

POCKLINGTON'S GREATEST CHURCHMAN?

ADELULF, THE FORGOTTEN BISHOP

Pocklington has produced many remarkable churchmen from Medieval times right up to the 20th century, but none can be said to have had the impact of the town's first known cleric, Adelulf, who was one of the leading 12th century churchmen and politicians on both sides of Hadrian's Wall during the reign of Henry I.

A simple list of his appointments and foundations gives a brief insight into his achievements. Adelulf (though he is also known by other variations of the name depending on whether the source is Latin, old or modern English) was from a local noble family who became a Lord of the manor of Pocklington; then chaplain, advisor and confessor of Henry I. He is named as founder and prior of Nostell (c1120-1153) and builder of its monastic church; and simultaneously became prior and first bishop of Carlisle (1133-1156).

He was a favoured courtier of Kings Henry I, Stephen and Henry II of England, and also King David I of Scotland. He held the prebend seat of Bramham in York Minster, and founded St Nicholas' Hospital, Carlisle, and Carlisle Grammar School. Carlisle Cathedral was built under his direction, and his influence north of the border saw him patron of both Scone Abbey and St Andrews Abbey.

However, though his later career is well recorded and revered at Carlisle, he is little known in his native Yorkshire.

A good starting point for a brief summary of his life comes from the Victoria County History for Cumberland, which states:

"Adelulf (also Athelwold, Adelo, Aldulf, Adulphus, representing O.E. Æthelwulf) was originally a wealthy Yorkshire landholder, lord of Pocklington, who took orders became archbishop Thurstan's friend, prior of Nostell in Yorkshire and confessor to King Henry I who consecrated him bishop of Carlisle in 1133. When Carlisle was ceded to King David, Adelulf found it possible to serve him diligently without forsaking his duties to the English Church and court. He was still prior of Nostell shortly before his death in 1156 at Carlisle, where he was buried in the cloister he had built."

Though little is known about his early life Adelulf is believed to have been a Yorkshire-born English noble, as opposed to having Norman roots, like the king.

Despite being the fourth and youngest son of William the Conqueror, Henry, thought to have been born at Selby during one of William's military campaigns to subdue the north, managed to rule on both sides of the channel as King of England and Duke of Normandy through a mixture of luck, ability and opportunism.

He developed strong ties with East Yorkshire, and was prolific in his bequests and foundations to the churches and monasteries of the East Riding. Henry I's initial direct connection with All Saints was in circa 1105. Pocklington was a royal manor and Henry I was both lord of the manor and patron of its church; but an early charter granted the patronage of the church and all its chapels (All Saints was still a minster in 1105 and the villages round the town included a dozen small churches that were designated as chapels) to the Archbishop of York.

It has been suggested that this initial link with Henry I, Adelulf and Pocklington may through a family connection with Edith FitzForne, Henry's mistress and mother of one of his numerous illegitimate sons. Edith was the daughter of Forne FitzSigulf, a Saxon thegn of Grimthorpe and Nunburnholme, who acquired other lands across the manor of Pocklington.

Adelulf's conversion from minor English noble to distinguished churchman appears to lie in the foundation origins of Nostell Priory. The priory history states that Adelulf was in Henry I's retinue that was heading north on an expedition against Scotland when he was struck down by illness and had to be left behind in Yorkshire. He is said to have been cared for by a small hermitage community near Nostell which he subsequently persuaded Henry to 'upgrade' into a priory, with Adelulf as the prior.

Henry took particular interest in Yorkshire matters after 1120, and in 1122 Adelulf accompanied Henry I on a Yorkshire tour during which the king informed the reeve and minister of Pocklington that he had devolved the tithes and church patronage of Pocklington to Hugh Dean of York.

In the 1130s Adelulf himself became a benefactor to the Dean, another Henrician charter stating: 'Grant by Adelulf bishop of Carlisle, to the deanery of York and to William, dean, and his successors, of tithes of the mills of Pocklington and of his demesne [house and lands] and the whole soc, as appointed and confirmed by Henry I.' This land became the core of the Dean of York's East Riding estate which was run from Pocklington from circa 1130 for another 700 years until it was sold to Admiral Duncombe in 1850. Adelulf's estate at Pocklington was a minor subsidiary manor, probably split by the king out of the main royal manor. Nevertheless, it included valuable land both in the centre of Pocklington, including Dean's Lane and St Peters Square, and in the fields around the town, it also included the corn mill down West Green which became 'Thirsk's Mill'.

After renouncing his secular possessions Adelulf devoted himself to matters of both religion and court. His signature on numerous royal bills show he was often at Henry's side both in England and France, and he also accompanied the King in his discussions with Pope Innocent II in 1131.

At the time Cumberland and the Galloway region of Scotland was a disputed territory, both politically and ecclesiastically, between England and Scotland and vacillated between the two for many years. Adelulf was given dispensation to hold the offices of both Prior of Nostell and Prior of Carlisle, and was then soon appointed the first Bishop of Carlisle when the see was created in 1133. He became a key border magnate as Bishop of Carlisle as King Henry sought to impose his rule on the region, and after Henry's death in 1135 Adelulf was reconciled with King David of Scotland and became an important figure in his retinue. Switching back to the English court he became a trusted advisor of Stephen and Henry II, and witnessed Stephen's charter of liberties - a forerunner of Magna Carta.

In later life Adelulf appears to have retired from travelling Europe with the royal court and concentrated on developing his diocese and his foundations, remaining active at Nostell and Carlisle despite declining health. He died in 1156 and was buried in the cathedral.

Below is a photograph of a modern carving of Adelulf in Carlisle Cathedral, supplied by the current Dean of Carlisle.

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