

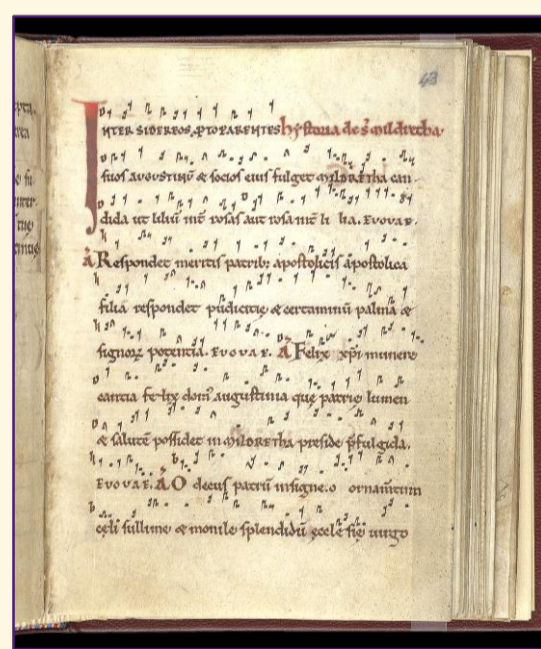
Saint Mildred and the origins of Minster-in-Thanel



Saint Mildred was the second abbess of a double monastery at Minster-in-Thanel, the house founded by her mother, Domne Eafe. Domne Eafe was the great-granddaughter of King Ethelberht and daughter of King Eormenred, connecting Mildred to the Kentish royal family.

The Kentish Royal Legends contain most of what we know about Saint Mildred. They record she was educated in France but having experienced ill-treatment there, she escaped. She landed on the Isle of Thanet, leaving a footprint which had healing properties.

Saint Mildred's relics were originally held at Minster-in-Thanel and were then translated to St Augustine's Abbey in 1030. By allowing her relics to be moved, the saint was demonstrating her agreement and importantly the abbey had royal approval – from King Cnut. Thus, even though the Thanet islanders put up considerable opposition, St Mildred's body was brought triumphantly to Canterbury. St Augustine's Abbey produced a manuscript dedicated to the life of Saint Mildred, along with music for a hymn that is dedicated to the saint. The lyrics compare her to roses and lilies, as well as celebrating her virtue.



Foundation Myth of Minster-in-Thanel Abbey

Domne Eafe returned to Kent to receive wergild (compensation) for the murder of her two brothers by Thunor, King Ecgbert's councillor. According to tradition, the king, her cousin, gave Domne Eafe all the land which her hind ran around in one circuit, thereby bisecting the island. Thunor disagreed with the division and the ground swallowed him and a mound was raised up. This became the site of Minster-in-Thanel.

Credits: Research and text: Beth Brown. Photographs: St Mildred, medieval stained-glass panel in the Atwood Chantry, St Mildred's church by Rev. Jo Richards. *Life of Mildrith* and other texts, British Library Harley 3908, f.43; photograph courtesy of The British Library, Domne Eafe's hind, misericord, St Nicholas Church, Minster-in-Thanel, by Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh.