

Supporting the Saints



St Mary's and St Peter's Churches each had more than a dozen images of saints, and St James' only slightly fewer. Overall, the most common saints were Our Lady (Jesus' mother, Mary), St John the Baptist (another member of the holy family), St Christopher, the patron saint of travellers whose image was believed to protect that day those who looked on it, and St Nicholas the saint of sailors, merchants and children.

Evidence from the wills reveals that small cash sums were favoured, but occasionally much more was left to these locally and nationally popular saints. In 1483 Richard Palmer gave 3s 4d towards the light (candles) of St Nicholas in St Peter's Church. Whereas in 1485 John Claryngbold intended that for thirteen years after his death two quarters of barley each year should be turned into malt, then ale and sold, the proceeds going to Our Lady's light in St James' Church, a gift worth the equivalent of several hundred pounds each year.

Several unusual and much less popular saints nationally were also supported at Dover's churches. St Ninian was remembered at St Mary's and St James', the light at each church receiving small sums of money. According to tradition, he is said to have converted the southern Picts to Christianity and is linked to St Martin of Tours.



Even more obscure, although he was also venerated at Faversham and Canterbury, was St Tronyon, whose shrine in St Peter's Church received a cow in Henry Fravell's will to be farmed for its support. St John of Bridlington was similarly remembered in Dover and Faversham. Robert Randalff in 1489, asked to be buried before the saint's altar in St Nicholas' Church, Dover, while Faversham's first town book contains copies of the saint's prophecies.