

ST. URITH OF CHITTLEHAMPTON: A STUDY IN AN OBSCURE DEVON SAINT.

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(Read at Tavistock, 22nd July, 1914.)

IN his presidential address at our Jubilee Meeting, Lord St. Cyres gave us a Devonian Common of Saints, and he added that there were many who deserved their proper offices, most of whom had received appropriate commemoration. Yes, of our Devon heroes, artists, philosophers, and writers much has been said, as the *Transactions* of our Society bear witness. But of our saints, save for Dr. Brownlow's accounts of St. Boniface and his companions, Devonians only by the accident of birth, how little. So I would attempt to give a proper for a Devonshire Saint, now obscure and quite unknown, yet one whose name takes us back to Devon's remotest past, even to its prehistoric age, whose cult was one of the most popular in the county through mediæval times, and even in the seventeenth century, when Risdon and Westcote were writing, the North Devon villagers still talked of her miracles and of the pilgrims who had flocked to lay their offerings at her shrine, above which our forefathers have reared one of the most stately and beautiful of all our North Devon churches.

To the present age St. Urith is all unknown, her legend and period quite forgotten, sex and even the true form of her name quite obscured. For modern Devon speaks of St. Hieritha, never of St. Urith, and modern writers on English hagiology, such as Miss Arnold Foster in her *Studies in Church Dedications* and Stanton in his *English Menology*, have turned her into a man, by identifying her with St. Herygh, St. Ercus, and St. Erth, and even Mr. Edmund Bishop, the deepest read of modern English hagiologists, in his MSS. (now in the British Museum) places her name in a list of saints of whom no day is known

and no information can be gathered. So be it my task to attempt to restore to her place in the minds of Devon folk a Saint who in birth, life, and death is all our own, to give a date and day, and, to use the old liturgical term, a proper for the feast of St. Urith of Chittlehampton, Virgin and Martyr.

Saint-lore may seem, perchance, to many a useless study, a mere record of absurd tales and fabulous miracles, but to those who have embarked on it, is ever a most fascinating subject, for not only does it rekindle for us the life, religion, and romance of the earlier Christian ages in our land, but it also brings us to the threshold of the religious beliefs of our forefathers in a still remoter past. All pre-Christian religion in our country consisted of two main elements: one a system of nature-worship with departmental gods, of whom the sun, weather, fire, and water were the chief, the other a system of magic or druidism, as they called it. Of these, the former was a development of the religion the Kelts brought with them from the old home of the Aryans, the latter was the religion of the Ivernians, whom they found occupying the land they invaded and whom they largely absorbed. And all literature shows that the latter was the more permanent, and in Devon it has never died out; as that acute observer, R. J. King, said: "Every form of superstition and superstitious observance condemned in the Penitential of Bishop Bartholomew in the twelfth century may still be found in Devon."¹ And again he writes: "A long string of superstitions remain and are as vigorous and lifelike at present as in the time when King Athelstan, in the midst of his Witan at Exeter, set forth his dooms against the evil practices of witches and warlocks."² The old wild creeds have been handed down from generation to generation, and form the basis of our folklore, which we appoint committees to enquire into and record. The impact with Christianity shattered the old faiths, but many of their fragments have floated down the stream of time and recombined in curious figures around the persons of Christian saints and heroes.

We find over and over again in the lives of our saints miracles which are solar in origin. We see it still in lamps that are kept perpetually burning, in fires lit at Easter. It has a Christian complexion, but its heathen origin is

¹ *Art Standard*, August 17th, 1876.

² *Sketches and Studies*, p. 324.

undoubted. We see it again in the idea, so widely diffused in folk-lore, of animals friendly to men. There is scarcely one of our Westcountry saints but has his own particular animal friend which assists him in all his difficulties. St. Brannock had his milk-white cow, which gave milk to every one that required it. However frequently it was required to be milked, it was never deficient, and everybody who drank of her milk was healed of their particular complaints; from fools they became wise, from sad, happy, from wicked, good. So too he had his stags to draw the timber for his church and his pig to point out the right spot. St. Petrock had his faithful wolf that watched over his belongings.

It is clear that the idea underlying these stories goes back to a time when it seemed natural that an animal should have a human understanding and enter into men's thoughts. Trees and flowers too form part of the lives of most of our saints. St. Brannock has his miraculous tree that bore loaves of bread; St. Juthwara has her wonderful tree. So too the cult of the water deity is seen in the miraculous fountains associated with our saints. Wherever their heads fall a spring gushes out; it is told of St. Nectan, St. Sidwell, St. Juthwara, and St. Urith, which brings me back to my story, from which I have somewhat digressed.

First, let me give all the statements we have of St. Urith in Devonshire writers or those who have written of Devon :

Risdon (1580-1640).—"This parish (i.e. Chittlehampton) is graced with a fair church and stately tower, and in times past hath been notable for that Hieritha (born at Hoforde,¹ *Ccm. Devon*), canonized a saint, was here interred, unto whose memory the church was dedicated, and she esteemed to be of such sanctity that you may read of many miracles ascribed to her holiness in his book that penned her life."²

"The Hamlet of Stowford . . . in this place was Hieritha, the patroness of Chittlehampton, born, who as the legend of her life makes mention, suffered the next year after Thomas à Becket, in the reign of Henry the Second, in which history the name of her parents are set down."³

I have found these words in Parker's Calendar of the Anglican Church, Murray's and other guide-books ascribed

¹ A misreading of Stowford in Swimbridge parish.

² *Risdon*, pp. 319, 320. Ed. 1811.

³ *Risdon*, pp. 323, 324.

to Leland, but there is no mention whatever of her by Leland either in his *Itinerary* or *Collectanea*.

Westcote (1567-1640).—"Chittinton *alias* Chittlehampton . . . is no great town, but rather to be termed a village ; famous only for that good St. Hieritha, whose miracles are able to fill a whole legend, who lived there and was there buried. And I observed the tower of the Church to be a work more curious and fair than any in that County."¹

Prince (1643-1723).—"Chittelhampton, commonly called Chittington, a parish famous for a canonized saint of great repute, St. Hieritha, which (whether born I can't say) lived there and was there interred, unto whose memory the Church of that place (eminent for its curious stately tower and spire on top²) was dedicated, who was esteemed of such sanctity that the miracles she is said to have done by her holiness was sufficient to fill a volume, as may be seen in the legend of her life."³

Polwhele (1760-1838).—Merely quotes *Risdon*.

Camden (1551-1623).—"Chettelhampton, where lies the body of St. Hierytha."⁴

These extracts are all the references to the Saint of Chittlehampton in standard authorities, references to her in other works being merely copies of the above, and the only ones which are of any value are those of *Risdon* and *Westcote*, of which all others are merely copies or repetitions ; and the question that at once arises is from whence did they get their accounts, for their words suggest that a life of St. Hieritha, as they term her, was extant and well known in the early seventeenth century.

Yet as a matter of fact no trace of such a life has ever been found. There is no mention whatever of such a saint in John of Tynemouth's *Sanctilogium* or *The Nova Legenda Angliæ*, the *Lives of the Women Saints of our Countre England, the Martiloge*, with addicyons, written by R. Whytford, or in any other book or MS. of such a class. The Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum* knows nothing of such a person, and there is further proof positive that no life of her was even known of in Devon during the period when *Risdon* and *Westcote* lived and wrote, for *Nicholas Roscarrock*, a Westcountryman who took his degree at

¹ *Westcote*, p. 287. Ed. 1845.

² Probably he means pinnacles. J. F. C.

³ *Prince's Worthies*, p. 411.

⁴ *Camden's Mag. Brit.*, Vol. I, p. 29. Ed. 1789.

Exeter College, Oxford, in 1568 and died in 1633, a man who, as Carew says, "took an industrious delight in matters of History and Antiquity,"¹ has left us a MS. compiled *circ.* 1613 on *Lives of the English Saints*, which contains much new information on Devonshire saints, and in this MS. he says of St. Hieritha : "What she was I know not. I would to God others would learn." The entry concerning her in Roscarrock's MS. is, I believe, unknown, so I give it in full :

OF ST. HIERYTHA A WOMAN SAINT.

There lyeth one Hierytha a woman saint canonized in the village of Chittlehampton in Devonshire, saith Camden, but what she was more I knowe not. I would to God others would learne.

Cam. Univ. MS., Add. 3041.

Where, then, did Risdon and Westcote get their information on a subject on which no one else at the period could obtain any? There can be but one answer to this question, "locally." Risdon and Westcote were both North Devon men ; both knew and had visited the spot. The written life they referred to must have been that which Bishop Grandisson had in 1330 ordered to be drawn up by the Parish Priest of the lives of Local Saints.² It may have been still in existence in the hands of the vicar, or at Brightleigh ; but though this is possible, all the evidences go to show that their information was gathered from local tradition, probably from some member of the Chapple family, who were then and had been tenants of the glebe lands for over one hundred years, and whose descendants are still, and have been for many generations, custodians of the church of Chittlehampton.

In Risdon's days the story would be still well known, for men must have been living who had heard it read out in the church on the feast day, and whose parents would have remembered the pilgrimages to the shrine of St. Urith and the rich offerings made there which had enabled them to build a tower which was the wonder and pride of the neighbourhood. How relatively large these offerings were may be gathered from the fact that in the last year of these pilgrimages, when they were being discouraged and falling into disrepute, the vicar's share of the offerings was still

¹ *Survey of Cornwall*, p. 229.

² *Grand. Reg.*, Part I, p. 585. Ed. Hingston Randolph.

sufficient to more than treble his income from tithes and glebe.¹

The next point to notice in the extracts I have quoted is the form the name of the Saint takes in all of them, Hieritha or Hierytha; this is also the form used in the inscription still to be seen at Chittlehampton Church. On a scroll in the housing or niche where the image of the Saint formerly stood, and to which I shall refer later, are these words: "The souls | of the righ | teous are | in the | hands of | God | IHS | The bodies | of the merci | ful are | buried in | peace but | their name | liveth for | evermore | In memory of | S. Hieritha fo | undress of this | Church."

The lettering of this inscription is of the latter part of the eighteenth century, and probably dates from 1764, when, shortly after the appointment of Peter Beavis as Vicar, a new altar-piece was contracted for by William Reed, of Barnstaple, joiner, at a cost of £46, the painting and writing executed by Mr. Scott costing £12 6s. in addition.²

Philip Bremridge, who visited the church in 1789, mentions the inscription exactly as it is now, but with the "figure of a lady painted" instead of the I.H.S.³ Some trace of this painting can still be seen under the I.H.S. In 1849, when the church was examined by Mr. James Davidson, it was exactly as it is now.⁴

The original of the inscription, however, probably goes back much earlier, but there is nothing to show how this form of the name originated, for that it is not the true form, which should be St. Urith, we have ample evidence, both in ecclesiastical and legal documents and also in tradition, for the Bishop of Crediton, formerly Vicar of Chittlehampton, informed me that his daughter, who was named Hieritha after what he thought the name of the patron Saint of the church, was always called "Miss Urith" by the villagers. The only explanation I can offer is that Risdon got the name as "Hurith" or Huritha (its Latinized form), locally, an H being prefixed where it had no business, an error that the villager is still very liable to, and by a clerical error Hu was read or written Hie in his MS., a difference that is very difficult to judge between in many manuscripts, which error, once made, has been followed by all subsequent writers.

¹ MS. Public Record Office.

² Chittlehampton Churchwardens' accounts.

³ Incedon MS. ⁴ Davidson's MS.

That the true name of the Saint is Urith, sometimes Latinized into "Uritha," we have, as I said, full evidence, for although there is no mention of either form in the Episcopal Registers of the Diocese of Exeter, or mention of the name of any saint in connection with Chittlehampton, yet both the *Liber Regis* of Bacon and the *Thesaurus* of Ecton, which are our main authorities for English Church dedications, agree in giving the dedication as St. Urith. Also at the Public Record Office there are documents referring to Chittlehampton in which the name is given twice as St. Urith, and in another and more important document (to which I shall refer later) in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, we have it in a Latinized form as St. Uritha.

And very strong confirmation is the fact that in the older parish registers of Devonshire Hieritha as a Christian name is never met with, while Urith is frequently, and was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a fairly popular name, both in simple and gentle families, as instances I have noted : Urith, daughter of Sir John Chichester, bap. 24th April, 1558 ; Urith, daughter of Humphrey Coplestone, bap. 1596 ; another Urith Coplestone, bap. 1649. Urith, daughter of Peter St. Hill, occurs in 1624, Urith, wife of John Trevelyan, in 1576, and several other instances might be given.

I cannot give any instances from Chittlehampton itself, but of the Register for the first hundred years, 1538-1638, only three pages giving some entries between 1575-1579 are now in evidence. We may therefore conclude that the true name is St. Urith, and that Risdon's form of the name originated in some error, clerical or otherwise ; so leaving this point, I would proceed to give some account of the legendary life of this almost unknown saint to Devon folk, that the prayer of Nicholas Roscarrock may be fulfilled. My main authority for this will be a document I have briefly referred to before.

It is a MS. in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge (O. 9. 38), which is a fifteenth-century notebook of a monk of Glastonbury. In the catalogue of the Library it is described as a paper volume, $11\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$, of ninety folios, fifty-one lines to a page, originally in a vellum wrapper and tender from damp at each end. It contains a great deal of mediæval Latin verse, most of which are hymns and sequences, the greater part of which are still quite unknown.

On the last leaf of this MS. is a poem referring to St. Urith and a collect, which gives us not merely the true form of the name, but also for the first time some real account of the mediæval legend attached to her. Unfortunately some parts are indistinct and the page has lost some parts of its outer edge, which has made some of the lines defective at their ends, but enough remains to give us the broad outlines of her story. It is practically the sequence and collect for the feast of St. Urith of Chittlehampton, Virgin and Martyr, and by the aid of it the proper for her festival can easily be reconstructed. The MS. is as follows :—

ORATIO RHYTHMICA.

Cotidiane lux di(ei)
 Protulit ad laud(em) dei
 (Urithae memoriam)
 Hic pudica et formosa
 Sua vita virtuosa
 Hic pu(ella etiam)
 Holocaustum Deo gratum
 Virgo vouit celebratum
 Se in etate tenera
 Munda carne pura mente
 Vixit Christo protegente
 Inter mundi (genera)
 Gaudet quia falcatorum
 Falce prato iniquorum
 Martirium sustin(uit)
 Virgo martyr nunc sanctorum
 Consortia angelorum
 In premium promer(uit)
 Hostium minas non expauit
 Hostes morte superauit
 Hostes quos absor(buit)
 Ubi virgo expirauit
 Fons habunde emanauit
 Sicca terra floru(it)
 Nunc gaudet tota patria
 Quod sue nouerce odia
 Innocens virgo (vicerit)
 O villa Chitelhamptonia
 Letare cum Deuonia
 Quod tal(iter se gesserit).

Ora pro nobis Virgo martir Christi
 Ut liberemur a morte tristi.

ORACIO

Omnipotens sempiterne deus q(ui sanctam)
 Vritham et virginitatis et ma(rtirii)
 Angelico decorasti gaudio conc(ede)
 Nobis famulis tuis ut suis merit(is)
 Et intercessionibus eterna celi g(audia)
 Pertingere mereamur per Christ(um)
 Dominum Nostrum. Amen.

The parts in brackets are conjectural restorations of those parts of the hymn and collect which are decayed or missing. Some few of them may be open to doubt, but most are fairly certain.

As a literal translation of this hymn and collect would not in any way reproduce the beauty of the original or be of any use, I would offer instead a free translation of the hymn in English verse and an adaptation of the collect, so that they may be fitted for present use in the Church of St. Urith and taught to the children of Chittlehampton, which will restore to the people of the parish their inheritance in their own Saint. For the metrical version of the hymn I am indebted to the Rev. George Woodward, whose *Songs of Syn* may be known to many, and who has thoroughly caught the spirit and beauty of the original sequence.

HYMN OF ST. URITH.

(COTIDIANE LUX DIEI.)

8, 8, 7, D.

(G. R. Woodward, 1914.)

Every daybreak, to the glory
 Of the Lord, doth call the story
 Of Saint Urith back to mind.
 Fair of face, and full of beauty,
 Modest, leal to God and duty,
 Every virtue she combined.

(Wherein God is well delighted)
 Virgin-vows to God she plighted
 While as yet a little child.
 Pure in body, chaste in 'haviour,
 She, by aid of Christ her Saviour,
 By the world was undefiled.

Mown by scythe of pagan scornful,
Gladly in the valley mournful
Crown of martyrdom she gain'd.
Now, 'mid Angels high and holy,
See, enthroned, this maiden lowly
Hath the victor's prize obtained.

Trembled she at threat of no man,
But did triumph o'er the foeman—
Foeman whom she overthrows.
There, where fell this godly maiden,
Sprang a well with virtue laden,
Bloom'd the desert as the rose.

By stepmother once ill-treated,
Now on every side is greeted,
Urith as the lily, white.
Chittlehampton voice to heaven,
Raise thou with the rest of Devon,
For this martyr, ruby-bright.

Maiden martyr, pray for us,
To our Saviour Christ, that thus
We thy bedesmen here may be,
Set from death eternal free.

COLLECT.

Almighty and everlasting God, who didst adorn Saint Urith with the angelic joy of virginity and martyrdom, grant to us thy servants, that we with her may be worthy to attain to the eternal joys of heaven through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

From this hymn and collect we can reconstruct the main parts of the legend of St. Urith. She was a beautiful maiden who from a tender age had dedicated herself to the service of God and a religious life. At the instigation of a jealous and probably a heathen stepmother, she is martyred, when on her way to prayer, by the haymakers of the village, who cut her in pieces with their scythes. At the spot where her head falls to the ground a copious spring bursts forth, and flowers bloom wherever a drop of her blood is sprinkled. Doubtless in the legend these were scarlet pimpernels, the poor man's weather-glass, showing the colour of her blood and a sign to show hereafter whenever God would be propitious to haymakers, as they open when there is a day

suitable for haymaking and close when it is going to be unfavourable.

Now in this legend the first noticeable point is the striking resemblance it bears to the legend of two other Devonshire female saints, the sisters Sidwell and Juthwara. The Sidwell legend is well known to all Devonshire people, and I need not repeat it, but Juthwara's is not much known, so I give it from Whytford's additions to the Martyrology for the use of the daughters of Sion as printed by Wynkin de Worde in 1526 :

July 13. In Englonde the feest of S. Iuthwara a virgin that by her stepmoder was falsely accused unto her own brother of fornycacion for the whiche in a fury he stroke off her heed, which heed she herself toke vp before him and all his people and there sprang vp a well and a grene tree growying thereby, than bare she her heed unto the chirche wereafter were shewed many grete myracles.

Now these stories are in their complexion so thoroughly mythological that we can see at once that Risdon's story of St. Urith's martyrdom having taken place the year after St. Thomas Becket's is absurd. Had it happened at that late period we should have other confirmation of it. But the whole thing becomes clear if, as seems certain, Risdon got his account from a Chittlehampton inhabitant. The feast of St. Urith at Chittlehampton is July 8th (or, according to the Kalendar in the *Devonian Year Book*, July 10th), that is immediately after the great festival of St. Thomas Becket, the Translation of his relics, July 7th. Risdon's informant said : " Her time is just after that of St. Thomas," or Her martyrdom day is just after St. Thomas Becket's day. Omit the word day and you have Risdon's statement. In Wales a St. Urith (in Welsh called Ewrith) was commemorated on January 31st, according to three Welsh MS. Calendars (John Edwards, 1481, Welsh Prymer, 1546, and Peniarth MS.), and this date curiously is just a month after the feast of the Martyrdom of St. Thomas of Canterbury, December 29th; if they refer to the same saint, the Welsh date is that of the translation of St. Urith.

From the striking similarity of the legend of St. Urith to that of St. Sidwell and St. Juthwara, we should be inclined at first to place them all at the same period (though the story as we have it may only be that of a professional saint life-writer of a later date), and St. Sidwell's date is

generally put down as being about A.D. 700, but further consideration leads me to place St. Urith much earlier.

The best guide to the period of any of our Devon saints is the name itself. If the name is of Teutonic stock the Saint must have lived after the English came into Devon. If the name is Keltic the presumption is that the Saint lived before the English occupation or at the very early part of it ; so before fixing any period for St. Urith let us consider the name itself. Although it is a name that was well known in Devon, being used by the Chichester, Coplestone, St. Hill families and others, yet strange to say no form of it appears in any list of Christian names I have seen. The fullest I am acquainted with is in Miss Yonge's *History of Christian Names*, and there is no name in her list that bears any resemblance to it. Enquiries addressed to philological experts as to the name produced at first no results. Sir John Rhys, Professor of Keltic, informed me that the name was not Keltic in origin. Mr. W. H. Stevenson, of St. John's College, Oxford (to whom the question was referred by Sir John Rhys), wrote :

I am unable to suggest any Old English or Germanic name that would appear as Urith . . . the suffix *ith* reminds one of the numerous O.E. feminine names in *gyð*, such as *Eadgyð*, now *Edith*, through the Latinized form *Editha*. But I know of no name stem that could produce *Ur*—or *Hier*—however the latter is pronounced.

Sir John Rhys then wrote me :

I thought it very feeble of us that we could make the name out neither Celtic nor Germanic. I am very glad, all the same, to have had the letter, for the name, not belonging to his field, must, I thought, belong to mine. So I began thinking over it again, and believe I have now identified it, namely, *Iweryð*, pronounced in mediæval Welsh as *Iwārith*, with *th* as in *this*, *there*, *that*, and *Iw* as *eau* in beauty. It is a name with a mythological tinge, and inseparable from that of the eponymous representative of the Ivernian race, a goddess of a sort I should say.

We are therefore brought up with the fact that the name *Urith* is in its origin pre-Keltic, and carries us back to the very earliest page in Devon's history when it was populated by a race generally termed Ivernian, who were here before Goidel, Brython, or Saxon appeared in our county.

In its original form the nominative *Iweryð* had a genitive

Iwerdon, but in the Keltic languages, when they ceased distinguishing case relations by inflexions, the two words, nominative Iweryð, and genitive Iwerdon, became disassociated. The nominative Iweryð was restricted for a long time to the supposed ancestress of the Ivernian race, but eventually was used as the ordinary name of a woman. The genitive Iwerdon was the general name for the land occupied by the Ivernians, not only Ireland, but also portions of West Britain, but later became restricted to Ireland only, and our present name Ireland is only a form of Iwerdon.

We can find instances of the earlier use of the name Iwerð in an early Welsh poem in the Black Book of Caermarthen, where in a dialogue between two legendary characters one of them says :

I have been where Bran was slain,
Iwerth's son of widespread fame.

The Mabinogion makes this Bran, who was the Bran the Blessed son of Lyr, the son of a woman named Penardim, while Iwerth was regarded as an ancestress of the race of which Bran was the head.

In mediæval times the distribution of the name in Wales shows that it was fairly popular. In the Brut-y-Tywy-sogion there is a Iweryð a half-sister of Bledyn, Prince of Powys. In the records of Carnarvon the name occurs twice, written Ewerith and Eweryth, and in the Black Book of St. David's it is mentioned as the name of one of the Bishop's tenants in Cardiganshire under the form of Yweryth, and the use of Iwerð in mediæval Welsh as the name of a woman is best accounted for on the supposition that the race to which it belonged had materially contributed in flesh and blood to the population that used it.¹

The Devonshire form of the name "Urith" approaches nearer to the Goidelic form than to the Brythonic form of the name. And in conjunction with this it is worthy of notice that the name of another North Devon saint, Nectan, is also pre-Keltic. Its original form is Nechtan. In Welsh it becomes Neithon, and occurs in Bede as Naiton. We have this form in St. Nightons Kieve, in

¹ "Studies in Early Irish History," *Proc. British Academy*, Vol. I, 1903-4, from which most of above remarks on the name are gathered.

North Cornwall. Together these two early names are some evidence of a continuance of an Ivernian element in the population of Devon to a late period.

From what has been said, then, we shall be justified in placing the date of St. Urith of Chittlehampton as not later than the Keltic period in North Devon, and at the earlier part of its evangelization rather than at the latter, and that she should be classed among very early saints of Devon, and not at the late period in which Risdon places her.

The local traditions of this Saint are unfortunately very scanty, and such as there are mainly centre round her well, though I also found some traces of an ascription of a flower to her, which was the scarlet pimpernel, as I mentioned before.

The well, which is still held in high estimation for its abundance, purity, and coolness, lies to the south of the churchyard, on the road to the vicarage. The ancient walls and building that stood above and around it were removed some few years ago, the well covered in and a pump fixed, and it is now commonly known as "Tiddy well"; but from some deeds connected with the land adjacent to it, and from the old people in the village, I have gathered several forms of its ancient name. One person called it St. Ura's well, another St. Erim's or St. Erin's. The deeds favoured some such name as St. Teara's, probably meaning St. Eara's. The form Erin is interesting, as Erin, one of the names Ireland is still called, comes from the same root as Urith.

The local pronunciation of the name is generally Urith, with the *u* as in *universe*, but among the more rustic there was a tendency to use the sound of *u* as *oo* in *moon*, and this probably would represent more nearly the ancient village pronunciation, and by some an aspirate was used, "Hurith," which gives us the form used by Risdon.

Having considered the true name, legend, and period of St. Urith, I would draw attention to her church, shrine, and image. The church has, though lacking a clerestory, an imposing external aspect. It stands on the higher side of a large open square formed by the church and churchyard on the north, rows of houses east and west, and a main road on the south. The view from the square shows a fine range of good Perpendicular windows, the walls embattled and ornamented with a cornice of quatrefoils

relieved at intervals by crocketed pinnacles, and the line broken by a south porch in the centre of the nave aisle, a small turret to give access to rood loft and roof, and transept. At the west end rises a tower which is certainly the finest in the county ; it approaches nearer to the Somerset type of tower than that of any other Devonshire church, though it has nearer affinities with the towers of Southmolton and Lapford. It is about 100 feet high to the battlements and 125 feet to the top of the pinnacles, of four stages divided by bands of quatrefoils and supported by buttresses of four stages, the set-offs being ornamented with crocketed pinnacles. The summit has a rich cornice of open battlements and quatrefoils, and is finished by eight crocketed pinnacles supported by flying buttresses and smaller pinnacles, some of which spring from corbels on the string course below the belfry and are enriched with sculptures on their sides. The belfry windows, in pairs on each face, richly carved in open quatrefoils, are of three lights divided by a transom and subarcuated with cinquefoil heads. The western doorway is large and fine, formed by a four-centred arch with numerous mouldings and foliage in the spandrels. Over it is a boldly moulded square head above which rises the west window of four lights with cinquefoil heads and open tracery. The south face has a fine housing for the image of St. Urith, which unfortunately is wanting.

The church itself has suffered much internally from restorations, in which the screen, the old carved bench ends—of which a very few only survived to the nineteenth century—the later seats, with fluted Doric pilasters and pediments, roof-bosses carved with animals, foliage, and various devices, have all been swept away. It is almost entirely of the Perpendicular period, with a somewhat peculiar ground plan, caused probably by the position of the shrine of St. Urith its foundress having prevented the usual eastern extension. It consists of a baptistery at the base of the tower, a nave 57 feet 3 inches by 21 feet, north and south aisles each 53 feet 9 inches by 12 feet 10 inches, and opening into the nave by five arches of the late Decorated period resting on slender columns formed by intervening hollow mouldings ; those on the south side have their capitals enriched with carved foliage. North and south transepts each 20 feet by 15 feet opening into the aisles by an arch 10 feet span, and into the chancel by two

narrow arches somewhat similar to those of the nave, the southern capitals only being carved. The chancel, 32 feet 4 inches by 17 feet 10 inches, is divided from the nave by a wide arch and a modern dwarf stone screen. On the north pier of the chancel arch there is a canopied housing for an image. On the north side of the sanctuary is a small chapel 8 feet by 4 feet, opening into the north transept by a narrow arch of 3 feet span, and into the sanctuary by an arch of about 7 feet span. On the west face of the column supporting these two arches is a beautiful housing for an image with a rich canopy of tabernacle work terminating in crocketed pinnacles and finials, its sides supported by buttresses of two stages with pinnacles. On the back of this housing is now the inscription to St. Urith which I have previously mentioned.

Originally it contained the image of the Saint, which was the object of much devotion. A few particulars concerning it and its removal can be gathered from the proceedings of a commission issued in 1540, to which I shall refer later. This small chapel, which has now been made into a passage leading to a small vestry, originally contained the shrine of St. Urith. It is now floored by an ancient slab, on which is a cross fleury fitchée with a long shaft resting at its base on a shield which has a bend engrailed cottised, on the sides of the shaft, and across it is the inscription "Orate pro aia Joh Coble." This slab, which is evidently not in its original position and is partly broken, was probably placed here after the desecration of the shrine to prevent further profanation by the State commissioners, and the relics of St. Urith may possibly still be under it.

The roofs are cradle and modern, with the exceptions of those in the transepts, which are ancient, flat, and much ornamented with bold ribs and bosses, and that of the south porch, which is cradle with bosses and shields. The south transept has four large windows and a small one over the porch, but in the north transept, which is of a more debased type, there are only four.

The pulpit is an ancient stone one, somewhat similar to those at Southmolton and Swymbridge, octagonal and handsomely carved. Five of its panels are occupied by whole-length standing figures, in housings the canopies of which are enriched with crockets and finials. The figure in the northern panel is a female with a palm branch in

one hand and a square block of stone in the other, and doubtless represents St. Urith. In the Swymbridge pulpit the patron saint St. James occupies the same position. The other four figures are male saints, none of which I am able to identify.

The pulpit has suffered very much from the restorers. In 1789 it was painted and gilded, as the Swymbridge one is still, but all traces of this has been removed and the figures themselves have been very coarsely retouched, which has spoilt them. The font also bears the marks of restorers' destruction, which gives it quite a modern appearance. And this destruction of ancient landmarks is still going on, the base and part of the shaft of the old churchyard cross having been quite lately utilized for a memorial to the late Archdeacon Seymour, formerly Vicar of Chittlehampton, a long inscription having been cut on it and a new shaft and cross quite out of keeping having been added.

The only other point to notice is the south porch, which had a good roof with carved bosses and a housing for an image outside and a bracket over the door into the church. The figures have, however, disappeared. The screen has also shared the same fate, but the rood loft door and staircase show its former position and that it extended right across the church.

As I have mentioned before, a few interesting particulars concerning the shrine and image of St. Urith can be gathered from the proceedings of a commission issued in 1540 concerning Chittlehampton. Though a large number of witnesses were called there is unfortunately no record of their evidences. The object of the commission was to enquire into the value for taxing purposes of the Vicarage of Chittlehampton. In accordance with this an Inquisition was held at Tawstock on August 18th, 31 Henry VIII, before Sir Thomas Dennis, Sir Hugh Pollard, Humphry Prideaux, John Cobley, and Roger Giffard.

Various witnesses were examined, viz. Robert Venner, John Budd, John Bright, Richard Tanner, William Chapell, John Brasier, John Yea, William Chapell, Jr., Michael Thorne, Thomas Christopher, and John Shepherd.

Full particulars of the emoluments were set forth, which were tithes on wool, lambs, pigs, calves, colts, whetfoles, hay, herbs, fish, apples, cider, geese and honey, justment ground (i.e. agistment), petty tithes, mortuaries, chrisoms, offering pence 18s. 4d., the four offering days 43s., offerings

at the cross, offerings at Easter 3s. 2d., cowatage glebelands £5, the total being £27 13s. 2d.

As the sum of the old rate was £76 17s. 10d., it was enquired what had caused the great falling off, and it was found that the decay was by reason of a loss in the oblations of £49 4s. 8d. since Easter last past year, the cause of which was "the takyng away of the Image of Saynt Urithe and the ceasing of offerings that used to be made there by pilgrims" (P.R.O. document).

To the document from which the above is taken, which is in English and signed by the commissioners, there is attached a return of the Commission to the Court of Exchequer in Latin, in which the same facts are set forth, and the name of the Saint given again as "Urith."

Mrs. Rose Troup has also brought to my notice a loose uncalendered paper she discovered among some Valor Ecclesiasticus documents at the Record Office. It is a return by Bishop Veysey, giving the names of the stipendiary priests at Chittlehampton and their conducts, i.e. those who have the right of appointing them.

Robert Bulpayne	conduct	The Vicar
Robert Bulhed	conduct	Executors of Henry Mayne.
Thomas Rowe	conduct	W. Chapell and W. Gregory.

Few though these documents bearing on Chittlehampton are, they give us several very interesting facts, viz. :

That the right name of the Saint is Urith, that her shrine was a place of pilgrimages, that the offerings at it which fell to the Vicar's share as late as 1539, when pilgrimages had fallen into disrepute, were over £50 in the year, which is equivalent to £500 a year now, that the church and its chantries and shrine was served by four priests, Richard Wulman, the Vicar, Robert Bulpayne, his assistant, and who succeeded him as Vicar in 1546, Robert Bulhed and Thomas Rowe, who served the shrine and chapels, and that the image of St. Urith was taken away in 1539 or 1540.

It would seem, however, that the veneration of her in no way ceased locally. Her relics probably still lie under the stone of John Cobley, whose inscription still calls for her prayers. A picture was placed in lieu of what the iconoclasts had destroyed with an inscription from the Book of Ecclesiasticus setting forth her merits, and which certainly imply that the relics of the Saint had been interred with due

honour and that her name still lived in their minds. This has happily survived all the changes and chances of nearly four hundred years.

It would be interesting to know if there is any other instance in England of such care being taken to preserve the memory of a local saint in the evil days.

There is also one other point to add. Mr. Maurice Drake informs me that there is a representation of St. Urith at St. Sidwell's, Exeter, in the robes of an abbess and holding the plan of a church, with workmen at their work behind her. I should think this very doubtful; it is more likely to be meant for one of the saintly sisters of St. Sidwell, either Juthwara, Eadwara, or Wulvella, for though there are representations of St. Sidwell in various parts of Devonshire and even so far afield as Oxford, where I noticed a few years ago a figure of her in some old glass in one of the college chapels, there is, as far as I know, nowhere anything that can with any certainty be connected with St. Urith of Chittlehampton. The cult of her seems to have been almost entirely local, but the scarcity of shrines in North Devon (there were but three, St. Nectan's, St. Brannock's, and St. Urith's) would account for her popularity.

England was in past days especially proud of her saints. The saints, it is true, belong to the whole Church, and are not the property of any part of it; but in no other country has so much attention been paid to those who sprang from their nation, witness the books that have been written at all periods on the saints of our country, and to-day she is reawaking to the value of her share in that glorious company. It is shown by the resolution lately passed by both houses of Convocation to add several local saints to those that already find a place in the Calendar of the Book of Common Prayer. One of our members and past presidents, the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, "*clarum et venerabile nomen*," has been the pioneer of that movement, and may I, as the priest of a sanctuary to which the name of St. Petrock, the Apostle of Devon, is attached, make my offering to this cause by attempting to rescue from unmerited oblivion the name and memory of one of Devon's oldest saints.