

The Life of St. Winifred:
The *Vita S. Wenefrede* from
BL Lansdowne MS 436

INTRODUCED, EDITED, AND TRANSLATED BY

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Corrigenda

- p. 26: entry for line 122 should be deleted
- p. 27: second entry for line 150 should begin *Bennonius virtutibus*
- p. 30, line 17: *precipuum* should read *praecipuum*
- p. 42, line 150: *Benonius* should read *Bennonius*
- p. 44, line 172: *perseuerans* should read *perseverans*

The Life of St. Winifred: The *Vita S.* *Wenefrede* from BL Lansdowne MS 436

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I – General Introduction

Known in Welsh as Gwenfrewy, Winifred is the best known of the Welsh female saints. She lived and died in the seventh century, and her legend survives in multiple written accounts from the High and Late Middle Ages.¹ The three earliest accounts are in Latin: two date to the twelfth century and one dates to the early fourteenth. English and Welsh versions of Winifred's legend that are based on these

1 The saint's name is a matter of some difficulty since it appears in both a Welsh form (*Gwenfrewy/Gwenfrewi*) and an apparently Latin-derived English form (*Winifred/Winefride/Wenefred*), each of which exhibits a wide range of orthographic variety in surviving texts. This discussion refers to the saint by her English name, spelled *Winifred*, and uses Welsh spellings for the names of those characters and places that have no equivalent in English; the translation uses the Welsh form of her name. For a survey of Winifred's legend and its development in the Middle Ages and beyond, see Elissa R. Henken, *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 141-51. For further discussion of the medieval cult of Winifred, see my dissertation, James Gregory, "A Welsh Saint in England: Translation, Orality, and National Identity in the Cult of St. Gwenfrewy, 1138-1512" (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2012). I would like to thank Elissa R. Henken, Cynthia Turner Camp, Thomas Charles-Edwards, Tristan Gray Hulse, Richard Sharpe, Elizabeth C. Teviotdale, Marjorie Housley, Anthony Minnema, Rachel Mahan, and Sandy Paul and the digitization team at Trinity College, Cambridge, for their assistance with the research and work that led to this volume.

Latin texts also survive from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.² The edition and translation provided here is of the latest of Winifred's three Latin *vitae*—that preserved in British Library MS Lansdowne 436, a manuscript of the very early fourteenth century. Probably the work of a single redactor, the Lansdowne 436 legendary contains *vitae* for a total of forty-three different saints arranged in roughly historical chronological order, including the *Life* of St. Winifred (*Vita S. Wenefrede*). All of these *vitae* show signs of deliberate conflation, modification, and adaptation.³ The redactor has carefully combined and reworked Winifred's two earlier Latin *vitae* to create a new, composite version of her legend that has been neither fully edited nor translated into English before. The composite nature of all the Lansdowne 436 lives, as well as their somewhat chronological ordering in the manuscript, suggests that the collection was meant to provide an edifying overview of saintly life in the British Isles. The collection was owned in the fifteenth century by the Benedictine nunnery at Romsey in southwestern England, and it is possible, although not certain, that the manuscript was created there.⁴ The

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- 2 Both of Winifred's twelfth-century *vitae* are edited in Charles de Smedt, ed., *Acta sanctorum Novembris. T. 1: Quo dies primus, secundus et partim tertius continentur* (1887), 691-731. (Hereafter Smedt, *Acta sancti Nov.*) Translations of both are available in Ronald Pepin and Hugh Feiss, trans., *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride* (Toronto: Peregrina Publishing, 2000). (Hereafter *Two Mediaeval Lives*.) An edition and translation of the shorter *vita*—that found in BL Cotton Claudius MS A.v—is also available in A.W. Wade-Evans, ed. and trans., *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae: The Lives and Genealogies of the Welsh Saints [VSBG]*, new ed., ed. Scott Lloyd, *Classic Texts in Medieval Welsh Studies*, vol. 1 (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2013). Until now, the Lansdowne *Life* of Winifred itself has been accessible only via the notes to the Bollandist edition of the Cotton Claudius *vita* published in 1887.
 - 3 For a list of the *vitae* in the Lansdowne collection, see pp. 50-53 below. See also Paul Grosjean, "Vita S. Roberti: Novi Monasterii in Anglia Abbatis," *Analecta Bollandiana* 56 (1938): 335-39.
 - 4 For the notion that the Lansdowne 436 legendary was part of a program to remediate Latin literacy in nunneries in southwestern England, see Stephanie Hollis, "The Literary Culture of the Anglo-Saxon Royal Nunneries: Romsey and London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 436," in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton, Veronica O'Mara, and Patricia Stoop (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013).

manuscript contains no clues regarding the compiler-redactor's identity, including that person's gender. Romsey ownership and the seemingly educational nature of the legendary—combined with the fact that it contains the *vitae* of several female saints—indicates that the collection was most likely created specifically for a female audience.⁵ A female saint from the border region between Wales and England, Winifred herself is an intriguing and liminal figure. She became known and was venerated in both countries after English monks translated her bones from Wales to the relatively new Benedictine abbey at Shrewsbury in 1138. Claimed by two nations with a history of conflict, Winifred's narrative thus became a site for the expression of competing nationalist interests.



II – St. Winifred and her Latin *Vitae*

According to her written *vitae*, Winifred lived in northeastern Wales in the first half of the seventh century. The daughter of a wealthy man named Tyfid, she decided to devote her life wholly to God soon after a male saint, Beuno, built a church on her father's property and began to preach there. The *vitae* report that a local prince named Caradog one day approached Winifred at home and, moved by her beauty, propositioned her on the spot. She of course refused his advances and fled toward Beuno's church, but her angry suitor caught up with and beheaded her. The site of her martyrdom, Holywell (Welsh, *Treffynnon*), received its name from the healing fountain that erupted where her head—or, alternately,

On the ownership of the manuscript and the possibility that it was created at Romsey, see Michael J. Wright, "BL MS Lansdowne 436 Contains Two Separate Items," *Notes and Queries* 59, no. 1 (2012): 25-28.

- 5 Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has observed that, "[r]ather than being a house dossier or a calendrical legendary," the Lansdowne collection "is an ecclesiastical history of Britain through its church leaders and some of its saintly Anglo-Saxon kings;" moreover, it is "an expression of female communities' interest in their own ecclesiastical history." See *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture, c. 1150-1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 198-99.

her blood—had struck the ground. The stones in this fountain were forever stained with the color of the virgin’s blood, and the fragrant moss that grew in the waters of the fountain came to be known as Winifred’s Hair (Welsh, *Gweryd Gwenbhweryd*).⁶ After the murder, St. Beuno immediately cursed Caradog, who melted away under the intensity of the saint’s malediction. Then, through the miraculous power of God, Beuno resurrected Winifred so that she lived for many years thereafter, eventually dying a natural death as abbess of Gwytherin, a religious house of monks and nuns some thirty miles from Holywell. All three of Winifred’s Latin *vitae* tell essentially this same story, with notable variations in emphasis and detail.

The Lansdowne 436 *Vita* of Winifred is a combination of the two earlier Latin *vitae*, the anonymous *Vita S. Wenefrede* preserved in BL Cotton Claudius A.v, a manuscript of the very late twelfth or very early thirteenth century, and the much longer *Vita et translatio S. Wenefrede ex Wallia* (The Life and Translation of St. Winifred out of Wales) by Robert Pennant, the Prior of Shrewsbury Abbey. In 1138, Prior Robert led an expedition from his abbey to retrieve Winifred’s bones from Gwytherin, the remote churchyard in northeast Wales where she had been buried centuries before. He completed his version of her *vita* and his account of the journey to Gwytherin ca. 1140, and the version of Winifred’s legend that Prior Robert preserved exerted the greatest influence on later retellings of her story, including the numerous English and Welsh renditions that survive from the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

6 Scientists have identified the “blood” on the stones as another moss. Neither of the mosses survives, however, at Holywell today. The water of the well was diverted by mining in the early twentieth century and is now supplied via the municipal water system. The treated water killed off the natural growth in the well. On the mining incident that caused the fountain to run dry and the subsequent re-routing that allowed it to flow again, see John A. Shaffer, *Winifred’s Well* (Nashville, TN: Cold Tree Press, 2008). The red moss was *Byssus jolithus*, and the fragrant moss was *Jungermannia asplenoides*. T. W. Pritchard, *St. Winefride, Her Holy Well, and the Jesuit Mission: c.650-1930* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2009), 33-34.



III – Medieval Saints’ Lives, the Virgin Martyr Tradition, and St. Winifred

A saint’s *vita* or life is a stylized account of a holy person’s life, deeds, and death, a genre that can be traced back to the Acts of the Apostles and, ultimately, to the life of Christ as told in the Gospels. Throughout the Middle Ages, saints’ lives were a wildly popular literary genre among all classes of European society, as is evidenced by the sheer number of surviving manuscripts that contain individual lives or—like Lansdowne 436—whole collections of them. These texts were meant to inspire audiences to emulate the saint’s behavior while also confirming what audiences knew of the saint from received tradition, which, at an early point, usually meant oral tradition. By advertising a saint’s miraculous powers, these texts could also popularize a saint and spread his or her cult beyond the locality within which he or she originally operated and was venerated, bringing prestige to the community that held the saint’s relics. This consideration, coupled with the fact that pilgrims who visited a saint’s relics for the sake of healing or other favors represented a ready source of income, often inspired religious communities in possession of a saint’s bones to commission a written life of their ossified patron.

However, saints’ lives were not intended as historically precise biographies in the modern sense. An author’s ability for objective accuracy or capacity for originality were of little interest to audiences, except insofar as the author was able to fit the actions of the holy subject into the formulaic conventions of the genre. The ultimate purpose was to provide clear, yet powerful examples of holy living and the benefits thereof and to excite the audience to imitate those examples. The stories of individual saints contained in large collections would often be read aloud for the spiritual benefit of listeners in, for instance, a nunnery or monastery, and it is possible that this was the purpose of the Lansdowne 436 collection. If so, then it appears that the Lansdowne redactor, by combining and reworking available sources, was trying to produce versions of the saints’ stories that would best accommodate the spiritual and educational needs of an audience of female religious.

Saints' lives are by definition formulaic, but the genre was incredibly versatile, often being used to advance political and social agendas, and it contains a number of sub-categories. The lives of many female saints belong to a subcategory known as the virgin martyr legend, a literary tradition that stretches back to the earliest centuries of Christianity.⁷ In brief, these legends adhere to the following formula: a beautiful young woman decides to spurn worldly pursuits like marriage and family in order to preserve her virginity and devote herself entirely to God; her decision raises the ire of suitors and/or family members, which leads to conflict and to threats against the woman's chastity and life should she not recant her position; after she refuses, her persecutors attempt to torture and mutilate her, but their efforts are either miraculously obstructed by God or are attended by signs of God's favor toward the woman; ultimately, the woman is martyred for her faith but reaps heavenly rewards as a result.

While other subcategories of saints' lives—e.g., the lives of hermits, bishops, holy kings, etc.—were extremely popular in the Middle Ages, virgin martyr legends were perhaps the most popular type of all by the later medieval period. This popularity stemmed from the variety of ways in which these particular lives could be read and interpreted during a time when divisions between lay and ecclesiastical authority were being reexamined and reconfigured. The virgin martyr symbolically expressed different and competing ideologies. For example, in her successful attempts to reject marriage and live (and die) chastely, the virgin martyr is a champion of the monastic ideal of celibacy, while at the same time her status as bride of Christ provides an idealized model for chaste earthly marriage. Simultaneously, however, the virgin martyr can be read as a bold virago who rejects gendered social norms, biblically sanctioned obligations like the conjugal debt, and masculine authority over women. Virgin martyr legends also allowed exploration of paradoxes in medieval theology, for the fragile virginal body is both subject to dismemberment and disintegration and is miraculously reunified in

7 Karen A. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); see also Karen A. Winstead, ed. and trans., *Chaste Passions: Medieval English Virgin Martyr Legends* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

a fashion that recalls the mystery of the Eucharist and the promise of bodily resurrection for all Christians.

Winifred herself does not exactly fit the virgin martyr mold—although she is martyred for her faith, she is also resurrected to live a second life as a nun and abbess. She belongs in addition then to the category of foundress saints, those holy and often royal women who establish and rule over religious houses. In their lives, these women exhibit model sanctity, generosity, and governance. These qualities provide the impetus for their cults at the monastic establishments they created and grant a continuing *raison d'être* to the establishments themselves. These women's bodily relics, often claimed by their hagiographers to be miraculously incorrupt, are situated as the source from which their religious foundations continue to draw legitimacy and authority. Examples of foundress saints from Anglo-Saxon hagiography include the royal female saints of Ely Abbey, who were related by blood through three generations: Aethelthryth, Seaxburgh, Eormenhild, and Werburgh.⁸ Ely was reestablished in the late tenth century as a Benedictine house for men, and from this point on, the monks promulgated the cults of their foundress saints as a closely related group whose ancient patronage lent authority to their newly refounded monastery.⁹ Winifred's cult experienced a similar process at all-male Shrewsbury. Like the founding saints of Ely, Winifred was, according to Welsh genealogies, descended from royalty (though her Latin hagiographers were apparently unaware of this fact),

8 On the female saints of Ely, see Rosalind C. Love, ed. and trans., *Goscelin of Saint-Bertin: The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004). The Lansdowne 436 legendary contains redacted *vitae* for the Ely saints. For a brief discussion of these *vitae*, see *ibid.*, cxvii. Other Anglo-Saxon foundress saints include those of the Kentish royal house, i.e., SS. Eafe, Mildrith, and Milburga. Like the saints of Ely to whom they were blood relations, these saints were culted at—and were seen to provide legitimacy and prestige to—the monastic houses they had founded, they had governed, or to which they were eventually translated. See David Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend: A Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982). The Lansdowne legendary also contains *vitae* for Eafe and Milburga.

9 On the refounding of Ely and the subsequent hagiographical activity there, see Love, *Goscelin of Saint-Bertin*, xviii–xxiii.

and her saintly reputation enhanced the reinvigorated foundation at Shrewsbury.¹⁰



IV – The Nature of Welsh Hagiography

Besides sharing characteristics with both the virgin martyrs and the Anglo-Saxon foundress saints, Winifred is also a Welsh saint, and the Welsh saints have a character all their own. As Elissa Henken has demonstrated, Welsh hagiography presents male saints in a manner that echoes the portrayal of secular heroes in early Welsh myth.¹¹ By contrast, female Welsh saints experience far less development in their legends. Female Welsh saints are generally cast in a purely domestic light, one that reflects the roles considered appropriate for women in medieval Welsh society; they do not appear, for instance, as royal nuns who found religious houses, as is common in English hagiography. In fact, nunneries themselves were exceptionally rare in medieval Wales, and Welsh noblewomen did not found, nor were they encouraged to enter, female religious houses.¹² And while male Welsh saints are in their *vitae* miraculously acknowledged as holy even before birth, Henken has demonstrated that female Welsh saints are usually not identified as holy until they are confronted in some way by male sexuality, a force from which they must flee or that they must somehow overcome or avoid.¹³ Female Welsh saints rarely, in fact, have full lives of their own

10 For the Welsh genealogies, see P. C. Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966). For a discussion of Winifred's genealogy, see Gregory, "A Welsh Saint in England," 162-69.

11 Elissa R. Henken, *The Welsh Saints: A Study in Patterned Lives* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991).

12 On the almost complete absence of nunneries in medieval Wales, as well as the social and political reasons for that absence, see Jane Cartwright, "The Desire to Corrupt: Convent and Community in Medieval Wales," in *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality in Medieval Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), 176-208.

13 Henken, *Patterned Lives*, 7.

and generally appear as auxiliary characters in the lives of male saints. Only Winifred and Melangell have prose lives that survive from the pre-Reformation period.¹⁴ Lastly, and unlike the saints of England or continental Europe, the Welsh saints—male or female—are often of a vengeful bent; easily stirred to anger, they will use their miraculous powers to strike down sinners, sometimes for the smallest of infractions.



V – Reform, Conquest, and Saints’ Lives

The veneration of saints in the British Isles was originally a highly localized phenomenon, but this situation began to change in England in the tenth century and in Wales in the eleventh. During the latter half of the tenth century, King Edgar of England instituted what eventually came to be known as the Benedictine Reform, a program of converting minster churches operated by secular and often married clerks into monasteries run by Benedictine monks. Eager to promote the interests of their reformed houses, the monks composed and disseminated *vitae* for the early English saints whose relics their houses held, and, as a result, previously local saints began to be known more widely.¹⁵ After the Norman Conquest, a similar process occurred in the later eleventh century when Norman abbots took charge of the old Anglo-Saxon minsters and commissioned new Latin *vitae* for the patron saints of these churches. Those saints sometimes had no previous written lives

14 For the *Life* of Melangell, see Huw Pryce, “A New Edition of the *Historia Divae Monacellae*,” *The Montgomeryshire Collections* 82 (1994): 23-40. See also Henken, *Traditions of the Welsh Saints*, 217-20.

15 John Blair, “A Saint for Every Minster? Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 455-94. See also Michael Lapidge, “The Saintly Life in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 250.

at all or else Anglo-Saxon lives that did not provide as thorough and authoritative an account as the abbots desired.

Ecclesiastical developments in Wales in the later eleventh century mirrored to some extent those in England, for the veneration of Welsh saints and the diffusion of their stories dramatically changed after the arrival of the Normans. Prior to Norman incursions into Wales in the latter half of the eleventh century, the legends of the Welsh saints were disseminated orally by devotees in a given saint's area of activity. As a result, the saints themselves were not known or venerated beyond the immediate locality in which they had originally lived, worked miracles, founded churches, and died.¹⁶ From the time that the Normans arrived, however, the Welsh began to write prose lives for their native saints, essentially in response to pressure from Norman churchmen to bring Welsh ecclesiastical organization in line with continental and English practice.¹⁷

As an approved version of a saint's legend, a new *vita* served to explain a Welsh saint's worthiness to a new Norman audience. It could also authorize a new community's possession of the saint's physical relics, those sacred somatic objects thought to be imbued with healing agency and the ability to influence or legitimize earthly events (e.g., legal proceedings). The relics thus increased the power and prestige of those who

16 On this point generally, see E. G. Bowen, *The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in Wales*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1956); and *Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1969). Even Prior Robert tells us in his preface to the *Vita et translatio* that, when gathering information about Winifred on his travels to Gwytherin, he was able to find some details of her story circulated only in oral form. In good Norman fashion, he decided that these orally circulated details were not worthy for inclusion in his final written text—unless, of course they were being circulated by venerable priests. See *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 26.

17 See R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change: Wales, 1063-1415* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 174-78; and T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350-1064*, Oxford History of Wales (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 583-624. See also John Reuben Davies, "The Saints of South Wales and the Welsh Church," in Thacker and Sharpe, *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 395; and Elissa R. Henken, "Welsh Hagiography and the Nationalist Impulse," in *Celtic Hagiography and Saints' Cults*, ed. Jane Cartwright (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 26-28.

held them. Such was the purpose of Prior Robert's *Vita et translatio S. Wenefrede ex Wallia*, for, before the arrival of her bones at their local abbey, few people in the area of Shrewsbury were likely to have known much about—or perhaps to have been much interested in—a saint from across the Welsh border. Robert's *Vita* introduced Winifred to a new audience and, by recounting her martyrdom, resurrection, and holy life, explained why she was worthy of veneration. His *translatio* narrative justified the removal of her relics from their native soil by recording the visions and miracles that attended the process. According to Robert these wondrous events demonstrated Winifred's own desire to be moved, but they also advertised the holy power resident in her bones, power over which the monks of Shrewsbury Abbey had now become the stewards.¹⁸



VI – Saints' Cults, Nationalism, and the Lansdowne Legendary

The northeastern corner of Wales, where Winifred lived and where her cult was originally based, was known in Welsh as *Y Berfeddwlad* (the Middle Country) and was for centuries contested territory. The site of her martyrdom, Holywell, is located on the northern Welsh coast less than twenty miles from the city of Chester in England, and the site of her burial at Gwytherin is inland from Holywell some thirty miles. In the centuries between Winifred's death in roughly the mid-600's and Prior Robert's expedition to retrieve her bones in 1138, Welsh rulers fought not only with Anglo-Saxons and later, with Normans, but also

18 Robert's first-hand account of Winifred's translation was written in the tradition of the *furtum sacrum* (holy theft) story, a hagiographical genre in which an author describes the often adventurous and usually furtive process by which he or his community came to acquire a saint's relics from their previous owners. These stories not only legitimize the removal of the saint's remains to a new location, but also establish the spiritual power and value of those remains in that new location by underscoring the idea that the relics were so valuable that they could only have been attained with difficulty and through subversive action. Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

among themselves for control of the region. As a result of this endemic conflict, Holywell was sometimes controlled by one or another of these groups, while Gwytherin, which was also a cult site, remained steadily in Welsh hands.

These vicissitudes, coupled with her physical appropriation by English monastics, make Winifred an intriguing and liminal figure. A Welsh female saint from the border region between Wales and England, she became known and was venerated in both countries—at the sites of her holy fountain and burial in Wales and at Shrewsbury in England.¹⁹ While virgin martyrs in general were *loci* of social, spiritual, or cultural tension and negotiation, Winifred herself, claimed by two nations with a history of conflict, became a site for expressing competing nationalist interests. For example, Winifred's legend appears amid the lives of numerous English saints in one copy of the *Gilte Legende* and one copy of the *South English Legendary*, hagiographical compendiums in English dating to the first half of the fifteenth century, and in both of these texts Winifred's Welsh origins are completely overlooked.²⁰ Evidence of English interest in Winifred during the fifteenth century also comes from Tudur Aled, a Welsh poet who tells us in a poem dedicated to Winifred and her healing well that the Lancastrian King Edward IV visited Holywell to venerate

19 Regular monastic life had begun at Shrewsbury Abbey in 1087 following the vow in 1083 of Roger de Montgomery, first Earl of Shrewsbury (1071-1094), to transform the small chapel of St. Peter at Shrewsbury into a Benedictine foundation. For the founding and history of Shrewsbury Abbey, see Nigel Baker and Steve Allen, eds., *Shrewsbury Abbey: Studies in the Archaeology and History of an Urban Abbey* (Shropshire: Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society in association with Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, 2002).

20 Richard Hamer and Vida Russell, eds., *Supplementary Lives in Some Manuscripts of the "Gilte Legende"*, Early English Text Society, no. 315 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 39-43. The *Life* in the *South English Legendary* appears in Oxford, Bodleian MS 779 and is printed in William Fleetwood, *The Life and Miracles of St. Wenefred Together with Her Litanies and Some Historical Observations Made There On*, 2nd ed. (London, 1713), 125-27. For a detailed discussion of these and the many other vernacular *Lives* of Winifred, see Gregory, "A Welsh Saint in England," 222-349.

the saint.²¹ On the other hand, one version of the *Buchedd Gwenfrewy* (Life of Winifred), an abbreviated fifteenth-century Welsh translation of Prior Robert's *Vita*, makes no mention of Winifred's translation to England, but instead confidently asserts that she remains buried alongside other powerful saints in her native soil at Gwytherin.²²



VII – The Legend of Winifred: A Brief Manuscript History

The *Vita* of Winifred in the fourteenth-century Lansdowne MS 436 is the latest of Winifred's three Latin *vitae*. The two earliest surviving accounts of her legend are datable to the twelfth century. One of these is the anonymous *Vita S. Wenefrede*, a text that was once ascribed to Winifred's preceptor at Gwytherin, St. Eleri. However, it was more likely composed by a Norman monk of Basingwerk Abbey, which was situated near Winifred's Holywell shrine and which periodically vied for control of the shrine with the monks of St. Werburgh's Abbey in Chester. This *vita* survives in a single manuscript of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, BL Cotton Claudius A.v, and is designated as the Cotton *Vita* from here on. Appended to the end of this *vita* in the Cotton manuscript is a list of miracles performed by the saint at her Holywell shrine; the list is known as the *Libellus miraculorum*. Taken together, the *Vita* and the *Libellus* focus the reader's attention almost exclusively on Holywell. Because it makes no mention of the translation to Shrewsbury and also bluntly indicates that Winifred is buried at Gwytherin, the Cotton *Vita* has traditionally been considered the earlier of Winifred's two twelfth-century Latin *vitae*. In spite of this fact, precise dating of the Cotton *Vita* and the *Libellus* in relation to the

21 T. M. Charles-Edwards, ed. and trans., *Two Mediaeval Welsh Poems* (Gwasg Gomer: Llandysul, 1971), 14-15.

22 For an edition of the *Buchedd Gwenfrewy*, see Lisa Eryl Jones, "Golygiad O Fuchedd Gwenfrewy" (MPhil diss., University of Cardiff, 2000). The copy of *Buchedd Gwenfrewy* that maintains that the saint remains buried at Gwytherin is found in NLW Peniarth MS 27ii.

other twelfth-century *Vita* of Winifred is difficult.²³ That other *vita* is the lengthy *Vita et translatio S. Wenefrede ex Wallia* written ca. 1140 by Prior Robert of Shrewsbury Abbey, the monk who led the expedition to Gwytherin to retrieve Winifred's relics. Robert explicitly dedicates his work to the prior of nearby Worcester Abbey, a man named Gwarin, and his verbose text includes a detailed, first-hand account of the cult site at Gwytherin. Robert's work survives in three copies, the earliest of which is found in the twelfth-century Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud Misc. MS 114.²⁴ The Lansdowne redactor seems to have used a copy of Robert's *Vita* similar to that in the Bodleian manuscript when creating the composite *Vita* of Winifred, but does not appear to have taken much, if anything, from Robert's *translatio* narrative. The redactor also included nothing from the Cotton manuscript's *Libellus miraculorum* in Winifred's

23 For the Basingwerk origin of the Cotton *Vita* and the difficulty of dating this text, see Fiona Winward, "The Lives of St. Wenefred (*BHL* 8847-51)," *Analecta Bollandiana* 117 (1999), 89-132. Support for Winward's thesis that the Cotton *Vita* originated at the Cistercian abbey of Basingwerk can be found in recent work on other *vitae* in the Claudius A.v collection. The most recent editors of William of Malmesbury's *Life* of Wulfstan of Worcester, which survives only in Claudius A.v alongside the *Life* of Winifred, argue from the script, punctuation, and pressmark that the entire Claudius A.v legendary was produced at Holme Cultram in northwestern England, another Cistercian house. If indeed the legendary originated at Holme Cultram, then it is entirely possible that the *Life* of Winifred contained therein came from another Cistercian foundation, i.e., Basingwerk. Indeed, it is conceivable that the *Lives* of saints produced by a house of a given monastic order would have been shared with and copied out at other houses of the same order. See N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2nd ed. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1964), 102; William of Malmesbury, *Saints' Lives*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 3n1; and Emma Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester, c. 1008-1095* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 291. For the notion that the Claudius A.v legendary was created about 1203, the year in which Wulfstan was canonized, see Wade-Evans, *VSBG*, new ed., xviii-xix.

24 For a discussion of Laud Misc. 114, see Gregory, "A Welsh Saint in England," 380-83. An abridged, thirteenth-century copy of Robert's *Vita* is in Trinity College Library MS O.4.42, which can be viewed at <http://sites.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=797>, accessed September 8, 2015. A seventeenth-century copy of Robert's *Vita* is in Brussels Bibliothèque Royale MS 8072.

Lansdowne *vita*. Crucially, the Cotton *Vita* and Prior Robert's *Vita et translatio* previously had no explicit connection to one another, although they were combined by the Lansdowne redactor into a single text.²⁵

The scholar who has most thoroughly studied Winifred's Latin *vitae*, Fiona Winward, notes the existence of the Lansdowne *Vita* but describes it as a version of the Cotton *Vita* "into which the occasional passage of Robert's frothy verbiage has been added."²⁶ The Lansdowne *Vita* is, however, much more than that. Unlike the later, vernacular versions of Winifred's legend that draw primarily, if not exclusively, on Robert's account, the Lansdowne *Vita* uses the Cotton *Vita* as its primary source. A close inspection of the Lansdowne *Vita* reveals that the redactor was reading the Cotton *Vita* side by side with Robert's *Vita et translatio* and was combining passages from parallel episodes. Besides carefully selecting and seamlessly integrating parts of Robert's work into the text of the Cotton *Vita*, the Lansdowne redactor has also inserted framing and descriptive commentary and has edited or rewritten passages from the Cotton *Vita*. The overall goal of the Lansdowne text is to figure Winifred as an exemplary nun and abbess while underscoring the miraculous favor shown to her by God. Both of these emphases would foster devotional inspiration in an audience of female religious.

25 Robert does not appear to have seen the Cotton *Vita*, since he claims in his prologue to have left out any details of Winifred's story that he could not find *in libris*. In this regard he specifically refers to the story of Winifred's journey to Rome, a story that does appear in the Cotton *Vita*. For Robert's prologue, see Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:708-9; and *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 25-26. For the story of the Roman pilgrimage in the Cotton *Vita*, see Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 704; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 102; and Wade-Evans, *VSBG*, new ed., 294-95.

26 Winward, "Lives of St. Wenefred," 129.



VIII – The Purpose of the Lansdowne *Vita* of Winifred

While the Lansdowne redactor's composite *Vita* of Winifred, the Cotton *Vita*, and Prior Robert's text provide the same basic narrative of the saint's early life, martyrdom, and resurrection, the goals of the three texts vary widely. The Cotton *Vita* is primarily concerned to relate Winifred's time and continuing efficacy at Holywell, probably because this work was composed as part of a monastic dispute over control of Winifred's Holywell shrine. An Anglo-Norman monk writing the *vita* of a non-Norman female saint, Robert sought to trace and authorize the development of Winifred's spiritual potency, from its beginnings in Holywell to its flourishing at Gwytherin to its final transfer to his own abbey. By incorporating selections from Robert's text into the Cotton *Vita*, and by omitting some details from the Cotton *Vita*, the Lansdowne redactor refocuses attention on Winifred's entry into and success in a conventual community. Ultimately, the redactor's focus on Winifred's ability to make her own decisions regarding her spiritual life provides a model for a female audience to follow.²⁷

The Lansdowne *Vita* is then concerned to figure Winifred as an exemplary abbess worthy of inclusion in the English pantheon of saints. The Lansdowne redactor has added an entirely new introduction to Winifred's legend, one that situates and explains Winifred's appearance in a catalog of English sanctity:

Quia virgo sancta Wenefreda sua corporali presentia abbatiam
monachorum nigrorum apud Salopiam, id est Provesbury
divina dispositione a Wallia illuc translata gloriose venustat

27 For a detailed discussion of the Lansdowne *Vita* and the redactor's repurposing of both the Cotton *Vita* and Robert's text, see Gregory, "A Welsh Saint in England," 198-221.

et suo patrocinio protegit et adiuvat aliqua de eius gestis inter sanctos Anglie interserere decrevimus. (fol. 107r^a)

(Because the holy virgin Winifred gloriously adorns with her own bodily presence the abbey of the black monks near Shrewsbury, that is Provesbury, translated there from Wales by divine arrangement, and with her own patronage protects and aids it, we have determined to place among the saints of England something regarding her deeds.)

For the redactor, Winifred's current geographical location—as well as her patronage of that location—override any potential concerns about her origins as a non-English saint. Consonant with the redactor's interest in presenting a very roughly chronological account of the English church through the stories of its saints, the redactor also retains information needed to situate Winifred in time; however, the text's focus throughout underscores Winifred's own strength of will in her vocation as well as her benevolent accessibility to those who pray for her.

After recounting Winifred's martyrdom essentially verbatim from the Cotton *Vita*, the Lansdowne redactor begins to insert passages taken from Robert's narrative to give texture to Winifred's life as a nun and abbess. By borrowing and reworking certain passages, the redactor emphasizes Winifred's freedom of will in taking the veil in a way that the Cotton *Vita* does not. For example, the Lansdowne redactor includes two selections from the sequence in Robert's *Vita* that describe Winifred's consecration as a nun at Beuno's hands. However, the redactor has edited out all of Robert's references to Winifred's parents' consent and refocuses the scene, therefore, on Winifred's own will in the matter. The only role left to Winifred's parents in the Lansdowne version of events is to accept their daughter's decision and to follow Beuno's advice that they in turn heed her examples and admonitions after he has gone.

Similarly, many of the redactor's other inclusions from and modifications of the source texts address the concerns of a conventual community, for whom interest in Winifred's story would lie in her manner of living with and ruling over a group of professed nuns. The Lansdowne *Vita* of Winifred ends with the redactor's own summary of the saint's days at

Gwytherin, emphasizing Winifred's role as an example to other nuns, a group presumably expanded to include the redacted text's audience. The Lansdowne *Vita* thus conforms to the pattern that Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has observed in twelfth- and thirteenth-century *vitae* of female saints: i.e., that they tend to emphasize the liturgical, communicative, or scholarly abilities of their subjects, qualities that further mark the saint out as an exemplary member of her religious community.²⁸

The Lansdowne *Vita* of Winifred therefore carefully combines the saint's two earlier Latin *vitae* in order to present her as a model nun and abbess for female religious living in England. The Lansdowne redactor emphasizes Winifred's free will in becoming a nun and in leading a model religious existence. The redactor also reworks some of Robert's text to render Winifred a more benevolent figure whose power is universally accessible, even though her bones and her primary cult site were situated far from the nuns of Romsey Abbey who eventually came to possess the Lansdowne manuscript. By ending with a statement about Winifred's translation to England and her continuing miraculous demonstrations in both Shrewsbury and Holywell—locations under the explicit control of male monastics—the redactor presents Winifred as a foreign saint and nun fully mediated into the saintly pantheon of England and, therefore, one worthy of veneration and emulation.



IX – BL Lansdowne MS 436

Lansdowne 436 dates to ca. 1300 and includes two separate works: an incomplete chronicle history of English kingdoms and sees and the saints' legendary. These works are in two separate fourteenth-century hands, and the chronicle and the legendary seem to have been composed independently and then attached to one another in the fifteenth century. As a result, the legendary has lost a few folios at the beginning, and further loss of folios has occurred at the end. The text of the legendary (fols. 6r-131v) is arranged in two columns, each ruled for thirty-eight

28 Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives*, 199.

lines, and contains initials that are more ornate than those found in the chronicle (fols. 2r-5v). The manuscript also includes, on fol. 1v, an index of fifteenth-century date indicating that the legendary originally consisted of forty-seven *vitae* (a table detailing those *vitae* is included below on pp. 50-53). Besides the *Vita* of Winifred, the surviving folios contain forty-two other *vitae*, all for British saints.²⁹ Starting with the Augustinian mission of the late sixth century, the collection moves somewhat chronologically towards *vitae* of twelfth- and thirteenth-century eremitical saints. In addition to sixteen royal virgins and abbesses, the compilation includes hermits, confessors, abbots, bishops, archbishops, and martyred kings in its catalog of British sanctity. The *Vita* of Winifred, appearing on fols. 107r-109r, is the thirty-fifth text in the legendary, preceded by a *Vita* of Abbess Hilda and followed by a *Vita* of Ebba, virgin and abbess. All of the *vitae* in the Lansdowne manuscript have been abbreviated, re-written, or both, probably by a single redactor.

To judge from a fifteenth-century *ex libris* inscription on fol. 1v, Lansdowne 436 belonged, at least in the later Middle Ages, to the Benedictine nunnery at Romsey in Hampshire.³⁰ However, while Lansdowne 436 can be placed at Romsey Abbey in the later medieval period, the fact that the collection gives no pride of place to the *Vitae* of Ethelfleda and Merwinna—respectively the foundress of Romsey and her successor as

29 For the date, composition, and physical structure of the Lansdowne manuscript, see Wright, “BL MS Lansdowne 436 Contains Two Separate Items,” and Hollis, “The Literary Culture of the Anglo-Saxon Royal Nunneries.” For a list and discussion of its contents, see Grosjean, “Vita S. Roberti,” 334-39. See also Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:692, §7; and Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 164. For another description and sample images of the manuscript, see the British Library detailed record at <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=5273&Col-IID=15&NStart=436>, accessed September 8, 2015.

30 On the *ex libris*, which may have been written at the same time as the index of saints’ lives already mentioned, see Wright, “BL MS Lansdowne 436 Contains Two Separate Items,” 28. For the history of Romsey Abbey, see Henry George Downing Liveing, *Records of Romsey Abbey: An Account of the Benedictine House of Nuns, with Notes on the Parish Church and Town (A.D. 907-1588)* (Winchester: Warren and Son, Ltd., 1912). For the archeological record of the abbey, see Ian R. Scott, *Romsey Abbey: Report on the Excavations 1973-1991* (Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society, 1996).

abess—may indicate that the legendary was not specifically created for the nuns of that particular house. The size of the manuscript would certainly facilitate reading out loud to an audience of female religious at Romsey or another foundation. Moreover, the composite nature of the *vitae* in the collection suggests that the redactor was attempting to create condensed versions that could be read in less time than the redactor's full sources.

In the case of the *Vita* of Winifred, the Latin of its sources is quite varied. While the Latin of the Cotton *Vita* is terse, direct, and relatively straightforward, Prior Robert's Latin is self-conscious, complicated, and overbearing. The Latin of the Lansdowne redactor is between these two poles. The condensed, composite quality of all the Lansdowne *vitae*, as well as the multi-layered Latin of the Lansdowne *Vita* of Winifred, support recent scholarly opinion that the collection was part of a program to remediate Latin literacy among the nuns of southwestern England.³¹



X – Notes on the Edition

The text presented here is the *Vita S. Wenefrede* as found in the early fourteenth-century BL Lansdowne MS 436. It has been checked against Lansdowne 436, Laud 114 (Robert of Shrewsbury), and Cotton Claudius A.v (the Cotton *Vita*), and, as appropriate, against the Bollandist and Wade-Evans editions of Winifred's *vitae*. Orthography within the present edition generally follows the example of the Bollandists—i.e., simple contractions (e.g., *-e* for *-ae*) are silently expanded, *u* for *v* is normalized to *v*, and *j* for *i* is normalized to *i* throughout, etc. The only exceptions are proper names, which appear in this edition as they do in the Lansdowne manuscript (i.e., Cathuanus instead of Cathvanus, Teuiht instead of Teviht).³² The spelling of personal and place names sometimes differs between the Lansdowne and Cotton manuscripts (e.g,

31 Wright, “BL MS Lansdowne 436 Contains Two Separate Items,” and Hollis, “The Literary Culture of the Anglo-Saxon Royal Nunneries.”

32 The Welsh spellings of all character names are used in the translation text.

Lansdowne: *Catbuanus*, Cotton: *Katuanus*); however, such differences are noted in the *apparatus criticus* only the first time the name appears. A few minor inconsistencies in the spelling of names in the Lansdowne manuscript (e.g., Bennono for Bennonio) have been silently corrected.

{ } indicate major excisions (i.e., more than three words) that the redactor has made from the Cotton *Vita*, the main source text, which appears here in black. Extracts that the redactor has taken from Prior Robert's *Vita* appear in green, and () indicate major excisions—again, more than three words—that the redactor has made in those extracts. Bracketed numbers in green—e.g., [20]—refer to the section numbers given by the Bollandists to Robert's text.

At several points the redactor has composed and inserted original text that appears in neither of the sources. In those instances where the redactor has written and inserted more than three words, that original text appears in purple. When the redactor's original text has replaced text from the Cotton *Vita*, the new text appears within { }, for example, at lines 2-5. When the redactor's original text replaces material from Prior Robert's *Vita*, it appears within (), for example, at lines 63-64. An * marks points where the redactor has excised text from the sources but has put nothing in its place. Finally, the redactor has made numerous minor alterations to the vocabulary, tense, and/or syntax of the sources; there are also brief excisions from or additions to them (in this case, "brief" means three words or fewer). All of these minor alterations are captured in the *apparatus criticus*. Lastly, the *incipit*, chapter markers, and *explicit* are all counted in the line numbering.



Apparatus Criticus

C = London, BL, Cotton Claudius A.v.

La = Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 114

lines 3-7:

3-7 Quia ... decrevimus] C: Quanto opere regis archanum operire salubre est, tantopere Dei magnalia non revelare tormentuosum est. Quamobrem quicquid de beata Wenefreda, favente Deo, nobis traditione veterum manifestatum est, ad laudem ipsius Dei et ad virginis suae merita declaranda, ut pote dignum est, inchoandum. **7** illis] C: igitur **7** Cathuanus] C: Katuanus

lines 8-13:

8 partes] C: provincias **9** Teuiht filius Cylut] C: Teuyth, Eylud filius **9** Tekeyngleya] C: Tekeynglia **10** *) C: Quarum prima Abeluyc, secunda Maynguen, tertia Guenphennaun appellabantur. **10-11** data ... Wenefreda] C: data, filia sola excepta, Wenefreda nuncupata. **11** aetate ... amare] C: coepit aetate sponsum adamare caelestem **12-13** soli ... virginitatem] C: sibi soli suam dicavit virginitatem.

lines 13-14:

13-14 Cuius ... proposuit] C: Quod illius genitor comperiens, ex parte sollicitatur maestus, ex parte exultabat gratulabundus. Sibi enim inerat maestitia eo quod prole carebat, illa sola excepta; et quod quidem gravius ferebat, ad observandum in posterum patrimonium viro illa nubere renuebat. E contra vero gratulatio inerat sibi suam prolem Dei se subdere ditioni. Cuius gratiae causa proposuit heros liberalibus artibus suam tradere satam.

lines 14-24:

14-19 Quod ... erudiendam] C: Dumque in tali existebat proposito, beatus Bennonus praesul, superfluitate filiorum Selym mansione sua privatus, in domo descendit ipsius. Quem heros bene literatum atque religiosum animadvertens, de sua eum consuluit nata, sibi eiusdem votum enucleans. Perpensis itaque prorsus militis elogiis, Bennonus inquit: "Si Deo tuum in manu mea commendes praedium, tecum hic habitabo, divina lege tuam instruens genitam." Ad haec Teuyth: "Domine, si hoc in mea potestate constaret, nemo me avidius tale quid patraret. Sed nunc, serve Dei, nisi nimium diu tibi videatur, te hic morari desidero, quoadusque de talibus regis responsum recipiam." At ille: "Carissime fili, progredere; teque Deus praecedat quo tuum reperias negotium." Teuyth igitur, a domo sua egrediens domo regis, domini eius palatium petiit, illum obnixè interpellans, ut sibi faveret quod de suo patrimonio deliberaret. Ille refert: "O vir venerande, nequaquam mihi vel tibi sortitur tuum sequestrare rus a provinciae communione, ne sibi sit inutile vel meae necessitati. Sed harum quamcunque villarum trium elegeris ad divinum officium tibi libere annuo, si placatus fueris; mihi que reliquas relinque." Audito itaque regis responso optimo, domum repedavit, quicquid a rege audierat Bennono referens: "Ergo si mecum manere desideraveris," ait, "ad Dei ministerium, ubi tibi videatur opportunius in meo elige patrimonio." Beatus Bennonus inquit: "In Beluye solitudine mihi mansionem delibero." Quod et ita factum est. **19** Bennonius] C: Bennonus **19** igitur fixit suum] C: igitur cum Teuyth patrocinio suum fixit **20** appellatur] C: appellabatur **21** ibi construxit] C: ibidem struxit **21** missas celebrans, divina] C: missam celebrat, erudiens divina **22** diligenter instruxit] (not found in C) **23** illius] C: ipsius **23-24** quibus ... celebrationem] C: ubi Bennonus celebrationem **24** verbum ... praedicabat] C: categorizabat.

lines 24-31:

24-27 Hiis ... relicta] C: Ea tempestate accidit quadem die dominica Teuyth cum uxore ad missam existere audiendam, Wenefredamque in domo eius genitoris cunctatam fuisse, causa secum ferendi missae necessaria, ignem videlicet et aquam cum sale. **27** Carodocus] C: Karadauc

Alauc filius 27 progenitus] C: ortus 27 venatione] C: venationem 28 domum Teuiht] C: domui 28-29 querens ... sitiens] C: querens nimirum erat enim sitiens 29 enim] C: igitur 29 existens sola] C: sola existens 30 patremfamilias] C: patrem 30-31 audiendum] C: audiendam 31 missam] C: in missa praedicationem 31 respondit] C: dixit

lines 32-36:

32 iuencule] C: nimphae 33 formosam] C: forma 33 praefulgidam] C: idoneam 33 cor illius] C: illius cor 34 eius] C: sui 34 coepit exardescere] C: coepit diffusum exardescere 34 Deprehendens] C: Deprehendensque 36 illiciti] (not found in C) 36 puellae intulit] C: intulit ei

lines 38-43:

38 Et virgo ad haec] C: Ad haec virgo 40 ingrediari] (not found in C) 40 Domine, hoc] C: Domine, nequaquam hoc 40 nequeo] C: queo 41 namque sum] C: sum enim 41 et ... valeo] C: cui ad praesens nubere debeo 43 loqui nugatoria] C: nugatoria loqui

lines 44-49:

44 animum aemulatione] C: animum in aemulationem 46-47 decentius ornata vestibus] C: ornata vestibus decenter 47 commisceri] C: commiscere 47*] C: Linqam enim, ut necesse est, ministerium mihi iniunctum, et iuxta vestrum ero arbitrium. 48 Sed] C: Si 48 insit] C: inerit 48-49 mihi ... aliquantulum] C: mihi nimium non videbitur te aliquantulum operiri.

lines 50-59:

50 quamtotius a] C: quam citius se a 51 conspectibus abesse] C: abesse conspectibus 52 fortiter calcaribus pungit] C: cum calcaribus fortiter punxit 53 currendo eum] C: virum 57 figere vellet] C: voluit figere 57 ille Belial] C: eam 58 caput ... anticipavit] C: anticipavit eius abscedens caput 58 contuentes] C: intuentes 58-59 ex subito eventu rerum] (not found in C)

lines 59-64:

59 sunt detenti] C: detenti sunt *59* Sed] C: Et *59-60* post modicum] (not found in C) *60* revertentes] C: reversi *60* et ... deficientes] (not found in C) *61* se madebant] C: maduerunt *61-62* perniciem conspiciens] C: perniciem hanc conspiciens *62* Altare] C: altareque *63* ostium ocius] C: ocius ostium *64* Erectisque] C: Erectis

lines 64-69:

64 contemplans...cum] C: contemplatus est Karadocum cruentum adhuc cum *65-66* facti ... iactitantem] C: stantem animadvertensque istud a Caradoco fieri, eum *67* sicut ... ignis] C: ut ab igne cera *68* reversus] C: revertens *69* devotius] C: obnix *69* ut] (not found in C) *69* vivificaret] C: vivificare

lines 70-75:

70 illo deprecante] C: cum prece *71* nonnisi] C: nisi *71-72* cervice apparente] C: cervice non apparente *72* virginis madefacta] C: eius infecta *72-73* moxque ibidem fons] C: torrensque fons ibidem *74* utpote die] C: utpote in die *74* illius] (not found in C) *75* medetur languoribus] C: languoribus medetur

lines 77-101:

77-99 Cum ... conversus] C: Bennonus itaque, aspiciens Deum propter eam huiusmodi peregrisse miraculum, sibi in audientia parentum suorum inquit. *77-78* surrexisset, sancti] **La:** surrexisset, tota die sancti *78* frequentius] (not found in C) *80-81* atque ... cupiens] **La:** Quo facto atque ecclesiasticae disciplinae dogmate assecuto, illa magistri sui pedibus advoluta velari se obnix postulavit. "Cum enim," inquit, "a parentibus meis hoc mihi concessum sit, et meum noveris animum, omnem seculi luxum calcantem, solius Dei amoris et cognitioni inhare, nulla debet esse delatio, sed consequenda desiderii mei sacramenta. Nullatenus vero a te abstrahi aut a pedibus tuis divelli poterō, priusquam tua benedictione regularis disciplinae mysteriis initiata, habitu etiam exteriori sortis

Dei me fore monstravero. Noli ergo, pater sancte, meum diu differre desiderium; sed persuasionibus meis acquiescens, me voti mei compotem protinus effice.” **81** *] **La:** virginis animum et votum manifestavit et praerogatum ei divinam gratiam dixit, atque ipsius voluntati se satisfacere velle intimavit. Illis vero benigne consentientibus filiaeque suae devotionem iucundo affectu complectentibus, vir sanctus **82** regularibus disciplinis] **La:** regularis propositi disciplinis **86** observantionis] **La:** observantiae **87** sanctitate] **La:** charitate **88** laetificat] **La:** laetificabat **88-89** est usus] **La:** usus est **90** promptos] **La:** promptos **95** praeostensam] **La:** per ostensam **98** multis aliis] **La:** omni populo **100-101** Soror ... locum] **C:** Soror mi, hunc Deus tibi destinavit locum

lines 101-112:

101 at] (not found in C) **102** perhendinari] **C:** perhendinare **102-103** Hanc ... memoria] **C:** Mihi autem **104** anno casulam] **C:** anno hoc facito casulam **104** mihi de] **C:** mihi dirige de **104** tuo proprio opere] **C:** vestro opere proprio **104** affer] (not found in C) **104-105** At illa] (not found in C) **105** “Domine,” inquit] **C:** “Domine mi,” inquit **105-106** cordi ... existeret] **C:** meo non extat molestum cordi **107** maxime cum ignorem] **C:** ignoro enim **107** iturus eris] **C:** habitaveris **108** namque] (not found in C) **109** super] **C:** supra **109** preces ruminare] **C:** ruminare preces **110** termino constituto] **C:** constituto termino **110** veniat] **C:** adveniat **111** igitur ex hinc] **La:** igitur erit exhinc **111** istum erit] (not found in C) **112** famulatu] **La:** famulitio

lines 114-129:

114 enim iugi] **La:** enim in iugi **114-115** servieris et septem] **La:** serviens, septem **115** peregerisque] **La:** peregeris **119** Nam] (not found in C) **122** tertetcia] **La:** tertia **125** *] **La:** se presentis vitae luce in proximo cariturum, atque ideo **129** His dictis] **C:** Sic ab invicem **129** discesserunt] **C:** disgregati sunt

lines 131-142:

131-142 Ac ... edocebat] C: Beata vero Wenefreda in supra dicta eremo multis diebus suam peregit vitam, utpote Bennonus sibi consulerat *131* Ac ... beata] **La:** Elapso autem aliquanto tempore, rediens ad se beata virgo et ad memoriam reducens conversionis suae modum passionisque titulum atque beati doctoris sui Beunoi sermones seu vaticinia, virilem constantiam aggrediens, omnem moerorem funditus deposuit, statimque *141* *) **La:** nunc eas ab insidiis fraudulentis prae donis evangelicis verbis et sanctorum patrum sententiis munitas esse docebat, nunc luculento sermonis sui affamine divinum in earum pectoribus amorem infundebat; assiduis autem admonitionibus non desistebat illas instruere, regulae institutionibus solerter intendere, propositique sui meminisse atque in his officiosas existere. Ipsa vero

lines 142-149:

142-143 Recordata ... singulis] C: In annis quoque singularibus *143* beati] (not found in C) *144* modo praelibato] C: hoc modo *144-145* Quam ... exterius] C: Super saxum illam aptabat; saxum vero ipsam interius et exterius *146* deferebat] C: deferrebat *146-147* ac deinceps] C: et sic *147* siccam] (not found in C) *147* Sachelem] C: Sachlen *148* transvehebat] (not found in C) *148* *) C: Ita Bennonus virginis donum omni anno accipiebat. Huic casulae virginis ob meritum tanta virtus inerat quod ubicumque Bennonus foret hanc indutus, nec pluvia humectari nec pilus eius posset vento moveri. *148* Tali eventu rei] C: Talis rei eventu *148-149* Casula Sicca cognominatus] C: Casulam Siccus agnominatus

lines 150-155:

150 singulis observaret annis] **La:** singulis annis *150* Benonius virtutibus] **La:** Beunous, longo confectus senio, virtutibus *151* *) **La:** et operibus praeclarus, caducum et aerumnis obsitum relinquens seculum, ad coeleste *151* migraret ad dominum] **La:** migraret gaudium *155* Unde] (not found in C) *155* *) paululumque procedente tempore, cum pars maxima consortium suarum virginum de hoc saeculo migrasset, odio habere locum illum coepit in quo eatenus conversata erat; memorque

verborum praeceptoris sui, quibus illam post septem annos alium debere invisere et incolere locum designaverat, in ultimi expletione anni coepit fastidire locum et omnia prorsus aedificiorum genera intermittere. Et quoniam facies eius alias intendentis erat, requiem non habebat spiritus eius dum ibi degebat. Nec tamen, donec consummati essent praefati septem anni, habitationem illam dimittere aut usquam abire facultatem habere potuit. Cum autem omnes evoluti essent, tunc illa, sui ipsius compos effecta

lines 157-170:

157 ut et] **La:** ubi et *161* mores illius] **La:** mores pro illius *164* *] **La:** quod postea patentibus demonstrabitur exemplis, cum prius narrationem historiae texuerimus *169-170* antea ... sive] **La:** habitaverat, una sola virgine comite contenta, ut in oraculo audierat, peregrinationem suam aggressa est. *170* Wyteriacus] **La:** Witheriacus nuncupatus

lines 170-184:

170 pignoribus] **La:** pigneribus *171* pervenit] **La:** et pro illorum reverenda conversatione a Deo electus atque ab omni populo in nimia reverentia habitus. *171* Erat ante] (not found in C) *171* ibi quidam] **La:** Ibi est quidam *174* saperet nihil mundanae] **La:** sapiat nihil prorsus mundanae *174* affectaret] **La:** affectet *175* Sub ... ibidem] **La:** Ad hunc te destinare divino sum praecepto admonitus, tibi que insuper intimare quod ibi inventura sis quicquid animae coelestia desideranti in praesenti vita sufficere debet. Nam ibi sunt *177* *] **La:** et diligenti devotione proposito suo intendentes, tuis admonitionibus et exemplis, Dei nutu, aliquatenus meliores efficiendae. *177-183* Quibus ... venerabantur] **C:** Eo tempore, ut memorant, Romam petiit, visitandi causa sanctorum apostolorum loca, ut ibi in praesentia reliquiarum sanctorum se totam Deo devote offerret. Quo peracto, ad desertum pristinum repedavit. In diebus illis, totius Britanniae sancti ad synodum Wenefredi contionabantur. Ad quam cum aliis sanctis etiam beata Wenefreda ascendit. Ibidemque omnibus ritu synodali religiose institutis, videlicet, ut sancti qui antea disparati singillatim vivebant, nullam habentes regulam nisi voluntatem, postea

gregatim convenirent in locis ad hoc congruis, et eorum conversationem sub prioribus provectoris sibi praefectis emendarent. Unde contigit beatam Wenefredam undecim virginibus esse praelectam, ut vitae et sanctae conversationis exemplum ab ea exciperent. **184** autem] (not found in C) **184** sancta] (not found in C)

lines 185-196:

185 namque] C: quippe **186** lacte] C: lacteque **187** nominata] C: praenominata **188** conformiter] C: confirmiter **189** ut praedicitur Wytern] C: Gurtherin **189** ubi] C: Quo etiam **190** quae erat] C: cum consodalibus virginibus **190** octavo] C: VIII **190-196** per ... continetur] C: requiescit in Christo, cui est honor, et gloria in secula seculorum. Amen. **196** Explicit ... martire] C: Explicit vita sanctae Wenfredae virginis et martyris.

1 [107ra] Incipit de sancta Wenefreda virgine et
martire .iiii.

{Quia virgo sancta Wenefreda sua corporali praesentia abbatiam
monachorum nigrorum apud Salopiam, id est Provesbury divina
5 dispositione a Wallia illuc translata gloriose venustat et suo patro-
cinio protegit et adiuvat aliqua de eius gestis inter sanctos Angliae
interserere decrevimus.} In diebus illis quibus Cathuanus super
Venedociae partes regnabat, strenuus quidam miles, trium dum-
taxat possessor villarum nomine Teuiht filius Cylut in Tekeyngleya
10 manebat. {*} Huic Teuiht propago non fuit data excepta sola Wene-
freda. Haec statim ab ineunte aetate coepit sponsum celestem amare
hominesque transitorios respuens, soli Christo dicavit suam virgini-
tatem. {Cuius sancto proposito congaudens pater liberalibus artibus
imbuendam tradere proposuit}. {Quod dum cogitaret beatus Ben-
15 nonius, multorum monachorum diversis locis habitantium [107rb]
abbas et pater, in domum descendit ipsius. Teuiht, vero considerans
eum virum egregie literatum, religione atque sanctitate precipuum,
dedit ei in patrimonio suo habitationis locum filiam suam tradens
ei erudiendam.} Bennonius igitur fixit suum tugurium in convalle
20 quae Britonum lingua Sechnant appellatur ecclesiamque parvulam
ibi construxit in qua missas celebrans, divina quotidie pagina virgi-
nem Wenefredam diligenter instruxit. Siquidem Teuiht domusque

[107ra] Here Begins the Life of St. Gwenfrewy,
Virgin and Martyr

Because the holy virgin Gwenfrewy gloriously adorns with her
own bodily presence the abbey of the black monks near Shrews-
bury, that is Provesbury, translated there from Wales by divine
arrangement, and with her own patronage protects and aids it, we
have determined to place among the saints of England something
regarding her deeds. In those days in which Cadfan was reigning
over the regions of North Wales, a certain vigorous soldier named
Tyfid, son of Clyut, dwelled in Tegeingl, where he owned no fewer
than three villas.¹ Tyfid had no children except for Gwenfrewy
alone, who, from an early age began to love a heavenly spouse,
rejecting transitory men and dedicating her virginity to Christ
alone. Rejoicing over her holy inclinations, Tyfid determined to
have his daughter educated in the liberal arts, for she was in need
of instruction. While he was thinking such things, blessed Beuno,
abbot and father of many monks living in various places, arrived
at Tyfid's home.² Truly considering Beuno a very learned man,
particularly in religion and sanctity, Tyfid gave to Beuno a place
to reside in his own lands. He also handed over to Beuno his own
daughter to be educated. Then, in an enclosed valley, which in the
language of the Britons is called *Sechnant*,³ Beuno built his own
dwelling. He also constructed there a very small church in which
he celebrated masses, and every day he diligently instructed the
maiden Gwenfrewy in the divine word. As was proper, Tyfid and his

1 The Cotton *Vita* includes the Welsh names of each of Tyfid's three villas; however, the Lansdowne redactor has excised the names, presumably because they would be of little interest to English nuns.

2 The Lansdowne redactor has here overlooked the "numerous sons of Selym" who, according to the Cotton *Vita*, had expelled Beuno from his previous home and caused him to wander through north Wales.

3 The Lansdowne redactor has preserved the Welsh place name *Sechnant* (Dry Stream) from the Cotton *Vita*. In his *Vita et translatio*, Prior Robert refers to this location as *Sicca Vallis* (Dry Vale).

illius quotidie missarum officia adibant, quibus et Benonnius post
celebrationem {verbum Dei frequenter praedicabat. Hiis itaque ali-
25 quo tempore durantibus, accidit quadam die dominica Teuiht cum
uxore, ad missam exisse more solito audiendam, sola Wenefreda
domo relicta}. Interea Carodocus regali stirpe progenitus, venatione
ferarum fatigatus, domum Teuiht appropriavit potum quaerens; erat
enim valde sitiens. Puella enim, in domo existens sola, interroganti
30 patremfamilias ocius occurrit, eumque eleganter salutans, ad audien-
dum Bennonii missam parentes suos isse respondit. Caradoco itaque
iuuencule faciem, candore ruboreque confectam, intuente ipsamque
totam formosam et vultu praefulgidam admirante, cor illius [107va]
in eius concupiscentia coepit exardescere. Deprehendens illam solam
35 in domo absque alterius testimonio sitim obliviscens prae amo-
ris illiciti magnitudine puellae intulit: “O carissima virgo, meis
adquiesce consiliis mecum procorum familiaritatem patrando; te
enim vehementer concupisco.” Et virgo ad haec: “Domine mi, quale
elogium est hoc viri tam ingenui ut tu ad ancillam tam degenerem
40 uti ego ingrediaris.” Iterum, “Domine, hoc agere nequeo, despon-
sata namque sum alteri viro, {et idcirco alibi nubere non valeo}.”
Audiens haec Caradocus furore repletus ait: “Dimitte haec frivola
loqui nugatoria, et mecum commisceri consenti mihi nube, et ego
te uxorem ducam.” Videns igitur puella viri animum aemulatione
45 commotum ad industriam se vertens ne viri opprimeretur violentia
ait: “Concede michi, Domine, vestiarium meum intrare ut decentius
ornata vestibus tecum possim aptius commisceri. {*}” Respondit
puellae Caradocus: “Sed nulla tibi insit mora, mihi namque nimium

household used to visit daily for the offices of the mass, and, after
the mass, Beuno would frequently preach the word of God to them.
After these arrangements had continued for a time, it happened one
particular Sunday that Gwenfrewy was left home alone while Tyfid
and his wife went to hear mass as usual. Meanwhile, Caradog,⁴ a
man born of royal stock and tired out from hunting wild beasts,
approached Tyfid’s home seeking drink, for he was very thirsty.
Gwenfrewy, being alone at home, quickly greeted and properly
addressed him. When he asked for the head of the household, she
responded that her parents had gone to hear Beuno’s mass. At this
point, Caradog gazed upon the face of the young girl, formed as
it was with grace and modesty, and he noticed that she was com-
pletely beautiful. As he admired her radiance, his heart began to
blaze with desire for her. Recognizing that she was home alone and
away from the view of anyone else and therefore quickly forgetting
his thirst, and because of the magnitude of his illicit passion for
the girl, Caradog said, “Most beloved maiden, submit to my desire
and join me in the intimacy of suitors; indeed I vehemently long
for you.” To these words the maiden responded, “My Lord, such
speech is this from a man so noble that you would begin to utter it
to a servant girl so low-born as I?” She continued, “Lord, I am not
able to do this, for I am betrothed to another man, and therefore
I am not free to marry another.” Hearing these things, Caradog
was filled with anger and replied, “Speak no more of these frivolous
trifles, and consent to join with me in marriage; I will make you my
wife.” The girl saw that the man’s spirit was roused with ambition,
so, turning away lest she be overwhelmed by his force, she said,
“Allow me, Lord, to enter my dressing chamber so that I might be
adorned in more appropriate clothes and may join with you more
suitably.” Caradog responded to the girl, “Yes, but do not delay,
for to me even a short time will seem excessive.” Having accepted

4 In the Cotton *Vita*, the villain’s full name is given as *Karadauc, Alauc filius* (Caradog, son of Alâog). The Lansdowne redactor has excised Caradog’s patronymic because this information, just like the Welsh names of Tyfid’s villas, was probably not important to the redactor’s intended audience.

videbitur vel aliquantulum.” Accepta igitur licentia per thalamum
50 vallem celeribus adivit passibus puella cupiens quamtotius a viri
conspicibus abesse. Caradocus itaque videns se virginis industria
delusum, furore repletus, fortiter calcaribus pungit equum, puellam
quaerens comprehendere. Puella vero currendo eum praecesserat
quousque ad monasterii ostium pervenerat, pacis tutelam a [107vb]
55 Deo et Bennonio assequi desiderans.

Capitulum Secundum

Cumque suum infra limen figere vellet pedem, vir ille Belial framea
caput abscidens ipsam anticipavit. Quod parentes sui contuentes, **ex**
subito eventu rerum in extasi aliquamdiu sunt detenti. Sed ad se post
60 modicum revertentes **et prae doloris vehementia paene deficientes**,
lacrimis se madebant miserandis, Bennonius quoque, perniciem
conspiciens, maestitia permaxima irretitus est. Altare relinquens
ostium ocius adivit, scire volens quis huiusmodi peregisset caedem.
Erectisque oculis contemplans Caradocum cruentatum cum gladio
65 in manu sanguinolento {**facti non paenitentem, immo bene se fecisse**
iactitantem}, in eodem loco maledixit. Statimque in conspectu eius

this permission, the girl fled with quick steps through her dressing
chamber and into the valley, desiring to be away from the man’s
sight as soon as possible. But then, seeing himself deceived by the
girl’s cunning and filled with rage and seeking to catch her, Caradog
harshly gave spur to his horse. Truly hoping by her flight to gain
the protection of God’s peace and of Beuno, the girl had got ahead
of him and came to the very door of the monastery.

The Second Chapter

However, just as she hoped to put her foot upon the threshold,
the man, that Belial,⁵ caught her, and with his sword he cut off her
head. Seeing this deed, her parents remained in shock for some
time **from the sudden nature of it all**. But, returning to themselves
after a short while, they wet their cheeks with miserable tears **and**
fainted many times on account of their intense sadness. Beuno,
having also witnessed this disaster, was caught in the greatest of
grief. He left the altar and went quickly to the door, wishing to
know who had committed such a murder. Beuno raised his eyes and
saw Caradog, spattered with blood and with blood-stained sword
in hand—he was **not penitent for his actions but, on the contrary,**
gloated over the deed he had done, so Beuno cursed him on the

5 The reference to Caradog as “that Belial” is an addition on the part
of the Lansdowne redactor, but the redactor may have borrowed this
phrase from Prior Robert. In his account of Gwenfrewy’s translation,
Robert uses a similar phrase (*vir Belial*) to describe a Welshman at
Gwytherin who speaks out publically against the Shrewsbury monks
and their intention to take Gwenfrewy’s relics to England. Robert
reports that the man was appeased with a secret bribe and that the
other villagers took the man’s change of heart as a sign of divine favor
toward the Shrewsbury contingent. Not surprisingly, this little mone-
etary exchange is missing from the sixteenth-century Welsh translation
of Robert’s account found in NLW Llanstephan MS 35. Smedt, *Acta*
sanct Nov., 1:729; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 86. On this sequence in the
Llanstephan translation of Robert’s text, see Gregory, “A Welsh Saint
in England,” 70-72.

ille liquefactus est sicut cera a facie ignis. Deinde Bennonius, ad
cadaver reversus, caput ictu gladii intus proiectum corpori deforis
70 iacenti coaptavit. Deum devotius interpellans ut illud vivificaret
corpus ne gauderet super illo inimicus. Et mox illo deprecante cor-
pus cum viribus resumpsit animam, cicatrice nonnisi exili in cervice
apparente. Aria vero sanguine virginis madefacta crepuit, moxque
ibidem fons irriguus scaturivit. Cuius lapides usque in hodiernum
85 diem utpote die prima sanguinolenti videntur. Mussa etiam illius
ut thus odorat et diversis medetur languoribus.

Capitulum Tertium

[108ra] {[14] Cum igitur ut praelocuti sumus, a mortuis surrexisset,
sancti viri pedibus frequentius adhaerens, illius sermonibus sedula
devotione intendebat, de omnibus quae ad Deum pertinent plenius
80 instrui volens, (atque sanctae religionis habitum ab eo recipere cupi-
ens). Tunc vir beatus, vocatis parentibus eius, (*) coram multis illam
sacro velamine indutam consecravit, atque regularibus disciplinis
sufficienter confirmavit. Quae statim post completum desiderii sui
votum, totius virtutis artem aggrediens, et regularis disciplinae
85 studiis devotissime inhaerens, in brevi totius ordinis peritiam et
observantionis perfectionem adepta est. Dehinc quotidie magis ac
magis proficiens, beatum virum pro nimia sanctitate sua admodum
laetificat. [15] Qui, vocatis parentibus illius, huiusmodi oratione est

spot. Then, as Beuno looked on, Caradog melted like wax before a
flame. Returning to the cadaver, Beuno took the head, which had
been thrown inside the church by sword's blow, and joined it to
the body lying outside. He then besought God devotedly that He
would bring the corpse back to life lest the enemy should rejoice
over it. As he prayed, the body came quickly back to life with full
force once again, and no scar was visible on it except a thin one
on the neck. The ground soaked by the maiden's blood then burst
asunder, and in that same place a watery fountain gushed forth.
The stones in the fountain, even to the present day, seem stained
with blood as they had been on the first day, and the moss in the
fountain smells of frankincense and cures diverse illnesses.

The Third Chapter

When, as we related, she had risen from the dead, the maiden
more frequently followed the steps of the holy man, listening with
zealous devotion to his sermons, wishing to be instructed more
fully about all things that pertain to God, and eager to receive from
Beuno the habit of sacred religion.⁶ Then the holy man called
her parents, and, in the presence of many people, he covered and
consecrated her with the sacred veil, confirming her according
to the holy rule. Immediately after completing this vow that she
had long desired to make, she began to seek the knowledge of all
virtue, held most devotedly to her studies of the holy rule, and in
a short time acquired expertise in the whole order and perfection
in her observance. From then on accomplishing more and more
every day, the maiden brought her holy teacher great joy on account
of her devoted piety.⁷ Then, calling the girl's parents, he spoke to

6 At this point in Robert's original text, Gwenfrewy asks Beuno to give her the veil, noting that her parents support her desires for a holy life. Beuno then explains Gwenfrewy's wish to her parents, who readily give their consent. The Lansdowne redactor has condensed this sequence. Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:715; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 40-41.

7 In Robert's original text, we are told that Gwenfrewy brought her teacher great joy on account of her devoted charity (*charitate*). The Lansdowne redactor has altered the reading to focus on her piety (*sanctitate*), perhaps because the redactor felt that the intended

90 usus: “Vos, me,” inquit, “prius hic suscepistis et meis postulationibus vos paratos atque promptos exhibuistis; demum quoque locum istum Dei servitio instituendum concessistis, et vos illud idem efficaciter complere studuistis. Nunc vero quoniam divina inter vos exuberaverunt beneficia, lumen celeste vobis et filiae vestrae infusum diligenter attendite; gratiamque qua respersi estis sollicitè considerantes, praeostensam vobis salutis viam vigilanter incedere curate. Et quoniam mei praesentia ad praesens carituri estis, quia alias me vocat Deus, exemplis et admonitionibus filiae vestrae sollerter intendite, certissime scientes illam non solum vobis verum etiam multis aliis exemplum salutis futuram.” [108rb] Ad virginem vero conversus:} 100 “Soror,” inquit “dilectissima, hunc ut cerno Deus destinavit tibi locum, meque oportet alias tendere, at ubi Deus mihi providerit perhendinari. Hanc solam, si placeat mecum age misericordiam, ut recentior altrinsecus mutuae caritatis vigeat memoria, circa hunc diem unoquoque anno casulam mihi de tuo proprio opere affer. At 105 illa, “Domine,” inquit, “hoc tibi impendere cordi meo iocundum existeret, sed permaxima mihi videtur difficultas, id qualiter ad te pervenerit, maxime cum ignorem quo iturus eris.” Cui sanctus: “De hoc tibi absit sollicitudo. Saxum namque extat in medio fontis rivo, super quod meas consuevi preces ruminare; superpone huic 110 in termino constituto casulam, et si mihi advenerit, veniat. [15] Tuum igitur ex hinc locum istum erit incolere, atque virgines in Dei famulatu victuras et hic tecum mansuras congregare. Unumque pro certo scias te in hoc loco finem vitae non habituram. Cum enim iugi corporis abstinentia et spiritus afflictione Deo servieris 115 et septem hic annos peregerisque, alium te invisere locum divinitus admonitam oportebit, Deo te dirigente et per te multorum cordium

them in this way: “Previously,” he said, “you supported me here, and you proved yourselves ready for and open to my requests; you then also provided for a place to be established for the service of God, and you diligently exerted yourselves to fill that same place. Now, because divine favors have been truly abundant among you, attend diligently to the heavenly light that has been poured into you and into your daughter, and, considering carefully the grace with which you have been sprinkled, take care to walk vigilantly in the way of salvation shown forth for you. And because you will soon be without me, for God calls me elsewhere, exert yourselves to follow carefully the examples and admonitions of your daughter, knowing most certainly that she will be an example of salvation not only for you, but truly for many others.” Turning then to the virgin he said, “Most beloved sister, I can see that God has intended this place for you, so it behooves me to carry on elsewhere; God will provide me with a place to dwell. If it pleases you, and so that we may recall one another with mutual affection when I am in my new dwelling, show me this one sympathy: about this day each year send to me a vestment of your very own work.” And she replied, “Lord, to do this for you would bring joy to my heart, but the manner in which the vestment should come to you seems the greatest difficulty, chiefly because I do not know where you will go.” To which Beuno replied, “Let worry be far from you regarding this, for in the middle of this fountain’s stream stands a stone on which I was accustomed to say my prayers. Place the vestment on this stone at the agreed upon time. If it will come to me, let it come. And so henceforth this place will be your very own in which to dwell and to fill with virgins excelling in the service of God who will live here with you. And let you know one thing for certain: you will not have the end of your life in this place. After you have spent seven years in this place serving God with steadfast bodily abstinence and spiritual suffering, it will be necessary for you, moved by divine inspiration, to seek out another place, with God directing you and through

audience of nuns would have more opportunities to exercise piety in the cloister rather than charitable behavior outside its walls. Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:715; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 41.

tenebras illuminante. Hoc etiam retine, quod celebris erit in hoc mundo memoria tua, et quanti apud Deum fueris meriti, multi per te incommodorum suorum remedia adepti contestabuntur. Nam
120 [16] quicumque aliqua infortunia passus te requisierit et per te a sua invaletudine seu oppressione se liberari [108va] petierit, prima sive secunda aut certe tertia vice voluntatis suae compos effectus, quod postulaverat se impetrasse gaudebit. Si autem contigerit petentem te trine vicis petitione quod optaverat non consecutum fuisse, certissime sciat (*) occulto Dei iudicio precis suae fructu in praesenti frustratum fuisse. Proficere sibi tamen ad animae suae medelam te invocasse constanter intelligat, atque per te aliquid sibi maius divinitus praestari quam si quod petebat exterius consequeretur.”
125 His dictis post benedictionem mutuam discesserunt.

130 Capitulum Quartum

{[18] (*Ac dentius¹ ex tunc virgo beata*) sponsum suum Christum, cui se caste vivendo devoverat, toto mentis affectu amplectens, illi inhiare, illum sapere, ad eum suspirare ardenti desiderio coepit. Deinde nobilium filias secum congregans, docebat eas castitatem
135 amare, atque spretis omnibus mundi blandimentis² illecebris, levi iugo Christi colla submittere, et per regularis propositi normam se Dei servitio mancipare. Nonnullae autem videntes conversationis illius severitatem, et modestam vitae gravitatem, gratia sunt divina

1 The manuscript reads *dentius*, but a more logical reading here is *deintius*, a comparative form from *deinde*.

2 The reading *blandimentis* agrees with Laud Misc. 114, fol. 147r. However, a deletion in what could be a later or nearly contemporary hand strikes out the “m” of *blandimentis* and brings the reading in line with that in Bibliothèque Royale MS 8072. Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:717.

you illuminating the shadows of many hearts. Know also that your memory will be renowned in this world and that however many merits you will have gained before God, many souls will be witness to this, having gained remedies for their own ills through you. For whosoever has suffered any misfortune and who seeks you and asks through you to be freed from their infirmity, having come to possess their own desire either the first, second, or certainly the third time they have asked, will rejoice to have obtained that for which they have sought. If, however, it occurs that by the third petition the penitent soul beseeching you has not received that which they desired, let them know most certainly that for the present time they will, through the hidden judgment of God, be deprived of the fruit of their prayer.⁸ Nevertheless, let them know that, having called resolutely on you to achieve for themselves the healing of their own souls, through you something greater from heaven is supplied to them than if they had asked for something outwardly.” With these things said, they blessed one another and parted.

The Fourth Chapter

And more frequently from that time the blessed virgin, embracing with complete passion of mind her own spouse Christ, to whom she had devoted herself by living chastely, began with ardent desire to be eager for him, to know him, and to long for him. Congregating then daughters of the nobility with her, she taught them to love chastity, and, spurning all the world’s flattery and allurements, to submit their necks to the light yoke of Christ, and to surrender themselves to servitude in God through the order of a regimented pattern of life. Seeing the severity of her speech and the reserved gravity of her living, and stimulated by divine grace and seizing

8 The Lansdowne redactor has softened this particular prediction. In Robert’s original text, Beuno states that the penitent must take their third unsuccessful entreaty as a sign that they will soon *die* and that they must wait for a heavenly reward for their prayer. Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:716; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 43.

compunctae, atque arripientes monastici ordinis regulam, sacro
140 indumento se velari petierunt. Quibus beata Wenefreda boni pas-
toris vices et officia exercens, (*) sine intermissione eadem faciebat
quae subiectis suis facienda edocebat}. Recordata etiam verborum
Benonius annis singulis in beati Johannis Baptiste [108vb] vigilia
casulam modo praelibato Bennonio trans mittebat. {Quam super
145 saxum in torrentis medio coaptatam saxum illam interius exterius}
siccam cum fontis fluctibus labans, usque in mare deferebat, ac
deinceps per mare siccam ad portum Sachelem, usque ad Ben-
nonium transvehebat. {*} Tali eventu rei Bennonius Casula Sicca
cognominatus est. [20] Accidit autem, dum virgo hunc mittendi
150 modum singulis observaret annis, ut beatus Benonius virtutibus
plenus (*) migraret ad dominum. [21] Cuius discessus cum sanctae
virgini innotuit, multis illum lacrymis et orationibus prosecuta est,
atque praefatum munus ulterius transmittere destitit. Tunc autem
primum, omni humana consolatione se destitutam dicens, taedere
155 coepit locum in quo morabatur. Unde (*) toto conamine ad Deum
mentem erigens deprecabatur, ut eam ad talem locum destinaret,

the rule of monastic life, several of them sought to cover them-
selves in the holy veil. Blessed Gwenfrewy, exercising for them
the duty and authority of a good shepherd,⁹ did without hesitation
the very things which she taught had to be done by those subject
to her. And also remembering each year the words of Beuno, she
was accustomed on the vigil of blessed John the Baptist to send
to him the vestment in the agreed upon manner. The vestment
having been placed upon the stone in the middle of the torrent,
the stone floated on the waves of the spring and carried the vest-
ment dry inside and outside all the way to the sea, and thereafter
transported it dry through the sea to the port of Sachelem and all
the way to Beuno.¹⁰ As a result of this, Beuno received the epithet
“Dry Cloak.” It then occurred, while the maiden observed each
year this manner of sending the gift, that blessed Beuno, full of
virtues, departed to the Lord. When his departure became known
to the sacred maiden, she mourned his passing with many tears and
prayers, and she ceased to send the aforementioned gift any longer.
She then, saying that she was deprived of all human consolation,
grew tired of that first place in which she had dwelled. Thence,¹¹
turning all the power of her mind to God, she prayed that He would

9 The Lansdowne redactor has here removed Robert’s description of how Gwenfrewy would quote the gospels and the church fathers to teach the women under her rule. Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:717; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 46.

10 At this point in the Cotton *Vita*, we are told that Beuno’s cloaks were imbued with apparently magical power against wind and rain. The Lansdowne redactor has excised this detail, which was likely an echo of the pre-Christian hero tales that influenced the stories of the Welsh saints. Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:703; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 101. On the pre-Christian characteristics of the Welsh saints, see Henken, *Patterned Lives*.

11 In Robert’s original text, he emphasizes here that Gwenfrewy was unable to leave the site of her martyrdom (i.e., Holywell) and to find another dwelling until the seven years predicted by Beuno had passed. Robert also relates that most of Gwenfrewy’s fellow nuns died during this time and that Gwenfrewy herself, neglecting the church buildings, came thoroughly to hate the place. Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:718; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 51.

ut et sibi placere et aliis proficere posset. Locumque illum in quo prius consolationem habuerat, sua benedictione perfundere dignaretur, ut qui illuc orationis gratia aut alicuius remedii consequendi
160 causa adveniret, invocato nomine ipsius atque patrocinantibus illis qui ibidem actus suos et mores illius amore correxerint, quod postularet consequeretur. Quam petitionem ad Dei aures pervenisse testantur innumere gentes, in eodem loco a diversorum morborum invaletudinibus liberatae (*). Praedictus autem locus simul et fons
175 beatae Wenefredae monachorum nunc sunt de Bazingwerk, Ordinis Cisterciensis.

Capitulum Quintum

[23] Igitur sanctissima virgo, committens Deo locum suum et omnes cum quibus [109ra] (antea habitabat nutu divino ad locum qui uter
170 Wytern sive) [24] Wyteriacus multorum sanctorum pignoribus refertus (pervenit). Erat ante ibi quidam multarum virtutum Abbas, nomine Elerius, quem iugis gemitus et oratio perseuerans, ita ab omnibus saecularibus curis liberum et defaecatum reddiderunt ut iam nil terrenum saperet nihil mundanae delectationis affectaret,
175 totus celestibus intentus. (Sub cuius regimine erant ibidem) Deo

send her to a place where she could both find peace for herself and be useful to others. And she prayed that He would deem that that place in which previously she had received her consolation deserved His own blessing, so that he who should come there for the sake of prayer or for achieving any other remedy would, invoking her name and supported by those who have reformed their own deeds and habits for love of her, receive that for which he asks. People beyond number, freed in that very place from the infirmities of many diseases, proclaim that her prayer reached the ears of God.¹² Moreover the aforementioned place and, likewise, the fountain of blessed Gwenfrewy are now owned by the monks of Basingwerk, of the Cistercian Order.

The Fifth Chapter

And so the most sacred virgin, committing to God her own place and all those with whom she had previously lived, came by divine command to a place which is known as either Wytern or Witheriacus¹³ and is filled with the relics of many saints. Previously there was¹⁴ in that place a certain abbot of many virtues, named Eleri, whom continual sighing and persistent prayer had rendered so free and clean of all worldly cares that now, totally intent on heavenly matters, he knew no earthly thing and desired nothing of worldly

12 Robert indicates here that he will relate examples of these miraculous cures later in his account, but because the Lansdowne redactor has not retained any of these examples from Robert, the redactor has removed this reference.

13 The Cotton *Vita* gives the name of Gwenfrewy's new community only as *Gurtherin*; the second spelling given here by the Lansdowne redactor has been taken from Robert's text. Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:719.

14 The material following here, taken from section 24 of Robert's *Vita* is, in its original context, direct speech by St. Saturnus, whom Gwenfrewy meets on her journey from Holywell and who tells her of Gwytherin. The Lansdowne redactor has converted Saturnus' speech into simple narrative description. Ibid., 719-20; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 55.

dicatae virgines, ab ipsis infantiae rudimentis in professione vitae sanctimonialis caelibatum observantes (*). {Quibus processu temporis ab eodem Elerio virgo Wenefreda in exemplum sanctitatis praelata est. Quae nihil intactum dimittebat, quod ad propriam salutem vel aliorum exemplum et utilitatem pertinere cognoscebat. Unde ab universis simplici diligebatur affectu, et tam extranei quam domestici propter vitae sanctitatem et miraculorum operationem honorem ei exhibebant et eam reverenter venerabantur.} Quanta autem scientiae eloquentia haec virgo sancta praeferat, non est nostrae facultatis edissere. Sermones namque elogii ipsius melle dulciores lacte nitidiores in sensibus audientium reputabantur. Unde et ab omnibus publice Candida Wenefreda nominata est. Candore enim sophiae eloquebatur et conformiter degebat. Locus quidem, quo cum virginibus conversata est ut praedicitur Wytern vocatur ubi post vitae dormitionem quae erat octavo kalendas Julii seputa {per

delight. Under his rule in that place there were virgins dedicated to God, who had observed celibacy from a very early age in profession of the holy life.¹⁵ Before long, the same Eleri held the maiden Gwenfrewy forth as an example of sanctity to the virgins, she who left nothing untried which she thought pertained to proper health or the utility and example of others. And so she esteemed all things with simple affection, and foreigners and locals showed her honor on account of her sanctity of life and her working of miracles, and they venerated her reverently.¹⁶ Indeed, it is beyond our skill to explain the eloquence of knowledge with which this sacred virgin shined forth. And in fact her conversation and her speech were reputed sweeter than honey and brighter than milk in the minds of those who heard her. And so she was known by all publicly as White Gwenfrewy, for she used to speak with and, likewise, to spend her time in the radiance of wisdom. Certainly the place in which she lived with the virgins is called, as was mentioned, Wytern, where after the sleep of life, buried eight days before the Kalends of

15 In Robert's original text, Saturnus here indicates that the virgins living at Gwytherin, while diligently devoted to the holy life, could be improved through Gwenfrewy's instruction and God's favor. The Lansdowne redactor has left out this detail.

16 The Lansdowne redactor has removed at this point the story of Gwenfrewy's journey to Rome and her attendance at the "Synod of Winifredus" as described in the Cotton *Vita*. Robert indicates in his prologue that he decided not to include the story of Gwenfrewy's Roman pilgrimage in his own account of her life, since he was unable to find a written account of the story. Robert's statement implies that he heard the story circulated orally and that he most likely never saw the Cotton *Vita*, wherein the story of the pilgrimage is preserved. The Lansdowne redactor may have been influenced by Robert in the decision to leave out the pilgrimage story, but the redactor may also have felt that the story would have encouraged a female audience to consider activity outside the nunnery walls, something that the redactor was not likely eager to do. For the Roman pilgrimage in the Cotton *Vita*, see Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:704; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 102. For Robert's prologue, see Smedt, *Acta sanct Nov.*, 1:708-9; *Two Mediaeval Lives*, 25-26.

tempora multa quieuit. Sed postea tempore regis Henrici³ illinc ad [109rb] Salopiam translata debito honore veneratur. Florent autem in locis quibus habitaverat et ubi nunc honorifice est translata innumera ob eius merita divinorum operum indigentibus miracula, ut in 195 hiis quae de eius vita et translatione scribuntur plenius et prolixius continentur}. **Explicit de sancta Wenefreda virgine et martire**

July,¹⁷ she for many ages rested. But now, translated from there to Shrewsbury in the time of King Stephen,¹⁸ she is still venerated with due honor. Moreover, in those places wherein she dwelt, and where now honorably she has been translated, innumerable miracles flourish for those needing divine works on account of her merits, such as is contained in those texts which are written about her life and translation more fully and in more detail. **Here Ends the Life of St. Gwenfrewy, Virgin and Martyr**

3 The name *Stefani* appears beneath this word in a different hand. It is enclosed in a circle.

17 June 24

18 The Lansdowne text erroneously states that Gwenfrewy was translated during the reign of “King Henry,” but a later hand has corrected the text to read “King Stephen.”



List of Saints' Lives in BL Lansdowne MS 436	
<i>Saint's Name and Folios in MS</i>	<i>Primary Role and Period of Historical Person</i>
1. Augustine of Canterbury (fols. 6r-9v)	First Archbishop of Canterbury (†604–609)
2. Laurentius of Canterbury (fols. 9v-11v)	Second Archbishop of Canterbury (†619)
3. Mellitus of Canterbury (fols. 11v-14r)	Third Archbishop of Canterbury (†624)
4. Paulinus of York (fols. 14r-16v)	First Bishop of York (†644)
5. Oswald of Northumbria (fols. 16v-19v)	Martyred King of Northumbria (†642)
6. Aidan of Lindisfarne (fols. 19v-21v)	Bishop of Lindisfarne (†651)
7. Chad of Northumbria (fols. 21v-23v)	Bishop of Lichfield (†672)
8. Wulfhad and Ruffin of Stone (fols. 23v-27r)	Martyred Princes of Mercia (fl. first half of 7 th c.)
9. Werburgh of Chester (fols. 27r-29r)	Fourth Abbess of Ely (†699)
10. Osgyth of Essex (fols. 29r-30r)	Martyred First Abbess of Chich (†700)
11. Birinus of Dorchester (fols. 30r-31v)	First Bishop of Dorchester (†ca. 649)
12. Edmund the Martyr (fols. 32r-34v)	King of East Anglia (†869)

13. Æthelthryth of East Anglia and her sisters Seaxburgh, Wihtburh, and Æthelburh (fols. 34v-36v)	First Two Abbesses of Ely (†679 and † ca. 700); Recluse/ Foundress of East Dereham (<i>fl.</i> late 7 th c.); Abbess of Faremoutiers (†664)
14. Erkenwald of London (fols. 36v-38v)	Bishop of London (†693)
15. Cuthburh of Northumbria (fols. 38v-41v)	First Abbess of Wimborne (†718)
16. Edburga of Winchester (fols. 41v-43v)	Nun of Winchester (†960)
17. Ethelfleda and Merwinna of Romsey (fols. 43v-45v)	First and Second Abbesses of Romsey (<i>fl.</i> late 10 th c.)
18. Edward of Wessex (fols. 45v-48v)	Martyred King of England (†978)
19. Wulfsgie of Sherborne (fols. 48v-50v)	Bishop of Sherborne (†1002)
20. Ælfheah of Canterbury (fols. 50v-55v)	Martyred Archbishop of Canterbury (†1012)
21. Wulfstan of Worcester (fols. 55v-59v)	Bishop of Worcester (†1095)
22. Dunstan of Canterbury (fols. 59v-68r)	Archbishop of Canterbury (†988)
23. Hugh of Lincoln (fols. 68r-72r)	Bishop of Lincoln (†1200)
24. Milburga of Much Wenlock (fols. 72v-76r)	Abbess of Much Wenlock († after 715)
25. Oswald of Worcester (fols. 76r-81r)	Archbishop of York (†992)
26. Æthelwold of Winchester (fols. 81r-85v)	Bishop of Winchester (†984)

27. Odo of Canterbury (fols. 86r-88r)	Odo the Good, Archbishop of Canterbury (†958)
28. Kenhelm of Mercia (fols. 88r-91r)	Martyred prince of Mercia († early 9 th c.)
29. Swithun of Winchester (fols. 91r-95r)	Bishop of Winchester (†863)
30. Wilfrid of York (fols. 95r-98v)	Bishop of York (†709/710)
31. John de Beverly of York (fols. 98v-101r)	Bishop of York (†721)
32. Frideswide of Oxford (fols. 101r-104r)	First Abbess of Oxford (†727)
33. Rumwold of Buckingham (fols. 104r-105v)	Royal infant saint († mid-7 th c.)
34. Hilda of Whitby (fols. 105v-107r)	Abbess of Whitby/ Streonshalch (†680)
35. Winifred of Wales/ Shrewsbury (fols. 107r-109r)	Abbess of Gwytherin († ca. 650)
36. Eafe of Minster-in-Thanel (fols. 109r-111v)	First Abbess of Minster-in- Thanet (fl. ca. 700)
37. Beornstan of Winchester (fols. 111v-113r)	Bishop of Winchester (†934)
38. Ælfheah of Winchester (fols. 113r-114r)	Bishop of Winchester (†951)
39. Cedd of Northumbria (fols. 114r-116r)	Bishop of the East Saxons (†664)
40. Robert of Newminster (fols. 116r-121v)	First Abbot of Newminster (†1159)
41. Godric of Finchale (fols. 121v-126v)	Hermit (†1170)

42. Modwenna of Burton (fols. 126v-131v)	First Abbess of Burton-on-Trent (<i>fl.</i> 7 th c.)
43. Wulfric of Haselbury (fol. 131v)	Hermit (†1154)
44. Aldhelm of Sherborne (missing)	Bishop of Sherborne (†709)
45. Patrick of Ireland (missing)	Apostle to the Irish (<i>fl.</i> 5 th ct.)
46. Guthlac of Crowland (missing)	Recluse of Crowland Island (†714)
47. Adelbert of Egmond (missing)	Missionary to Frisia (†710)



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