

Anglo-Saxon Kings

The kings of Anglo-Saxon Britain each ruled their own kingdom and the people in it. They also controlled their own army. Kings constantly fought to control other kingdoms and defend their land. They were known as warrior-kings.

When the Anglo-Saxons first settled in Britain, there were seven other kingdoms. However, by AD 878, there was only one kingdom left; Wessex, ruled by Alfred the Great. The other kingdoms had been overrun by Vikings who established their own kingdoms. Some Anglo-Saxons are well-known for the resistance they put up against the Vikings. They fought hard to keep control of their land and tried to push the Vikings out.

King Alfred the Great

One of the most famous Anglo-Saxon kings is Alfred the Great. He is the only British monarch to have the **epithet** 'the Great' in his name.

Alfred became king in AD 871 and he is credited with being the first Anglo-Saxon king to defeat the Vikings in battle and bring some peace to the English people. In AD 878 the Vikings invaded Wessex and forced King Alfred into hiding, though he did not surrender. In the same year, King Alfred and his small band of followers defeated the Vikings at the Battle of Edington. The battle was reported as a fierce and bloody event and Alfred was said to have charged into battle like a wild boar. King Alfred and his men drove back at the attacking Vikings, who surrendered.

King Alfred knew that although he had been able to prevent the Vikings from invading Wessex, he would never be able to control them in the rest of England. So, in AD 886, he established a treaty which gave the Vikings control over northern and eastern England, an area which later became known as 'Danelaw'. The treaty allowed King Alfred to keep control over Wessex as well as West Mercia and Kent. This arrangement also helped to establish more peaceful relationships between the English and the Vikings.

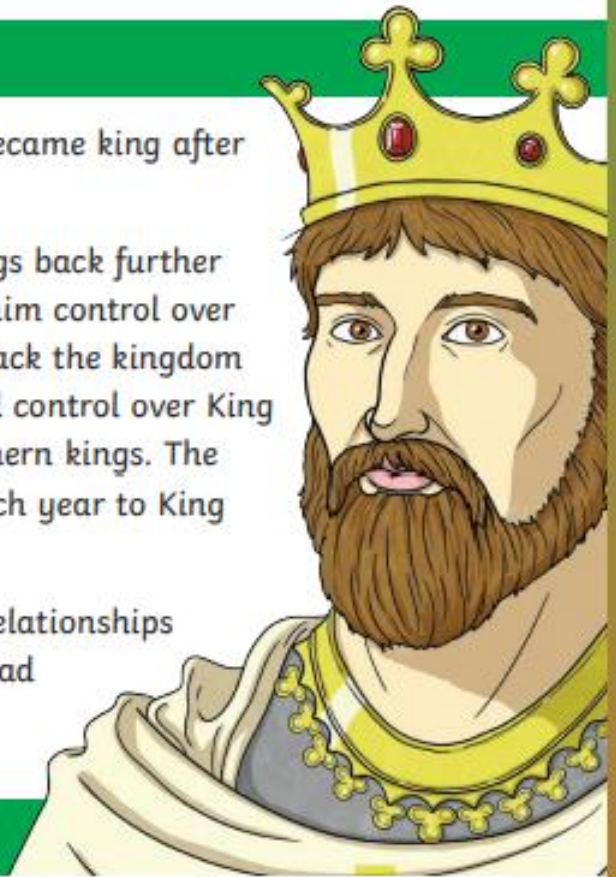


King Athelstan

Athelstan was the grandson of Alfred and became king after his father, King Edward, died in AD 924.

During Athelstan's reign, he drove the Vikings back further from Anglo-Saxon lands and was able to claim control over a greater area. In AD 927, Athelstan won back the kingdom of York from the Vikings. He also established control over King Constantine in Scotland and the other northern kings. The five kings of Wales agreed to pay **tribute** each year to King Athelstan.

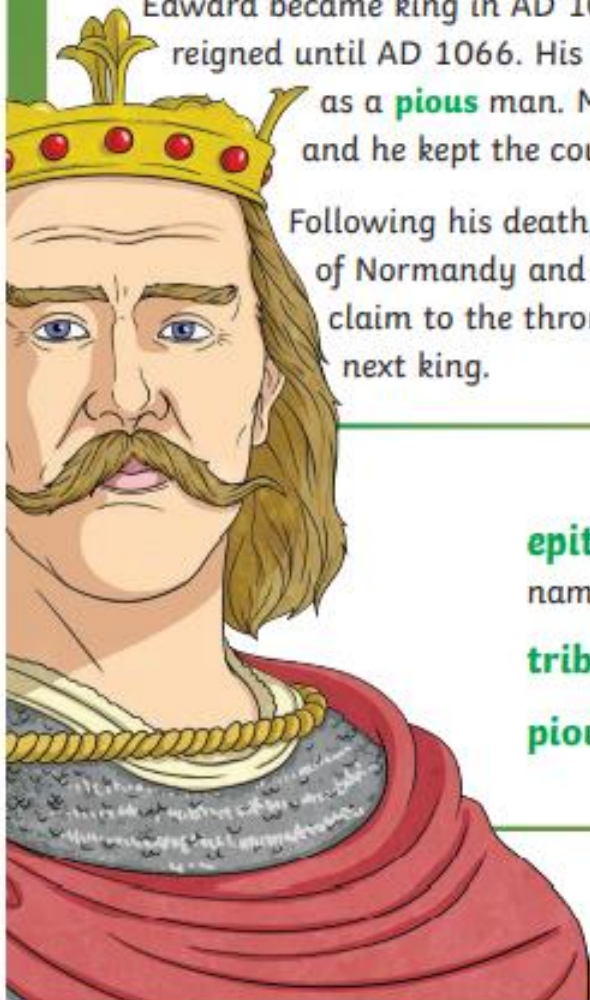
Athelstan is remembered for forming good relationships with leaders from other countries. He also had strong links with religious leaders and he founded many churches.



Edward the Confessor

Edward became king in AD 1042 and reigned until AD 1066. His epithet 'the confessor' came from his reputation as a **pious** man. Much of his reign was peaceful and prosperous and he kept the country united.

Following his death, a war raged between his heir, Harold, William of Normandy and Harald Hardrada, all of whom felt they had a claim to the throne. William was the victor and was crowned the next king.



Glossary

epithet – a word or phrase added to a person's name to describe them.

tribute – a gift given to another to keep the peace.

pious – a deeply religious person.

Questions

1. What were the Anglo-Saxon kings also known as? Tick one.

- Vikings
- warrior-kings
- Danelaw
- northern kings

2. What was King Alfred's epithet?

3. Number the events from 1 to 5 to show the order in which they happened. One has been done for you.

- The Vikings are given lands in Britain known as Danelaw.
- 1 Alfred the Great defeats the Vikings at the Battle of Edington.
- Edward the Confessor is crowned king.
- Athelstan establishes control over the northern kings.
- William of Normandy becomes king.

4. Find and copy the simile used to describe Alfred.

5. What kingdom did Athelstan win back from the Vikings?

6. Do you think King Athelstan was religious? Give reasons for your answer.

7. Do you think Edward the Confessor is remembered as a successful king? Give reasons for your answer.

8. Which king do you think was most important? Give reasons for your answer.
