

The Saints of Bedfordshire

Diuma, Cedd, Betti and Adda

St Mary the Virgin Parish Church, Maulden

Maulden is a small Bedfordshire village located about 1.5 miles east of Ampthill and about 8 miles south of Bedford. In the Domesday Book, it is referred to as "Meldone". The meaning of the name is unclear, but may be "high down", "cross on the hill" or "place of meeting"

The latter two are of particular interest in the search for Christian saints who have connection with Bedfordshire.

In the churchyard of the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, there is the base and part of the upright of an ancient cross. There is no clear evidence that may indicate the origin of this cross, but there is a theory that fits the facts.



The church is on a hill north of the village. Below the hill there are springs in an area called Church Meadow. This resembles what is known of old pagan Saxon High Places: they were to the north of the nearest settlement and always had water nearby. It is known that these High Places were used for preaching by early Christian missionaries. St. Aidan, the Bishop of Lindisfarne, when he established his monastery on Holy Island in Northumbria, and his successor St Finan, sent out groups of monks to bring Christ to the Anglo-Saxons. This happened in the middle of the 7th century. Two of his most famous monks were brothers, one called Chad, who was sent to Lichfield, and the other was called Cedd, and his area of responsibility was originally the southern part of the Saxon Kingdom of Mercia, which is sometimes referred to as Middle Anglia. Middle

Anglia stretched up across Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and as far north as Peterborough.

Most likely where the monks were successful in making converts, crosses would be erected as a centre for worship. These crosses were probably in the form of what we now call a Celtic cross, with stepped bases. Very often churches were eventually built where these crosses stood. Some have considered the possibility that an early wooden church existed on this site in Maulden before the first known brick and stone building was built in the 13th century. Unfortunately. At the time of writing, no evidence has been discovered to confirm or deny this..

However, if this is the case, then we are in a position to know the names of the monks who established the cross and preached in Maulden.

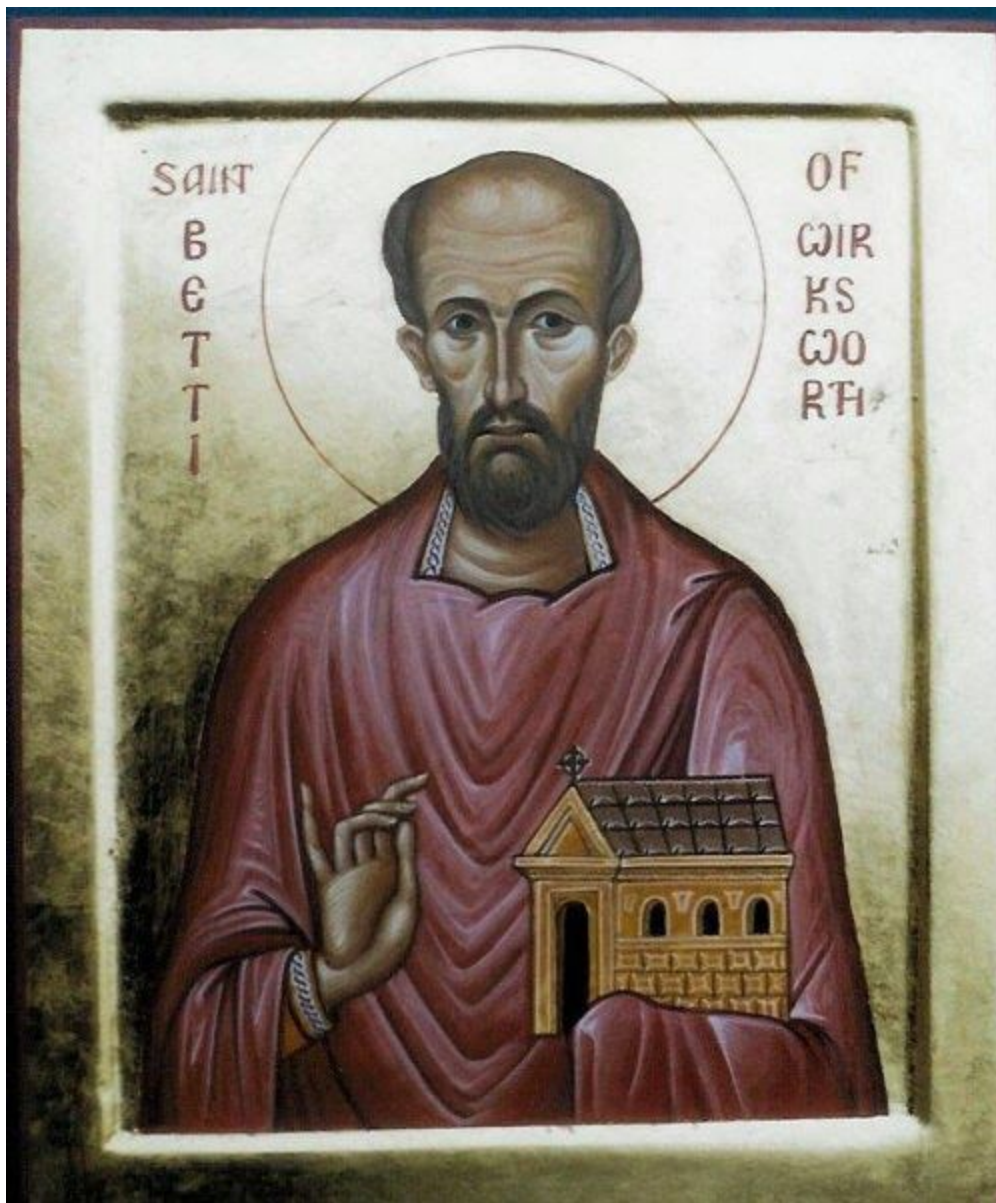
Bede, in his History of the English Church and People talks about a king of Mercia called Penda. Penda was pagan, but he did not forbid the preaching of the cross. Indeed he expected people who called themselves Christians to act in a manner worthy of Christ.

Penda's son, Paeda, who was sub-king of Middle Anglia, had become a Christian, even before the death of his father in AD653. All of Paeda's closest companions and their households were baptised and Paeda encouraged monks from Lindisfarne to come to Mercia, to his sub-kingdom of Middle Anglia, to teach people about Jesus Christ. In the years before the death of Penda, they were particularly successful. It was only after Penda's death that the faith spread out into the rest of the kingdom.

Bede tells us the names of the monks that were sent from Lindisfarne: three Englishmen: Cedd, Adda and Betti and an Irish monk called Diuma. Of the four, Diuma was made bishop of Mercia and it is thought his diocese stretched through Middle Anglia to the English Midlands and into Lindsay, part of modern day Lincolnshire, Most Celtic bishops had no permanent home but wandered around, using monasteries that they had founded to stay in, but it seems that Diuma used Repton as a base. St Diuma is buried in Charlbury in Oxfordshire.

Cedd did not stay in Middle Anglia long. King Sigeberht II of Essex had been baptised by Finan the successor of Aidan in Northumbria and was anxious for monks to come to Essex and teach his people about the Christian Faith. Oswiu, king of Northumbria, Paeda's overlord, dispatched Cedd to Essex, the Saxon kingdom that is linked with his name.

Of the other two, St Betti also became Bishop of Mercia and is buried in Wirksworth in Derbyshire. Sadly we know nothing else about St Adda.



Through the Holy Prayers of Sts Diama, Cedd, Betti and Adda, may God give an increase in the knowledge of Christ and add to Christ's Church such as should be saved in the county of Bedfordshire.

Bibliography

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