

Abbess Elwina (circa 990s)



Elwina, created by Romsey Primary School

After the death of St. Merwenna, she was succeeded by Elwina.

It was during the time of Elwina's abbacy that Romsey Abbey fell victim to a raid by the Vikings who had landed at Southampton and sailed up the River Test in search of riches. Of the various Viking raids in this part of Wessex, this is likely to have happened during the raid of 994, since Elwina was only purported to have been Abbess for three years.

While praying at the altar, Elwina is said to have had a vision of the Danes attacking and burning her church so she gathered the nuns, packed up the community's treasures and fled to the safety of the Nunnaminster, also known as St. Mary's Abbey, another Benedictine nunnery in Winchester. Here they stayed, for an unrecorded length of time, until it was safe to return to Romsey and the nunnery was to some degree habitable. The church and buildings had been burned in the raid, though the severity of the damage is not certain. In any case, building work had to be carried out and the opportunity may have been taken to extend the church. The nuns were certainly back in Romsey by 1012, when Queen Emma gave lands to Romsey Abbey. We cannot know if it was a wooden church or the first stone church which was damaged.

According to Henry D G Liveing, in his 1906 publication *Records of Romsey Abbey*, Elwina remained abbess for only three years and was succeeded by Elflæda, subsequently better known as St. Ethelflæda, one of the Patron Saints of Romsey Abbey.