

## ANTIQUARIANS, VICTORIAN PARSONS AND RE-WRITING THE PAST: HOW LYMINGE PARISH CHURCH ACQUIRED AN INVENTED DEDICATION

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For more than a century, the residents of Lyminge, on the North Downs in East Kent, have taken for granted that the parish church is dedicated to *St Mary and St Ethelburga*. Yet for many centuries before that, it was known as the church of *St Mary and St Eadburg*. The dedication to St Mary, the Virgin, is ancient and straightforward to explain, for it appears in the earliest of the surviving charters for Lyminge dated probably to 697.<sup>1</sup> The second part of the dedication, whether this is correctly St Ethelburga or St Eadburg, is also likely to pre-date the Norman Conquest for both are clearly Anglo-Saxon names. But the uncertainty over the dedication invites investigation to understand who the patron saint actually is and the cause of the change, which is an unusual event by any standards.

At first sight, St Ethelburga is apparently also easy to explain. Although there were a number of St Ethelburgas, the one traditionally connected with Lyminge was Queen Æthelburh<sup>2</sup>, daughter of Æthelberht I, King of Kent, and widow of Edwin, King of Northumbria. The story of her marriage to Edwin, his conversion to Christianity and the beginning of the conversion of Northumbria in the 620s was recorded by Bede, writing around a century later.<sup>3</sup> After Edwin's death in battle in 633, Bede noted that Æthelburh returned to Kent where her brother Eadbald had become king. Other sources<sup>4</sup> recounted that the king allowed his sister to retire to his estate at Lyminge where she established a 'minster'<sup>5</sup> and subsequently died in 647.<sup>6</sup>

A dedication to St Ethelburga makes sense in the historical context of Lyminge. A dedication to St Eadburg is less easy to comprehend. Eadburg, or Eadburh,<sup>7</sup> was a relatively common name in the Anglo-Saxon period and there are several possible candidates, but not one is known to be closely connected with Lyminge during her lifetime. This presented problems for antiquarians seeking to understand the dedication, and for at least the last four hundred years, the conventional explanation has been that Eadburg was simply a variant of the name that is otherwise known to us as Ethelburga.

However, the recent discovery of a manuscript in Hereford Cathedral Library now casts doubt on this interpretation. In the light of this new source of information, this paper examines three questions: how real was Æthelburh's connection with Lyminge, who was the St Eadburg to whom the church was once dedicated, and why did the dedication change?

## Did Æthelburh found a minster at Lyminge?

Archaeology does not often substantiate history. But remarkably, the excavations in Lyminge in 2008-15 have amply demonstrated that there was a complex of large, elaborate halls there in the seventh century, associated with a rich assemblage of artefacts, with origins in an earlier settlement from possibly the late fifth century that is best interpreted as the centre of a royal estate.<sup>8</sup> In addition, an extensive monastic site was established to the south of the present church by the end of the seventh century.<sup>9</sup>

The chronology of the minster's foundation at Lyminge is debateable, as the earliest attributable archaeological remains date to around fifty years after the traditional date of Æthelburh's death. There is evidence of feasting and conspicuous consumption in the hall complex, but it is not clear whether this is the result of permanent occupation, which might relate to Æthelburh's community, or simply the debris left by the royal retinue passing through periodically. The evidence for when a minster was founded at Lyminge is not clear-cut.

The seventh century was a formative period as Anglo-Saxon royal families rapidly embraced Christianity. The context for any foundation by Æthelburh would have been the period when Kent led the Christian mission across southern England.<sup>10</sup> However, the main wave of monastic foundations originated later in East Anglia during the 650s, spreading rapidly across all of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms during the latter half of the seventh century.<sup>11</sup>

The foundation of many minsters, largely as a royal initiative in just a few decades during the later seventh century, appears to have been part of a strategy by royal families who did not just exercise power in their own kingdoms, but also intermarried with each other extensively. Minsters were led almost exclusively in these early years by princesses or widowed queens. Christianity required new roles and structures to be developed, and drew heavily upon the input of female family members from the outset. The estates with which these minsters were endowed were generally not alienated to the Church, but seem to have been conceived as a special kind of family property.<sup>12</sup>

There is good evidence that the royal minsters served a practical purpose, with royal women looking after the spiritual interests of the king, the royal kin group and the kingdom as a whole through regular religious observance. The expectations of this role are probably encapsulated in the 'customary honour and obedience' set out by King Wihtred in a charter of 699, that documented the rights and obligations of the Kentish royal minsters.<sup>13</sup> Unusually, this charter was witnessed by four abbesses, three of whom were certainly of royal birth.<sup>14</sup>

Minsters provided fixed points in a landscape where kings and their households were constantly moving around. They were essentially aristocratic communities, and the opulence, conspicuous consumption and wealth associated with them amply demonstrate that they remained fully connected with the secular world. They can be seen as an integral part of the royal progress, providing lodging and opportunities for feasting as much as any mead hall. They were also centres where craftsmen could congregate under patronage, providing a platform for economic development.<sup>15</sup> This was evident by the start of the eighth century. What is uncertain is how early this began, and what this indicates about the origins of the foundation at Lyminge.

Bede is famously critical of monastic communities that did not meet his strict view of how they ought to function. His observation that princesses pursuing a cloistered life in the 640s and 650s went to the monasteries at Chelles, Faremoutiers-en-Brie and Jouarre in Francia<sup>16</sup> is often taken as evidence that minsters were not founded in England until after this time. But it could equally mean that he did not regard the communities then in existence as meeting his strict criteria for what a minster should be, so he ignored them.<sup>17</sup> The explosion in foundations from the 650s onwards led to more clearly recognisable monastic communities coming into existence. However, from the outset, minster communities varied considerably in terms of origin, scale and organisation. Minsters could be founded as a private initiative, might have a relatively short life of a generation or two, and did not necessarily follow an established rule.<sup>18</sup> A minster's fortunes could ebb and flow with those of its founder's family. They performed a role intimately bound up with kinship and politics and the continuity of any particular community could depend on whether a family, or a particular branch of a family, was in the ascendancy or not.

Æthelburh would have been well aware that in widowhood, her Frankish grandmother Ingoberga retired to lead a contemplative Christian life at Tours, as indeed had Ingoberga's own grandmother St Clothilde.<sup>19</sup> If one accepts Bede's account that Æthelburh returned to Kent after Edwin's death, it is credible that she followed her maternal family practice, and Lyminge is as good a location for this as any. It is simplest to accept the tradition if this is consistent with all the available evidence.

In the absence of any definitive archaeological or charter evidence, it is reasonable to consider what if anything might corroborate the tradition of the *Kentish Royal Legend*. Everitt has observed that all the main Kentish royal estates had close associations with Roman remains and seem to show continuity, with land ownership passing seamlessly from the previous sub-Roman aristocracy into Anglo-Saxon lordship with little or no interruption.<sup>20</sup> However, the level of direct continuity at Lyminge is questionable. Roman brick is re-used in the church,<sup>21</sup> but the only Roman artefacts found in the recent excavations were tiles re-used as post-hole packing<sup>22</sup> and pottery in the large midden associated with Anglo-Saxon material of the sixth century.<sup>23</sup> These were Roman items used in a post-Roman context and nothing is certainly local occupation debris. The PAS website records very few Roman coins or other artefacts from Lyminge parish. This casts doubt on the contemporary interpretation of the structures uncovered in the churchyard in the 1850s as Roman.<sup>24</sup> Evidence for human presence between the Bronze Age and the Anglo-Saxon period is sketchy.<sup>25</sup>

Roman material found in Lyminge seems to be Anglo-Saxon recycling, possibly deriving from the Roman Saxon Shore fort at Lympne, adjacent to the port at Sandtun that became part of the Lyminge estate.<sup>26</sup> The connection between the two sites extends to their names for they both derive from *Lemana*, the name for the tidal inlet where the fort, known as *Portus Lemanis*, stood (Fig. 1).<sup>27</sup> This inlet was gradually reduced by deposits of shingle and sand from the Roman period onwards so that the site is now some distance from the shoreline and entirely land-locked. That Lyminge and Lympne perpetuate a name from the Roman period is not surprising. Many Saxon Shore fort names had an unusual continuity into the Anglo-Saxon period, which may stem from unbroken use of the maritime environment and the landmarks within it.<sup>28</sup>

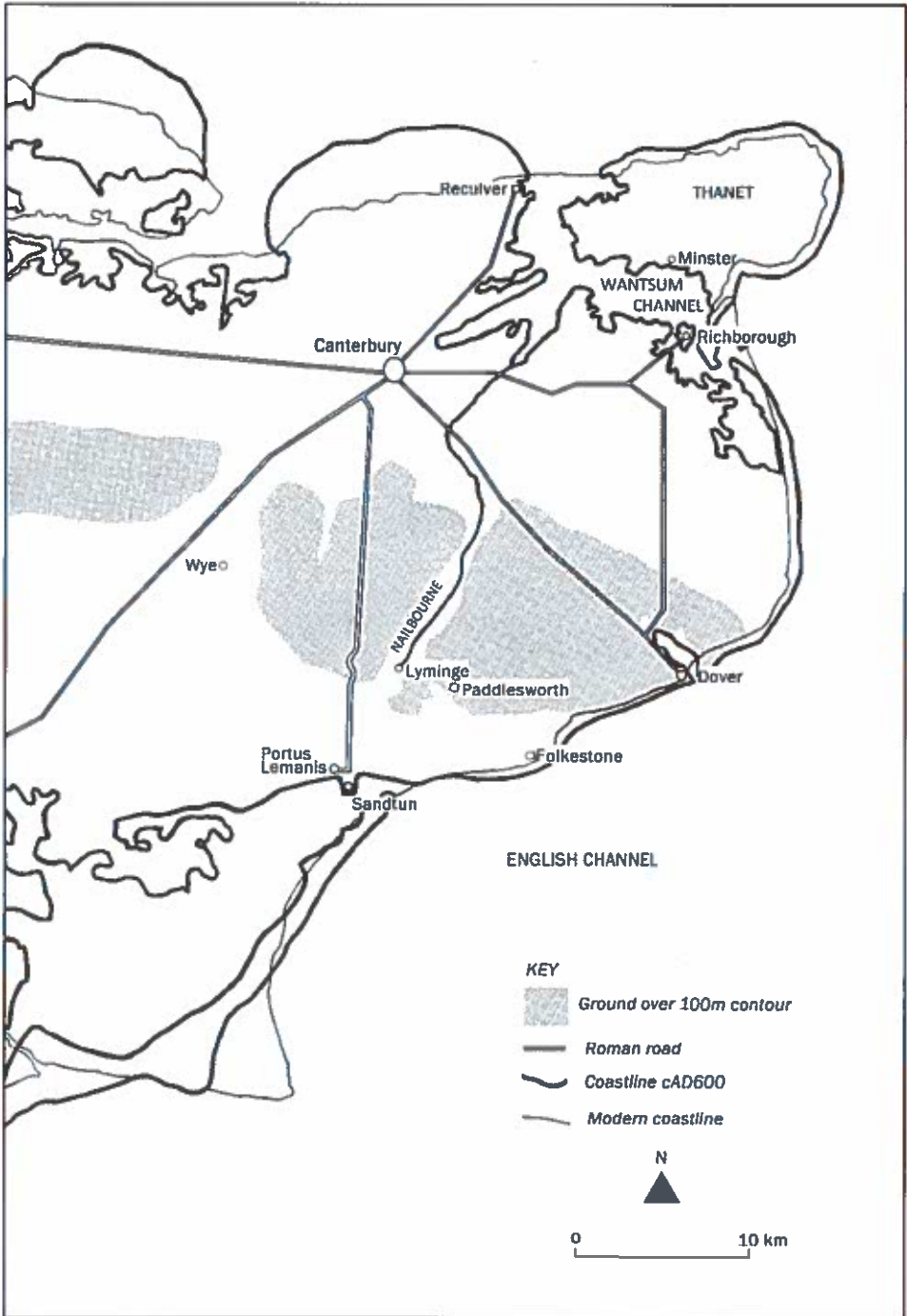


Fig. 1 The location of Lyminge and the other places mentioned in text.

The settlement at Lyminge, revealed by the recent excavations as well as by two cemeteries of the mid to late sixth century,<sup>29</sup> was apparently established on land that had not been permanently occupied for a substantial period previously. It was a pioneering settlement, but it took its name from the tidal inlet at Lympe or possibly more specifically from the Saxon Shore fort itself. This suggests that the founding group at Lyminge sought to preserve a connection, perhaps to what it viewed as its place of origin where it had first forged its identity. The connection was important enough to be perpetuated in the name of the new settlement at Lyminge.

On the basis of coin and pottery evidence, the fort is thought to have been abandoned by around 350.<sup>30</sup> However, the location at Lympe in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, (the military list dated to the late fourth or early fifth centuries), of a unit originating at Tournai in Belgica suggests a continuing military function at least in the vicinity of the fort that might have persisted into the fifth century. Conceivably, the pioneer group that came to Lyminge might have originated as *foederati* located in the fort environs and taking their name from it. The one suggestive find in the fort was a knife that lacks clear parallels, although it was noted in the site report that most of the comparative material for such knives comes from Germanic, including Frankish and Saxon, graves in the Rhineland and North Germany.<sup>31</sup>

If there was late or sub-Roman occupation by *foederati* in or around the fort itself, the ephemeral traces would have been difficult to detect during excavation. The ground was highly disturbed due to substantial land slippage in the period up to around 700 that led to the fort collapsing. The excavator concluded that no part of the fort remains in its original position and occupation layers are largely destroyed.<sup>32</sup> The context for a group of *foederati* relocating from Lympe could be after the local military command finally broke down and perhaps when rising sea levels and subsidence caused the fort to collapse and made the surrounding area physically unsafe.

Sandtun is unlikely to be the location of any ancestral community. It had a different pottery profile from the Saxon Shore fort itself and no Roman pottery was found clearly dated later than around 250.<sup>33</sup> Two sherds of early Anglo-Saxon pottery indicate some activity in the late sixth or probably seventh centuries, but there is nothing definitely earlier than the settlement at Lyminge.<sup>34</sup>

The location of a hall and settlement at Lyminge probably by the later fifth century<sup>35</sup> indicates when it became the central place of the group whose territory by at least 724 was known as that of the *Limenwara*<sup>36</sup> (the 'Lemana Folk'). The suffix *ge* in the name derives from an unusual early name element meaning *district* or *territory*.<sup>37</sup> The name Lyminge could conceivably perpetuate the name adopted by the putative ancestral group when it first settled in Britain in or around the Saxon Shore fort at Lympe in the fourth or fifth centuries.

In considering why this group was drawn to Lyminge specifically, one possibility is that it was attracted by the spring, now known as *St Ethelburga's Well*. This is a perpetual spring, the source of the Nailbourne that flows north along the Elham Valley, becoming the Little Stour and ultimately flowing into the Great Stour just upstream from Minster-in-Thanel. In the Anglo-Saxon period it reached the sea via the now-silted Wantsum Channel that then separated the Isle of Thanet from

mainland Kent. There is evidence that the spring attracted occupation from the Mesolithic onwards, for a dense scatter of worked flakes dating to between the eleventh and ninth millennia BC has been found on the chalk bluff immediately overlooking the spring.<sup>38</sup> This is a sheltered position at the head of the Elham Valley. The direct route from Lympe to the south-west, still traceable by road and footpath, is the only relatively level passage through the North Downs without a steep ascent between Dover and Wye, a distance of over 20 miles. This may be why early Anglo-Saxon settlers were drawn to the Nailbourne springhead, but whether the spring was treated as sacred in this early period is unknown. What is clear is that the first settlement, which developed later into a royal hall complex, was located between the spring and a Bronze Age barrow. This is the kind of association between Anglo-Saxon sites and ancient monuments that became common from around 550.<sup>39</sup> Whatever the perceived meaning to those early settlers, the spring was clearly significant from its proximity.

The current appearance of the springhead is deceptive. The fundamental geology is likely to be the same, so in the seventh century as now, the spring flowed from the chalk at the base of the promontory where the church now stands. But the recent excavations have shown that the springhead itself would have been within more of a defined grove than is now apparent because the ground has been affected by erosion and land slip.<sup>40</sup> Subsequently, the spring was named *St Eadburg's Well*. The will of Henry Rand dated to 1490 records 3*s.* 4*d.* left to repair 'the well of St Edburge the Virgin',<sup>41</sup> suggesting it had been a sacred spring for some time before the fifteenth century, and conceivably since pagan times.

The presence of a pagan sacred spring could have been a reason why Æthelburh chose to go to Lyminge rather than to any other royal estate. Although this is speculative, a sacred spring would have given her the opportunity to convert an overtly pagan religious shrine, just as Pope Gregory had commended St Augustine to do in 601 following the launch of the mission to convert England.<sup>42</sup>

If Æthelburh did retire to Lyminge, it is probable that she lived in the archaeologically-attested royal hall complex, and this would fit with the later date of the explicitly monastic site on the higher ground to the south. However, she would have needed a church, being in much the same situation as her mother Bertha, the Frankish Princess, when she came to Kent in the sixth century to marry Æthelberht. Bertha established an oratory that is now incorporated into St Martin's church in Canterbury.<sup>43</sup> Private oratories were ubiquitous in Francia at this period.<sup>44</sup> The most likely site for Æthelburh's oratory is where the current church now stands, elevated on a promontory above the springhead of the Nailbourne in a classic minster location.<sup>45</sup> If there was such a church, it is probable too that Æthelburh was buried there. The excavated monastic buildings thus need not represent continuity of a community from Æthelburh's time and could relate to a re-foundation there subsequently around what would, on this hypothesis, have been her mortuary chapel.<sup>46</sup> This could mirror what happened at the Frankish royal chapel at Chelles, originally founded by St Clothilde in the sixth century, and later re-founded as a minster by Queen Balthild around 659.

If the initial monastic foundation at Lyminge is associated with Queen Æthelburh, Edwin's widow, it fell outside the main wave of royal foundations that only began in the second half of the seventh century. To address this apparent anomaly, Yorke

has intriguingly suggested that it could be attributed to Queen Æthelburh, wife of King Wihtrud, around the end of the seventh century, as she is named alongside her husband in a land-grant to Lyminge.<sup>47</sup> This also fits the archaeological evidence. However, to introduce Wihtrud's Queen as founder conflicts with the later tradition that consistently presents the Æthelburh at Lyminge as the widow of Edwin. This raises the question whether a foundation at Lyminge as early as the 630s is sustainable in the light of the prevailing view on how and when most monastic communities were founded during the seventh century.

If one accepts Yorke's proposal about the identity of the Æthelburh who founded the minster at Lyminge, one then has to explain what happened to Edwin's widow, as Bede confirms that she returned to Kent. Moreover, it is also known that her daughter Eanflaed was living somewhere in Kent before she married Oswiu, King of Northumbria, in around 642-45.<sup>48</sup> If this was at Lyminge, this would help to explain the curious dedication to St Oswald at the church in the neighbouring parish of Paddlesworth, which is still part of Lyminge Benefice. Paddlesworth is probably one of the two churches assigned to Lyminge in Domesday Book,<sup>49</sup> although the fabric of the current church does not obviously pre-date the twelfth century.<sup>50</sup> The dedication is ancient. It is first recorded in 1484,<sup>51</sup> and as it existed then, it seems likely that it pre-dates the Norman Conquest for Oswald was promoted as the major saint of Anglo-Saxon England and there is no context in which this dedication is likely to have originated after the Conquest. St Oswald was Northumbrian, the brother (or possibly half-brother) and predecessor to King Oswiu, and Eanflaed's first cousin by the sister of her father. Oswald was known for his piety within his lifetime, and was rapidly celebrated as a saint shortly after his death.<sup>52</sup> There are 56 pre-Conquest dedications to St Oswald, the vast majority in northern England, and only one in the South,<sup>53</sup> so the dedication at Paddlesworth is unique and highly unusual.

While not conclusive, it is difficult to explain such a clearly Northumbrian dedication in east Kent without some local connection to Northumbria. The presence of Æthelburh and Eanflaed would provide such a connection, and the dedication at Paddlesworth could be connected with Eanflaed's marriage to Oswiu. This was highly significant, designed to unite the rival royal dynasties of Deira (to which Eanflaed was connected through her father Edwin) and Bernicia (to which Oswiu belonged). These dynasties had disputed the Northumbrian throne for decades and a dedication by Eanflaed in the name of St Oswald could have been an appropriately symbolic act at that time. If she and her mother were not living locally, this anomalous dedication is otherwise hard to explain.

There is a further possible link between Lyminge and Northumbria from a charter of 741 in which King Æthelberht II of Kent granted land to Lyminge minster that was said to have once belonged to the priest Romanus. It is conceivable that this was the same '*Kentish priest Romanus*' who was in Queen Eanflaed's court and who accompanied her at the Synod of Whitby in 664.<sup>54</sup> As someone named by Bede at such a pivotal event, it is possible that Romanus was sufficiently well-known to be referenced in a charter dated only a decade after Bede completed his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which was widely distributed across England. The accumulation of evidence does therefore highlight a particular connection between the Lyminge area and Northumbria that tends to support the tradition that the Æthelburh connected



with Lyminge was the wife of King Edwin of Northumbria rather than the wife of King Wihtred of Kent.

The royal estate centre at Lyminge was an appropriate home for someone of her rank, and retiring in this way to such a location was a practice consistent with other members of her family. Bede recorded that before her marriage to Edwin, Æthelburh had corresponded with the Pope.<sup>55</sup> This shows how she was connected at the highest political levels and was participating in the mainstream of continental civilisation. In 633, she would have been well aware of the proliferation of monastic communities founded by members of her family across northern Francia, all closely associated with the royal court.<sup>56</sup> The strong links that persisted between Kent and Francia at a cultural and family level throughout this period provide a reasonable context for the foundation of probably the first monastic community in England.

Lyminge, moreover, is not an entirely isolated example of early foundation during this phase of the conversion. It is realistic to see the foundation at Folkestone as comparable. The *Kentish Royal Legend* recorded the minster at Folkestone as founded by Eanswythe, King Eadbald's daughter, and hence Æthelburh's niece. Her relics are, unusually, still likely to be in the church to this day.<sup>57</sup> This foundation too is traditionally dated early, and while the traditional date of 630 is perhaps too early,<sup>58</sup> it too could have followed in the family tradition ultimately deriving from Francia. It is possible that the activity at both Lyminge and Folkestone in the 630s and 640s is not an anachronistic projection back from a later period but rather a manifestation in England of a contemporary Frankish family tradition. It is thus conceivable that Æthelburh did found a church at Lyminge, and did live in a community there during her lifetime. It is likely, and not inconsistent with this, that the monastic complex to the south of the church is later and was built in the period after her death.

There is consequently a plausible interpretation of the archaeological evidence that is broadly consistent with the historical narrative. Archaeology is rarely good at 'proving' history but as confirmation of the historical account, the archaeological evidence at Lyminge, is about as good as it ever gets.

#### How Lyminge Parish Church came to be dedicated to St Ethelburga

The archaeological evidence might be thought to close off the discussion. It could be taken as proof that the received historical account is essentially true, and the dedication of the church dates back to the seventh century. However, all is not quite as simple as that, and the greatest problem facing this interpretation is that for many centuries, the church at Lyminge was recorded as dedicated to *St Mary and St Eadburg*, not *St Ethelburga*. How can this be explained and when did the change take place?

For those who thought about it at all, the answer seems to have been that *Ethelburga* and *Eadburg*, were alternative versions of the same name for the same person. This idea dates back several centuries. William Lambarde, in his *Perambulation of Kent* of 1576 recorded that:

Lyminge ... Eadbald... gave it to Edburge his sister, who forthwith clocked together a sorte of simple women, which under her wing there, tooke upon them the Popishe veile of widowhood. But that order in time waxed colde, and therefore Lanfranc... translated the olde bones of Edburge from Lyminge to Saint Gregories.<sup>59</sup>



William Camden, in his *Britannia*, first written in Latin in 1585 (but translated into English in 1610) said little about Lyminge but did observe:

... by Stoure mouth runneth a brooke ... issuing out of Saint Eadburghs well at Liming (where the daughter of King Ethelbert first of our nation tooke the veile) ...<sup>60</sup>

In his county history, Richard Kilburne in 1659 noted:

Limege, lieth towards the southeast part of the County ... the Church was called St Mary and St Eadburgh. King Eadbald gave to Eadburgh his sister ... second wife and widow of Edwin (King of the Northumbers) Liminge, where she built a Monastery ... and there died and was buried.<sup>61</sup>

Edward Hasted writing just over a century later in his multi-volume survey of Kent recorded that:

the monastery founded in this parish by Ethelburga, called by some Eadburga, daughter of King Ethelbert ... Ethelburga, the founder, was buried in it ... The church ... is dedicated to St Mary and St Eadburgh ...<sup>62</sup>

It is noteworthy that these county antiquarians all shared the same view that Æthelburh was known as Eadburh (in variant spellings). They focused on the well-known details of the *Kentish Royal Legend* linking Æthelburh, the historical person authenticated by the well-respected near-contemporary Bede, to Lyminge, and did not look further. Given the general contemporary inconsistency of spelling, and the fact that for most authors this simply did not matter, by far the simplest explanation seems to have been to see the name *Eadburg* as some local corruption of the name that was better known to readers of Bede and the *Kentish Royal Legend* as *Ethelburga*.

But there was one other antiquarian who recorded a divergent position. John Leland, is perhaps best known for his itineraries undertaken in 1535-43, but his journey through Kent brought him no closer to Lyminge than the Stone Street, the Roman road between Lympe and Canterbury, some miles to the west of the village.<sup>63</sup> However, in his earlier six volume work *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea* of 1533-36, Leland included a number of references to *Ethelburga* and Lyminge, and in particular quoted the following passage from the *Life of St Werburga*:<sup>64</sup>

So Queen Ethelburga, after the killing of Edwin, the pious King of the Northumbrians, having returned to her brother Eadbald, built a minster at [his] estate in Lyminge, where she was laid to rest with St Eadburga.<sup>65</sup>

Thus Leland, writing in the 1530s, differed from the later antiquarians, distinguishing between *Queen Ethelburga* and *St Eadburga*. Moreover, earlier chroniclers whose work still survives did the same. William Thorne, active at the end of the fourteenth century and whose chronicle ended in 1397, recorded *Ethelburga* (rather than Eadburh) as the daughter of Æthelberht, widow of Edwin and founder of the minster at Lyminge where she was buried.<sup>66</sup> Thomas of Elmham, a monk of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, writing around the first decade of the fifteenth century recorded the same, and also went on to discuss the dispute between his abbey and St Gregory's Priory, documented by Goscelin of Saint Bertin in the late

eleventh century that is considered further below.<sup>67</sup> Thomas's account distinguished Æthelburh from Eadburh, whom he knew to be a different person.

Hugh Candidus, a monk at Peterborough writing in the second half of the twelfth century, repeated the details of the *Life of St Werburga*, concluding his account about Æthelburh as follows:

So after Edwin died, she returned with Paulinus to Edbald who was then King of Kent, and he, taking care of her, gave her his great hall at Lyminge, with all its estates, and she built there a minster, and there she was laid to rest, and Saint Eadburga with her.<sup>68</sup>

Florence, a monk of Worcester, wrote a chronicle of the English nation, drawing upon many sources, starting with events in the mid fifth century and continuing up to his own day. He died in 1118. He referred to both *Queen* and *St Ethelburga*, widow of King Edwin, and also recorded that she built a minster at Lyminge and was buried there.<sup>69</sup> He mentioned the diminutive *Tate*, which was also recorded by Bede,<sup>70</sup> but did not at any point use the name Eadburh.

For William Thorne, Thomas of Elmham, Hugh Candidus, and Florence of Worcester, there was no confusion. However, Goscelin of Saint Bertin, writing in Canterbury towards the end of the eleventh century in his polemical *Tract against the foolish claimants to the body of the holy virgin Mildrith*<sup>71</sup> said this about the relics at Lyminge:

There in the church at Lyminge, which belongs to the Archbishop, Queen Æthelburga is well-known to have been buried, but commonly she is known there as Saint Eadburga.<sup>72</sup>

Goscelin's work served a very specific purpose, defending the claim of St Augustine's Abbey to the relics of St Mildrith. In the late 1080s, St Gregory's Priory in Canterbury began to claim that their foundation relics given by Archbishop Lanfranc included those of St Mildrith (though they styled her *Miltrude*). Goscelin quoted two works promoted by St Gregory's in support of the claim that appear to be the *Lives of SS Æthelred, Æthelbert, Miltrude and Edburg* that survive in a fifteenth-century manuscript at Gotha.<sup>73</sup> This text contains the surprising assertion that *Edburg*, Abbess of Minster-in-Thanel, was daughter of King Æthelberht and Queen Bertha of Kent, a claim that was not surprisingly ridiculed by Goscelin. It was clearly impossible for *Edburg* to have succeeded Mildrith as Abbess of Minster-in-Thanel in the first half of the eighth century, and to have been the daughter of Æthelberht who died in 616. Goscelin turned this ludicrous statement to his advantage, using it to cast doubt on the credibility of the claim by St Gregory's to St Mildrith. At the same time, he drew attention to the presence of Æthelburh's tomb at Lyminge, apparently intending to emphasise the point that no one disputed that she was buried there. He carefully contrived a picture of local confusion, suggesting that even local people were unclear whether she was really to be called Æthelburh or Eadburh. The implications of Goscelin's work will be considered further below.

However, notwithstanding Goscelin's justifiable criticism and the clearly shoddy scholarship displayed in it, the work represented by the Gotha text may have had more influence than it deserved. It was quoted extensively in the first comprehensive

collection of the *Lives* of saints from across the British Isles compiled by John of Tynemouth, a monk of St Alban's Abbey, in the mid fourteenth century.<sup>74</sup> John travelled widely and collected exhaustively. He seems to have accessed most of the extant *Lives* of saints, referring to some now lost and even going beyond the existing *Lives* in some cases, utilising Bede for example where hagiographies were lacking. But he was also uncritical, generally quoting from the works he found and not attempting to reconcile or explain inconsistencies. John's work was arranged in calendar order by reference to each saint's feast day. During the fifteenth century this was rearranged alphabetically, and with some additions was later published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1516 as *Nova Legenda Anglie*. It would certainly have been known to Lambarde writing less than sixty years later. It would have been a small step for Lambarde to take John's repetition of the statement that Eadburh was daughter of Æthelberht and transform this into Eadburh being the daughter of Æthelberht who was known to have been Queen of Northumbria, in other words that she was Æthelburh by another name. Whether this was the source of Lambarde's confusion about Eadburh and Æthelburh will never be known, though if it was, this would be ironic. The *Nova Legenda Anglie* also quoted from the same *Life of St Werburga* referenced by Leland which recorded that *Queen Ethelburga* was buried at Lyminge with *St Edburga*.<sup>75</sup>

Goscelin was keen to minimise any possible connection between Lyminge and Minster-in-Thamet. The presence in Lyminge of St Eadburh from Minster could possibly have given some credence to the presence of St Mildrith there also, which could then have cast doubt on the claim by St Augustine's to hold the relics of St Mildrith. The possession of relics was intimately bound up with, and in the absence of good written records could be used as evidence of, rights to land.<sup>76</sup> Any hint that relics associated with a specific estate were in the possession of another community would have caused grave concern. It suited Goscelin's purpose to suggest that locally in Lyminge, Æthelburh was known as *Eadburga*, because if that was the case, it neatly dismissed any suggestion that St Eadburh, Abbess of Minster, was interred there. If the claim that St Eadburh of Minster was once buried in Lyminge could not be sustained, the credibility of the claim by St Gregory's to St Mildrith evaporated. This claim depended upon the idea that St Mildrith's relics were taken from Minster to Lyminge with those of St Eadburh. There was no other reasonable context in which St Mildrith could have arrived in Lyminge.

Goscelin did not actually say that Eadburh and Æthelburh were the same person, but merely that some people at Lyminge believed this to be so. Taken at face value, he was reporting genuine local confusion, amongst some people if not everyone, about the identity of the relics at Lyminge. This helped to muddy the waters and cast doubt over whose remains were translated from Lyminge and consequently over the claim by St Gregory's to the relics of St Mildrith, which was his prime objective.

Whatever the actual source of the confusion, the equation between Æthelburh and Eadburh was repeated from the sixteenth century onwards and by the end of the nineteenth century, it was more or less universally accepted. A local history aimed at a popular readership summed up the received view on Lyminge as follows:

One of the earliest Christian monasteries built and dedicated to its holy purposes by St Eadburg, the sister of King Eadbald, ... [and in a footnote]: The historians more usually call her Ethelburga.<sup>77</sup>

A more scholarly history of church architecture noted that the first Abbess of Lyminge was: 'Queen Æthelburga, vulgarly called St Eadburg'.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, despite the almost complete unanimity of those writing on the subject, a query over the identification of Eadburh with Æthelburh did appear in the monumental gazetteer of church dedications compiled by Frances Arnold-Forster, dating to 1899:

... some doubt exists whether this saint is strictly speaking commemorated amongst us at all. Her one supposed church, the church of which she was the undoubted foundress, bears the name, not of Ethelburga but of Eadburga and it is a much disputed question whether these two names belong to one and the same individual.<sup>79</sup>

But the Rector of Lyminge from 1854 to 1896, Canon Robert Jenkins, regarded as an antiquarian of some standing, believed that the name *Eadburg* was a variant of the name *Ethelburga*.<sup>80</sup> For him, the form of the church dedication was no more than an antique version of the name Æthelburh. Though he undoubtedly believed that Lyminge church was dedicated to *St Ethelburga*, he preferred to use the old form and in the marriage notices for his daughter in 1892 and in the subsequent newspaper report, the church dedication was recorded as *Saints Mary and Eadburg*.<sup>81</sup>

The innovation that changed the dedication to *St Mary and St Ethelburga* seems to have been the responsibility of Canon Jenkins' successor Robert Eves, who became Rector of Lyminge following the death of Canon Jenkins in March 1896. The Reverend Eves took over a church in poor repair and embarked on a restoration campaign that involved significant fund-raising.<sup>82</sup> In August 1897, he wrote to local newspapers describing his plans for *the church of St Ethelburga at Lyminge*.<sup>83</sup> This is the first mention of the church dedication in this form so far located.

The modernising new Rector seems to have had no qualms about making changes. Along with the old pews,<sup>84</sup> he threw out the old name and *St Ethelburga* combined with St Mary, became the normal form used locally after 1897. The fund-raising *Grand Fete and Fancy Fair* held at Sibton Park, the largest house in Lyminge, in July 1898, was reported as being in support of *the church of St Mary and St Ethelburga*.<sup>85</sup> Looking at wedding notices, there were just two in the period up to 1930 that named the church dedication, one in 1912 and the other in 1921. Both referred to *St Ethelburga*.<sup>86</sup> Newspapers further away, in Whitstable and Dover, continued to use the old form *St Eadburg* when reporting on Lyminge, but the Folkestone Herald, the newspaper circulating closest to Lyminge, seems last to have used this form of the dedication in 1903.<sup>87</sup>

Wedding notices and local newspaper reporting are a good indication of the name the local population gave to Lyminge church in the early twentieth century. By 1912, the name seems to have been adopted in more scholarly circles as well, for in July that year, the Kentish church historian Charles Everleigh Woodruff led a visit of the Kent Archaeological Society to what was reported in the society's *Proceedings* as the *Church of SS Mary and Ethelburga, Lyminge*.<sup>88</sup>

There is no documentation so far found that makes any reference to a formal change in the dedication. Indeed, this may never have happened as such, not least because in the 1890s, there may have been little if anything at the church itself that actually recorded the dedication one way or the other. In any event, it seems clear

that the view prevailed that *Eadburg* and *Ethelburga* were alternate spellings, so no one would have seen changing the name by which the church was known as an actual change of dedication. This was probably seen as at most a modernisation, fully endorsed etymologically by Canon Jenkins, as well as by antiquarians back to Lambarde. The Canon had had a profound impact on the parish throughout his forty-two year incumbency as Rector. In the years following his death, it is doubtful if anyone in Lyminge would seriously have challenged his views. It is a reasonable proposition, therefore, that his successor Robert Eves viewed changing the form of the dedication as simply a modernisation of an archaic form, aligning it with the recorded history about Queen Æthelburh and the account by Bede, and placing it firmly in the context of the creation of the English nation. The Reverend Eves astutely launched his fund-raising just two months after Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. This was the high point of Empire. Patriotic fervour undoubtedly facilitated raising the substantial sum necessary to finance the major renovation work and internal reordering undertaken in the period 1898 to 1900.<sup>89</sup>

By the time that the Parochial Church Council (PCC) was founded in 1917,<sup>90</sup> the dedication *St Mary and St Ethelburga*, would most likely have been seen as the correct form, replacing an odd archaism but not actually a change of dedication. The minutes of the PCC from the 1920s onwards at no point mention the church dedication directly, but they do refer to *Ethelburga* as the church's patron, to the *Friends of Ethelburga* and to the annual *St Ethelburga Fair*.<sup>91</sup> In 1933, the fair was opened by a local girl dressed as *Queen Ethelburga*, emphasising how important she had become as a character integral to village history.<sup>92</sup>

But it is equally clear that it took time to eradicate the old form of the dedication completely. Postcards were still using the form *St Mary and St Eadburg* in the 1920s, and the Kent County Association of Change Ringers was still doing so as late as 1994.<sup>93</sup> The name was not changed in *Crockford's Clerical Directory* until the edition of 1985-86.<sup>94</sup> But the dedication now seems firmly established everywhere in the form *St Mary and St Ethelburga*, and the spring just below the church has been known as *St Ethelburga's Well* since at least 1899.<sup>95</sup>

### St Eadburh – Lyminge's other saint

Why then should the dedication at Lyminge be open to question? The problem is that, as Arnold-Forster observed in 1899, the identification of Æthelburh with Eadburh is questionable. There is no evidence that the name Æthelburh ever was contracted to Eadburh or *Eadburg*. Moreover, medieval chronicles and the *Life of St Werburga* all indicate that St Eadburh was different from Queen Æthelburh, and buried with her at Lyminge. Eadburh was a common name. There were several St Eadburhs,<sup>96</sup> but the one most local to Lyminge, and the only one listed with her own *Life* in the *Nova Legenda Anglie*, was abbess of Minster-in-Thanel. She is known from the *Kentish Royal Legend*, and succeeded St Mildrith as Abbess in the early eighth century. She was named in a charter from Minster dated to 748,<sup>97</sup> and she is recorded as having died in 751.<sup>98</sup>

In order to understand how an Abbess of Minster could be associated with Lyminge, it is necessary to look at events in the eighth and ninth centuries. At some point, probably in the ninth century, the community at Lyminge seems to

have contracted. This was once attributed to Danish raiding, and undoubtedly there was disruption locally.<sup>99</sup> This may have led the female community to relocate to Canterbury, but it is probable that a male community of priests did persist. However, whatever the physical disruption caused by the Danes, in the period leading up to these changes, there was real political disruption, first through Mercia dominating Kent from the end of the eighth century, and then from Wessex gaining control following the Battle of Ellandun in 825.

The focus of support for new endowments shifted to the heartlands of first Mercia then Wessex in the ninth century, and with the eclipse of the Kentish royal family, the Kentish royal monasteries lost their primary role supporting the interests of the Kentish royal kin-group.<sup>100</sup> At the same time, the Kings of Mercia and Wessex, who as successors to the Kings of Kent had assumed authority over the Kentish royal minsters and their estates, began to assert this more directly, in many cases completely eroding the minsters' autonomy and leaving any residual resident community largely to a local pastoral role.<sup>101</sup> That Lyminge was affected by this seems evident from the way it disappears from the charter record as an independent community with its own land and re-emerges only once the estate had come into the possession of the community of Christ Church, Canterbury.<sup>102</sup> Notwithstanding this, Archbishop Lanfranc was able to exercise some degree of control over Christ Church estates. Thus around 1085, he ordered the collection of relics from Lyminge so that they could endow his new foundation of St Gregory's Priory in Canterbury. The identity of these relics has been the subject of debate ever since.

The foundation charter in the Priory Cartulary lays claim to 'St Ædberga, St Mildrith and Queen Ethelburga of the Northumbrians'.<sup>103</sup> Although this is most likely to be a forgery of the early to mid-thirteenth century,<sup>104</sup> it may reflect the tradition handed down from Lanfranc's original community at St Gregory's. The layout of the original church could support two or three shrines laid out symmetrically as during excavation, what were probably relic chapels were found either side of the nave.<sup>105</sup> Goscelin described the relics as being elevated to the right and left of the altar.<sup>106</sup> No evidence of burials was found in either the nave or the chapels, but as relics would most likely have been elevated in shrines above ground, lack of burials does not disprove the presence of shrines. The Easter Table Chronicle records only that St Eadburh was translated to St Gregory's by Lanfranc in 1085.<sup>107</sup> The Priory seal created in the thirteenth century names *St Edburga* to the left side of Lanfranc, but the seal is broken and while the saint to his right is not visibly named, it is most likely to be St Mildrith.<sup>108</sup>

The most contemporary record is the *Libellus* of Goscelin of St Bertin already discussed, probably written in the 1090s,<sup>109</sup> that attacked the Priory's claim to the relics of St Mildrith on behalf of his own abbey St Augustine's. This claim by St Gregory's caused great anger at St Augustine's because King Cnut had allowed the Abbey to translate St Mildrith's relics from Minster in 1030.<sup>110</sup> She was popular locally, and the account of her translation records that the local populace chased Abbot Aelfstan and his monks as they fled with the relics. Securing relics could involve subterfuge and deception, although successful theft was often justified after the event as the will of the saint involved.<sup>111</sup> Aelfstan would have known that holding the relics of a popular saint would generate revenue from supplicants,

particularly from amongst the aristocracy seeking divine aid with the help of very material donations. When confronted by the claims of St Gregory's, the Abbey was not prepared to have this income source undermined. Accordingly, an extraordinary campaign was launched, spear-headed by Goscelin who scorned the claim by St Gregory's that the nuns of Minster had fled to Lyminge with the relics of Mildrith and Eadburh, seeking sanctuary from Danish raiders.

The claim by St Gregory's to St Mildrith seems remarkably audacious. However, it is possible that at the time, it may not have seemed quite so far-fetched. Though St Augustine's had clearly coveted St Mildrith's relics in 1030, in the 1050s they were moved to make way for building work, and since then had languished at the back of St Gregory's Porticus at the Abbey.<sup>112</sup> Conceivably the clergy at St Gregory's Priory thought that St Augustine's was not showing St Mildrith much honour and had lost interest in her amongst the many relics the Abbey possessed. Goscelin says that the claim to St Mildrith surfaced some three years after the relics were removed from Lyminge.<sup>113</sup> As evidence of what happened, he cited the testimony given to Abbot Wido by Ralph, the priest at Lyminge who exhumed the relics:

'I', he said, 'who with my own hands raised both bodies and emptied their tombs, testify that on not one of the things that was found or identified as a holy relic was there any name or writing or title or any mark at all, certainly nothing relating to Miltrude, nothing clearly holy there except what was considered to relate to Eadburga...'<sup>114</sup>

This would have been a strange statement for Goscelin to have invented as it did not help his argument to have Ralph say he could positively identify Eadburh. This passage could therefore be genuine word-for-word eye-witness testimony, used only because it categorically refuted Mildrith's presence. If the tombs at Lyminge had ever had any inscription, these had been lost by 1085. But significantly, Ralph asserted that there were only two bodies found and he himself could identify one of these as Eadburh. Goscelin did not record whether Ralph thought he could also identify the other body. He noted only that the other grave was unmarked in any way.

This testimony indicates that the original endowment by Lanfranc in 1085 was of two sets of relics, not three, and that the claim to St Mildrith can be attributed to the clergy of St Gregory's not Lanfranc. This would fit better with Lanfranc's reputation for being scrupulous over checking the authenticity of relics and judicious about who should be treated as a saint.<sup>115</sup> Setting aside the claims about St Mildrith, the tradition is consistent that St Eadburh was translated to St Gregory's. It is St Eadburh alone who was highlighted in the Easter Table Chronicle, and St Eadburh who was named on the thirteenth century seal of St Gregory's. As the evidence is strong for a St Eadburh being buried at Lyminge, is there any evidence to indicate which particular St Eadburh she was?

There is an unusually full collection of original charters covering land grants to religious houses in Kent. The charter of 804 recording the gift of land in Canterbury by King Coenwulf to Lyminge as a refuge, dates to the time when Kent was dominated by Mercia and Selethryth was abbess. The charter referred to 'Lyminge where the blessed Eadburga rests',<sup>116</sup> which shows that at least by 804, Lyminge was known as the resting place of St Eadburh.



As noted already, an Eadburh is documented as Abbess of Minister-in-Thanel, successor to St Mildrith. She was responsible for the first translation of Mildrith's remains and for establishing her cult at Minster.<sup>117</sup> She was once thought to have corresponded with St Boniface as there is a series of letters in existence between him and an Abbess Eadburh up to the 740s, but this is now generally believed to be another Eadburh, and Yorke convincingly places Boniface's correspondent, like most of his other correspondents, in his native Wessex.<sup>118</sup>

Eadburh's successor but one at Minster was Abbess Selethryth.<sup>119</sup> Unlike Eadburh, this is an unusual name and given the coincidental chronology, it is probable that the Selethryth at Minster was the abbess named in Coenwulf's charter of 804.<sup>120</sup> Charters CCC 22 and 23, dated to 785 and 786 respectively, identify Selethryth as the sister of King Offa's thegn Ealdberht.<sup>121</sup> It is possible that her appointment was designed to bring control of Minster and Lyminge together, and was part of the Mercian king's struggle with the Archbishop of Canterbury to assert his authority over the royal minsters of Kent, as successor to the Kings of Kent. This could be seen as a straightforward struggle over rights to land and the income therefrom. It is doubtful the Kings of Mercia had the same interest as the Kings of Kent in maintaining a group of royal minsters in Kent to protect their family interests. They had founded their own minsters for that purpose.

Selethryth was succeeded, at least at Minster, by Cwoenthryth, daughter of King Coenwulf in the second decade of the ninth century. Cwoenthryth is a known pluralist who occupied the role of abbess in a number of locations simultaneously but whether she succeeded to Lyminge as well is unknown.<sup>122</sup> When Wessex seized Kent in 825-7, the long-running dispute between king and archbishop over the lordship of the royal minsters continued.<sup>123</sup> Ultimately, Archbishop Ceolnoth conceded at the Council of Kingston in 838 that the free minsters had chosen the lordship and protection of King Ecgberht, and the king therefore succeeded in gaining control over the old royal monastic estates outside Canterbury.<sup>124</sup>

The link between the two minsters of Minster and Lyminge under the control of a single abbess appointed by the king fits with this long-running dispute and the aim of reasserting royal control over the royal minsters, in succession to the Kentish royal family who had founded them originally. Selethryth could be seen as a royal appointee, promoting the role of the old royal minsters, using control of land and relics to reinforce the power of Mercia in Kent when it was relatively new. The cult of saints was largely a concern of the aristocracy at this period.<sup>125</sup> Minster already had a well-established shrine to Mildrith. It is reasonable to see Selethryth acting as impresario of the cults at Minster, distributing the relics over which she had control to improve the local standing of the minster at Lyminge. Successful fostering of cults brought rich material rewards through the receipt of donations of land and this gives both a motivation and a context for the translation of Eadburh's remains from Minster to Lyminge.

### The identity of the Lyminge relics

Although it is likely that Queen Æthelburh had been buried at Lyminge for 150 years before Eadburh's relics arrived, and it is probable that she was venerated to some degree locally, this alone was not enough to make a successful cult that was

recognised more widely. The convention of the time was that sainthood generally required both elevation and translation.<sup>126</sup> This could explain the priest Ralph's otherwise rather ambivalent assertion that the only holy relics he could certainly identify in 1085 were those of St Eadburh. This suggests that even to him as priest of Lyminge, the remains of Queen Æthelburh were not definitely *holy* relics. A successful cult also required promotion and this was something that Selethryth was in a position to deliver. By effecting the translation of Eadburh's relics to Lyminge, and elevation into a reliquary, Selethryth could have promoted her more widely as a saint according to the practice of the time.

Until very recently, the link between the Eadburh of Lyminge and the Eadburh of Minster rested largely on the claims of St Gregory's. However, a manuscript found recently in Hereford Cathedral Library has given the connection a firmer basis. This includes a version of the Minster foundation story, a *Life of St Mildrith* and crucially a *Life and Miracles of St Eadburga*. The *Life* closely matches the text of the Gotha manuscript already discussed,<sup>127</sup> and places Eadburh as Abbess of Minster. The *Miracles* are centred on Lyminge, and locate her tomb in the minster there:<sup>128</sup>

... in the eastern parts of Kent, there in the minster at Lyminge, Saint Edburga was heard to lie.

... to the tomb of Saint Edburga ... at Lyminge, where the body of the holy virgin lies...

The text may be dateable to around 1000,<sup>129</sup> when Lyminge was controlled by Christ Church. Much hagiography dates to this period, providing the kind of literary justification for a saint's sanctity that was becoming an accepted requirement and a necessary part of the promotion of any cult.<sup>130</sup> Whether the miracles were rooted in any kind of reality is not really the point. What is significant is that the author of the *Life and Miracles of St Eadburga* knew Eadburh as the Abbess of Minster who was by then buried and venerated at Lyminge. This was 85 years or more before any dispute arose between St Augustine's and St Gregory's. It is quite possible that the niche that is still visible on the outside of the south wall of the church is part of the shrine that housed her relics.<sup>131</sup>

But while all the evidence supports the burial of Eadburh at Lyminge, and there is no reason to doubt that the dedication of the church up to the end of the nineteenth century recognised this, this does not deny that Æthelburh was buried at Lyminge too. As already discussed, the *Kentish Royal Legend* does locate her at Lyminge after 633, and the archaeology is consistent with the foundation of a minster within fifty years of the time when Bede says she returned to Kent from Northumbria. The dedication to St Oswald at Paddlesworth, and the land held by Romanus both support a local connection to Northumbria. There is thus the strong possibility that Æthelburh lived, died and was buried at Lyminge after she returned to Kent.

In his *Libellus*, Goscelin highlighted the presence of 'Æthelburga's tomb in the north porticus in the south wall of the church',<sup>132</sup> although the priest Ralph testified that there was no mark or inscription to provide a formal identification. This must therefore have been identification by tradition that required neither further explanation nor justification in the late eleventh century. There is no alternative tradition placing her remains anywhere else, and there is no challenge to the claim

by St Gregory's that her remains were translated by Lanfranc. She may not have been reckoned a significant saint, or indeed a saint at all prior to her translation, and St Eadburh is given more prominence in the records of the translation, such as they are, but nothing contradicts the view that Æthelburh was originally buried in Lyminge.

Goscelin is possibly selective in his quotation from the priest Ralph's testimony on the exhumation of the relics at Lyminge. He omits anything Ralph may have said about Æthelburh, although he does quote him as saying that he identified only 'one set of holy relics', those of St Eadburh. This could suggest that Ralph saw Æthelburh as of lesser sanctity than Eadburh, not that he did not know the second body was hers. The lesser status of Æthelburh is consistent even with the position taken by St Gregory's since she is named only as *Queen*, not *Saint*, *Ethelburga* in the foundation charter and is probably excluded altogether from the priory seal. In context, Ralph's statement about the lack of inscriptions is used to demonstrate that there was nothing positively indicating the presence of St Mildrith, not that the identity of the bodies was not known. The text could be taken as deliberately ambiguous, and perhaps Goscelin was intending to create the impression that Ralph himself was one of those who confused the names of Eadburh and Æthelburh. It seems likely that this was Goscelin's aim because it is otherwise difficult to reconcile his clear description of Æthelburh's tomb with Ralph's testimony that he disinterred relics that he positively identified as St Eadburh. However, on the basis that two tombs were found at Lyminge and two bodies exhumed and translated to Canterbury, there seems good reason to conclude that one of these was Queen Æthelburh, and the other was St Eadburh, Abbess of Minster.

### Conclusions

The evidence of the Hereford *Life and Miracles of St Eadburga*, taken with the charter evidence and the account from St Gregory's, is strong support for the dedication of the church at Lyminge properly being in the form *St Mary and St Eadburg*, as it was until 1897. The conclusion also follows that Æthelburh and Eadburh were indeed not the same person, and that antiquarians since William Lambarde have been misled.

So why did later antiquarians confuse the names? The source of the confusion may lie in the work of John of Tynemouth quoting the *Life of St Edburga*, reproduced in the Gotha text, which was published in the widely read *Nova Legenda Anglie* of 1516. But while even a small amount of critical analysis could have revealed the chronological problem with this account, for antiquarians who were compilers of the first national and county surveys, and for whom the intention was to establish and define English identity, the significance of Lyminge was different from the compilers of hagiographies and the early chronicles. For antiquarians, Lyminge was significant because it was associated with people mentioned by Bede. The connection with Augustine's Mission and the early history of the conversion of England, and thus with the creation of the English nation itself, was central to their theme. They may not have critiqued the equation of Æthelburh with Eadburh because it simply may have seemed incredible that the church at Lyminge would not recognise Æthelburh and instead would honour some other local saint who

by then was of no great significance. By the sixteenth century, the relative status of Æthelburh and Eadburh had been completely reversed from the position in the Anglo-Saxon period.

Once propagated, the assumption that Eadburh was Æthelburh was not seriously challenged until the end of the nineteenth century. Ironically, this was just when the new rector at Lyminge decided to bring his church into the twentieth century through a major renovation and re-ordering and by abandoning what seemed to be an archaic and confusing form of the church dedication. This demonstrates how evidence can be twisted or ignored to fit a point of view and ultimately, if it is repeated often enough by respected authorities, how opinion can come to be accepted as fact.

When the Reverend Eves started calling the parish church *St Ethelburga's*, he may have been following received belief, but more importantly and very astutely, he was also making it easier for potential donors to his church restoration fund to believe their donations both patriotic and worthwhile. By making the identification with *Queen Ethelburga* more explicit, he was probably consciously connecting Lyminge with Bede's History. This would have made it easier for the gifts to be seen as contributing to restoring a church that was a cradle of English Christianity. This was in the Diamond Jubilee Year of 1897, the high watermark of the British Empire, an avowedly very Christian empire, widely regarded in the contemporary popular imagination as built on Christian foundations laid in the Anglo-Saxon period. The achievements of the Anglo-Saxons and the evangelisation of England were integral to the English identity of those who had received a Victorian English education, and the restoration campaign was hugely successful. When the newly refurbished church was re-opened to worship by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1900, it had not only been repaired and refitted but also had a restyled dedication. Thanks to the Reverend Eves' project to restore the church for the new century, it has been known as the Church of *St Mary and St Ethelburga* ever since.

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CDHAS, *Canterbury Diocese Historical and Archaeological Survey*, prepared for the Churches Committee of the Kent Archaeological Society.

DB, *Domesday Book. Kent*, Morgan (1983).

- FH*, *The Folkestone Herald*.  
*FHCSH*, *The Folkestone, Hythe, Cheriton, and Sandgate Herald*.  
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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> CCC 5 records a grant to the 'basilica of St Mary, Mother of God, at the place known as Lyminge', (*'bassilicae Mariae genitricis Dei quae sita est in loco qui dicitur Lymingae'*).

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper, the form *Ethelburga* is used to refer to the church dedication. Otherwise, the historical Queen of Northumbria is called *Æthelburh*, unless quoting the spelling adopted by a specific author.

<sup>3</sup> HE ii, 9-20.

<sup>4</sup> Rollason, 1982, 21. These are collectively known as the *Kentish Royal Legend*. The earliest manuscript is dated to the period 1035-1091, although deriving from an earlier source.

<sup>5</sup> The term used was *monasterium*, normally translated as *monastery* or *minster*. This was a term



applied to any kind of religious establishment with a church (Blair, 2005, 3). To avoid confusion with mediaeval monasteries, because they were a very different kind of institution, the term minster is adopted in this paper.

<sup>6</sup> Rollason, 1982, 80-85.

<sup>7</sup> In this paper, references to the historical church dedication are given as ‘*St Eadburg*’. ‘*Eadburh*’ is used to refer to the historical person, unless quoting the form of the name used by a specific author.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas and Knox, 2015, 12-15.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas, 2013, 111.

<sup>10</sup> Blair, 2005, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Yorke, 2003, 23-29 and 105-06.

<sup>12</sup> Blair, 2005, 82-85.

<sup>13</sup> Yorke, 2003, 106-12.

<sup>14</sup> CAM 10 and CCC 7.

<sup>15</sup> Blair, 2005, 257.

<sup>16</sup> HE iii, 8.

<sup>17</sup> HE iv, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Yorke, 2006, 168-69.

<sup>19</sup> Gregory of Tours, ix, 26 for Ingoberga, and ii, 43 and iv, 1 for St Clothilde.

<sup>20</sup> Everitt, 1986, 102-03.

<sup>21</sup> Tatton-Brown, 1991, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Jervis, 2011; Thomas and Knox, 2014, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas and Knox, 2015, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas, 2013, 115; Jenkins, 1875, 205-11.

<sup>25</sup> The recent excavations revealed a Bronze Age barrow with 5 cremation burials, and a separate crouched burial, but no later occupation evidence before the Anglo-Saxon period, Thomas and Knox, 2015, 4. The PAS website records Iron Age coins from the area, but occupation sites of the period have yet to be identified.

<sup>26</sup> CCC 10 and CCC 65.

<sup>27</sup> Gardiner *et al.*, 2001, 164; 265-67; Rivet and Smith, 1979, 386-87.

<sup>28</sup> Gelling, 1988, 64.

<sup>29</sup> Warhurst, 1955.

<sup>30</sup> Reece, 1980, 263.

<sup>31</sup> Hawkes, 1980, 265-69.

<sup>32</sup> Cunliffe, 1980, 255-57.

<sup>33</sup> Gardiner *et al.*, 2001, 191.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas and Knox, 2015, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Witney, 1976, 31; CCC 23.

<sup>37</sup> Gelling, 1988, 123.

<sup>38</sup> Mudd and Lawrence, 2013, 4-5.

<sup>39</sup> Blair, 2005, 183.

<sup>40</sup> Information provided by Gabor Thomas during the conference ‘Early Medieval Monasticism in the North Sea Zone’ at the University of Kent in Canterbury, 24-26 April 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Hussey, 1907, 204.

<sup>42</sup> HE i, 30.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, i, 26.

<sup>44</sup> Blair, 2005, 70.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-95.

<sup>46</sup> Kelly, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> CCC 5 and 6.

- <sup>48</sup> HE iii, 15.
- <sup>49</sup> DB 2, 26.
- <sup>50</sup> Tatton-Brown, 1992, 1.
- <sup>51</sup> Hussey, 1907, 244, although Jenkins, 1876, li dates this will to 1459.
- <sup>52</sup> HE iii, 9-13.
- <sup>53</sup> Arnold-Forster, 1899(a), 312-16; 1899(b), 21.
- <sup>54</sup> HE iii, 25 and CCC 11. For the identification of Romanus, see Brooks and Kelly, 2013, 31, note 15.
- <sup>55</sup> HE ii, 11.
- <sup>56</sup> Blair, 2005, 42.
- <sup>57</sup> Scott Robertson, 1886.
- <sup>58</sup> Yorke (2003, 23-24) observes that Eanswythe is said to have been born in 614, so a foundation date of 630 seems improbable.
- <sup>59</sup> Lambarde, 1576, 216.
- <sup>60</sup> Camden, 1610, 339.
- <sup>61</sup> Kilburne, 1659, 171-72.
- <sup>62</sup> Hasted, 1799, 78-91.
- <sup>63</sup> Toulmin Smith, 1909, map between pp. 46 and 47.
- <sup>64</sup> Rollason, 1982, 26-27 and 81.
- <sup>65</sup> *'Eithelburga vero regina, post pii regis Northumbrorum Eadwini interfectionem, reversa ad Eadbaldum fratrem, in villa Liminga monasterium aedificavit, in quo cum S Eadburga requiescit'*, Hearn, 1770, 167. The translation is the author's.
- <sup>66</sup> Davis, 1934, 233.
- <sup>67</sup> Hardwick, 1858, 142, 176-77, 224.
- <sup>68</sup> *'Postea vero mortuo Edunino reversa est cum Paulino ad Edbaldum qui tunc Cantuariorum rex erat, deditque ei memoratus villam maximam Liminge, cum omnibus adiacentibus, construxitque ibi monasterium, ibique requiescit, et sancta Eadburga cum ea'*, Mellows, 1949, 56. The translation is the author's.
- <sup>69</sup> Forester, 1854, 13, 433, 439, 443, 450.
- <sup>70</sup> HE ii, 9.
- <sup>71</sup> *Libellus contra inanes corporis sanctae virginis Mildrethae usurpatores* (Colker, 1977).
- <sup>72</sup> *'Igitur in ecclesia Liminge, quae est episcopii, regina Æthelburga celebratur sepulta, sed vulgo ibi nominabatur quaedam sancta Eadburga'*, *ibid.*, 71. The translation is the author's.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-108
- <sup>74</sup> Horstmann, 1901a, 308-11.
- <sup>75</sup> Horstmann, 1901b, 422.
- <sup>76</sup> Rollason, 1989, 180-87.
- <sup>77</sup> Mackie, 1883, 209.
- <sup>78</sup> Allen, 1889, 27.
- <sup>79</sup> Arnold-Forster, 1899(a), 352.
- <sup>80</sup> Jenkins, 1859, 7; 1890, 5; 1874. He was a prolific author on antiquarian and theological matters, and the instigator of excavations that revealed the foundations of an apsidal structure, possibly the original Anglo-Saxon stone church, adjacent to the present church building.
- <sup>81</sup> *FH* 15 October 1892, 9. The notice appears in *SEG* 18 October 1892, 8, and *BCWG* 20 October 1892, 1.
- <sup>82</sup> Initially costed at £1,000, *FH* 30 July 1898, 3. Igglesden, 1901, 49, reported that the work cost £1,807 10s. 5d. in total (in excess of £180,000 in today's terms).
- <sup>83</sup> *WTHBH* 28 August 1897, 2. A letter was probably also published in *FH*, but the archives for this period are missing.
- <sup>84</sup> *FH* 2 September 1899; 2, and 16 June 1900, 3.
- <sup>85</sup> *WTHBH* 30 July 1898, 4. The report in *FH* 30 July 1898, 7, omitted the church dedication.

## ANTIQUARIANS, VICTORIAN PARSON AND RE-WRITING THE PAST: LYMINGE CHURCH

However, in a special illustrated supplement on the local area published the following month, there is reference to 'the church of SS Mary and Ethelburga', *FH* 27 August 1898, 30.

<sup>86</sup> *FHSCH* 27 January 1912, 2 and 10; 28 May 1921, 4.

<sup>87</sup> *FHHSS* 17 October 1903, 4.

<sup>88</sup> *Archaeologia Cantiana*, xxx, 1914, lvi-lix.

<sup>89</sup> The work on the church was sufficiently important for the church to be re-opened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, *FH* 10 November 1900, 4.

<sup>90</sup> *FHSCH* 14 April 1917, 5.

<sup>91</sup> The PCC minutes are held in the Cathedral Archives, Canterbury.

<sup>92</sup> *FH* 15 July 1933, 11.

<sup>93</sup> Harrington, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Crockford, 1983, 1254; and 1985, 632.

<sup>95</sup> *FH* 4 February 1899, 12, referencing the *Lyminge Church Magazine*. Earlier, we know it was called *St Eadburg's Well* (see note 41).

<sup>96</sup> Blair, 2002, 525-6, lists five.

<sup>97</sup> CAM 51

<sup>98</sup> Rollason, 1986, 157

<sup>99</sup> CCC 34 records the grant of a 'refuge of necessity' (*'necessitatis refugium'*) at Canterbury by King Coenwulf of Mercia in 804. Whether this means the female community vacated Lyminge at this time is unclear. CCC 26, dated to between 798 and 810 refers to the brotherhood at Lyminge, and also CCC 74, dated to 844, which could imply that only the male community remained, but this is not certain. There is no further reference to the community after 844, although when Lyminge came under the control of Canterbury remains open to question, (Brooks and Kelly, 2013, 34). By the time of the Domesday Survey, it had done so, DB 2, 26.

<sup>100</sup> Yorke, 2003, 72-76.

<sup>101</sup> Blair, 2005, 298-99; 323.

<sup>102</sup> Brooks, 1984, 255.

<sup>103</sup> Woodcock, 1956, 1.

<sup>104</sup> Sweetinburgh, 2011, 29.

<sup>105</sup> Tatton-Brown, 1995, 48-49.

<sup>106</sup> Colker 1977, 73.

<sup>107</sup> Garmonsway, 1955, 271.

<sup>108</sup> Birch, 1887, 489, no. 2855; Sweetinburgh, 2011, 31.

<sup>109</sup> Sharpe, 1990, 512-16.

<sup>110</sup> Sharpe, 1991.

<sup>111</sup> Rollason, 1989, 180.

<sup>112</sup> Sharpe, 1995, 4.

<sup>113</sup> Colker, 1977, 73.

<sup>114</sup> 'Ego' inquit 'qui hisce meis manibus utraque corpora de tumultis suis levavi et exhausi, testor omne sacrum quod ibi nullum nomen, nulla scriptura, nullus titulus, nullum indicium fuit repertum vel nominatum, nulla prorsus Miltrudis, nulla sancta preter illam quae censebatur Eadburgis ibi erat indicabilis...'. *ibid.*, 85. The translation is the author's.

<sup>115</sup> Rollason, 1989, 223-24.

<sup>116</sup> 'Lymingas ubi pausat beata Eadburga', (CCC34).

<sup>117</sup> Rollason, 1986, 154-57.

<sup>118</sup> Sims-Williams, 2005, 195-6; Yorke 1998, 150-52.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>120</sup> Rollason, 1982, 25.

<sup>121</sup> Brooks and Kelly, 2013, 401-03.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 33; Stafford, 2005, 41.

<sup>123</sup> Foot, 2006, 131-34.

<sup>124</sup> Brooks, 1984, 202-05; Blair 2005, 124.

<sup>125</sup> Rollason, 1989, 95, 129.

<sup>126</sup> Thacker, 2002, 48; Rollason, 1989, 42.

<sup>127</sup> Colker, 1977, 97-108.

<sup>128</sup> '*...in orientales partes Cantuarie, ibique in Limbiensi monasterio audisse sanctam quiescere Edburgam*', and '*...ad sepulchrum sancta Edburge...ad Limbias, ubi corpus sancte quiescit virginis...*' The author is grateful to Dr Rosalind Love of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic Studies in the University of Cambridge, who has kindly shared a transcript of the manuscript she has found. The text has not yet been published.

<sup>129</sup> Love, *pers. comm.*, attributes the text on stylistic grounds to the author known as 'B', who was active around 1000.

<sup>130</sup> Rollason, 1989, 105-10.

<sup>131</sup> Tatton-Brown, 1991, 1.

<sup>132</sup> Colker, 1977, 72.