

**ESTABLISHING AND ANALYSING  
THE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE OF  
SAINTS OSWALD AND WULFSTAN  
OF WORCESTER, c. 950 TO c. 1400**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Pilgrimage to shrine centres in medieval England was a significant event for the community to undertake, as well as an important source of income for the shrine itself. The level of interest that a shrine could generate was dependent upon a variety of factors, stemming from both the saint's actions and the establishment of their political and familial networks when they were alive, and the efforts of the clergy administering the shrine and popularising the relics after their death. This study investigates the sphere of influence of a shrine, using a detailed analysis of the lives and cults of Saints Oswald and Wulfstan of Worcester as a case study.

An analysis of the manuscripts written celebrating the saints' lives has been combined with data detailing the foundations and church dedications with links to Worcester, locations of the saints' relics, material culture related to them, and details of their documented miracles to build a picture of the geographical extent of their influence, and the longevity of their cults. Using this variety of both archaeological and historical sources, this interdisciplinary study builds a methodology which can subsequently be applied to other shrine centres to compare their influence on the medieval community.

## INTRODUCTION

At its height in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,<sup>1</sup> pilgrimage to shrine centres was hugely important, both to the travellers making the sometimes lengthy journeys to visit the shrines, and to the clergy administering them. Using the range of archaeological and historical sources described in chapter one, this study assesses the influence that saints and their shrines had on the medieval community, defined by the popularity and longevity of the shrine as a pilgrimage destination, and by the extent of the saint's geographical footprint. The saints Oswald (born c. 925, died 992) and Wulfstan (born c. 1008, died 1095) have been chosen as a case study since both were bishops of Worcester and archbishops of York, and both were venerated at Worcester until their shrines' destruction during the Reformation. Consequently, a direct comparison of their lives and influence is possible.

Chapter two of this study examines the archaeological evidence of pilgrimage to Worcester, combining geographical detail of the site of the cathedral itself with the spread of churches dedicated to the Worcester saints to show the accessibility of the shrine centre from further afield. The discovery of a single pilgrim badge depicting Wulfstan is additional evidence of the extent of his cult. At a more micro level, a discussion around the specific location of the shrines within the cathedral, with reference to the sensory nature of the space around them, shows how important local management of the pilgrimage experience was to their success and popularity. With this in mind, a proposal for a processional route around the interior of the cathedral is shown.

The existence of a good travel infrastructure and the proximity of other shrines also affected the numbers of visitors. Worcester's strategic location on the river Severn, its accessible road links and its vicinity to other important pilgrimage centres meant it was seen both as a destination in its own

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Nilson uses a financial analysis of a number of English shrine centres to identify two peaks of pilgrimage's popularity, at around 1320 and 1380 (split by the onset of the Black Death), followed by a gradual decline in shrine offerings (B. Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 171 and graph 15, p. 241). André Vauchez uses estimates of the numbers of western European saints being venerated to assert that the cult of saints 'became, between 1150 and 1350, one of the principal expressions of popular devotion' (A. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 106). John Crook talks of the increase in the numbers of reliquaries that were located in shrine centres from the thirteenth and into the fourteenth centuries, indicating their popularity as pilgrimage destinations (J. Crook, *English Medieval Shrines* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2011), p. xiii), while Eamonn Duffy notes the decline of the traditional shrine centres such as Canterbury and Durham from the end of the fifteenth century (E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (London, 2005), p. 195).

right and a stop-off location on a pilgrimage 'tour'.<sup>2</sup> Local shrines were also competitors however,<sup>3</sup> and in reality, it is not possible to determine whether their effects were positive or negative.

The evidence collated in this dissertation suggests that a shrine's influence was based as much on the saint's activities when they were alive as it was after their death, and the evidence for this is examined in chapter three. While in office, the establishment of religious, political and familial networks was hugely important in building geographically wide-ranging power bases through which the bishops could communicate their messages and generate income for their bishoprics. The more successful they were in setting up and maintaining these networks, the better chance they had of leaving a sustained legacy. Oswald was particularly successful at this, with Wulfstan less so since he was in office throughout the period of the Norman Conquest, and thus was not able to take advantage of the relative political stability benefiting his predecessor.

After death, the principal driving force in the establishment of a cult and its longevity was the saint's canonisation and the veneration of their relics. The time and effort that the clergy based at the shrine centre expended to gain agreement for canonisation, as well as the awareness that was built up and subsequently maintained through the writing of *vitae* and *miracula* (saints' lives and miracle stories) were instrumental in ensuring pilgrims were persuaded to visit the shrines, and then were able to pass their experiences on to others. It was as a result of this momentum that shrine centres became successful and survived, sometimes for several centuries. Analysis of the hagiographies of Oswald and Wulfstan in chapter four shows that the cults were relatively long-lived, and there is complementary evidence of pilgrimage to Worcester until at least the early sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Their journeys to sainthood were markedly different however, with Oswald being proclaimed a saint within a few years of his death, while Wulfstan's beatification was not sanctioned until nearly a century after he was buried. There are differences in the foci of the *vitae* and particularly the miracle stories of the two bishops which highlight the different paths the clergy promoting the shrines had to follow to achieve their goal of sainthood.

This study brings together a wide range of sources which show that the Worcester shrines were well-known within their specific areas of influence, but far less so outside of these. The conclusions

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<sup>2</sup> As an example, Diana Webb describes how Richard II undertook several pilgrimage tours of the West Country in the early fourteenth century, taking in amongst others the shrines at Gloucester, Worcester, Tewkesbury and Evesham (D. Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 134).

<sup>3</sup> Ute Engel interprets the establishment of Thomas Cantilupe's shrine at Hereford in the late thirteenth century as being in direct competition with the Worcester shrines (U. Engel, *Worcester Cathedral: An Architectural History* (Chichester, 2007), p. 199).

<sup>4</sup> The accounts of Worcester Priory show receipts of 13s. 4d. from 'offerings to the tombs of saints Oswald and Wulfstan' for the years 1515/16. *Worcester Cathedral Archive, Miscellaneous Volumes*. AXII, f. 41, (1515/16).

drawn from this study also demonstrate that this interdisciplinary approach is an effective method by which to analyse the influence of a shrine centre, and its application to other locations is therefore an avenue for further and wider study.



## CHAPTER 1 – THE SOURCES FOR THE STUDY

### **The Historiography of Pilgrimage and the Cult of Saints**

Medieval pilgrimage has been the subject of a great deal of academic interest over the last fifty years. One of its earliest scholars, Donald Hall in his work *English Mediaeval Pilgrimage* from 1966, provides a concise overview of the increasing popularity of pilgrimage in the early Middle Ages before analysing the experiences of pilgrimage to shrines such as Canterbury, Walsingham and Glastonbury.<sup>5</sup> His premise is that the existence of the shrine provides the focal point of the pilgrim's journey, and only once this has been identified, can the pilgrimage take place. Consequently, the growth in pilgrimage was as a direct result of the focus on the shrine centre itself, and less on the journey.<sup>6</sup>

During the 1970s and 1980s, a number of books concentrated on the reasons behind pilgrims' journeys, the roles played by miracle stories and relics, and the efforts expended by religious houses to attract pilgrims. Jonathan Sumption's book from 1975 examines how relics were collected, put on display and transformed (and stolen), linking them to the growth and increasing popularisation of the cults of saints.<sup>7</sup> The cult of relics, and specifically the relics' movement, is also the subject of Patrick Geary's 1978 book *Furta Sacra*. He identifies their symbolic function, and thus focuses on the relationship between them and the people who obtained them, stating 'it is the individuals who came into contact with these objects, giving them value and assimilating them into their history, who are the proper subject of historical inquiry'.<sup>8</sup> Peter Brown, writing a couple of years after Geary, continues in this vein and introduces the concepts of *praesentia* (the perception of the physical presence of the holy in the remains) and *potentia* (the resulting power that the saint had over the people who venerated him).<sup>9</sup>

The popularisation of the shrines is a theme also taken up by Ronald Finucane, who provides an analysis of the recorded examples of approximately three thousand medieval pilgrims who claimed to be the beneficiaries of miracles. These records, taken from the collections of miracle stories

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter 1, entitled 'Pilgrimage and the Mediaeval Mind', discusses the medieval pilgrims' motivation to embark on these journeys (D. J. Hall, *English Mediaeval Pilgrimage* (London, 1966), pp. 1-17). An earlier book on the subject by Sidney Heath (S. Heath, *Pilgrim Life in the Middle Ages* (London, 1911)) includes a list of English shrines that had been identified at this time.

<sup>6</sup> Hall, *English Mediaeval Pilgrimage*, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> J. Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion* (London, 1975), chapters ii-iv, vi and x.

<sup>8</sup> P. J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1978), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1982), chapters 5 and 6. While he concentrates on cults in late antiquity, the concepts he introduces are also pertinent to the cult of saints in the period of this study.

which were collated by the shrine centres' clergy, allow him to classify pilgrims according to social status, miracle type and their afflictions or ailments. His book also contains a short analysis of the places of origin of the pilgrims.<sup>10</sup>

While Finucane's approach was from the perspective of the pilgrim, a study of almost nine hundred saints from the period between the twelfth and the eighteenth centuries by Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell provides a detailed analysis not only of the saints themselves, but also the people venerating them. Statistical methods are used to show how people's attitudes to piety and the saints evolved, using data from a diversity of categories such as the geographical reach of the cult, its popularity and the saint's reputation. While groundbreaking in their approach, Weinstein and Bell were criticised for making some fundamental errors. For instance, they ignored the effect of the Reformation on the shrines, and they did not take into account the differences in the accessibility of English shrines when compared to those in mainland Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Two more books of the same period which should be mentioned are Christian Zacher's 1976 work, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage*, and from 1985, *Relics and Shrines* by David Sox. Zacher is one of the earliest writers to contrast the spiritual and religious motivation for pilgrimage with an experiential and intellectual one. He purports that the journey was no less important than the destination, saying that 'pilgrims were as curious about their experience of their journey as they were devoutly intent on arriving at the shrine'.<sup>12</sup> Sox uses examples of the translation of relics to compare the experiences of medieval pilgrims with those of modern travellers, and unsurprisingly, he refers heavily to Geary in his chapter on the movement of the relics.<sup>13</sup>

Of the more recent texts, some of the most well-argued and in-depth examples are Diana Webb's trio of books. *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West* is the earliest of these, written in 1999, and gives a comprehensive overview of pilgrimage. In it, Webb uses her predecessors' publications to understand the distances travelled by pilgrims, and concludes that long-distance pilgrimages were less popular than local journeys, pointing to the plethora of local saints that were venerated in

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<sup>10</sup> R. C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977), p. 9 and chapters 4-6, 8 and 9. Finucane specialised in medical history, and hence he applies this knowledge within his analysis.

<sup>11</sup> D. Weinstein and R. M. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000 - 1700* (London, 1982), pp. 121-137. The book's critical appraisal was from the Times Literary Supplement dated 24 August 1984 (C. Stancliffe, 'Hagiographical Deductions', *Times Literary Supplement*, (1984)).

<sup>12</sup> C. H. Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England* (London, 1976), p. 53. Zacher's arguments are illustrated through three fourteenth century texts, *Philobiblon* by Richard de Bury, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and Mandeville's *Travels*.

<sup>13</sup> D. Sox, *Relics and Shrines* (London, 1985), Part 1, chapter 3 ('The Movement of Relics'), and Part 2 ('A Modern Day Exploration of Relics and Shrines').

England at the time as evidence that this was true.<sup>14</sup> Her other two books, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (2000) and *Medieval European Pilgrimage* (2002), use many more primary and secondary sources. In the former of these, first-hand accounts of journeys (such as the writings of Margery Kempe) and official documents are used in combination with the chronicles of the saints' lives and their miracle stories to add to the existing body of knowledge. She also distinguishes between pilgrimage, which she defines as 'a physical action undertaken with a religious purpose', and the cult of saints, which she says encompasses other practices.<sup>15</sup> Her book on European pilgrimage similarly utilises a wide range of sources, but concentrates more on the geography of pilgrimage, and she dedicates an entire chapter to the wide distribution of shrines in Europe and the journeys made by pilgrims to visit them.<sup>16</sup> The specific case studies of Den Bosch in the Netherlands and Aachen in Germany are cited to demonstrate the shrines' peripheral influence, and this type of approach could be applied to alternative shrines in the same way.<sup>17</sup>

The contribution that Ben Nilson's 1998 book *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England* (reprinted in 2001) has made to the development in thought in the area of pilgrimage is acknowledged in Webb's introduction. Nilson concentrates on the larger and more influential shrines, saying that there is now sufficient published material to produce 'a broadly based study of the entire body of evidence relating to medieval English shrines', and that by comparing a number of different sites 'the underlying patterns in worship, offerings, organisation and shrine structure' should become clear.<sup>18</sup> Of specific interest is his analysis of the oblations and offerings made to the cathedrals (including Worcester), as a result of which he concludes that pilgrimage, while slowly declining in popularity, was still a 'valuable spiritual and economic resource almost to the 1530s'.<sup>19</sup>

In 2000, the University of Kent held a colloquium on the subject of English pilgrimage, the outputs of which were published as a set of essays by Colin Morris and Peter Roberts in 2002 which covered pilgrimage over a five hundred year period. The editors' premise was that the majority of current

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<sup>14</sup> D. Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West* (1999), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. xvii.

<sup>16</sup> D. Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage, C.700 - C.1500* (Basingstoke, 2002), chapter 4, 'The Geography of Pilgrimage'.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-138 (Aachen) and pp. 138-142 (Den Bosch). She discusses the 'family' of shrines related to Aachen, which planned activities timed specifically to coincide with each other in order to attract pilgrims in the vicinity, and where pilgrim badges commemorating multiple shrines could be obtained. In the case of Den Bosch, Webb defines a catchment area for the shrine based on the dialects prevalent in certain localities.

<sup>18</sup> Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. xvii; Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England*, p. 2. Prior to this book, Nilson has published data on specific cathedrals in various other volumes, e.g. a collection of essays by Jennie Stopford included his work relating to Lincoln cathedral (B. Nilson, 'The Medieval Experience at the Shrine', in J. Stopford, ed., *Pilgrimage Explored* (York, 1999), pp. 95-122).

<sup>19</sup> Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England*, chapters 6 and 7 (for the analysis of the offerings) and p. 194 (conclusion).

works on pilgrimage were written from a continental standpoint and that focusing on English shrines would aid in redressing this imbalance,<sup>20</sup> and it is probably not coincidental that Diana Webb's book on English medieval pilgrimage was being written contemporaneously. In one of the essays, Eamonn Duffy talks of the regional nature of rural life in medieval England, citing it as the prime reason for the relatively short distances that pilgrims travelled, and suggesting that shrines helped to 'define and sustain the boundaries of regional identity'.<sup>21</sup>

Interest in the topic of the cult of saints has increased over the last twenty years. One of the first people to investigate the social and political implications of the veneration of saints was Barbara Abou-El-Haj, and using art historical evidence, she has shown how social attitudes and local economies were affected by the increase in the popularity of pilgrimage. She specifically mentions how shrines maximised their earning potential as a direct consequence of the way they were presented, managed and developed by the clergy that were promoting them.<sup>22</sup> Contemporary to Abou-El-Haj's work is André Vauchez's wide-ranging book, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*. It was originally published in French in 1981, but has subsequently been translated into English, while also being expanded to include papal reports of saints' canonisations and hagiographical texts. Vauchez uses a combination of clerical and vernacular sources to interpret the political, cultural and religious aspects of the cult of saints and sainthood, and allocates saints to categories based on the process of their canonisation.<sup>23</sup> Of specific interest are the sections on the rise of the cult of saints which discusses the effect of the pope's intervention on the numbers of canonisations; popular and local sainthood, where he distinguishes between cults well-known in a specific location and those with wider appeal; and the typology of sainthood, where, like Weinstein and Bell, he analyses European saints statistically in terms of the process of their canonisation.<sup>24</sup>

Three more recent texts which have further advanced the discussions on the cult of saints and sainthood are Michael Goodich's *Lives and Miracles of the Saints* (2002), Sarah Salih's *Companion to Middle English Hagiography* (2004), and Simon Yarrow's 2006 work *Saints and Their Communities*. The first two of these are edited volumes of articles and essays that bring together thinking from the

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<sup>20</sup> C. Morris, 'Introduction', in C. Morris and P. Roberts, eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> E. Duffy, 'The Dynamics of Pilgrimage in Late Medieval England', *ibid.*, p. 173. Duffy also concludes by arguing that since local identity is central to late medieval religious experience, pilgrimage of the same era should be considered in the same way; *ibid.* p. 177.

<sup>22</sup> B. Abou-El-Haj, *The Medieval Cult of Saints: Formations and Transformations* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 131-134.

<sup>23</sup> Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Book 1, part III, chapters 6-8, pp. 105-140 (The Rise of the Cult of Saints), Book II, part I, chapters 9 & 10, pp. 147-245 (Popular and Local Sainthood), and Book II, Part II, chapter 11, pp. 249-284 (The Quantitative Aspects of the Typology of Official Sainthood).

latter part of the twentieth century on the subject of sainthood and their hagiography. In his book, Goodich publishes articles that he has written over the previous thirty years. His earlier papers, 'The Politics of Canonization in the Thirteenth Century', and 'A Profile of Thirteenth Century Sainthood' together show how the cult of saints was managed by the church, and how its intervention affected the popularity of the saints of that period.<sup>25</sup> Salih's work covers a wide range of approaches to medieval hagiography. For example, Samantha Riches' essay discusses the view that hagiography is only one element of the overall veneration of the saint, while Claire Waters' article interprets hagiographical writing as a display of authority and power.<sup>26</sup> Simon Yarrow uses an analysis of six case studies to build a 'social, anthropological and ritual' study of the stories of miracles recorded at shrine centres.<sup>27</sup> In his conclusion, he highlights the fact that miracle stories are a rich source of twelfth century social history, while also warning of the basis for the stories being written in the first place, saying they 'marginalised and obscured some historical truths in the act of privileging and revealing others'.<sup>28</sup> The miracle stories were collated for the specific purpose of shrine promotion, and Yarrow's comment highlights the selective nature of these narratives. This reinforces the importance of using a multi-source approach when considering the shrine's influence, taking into account the shrine's clergy's efforts in conjunction with the other factors outlined above.

Finally, an unpublished thesis written in 2009 by Carwen Morris discusses the concept of territory with reference to shrine centres, distinguishing between the sacred and non-sacred spaces that a saint's influence can cover. His evidence is drawn primarily from hagiographical and liturgical texts, although he does acknowledge the advantages and limitations that other sources such as church dedications can have with this type of study.<sup>29</sup>

### **Archaeological and Historical Sources**

The multidisciplinary approach of this research uses both archaeological and historical methods to study the influence of the shrines. Archaeologically, the period and place of manufacture of pilgrim badges – emblems which were bought at the shrine site as souvenirs – can be identified, and

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<sup>25</sup> M. E. Goodich, 'The Politics of Canonization in the Thirteenth Century: Lay and Mendicant Saints', *Journal of Church History*, 44 (1975), pp. 294-307; M. E. Goodich, 'A Profile of Thirteenth-Century Sainthood', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 18 (1976), pp. 429-437.

<sup>26</sup> S. Riches, 'Hagiography in Context: Images, Miracles, Shrines and Festivals', in S. Salih, ed., *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 25-46; S. M. Waters, 'Power and Authority', *ibid.*, pp. 70-86.

<sup>27</sup> S. Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities* (Oxford, 2006), p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>29</sup> C. H. Morris, 'The Concept of Territory in the Late Anglo-Saxon and Early Medieval Cult of Saints in England' (Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2009).

therefore an estimate of the distances travelled by the pilgrims can be made. To aid in their identification, several pilgrim badge catalogues exist, and electronic databases such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Kunera Database, set up by the Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen in the Netherlands, are also excellent sources of information.<sup>30</sup> For an explanation of the growth in the production and popularity of pilgrim badges, as well as detailed descriptions of the different types and their significance, the principal authority is Brian Spencer who has catalogued most of the badges found in England. He has written several books on the subject, including *Medieval Pilgrim Badges* (1968), *Medieval Pilgrim Badges from Norfolk* (1980), *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (1990), which details the collection held at Salisbury Museum, and his 1998 work of the same name, which covers the whole country and is seen as the authoritative work on pilgrim badges.<sup>31</sup> Particularly relevant to this study is Spencer's 1984 article 'A Thirteenth Century Pilgrim's Ampulla from Worcester'. The ampulla was found in Dublin, establishing a link between Wulfstan and Ireland.<sup>32</sup>

Later authors have used Spencer's books as the basis for further analysis of the subject. In 1976, Esther Cohen estimated the wealth of shrines from the south of France using the volumes of badges manufactured and the level of trade undertaken in them,<sup>33</sup> while in 1994, Sarah Blick in her doctoral thesis makes the link between pilgrim badges of Thomas Becket and other material culture, such as the stained glass windows of Canterbury Cathedral, to build a comprehensive picture of his influence and status.<sup>34</sup> Sarah Blick was supervised by Brian Spencer and to commemorate his life and work, in 2007 she published a collection of essays called *Beyond Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*. In it, she suggests that pilgrim badges were not only produced at the larger, more influential shrines, but were also dedicated to local, lesser-known cults.<sup>35</sup> Other authors such as Michael Garcia and Mark

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<sup>30</sup> As of 2009, the PAS (<http://www.findsdatabase.org.uk>) had identified 148 badges found in the UK. The Kunera database (<http://www.kunera.nl>), which is more comprehensive, lists more than 3,000 from England and Wales out of a total of over 15,000 across Europe.

<sup>31</sup> His first article on the subject was B. W. Spencer, 'Medieval Pilgrim Badges', in J. G. N. Renaud, ed., *Rotterdam Papers: A Contribution to Medieval Archaeology* (Rotterdam, 1968), and discussed badges discovered on the Thames foreshore in London; B. W. Spencer, *Medieval Pilgrim Badges from Norfolk* (Norwich, 1980), B. W. Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (Salisbury, 1990) and B. W. Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (London, 1998) are his other volumes. This latter work is a more comprehensive catalogue of badges principally from London, Salisbury and Norwich, as well as other areas.

<sup>32</sup> B. W. Spencer, 'A Thirteenth Century Pilgrim's Ampulla from Worcester', *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, 9 (1984), pp. 7-11.

<sup>33</sup> E. Cohen, 'In Haec Signa: Pilgrim-Badge Trade in Southern France', *Journal of Medieval History*, 2 (1976), pp. 193-214.

<sup>34</sup> S. Blick, 'A Canterbury Keepsake: English Medieval Pilgrim Souvenirs and Popular Culture' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Kansas, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> S. Blick, 'King and Cleric: Richard II and the Iconography of St. Thomas Becket and St. Edward the Confessor at Our Lady of Undercroft, Canterbury Cathedral', in S. Blick, ed., *Beyond Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges: Essays in Honour of Brian Spencer* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 192-194.

Hall have concentrated on the badges' significance as medicinal or magical objects<sup>36</sup> and their provenance as family heirlooms and symbols of devotion.<sup>37</sup>

As historical interest in medieval pilgrimage has increased, so archaeological discoveries linked to pilgrimage have also grown in number. The most definitive of these is the excavation of a pilgrim's remains from Worcester Cathedral in 1986. The skeleton was found buried alongside a pierced cockleshell, a staff and a pair of leather boots, all clear signs of pilgrimage. The report of the excavation was written up by the then cathedral archaeologist, Helen Lubin, and a reconstruction of the pilgrim's journey was published by Katherine Lack.<sup>38</sup> Other burials that could be pilgrimage-related have been located at Sandwell Priory, where several graves were excavated and found to contain wooden poles that could potentially be pilgrims' staffs, Hulton Abbey in York and Bordesley Abbey in Worcestershire.<sup>39</sup> With specific reference to Worcester itself, the cathedral employs a full-time archaeologist, and so work on the site continues. One of the outstanding questions that is currently being investigated is the specific site of the original shrines of Oswald and Wulfstan. The 2007 excavation reports provided more evidence to address this question, but as yet, no definitive location has been identified.<sup>40</sup>

To aid in the understanding of the geographic influence of the shrine centre, church dedications have been identified and mapped. Bond's 1914 book, *Dedications and Patron Saints of English Churches*, identifies sixty-seven churches dedicated to St. Oswald (although the vast majority relate to another Oswald, a Northumbrian king dating from three hundred years earlier than Oswald of Worcester), but none to Wulfstan.<sup>41</sup> Church dedications can indicate the distances travelled on pilgrimage, as there is evidence that returning pilgrims dedicated local churches to the saint they

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<sup>36</sup> M. Garcia, 'Medieval Medicine, Magic and Water: The Dilemma of Deliberate Deposition of Pilgrim Signs', *Peregrinations: International Society for the Study of Pilgrimage Art*, 1 (2003), pp. 1-13. Garcia links the curative properties of badges with the disproportionate number badges found in or near water.

<sup>37</sup> M. A. Hall, 'The Cult of Saints in Medieval Perth: Everyday Ritual and the Materiality of Belief', *Journal of Material Culture*, 16 (2011), pp. 80-104.

<sup>38</sup> H. Lubin, *The Worcester Pilgrim* (Worcester, 1990); K. Lack, *The Cockleshell Pilgrim* (London, 2003). The remains have been identified as potentially being those of a wealthy local dyer named Robert Sutton, although this has not been confirmed. Lack uses other contemporary accounts of pilgrimages to Compostela together with Lubin's archaeological evidence to build up an account of the pilgrim's travels from Worcester to Spain and back.

<sup>39</sup> M. A. Hodder, 'Sandwell Priory', *Current Archaeology*, 113 (1993), pp. 187-192, pp. 191-192. Also see J. Stopford, 'Some Approaches to the Archaeology of Christian Pilgrimage', *World Archaeology*, 26 (1994), pp. 57-72, p. 69 for the Bordesley Abbey finds, and C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England* (London, 1997), p. 167 for the burials at Hulton Abbey.

<sup>40</sup> See M. Perkins, 'A Stole, Maniple and Four Other Embroideries in Worcester Cathedral Library', in C. Guy, ed., *Archaeology at Worcester Cathedral: Report of the Sixteenth Annual Symposium, March 2006* (Worcester, 2007), pp. 7-10, and C. Guy and C. Brain, 'Medieval Ecclesiastical Effigies in Worcester Cathedral - Part 2', *ibid.*, pp. 12-18.

<sup>41</sup> F. B. Bond, *Dedications and Patron Saints of English Churches* (London, 1914), p. 17.

had visited.<sup>42</sup> There are limitations to this approach, however, since both the historical date and the location of the dedication need to be identified to directly link it with the saint. Dedications can be changed, and churches that were established after the Reformation are very unlikely to be as the result of a pilgrimage, which is probably the case for Wulfstan as none are listed for him in Bond's book. They are still useful in conjunction with the other information, but cannot be seen as primary evidence of a connection.

A very important cartographic source from the middle of the fourteenth century is the Gough Map. This map shows how well-placed the city of Worcester was in respect of major medieval routes around the country, and, when used in combination with the other archaeological and documentary evidence, could help to calculate the distances pilgrims travelled, and thus identify a 'catchment area' for the shrines located at Worcester.<sup>43</sup>

### Hagiographical Sources and Analyses

During his tenure as bishop of Worcester from 961, St Oswald was responsible for (or instrumental in) the foundation of abbeys at Westbury-on-Trym, Evesham, Pershore, Winchcombe and Ramsey in Huntingdonshire. Links with a number of these foundations are evident in the three versions of Oswald's life that have been written: the first by a Ramsey Abbey monk, Byrhtferth, within a decade of Oswald's death in 992; another by the eleventh-century monk and historian Eadmer dated to between 1113 and 1116; and a third by Senatus, a Worcester prior in about 1170.<sup>44</sup> After Oswald's death a number of miracles were witnessed at his funeral and tomb, and they were reported by Eadmer in the *Miracula sancti Oswaldi* which was produced together with his *vita*.<sup>45</sup> Secondary sources give added insight into the life and legacy of Oswald. Examples are J. Armitage Robinson's

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<sup>42</sup> Churches dedicated to St. James the Great have been used in conjunction with maps to plot routes to the south western ports of England, where pilgrims embarked on ships for sea journeys to Santiago de Compostela, see R. B. Tate, *Pilgrimages to St. James of Compostella from the British Isles During the Middle Ages* (London, 2003), p. 16.

<sup>43</sup> See N. Millea, *The Gough Map* (Oxford, 2007) for an in-depth analysis of the map itself. Also, see <http://www.goughmap.org> for an interactive on-line version of the map.

<sup>44</sup> The three versions of Oswald's *Life* are as follows: Byrhtferth, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', in J. Raine, ed., *The Historians of the Church of York and Its Archbishops, Vol. 1* (London, 1879); Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', in J. Raine, ed., *The Historians of the Church of York and Its Archbishops, Vol. 2* (London, 1879-1894); and W. D. Macray, ed., *Chronicon Abbatiae Rameseiensis* (Rolls Series, 1886).

<sup>45</sup> There are two versions of the *Miracula* available: See Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', and for a much more recent translation, A. J. Turner and B. J. Muir, eds., *Eadmer of Canterbury: Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan and Oswald* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 290-324.



work, which describes the foundations of Oswald's abbeys,<sup>46</sup> and the commemorative collection of essays by Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt, written for the thousandth anniversary of the death of Oswald, which gives an insight into the saint and his cult from a multidisciplinary perspective. Oswald's life covering the period until he takes office in Worcester is explored by Donald Bullough, while Byrhtferth's *Vita* of him is analysed by Michael Lapidge. Christopher Dyer and Julia Barrow concentrate on the city of Worcester itself at the time of Oswald's bishopric.<sup>47</sup>

Wulfstan took over the bishopric of Worcester in 1062, was appointed as King Harold's spiritual advisor prior to the Norman Conquest, and became known for his holiness and piety right up until his death in 1095.<sup>48</sup> Of the primary sources for his life, such as the *Vita Wulfstani* written by William of Malmesbury between 1124 and 1142, translations have been completed by Darlington in 1928 (which also includes a *Miracula*), and by Peile in 1934.<sup>49</sup> A principal secondary source is Emma Mason's book, *St Wulfstan of Worcester*, written in 1990, which contains a section on his journey to sainthood, his veneration and miracle stories, and lists the primary sources relating to the life of Wulfstan in its appendix. It also contains accounts of pilgrimages to his shrine, including one by King John.<sup>50</sup> Julia Barrow and Nicholas Brooks have edited a volume of essays in a similar vein to the one Brooks and Cubitt produced for Oswald, commemorating the nine-hundredth anniversary of Wulfstan's death. This is also a multidisciplinary work, containing chapters on his spirituality, the city of Worcester at the time of his bishopric, and a reconstruction of the cathedral by the former cathedral archaeologist, Philip Barker.<sup>51</sup> The incumbent archaeologists have also published several texts based on their work. For instance, a number of investigations which identified surviving segments of Wulfstan's Norman cathedral were published in 2008.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The account of the leases and satellite abbeys set up by Oswald can be found in J. A. Robinson, 'St. Oswald and the Church of Worcester', *The British Academy, Supplementary Papers* (London, 1919).

<sup>47</sup> D. Bullough, 'St. Oswald: Monk, Bishop and Archbishop', in N. Brooks and C. Cubitt, eds., *St. Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence* (London, 1996); M. Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and Oswald', *ibid.*; J. Barrow, 'The Community of Worcester, 961 - c.1100', *ibid.*; C. Dyer, 'St. Oswald and 10,000 West Midland Peasants', *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Emma Mason discusses his religious dedication and his commitment to the welfare of his clergy and parishioners, E. Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 156-161.

<sup>49</sup> The two versions of William of Malmesbury's *Vita* are R. R. Darlington, ed., *The Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury* (London, 1928), and J. H. F. Peile, ed., *William of Malmesbury's Life of St. Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester* (Oxford, 1934).

<sup>50</sup> For the list of primary sources, see Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester*, pp. 286-307. Mason talks of King John's visit to Wulfstan's tomb in September 1207, 'where he was received in solemn procession', *ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>51</sup> P. Barker, 'Reconstructing Wulfstan's Cathedral', in J. Barrow and N. Brooks, eds., *St. Wulfstan and His World* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 167-188.

<sup>52</sup> See P. Barker and C. Guy, *St. Wulfstan, 1008 - 1095, His Life and Times* (Worcester, 2008), pp. 14-19 for detail of the work undertaken in the chapter house, crypt, refectory and eastern slype (an arched walkway between the monks' cemetery and the cloister).

## Research Methodology

Using Saints Oswald and Wulfstan of Worcester as case studies, this research addresses several key themes which together provide an overall picture of the shrine's popularity, longevity and geographical reach. The reasons as to why some shrines succeeded while others failed to attract pilgrims are varied. Since the level of interest a shrine attracted was primarily dependent upon word of mouth, publicity was generated through its ability to be recognised and remembered above other shrine centres. As an example, the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury was hugely popular in the Middle Ages, and the story and manner of his death were major contributory factors to his shrine's popularity, and consequently, it can be surmised that the life of the saint and the miracle stories attributed to him will affect interest in the shrine. From the perspective of the Worcester shrines the analytical approach to miracle stories used by scholars such as Finucane and Yarrow has been applied here.<sup>53</sup> Where it has been recorded, the location at which the miracle took place or where the benefactor of the miracle lived has been collated, and, for those places outside of Worcester, they have been mapped.

Using archaeological, historical and documentary evidence, the origins, lengths and numbers of pilgrims' journeys can be documented and measured, thus defining the shrine's 'catchment' area. Diana Webb uses this approach to describe several pilgrimages, combining estimates of the speed of a pilgrim's walking pace with evidence of buildings, roads, and river and sea crossings to compile an account of the journeys.<sup>54</sup> Where the data is obtainable, analysing the numbers of visitors to the shrine can provide evidence of its popularity, while a comparison over time of these figures illustrates its longevity. Various methods to count the number of pilgrims were employed by the clergy controlling the shrine, such as recording the number of coins received where admission to the shrine was charged, or counting the number of peas placed in a jug at the entrance.<sup>55</sup> This approach could not be used at Worcester however, as these types of records are not available.

The income generated by a shrine is another indicator of its success. An analysis of the cathedral's financial records when combined with the detail of the infrastructure available for visitors (such as the number of inns, hostels and hospitals in the vicinity) can demonstrate the shrine's impact on the

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<sup>53</sup> See Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, pp. 100-112 and Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*, pp. 13-23 for how the authors categorise and use recorded miracle stories.

<sup>54</sup> Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, pp. 215-232.

<sup>55</sup> At the shrine of St. Hugh in Lincoln, the monks asked each visitor for a donation of one penny to gain admittance. In the year 1334/5, according to the ecclesiastical records, there were approximately 8,000 visitors (Nilson, 'The Medieval Experience at the Shrine', pp. 116-117). Spencer (Spencer, 'Medieval Pilgrim Badges', p. 137) talks of up to 60,000 pilgrims visiting Munich in a single week in 1392, a figure arrived at by counting the number of peas placed into a jug at the gates of the city as the pilgrims passed through.

local economy and population. Nilson uses this approach to analyse the offerings made at a number of shrines, including Worcester, in his 2001 book and his work could form the basis for further study. For instance, while he discusses in detail the effects of population changes and the medieval economy on the cathedrals' finances, more direct comparison of the figures could reveal greater insight into the competition between shrine centres.<sup>56</sup> Charles Woodruff's investigation from 1932 into the accounts of Canterbury Cathedral is a powerful example of the insight that this type of analysis can provide. He showed that, at the height of its popularity in the fourteenth century, receipts from pilgrimage were more than enough to finance the rebuilding of the nave.<sup>57</sup>

In this study, all of the data for Worcester and its two saints has been categorised and mapped using Geographic Information System (GIS) software to highlight the patterns and links apparent when the evidence is assessed together. This allows the areas of influence of the saints to be easily identified, and the two sets of data to be compared against each other.

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<sup>56</sup> See Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England*, pp. 211-231 for the analysis of the offerings made to the shrine centres.

<sup>57</sup> Woodruff notes that, in the fifteen years from 1198, over thirty per cent of the total income generated by the cathedral could be attributed to shrine offerings, with an average of more than £426 per annum being received. In Jubilee years (multiples of fifty years from Thomas's martyrdom) this figure rises considerably, with £1,142 taken in 1220, £670 in 1320 and £644 in 1420. In the latter year the city archives also record upwards of 100,000 pilgrims visiting the shrine. The rebuilding of the nave in the last quarter of the fourteenth century cost approximately £2,900 over a twenty year period, an amount which would have been covered more than twice over by the value of the offerings made at Becket's tomb, even if the average annual takings seen in the early thirteenth century were not sustained. C. E. Woodruff, 'The Financial Aspect of the Cult of St. Thomas of Canterbury', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 44 (1932), pp. 13-32, pp. 16-23 & 27.

## CHAPTER 2 – THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PILGRIMAGE TO WORCESTER

### **The Geography of Worcester Cathedral and its Surroundings**

Worcester's geographical location and as it is the site of one of only three medieval bridges along a fifty-mile stretch of the River Severn meant that it was a focus for trade and travel.<sup>58</sup> Roman roads converged on the city, linking it with Gloucester to the south, Droitwich to the northeast, and Hereford to the west, and the cathedral itself is sited very near to the meeting point of these roads, on a piece of higher ground to the east of the river, not far from the bridge.<sup>59</sup>



Fig. 1. The principal features of the medieval city of Worcester and its arterial routes.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The others were at Gloucester, twenty-five miles to the south, and Bridgnorth, the same distance northwards. N. Baker and R. Holt, *Urban Growth and the Medieval Church: Gloucester and Worcester* (Aldershot, 2004), p.142; Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> Baker and Holt, *Urban Growth and the Medieval Church*, p. 147.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* p. 148.

The Gough Map, drawn in the fourteenth century but perhaps conceived as early as 1280,<sup>61</sup> is also an excellent source of information on the strategic routes that passed through the city. The cartographer of the Gough Map defined so-called 'red routes' – a network of arterial routeways connecting all of the major towns and cities of medieval England, and this shows Worcester linked to Bristol in the southwest, to Chester in the northwest, and through Lichfield and Coventry in the Midlands and then on to the northeast.<sup>62</sup>



Fig. 2. A segment of the Gough Map showing the main arterial routes (the thin red lines) and rivers (in blue) that linked medieval Worcester to the rest of the country.<sup>63</sup> The map was originally drawn in the perspective shown above, and therefore east is at the top.

Pilgrims often combined visits to several shrines into one, longer journey.<sup>64</sup> The proximity of major shrines at Hereford, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Evesham and Hailes Abbey meant that the medieval traveller could cover a number in a relatively short space of time. Opinion as to whether this was of benefit to Worcester is divided, however, as it was the subject both of, as Diana Webb puts it, 'competition and passing trade'.<sup>65</sup> Ute Engel talks of the competition that the Worcester shrines

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<sup>61</sup> Millea, *The Gough Map*, p. 13. The actual drawing of the map can be dated quite accurately to between 1355 and 1366, since the walls of Coventry are shown, and building of them only commenced in 1355, while Sheppey (as it is annotated on the map) changed its name to Queenborough in 1366.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 28; Baker and Holt, *Urban Growth and the Medieval Church*, p. 143.

<sup>63</sup> Image extracted from <http://www.goughmap.org>, accessed October 2013.

<sup>64</sup> There are many references to pilgrim journeys in the literature, for instance Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. 219; J. Harpur, *Sacred Tracks: 2000 Years of Christian Pilgrimage* (London, 2002), p. 73; N. Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller* (Woodbridge, 2010), p. 194.

<sup>65</sup> Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, p. 121.

faced from St Thomas Cantilupe's shrine in Hereford (Cantilupe was canonised in 1320, and his cult was already well established prior to this),<sup>66</sup> whereas both Ben Nilson and Diana Webb point to the benefits of Hereford's proximity, quoting from the 1307 testimony of a monk who talks of the Worcester accounts showing an increase in income of £10 in one year at the end of the thirteenth century, purely as a result of being located on the route to Hereford.<sup>67</sup>

### Church Dedications

The locations of churches dedicated to a saint can give an indication of his geographic reach. The church dedication could have been made to recognise the establishment of a satellite foundation, or they might highlight the routes taken by pilgrims to shrine centres. For instance, dedications to St James have been plotted to show routes to the south-west ports where pilgrims embarked on pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela.<sup>68</sup>

The primary source of church dedications is Frederick Bond's 1914 book in which he lists sixty-seven dedications for St Oswald but none for St Wulfstan.<sup>69</sup> For a more up-to-date list of dedications, two further sources were consulted: the Catholic Directory of England and Wales; and a series of databases held by the Church Buildings Council of the Church of England.<sup>70</sup> Of the entries for Oswald, only five could be linked directly to the Worcester bishop – the remainder are dedicated to Oswald of Northumbria – while the number of Wulfstan dedications has been extended to twelve, and the locations of these are mapped in figure 3 below. Also included are the locations of satellite foundations that Oswald was instrumental in establishing, and this highlights the relationship between them and churches dedicated to the saint, particularly at Ramsey in Cambridgeshire and in Westbury-on-Trym near Bristol. Great Malvern and Pershore in Worcestershire are locations for Oswald foundations as well churches dedicated to Wulfstan, which does geographically link the two bishops. Wulfstan was a great advocate of the Oswald's cult, and this may be reflected here.

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<sup>66</sup> Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, p.199.

<sup>67</sup> Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England*, p. 160; Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, pp. 34 & 124.

<sup>68</sup> Hillary Shaw used church dedications to plot routes to south-western ports such as Fowey, Falmouth and Plymouth, all of which had sea-links with Santiago, see H. Shaw, 'Cornwall and Saint James: The Ways by Land and Sea from Cornwall to Santiago De Compostela', in Confraternity of St. James, ed., *Pilgrims from the British Isles to Santiago de Compostela in the Middle Ages* (Hengrave Hall, Suffolk, 1990), pp. 20-30, pp. 22-27.

<sup>69</sup> Bond, *Dedications and Patron Saints of English Churches*, pp. 17-25.

<sup>70</sup> *Catholic Directory of England and Wales, 2013* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 76-570; The Church of England data was extracted from a series of diocesan databases built and maintained by the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division of the Church Buildings Council, London, October 2013.

Churches dedicated to Wulfstan are centred on the Worcestershire and Warwickshire areas, representing his local sphere of influence, with another two or three further north, although there is no evidence linking these northern churches to other events.

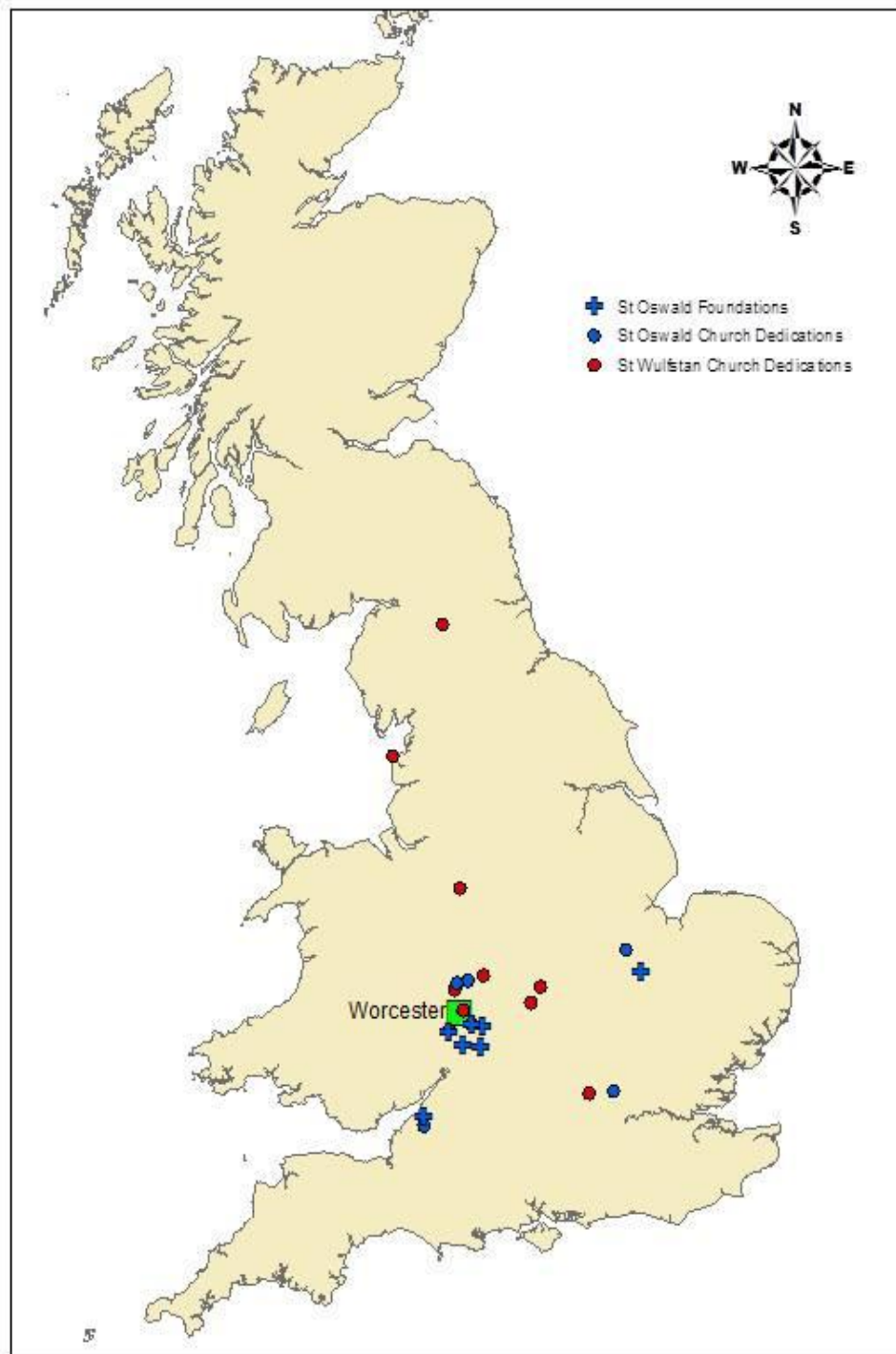


Fig. 3. Locations of Oswald's Foundations and Churches Dedicated to Oswald and Wulfstan.

## The Siting of the Shrines

Both Worcester bishops were reformers of the church during their respective tenures. Oswald, along with two other reformist Anglo-Saxon bishops, Dunstan of Canterbury and Æthelwold of Winchester, was responsible for a return in tenth century England to a strict Benedictine liturgy, which corresponded with a rise in the popularity of the cult of saints.<sup>71</sup> He founded a Benedictine monastery at Worcester in 964 as well as building a secondary cathedral dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin directly alongside the older cathedral of St. Peter, which Baker and Holt have interpreted as an indication of his reforming agenda.<sup>72</sup> The importance that the Benedictines placed on the Virgin ultimately gave rise to a third figure of veneration at Worcester with the Marian shrine reputed to have been more popular than those of Wulfstan and Oswald at times in thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>73</sup> Also, during Oswald's tenure, the principal Marian feast days were commemorated by the monks with a great degree of ceremony.<sup>74</sup> Almost a century later, Wulfstan pulled down the cathedral of St. Mary to make way for the new Norman building sometime after 1084, installing a high altar in the later cathedral dedicated to the Virgin in 1089, so continuing the Marian tradition.<sup>75</sup> He was instrumental in establishing the Oswald's cult, and translated Oswald's remains from St. Mary's to a much more prominent and ornate tomb in the main cathedral of St. Peter.<sup>76</sup> His remains were finally enshrined in a tomb in the cathedral in 1218.

Worcester is slightly unusual when compared to other cathedrals and shrine centres, in that all evidence of the medieval shrines has been completely eradicated. In a letter to Thomas Cromwell in 1538, Bishop Hugh Latimer implores Cromwell to destroy the statue of St. Mary which stood at the centre of the cathedral 'with great noise' (*cum sonitu*), then continues on to say that he should do the same to the shrines of St. David, St. Wulfstan and Bishop John of Courtances, who was also venerated at Worcester.<sup>77</sup> As a result, the original sites of the three main shrines of Oswald,

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<sup>71</sup> J. Hillaby, 'St. Oswald, the Revival of Monasticism and the Veneration of the Saints in the Late Anglo-Saxon and Norman Diocese of Worcester', *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, 16 (1998), pp. 79-132, p. 81.

<sup>72</sup> S. Hopper, *To Be a Pilgrim: The Medieval Pilgrimage Experience* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2002), p. 70; Baker and Holt, *Urban Growth and the Medieval Church*, p. 134. Despite the building of St. Mary's cathedral, Baker and Holt say that the extent of the reform was quite localised, wider change not seen to be forthcoming until the eleventh century.

<sup>73</sup> Lubin, *The Worcester Pilgrim*, p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, p. 193.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 56-57.

<sup>76</sup> Baker and Holt, *Urban Growth and the Medieval Church*, p. 155.

<sup>77</sup> Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, pp. 200-201; Crook, *English Medieval Shrines*, p. 298, quoting *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, 21 volumes and *addenda* (London, 1864-1932), vol. 13.i (1538), p. 437 (item 1177). Holograph letter, Latimer to Cromwell, dated Hartlebury, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1538.



Wulfstan and Mary have never been definitively located, nor the remains of the two bishops discovered, and, as Engel says, the layout of the cathedral does not give too many clues.<sup>78</sup>

There have, however, been several theories put forward as to the shrines' location. The east end of the cathedral contains a retrochoir, which may have been as much as two bays in length and could rise in height towards the level of the main vault of the cathedral.<sup>79</sup> Batsford and Fry have specifically linked the development of retrochoirs 'to the growing cult of the veneration of saints and their relics and the wish to attract great concourses of pilgrims and their offerings', and Lawrence Hoey in 1986 used this argument to suggest that this area of Worcester Cathedral could have been where the shrines were sited.<sup>80</sup> This theory was subsequently disputed by Nilson, who cited the examples of Salisbury and Wells Cathedrals. While both cathedrals have retrochoirs, neither used them to house their saints' shrines.<sup>81</sup> Engel is also of the opinion that the shrines were not located in the retrochoir, pointing to the fact that this area is much lower than the choir and therefore would not have been visible. Instead, she suggests that the tombs were placed in the raised area above the crypt.<sup>82</sup> While he did not agree with the retrochoir theory, Nilson also concludes that line of sight to the tomb was not a major factor in where it was sited. The fact that other church architecture, such as a reredos or rood screen, could form a barrier between the altar and the shrine did not detract from the shrine's importance, and could actually have served to increase its mystification and holiness.<sup>83</sup>

The suggested positions of the various altars and shrines are shown in the plan of the cathedral in figure 4 below, with the altar of St. Mary at the far east end, inside the Lady Chapel (nos. 1 and 2), the secondary Marian altar, no. 26, next to the North Portal (the 'red door'), no. 29, and the high altar (dedicated to Mary and Oswald), no. 7. The shrines of Oswald and Wulfstan are shown as nos. 8 and 9, with the alternative positions next to the tomb of King John shown in smaller numbers.

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<sup>78</sup> Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, p. 201.

<sup>79</sup> M. F. Hearn, 'The Rectangular Ambulatory in English Medieval Architecture', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 30 (1971), pp. 187-208, p. 187.

<sup>80</sup> H. Batsford and C. Fry, *The Greater English Church of the Middle Ages* (London, 1943), p. 47; L. Hoey, 'Pier Alteration in Early English Gothic Architecture', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 134 (1986), pp. 45-67, p.59.

<sup>81</sup> Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England*, p. 97.

<sup>82</sup> Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, pp. 201 & 205. She uses the example of the Becket shrine in Canterbury to illustrate how height and visibility were important in the pilgrimage experience, and quotes Christopher Brooke, who says the shrine became the focal point of the church, and should be visible for all to see (C. Brooke, 'Religious Sentiment and Church Design in the Later Middle Ages', in C. Brooke, ed., *Medieval Church and Society, Collected Essays* (London, 1971), p. 175).

<sup>83</sup> Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England*, pp. 85 & pp. 90-91. He uses the examples of St. Frideswide's shrine in Oxford, which was partitioned off in 1180, and Durham's reredos screen from 1380 (which is still standing) which effectively obscures the shrine behind it.

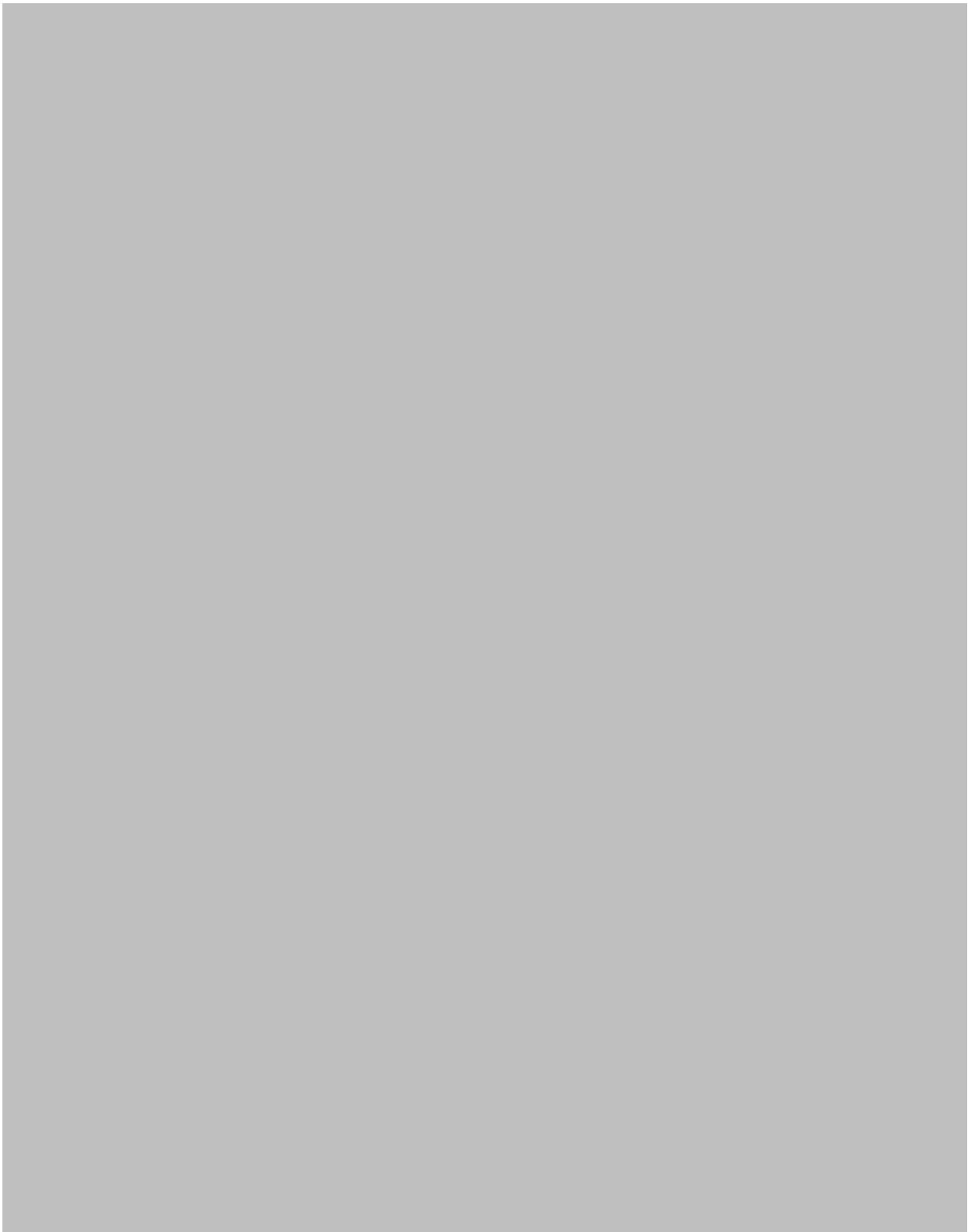


Fig. 4. Liturgical Arrangement of the Gothic Cathedral.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, p. 295 after the plan in B. Willis, *A Survey of the Cathedrals of York, Durham, Carlisle, Chester, Manchester, Lichfield, Hereford, Worcester, Gloucester and Bristol, Volume 1*. (London, 1727), p. 623.

The debate over the specific locations of the shrines within the cathedral is influenced by the interpretation of the space around them. The area around the shrine could easily become clogged with people eager to get close to or touch the shrine or its relics. Jonathan Sumption describes the crush in the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem on holy days during the twelfth century, with hundreds of pilgrims fainting in one instance, and, as Hall says, ‘the more beautiful the shrine the more pilgrims were attracted’.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, the cathedrals developed processional routes around the shrines, which meant that they were able to manage the visitors, thus maximising the numbers of pilgrims reaching the shrine. Nilson discusses the architectural setting of shrines within a cathedral in depth,<sup>86</sup> specifically identifying several key elements such as their accessibility, the nature of the space around them, the level of noise in the shrine’s immediate vicinity and the degree of visibility. He links these features to what he refers to as the ‘theological and practical aspects of sanctity’.<sup>87</sup> Cynthia Hahn also alludes to the spatial organisation of the shrine, saying that these elements were inter-related, with the specific aim of creating an imposing effect for the visitor,<sup>88</sup> and Emma Wells talks of the combination of sensory elements that come together at the shrine to ‘enforce a symbolic experience like never before’.<sup>89</sup>

Until recently, there was a view that the shrine should be visible from as much of the cathedral as possible – Coldstream cites the height of the bases of shrines as evidence that this was the case, saying that reliquaries in general ‘should be seen from the main body of the church, above and beyond the high altar’, whilst in the case of Worcester specifically, Singleton uses the fact that the retrochoir is several feet lower than the main cathedral to suggest that Wulfstan’s tomb would never have been placed behind the high altar, as it would have been too inconspicuous.<sup>90</sup> Nilson disputes this argument, however, citing the introduction of screens behind the high altar of some cathedrals which blocked off the retrochoir or Lady Chapel, much as were present in Worcester, as a means of separating the pilgrims from the worshippers in the nave, and ‘as an additional barrier

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<sup>85</sup> Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, p. 214. Sumption also describes several other instances where large crowds of pilgrims caused injury or death to the pilgrims converging on the shrine. Hall, *English Mediaeval Pilgrimage*, p. 9.

<sup>86</sup> Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England*, chapter 3.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* p. 81.

<sup>88</sup> C. Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines', *Speculum*, 72 (1997), pp. 1079-1106, p. 1080.

<sup>89</sup> E. J. Wells, 'Making 'Sense' of the Pilgrimage Experience of the Medieval Church', *Peregrinations: International Society for the Study of Pilgrimage Art*, 3 (2011), pp. 122-146, p. 143. She uses St. Cuthbert’s shrine at Durham to illustrate her arguments.

<sup>90</sup> N. Coldstream, 'English Decorated Shrine Bases', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 129 (1976), pp. 15-34, p. 16; B. Singleton, 'The Remodelling of the East End of Worcester Cathedral in the Earlier Part of the Thirteenth Century', *British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions*, 1 (1978), pp. 105-115, pp. 109-110.

against the unwashed and suffering crowd of common humanity'.<sup>91</sup> The degree of visibility of shrines seems to have changed over time, with a shift from accessibility and height to concealment, emphasising the spiritual and symbolic nature of the relic. Eamon Duffy, when talking about the mystery of the Mass in the period leading up to the Reformation, describes how the rood screen segregates the laity from the clergy while at the same time allowing them to glimpse what was happening behind it, calling it 'a barrier and no barrier' as it was not completely opaque but could contain windows, a door and squints.<sup>92</sup> This could equally be true of the layout of the retrochoir in Worcester, which would have allowed pilgrims to see the Marian shrine in the Lady Chapel and the shrines of Wulfstan and Oswald as they processed by.

The accessibility of the shrines and the development of the processional route around Worcester cathedral highlight the difficulties in positively identifying the sites of the shrines. Engel's proposed route takes the pilgrim around the eastern end of the cathedral, through screens situated between the choir and the Lady Chapel, then back around the choir and the presbytery. This route took the visitor past both the Marian altar at the red (north) door and the altar in the Lady Chapel, whilst also allowing the main altar to both Mary and Oswald to be visible. However, the shrines to Wulfstan and Oswald would also have to have been located in view of the passing pilgrims, and this view points to them being in close proximity to the main altar, as opposed to their alternative positions, as shown in figure 5 below.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England*, pp. 85, 90. The quote refers specifically to Winchester Cathedral, and is taken from G. W. Kitchin, *The Great Screen of Winchester Cathedral* (London, 1899), p.12. For the specific reference to the screen at Worcester which partitioned the east end of the cathedral, see Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, p. 195, where she quotes P. Hughes and D. MacCulloch, 'A Bailiff's List and Chronicle from Worcester', *Antiquaries Journal*, 75 (1995), pp. 235-255, pp. 246 & 248, which tell of the dismantling of the screen in the sixteenth century.

<sup>92</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 112.

<sup>93</sup> Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, p. 195.



Fig. 5. A Potential Processional Route around the Cathedral. This route takes in the Marian shrine (no. 21) as well as passing near to the most favoured locations of the shrines of Oswald and Wulfstan (larger nos. 8 and 9).

The establishment of the cults of Oswald and Wulfstan, together with the veneration of the Marian shrines at Worcester ensured that the cathedral became one of the major pilgrimage destinations in the west of England. However, the resident monks had to ensure that they maintained this popularity through auspicious management of the shrines themselves. This they did by considering the specific locations of the reliquaries within the cathedral, the use of the space at the cathedral's eastern end as an ambulatory which allowed the pilgrims to move through in an efficient manner, and the restriction of visibility of the shrines, invoking an air of spirituality and symbolism while also separating the pilgrim from the main congregation. The fact that the exact location of the Worcester shrines has not been established and that there have been a number of different theories as to their positions is testament to the evolving debates around the interrelationships between the shrine and the pilgrims visiting them.

### **Material Culture – Pilgrim Badges**

Pilgrim badges were mass-produced emblems made at or in the vicinity of the site of the shrine by local craftsmen. They were sold to the pilgrims as souvenirs, and became as much a symbol of pilgrimage as the hat and the staff.<sup>94</sup> They tended to be made out of cheap metal, such as lead, tin or pewter,<sup>95</sup> and were cast into figures or shapes that represented the shrine from which they came. For instance, Canterbury's badges were principally representations of Thomas à Becket, such as the ones shown in figures 6 and 7.



Figs. 6 & 7. St. Thomas à Becket reliquary pilgrim badge<sup>96</sup> and a stone mould for a Becket mounted pilgrim badge.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Lubin, *The Worcester Pilgrim*, p. 21.

<sup>95</sup> Spencer, 'Medieval Pilgrim Badges', p. 137.

<sup>96</sup> Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, p. 15.

It has been argued that pilgrimages were not only driven by the religious significance of the saint or shrine, but also by a far simpler motive, that of travel and adventure.<sup>98</sup> Finucane suggests that pilgrimage was a way of taking 'a sight-seeing holiday away from the farmyard drudgery',<sup>99</sup> while Melczer sees it as a way to leave behind social regimentation.<sup>100</sup> In any event, there are parallels with modern-day tourism, with the possibility of seeing places that would otherwise be out of reach, and of meeting new people with different perspectives. As Spencer puts it, 'in most pilgrims there was an element of the worldly tourist. Some joined package tours, had route-maps and used phrase-books. Most collected, and sometimes purloined, souvenirs'.<sup>101</sup>

As the popularity of pilgrimage grew, and the market in pilgrim badges became more important as a source of income, so their significance as symbols of the saints themselves increased. There are many indications that the badges were seen to have the same healing powers as the shrines themselves, especially as they were brought into direct contact with the shrine prior to being made available for sale, and thus they became 'secondary relics'.<sup>102</sup> Archaeologically, their significance is governed by two key characteristics: where they were found, and from where and when they originated. Since badges were produced locally to their respective shrine, their provenance can usually be determined as long as the badge is found in reasonable condition, especially as published catalogues mean that excellent comparative material exists.<sup>103</sup> The relationship between the point of origin of the badge and its find-spot can be an indication of the minimum distance the pilgrim travelled.

The main sources of details of pilgrim badges are the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) which logs details of all finds made and reported by the public, and the Kunera database which is maintained by the Radboud University at Nijmegen, Holland.<sup>104</sup> The Kunera database lists over 3,000 badges, while

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<sup>97</sup> Spencer, 'Medieval Pilgrim Badges', p. 153.

<sup>98</sup> Blick, 'A Canterbury Keepsake', pp. 22-23.

<sup>99</sup> Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p. 40.

<sup>100</sup> W. Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago De Compostela* (New York, 1993), p. 36.

<sup>101</sup> Spencer, *Medieval Pilgrim Badges from Norfolk*, p.7.

<sup>102</sup> There are several references to badges possessing the healing properties of the shrines they represented, see for instance Spencer, 'Medieval Pilgrim Badges', p. 143; S. Barker, 'Pilgrim Signs and Other Badges in Bristol City Museum', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 95 (1977), pp. 47-50, p. 47; Blick, 'A Canterbury Keepsake', p. 72; and Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West*, p. 125. Hall (Hall, 'The Cult of Saints in Medieval Perth', p. 95) develops this theme, exploring how badges became a part of the 'religious material culture' of the family, once the pilgrim had returned home with it in his possession.

<sup>103</sup> Brian Spencer has published several catalogues and analyses of pilgrim badges held in a variety of collections around the country, see note 31, above.

<sup>104</sup> See <http://finds.org.uk/database> for the PAS, and <http://www.kunera.nl> for the Kunera database. The PAS holds records of just over one thousand badges and ampullae found in Britain, while the Kunera database

the PAS records less than a third of this number, but describes each in more detail. From the late nineteenth century, they were being recognised as pilgrimage emblems. Brent in 1880 talks of 'numbers of them being found in the Thames',<sup>105</sup> and since then many more have come to light, with Spencer cataloguing about 1,300 and Garcia quoting 'several thousand'.<sup>106</sup>

There is, however, only one example that can be traced directly back to Worcester. During excavations in Dublin in the late 1960s, an ampulla was discovered which was embossed on both sides with figures, and had inscriptions around the edges. Subsequent analysis of the ampulla by Spencer showed it to be a keepsake of St Wulfstan of Worcester, portraying the saint on one side, with the figure of the Virgin Mary on the other.<sup>107</sup> Even though the figures were not immediately recognisable, any doubts about its provenance were dispelled as the inscriptions were found to read + IN HONORE . SANTI . VVLSTANI and + IN HONORE . SANTE . MARIE. The fact that both Wulfstan and Mary appear on the ampulla reinforces the importance of the Marian shrine in Worcester, and adds weight to the proposed processional route outlined above which includes Mary's and both bishops' shrines. Spencer has dated this find to the second half of the thirteenth century, using comparisons in style, decoration and manufacture with similar Canterbury ampullae (of which many have been found) which can be accurately dated to Becket's first jubilee in 1270.<sup>108</sup>



Fig. 8. The Dublin ampulla showing the figure of Wulfstan and the inscription.<sup>109</sup>

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catalogues over fifteen thousand across Europe, of which more than three thousand have been found in England and Wales.

<sup>105</sup> C. Brent, 'Pilgrims' Signs', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 2 (1880), pp. 111-115, p. 113.

<sup>106</sup> Spencer, 'Medieval Pilgrim Badges', p.139. The same figure was quoted by Nilson (Nilson, 'The Medieval Experience at the Shrine', pp. 114-115), although he was using Spencer as a source without taking into account the finds in the intervening period. Garcia, 'Medieval Medicine, Magic and Water', p. 1.

<sup>107</sup> Spencer, 'A Thirteenth Century Pilgrim's Ampulla from Worcester', pp. 7-9.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> Image taken from Kunera database, object no. 08650.



The Wulfstan ampulla illustrates the relationship between Worcester and Dublin, and is supported in the historiography, which details Wulfstan's intervention in the slave trade between England and Ireland.<sup>110</sup> Also, John Comyn, the archbishop of Dublin at the beginning of the thirteenth century, was one of the prelates who verified Wulfstan's miracles as part of the application for his canonisation in 1202.<sup>111</sup> The sea crossing from Bristol to Dublin was a long and dangerous one, and so the pilgrim's journey between Worcester and Ireland was not to be undertaken lightly. The crossing, coupled with a minimum of a three-day journey between Bristol and Worcester, means that the traveller would have spent at least three weeks completing it, even travelling directly there and back.<sup>112</sup> In reality, it is highly likely that other shrines would also have been visited on the way.

Although the Dublin find is the only pilgrim souvenir that can be directly associated with Worcester, there have been other ampullae found in the vicinity. The databases show six finds with find-spots within a radius of twenty miles – one or two days' walk – of Worcester.<sup>113</sup> Unfortunately, none of them have specific provenances identified, as they are all relatively common ampullae in the shape of a small pouch with a drawn neck, within which a drop of holy blood or holy water was placed, which the pilgrims believed bestowed healing and spiritual properties. This type of ampulla was generally available from shrines of the Virgin Mary or the Holy Blood of Christ. The nearest well-known example of a shrine of this type was Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire, approximately twenty-five miles away, although there is no evidence suggesting any of the finds originated from there. Despite this, the number of badges found in the area does give an indication of the popularity of the Worcester shrine. Spencer suggests that the ratio of surviving badges to the number initially produced could be in the 'order of one to hundreds of thousands' based purely on the popularity of pilgrimage at the time, and Esther Cohen asserts that 'no pilgrim would return home without first

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<sup>110</sup> Spencer, 'A Thirteenth Century Pilgrim's Ampulla from Worcester', p. 7.

<sup>111</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, p. 43.

<sup>112</sup> Diana Webb (Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. 223) calculated that a medieval pilgrim, travelling on foot, would cover approximately twenty-two miles per day, and so using this measure, the sixty-three miles between Bristol and Worcester would have taken three days each way. When this is added to the sea voyage of possibly between three and six days per leg, a stay at the shrine itself, and delays at the ports prior to boarding the ship, an elapsed time of three weeks is very quickly reached.

<sup>113</sup> The PAS (<http://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/description/pilgrim/county/WORCESTERSHIRE/broadperiod/MEDIEVAL>) lists six ampullae found in Worcestershire, refs. WAW-C921D2, WAW-C8FEE3, WMID-A134A6, WAW-OCF996, WAW-C23733 and WAW-F7FC51, all with broad dates of between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries.

having purchased a badge'.<sup>114</sup> Spencer also portrays medieval Worcester as 'teeming with pilgrims', although does not provide any evidence for this.<sup>115</sup>

Pilgrim badges are a good indication of the distances involved in pilgrimage, but do not give details of the routes: they give us a point of purchase (the shrine) and a deposition point, which may be the pilgrims' final destination, or it could be the location after subsequent distribution of the object, as in Hall's example from Perth.<sup>116</sup> The Worcester example that was discovered in Dublin does, however, indicate the extent of the geographical influence that Wulfstan's cult had at the height of the pilgrimage's popularity, and this evidence is corroborated by the historic references to Wulfstan's successful attempt to halt the previously very profitable Irish slave trade through Bristol as well as his miracles involving the rescue of sailors in the Irish Sea.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Spencer, 'A Thirteenth Century Pilgrim's Ampulla from Worcester', p. 7; Cohen, 'In Haec Signa', p. 194.

<sup>115</sup> Spencer, 'A Thirteenth Century Pilgrim's Ampulla from Worcester', p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> See note 35 above.

<sup>117</sup> This miracle is described in William of Malmesbury's *Vita*, see William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, pp. 43 & 156.

## CHAPTER 3 – THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF THE BISHOPS’ INFLUENCE

### **The Bishops’ Networks**

The foundations of the successful promotion of a cult were often laid while the saint in question was still alive, and there is an interesting contrast between the two Worcester bishops in this respect. Oswald, who was bishop of Worcester from 961 until his death in 992 and who simultaneously held the archbishopric of York from 972, was highly influential during his life. He was a reformist bishop, who, along with Dunstan of Canterbury and Æthelwold of Winchester, actively promoted Benedictine teaching and is attributed with instigating the revival of monasticism in the mid-tenth century in England.<sup>118</sup> This association was formulated at the monastery at Fleury and is referenced by Byrhtferth in his *Vita s. Oswaldi*. Oswald’s uncle, Archbishop Oda of Canterbury, had trained to become a monk at Fleury and subsequently encouraged Oswald to study there. Byrhtferth also describes the monastery’s participation (and possibly even that of Æthelwold himself) in the writing of the *Regularis Concordia*, a tenth century manuscript that laid down the rules and order of monastic daily life, and which draws heavily on the writings of the sixth-century Saint Benedict of Nursia, who was renowned for his humility and obedience and whose influence resulted in the growth of the Benedictine community.<sup>119</sup> As a result of his work and his alliance with the two other powerful Anglo-Saxon bishops, Oswald travelled extensively and his message was heard across the country. Preaching was the principal method of communication to the laity in the early Middle Ages, and it was proven to be successful, with the spoken word overcoming the difficulties of written language – whether Latin or English. Sophia Menache talks of the impact that a travelling bishop and his entourage would have, portraying ‘anew the powerful, eternal, and mythical status of the Church he represented’, whilst at the same time advertising the human face of the Church.<sup>120</sup> Politically, Oswald used this communication strategy to his advantage, as from his joint bases of

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<sup>118</sup> Hillaby, 'St. Oswald', p. 81 is referenced here, but see also J. Nightingale, 'Oswald, Fleury and Continental Reform', in N. Brooks and C. Cubitt, eds., *St. Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence* (London, 1996) for an insight into how Oswald’s time at Fleury was instrumental in the formation of his Benedictine outlook.

<sup>119</sup> See Byrhtferth, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', pp. 411-423 for the account of Oswald’s time at Fleury, and the writing of the *Regularis Concordia*. Æthelwold’s contribution to the production and promotion of the Rule of St. Benedict is also corroborated in both Archbishop Wulfstan of Winchester’s *Vita s. Æthelwoldi* (Wulfstan, 'Vita sancti Æthelwoldi', in M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom, eds., *Life of St. Æthelwold* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 26-27) and the Abingdon Chronicle ('Chronicon Monasterii De Abingdon', in J. Stevenson, ed., *Chronicon Monasterii De Abingdon* (Cambridge, 1858), vol. 1, p. 278).

<sup>120</sup> S. Menache, *The Vox Dei: Communication Strategies in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1990), pp. 62-63.

Worcester and York, he was able to shore up and influence the frail unity that existed between the different parts of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom at the time.<sup>121</sup>

Oswald used his influence to obtain and move relics both from and to some of the northern houses. Byrhtferth records that whilst creating a new shrine and community of monks in Ripon, Oswald unearthed a great many relics which may have included the remains of Wilfrid, the founder of the monastery itself, as well as those of several other important figures, and that he 'placed them in a shrine with a new community to care for them'.<sup>122</sup> However, according to Eadmer's *vitae* of Oswald and Wilfrid (both written nearly two centuries later), Oda had already translated these relics to Canterbury some thirty years before Oswald's visit.<sup>123</sup> The differing accounts may well be explained by the fact that Byrhtferth was writing his *vita* very much from a Worcester perspective, while Eadmer's affiliations were much more towards York. Either way, whether Oswald was translating the actual relics of the bishop of Ripon, or some secondary relics with links to Wilfrid, his motivation and the outcome were very similar, in that his network and therefore control was spreading northwards and being reinforced. Geary talks of the medieval belief that the relic *was* the saint, and that their movement was justified because it was the will of the saint to be moved.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, Oswald could completely rationalise his translation of the relics from Ripon, while gaining the benefit in their new location.

According to the chronicler Hugh Candidus writing in the early twelfth century, the relics of Wilfrid, Botwin, Sicgfrid, Tatberht and Wildegel (all of whom were directly linked to the monastery at Ripon) were to be found in shrines at the high altar of Peterborough.<sup>125</sup> Alan Thacker suggests that these relics are the same ones that originated in Ripon as described by Byrhtferth and Eadmer, but that they were subsequently donated to Peterborough by Oswald, potentially as part of the confirmation of privileges that were being afforded to the new foundation there.<sup>126</sup> Thacker does, however, question Oswald's success in translating the relics, since no further mention of them can be found

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<sup>121</sup> Hillaby, 'St. Oswald', pp. 105-106.

<sup>122</sup> Byrhtferth, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', pp. 457-462.

<sup>123</sup> For the accounts of Oda's translation of Wilfrid's relics, see Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', pp. 30-31 and Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita sancti Wilfridi', in R. J. Muir and A. J. Turner, eds., *Life of St. Wilfrid by Edmer* (Liverpool, 1998), pp. 142-147. The shrine to Wilfrid at Canterbury is described in Crook, *English Medieval Shrines*, p. 123.

<sup>124</sup> Geary, *Furta Sacra*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>125</sup> Candidus, 'The Peterborough Chronicle', in W. T. Mellows, ed., *The Peterborough Chronicle of Hugh Candidus* (London, 1949), p. 55.

<sup>126</sup> Geary says that one of the prime reasons for the movement of relics was the establishment of new foundations, Geary, *Furta Sacra*, p. 158.

after that of Hugh Candidus, and he attributes this to the Ripon community's lack of initiative in promoting them at the time of the translation.<sup>127</sup>

Oswald's national influence was not solely as a result of his hard work, but it was also enhanced through his family connections. In the mid 960s, he founded the abbey at Ramsey in Huntingdonshire (now part of Cambridgeshire), thus extending Worcester's reach into East Anglia. He was able to do this because of his strong family links in the area – indeed the foundation of the abbey was as a result of a secure endowment made by Oswald and his relatives, who had had a presence in the area for more than two centuries.<sup>128</sup> Both the Ramsey Chronicle and Byrhtferth's *vita* give details of Oswald's family connections with East Anglia, and Andrew Wareham reproduces a family tree which names Archbishop Oscytel of York and Abbot Thurcytel of Bedford, both important East Anglian landowners, as kinsmen of Oswald.<sup>129</sup> From the *Chronicle*, we can see that in 969, shortly after the time of the abbey's foundation, Oswald himself endowed fourteen hides of land to Ramsey, while Æthelstan Mannessune (who was related to Oswald by marriage) donated another twenty-five hides and a relic of the True Cross, and that this level of benefaction continued through until the 990s.<sup>130</sup> Wareham states that this combination of Oswald's wealth and family links meant that Ramsey Abbey did not have to resort to more ruthless land acquisition strategies to build the community, and was therefore more successful and less prone to subsequent legal battles over land rights than other foundations, despite being geographically remote from Oswald's powerbases of Worcester and York.<sup>131</sup>

In Worcester itself, Oswald also used his network of family connections to maintain his control over the bishopric. The records of leases held at Worcester are a valuable source of information showing how Oswald's family benefited from the wealth of the church during his tenure as bishop, specifically mentioning his brothers Osulf, who was the recipient of no fewer than thirty-four separate leases from six Worcester estates, and Æthelstan (no relation to the East Anglian Æthelstan

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<sup>127</sup> A. Thacker, 'Saint-Making and Relic Collecting by Oswald and His Communities', in N. Brooks and C. Cubitt, eds., *St. Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence* (London, 1996), pp. 254-255.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. pp. 245-246; Hillaby, 'St. Oswald', p. 87.

<sup>129</sup> 'Chronicon Abbatiae Rameseiensis', in W. D. Macray, ed., *Chronicon Abbatiae Rameseiensis (1886)* (Whitefish, Montana, 2010), chapter 15, p. viii; Byrhtferth, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', pp. 404-405; A. Wareham, 'Saint Oswald's Family and Kin', in N. Brooks and C. Cubitt, eds., *St. Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence* (London, 1996), p. 48.

<sup>130</sup> See 'Chronicon Abbatiae Rameseiensis', chapter 25, p. xxiii for Oswald's gifts of land at Needingworth, Wistow and Burwell, and ibid. chapter 33, p. xxxix for details of Æthelstan Mannessune's land endowment. Hillaby mentions the donation of the relic of the True Cross, as well as saying that King Edgar was persuaded by Oswald to donate the church at Godmanchester to Ramsey (Hillaby, 'St. Oswald', p. 87).

<sup>131</sup> Wareham, 'St. Oswald of Worcester', p. 53.

Mannessune mentioned above), who was granted three estates.<sup>132</sup> Other relatives (Wareham describes a large number of kin descended from the male lines) were also the recipients of Oswald's land and wealth in Worcester, with the result that they helped him in the day-to-day running of the diocese, meaning that he was not beholden to ealdormen (high-ranking officials, usually royally-appointed) to protect the bishopric and associated monasteries, and Oswald's family was able to retain control of the wealth in Worcester until the mid-1100s, and in Ramsey also until well after the Norman Conquest.<sup>133</sup>

The establishment of Oswald's influence across the country through both his ministry and his family is in direct contrast to that of Wulfstan, who, while like his predecessor also simultaneously held the sees of Worcester and York, was confined to a much more local sphere of influence while he was alive, being limited to Wales and the west of England.<sup>134</sup> Joe Hillaby refers specifically to the fact that, whereas Oswald used the Worcester–York connection to forge links between the north and south of the country, in Wulfstan's case it turned out to be a source of disagreement and conflict.<sup>135</sup> This was partly an unfortunate result of timing, as the Norman archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc, successfully laid claim in 1070 to the provinces belonging to York against their wishes, after persuading Wulfstan to move his allegiance away from York and towards Canterbury. Prior to the Norman Conquest, however, Wulfstan had promoted some of the northern saints' cults, and diocesan calendars show that the feast days of St Chad of Lichfield and St Cuthbert of Durham were celebrated in Worcester, while at Evesham the translations of Saints Aiden of Lindisfarne and Ceolfrith of Wearmouth and Jarrow were celebrated.<sup>136</sup> Emma Mason suggests that Wulfstan could well have increased their presence had Harold's rule continued after 1066.<sup>137</sup>

As Wulfstan did not have the family connections that Oswald used so successfully, so for him, political allegiances became even more important, especially around the time of the Conquest. In conjunction with these allegiances, he was also drawing on the legacies of Oswald and Dunstan of

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<sup>132</sup> See the *Liber Wigorniensis* contained in the Hemming's Cartulary 'Hemingi Chartularium Ecclesiae Wigorniensis', in T. Hearne, ed., *Hemingi Chartularium Ecclesiae Wigorniensis (1723), Vol. 1* (Whitefish, Montana, 2009), folios 147-150, and 'Cartularium Saxonicum', in W. de Gray Birch, ed., *Cartularium Saxonicum: A Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History, Vol. 3: A.D. 948-975* (Cambridge, 1885-1893), charters 815, 917, 1029, 1030, 1045, 1046, 1051, 1055, 1058, 1066, 1072, 1074, 1076, 1077, 1079, 1083, 1121, 1123, 1135, 1176, 1189, 1199, 1200, 1213, 1220-1222, 1224, 1226, 1227, 1229, 1234, 1266 and 1269 for those relating to Osulf, and 'Liber Wigorniensis', folios 211-213 and 232-233 for leases relating to Æthelstan.

<sup>133</sup> Wareham, 'St. Oswald of Worcester', pp. 61-63.

<sup>134</sup> Engel, *Worcester Cathedral*, p. 198.

<sup>135</sup> Hillaby, 'St. Oswald', p. 116.

<sup>136</sup> F. Wormald, *English Kalendars before A.D. 1100* (London, 1934), nos. 16-18.

<sup>137</sup> E. Mason, 'St. Oswald and St. Wulfstan', in N. Brooks and C. Cubitt, eds., *St. Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence* (London, 1996), p. 274.

Canterbury and the rules laid down in the *Regularis Concordia* to continue the Benedictine teachings. William of Malmesbury states that Wulfstan felt his actions against the archbishopric of York were vindicated by Oswald and Dunstan, and that by following their example, he would be building on their work.<sup>138</sup> In 1077 he brought together a confraternity of likeminded monks, bishops and abbots – both English and Norman appointees – from the houses at Evesham, Chertsey, Bath, Pershore, Winchcombe, Gloucester and Worcester with a view to ‘solemnly committing themselves to earnest obedience to God, the Blessed Virgin and St. Benedict’, whilst at the same time proclaiming faith to King William and Queen Matilda.<sup>139</sup> At Worcester, the English prior Alfstan was succeeded on his death by Thomas, a ‘French’ replacement, and Wulfstan used this appointment to sign a similar confraternity agreement with the Worcester prior, as well as the abbot and monks of Ramsey, thus again reaffirming his will to continue the links that Oswald had put in place a century earlier. Textual evidence of this agreement exists in a Worcester Cathedral cartulary, although is not reciprocated in the Ramsey cartulary.<sup>140</sup> It was perceived that any claims to land titles would be more favourably heard by the crown if the monastery was actively seen to be supportive, and as the English heads of the various houses were gradually replaced by French successors, so the English traditions were slowly phased out,<sup>141</sup> and the prayers and chants on behalf of the king and queen that were used by the participating houses were, in effect, a voicing of spiritual support in return for the more tangible financial benefit that the monarchy could provide. The basic tenets of the Benedictine order continued, however, and the fact that Wulfstan could successfully continue promoting fundamentally the same message within a shifting political landscape is testament to his intelligence and shrewdness.

The differing political fortunes of the two bishops are evident here. Oswald was a consummate politician and used both his ecclesiastical and family connections to spread his Benedictine message across the country, founding several satellite houses to Worcester in the process, while Wulfstan was the unfortunate victim of circumstance at a time when the houses of York and Canterbury were at loggerheads, denying him the ability to emulate his predecessor. His influence was thus limited to the West Midlands and South West England.

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<sup>138</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, p. 25.

<sup>139</sup> 'Diplomatarium Anglicum Aevi Saxonici', in B. Thorpe, ed., *Diplomatarium Anglicum Aevi Saxonici: A Collection of English Charters, from the Reign of King Aethelberht of Kent, to that of William the Conqueror* (London, 1865), pp. 615-617

<sup>140</sup> 'The Cartulary of Worcester Cathedral Priory (Register 1)', in R. R. Darlington, ed., *The Cartulary of Worcester Cathedral Priory (Pipe Roll New Series, No. 38)* (London, 1968), no. 304.

<sup>141</sup> Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester*, p. 200.

## The Transition to Sainthood

The level of influence of a saint's cult was not only the result of the popularity of the shrine based on the pilgrims' experiences of cures and miracles and their communication of these to other people, but also as a direct consequence of the actions of the church itself. The effort that was expended by the saint's supporters to establish the cult after their deaths, for instance by putting forward an application for canonisation, or through the writing of a *vita* and the translation and distribution of relics in the church's possession, was the main method by which the clergy could increase the awareness of the cult, and thus ensure that pilgrims were persuaded to visit and subsequently publicise the shrine's curative and miraculous power.

The benefits of promoting a shrine were not only religious, but could also be financial and political, and there have been several recent discussions about how influential these latter factors were. For instance, Tom Watson highlights the parallels between the promotional methods employed by the medieval church, and the communications strategies used in the modern-day promotion of goods and services.<sup>142</sup> His approach, along with that of Bell and Dale who argue that pilgrimage can be seen as a form of contract between the shrine and the pilgrim,<sup>143</sup> highlight very different ways of interpreting the methods of publicising a saint, portraying them in a very calculating, hard-headed fashion. The application of modern brand and marketing concepts to medieval shrine promotion can serve to downplay or even disregard the religious aspects of the cult, linking any success much more to the promotional activities that were planned and implemented. Ignoring the spiritual motivation for pilgrimage is controversial and short-sighted, however. Scholars such as Jonathan Sumption and David Sox, writing in the 1970s and 1980s, are proponents of the spirituality of the shrine being the motivation for its veneration. The first sentence in chapter two of Sumption's book is 'The cult of the saints was the counterpoint of the fear of evil', while Sox emphasises the fact that relics were 'a firm link with Christ', as well as pointing out that modern historians are ill-equipped to understand the full impact they had on the medieval mind.<sup>144</sup> Both of these statements are unequivocal in defining the motivation that medieval pilgrims had in venerating the shrines. Eamonn Duffy, writing thirty years later, acknowledges the commercial considerations of a shrine

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<sup>142</sup> See T. Watson, 'Creating the Cult of a Saint: Communication Strategies in 10th Century England', *Public Relations Review*, 34 (2007), pp. 19-24, p. 23 where he uses terms such as 'brand extension' to illustrate how the cult of St. Swithun at Winchester was established.

<sup>143</sup> Adrian Bell and Richard Dale have also discussed pilgrimage from the standpoint of modern business and marketing techniques, pointing to the mutual benefit gained by the pilgrim and the shrine, with possible cure and redemption after death received in return for monetary offerings (A. R. Bell and R. S. Dale, 'The Medieval Pilgrimage Business', *Enterprise and Society*, (2011), pp. 601-627, p. 624).

<sup>144</sup> Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, p. 22; Sox, *Relics and Shrines*, p. 14.



centre, however, but ultimately warns against placing them above the importance of the laity in defining its relative success, thus showing the shift in thinking over the period.<sup>145</sup>

Subsequent to their deaths, Oswald in 992 and Wulfstan just over a century later in 1095, the transition to sainthood progressed at very different speeds due in a major part to the change in the way that sainthood was granted. As Donald Bullough succinctly puts it, Oswald was accorded the honour of sainthood 'in a period in which these required no authority beyond that of the bishop of the place where he was buried',<sup>146</sup> and within ten years of his death, the monks of Worcester, Evesham (another Oswald foundation) and Ramsey were preparing the way for his sainthood. Byrhtferth's description of how Oswald's body was washed, laid out and very carefully interred in a 'mausoleum of miraculous workmanship' is interpreted by Thacker as the initial steps in the process, and the appearance of Oswald's name in a York metrical calendar held at Ramsey probably within two years of his death also gives weight to this assumption.<sup>147</sup>

The journey to canonisation for Wulfstan was both far longer and more rigorous. The lack of any prolonged national recognition for him while he was alive meant that veneration after his death was also limited to a small area, although it did commence relatively quickly, and there are several reports of post-mortem miracles being performed in the vicinity of his tomb at Worcester. Wulfstan's *vita* states that manifestations of him were seen by the Worcester monks, who were apparently roused from their rest by the bishop appearing to them and telling them to continue their prayer vigils around the tomb.<sup>148</sup> Bishop Robert of Hereford also saw visions, but they were initially a premonition of Wulfstan's impending death, which prompted him to ride immediately to Worcester from Cricklade, where he was in an audience with the king. Wulfstan appeared a second time on the way, saying that he had already died but that there was a present waiting for Robert in Worcester. Robert arrived just in time for the funeral, after which, despite not mentioning any of the specifics of his visions to the monks, he was given Wulfstan's cloak by the prior.<sup>149</sup> Despite these visions, there generally seemed to be less urgency around the attempts to promote Wulfstan's cult immediately after his death when compared to those made on Oswald's behalf. As Mason says, the

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<sup>145</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>146</sup> Bullough, 'St. Oswald', p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> Byrhtferth, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', pp. 467-473 & p. 475; Thacker, 'Saint-Making and Relic Collecting', p. 262. For reference to the calendar, see M. Lapidge, 'A Tenth-Century Metrical Calendar from Ramsey', *Revue Bénédictine*, 94 (1984), pp. 326-369.

<sup>148</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, p. 63.

<sup>149</sup> William of Malmesbury, 'De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum', in N. E. S. A. Hamilton, ed., *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum, Book 5 (1870)* (Whitefish, Montana, 2010), p. 302.

Worcester monks 'dutifully' sent letters throughout the country with news of Wulfstan's demise, but there was 'little immediate effort' made to formalise the process.<sup>150</sup>

It was not until a visit to the shrine at Worcester by King John in early 1200 that interest in the cult of Wulfstan began to increase. King John visited the shrine several times over the next few years, and ultimately was himself entombed next to Wulfstan in Worcester Cathedral. This was a change of heart by the king, who had previously expressed a wish to be buried at a Cistercian house, and his foundation of Beaulieu Abbey was taken as fulfilment of this promise.<sup>151</sup> Peter Draper has analysed John's reasons for promoting Wulfstan's cult and draws the conclusion that they were politically motivated, in that the king wanted to identify himself with an Anglo-Saxon bishop, thus distancing himself from Rome; it was in, effect, a declaration of 'national identity'.<sup>152</sup> At the same time as the king's interest in Wulfstan was growing, a renewed wave of miracles was recorded at the tomb. The Worcester annals report that these continued for more than a year, with as many as fifteen or sixteen a day being documented.<sup>153</sup> The cathedral also suffered a disastrous fire in the spring of 1202, and this combined set of circumstances was enough to persuade the incumbent bishop, Mauger, to petition the pope for Wulfstan's canonisation. Consequently, in September of that year, a commission comprising the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop of Ely and the abbots of Bury St. Edmunds and Woburn was set up by Pope Innocent III to investigate Wulfstan's eligibility for sainthood and the nature of his miracles.<sup>154</sup>

The path to sainthood became a more formal process in the late Anglo-Saxon period, and subsequently proceeded to become even more judicial and inquisitorial throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>155</sup> From the end of the twelfth century Rome decreed that declarations of sainthood could only be ratified by the pope, and in 1234, Gregory IX officially wrote this into canon law. From then on, beatification would only be granted once sufficient proof of the candidate's suitability could be documented and verified, and this proof was in the form of miracles that had been witnessed and presented to a committee of bishops and archbishops, who would then make a

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<sup>150</sup> Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester*, p. 265.

<sup>151</sup> Ralph of Coggeshall, 'Chronicon Anglicanum', in J. Stevenson, ed., *Chronicon Anglicanum (Rolls Series, 1875)* (London, 1875), p. 109.

<sup>152</sup> P. Draper, 'King John and St. Wulfstan', *Journal of Medieval History*, 10 (1884), pp. 41-50, p. 48.

<sup>153</sup> 'Annales Monastici', in H. R. Luard, ed., *Annales Monastici (Rolls Series, 5 Volumes)* (London, 1864-1869), vol. IV, p. 391.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. pp. 391-392; William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, p.184.

<sup>155</sup> Rome's successful attempts to control the canonisation of saints has been attributed to the severe pressure the Catholic Church was experiencing at the time from heretics in France and Spain and Muslim and Mongol threats in the east. It was just one of a number of measures that the papacy introduced to try to shore up the church's position, see Goodich, 'The Politics of Canonization in the Thirteenth Century', pp. 294-295.

recommendation to the pope.<sup>156</sup> In the years prior to this it was still a very subjective process however, with the papal decision potentially being swayed by gifts, political threats or promises. Despite the irregularities, one fundamental component that was taken very seriously was the authentication of the miracles.<sup>157</sup> This obviously worked in Wulfstan's favour, as the commission was able to conclude that the miracles were genuine after investigating for only three days, and, based on its recommendations, Wulfstan's canonisation was announced in April 1203.

As a result of the papal legislation relating to canonisation, Wulfstan's passage to sainthood was a much more formal one than his predecessor's, and it was not until the intervention of Bishop Mauger in 1202 that the process was started, completing a year later. Also, the lack of urgency shown by the Worcester monks in publicising Wulfstan's death contrasts with the efforts of the clergy immediately after the death of Oswald, and probably contributed to the quicker establishment of the latter's cult compared to Wulfstan's.

### **The Translation and Donation of the Relics**

In order to maximise the opportunity for the continuation and expansion of a cult, the church officials needed to proactively promote their saint, particularly if there were other major shrines in the locality. This was especially true of Worcester where the shrine centres at Gloucester, Hereford, Tewkesbury and Hailes were all within a day or two's travel. There were several ways of doing this. The translation of the saint's remains was an ideal opportunity to increase awareness of the shrine, as this was usually done in the presence of other, highly influential religious figures such as bishops or abbots, and was sometimes combined with the donation of relics to other houses. These donations were highly significant events, since, as Sumption states, the spirit of the saint was believed to be in the relics, and therefore when the relics moved, so the saint moved with them.<sup>158</sup> The importance of the relic's status and meaning to the recipient is highlighted when its history and the circumstances surrounding its movement are collated, forming its 'biography'. This biographical approach to cultural objects has been outlined by Igor Kopytoff, using the examples of, among other things, African slaves and Renoir paintings, but can equally be applied to how the relics of Oswald

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<sup>156</sup> For an in-depth explanation of the change in the process of canonisation, see A. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1997), chapters 2 & 3.

<sup>157</sup> Hillaby, 'St. Oswald', p. 121; A. M. Kleinberg, 'Proving Sanctity: Selection and Authentication of Saints in the Later Middle Ages', *Viator*, 20 (1989), pp. 183-205, pp. 189-190 & 197.

<sup>158</sup> Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, p. 51. See also Geary, *Furta Sacra*, pp. 162-163.

and Wulfstan were used to strengthen the networks that existed between Worcester and the other houses.<sup>159</sup>

Diana Webb has argued that the development of secondary or subsidiary shrines was a way of increasing the public's focus on a particular saint, and the principal method of establishing these secondary shrines was also through the movement and distribution of the relics.<sup>160</sup> Patrick Geary gives an insight into how relics became so important to both the shrine and the people venerating them. He says that the relic itself was not significant in the way that, for instance, a manuscript was, which could be read and contextualised. The way that the relics gained significance, and so could be perceived by an individual as something of religious and cultural value, was to encase them in a reliquary, include some kind of document of authenticity, or link them to a tradition or story, much as Kopytoff outlined. These additions personalised the relics, and meant that the ordinary person could identify with the saint from whom they came, and so could touch and communicate with them directly.<sup>161</sup> James Robinson, contributing to the publication of the catalogue for the British Museum's 'Treasures of Heaven' exhibition in 2011, writes that reliquaries effectively became portable altars, saying that they were 'charged with the power to convey the spirit of consecration and served as miniature embodiments of the Church and, therefore, the Heavenly Jerusalem'.<sup>162</sup> In order to increase the potential for people to come into contact with the saints, the relics were taken on processions, thus bringing them to the people and so lessening the reliance on pilgrims visiting the shrine. There were even professional questors whose job it was to transport the relics on their tour, receiving payment based on the levels of offerings they were able to amass.<sup>163</sup>

Many of these methods were used to promote the cults of Oswald and Wulfstan, and this is where similarities exist between them. Prior to his death, Oswald, according to Eadmer, had constructed and consecrated a shrine at Worcester for himself, and the Worcester clergy took this as a prophecy which was only fulfilled through the translation of Oswald's remains which took place in 1002.<sup>164</sup> Eadwulf, Oswald's successor as bishop of Worcester in 995, was the driving force behind the

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<sup>159</sup> See I. Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in A. Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 66-67. Kopytoff talks of the status, period and culture of an object, asking how does an object change with age, and what happens when it comes to the end of its usefulness, calling these changes 'cultural markers'.

<sup>160</sup> Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. 80.

<sup>161</sup> Geary, *Furta Sacra*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>162</sup> J. Robinson, 'From Altar to Amulet: Relics, Portability and Devotion', in M. Bagnoli, H. A. Klein, C. G. Mann and J. Robinson, eds., *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (London, 2011), p. 112.

<sup>163</sup> Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. 18; Bell and Dale, 'The Medieval Pilgrimage Business', p. 607.

<sup>164</sup> Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Miracula sancti Oswaldi', in J. Raine, ed., *The Historians of the Church of York and Its Archbishops* (London, 1879-1894), pp. 31-32 & 45-46.

translation. He commissioned Byrhtferth to draw up the *Vita Oswaldi*, and oversaw the ceremony to enshrine the bones in Oswald's *feretrum* 'surrounded by his bishops, abbots, priests, monks and religious men ... after which many miracles were wrought'.<sup>165</sup> Byrhtferth's *vita* does not mention the translation, and so it is only from Eadmer's account a century later that we are able to see more of the detail. His *miracula* was written in conjunction with a revised *vita*, and was produced at the specific request of the monks at Worcester, and has been interpreted by both Thacker and Hillaby as a political statement in support of monasticism – Eadmer describes Ealdwulf as 'a monk who governed and protected the new family of monks at Worcester in Oswald's place'.<sup>166</sup>

Hillaby talks of the translation of Oswald's relics in 1002 to a new tomb at Worcester by bishop Ealdwulf as the catalyst for the revival of his cult, and the importance of the date of the translation of a saint's relic's ranks second only to the anniversary of his death. Oswald's remains were translated for a second time by Wulfstan in 1092, which was the centenary of his death, and it is no coincidence that both translations happened in conjunction with the rebuilding of the cathedral. The *Vita Wulfstani* records that this second celebration took place in the presence of the bishop of Hereford, several abbots and a large crowd of people, and Wulfstan himself is reported to have contributed seventy-two marks towards the embellishment of the new shrine.<sup>167</sup> Peter Brown states that relic translations 'hold the centre of the stage in late-antique and early-medieval piety', and the celebration of the date of translation, along with that of the death of the saint, took place 'in an atmosphere of high ceremony associated with unambiguously good happenings'.<sup>168</sup> In Oswald's case, the fact that there were three dates in the liturgical year that he could be commemorated – his death on 28 February, his first translation on 15 April, and his second on 8 October – meant that his legacy would be less easily forgotten. Wulfstan used these feast days for this very purpose, and promoted them in a calendar in his own personal prayer-book, as well as on other liturgical calendars both in Worcester and Evesham. In contrast, prior to Wulfstan's tenure in Worcester, Oswald's feast days did not appear, as evidenced by a calendar dated to the early eleventh century.<sup>169</sup> This absence of celebration before Wulfstan's time is consistent with Thacker's assertion

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid. pp. 41 & 48.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. p. 46. For the interpretation of this statement see Thacker, 'Saint-Making and Relic Collecting', p. 263 and Hillaby, 'St. Oswald', p. 83.

<sup>167</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, p. 52.

<sup>168</sup> Brown, *The Cult of Saints*, pp. 88, 101.

<sup>169</sup> The manuscript of Wulfstan's prayer book has been published, see 'The Portiforium of Saint Wulfstan, Vol. 1', in A. Hughes, ed., *The Portiforium of St. Wulfstan (2 Vols)* (Cambridge, 1958-1960), pp. 89-90, and for the interpretation of the book, see L. McLachlan, 'St. Wulfstan's Prayer Book', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 30 (1929), pp. 174-177. The Worcester and Evesham calendars are recorded in Wormald, *English Kalendars before A.D. 1100*, nos. 197-209, 213, 215 and 221, while the earlier calendar, which does not include the Oswald feast days are recorded as *ibid.* nos. 225-237.

that, apart from the early years after his death, it was not until later that Oswald's cult became more widespread. The subsequent increase in popularity was relatively quick, however, with calendar entries appearing later in the eleventh century in Winchester, Bury St Edmunds, Crowland and Exeter, and within the Worcester community, Wulfstan continually reiterated the teachings of Oswald, with the aim, according to Emma Mason, of 'inspiring them in the ongoing battle to assert the interests of the church of Worcester'.<sup>170</sup>

The translation of Wulfstan's relics was originally planned to coincide with his canonisation in 1203, but only eventually took place fifteen years later. The Worcester annals record that this was partly due to the length of time that the repairs to the cathedral took after the fire of 1202, but also was as a result of the ongoing dispute between King John and the papacy, within which Mauger, the bishop of Worcester was also embroiled, and who subsequently ended up in exile in Burgundy until his death in 1212.<sup>171</sup> It was only the death in 1216 of John that meant that Wulfstan's remains could finally be moved. Wulfstan's *vita* states that, in a magnificent ceremony which included King Henry III together with many of the church and state nobility, his body was placed into a freretory in the altar of the cathedral, Oswald's remains were translated (for the third time!), and John's tomb was placed between those of the two bishops.<sup>172</sup>

Finally, but by no means least, the two bishops' cults were maintained and developed through the donation of their relics to other institutions. Oswald is credited with the foundation of several local houses, one of which is Evesham Abbey,<sup>173</sup> and the chronicler there, Thomas of Marlborough, records that by the early twelfth century the abbot provided the abbey church with reliquaries to house arm relics of St Ecwine (the saint associate with Evesham) and St Oswald.<sup>174</sup> Although there is no direct record that states an actual relic was at Evesham, or indeed whether the Oswald that Thomas of Marlborough is referring to is the Worcester bishop or the Northumbrian king of the same name, David Cox has investigated the circumstances surrounding the reliquary's provenance and he believes that there was, in fact, an arm-relic of Oswald of Worcester in Evesham sometime

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<sup>170</sup> Thacker talks of the lack of growth in popularity of the cult in Thacker, 'Saint-Making and Relic Collecting', pp. 256-257. The evidence which shows the subsequent spread of Oswald's cult is recorded in the liturgical calendars, see Wormald, *English Kalendars before A.D. 1100*, nos. 15, 16, 73, 241 and 255, and also see Mason, 'St. Oswald and St. Wulfstan', p. 283.

<sup>171</sup> 'Annales Monastici', pp. 395-396.

<sup>172</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, p. 185; 'Annales Monastici', pp. 407 and 409.

<sup>173</sup> The foundations are listed and described by Hillaby, see Hillaby, 'St. Oswald', pp. 79-133.

<sup>174</sup> Thomas of Marlborough, 'Chronicon Abbatiae De Evesham', in W. D. Macray, ed., *Chronicon Abbatiae De Evesham, Ad Annum 1418 (Rolls Series 29)* (London, 1863), pp. 98-99.

before 1130.<sup>175</sup> Cox accredits the gift to Ealdwulf, the Worcester bishop responsible for Oswald's first translation in 1002 and the commissioner of Byrhtferth's *vita*, saying that it would serve as a constant reminder of the ties linking Evesham and Worcester, both spiritually between the two saints Oswald and Egwine, as well as physically between the then living bishops.<sup>176</sup> Using the language of Kopytoff, the biography of the arm-relic is a long one. The Evesham calendars of c. 1500 mention an important relic of Oswald being honoured in a mass-set, along with those of other saints whose relics are contained in the church, and thus it appears that the presence of Oswald as saint and spiritual friend of Evesham continued almost up until the Reformation.<sup>177</sup>

Another arm-relic of Oswald is reported in two sources as being located at Peterborough. Hugh Candidus, the Peterborough chronicler, unsurprisingly extols its powers, saying that it performed many miracles, including eliciting the gift of a ring and a payment of forty marks from the visiting King Stephen, as well as being responsible for several (unspecified) cures. William of Malmesbury is more sceptical, doubting its authenticity but saying that it was being displayed 'with great exhibition' in its shrine.<sup>178</sup> Diana Webb suggests that its questionable provenance could have been overshadowed by the desire to reap the financial rewards the relic could generate.<sup>179</sup> There is no explanation as to how it arrived at Peterborough, although Oswald's links with East Anglia are well-documented and so it is not unrealistic that an arm-relic could be found there.

The donation of Wulfstan's relics was also carried out at the time of his translation. The ceremony in 1218 was presided over by the then bishop of Worcester, Silvester, in the presence of the bishops of Salisbury and Norwich and the abbot of St Albans, and the Worcester annals record each of these three powerful houses subsequently possessing a relic of Wulfstan. One of Wulfstan's ribs was placed in a special altar dedicated to him in St Albans, while Norwich and Salisbury are listed as receiving 'fragments of his mortal remains'.<sup>180</sup> This seems to have been a deliberate strategy of Silvester's, with the specific aim of promoting Wulfstan's cult to a much wider audience, perhaps conscious of the limited local appeal that the shrine had had up until that point. Draper however, sees this as having a negative effect on the shrine at Worcester, with pilgrims having less incentive

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<sup>175</sup> D. Cox, 'St. Oswald of Worcester at Evesham Abbey: Cult and Concealment', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53 (2002), pp. 269-285, pp. 273-276.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* p. 276.

<sup>177</sup> F. Wormald, *English Kalendars after A.D. 1100* (London, 1939), no. 35.

<sup>178</sup> Candidus, 'Peterborough Chronicle', pp. 105-106; William of Malmesbury, 'De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum', pp. 317-318.

<sup>179</sup> Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. 38.

<sup>180</sup> 'Annales Monastici', p. 409.

to visit, and he suggests that this 'wanton' distribution of relics may have led to Silvester's sudden death not long after Wulfstan's translation.<sup>181</sup>

Both saints' relics were the subjects of translations (in Oswald's case three times), and each of these events served to reinforce their saintly status through the invitation of powerful bishops and laity from across the country to witness the events. In tandem with the translations, the saints' relics were donated to the houses of the attending bishops, which have been seen as an attempt to increase the popularity of the Worcester shrine. This strategy met with mixed levels of success, however, and ultimately served to sustain interest in the areas where Worcester was already influential but failed to widen knowledge of the cult to areas where previously Oswald and Wulfstan were less well-known.

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<sup>181</sup> Draper, 'King John and St. Wulfstan', p. 45. He suggests that the prospect of pilgrims being drawn to shrines other than Worcester as a result of Silvester's distribution of the relics could have given rise to the suspicion that his death was retribution for his actions.



## CHAPTER 4 – THE HAGIOGRAPHIES OF ST OSWALD AND ST WULFSTAN

Of the many factors that help to define a saint's influence, the hagiographic record gives us a great insight. There were normally two parts to the hagiography, with the *vita* documenting the saint's life, deeds and death, and the *miracula* listing the post-mortem miracles that evidenced the saint's power to intercede on his devotees' behalves. Marcus Bull calls these texts 'the two main staples of hagiographic culture',<sup>182</sup> and they are a rich source of information from which we can gain a great deal of understanding into attitudes towards the saint's life, legacy and influence.

The earliest example we have of this combination of biography and miracle collection is that of St. Martin of Tours, written by Sulpicius Severus, which dates from the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries. The collation of the works commenced very soon after Martin's death in 397, and, according to Barbara Abou-El-Haj, can be seen as the precursor for many of the later hagiographies.<sup>183</sup> As the cult of saints grew in popularity, so the stories of their lives and miracles became more widely available, and from the tenth century onwards greater emphasis was put upon the hagiographies as their manuscripts became more detailed and embellished with decoration and illustrations. The growth in the production of hagiographies coincided with the increase in pilgrimage to the shrines, and the concurrent timing of these two events is not coincidental. Pilgrims visited shrines as a penance or to be provided with a cure for an ailment or illness, and the competition between shrines to attract visitors, especially in the later Middle Ages, became increasingly overt.<sup>184</sup>

### **The Manuscripts**

While both Oswald and Wulfstan had *miracula* written in conjunction with their *vitae*, the circumstances surrounding the timings and collation of them are very different. Within months of Oswald's death in 992, the monks of both Worcester and Ramsey started recording miracles at his tomb, demonstrating a wish by the monastic community to move quickly towards sainthood. In conjunction with the collation of the miracle stories, there is some evidence that a number of

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<sup>182</sup> M. G. Bull, *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour: Analysis and Translation* (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 8.

<sup>183</sup> Abou-El-Haj, *The Medieval Cult of Saints*, pp. 8-9. For detail of the life of Saint Martin, see A. Roberts, ed., *Sulpitius Severus; Life of Saint Martin* (New York, 1894).

<sup>184</sup> For an analysis of the competition between shrine centres, see D. J. Birch, 'Selling the Saints: Competition among the Pilgrimage Centres in the Twelfth Century', *Journal of Medieval History*, 2 (1992), pp. 20-34.

hagiographic records were being written in the first years after Oswald's death – Eadmer in his *Vita* talks of 'the pens of many a different writer' being evident.<sup>185</sup> Orderic Vitalis in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* references writing about Oswald by Folcard of Saint-Bertin, an administrator at the monastery of Thorney in Cambridgeshire (Thorney is located only fifteen miles from Ramsey), dating from the second half of the eleventh century, although the manuscript itself is now lost.<sup>186</sup> The Ramsey Chronicle also contains what may be fragments from another (also lost) version of Oswald's Life, mentioning as it does the foundation of Ramsey Abbey, as well as various parts of Oswald's education and early monastic career.<sup>187</sup> Clearly, then a good deal of interest was being generated in Oswald's hagiography by the monks at Worcester and at Ramsey.

The only extant *vita* and *miracula* from this early period after Oswald's death is that of the Ramsey monk Byrhtferth, who completed his work sometime between 997 and 1002, and which is currently contained as a sole, anonymous manuscript in the British Library. These dates can be verified with some degree of certainty, as Byrhtferth references Wulfstan of Winchester's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, which was completed after the translation of Æthelwold's remains in 996, but he does not mention Oswald's own translation in April 1002.<sup>188</sup> Despite its anonymity, Byrhtferth has been identified as the author of the manuscript as a result of the highly individual and idiosyncratic language that is used in the text, which mirrors that of his *Enchiridion*, also written at Ramsey between 1010 and 1012.<sup>189</sup> Alan Thacker highlights Byrhtferth's description of Oswald's funeral, the washing and laying out of the body, and the decoration of the mausoleum as evidence that the *Life* was written specifically with the intention of attaining sainthood.<sup>190</sup>

Eadmer of Canterbury completed an updated *vita* and *miracula* based on Byrhtferth's original about a century later. The textual style of Eadmer's work suggests that he used both Byrhtferth's earlier version as well as the lost work, parts of which were reproduced in the Ramsey Chronicle. However, he also added miracle stories that were reported subsequent to Byrhtferth's collection, probably with the aid of the Worcester monks.<sup>191</sup> Eadmer was a well-respected writer of hagiographies, and produced *Vitae* of Saints Wilfrid, Odonis, Dunstan and Anselm alongside that of Oswald. It is therefore likely that Oswald's *Vita* was commissioned specifically by the monks at Worcester with a

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<sup>185</sup> 'uario diuersorum stilo', Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', prologue.

<sup>186</sup> M. Chibnall, ed., *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford, 1968-1980), vi, p. 151, n. 7.

<sup>187</sup> Macray, ed., *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis*, chapter 22.

<sup>188</sup> Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and Oswald', p. 65.

<sup>189</sup> The identification was made by Samuel Crawford who listed approximately sixty linguistic parallels between the two documents, see S. J. Crawford, *Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Anonymous Life of St. Oswald* (Oxford, 1929), pp. 103-108.

<sup>190</sup> Thacker, 'Saint-Making and Relic Collecting', p. 262.

<sup>191</sup> A. J. Turner and B. J. Muir, eds., *Eadmer of Canterbury: Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan and Oswald* (Oxford, 2006), p. cviii.

view to increasing the popularity of his cult, as his reach was quite localised at the time. In the text, Eadmer himself says that the miracles are appended to the *Vita* to prove Oswald's worth as an intercessor.<sup>192</sup>

Turner and Muir have traced all of the known copies of Eadmer's version of the *Vita*, which actually number very few. His original version was kept in the cathedral library at Worcester, with a subsequent copy made for the monastery at Pershore in the late twelfth century. Another abridged version was commissioned by Bishop Roger of Worcester and was written by the cantor Senatus sometime after 1235, which also contains an abridged Life of St Wulfstan of Worcester.<sup>193</sup> Eadmer created two more copies of the original manuscript, one of which was produced for the abbey at Ramsey, and another which was sent to Christ Church, Cambridge.<sup>194</sup> Despite the Worcester monks' wish to publicise the cult of Oswald more widely in the twelfth century, the manuscripts were not copied in great numbers, nor were they distributed to anywhere other than those places where Oswald was already known, Worcester and East Anglia, and consequently Oswald's cult remained more of a localised phenomenon. It is possible that the distribution of the manuscripts may have been intentionally limited to these locations, in order to use them as a teaching resource for the clergy, rather than being for wider circulation.

In contrast to Oswald, while Wulfstan's life has been chronicled quite extensively the majority of his miracles were not documented until the deposition to Pope Innocent III for his elevation to sainthood was being produced. The first *Vita* was written by Coleman, a Worcester monk who had served as Wulfstan's chancellor, the position of which would have given him a very good insight into both the work and the character of the bishop. He was appointed prior of Westbury-on-Trym less than two years before the death of Wulfstan, only to see the priory disbanded and himself demoted back to Worcester by Wulfstan's successor, Samson. Coleman wrote his text in English, which at the time was very unusual as the normal language of scribes was Latin, and this would have meant that the audience for his work would have been much more limited. This, together with the circumstances that saw him moved back to Worcester, indicate that it was he, and not Samson, who was the instigator of the writing of the text. Emma Mason suggests that this was in fact a reactionary act against the changes introduced by the new bishop, while David Rollason calls it a 'form of English patriotism'.<sup>195</sup> This manuscript formed part of the evidence sent to the Pope in

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<sup>192</sup> 'Quod ut euentibus probemus argumentis, quae per eum post mortem suam facta et ad nostram noticiam sunt perlata paucis subnectere rati sumus', Eadmer of Canterbury, 'Vita sancti Oswaldi', c. 40.

<sup>193</sup> Turner and Muir, eds., *Eadmer of Canterbury*, p. cxxv.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. p. cxxxii.

<sup>195</sup> Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester*, pp. 269-270; D. W. Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 237.

1202, and has subsequently been lost. However, by then, the Worcester monks had had the English version translated into Latin, which was much better suited to the goal of widening the influence of Wulfstan's cult.<sup>196</sup>

It was not until a devastating fire destroyed large parts of the cathedral at Worcester in 1113, that this new, Latin version of Wulfstan's *Vita* and *Miracula* was compiled. The celebrated twelfth-century historian William of Malmesbury was invited by the incumbent prior, Warin, to come to Worcester and translate Coleman's text into Latin.<sup>197</sup> While he was in Worcester, William also used Coleman's *Life* to collect material for his other projects *De Gesta Regum Anglorum* and *De Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, using it particularly for the sections on the English bishops. While also substantially adding to the compendium of miracles that Coleman had mentioned, William omitted the names of some of the witnesses to them. He also suppressed some of the longer, rhetorical passages of Coleman's work, while at the same time adding in anecdotes recounted to him by Nicholas, a favourite prior of Wulfstan's. This contrast has been interpreted by Emma Mason as Coleman very much using his own recollection and not necessarily consulting with the other priors, while William was much more open to the inclusion of input from contemporaries of Wulfstan.<sup>198</sup> William states that he completed the text in six weeks,<sup>199</sup> a major achievement considering the volume of work he had to undertake, and his *Vita* and *Miracula* are still the most comprehensive account of Wulfstan's life and miracles, with the one remaining copy now housed in the British Library.

Apart from the entries concerning Wulfstan's life in William of Malmesbury's other major works, some other biographical and hagiographical texts are also known of, which were produced to increase interest in Wulfstan's cult. There is scant evidence that any full-length copies of William's work were made, but several abridged copies were written, the first of which is that held with Oswald's *Life* at Durham, probably written by Senatus, the Worcester cantor, in the latter part of the twelfth century. These versions omit some of the detail that William included in his *Life*, but do place more emphasis on the record of miracles, with the earliest of them compiled in response to Canterbury's success in promoting Becket's cult, possibly in reaction to the perceived competition that Becket's shrine was for Worcester. This first abridged version was subsequently copied and compressed several times, with three extant copies in the British Museum, the latest one of which

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<sup>196</sup> Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester*, p. 289.

<sup>197</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, pp. viii & pp. 1-2.

<sup>198</sup> Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester*, pp. 292-293.

<sup>199</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, p. 67.

dates from the fourteenth century. The provenance of only the latest of these is known, as it was included in a collection of saints' lives from Romsey Abbey in Hampshire.<sup>200</sup>

The significance of the distribution of the manuscripts can be seen from the mapping of their locations (see figure 9). It appears that the monks in Ramsey and Worcester were trying to maintain the legacy of Oswald in the areas of the country where he was well-known during his lifetime through the completion of both the *Byrhtferth* work, and that of the Canterbury monk Eadmer. The difference in timing of the two main works is of interest, though, with the Ramsey monks commissioning the first *vita* less than a decade after Oswald's death, whereas the Worcester clergy's version written by Eadmer was not completed until a century later. While the monks in Cambridgeshire were looking towards the canonisation of Oswald, the Worcester monks were looking to re-establish and strengthen his cult where it had existed for some time.

In contrast, Coleman's *vita* of Wulfstan was a much more internal-looking document, probably written as a reaction to the new bishop in Worcester, as it was written in English, and it was not until the twelfth century that the first Latin version (by William of Malmesbury) was completed with the aim of increasing the knowledge of Wulfstan's cult. The abridged versions that appear in Durham and Romsey in Hampshire are from much later (into the fourteenth century) and, since they appear in conjunction with other saints' lives, could have been used as teaching aids for the monks themselves, but could also have been a reaction against the increasing popularity of other shrine centres at the time.

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<sup>200</sup> Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester*, p. 299.

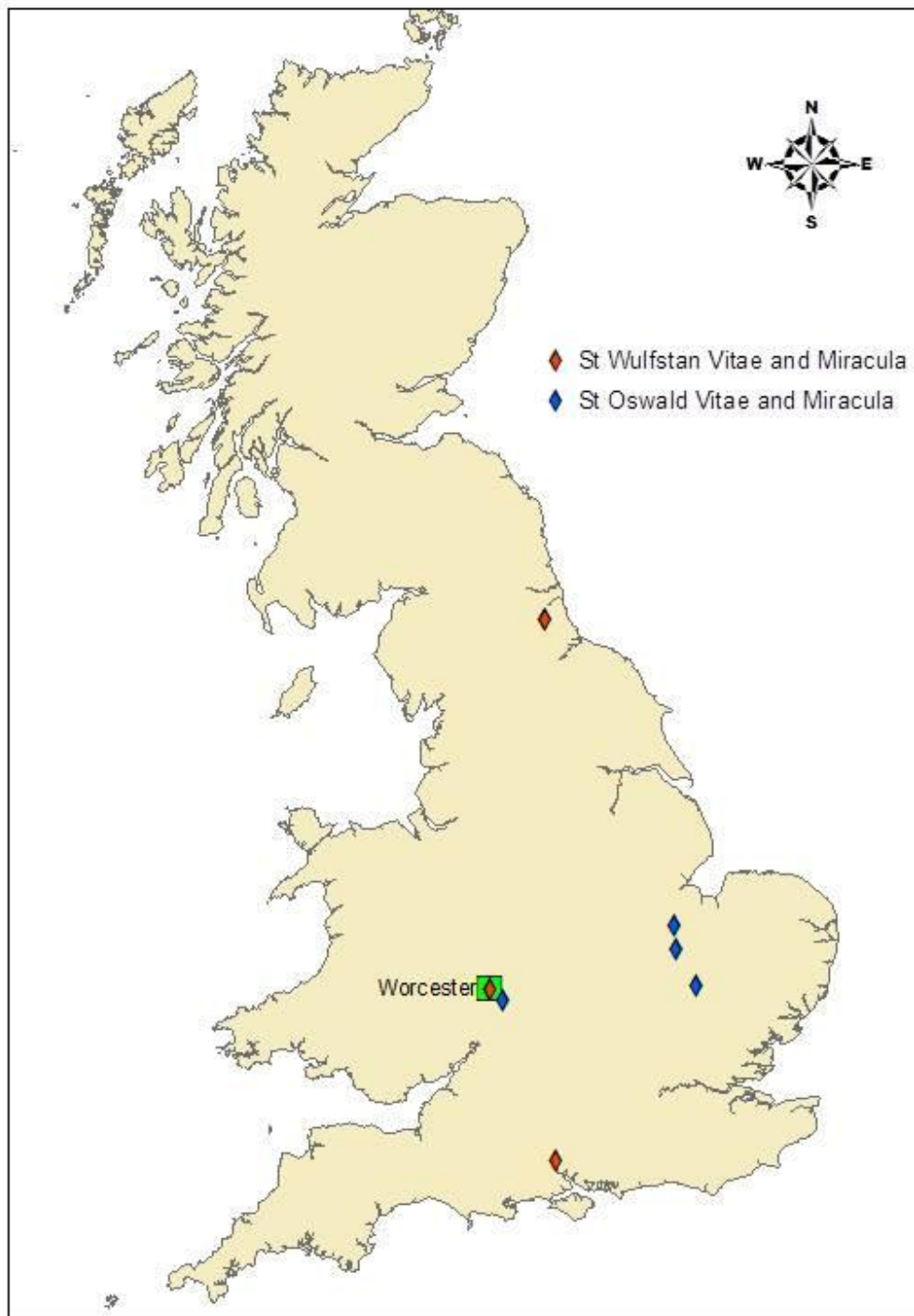


Fig. 9. The Locations of the Composition of Known Manuscripts of the *Vitae* and *Miracula* of Oswald and Wulfstan.

## Miracle Stories

The collation of a compelling and varied set of miracle stories was an ideal tool for the clergy to use to publicise their shrine, as the narratives communicated to the potential visitor, in a very simple and direct way, that the cure he was looking for was available and had already been proven to work in the past. The stories of these cures could also then be passed on. William Purkis calls them a 'propaganda device', for both promoting pilgrimage and generating income through donations.<sup>201</sup> Ronald Finucane, in his 1977 book *Miracles and Pilgrims*, discusses how the dissemination of miracle stories was an essential part of a cult's development, describing how word of mouth could bring the news of a miracle that had been witnessed at a small, fledgling shrine to other members of the family and wider community, which in turn would trigger more journeys and visits, thus considerably increasing the shrine's catchment area.<sup>202</sup> Sophia Menache has shown how influential word of mouth was as a communication channel in the Middle Ages,<sup>203</sup> while Finucane specifically says that 'the sweetest promise a pilgrim could hear was *miracula magna videbis*, (you will see great miracles), and that the awareness of a cult was not an abstract knowledge, but it was 'physically carried to them by living individuals'. This statement demonstrates the fervour of belief in miracles that Finucane identifies as fundamental to the successful growth of a cult. This enthusiastic endorsement was key to the shrine's ability to attract pilgrims from greater distances.<sup>204</sup> Simon Yarrow has also recognised the communal effect of miracles as shared experiences saying that through them medieval communities 'shared a sense of their Christian identity'.<sup>205</sup>

As the desire to attract pilgrims to the shrines became greater from the twelfth century onwards, what becomes clear is the Church's use of the *miracula* as a tool with which to do this. There is, however, a wide range of opinion on how much the miracle stories were a purely mercenary attempt to generate interest in their shrine, and how much was based on genuine belief. Jonathan Sumption, writing in the mid-1970s, is unequivocal, saying that 'most collections of miracles were pure propaganda'.<sup>206</sup> Whilst neither the *vitae* nor the *miracula* can be viewed as impartial accounts, the reality is far more complex. The medieval visitor to a shrine was for the most part there to plead for the fulfilment of a specific request, and was motivated by, as Finucane puts it, 'an uncritical

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<sup>201</sup> W. J. Purkis, 'Miracles as Propaganda', in L. J. Taylor, L. A. Craig, J. B. Friedman, K. Gower, T. Izbicki and R. Tekippe, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Pilgrimage* (Leiden, Netherlands, 2009), p. 432.

<sup>202</sup> Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p. 152. Finucane uses the word 'family' in a wider sense, to incorporate retainers, servants and other members of the household.

<sup>203</sup> For the detail of Middle Age religious communication, see Menache, *The Vox Dei*, especially chapters 1 and 2, where she discusses word of mouth.

<sup>204</sup> Finucane specifically uses the word 'hear' in this context, and describes the dissemination of the miracle stories. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, pp. 49 & 154.

<sup>205</sup> Abou-El-Haj, *The Medieval Cult of Saints*, p.10; Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*, pp. 2 & 13.

<sup>206</sup> Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, p. 152.

acceptance of wonders and miracles stemming partially from ignorance of the natural world and partially from an overwhelming need, created by the conditions of medieval life, to believe in miracles'.<sup>207</sup> Both the pilgrims and the clergy at the shrine-site truly believed that the miracles occurred, and consequently, the benefits flowed in two directions; the church gained visitors and the pilgrims received intercession from the saint on their behalf. John Arnold is also a proponent of this symbiotic relationship between saint and penitent, and talks of the saint acting as an intermediary between the petitioner and God, with their principal role that of protector from evil spirits, and curer of ills.<sup>208</sup>

The miracle stories themselves were also used specifically to counter competition between shrines. Diana Webb refers to this, giving examples of miracles being attributed to one saint after a rival saint had failed to perform them.<sup>209</sup> There are two specific instances of this type of miracle that relate to St Wulfstan dating from the twelfth century. In the first, a girl from Gloucester was instructed by the Virgin Mary in a dream to visit Wulfstan's tomb in Worcester to have her sight restored. Her parents were however insistent that she go to St. Peter's tomb in Gloucester, asking why it was that Peter's power was seen to be less than Wulfstan's. In the end, the girl visited Worcester and was cured.<sup>210</sup> The second example involves three seafarers on the voyage to Ireland. Caught in a storm, each called for intercession from the saint of their choice, with one invoking Thomas Becket, one St. Nicholas and the other Wulfstan. In the end, it was Wulfstan who was apparently responsible for delivering the sailors safely to their destination, as he was seen to have more influence in relation to Ireland.<sup>211</sup> These miracles were used not only to demonstrate Wulfstan's greater healing power, but the reference to Thomas Becket shows that the authors were also well aware of the influence that Canterbury's saint could bring to bear in the time leading up to Wulfstan's canonisation in 1203.

Also important to the impact made by a miracle collection was its style of language and the setting in which it took place. In his descriptions of some of the miracles witnessed at Rocamadour, Bull highlights the use of language to achieve the effect that the writer was looking for.<sup>212</sup> For instance, in the story of a boy who is born blind to a couple who had already been on pilgrimage to

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<sup>207</sup> Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p. 55.

<sup>208</sup> J. H. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (London, 2005), pp. 69-70.

<sup>209</sup> She describes the competition between Worcester and the nearby centres of Gloucester and Hereford. Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, p. 82.

<sup>210</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 154-157. Wulfstan spoke out against the slave trade between England and Ireland while he was bishop of York and Worcester, and one of the bishops involved in the collating of evidence for Wulfstan's canonisation was the bishop of Dublin.

<sup>212</sup> Bull, *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*, pp. 16-17. Bull also describes how the evidence of the miraculous 'is embedded in the whole narrative, shaping the story's structure, plot development, description and characterisation, language and imagery', *ibid.* p. 15.



Rocamadour, the description of the boy's affliction is stark and not medically detailed in any other way – he is, simply, 'blind'. This style of writing miracle stories has also been highlighted by Benedicta Ward, which she describes as 'legalistic'.<sup>213</sup> The description of the cure itself, however, focuses much more on the effect it has on the boy's family and the community, highlighting the resulting stronger bond between the parents, the local villagers, and the Virgin Mary herself, thus portraying her in the widest beneficial light.<sup>214</sup>

### **The Accounts of Oswald's Miracles**

Some of the miracle stories relating to Oswald distinguish between their participants and the wondrous events that take place, with the curative powers of the saint lauded in very descriptive language. For example, Eadmer of Canterbury describes how a penitent wrapped in chains 'was trudging from place to place' seeking release from the 'stench of the rotting flesh' where the irons had eaten into his wrists, thus making it difficult for him to live with himself. This description gives us a graphically pitiful image of someone who is virtually ready to give up on life because of his plight. However, in contrast, when he approaches the tomb of St Oswald in Worcester, which was 'beautifully and fittingly adorned', he prays and tears run down his face, at which point the chains spring apart, and wholesome skin appears in place of the wounds. Eadmer says how the commendation of Oswald was then 'upon everyone's lips ... with praiseworthy love, by the merits of blessed Oswald'.<sup>215</sup> This was one of the earlier miracle stories, recorded in Byrhtferth's *miracula* (i.e. c. 992) and subsequently reproduced by Eadmer. Byrhtferth was writing very much from the standpoint of Benedictine monasticism, portraying Oswald as an icon of the benefits of a spiritual way of life – Michael Lapidge talks of his 'vivid narrative'.<sup>216</sup> Consequently, the distinction he makes between the description of the man's situation prior to his healing and that of the miracle itself could not be starker.

It is unfortunately not possible to deduce the number of miracles that were reported to have been performed at or near to Oswald's tomb, as Eadmer does not list all of them individually, saying instead that 'no mortal man is endowed with the full knowledge of the range of his miracles and of

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<sup>213</sup> Benedicta Ward describes the new form of miracle collections as being written in the style of a legal brief, B. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000 - 1215* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1987), pp. 166-167.

<sup>214</sup> The miracle itself is narrated in E. Albe, ed., *Les Miracles De Notre-Dame De Rocamadour Au Xiie Siècle* (Toulouse, 1996), book I, p. 23.

<sup>215</sup> Turner and Muir, eds., *Eadmer of Canterbury*, p. 297.

<sup>216</sup> Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and Oswald', p. 72.

how many there were'.<sup>217</sup> Despite these miracles being too numerous for him to count, Eadmer does however state that 'sight was restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the ability to walk to the lame, and health, customary vigour, and proper use of limbs to each and every invalid', identifying them as cures, and thus conforming to the pattern that Finucane has identified where over ninety per cent of the miracles that he analysed were healing miracles.<sup>218</sup>

However, there are sixteen miracles that are specifically described in Oswald's *miracula*, singling them out for specific attention. In summary, eleven of the sixteen, or seventy per cent, are curative, with the remainder comprising either visions or property saved from burning and in one case, preventing plague from entering a village. Only one was performed outside Worcester (actually at Ramsey), with a further three taking place in Worcester, but not at the tomb. Six of them were recorded by Eadmer but not by Byrhtferth, inferring that they happened later than Byrhtferth's writing, and of these four can be linked to recorded events of plague or fire (in 1111 and 1113 respectively).

There are only two miracles where the recipient is actually named, and both of the beneficiaries are monks. The Ramsey brother Eadwacer is afflicted with an ulcerous growth on his jaw, and his plight is described in detail by Eadmer. Eadmer concentrates on the grief and compassion that his fellow monks feel for Eadwacer, whilst also talking of how humble and hard-working the monk is, before then describing the cure in a great deal of detail.<sup>219</sup> The other named monk, Eadwulf, is also seen to be well-respected in the monastery, being 'most effective in his religious acts', and he was in charge of the pastoral care of the other monks. He was privileged to be told in a vision that Oswald's remains should be translated to a more worthy burial place, and the resulting ceremony is described in the glorifying language that would be expected for a translation of relics.<sup>220</sup> Two other miracles involving monks (albeit unnamed ones) are described in far more detail than is afforded to the majority of other miracle stories.<sup>221</sup>

The translation of Oswald's relics is the catalyst for a number of curative miracles, none of which have named recipients, but all of which take place directly in the vicinity of the shrine.<sup>222</sup> Also, there are details of two specific, non-healing miracles that tell of houses being saved from destruction by

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<sup>217</sup> 'Quorum modus uel numerus quantus sit, sub nullius mortalis hominis', Turner and Muir, eds., *Eadmer of Canterbury*, p. 307.

<sup>218</sup> 'Nam caecis uisus, surdis auditus, claudis incessus, et quibusque debilibus sua integritas, uigor solitus, proprius usus restitutus est', *ibid.* p. 305. For Ronald Finucane's analysis of European and English miracle stories, see Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p. 75.

<sup>219</sup> Turner and Muir, eds., *Eadmer of Canterbury*, pp. 309-313.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 299-303.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 293-295 & 319-321.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* p. 305.

fire, as a result of the movement of Oswald's relics towards the flames.<sup>223</sup> These miracles can be linked to the movement of Oswald's relics, whether as a result of the translation to a new shrine, or to intervene on the city's behalf in a time of crisis. This situation is reflected in Eadmer's narrative: the emphasis on the miracles that happened at the tomb and at the time of the translation; the detailed descriptions of the miracles pertaining to the Worcester monks (the very same monks who were petitioning for Oswald to be canonised); and the interventions on behalf of the Worcester residents. These are all local events, written for a local influential audience, and portray a concerted effort on the part of the Worcester monks to legitimise their bishop, and thus move towards confirming Oswald's sainthood status with specific emphasis on the Worcester locality.

### **The Accounts of Wulfstan's Miracles**

Whereas the vast majority of Oswald's curative miracles are not individually reported within Eadmer's text, William of Malmesbury identifies more than one hundred specific instances of Wulfstan's miracles, and these have been categorised by Finucane.<sup>224</sup> They cover a whole range of ailments from blindness, headaches and epilepsy, through to deafness, sciatica and paralysis. There are very few that are not curative, and virtually all of them date from the late twelfth century, coinciding with the rise in popularity of Becket's cult from 1170 onwards and the petition to Pope Innocent III in 1202. It is also not surprising that geographically, the pilgrims mostly came from areas in Wulfstan's heartland of the south-west and the Midlands, with a few exceptions originating from London, Essex and Hertfordshire.<sup>225</sup>

Significantly, there are also examples in the text where it is recorded that there were witnesses present who were able to attest to the miracles happening as stated. For instance, in one case – that of a boy from Petton in Shropshire who after drowning was brought back to life through the invocation of Wulfstan's spirit – the local villagers were subsequently summoned to Worcester to give evidence, and the parents had to swear on Wulfstan's tomb that what they had recounted was true.<sup>226</sup> Another example where the miracle story was validated is that of a man named Thomas, who lost his eyes and testicles in a battle but was subsequently healed by Wulfstan. Benedict, bishop of Rochester was in Worcester at the time and verified that the healing had happened (although he made his monk-chaplain confirm that Thomas's testicles were present first!), and then

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid. pp. 315-319.

<sup>224</sup> Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, pp. 130-141

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. p. 169; Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, p. 59.

<sup>226</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, p. 161.

rode away satisfied.<sup>227</sup> As witnesses were present to testify that these miracles took place, they could be used as evidence to strengthen the case for Wulfstan's sainthood. A papal delegation was sent to Worcester in 1202 to validate Bishop Mauger's request for Wulfstan to be sanctified, and a key element of their investigations was the interviewing of witnesses to the miracles to prove their efficacy. This is a key distinction between the miracles of Oswald and Wulfstan, and highlights the change in the process that the clergy had to go through in order to gain sainthood for their respective bishops. While Oswald's followers had to convince the local laity and priesthood of his suitability, a much more stringent test had to be passed before Rome would endorse Wulfstan's request nearly two centuries later.

Another difference in the two saints' *miracula* is that of the recording of revenge miracles. These are not evident in Oswald's case, but there are examples in William of Malmesbury's text of Wulfstan's miracles. In the most important of these, dating from 1198, it was reported that Bishop John of Worcester secretly opened Wulfstan's tomb to see whether the remains were intact, which they were. Ordinarily, the tomb could not be opened unless papal consent had been received. John had given a cleric permission to watch the tomb being opened, and on the following night a vision of Bishop Oswald appeared to John and berated him for not waiting until the morning, when he would have found oil and water in the tomb, signifying the Holy Spirit and the curing of the sick. William's *vita* records that Bishop John died shortly afterwards, apparently in revenge for the wrongful meddling with the tomb.<sup>228</sup> When he was alive, Wulfstan was a keen promoter of the cult of Oswald in Worcester, and so the intercession of Oswald here is highly significant, especially as he states that holy oil and water would have been found had the tomb been opened legitimately. The presence of the Holy Spirit and the healing water are clear signs of Wulfstan's posthumous power which was further directly endorsed by his predecessor Oswald, while linking John's death to the tomb opening is also an indication of Wulfstan's importance and influence. Soon after this, in 1202, John's successor Bishop Mauger was the victim of a serious fire that destroyed much of the cathedral in Worcester, and these three events were taken together as a definitive sign that a petition should be sent to the pope, initiating Wulfstan's canonisation process.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid. p. 174.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid. p. 183

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. p. 185.

## A Comparison of the *Miracula*

There are both similarities and differences between the miracle stories of Oswald and Wulfstan. The prevalence of curative miracles is common across both, and this is no surprise, as they were easily recorded at the tomb, very effective in highlighting the healing power of the saint, and the transformation of the victim from illness to health was clearly evident. This meant that word of these miracles could spread quickly and their effects were able to be understood by the largely illiterate population, which would have the effect of drawing more pilgrims to the shrines, especially those with ailments similar to the ones that had been miraculously cured. As word of mouth was the principal method by which miracle stories were passed on, it stands to reason that the greatest number of pilgrims would travel from nearby, and this bears out the relatively local influence of both of the saints. The clergy themselves did try to publicise their shrines through the collation and reproduction of *vitae* and *miracula*, but the evidence from the surviving manuscripts suggests that only those locations where they already had strongholds were the recipients of those manuscripts, and so this would not have necessarily widened their influence.<sup>230</sup>

On the other hand, the marked differences in the composition, style and subjects of the miracle stories of Oswald and Wulfstan are a reflection on the very different paths to sainthood that they followed. While Eadmer does not feel it necessary to recount every single instance of a cure performed by Oswald, choosing instead to concentrate on certain miracles that have a specifically local influence – for instance those involving the Worcester monks themselves – William’s account of Wulfstan’s miracles emphasises the requirement for external ratification of the evidence of them. His text highlights stories that can be seen as a means to a specific end, with, most evident of all, the later addition of the two vengeful miracles which lead directly to the application to Innocent III for Wulfstan’s canonisation.

Both Eadmer’s and William’s works were commissioned by the Worcester clergy, and both draw upon earlier texts – Eadmer’s is a direct descendant of Byrhtferth’s manuscript, while William draws heavily on Coleman’s English text – and they are both written with the route to sainthood in mind, although the degree of papal control that exists at the beginning of the thirteenth century when Wulfstan’s case is being considered is a far cry from when Oswald is canonised, and their miracle stories are a clear reflection of this.

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<sup>230</sup> This conclusion is based on surviving manuscripts, but may not be true of any that were produced but have not survived, and whose locations are consequently unknown.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **A Summary of the Influence of Oswald and Wulfstan**

This study has used several sources to build up a picture of the influence and geographical spread of the cults of Saints Oswald and Wulfstan. What has become apparent is that they were both influential figures and that their legacy continued for many years after their deaths, although this was limited to the areas where they were most active during their lives. Within this overarching similarity between them, however, there are distinct differences in the way that their cults were established and maintained, and these differences become evident once the sources are examined in greater detail.

During his life, Oswald used his political strength and religious and family connections to establish foundations of monks in several different locations, of which the key one outside Worcester was Ramsey Abbey. This connection with East Anglia can be seen throughout most of the evidential sources analysed in this study, and importantly shows a continuation of this link right up until the monasteries were dissolved at the time of the Reformation. Charters show that, once Ramsey was founded, he used a system of bequests to various family members in East Anglia in the latter part of the tenth century to strengthen his influence there, and this meant that his family were able to keep direct control of the abbey until at least the Norman Conquest. Byrhtferth's *vita* describes how, using the power he gained from being appointed archbishop of York, he was responsible for the movement of important relics from Ripon to Peterborough, further reinforcing his ties with that area of the country.

After his death in 992, miracles are recorded both in Worcester and Ramsey, the first hagiography was written by Byrhtferth, a Ramsey monk, and copies were placed in Ramsey and Cambridge. All of these events are linked by the desire to canonise Oswald as soon as possible. Since canonisation at this time was much less rigorously controlled than it was a century later, the focus of evidence for Oswald's sainthood is very much towards the local clergy and church leaders who made the final decision. Uniquely, Ramsey and Worcester bishops are mentioned by name in miracle stories, while relic donations are made to Evesham and Shrewsbury – both influential local foundations. Highly significantly, a donation of an arm-relic is made to Peterborough cathedral. While the date of this donation is unknown, it would become a draw for pilgrims to the area, thus maintaining Oswald's presence in East Anglia, and maybe also promoting the Worcester shrine centre there. There is also evidence of links to Westbury-on-Trym near Bristol, although to a far lesser extent than that of

Ramsey. Oswald founded the priory there, and a church dedicated to him still exists. These clusters are evident when all of the elements are mapped together, as in figure 10, below.

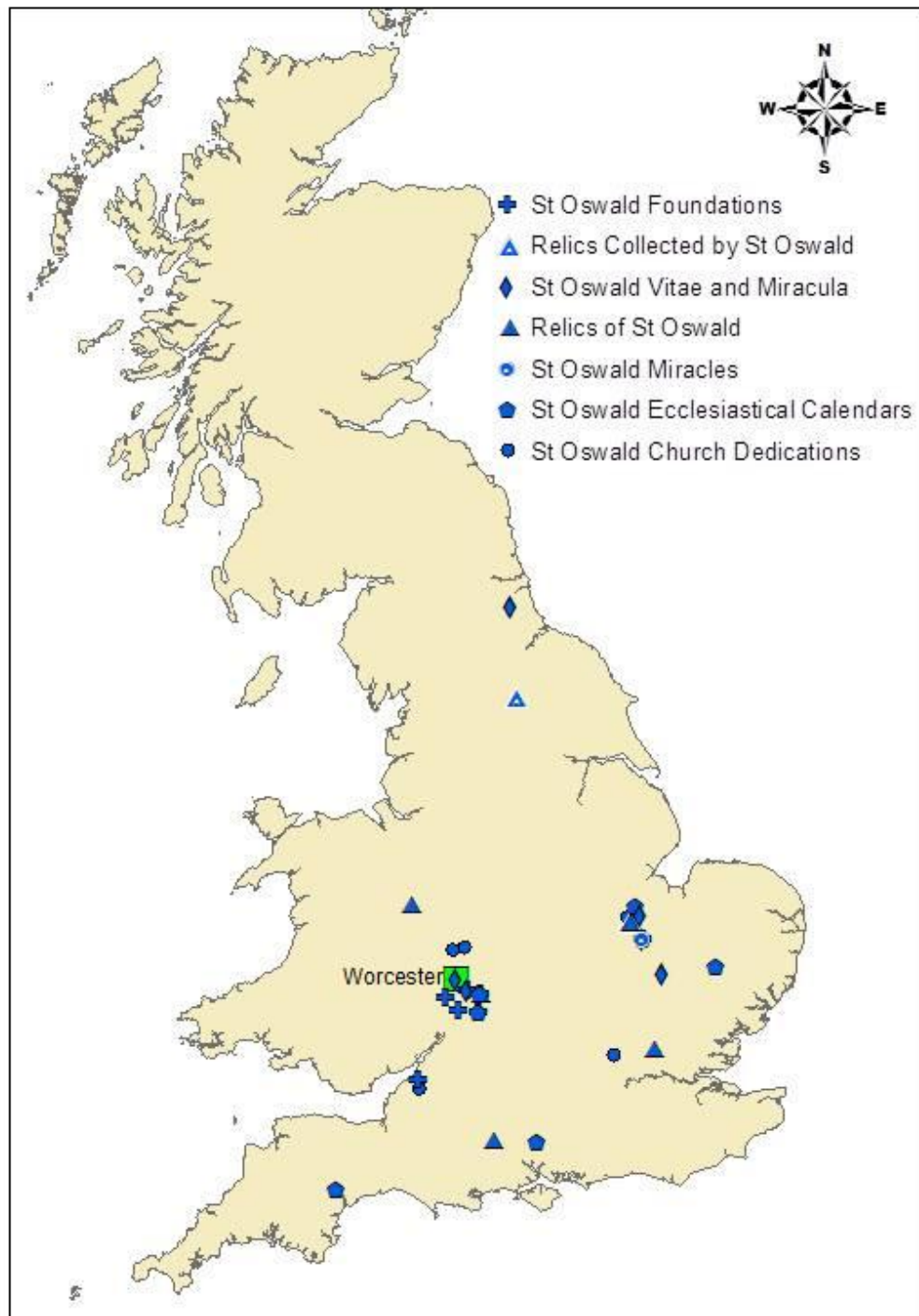


Fig. 10. St. Oswald – a geographical representation of the evidence of his influence.

Wulfstan's success is also highly localised to the Worcester area, and the church dedications are evidence of this. During his lifetime, although like Oswald he was archbishop of York at the same time as presiding over the bishopric at Worcester, the political landscape of England was considerably more turbulent than it had been when Oswald was bishop, with the result that Wulfstan's power outside of Worcester was never able to grow. The transition from Anglo-Saxon to Norman rule, and the ongoing struggle between the sees of York and Canterbury, meant that Wulfstan was never able to gain a strong foothold outside the Worcester area.

Subsequent to his death, however, there was a relatively long wait before Wulfstan's supporters' request for his canonisation was put forward, and by this time Rome had to sanction any proposals. Consequently the focus of activity after death was more wide-ranging than that of Oswald. The first *vita*, that of the Worcester monk Coleman, was written in English and was probably a retaliatory action against the incumbent bishop rather than an attempt to promote Wulfstan's shrine. However, the later translation into Latin, along with the records of the miracle stories relating to Wulfstan, were used as evidence to put before Pope Innocent III for his canonisation which was granted in 1202, a century after his death. The geographical spread of miracle stories and the donation of relics of Wulfstan to Salisbury, Canterbury and St Albans highlight the greater external focus that was needed to provide enough supporting evidence for the canonisation proceedings.

The only other location where Wulfstan's legacy was sustained was in Ireland. He was a critic of the slave trade from Ireland,<sup>231</sup> and consequently was well thought of there while bishop at Worcester. Over a century later, the archbishop of Dublin was asked to sit on the canonisation panel appointed by the Pope to validate the miracle stories attributed to Wulfstan, one of which involved a sea crossing from England to Ireland where the sailors were saved after making reparations to him. Finally, there is also evidence of pilgrimage from Ireland to Worcester, as the only pilgrim badge identifiable as dedicated to him was found in Dublin and has been dated to the thirteenth century, thus proving that the links to Ireland lasted for at least two hundred years. It is highly likely that these badges were produced in numbers, although with no evidence of any others being found, it is impossible to draw any conclusions as to their distribution.

Figure 11 shows that the spread of evidence relating to Wulfstan and his cult is more dispersed and sporadic outside of the Worcester area than that of Oswald, although there are miracles recorded in counties to the south west, as well as a handful in the London area. The south west connection is

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<sup>231</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, p. 43. Emma Mason talks of how Wulfstan visited Bristol (from where slaves were despatched to Ireland) to preach to the local traders; Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester*, p. 184.



reinforced by the continuation of Oswald's foundation at Westbury-on-Trym, as well as a mention in an ecclesiastical calendar at Exeter, but it is the Worcestershire area around which his sphere of influence was concentrated.

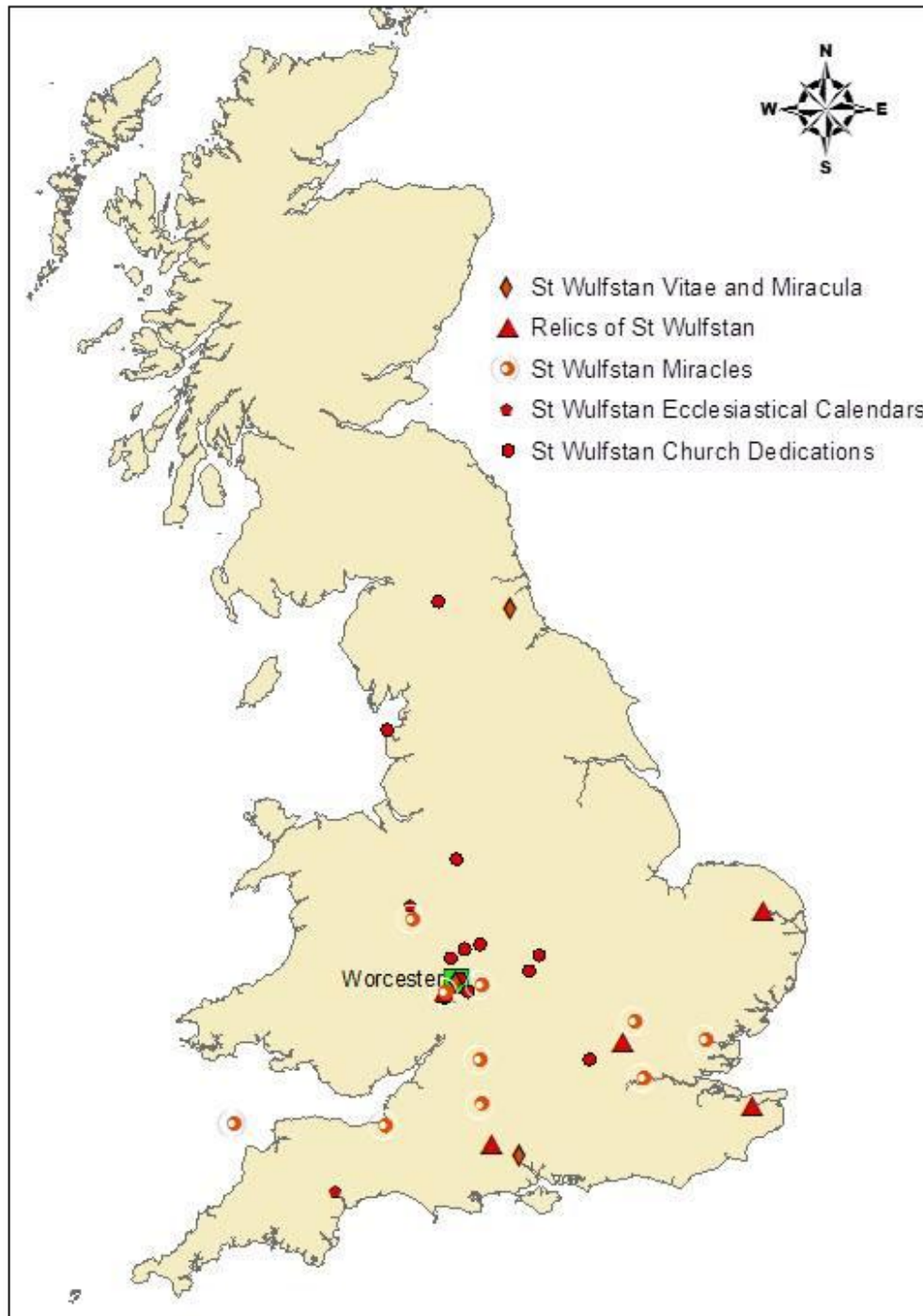


Fig. 11. St. Wulfstan – a geographical representation of the evidence of his influence.

## The Study's Approach

In the introduction, several questions were phrased regarding the multidisciplinary approach that has been used in this study, and these have been answered, either fully or partially, by the evidence that has been collated. Despite there only being one pilgrim badge find, the archaeological data has provided evidence of Wulfstan's links with Ireland, and, in combination with the miracle stories and the hagiographical manuscripts, has allowed its longevity to be demonstrated. Church dedications, although again quite sparse in number, have reinforced the local nature of Oswald's and Wulfstan's cults, correlating as they do with their foundations established in the Worcester area, and, in Oswald's case, in East Anglia.

The documentary evidence has also given an insight into the complexity of the relationships between neighbouring shrines, with Worcester shown to have benefited financially through its proximity to Hereford, while also highlighting the competition that existed, as portrayed in the miracle story of the girl who was unable to be cured at Gloucester but whose sight was successfully restored at Worcester. Also, the *vita* and *miracula* have proved to be excellent sources of evidence of the attempts to promote the saint's influence, both in terms of a geographic and demographic analysis of the miracle stories, and the numbers, locations and provenance of the versions of the documents themselves. Unfortunately the financial records for Worcester are not complete or detailed enough for any conclusions to be drawn as to the impact of the shrines on the cathedral's finances, but where these do exist in other locations, they will be very useful evidence in building the overall picture of the impact pilgrimage has on a shrine centre.

Other shrine centres will have differing amounts and types of evidence available with which to analyse their influence. For instance, the survival of greater numbers of pilgrim badges would mean more detailed geographic analysis of their find-spots could be undertaken. Evidence such as stained glass windows, church furniture such as rood screens and wall paintings that were identifiable with specific saints would augment the use of church dedications, and a more detailed investigation into the churches themselves (e.g. to understand the date of the dedication, and whether it had changed) would allow greater weight to be applied to this type of information. Also, other structures (such as inns, hospitals or wells) can be dedicated to saints, and may therefore have links with the shrines themselves. All of these types of evidence can be used within the multidisciplinary approach developed in the study to assess a saint's sphere of influence both before and after death, and can therefore be applied to other shrine centres as an avenue for further investigation.

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