

From June until August 2021, I was privileged to be able to stay at Merton and conduct research at the Weston Library as part of Merton's residential undergraduate research project grant scheme. I used this time to examine a particular manuscript, MS Digby 146, which contains a copy of Aldhelm of Malmesbury's *Prosa de Virginitate*, his letter to Heahfrid, and a later life of St Edward, though I focused primarily on the *Pdv*. The main text of the MS is in Latin, and is heavily glossed in both Latin and Old English. I spent the course of my project alternating between working directly hands-on with the manuscript in the Weston, and reading through criticism on the manuscript, its texts (both in that copy and others), and the life and works of Aldhelm more generally. After four weeks of research I began writing up my project, and spent the second half of my stay in Oxford combining writing with continued research. I learned a great deal about the manuscript's history, both as an object and within scholarly consciousness, and was able to tune into and form my own opinions on various debates as to its provenance and function. I was able to observe some fascinating damage patterns and engage with glosses that have baffled scholars for generations, and it was a great privilege to physically hold and turn the pages of an object that is so old, and to consider the chances that led to its survival.

The project was an invaluable exercise in self-directed research and manuscript studies, giving me many useful skills that I continue to rely upon in preparing my work for my dissertation and my portfolio for the Material Texts paper I am taking over the next two terms. It enabled me to better understand foliation, differentiate between early medieval handwriting scripts, and improved my ability to follow the thread of an idea from one piece of criticism to another, utilising citations and references to follow concepts back to their sources. I also was able to take advantage of both Oxford's wide range of online resources and the physical texts in the libraries, especially a modern edition of Aldhelm from the English Faculty and N. R. Ker's *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, kept in the Weston. Undertaking this research also confirmed my interest in postgraduate study in the field of medieval literature, and I believe has uniquely prepared me for this course of action should I be successful in my applications.

The final product of my project took the form of a four-part essay detailing the manuscript's history, its appearance and notable features, the relationship between the text and glosses and any particular glosses worthy of deeper analysis, and finally my own conclusions and opinions about the text as an object, ranging from its likely site of production to what it can tell a modern scholar about religious doctrine, written culture and even gender roles in early medieval England. Much of my work built on the ideas expressed by Scott Gwara in his extensive body of work on Aldhelm. I found it very helpful to sort through a large volume of secondary criticism and draw conclusions about which arguments were convincing and which less so. It was also rewarding to learn more about such an influential figure from Malmesbury, where my family has recently moved to, and I am considering the possibility of offering to present my findings to Malmesbury History Society, the Malmesbury Medieval Library or one of the other bodies that exists for the purpose of study and celebration of the town's medieval history.

This project would not have been possible without the hard work and collaboration of many people. My sincere thanks go to Merton for offering me one of their Undergraduate Research Grants to study this manuscript. I am also indebted to my director of studies, Dr Sawyer, for his belief in my abilities, his encouragement to apply for the scheme and his untiring work on my behalf to make this project possible. Thanks also are due to the Medieval Manuscript Curators, Dr Matthew Holford and Dr Andrew Dunning, and the welcoming attitude of all of the staff at the Weston Library, especially in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Reading Room. Last but not most certainly not least, I was much aided by my fellow students on English Course II for their help in decoding Anglo-Caroline Script:

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