

Hyde Abbey: The Final Burial Place of King Alfred The Great

King Alfred died in 899. Although some of his predecessors had been buried in the Old Minster, the fore-runner of today's Cathedral, Alfred wanted to build a new church in the centre of Winchester as a resting place for himself and his dynasty. In his will he left 'fifty pounds to the church in which I shall rest'.

The 'New' Minster, to contrast it with the 'Old', was completed quickly after Alfred's death. In the interim years his body had been placed in the Old Minster but his unhappy spirit was claimed to walk at night in dissatisfaction. Alfred, together with his wife Alswitha who died a couple of years later, were then buried in New Minster to be followed later by their son King Edward.

The End of New Minster

Two hundred years later the construction of Winchester Cathedral by the new Norman regime meant 'all change' in the city centre. The Old Minster had been brought down to accommodate the Cathedral and the New Minster was also standing in its way. So, under the auspices of King Henry 1st, land was bought a little way outside the city (in the area known as Hyde) for a new abbey church and accompanying monastery to be built.

In 1110 a great procession took the coffins of Alfred, Edward, Alswitha and other dignitaries across to Hyde where they were reburied in prominent positions within the abbey church. The community of Benedictine monks then followed and remained there until 1538 when

the monastery was dissolved and the monks were pensioned off. The redundant buildings were very rapidly plundered for their valuable construction materials.

Shortly after the Dissolution the visiting antiquarian John Leland reported:

'All that now remains [of Hyde Abbey] are some portions of the walls, a gateway, and a few small door-ways of the fifteenth century, and some fragments of an earlier period built in the neighbouring walls.'

It has continued so ever since.

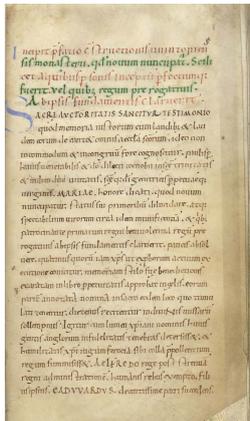
The Move To Hyde

At the time of the move to Hyde from New Minster during the reign of Abbot Geoffrey, the king granted another charter to the monks of Hyde, whereby, amongst other regulations, it was arranged that a joint procession of the monks of St. Swithun and Hyde was to be made year by year. Their new home was speedily ready for occupation and in 1110, the monks of New Minster carried with them to the Abbey of Hyde, in solemn procession, their sacred relics, the great gold cross of Cnut's benefaction, together with the illustrious remains of Alfred, his queen and his son. Henry I made several grants to the abbey, among them the churches of Kingsclere and Alton and five hides in Alton which William I had given in exchange for land in the city of Winchester. He also confirmed to them the right of soc and sac, thol and theam and other liberties.

From the Victoria County History of Hampshire



Liber Vitae de Hida
A projection of the New Minster's view of its history and identity at a time when Winchester was the centre of Anglo-Danish England. It was probably commissioned by King Cnut (1016–1035) and shows the King presenting the 'Gold Cross' to the New Minster.



Vita de Hida
Grant recording the acquisition of land by King Edward the Elder of land on which to build the New Minster circa 901 AD



Liber Monasterii de Hida
Three copies of Alfred the Great's will in Latin, Early English and Middle English



Bird's eye impressions of Hyde Abbey by Nick McPherson