

Anglo-Saxon Kings



Kingdoms

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 kingdoms. However, by AD 878 there was only one kingdom left; Wessex, ruled by King Alfred the Great. The other kingdoms had been overrun by the Vikings who established their own kingdoms.



Kingdoms

410 AD

Anglo Saxons Invade Britain

Around 790 AD

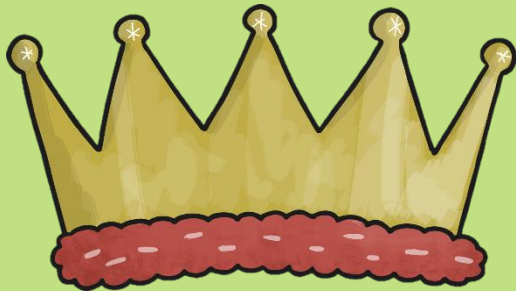
Vikings Invade Britain



Kings Vs. Vikings

Some of the Anglo-Saxon Kings 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.

One of the best known Anglo-Saxon kings is King Alfred the Great. He is the only British monarch to have the title 'great' in his name.

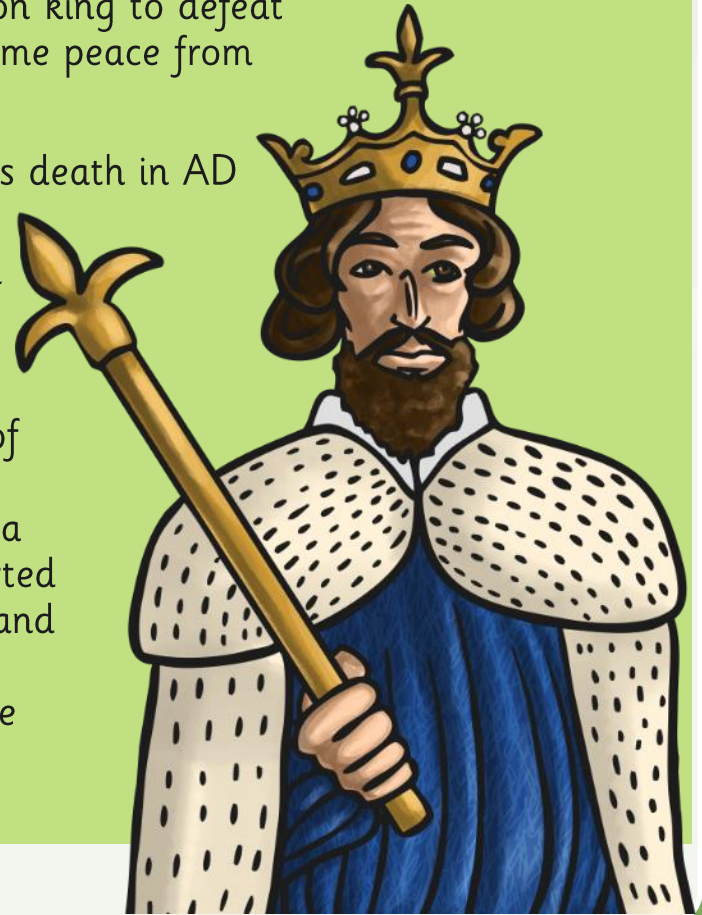


King Alfred the Great

So, what made King Alfred so great?

King Alfred is credited with being the first Anglo-Saxon king to defeat the Vikings in battle and buy the people of Britain some peace from them.

- Alfred became king in AD 871. He reigned until his death in AD 899.
- In AD 878 the Vikings invaded Wessex and forced King Alfred into hiding. However, Alfred was not prepared to give up.
- Later in AD 878, King Alfred and his small band of followers defeated the Vikings at the Battle of Edington. The Battle of Edington was reported as a fierce and bloody event and King Alfred was reported to charge into battle like a wild boar. King Alfred and his men drove back the attacking Vikings who surrendered. The leader of the Vikings in this battle was King Guthrum.



Danelaw

King Alfred knew that although he had been able to stop the Vikings from taking over in Wessex, he would never be able to control them in the rest of England.

In AD 886, he made a deal with King Guthrum and established a treaty which gave the Vikings control over Northern and Eastern England, an area which later became known as Danelaw.

King Alfred got to keep control over Wessex and he also got to rule over West Mercia and Kent.

This arrangement helped to establish more peaceful relationships between the English and the Vikings.



King Athelstan



After the death of King Alfred the Great, his son Edward the Elder took the throne. When Edward died, his son Athelstan (King Alfred's grandson) became king. Athelstan is regarded as the first king of all Britain and he is remembered as a great leader.

- Athelstan was king from AD 924-939.
- During his reign he drove the Vikings back more and more and was able to claim control over a greater area of land.
- In AD 927 Athelstan won back the kingdom of York from the Vikings.



King Athelstan



Athelstan is known for forming good relationships with leaders from other countries. He married his four sisters to important rulers abroad which helped strengthen Britain's position overseas.

Do you think Athelstan was as 'great' as King Alfred?

1. Think about the actions and achievements of King Alfred and King Athelstan.
2. What important or influential things did the two kings do?
3. Why are they such important historical figures?



