

Saints connected with Wimborne

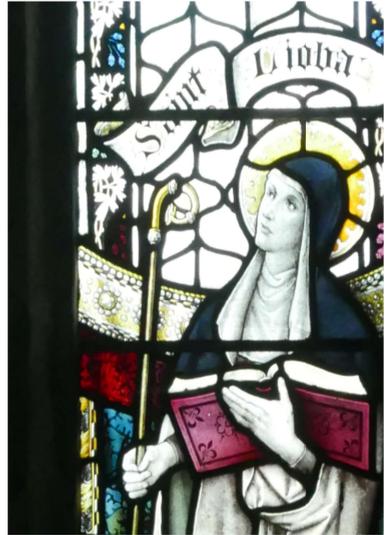
Saint Lioba

St Lioba was born in Wessex to elderly parents around 710AD. Her mother was a relative of St Boniface. She entered the convent in **Wimborne** where, under the Abbess Tetta, Lioba was very well educated. She became responsible for the training of young novices and was much loved by them all. At some time in her life she also studied under the learned Abbess Eadbury at Minster in Thanet.

Boniface exchanged letters with his relative Lioba and became aware of her affectionate nature and eagerness for studying the Scriptures. He called on her to travel to Germany and to establish convents for women there. Tetta at first was reluctant to allow Lioba to leave, but then relented. Up to thirty nuns left **Wimborne** in 740AD to travel to Germany.

Lioba was taken to Bischofsheim in Mainz where she was appointed as abbess to a convent founded by Boniface. Rudolf, her biographer describes her as being of angelic aspect, pleasant speech, of clear intelligence, great counsel, orthodox in faith, most patient in hope and generous in charity. The fame of Lioba spread far and wide. Men of influence and noble birth placed their daughters in her care. Many visitors, including bishops, sought her advice.

Lioba eventually retired to one of her daughter houses at Scoranesheim. Her retirement was short and she died in 780AD. Her body was transported to Fulda where she was buried in the same churchyard as Boniface. After her death miracles were soon reported. The tomb of Lioba now stands in the crypt of the church of St Petersburg in Fulda. Her feast day is September 28th.



*Source: The Saxon Saints of Wimborne compiled by Christine Oliver
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Saint Cuthburga

St. Cuthburga is venerated as the foundress of the famous double monastery in **Wimborne**. She was the daughter, wife and mother of kings. She was the sister of Ine, the King of Wessex and was married to the Northumbrian king Aldfrith. She left her husband to become a nun under St. Hildelitha at Barking, Essex. Sometime after 705, Cuthburga and her sister St. Cwenburga, founded the double-monastery at **Wimborne**.

This monastery, founded in honour of the Mother of God, was famous for the zeal of the nuns in the study of sacred and classic literature. As was the case with other double monasteries, it was predominantly a convent and was ruled by an

abbess rather than an abbot. It served as a very important centre that trained many missionaries who travelled to Germany to work with St. Boniface and to evangelize the local inhabitants and build monasteries. The most striking aspect of this story is that most of those heroic missionaries were saintly women, highly cultured and educated with brave spirits, who did not fear the pagans in Germany. They would fell trees, build churches and monastery complexes, were in contact with local populaces, educating, instructing them in the faith and teaching them various skills.

Her biographers describe St. Cuthburga as very austere to herself, but kind to others and assiduous in fasting, prayer and spiritual life. Few facts from St. Cuthburga's abbacy survive, but we can judge it by its accomplishments, for

Wimborne produced a host of saintly women, both abbesses and missionaries to foreign lands. Before her death, St. Cuthburga fell seriously ill and while the sisters were praying for her recovery, she revealed to them that it was the will of God for her to die. Her relics were buried on the north side of the presbytery and then later transferred to the east end of the High Altar of the Minster. Many miracles occurred at her tomb. The lame regained the ability to walk, sight was restored to the blind and hearing to the deaf. Her name can be found in a late Saxon litany.

St. Aldhelm of Sherborne addressed his *De Laude Virginitatis* (the prose *De Virginitate*), a Latin treatise on virginity, to the nuns of Barking (before 705), with St. Cuthburga among them. St. Cuthburga's veneration was not limited to **Wimborne**. In the late medieval period she was venerated at Thelsford Priory in Warwickshire, where a commissioner of Henry VIII during the Reformation came across a devotional image of the "Maiden Cuthburga" in 1538.

It is unknown whether St. Cuthburga and Aldfrith had children. Some historians conjecture that King Osred of Northumbria (705-716), Aldfrith's son, was born by the saint, though his mother may have been Aldfrith's next wife. At least St. Cuthburga did not act as regent after Aldfrith's death when his son was eight. St. Cuthburga had a brother named Ingild who was an ancestor of St. Alfred the Great.

St. Cuthburga's shrine was destroyed during the Reformation, and the same fate befell the silver reliquary with her head. She died on 31st August 725 which date is now kept as her feast day.

