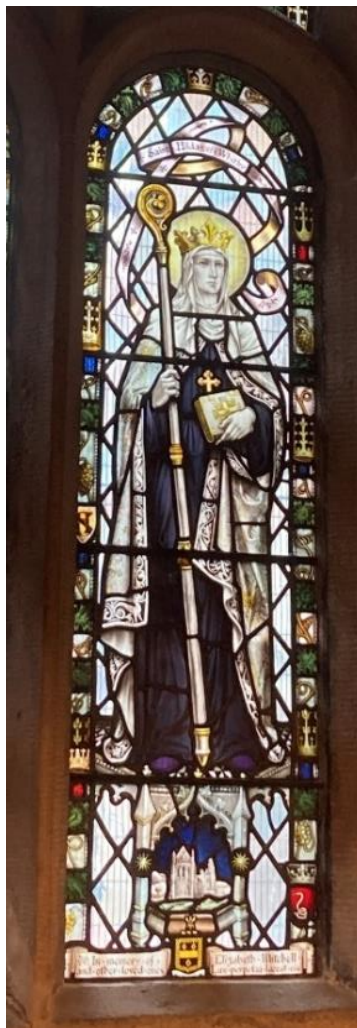




Saint Hild

Hild (614-680) was born into a wealthy family and grew up in the Northumbrian royal court in the north of England. She was baptised by one of the first Christians to preach in the north of England, Paulinus, on Easter Eve 627, in the city of York. She was well educated and a strong personality; her views and actions had far-reaching effects on Christianity in the north of England and she showed that a woman was as powerful and as intelligent as any man.

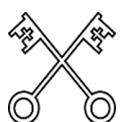
When she was 33 Hild became a nun in the north-east town of Hartlepool; she was taught by Saint Aidan. Like many of the nuns she became very learned. Everywhere that Christianity spread books were required and many of these were copied by the nuns for other people to read. Aidan himself had made sure that it was possible in Northumbria for women to do this and to become nuns if they so wished. Hild's contribution to the church was great: she was a very good teacher and at least five of her male students went on to become bishops. She founded a double monastery for men and women at Whitby, which became a famous centre of learning and wisdom.



As abbess, leader of the community, she would have been able to preach at the Celtic church services and give Holy Communion (blessed bread and wine) to others. She was one of the principal Celtic champions at the Synod of Whitby in 664, (a large meeting of Christians to agree on worship, practices and matters of belief), but she eventually accepted the ruling of the Synod in favour of Roman Catholic practice, which actually reduced some of her own power as a Christian leader.

If you look closely at Hild's window in the Cathedral you will see an ammonite (a fossil, often called a 'devil's toenail!'). These fossils are found on the beach at Whitby, below the cliffs on which Hild built Whitby Abbey. They also represent a serpent, which is always associated with the pre-Christian pagan religion. Celtic Christianity claimed to have driven the 'serpents' out of Ireland and the north of England. The ammonite is one of Hild's symbols because she championed Christianity and encouraged people to move away from pagan practices, towards those of the Celtic Church.

Hild's gift to others was one of education; she made sure that those who wished to do so could read and write and so spread the word of the Gospels. She also demonstrated through her actions that women are not less important or less intelligent than men, providing a role model for girls and women.





Key questions:

- Do you think it's important for men and women to be equal?
- Is it important to be able to read and write? Why?

Key activities:

- Design your own Saint Hild of Whitby stained glass window; remember to include her symbol.

<https://bradfordyouthpilgrimage.org.uk/documents/further-resources/templates/stained-glass-window-template.pdf>

- Can you think of one other woman that is remarkable or special to you; one who shares her gifts and talents? Design a symbol to represent this person.

