



The Founding Father of England: Alfred the Great By Liam Gorman



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_depictions_of_Alfred_the_Great#/media/File:Statue_d'Alfred_le_Grand_%C3%A0_Winchester.jpg

Let us take a look back to the beginnings of United States. George Washington VALIENTLY led the CONTINENTAL army to victory over the stronger British forces in the American Revolutionary war. Washington then served as president general of the 1787 Constitutional Convention, PRESIDING over the development of the United States Constitution. He then served as the first President of the United States, setting PRECEDENTS for the office that are still maintained to this day. Down in South America, Simon BOLIVAR successfully led an army consisting of many modern day South American countries that fought for independence against the Spanish empire. He was successful in this endeavor, as he created the first union of independent nations in Latin America. He served

as the first president of a union between BOLIVIA, VENEZUELA, ECUADOR, COLOMBIA, PERU, and PANAMA. What do these two men have in common? They are unambiguously the founding fathers of their respective countries. (In Bolivar's case, he is considered the founding father of quite a few countries!). They fought in a revolutionary war to free their homeland from other countries' empires and established new countries that were nation states in the modern sense, with modern national identities.

SPELL: VALIENTLY SPELL: PRESIDING SPELL: PRECEDENTS

What was the name of the army that George Washington led in the American war of independence? CONTINENTAL ARMY

Washington served what role in the 1789 Constitutional Convention?

PRESIDENT GENERAL

What man led a coalition of South American natives in a war of independence against the Spanish Empire? SIMON BOLIVAR, BOLIVAR
Simon Bolivar was the first President of a union between which modern day nations? BOLIVIA, VENEZUELA, ECUADOR, COLOMBIA, PERU, PANAMA

Can you name another war of independence or revolutionary war?

FRENCH REVOLUTION, TEXAS REVOLUTION, IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, CUBAN REVOLUTION ETC.

But what about seemingly ANCIENT countries that have been around for so long that they make it seem like George Washington was born yesterday? How about a country like England, which has been around for eons? 1500 years ago, or more, there were no TRANSCONTINENTAL empires. There were mostly small, squabbling kingdoms with little or no national IDENTITY. Yet England was a thriving Kingdom in the MIDDLE AGES. How did England develop into a nation so much sooner than most of the world? Even though there was no REVOLUTIONARY war that led to the development of a nation-state with a REPUBLICAN system held together by a constitution, the circumstances behind the development of

England as a country in the Middle Ages were not actually that different from the stories of Simon Bolivar and George Washington. In the 9th century, Danish VIKINGS had invaded England. As they conquered the petty kingdoms that on the island existed at the time, King ALFRED of WESSEX had to win a battle against all odds that would prevent the island from being entirely controlled by the Danes.

SPELL: ANCIENT SPELL: TRANSCONTINENTAL SPELL:
REVOLUTIONARY

In what historical period was England a thriving Kingdom? MIDDLE AGES
The Middle Ages mostly consisted of squabbling Kingdoms consisting of little or no national what? IDENTITY

What was the name of the English Kingdom that King Alfred ruled?
WESSEX

What group of people invaded England? VIKINGS, DANES

What century was England invaded? 9th, 800s

Can you name any other kingdoms that existed in the Middle Ages?
FRANCE, AUSTRIA, BURGUNDY, CASTILE, ETC.

To gain some background on this battle between King Alfred and the Danes, we must take a step back and see the historical background that led to this conflict. Who were the people living on the island of Britain at the time? Why were Vikings INVADING? To answer these questions, we must look all the way back to the fall of the ROMAN EMPIRE. Up until the beginning of the 5th century, the island of Britain was controlled by the Roman Empire. But in this time, Rome was weakening. To AUGMENT their army in Britain, Rome invited groups of GERMANIC peoples called the ANGLES, SAXONS, and JUTES, from what corresponds to modern day DENMARK and Netherlands.

SPELL: INVADING SPELL: AUGMENT SPELL: DENMARK

What peoples were invited to join the Roman Army? ANGLES, SAXONS, JUTES

From what counties did these Germanic people hail? DENMARK, NETHERLANDS

Who controlled Britain until the beginning of the 5th century? ROMAN EMPIRE, ROME

This was all to no avail for Rome as in 410, the Empire withdrew their army from Britain as they then had to focus on a group of BARBARIANS that crossed the frozen RHINE river in the winter of 406-407. The existing Romano-British inhabitants of the island were now left alone to fend for themselves. Taking advantage of the withdrawal of the Roman LEGIONS, the rest of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes began to invade the island, first in small invading parties, but soon in increased numbers. Around the year 500, the Romano-British attempted to resist the invaders and fought a series of battles with them. We do not know much about these battles due to the SCANT nature of the source material, but eventually the Romano-British were pushed to the corners of the island such as modern-day CORNWALL, WALES, and CUMBRIA. The invaders, now known as the Anglo-Saxons, would occupy most of modern-day England, setting up new kingdoms of their own.

SPELL: AUGMENT SPELL: GERMANIC SPELL: BARBARIANS

What river did the Barbarians cross in 406 and 407 in their invasion of the Roman Empire? RHINE

What were the Roman military units called? LEGIONS

Name a Germanic group that invaded Britain after the withdrawal of the Roman Empire? ANGLES, SAXONS, JUTES

Name a region that the Romano-British settled in after the conquest of Britain? CORNWALL, WALES, CUMBRIA

What year did Rome withdraw from Britain? 410

name another region or province Rome controlled? GAUL, HISPANIA (Spain), ILLYRIA, JUDAEA, MOESIA, MACEDONIA, GREECE, ETC.

Define the word scant.

The Anglo-Saxons would set up seven distinct kingdoms after securing the land that CORRESPONDS to most of modern-day England. The Angles settled in the middle and northern part of the country, creating the kingdoms of Mercia, Northumbria and East Anglia. The Saxons settled in the southern part, creating the kingdoms of Wessex, Sussex and Essex. Lastly, the Jutes created the Kingdom of Kent in the south eastern part of the country. These kingdoms' dominance over regions would FLUCTUATE: sometimes they would spar and other times they would ally, but they would be relatively prosperous and unchallenged by any external threat for the next couple of centuries. That all changed year 793, when all the Anglo-Saxons faced an EXISTENTIAL threat that would begin to slowly challenge their HEGIMONY in the region. This was the year in which the first recorded Viking raid occurred. Future Anglo-Saxon historians wrote in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, "...on the Ides of June the harrying of the HEATHEN destroyed God's church on Lindisfarne, bringing ruin and slaughter."

- SPELL: CORRESPONDS SPELL: FLUCTUATE SPELL: EXISTENTIAL
What is the word meaning godless that the Anglo-Saxon chronicle uses to describe the Vikings and their non-Christian religion? HEATHEN
What was the name of the kingdom the Jutes created? KENT
What is the word in the paragraph used to describe a group's dominance over a region? HEGIMONY
What is the name of one of the kingdoms the Angles created? MERCIA, NORTHUMBRIA, EAST ANGLIA
What is the name of one of the kingdoms the Saxons created? WESSEX, SUSSEX, ESSEX
How many kingdoms did the Anglo-Saxons set up? 7
What was of the year of the first recorded Viking raid of England? 793



<https://www.totallytimelines.com/anglo-saxon-england-410-1066/>

VAKT: Seven Kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons, point to the Kingdom Alfred was from

Initially the Vikings were not interested in conquering the land, as they just wanted to raid and loot the coastline towns of England before returning to their homeland. They would take treasure and other valuable goods, so as a result, their primary target was MONASTERIES, as these had an ABUNDANCE of precious gold, silver, plates, bowls, and other valuable materials. Gradually, as the years went on, their raids became more frequent, and as a result, the Vikings began to settle on the island. Initially they would travel back to Denmark during the winter months and return to Britain to raid during the warmer months. They later found it more convenient to settle in the land they seized and set up winter camps. The land in Britain was more HABITABLE as well. As they began to settle the

land in Britain, more and more fellow Danes came over so they could expand their reach. This naturally led to the Vikings coming into conflict with the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. In 866, they conquered Northumbria, captured the city of YORK, and made it their capital. Shortly after, East Anglia fell. Mercia did the best it could but even it fell to the might of the Danes. Before the Anglo-Saxons could blink, the only kingdom remaining unconquered was little Wessex. And this was the state of Anglo-Saxon England when King Alfred was CORONATED. King Alfred and Wessex had to resist the full might of the Vikings.

SPELL: ABUNDANCE SPELL: HABITABLE SPELL: CORONATED

What buildings were the Vikings primary target for looting? MONASTERIES

What Anglo-Saxon city did the Vikings make their capital? YORK

Which was the first kingdom conquered by the Vikings? NORTHUMBRIA

What treasure did the Vikings like to steal? GOLD, SILVER, PLATES, BOWLS

Monasteries were the living quarters for individuals in what profession?

MONKS, NUNS

What year did Vikings conquer Northumbria? 866

Alfred was the son of ETHELWULF, King of Wessex, and was probably born in 849, as the youngest of five sons. You may be wondering, how in the world, as the youngest of five brothers, did Alfred ever become King? When thinking about it, it is pretty MIRACULOUS. At the time of Alfred's birth, the Vikings were already a MENACING threat to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. So Ethelwulf set a new policy, changing the line of succession, making all of his sons heirs in order of birth, instead of his grandsons (Alfred's nephews) SUCCEEDING the throne, to prevent under-age children from becoming king in a time of such danger. That is, Ethelwulf's oldest son would be next in line, but instead of this eldest son's child being second in line, Ethelwulf's second son would be second in line. Alfred's childhood was not without challenges. In addition to the Viking threat, in his own kingdom, Alfred had seen his older brother, ETHELBALD, betray their father and take over the kingdom while Ethelwulf was traveling abroad with a young Alfred to meet with the other prominent European leaders. (Yeah,

medieval families were indeed. . . interesting.) Eventually, Ethelwulf was able to take his Kingdom back and he reigned until his death in 858.

SPELL: MIRACULOUS SPELL: MENACING SPELL: SUCCEEDING

What was the name of Alfred's father? ETHELWULF

What was the name of Alfred's treacherous older brother? ETHELBALD

How did Alfred's father change the line of succession? YOUNGER SONS ARE NEXT IN LINE INSTEAD OF OLDEST GRANDSON

What year was Alfred born? 849

How many older brothers did Alfred have? 4

Ethelbald was obviously out of the picture, but there were still several other older brothers to go. The elder two would die at young ages over the next few years, finally leaving Alfred's youngest older brother, ETHELRED (Anglo-Saxons had interesting names), to become King in 865. Alfred was REMARKABLY close to Ethelred as they grew up together and were very close in age - unlike his other three brothers. Unfortunately, in 870 the Danes, who were led by a man named HALFDAN, attacked Wessex for the first time. In 871 Ethelred and Alfred gathered an army to challenge this invading army at the BATTLE OF ASHDOWN. Alfred HEROICALLY routed the Viking army even though they were fighting an uphill battle (both literally and figuratively!) Tragically though, even with the Wessex victory, Ethelred would SUCCUMB to a wound sustained in this battle. Fortunately for England, Alfred was the next in line for king. In 871, at 21 years old, Alfred became King Alfred of Wessex, changing the course of world history forever.

SPELL: REMARKABLY SPELL: HEROICALLY SPELL: SUCCUMB

What was the name of Alfred's youngest older brother? ETHELRED

What was the name of the leader of the Danish Vikings? HALFDAN

What was the name of the battle that Alfred fought with his brother against the Danes? BATTLE OF ASHDOWN

What year did Alfred become King? 871

How old was Alfred when he became king? 21

Remember that even before Alfred himself had become king, the Danes had already taken over the great Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, East Anglia, and Mercia. They instituted native puppet rulers controlled by the conquerors, so Alfred had no natural English allies who could help him against his INEVITABLE struggle. Right after Alfred's coronation, Halfdan and the Danes who had been in the process of regrouping after their previous years' loss stayed in Wessex and were REINFORCED by another army: GUTHRUM'S "Great Summer Army." Knowing that his kingdom needed a break from fighting and needed military upgrades, Alfred decided to negotiate peace from the Danes, which he hoped would buy time in their fight against them. This plan worked for five years. But eventually, Guthrum's army came back. A couple of Alfred's nobles, angered at being asked again to pay Guthrum, and seeing that Wessex was not in a much better position than five years before, deposed Alfred during a Christmas meeting between Alfred and his subjects. In his place, rule was given to a Danish puppet controlled by Guthrum. Alfred could easily have fled overseas and abandoned his kingdom, LEGITIMIZING the puppet ruler; instead, he went into hiding, never fully solidifying Guthrum's puppet rule. The thought of fleeing the country would never cross King Alfred's mind. He would not abandon his people.

SPELL: INEVITABLE SPELL: REINFORCED SPELL: LEGITIMIZING

What was the name of the new Danish leader? GUTHRUM

What was the name of Guthrum's army? GREAT SUMMER ARMY

What time of the year was Alfred deposed? CHRISTMAS, WINTER

Alfred and the Danes came to an agreement to not fight for a period of time, what is this kind of agreement called? TREATY, PEACE TREATY

What does it mean to be a "puppet" ruler?

Alfred went hiding in the SOMERSET MARSHES, in Southwest England. It was a difficult spot to move an army and all its necessary supplies, so this was a good TEMPORARY hideout for Alfred to regroup. For a time it seemed that Guthrum had completely taken over Wessex, and England was to become a completely Danish land. But Alfred's closest (and loyal!) nobles and advisors knew he was still in the country, and ready to raise an army of his own. His mere presence on English soil SYMBOLIZED that Anglo-Saxon England was still alive, and that England still belonged to the Anglo-Saxons. While in hiding, Alfred organized a plan. He and his

advisors would secretly send messages to all the nobles in Wessex. The messages instructed these nobles to call all the English peasants and landowners to serve as MILITIA, called FYRD (pronounced: Fee-ard) in Wessex. These militia would all meet up with Alfred at a certain time and location to launch a COUNTERATTACK on Guthrum. Alfred's subjects gladly answered his call to arms. This small hope he gave to those West Saxon people who continued to follow him after Alfred went into hiding paid off, as Alfred would end up SOUNDLY defeating Guthrum and rebuilding his kingdom.

SPELL: TEMPORARY SPELL: SYMBOLIZED SPELL:
COUNTERATTACK

Where was Alfred's hiding place? SOMERSET MARSHES

What part of England were the Somerset Marshes? SOUTHWEST

What was the name of the Anglo-Saxon militia? FYRD

Why were the Somerset Marshes a good hiding spot? DIFFICULT TO
MOVE AN ARMY, DIFFICULT TO MOVE SUPPLIES

What was Alfred's plan in hiding? SECRETLY SENDING MESSAGES TO
WESSEX NOBLES, SEND MESSAGES TO RAISE AN ARMY

What is a militia? A MILITARY FORCE FROM THE CIVILIAN
POPULATION



VAKT: Memorial to King Alfred in Athelney, England. This is the location where Alfred hid from Guthrum in the Somerset Marshes in Southwest England

<https://thefreelancehistorywriter.com/2013/02/06/memorial-to-athelney-island-home-of-alfred-the-great/>

In May of 878 Alfred gathered his army and marched east to EDINGTON, outside the Danish held FORTRESS of CHIPPENHAM. The presence of Alfred's army drew Guthrum and his army outside of the fortress and a crucial battle ensued. Alfred's army, fighting on foot, formed a dense shield wall. As the BATTLE OF EDINGTON went on, the Saxons were slowly able to push the Danes back. Alfred's BIOGRAPHER, a Bishop named ASSER wrote, "Alfred attacked the whole pagan army fighting FEROCIOUSLY in dense order, and by divine will eventually won the victory, and pursued them to their fortress." After his decisive victory, Alfred forced Guthrum to sign a peace treaty. In this treaty, Alfred and Guthrum split England in half, the southwest part of England would belong to Wessex while the Northeast part would belong to the Danes. More importantly, Alfred got the Danes to withdraw from Wessex for good. The incredible loyalty towards Alfred among his subjects led to the Anglo-Saxon's great victory over Guthrum,

and thus created the pride among the Anglo-Saxon people that set the foundations for idea that this was the land of the Angles and Saxons. It would later be shortened just to Angle-Land. Now I am sure you can see how the word England came to be!

SPELL: FORTRESS SPELL: BIOGRAPHER SPELL: FEROCIOUSLY

What was the name of the Danish Fortress? CHIPPENHAM

What was this decisive battle called? BATTLE OF EDINGTON

What was the name of Alfred's biographer? ASSER

Asser was what profession? BISHOP

What was the main provision in Alfred and Guthrum's peace treaty?

**DANES LEAVE WESSEX, DANES WITHDRAW FROM WESSEX,
ENGLAND SPLIT IN HALF**

When was the Battle of Edington? 878, May 878



VAKT: Battlefield of the Battle of Edington. Memorial commemorating the Wessex victory.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Edington#/media/File:Ethandunmem.jpg

Alfred would not sit on his LAURELS. He knew that Wessex needed stronger defenses so it could remain free and independent. He organized a standing army that would call the people to serve for a short period of time on a rotating basis, as a “rapid reaction force,” but allow them to return after this period so they would be able to maintain their farms. He also started a building program to develop well-defended Wessex towns and MARKETPLACES across the country. Settlers would receive plots of land and in return man the towns’ defenses in times of war. This program not only brought security to Wessex but brought it economic PROSPERITY! Alfred also rebuilt the Wessex navy, to ensure that his Kingdom was well protected against Danish RAIDERS. All these reforms ensured that another situation like what had occurred would not happen again, but Alfred believed his duty as king was not only to protect his people, but enrich their lives, specifically with education.

SPELL: LAURELS SPELL: PROSPERITY SPELL: RAIDERS

Alfred prioritized what reforms after his victory over Guthrum? STRONGER DEFENSES

What military group did Alfred rebuild? NAVY

What description was used to characterize this new standing army? RAPID REACTION FORCE

Alfred wanted to not only create stronger defenses but also improve what? EDUCATION

The individuals called to serve in this standing army would serve _____? ON A ROTATING BASIS, SHORT PERIOD OF TIME

Alfred created well-defended what in his building program? TOWNS, MARKETPLACES

Alfred knew that the Vikings’ destruction of monasteries directly led to a DETERIORATION of learning. Alfred sought to reverse that. Alfred was fluent in LATIN, so he himself would take part in the translation of books

that covered history, geography, philosophy, and religion from Latin to English. He then sent all these translations around his kingdom and developed a system of education so all people of Wessex would be able to read them. Additionally, Alfred organized the creation of the ANGLLO-SAXON CHRONICLE, which was a PATRIOTIC book depicting all Anglo-Saxon history in England, further unifying his people under a collective English identity. Historian, Justin Pollard, stated that Alfred's spirit still lasts in England today because of his REVOLUTIONARY belief that "the government of the country should be conducted, and conducted accountably, in the language of its people – English (304)." MINTING coins was a great way for medieval kings to communicate messages to their people, so Alfred in his mission to unify all Anglo-Saxon people referred to himself on these coins and additional charters not as the King of the Saxons but the "King of the English." I do not know who would dispute this with him at this point either!

SPELL: DETERIOATION SPELL: PATRIOTIC SPELL: REVOLUTIONARY

In addition to English what language was Alfred fluent in? LATIN

What the name of the Anglo-Saxon history book that Alfred organized the creation of? ANLGO-SAXON CHRONICLE

What was the name of the historian quoted in this paragraph? JUSTIN POLLARD

How did medieval kings communicate mass messages to the people? MINTING COINS

Alfred called himself what on the coins and charters he created? KING OF THE ENGLISH

Alfred translated books about what topics? HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION

Which of Alfred's accomplishments did you find most impressive?

Alfred did not live to see all of England UNIFIED under English rule, since the Danes still controlled half of the country, but Alfred set the foundations for a unified English kingdom. Alfred's son, EDWARD, was able to push the

Danes back out of East Anglia and Mercia, and Alfred's grandson, ETHELSTAN, was able to reconquer York in 927, the last Danish STRONGHOLD in the whole of England. From 927 to today, England became one unified kingdom ruled by an English MONARCH. Alfred the Great took over a kingdom that was weak and had no Anglo-Saxon allies. Yet against all odds, he prevented the entire island from being controlled by the Danes, reconstructed the infrastructure of Wessex, ensured it's security, promoted education and pride among the Anglo-Saxon people, and started the process for the unification of all Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Who knows but - without Alfred maybe we would never have an England today. Either way history would play out very differently if Wessex did not have the founding father of England as its King.

SPELL: UNIFIED SPELL: STRONGHOLD SPELL: MONARCH

What was the name of Alfred's son? Edward

What was the last Danish stronghold? York

Edward was able to push the Danes out of which former Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms? EAST ANGLIA, MERCIA

What year was Alfred's grandson able to recapture York? 927

Which of Alfred's accomplishments did you find most impressive?

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