

3. Compare and contrast the Lives of any male and female saint associated with the Celtic regions. To what extent are these hagiographical texts similar in purpose and to what extent do they share similar motifs. Are any differences notable given the gender of these saints?

There are several ways to celebrate a saint and a variety of reasons for doing so, such as social and nationalistic ones as well as for religious purposes. Some saints are well known, such as Saint David (sixth century) and others less so, like Saint Gwenfrewy (Winefride, seventh century) and these are the saints I will be discussing in this essay. Rhygyfarch ap Sulien (1056/7 – 1099) wrote a *Life* of St David, of which there seem to be two versions.<sup>1</sup> There have been different editions produced by writers like Gerald of Wales, Arthur Wade Wade-Evans and John Williams James, in both Latin and Welsh.<sup>2</sup> The text I will refer to here is the one based on BL MS Cotton Vespasian A. XIV (V), which is ‘the only complete witness to the original Latin text of Rhygyfarch’s *Life*’.<sup>3</sup> The book *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride* comprises two Latin versions of her life, both of which I will discuss.<sup>4</sup> There is also a third Latin *vita*, ‘usually referred to as the Lansdowne Life’, a combination of the first two, which is thought to have been produced in the fourteenth century.<sup>5</sup> In addition there is an extant medieval Welsh *Life*, or *buchedd*, for Gwenfrewy from the fifteenth century in various manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> These *Lives* were written several hundred years after the saints lived, so they are unlikely to be completely accurate. The notion of sainthood includes miracles, relics, motifs, piety and veneration, and these will be considered in this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Sharpe, ‘Which Text is Rhygyfarch’s *Life* of St David?’, in J. Wyn Evans and Jonathan M. Wooding (editors) *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 90-105. <https://viewer-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/EbscoViewerService/ebook?an=278101&callbackUrl=https%3a%2f%2fresearch.ebsco.com&db=nlebk&format=EB&proflid=ehost&lpid=&ppid=&lang=en&location=https%3a%2f%2fresearch-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk%2fc%2fonvpsy%2fsearch%2fdetails%2fbg3qblklnv%3fdb%3dnlebk&isPLink=False&requestContext=&profileIdentifier=onvpsy&recordId=bg3qblklnv>.

<sup>2</sup> Sharpe, ‘Which Text?’, pp. 90-93.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Sharpe and John Reuben Davies (editor and translator), ‘Rhygyfarch’s *Life* of St David’, in J. Wyn Evans and Jonathan M. Wooding (editors) *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 107-155. <https://viewer-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/EbscoViewerService/ebook?an=278101&callbackUrl=https%3a%2f%2fresearch.ebsco.com&db=nlebk&format=EB&proflid=ehost&lpid=&ppid=&lang=en&location=https%3a%2f%2fresearch-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk%2fc%2fonvpsy%2fsearch%2fdetails%2fbg3qblklnv%3fdb%3dnlebk&isPLink=False&requestContext=&profileIdentifier=onvpsy&recordId=bg3qblklnv>.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Pepin and Hugh Feiss (translators), *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Jane Cartwright, ‘The Welsh Versions of the Life of Gwenfrewy’, in *Seintiau Cymru, Sancti Cambrensis: Astudiaethau ar Seint Cymru, Studies in the Saints of Wales*, David N. Parsons and Paul Russell (editors) (Aberystwyth: Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, University of Wales Press, 2022), (pp. 237-267), p. 240. <https://repository.uwtsd.ac.uk/id/eprint/2038/1/Cartwright%20Jane%20%282022%29%20The%20Welsh%20versions%20of%20the%20life%20of%20Gwenfrewy.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Cartwright, ‘The Welsh Versions of the Life of Gwenfrewy’ pp. 237 & 240.

Rhygyfarch's *Life* states that 'this holy man, who was baptized David', but called Dewi by the common people, 'was enriched with mystical gifts and endowments', and also that his birth was known thirty years beforehand by his father and St Patrick because of the 'truth-telling prophecies of angels'.<sup>7</sup> It is clear, then, that David was regarded as special even before he was born. David's father, Sanctus, 'who enjoyed sovereignty over the people of Ceredig', had an angelic prophecy in a dream, which said that he would find three gifts beside the river Teifi – a stag, a fish and a swarm of bees in a tree at a place called Llyn Henllan – with instructions to deliver them, (the honeycomb and a portion of the stag and the fish) to the monastery of Meugan.<sup>8</sup> The claim is that these gifts foretell David's life: the honeycomb 'proclaims his wisdom'; the fish 'signifies his watery life' and the stag 'signifies dominion over the ancient serpent', despoiling the power to harm him.<sup>9</sup> These gifts are powerful, and the need for protection becomes apparent. The watery life entails the rejection of wine and liquor, and David lives on bread and water.

St Patrick arrived in Dyfed and made his way to a place called *Vallis Rosina*, where he 'vowed that he would faithfully devote himself to God', but when an angel of the Lord appeared and told him that the place was not assigned to him, the virtuous Patrick was 'both surprised and angered'.<sup>10</sup> However, an angel showed him the whole of Ireland from there and told him that he would be an apostle there. The place where he was standing is now called Patrick's Seat, and eventually he 'willingly surrendered that holy place to St David'.<sup>11</sup> Before sailing to Ireland from Porth Mawr, he performed a miracle by raising an old man called Cruimther, who had been buried nearby for twelve years.<sup>12</sup> Patrick took the newly resuscitated man with him to Ireland, who was later made a bishop. This episode echoes the raising of Lazarus by Christ, and perhaps demonstrates that although Patrick had to make way for David, he was himself a worthy saint.

After thirty years had passed, David was conceived in a shocking way when Sanctus raped Nonnita (or Non), a beautiful girl who was a nun. Non continued 'steadfastly in chastity of mind and body' following this rape, and led her life 'most devoutly', living only on bread and water from the time she conceived.<sup>13</sup> The states of virginity and chastity are highly important for female saints, and this

<sup>7</sup> Sharpe and Davies, 'Rhygyfarch's *Life* of St David', p. 109. This is similar to the Annunciation of Jesus in *The Bible*, Luke 1:26-38.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 113.

<sup>12</sup> In the Latin version, but in Elissa R. Henken's chapter 'Healing' in *The Welsh Saints: A Study in Patterned Lives*, (England: D. S. Brewer, 1991) (pp. 49-64), p. 58, the man had been dead and buried in the sea-marsh for fifteen years. [https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/457661/mod\\_resource/content/3/CYCS7007HEN49.pdf](https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/457661/mod_resource/content/3/CYCS7007HEN49.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Sharpe and Davies, 'Rhygyfarch's *Life* of St David', p. 113.

violation of Non preserved her purity to some extent, because she was unwilling in the physical act of this conception. David Dumville calls this ‘a blameless conception’.<sup>14</sup> Jane Cartwright has pointed out that Non is unusual ‘in the context of European hagiography in that she is a rare example of a raped female saint’.<sup>15</sup> The ‘menaced virgin’, however, ‘is a common topos in hagiography’, and a number of them have been threatened with rape or physical abuse, and some of them have been abducted.<sup>16</sup> Cartwright explains that although Non’s case is unusual, ‘in medieval hagiography there are instances when the violation’ of a virgin ‘was deemed not only appropriate, but necessary in order to explain the conception of certain, powerful male saints – notably, although not necessarily exclusively, in the Celtic regions’.<sup>17</sup>

The importance of David is further signified by the appearance of two large stones in the meadow where Non was raped, ‘one at her head and the other at her feet’, because the land rejoiced at David’s conception, preserving ‘the modesty of the girl’, and declaring ‘the significance of her offspring’.<sup>18</sup> Later, when her womb had grown, Non went to church to make offerings for the unborn child, and to hear the preaching of the gospel by St Gildas ‘in accordance with enduring custom’ but when she entered, Gildas could no longer speak.<sup>19</sup> When the congregation went outside and then back into the church, as Non advised them by divine providence, Gildas preached loud and clear. Gildas recognised that Non’s unborn child was greater than him, because God had ‘given him the privilege, sovereignty and princely dignity of all the saints of Wales for ever’.<sup>20</sup> Gildas then said farewell to the people because it was necessary for him to go and ‘leave the whole of Britain to her son’.<sup>21</sup> Like St Patrick, Gildas has to depart to make way for David’s arrival.

The requirement for David to be protected becomes apparent when the nearby tyrant vows to slay with his sword anyone resting in the place appointed for David’s birth. Mother and baby were kept safe, however, by a huge storm which blew up so that no-one could go outside, but there was a serene light shining where Non gave birth.<sup>22</sup> A church was built there and the rock which broke in

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<sup>14</sup> David N. Dumville, ‘Saint David of Wales’, *Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures on Mediaeval Welsh History I*. Hughes Hall and Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge, 2001, p. 28. <https://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/publications/Hughes/KH%20Vol%201%202001%20Dumville.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Jane Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality in Medieval Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2022), p. 95. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/trinity/reader.action?docID=7386140&ppg=1>.

<sup>16</sup> Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity*, p. 95.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 96.

<sup>18</sup> Sharpe and Davies, ‘Rhygyfarch’s *Life of St David*’, p. 113.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 113.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 115.

<sup>22</sup> This is another similarity to the birth of Jesus, when Herod ordered the execution of male children under the age of two (the Massacre of the Innocents): *The Bible*, Matthew 2:16-18.

half in sympathy with her agony ‘lies hidden in the base of its altar’.<sup>23</sup> Miracles occurred when David was baptised by Ailbe, Bishop of Munster; a spring of clear water appeared, which then healed the eyes of Mobí, who was holding him when he was being baptised. Wondrous things happened while David was very young. Although he was already special, he ‘grew in virtues and merits’ during his education at Vetus Rubus, the Old Grove.<sup>24</sup> His fellow pupils saw a dove with a golden beak teaching him and singing hymns, which became his emblem, and he is often represented with a dove on or near his shoulder. According to Rhygyfarch’s *Life*, David was made a priest and ‘elevated to the sacerdotal rank’.<sup>25</sup>

David’s education was furthered by his study with Paulinus until he was a scholar, and led a life pleasing to God. He miraculously cured his teacher’s blindness by touching his eyes, even though he had been unwilling to look at them because of his modesty. The metaphor of a harvest is used to describe David’s work in increasing numbers of the faithful, and he ‘founded twelve monasteries to the glory of God’.<sup>26</sup> These monasteries were not just in Wales, though, but in places like Leominster and Bath in England as well as Raglan in Gwent. He also restored the eyesight of the blind Peibio, king of Ergyng, helped by two holy men. David went with his three most faithful disciples to the *Vallis Rosina*, (Hoddnant), and when smoke from the first fire which had been lit there in the name of the Lord, a neighbouring warlord called Baia saw it and became angry. When Baia went with his slaves to kill David, they were gripped by a fever, which thwarted their plans. Not only had David been protected from danger once more but when he returned home, Baia found out that all his animals had died. Baia then went to David asking for mercy, which was granted. Baia also gave David *Vallis Rosina* ‘in perpetual possession’ and when he went back home, Baia found that his cattle were revived, just as David had said they would be.<sup>27</sup>

David’s patience and fortitude are shown when Baia’s wife, who was intent on causing trouble, told her maids to misbehave in front of the holy men at the river Alun. The disciples wanted to flee, but David told them that they could overcome their adversities with the help of Christ. David told them that Baia should withdraw, and that they should stand firm. The following day, Baia’s wife committed the heinous act of murdering her innocent stepdaughter Dunod by beheading her. A clear spring rose from the place where her blood ran on the ground, which cured many human diseases, and it is called Merthyr Dunod. This episode is similar to that of Winefride, in which a healing spring rose where her blood ran on the ground after her decollation. After the stepmother fled,

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<sup>23</sup> Sharpe and Davies, ‘Rhygyfarch’s *Life* of St David’, p. 117.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 117.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. pp. 117 & 119.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.119.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 123.

David and his pupils sang praise to God. He was in danger again, though, because Baia planned to kill him. As before, however, David was protected when Baia's enemy, Llysgi, went into his castle and cut off his head. This castle burnt down, and the text reads that it was fitting that 'he who was unmerciful to the servants of God should be punished without mercy'.<sup>28</sup>

The monks built a monastery where the angel had shown them and lived there in considerable austerity. They worked hard and 'rejected the gifts of the wicked'.<sup>29</sup> It is stated that kings and princes visited the monastery when they heard of holy David's good reputation. One of the miracles David performed was when he prayed for water and the spring produced wine for celebrating the Lord's sacrament, which is reminiscent of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Galilee.<sup>30</sup> On another occasion, he used his staff to make an opening in the ground and produce a stream of water to help those in the neighbourhood, like when Moses struck a rock with his staff to provide plenty of water for the people and their livestock.<sup>31</sup> David once again avoided harm when his former disciple Scuithín warned him at Easter that poison would be served at lunch. Despite eating the bread, which he had blessed, David showed no ill effects from doing so. The brethren condemned those involved, saying that 'they should never have a place in the kingdom of heaven'.<sup>32</sup>

There are accounts of other miracles before an angel told David to prepare for a journey to Jerusalem, together with two companions, Eliud (Teilo) and Padarn. David had the gift of languages, so that they did not need an interpreter when they were amongst foreign people. The Patriarch of Jerusalem knew to welcome the travellers because he had received a message from an angel the night before their arrival. He treated them with the highest honour and 'promoted holy David to the archiepiscopate'.<sup>33</sup> The Patriarch urged them to preach every day in order to strengthen the Christian faith because he said the power of the Jews was increasing against them, and they did that successfully. The Patriarch sent four gifts for them to receive when they returned to their own country – a consecrated altar which worked miracles, a bell which was famed for its miracles, a staff and a coat woven from gold.

One of David's most significant miracles was at a universal synod at Breff where all the bishops of Wales were assembled, to deal with the Pelagian heresy. Despite standing on a pile of clothes, the

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<sup>28</sup> Sharpe and Davies, 'Rhygyfarch's *Life of St David*', p. 125.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 127.

<sup>30</sup> *The Bible*, John 2:1-11.

<sup>31</sup> *The Bible*, Numbers 20:11.

<sup>32</sup> Sharpe and Davies, 'Rhygyfarch's *Life of St David*', p. 135.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 141.

people could not hear them preaching. David's former teacher, Paulinus called for David, and eventually David agreed to help them. On the way to the synod, David brought a boy back to life. When he preached, a white dove 'sent from heaven, settled on his shoulders'.<sup>34</sup> The people could hear David preaching and while he was doing so, the earth beneath him 'swelled and was raised to a hill'.<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Wooding calls this event 'the most remembered fact from St David's dossier in modern Wales'.<sup>36</sup> As a result, the heresy was expelled and the faith confirmed, and David was appointed archbishop. In addition, his monastery was 'dedicated as the metropolitan church of the whole country' and a few years later, the Synod of Victory was convened.<sup>37</sup> Ultimately, the whole episcopate gave 'power, sovereignty and princely authority to the holy David', which elevated him considerably.<sup>38</sup> Not only was he 'leader and prince of all the Welsh', but in old age he was also 'extolled as the head of all the British nation'.<sup>39</sup>

The text states that David lived for 147 years, and that on 22 February an angel told him to prepare for the end of his life, because on 1 March Jesus and a host of angels would meet him. The brethren were distraught, but David comforted them and preached to them until the day of his death. When people heard the news, they went to visit the monastery and grieved for him, but David remained steadfast and told them to persevere in the things that they had learned from him. He went willingly with Lord Jesus to seek the heavenly gates, which seems like an apotheosis. Those left behind mourned him as David's soul was 'released from the limits of this fleeting life'.<sup>40</sup> It is clear from Rhygyfarch's *Life* that David was considered to be special and that some of his miracles, for example, are comparable with those undertaken by Jesus. David had saintly qualities, like patience and fortitude, and he was protected by God. On a more earthly level, David had political influence, although he was not deemed to be ambitious.

Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher take issue with some of the aspects of Rhygyfarch's *Life*, however, claiming that the episode about the angel telling Patrick that he would have to go to Ireland was 'wholly fabulous' in order to 'prepare the reader for the superlative saintliness of

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<sup>34</sup> Sharpe and Davies, 'Rhygyfarch's *Life* of St David', p. 145.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 145.

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan M. Wooding, 'The Figure of David', in J. Wyn Evans and Jonathan M. Wooding (editors) *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation*: details as above, p. 5. [https://research-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/c/onvpsy/ebook-viewer/pdf/bg3qblklnv/page/pp\\_4?location=https%3A%2F%2Fresearch-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk%2Fsearch%2Fdetails%2Fbg3qblklnv%3Fdb%3Dnlebk](https://research-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/c/onvpsy/ebook-viewer/pdf/bg3qblklnv/page/pp_4?location=https%3A%2F%2Fresearch-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk%2Fsearch%2Fdetails%2Fbg3qblklnv%3Fdb%3Dnlebk).

<sup>37</sup> Sharpe and Davies, 'Rhygyfarch's *Life* of St David', p. 147.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 147.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 149.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 151.

Dewi'.<sup>41</sup> They also declare, understandably, that David living to the age of 147 is 'absurd'.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the difficulty regarding David's ancestry on his father's side, Baring-Gould and Fisher assert that Rhygyfarch's account of the incident with Gildas was to enhance 'the glory of his hero'.<sup>43</sup> They also point out that David could not have founded the monasteries in England, such as at Leominster which Rhygyfarch claimed that he did, because those territories 'were in the hands of the Angles and Saxons', although he might have visited Devon and Cornwall.<sup>44</sup>

Baring-Gould and Fisher note that there is a mound at Llanddewi Brefi, and take it to be the meaning of the legend of the ground swelling beneath David's feet.<sup>45</sup> Further, the purpose of the synod was 'to enact canons of discipline for the clergy and laity', not for the 'suppression of the Pelagian heresy'.<sup>46</sup> In addition, they take David's pilgrimage to Jerusalem as fiction, and maintain that his journey abroad might have been to Armorica during the Yellow Plague. They point out that Dewi is still the only purely Welsh saint who 'has been formally enrolled in the Calendars of the Western Church', explaining that this was 'a critical period in the history of the Welsh Church', as it was 'on the verge of losing its ancient independence', and the see of St David's became 'subject to Canterbury'.<sup>47</sup> In the matter of David as archbishop, Baring-Gould and Fisher aver that no such claim was put forward until the twelfth century, and that 'in the Celtic Church of Wales, as of Ireland, the title of Archbishop was used very loosely'.<sup>48</sup> David's canonization supposedly happened in the time of Pope Calixtus (1119-1124), probably helped by Rhygyfarch's *Life*, and it is likely that this is when his pre-eminence over the other Welsh saints occurred, and 'his cult, from being that of a merely local Saint, became that of the Patron of Wales'.<sup>49</sup>

The Latin *Life* of Saint Winefride written by Robert Pennant, Prior of Shrewsbury (d. 1168) begins with the arrival of Saint Beuno, Winefride's uncle, at Teuyth's manor, where he was received kindly. When Beuno asked Teuyth to build a church on his inherited land, Teuyth agreed, as he was honourable and influential. In return, he asked if Beuno would instruct his daughter Winefride in the ways of God. She received this with an open heart, and 'increased daily in goodness and

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<sup>41</sup> Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints: The Saints of Wales and Cornwall and such Irish Saints as have Dedications in Britain Volume II* (London: Charles J. Clark, 1908) p.288.

<sup>42</sup> <https://archive.org/details/livesofbritishsa02bariuoft/livesofbritishsa02bariuoft/mode/2up>

<sup>43</sup> Baring-Gould and Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints Vol. II*, p. 305.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 290.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 295.

<sup>46</sup> For details of the meaning of 'llannau' relating to place-names, see Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity*, p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> Baring-Gould and Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints Vol. II*, p. 303.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 310.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 311.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 310.

advanced in wisdom'.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps most importantly, Winefride 'determined to renounce utterly every man, and she intended to long for the embraces of God alone'.<sup>51</sup> Winefride was her parents' only child, so 'the hope of increasing their offspring and the succession of their posterity depended on her alone', but they were glad that she was being taught by the holy man.<sup>52</sup> Winefride believed that it would be better 'to offer herself as a pure virgin to Christ' than to get married and have children.<sup>53</sup> Winefride gained the support of her parents, who 'subjected themselves entirely to the precepts of God', and she 'hastened on the path of God's commandments', but the devil, 'seeing that many losses of his power might occur through her' rose up against her and did not cease until he thought he had defeated her.<sup>54</sup>

After Beuno had finished building his church and consecrated it to God, Winefride's parents attended almost every day. One Sunday Winefride had to stay at home when the others went to church, and Caradoc, the son of King Alan, visited the house. She innocently told him where her father was, and he became full of lust for her. When Caradoc told Winefride that he desired her, she told him that she should change into more acceptable attire in her room, and would return. Desperate to get away from Caradoc, Winefride ran towards the church, where 'she thought she would be protected and defended'.<sup>55</sup> When Caradoc discovered that Winefride had fled, he became violent and when he caught up with her, he told her that if she would not be 'united voluntarily' to him immediately, then he would cut off her head with his sword.<sup>56</sup> Nobody came from the church to help Winefride, and she told Caradoc that she was joined 'in matrimony to the son of the eternal king' and could accept no other, so he could draw his sword.<sup>57</sup> Upon hearing such defiance from the maiden, Caradoc cut off her head. As soon as her head fell to the ground, a clear spring appeared there, 'offering health to many sick people through the merits of the holy maiden, which even today has not ceased to flow'.<sup>58</sup>

Winefride makes it clear that the son of the eternal king was far more deserving of her love than the son of an earthly king, especially one who behaves like Caradoc. Winefride was not protected from harm in the way that St David was, which provides a contrast between their lives. The protection of Winefride's virginity is of the utmost importance in this episode and as Cartwright has emphasised,

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<sup>50</sup> Pepin and Feiss, *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride*, p. 30.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. pp. 32-33.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

feminine sanctity 'is closely linked with the saint's virginity'.<sup>59</sup> In a passage about St Non, Cartwright maintains that for 'the virgin bride of Christ rape is a fate worse than death' and this could also apply to Winefride.<sup>60</sup> Cartwright explains that 'in medieval hagiography the female saint, obsessed by the preservation of her virginity, usually welcomes martyrdom', and this is the case with Winefride.<sup>61</sup>

When Caradoc beheaded her, Winefride's head rolled into the church and her parents were full of sorrow and 'poured forth their grief'.<sup>62</sup> Beuno was distressed by what had happened, and saw the murderer cleaning his sword, showing that he did not fear God. Beuno addressed Caradoc, holding Winefride's head and saying that he had 'confounded the peace and polluted the church' by his sacrilege, and 'impiously provoked God', but was not sorry.<sup>63</sup> As soon as Beuno beseeched God that he should receive 'fitting recompense' for what he had done, the youth fell to the ground and died. His body then melted and disappeared into the ground, which frightened all those who saw it happen.<sup>64</sup> Beuno took the head to the rest of Winefride's body, spread his cloak over it and breathed into the nostrils. He told her parents to pause their mourning, and he celebrated Mass. In his sermon, he urged the people to 'implore God for her resurrection', which they did.<sup>65</sup>

After they had prayed for a long time, Winefride 'arose as if from sleep', filling those present with 'astonishment and joy'.<sup>66</sup> There was a slender white line along her neck where her head had been severed and re-attached by divine power. Apparently this is how she got her name, because she used to be called Brewa, and 'Wen' means white, and two letters were changed around. Baring-Gould and Fisher maintain, however, that 'there is no relationship whatever between' the names Gwenfrewi and Winefride.<sup>67</sup> The place where Winefride was killed was also renamed, from 'Dry Vale' to 'Fennan Winefride' (Ffynnon Wenffrewi, St Winefride's Well in Holywell).<sup>68</sup> The text says that the stones which were spattered with Winefride's blood still retain their colour as if they are stained by it, and the moss which clings to them smells like incense. Winefride declared her

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<sup>59</sup> Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity*, p. 92.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 115.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 115.

<sup>62</sup> Pepin and Feiss, *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride*, p. 36.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. pp. 36-37.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 37. Beuno also resuscitated others after decollation – see Henken's chapter 'Healing' pp. 56-58.

[https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/457661/mod\\_resource/content/3/CYCS7007HEN49.pdf](https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/457661/mod_resource/content/3/CYCS7007HEN49.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Pepin and Feiss, *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride*, p. 38.

<sup>67</sup> Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints: The Saints of Wales and Cornwall and such Irish Saints as have Dedications in Britain Volume III* (London: Charles J. Clark, 1911), p. 191.

<https://archive.org/details/livesofbritishsa03bariuoft/livesofbritishsa03bariuoft/mode/2up>

<sup>68</sup> Pepin and Feiss, *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride*, pp. 38-39.

wish to live a religious life, and Beuno ‘consecrated her in her holy veil’, after which she practised every virtue and studied devoutly.<sup>69</sup>

Beuno said that he was to leave because God had called him elsewhere, and that Winefride will serve God there for seven years, but then she will need to find another place. He tells her that the annual gift she is to send him – a chasuble – will arrive if she puts it in the spring, as it will be carried ‘by divine power’ and the force of the water to him by the seashore.<sup>70</sup> Winefride sent the gift every year until Beuno died. After seven years had passed, Winefride went to Witheriac (Gwytherin), guided by Saint Deifer and Blessed Saturnus. She was welcomed there by the abbot Elerius and his mother, Theonia. The other virgins made Winefride a leader ‘in all things which pertained to salvation’.<sup>71</sup> During a discussion with Elerius about death, Winefride was prophesied that Theonia would die first, followed by Winefride herself, and Elerius would outlive them both. After Theonia died, Winefride took over her duties in the care of the other virgins and when her own time came, she prepared herself ‘for the joys of the everlasting kingdom’.<sup>72</sup>

Winefride’s *Life* does not end there, though, because a few posthumous miracles are recounted, such as that of the workman’s daughter being able to see for the first time in her life, and the misfortunes encountered by various robbers. Then there is the translation of Winefride’s relics from Gwytherin to the Benedictine Abbey of Saints Peter and Paul at Shrewsbury, which Prior Robert Pennant was involved in. This occasion has been given publicity by Ellis Peters in *A Morbid Taste for Bones*.<sup>73</sup> The monks at Shrewsbury felt that they lacked the relics of a saint, and knew that there were many bodies of saints in Wales. In Robert’s account of the translation, miracles occurred along the way, such as it not raining, and miracles are briefly mentioned at the end, as cures were granted to heal the sick.<sup>74</sup>

The first part of the anonymous *Life* is about Winefride’s life, and it is similar to Prior Robert’s one, although considerably shorter and less elaborate. It tells of Beuno instructing Winefride, and of building a church at Sechnant. Caradoc cut off her head with his sword, and melted when Beuno cursed him. Beuno rejoined the head and prayed until Winefride came back to life. A fountain appeared, and Winefride sent the gift of a cloak each year. Here it says that Winefride visited Rome, and later attended the synod of Whitby. The second part consists of the miracles which occurred at

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<sup>69</sup> Pepin and Feiss, *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride*, p. 41.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 43

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 58.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p. 63.

<sup>73</sup> Ellis Peters, *A Morbid Taste for Bones* (London: Macmillan London Limited, 1977).

<sup>74</sup> Winefride’s shrine was destroyed after the Reformation and her relics thrown out, but apparently a finger bone was rescued.

her well, including unfortunate outcomes for wrongdoers and cures for those who had been suffering. One of the miracles was when the spring ‘appeared to flow with a milky liquid for three days’ after the French (Normans) were expelled from Gwynedd, which shows a political dimension.<sup>75</sup> Between 1093 and 1240 control over the well and Holywell church changed between the Benedictine monastery of St Werburgh in Chester and Basingwerk Abbey in Flintshire.<sup>76</sup> The two versions of Winefride’s life are similar enough for Fiona Winward to suggest that they are derived from a common source.<sup>77</sup>

Winefride’s beheading is exceedingly dramatic, although Baring-Gould and Fisher make little of it, saying that the story is ‘a commonplace in Celtic hagiography’, and there are numerous instances of it.<sup>78</sup> They explain that Caradog probably just wounded Winefride in the throat and she was cured easily. They note that the fountain which sprang up is also a common occurrence in Celtic legend, and add that it was doubtless in veneration in pre-Christian times’.<sup>79</sup> Baring-Gould and Fisher point out that the fountain had ‘flowed for thousands of years’ before Winefride existed.<sup>80</sup> However, it is the significance of the well and its cult which is important with regard to this saint.<sup>81</sup> Winward avers that the landscape of Holywell would have made it an ideal site for a saint’s cult, and points to evidence compiled by Anne Ross and Francis Jones ‘pertaining to early British veneration of water’.<sup>82</sup> Jones and Ross, continues Winward, argue that ‘the church was eventually forced to incorporate the well-cult, particularly in the Celtic areas’.<sup>83</sup>

It appears as though Winefride became better known over time, as writers such as Nennius, Giraldus Cambrensis and Geoffrey of Monmouth did not mention her, and she is not entered in the Calendar of Welsh Saints, but large numbers of pilgrims visited her sites.<sup>84</sup> She does appear in *The*

<sup>75</sup> Pepin and Feiss, *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride*, p. 111. This is similar to David and Jesus turning water into wine.

<sup>76</sup> For details see T. W. Pritchard, ‘The Development of the Cult’ in *St. Winefride, her Holy Well and the Jesuit Mission* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2009), (pp. 45-88), p. 46.

<sup>77</sup> [https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/457662/mod\\_resource/content/3/CYCS7007PRI45.pdf](https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/457662/mod_resource/content/3/CYCS7007PRI45.pdf).

<sup>78</sup> Fiona Winward, ‘The Lives of St Wenefred’ (BHL 8847-8851) in *Analecta Bollandiana* Vol. 117 (1999), Issue 1-2, pp. 89-132. [https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/457663/mod\\_resource/content/1/CYCS7007WIN117.pdf](https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/457663/mod_resource/content/1/CYCS7007WIN117.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> Baring-Gould and Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints Vol. III*, p. 191. See also Henken, ‘Healing’ in *The Welsh Saints*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>80</sup> Baring-Gould and Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints Vol. III*, p. 191.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 192.

<sup>82</sup> The late-perpendicular chapel and well have been associated with Lady Margaret Beaufort and the Stanley family, but might have been built by Abbot Thomas Pennant of Basingwerk in 1512. See T. W. Pritchard, ‘The Development of the Cult’, pp. 78-82.

<sup>83</sup> Winward, ‘The Lives of St Wenefred’, p. 95.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 96.

<sup>85</sup> These omissions of writers are noted by Baring-Gould and Fisher in *The Lives of the British Saints Vol. III*, p. 187.

*Roman Martyrology*, though, as ‘St. Winefride, virgin and martyr’ for the 3<sup>rd</sup> November.<sup>85</sup> The Archbishops of Arundel (in 1398) and Chicheley (in 1415) ‘ordered the celebration of her festival’, and it was then ‘introduced into the Sarum Breviary’, but this was many years after her death.<sup>86</sup> Winefride has two commemorations, that of her decollation on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, and that of her ‘second death’ (and translation), on 3<sup>rd</sup> November. Saint David’s day is 1<sup>st</sup> March, the date of his death, which is the one given in the ‘Welsh, Sarum, Hereford, Roman and other Calendars’.<sup>87</sup> He is also the only ‘purely Welsh Saint’ to have been ‘formally enrolled in the Calendars of the Western Church’.<sup>88</sup> Winefride is associated with three places – Holywell, Gwytherin, both in north east Wales, and Shrewsbury, whereas David is associated with St Davids – also known as Mynyw (or the Latin Menevia) in south west Wales.

The motifs pertaining to David include producing a stream of water with his staff and being educated by an influential figure. Alwyn Rees has noted nineteen characteristics relating to saints, including the birth of a saint being foretold, a miracle occurring at the time of the birth, the saint becoming the supreme power in the land, and the body retaining a miraculous element after death, and Rees maintains that David’s life includes seventeen of these elements.<sup>89</sup> Winefride is mentioned, but her life has far fewer of these elements, the main one being her miraculous well. Winefride was educated by the influential Beuno, and although this motif is like David’s, it seems as though the only real decision she made was to choose the religious path. The miracles Winefride carries out are mostly intermediary ones through her well, whereas David’s are more direct, such as curing Paulinus by touching his eyes – and the well only came into being as a result of the violence done to her, the decollation being one of her motifs. This indicates that David was endowed with greater healing powers than Winefride. He also had greater power, sovereignty and authority than her.

The question of how relics were regarded is discussed by Rice Rees, who suggests that ‘in whatever esteem the Britons of the primitive Church might have held their holy men, they could not have worshipped their relics’.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps relics became more significant over time. There was a lot of

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<sup>85</sup> *The Roman Martyrology*, Published by Order of Gregory XIII. First published in 1583. This edition published in Baltimore by John Murphy Company, 1916, p. 340.

[https://www.saintsbooks.net/books/The%20Roman%20Martyrology%20\(1914\).pdf](https://www.saintsbooks.net/books/The%20Roman%20Martyrology%20(1914).pdf).

<sup>86</sup> Baring-Gould and Fisher in *The Lives of the British Saints Vol. III*, p. 193.

<sup>87</sup> Baring-Gould and Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints Vol. II*, p. 308.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p. 310.

<sup>89</sup> Alwyn D. Rees, ‘The Divine Hero in Celtic Hagiology’, in *Folklore*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (March 1936) (pp. 30-41), pp. 31-36. <https://www.jstor-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/stable/1257341?seq=6>.

<sup>90</sup> The Rev. Rice Rees, *An Essay on the Welsh Saints or the Primitive Christians Usually Considered to have been the Founders of Churches in Wales* (London: Longman, Rees Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman; Rees, Llandoverly; and

upheaval and destruction at St Davids towards the end of the eleventh century, which is when the first reference to the relics of St David appears in the historical record, in the *Annales Cambriae*.<sup>91</sup> David's reliquary and shrine were stolen, and it appears as though only his secondary relics from Jerusalem remained.<sup>92</sup> The *Lives* of David and Winefride and show how pious they were, but it seems that David was praised more for himself, while Winefride's virtues were extolled, to a certain extent, to promote the holy well, and this difference might have had something to do with their gender.

The main purpose of these *Lives* might have been to encourage pilgrimages to the centres with which these saints were associated; Winefride's relics at Shrewsbury might have encouraged pilgrims to visit there. St Davids became a centre of pilgrimage, with visits by William the Conqueror in 1081, Henry II in 1171 and Edward I in 1284. By the fourteenth century 'two journeys to St Davids equalled one to Rome, and three journeys equalled one to Jerusalem'.<sup>93</sup> As a religious hero and a representative of the nation, David 'forged an unbreakable link between State and Church'.<sup>94</sup> Henry V reportedly went on pilgrimage in 1416 'from Shrewsbury to Holywell to give thanks for his victories' in his French campaigns.<sup>95</sup> Having such prestigious visitors would have increased the status and revenues of these holy centres, making them powerful and wealthy. The pilgrims might also benefit not only spiritually, but also physically if they were healed as a result of their visits, and the notion that they had become closer to God.

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Bird, Cardiff, 1836), p. 193.

<https://ia600302.us.archive.org/17/items/AnEssayOnTheWelshSaints/AnEssayOnTheWelshSaints.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> Fred G. Cowley, 'The Relics of St David: The Historical Evidence', in Wyn Evans and Jonathan M. Wooding (editors) *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation*, (pp. 274-281), p. 274.

[https://research-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/c/onvpsy/ebook-viewer/pdf/bg3qblklmv/section/lp\\_v?location=https%3A%2F%2Fresearch-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk%2Fsearch%2Fdetails%2Fbg3qblklmv%3Fdb%3Dnlebk](https://research-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/c/onvpsy/ebook-viewer/pdf/bg3qblklmv/section/lp_v?location=https%3A%2F%2Fresearch-ebsco-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk%2Fsearch%2Fdetails%2Fbg3qblklmv%3Fdb%3Dnlebk).

<sup>92</sup> F. G. Cowley, 'The Relics of St David', p. 275.

<sup>93</sup> Elissa R. Henken, 'Welsh Hagiography and the Nationalist Impulse' in J. Cartwright (editor) *Celtic Hagiography and Saints' Cults* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) (pp. 26-44) p.38.

<sup>94</sup> Henken, 'Welsh Hagiography', p. 39.

<sup>95</sup> Pepin and Feiss, *Two Mediaeval Lives of Saint Winefride*, p. 16.

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