



**HOLY
TRINITY
CHURCH**

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St John the Baptist
COOKHAM DEAN

Press Release 20 August 2021

We are very excited by the discovery of the 'lost' monastery ruled by Queen Cynethryth in the Paddock at Holy Trinity Church, Cookham.

We look forward to working with Dr Gabor from the University of Reading, and local archaeological groups, over the next 2 years on a planned programme of further excavations.

As previously arranged, the dig is closing this weekend (20/8/21). We are looking forward to welcoming Dr Thomas and his team back again over the next two summers.

Queen Cynethryth was married to King Offa of Mercia, one of the main Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Written records show she became royal abbess of a monastery after the death of her husband. Dr Gabor Thomas, the University of Reading archaeologist leading the excavation, said: "Cynethryth is a fascinating figure, a female leader who clearly had genuine status and influence in her lifetime. We are thrilled to find physical evidence of the monastery she presided over, which is also very likely to be her final resting place."

Remains of timber buildings that would have housed the inhabitants of the monastery have been found so far and they have also unearthed artefacts including food remains, pottery vessels used for cooking and eating, a delicate bronze bracelet and a dress pin, likely to have been worn by female members of the community.

Dr Thomas said that despite its documented royal associations, little was known of what life was like at the monastery, or others nearby. "The items that have been uncovered will allow us to piece together a detailed impression of how the monks and nuns who lived here ate, worked and dressed," he said. He added that the lost monastery of Cookham had long "puzzled historians" but the mystery had now been solved "once and for all".

Dr Thomas has kindly agreed to give a talk to the Trinity Talks meeting to be held at The Bel and The Dragon on Monday 15th November at 6.30pm. Tickets available from Steph Diggon: stephaniediggon@hotmail.com