

The story of King Arwald

This postcard was posted from Shanklin in 1913. The description on the back reads 'CONVERSION OF THE WIGHT BY BISHOP WILFRID. 686-SAXON Up to this period, the Island had been given up to idol worship, but through the instrumentality of Bishop Wilfrid was won over to Christianity.'

Well, that is the story on the postcard, however the reality is somewhat darker!



The Jutish King Arwald reigned in the Island in the late 600s. The inhabitants worshipped pagan gods while the rest of Britain had been forcibly converted to Christianity.

Wilfred was a powerful bishop who used warfare to spread Christianity. He allied himself with a likeminded Wessex king, Caedwalla. This Caedwalla arrived on the Island with an army and, according to reports, killed all the inhabitants. The slaughtered 'Wightwarriors', as they were known, and King Arwald himself were all later canonised. The event is commemorated on 22 April as St Arwald's Day.

The existence of this postcard shows how much interest there was in the Island's local history early in the 20th Century.