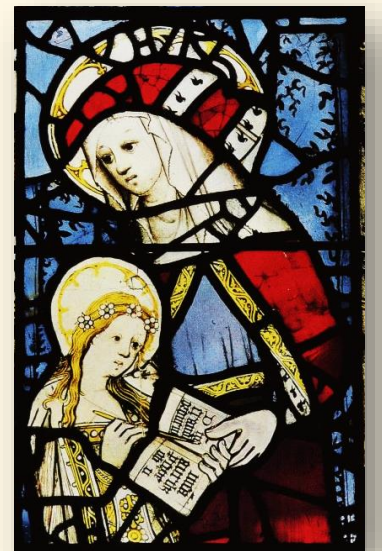


Saints at St Dunstan's



Medieval churches often contained altars, images and relics of numerous saints. People would pray to saints if they needed encouragement and saints also offered a role model. Parishioners formed fraternities to care specifically for an altar or image.

At St Dunstan's church there was a fraternity of St Anne. As the mother of St Mary and grandmother of Jesus, St Anne was seen as a role model for women who often prayed to her for successful pregnancies. Joan Ricard bequeathed half a pound of wax to St Anne's light, while Amy Grey gave an altarcloth and the fraternity gave two cloths depicting the saint. The parish also owned short booklets about St Anne and her relics.



Saint Sitha (Zita) lived in 13th-century Italy as a maid for the Fatinelli family in Tuscany, where she gradually gained a reputation for her concern for the helpless. Some stories include angels completing her chores when she was away tending to the poor. Her generosity and selflessness meant that she became the patron saint of domestic workers, maids, and lost keys. Joan Begynden, a widow, gave 20d towards the making of her image at St Dunstan's church in 1468.

St George was popular in medieval England. St George and the dragon was included in *Legenda Aurea* written in the 13th century by Jacobus de Voragine archbishop of Genoa. The book was translated into English as *The Golden Legend* and was later printed by William Caxton. Among the objects held at St Dunstan's church was a streamer depicting the dragon.



St Mary Magdalene is mentioned in the canonical gospels but in medieval Western traditions she was viewed as a repentant prostitute because of a conflation between Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, and the unnamed 'sinful woman' who anointed Jesus's feet. Her legendary life became well-known through *The Golden Legend* and this 'composite' also included Mary of Egypt. Among those who supported her image at St Dunstan's church was Joan Begynden who gave 10d towards her light.

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. Photograph of Rood screen, including detail of St Mary Magdalene below, Ludham, courtesy of Simon Knott, norfolkchurches.co.uk. Image of St Anne reading to Virgin Mary, All Saints Church, York, early 15th century stained-glass, photograph: BHO; St George, *Legenda Aurea*, 1348, BNF Français 241, fol. 101v. Photograph of St Zita, Rood screen Barton Turf, Norfolk, <http://www.snaithpriory.org/st-zita-of-lucca>.