

St Kyneburga/Cyneburh

St Kyneburga, also known as Cyneburh in Old English. and Kyneswide (Cyneswitha) were sisters, they were daughters of Penda, the pagan king of Mercia. Penda was under political pressure from the king of Northumbria to become a Christian but resisted. However, his son Paeda, sub-king of the Middle Angles (an area which included Bedfordshire) did become a Christian and allowed the monks Diuma, Cedd, Betti and Adda from Lindisfarne to preach in his sub-kingdom and establish churches.. Kyneburga was Penda's eldest daughter, and although her father was not a Christian, she and all her siblings converted to Christ.

Bede wrote that Penda tolerated the preaching of Christianity in the whole of Mercia itself, despite his own beliefs:

"Nor did King Penda obstruct the preaching of the word among his people, the Mercians, if any were willing to hear it; but, on the contrary, he hated and despised those whom he perceived not to perform the works of faith, when they had once received the faith, saying, They were contemptible and wretched who did not obey their God, in whom they believed."

Clearly Penda, even if he never gave up his old religion, understood what it meant to be a Christian. No doubt his high regard for the new faith was instrumental in all his children accepting Christ as their Saviour.

Kyneburga married Alhfrith of Deira, co-regent of Northumbria-Deira was the southern province of that kingdom. Her husband was one of the delegates to the Synod of Whitby in 664. Kyneburga later founded a dual foundation abbey for both monks and nuns in Castor, near to Peterborough. She also became its first abbess and was later joined by Kyneswide and a cousin called Tibba. Kyneswide succeeded Kyneburga as abbess and she was later succeeded by Tibba. Kyneburga was buried in her church, but her remains and those of her sister, Kyneswide, were moved sometime before 972 to Peterborough Abbey, a church we now know as Peterborough Cathedral..

This move, no doubt, was because Kyneburga had been one of the signatories, together with her brother Wulfhere, of the founding charter of Burh Abbey, dated 664, (according to William Dugdale's *Monasticon*) Later on, Burh Abbey was dedicated to St Peter, and the settlement around it became known as "Peterborough". Kyneburga was much esteemed as a saint by the monks of Peterborough, and featured as one of the

saints remembered annually on 6 March in several ancient Peterborough-produced Kalendars,

She died on 15 September AD 680 and was buried at Castor where she soon became revered as a saint. In 963 her relics were moved to Peterborough, with those of her sister, Kyneswida, and their relative, Tibba. Later on her remains were transferred to Thorney Abbey.. Her feast day is celebrated on 6 March.

Kyneburga has a holy well dedicated to her called The Klumberwell in the village of Toddington, near to Chalgrave and Tebworth.