

CHURCH NOTICES

Sunday 24th May – **7th Sunday of Easter**

Bible Study

Next week our Bible Study will be led by the Bishop of Lichfield, The Rt Rev Michael Ipgrave. This will take place on **Thursday 28th May at 11.00am**. The Bishop will lead us in looking at the Pentecost reading from Acts 2.1-21.

We will be using "Zoom". This is quite simple to use, and doesn't require you to download any software. All you need is a laptop or other device that has a camera.

If you took part in last week's Bible Study you will automatically receive a code to join the discussion. If you would like to take part starting this week please email Chris Baker on c.j.baker@bham.ac.uk and he will send you a web link to join the study and some simple instructions. The text and questions to think about are on our website. <https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/easter-season.html>

Worship by Zoom

On **Pentecost Sunday**- 31st May - we will hold live worship via Zoom.

The service will start at 6.00pm and will last for about 30mins. There will be readings, prayers, a short address and hymns.

If you would like to join in please email Simon on simonbaker57@outlook.com and you will be sent a direct link. You do not need to have Zoom downloaded on your PC or other device.

STAYING IN TOUCH

The office Phone is not currently being regularly monitored. The ministry team and others are continuing a ministry by telephone to keep in touch.

Rector, Simon Baker (☎ 01543 253010)

VOLUNTEERING AND CHARITIES

LICHFIELD FOODBANK is continuing to function and is dealing with increased numbers of clients. Donations of items can still be made at the collection boxes in our local Co-op, Tesco and Waitrose supermarkets. The particular items needed are – **snacks (breakfast bars, crackers), custard and tinned meat**. If you can, please do support this appeal. Many thanks.
Trevor

You can access more information about the Foodbank on our website. There is information for those who would like to make a financial donation and a gift aid form.

GIVING TO CHARITIES

It is clear that many charities are suffering a significant loss of income due to the changes in our way of life at the moment. For many of them the demands on them will also increase. Please consider making a donation to a charity while you are confined to home so that others can benefit and our charities continue with their work.

GIVING

GIVING TO ST MICHAEL'S

Our accounts for last year show that we operated at a loss. In many ways that is due to the increase in utilities and costs as a result of the church being used as the main venue for all our activities. This is very worthwhile and just what we should be doing, however we do need to make an effort to put our finances back into balance.

We are grateful to everyone who gives to St Michael's church and helps us cover our costs. At the moment, we cannot supplement our donations by standing order with collections made in church. If you give through the envelope scheme please consider changing to a bank order, hold on to your envelopes or write out a cheque and put it in the church mailbox. In order to make one off or regular donations easier we now have a **JUST GIVING** page for St Michael's. please visit:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/stmichaellichfield>

ITEMS FROM OUR MAGAZINE

St Wistan

By Trevor James

Forty years ago David Rollason's meticulous research into the existence and life of St Wistan was published as a University of Leicester Vaughan Paper. [1] His search through various sources confirmed the existence of St Wistan and his commentary explained how this Anglo-Saxon prince had come to be identified as a saint. As Rollason pointed out Wistan's life was in the era before the official papal canonisation process was adopted in the late 12th Century. This meant that his status as saint was dependent on a form of public recognition: his personal integrity and reputation, together with the tendency of the Anglo-Saxon hierarchy to promote sainthood within the power politics of Anglo-Saxon England as a way of emphasising that the murder of kings was especially sinful, given that kings were divinely appointed. In this case Wistan should have been king but declined the status when his father King Wigmund died. Wistan was murdered in AD849 and his body was carried to the Mercian royal mausoleum at Repton. He died because he had tried to protect his mother from an unsuitable suitor, a sign of his inherent integrity and values.

Rollason's paper is entitled 'The Search for Saint Wigstan, Prince-Martyr of the Kingdom of Mercia', drawing his spelling from an early Anglo-Saxon reference which stated that 'St Wigstan rests at the monastery of Repton near the River Trent'. However in the Midlands this saint is conventionally known as Wistan or Wystan, as reflected in the four churches dedicated to his memory, and this spelling will be maintained for the rest of this note.

The four church dedications, in effect, occur in two pairs. Wistow in Leicestershire is the site of his murder – translated as 'holy place of Wistan', with the nearby town of Wigston Magna with a second dedication. Approximately thirty miles away the parish church at Repton, where he was buried in the crypt, is named in his honour, with a nearby church to the south at Bretby being the fourth dedication

Using the methodology originally offered by Bishop Kirk in 1946 [2], it does seem possible that these four dedications represent part of a pilgrimage route, in this case following the funeral route of the murdered prince in AD849. In a sense the dedications at the start and

finish are self-explanatory, the sites of his murder and burial, but, applying Kirk's methodology, the other two dedications may well have arisen because of the pilgrim traffic. Pilgrims naturally were likely to celebrate the memory of the saint whom they were memorialising and, whilst medieval churches tended to have multiple altars focussed on various saints, the emphasis on the focus of this particular pilgrimage may have led one altar to become predominant. Although there is no further substantial evidence between Wigston Magna and Bretby, this was basically open countryside, with Ashby-de-la-Zouch being the only substantial settlement that might be encountered.

The reason for exploring the likelihood of there having been a pilgrim route, with Repton as the local shrine, is because there is some evidence that there may have been a further pilgrimage route from the north. About fourteen miles north of Derby, approximately twenty miles from Repton, is the small village of Wessington. Using Ekwall [3] and Cameron [4], it becomes apparent that the earliest known spelling – at the Domesday – was 'Wistenstune', not what we might have anticipated, and this yields the meaning of 'Wistan's farm'. There was no church at Wessington until the 20th Century, so any reference to Wistan arises from a form of association from this location, in their minds it could arise from the progress of pilgrims towards Repton. The potency of this association is based on the fact that Wessington, in effect, stands astride Lindway Lane, an ancient upland route on a spur from the Peak District which makes its way towards the Trent floodplain south of Derby, in effect pointing to Repton. As a rule of thumb the distances between Wessington or Wistow and Repton are broadly similar, thereby re-enforcing the notion of similarity and comparison.

Having established the possibility that a second pilgrim route to Repton might readily be identified, the status of four further settlements in the West Midlands needs to be considered. Wistanstow and Wistanwick in Shropshire both yield clear references to Wistan, as do Wistaston in Cheshire and Wisteston in Herefordshire. The four settlements are in the western fringe of Mercia and substantially further away from Repton but the movement of pilgrims from these places is still a realistic prospect, given the feelings aroused by the nature of Wistan's death. One cannot rule out a possible alternative link with Evesham because under King Cnut in 1019 Wistan's relics were removed to Evesham Abbey, although the veneration of his memory still continued at Repton.

If his integrity was a matter of national interest, it is even possible that Wiston in Sussex – 'Wistantune' in the Domesday – could also be a further testimony to the inspiration which his life and death had stirred.

As with many pieces of saintly research, this exploration is not yet complete. Further evidence is bound to emerge.

[1] D.W.Rollason, The Search for St Wigstan: Prince-Martyr of the Kingdom of Mercia, Vaughan Paper No.27, University of Leicester, 1981, 19p.

ISSN 308-9258.

[2] K.E.Kirk, Church Dedications of the Diocese of Oxford, 1946.

[3] E.Ekwall, Concise Oxford Dictionary of Place Names, 1960

[4] K. Cameron, The Place Names of Derbyshire [Part 2], Cambridge University Press, 1959, p332-3