

ANGLO-SAXON KINGS (fifteen before the Norman Conquest, and four Danish kings)

802-839 King Ecgbert: known as 'bretwalda,' or 'king of Britain; dominance not clear cut as other Saxon kingdoms still separate, but beginning of dissolution of A-S heptarchy

839-858 King Ethelwulf (son of Ecgbert): fought successfully against the Danes; fathered four English kings by Osburga, including Alfred the Great, his youngest and favorite son; took Alfred with him to Rome when Alfred was still young, and there, Ethelwulf, then 56, married Judith (his second marriage); Judith was the thirteen-year old granddaughter of Charlemagne

858-860 King Ethelbald: oldest son of Ethelwulf; rebelled against his father; married his father's widow when she was fifteen, which was considered incestuous

860-865 King Ethelbert: had been 'sub-king' of Kent and Essex; fought against havoc from Danes

865-871 King Ethelred I: died in a fight against the Danes; very pious and was venerated as saint; refused to fight Battle of Ashdown against Vikings until he had finished mass

871-899 Alfred the Great: only English king to earn title 'great'; very difficult struggles against Vikings leading to 'burning of the cakes' legend; treaty with Danish King Guthrum in Treaty of Wedmore that led to Danelaw; had A-S chronicles and other works translated into English; very learned, introducing new laws and inviting foreign scholars

899-924 King Edward the Elder: holds record for most legitimate children of any English king (eighteen by three different wives) including three future kings; also fought successfully against Danes

924-939 King Athelstan (son of Edward the Elder and Egwina): first undisputed king of all England; advantageously married off sisters to be peace weavers (one to Holy Roman emperor, one to Hugh Capet of France, and one to King Charles of West Franks); known for diplomacy and hospitality; unmarried and died without heir.

939-946 King Edmund I, the Elder (son of Edward the Elder and Edgifu): died at 21 in brawl that is recorded in A-S chronicles against Leofa, an outlaw who stabbed Edmund to death; still, married twice and fought successfully against Vikings

946-955 King Edred (son of Edward the Elder and Edgifu): fought and killed Erik Bloodaxe, winning Northumbria; advised by Dunstan to establish monasteries; died unmarried

955-959 King Edwy the Fair: only fifteen when crowned; skipped out on coronation banquet to make out with his mistress (his stepmother's daughter); exiled Dunstan, who chastised him; was murdered

959-975 King Edgar the Peaceful: reinstated Dunstan; known for peaceful and stable reign; strengthened church establishing monasteries; fathered two subsequent kings (by different wives)

975-978 King Edward the Martyr (son of Edgar and Ethelfled): crowned at age twelve; was murdered, probably by his stepmother, Elfrida, when he went to visit her (she wanted her own son to be king); miracles were said to occur at his tomb, leading him to become Saint and Martyr; pilgrims still visit his grave hoping for miracles

978-1016 King Ethelred, the Unraed, or ill-advised (son of Edgar and Elfrida): some thought cursed because he peed in the baptismal font as an infant; foolishly tried to buy off the Vikings; spent large sums of protection money; defeated by Danish King Sven, who ruled briefly but was never crowned; Ethelred brought back briefly but also died; had sixteen children including two kings (by different mothers)

1016 King Edmund Ironside: won three out of four battles against the Danes; had to partition country and share it with Danish King Canute; murdered, apparently on the privy, by enemies

1016-1035 King Canute: first Viking king, but a great English king; restored peace and tranquility to country; married widow of Ethelred the Unready (Emma, who married two kings of England and fathered two kings of England) in an effective political move; a strong, effective, popular king

1035-1040 King Harold I, Harold Harefoot (son of Canute and Elfgifu): a short and brutal reign; exiled his stepmother Emma; possibly murdered Ethelred's son Alfred, whom he saw as rival to the throne

1040-1042 King Hardecanute (son of Canute and Emma): angered that Harold I had succeeded him (he thought rightfully he should have been crowned in 1035), he exhumed his half-brother's body and threw it in a bog; unpopular king known for heavy taxes; died while partying excessively at a feast, ending the Viking line

1042-1066 Edward the Confessor (son of Ethelred II, the Unraed, and Emma): Norman mother and Saxon father; very pious; married, but took vow of chastity; reputation for holiness and healing; became England's patron saint; would have been better suited for religious life; accused his own mother of adultery and put her through a trial by ordeal; established Westminster Abbey; 1066 Harold II: son of Godwin and Gytha, with no real claim to throne except as brother-in-law to Edward the Confessor; challenged by William of Normandy; defeated at Battle of Hastings and had to be identified by his mistress, Edith of the Swan Neck.