

# St Dunstan



**St Dunstan was canonised in 1029. He became the patron saint of blacksmiths because of his talent as a metal worker as a young man. St Dunstan became a very popular saint in England and remained so until the death of Thomas Becket in 1170.**



St Dunstan was an important ecclesiastical reformer in the tenth century. As a child he was known for his devotion to learning and although he suffered setbacks, he was favoured by certain members of the royal family. King Edmund appointed him abbot at Glastonbury and Dunstan reformed the community so that it became a Benedictine monastery. Later he became bishop of Worcester in 957, bishop of London in 958, and archbishop of Canterbury in 960.

Working with King Edgar, Dunstan planned even greater reforms of the English Church. His final years were quieter, living a devout life teaching and practising his crafts.

The dedication of the church to St Dunstan and the stonework of the north wall of the nave suggest that the church dates from at least the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. In the later Middle Ages parishioners continued to express their devotion to St Dunstan. In 1480, Aveline Osborne intended that her golden ring and three girdles should be sold after her death and some of the money was to be used to pay for the painting of the image of St Dunstan. Simon Parke (1516) gave money to ensure precious stones (beryls) would be fixed in the feet of the image. The church also had a relic of the saint: 'a pynyon' of St Dunstan.



In 1500, the churchwardens' listed 'three newe queers (quires of paper) off the story off Seynt Donston', these may have included stories about St Dunstan's meetings with the devil, because in each story the saint prevails. Probably the most famous concerns St Dunstan tweaking the devil's nose with his smith's tongs, which became his symbol. Another tale involved the saint nailing a horseshoe to the devil's foot.

Our thanks to Canterbury Historical and Archaeological Society (CHAS) for their generous sponsorship of this postgraduate student project. Credits: Research and text by Beth Woljung. St Dunstan tweaking the Devil's nose with blacksmith tongs, London, British Library, Harley 315, fol. 15v; St Dunstan, Holy Cross Chapel, NY, 1920s stained-glass, photograph: Randy OHC CC4 BY; St Dunstan, London, British Library, Royal 10 A XIII, fol. 2; G. Cruikshank, 19<sup>th</sup> C engraving of St Dunstan shoeing the Devil, E. G. Flight, *The Horse Shoe* (1871), Project Gutenberg.