

Malmesbury Abbey South Porch

## *MALMESBURY ABBEY*

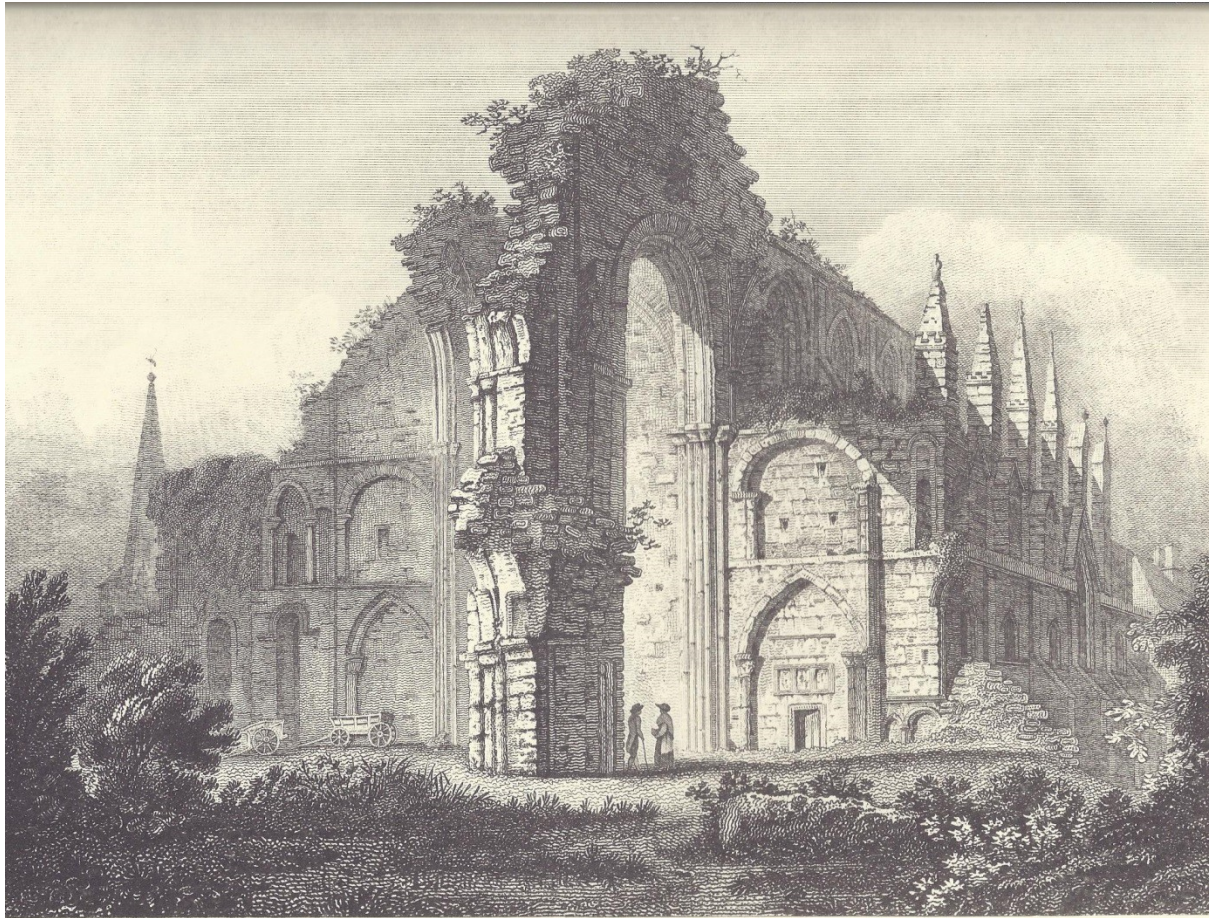
A religious house was first established at Malmesbury by one Maildolph or Maildubh during the latter half of the 7th Century. His most distinguished pupil was St. Aldhelm who became Abbot of Malmesbury and Bishop of Sherbourne. During Aldhelm's lifetime, and after his death in 709 AD. The abbey had royal benefactors - King Alfred and his grandson King Athelstan, who was buried there, among others. William the Conqueror continued the tradition of Royal patronage.

The present building is all that remains of the rebuilding which took place during the 12th century, possibly at the instigation of Bishop Roger of Salisbury, who built a castle in the abbey churchyard, much to the dismay of the monks. The castle played a significant role during the anarchy of the time of Stephen and Matilda and was finally demolished during the reign of King John.

By the 16th century standards in the abbey had declined. After the Dissolution the abbey fell into ruin except for the nave of the church which was rescued by William Stumpe, a clothier. He bought the site and buildings and used parts of the outer buildings to house his looms and workers but he presented the nave to the parish to be used as the parish church, which function it has retained to this day.

The illustration below by F. Nash shows the walled off east end of the nave and one of the ruined arches which supported the tower and steeple, said to be loftier than that of Salisbury Cathedral, which collapsed around 1530. Everything to the east of this has disappeared as have all the other

abbey buildings including the cloisters which were to the north of the nave. The church has been restored on several occasions most recently in 1928.



From a description by Wiltshire Library & Museum Service 1978