

Press Release 05/01/2023

Explore Archbishop Wulfstan's Anglo-Saxon world at Worcester Cathedral's historical conference marking the 1000th anniversary of his death

This year marks the 1000th anniversary of the death of Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester (1002-16), Archbishop of York (1002-23) and revered uncle of St Wulfstan (1062-95).

His power influenced kings, directed laws and combatted Viking invasions.

Join internationally renowned experts for two unique days of learning at the Old Palace, Worcester Cathedral, on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 March 2023 to explore the life of this fascinating archbishop.

Wulfstan was one of the most powerful bishops in the history of Worcester Cathedral, and left his mark on its library, lands and diocese. He was a major player in the turbulent politics of the reign of King Æthelred the Unready, influencing the King's policy in combatting the Viking attacks which eventually overwhelmed the Kingdom. Under the conquering King Cnut, Wulfstan continued to guide national policy. He composed lawcodes for both kings and was a legislative innovator, protecting English rights. The road to *Magna Carta* starts with Wulfstan.

As a bishop, he was a reformer and preacher. His sermons in Old English are some of the most original writings in the development of English prose. Writing around the year 1000, Wulfstan's preaching is notable for its hellfire warnings of the imminence of the End of the World. His staunch defence of the diocese against Viking invaders, greedy aristocrats and grasping kings ensured Worcester's safety and stability during one of the most dramatic periods in English history.

This two-day conference features eight internationally-known scholars, who will speak about Wulfstan's life, writings, political influence, and the crucial role he played in the early history of Worcester. Throughout the conference attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and join in discussions with the speakers.

Speaker Prof. Andrew Rabin, University of Louisville, USA, said: "It's difficult to overstate Archbishop Wulfstan's importance to the history of English law, the English church, and English national identity. He was a visionary social thinker whose works provide influential

formulations of many of the values still central to modern society, including forceful arguments for the importance of ethical governance, the need for checks on royal power, and the notion that a just society rests on the well-being of all its members, not simply the wealthiest or most powerful. In a chaotic age, he was the most accomplished prose stylist of his generation, the most influential royal advisor to Kings Æthelred and Cnut, and the most powerful leader of the early eleventh-century English Church. Although many today don't know his name, the world he created is still very much a part of the one in which we live."

Prof. Katy Cubitt, University of East Anglia, added: "For me, the conference is an exciting opportunity to communicate the importance of Archbishop Wulfstan; a man who not only transformed the politics of his day, but also whose writings have shaped our understanding of the period. Wulfstan lived at a time of the greatest stress, when the Viking raids devastating England led to the downfall of the Anglo-Saxon King Æthelred and his replacement by the Danish victor, Cnut. His political influence is manifest in the lawcodes he drafted for both kings, and his sermons and other writings set out a spiritual interpretation based on sin, divine punishment and the need for penitence of the crisis. He was a towering figure in his own time and remains so today when his writings dominate scholarly debate concerning England at the turn of the first millennium. This conference brings together leading experts from across the world who will present new insights into the man, his career and his turbulent times in a lively and accessible way."

Lectures will be held in the historic Abbot's Kitchen in the Old Palace, once the residence of the Bishops of Worcester. One of the oldest buildings in the city, it has hosted royalty through the ages, including Elizabeth I, Charles I, James II, George III and Elizabeth II.

A light lunch is included on both days in the magnificent Great Hall. The Friday evening conference reception will be in the stunning setting of Worcester Cathedral Nave.

There will be opportunity to take a tour of the Cathedral and the library and see some of the medieval gems and fragments of what remains of Wulfstan's Anglo-Saxon world.

The Dean of Worcester, The Very Reverend Peter Atkinson, said: "The Cathedral team is most grateful to Prof Katy Cubitt and Prof Andrew Rabin for working with us to bring together such a fantastic group of academic speakers and a wonderful programme, which will be of enormous interest not only to scholars, but to all who are fascinated by the history of Worcester and Worcester Cathedral."

Tickets for the two-day conference are priced at £160 per person, including eight lectures, tea and coffee, a light lunch each day, a tour of the cathedral and/or library, a short dramatic recitation of highlights of Wulfstan's preaching and an evening reception with drinks and canapes.

Attendees can also join the speakers at the conference dinner on Friday 24 March in the Cathedral's early 12th Century Chapter House - thought to be the first round Chapter House in the world - at an additional cost of £35 per person.

For further information and to book, please email events@worcestercathedral.org.uk or visit www.worcestercathedral.co.uk/Wulfstan

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For press enquiries about Worcester Cathedral, please contact sarahbowyer@worcestercathedral.org.uk.

Notes to editors

Worcester Cathedral has been a place of Christian worship and prayer for fourteen centuries; the present building dates back to 1084 and is dedicated to Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Described as possibly the most interesting of all England's cathedrals, especially architecturally, Worcester Cathedral was founded in 680. Saint Oswald then built another cathedral in 983, and established a monastery attached to it. Saint Wulfstan began the present building in 1084 replacing the earlier cathedrals.

The Cathedral's attractions include King John's Tomb, Prince Arthur's Chantry, the early 12th Century Chapter House, St Wulfstan's Crypt, medieval cloisters, magnificent Victorian stained glass and spectacular views from the top of the Cathedral tower.