

St Frideswide's monastery

St Frideswide is the patron saint of Oxford, and her feast day is October 19th.

According to William of Malmesbury, writing around 1125, St Frideswide was a king's daughter who rejected an offer of marriage. She escaped from her suitor, who pursued her to Oxford, where he was struck blind. His sight was restored by Frideswide's prayers, and she went on to found a monastery in the town.¹

Little is known about the eighth-century foundation of this monastery, though its site is known: it lies beneath the modern Christ Church Cathedral.²

In the uprising of 1002 the Danes settled in Oxford took refuge in St Frideswide's minster, and the townsfolk burned it to the ground, along with all its records. To correct the situation, in 1004 King Aethelred II granted a fresh charter confirming the minster's rights and possession of its lands. It is this replacement charter which describes the boundaries of the three hides of land 'in Cowley' which include the parish of St Clement's.³

1. F. M. Stenton, "St Frideswide and her times" *Oxoniensia* I (1936) 105.

2. John Blair, "St Frideswide's Monastery: problems and possibilities" *Oxoniensia* LIII (1988) 222.

3. S. Wigram, *The Cartulary of the Monastery of St Frideswide at Oxford, edited from the Christ Church and Corpus MSS* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 4.