

# The Cult of St Urith in pre-Reformation Devon

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Urith, otherwise Hieritha,<sup>1</sup> is patron saint of Chittlehampton church in North Devon and a notoriously enigmatic figure. Absent from written records until the mid-fifteenth century, and with little reference thereafter, she occupies a minor position among Devon's saints, couched in bemused descriptors by later writers: rare, obscure, unknown. The cult of St Urith, which centred on her shrine at Chittlehampton, has suffered a similar fate, and despite its flourishing in the Later Middle Ages, remains an overlooked area of study.

Drawing upon textual, iconographical, and onomastic evidence, this paper offers a comprehensive study into the veneration of St Urith, from its burgeoning during the fifteenth century to its decline in the early sixteenth. It will aim to establish the date at which veneration to St Urith commenced, its geographical spread, and the extent of its popularity in both Devon and elsewhere. From this, it will turn to the preponderance of the name 'Urith' in sixteenth-century parish registers, probate records, and visitations, and will seek to understand how its usage in early modern England reflects both private and public veneration in the pre-Reformation landscape.

## Dating St Urith

The date at which veneration of St Urith (whether private devotion or pilgrimage) commenced can only be tentatively guessed at. If Tristram Risdon is to be believed, Urith was martyred in 1171, the year after Becket,<sup>2</sup> an unlikely date that is not borne out by hagiographical evidence; as we shall see, Urith's legend is too similar to the earlier martyrdom stories of Sidwell of Exeter or Juthwara of Sherborne to conceivably be a product of the twelfth century. Still, a problem arises when accounting for this date. The Reverend J. F. Chanter waved away the discrepancy between an 1171 martyrdom and Urith's legend with the tidy explanation that as Urith's feast day (8 July) falls the day after Becket's, Risdon had simply muddled the dates.<sup>3</sup> The problem with this explanation is that Urith's feast day appears to have originally fallen on 21 June, not 8 July, as Nicholas Orme has discovered in his study of two fifteenth-century prayer books.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the date of 8 July seems to have no basis in any saints' calendars, but owing to a speculative guess made by M. R. James in 1901,<sup>5</sup> has become Urith's *de facto* feast day, superseding the earlier 21 June.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the church of Chittlehampton is dedicated to St Hieritha, this is a comparatively late development of 'Urith', resulting from either a play on the Greek *hier* (holy) and *itheia* (just, upright), or the local dialect prefixing an 'H' to the Latin 'Uritha'. In all pre-Reformation records, she is Urith. See Nicholas Orme (ed.), *Nicholas Roscarrock's Lives of the Saints: Cornwall and Devon*, DCRS new series, Vol. 35 (1992), 138; and J. F. Chanter, 'St. Urith of Chittlehampton: A Study in an Obscure Devon Saint', pp. 290-308, *TDA*, 46 (1914), 295-296.

<sup>2</sup> Tristram Risdon, *The Chorographical Description or Survey of the County of Devon* (Plymouth: Rees and Curtis, 1811), 323-324.

<sup>3</sup> Chanter, 'St. Urith', 300.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Orme, 'Two Early Prayer-Books from North Devon', pp. 345-350, *DCNQ*, 36 (1991), 348.

<sup>5</sup> M. R. James, 'St Urith of Chittlehampton', pp. 230-234, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 24 November, 1898, to May 23, 1900, 10 (1901), 233.

The problems with Risdon's date aside, it is reasonable to assume that Urith was venerated in some form long before 1171, and potentially before the seventh century. Like Nectan of Hartland and Brannoc of Braunton, the name 'Urith' is Brythonic in origin, likely cognate to 'Iwerth', a name encountered in medieval Wales.<sup>6</sup> The legend depicted in a fifteenth-century hagiographical poem, composed at Glastonbury Abbey, is further indicative of an earlier date for St Urith. Beautiful, virginal, and virtuous, Urith dedicates herself to a religious life. A hateful stepmother instigates her demise, and Urith is accosted in a meadow by haymakers, who mow her down with their scythes. At the place of her martyrdom, a fountain springs out of the ground, and divine vengeance is meted out to her killers. Now, the poem concludes, the whole country rejoices in the ultimate triumph of Urith, elevated to sainthood and in the company of angels.<sup>7</sup>

The narrative and characters of Urith's legend bears a striking resemblance to that of Sidwell, or Sativola. According to her fourteenth-century 'life', Sidwell's stepmother, filled with envy, conspired to be rid of her, and so bribed haymakers with the task of murder. Like Urith, Sidwell is ambushed in a meadow, and beheaded with her killers' scythes; a fountain gushes forth from the place where she is martyred.<sup>8</sup> A similar fate befalls a third saint, Juthwara of Sherborne, whose stepmother convinces her brother that she is pregnant; again, the virgin is beheaded, this time to preserve her honour, and the miraculous spring rises from the spot where she was killed.<sup>9</sup> Evidence for both Sidwell and Juthwara predate 1171 by at least a century: Sidwell is possibly the 'Sitafolla' named in a ninth-century saint's 'life' from Brittany,<sup>10</sup> while Juthwara first appears in the Life of St Wulfisge, composed c.1078-80.<sup>11</sup> A closer reading however places these legends at a much earlier date, potentially during the nascent days of Christianity. All three saints are explicitly Christians, the foil to the wicked – and, by implication, heathen – stepmothers. The spring that accompanies their martyrdoms is a staple of early martyrdom stories, such as Decuman's and Nectan's. Urith's final triumph, finally, can be interpreted as a wider triumph of Christianity over paganism. One may therefore conclude that Urith, as with Sidwell and Juthwara, represents a tradition of Brythonic saints whose legends had crystallised prior to the Anglo-Saxon incursions into Devon. Despite the relative lateness of her hagiographical poem, the legend of St Urith had almost certainly existed prior to the fifteenth century, although quite evidently, it was not a popular one.

### **The rise of Urith's cult in the fifteenth century**

The hagiographical poem, now in a fragmentary state, is located in the back pages of a commonplace book, a compendium of accounts, medicinal recipes, and poems, likely

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<sup>6</sup> Chanter, 'St Urith', 301-302.

<sup>7</sup> Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 0. 9. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Grosjean, 'Legenda S. Sativolae Exoniensis', pp. 359-365, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 53 (1935), 363-365.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Horstmann (ed.), *Nova Legenda Anglie: As Collected by John of Tynemouth, John Capgrave, and Others, and First Printed, with New Lives*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), ii, 98-100.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Pilgrimage: With a Survey of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Bristol* (Exeter: Impress Books, 2018), 102.

<sup>11</sup> Rosalind Love, 'The Life of St Wulfisge of Sherborne by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin', pp. 98-123, in K. Barker, D. A. Hinton and A. Hunt (eds.), *St Wulfisge and Sherborne: Essays to Celebrate the Millennium of the Benedictine Abbey, 998-1998* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 100.

composed by a series of unnamed Glastonbury monks. Dating to the mid-fifteenth century,<sup>12</sup> it is the earliest surviving record of St Urith, a comparatively late period when compared to Sidwell or Juthwara, or indeed most West Country saints. As opposed to Sidwell, Grandisson's Calendar of saints, composed in 1337, omits Urith; nor does she appear in the *Nova Legenda Anglie*, a fourteenth-century compendium of saints' lives from St Albans. Only one national list of saints includes Urith, and as her name is spelt 'Hyeritha' instead of the pre-Reformation 'Urith', it is likely that the list, either in the date of composition or in addenda, was a product of the sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup> After the composition of the Glastonbury poem, however, one witnesses a burgeoning of Urith's cult in textual sources, all of which originate in Devon. But what had precipitated this during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?

The answer is probably a series of miracles. Tristram Risdon and his contemporary Thomas Westcote, whose respective choreographies were completed in the 1630s, both note their number in Urith's *vita*, which is now lost; the latter even suggests that there were so many reported that they were able to fill a whole legend.<sup>14</sup> Risdon and Westcote were both local men, born in the latter decades of the sixteenth century; it would be no stretch to imagine they had been raised with the stories, still within living memory, of local pilgrimage and miraculous recoveries. As Urith's *vita* is no longer extant, what these miracles constituted is unknown, but they were undoubtedly thaumaturgical in nature, centred on an ailment and a cure; miracle stories bear an uncanny resemblance to one another, and the miracles reported at Urith's shrine are likely identical to the miracles reported at Sidwell's, which purportedly cured lameness and blindness.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever such miracles were, their proliferation had ensured that by the eve of the Reformation, Chittlehampton had been transformed into a notable place of pilgrimage. From the unlikely source of a debt plea, we know that a fraternity had been established in the village by 1508; almost nothing is known of this fraternity, except that the plaintiffs named in the debt plea, Matthew Halse and William Hamond, were wardens of St Urith's light.<sup>16</sup> This light would have shone before Urith's image, which formerly had been placed in an elaborate niche north of the chancel, at the entrance to her shrine. As Richard Marks has noted, the positioning of the niche had been designed to accommodate the pilgrim, and, visible from both nave and transept, its placement would have provided ample space for pilgrims to pray and prostrate before Urith's image.<sup>17</sup> The number of pilgrims who visited the shrine is unknown, but offerings made to Urith's image were evidently numerous, for an inquisition into the benefice's revenue in 1539 reported that due to its removal the year before, and the ceasing of oblations made by pilgrims, the annual value of the vicarage had fallen by £49 4s. in a single year.<sup>18</sup> This is an extraordinary sum of money; by contrast, the offerings received at Bishop Lacey's tomb in Exeter totalled £7 13s. 4d. in 1528, despite it being a noted place

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<sup>12</sup> The commonplace book was a collective effort; the oldest hand, and the hand that records Urith's poem and accompanying prayer, dates to the mid-fifteenth century. See A. G. Rigg, *A Glastonbury Miscellany of the Fifteenth Century: A Descriptive Index of Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 0.9.38* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 6-9.

<sup>13</sup> John Leland, *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea*, ed. Thomas Hearne, 6 vols. (London: G. & J. Richardson, 1770), iii, 408-409.

<sup>14</sup> Risdon, *Survey of Devon*, 319-320; Thomas Westcote, *A View of Devonshire in MDCXXX, with a Pedigree of Most of its Gentry* (Exeter: William Roberts, 1845), 287.

<sup>15</sup> Grosjean, 'Legenda S. Sativolae', 365.

<sup>16</sup> TNA, CP40/983.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), 200.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, SC 12/25/32.

of pilgrimage.<sup>19</sup> In light of this, the figures reported seem unusually high, and Nicholas Orme has suggested that oblations received at Chittlehampton may have encompassed tithes and statutory payments from parishioners alongside offerings made by pilgrims.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the principal source of revenue was the oblations, for it was due to the removal of Urith's image in 1538 that an inquisition had been called; if not as lofty as £49 4s., they were significant enough to cause lasting damage to the fortunes of the benefice in the post-Reformation years.

Private devotion to St Urith had likewise arisen by the fifteenth century, as is evidenced by three prayer books from North Devon. The first, a Parisian Book of Hours, had at some point during the fifteenth century come into association with the parish of Tawstock, near Barnstaple; a later hand has appended Urith, along with Nectan, to its Calendar. The second prayer book to include Urith is also of the fifteenth century, and includes a dedication to the parish church of South Molton. The third prayer book is a later creation, dating to c.1521, and likely originates from Pilton Priory; again, Urith and Nectan are specifically mentioned.<sup>21</sup> Arnulph Colyns, the vicar of Chittlehampton, also left 13s. 4d. when he died in 1490 to the honour of 'sancta Urithe', virgin and martyr.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to the fourteenth century, veneration towards St Urith's cult, both private and public, was beginning to flourish in the fifteenth.

### The spread of St Urith's cult

Despite its gradual ascension into written records by the mid-fifteenth century, it is evident that Urith's cult was highly provincial in nature, and never penetrated further east than Glastonbury. This is apparent in pre- and post-Reformation chorographies of the county; with the exceptions of the Devon-born Risdon and Westcote, most topographers and antiquarians knew little, if anything, of Urith. William Worcester, a Bristolian by birth, travelled through North Devon in the late fifteenth century, yet does not name a Urith in his *Itineraries*. Writing in the sixteenth century, John Leland is similarly mute. Although William Camden knew of her existence, he could supply no more than her name.<sup>23</sup> The Cornish recusant Nicholas Roscarrock could no more furnish Urith's story than Camden: his entry on 'Hierytha, a woman Sainct', is surprisingly brief, for 'what she was more I knowe not. I would to God others would learne'.<sup>24</sup>

Textual and visual sources of Urith paint a similar picture of local devotion. The prayer books that include Urith either originated or were associated with parishes and priories in North Devon; if one were to draw a nine-mile radius around Chittlehampton, all three prayer books would fall within its bounds. Iconographical representations – which are few – of Urith would likewise fall within this radius. In Chittlehampton itself, she appears on the sixteenth-century pulpit, holding the palm of martyrdom, while in the nearby parish of North

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<sup>19</sup> U. M. Radford, 'The Wax Images Found in Exeter Cathedral', pp. 162-168, *The Antiquaries Journal*, 29 (1949), 165.

<sup>20</sup> Orme, *Medieval Pilgrimage*, 89.

<sup>21</sup> The three prayer books are, respectively: Senate House Library, MS 906; British Library, Harley 2367; and Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. liturg. g. 12. The Tawstock and South Molton prayer books are discussed by Orme, 'Two Early-Prayer Books', 345-350.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, PROB 11/8/397.

<sup>23</sup> William Camden, *Britannia: Or a Chorographical Description of Great Britain and Ireland, Together with the Adjacent Islands*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. and trans. Edmund Gibson, 2 vols. (London, 1722), i, 45-46.

<sup>24</sup> Orme (ed.), *Lives of the Saints*, 78.

Molton, she is represented on the Perpendicular font, this time with a scythe. Beyond the environs of Chittlehampton, however, identifications become more tentative. Rev. J. H. B. Andrews identifies the saints carrying scythes on rood screens at Hennock, Bere Ferrers, and Ashton as representing Urith,<sup>25</sup> but as these parishes are closer to Exeter than Chittlehampton, it is more likely that they are Sidwell. Outside Devon, ‘Sca Uritha’ appears in the east window of the Trevelyan Chapel at Nettlecombe Court in Somerset, alongside the more conventional Saints John, Laurence, and Mary. Dating the window is problematic: the original glass appears to be of the early sixteenth century, with significant restoration in the years following the Reformation.<sup>26</sup> This stained-glass has been cited as evidence of the cult of Urith’s spread into West Somerset during the sixteenth century,<sup>27</sup> although a more likely explanation rests in the marriage of one of Nettlecombe’s scions, Sir John Trevelyan, to Urith Chichester of Raleigh in 1576; the stained-glass, which may have once originally represented a different saint entirely, was thus renamed to celebrate Urith Chichester, and not in commemoration of the saint herself.

In light of this, it would be reasonable to conclude that Urith’s cult was mostly limited to the confines of North Devon. Antiquarians outside Devon were largely ignorant of her; not even a Cornishman in 1613 could expand her story. Pre-Reformation iconographical representations of her are limited to North Devon, as are most textual sources. Unlike Sidwell or Juthwara, whose legends and cults were established across England and possibly Brittany, Urith does not seem to have spread much further than Chittlehampton.

### **The use of the name ‘Urith’**

Textual and iconographical evidence, or the lack thereof, is thin on the ground, but nonetheless supports two facts: that the cult of St Urith had begun to flourish in the fifteenth century, and that it was largely confined to North Devon and West Somerset. There remains however an additional source that supports these arguments, and that is the use of her name.

The relationship between the cult of a saint and the use of a saint’s name is not well-defined, and employing onomastics as a barometer for the popularity of a cult is often inconclusive. Peter Franklin’s analysis of forenames in fourteenth-century manorial records and court rolls in South Gloucestershire reflects a ‘restricted picture of local peasant piety’, one in which the names of patron saints of local churches were seldom used amongst the parishioners.<sup>28</sup> In medieval Provence, despite the popularity of the Abbey of St Giles as a place of pilgrimage, the name ‘Giles’ was likewise rarely bestowed to boys.<sup>29</sup> However, Fiona Edmonds has demonstrated that onomastics can reflect local devotion, as with the use of the name ‘Gospatric’ and the cult of St Patrick in Strathclyde and Northumbria,<sup>30</sup> and as shall be evidenced, this is also the case with Urith, whose name has been used since at least the early

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<sup>25</sup> J. H. B. Andrews, ‘Chittlehampton’, pp. 233-338, *TDA*, 94 (1962), 240.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Woodforde, *Stained Glass in Somerset, 1250-1830* (Bath: Kingsmead Reprints, 1970), 76-77.

<sup>27</sup> Andrews, ‘Chittlehampton’, 240.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Franklin, ‘Normans, Saints, and Politics: Forename choice among fourteenth-century Gloucestershire peasants’, pp. 19-26, *Local Population Studies*, 36 (1986), 24.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Wilson, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-53, in Stephen Wilson (ed.), *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 15.

<sup>30</sup> Fiona Edmonds, ‘Personal Names and the Cult of Patrick in Eleventh-Century Strathclyde and Northumbria’, pp. 42-65, in Steve Boardman, John Reuben Davies, and Eila Williamson (eds.), *Saints’ Cults in the Celtic World* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), 42-43.

sixteenth century, and despite its appearance across Southern England, can in all certainty be drawn back to North Devon.

Evidence for pre-Reformation examples of the name 'Urith' is difficult to determine. The name features in no known poll tax; furthermore, no woman named Urith ever proved a will prior to 1583, although the destruction of probates proved in Devon's archdeaconries during the Blitz may well have extinguished any evidence of a wife, relation, or witness who bore the name. Owing to its appearance across England by the time parish registers were introduced in 1538, however, it was evidently in use at the baptismal font long before that date. In Bovey Tracey in 1539, Urithe Clemente was baptised, the earliest example of the name in parish records; two years later, a Urith Maynerd was baptised in the parish of St Petrock, Exeter, while a Urith Inledon was baptised in Braunton. In West Somerset, two Uriths were baptised in North Curry in 1548 and 1564, and an 'Earthe Wills' in nearby Othery in 1562. Even outside the West Country, the name is to be found in parish records, as in Ulceby by Barton (Lincolnshire), where Urithe Cootes was baptised in 1566, or in Creeting (Suffolk), when Urith Boby married William Rose in 1559. Nothing suggests that the cult of St Urith had ever been popular in Lincolnshire or Suffolk, and the name had probably been carried there by Devon families.

Earlier records indicate the use of the name 'Urith', particularly in North Devon families. Between 1532 and 1538, a chancery pleading named Joan, widow of Henry Hyll, and the detention of lands and goods intended for the husband of Henry's daughter Urith.<sup>31</sup> Joan's husband, a sergeant-at-arms to the king, is presumably the Henry Hill whose will was written in 1529, and who requested to 'be buryed within the churche of Saint Urithe of Chetelhampton'; he made no provisions for any children, although he names his wife Joan,<sup>32</sup> and one may assume that his daughter was under age at the time of its composition, but married in the years immediately following, thus placing her date of birth to around the 1510s. The *Visitations of Cornwall* also records a Urith Mathewe, who married William Roope. Her father was Edmund Mathewe, of Dodbrooke in the South Hams, but her maternal grandfather was Thomas Parker of North Molton,<sup>33</sup> the parish that commemorates St Urith on its fifteenth-century font. The pedigree provided in the *Visitations* provides no birth dates on Urith or her ancestors, but a Thomas Parker left a will in 1543, naming 'Edmonde Marthewe' as his son-in-law;<sup>34</sup> as such it is likely that Edmond's daughter Urith had been born either before or around the Reformation.

The popularity of the name 'Urith' in Surrey and Dorset is similarly indicative that it was in use prior to the sixteenth century, and had probably been introduced by a woman from North Devon sometime in the fifteenth. The name is found, rather unusually, in the Isle of Purbeck and its surrounding areas, as in the baptism of Urith Parrish in Church Knowle in 1588, or in the marriage of Urith Smedmore to Thomas Haine in East Lulworth in 1575. It is the Smedmore family who are the probable root for the prevalence of the name in this remote corner of Dorset, for a second Urith Smedmore is to be found as daughter to one John, in his will of 1587,<sup>35</sup> while a possible third – Urith Mogge – was named as the wife to William Mogge, a merchant of Wareham, in 1581. Urith's maiden name is unknown, but her husband's godson was George Smedmore; furthermore, a William Mogge took an oath upon the inquisition of a Walter Smedmore of Lulworth in 1562. It is likely, and particularly when considering the evident fondness for the name in the Smedmore family, that there is a familial

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<sup>31</sup> TNA, C 1/707/34.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, PROB 11/23/290.

<sup>33</sup> J. L. Vivian (ed.), *The Visitations of Cornwall: Comprising the Heralds' Visitations of 1530, 1573, and 1620* (Exeter: William Pollard and Co., 1887), 309.

<sup>34</sup> TNA, PROB 11/30/23.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, PROB 11/70/342.

relationship between Urith Mogge and the Smedmores of Lulworth.<sup>36</sup> On this basis, and given the absence of St Urith's cult outside Devon or Somerset, it would appear that the name had been introduced through an ancestress, possibly an earlier Smedmore wife, and had later become established in neighbouring families by the late sixteenth century.

The name is encountered in several noble families of Surrey by the early sixteenth century, including two of the granddaughters of Henry Saunders (d. 1519), of Ewell,<sup>37</sup> and in the thrice-married Urith de Lisle (d. 1583).<sup>38</sup> The Saunders' pedigree claims no connection with North Devon, although Urith de Lisle's grandmother is stated to have been Avis Daubney, whose father Giles held the manor of Chittlehampton in 1507.<sup>39</sup> As with many early pedigrees, this claim is fictional: Giles did not have a daughter named Avis, nor did he have any relationship with the de Lisles. A connection with Chittlehampton is however very likely, either in the de Lisle family or elsewhere, for there is no evidence to indicate that the cult of St Urith had reached Surrey, but plenty to suggest that the name had reached there by the turn of the sixteenth century.

As with Dorset, and as with Lincolnshire, Suffolk, and other counties far beyond Chittlehampton's environs, the spread of the name 'Urith' is indicative of an early introduction of the saint's name, possibly in the fifteenth century. Few places outside North Devon appear to have venerated St Urith in any way, and the spread of her name is almost certainly not a reflection of her cult's popularity in the Isle of Purbeck or Surrey. Rather, it was likely borne there by local families, whose initial adoption of the name was probably a reflection of the cult's popularity in the mid- to late-fifteenth century, but had lost any reverential meaning by the time it had become established far beyond the reaches of Chittlehampton in the sixteenth.

## Conclusion

This paper has considered the cult of Urith of Chittlehampton through a variety of sources, from written and visual representations of the saint to the use of her name in post-Reformation England. In so doing, it has sought to determine the cult's provenance, its dissemination and repute in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as its decline following the removal of her image in 1538.

From these considerations, certain facts become apparent. The silence of textual sources until the mid-1450s suggests that the cult of St Urith was a relatively minor one until the fifteenth century, when a series of miracles instigated a wave of pilgrims to make offerings to her shrine. This period also witnessed the first textual evidence for her existence, in the form of a hagiographical poem and prayer at Glastonbury Abbey. At the same time, visual representations of the saint began to appear in the parishes of Chittlehampton and North Molton, and a fraternity was established in the church of the former.

It was during the fifteenth century, furthermore, that the name 'Urith' began to be bequeathed to baby girls, at first within North Devon but later spreading elsewhere. While

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<sup>36</sup> TNA, PROB 11/63/308; Dorset History Centre, D-BOC/889/Box13a/H2.

<sup>37</sup> These granddaughters were Urith Saunders, daughter of Sir William, who married Sir John Pgrave and died in 1600; and Urith Bray, daughter of Sir Richard Bray and Jane Saunders. See the will of William Saunder, 1571, TNA, PROB 11/53/491, and W. Bruce Bannerman (ed.), *The Visitations of Surrey Made and Taken in the Years 1530, 1572, and 1623* (London: Harleian Society, 1899), 51.

<sup>38</sup> See Bannerman (ed.), *Visitations of Surrey*, 67-68. This pedigree erroneously names her as Ursula, although she is correctly named in both her first husband's will (London Metropolitan Archives, DW/PA/5/1558/197) and her own in 1583 (TNA, PROB 11/65/188).

<sup>39</sup> Bannerman (ed.), *Visitations of Surrey*, 67; Andrews, 'Chittlehampton', 251.

records are scarce before the advent of parish registers, Urith's diffusion across much of southern England by the sixteenth century is indicative of an earlier introduction of the name, coinciding with the burgeoning of the saint's cult in the previous century. Through adoption of the name amongst the landed families, such as the Chichesters or the Parkers, the name spread beyond the parameters of St Urith's cult, reaching diverse parts of England by the close of Elizabeth I's reign. The consequence of such diffusion was that even after the waning of her cult, the name 'Urith' continues to be used for girls to this day, in both Devon and elsewhere. If not a restoration of her cult, the bestowing of Urith's name at the baptismal font has nevertheless ensured a long and peculiar afterlife for one of our most unknown saints.

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