

# Saint Hilda of Whitby

Hilda was born in 614. She was a niece of Edwin, the Saxon king of Northumbria, and lived at his royal court. King Edwin was married to a Christian princess called Ethelburga. When Hilda was 13 she became a Christian and was baptised by St Paulinus in York. After King Edwin was killed in a battle Ethelburga and Hilda fled to Kent. When she was older Hilda became a nun. In 657 she founded an abbey in Whitby and was the abbess there until she died on 17 November 680.

She was a wise and respected woman, kings and princes asked her for advice. In 664 Whitby Abbey was chosen as the place for an important church meeting or synod.

Hilda cared about ordinary people and would help them with their problems as well. She helped the farmers around Whitby when their crops were being eaten by the wild geese. In one legend there was a plague of snakes in Whitby which Hilda turned to stone. On the beach at Whitby you can find fossils of pre-historic creatures called ammonites. These were mistaken by people for the snakes that Hilda had turned to stone.

## Activity - make your own snakestone

You will need: clay or playdough (you can find playdough recipes on the internet)

1. Roll the clay or playdough into a long thin sausage.
2. Make the sausage into a spiral starting at the centre of the spiral.
3. Shape the end of the spiral into a snake's head.
4. Decorate your snakestone.

