

Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain

Cuthman of Steyning

Feast day: February 8

He was born around 681 possibly in Devon or Cornwall, or more probably in Chidham near Bosham, about 25 miles from Steyning. His life was one of simple filial piety and charity...

According to legend, he was a shepherd who had to care for his paralysed mother after his father's death. Due to their poverty, he built a one-wheeled cart or wheelbarrow (with a rope from the handles over his shoulders taking part of the weight) in which he moved her around with him.

They set out east from his home and, when the rope broke, he made a new one, deciding that if the rope broke again he would take it as a sign from God to stop at that place and build a church. The rope broke at the place now called Steyning. After building a hut to accommodate his mother and himself, he began work on the church (St Andrew's, Steyning). As the church was nearing completion and St Cuthman was having difficulty with a roof-beam, a stranger showed him how to fix it. When Cuthman asked his name, he replied: "I am he in whose name you are building this church." This church was certainly in existence by 857, for we know that King Ethelwulf was buried there in that year.

Here he died and was buried. King Edward the Confessor handed over responsibility for the Steyning church to the monks of Fécamp in Normandy; they enlarged the church, but took the saint's remains back to their French abbey to be enshrined. He died at an unknown date in the 8th century. A local cult of his sainthood predates the Norman Conquest.