

# Saint Frideswide Reconsidered

By JOHN BLAIR

## SUMMARY

**Introduction** (pp.72-93): William of Malmesbury's brief account of St. Frideswide, long considered the only worthwhile source for the Frideswide legends, is re-interpreted as a mere summary of older material which also formed the basis of a full-scale early 12th-century Vita ('Life A'). During c.1140-70 Life A was re-written, almost certainly by the scholar and Prior of St. Frideswide's Master Robert of Cricklade, in a more elegant and elaborate version ('Life B'). In Life A the princess, pursued by the lecherous King Algar, flees by boat from Oxford to Bampton where she hides in 'a wood called Binsey'. This blunder, which shows that the compiler of 'Life A' was ignorant of local topography, nonetheless suggests that the Frideswide legend in its pre-12th-century form included separate episodes associated with Bampton and Binsey. Life B resolves the confusion by adding a chapter in which Frideswide returns towards Oxford but stops for a while at Binsey, where she builds a nunnery in a secluded place called 'Thornbury' and obtains by her prayers the still-extant holy well. The Lives may include elements of genuine tradition. Frideswide, as a king's daughter and the first head of a minster founded by her father c.700, is highly plausible in the general contemporary context. Other evidence hints at a mid-Saxon province centred on Eynsham and probably including Oxford and Bampton, both of which had royal minsters by at least the 10th century; thus the association of Frideswide's cult with these two centres, spaced out along the Thames on either side of Eynsham, rings true. Life A may preserve a hint that the early minster at Oxford had three churches, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, St. Mary and All Saints. Life A says that Frideswide was buried on the south side of St. Mary's church on 19 October 727; Life B adds that King Æthelred enlarged the church after 1002 in such a way that the grave was thereafter central. 'Thornbury' at Binsey is tentatively interpreted as a monastic retreat-house, its boundaries perhaps reflected in a surviving earthwork.

**Appendix A** (pp.93-101): Edition of Life A.

**Appendix B** (pp.101-116): Edition of Life B.

**Appendix C** (pp.116-119): Narratives describing the re-discovery (1111 × 1180) and first translation (12 February 1180) of Frideswide's relics. After the re-foundation of the minster as an Augustinian priory, the canons became afraid that monks of Abingdon had stolen the bones. They opened the grave secretly at night and found an empty stone coffin; digging deeper, they found a skeleton which was identified as Frideswide's by a miraculous sign. At a ceremony in 1180 the Archbishop of Canterbury translated the bones from this grave into a raised feretory.

**Appendix D** (pp.119-127): At Bomy in northern France is a cult of St. Frideswide ('Ste. Fréwisse') associated with a chapel, hermitage and holy spring. The known hagiographical 'traditions' are post-medieval importations from Oxford, but a charter of 1187 mentions St. Frideswide's well and appears to associate it with the old parish church and cemetery, then being down-graded to the status of a chapel. The cult may possibly have reached Bomy from Oxford in the late 10th or 11th century through links between the English and Flemish Churches.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My main thanks are to Richard Sharpe and Michael Lapidge for their painstaking criticism of the texts, and to Edward Impey for his splendid fieldwork at Bomy. I am also very grateful to Theresa Webber for advice on the palaeography of the Nero E1 and Laud Misc. 114 MSS; to the British Library, the Bodleian Library, and the Libraries of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and Balliol College, Oxford, for access to the MSS; to Mme. Martine le Maner for supplying Xeroxes from Saint-Omer; to Peter Foote and Paul Bibire for advice on Robert of Cricklade's works; and to Steven Bassett, Martin Biddle, Ralph Davis, Antonia Gransden, Tom Hassall, Patrick McGurk, Henry Mayr-Harting, Alan Thacker, Rodney Thomson and David Wilson for all their suggestions. Pat Lloyd's quick and accurate typing has been a very great help. It is also appropriate to mention two names from the past: Miss L.I. Guiney, whose collection of transcripts (now Bodl. MS Lat. Misc. c.72) has proved extremely useful; and the Revd. G.E.C. Rodwell, vicar of Bampton, whose correct identification of *Bentonia* ('The Flight of St. Frideswide', *Jnl. Brit. Archaeol. Assocn.* n.s. xxii (1916), 85-9) has passed almost unregarded.

## INTRODUCTION

It was fitting that the first volume of *Oxoniensia*, published in 1936, should contain an article on Oxford's patron saint by the leading Anglo-Saxonist of the day.<sup>1</sup> The rough handling which St. Frideswide's *Vita* received there from Sir Frank Stenton is all the more unfortunate, for it has barred it from serious attention for half a century.<sup>2</sup> Stenton wrote of Frideswide:<sup>3</sup>

No materials for her life were available to the first generation of Anglo-Norman hagiographers, and the earliest writer to sketch the outline of her legend is the historian William of Malmesbury, writing shortly before the year 1125. According to him, Frideswide was a king's daughter, sought in marriage by a king from whom she escaped, at first into a nameless woodland refuge, and then into the town of Oxford. Her pursuer was struck with blindness as he approached the gates of the town, but was soon restored to sight by her intercession, and she, freed from his importunities, proceeded to found a monastery in the town, where she spent the rest of her life. It is a meagre story, and the men of later generations were not satisfied with it. Before the end of the thirteenth century, Frideswide had been provided with a father named Didanus and a mother named Safrida; the king who pursued her was called Algar, and the place of her final retirement was changed from Oxford to a neighbouring wood called Thornbury, afterwards known as Binsey. There is no reason to think that these details represent any real tradition; the personal names in the story show that it cannot have been written down before the late twelfth century, and carry no suggestion that it comes from any older source. It clearly stands for an attempt to give some appearance of substance to one of the most nebulous of English monastic legends.

This verdict rests on two assumptions: that the detailed *Vita* is a mere embroidery of Malmesbury's simple narrative; and that this embroidery occurred in the 13th century when all things pre-Conquest had grown dim. The second assumption is simply wrong: the

<sup>1</sup> F.M. Stenton, 'St. Frideswide and her Times', *Oxoniensia*, i (1936), 103-12.

<sup>2</sup> E.F. Jacob, *St. Frideswide, the Patron Saint of Oxford* (1957) identifies the two 12th-century versions of the Life, but his discussion of the manuscripts is so riddled with confusions that he cannot have carried out any systematic collation. In fact the most thorough discussion to date remains that of James Parker, *The Early History of Oxford* (O.H.S. iii, 1885), 86-106, though this too is vitiated by misunderstandings of the relationships between the sources.

<sup>3</sup> Stenton op.cit. note 1, 104-5.

full story, unlikely names and all, survives in a manuscript which can scarcely be later than c.1140 and which is not the original exemplar of its text. This in turn calls the first assumption into question: the Life cannot have been composed much, if at all, later than Malmesbury's narrative, and the possibility is open that Malmesbury was merely summarising a longer story which already existed in written form.

The two 12th-century versions of the Life have never been edited or compared, and to do so is the main purpose of this paper.<sup>4</sup> It will also try to assess their value as evidence for Anglo-Saxon Oxford and its environs, and to suggest a context for Frideswide's minster church in the light of historical, archaeological and topographical work since Stenton's time. Evidence is also presented for the rediscovery and translation of Frideswide's bones, and for her cult at Bomy in France.

#### MALMESBURY, 'LIFE A' AND 'LIFE B': THE THREE 12TH-CENTURY SOURCES AND THEIR INTER-RELATIONSHIP

William of Malmesbury's account of St. Frideswide occupies a brief passage in his *Gesta Pontificum*, written, like the rest of that work, in or shortly before 1125.<sup>5</sup> He goes on to note that Roger bishop of Salisbury established regular canons under Prior Wimund in Frideswide's former nunnery, a change which evidently occurred during 1111–22.<sup>6</sup> The story is compressed and summary, one of many such which William recounts in the course of his survey of ecclesiastical England.

The Life itself, in the two versions designated here 'Life A' and 'Life B', is a different matter: a full-scale *Vita* of the normal kind designed for monastic readings, replete with miracles and other edifying material. Life A is quite short, and is written in bald, rather clumsy Latin. It borrows many phrases from the Vulgate, and Frideswide herself, who is said to know the Psalms by heart, quotes them copiously. The only complete manuscript (British Library, MS Cotton Nero E 1 (ii) ff.156–7<sup>v</sup>) is an addition, in a Worcester hand of c.1110–40 which may be John of Worcester's, to a late Anglo-Saxon legendary; textual evidence (below, pp.93–6) suggests a possibility that some passages were not present in the archetype. The currency of Life A may have been mainly in the West Midlands, for there was evidently another copy at Hereford (below, p.95). Two abridgements of a slightly different and possibly earlier text are extant, but a text similar or identical to the Nero manuscript was used for the compilation of Life B.

Life B survives in three manuscripts, the earliest a Pershore collection written c.1150–80 (below, pp.101–2). The author claims in his prologue that by assembling information from 'chronicles', 'volumes of authentic histories' and 'catalogues of English saints', he has proved that 'that man, whoever he was', who previously wrote her life was further from error than critics of his simple style have claimed. Clearly this refers to Life A, of which Life B is essentially a more stylish and literary re-working. The text is padded out to twice its original length, though many phrases (especially from Frideswide's direct

<sup>4</sup> A full translation of Life A will be published as J. Blair, *Saint Frideswide, Patron of Oxford* (Perpetua Press, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum*, ed. N.E.S.A. Hamilton (Rolls Ser. lii, 1870), 315; see discussion of date in A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550–c.1307* (1974), 168.

<sup>6</sup> J.C. Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England* (1950), 113–15.

speech) are repeated verbatim. Life B was thereafter the favoured source, and nearly all the late medieval abridgements in Latin and English derive from it.<sup>7</sup>

At this point it will be convenient to present English versions of the three sources. Malmesbury's brief narrative may be translated in full:

In old times there was in the city of Oxford a monastery of nuns, where rests the most holy virgin Frideswide. A king's daughter, she spurned a king's bed, avowing her chastity to the Lord Christ. But the king had set his heart upon marrying the virgin, and when prayers and flatteries had been spent in vain he prepared to take her by force. Frideswide learnt of this, and fled into a wood. No refuge could be secret from the lover, no coldness of heart could deter him: he followed the fugitive. So once again, when the young man's frenzy became plain, with God's help she entered Oxford at dead of night by means of hidden ways. By morning the persistent lover had hastened there too, and the girl, now despairing of flight and too weary to go any further, prayed to God for protection for herself and punishment for her persecutor. As he passed through the town gates with his thegns, a heaven-sent blow struck him blind. Understanding the wrongfulness of his persistence, he placated Frideswide by means of messengers and recovered his sight as quickly as he had lost it. Thus it came about that kings of England are afraid to enter or lodge in that town: it is said to bring ruin, and they all shrink from the danger of putting it to the test. So the woman, secure in her maidenly victory, established a monastery there where she ended her days, submitting to her bridegroom's call.

The Latin texts of Lives A and B are edited below (pp.93–116). The following parallel summaries aim to give the essential ingredients of the story, while condensing Life B's discursive style. The section numbers in bold type correspond with those in the editions below:

## A

**2** St. Augustine converted the English, and priests, churches and believers multiplied greatly. At length there was a king of Oxford named Didan. He married a godly woman named Sefrida, who produced a daughter. The king ordered her to be baptised, and they called her Frideswide.

**3** She was carefully brought up, and from the age of five she was entrusted to a matron called Ælfgifu to

## B

**1** (Prologue). Concerning the life and virtues of the most blessed virgin Frideswide, beloved brethren, I have gathered into one volume all that I could learn in chronicles, in volumes of authentic histories or in catalogues of English saints. It is obvious from this that that man, whoever he was, who wrote the most holy virgin's Life was in many ways far from error, despite the scorn of those who, affecting to despise his simple style, show that they value ornament more than substance.

**2** In about the year 727, when the word of God was bearing fruit among the savage race of the English who had invaded Britain, a sub-king named Didan, a catholic and upright man, adorned the city called in the Saxon tongue Oxford and in Latin *Boum Vadum*. He took a worthy wife named Safrida, who gave him an heir (to his qualities rather than to his estates), an only daughter. She was baptised, and he ordered her to be called Frideswide.

**3** After five years of careful upbringing, she was entrusted to a religious matron called Algiva to learn

<sup>7</sup> These include: the incomplete version printed J. Mabillon, *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis S. Benedicti*, iii.1 (2nd ed.), 524–6 (BHL 3163); the Life in Tynmouth's *Sanctilogium* (Brit. Lib. Cotton Tiberius E 1 ff.85<sup>v</sup>–7), whence Capgrave's *Nova Legenda Anglie* (BHL 3165); the late 15th-century Sarum breviary lessons (*Breviarium ad Usus Insignis Ecclesie Sarum*, eds. F. Proctor and C. Wordsworth, iii (1886), 938–42); the Latin metrical version (BHL 3168); and the Middle English verse life in the *South English Legendary* (Carleton Brown, *A Register of Middle English Religious and Didactic Verse*, ii (1920), No. 1815). Some of these are discussed more fully (though with confusions in the relationships between them) in Jacob op.cit. note 2.



learn her letters. Already chosen as a vessel of the Holy Spirit, she studied earnestly, learnt the Psalter within six months, and based her whole life on the precepts of Holy Scripture, always longing to dwell in the house of the Lord.

4 Sefrida died. Didan built a church in Oxford, and had it dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary and All Saints. Frideswide asked him to give her the church, which he did. She studied to serve God by day and night in vigils and prayers. Despising the world, she gave all that she had to the poor; she always wore a hair shirt, and her food was barley-bread with a few vegetables and water. All the English marvelled at such virtue in one so young, and the king rejoiced to see his only daughter a vessel of the Holy Spirit.

5 Frideswide asked her father's permission to take the nun's habit. Rejoicing, Didan summoned Orgar, bishop of Lincoln, whom he caused to consecrate his daughter together with twelve other noble virgins. Didan then had a refectory, dormitory and cloister built for the nuns, assigned religious men to serve them, and gave the estates and villages of St. Mary and a third part of the city of Oxford to provide the nuns' food.

6 So Frideswide studied to mortify her body and nourish her soul. Didan fell sick, gave his treasure to the poor, and died after receiving the Eucharist. Bereft of both parents, Frideswide trusted all the more in the Holy Spirit; she resolved to kneel a hundred times by day, and to mortify her flesh a hundred times by night.

7 One night, while her companions slept, she was thus occupied alone in the oratory which she had built for herself. A devil appeared, bedecked with gold, silver and gems and surrounded by demons. Pretending to be Christ, he offered her the crown of eternal life and invited her to adore him. But she rejected him scornfully, made the sign of the cross, and he vanished howling, leaving her to pursue her devotions unperturbed.

her letters. How happily she showed everyone that she was fore-chosen as a vessel of the Holy Spirit! Who could not marvel at this five-year-old maiden learning the 150 psalms in about five months? None of her peers could envy her; she was so humble and gentle that she seemed more like a slave-girl than a princess, respectful and compassionate to all. She not merely heard but practised the divine word, storing it in her heart; she spent her time in tears, sighs and groans, always longing to dwell in the house of the Lord.

4 Before she reached marriageable age her mother died, leaving her to her father's protection. She exhorted him to look to the welfare of his soul; he, grieving for his wife and urged on by his daughter, built a church within the city boundary and had it dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary and All Saints. He gave it to his daughter as she asked him; there she applied herself to devotion and to mortification of the flesh. She slept on the bare earth; this princess, brought up to banquets, ate only simple vegetables with barley-bread, and drank only water. O unhappy men of today who make gods of their bellies, who pretend to religion in their dress but deny it in their way of life! England was agog; all marvelled to see the frail sex at so young an age surpassing masculine strength, and her father rejoiced.

5 Rejecting all hope of mortal posterity, Frideswide obtained her father's permission to take the nun's habit, doubtless foreseeing that after his death someone might try to force her into marriage. Knowing that Christ's blood had redeemed her, she sickened of fine clothes; wedded with the ring of faith, she despised gold and gems. Rejoicing, Didan summoned the bishop of the next diocese and ordered him to give her the nun's habit. About twelve noble girls, following her example, left all to serve the Lord, and although they could not equal her merits, they strove to share with her the heavenly kingdom. Buildings appropriate for religious uses were constructed beside the church through the king's generosity. So the sweet singing of psalms and hymns could be heard there by day and night.

6 The king fell sick and, strengthened by the Eucharist, slept with his fathers, ending his days in a good old age. Bereft of both parents, Frideswide sought her father in heaven the more earnestly: she fasted and prayed, kneeling a hundred times by day, a hundred times by night.

7 But who can be good, yet avoid the envy of him who is supremely bad? The Devil, unable to seduce Frideswide's soul, tried to deceive her by pretending to be Christ. Simulating heavenly light but surrounded by demons, he invited her to adore him, offering her eternal life without the pains of death. Guided by the Holy Spirit she rejected him scornfully, and he vanished howling, leaving her to pursue her devotions unperturbed.

8 Algar king of Leicester, a villainous man hateful to God, succeeded to the kingdom after Didan's death. He sent envoys to her with this message: 'King Algar wants to take you in marriage, but if you object he will have you dragged to a brothel.' Frideswide answered: 'I am betrothed to the King of all kings, whom it would be shameful to leave to obey a slave. As for your threat, the soul cannot be polluted except by consent of the will [quotes Psalm cxviii.6].'

9 The envoys threatened to take her by force. Frideswide invoked God's help [quotes Psalms x.20.1 and xxxv.2-3], and they were struck blind. The citizens of Oxford fell terrified at her feet, begging her to pray for them.

10 Wishing to return good for ill, she invoked God [quotes Psalm lxxxvi.15], begging him to restore the envoys' sight so that the people might know his mercy. As all replied 'Amen' their eyes were opened, and they fell at her feet, praising God.

11 The envoys reported back to Algar. Enraged, he cried that her magic arts would not save her from him. As Frideswide prayed that night, an angel appeared to her, promising Christ's protection [quotes Psalm xvii.8]: she should go with chosen companions to the river, where a boat and boatman provided by God would take them to safety.

12 Frideswide took two of her sisters to the Thames. There they found a boat, with a young man of angelic appearance who invited them to embark. Guided by the Lord, they arrived within an hour at the town called Bampton. They left the boat, and the young man vanished. Fearing the wicked king's snares, the nuns went into a wood called Binsey, not far from that town; they followed a path to an abandoned swineherds' hut which was completely overgrown with ivy. Frideswide made the sign of the cross, and entered with her companions.

13 The wicked king reached Oxford with his henchmen, intent on defiling the vessel hallowed for God; but as he entered the city he was struck blind. It is thought

8 The Devil, thus foiled, tried again: he inflamed the wicked King Algar with love for Frideswide, prompting him to seek to despoil her of the nun's habit. Algar, thus maddened, sent messengers to take Frideswide willy-nilly. Swiftly travelling a great distance, they came to her and said: 'King Algar desires you as partner for his bed and kingdom: he will not be denied.' She answered humbly, 'If I could marry anyone, I would have no objection to King Algar. But since I am betrothed to the eternal King, it would be shameful to seek a mortal husband and children.' The envoys replied, 'If you refuse the king's honourable offer, you will be dragged to a brothel and suffer great dishonour.' 'God will protect me', she answered, 'and in any case the body cannot be polluted except by consent of the will.'

9 The envoys, persisting in their folly, prepared to take her by force. Frideswide invoked God's help [quotes Psalms x.20.1 and xxxv.2-3]. How great is God's wisdom! See these wicked men, already blind in their souls, now restrained by physical blindness. The miracle stupefied the city; all fell at her feet, begging her to pity the envoys.

10 Unable to harden her heart, she invoked God [quotes Psalm lxxxvi.15], begging him to restore their sight so that the people might know his mercy. As all replied 'Amen' their eyes were opened, and they fell at her feet asking pardon. 'Do not attribute it to me', she answered, 'but to the Saviour's mercy and the faith of these people. Remember this, and leave nuns alone in future.'

11 The envoys reported back to Algar. Enraged, he cried that her magic arts would not save her from him: before she should insult him thus, he would hand her over to the pleasure of pimps. He rode off in a fury towards Oxford. But God protects those who trust in him: as Frideswide prayed that night, an angel appeared and warned her of the coming danger. Frideswide was aghast; but the angel told her that Christ would protect her, and punish Algar with perpetual blindness. She should go with chosen companions to the Thames, where they would find a boat and boatman provided by God to guide them.

12 Thanking God, Frideswide took two of her sisters to the Thames. There they found a boat, with a young man of beautiful appearance who invited them to embark. Within an hour they travelled ten miles, and were deposited below the town called Bampton, whereupon the boat and boatman vanished. They found a path near that town, which led into the heart of a wood not far away. There they found a hut built to protect pigs in bad weather, long abandoned and so completely overgrown with ivy that no entrance was visible. Frideswide made the sign of the cross, and entered with her companions to await God's will.

13 Meanwhile the wicked king reached Oxford, and tried by threats and promises to learn from the inhabitants where Frideswide had gone. Nobody could tell

to have come about in this way that kings never enter Oxford. He remained blind for the rest of his life, always plotting injuries to Frideswide. She, continuing ceaselessly in prayer and meditation, stayed in the wood for some three years.

**14** A girl of Bampton, who had been blinded by a devil nearly seven years earlier, was told in a dream to go to the nuns' dwelling and wash her eyes with the water in which Frideswide had washed her hands. In the morning she told her father; he led her to Frideswide's dwelling, waited until she washed her hands, and wiped the water on the girl's eyes, which were immediately cured. They returned home, praising the Saviour's power displayed in Frideswide.

**16** A youth named Alward in the village called Seacourt was chopping wood with an axe on a Sunday, forgetful of the Lord's Resurrection, when his hands stuck to the haft and felt as though on fire. He was led in great pain to Frideswide, and fell at her feet. Moved by pity, she invoked God and asked him to cure the sufferer. As the by-standers answered 'Amen' she made the sign of the cross, and the youth was cured; he returned home praising God. So Frideswide's name became famous through the region.

him, and the enraged king swore to sack the city. But as he approached the North Gate he was struck blind, and learnt the fate of those who defy God. He returned home obdurate, and remained blind for the rest of his life. Because of his just punishment, no king of England has dared to enter Oxford since. But Frideswide, as though transported into a desert, continued ceaselessly to serve and venerate God. She remained in the wood for some three years, but not unknown to the locals: for the light of God cannot be hidden for long.

**14** In Bampton was a girl of good family whom the Devil had struck blind. She was told in a dream to go to the nuns' dwelling and wash her eyes with the water in which Frideswide had washed her hands. In the morning she told her parents, who congratulated her, went to the hut, knocked loudly, and asked to be present while Frideswide washed her hands. The girl seized the water, wiped it on her eyes, and at once she could see. How pure a virgin, that what might have been thought dirty could thus cleanse! Silence, all who question the Redeemer's promise, 'Not a hair of your head shall perish': he who can restore sight through the dirty water in which his handmaid has washed, can restore our bodies at the Resurrection. Stupendous miracle! Returning home joyfully, they proclaimed it throughout the region.

**15** But the wise virgin feared to pour out her oil, lest none remained for her lamp when the Bridegroom came. Embarrassed by the admiring crowds, she decided to hide. So calling together her companions, she said, 'It is time to return to our monastery: our sisters, grieving for us, may have gone astray.' So they travelled swiftly by boat to the estate called Binsey near the city. Here they disembarked, and Frideswide decided to stay for a while in solitude: their sisters in Oxford could come there easily, and it would be protected from the crowds of townsfolk. On that estate was a secluded spot, called *Thornbiri* because it was overgrown with many kinds of thorns, lonely and suitable for devotion. Here she built an oratory and other appropriate buildings. The nuns could not conveniently draw water from the stream, so she obtained by her prayers a well which still remains, and performs healing works for many who drink from it [or for many praying there]. Here she hoped to shun the company of men.

**16** Why are you trying to hide, virgin beloved of God? The Lord said that a city placed on a mountain cannot be hidden, and that the humble will be exalted. Although you are crucified to the world, the wretched still seek you out. Behold the unhappy youth of the village called Seacourt, who was chopping wood with an axe on a Sunday, forgetful of the Lord's Resurrection, when his hand stuck to the haft and felt as though on fire. As the wretch cried out and his parents wept, they remembered the miracle of the blind girl and determined to visit Frideswide. Indeed I applaud your faith: drag her out and make her show her merits! Crossing the river, they brought him to Frideswide's dwelling and said, 'Cure this youth, suffering through

**17** Some fishermen were asleep one night in a boat, when one of them was seized by a demon. He laughed madly, strangled one of his companions, and tried to tear him with his teeth. The others bound him and led him to Frideswide's oratory. She invoked God to free his creation laid low by the enemy of mankind, made the sign of the cross, and commanded Satan to depart. The man fell senseless; she ordered him to be unbound, and commanded him in Christ's name to arise. He got up in his right mind and glorified God. His name was Leowin.

**18** God worked many other miracles through Frideswide. One day she said to her companions, 'Let us return to our monastery.' So they went by boat to Oxford, where they were honourably received by the citizens and clergy. When Frideswide had just entered the town, a leprous youth ran up and said 'I charge you, virgin Frideswide, to give me a kiss in Christ's name.' She made the sign of the cross, kissed him, and his leprosy was cured. Seeing her works, the people and clergy rejoiced at her coming.

**19** She continued to serve God, mortifying her body to nourish her spirit. A long time passed, and the day of reward drew near. On 12 October an angel appeared and told her, '19 October will be a Sunday, and then you will receive the crown of eternal life. Because you scorned your father's earthly palace, a heavenly hall is prepared for you'. Then a fever seized her, and her limbs began to fail. One day all the citizens came to her, and she edified them with good advice.

his own fault; for we know that if you want to, you can.' Will you send them home unrequited? No: moved by pity, she invoked God and asked him to cure the sufferer. As she made the sign of the cross, his hand was freed from the haft and he regained full health.

**17** Shortly afterwards, some fishermen were asleep in their boat at dead of night, when one of them was seized by a demon. He grabbed one of his companions, and tried to tear him with his teeth and strangle him. The others overpowered him, tied his hands behind him, and led him to Frideswide's dwelling. She prayed, made the sign of the cross, and commanded Satan to depart. The author of death thus ejected, the man fell as though dead. She commanded him to rise in Christ's name; he got up in his right mind, and proclaimed the miracle wherever he went.

**18** God worked so many miracles through Frideswide that it is hard to believe her mortal. One was of such outstanding virtue that it cannot be omitted. When the day of her death approached, sad for men but joyful for angels, she returned on horseback to her own monastery, to surrender her soul to God where she had first served him in the nun's habit. The whole city rushed to meet her; and behold, in the joyful crowd of clergy and people, a leprous youth so disfigured with ulcers and tumours that he seemed more like a monster than a man. He approached her and said, in a raucous voice, 'I charge you, virgin Frideswide, to give me a kiss in Christ's name.' A hard request! Do you, from whose horrible form and smell hardened men recoil, ask this royal maiden to kiss you? An outrageous request, unless prompted by stupendous faith! If you were not a leper, but simply male, you could not ask a kiss from her who has never touched a man. But you answer, 'The heats of my disease, not of my sex, prompt my request. At the touch of her pure mouth the impurity of my body will vanish.' To everyone's wonder, she made the sign of the cross and then kissed the leper. Amazing miracle! What bathing in the Jordan did for Naaman, one kiss from the holy maiden did for this young man: as their mouths touched his whole body was cleansed, and his scaly skin became like that of an infant. Who could refrain from praising Christ? At the coming of such a patron, the whole city rejoiced. But as she grew in good works, so the more humbly she tamed her soul and body.

**19** As the day of her death approached, the Lord's angel appeared while she prayed and said, 'On 19 October, during the night which ends with Sunday's dawn, you will end your pains and receive eternal rewards. Because you scorned your father's earthly palace, you will enter the heavenly King's chamber.' Then a fever seized her, and her limbs began to fail. The citizens came to her as to a nurse and mother, and even during her illness she edified them with good advice.

20 On Saturday she asked for a grave to be opened for her in St. Mary's church, saying 'Tomorrow is Sunday, and I do not wish anyone to work on my account. After the third cock-crow I shall go to my Lord, strengthened by Christ's body and blood [quotes II Tim. iv. 6]. As the sickness grew she received the Eucharist, and began to bless God.

21 When very weak, she looked up and said, 'Welcome, holy virgins.' The others asked with whom she was speaking, but she said, 'Do you not see the blessed virgins of God, Catherine and Cecily?' She spoke to them further, and then said 'Now I come, my Lord.' After the third cock-crow, she bade everyone farewell and passed to the Lord. In that hour such a light blazed through Oxford, and such a sweet scent filled it for three hours, that all marvelled and glorified God.

22 A very rich man who was paralysed ordered his servants to bear him to her grave, where he instantly regained full health: he who had been dumb and lame for two years walked home praising God.

23 A nobleman named Athelwold, who was crippled from the navel downwards, dragged himself on crutches to the church door during the funeral. The crowd prevented him from entering, but he shouted at the door, 'Chosen bride of Christ, free me from my infirmities: I know that if you want to help me, you can.' At once he was completely cured; he leapt into the church, holding up his crutches and praising God.

24 The blessed virgin Frideswide passed to the Lord on 19 October 727. She was buried in St. Mary's church, on the south side, where Christ has worked many miracles through her merits.

20 On Saturday evening she said to those around her, 'Dig me a grave today in the basilica of the holy Mary mother of Christ, under whose protection I shall be the safer before her son's tribunal. And since his Resurrection is celebrated tomorrow, and I shall leave this world tonight after the third cock-crow, I do not wish anyone to work on my account on such a day.' Receiving the Eucharist, she blessed the Lord.

21 Looking heavenwards, she saw approaching the virgins whom she most venerated, and addressed them, 'Welcome, blessed virgins.' How great are your mercies, O Lord! Your handmaid now coming to you need not fear Satan, who although vanquished is wont to assail victors coming home, when you send these fore-runners to guard her path. The others asked with whom she was speaking, but she said, 'Do you not see the holy virgins, Catherine and Cecily?' She spoke to them further, and said, 'Now I come, my Lord.' Bidding everyone farewell, she passed to the Lord at the hour foretold. In that hour a heavenly light shone from the house in which her body lay, and the sweetest of scents filled the town.

22 To leave no doubt that she lived beyond death, behold a very rich man, paralysed and dumb, borne by his servants to the feretory on which her body rested. On touching it he was cured so completely that he leapt up in praise of God and St. Frideswide.

23 As her most chaste corpse was carried to the grave amid a great crowd, a man crippled from the navel downwards dragged himself to the funeral on crutches. The crowd prevented him from approaching the feretory, but he shouted in a loud voice, 'Bride of the Fount of mercy, how long have I wished to come to you? I could not while you lived, nor can I now that you are dead. But heal me now: for I know that you can most easily.' As all turned to look at him, his infirmity vanished; holding up his crutches, he rushed to the grave and threw them down praising God and his servant Frideswide. All congratulated him, seeing how God worked miracles through his servant even after her life.

24 She was buried in the basilica of the spotless virgin Mary, on the south side, next to the River Thames. The site of the basilica remained thus until the time of King Æthelred, who, after the burning of the Danes who had fled there, enlarged the perimeter of the basilica as he had previously vowed. It certainly happened like this, because the grave, which had previously been on one side, came thenceforth to be the middle. There Christ has worked countless miracles through her merits.

The least of our problems is the status of Life B. Clearly its author was using a text of Life A identical with, or very close to, the Nero manuscript. There are a few omissions of fact: the name and see of the bishop who consecrated Frideswide, the description of Didan's gifts to the church, the facts that Algar was king of Leicester and succeeded Didan in his kingdom, and the names of the beneficiaries of the miracles. For textual reasons it is unlikely that this material was absent from the version of Life A used by the later author (below, pp.95-6), so

probably he discarded it as dubious or irrelevant. In three cases Life B adds substantive information not in Life A, all reflecting a knowledge of Oxford topography: Algar's attempted entry through the North Gate; the Binsey episode; and the location of Frideswide's grave after Æthelred's rebuilding of the church. As shown below (pp.83-5), the insertion of the Binsey passage rationalises Life A's gross confusion over the locations of Bampton, Binsey and Seacourt. Evidently the author of Life B either knew Oxford and its environs or had access to reliable information, whereas the author of Life A did not.

Life B must have been written before the translation of Frideswide's relics in 1180, which would otherwise have been mentioned, and in any case the Pershore manuscript is probably rather earlier than this. On the other hand, the version of Life A available to the author of Life B and to us contains spellings which can scarcely pre-date c.1100 (below, p.82). The prologue of Life B implies that Life A was of unknown authorship and held in doubtful repute, suggesting at least a generation or so between the two Lives. Thus the likely date-ranges are c.1100-30 for Life A and c.1140-70 for Life B.

The obvious candidate for the author of Life B is the scholar Robert of Cricklade, prior of St. Frideswide's between 1139 × 41 and 1174 × 80.<sup>8</sup> His literary interests certainly included hagiography, for he wrote a life of St. Thomas of Canterbury (now only known from an Icelandic version); he has also tentatively been identified as the 'Master Robert' who composed a Latin life, also now lost, of St. Magnus of Orkney.<sup>9</sup> A quick comparison of Life B with one of Robert's known works, *De Connubio Iacob*,<sup>10</sup> reveals close similarities both in style and in sentiment. At least five of Life B's scriptural quotations are also used in *Iacob*, two of them twice and one three times;<sup>11</sup> the author deals with similar moral themes (notably gluttony, attacked in section 4 of Life B and several times in *Iacob*); and there are some striking correspondences in style and vocabulary.<sup>12</sup> Given the inherent likelihood that Robert would have been interested in the patron-saint of the house of which he was prior, the attribution of Life B to him must be considered extremely strong if not conclusive.

<sup>8</sup> For Robert's dates see D. Knowles, C.N.L. Brooke and V.C.M. London, *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales, 940-1216* (1972), 180. He had been succeeded as prior by Philip before the translation of Frideswide's relics on 12 February 1180 (below, p.117). (There is no evidence for the precise death-date of 1180 given in some works, still less for that of 1188 given by J.B. Schneyer, *Repertorium der Lateinischen Sermones*...; *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*, xliii.5 (Münster, 1974), 171-6.)

<sup>9</sup> Robert's works are discussed in M. Burrows (ed.), *Collectanea II* (O.H.S. xvi, 1890), 160-5; A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford* (1957), i, 513-14; *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, viii (Freiburg, 1963), 1338; R.W. Hunt, 'English Learning in the Late Twelfth Century', *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.* 4th ser. xix (1936), 31-3, 37-8. For the Thomas text see also P.G. Foote, 'On the Fragmentary Text Concerning St. Thomas Becket in Stock. Perg. fol. nr. 2', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, xv.4 (1961), 403-50; idem, introduction to *Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile*, iv (1962), 7-18; M. Orme, 'A Reconstruction of Robert of Cricklade's Vita et Miracula S. Thomae Cantuariensis', *Analecta Bollandiana*, lxxiv (1966), 379-98. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, *Orkneyinga Saga*, Íslenzk Fornrit xxxiv (Reykjavík, 1965), xlvii-xlviii, discusses the possible identity of 'Master Robert' with Robert of Cricklade; he is known to have visited Scotland at least once in the 1160s (*Regesta Reg. Scott.* i, Nos. 223-5, 228, 260), and might have become interested in St. Magnus there.

<sup>10</sup> Bodl. MS Laud Misc. 725.

<sup>11</sup> (a) Eccli.ii.12: *Life B* sec.9, *Iacob* ff.173,181. (b) Matt. v.14: *Life B* sec.16, *Iacob* f.108. (c) Matt. vii.14: *Life B* sec.4, *Iacob* ff.128,169. (d) Rom.xi.33: *Life B* sec.9, *Iacob* f.153. (e) Philipp.iii.19: *Life B* sec. 4, *Iacob* ff.94, 127. 136<sup>v</sup> (and cf. attack on gluttony in *Iacob* ff. 147-50<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>12</sup> For example: (a) *Novimus enim, et valde novimus, quoniam si volueris... (Life B sec.16)/ Novi enim, et valde novi, Deus meus, quia tu es... (Iacob f.92<sup>v</sup>).* (b) *... absque corporis incommodo... (Life B sec.7)/ ... corpori esse incommoda...; Quis enim omnia corporis incommoda enumerare possit? (Iacob f.101).* (c) *Propterea diebus assidue et noctibus piis lacrimarum rivulis, suspiriis quoque et gemitibus, cordis mactabat hostiam in holocaustum acceptabile Domino... Mundi etiam fertur sic postposuisse gloriam, sic ad supernam hanelare patriam... (Life B secs.3 and 4)/ Adde etiam quia eum videre contingit in congregatione sancta, hos ieiuniis*



More difficult is the relationship between Life A and Malmesbury: did he use Life A as we have it, Life A in some earlier form, or an independent source? Malmesbury often summarised, and in this case his staccato narrative has decidedly the appearance of a summary: we cannot argue from its brevity that his source was also short or simple. His account of Frideswide's flight from her suitor differs significantly from Life A, while at the same time containing some strong echoes of it:

*Malmesbury*

The king proposes marriage to Frideswide.

She rejects him, 'avowing her chastity to the Lord Christ'.

He prepares to take her by force.

Warned of this, she hides in a wood; he follows her, and 'with God's help she enters Oxford at dead of night by means of hidden ways'.

He follows her to Oxford.

She prays for protection for herself and punishment for him.

He tries to enter the town with his men, and is struck blind. Therefore kings are unwilling to enter Oxford.

He repents and sends messengers to placate her, and his sight is restored.

*Life A*

King Algar sends messengers to propose marriage to Frideswide, with threats if she refuses.

She rejects them because she is 'betrothed to Christ, King of all kings'.

The messengers prepare to take her by force.

She prays for protection for herself and punishment for them.

The messengers are struck blind, and repent; she prays for them, and their sight is restored.

Warned by an angel, and with miraculous help, she travels by boat to Bampton and hides in a wood 'called Binsey'.

Algar sets out for Oxford, intent to violate her.

He tries to enter the town with his men, and is struck blind. Therefore kings are unwilling to enter Oxford.

He remains blind and unrepentant. She returns to Oxford some three years later.

Where the main lines of the story are concerned, it seems *prima facie* likely that Malmesbury's is the earlier version. The transformation of his over-persistent young man into Life A's wicked tyrant has didactic and dramatic advantages, whereas the reverse process does not. Likewise, the blinding of Algar at the town gates makes sense if Frideswide is trapped inside, but not if she is safely at Bampton. Her appeal for divine aid against the messengers, and their blinding, repentance and cure, in Life A, is clearly the same sequence of events which in Malmesbury's version involves the king himself.

On the other hand, Malmesbury's condensed phrases sometimes suggest an underlying longer narrative, similar in places to Life A but differently ordered. The messengers who convey the king's repentance in Malmesbury may equate with those who convey his initial demands in Life A; Frideswide's rejection of him because she is 'vowed to chastity in the Lord Christ' echoes her longer explanation to the messengers; her return to Oxford

afflictos, macieque confectos, illos assidue orando, dulcibus interdum decurrentibus lacrimis ad supernam patriam hanelo desiderio suspirantes (*Iacob* f.124). (d) . . . qua se Altissimo fore similem promittebat . . . [of the Devil] (*Life B* sec. 7)/ Immo et in hoc magis Diabolum imitatur, qui ait, 'Ero similis Altissimo' (*Iacob* f.140<sup>v</sup>). (e) . . . de forma hominis nichil fere inesse videretur preter exteriora liniamenta, velut in trunco ad formam humani corporis desecto . . . (*Life B* sec.18)/ . . . nichil fere de Deo extra humani liniamenta corporis. . . ac si non forma humani corporis corporeum . . . (*Iacob* ff.157<sup>v</sup>, 158). (f) Si quando ieiunant, terra marique queritur, unde ieiunii dampnum restituatur. Sed non est hoc ieiunium quod elegi dicit Dominus (*Life B* sec.4)/ Verbi gratia ieiunas, sed ut ab hominibus abstinens videaris; non est hoc ieiunium quod elegi dicit Dominus (*Iacob* f.160).

'with God's help by means of hidden ways' recalls her voyage to Bampton with the angelic boatman. There may also be a direct echo of Life A's 'inde creditur inolevisse reges Oxinefordiam non intrare' in Malmesbury's 'hinc timor regibus inolevit Anglie illius urbis ingressum . . . cavere'.

To propose that Malmesbury first formulated these passages, and that the canons of Oxford used his *Gesta Pontificum* immediately afterwards as a basis for their own saint's *Vita*, is hardly plausible. The alternative explanation is that both Malmesbury's narrative and Life A reflect some lost text, which was condensed for the former and expanded for the latter. We have Malmesbury's explicit statement that he consulted the archives of St. Frideswide's Priory, and it is more than likely that he was shown hagiographical material on this occasion.<sup>13</sup> This would make Life A a source of independent value, preserving elements from the earlier text: Malmesbury is useful as evidence for the main lines of the unadapted story, and Life B for a few extra details which may or may not be genuine traditions.

#### THE AUTHORSHIP OF LIFE A

The references to places and people show that Life A in its penultimate form (in other words the archetype of the Nero manuscript and Life B, below p.95) cannot have been earlier than the late 11th century. The places mentioned are Oxford (*Oxinefordia*), (the folk of) Lincoln (*Lincolienses*), (the folk of) Leicester (*Leicecestrenses*), Bampton (*Bentonia*), Binsey (*Benesia*), and Seacourt (*Seuecordia*). All except Binsey correspond closely to the Domesday (1086) forms, whereas *Oxnaforda*, *Bemtune* and *Seofecanwyrthe* would be more likely in a 10th-century source.<sup>14</sup> Binsey is normally *Beneseye*, *Buneseia* in the 12th century, and no earlier forms are known.<sup>15</sup> Modernisation of placenames is only to be expected, so the forms are in no sense evidence that the places were not mentioned in the hypothetical earlier source.

Apart from Frideswide herself (*Fritheswiitha*), the people mentioned by name are her parents (King *Didanus* and Queen *Sefrida*), her nurse (*Ælfgyva*), her suitor (King *Algarus*), the bishop of Lincoln (*Orgarus*), and the beneficiaries of three miracles (*Alwardus*, *Leowinus*, *Athelwoldus*). The last three are the Anglo-Norman Latin forms of standard late Old English names (*Ælfweard*, *Leofwine*, *Æthelwold*), and may well be picked at random; perhaps the same applies to the suitor (*Ælfgar*). 'Orgar bishop of Lincoln' looks like a crude anachronism which would be impossible before the 1090s, since the see of Dorchester was only transferred to Lincoln in 1072. But it is just possible that this reference has substance after all: between the 690s and the 720s the bishop of the old Mercian see of Lindsey was one Eadgar, who may conceivably have exercised diocesan functions in the Oxford area.<sup>16</sup>

As Stenton pointed out, *Sefrida* 'seems to be due to a confusion between the Old

<sup>13</sup> William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. W. Stubbs, i (Rolls Ser. xca, 1887), 213. Dr. Alan Thacker (pers.comm.) notes that in the comparable case of St. Werburgh Malmesbury gives a miracle story, radically different from the version in Werburgh's *Vita*, which is most likely to be simply a garbled summary.

<sup>14</sup> *P.N. Oxon.* 19, 304; *P.N. Berks.* 465.

<sup>15</sup> *P.N. Oxon.* 26.

<sup>16</sup> Mr. S.R. Bassett (pers. comm.) suggests 'the possibility of a bishop of Lincoln deputising, during the probable vacancy of Leicester in 705-37, for the bishop of Lichfield in church matters in the southernmost part of "greater Mercia"'. Cf. his forthcoming paper 'Lincoln and the Anglo-Saxon See of Lindsey', which notes 'a number of references to a bishop of Lincoln (as opposed to Lindsey) in being before 1066, not all of which are easily dismissed as anachronisms'. Note that Life B, sec. 5, has Frideswide consecrated by the bishop of the *next* diocese.

English *Sæfrith* and *Sæthryth*, which are respectively masculine and feminine names:<sup>17</sup> it may be a garbling of *Sæthryth*, or it may be invented. *Didanus*, on the other hand, could be a rather corrupt Latinisation of *Dæda*, *Dida* or *Dyddā*, all evidenced by placenames. This name would occur less readily to an Anglo-Norman writer than would the others, and may be more likely to represent genuine tradition. Finally, *Frithesuuitha* and *Ælfgiva* would both be acceptable in a pre-Conquest Latin text. The fact that the name of Frideswide's nurse appears in an Anglo-Saxon form (*Ælfgiva*), but the lecherous king's in an Anglo-Norman one (*Algarus*), may be a sign that the more homely and inconsequential detail is the more authentic.

Textual evidence (below, p.95) suggests some possibility, but no more than this, that the archetype of Life A lacked certain passages which appear in the Nero manuscript: Frideswide's invocations of God to heal Algar's messengers, the young man of Seacourt and the demoniac fisherman; the two posthumous miracles; the dating of Frideswide's death to 727; and the location of her grave. With these possible exceptions, the text is the work of one man: it is characterised throughout both by stylistic ineptitude and by a marked tendency to repeat catch-phrases.<sup>18</sup> This man can scarcely have been a professional hagiographer, and his topographical errors show that he was not local; he may well have been one of Wimund's new canons, brought from some distant Augustinian house.<sup>19</sup> If he was active in the Priory at some date close to William of Malmesbury's visit, he could well have re-worked, into a more unified or edifying form, a body of older material which Malmesbury also used. This material could have been of various kinds: not necessarily a single *Vita*, but brief lessons or stories, miracles collected in one or many places, and even oral traditions. In this context must be considered the central crux: the confused and inconsistent accounts of Frideswide's flight from Oxford.

#### THE BAMPTON-BINSEY PROBLEM

The Frideswide of popular legend hid at Binsey, where a well sprang up in response to her prayers. So well-known and well-loved is this story that her connection with Bampton is usually forgotten. But in fact it is far from clear that the Binsey episode is the more important. William of Malmesbury merely says that she 'hid in a wood'. Life A's account of her flight and exile is as follows:

The blessed virgin arose and called two nuns, virgins dedicated with her to God. When they reached the River Thames as the angel had directed they found a boat, and sitting in it a young man with a gleaming, angelic face who thus addressed the virgins, 'Step into the boat, hallowed virgins.' They got into the boat and, guided by the Lord, arrived within an hour's space at the town called Bampton. They left the boat, and at once the young man vanished from their sight. Then blessed Frideswide, fearing the wicked king's snares, went with her virgins into a certain wood called Binsey, not far from that town. There they found a path leading to a small house, built in former times by herdsmen guarding herds of swine, which was completely covered with ivy. The most holy virgin entered it with her virgins, fortifying herself with the sign of the holy cross. . . . [Blinding of Algar.] The revered virgin stayed in that wood for about three years . . . [Miracle of the blind girl of Bampton; miracle of the young man of Seacourt; miracle of the demoniac fisherman.] One day she said to her companions, 'Let us return to our monastery.' So a boat was made ready, the blessed virgins embarked, and coming to the city of Oxford they were received with honour by the citizens and all the clergy.

<sup>17</sup> Stenton op.cit. note 1, 105n.

<sup>18</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Michael Lapidge for the following comment: 'In my view, the style of the whole is that of one rather simpleminded narrator, a man of no stylistic pretensions whatever, given to repetition of words, phrases and constructions.'

<sup>19</sup> Suggestion by Dr. Rodney Thomson (pers.comm.).

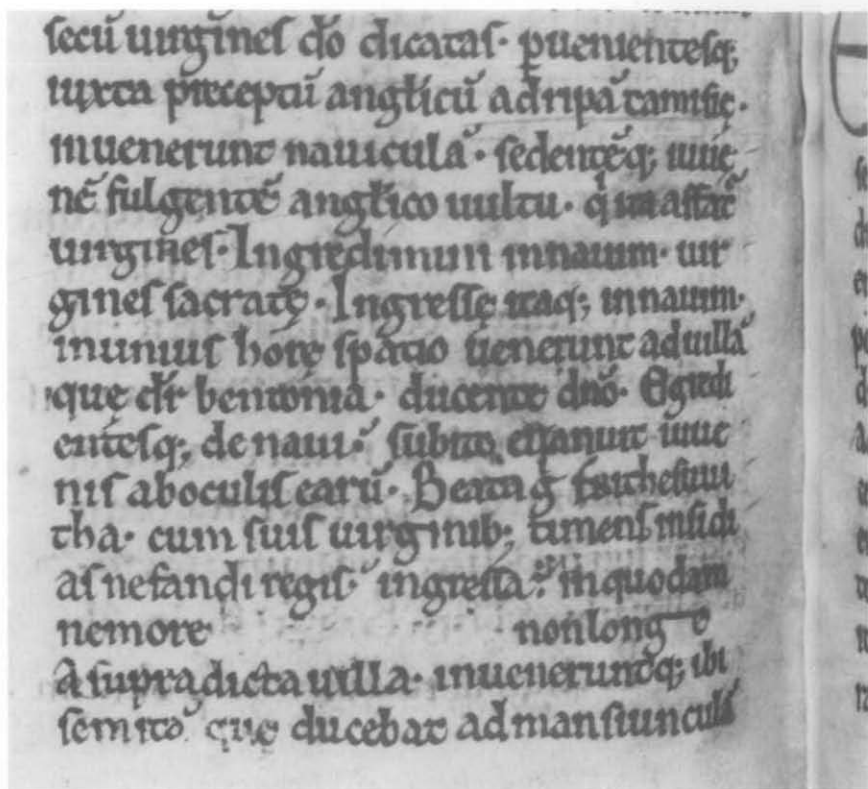


Fig. 1 The Bampton episode in Life A, from B.L. MS Cotton Nero E 1 (ii) f.156v. The erased words can be read as *quod dicitur Benesia* under ultra-violet light. Actual size. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the British Library.

Any inhabitant of Oxford must have known that Binsey is not a wood in Bampton, thirteen miles to the west, but lies less than two miles from the city (Fig. 2). The possibility of a straightforward mistake – that there was a wood in Bampton which had a name resembling Binsey and came to be confused with it – is ruled out by the miracles associated with this episode. The first, the healing of a blind girl, is explicitly located at Bampton. But the second beneficiary is a young man of Seacourt, which lay only 600 yards from Binsey church (Fig. 3):<sup>20</sup> obviously his miracle must relate to the genuine Binsey. It must be concluded that there were separate legends of Frideswide at Bampton and at Binsey, both involving miracles, and that Life A has conflated and confused them.

In the 12th century Binsey belonged to St. Frideswide's Priory. The townsfolk challenged the canons' ownership in 1139, and it has been suggested that the weaving of the Binsey story into Frideswide's legend was a response to this challenge.<sup>21</sup> But elements in the story must be older than this. The author of Life A was aware of a Binsey episode, but

<sup>20</sup> See M. Biddle, 'The Deserted Medieval Village of Seacourt, Berkshire', *Oxoniensia*, xxvi/xxvii (1961/2), 70–84.

<sup>21</sup> H. Mayr-Harting, 'The Miracles of St. Frideswide', in H. Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R.H.C. Davis* (1985), 194.

not of its practical utility. A story designed to bolster the legal claim would have emphasised the nuns' ownership of Binsey; it would certainly not have mis-located it so grossly. It may well be that the incompetent author of Life A framed his narrative as a vehicle for miracle stories already assigned to Bampton and Binsey respectively. In any case, the geographical confusion is itself good evidence that the body of older tradition included both a Bampton episode and a Binsey episode.

Not surprisingly, this failed to satisfy the mid 12th-century canons. The mistake must have been a prime reason for the disparagement of Life A mentioned in Life B's prologue; awareness of it is demonstrated by the erasure of the words 'called Binsey' in the Nero manuscript of Life A (Fig. 1). The author of Life B solved the problem by inserting, between the first and second Bampton miracles, a new chapter which transports Frideswide from Bampton to Binsey in time to cure the young man of Seacourt. The central passage reads:

... when a boat had been made ready, and she and her companions had embarked, it went swiftly and surely by the boatmen's strength to the estate called Binsey near the city. Disembarking and surveying the scene, she decided that it would be useful to stay for a short while outside the city and devote themselves to sweet tranquillity. The virgins whom she had left in the monastery would not find it troublesome to come there, and it would be less exposed to the townsfolk, always looking for some fresh novelty. On that estate was a place entangled with various kinds of trees, called *Thornbiri* in the Saxon tongue because of the many different species of thorns there, lonely and most suitable for devotion. Here she straightway built an oratory, and many buildings well-suited to the needs of holy people. And since the branch of the river was some way away, and she felt it inconvenient for the sisters to go there to draw water, she obtained by her prayers a well which remains to this day, and performs healing works for many who drink from it [*or who pray there*].<sup>22</sup>

Thus St. Margaret's well makes its first appearance. Given that there existed a Binsey story of some kind, it may be that the author of Life B had access to independent sources or traditions. But the proprietary motive is now obvious, and is emphasised by the use of the word *predium* (estate). The same word, and the same emphasis, appear in the rubric to the Binsey section of the late medieval St. Frideswide's Cartulary: '*predium nuncupatum Bunseye ... fuit de tempore quo S. Frideswyda corpore vixit predicto monasterio donatum*'.<sup>23</sup> In the last analysis, it must be accepted that whereas the 12th-century canons had no vested interest in Frideswide's association with Bampton, they had a clear one in her association with Binsey. But neither episode can be dismissed, for there are independent signs that both Bampton and Binsey were places of significance, and perhaps of religious significance, in the mid-Saxon period.

#### THE LIVES IN THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This section assumes the premise that the 12th-century Lives contain elements of an older tradition, potentially informative about Oxford and its region in the 7th and 8th centuries. The test of these elements must be their consistency or otherwise, adduced on general grounds, with the conditions of the age to which they ostensibly refer. We must therefore examine the Frideswide legend in the broader context of royal and ecclesiastical organisation in the area, some of the evidence for which is mapped in Fig. 2.

The first Germanic colonisers of the Upper Thames were the West Saxons, whose

<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately the readings *potantibus* and *petentibus* have equal textual weight: below, p.110 note 319.

<sup>23</sup> *Cartulary of the Monastery of St. Frideswide*, ed. S.R. Wigram (i-ii, O.H.S. xxviii, xxxi, 1895-6). ii, 18.

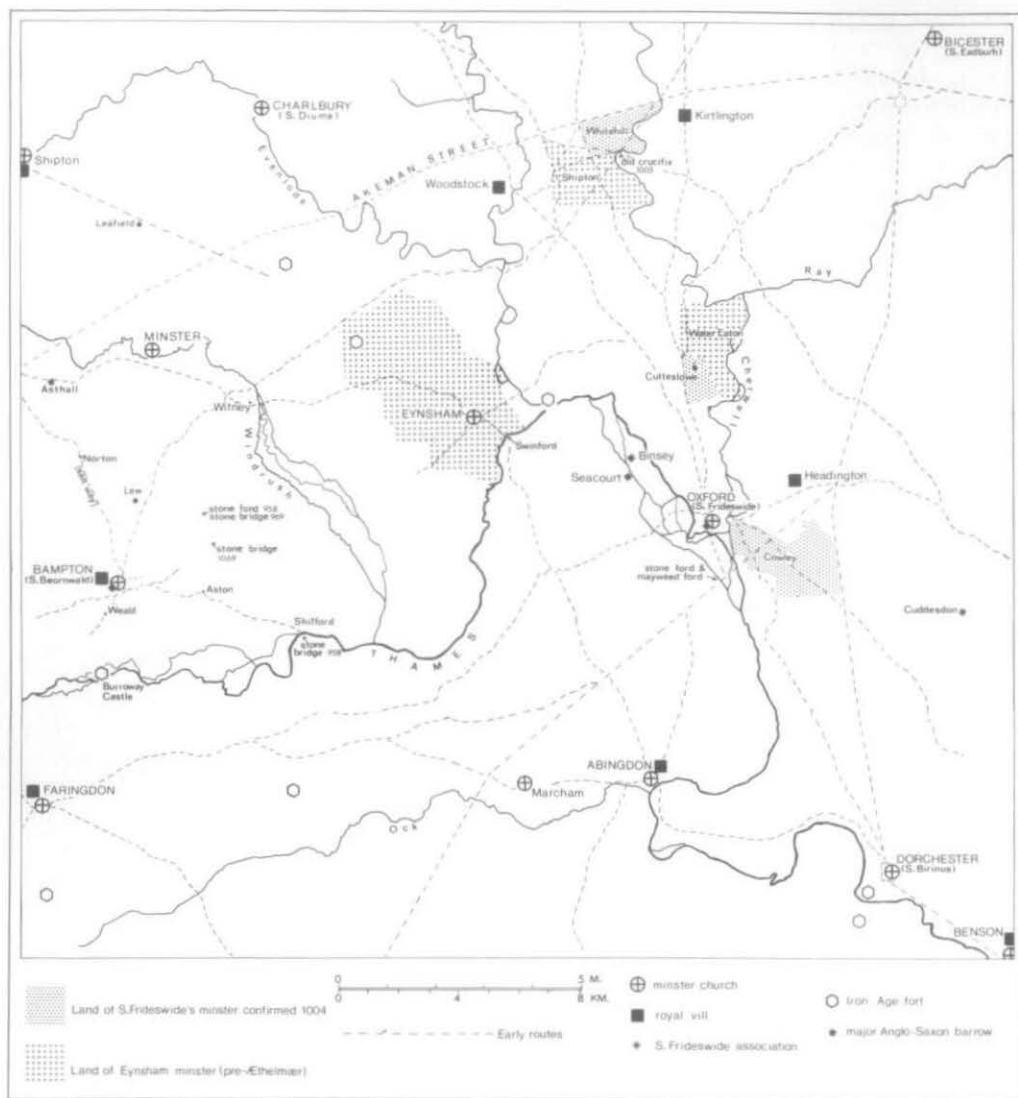


Fig. 2. The Upper Thames in the Anglo-Saxon period, showing places associated with St. Frideswide in relation to minsters, monastic estates, royal vills and select landscape features.



descendants had a tradition that British strongholds at Benson and Eynsham were captured in '571'.<sup>24</sup> Archaeology confirms that both places lay in areas of intensive activity during the pagan Anglo-Saxon period; and when, in 634, the West Saxons became Christian, their bishopric was established at Dorchester-on-Thames near the royal headquarters at Benson.<sup>25</sup> But meanwhile, the rapid growth of Mercia under its great kings Penda (?626–55) and Wulfhere (658–75) was involving a relentless thrust down the Thames Valley towards London. If Frideswide was born in the neighbourhood of Oxford in the mid to late 7th century, her father and the territory which he ruled must have been subject to Mercian overlordship.

The known history of Oxfordshire in these years is essentially the history of its saints. Birinus, the Italian missionary who converted the West Saxon court, was buried at Dorchester in c.650; the foundation of Winchester Cathedral, and the removal there of Birinus's relics in c.690,<sup>26</sup> reflect the retreat of Wessex's north-eastern frontier in the face of Mercian expansion. Meanwhile, the Mercian nobility were being converted by a mission from Northumbria led by St. Diuna, who died in Middle Anglia in 658 in a district which Bede calls *Infeppingum*.<sup>27</sup> Except that this is probably identical with the *Færpinga* of the Tribal Hidage its location is unknown, but by the 10th century Diuna's relics were enshrined at Charlbury in Oxfordshire.<sup>28</sup> Since the bones of important saints were rarely translated to obscure churches, this suggests that Charlbury was significant in the 7th century and perhaps that Diuna died there.

Between 660 and 700 both Wessex and Mercia saw an unparalleled number of monastic and quasi-monastic foundations, the centres of the new 'minster'-based parochial organisation.<sup>29</sup> Many were double houses, ruled by the generation of princess-saints whom James Campbell has aptly termed the 'holy cousinhood'.<sup>30</sup> Thus the Oxfordshire minster of Bicester housed the relics of a lady named Eadburh, reputedly a sister of King Wulfhere, whose niece St. Osyth had her own community at Aylesbury a few miles eastwards along Akeman Street.<sup>31</sup> So it is eminently credible that a Mercian sub-king, if this is what 'Didan' was, should have founded a monastery at Oxford and made his daughter 'Frideswide' (*Frithuswith*, 'Peace-Strong') the first abbess. Given the mid-Saxon habit of repeating name-elements within families, some relationship is possible with a pair of late 7th-century Mercian nobles whose names also began *Frith*—Wulfhere's sub-king Frithuwold, benefactor of Chertsey minster in the early 670s and reputedly the father of St. Osyth by a sister of Wulfhere; and his kinsman Frithuric *princeps*, who founded the Leicestershire minster of Breedon-on-the-Hill.<sup>32</sup> The West Saxon king Æthelheard was married by the 730s to a lady named Frithugyth,<sup>33</sup> a close contemporary of Frideswide and conceivably even her sister.

<sup>24</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 571. (The attribution of this annal to 571 is probably arbitrary, and the date seems likely to be much too late.)

<sup>25</sup> G. Briggs, J. Cook and T. Rowley (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region* (1986), map 11; *Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (1896), i, 139.

<sup>26</sup> *Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (1896), i, 140–1, ii, 143–5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* i, 170–1.

<sup>28</sup> D.W. Rollason, 'Lists of Saints' Resting-Places in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* vii (1978), 64, 90.

<sup>29</sup> See for instance J. Campbell, 'The First Century of Christianity in England', in J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (1986), 49–67; J. Blair, 'Minster Churches in the Landscape', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (forthcoming).

<sup>30</sup> J. Campbell, 'Some Twelfth-Century Views of the Anglo-Saxon Past', in Campbell op.cit. note 29, 218–19.

<sup>31</sup> See C. Hohler, 'St. Osyth and Aylesbury', *Records of Buckinghamshire*, xviii (1966–70), 61–72.

<sup>32</sup> J. Blair, 'Frithuwold's Kingdom and the Origins of Surrey', in S.R. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester U.P., forthcoming).

<sup>33</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* s.a. 737.

To propose an extensive *Frith*-family is conjecture; but certainly Frideswide's name and supposed parentage are wholly appropriate to the age and context in which the Anglo-Norman writers placed her.

If her father was a Mercian sub-king, how large was his kingdom? It is unlikely to have stretched south of the Thames, where West Saxon princes (such as the Cissa who founded Abingdon minster)<sup>34</sup> were ruling in the late 7th century. The region around Oxford was bounded east by the Tribal Hidage territory of the *Ciltensætna* and west by the *Hwicce*; to the north, a large tract of Oxfordshire, presumably including the *Færpinga* if they were indeed centred on Charlbury, had links with Northamptonshire and evidently belonged to Middle Anglia.<sup>35</sup> This leaves an area, lying roughly between the Thames to the south, Otmoor and the Chilterns to the east and south-east, and the Cotswolds to the west and north-west, for which no early tribal or territorial identity is known. It includes three places of evident importance in the Anglo-Saxon period, all of which had minster churches: Eynsham, Oxford and Bampton. Princedoms in the age of overlordship could be both artificial and transient.<sup>36</sup> 'Didan's' kingdom may have been much larger than this, an amalgam of territories which were later re-combined into other patterns. But it is worth suggesting that the legends which associate Frideswide with a monastery at Oxford, and with a refuge at Bampton, preserve distant memories of a Thames Valley heartland. This heartland may well be perpetuated as the 300-hide estate 'at Eynsham' which belonged to the see of Canterbury before the 820s,<sup>37</sup> for Eynsham stands out clearly as the dominant place: despite its later obscurity, the strong implication both of the pagan Saxon finds and of the '571' annal is that it was originally more important than Oxford.

Oxford, like Eynsham, occupies a site almost pre-determined for a major settlement: on a tongue of gravel between the Thames and the Cherwell, and at an important Thames crossing. Excavations in St. Aldate's have produced evidence for human activity along the line of this crossing from the 8th century onwards.<sup>38</sup> Frideswide's monastery, assuming that it stood where the Cathedral now stands, was at the north (or Mercian) end of the ford, on the south edge of the gravel terrace. In 1985, excavations in the Cathedral cloister revealed a cemetery which began in or around the 8th century.<sup>39</sup> This provides strong if indirect support for the historical existence of Frideswide and her monastery, for it shows that the late 9th-century fortified town was laid out around some existing religious site.<sup>40</sup>

Many 7th- and 8th-century minsters may have been mixed communities of nuns, monks and priests, the last being needed for parochial duties.<sup>41</sup> The presence of a female head strongly suggests that the Oxford house was of this type, as does Life A's statement that Didan provided 'religious men' to serve the nuns. The reference to a 'refectory, dormitory and cloister' speaks more of the 12th century than of the 8th. On the other hand,

<sup>34</sup> F.M. Stenton, *The Early History of Abingdon Abbey* (1913).

<sup>35</sup> Bassett op.cit. note 32, *passim*; G. Foard, 'The Administrative Organisation of Northamptonshire in the Saxon Period', in S.C. Hawkes, J. Campbell and D. Brown (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, iv (1985), 196-9.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. papers by D. Dumville and J. Blair in Bassett op.cit. note 32.

<sup>37</sup> King Coenwulf of Mercia acquired this estate from Archbishop Wulfred in 821: see N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (1984), 104, 138, 181-2.

<sup>38</sup> B.G. Durham, 'Archeological Investigations in St. Aldates, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xlii (1977), 83-203.

<sup>39</sup> C.J. Scull, publication forthcoming. Other burials from the same cemetery were published by T.G. Hassall in *Oxoniensia*, xxxviii (1973), 270-4.

<sup>40</sup> There are close analogies for this, notably Wareham and Cricklade: cf. J. Haslam (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England* (1984), 213-14, 106-7.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Campbell and Blair, *opp.cit.* note 29.

Life A may possibly preserve a hint that the community had more than one church. Didan is said to have had his church dedicated 'in honour of the Holy Trinity, the spotless Virgin Mary and All Saints'. The church could certainly have had a multiple dedication, but if so it is strange that Frideswide asks 'for a grave to be opened for her in the church of the blessed Mary mother of God', and is buried 'in St. Mary's church on the south side'. This problem could be resolved by supposing that the author conflated a memory of three churches, dedicated respectively to the Trinity (perhaps originally the Saviour or the Divine Wisdom),<sup>42</sup> the Virgin, and All Hallows,<sup>43</sup> in the second of which Frideswide was buried. Since the canons later believed that their church was enlarged around her grave (below, p.116), the direct predecessor of the present Cathedral must have been St. Mary's; on the other hand, one writ of Henry I is addressed to 'the church of the Holy Trinity of Oxford'.<sup>44</sup> Although the dedication could derive from the Augustinian priory of Holy Trinity Aldgate, which colonised St. Frideswide's,<sup>45</sup> it would be wrong to exclude the alternative possibility that it preserves some memory of the former main church, abandoned in favour of the lesser church containing the holy grave. Both literary and archaeological evidence shows that important mid-Saxon minsters commonly had multiple churches, sometimes on axial alignments.<sup>46</sup> The possibility that Alfredian Oxford was laid out around a line of churches on the edge of the gravel terrace, not around one church only, deserves further thought.<sup>47</sup>

Life A says that Didan endowed the monastery with rural property, described obscurely as 'the estates and villages of St. Mary', and with one-third of Oxford. By the latter, the author presumably meant the cluster of Priory tenements in the south-east quarter of the 10th-century *burh*, around the monastic precinct, some of which were known by the 1130s as 'land of St. Frideswide's altar'.<sup>48</sup> The first reliable source for the minster's rural holdings is Æthelred II's confirmation in 1004, which lists three manors in Oxfordshire (3 hides at Cowley, 3 at Cutteslowe and 3 at Whitehill) and one manor in Buckinghamshire (10 hides at Upper Winchendon).<sup>49</sup> The earliest claims of parochial jurisdiction post-date

<sup>42</sup> In two cases, at York and at Christchurch (Hants.), Domesday Book equates dedications to the Trinity with dedications to the person of Christ: see R.K. Morris, 'Alcuin, York, and the *Alma Sophia*', in L.A.S. Butler and R.K. Morris (eds.), *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers . . . in Honour of Dr. H.M. Taylor* (C.B.A. Research Rep. ix, 1986), 82-3. In view of the connection between Eynsham and Oxford minsters suggested below, it is worth noting that in 1005 Eynsham was described as a monastery 'in honore Sancti Salvatoris omniumque sanctorum suorum iure dedicato': *The Eynsham Cartulary*, ed. H.E. Salter, i (O.H.S. xlix, 1907), 20. A bede-roll of 1122 includes the entries 'T[est]e sanctae Trinitatis et sanctae Mariae Egneshamniac' and 'T[est]e sanctae Trinitatis et sanctae Fridesvidae Oxinefordensis' (A. Clapham, 'Three Bede-Rolls', in *Memorial Volume to Sir Alfred Clapham: Arch. Jnl.* cvi suppl. (1952), 49).

<sup>43</sup> Dr. Michael Lapidge points out (pers.comm.) that a dedication to All Saints is unlikely to pre-date the general adoption of that feast during the 9th century: see A. Wilmart, 'Un Témoin Anglo-Saxon du Calendrier Métrique d'York', *Revue Bénédictine*, xlv (1934), 51-6.

<sup>44</sup> *Cart.St.Frid.* op.cit. note 23, ii, 323: 'Precipio quod ecclesia Sancti Trinitatis Oxon' et prior et canonici teneant . . .'. Cf. note 42 for 'the Holy Trinity and St. Frideswide of Oxford' at about the same date.

<sup>45</sup> I owe this suggestion to Dr. Richard Halsey. Cf. Dickinson op.cit. note 6, 113-15.

<sup>46</sup> For the most recent discussions of this phenomenon see W. Rodwell, 'Churches in the Landscape', in M.L. Faull (ed.), *Studies in Late Anglo-Saxon Settlement* (O.U.D.E.S., 1984), 15-21; S.R. Bassett, 'A Probable Mercian Royal Mausoleum at Winchcombe, Gloucestershire', *Antiq. Jnl.*, lxx (1985), 82-100.

<sup>47</sup> This idea will be developed in a later paper. The late Anglo-Saxon church seems to have been immediately north of the present Cathedral. It is noteworthy that a church in this position would be exactly on the axis of St. Aldate's church, over which the canons of St. Frideswide's claimed rights in the 12th century: could St. Aldate's have been one of the monastic churches?

<sup>48</sup> *Cart.St.Frid.* op.cit. note 23, i, 18 ('terras que de ara Sancti Frideswidi dicuntur' in 1139), and *passim* for later references.

<sup>49</sup> P.H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography* (1968), No.909; *Cart.St.Frid.* i, 2-6.

the Augustinian reform and are of a rather dubious character, though they may embody genuine information. If they do, the *parochia* extended east of the Cherwell to include the royal manor of Headington with its dependencies at Marston, Elsfield and Forest Hill.<sup>50</sup> The confirmation to the canons in 1122 of most of the city churches, some of which had parishes extending well outside the city boundary, is another sign that St. Frideswide's enjoyed residual minster rights over Oxford and its neighbourhood.<sup>51</sup> It seems clear enough that the *parochia* of Oxford must once have been contiguous with that of Eynsham, though more work is needed on its precise extent.

The rural manors provide a tantalising hint that the early history of St. Frideswide's church was in some way bound up with the minster at Eynsham. The only early source for Eynsham minster is a charter of 864, which implies that it had recently been deprived of a 5-hide estate at Water Eaton.<sup>52</sup> In 1005 it was re-founded as a Benedictine abbey by Ealdorman Æthelmær, who endowed it with several properties of his own acquiring.<sup>53</sup> But the charter specifies no source for 5 hides at Shipton-on-Cherwell, the first manor in the list after Eynsham itself: the implication must be that this belonged to the minster already. Thus the known pre-Æthelmær manors of Eynsham minster, apart from Eynsham, were Water Eaton and Shipton-on-Cherwell. It is a most striking fact that these were contiguous with the St. Frideswide's land at Cutteslowe and Whitehill respectively, both pairs of manors lying on the west bank of the Cherwell (Fig. 2).<sup>54</sup> It looks almost as though two 8-hide manors were divided between Eynsham and Oxford minsters, in a proportion of 5 to 3, at some date before the 864 charter. If so, the fact suggests some common element in the endowment, and perhaps in the foundation, of the two communities.

Turning to the supposed events of Frideswide's career, the central theme is perhaps the most likely to have been invented: the holy virgin persecuted by a lecherous prince, but then miraculously saved, is a standard *topos* of medieval hagiography. On the other hand, in the context of Mercian overlordship a sub-king of Leicester would be no less credible a figure than is St. Frideswide's father. The abduction of noble ladies for dynastic ends was common enough early medieval practice, and King Æthelbald of Mercia, who began his reign eleven years before Frideswide's reputed death, was accused of seducing nuns. It is not inherently unlikely that something of the sort may have happened to Frideswide.

Bampton, where she was supposed to have spent three years, could well have been important in the 8th century. In Domesday Book it appears as the most valuable royal manor in Oxfordshire after Benson.<sup>55</sup> From the 11th century onwards Bampton church can

<sup>50</sup> The reference to the tithes of Headington in Æthelred's charter (*Cart.St.Frid.* i, 4-5) is a forged addition, and the authenticity of some of the 12th-century texts in *Ibid.* i, *passim*, is questionable. In c.1200 it was asserted that Headington, Marston and Elsfield chapels, and the extra-mural chapels of St. Mary Magdalen, St. Giles and St. Clement, had been built by leave of the canons of St. Frideswide's; and that the chapel of Forest Hill, and the city churches and chapels of Holy Trinity, St. Michael N., St. Peter-le-Bailey, All Saints, St. Michael S., St. Mildred and St. Aldate (half-share) had belonged to St. Frideswide's from of old: *Oseney Cartulary*, ed. H.E. Salter, ii (O.H.S. xc, 1929), 234-5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, and *Cart.St.Frid.* i, 10-11. J. Haslam, 'Parishes, Churches, Wards and Gates in Eastern London', in J. Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches: the Local Church in Transition 950-1200* (1988), 39, comments on Oxford: 'the creation of one or possibly several sub-minsters at an early stage in the development of the *burh* would explain the large size of the parishes of churches near its gates in the later medieval period compared to that of the early minster of St. Frideswide's.' See map in *V.C.H. Oxon.* iv, 30.

<sup>52</sup> Sawyer *op.cit.* note 49, No. 210; W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ii (1887), No. 509.

<sup>53</sup> *Eynsham Cart.* *op.cit.* note 42, i, 19-28.

<sup>54</sup> For the boundaries of all four manors see J. Cooper, 'Four Oxfordshire Anglo-Saxon Charter Boundaries', *Oxoniensia*, 1 (1985), 15-23.

<sup>55</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.* i, 400.

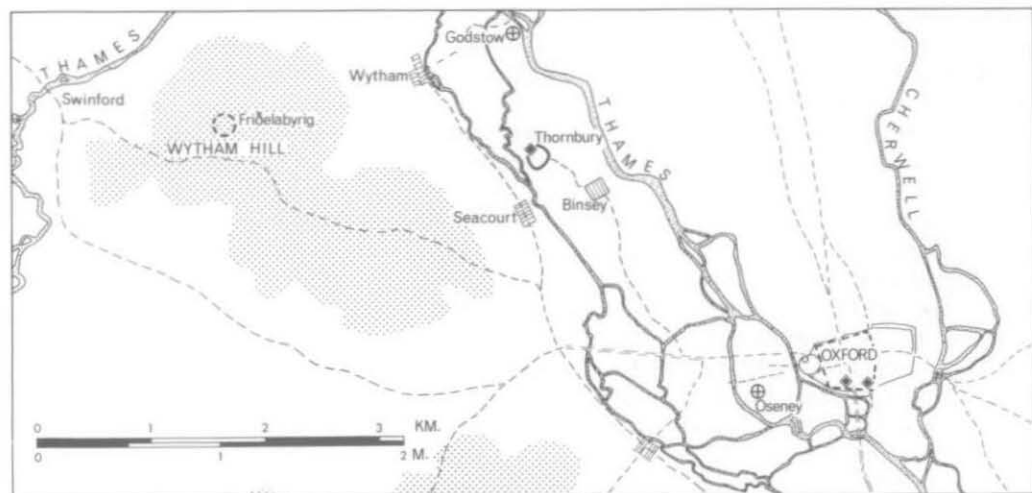


Fig. 3. The environs of Oxford and Binsey (land above 100m. stippled). The lozenge-shaped symbols denote possible mid-Saxon religious sites.

be recognised as a powerful minster, retaining a large parish with several subordinate chapels; in the 950s it housed a religious community venerating the relics of an obscure saint named Beornwald.<sup>56</sup> For present purposes, one Bampton tradition is especially interesting. Blindness and vision are prominent themes of Frideswide's legend; in the one miracle explicitly located at Bampton, a blind girl is cured when her eyes are anointed with water in which the saint has washed her hands. It is therefore rather odd that the Binsey well was not especially noted for cures of this kind: in its one appearance in the late 12th-century miracle collection it heals not blindness but deafness.<sup>57</sup> But there exists near Bampton church a well called 'Lady Well' traditionally believed to cure ailments, especially of the eye: the bathing of infected eyes in its water was still practised within living memory.<sup>58</sup> Whether or not this reflects a forgotten local tradition of Frideswide's activities, there is every reason to see Bampton as a place of sufficient temporal and spiritual status to be frequented by the royal abbess.

With Binsey the case is different: it is much too near Oxford to have had an independent minster (Fig. 3), and there is no suggestion in post-Conquest sources that its church was more than a humble chapel. But Life A shows that the legend of Frideswide at Binsey pre-dates the 12th century, while Life B's statement that she established her chapel and well there in a secluded place called *Thornbiri* (i.e. 'thorn fortress' or 'thorn enclosure') suggests that the church lay within some earthwork or other substantial boundary. An independent source, the Godstow cartulary, says that in c.1100–30 the lady Ediva spent a period of prayer and solitude at Binsey, culminating in the vision which prompted her to

<sup>56</sup> J. Blair, 'St. Beornwald of Bampton', *Oxoniensia*, xlix (1984), 47–55; J. Blair, 'Parish versus Village: the Bampton-Standlake Tithe Conflict of 1317–19', *Oxfordshire Local History*, ii.2 (1985), 34–47.

<sup>57</sup> *Acta Sanctorum: Octobris: VIII* (Brussels, 1853), p.579, No. 48.

<sup>58</sup> J.L. Hughes-Owens, *The Bampton we have Lost* (Bampton, n.d.), 13–14; cf. J.A. Giles, *History of the Parish and Town of Bampton* (1848), 66–8.



found Godstow Nunnery.<sup>59</sup> So in the early 12th century Binsey was known as a place of ancient sanctity, appropriate for religious seclusion. The church lies apart from the village, on the north side of a large sub-oval enclosure defined by field-boundaries and eroded banks (Fig. 3). Excavation on the perimeter of this enclosure in 1987 revealed a sequence of boundary ditches, apparently with a massive wall; the only diagnostic finds were two sherds of 6th- to 8th-century grass-tempered pottery, one sealed by the primary silt of the first ditch.<sup>60</sup> It is tempting to identify this enclosure with *Thornbiri*; like the stray find of an early 8th-century *sceat* somewhere nearby,<sup>61</sup> it hints that an archaeological context for the Binsey legend may yet be recoverable.

Both Life B and the Godstow narrative emphasise the seclusion of Binsey: it is within easy range of the city, yet remote enough to afford undisturbed calm. If *Thornbiri* was indeed a monastic settlement, it seems best interpreted as a retreat-house used from time to time by the main community. Such establishments were familiar to Bede, who says that Bishop John of Hexham (687–706) had ‘a more private house, surrounded by open woodland and a ditch, not far from Hexham church, that is almost a mile and a half . . . , in which the man of God used to retire with a few companions to pray and read quietly whenever he had the chance, and especially during Lent’.<sup>62</sup> Oddly enough, it is possible that Binsey was not the only such retreat-house west of Oxford (Fig. 3). The Abingdon Chronicle preserves a legend that in c.700 the nuns of St. Helen’s Abingdon moved to Wytham, where they stayed until Wytham Hill was fortified in Offa’s time (presumably with the fortress called *Frithelabyrig* in a charter-boundary of c.957).<sup>63</sup> James Parker’s comment of 1885 is still valid: ‘If . . . upon the death of the foundress of Abingdon, which probably happened about AD 700, the nuns moved thence to Wytham . . . , St. Frideswide, when she went to Binsey, must have found companions there.’<sup>64</sup> The Wytham and Binsey legends are both late and unreliable, but they also make some sense in relation to our few facts about the setting of 8th-century monasticism.

To draw together these inferences and conjectures: In the late 7th century a territory in west Oxfordshire was ruled, under Mercian overlordship, by a sub-king who may have been named something like Dida and who may have been based at Eynsham. He probably endowed minster churches, for the fashion of the time was to do so; one, perhaps the earliest and most important, was at Eynsham, and there were others at Oxford 6 miles eastwards and Bampton 8 miles westwards. His daughter Frithuswith was first abbess of the Oxford community, a ‘double house’ which may have had three churches. An episode in her life was associated with Bampton, which may already have had both a royal residence and a minster church. She also spent some time at Binsey, at a retreat-house of her community within a ditched enclosure which became known as Thornbury. Always prominent in her life was the Thames, that vital thoroughfare which flowed past Bampton, Eynsham,

<sup>59</sup> *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery*, ed. A. Clark, i (E.E.T.S. cxxix, 1905), 26.

<sup>60</sup> Report forthcoming in a future *Oxoniensis*.

<sup>61</sup> A ‘Porcupine’ *sceat* of ‘series E’, now in the Ashmolean Museum; a label noting the find-spot as Binsey is the only evidence for its source. Dr. Metcalf (pers. comm.) suggests a date of c.710–30. See D. Hill and D.M. Metcalf (eds.), *Sceattas in England and on the Continent* (B.A.R. British Ser. 128, 1984), 61, 247.

<sup>62</sup> *Baedae Opera* op.cit. note 26, i, 283; cf. *Ibid.* i, 207 for another case (Chad’s *mansio remotior* near his church of Lichfield). See also E. Cambridge, ‘The Early Church in County Durham: a Reassessment’, *Jnl.Brit. Archaeol. Assocn.* cxxxvii (1984), 76–7.

<sup>63</sup> *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson, i (Rolls Ser. iia, 1858), 8; M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire*, iii (E.P.N.S. li, 1976), 729–31. Unfortunately the possibility cannot be excluded that the Abingdon Chronicle refers to Wittenham Clumps, though the spelling *Witham* is more normal for Wytham.

<sup>64</sup> Parker, op.cit. note 2, 90–1.



Thornbury and Oxford.<sup>65</sup> it is not idly that the river is made so prominent a motif in the 12th-century Lives. She died, perhaps on the traditional date of 19 October 727, and was buried in her monastery, the nucleus of the nascent town of Oxford.

Of course, this is a mere theoretical construct: the most that can be claimed for it is that it takes the written sources as far as they can be persuaded to go, and makes some kind of sense of them. This discussion will have achieved its aim if it has enlarged the basis for hypotheses about early Oxford; thereafter, archaeology takes over.

#### APPENDIX A: THE FIRST LIFE OF ST. FRIDESWIDE ('LIFE A'), PROBABLY WRITTEN c.1100-30

Life A is edited here from the one full text and the abridgements:

N = British Library MS Cotton Nero E 1, part 2, ff. 156-7<sup>v</sup>  
(pencil foliation) (= *BHL* 3164)

Nero E 1 is a massive late Anglo-Saxon collection of *vitae*, written at Worcester.<sup>66</sup> The St. Frideswide text is not part of the original book, but among material written in a single 12th-century hand on twelve inserted leaves: ff.156-7<sup>v</sup>: the text here edited.

ff.158-62<sup>v</sup>: Rhigyfarch's Life of St. David.<sup>67</sup>

ff.162<sup>v</sup>-5: Life of St. Margaret of Antioch.<sup>68</sup>

ff.187-8<sup>v</sup>: Life of Bede.<sup>69</sup>

It is possible that these leaves owe their present positions to Sir Robert Cotton's binder. However, the words '... dei gracia Wigo...' scribbled on f.165<sup>v</sup> indicate a Worcester origin, while alterations to the original text of the book in the hand of the addenda (e.g. on ff.95<sup>v</sup>, 151) imply that the leaves have always been associated with this volume. The material on them, written in two columns with red initials and headings, is in a book-hand of a distinctive Worcester type, current at the Cathedral Priory through the first half of the 12th century and associated with John of Worcester's circle.<sup>70</sup> The scribe has certain orthographic preferences: *y* for *i* ('paradysi'), *n* for *m* ('menbra'), *h* rather than *ch* ('nihil', 'mihi'), *c* rather than *k* ('caritatis').<sup>71</sup>

Following the words '... ingressa est in quodam nemore...' in section 12 is an erasure (Fig. 1). Under ultra-violet light the erased letters can be deciphered as 'q'd de' B-n-sia'; this is confirmed by B's reading 'in nemore quod dicitur Benseya' and L's 'nemus de Beneseya'. In the present edition the name is reconstructed as 'Benesia'.

L = British Library MS Lansdowne 436 ff.101-3 (= *BHL* 3166)

Lansdowne 436, from Romsey Abbey, is a chronicle and collection of *vitae* in an early 14th-century hand.<sup>72</sup> Its abridgement of Life A follows N closely, though reduced to about half-length; it ends rather abruptly, leading straight into an account of the later fortunes of the house, the rediscovery of Frideswide's relics and their translation in 1180 (below, Appendix C). The degree of abridgement varies from section to section:

<sup>65</sup> Mr. David Wilson (pers.comm.) points out that up-river journeys would have been slower and more difficult than travel by road. Bampton may, however, have functioned as a loading-on point for sending Mercian produce down-stream towards London; note especially the Droitwich salt-rights attached to the manor in 1086 (*V.C.H. Oxon.* i, 400).

<sup>66</sup> *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library* (Rec.Comm., 1802), 239-41; N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (2nd edn., 1964), 207.

<sup>67</sup> *BHL* 2107; edited J.W. James, *Rhigyfarch's Life of St. David* (Cardiff, 1967).

<sup>68</sup> Version of *BHL* 5303-5.

<sup>69</sup> *BHL* 1069; see T.D. Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials Relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, I.1 (Rolls Ser. xxvii, 1862), No. 985.

<sup>70</sup> See E.A. McIntyre, 'Early Twelfth-Century Worcester Cathedral Priory, with Special Reference to the Manuscripts Written There' (unpub. Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1978), 29-51, where this group of hands is classified as 'Type B'. Mrs. Theresa Webber (pers.comm.) suggests a date in the second quarter of the 12th century for the Nero E1 text; Dr. Patrick McGurk proposes (pers. comm.) that it was written by John of Worcester himself.

<sup>71</sup> In these respects the Frideswide text is consistent with the David text (James op.cit. note 67, p.xiv).

<sup>72</sup> *A Catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts in the British Museum* (Rec.Comm., 1819), part ii, 121; Ker op.cit. note 66, 164; Hardy op. cit. note 69, No. 1000.

- (i) From the beginning to the building of the church (sections 2-4) is extremely brief, and omits Frideswide's upbringing: 'Tempore illo quo Anglia diversis regibus et subregulis erat subiecta, Cristianissimis parentibus regi Didano et Sefride regine beata virgo Fridesuuida extitit orta. Huius regis dominium in Oxonifordia et partibus circumadiacentibus erat. Rex vero predictus construxit ecclesiam. . .'
- (ii) Thence to '... imploransque Dei misericordiam' (end of section 6): a brief summary of N, omitting Didan's death.
- (iii) The diabolic vision (section 7): essentially as N.
- (iv) 'Quidam igitur rex Leicestrensi. . . ' to the healing of Algar's messengers (sections 8-10): substantially as N, but omitting Frideswide's long invocation on behalf of the messengers, and some shorter phrases.
- (v) 'Repletus itaque rex furore. . . ' to '... prope tribus annis in ipso nemore' (sections 11-13): essentially as N, though with the last phrase expanded to '... prope tribus annis in nemore illo, ieiuniis et orationibus intenta, miraculis clara'.
- (vi) The miracle of the blind girl of Bampton (section 14): a brief summary of N.
- (vii) The miracle of the young man of Seacourt (section 16): a slightly condensed version of N, omitting Frideswide's invocation.
- (viii) The miracle of the demoniac fisherman (section 17): a brief summary of N, omitting Frideswide's invocation.
- (ix) 'Quadam igitur die dixit. . . ' (section 18) to Frideswide's death: essentially as N.
- (x) The posthumous miracles (sections 22-4) are omitted, and the Life ends abruptly: '... valedicens omnibus, ad Dominum Iesum Cristum migravit, atque in loco ab ea designato honorifice sepulta fuit. In hora autem transitus eius, tanta lux effulsit per universam civitatem Oxenefordie, tanta etiam suavitas odoris trium horarum spatio fragravir, ut omnes mirarentur et glorificarent Deum.'

B = Oxford, Balliol College, MS 228 f.300 (= BHL 3167)

A late 14th- or early 15th-century miscellany, including a kalendar, a *Legenda Aurea* and a collection of short *Vitae*.<sup>73</sup> The version of Life A is no more than a brief summary some 550 words long, but it includes all the main elements of the story, with these differences: Frideswide learns the psalter within seven months, not six; she is consecrated by Bishop Edgar, not Orgar; and the miraculous boat-journey to Bampton takes a moment, not an hour. After the curing of the leper (section 18) the text ends briefly, omitting the two posthumous miracles: 'Hiis gestis, precipit ei angelus domini diem obitus sui. Qua mortua, sepulta est in ecclesia beate Marie Oxonie, ubi per ipsius merita petentibus multa prestantur beneficia.'

Although B, like L, omits the posthumous miracles, it is not derived from L but independently from a version of the full text. Phrases in N echoed by B but not by L include:

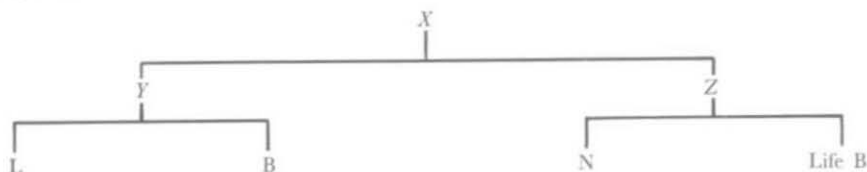
N	L	B
Transactis itaque quinque annis, . . . ita animum stabilivit ad discendas litteras ut intra sex menses totum sciret psalterium.	[whole passage omitted]	Cum esset annorum quinque, litteras discens, infra vij menses psalterium scivit.
. . . rogavit patrem suum, dicens, 'O dulcissime pater, concede mihi ut sanctimoniam habitum adipisci merear. . . '. Rex autem Didanus, audiens propositum filie, gavisus est valde.	Rex vero predictus construxit ecclesiam Oxonie . . . quam filie sue ab ipsa devote postulatus dedit . . .	Rogavit igitur patrem suum ut se sanctimoniam fieri permitteret in ecclesia Sancte Marie virginis quam Rex Didanus in Oxonia construxit, gavisus itaque rex de proposito suo...
Accidit etiam ut piscatores, . . . cum . . . obdormissent in navi, unus eorum arreptus a demonio . . . tenensque unum e sociis suis suffocabat cum manibus, dentibusque dilaniare volebat. Ceteri vero, tenentes eum, ligaverunt manus a tergo, ducentes eum. . .	Quadam etiam vice cum piscator quidam . . . a demonio arreptus, vinculisque ligatus, ad ipsam esset adductus. . .	Piscator quidam cum sociis suis in navi obdormientis a demone arripitur, apprehendens unum de sociis suis, suffocans, dentibus delaniare fecit. Ceteri vero, ligantes eum, duxerunt eum . . .

<sup>73</sup> R.A.B. Mynors, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1963), 230-7.

H, W and R = extracts in versions of the Hereford Breviary.<sup>74</sup>

H (Hereford Cathedral Library, MS P.9.vi: late 13th century)<sup>75</sup> contains a text of sections 2 to 4, essentially similar to N, ending at '... omniumque Sanctorum in urbe Oxinefordia'. W (Worcester Cathedral Library MS Q.86: 14th century)<sup>76</sup> and R (printed version, Rouen, 1505)<sup>77</sup> contain extracts from sections 2 to 6 closely related to each other; they too are based on an N-type text, but often lapse into summary and paraphrase. H and W/R derive from a common exemplar, for they share one clear error ('volebat' for 'valebat', note 91). The textual authority of these extracts is low, and the agreement of any one of them with N must always overrule alternative readings within the group.

The Hereford extracts H, W and R are too brief to be useful for determining the development of the text, except that their exemplar was apparently close to N. But the summaries L and B, condensed though they are, contain suggestions that they derive from a text or texts independent of N, and in some respects superior to it. N has a slight tendency to drop minor words, six of which can be restored from L<sup>78</sup> and one on the combined testimony of L and B.<sup>79</sup> Two phrases in L can also be interpreted as accidental omissions by N,<sup>80</sup> and L corrects two of N's implausible readings.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, L and B agree on one apparent error. In N, Frideswide tells Algar's messengers that since she is betrothed to the King of all kings, she cannot leave the King to obey the commands of a slave ('... ut relinques Regem, obediam mandatis servi'): L and B read *eum* for *regem* (note 113), thus destroying what is surely a deliberate antithesis between king and slave. From this it appears that L and B had a common exemplar (Y) which was independent of N. These inferences suggest the following stemma, with X the archetype and Z either N itself or N's exemplar:



From this certain conclusions follow:

1. B's readings 'Edgarum' and 'in momento', which are contradicted by L and N, cannot reflect the archetype.
2. Since both L and B omit the two posthumous miracles but include all the others, and since miracles are more likely to have been added than excised, it may be that the posthumous miracles were not in Y or the archetype but introduced with Z.
3. Other material in N which is not attested by either L or B could also have been added at the Z stage. In fact, there are only two circumstantial details to which this applies: the year of Frideswide's death, and the location of her grave on the south side of the church. However, it is noteworthy that L completely omits Frideswide's long invocations of God to heal Algar's messengers, the young man of Seacourt and the demoniac fisherman in sections 10, 16 and 17 ('Deus invisibilis... infinita seculorum secula'; 'Adonay domine Deus... in secula seculorum'; '... deprecabatur Deum patrem... generis prostratum'); and that none of these passages is echoed in B. Since L reproduces, or at least mentions, all other cases of Frideswide's reported speech, it seems possible that these rather distinctive passages (which are in collect form and employ a loose paraphrasing of the Vulgate not otherwise found in Life A) were also absent from Y, and thus probably from X.

The relationship between Life A and Life B is discussed more fully above (pp.79-80). Since the author of Life B re-worked Life A into a more elaborate Latin style, textual comparisons are difficult. However, his inclusion of the posthumous miracles and of Frideswide's invocations shows that his exemplar was closer to N than to the hypothetical Y; it very likely included the few circumstantial details which Life B itself omits, all of which belong to the common material of Y and N. Indeed, it is not impossible that the author of Life B used the N manuscript

<sup>74</sup> All variants are printed in *The Hereford Breviary*, eds. W.H. Frere and L.E.G. Brown, ii (Henry Bradshaw Soc. xl, 1911), 376-7.

<sup>75</sup> Described Ibid. iii (Henry Bradshaw Soc. xlvi, 1915), lv-lxi.

<sup>76</sup> Described Ibid. lxi-lxii.

<sup>77</sup> Described Ibid. liii-lv.

<sup>78</sup> Text footnotes 126, 139, 143, 146, 147, 153.

<sup>79</sup> Text footnote 112.

<sup>80</sup> Text footnotes 117, 145. (In the second case, the similarity of 'dies... recipiendi mercedem pro labore' to the devil's earlier statement that 'tempus est ut recipias mercedem laborum tuorum' supports the view that it belongs to the original text.)

<sup>81</sup> Text footnotes 128, 144.

itself. The material peculiar to Life B must therefore be derived by its author from some other source, or from his own imagination, though it is conceivable that one small detail (Algar's attempted entry through the North Gate, section 13) reflects a passage in the archetype ignored by N, L and B.

The basic text of the present edition is of course N. Its chapter divisions are preserved as paragraphs, but punctuation, capitalisation and the usage of *u* and *v* are modernised, and contractions are expanded. Variant readings from L, B, H, W and R are noted when the differences seem likely to reflect the full texts underlying them, rather than to result merely from the process of abstraction. Direct quotations from the Vulgate are italicised. The section numbers, which are editorial insertions, correspond with the equivalent passages in Life B and on pp.74-9 above.

### Incipit vita Sancte Fritheswithe virginis

(2) Igitur postquam populus Anglorum beati Augustini predicatione edoctus atque baptizatus est, constituti sunt presbiteri atque diaconi, ecclesieque constructe atque dedicate sunt per universam regionem illam. *Augebatur igitur credentium multitudo*,<sup>82</sup> et per universam terram Anglorum ecclesia nova prole fecundabatur. Post multum vero tempus fuit rex quidam Oxinefordie cui nomen erat Didanus. Hic accepit uxorem nomine Sefridam, colentem Deum atque prudentem in omni opere bono, cunque simul gauderent flore iuventutis, donavit eis<sup>83</sup> Dominus fecunditatem. Concepit itaque venerabilis Sefrida, et post peractum tempus idoneum peperit filiam. Cum hoc audisset supradictus rex, *gavisus est valde*,<sup>84</sup> iussitque eam regenerari ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto.

Baptizatam itaque vocaverunt<sup>85</sup> eam Fritheswitham. (3) Hec igitur regis filia diligenter enutrita est. Transactis itaque quinque annis, tradiderunt<sup>86</sup> eam cuidam matrone, *Ælfgive*<sup>87</sup> nomine, ad erudiendum<sup>88</sup> litteras. Virgo igitur, quam Deus iam providerat vas futurum Spiritus Sancti, ita animum stabilivit ad discendas litteras ut intra sex<sup>89</sup> menses totum sciret psalterium. *Proficiebat* igitur beata Fritheswitha virgo et *crescebat*,<sup>90</sup> omnique animo nitebatur omnibus se amabilem facere, semperque prout valebat<sup>91</sup> liminibus sancte ecclesie adhebat. Sacrarum<sup>92</sup> etiam scripturarum dicta in pectoris antro condebat, hanc sepe<sup>93</sup> orationem repetens, *ut inhabitare valeret in domo Domini omnibus diebus vite*<sup>94</sup> sue, videretque voluntatem eius atque impleteret. (4) Prefata igitur mater eius, infirmitate corporis detenta febreque gravi correpta, mortua est. Rex vero Didanus construxit ecclesiam, et dedicari<sup>95</sup> fecit in honore Sancte Trinitatis et intemerate Virginis Marie Omniumque Sanctorum, in urbe Oxinefordia.<sup>96</sup> Venerabilis igitur Fritheswitha petiit patrem suum, videlicet Didanum regem, ut daret sibi ecclesiam. Rex igitur dedit sibi ecclesiam.<sup>97</sup> Religiosa itaque virgo, post obitum matris sue, servire Deo studuit die noctuque vigiliis<sup>98</sup> et orationibus, semper intendens ita ut multotiens oblivisceretur

<sup>82</sup> *Acts v.14.*

<sup>83</sup> *ei H, W, R*

<sup>84</sup> *II Joh.4, III Joh.3.*

<sup>85</sup> *vocavit W, R*

<sup>86</sup> *tradidit W, R*

<sup>87</sup> *Eluine H, Eliue W, R*

<sup>88</sup> *erudiendas H, W, R*

<sup>89</sup> *intra sex] infra vij B*

<sup>90</sup> *crescebat N, H] crescebat in Domino W, R. The passage echoes I Chron. xi.9.*

<sup>91</sup> *volebat H, W*

<sup>92</sup> *sanctarum H, W, R*

<sup>93</sup> *sepe N, H] semper W, R*

<sup>94</sup> *Ps. xxvii.4.*

<sup>95</sup> *dedicare N, H, W, R*

<sup>96</sup> *H ends here*

<sup>97</sup> *ecclesiam quam fecerat W, R*

<sup>98</sup> *noctuque vigiliis N] nocteque vigilans W, R*

cibum corporeum, totisque nisibus anhelaret<sup>99</sup> cibum animarum.<sup>100</sup> Considerans virgo Fritheswitha transitoriam huius mundi pompam gloriamque, *quasi sterquilinum*<sup>101</sup> omnia reputans, quicquid habere poterat pauperibus erogabat. Cilicio semper utebatur; modicum panem ordeicem<sup>102</sup> cum paucis oleribus et aqua pro cibo habebat. Omnis interea populus Anglorum mirabatur tantam in puerili etate virtutem, gaudebatque rex, considerans et cognoscens unicam filiam suam vas esse Spiritus Sancti. (5) Beata igitur virgo rogavit patrem suum, dicens, 'O dulcissime pater, concede mihi ut<sup>103</sup> sanctimonialem habitum adipisci merear et in templo Dei semper nomen eius laudare et benedicere.' Rex autem Didanus, audiens propositum filie, *gavisus est valde*,<sup>104</sup> et advocans quendam religiosum virum, Orgarum nomine, Lincolniensium pontificem,<sup>105</sup> fecit Deo filiam suam Fritheswitham consecrari. Sacrate sunt itaque cum ea duodecim virgines, omnes nobili progenie. Fecit itaque prefatus rex edificari domos que conveniunt sanctimonialibus, videlicet refectorium et dormitorium et claustra, virosque religiosos dedit ad serviendum eis. Dedit etiam rex Didanus predia et villas Sancte Marie, tertiamque partem civitatis Oxinefordie, ad victum sanctimonialium.

(6) Igitur beata Fritheswitha, bonis ornata moribus, studuit corpus domare, spiritumque vivificare, iuxta vocem apostoli dicentis, '*Mortificate membra vestra que sunt super terram.*'<sup>106</sup> Post non multum vero tempus, *decidit in lectum*<sup>107</sup> rex Didanus, gravi egritudine correptus. Distribuensque thesaurum suum pauperibus, communione corporis Christi<sup>108</sup> confirmatus, Deo spiritum reddidit. Beata igitur Fritheswitha, sponsa Christi, orbata utroque parente, magis ac magis se<sup>109</sup> commendabat Spiritui Sancto quem<sup>110</sup> timebat. Statuit etiam in corde suo beata virgo ut centies per diem flecteret genua, centiesque per noctem affligens carnem, imploransque Dei misericordiam.<sup>111</sup>

(7) Quadam igitur nocte, dum hec sola perageret in oratorio quod sibi construxerat, dormientibus consodalibus suis, apparuit ei<sup>112</sup> diabolus ornatus auro et argento omnique lapide pretioso, constipatusque caterva demonum. Dixit ei, 'O mihi amabilis virgo, iam tempus est ut recipias mercedem laborum tuorum. Veni ergo adorare me: ego enim sum Christus, daboque tibi coronam immortalitatis quam promeruisti.' Cui beata Fritheswitha dixit, 'O miser omniumque creaturarum fetidissime, cur non times Dei iudicium? Veniet enim dies quando et tu et magister tuus eternam recipietis penam. Quomodo ergo promittis quod non habes?' Hec dicens, venerabilis virgo consignavit corpus suum vexillo crucis, et statim diabolus, dans mugitum et ululatum, evanuit. Beata vero virgo, perseverans in oratione, persistensque in vigiliis, equo animo erat.

(8) Quidam igitur rex Leiecestrensis, vir nefandissimus et Deo odiosus, successit in regnum post obitum Didani regis, Algarus nomine. Hic misit legatos ad beatam Fritheswitham, ita dicentes, 'Misit nos ad te rex Algarus, Fritheswitha virgo, volens te habere in matrimonium. Quod si nolueris, faciet te trahi ad lupanar.' Quibus virgo Deo sacra respondit, 'Desponsata sum Christo, Regi regum omnium, et ideo nefarium videtur

<sup>99</sup> anhelabat ad *W, R*

<sup>100</sup> *R ends here*

<sup>103</sup> inserted above line *N*

<sup>104</sup> *II Joh. 4, III Joh. 3*

<sup>105</sup> Orgarum . . . pontificem] Edgarum episcopum Lincolnie *B*, Orgaro Lincolniensi episcopo *L*

<sup>106</sup> *Coloss. iii. 5.*

<sup>107</sup> *I Macc. i. 6 or vi. 8.*

<sup>108</sup> *Xpi etc. has been expanded throughout to Christi etc.*

<sup>109</sup> *se W] om. N*

<sup>110</sup> *quem W] quod N*

<sup>111</sup> *W ends here*

<sup>112</sup> *ei B, L] om. N*

<sup>101</sup> *Job xx. 7.*

<sup>102</sup> *sic N*

esse ut relinquens Regem<sup>113</sup> obediam mandatis servi. Quod autem dicitis me trahere ad lupanar, sciatis non posse contaminari animum nisi ex consensu mentis. Insuper omnia autem, *Dominus mihi adiutor, non timebo quid faciat mihi homo.*<sup>114</sup> (9) Ministri ergo regis indignati dixerunt, 'Nisi adquireveris sponte preceptis regis, rapiemus te ducemusque ad regem Algarum, velis nolis.' Hec audiens, beata Fritheswitha, suspiciens sursum, clara voce dixit, *'Exurge, Domine, non confortetur homo: iudicentur gentes in conspectu tuo, sciantque quoniam homines sunt. Apprehende arma et scutum, et exurge in adiutorium mihi. Dic anime mee, salus tua ego sum.'*<sup>115</sup> Hec cum dixisset virgo sancta, excecatis oculis eorum, et videre non poterant lumen celi.<sup>116</sup> Videntes autem populi civitatis Oxinefordie, expavescere corruerunt ad pedes sancte virginis, postulantes ut pro eis oraret. (10) Sanctissima igitur femina, volens bonum pro malo reddere,<sup>117</sup> flexis genibus cepit orare, dicens, *'Deus invisibilis et incommutabilis, qui fecisti celum et terram, mare, et omnia que in eis sunt, quique formasti Adam de limo terre,'*<sup>118</sup> et seductum invidia diaboli eieciturque de paradysi amenitate<sup>119</sup> per mortem filii tui Domini nostri Iesu Christi redemisti, redde his miseris lumen oculorum, ut cognoscat populus iste quia *tu es miserator et misericors, patiens et multe misericordie et verax,*<sup>120</sup> qui vivis et regnas per infinita seculorum secula.' Cunque omnes repondissent 'Amen', restituti sunt oculi eorum, currentesque provoluti pedibus beate virginis laudabant Dominum, magnificantes eius immensam clementiam. (11) Venientesque ad regem Algarum, narraverunt omnem eventum rei. *Repletus itaque rex furore et ira,*<sup>121</sup> dixit, 'Neque incantationes eius neque eius falsa dogmata neque ars eius magica eam liberabit de manibus meis, quin eam habeam.' In ipsa nocte, orante beata Fritheswitha, apparuit ei angelus Domini, dicens, *'O vas electum'*<sup>122</sup> Sancti Spiritus, noli timere minas funesti regis, quia *sub umbra alarum suarum proteget*<sup>123</sup> te Iesus<sup>124</sup> Christus, et dextera sua sullevabit te. Pergens igitur ad amnem, habe tecum quascunque volueris socias sanctimoniales,<sup>125</sup> inveniesque navem preparatam a Deo nautamque, intrantesque navim *deducet* vos Dominus<sup>126</sup> omnipotens *in viam rectam*<sup>127</sup> ad glorificandum nomen suum.' Hoc dicto,<sup>128</sup> recessit ab ea. (12) Surgens igitur, beata virgo vocavit duas sanctimoniales secum virgines Deo dicatas, pervenientesque iuxta preceptum angelicum ad ripam Tamisie, invenerunt naviculam, sedentemque iuvenem fulgentem *angelico vultu,*<sup>129</sup> qui ita affatur virgines, 'Ingredimini in navim, virgines sacrate.' Ingressa itaque in navim, in unius hore spatio<sup>130</sup> venerunt ad villam que dicitur Bentoniam,<sup>131</sup> ducente Domino. Egredientesque de navi, subito evanuit iuvenis ab oculis earum. Beata igitur Fritheswitha cum suis

<sup>113</sup> regem] eum B, L

<sup>114</sup> Ps. cxviii.6.

<sup>115</sup> Ps. ix.19-20, xxxv.2-3.

<sup>116</sup> Echoes Tobias v.12, xi.8, xii.3

<sup>117</sup> volens ... reddere L] om.N

<sup>118</sup> Paraphrase of Genesis ii.7, Tobias viii.7-8.

<sup>119</sup> inserted above line N

<sup>120</sup> Ps. lxxxvi.15.

<sup>121</sup> Conflation of Daniel ii.12, iii.13, iii.19.

<sup>122</sup> Acts ix.15.

<sup>123</sup> Ps. xvii.8.

<sup>124</sup> Ihc etc. has been expanded throughout to Iesus etc.

<sup>125</sup> socias sanctimoniales] sanctimoniales feminas L

<sup>126</sup> Dominus L] om.N

<sup>127</sup> Ps. cvii.7.

<sup>128</sup> dicto L] audito N

<sup>129</sup> Judges xiii.6

<sup>130</sup> in ... spatio N, L] in momento B

<sup>131</sup> villam ... Bentoniam] villam Bendoniam B, villam que dicitur Bamtonia L



virginibus, timens insidias nefandi regis, ingressa est in quodam nemore quod dicitur Benesia<sup>132</sup> non longe a supradicta villa, inveneruntque ibi semitam que ducebat ad mansiunculam quam quondam fecerant subulci custodientes greges porcorum, coopertumque erat ex omni parte edera. In quam introivit sanctissima virgo cum suis virginibus, muniens se signaculo sancte crucis. (13) Surgens itaque, rex impius cum satellitibus suis pervenit ad urbem Oxinefordiam, cupiens violare vasa Deo sacrata. Ex quo igitur cepit introire rex civitatem, excecatis oculis eius et videre non potuit. Inde creditur inolevisse reges Oxinefordiam non intrare. Permansit itaque rex impius cecus omnibus diebus vite sue, semperque insidiabatur et cogitabat quomodo nocere beate Frithesuuiethe posset. Beata autem virgo Cristi semper gerebat vocem evangelii in pectore, et non cessabat diebus vel noctibus a colloquiis divinis et oratione. Mansit itaque venerabilis virgo prope tribus annis in ipso nemore.

(14) Puella itaque quedam erat in supradicta villa Bentonia,<sup>133</sup> que ante a diabolo obcecata erat prope septem annis. Hec cum quadam nocte dormiret, apparuit ei quidam in somnis dicens, 'Vade in nemore ubi sanctimoniales morantur, et stillam que de manibus beate Frithesuuiethe ceciderit quando manus laverit tolle, et lini oculos tuos, et visum recipies.' Mane facto, narravit puella patri suo quod viderat. Pater vero, tenens manum eius, duxit eam secum usque dum veniret ad habitaculum virginis. Expectansque horam cum lavisset manus beata Frithesuuietha, recepta aqua linivit oculos filie sue, et visum continuo recepit. Benedicentes igitur Deum, reversi sunt ad propria, laudantes omnipotentiam Salvatoris, narrantes mirabilia que viderant fieri per sanctam Frithesuuietham.

(16) Erat etiam quidam adolescens nomine Alwardus in villa que dicitur Seuecordia, qui Dominica die incidebat ligna cum securi, parvipendens diem resurrectionis Dominice. Cum hoc ageret, adhererunt manus eius manubrio, ita ut extendere digitos penitus non valeret, sed clamans voce magna dicebat sibi manum incendi. Ductus usque ad sanctam virginem, provolutus eius pedibus, cepit eius implorare auxilium. Illa, ut erat misericordia<sup>134</sup> visceribus repleta, mota pietate, flexis genibus cepit Domini clementiam rogare, ita dicens, 'Adonay Domine Deus, magne et mirabilis, qui Moysi in igne flamme rubi apparuisti, et ei in Syna legem dedisti, et filios Israel de terra Egypti eduxisti, et per medium maris rubri<sup>135</sup> sicco vestigio transire fecisti, quique Ionam prophetam de ventre ceti eduxisti illesum atque incolumem, et filium tuum Dominum nostrum Iesum Cristum pro redemptione mundi incarnari voluisti, queso ut per invocationem tuam huic viro pristinam sanitatem restituas, quia tu es Deus benedictus, Salvator omnium in te sperantium, permanens in secula seculorum.' Cunque astantes respondissent 'Amen', faciens virgo signum crucis tenensque manum adolescentis, fugato dolore liberavit eum. Reversusque ad propria, glorificabat Deum. Ad Domini igitur laudem divulgabatur nomen beate Frithesuuiethe per totam regionem illam.

(17) Accidit etiam ut piscatores, sicut mos est illius generis hominum, ascenderent in navim quadam nocte ut caperent pisces. Cum ergo misissent retia in navem, et obdormissent in navi, unus eorum arreptus a demonio cepitque cachinna falsa dare, tenensque unum e sociis suis suffocabat eum manibus, dentibusque dilaniare volebat. Ceteri vero, tenentes eum, ligaverunt manus a tergo, ducentes eum ad beate virginis oratorium. Videns igitur venerabilis virgo imaginem Dei illusam a diabolo, genibus flexis deprecabatur Deum

<sup>132</sup> ingressa . . . Benesia N, last three words erased] venit . . . in nemore quod dicitur Benseya B, ingresse sunt nemus de Benseya L

<sup>133</sup> Bentonia] Bendonina B

<sup>134</sup> misericordie N

<sup>135</sup> Paraphrase of Acts vii.30-40.

Patrem omnipotentem, Filiumque eius Dominum nostrum, ut per virtutem Spiritus Sancti liberaret plasma suum ab inimico humani generis prostratum. Hec dicens, fecit signum sancte crucis in frontem eius, ita dicens, 'Recede, Satana, ab *imagine quam formavit Deus ad similitudinem suam*.'<sup>137</sup> Cum hoc dixisset, factus est velut mortuus, ceciditque in terram. Beata virgo iussit eum solvi. Cunque solutus esset, tenuit manum eius et dixit, 'In nomine Iesu Christi Nazareni, surge'<sup>138</sup> incolumis.' Et surrexit sanus, cepitque<sup>139</sup> glorificare Deum, qui eum liberavit per merita sancte Fritheswithe. Erat autem nomen eius Leowinus.<sup>140</sup> (18) Hec et alia multa miracula operatus est Dominus per beatam Fritheswitham.

Quadam igitur die dixit consodalibus suis, 'Revertamur ad cenobium'<sup>141</sup> nostrum.' Preparata igitur navicula, beate virgines intraverunt in eam, venientesque ad civitatem Oxinefordiam, honorifice a civibus et ab omni clero<sup>142</sup> suscepte sunt. Cum autem ingrederetur beata Fritheswitha in supradictam urbem, occurrit ei quidam iuvenis plenus lepra, dixitque ei, 'Adiuro te, O Fritheswitha virgo, ut des mihi osculum in nomine Iesu Christi.' Illa, ut semper erat repleta Sancto Spiritu, faciens signum crucis dedit ei<sup>143</sup> osculum in nomine Domini, et statim mundatus est a lepra. Videntes autem populi urbis illius omnisque clerus que fiebant per sanctam Fritheswitham virtutes et miracula, gaudebant<sup>144</sup> in adventu eius. (19) Beata itaque Christi virgo omnipotenti Deo servire non cessabat, affligebatque corpus ut vivificaret spiritum. Unde cum hec per multa tempora continuaret, et dies retributionis a Domino recipiendi mercedem pro labore appropinquaret,<sup>145</sup> quarto idus Octobris apparuit ei angelus Domini, dixitque ei,<sup>146</sup> 'Quartodecimo kalendas Novembris erit dies Dominicus, recipiesque a Domino coronam immortalitatis quam semper desiderasti. Preparata enim tibi est aula celestis, luxque immarcescibilis, quia despexisti terrenum palatium patris.' Hoc dicto, angelus ab ea recessit. Beatissima igitur virgo Fritheswitha correpta fortissima febre, ingravescente egritudine corporis, cepit omnibus membris dissolvi. Unaquaque igitur die veniebant ad eam omnes cives illius urbis. Beata vero virgo monitis salutaribus non cessabat eos reficere. (20) Sabbato igitur quo in crastinum recessura erat a<sup>147</sup> corpore, rogavit ut ei sepultura aperiretur in ecclesia beate Dei genitricis Marie, dicens, 'Crastina die erit dies Dominicus, et nolo ut aliquis laboret propter me. Hac enim in nocte post tertium cantum galli, munita corpore et sanguine Christi, vadam ad Dominum'<sup>148</sup> meum. *Bonum enim certamen certavi, cursumque iustitie consummavi*, mundum et omnem pompam eius contempsi, ideoque *reposita est mihi corona iustitie*.'<sup>149</sup> Hec dicens, ingravescente molestia egritudinis, iussit sibi afferri eucharistiam Christi. Quam gaudenter suscipiens, omnipotentem Deum benedicere cepit. (21) Cunque infirmitatis mole nimium opprimeretur sicut antea predixerat,<sup>150</sup> post multas

<sup>137</sup> 'Recede . . . suam' ] 'Precipio tibi, Sathana, in nomine Iesu Christi, ut recedas ab hac ymagine Dei' L. The N text is a conflation of Genesis i.26-7, ii.7 and v.1.

<sup>138</sup> Acts iii.6.

<sup>139</sup> cepitque L] cepit N

<sup>140</sup> Leowinus] Leswinus L

<sup>141</sup> cenobium N, B] monasterium L

<sup>142</sup> clero N, L] clero nobilium B

<sup>143</sup> ei L] om.N

<sup>144</sup> gaudebant L] gaudebat N

<sup>145</sup> Unde cum hec . . . appropinquaret L] om.N

<sup>146</sup> ei L] om.N

<sup>147</sup> a L] om.N

<sup>148</sup> Dominum] Deum L

<sup>149</sup> II Tim. iv.7.

<sup>150</sup> sicut . . . predixerat] om.L; N alters dixerat to predixerat

predicationes,<sup>151</sup> respiciens sursum, clara voce dicebat,<sup>152</sup> 'Bene, sancte virgines, bene veniatis.' Interrogaveruntque eam astantes cum quibus loqueretur. At illa respondit, 'Nunquid non videtis beatas virgines Dei, Katerinam atque Ceciliam?' Cunque iterum loqueretur ad eas, dixit audientibus cunctis, 'Modo veniam, Domine mee.' Post tertium itaque galli cantum, sicut predixerat, valedicens omnibus, migravit ad Dominum Iesum Cristum. In illa hora tanta lux effulsit per universam civitatem Oxinefordiam, tantaque suavitas odoris trium horarum spatio fragravit,<sup>153</sup> ut omnes mirarentur et glorificarent Deum. (22) Quidam etiam vir paralitico morbo percussus, vir dives valde, iussit famulis suis ut eum deportarent ad sepulchrum sancte virginis. Cunque detulissent eum usque ad sepulchrum, ilico meritis sancte Frithesuithae incolumitatem recepit, et qui iam per biennium fuerat mutus et claudus, aliorumque manibus deportatus erat, propriis pedibus remeavit laudans Deum ad propria.

(23) Alius quidem nomine Athelwoldus, vir nobilis, qui erat contractus ab umbilico deorsum, cum sepelirent corpus beate Frithesuithae, venit ad fores ecclesie, trahens corpus suum duobus scabellis. Volens igitur introire in ecclesiam, pre multitudine populorum non poterat. Cepit autem ad fores ecclesie clamare, 'O sponsa Cristi electa, virgo Fritheswitha, libera me ab infirmitatibus meis. Scio enim quia si vis subvenire mihi, potes.' Hec dicens, ita sanus factus est, quasi nunquam aliquid habuisset infirmitatis. Surgens itaque et exiliens, et quasi *cervus saliens*,<sup>154</sup> viriliter introivit in ecclesiam portans elevatis manibus scannulos cum quibus corpus suum trahere solebat, laudans Deum omnium redemptorem. (24) Migravit igitur beata Frithesuitha virgo ad Dominum quartodecimo kalendas Novembris, anno ab incarnatione Domini septingentesimo vicesimo septimo. Sepultaque est in ecclesia sancte Marie in australi parte, ubi fiunt multa miracula propter merita eius a Domino nostro Iesu Christo, qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat per omnia secula seculorum. Amen.

APPENDIX B: THE SECOND LIFE OF ST. FRIDESWIDE ('LIFE B'),  
PROBABLY WRITTEN BY MASTER ROBERT OF CRICKLADE c.1140-70

Life B is edited here from the three manuscripts of the full text:

M = Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 114 ff.132-40 (= *BHL* 3162)

Laud Misc. 114 is a collection of *vitae* written at Pershore in a careful, regular hand of c.1160-80.<sup>155</sup> The Frideswide text is divided into chapters, with rubricated initials, and is preceded by a list of chapter-headings. Other 12th-century English items are Osbert of Clare's Life of St. Eadburh (f.85v) and Prior Robert of Shrewsbury's Life of St. Winifred (f.140).

C = Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 129 ff.167-77v

This is a miscellaneous collection of tracts in several 12th- and 13th-century hands, from an unknown monastic provenance.<sup>156</sup> The Frideswide text is written in a rather scrappy mid 13th-century hand, with minor corrections by a contemporary reviser. It does not observe M's chapter divisions.

<sup>151</sup> predicationes] devotas exhortationes *L*

<sup>152</sup> dicebat] cepit dicere *L*

<sup>153</sup> fragravit *L*] *om.N*

<sup>154</sup> *Echoes Isaiah xxxv.6.*

<sup>155</sup> H.O. Coxe (ed.), *Laudian Manuscripts* (1858, repr. as *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues* II, 1973), 122-3; Ker op.cit. note 66, 150.

<sup>156</sup> M.R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Gonville and Caius College*, i (1907), 137-8.

<sup>157</sup> Collated from a microfilm kindly lent by Dr. Michael Lapidge.



Incipit prologus in vita Sancte Frideswide virginis<sup>164</sup>

(1) De vita et virtutibus beatissime et omni veneratione dignissime virginis Frideswide, fratres karissimi, que addiscere potui in chronicis, et preter hec in quibusdam autenticarum hystoriarum voluminibus sive in cathalogis<sup>165</sup> sanctorum Anglie, in unum cohartare volumen curavi. Ubi liquido apparet quia longe ab errore in pluribus declinavit, quisquis ille fuit vite virginis sacratissime scriptor, licet quorundam supercilio contempnendus videatur, qui stili simplicitate in improbandum adducti fastidium, florum probant se magis attendere speciem, quam fructus utilitatem.

Incipit vita<sup>166</sup>

(2) Anno<sup>167</sup> itaque<sup>168</sup> ab incarnatione Domini nostri Iesu<sup>169</sup> Cristi<sup>170</sup> Regis omnium seculorum septingentesimo circiter vicesimo septimo, cum in effera gente Anglorum, que Britanniam insulam invaserat, depopulaverat, dominatuique<sup>171</sup> suo cruenta manu subiugaverat, verbum Dei<sup>172</sup> efflueret fructumque plurimum produxisset, subregulus quidam Didanus nomine, vir catholicus et omni morum honestate prestantissimus, civitatem que lingua Saxonica Oxinefordia<sup>173</sup> denominatur, quod nos Latine Boum Vadum dicere possumus, incolatus sui frequentatione<sup>174</sup> honestabat. Hic nutu divino uxorem moribus suis congruam, Safridam nomine, accepit, de qua morum magis quam prediorum heredem suscepit,<sup>175</sup> unicam videlicet filiam, quam fonte sacri baptismatis ablutam Fridesuvidam appellari precepit. (3) Transacto<sup>176</sup> quinquennio diligenti educatione, litterarum studiis erudienda traditur sub matrone cuiusdam admodum religiose disciplina, cui nomen Algiva. Felicis quidem posteritatis quoddam quasi felicissimum presagium, in ipso eius discipline primordio adeo<sup>177</sup> enituit, ut perspicuum foret omnibus quoniam mentem illius iamiam sibi habitaculum<sup>179</sup> preelegerat Spiritus Sanctus. Quis etenim<sup>180</sup> non obstupesceret quinquennem<sup>181</sup> virgunculam in quinque fere mensibus psalmos Daviticos, qui centum quinquaginta sunt, didicisse, memorieque commendasse? Nec hinc sibi consodaliū ascivit invidiam, sed fervore quo replenda erat caritatis attacta, cunctis se prebuit amabilem. Humilitatis namque simul<sup>182</sup> et mansuetudinis tanta extunc prepollebat<sup>183</sup> gratia, ut non regiam<sup>184</sup> esset videre iuenculam, sed servilem in tali etate personam, omnibus obsequium, omnibusque<sup>185</sup> compassionis exhibentem affectum. Non erat plane verbi divini auditrix obliviosa facta, sed factrix operum.<sup>186</sup> Quamque de scripturis audiebat, armario<sup>187</sup>

<sup>164</sup> heading only in M<sup>165</sup> cathalogis G] catholicis M<sup>166</sup> heading only in M<sup>167</sup> C text begins here<sup>168</sup> om. C<sup>169</sup> Ihu etc. has been expanded throughout to Iesu etc.<sup>170</sup> Xpi etc. has been expanded throughout to Cristi etc.<sup>171</sup> et dominatui C<sup>172</sup> verbum Dei C, G] verbumque M<sup>173</sup> Oxinefordia C, G] Oxenfordia M<sup>174</sup> frequentationem G<sup>175</sup> suscepit C, G] accepit M<sup>176</sup> Transacto C, G] Transacto quippe M<sup>177</sup> primordio adeo discipline C<sup>179</sup> om. C<sup>180</sup> Quis etenim C, G] Quisenim M<sup>181</sup> quinquennem C, G] quinquennam M<sup>182</sup> simul C, G] om. M<sup>183</sup> pollebat C<sup>184</sup> om. C<sup>185</sup> omnibus G<sup>186</sup> Based on James i.25.<sup>187</sup> in armario C

pectoris<sup>188</sup> pie recondebat, dans operam sedulo, creditam sibi cum usura reportare Domino<sup>189</sup> pecuniam. Propterea diebus assidue et noctibus piis lacrimarum rivulis, suspiriis quoque et gemitibus, cordis mactabat hostiam in holocaustum acceptabile Domino, supplicans iugiter *ut inhabitare mereretur in domo Domini omnibus diebus vite sue*, et contemplari vultum eius.

(4) Nec adultam adhuc etas eam proprio consignabat viri, cum iam *mater eius* de medio discessit.<sup>190</sup> Altero igitur carens virgo<sup>191</sup> solatio, patri protegenda relinquitur. Quem saluberrimis quoad<sup>192</sup> potuit impellebat monitis, ne pigritaretur iturus hinc in brevi quo precessit thori socia, anime sue remedia querere. At ille, ut assolet coniugis nuper amisse dolore percussus, et assiduus<sup>193</sup> dilectissime filie precibus compulsus, *ecclesiam* infra urbis ambitum *construxit*, et *in honore sancte ac sempiternae Trinitatis*, semperque *virginis Dei genitricis Marie, Omniumque Sanctorum*, dedicatam, filie commendavit poscenti. Ipsa vero *ecclesiam* ingressa, divinis se studiosissime mancipabat<sup>194</sup> operibus, suam Domino pudicitiam sedulis commendans precibus, pietatis viscera aperiebat petentibus, larga prebens manu que poscebant egentibus. Mundi etiam fertur sic postposuisse gloriam, sic ad supernam hanelare<sup>195</sup> patriam, ut iam propemodum carnis cerneretur deposuisse sarcinam, et immortalitatis tunicam induisse.<sup>196</sup> Non enim corpus alebat escis, sed spiritum protrahebat. Non mollibus vestiebat, sed asperrimis setis vigilans, nec<sup>197</sup> mollioribus dormiens, si tamen aliquoties dormitabat, pungebatur. Quid de lectisternio illius loquar, cum nullum illi preter humum durissimam fuerit? Super illam somno victa<sup>198</sup> recumbebat, nature solvens debitum, illam assidue prostrata petebat genibus, quando orationes Domino fundebat. Stuperes regiam regiis puellam epulis educatam, vilium *olerum* incondito pulmento *modicoque pane ordeiceo*<sup>199</sup> famis expugnare proterviam, *aque* vero sorbitiuncula sitis ardentissime imminentem superare dissolutionem. Quid plura? Arctam et arduam viam que ducit ad vitam<sup>200</sup> ita aggressa est, ut nichil supra. O infelices huius temporis homines, 'quorum deus venter est, et gloria in confusione illorum, qui terrena sapiunt',<sup>201</sup> qui religionem habitu pretendunt, moribus et vita contradicunt. Vili veste intuentium in se convertunt oculos, sed pretiosorum ciborum crapula, intestina confundunt. Si quando ieiunant, terra marique queritur, unde ieiunii dampnum restituatur. Sed non est hoc ieiunium quod elegi dicit Dominus. Stupet *Anglia*, *mirantur* universi, infirmum cernentes sexum *in etate* tenera robur excessisse virile. Pater vero<sup>202</sup> virguncule hilaris admodum effectus tripudiabat, quia heredem quem terrenarum rerum putabat prestari superstitem, iam ad celestia cernebat hanelantem.<sup>203</sup> (5) Et quidem ut omnem spem corruptibilis posteritatis eam plene<sup>204</sup> postposuisse constaret, exegit a patre, monacharum ut *mereretur*

<sup>188</sup> pectoris C] cordis M, G

<sup>189</sup> Domino reportare C

<sup>190</sup> discessit C, G] decessit M

<sup>191</sup> Virgo carens C

<sup>192</sup> quoad C, G] quoad M

<sup>193</sup> assiduus C, G] assidue M

<sup>194</sup> mancipabat studiosissime C

<sup>195</sup> anelare G

<sup>196</sup> induisse tunicam C

<sup>197</sup> om. G

<sup>198</sup> om. C

<sup>199</sup> ordeaceo C

<sup>200</sup> Based on Matth. vii.14.

<sup>201</sup> Philipp. iii.19.

<sup>202</sup> vero C, G] om. M

<sup>203</sup> anhelantem G

<sup>204</sup> eam plene] om. G



*habitus* suscipere, prudenti<sup>205</sup> proculdubio precavens consilio, ne forte defuncto patre cuiusquam cogeretur inire conubium, et virginalē usquequaque fedare<sup>206</sup> propositum. Tedeat preterea virginem beatissimam corporali decorari purpura, quae se noverat Christi sanguine redemptam, dum a perfidis morte turpissima condemnaretur. Anulo fidei subarrata, aurum gemmasque velud mercimonium contempnebat<sup>207</sup> vilissimum. Hoc proposito filie rex Didanus, inestimabiliter gavisus, accersiri iubet proxime<sup>208</sup> diocesis episcopum, filieque karissime habitum dari monacharum impetravit. Emulatione profecto beatissime virginis duodecim ferme nobilibus orbe natalibus puellae, relictis omnibus secute sunt Dominum, incedentes in omnibus mandatis et iustificationibus eius iuxta exemplum Deo dilecte Fridesuue. Et si ei equari<sup>209</sup> non potuerunt meritis, consortes tamen eius fieri nitebantur participatione regni celestis. Ex regis itaque munificentia diversoria religioni aptissima secus ecclesiam construuntur, ubi dulciffua diebus ac noctibus mente<sup>210</sup> virginum cum voce consona psalmodum et hymnorum modulata resonabat suavitas. (6) Interim rex ipse, gravissima tactus febre, decidit in lectum, atque ad extrema perductus, corporis Christi munitus viatico, dormivit cum patribus suis, complens dies in senectute bona.

Beata igitur Frideswida, utriusque parentis destituta solatio, ad Patrem qui in celis est ardentius hanelabat,<sup>211</sup> quibus potuit gressibus ad eum properabat. Protelabat enim ieiunia, orationibus instabat continuis, et preterea per diem centies, centiesque per noctem, flexis genibus quesivit quem dilexit anima illius. (7) Sed quis in mundo prevalet esse bonus, cui non invidet qui singulariter est malignus? Omnes namque conatur deicere, qui primum hominem a paradisi gaudiis potuit propellere. Et quia Fridesuue animum nullius stimulo suggestionis potuit evertere, ad dimicandum comminus corporeis eius oculis corporalem speciem exhibuit. Elatusque in antique vesanie sue presumptionem, qua se Altissimo fore similem promittebat, Christum se esse mentitur. Magnaque demonum constipatus caterua, angelorum lucis speciem mentientium, his virginem aggreditur: 'Veni, dilecta mea, veni, quia tempus est ut percipias immarcessibilem glorie coronam quam promeruisti. Veni, et ad pedum meorum provoluta vestigia, quem diu desiderasti, adora. Apparere quippe tibi ob<sup>212</sup> hoc volui, ut me, ad quem tanta aviditate suspiras, in hac etiam vita mortali conspiceres, et me adorato ad perpetue vite commodum, absque corporis incommodo prevaleres ingredi.' Cui virgo, Sancto edocta Spiritu, cuius instinctu humani generis hunc fuisse deprehendit inimicum, ita inquit, 'Quid, miserrime, quod nec<sup>213</sup> habes, nec habere pre superbia vales, aliis promittere presumis? Quid tibi cum vita immortalis, qui vivens mortuus es,<sup>214</sup> et manens semper in interitum vergis? Sed et ego, infelix et miserrima peccatrix, interitus tui particeps fuisset, ni me<sup>215</sup> Redemptoris mei Christi, quem tu te esse nefandissime mentiris, misericordia prevenisset. Ipse enim<sup>216</sup> "spes mea a iuventute mea."<sup>217</sup> Hec humillima virginis verba superbus ille non sustinens spiritus, evanuit, et aerem ululatu horribili fetoreque pestifero implevit. Beata quidem Frideswida in oratione perseverans, persistensque in vigiliis, equo erat animo et permansit intrepida.

<sup>205</sup> prudenti C, G] prudente M

<sup>206</sup> federa G

<sup>207</sup> mercimonium contempnebat C, G] mercennarium tempnebat M

<sup>208</sup> om. G

<sup>209</sup> ei equari] om. G

<sup>210</sup> in mente C

<sup>211</sup> anhelabat G

<sup>212</sup> tibi ob C, G] ad M

<sup>213</sup> nec C, G] non M

<sup>214</sup> om. G

<sup>215</sup> ni me] mi ne G

<sup>216</sup> enim est C

<sup>217</sup> Ps. lxxi.5.

(8) At non commentor impietatis, tametsi victus et confusus abscesserit, ab impugnationis sue arte quievit. Regem namque *Algarus* satis superque *nefandum* aggreditur, et virginis *Frideswide* iam amore tactum impudico inflammatur, et, ut a<sup>218</sup> sanctimonialis habitu deiciat,<sup>219</sup> suggerit iniustum non esse nefariumve interminans regis filiam licet monacham ad thorum regium evocare, sed magis optimum prolem suscipere et ad spem regni educare, quam inertem et plenam desidia ducere<sup>220</sup> vitam. His suggestionum stimulis rex furibundus concitatus,<sup>221</sup> quasi amens prosiliit.<sup>222</sup> nuntios accelerare precipit, qui summa cum festinatione *Frideswidam* adducant, et nolentem eque ut volentem properare compellant.<sup>223</sup> Nec mora, nefandissimi regis nefandi<sup>224</sup> evolant nuntii, et emenso celeriter multo terrarum spatio, ante conspectum *Fridesuide* assistentes, his eam aggrediuntur compellere<sup>225</sup> sermonibus. 'Rex,' inquit, '*Algarus ad te, O Fridesuvida, nos* direxit, legationis siquidem tibi<sup>226</sup> profuturo causa. Tu autem sapienti utere consilio, et voluntati regis consenti<sup>227</sup> honorem proponentis. Nam contradictio tua expers pene esse non poterit. Te sibi thori sociam rex vehementissime affectat, et matronali vinculo<sup>228</sup> coniungere, et partipicem efficere regni.' Quibus virgo, mitissimo ut erat semper animo, summissa humiliter voce,<sup>229</sup> 'Si me,' inquit, 'hominis conubio sociare disposuissem, nequaquam regis *Algari* postulationi contradicere haberem. Nunc, quia *Regi* immortalitatis *Cristo desponsata sum, nefandum* sane arbitror ut eo contempto assensum mortali prebeam peritura cum ipso, et fructu immortalitatis despecto posteritatem<sup>230</sup> mortalem cum detrimento integritatis queram.' Et illi, 'Hec te,' inquit, 'versutia iuvare non poterit, quoniam si acquiescere ac obtemperare regis voluntati *nolueris*, tuam cupientis honorare ingenuitatem, *ad lupanar tracta* multas sustenebis integritatis tue iniurias vel invita, lenonibus ludibrium facta. Et ignominiose corrupta sic tandem edoceberis sani capitis non esse regiam huiusmodi repulsa fedare dignitatem.' Ad hec<sup>231</sup> virgo, 'Mine siquidem,' inquit, 'vestre oppido timende fuissent, ni Dominus continere impiorum manus valeret, uti complere non possint<sup>232</sup> opere quod conari animo nefando proponunt. Preterea<sup>233</sup> nullis pollutionum contagiis *contaminari* potest corpus,<sup>234</sup> nisi ex consensu mentis. Et<sup>235</sup> profecto quemadmodum corporis integritas Deo grata non est, quam mentis corruptela fedavit, ita prorsus, si violentia impudicorum claustra signaculi pudicitie vexaverit, voluntatis contradicente arbitrio, ab inspectore Deo ad integritatis sue premium mente<sup>236</sup> illibata duplicato reducetur merito.' (9) His<sup>237</sup> iniquitatis *ministri* puelle responsis, velud solis meridiani

<sup>218</sup> in G

<sup>219</sup> deicerat G

<sup>220</sup> deducere C

<sup>221</sup> om. G

<sup>222</sup> prosiliit C] prosilit M, G

<sup>223</sup> compellatur G

<sup>224</sup> regis nefandi C, G] om. M

<sup>225</sup> om. C

<sup>226</sup> om. G

<sup>227</sup> consenti G] consentire M, C

<sup>228</sup> matronali vinculo C, G] matrimonio (with -imonia written over an erasure) M

<sup>229</sup> voce [respondit] C

<sup>230</sup> potestatem G

<sup>231</sup> hoc G

<sup>232</sup> possunt G] possunt amended to possint C, possint M

<sup>233</sup> propterea G

<sup>234</sup> contaminari potest corpus] puto contaminari corpus G

<sup>235</sup> Ex G

<sup>236</sup> mente G] mente altered to mens C, vite M

<sup>237</sup> Hiis G

aspectu hebetati, in<sup>238</sup> amentie tamen sue obstinatione perseverantes, cum pre stupore tante constantie eius quid amplius opponerent non haberent, vim inferre parabant. At Frideswida, confugiens ad protectorem suum Deum, preces cum lacrimis in excelsum porrexit, clamans voce magna atque dicens, 'Exurge, Domine, non confortetur homo: iudicentur gentes in conspectu tuo, sciantque quoniam homines sunt. Apprehende arma et scutum, et exurge in adiutorium michi. Dic anime mee, salus tua ego sum.' O altitudo sapientie tue, Domine<sup>239</sup> Deus, quam incomprehensibilia sunt iudicia tua, et investigabiles vie tue!<sup>240</sup> Vere nemo speravit in te<sup>241</sup> et derelictus est!<sup>242</sup> Ecce homines pessimi, qui noluerunt audire vocem tuam et<sup>243</sup> ancille tue ut beneagerent, prius animi nunc corporis amisso lumine, ab iniuriis suis<sup>244</sup> desistere compelluntur vel inviti. Ac experimento discunt, quod<sup>245</sup> doctrina salutari neglexerunt. Nec mora, miraculi magnitudine impletur civitas. Concurrunt undique, stupent universi,<sup>246</sup> paventque, ac pedibus virginis pro excecatorum compassione provoluti suppliciter postulant, quatinus hominum insensatorum et iccirco miserrimorum non attendat facinora, sed pro eis intercedere dignetur<sup>247</sup> propitia et lumen pia restituat supplicatione, quo destituti sunt miseri<sup>248</sup> propria protervitate. (10) At non sustinuit pietatis vasculum diuturnum impiorum cruciatum, vel populi in postulatione singultum. Ad preces convertitur, Deum genibus<sup>249</sup> deprecatur. 'Deus,' inquit, 'invisibilis et incommutabilis, Deus universe Conditor creature, cuius nutu que non sunt fiunt, cuius voluntate cuncta subsistunt, qui hominem sua culpa perditum reformasti ad vitam, hominibus istis miserrimis lumen restitue, ut cognoscat populus iste quia tu es miserator et misericors, patiens et multe misericordie et verax, reddens unicuique<sup>250</sup> iuxta opera sua, qui vivis et regnas per infinita seculorum secula.' Ad hanc vocem beate virginis,<sup>251</sup> cum astantes respondissent 'Amen', lumen redditur miseris. At illi corde<sup>252</sup> salubriter<sup>253</sup> compuncti, corruerunt ad pedes eius, veniam commissi huius flagitantes. Quibus illa, 'Non hoc meis,'<sup>254</sup> inquit, 'actum esse meritis estimetis, sed clementia Salvatoris, et fide populi ipsi supplicantis. Vos autem horum que passi estis memores estote,<sup>255</sup> et ancillas Christi deinceps infestare nolite.'

(11) Repedantes itaque viri, que gesta sunt regi<sup>256</sup> ex ordine nuntiant. Ille vero, 'Nequaquam,' inquit, 'incantationes eius, falsave dogmata, aut ars magica, a meis eam eripient manibus. Sed quoniam me contempnere ausa est, prius quam<sup>257</sup> illa ut libuerit abusus fuero, lenonum siquidem tradetur polluenda ludibrio.' Hec dixit, et furore agitatus inpreceps equos poscit, iterque ad urbem<sup>258</sup> qua virgo manebat nefanda urgente libidine aggreditur.

238 om. G

239 om. C

240 Based on Rom. xi.33.

241 in te C, G] om. M

242 Based on Eccli. ii.11-12.

243 tuam et C] om. M, G

244 suis C] illius M, G

245 quod in<sup>1</sup> C

246 stupent universi, concurrunt undique C

247 dignetur intercedere C

248 om. C

249 genibus C] gemitibus M, G

250 reddens unicuique C, G] unicuique reddens M

251 vocem beate virginis C, G] beate virginis vocem M

252 om. G

253 salubiter corde C

254 meis hoc C

255 estote memores C

256 om. C

257 prius quam] postquam MSS

258 urbem in<sup>1</sup> C

O quam magna est multitudo miserationum tuarum, Domine, qui non derelinquis sperantes in te! In ipsa nocte, dum *Frideswida* horum inscia more solito orationi incumberet, astitit ei angelus<sup>259</sup> tuus sanctus, *dicens*, 'Ignoras, O virgo, quia profanissimus rex Algarus cras pre foribus urbis istius aderit libidini sue satisfactorius, si detur possibilitas irrumpendi in pudicitiam<sup>260</sup> integritatis tue?' Audiens hec, sancta 'vehementer expavit',<sup>261</sup> nec adeo tamen ex visione angelica tam subita, quantum ex immanissime impietatis acceleratione, et<sup>262</sup> ignara quid ageret stabat stupefacta. Cui angelus, 'Ne timeas,' inquit, 'Frideswida: Dominus *Iesus Christus* iocundum quod in tua virginitate habitaculum ipsi preparasti custodiet, illususque rex et malignitatis sue spe frustratus redibit, ac penas cecitatis perpetue solvet. Tu autem propera, et semitam que ducit ad fluvium *Thamesis*<sup>263</sup> cum quibuslibet tuarum ingredi, repertura scapham a Deo paratam et in ipsa ducem itineris *nautam*.' Hec fatur, et ab aspectu virginis subito<sup>264</sup> eripitur. (12) *Frideswida* vero, gratias agens<sup>265</sup> Deo, hylaris ab oratione surrexit, duasque de sororibus suis *secum* assumens, ad *Thamesim*<sup>266</sup> usque pervenit, et iuxta verbum angeli *naviculam* secus *ripam* repperit. Quam *ingresse*, vident *iuvenem* in parte<sup>267</sup> *sedentem*, habitu splendido *vultuque* venustissimo,<sup>268</sup> qui eas<sup>269</sup> dulci demulcens *affatu* in *naviculam*<sup>270</sup> collocavit. Mira res, mirus impetus spiritus. Sub *unius hore spatio*<sup>271</sup> decem miliaria<sup>272</sup> transferuntur, et sub *villa que Bentona dicitur* exponuntur. Exposite vero, nec navem nec itineris ducem uspiam conspiciunt. Inventam ilico secus villam<sup>273</sup> semitam pergunt, et silvam non longe ab ea distantem *ingrediuntur*. Sequentes autem *semitam* in profundum *nemoris*<sup>274</sup> se protendentem, tandem *mapale*<sup>275</sup> conspiciunt ad *porcorum* tutamen contra aeris intemperiem constructum, sed multo iam tempore ab incolis derelictum, adeo ut *hedera* succrescente *ex omni parte* contextum, occultato<sup>277</sup> aditu ingredi volentibus, negare videretur introitum. Quod *virgo cum suis* ingressa sodalibus primum *signo crucis* munivit, ac deinde qualiter ibidem Deo disponente manerent prout sibi oportunit<sup>278</sup> videbatur statuit.

(13) Interea *rex impius ad Oxinefordiam*<sup>279</sup> veniens, minis precibusque ac premiis propositis conabatur ab incolis addiscere, quoniam *Frideswida* divertisset. Sed quoniam non erat occulta Dei nosse, sicut nullius eorum<sup>280</sup> hoc actum erat consilio, ita nec revelari poterat eorum eloquio.<sup>281</sup> Hinc iratus rex et amentium more intolerabili permotus furore,

259 angelus ei C

260 in pudicitiam] impudentiam M, impudicitiam G, in pudiciam G

261 I. Macc. xvi.22.

262 om. G

263 Thamesis C] Tamesis M, Thamensis G

264 subito C, G] om. M

265 agens gratias C

266 Thamensem G

267 Either a corruption, or in parte meaning 'on one side'; cf. below, note 421.

268 Echoes Mark xvi.5.

269 eos C, G

270 navicula C, G

271 spatium [per] C

272 milia G

273 villam C, G] villa M

274 om. G

275 mapale altered to magale C

277 occulto C

278 om. C

279 Oxinefordiam G] Oxenefordiam M, Oxonefordiam C

280 om. C

281 consilio G

civitatem terribiliter intuens, in eius subversionem coniuravit. Cumque appropinquaret porte que<sup>282</sup> ad aquilonem recluditur, iturus quo se vesanie sue propellebat impetus, luminibus ilico amissis didicit quam nichil est quod molitur humana perversitas, cui contrastat divina potestas. Expavit itaque stultus repentiam in se divine potestatis ultionem, nec a malignitatis sue desistens obstinatione, cor Pharaonis ad propria revehens, plagas Egypti cernentis et in promerita obcecatione perdurantis, *omnibus diebus vite sue*<sup>283</sup> sicut a presumptionis<sup>284</sup> sue protervitate non destitit, luminum amissorum solatio caruit. Ob huius<sup>285</sup> equidem tyranni crudelissimi<sup>286</sup> iustissimum supplicium, innatus est horror *regibus Anglie*, ut ne<sup>287</sup> unus profecto successorum eius civitatem *Oxinefordie*<sup>288</sup> presumat<sup>289</sup> intrare. Frideswida vero iam quasi in heremum promota, soli Deo vacare studuit, solum Cristum pre oculis, solum in mente, solum in animo semper habebat. Non *diebus* aut *noctibus* vacabat de eo loqui, ipsum venerari, et assiduus interpellare precibus. *Mansit autem tribus ferme annis* in prefati *memoris* solitudine, sed non incolis ignota. Neque enim poterat lucerna Dei diutius abscondi, cuius odor luxque virtutum usquequaque diffundebatur.

(14) Fuit sane in *predicta Bentona puella* generis stemate nequaquam ignobili, que cecitatis incommodo ab hoste antiquo percussa, sibimet oneri et parentibus dolori extitit. At miseratio divina insultantis inimici proterviam in femine dampnum ulterius non sustinuit. *Dormienti* etenim, astitit ei *quidam in sompnis*<sup>290</sup> *dicens*, 'Vade,' inquit, 'in lucum'<sup>291</sup> ad habitaculum virginum, et *stilla de beate Frideswide manibus* manante, dum *manus* abluerit, *oculos tuos linito, visumque recipies*.<sup>292</sup> Expergefacta mulier et leta admodum effecta, ubi se primum dies terris apparuit, que in sompnis *viderat* parentibus indicare non distulit. Illi vero, congratulantes filie,<sup>292</sup> ac si iam<sup>293</sup> visum recuperasset, iter ilico arripientes, ad virginum incessu celeri perveniunt mansionem, et astantes pre foribus pulsantesque obnixe postulant, quatinus adesse mereantur Frideswide manus suas lavanti. Quod cum non negaretur petentibus, et si vix unquam sustinisset ab aliqua sibi sororum aquam effundi manus abluerit, verumtamen istis adesse non<sup>294</sup> abnuvit, veluti non eam<sup>295</sup> lateret, cur affore tantopere<sup>296</sup> postulassent. Stillam itaque puella<sup>297</sup> decidentem, quam primam<sup>298</sup> potuit avidissime rapuit, qua cum *oculos linivisset*, dicto citius recuperavit obtutum. O quam innocens manibus et mundo corde virgo, cuius e manibus quod immundum putabatur, ad tante salutis profuit ministerium! Desinant, queso, qui contra Redemptoris promissa garriunt, in evangelio dicentis, 'Capillus de capite vestro non peribit.'<sup>299</sup> Desinant, inquam. Pretiosior etenim est capillus qui ad munimentum capitis et ornamentum prebetur, qui de carne nascitur et in carne radicatur, quam sordes ex sudoris coagulo constipate seu ex

282 que C, G] qua M  
 283 diebus vite sue C] vite sue diebus M, vite diebus sue G  
 284 a presumptionis vite G  
 285 huius C, G] cuius M  
 286 om. C  
 287 ne C, G] nec M  
 288 Oxinefordie G] Oxenefordiam M, Oxonie C  
 289 presumat C] [pre] sumat M, presumant G  
 290 in sompnis] om. C  
 291 in lucum inquit C  
 292 om. C  
 293 iam C, G] eam (with m erased) M  
 294 non adesse C  
 295 eam non C  
 296 tanto opere G  
 297 puella C, G] om. M  
 298 primam M, C] primum G  
 299 Luke xxi.18.

rebus quibuslibet contrectatis superficiem cutis fedantes. Et ecce, quia nec ille in Dei servis et ancillis a virtutum officio vacant,<sup>300</sup> igitur, qui per ancille sue sordium ablutionem potuit excecate puelle visum restituere, potest redivos in resurrectione capillos<sup>301</sup> capiti vel cetero ut libet corpori apponere. Stupendum sane<sup>302</sup> miraculum, stupenda virtus! Melior est plane acquisitio talis argento et auro<sup>303</sup> ac lapidibus quantumvis pretiosis. Hinc quoque exclamare libet spei plena dictante letitia. O 'Domine, Dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in'<sup>304</sup> omnibus operibus tuis! *Revertentes* autem cum gaudio, factum hoc diffamaverunt per omnia confinia sua.

(15) Sed non virgo prudentissima<sup>305</sup> sustinuit quoad adulationis procellosus favor vas olei e suis excuteret manibus, ut veniente Sponso non haberet unde lampadum<sup>306</sup> suarum lumen informaret.<sup>307</sup> Unde et hominum pro facti magnitudine cum inmani<sup>308</sup> eam admiratione visere cupientium, laudes neiticam sibi profuturas, fugere iudicavit utilius. Convocatis igitur solitudinis sue *consodalibus*,<sup>309</sup> 'Arbitror,' inquit, 'iam oportunum esse ut proprio appropinquemus *cenobio*. Sorores namque nostre aut sollicitate<sup>310</sup> pro nobis, ut assolet, aut in absentia nostra in tristitie<sup>311</sup> abyssum corruentes, a bono, quod absit, proposito fortasse<sup>312</sup> destiterunt.' Sic fatur, et *naviculam preparatam* cum sororibus conscendens, prepeti valde<sup>313</sup> cursu ad predium civitati propinquum quod Buneseia dicitur, ope navigantium perducitur. E navi quippe<sup>314</sup> progressa, locumque pervidendo permetiens, utile duxit tantillum a civitate defore, et dilecte quieti operam dare. Quo et virginibus quas in cenobio dimiserat venire non esset onerosum, et civibus semper quod pro novitate stupeant querentibus minus aptum. Erat in predicto predio locus multigenis arboribus consitus, qui pro multitudine diversi generis spinarum lingua Saxonica Thornbiri<sup>315</sup> nuncupabatur,<sup>316</sup> solitarius<sup>317</sup> siquidem et religioni aptissimus. In quo extimplo construxit oratorium, et quam plurima edificia sanctorum usibus competentissima. Et quoniam fluminis alveus longius aberat, inopportunumque sibi videbatur quod sorores illuc usque ad hauriendum aquam<sup>318</sup> procederent, fontem precibus impetravit qui nunc usque superest, plurimis prestans beneficia sanitatum potantibus.<sup>319</sup> Hic latere, hic dilecte<sup>320</sup> quieti operam dare et hominum vitare frequentiam sperabat.<sup>321</sup>

(16) Quid est quod conaris, Deo dilecta virgo, quid inquam? Latebras queris,<sup>322</sup> at

<sup>300</sup> vacant C, G] vacabat M

<sup>301</sup> capillos C, G] om. M

<sup>302</sup> sane C, G] valde M

<sup>303</sup> argento et auro C] auro et argento M, G. Based on Prov. iii.14.

<sup>304</sup> Ps. viii. 2 or 10.

<sup>305</sup> Sed virgo prudentissima non C

<sup>306</sup> lampadarum G

<sup>307</sup> Echoes Matt.xxv.

<sup>308</sup> inmani C, G] in manu M

<sup>309</sup> consodalibus C, G] sodalibus M

<sup>310</sup> sollicitate C] sollicitudine M, G

<sup>311</sup> in tristitie] inercie G

<sup>312</sup> om. C

<sup>313</sup> valde C, G] om. M

<sup>314</sup> igitur C

<sup>315</sup> Thornberi G

<sup>316</sup> nuncupatur C

<sup>317</sup> solitariis C

<sup>318</sup> aquam C] om. M, G

<sup>319</sup> potantibus M, G] petentibus C

<sup>320</sup> dilectam C

<sup>321</sup> superabat G

<sup>322</sup> Latebras queris] om. C



latere diu non prevalet. Dominus in evangelio dicit, 'Non potest civitas abscondi supra montem posita.'<sup>323</sup> Tu prorsus civitas es regis omnium Cristi, turribus virtutum et propugnaculis operum bonorum constructa, et supra Montem illum fundata, qui 'lapis absconditus de monte sine manibus,'<sup>324</sup> universum implevit orbem. Sed tu te grandi premis humilitate, et 'qui se humiliaverit,' inquit idem<sup>325</sup> Dominus, 'exaltabitur.'<sup>326</sup> Esto. Nequaquam hominum te perquiret curiositas, quia mundo crucifixa es, sed non ob hoc ab inquisitione tui desistet miseranda<sup>327</sup> invalidorum et<sup>328</sup> anxia necessitas. Ecce prope te infortunatus iuvenis in villa que dicitur *Seuecordia*, dum *securi die Dominica ligna incideret*, nullam diei *Dominice resurrectionis* reverentiam prestans, cuius manus – sed horreo referens – ilico *manubrio* adherens, adeo incenditur, ut pre doloris intolerantia terribiliter clamans vicinos vel invitatus ad sui cogat spectaculum accurrere. Nec enim laxare manum valet<sup>329</sup> pre dolore, aut *digitos* a manubrio solvere. Stat igitur miser<sup>330</sup> clamans et ciulans, stant parentes eius flentes et semetipsos pugnis cedentes, necnon et vicini pavidi ire Dei vindicantis usque ad mortem tormenta metuentes. Quidni? Enimvero cernunt penam in homine<sup>331</sup> intolerabilem, nec unde ferant<sup>332</sup> opem. Tandem ad se invicem conversi, 'Nunquid non potest,' inquit, 'beatissima virgo Frideswida ab hoc tormento filium nostrum piis absolvere meritis, cuius e manibus stilla decedens, cece puelle visum restituere valuit? Ducamus et hunc ad habitaculum ipsius, ut miserta nostri liberet filium nostrum.' Aptè sane. Fidem quippe vestram cum exempli propositione vehementer approbabo. Abstraite<sup>333</sup> queso latitare volentem, abstraite inquam, et impetrantes<sup>334</sup> quod pre pietate negare non poterit,<sup>335</sup> palam omnibus<sup>336</sup> facite.<sup>337</sup> Quantum apud Deum valent<sup>338</sup> merita, que non propriam, sed illius querunt gloriam!<sup>339</sup> Nec mora, amne transito, sistitur iuvenis ante habitaculum virginis. Clamatur ad ipsam, et vocem interrumpente singultu salutis petitur remedium. 'Beata,' inquit, 'Frideswida, miserere iuvenis, ob proprium<sup>340</sup> delictum tormenta patientis. Novimus enim, et valde novimus, quoniam si volueris, et illius noxa tuis relaxabitur precibus, et salus pristina redonabitur.' Ad hanc vocem tam luctuosam, pre tam grandi miseria ciulantem, quid facies,<sup>341</sup> virgo? Numquid redibunt<sup>342</sup> miseri misericordia frustrati? Nunquid non erogabit pietas, quod denegare parabat latendi voluntas? Ecce infelices parentes precibus instant, et iuxta vocem Salvatoris querentes pulsant, ut intercessionem tuam noxa<sup>343</sup> filio suo dimittatur, et salutis remedium conferatur. Tandem

<sup>323</sup> Matt. v.14.

<sup>324</sup> Dan. ii.34.

<sup>325</sup> idem C, G] om. M

<sup>326</sup> Matt. xxiii.12.

<sup>327</sup> merenda C

<sup>328</sup> etiam G

<sup>329</sup> valet laxare manum C

<sup>330</sup> om. C

<sup>331</sup> in homine] om. C

<sup>332</sup> ferat G

<sup>333</sup> abstraite C, G] abstruite M

<sup>334</sup> inprecantes C

<sup>335</sup> poterat et G

<sup>336</sup> hominibus C

<sup>337</sup> Sense unclear: a word such as ostendere or revelare perhaps omitted.

<sup>338</sup> valeant G

<sup>339</sup> Echoes John vii.18.

<sup>340</sup> ob proprium] obprobrium C

<sup>341</sup> facis G

<sup>342</sup> redibit G

<sup>343</sup> noxa a G

igitur *pietate* victa procidit<sup>344</sup> Frideswida, et lacrimis *ita* precatur obortis.<sup>345</sup> *Adonay, Domine Deus*, pater omnipotens *magne et mirabilis*, qui per legis latorem *Moysen* populum tuum *Israel* iugo servitutis oppressum liberasti, et Ninivitas per *Ionam* in *ventre ceti illesum* ab impietatis errore revocasti, te precor, Domine *pie et misericors*, per Unigenitum tuum Redemptorem nostrum horum virorum actibus prefiguratum, ne longes misericordiam tuam<sup>346</sup> ab his<sup>347</sup> famulis tuis, sed presta quod petunt, ut cognoscant *quia tu es* potens in omnibus operibus tuis, *permanens in omnibus seculis*. Hoc dicto, *signoque salutifere crucis*<sup>348</sup> impresso, manus a manubrio solvitur, et pristinae saluti restituitur.

(17) Modico profecto intercedente tempore, dum intempesta nocte *piscatores* quidam insidentes navicule laxatis in *capturam retibus* predam expectarent, et sompnolentia urgente obdormirent, unus eorum a demonio repente correptus volutabatur, et post paululum facto<sup>349</sup> impetu in<sup>350</sup> quendam consodalium, *dentibus laniare et manibus illum prefocare* parabat. Ceteris hinc horroris et meroris causa fuit. Attamen reliqui prevalentes ei, *manibus post tergum revinctis, ducunt*<sup>351</sup> ad habitaculum *virginis*. Quem cum fuisset intuita, condolens miserie hominum qui ob proprium<sup>352</sup> delictum ad tantam devenere miseriam, ut demonum insolentie traderentur, ingemuit, et ab alto vocem revocans suspirio, lacrimis habundantissime perfusa, preces prius ad Dominum et abinde manum<sup>353</sup> porrexit ad miserum, salutiferum *crucis* adversus demonem depingens *signum*. Ac deinde, *Adiuvo te,* inquit,<sup>354</sup> *Sathana*, per nomen magnum Filii Dei vivi et Domini nostri Iesu Christi, *recede ab hoc homine* ad ipsius *imaginem formato*, et abhinc amplius ne presumas vexare illum. Ad hanc vocem virginis, quasi letali percussus vulnere, corruit homo, et auctore mortis eiecto, quo male fortis fuerat, *factus est velud mortuus*, ut qualis fuerit in anima, tali obsessus ab hospite, corporis hoc indicaretur specie.<sup>355</sup> Quod cernens virgo accessit, et manu iniecta, *Surge,* inquit, *homo, in nomine Iesu Christi Nazareni.* Qui statim surrexit, mentis et corporis incolumitati restitutus. Nec ille reticuit factum, sed quocunque procedebat in auditu omnium predicabat, quam potenter curatus fuerit *per merita* Deo dilecte *Frideswide*.

(18) His et aliis quam plurimis virgo *beatissima* refulgens *miraculis*, dierum succedentium alternatione, ad extremam vite temporalis communi<sup>356</sup> urgente necessitate decedebat horam. Et quoniam tantarum virtutum quantitatem<sup>357</sup> per illam Salutis Auctor<sup>358</sup> operatus est Deus,<sup>359</sup> vix scriptori credula foret mortalis infirmitas. Pluribus admodum intermissis, unum opus eius,<sup>360</sup> mirificum Dei inestimabili virtute consummatum,<sup>361</sup> reticere indignum valde iudico. Quod revera pro caritate magnifica et

<sup>344</sup> procidit C] procedit M, G

<sup>345</sup> precatur obortis] precabatur abatis C, precatur abortis G

<sup>346</sup> om. C

<sup>347</sup> huius G

<sup>348</sup> om. G

<sup>349</sup> om. G

<sup>350</sup> om. G

<sup>351</sup> ducunt Teum C

<sup>352</sup> obprobrium amended to ob proprium C

<sup>353</sup> manus C

<sup>354</sup> inquit te C

<sup>355</sup> hoc indicaretur specie C] hec indicaretur species M, hoc indicaret species G

<sup>356</sup> om. C

<sup>357</sup> quantitatem C] quantas M, G

<sup>358</sup> salutis auctor om. C

<sup>359</sup> deus Teum C

<sup>360</sup> opus eius] est opus C, eius opus G

<sup>361</sup> consummatum Teum C

constantia pietatis, nequaquam minus obstupendum esse arbitror, quam pro magnitudine miraculi. Instante iam<sup>362</sup> die luctuoso quidem hominibus, angelis autem letabundo, quo Frideswida e corpore fuerat migratura, ad proprium redire *cenobium* equum duxit, quatinus illic ultimum Deo commendatum spiritum redderet,<sup>363</sup> ubi primum in religionis habitu ipsi servire studuit. Repedanti ergo sacrosancte virgini, tota ilico in obviam ruit civitas, et ecce inter *cleri* populiue utriusque sexus congratulantium turbas, adest *iuvenis lepra* immanissima<sup>364</sup> adeo tabe et pustulis<sup>365</sup> toto deformatus corpore, ut de forma hominis nichil fere inesse videretur preter exteriora liniamenta, velut in trunco ad formam humani corporis desecto, antequam artifex membrorum ac sensuum, convenientiam distinctam imprimat arte magistra. Sic enim ulcera, sic tumores, sic iniquus color cuncta obdlexerant, ut monstrum potius putaretur quam homo. Iste profecto non modo miserabilis verum extra modum horribilis, cum appropinquaret ad sanctam, quanta potuit voce horribiliter quidem rauca<sup>366</sup> emisit sonitum satis confusum, verba tamen exprimentem, dicens, '*Adiuro te, virgo Frideswida*, per Deum omnipotentem, *ut des mihi osculum in nomine Iesu Christi Filii eius Unigeniti*.' O durum omnino sermonem, O dura sane postulatio! Petis, iuvenis leprose, virginem<sup>367</sup> natura uti<sup>368</sup> regiam<sup>369</sup> sed, quia Christi ancillam, non moribus delicatam, tibi dare osculum, in quem mares animo<sup>370</sup> prorsus duriores figere abhorrent obtutum? Plane postulatio tua, ni fides eam magnifica proferri compulisset, forte<sup>371</sup> putaretur insanientium improbitate prolata. Quidni? Homines, ut dixi, te intueri pre horrore nequeunt, pro sanie profluente tangere, pro fetore intolerabili tibi<sup>372</sup> appropinquare, et osculum petis a regia virgine? Esto. Nisi<sup>373</sup> leprosus fueris, attamen masculus, num tibi porrigere poterit osculum, que virilem ab ineunte etate non novit attactum? Sed inquis, 'Morbi mei intolerabilis estus, et non quem tu commemoras sexus, hoc me petere compellit.'<sup>374</sup> Credo enim quod ad tactum oris eius mundissimi, fugiet morbida immunditia corporis mei.' O res miranda et seculis inaudita preteritis! Caritatis igne succensa virgo, contra opinionem omnium ilico accessit, et *signo crucis* prius impresso, leproso contulit *osculum*. Facile etenim<sup>375</sup> proculdubio sit quod a caritate vera procedit. Abhorrent intuentes, et cum admiratione non modica rei exitum expectant. Stupendum plane miraculum! Non enim minus quam Naaman Siro septena et mistica iuxta sermonem Helisei in Iordane ablutio,<sup>376</sup> quantum ad corporis sanitatem spectat, huic una pia cum humili devotione puelle sacratissime deosculatio contulit. Ore etenim virginis os leprosi tangitur, et continuo toto corpore *mundatur*. Cutis aspera ad<sup>377</sup> squamarum modum<sup>378</sup> solvitur et velud exuvie colubrine deponitur, ac statim fit caro ipsius sicut caro pueri parvuli. Quis tanto presens

362 autem G

363 spiritum redderet C, G] redderet spiritum M

364 immanissima lepra C

365 pustulis G

366 rauca amended to 'et' rauc 'e' C

367 virginem 'teneram' C

368 om. G

369 regiam C, G] regiam amended to regia M

370 omnino G

371 forte C] fore M, G

372 om. C

373 Nisi] Non MSS

374 petere compellit C, G] copellit petere M

375 enim C

376 Ref. to IV Kings v.

377 ab G

378 nodis G

non expavit miraculo? Quis a laude Cristi os continere potuit? Repletur letitia civitas. Exultant omnes, congratulantur universi, et in tante patrone adventu se nequaquam pre gaudio capiunt. Sed non his<sup>379</sup> virgo extollitur, immo in dies quanto amplioribus virtutibus augebatur, tanto semetipsam et corpore et spiritu castigabat humilior.

(19) Die tandem pretiose dissolutionis eius instante, ecce angelus Domini astitit oranti, dicens, 'Quartodecimo kalendas Novembris, in ipsa nocte que Dominice aurora terminabitur, finis tibi, Frideswida, agonis a Deo<sup>380</sup> decernitur, et merces sempiterna preparatur.<sup>381</sup> Et quoniam terrenum patris palatium contempsisti, Regis eterni introibis thalamum, ubi lux<sup>382</sup> immarcessibilis, et vita nescia mortis.' Hec dicens, discessit, et Fridesuvidam febris gravissima corripuit, unde<sup>383</sup> et viribus corporis cepit ilico destitui. Quod cum civibus innotuisset, quasi ad nutricem et matrem conveniunt ad illam, monita salutis cum gemebunda exigentes devotione. Quos pio ut erat pectore a desiderio non fraudabat, set singulis egritudinis sue diebus conamine quodam quasi contra<sup>384</sup> ius nature verbum salutis in commune disseminabat. Etenim caritas impendebat, quod virium destitutio denegabat. (20) Cum vero Sabbati dies illucesceret, et nox instaret iam proxima qua e corpore virgo erat migratura, secus se assidentibus inquit, 'Hodie mihi fodite sepulchrum in basilica beatissime semperque virginis Marie genitricis Dei et Domini mei Iesu Cristi, cuius munita presidio, securior spirituum malignorum insidias contempnere, securior ante tribunal eiusdem Domini mei Filii eius valeam assistere. Et quoniam eius cras solennis et solita resurrectionis celebrabitur<sup>385</sup> memoria, et ego hac nocte post tertium gallicinium de presenti seculo migrabo, nolo pro me quemquam in tanta et tam illustri feria fodiendo fatigari.' Hec<sup>387</sup> dixit, et sibi eucharistiam affert precepit. Quam cum gratiarum actione suscipiens, benedicebat Dominum. (21) Et intentis ad superna luminibus, aspexit inde venientes ad se virgines, quas in veneratione maxima semper habebat, quoad inter homines in terris degebat. Et advenientibus suppliciter<sup>388</sup> inclinans, letabunda voce proclamabat, 'Bene venitis,<sup>389</sup> virgines beate.' O 'quam magna multitudo dulcedinis tue, Domine, quam abscondisti timentibus te, perfecisti autem eis qui sperant in te'.<sup>390</sup> 'Quis non timebit te, Domine, et magnificabit nomen tuum, quia tu solus pius'.<sup>391</sup> Ne ancilla tua ad te migratura<sup>392</sup> Sathane paveret occursum, qui etiam victus et confusus victoribus victricibusque a castris suis<sup>393</sup> ad te redeuntibus occursare et fallacie sue calumpnias assolet apponere,<sup>394</sup> munivisti<sup>395</sup> semitas gradientis munimine quo nosti, et dedisti ei beatas iam<sup>396</sup> virgines in decessu suo cernere, quas ante dederas quadam quasi familiari veneratione in vita diligere. Hinc<sup>397</sup> quippe constare

<sup>379</sup> hiis G

<sup>380</sup> a Deo om. C

<sup>381</sup> preparabitur C

<sup>382</sup> lux 'est' C

<sup>383</sup> inde G

<sup>384</sup> contra C, G] om. M

<sup>385</sup> celebratur C

<sup>387</sup> Hoc G

<sup>388</sup> simpliciter C

<sup>389</sup> veniatis G

<sup>390</sup> Ps. xxxi.20.

<sup>391</sup> Rev. xv.4.

<sup>392</sup> migratura ad MSS

<sup>393</sup> suis C] tuis M, G

<sup>394</sup> apponere C, G] opponere M

<sup>395</sup> munivisti C] minivisti altered to munisti M, munisti G

<sup>396</sup> beatas iam C, G] iam beatas M

<sup>397</sup> Huic G

arbitror quoniam tuorum mentibus fidelium inseris, ut quidam hos alii vero illos famulorum famularumve tuarum qui iam ad te<sup>398</sup> meritorum evaserunt gratia, quodam speciali pre ceteris venerentur honore. Ad vocem itaque<sup>399</sup> proclamantis, commote que assistebant<sup>400</sup> sorores quas alloquatur interrogant. Quibus illa, 'Num,' inquit,<sup>401</sup> 'non cernitis sacratissimas adventare virgines, Katerinam atque Ceciliam?' Et ad illas denuo conversa, dixit,<sup>402</sup> 'Modo veniam, Domine mee, modo veniam.' Et valedicens astantibus, hora quam<sup>403</sup> predixerat migravit ad Dominum. Ipsa quidem hora migrationis eius, lux celitus emissa habitaculum quo sacratissimum ipsius iacebat corpus subito illustrans, ita totam replevit urbem subsequente<sup>404</sup> odore inestimabiliter suavissimo, quatinus non dubitaretur Unigenitum affuisse Patris luminum cuius nomen unguentum effusum<sup>405</sup> universum implevit orbem.

(22) Et ut eam vivere post mortem non esset ambiguum, ecce *paralyticus*, etiam lingue destitutus officio, *vir* admodum *dives*, famulorum manibus deferitur ad feretrum super quod repositum erat sanctissime corpus virginis. Quod cum tetigisset, confestim sic solidatus est, ut exiliens in laudem Dei et sancte Frideswide magno cum clamore prorumperet. (23) Cumque corpus illud castissimum<sup>406</sup> cum magna frequentia utriusque ordinis et sexus deferretur ad sepulchrum, accidit ut quidam ab umbilico deorsum vitio nervorum ita constrictus, ut officio quoque gressuum destitueretur, scannulis nitens quia pedibus non potuit, et manuum<sup>407</sup> iuvamine miserabile trahens corpus, exequias virginis subsequeretur. Sed quoniam non potuit feretrum preciosissimi oneris aut gradiendo assequi, aut ad illam cum in<sup>408</sup> ecclesiam perventum fuit pre constipatione intrare *populi*, fecit quod potuit, magnis vocibus tanquam ad vivam, ad iam defunctam proclamavit, dicens, 'O inestimabilis virgo pietatis, O sponsa Fontis misericordie, quamdiu est ex quo<sup>409</sup> desideravi venire ad te? Sed me miserum cum vitio corporis vitium quoque impedit male sane mentis. Peccatis etenim meis id promerentibus, nec te mihi vivam<sup>410</sup> nec cernere concessum est defunctam. Veruntamen, domina mea, converte nunc ad me viscera misericordie tue, et sana me ab hac invaliditudine. Enimvero<sup>411</sup> certe credo quia hoc tibi facillimum est, quoniam ad Illum iam pervenire meruisti cui nichil esse potest difficile.' Hec proclamans, omnium<sup>413</sup> secus astantium in se convertit oculos, cum ecce crepans vehementer nervorum contractio solvitur, et iuncture gressuum solidantur. Itaque consurgens repente prosilit homo, et immunis a dolore letabundaque cum vociferatione proclamans, in manibus sustulit scannulos, proruensque per turbas ad sepulturam prorupit virginis. Et proiectis ibi scannulis, gratias agit<sup>415</sup> Deo et gloriose famule sue Frideswide. Tunc meror omnium in congratulationem<sup>416</sup>

398 om. G

399 om. C

400 astabant C

401 Num inquit] Numquid C

402 dixit C, G] ait M

403 quam C, G] quam altered to qua M

404 subsequente C, G] subsequentem M

405 construction unclear.

406 illud castissimum corpus C

407 manum G

408 ad illam cum in] cum ad illam G

409 ex quo] ex exquo G

410 te mihi vivam C, G] vivam te mihi M

411 Et enim vero G. From this point the C text has flaked off.

413 omni G

415 egit G

416 congratulatione G

conversus est, quoniam cernebant quanta pro meritis famule sue post huius etiam vite decursum, et dum celebrabantur<sup>417</sup> exequie, faciebat Deus mirabilia. (24) *Sepulta est* beata virgo in basilica intemerate semper virginis Dei genitricis *Marie in parte australi* prope ripam fluminis Thamesis.<sup>418</sup> Sic enim se tunc habebat situs basilice usque ad tempus regis Athelredi, qui, combustis<sup>419</sup> in ea Dacis qui confugerant illuc, basilice ambitum sicut ante voverat<sup>420</sup> ampliavit. Hinc nimirum actum est, quia sepulchrum, quod ante fuerat in parte,<sup>421</sup> medium extunc esse contigit. Inibi<sup>422</sup> quippe tot tantaque per illius merita facta sunt mirabilia, ut nec hominum ea fides capere, nec scriptorum posset colligere sollicitudo, prestante *Domino nostro Iesu Cristo*, cui est honor et imperium in *secula seculorum*, Amen.

#### APPENDIX C: THE INVENTION AND FIRST TRANSLATION OF ST. FRIDESWIDE'S BONES

The production of Life B by Prior Robert of Cricklade suggests an intention to promote the cult. If so, the logical next step would have been a solemn translation of Frideswide's bones into a raised shrine. While it is inconceivable that such a scholar as Robert, with wide contacts and hagiographical interests, did not contemplate this, it was not achieved during his priorate. The canons were faced with the problem that they were not completely sure where the relics lay. According to Life A, Frideswide had originally been buried on the south side of St. Mary's church. Life B adds that after the 1002 fire, King Æthelred enlarged the church in such a way that the grave was thereafter central. The story is taken up by a narrative (Text I), of unknown source, which survives as a continuation of Life A in its abbreviated 14th-century version L (above, p.93). This describes how Abingdon Abbey had held the church and its possessions between the expulsion of the secular clerks and the installation of the Augustinians (in other words at some date between 1086 and 1122), a fact which aroused fears that the monks had stolen the precious corpse.

An investigation was therefore initiated, presumably to be identified with the 'invention' of St. Frideswide later celebrated on 15 May.<sup>423</sup> It cannot be dated more precisely than to between the regularisation of the house and the translation of the relics, in other words between 1111 × 22 and 1180. It is likely enough that the Augustinians wanted to reassure themselves of Frideswide's presence as soon as their community was established: similar 'inspections' of Edward the Confessor's and St. Cuthbert's bodies occurred in 1102 and 1104.<sup>424</sup> On the other hand, it may have been an immediate prelude to the events of 1180: clearly it was essential to avoid the embarrassment of staging a solemn translation from what might prove to be an empty grave.

After fasting for three days, the canons entered the church secretly at dead of night and began to excavate the grave by torchlight. Finding an empty stone coffin, they almost despaired, 'but urged by an astute man amongst them they set about digging deeper. For he said that it had once been a common practice to put empty coffins over the bodies of saints, so that if thieves came intent on stealing the body they would go away deluded.'

<sup>417</sup> celebrabantur G] celebrantur M

<sup>418</sup> Thamensis G

<sup>419</sup> combustis G] combussis M

<sup>420</sup> voverat G] noverat M (voverat is supported by extract in Cart. St. Frid. op.cit. note 23, i, 9).

<sup>421</sup> Sic M, G and frags. of C. Unless australi is omitted, in parte evidently means 'on one side'; cf. above note 267.

<sup>422</sup> In ibi que G

<sup>423</sup> C.R. Cheney, *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History* (1970), 51.

<sup>424</sup> F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (1979), 268-9.



Thus encouraged, the excavators continued until they found a skeleton, whereupon all their torches were miraculously extinguished and re-kindled. Convinced by the heaven-sent sign that they had indeed found Frideswide, they closed the grave and left the corpse in peace.

'Thereafter', continues the narrative, 'miracles started to come thicker than before, and the virgin's grave was visited more diligently by people from many parts.' Prior Philip, elected during 1174 × 9, organised the translation. The ceremony is described (Text II) in the prologue to a miracle-collection which Philip wrote soon afterwards (Bodl. MS Digby 177); a transcript of the same passage continues the narrative in L. The Digby manuscript, of c.1200, contains an erasure of three words which are completely omitted by L, suggesting that the latter derives from Digby; on the other hand, L expands Digby's *in feretro* to *in feretro ad hoc decenter ornato*. It is at least clear that the L scribe had a copy of Prior Philip's book, for he goes on to give a statistical summary of the miracles and to quote one verbatim.

According to Philip the translation took place in 1180 on 12 February, the day on which its feast was later celebrated.<sup>425</sup> In January Henry II had held a council at Oxford,<sup>426</sup> bringing together a suitable collection of notables including the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Winchester, Ely, Norwich and St. David's, the bishop-elect of St. Andrew's and the papal legate to Scotland. Presumably the translation was timed to follow the council, though Prior Philip did not miss the opportunity of recognising God's providence in so distinguished a gathering to honour Frideswide. The party came into the church, and the archbishop 'opened with the greatest reverence the grave in which her most blessed corpse had rested for some 480 years. With a great crowd of clergy and people standing around and rejoicing, he took the virgin's glorious bones from the grave and laid them in a feretory fittingly embellished for this purpose, so that so precious a pearl, who proclaimed her life in heaven by such glorious miracles, should lie no longer hidden in the earth. Then the bystanders were filled with a most delightful scent which refreshed them like spices, so that it seemed not inappropriate to say of her, "The smell of thine ointments is above all manner of spices."'

# I: *The rediscovery of St. Frideswide's bones, 1111 × 79*

(British Library, MS Lansdowne 436, ff.103-3v)

Iacuit autem beata virgo Frideswida, miraculis clara, in eodem quo sepulta fuit loco, videlicet in ecclesia sua in honore Sancte Trinitatis, beate Virginis Marie et Omnium Sanctorum dedicata, ferme quadringentis octoginta annis. In cuius temporis spatio, varii fuerunt illius monasterii status. Nam processu temporis, monialibus de loco illo recedentibus, monasterium cum possessionibus optinuerunt clerici seculares. Quibus ob eorum insolentiam exclusis, monachi Abydonienses per aliquot tempora omnia habuerunt. Finaliter vero canonici regulares, viri religiosi, illuc introducti, pro maiori parte omnia recuperantes, usque hodie ibidem inhabitant. Qui post eorum adventum ad dictum monasterium, hesitantes an monachi predicti corpus virginis a sepulture sue loco abstulissent, indicto triduo ieiunio, secrete de nocte cum lumine copioso sepulchrum effodientes, sarcophagum lapideum vacuum invenerunt. Et cum iam quasi desperantes ab inceptis desistere proposuissent, cuiusdam discreti inter illos usi consilio profundius fodere conati

<sup>425</sup> Philip evidently uses the year beginning on 1 January: in other words 1180 by modern reckoning, not 1181. Henry II's presence in Oxford is consistent only with 1180, and John was only 'elect' of St. Andrew's until June 1180. The feast of the translation appears as 12 February in R. Stanton, *A Minology of England and Wales* (1892), 63, but wrongly (as 11 February) in Cheney, *Handbook*, 51. For this point I am grateful to Miss L. Dennison.

<sup>426</sup> R.W. Eyton, *Itinerary of Henry II* (1878), 230.

sunt. Dicebat autem quod quandoque sic fieri consuevit super sanctorum corpora poni sarcofaga vacua, ut fures, si forte venirent et corpus furari vellent, sic delusi recederent. Diligenter igitur fodientes ad corpus virginis pervenerunt, quod cum fieret omnia luminaria que habebant subito extincta sunt. Unde illi admirantes, cum non corpus virginis sed alicuius alterius se invenisse putarent, omnem dubietatem a cordibus eorum evidenti miraculo omnipotens Dominus misericorditer effugavit. Nam omnia luminaria prius extincta igne de superveniente divinitus sunt reaccensa, quod cum vidissent miraculum repleti gaudio magno Dominum collaudabant.<sup>427</sup> Certioresque de veritate affecti, corpus gloriosissimi<sup>428</sup> in eodem loco in pace dimiserunt.

Ceperunt autem extunc crebrius solito ibidem miracula fieri et a populis diversarum partium sepulchrum virginis devotius visitari. Inter hec multis revelationibus diversis super hoc preostensis, innumeris etiam precedentibus miraculis evidentibus, decretum est unanimi assensu, regis videlicet Henrici secundi illo tempore regnantis et in palatio suo extra Oxoniam tunc existentis, cleri etiam et populi, virginis corpus e terra elevari, et in locum eminentiorem debere transferri. Ad preces igitur et instantiam Philippi tunc prioris et totius conventus<sup>429</sup> . . .

## II: *The translation of the relics in 1180*

(Extract from the preface to Prior Philip's miracle collection, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 177 ff. 1<sup>v</sup>-2, printed *Acta Sanctorum: Octobris: VIII* (1853), 568-9; variants from incomplete version in British Library, MS Lansdowne 436, ff. 103<sup>v</sup>-4.)

Scripturus itaque miracula que temporibus nostris per merita beatissime virginis Frideswide Dominus operari dignatus est, ab eius translatione inchoandum duxi, que facta est anno ab incarnatione Domini m<sup>o</sup>c<sup>o</sup>lxxx<sup>o</sup>, regnante illustrissimo rege Anglorum Henrico secundo. Que quidem eo gloriosior apparet, quod eam non sub modio abscondi sed super candelabrum poni Dominus voluit, ut lucerna super candelabrum posita lucis sue radios ubique diffunderet. Eo nempe tempore idem gloriosus rex propter maxima et ardua regni negotia, reverendissimum patrem nostrum Ricardum Cantuariensem archiepiscopum, domnum quoque Ricardum Wintoniensem,<sup>430</sup> Galfridum Helyensem, Iohannem Norwicensem, Petrum Menevensem episcopos, et copiosam cleri multitudinem, proceres quoque et magnates regni sui ex omnibus Anglie partibus apud Oxenefordiam convocaverat, Deo nimirum id agente, ut pretiosa margarita, que tanto tempore terra iacuerat operta, gloriosius omnibus ostenderetur, cum ipsius revelationi terrena negotia, et cleri et populi tanta multitudo Domino quasi latenter id instigante ad hoc convocata, deservire viderentur. Predicto igitur invictissimo rege votis favente, suumque benignissime prebente consensum, ad preces et instantiam<sup>431</sup> Philippi tunc prioris et totius conventus, pridie idus Februarii idem<sup>432</sup> venerabilis archiepiscopus,<sup>433</sup> convocatis secum domino<sup>434</sup> Ricardo Wintoniensi, Galfrido Helyensi, Iohanne Norwicensi, Petro Menevensi episcopis, presente venerabili viro magistro Alexio tunc temporis ex delegatione domini pape Scotie legato, et magistro Iohanne tunc quidem electo, post modum autem episcopo,<sup>435</sup> Sancti Andree, ad

<sup>427</sup> written collaudent with da inserted MS

<sup>428</sup> gloriosissimi MS

<sup>429</sup> from here the text continues as in (II) below

<sup>430</sup> Wintoniensem MS

<sup>431</sup> L text begins here in continuation from (I) above

<sup>432</sup> idem] om. L

<sup>433</sup> archiepiscopus] pater dompnus Ricardus archiepiscopus Cantuariensis L

<sup>434</sup> domino] dominis venerabilibus L

<sup>435</sup> post . . . episcopo] erased Digby, om. L

eiusdem gloriosissime virginis<sup>436</sup> ecclesiam accedens, prius quidem indicto ieiunio, sepulcrum maxima cum devotione aperiens, ubi<sup>437</sup> per quadringentos et lxxx<sup>a</sup> circiter annos beatissimum eius corpus requieverat, astante et congaudente copiosa cleri et populi multitudine, gloriosa virginis ossa de sepulcro transtulit, et in feretro ad hoc decenter ornato<sup>438</sup> ea collocavit, ne tam pretiosa margarita terra diutius operta iaceret, que celebri miraculorum gloria se in celis vivere protestabatur. Odor denique suavissimus astantes replevit et aromatum more refocillavit, ut non inmerito de ea dictum videretur, 'Odor unguentorum'<sup>439</sup> tuorum super omnia aromata.<sup>440</sup> Precesserant sane translationem eius commonitiones creberrime, visiones plurime, revelationes gloriosissime, de quibus aliqua presenti inserere libet opusculo, ut beate virginis sanctitas posterorum memorie arcus inprimatur.

#### APPENDIX D: THE FRENCH CULT OF ST. FRIDESWIDE

No less enigmatic than the Oxford legend of St. Frideswide is its French counterpart: the cult of 'Ste. Fréwisse' long observed in a small village named Bomy in the Pas-de-Calais. Despite the Bollandists' lengthy discussion of it in 1853,<sup>441</sup> historians of Oxford have never given it more than a passing glance. At first sight it deserves no more, for much of the 'tradition' was clearly acquired from English sources in the late 16th or 17th century. Yet there is enough evidence to show that 'Ste. Fréwisse' was venerated at Bomy by the 12th century, and that her cult there was strikingly similar to St. Frideswide's at Binsey. Even though little new evidence has come to light since 1853, it seems appropriate here to provide an account in English of the Bomy cult, and to take speculation a little further.

Bomy (Fig. 4) lies 4½ miles (7 km.) south of the Roman town of Thérouanne, where a bishopric was re-established in the 7th century. The Roman road from Boulogne through Thérouanne to Amiens and Arras passes 4 miles (6 km.) north-east of Bomy, which thus lay on one of the main early medieval routes from England to many parts of Europe. Later in the middle ages it had a large parish, and was the centre both of a rural deanery and of a substantial lay *seigneurie*.<sup>442</sup>

Except for some tenuous archaeological data, and one crucial document to be discussed later, evidence for the cult derives essentially from three printed books of the 17th and 18th centuries:

(i) A 'Life of Ste. Fréwisse' by R.D. le Heudre, *curé* of Bomy in the mid 17th century. The Bollandists were unable to obtain a copy and none can be traced now, so this is only known from brief extracts in the later works of Malbrancq and de Neufville.

(ii) J. Malbrancq, *De Morinis* (3 vols., Tournai, 1639-54). A notoriously unreliable compilation on the history of the Thérouanne district, which nonetheless provides the only record of many ancient texts and traditions.

(iii) R.D. de Neufville, *La Vie de Sainte Fréwisse, Vierge, Religieuse Bénédictine, Honorée dans*

<sup>436</sup> virginis] *om. L*

<sup>437</sup> ubi] ubi ut dictum est *L*

<sup>438</sup> ad ... ornato *L*] *om. Digby*

<sup>439</sup> unguentorum *L*] unguentorum *Digby*

<sup>440</sup> From here *L* summarises the contents of Prior Philip's book and repeats one of the miracles.

<sup>441</sup> *Acta Sanct.* op. cit. note 57, 560-4.

<sup>442</sup> *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de la Morinie*, xiii (1864-9), 44-5, and map reproduced *Ibid.* xxvi (1898), frontispiece.

une *Chapelle de son Nom au Village de Bomy* (Saint-Omer, 1720).<sup>443</sup> A primarily devotional treatise written by the *curé* of Bomy for the benefit of his flock, drawing heavily on le Heudre and Malbrancq but adding some local information.

It must be said at once that the hagiographical material in these sources is utterly worthless: a garbled version of the Oxford 'Life B', with Bomy substituted for Bampton as the place of Frideswide's three-year exile.<sup>444</sup> In a revealing passage, Malbrancq praises the faithful of Bomy for keeping alive the cult so shamefully suppressed in Oxford since the 1560s, and notes that le Heudre had obtained much of his information from the English Catholic establishment in Saint-Omer.<sup>445</sup> Evidently le Heudre found himself presiding over a cult with no adequate tradition of its own, and made good the deficiency by adopting the Oxford story wholesale. Thus there is no reason to think that the legend in which Ste. Fréwisse comes from Oxford to Bomy in the 8th century is anything other than a late fabrication.

The topographical evidence is more interesting (Figs. 4-5).<sup>446</sup> The village and parish church of Bomy lie in a small valley, flanked on its eastern side by a wooded slope. Immediately west of the church is a motte,<sup>447</sup> presumably a predecessor of the late- and post-medieval seigneurial *château* further east. By the roadside half a mile (1 km.) south of the village is a powerful natural spring (Fig. 6A), gushing from a deep cleft in the chalk at the foot of the slope, which is still called 'la Fontaine de Sainte Fréwisse'. From the spring a stream, normally called la Laquette but sometimes known in the 19th century as 'le fleuve de Sainte Fréwisse',<sup>448</sup> runs northwards down the valley towards the village.

Near the spring there stood, until the Revolution, a small chapel and hermitage. In the 18th century this was under the *curé* of Bomy's jurisdiction, but was served and occupied by a succession of hermits appointed by the lords of the manor.<sup>449</sup> Its exact site (Fig. 5) is unfortunately the subject of some confusion. Malbrancq says that it lay 'below' (*subtus*) the spring,<sup>450</sup> while de Neufville locates the spring on the east side of the hermitage.<sup>451</sup> These references suggest either a very restricted site (c. 8 m. square) between the spring and the main road, or three meadows immediately west of the spring on the other side of the road; the latter, which contain indistinct earthworks c. 30 m. square opposite the spring, are believed locally to be the site of 'l'ancien village de Ste. Fréwisse' which preceded the modern village of Bomy.<sup>452</sup> On the other hand, neither site is consistent with Malbrancq's

<sup>443</sup> The only copy of this work which I have been able to trace is an incomplete one in the Bibliothèque Municipale at Saint-Omer, shelfmark 3412/83A2. A Xerox has now been deposited in the Bodleian Library.

<sup>444</sup> This is obvious from the accounts in Malbrancq i, 574-7, 582-3 and de Neufville 1-63; the sources which they cite (Matthew Paris, Polydore Virgil, Mabillon and le Heudre) all go back to 'Life B', with elements from William of Malmesbury's story.

<sup>445</sup> Malbrancq i, 583.

<sup>446</sup> The topographical observations in this section were made by Mr. Edward Impey during his visit in August 1987.

<sup>447</sup> Mr. Impey's observation.

<sup>448</sup> De Neufville, 101; *Acta Sanct.* op.cit. note 57, 564.

<sup>449</sup> De Neufville, 96: 'Dans cette Chapelle, il y a un espee de Benefice avec assignation de certains revenus pour decharger quelques messes toutes les semaines. Les Seigneurs de Bomy, qui l'ont fondé, s'en sont réservé la nomination.' The 18th-century hermits are discussed by P. Doyère, 'Ermites et Ermitages au Diocèse de Boulogne', *Bulletin Historique de la Société Académique des Antiquaires de la Morinie*, xviii (1952-7), 386-7. Cf. below, note 470.

<sup>450</sup> Malbrancq i, 684: 'necnon in proximo adsideat sacrariolum cum cella eremitica, hactenus culta ab anachoretis, subtus scaturiente lympa, desuper obumbrante sylva.'

<sup>451</sup> De Neufville, 101: 'Cette Fontaine est auprès de l'Hermitage de Bomy du côté de l'Orient... Cette source se nomme communement La Fontaine de Sainte Fréwisse. Elle est ainsi appelée d'un têmes immemorial.'

<sup>452</sup> Mr. Impey's observation, and statement from M. Devaux.

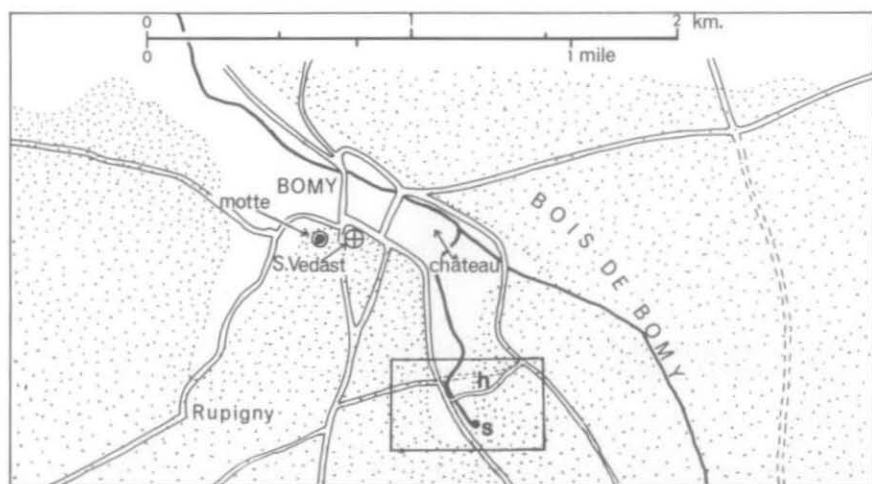
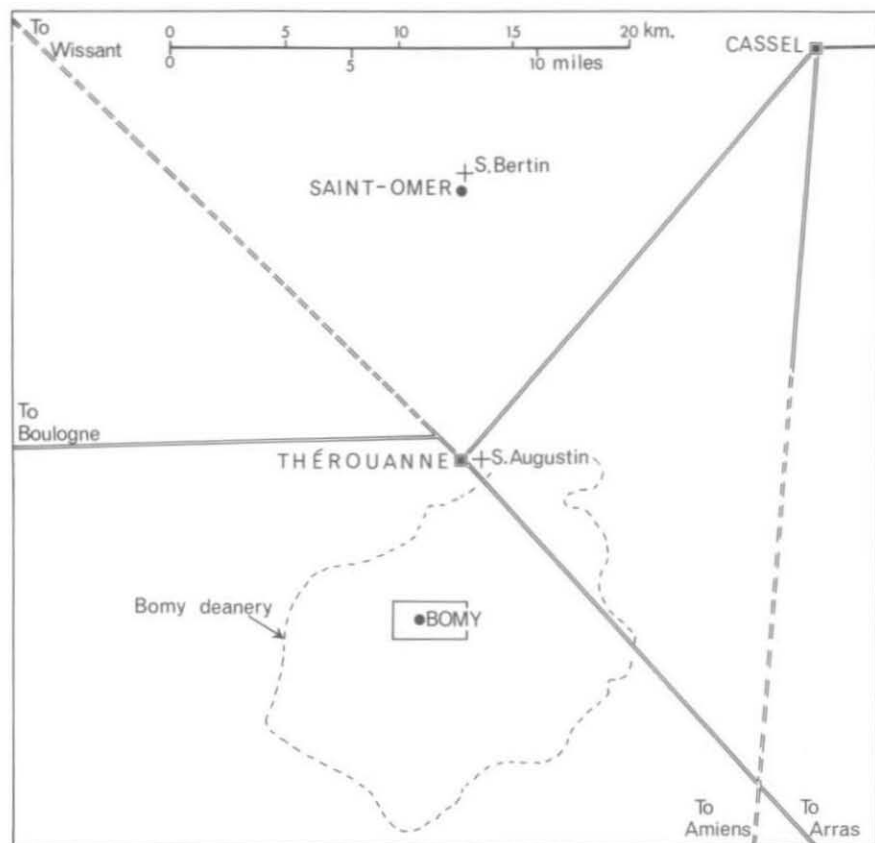


Fig. 4. The location and local topography of Bomy (land above 105m. stippled). **h** = hermitage site, **s** = St. Frideswide's spring.

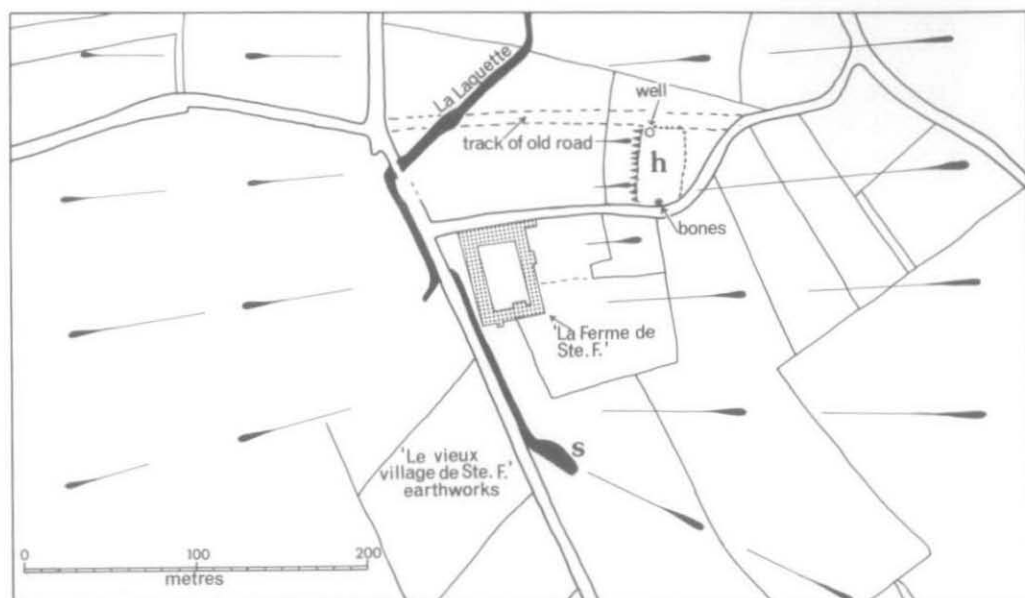


Fig. 5. The context of St. Frideswide's spring and hermitage, Bomy: for location see lower map in Fig. 4. **h** = hermitage site, **S** = St. Frideswide's spring. (After Carte Cadastrale de la Commune de Bomy, 1973, 2nd edn. 1983, and fieldwork by Edward Impey.)

statement that the hermitage was 'under an overshadowing wood',<sup>453</sup> or de Neufville's that it stood on 'a little hill at the foot of a wood, a place most appropriate for retreat and seclusion':<sup>454</sup> both imply a location further up the valley-side towards the wood, and thus north or north-east of the spring.

In fact, a site *c.* 200 m. north of the spring provides what seems to be conclusive archaeological evidence (Fig. 5). It lies south of an old west-east road, now disused but traceable as a hollow-way, and north of the modern 'chemin rurale dit de l'Hermitage'. A flat terrace between the two road-lines is bounded west by a line of old trees, beyond which the ground falls away steeply towards la Laquette. The southern part of the terrace has produced several inhumations, some cut by the modern lane;<sup>455</sup> this accords with de Neufville's statement that hermits of his own day often found human bones in the chapel garden.<sup>456</sup> In the north-west corner of the terrace is a stone-lined well, into which the chapel bell is reputed to have been dropped at the time of the Revolution. Recent excavation failed to find the bell, but produced instead a quantity of 15th- to 18th-century

<sup>453</sup> Loc. cit. note 450.

<sup>454</sup> De Neufville, 96: 'Cette Chapelle fait partie d'un Hermitage, qui est situé sur une petite colline au pied d'un bois, lieu fort propre à la retraite, et à la solitude. Elle est nommée, d'un têmes immémorial, la Chapelle de Sainte Frewisse'.

<sup>455</sup> Recent discoveries of burials are noted by M.M. Devaux, 'Note Préliminaire sur les Découvertes de Ste.-Fréwisse à Bomy', *Bulletin Historique du Haut-Pays*, iv.21 (1er semestre 1981), v-vii. In 1987 Mr. Impey observed skeletons in shallow graves protruding from a tree-hole on the edge of the modern road, in the position marked on Fig. 5.

<sup>456</sup> De Neufville, 106: 'Les Hermites modernes, commis pour le soin de cette Chapelle, assurent que bechant la terre de leur jardin, ils y ont trouvé plusieurs fois des ossements humains: preuve certaine que cet endroit étoit cet ancien cimetière de l'Eglise Paroissiale de Sainte Frewisse.'



pottery and several small terracotta statuettes of the Virgin and Child, probably thrown into the well when the chapel was destroyed;<sup>457</sup> the statuettes are presumably relics of the post-medieval cult of the Infant Jesus mentioned by de Neufville.<sup>458</sup> The excavator claims to have found remains of the chapel and hermitage nearby, but no plan is available. It can hardly be doubted that the hermitage stood here in at least the post-medieval period; the inconsistencies in the texts could perhaps be resolved by translating Malbrancq's *subtus* as 'downstream' and assuming that de Neufville wrote 'orient' in mistake for 'occident'.

At all events, le Heudre judged the chapel 'one of the oldest holy places of Artois',<sup>459</sup> and Malbrancq and de Neufville followed him in thinking it extremely ancient. All three authors believed that Ste. Fréwisse herself had dwelt at the chapel and spring, imbuing them with her holiness.<sup>460</sup> She was honoured there especially on two feasts, the anniversary of her death on 19 October and that of the chapel's dedication on the first Sunday after Easter, when the *curé* of Bomy sang vespers and mass there;<sup>461</sup> le Heudre also reports that the canons of Thérouanne celebrated her festival.<sup>462</sup> Pilgrims were believed to have come from time immemorial to invoke the saint and drink the waters of her spring, which were thought especially useful for curing fevers.<sup>463</sup> A 17th-century *curé* reported a local legend that the saint had obtained the spring by striking the earth with her staff, and his successor of 1847 believed that it never dried up.<sup>464</sup> The cult survived the demolition of the chapel, and in 1847 the Bollandists found an image (Fig. 6B) and even relics of Ste. Fréwisse in Bomy parish church.<sup>465</sup>

From all this it is clear that, whatever hagiographical material le Heudre may have obtained from the English Jesuits, the chapel, spring and cult cannot have been his invention. Some suspicion must rest on the observance of the main Oxford feast of St. Frideswide (19 October), but that a long-established tradition associated the chapel with a holy woman named Fréwisse, and that healing powers were ascribed to the water from her well, can hardly be doubted. And luckily, a document survives which takes the cult much further back: an episcopal charter of 1187 ratifying an exchange between the Premonstratensian canons of Thérouanne and Walter Butri, lord of Bomy. The text is only known

<sup>457</sup> Devaux *op.cit.* note 455. Mr. Impey interviewed M. Devaux, and examined the photographs and finds in his possession.

<sup>458</sup> De Neufville, 96.

<sup>459</sup> Quoted de Neufville, 98: 'Saint lieu des plus anciens de l'Artois'.

<sup>460</sup> Le Heudre (quoted de Neufville, 98): the antiquity of the chapel 'le font entrer en conjecture, toute vraie semblable, que cette Sainte auroit marché sur cette terre, y auroit respiré l'air, et laissé devant nos yeux de grands traits de sa bienveillance, et des témoignages évidens de sa Sainteté et de sa vertu'. De Neufville, 64, boasts that the suppression of the English cult 'n'a servi qu'à faire augmenter ce culte dans la Chapelle de Bomy, où cette Sainte étoit en particulière vénération depuis un temps immémorial'.

<sup>461</sup> Malbrancq, i, 684: 'Cum vero Bomyensis ille vicus omni memoria templum illi [i.e. in the parish church] Divae sacrum gerat, quotannis 19. Octobris festam ejus diem recolens; . . . [Nearby are the chapel and well] ubi etiam quotannis, prima post Paschalem solemnitate dominica, celebris loci dedicatio recurrit'; De Neufville, 96: the chapel 'est sous la juridiction spirituelle de Mr. le Curé de Bomy, qui y chante ordinairement les premières Vêpres et la Messe deux fois l'année; sçavoir, le Dimanche de la Quasimode, jour de la Dedicace de ce lieu, et le 19 d'Octobre, jour de l'heureux Trépas, et de la Fête de nôtre Sainte'.

<sup>462</sup> De Neufville, 92-3: 'les vénérables Abbés et Religieux de Saint Augustin de Terrouanne font chaque année mémoire solennelle de nôtre Sainte, selon le rapport de Mr. le Heudre dans son Histoire'.

<sup>463</sup> Malbrancq, i, 684 (quoted *Acta Sanct.* *op.cit.* note 57, 561, and de Neufville, 102-3). Le Heudre (quoted de Neufville, 102) writes of the water: 'Laquelle n'a été éprouvée apporter peu de soulas à ceux et celles qui en goûtent, venans Pelerins par sincère dévotion et affection en ladite Chapelle.' See also de Neufville, 64, 93-4, and *Acta Sanct.* *op.cit.* note 57, 564.

<sup>464</sup> Both reported *Acta Sanct.* *op.cit.* note 57, 564.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, 564.



Fig. 6A : 'La Fontaine de Sainte Fréwisse', Bomy. B : Bomy parish church: statue of 'Sainte Fréwisse' by F.P. Savary, 1755. Phh. Edward Impey, 1987.

from Malbrancq's transcript,<sup>466</sup> but internal evidence makes its authenticity almost certain.<sup>467</sup> In translation it reads:

Didier bishop of Thérouanne: Whereas the Abbot of St. Augustine of Thérouanne has persuaded the lord Walter Butri to allow his court of Fréwisse to be transferred within the same parish to the valley of Wigelm and Walter Butri (*ut curtem suam de Fredeswide transferret in eadem parochia ad vallem Wigelmi et Gualteri Butri*); the Abbot, with the chapter's consent, has granted in my presence to Walter Butri all his right in his mill, and the whole court of Ste. Fréwisse (*totam curtem Sanctae Fredeswidis*) with the orchard and with the adjoining land. The Abbot further grants that, within a year after Ste. Fréwisse's chapel (*capellam Sanctae Fredeswidis*) has been moved by the lord Walter Butri, he will transfer it to Wigelm's valley, rebuild it, and institute a priest ministering there forever at the Abbot's expense. He will transfer the corpses of the dead from the old site [to] the new chapel at Walter Butri's pleasure. In exchange, Walter Butri has given to St. Augustine's church ten measures of land next the new court on whichever side they choose, and 120 measures of new land to cultivate and marl, without seed and all [...] excepted. They shall possess and cultivate freely whatever land they buy or receive in alms in Bomy parish, and all common roads, especially to Ste. Fréwisse's spring (*et maxime ad fontem Sanctae Fredeswidis*), and likewise all pastures; and the brethren shall remain free from all multure charges. Given in the year 1187.

It is possible that this transaction merely involved shifting Ste. Fréwisse's *curia* from the meadow west of the spring to the later hermitage site; but it is hard to see how a move up the slope from the valley-bottom could be said to be *ad vallem Wigelmi et Gualteri Butri*. De Neufville assumed, rather, that the effect was to transfer parochial functions from Ste. Fréwisse's chapel to the later parish church in the village, further down the valley,<sup>468</sup> and he was probably right. The earliest part of the parish church is evidently its axial tower, which could well date from the 1180s or 1190s.<sup>469</sup> The graves in the *curia*, and their (evidently not very thorough) removal to a new site, suggests the replacement of an old parochial cemetery by the one which remained in use into modern times. The seigneurial family's later patronage of the hermitage<sup>470</sup> is consistent with its acquisition by Walter Butri; the point of the final clause is presumably to safeguard the canons' access to a spring which would now no longer be on their land. In short, the likelihood is that Ste. Fréwisse's chapel was the mother church of Bomy until 1187, but was then superseded by the present parish church of St. Vedast; because of its holiness it survived, but merely as a humble hermitage.

To explain the cult, and to determine what, if any, connection it had with Oxford, is another matter. There seem to be four possibilities, none of which can be either substantiated or eliminated:

1. Ste. Fréwisse of Bomy originally had nothing whatever to do with St. Frideswide of Oxford, whose legend was attached to her in the 17th century or slightly earlier. Against this is the presence of a feature common to both Bomy and Binsey: a spring which sprang up at the saint's request and which heals those who drink from it. Holy springs are of course

<sup>466</sup> Malbrancq, iii, 520; reprinted *Acta Sanct.* op.cit. note 57, 562, and (in French translation) de Neufville, 104-5.

<sup>467</sup> The text is vindicated by an exhaustive analysis in *Acta Sanct.* op.cit. note 57, 562-3, and is accepted without question by O. Bled, *Regestes des Evêques de Thérouanne*, i (Saint-Omer, 1902), No. 918.

<sup>468</sup> De Neufville, 106.

<sup>469</sup> Mr. Impey's observation.

<sup>470</sup> Cf. above, note 449. De Neufville's dedication to the Marquis de Trazegnies, *seigneur* of Bomy, includes (prelims. pp.iii-iv): 'Si nous passons de cette Ville à votre Terre de Bomy, nous y trouverons que vos Predecesseurs ne s'y sont pas moins distingués, et pour m'arrêter uniquement à la Chapelle de Sainte Frewisse, que je dois avoir particulièrement en vûe, outre qu'on ne peut leur contester la qualité de Fondateurs, depuis un têmes immémorial ne l'ont-ils pas toujours gratifié de leurs bienfaits, pour témoigner la pieuse affection qu'ils lui portoient. Ils y ont attaché un Benefice qui se donne aujourd'hui à votre Nomination. Ne puis-je pas dire avec justice que cette piété exemplaire, qui leur faisait avoir ce lieu en veneration, se trouve transmise en vous, Monsieur, qui par le même esprit prenez cette Chapelle de Sainte Frewisse sous votre protection. . . . Vous avez orné cette Chapelle d'un Clocher, la mettant dans le même état qu'elle étoit dans le X siècle.'

numerous, but the association between saints with identical names and springs with identical attributes seems an unlikely coincidence. If it could be shown that the 19 October feast was observed at Bomy from an early date, this would be conclusive evidence for the identity of Ste. Fréwisse with St. Frideswide.

2. The cult was exported from Oxford to Bomy after the re-foundation of St. Frideswide's minster as an Augustinian priory, in other words in the early to mid 12th century.<sup>471</sup> Since the chapel and well belonged before 1187 to the Premonstratensian canons of St. Augustine at Thérouanne, it would be necessary to postulate a link through the international community of canons regular. There is, however, no evidence that St. Frideswide's had any connection with St. Augustine's, which was founded in 1131 by Bishop Miles I of Thérouanne and colonised from Sélincourt in the Low Countries.<sup>472</sup> Its dedication to St. Augustine of Canterbury, which probably commemorates the ancient links between the Pas-de-Calais and the Gregorian mission to Kent, can scarcely explain the adoption of a minor Mercian cult. But the biggest obstacles to this view are the facts that the first site of the cult was already being down-graded and deprived of parochial status in 1187, and that Fréwisse eventually gave way to St. Vedast as the main patron of Bomy.<sup>473</sup> Traditions can become 'immemorial' with disconcerting speed, but it is hard to believe that this obscure and wholly extraneous saint was installed as patron of a large parish, complete with her holy spring and a cemetery, only to be demoted within two generations.

3. The cult was exported from Oxford to Bomy through one of the many links between English and Flemish churches in the 10th and 11th centuries.<sup>474</sup> From Alfred's time onwards there was regular contact between the West Saxons and St. Bertin's monastery at Saint-Omer, which was visited by many English pilgrims. Some Englishmen brought relics with them into Flanders, such as those of St. Oswald and St. Eadburh which the abbey at Bergues obtained in 1038.<sup>475</sup> The merit of this hypothesis is that it allows a plausible interval between the establishment of the Bomy cult and the 1187 charter, and on balance it is perhaps the most likely. The links between St. Frideswide's minster and Abingdon Abbey (above, p.116) make it a tempting possibility that St. Æthelwold, who was abbot of Abingdon (954-63) before becoming bishop of Winchester (963-84), had a hand in transmitting the cult.

4. The cult at Bomy results directly from Frideswide's own activities, or from those of her companions or followers. The relationships between the English and Gallic church hierarchies in the 7th and 8th centuries, the connections and similarities between 'double monasteries' on both sides of the Channel, and the unifying influence of Irish

<sup>471</sup> This explanation is preferred by the latest French commentator: G. Coolen, 'Sainte Fréwisse ou Frideswide', *Bulletin Historique de la Société Académique des Antiquaires de la Morinie*, xviii (1952-7), 363-4.

<sup>472</sup> *Sacri et Canonici Ordinis Premonstratensis Annales*, i (Nancy, 1734), 224; H. Piers, 'L'Abbaye de S. Augustin-lez-Thérouanne', *Mem. Soc. Antiq. de la Morinie* ii(2) (1834), 199-203; E. de Moreau, *Histoire de l'Eglise en Belgique*, iii (2nd edn., Brussels, 1945), 19. Bled op.cit. note 467, No. 586, says that Bishop Miles gave 'la cure de Sainte-Fréwisse' to St. Augustine's in c.1140, but this seems to be based on nothing more than Malbrancq's conjecture.

<sup>473</sup> De Neufville, 95-6: 'Il est vrai qu'elle n'est point la première Patronne de la Paroisse, puisque depuis la fin du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle ce titre est attribué à Saint Vaast, Evêque d'Arras; mais pour n'y être depuis lors que la seconde, elle n'y est pas moins honorée et respectée, non seulement des habitants de ce Village, mais encore des peuples voisins.'

<sup>474</sup> For these contacts see P. Grierson, 'The Relations between England and Flanders before the Norman Conquest', *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.* 4th ser. xxiii (1941), 84-95; F. Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066* (2nd ed., 1979), 17-20; J. Campbell, 'England, France, Flanders and Germany', in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (1986), 201-5.

<sup>475</sup> Grierson op.cit. note 474, 101.

missionaries<sup>476</sup> would provide a context, and some 7th-century English princesses certainly went to Gallic monasteries.<sup>477</sup> Alternatively, the cult could have been transmitted slightly later but still in the pre-Viking period: the Englishman Fridegis, abbot of St. Bertin's during 820-34,<sup>478</sup> is one possible link. It can only be said that none of this is impossible, but neither can it be used as evidence for events in Frideswide's lifetime.

If the cult at Bomy was old by 1187, and if its object of devotion was indeed our St. Frideswide, it is not impossible that it reflects forgotten aspects of the Oxford cult. In particular, it adds a little weight to the view that the holy site at Binsey was not invented for the convenience of the 12th-century canons, but perpetuates older traditions associating Frideswide with a hermitage and a healing spring. Further speculation is pointless; but it is pleasant to record that pilgrims are still attracted to St. Frideswide's spring in this second Binsey 150 miles from Oxford.<sup>479</sup>

*The Society is grateful to the W.A. Pantin Trust for a grant towards the publication of this paper.*

<sup>476</sup> For all of which see Campbell, 'First Century', op.cit. note 29, 49-67.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 55-6.

<sup>478</sup> Grierson op.cit. note 474, 83.

<sup>479</sup> Doyère op.cit. note 449, 387: 'Aujourd'hui il ne reste aucune trace de l'ermitage, mais la tradition d'un pèlerinage à la fontaine de Sainte Fréwisse s'est maintenue.'