

LI: I understand why King Alfred was important to the Anglo- Saxons.

There are 3 steps in today's lesson.

1. Read through the information below, and make notes as you read through it.

British Monarchs

Throughout British history, monarchs have been given unofficial titles based on their characteristics:

- William I - 'William the Conqueror'
- John - 'John Lackland'
- Richard I - 'Richard the Lionheart'
- Edward I - 'Edward Longshanks'



Today, we are going to learn about the only king to be given the unofficial title 'Great' and find out why he had this title.

Alfred

Alfred was born in Berkshire in 849. His father was Aethelwulf, King of Wessex. Alfred was the youngest of five sons so it appeared unlikely that he would ever become king. However, all of Alfred's brothers died so in 871, he became King of Wessex. Alfred became king in the middle of nine huge battles with the Vikings. At the Battle of Ashdown in 871, Alfred defeated Viking forces.



Alfred and the Legend

In 878, King Guthrun of the Vikings captured the town of Chippenham and used it as a base from which to launch a series of devastating attacks on Wessex. The people of Wessex either surrendered or fled the area. Alfred and his men escaped to Somerset.

It is about Alfred's time hiding in Somerset that a legend arose. It is said that Alfred sought shelter in the home of a poor woman. One day, while in the middle of baking, the woman remembered she had to go out. She asked Alfred to keep an eye on the cakes - small loaves of bread - cooking on the fire. Alfred agreed but, after a while, Alfred became so absorbed in his troubles that he forgot all about the food. The woman arrived back to find her house full of smoke. She shouted at the king for being so careless.



Peace

Alfred was a good fighter and leader and he learnt from his defeat at the hands of the Vikings. He copied the Viking tactics and at the Battle of Edington in 878, Alfred and his army defeated Guthrun and his men.



Alfred realised that the constant battles were bad for both sides. He and Guthrun signed the Treaty of Wedmore which agreed terms of peace.

Guthrun was baptised as a Christian (the religion which Alfred followed) with Alfred as his godfather.

The Danelaw

Alfred continued to pursue cooperation with the Vikings. In 886, he negotiated a land settlement. A border along Roman Watling Street split the groups. North and east England would be ruled by the Vikings. This area became known as the 'Danelaw'. The Anglo-Saxons gained areas of West Mercia and Kent.



Fortresses

Despite the Danelaw, Viking raids still occurred and Alfred did several things to protect his kingdom.

In the past, Royal marriages were arranged in order to create links between different kingdoms. Alfred had his daughter, Aethelflaed, marry someone from the kingdom of Mercia.

Alfred continued to build fortresses across Wessex. He organised rotas for his army so that when a Viking raid happened the forces could defend the kingdom. Nowhere in Wessex was more than 20 miles from a fortress.

Did You Know?

Do you know any towns or cities that end in 'borough'? This word comes from the Old English word 'burh' which means 'fortress'.



Fortresses

As well as holding back the threat of Viking invasion, Alfred earned his title 'The Great' for several other reasons.

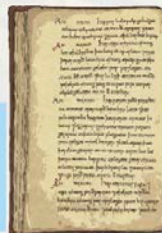
Important documents were usually written in Latin. Alfred organised for many of them to be translated into Anglo-Saxon, as he hoped that people in Wessex would become 'devoted to learning.'

Alfred gave money for the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to be written. This was a document which recorded important events in Anglo-Saxon history.

Alfred introduced laws to make the kingdom more stable. As the economy grew, he had more coins minted.

Did You Know?

Nine copies of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle still exist. Most of these are kept in the British Library. It is also available to view online.



'The Great'

Documents and coins from the 890s refer to Alfred as 'King of the English', as opposed to 'King of Wessex'.

Alfred died in 899 when he was 50 years old. He was buried in Winchester, the capital of Wessex.



2. Follow the links below and watch videos and find out more information about King Alfred.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zxsbcdm/articles/z9tdq6f>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCGAI93_IGM

3. Log onto Purple Mash and create a poster about King Alfred. (King Alfred).

I cannot wait to see all of your learning :D

Miss Hewer