

Edgar the Peaceful

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Edgar the Peaceful, or **Edgar I** (Old English: *Ēadgār*; c. 7 August 943 – 8 July 975), also called *the Peaceable*, was king of England from 959 to 975. Edgar was the younger son of Edmund I.

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Accession

Edgar was the son of Edmund I, grandson of Edward the elder, great-grandson of Alfred the Great, great-great grandson of Ethelwulf of Wessex, great-great-great grandson of Egbert of Wessex, and great-great-great-great grandson of Ealhmund of Kent. His cognomen, "The Peaceable", was not necessarily a comment on the deeds of his life, for he was a strong leader, shown by his seizure of the Northumbrian and Mercian kingdoms from his older brother, Eadwig, in 958. A conclave of nobles held Edgar to be king north of the Thames, and Edgar aspired to succeed to the English throne.^[3]

Government

While Edgar was not a particularly peaceable man, his reign was peaceful. The Kingdom of England was well established, and Edgar consolidated the political unity achieved by his predecessors. By the end of his reign, England was sufficiently unified that it was unlikely to regress back to a state of division among rival kingships, as it had to an extent under the reign of Eadred.

Edgar and Dunstan

Upon Eadwig's death in October 959, Edgar immediately recalled Dunstan (eventually canonised as St. Dunstan) from exile to have him made Bishop of Worcester (and subsequently Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury). Dunstan remained Edgar's advisor throughout his reign.

Dead Man's Plack

Edgar



King of the English

Tenure	1 October 959 – 8 July 975
Predecessor	Eadwig
Successor	Edward
Spouse	Æthelflæd ^[1] Wulthryth ^[1] Ælfthryth
Issue	Edward, King of England Saint Edith of Wilton ^[1] Edmund of England ^[2] Æthelred, King of England
House	House of Wessex
Father	Edmund, King of England
Mother	Ælfgifu of Shaftesbury
Born	943/944 Wessex, England
Died	July 8, 975 (aged 31/32) Winchester, Wessex, England
Burial	Glastonbury Abbey

In 963 he reputedly killed his rival in love, Earl Æthelwald, near present-day Longparish, Hampshire,^[4] an event commemorated in 1825 by the erection of Dead Man's Plack.^[4] In 1875, Edward Augustus Freeman debunked the Æthelwald story as a "tissue of romance" in his *Historic Essays*,^[5] but his arguments were rebutted by the naturalist William Henry Hudson in his 1920 book *Dead Man's Plack and an Old Thorn*.^[3]

Benedictine Reform

The Monastic Reform Movement that restored the Benedictine Rule to England's undisciplined monastic communities peaked during the era of Dunstan, Æthelwold, and Oswald (historians continue to debate the extent and significance of this movement).

Coronation at Bath (973)



Edgar the Peaceful sits aboard a barge manned by eight kings, as it moves up the River Dee.

Edgar was crowned at Bath and anointed with his wife Ælfthryth, setting a precedent for a coronation of a queen in England itself.^[6] Edgar's coronation did not happen until 973, in an imperial ceremony planned not as the initiation, but as the culmination of his reign (a move that must have taken a great deal of preliminary diplomacy). This service, devised by Dunstan himself and celebrated with a poem in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, forms the basis of the present-day British coronation ceremony.

The symbolic coronation was an important step; other kings of Britain came and gave their allegiance to Edgar shortly afterwards at Chester. Six kings in Britain, including the King of Scots and the King of Strathclyde, pledged their faith that they would be the king's liege-men on sea and land. Later chroniclers made the kings into eight, all plying the oars of Edgar's state barge on the River Dee. Such embellishments may not be factual, but the main outlines of the "submission at Chester" appear true. (See History of Chester.)

Death (975)

Edgar died on 8 July 975 at Winchester and was buried at Glastonbury Abbey. He left two sons, the elder named Edward, who was probably his illegitimate son by Æthelflæd (not to be confused with the Lady of the Mercians), and Æthelred, the younger, the child of his wife Ælfthryth. He was succeeded by Edward. Edgar also had a possibly illegitimate daughter by Wulfthryth, who later became abbess of Wilton. She was joined there by her daughter, Edith of Wilton, who lived there as a nun until her death. Both women were later regarded as saints.^{[7][8]}

From Edgar's death until the Norman Conquest, there was not a single succession to the throne that was not contested. Some see Edgar's death as the beginning of the end of Anglo-Saxon England, followed as it was by three successful 11th century conquests — two Danish and one Norman.

Appearance

"[H]e was extremely small both in stature and bulk..." From the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* of William of Malmesbury (c.1080-1143).

Genealogy

For a more complete genealogy including ancestors and descendants, see House of Wessex family tree.



A coin of Edgar, struck in Winchcombe c.973-75.

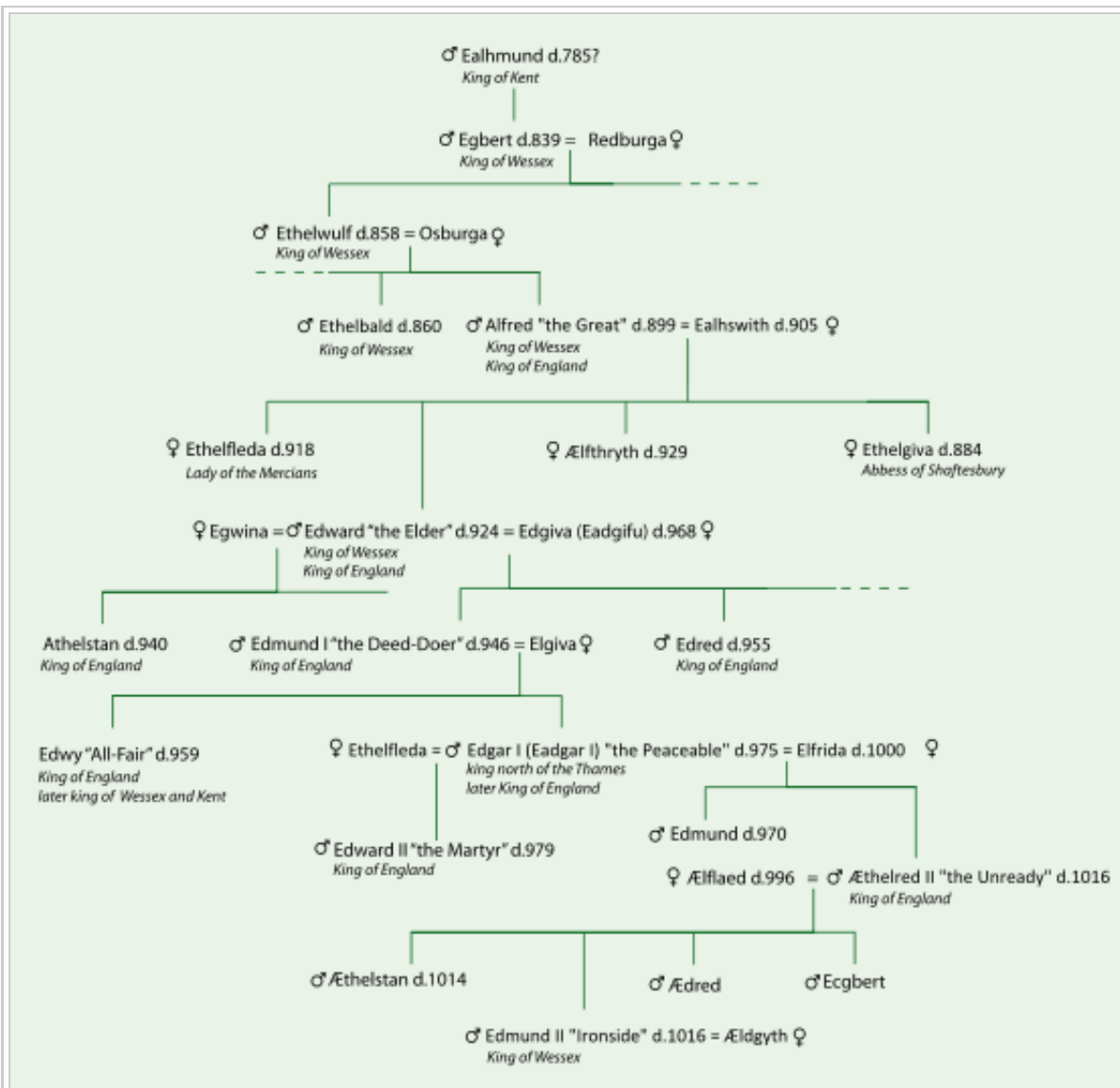


Diagram based on the information found on Wikipedia

Notes

- ¹ ^{a b c} Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma & Queen Edith*, Blackwell 2001, pp. 324-325
- ² Stafford, op. cit., p. 91
- ³ ^{a b} Hudson, William Henry (1920). *Dead Man's Plack and an Old Thorn* (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19691/19691-h/19691-h.htm>).
- ⁴ ^{a b} "Deadman's Plack Monument - Longparish - Hampshire - England" (<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-139701-deadman-s-plack-monument-longparish>). *British Listed Buildings*. Retrieved 8 September 2011.
- ⁵ Freeman, Edward Augustus (1875). *Historic Essays* (<http://www.archive.org/details/historicalessays00free>). MacMillan & Co. pp. 10–25.
- ⁶ Honeycutt, Lois (2003). *Matilda of Scotland: a Study in Medieval Queenship*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press. p. 35.
- ⁷ Yorke, Barbara (2004). "Wulfthryth (St Wulfthryth) (d. c.1000), abbess of Wilton" (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/49423/?back=,8463,49423,8482,49423,8482>). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/49423 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/49423>). Retrieved 17 November 2012. (subscription or UK public library membership (<http://www.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/freeodnb/libraries/>) required)
- ⁸ Williams, Ann (2004). "Edgar (called Edgar Pacificus) (943/4–975)" (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8463?docPos=1>). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/8463

Further reading

- Scragg, Donald (ed.). *Edgar, King of the English, 959–975: New Interpretations*. Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies. Manchester: Boydell Press, 2008. ISBN 1-84383-399-9. Contents (<http://www.boydell.co.uk/43833999.HTM>) (external link).
- Keynes, Simon. "England, c. 900–1016." In *The New Cambridge Medieval History III. c.900–c.1024*, ed. Timothy Reuter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 456-84.
- Sobceki, Sebastian. "Edgar's Archipelago." In *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages: Maritime Narratives, Identity and Culture*, ed. Sobceki. Cambridge: Brewer, 2011. 1-30.

External links

- Medieval Sourcebook: Anglo-Saxon Dooms: (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/560-975dooms.html#Laws%20of%20King%20Edgar>) laws of King Edgar, a fragment
- Edgar of England At Find A Grave (<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=8140973>)

Preceded by Eadwig	King of the English 959–975	Succeeded by Edward the Martyr
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