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## St Waldef of Melrose

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## **St Waldef of Melrose († 3 Aug 1159)**

1. Name variants: Waltheof

2. Places: Scotland, Nostell, Kirkham, Warden, Rievaulx, Melrose

3. Biography: W. was the son of Simon de Senlis, Earl of Huntingdon and Northampton, and Matilda, great-niece of King William I of England. His maternal grandfather was St Waldef (Waltheof) of Northumbria, whose name he bears. His mother remarried, and he and his older brother Simon were brought up at the court of his stepfather King David I of the Scots. Among his companions, there was Aelred, later abbot of Rievaulx. W., as a young man, became a regular canon at the Yorkshire priory of Nostell. By 1139, if not earlier, he had moved to become prior at Kirkham Priory, also in Yorkshire, which had been established by Walter Espec, also founder of Rievaulx. In 1140, he was put forward as a candidate for the vacant see of York, but his Scottish connections made King Stephen wary of appointing him. W. allied himself with those Cistercians (including Aelred) and Augustinians who pressured the papacy for the deposition of William Fitz Herbert. W. became a monk at Espec's second foundation at Warden and then at Rievaulx. In 1148, he became abbot the Scottish abbey of Melrose, whose founder was his stepfather, King David I. It is said that he refused the bishopric of St Andrews when it was offered to him. He died on 3 Aug 1159. Much of what we know of his life comes from the *vita* commissioned by Abbot Patrick of Melrose and written by the monk Jocelin of Furness, who seems to have used a now lost life by Everard. Immediately after W.'s death, there were stories of his sanctity and when his tomb at the entrance to the chapter house of Melrose was opened by the bishop of Glasgow and four abbots twelve years later, it was found to be incorrupt. He was interred in a new tomb in the church.

4. Cultus:

a. Relics: –

b. Liturgical commemoration: 3 Aug (PASCUAL 2019, 271)

c. Patronage: –

d. Attributes: –

5. Fontes: *Vita* by Jocelin of Furness between 1207 and 1214 in one MS: Madrid, Biblioteca del Palacio real, MS II 2097, fol. 41v–68 (mid 15th c.), printed in: AS, Augustii 1, Antwerp 1733, 248–76, ed. and transl. by G. MCFADDEN, *An Edition and Translation of the Life of Waltheof, Abbot of Melrose*, Unpublished PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1952; A. O. ANDERSON, *Early Sources for Scottish History AD 500 – 1286*, Edinburgh 1922, 2, 274–275; W. DANIEL, *Vita Ailredi, The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, ed. and transl. F. M. POWICKE, London 1950.

6. Literature: D. BAKER, *Legend and Reality: The Case of Waldef of Melrose*, in: *Church, Society and Politics, Studies in Church History* 12 (1975), 59–82; D. BAKER, *Patronage in the Early Twelfth Century: Walter Espec, Kirkham, and Rievaulx*, in: *Traditio, Krisis, Renovatio aus theologischer Sicht*, ed. B. JASPERT, Marburg 1976; D. Baker, *Waldef [Waltheof] (c/ 1095–1159)*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28647>; H. BIRKETT, *The Saints' Lives of Jocelin of Furness: Hagiography, Patronage and Ecclesiastical Politics*, York 2010; H. BIRKETT, *The Struggle for Sanctity: St Waltheof of Melrose, Cistercian In-House Cults and Canonisation Procedure at the Turn of the Thirteenth Century*, in: *The Cult of the Saints and the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland*, ed. S. BOARDMAN / E. WILLIAMSON, Woodbridge 2010, 43–59; J. BURTON, *Dioceses, Saints Cults and Monasteries*, in: *Northern England and Southern Scotland in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. K. J. STRINGER

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7. Illustrations: –

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