

SHORT NOTE

WAS ST. TUDA BURIED AT WHALLEY?

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An authority on the lives and last resting places of Anglo-Saxon saints has recently revived the claim that St. Tuda, an obscure seventh-century bishop of Northumbria mentioned by Bede, was buried at Whalley in Lancashire.¹ Although the proposition was discussed and found doubtful by Charles Plummer in the 1890s,² it merits a careful re-examination. If true, it would be a significant increase in our knowledge of one of the darkest corners of Anglo-Saxon England.

Whalley's importance as an early Christian centre is attested by the presence in the churchyard of a group of Viking-Age stone crosses,³ by the size of the church's endowment,⁴ and by the enormous extent of its later parish.⁵ Whalley was an ancient minster,⁶ one of the first centres of Christian activity in the area and a powerful religious corporation both before and after the Norman Conquest. The attraction of a place of established sanctity and wealth was among the reasons why the Cistercian monks of Stanlow (Cheshire) settled there in 1296.⁷ In the fourteenth century the monks made extravagant claims about the early history of Whalley, notably that the church was founded and the crosses put up in the time of St. Augustine of Canterbury, the first Roman missionary to the Anglo-Saxons in the late sixth and early seventh century.⁸ Whether tradition or invention, the story cannot be believed, but there must be something to account for the early importance of Whalley, and the presence there of the body of a revered if short-lived bishop of the Northumbrians would explain much. Unfortunately, the idea that St. Tuda was buried at Whalley cannot be substantiated.

Several lists of saints' resting places were compiled in

Anglo-Saxon England. Only one recorded Tuda's place of burial, and that was a list which survives only in a much amended and late copy translated into the Anglo-Norman language.⁹ It gave the name of the place in question as *Pagle*, which has been explained as an error for *Wagele* through the misreading of the initial Anglo-Saxon rune wen (W) as P, a common and understandable mistake.¹⁰ The suggested emendation makes the Anglo-Norman list agree with the northern recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which said that Tuda was buried at *Wagele*.¹¹ It is *Wagele* that has been taken as Whalley, but the etymology is impossible. The two earliest certain spellings of Whalley, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under the year 798 (*Hweallaege*)¹² and in Domesday Book of 1086 (*Wallei*),¹³ are such that *Wagele* cannot be a form of the same name.¹⁴

Where, then, did the body of St. Tuda lie? Both the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Anglo-Norman list of saints derived their knowledge of St. Tuda from Bede. According to Bede, the bishop died in the plague of 664 and was buried in the monastery (or minster) of *Paegnalaech*,¹⁵ a place which has eluded identification.¹⁶ All the other medieval authors who noticed Tuda's death took their information directly or indirectly from Bede. A corrupt reading in a Bede manuscript or group of manuscripts must have been responsible for the distortion of *Paegnalaech* into *Pagle* and so into *Wagele* and other forms.¹⁷ The nearest approach to Bede's spelling of any later author was made by the twelfth-century Henry of Huntingdon, who probably originally wrote Tuda's burial place as *Peinalec*,¹⁸ approximately how a French-speaker would say *Paegnalaech*.

The variation in the place name as it was copied by twelfth-century writers suggests that by then all recollection of the location of *Paegnalaech* had been lost. Despite the revival of scholarly and monastic interest in Bede's writings at that time,¹⁹ no one was able to place the monastic house where Bishop Tuda had been buried. Presumably it was in Northumbria, destroyed during the Viking period, and either never rebuilt or refounded under a different name.

In the absence of St. Tuda's body, it is difficult to explain why Whalley was a significant place at an early period, or even to fix the date by which it had an important church. By 1066 the church had a large endowment, namely the two carucates of land comprising the township of Whalley.²⁰ By the tenth or eleventh century the community or local lords were wealthy enough to pay for elaborate stone sculpture.

By 798 there was something about the locality which led warring Northumbrian factions to fight a battle there. Earlier than that, in the present state of knowledge, it is not possible to venture.

NOTES

- 1 D.W. Rollason, 'The shrines of saints in later Anglo-Saxon England: distribution and significance', *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on History, Architecture, and Archaeology in Honour of Dr. H.M. Taylor*, ed. L.A.S. Butler and R.K. Morris (Council for British Archaeology Research Report 60, 1986), pp. 32-43 at 40. To be fair, Rollason said only 'at a place probably to be identified with Whalley', though he mapped it as such without qualification on p. 39.
- 2 *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. Charles Plummer (2 vols, Oxford, 1896), II, pp. 195-6; reinforced by James Tait in *The Victoria History of the County of Lancaster*, ed. William Farrer and J. Brownbill (8 vols, London, 1906-14), II, p. 4.
- 3 W.G. Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age* (1927), pp. 107-8, 158; Richard Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture* (1980), pp. 49, 158-9, 187.
- 4 *Domesday Book, seu Liber Censualis Wilhelmi Primi Regis Angliae*, ed. Abraham Farley (2 vols, 1783), I, f. 270, col. 1, line 3.
- 5 *V.C.H. Lancs.* VI, p. 349.
- 6 John Blair, 'Secular minster churches in Domesday Book', *Domesday Book: A Reassessment*, ed. Peter Sawyer (1985), pp. 104-42 at 106, established a set of criteria for minster status which should include Whalley, though he did not map it on p. 111.
- 7 *V.C.H. Lancs.* II, pp. 131-9.
- 8 William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (new edn by John Caley and others, 6 vols, 1817-30), V, pp. 642-4, for the text called 'De statu de Blagborneshire'.
- 9 Printed in *Lestorie des Engles solum la Translacion Maistre Geffrei Gaimar*, ed. Thomas Duffus Hardy and Charles Trice Martin (Rolls Ser. 91, 2 vols, 1888-9), I, pp. xxxix-xlii; for comments on the character of the list, see D.W. Rollason, 'Lists of saints' resting-places in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, VII (1978), pp. 61-93 at 69-70.
- 10 Alexander Bell, 'The Anglo-French "De Sanctis"', *Notes and Queries*, 12th ser., V (1919), pp. 281-3.
- 11 *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. Charles Plummer (2 vols, Oxford, 1892-9), I, p. 35 (text); *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock and others (1961), p. 21 (translation).
- 12 *Two Saxon Chronicles*, ed. Plummer, I, p. 57 (text); *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. Whitelock, p. 38 (translation).
- 13 *Domesday Book*, ed. Farley, I, f. 270, col. 1, line 3.
- 14 Eilert Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1922), p. 76.
- 15 *Baedae Opera*, ed. Plummer, I, p. 192.
- 16 Barrie Cox, 'The place-names of the earliest English records', *English Place-Name Society Journal*, VIII (1975-6), pp. 12-66 at 25; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), pp. 312-13, n.1.

- 17 Geoffrey Gaimar gave it as *Paggle: Lestorie des Engles*, ed. Hardy and Martin, I, p. 56.
- 18 The only printed version at present available, Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum* (Rolls Ser. 74, 1879), p. 100, was edited from a corrupt manuscript; a better version is British Library, Egerton MS. 3668, but all known manuscripts appear to have variants of *Weinalet*, which has initial W for P and final t for c, common scribal errors. I am grateful to Dr. Diana Greenway for advice on the manuscripts of Henry of Huntingdon.
- 19 R.H.C. Davis, 'Bede after Bede', *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill, Christopher J. Holdsworth, and Janet L. Nelson (Woodbridge, 1989), 103-16.
- 20 *V.C.H. Lancs.* VI, p. 355.