



## St Winefride's Shrine

A Spring of Grace & one of the Seven Wonders of Wales

St Winefride's Shrine has been a place of pilgrimage, reflection and healing since at least 1115 and in November 2023 was granted the status of a National Shrine by the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Drawing on the story of St Winefride, the shrine is also becoming a place of prayer and consolation for those who have suffered in their own lives, and who have been victims of sexual violence, harassment or abuse.

### BATHING

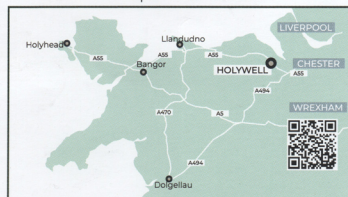
Bathing is permitted at the following times:  
11.00–11.30, 13.00–13.30, 15.00–15.30  
(Suitable attire is required)

### SERVICE AND VENERATION OF THE RELIC OF ST WINEFRIDE

Pentecost until the end of September at the Well  
Monday to Saturday – 12 noon  
Sunday 14.30

### HOLY MASS

St Winefride's Chapel (above the Well)  
Pentecost Sunday to the last Sunday  
in September at 17.00



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stwinefridesshrine.org

A listed scheduled monument  
in the care of the Roman  
Catholic Diocese of Wrexham  
Registered Charity no. 700426



## The National Shrine of St Winefride

St Winefride's Shrine is one of the 'Seven Wonders of Wales', and attracts many tens of thousands of visitors each year, who come in search of peace, reflection and even a cure for bodily ills. A grade I listed building and scheduled ancient monument, it is considered to be the oldest continually visited pilgrimage site in Great Britain.



### The Legend...

Winefride (*Gwenffrewi*) was a Welsh virgin martyr of the 7th century. According to legend, one day her suitor Caradoc became enraged when he discovered she intended to become a nun.

He attempted to seduce Winefride, but she broke free of his grasp and fled to the church at Holywell which had been built by her uncle, St Beuno.

Caradoc pursued her and cut off her head. In the place where it fell a spring of water came forth.

On hearing the commotion, St. Beuno came out of the church and placed her head back on her body, said a fervent prayer, and Winefride was restored to life, bearing just a white scar encircling her neck where Caradoc's blow had fallen.

Winefride became a nun and lived at Holywell for eight years before joining a community at Gwytherin where she eventually became Abbess, dying there some 22 years later.

By the 12th century her popularity had become so great that in 1138 her relics were translated to Shrewsbury Abbey, which became a major pilgrimage centre. After it was destroyed by Henry VIII in 1540, veneration to St Winefride returned to Holywell, where her story continues to inspire and comfort countless pilgrims to the present day.

### TO SEEK AND FIND ON YOUR VISIT ...

Visitors are asked to be quiet and mindful of being in a sacred place and of needs of others, who may have come to pray, to seek healing or simply to find a place of tranquility and peace.



#### SANCTUARY

The Sanctuary area comprises the Crypt, Outer Pool and the Small Chapel.

#### CRYPT AND OUTER POOL

The crypt covers the source of the healing waters which rise in the lower open Crypt and flow out into the exterior bathing pool. Built in the early 16th century, construction is attributed to Margaret Beaufort, the mother of King Henry VII.

#### THE GATE HOUSE (SMALL) CHAPEL

Located next to the Outer Pool, this small chapel is a place to pray, light a candle or simply reflect awhile on whatever may have brought you to the Shrine.

#### ST BEUNO'S STONE

In the outside bathing pool a stone lies at one side close to the steps. Legend has it that St. Beuno sat here whilst teaching his young niece, and the red stains on the stone were evidence of her martyrdom.

#### JAMES II STONE

Set into the side of the well is a stone marking the date when James II and Queen Mary of Modena made a pilgrimage. It carries the Jesuit Christogram IHS – an abbreviation of the Greek name for Jesus – and the date 1687.

#### ST WINEFRIDE'S (LADY MARGARET BEAUFORT) CHAPEL

Located above the crypt, this chapel was built c. 1500 for Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII & wife of Thomas Stanley, Earl of Derby. The chapel ceiling contains many elaborate carvings.



#### Walk the Holywell Way ...

The Holywell Way pilgrim route runs from the Cathedral of Our Lady of Sorrows in Wrexham to the Shrine of St Winefride, and on to the spectacular ruin of the 12th century Cistercian Abbey at Basingwerk.

For more information, go to:  
[www.pilgrimways.org.uk](http://www.pilgrimways.org.uk)



### VISIT OUR MUSEUM AND GIFT SHOP ...

Among the many fascinating historical objects on display in our Interpretative Centre is a reliquary casket from the medieval period that is believed to have once held the relics of St Winefride.



Our gift shop offers a wide range of carefully selected votive and religious mementoes of your visit to St Winefride's Well & Shrine.



## Welcoming Royal visitors down the centuries

Over the centuries St Winefride's has welcomed many royal visitors ...

Richard I (Lionheart) visited in 1189 to pray for the success of his crusade, and it is believed that King Henry V came on foot from Shrewsbury in 1416, to give thanks for his victory at Agincourt. According to the Welsh poet Tudor Aled, Edward IV came on pilgrimage to Holywell in 1461, and he placed a pinch of earth taken from beside the Well upon his crown.

King James II of England visited the Well with his wife Mary of Modena in 1686, after several failed attempts to produce an heir to the throne.

The king presented the chapel with part of a dress worn by Mary Queen of Scots at her execution, and the queen gave a £30 donation toward the repair of the building. Shortly after this visit, Mary became pregnant with a son, James.

King Henry VIII ordered the shrine and its saintly relics to be destroyed, but the shrine buildings and, a few precious artefacts, survived. Princess Victoria, staying in Holywell with her uncle King Leopold I of Belgium, visited the Well in 1828.

In July 2021 HRH The Prince of Wales who on 8th September 2022 became King Charles II paid an official visit to the Shrine and Well, during which he lit a votive candle and touched the water.



## SITE GUIDE AND LOCATIONS

- 1 INTERPRETATIVE CENTRE AND SHOP
- 2 STATUE OF ST WINEFRIDE
- 3 WELL HOUSE, THE OLD CUSTODIAN'S HOUSE
- 4 GATEHOUSE (SMALL) CHAPEL
- 5 OUTER POOL
- 6 ST BEUNO'S STONE
- 7 JAMES II STONE
- 8 WELL AND CRYPT
- 9 ST WINEFRIDE'S (LADY MARGARET BEAUFORT) CHAPEL

## AREA OF SANCTUARY



## Gerard Manley Hopkins and St John Plessington

The great Victorian poet and Jesuit priest Gerard Manley Hopkins (28th July 1844 – 8th June 1889) had a lasting devotion to Holywell and St Winefride.

Whilst training for the priesthood he spent much of his time at nearby St Beuno's, and said of his first visit to Holywell: "The sight of the water in the well as clear as glass, greenish like beryl or aquamarine, trembling at the surface with the force of the springs, and shaping out the five foils of the well, quite drew and held my eyes to it."

In 1882 Hopkins began writing a series of elements for a play about St Winefride. Most well known is *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo* (*Maidens' song from St. Winefred's Well*) which describes an encounter in which a woman at the well complains of the ravages of old age, and hears a voice promising her that God will make her beautiful again in the next life.

John Plessington (c. 1637-19th July 1679), was an English Catholic priest who was executed by the Crown for violating the ban on the presence of

Catholic priests in the kingdom. Born in Lancashire, he was ordained in Segovia, Spain and returned to England in 1663, ministering to covert Catholics in the areas of Holywell and Cheshire.

On arrest in Chester during the Popish Plot scare caused by Titus Oates,

he was hanged, drawn and quartered at Gallow's Hill in Boughton, Chester for the crime of being a Catholic priest. He was canonised on 25th October 1970 by Pope Paul VI as one of a group known as the Forty Martyrs of England & Wales.

