

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations ix

Genealogical Table xii

*A Note on Spelling, Pronunciation, Dates,
and Forms of Reference* xv

Acknowledgments xvii

Introduction	1
1 A Kingdom in Flux	20
2 The Birth of England	43
3 Wielding the Sceptre	70
4 Steward of the Christian Citizenry	109
5 British <i>Imperium</i>	147
6 European Renown	178
7 Death and Legacy	201

Glossary of Technical Terms and Titles 213

Dramatis Personae 215

Chronology of Principal Events 221

Appendix I. Æthelstan's Diplomas 223

viii CONTENTS

*Appendix II. The Identity of Æthelstan's Half-Sister,
Sent to East Francia in 929* 227

Notes 231

Bibliography 273

Index 295

Color plates follow pages 124 and 180

Introduction

BY 12 JULY 927, Æthelstan had made his way to the vicinity of Eamont Bridge, today a small village just over a mile south from the centre of Penrith, to receive the formal submission of two kings of the Welsh people, Hywel Dda ('the Good') and Owain; of the Scottish king, Constantine II; and of Ealdred, a powerful Northumbrian from the house of Bamburgh.¹ It is possible that another king, Owain of Strathclyde, also recognised Æthelstan's supremacy that day. Earlier in 927 Æthelstan had become the first ever person who could legitimately be titled 'King of the English', having brought the previously independent kingdom of Northumbria within his dominion. It is likely that the occasion at Eamont Bridge constituted formal recognition that Æthelstan was at that moment the premier king in the British Isles.

The site chosen was rich with symbolism. The Old English place-name for Eamont, *æt Eamotum*, means literally 'at the meeting of the rivers', indicative of Eamont Bridge's position at the place where the Rivers Eamont and Lowther flow together. It was also, in the early tenth century, the boundary between the early medieval kingdoms of Northumbria and Strathclyde. Meetings between rulers of roughly equal power were often deliberately held on borders in the early medieval period. That the ceremony was held in a border territory far from the heart of Æthelstan's power in Wessex was a recognition of the way in which he had managed to extend his authority so far to the north; but it was also, perhaps, an indication of the limitations of that authority, inasmuch as he could not compel the kings present to attend him further

south. Quite what the kings discussed that day, and whether or not they were moved by the symbolism of the area—which was reinforced by the presence nearby of three ancient sites of significance, the Roman fort Brocavum, King Arthur’s Round Table Henge, and Mayburgh Henge—is impossible to know. But the event, recorded in only one of the seven principal extant versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, was the most significant that had yet been set down in English historical texts. The moment was not lost on one member of Æthelstan’s retinue. A man of continental origin, possibly named Peter, had journeyed north with Æthelstan and witnessed his political successes of 927.² To commemorate the occasion he composed a poem which he directed south to the royal palace in Winchester and in which he records that the ‘Saxon-land’ (*Saxonia*), by which he means England, had now been ‘made whole’ (*perfecta*). Eamont Bridge was more than a coming together of rivers and of kings; it represented the beginnings of a newly constituted kingdom of the English, and a growing awareness that all of the peoples within England, who had diverse backgrounds that were variously Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Breton, and Scandinavian, could look towards Æthelstan as their king, and perhaps—if they chose to—could begin to think of themselves as members of the ‘English’, the *Angelcynn* in Old English.

The meeting near Eamont Bridge highlights the political complexity of early medieval Britain. The ‘kingdom of the English’ forged by Æthelstan comprised territories that had, until relatively recently, been independent kingdoms in their own right, with their own sequences of kings, who minted coins in their name and issued royal documents such as diplomas and laws. Æthelstan belonged to a line of West Saxon kings that traced their descent from a mythical founding figure called Cerdic, from whom descendants in the main line became known as Cerdicings. Their kingdom, Wessex, was located in the south and west. Abutting Wessex to the north was the kingdom of Mercia, situated in the mid-lands area. Its name derives from the Old English word *mierce*, which

means a ‘boundary’, and which may have been intended to convey the sense that it was on the boundary, either with Wales to the west, Wessex to its south, or Northumbria to its north, depending on one’s perspective. North of the River Humber lay Northumbria itself, which in its earliest manifestation had been divided by the River Tees into two kingdoms, that of Deira to the south and Bernicia to the north, which were latterly joined together into Northumbria proper in the mid-seventh century. A period of viking settlement in and around York from the late ninth century onwards, with which Æthelstan would have to contend, in effect served to reemphasise this old division between the two constituent parts of Northumbria, since vikings did not penetrate north of the Tees in any significant way. To the east of Wessex, the kingdom of East Anglia had also fallen under viking control in the late ninth century, as had parts of the east midlands; Æthelstan’s father, Edward the Elder, whom we will soon meet, undertook concerted efforts to bring these areas under West Saxon control.

Owing to a paucity of documentation and narrative accounts, the history of the north-west, in what today we would think of as Cumbria, is relatively obscure for the late ninth and early tenth centuries. From what we can gather, it seems to have been part of a Brittonic-speaking kingdom known as Strathclyde. The origins of Strathclyde itself lay with a series of kings who had as their base Dumbarton Rock (*Alt Clut*, ‘Rock of the Clyde’) but who, following a viking attack in 870, were forced to relocate their centre further east and inland, to the ‘valley’ (*strath*) of the River Clyde. According to one recent interpretation, the Strathclyde kingdom, sometimes termed the ‘land of the Cumbrians’ (*Cumbraland*) by early English sources, expanded its territory southwards in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, beyond the Solway Firth, and it was bounded ultimately by the River Eamont. The kingdom of Strathclyde/Cumbria (as it will be referred to here), whose history is obscure, endured until the eleventh century.³

From about 900 we begin to see references to a kingdom in northern Britain called ‘Alba’, which appears in some ways to be a successor to the northern kingdoms known as Dál Riata and Pictland, and a precursor to modern Scotland.⁴ Alba’s heartlands were in the region between the

Firth of Forth and the Moray Firth. The kings of Alba traced their descent back to a man named Kenneth MacAlpine (d. 858). Early kings in this line are referred to by the title ‘king of the Picts’, and it is only from the reign of Donald (d. 900) that the title ‘king of Alba’ is invoked. From the year 920, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* refers to people of this area as ‘Scots’ rather than ‘Picts’, as they had previously been known. Constantine II, who was present that day at Eamont Bridge, ruled Alba for over forty years at this crucial period of its formation. Æthelstan would have multiple dealings with him.⁵

Wales in the tenth century was itself politically fragmented and composed of a number of separate kingdoms which included Gwynedd in the north-west; Dyfed in the south-west (which was incorporated within a southern area known as Deheubarth); Brycheiniog, Gwent, and Glywysing (the latter two would later be joined and known as Morgannwg) in the south-east; the southern kingdom of Ystrad Tywi; the kingdom of Powys in the east; and the western kingdom of Ceredigion. The most influential Welsh king to emerge in the early tenth century was Hywel Dda, with whom Æthelstan would have regular contact.⁶

It might be expected that in the tenth century Ireland, an island less than half the area of Great Britain, would lend itself to being one political unit. But nothing could be further from the truth: in Æthelstan’s day there were a number of provincial overlordships, which included Munster in the south-west, Connacht in the west, the Northern and Southern Uí Neill in the north and into the midlands area, Ulster in the north-east, and Leinster in the east. And, according to one recent reckoning, there were in excess of some 150 separate kingdoms (known by the Old Irish word *túath*), whose kings had varying degrees of power and authority.⁷

The term Viking—regularly applied to those Scandinavians who came from regions of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden—is in some ways misleading. Its use not only disguises the diverse origins of the individuals concerned but also suggests a degree of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic uniformity which is inappropriate when describing the Scandinavians we will meet. The derivation of the word Viking has been much debated and is not certainly known. In Scandinavian texts the Old Norse word

vikingr referred to a man who was part of a military expedition. The term Viking was rarely used in the early medieval period itself. English sources, for example, tend to refer to members of the viking army as Danes (even if they did not come from Denmark) or as pagans. Because the word Viking has become so well ingrained in the modern consciousness, however, it has been used throughout the book, specifically for those involved in military acts. The neutral term Scandinavian (or Hiberno-Scandinavian, to denote those from Ireland) is preferred when no such activity is suggested. Historians have also come to refer to vikings, with a lowercase *v*, and, where possible, without the definite article, to make it clear that the word embraces peoples from many different backgrounds. The same practice is adopted here.

It was not just in the eastern, midland, and northern parts of England that vikings were active and creating settlements of their own. By this stage they had also settled parts of the so-called kingdom of the Isles (the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, and the islands of the Clyde); the Orkney and Shetland Islands, and the Isle of Anglesey. Viking naval camps were also created on the east coast of Ireland in Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, and Cork, and in the west at Limerick. One especially powerful dynasty of vikings, all descended from a certain Ívarr (d. 873), had based themselves in Dublin and would intermittently assert their rights to rule from York in Northumbria, thus causing serious issues for successive English kings, and for Æthelstan in particular.⁸ The area encompassed by the Irish Sea and the west coasts of England and Scotland was thus of crucial strategic importance.

Europe itself in the tenth century, as we will see in chapter 6, was experiencing a high degree of political turbulence. Charles the Great (d. 814), better known as Charlemagne,⁹ had created an empire that was the first, broadly speaking, to replicate in geographical extent the former western Roman empire. But by the mid- to late ninth century the empire had become politically fragmented. A series of successor regions emerged whose territories were often ill defined and ever shifting, and in which the power of kings, and of other secular dignitaries such as margraves and counts, fluctuated in extent and nature. Modern histori-

ans refer to a number of principal kingdoms and regions in existence by the late ninth and early tenth centuries:

1. The kingdom of **West Francia** (the ancestor of modern France), which had its centre around Laon and Rheims and included territory north of the River Loire, and which sometimes laid claim to areas of Lotharingia but did not incorporate the northern areas of Brittany, Normandy, and Flanders nor the eastern areas of Burgundy and Provence.¹⁰
2. The kingdom of **Italy**, which incorporated the area of Piedmont in the north-west and Friuli in the north-east, and which extended roughly halfway down the Italian Peninsula, just beyond Rome, and whose territories abutted those belonging to the papal see.
3. **Burgundy**, whose western lands, roughly the area between the Rivers Loire and Saône and north of Mâcon, became the duchy of Burgundy, and whose eastern territories were situated to the east of the River Saône and south of Mâcon. The southerly part of Burgundy (known variously as lower Burgundy, cisjurane Burgundy, or Provence), extended roughly from Lyons and Vienne southwards towards the Mediterranean.
4. **East Francia**, which comprised a variety of regions including Bavaria, Franconia, Swabia, Saxony, and Thuringia, with important cities including Aachen, Cologne, Liège, Mainz, Trier, and Würzburg.
5. The duchy of **Lotharingia**, formerly a kingdom, which was itself divided into Lower (northern) and Upper (southern) Lotharingia, and which was broadly bounded in the west by the territory of West Francia (along the lines of the Rivers Scheldt and Meuse), in the north by the North Sea, in the east by East Frankish lands (along the River Rhine), and in the south by Burgundy.

The tenth century in Europe became a particularly formative period as the different parts of the former empire forged their own new and separate identities and as nobles of non-royal stock sought recognition as



MAP 2. Europe around 933.

kings in their own right.¹¹ There were opportunities here for the ambitious individual, a fact not lost on Æthelstan, who developed a clear and distinctive foreign policy in ways that his royal predecessors had not before managed.

Even this brief overview highlights something of the complications of Britain's (and Europe's) geo-politics in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. The different English kingdoms all fluctuated in their extent and nature. Their borders could follow the course of major rivers, or of major routeways. Watling Street, for example, an old Roman road which runs from London in a north-westerly direction roughly towards Wrochester, was frequently invoked as a border between territories. But it is unlikely that these borders were thought of as hard and fast by those in the tenth century, and it is certain that they changed in a variety of ways. Across the British Isles a multiplicity of languages was spoken and written: Old English, Old Irish, Old Norse, Old Welsh, Latin, and Pictish, and society was distinctively cosmopolitan. People must have held a variety of beliefs and customs, as can be gleaned from the substantial archaeological and textual remains of the period. At the level of the average individual person, their outlook on life was likely to have been profoundly local: on the whole, what mattered was what happened within the near vicinity of their settlement and what was required of them by their local lord. Conditions of life must have been hard, life expectancy low (at about twenty-five to thirty years, in one estimation), and levels of competent literacy restricted to those of higher status.¹²

Despite their predominantly local horizons, members of the elite did travel, sometimes quite extensively. Vikings, of course, found their way to Britain, and as far east as the Middle East and as far west as North America. The presence of vikings in the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (modern Istanbul) is revealed by the remarkable discovery of graffiti which depicts four images of viking ships, etched into the building's fabric. It has been suggested that they were carved by vikings who were amusing themselves during a liturgical ceremony in the church.¹³ We have records from Æthelstan's reign of visits by Englishmen to Europe, and vice versa. Numerous European scholars sought out his court as a place where learning was respected and encouraged. By the early tenth

century, a pilgrimage to Rome was a well-established custom; it is remarkable that a form of travel diary concerning such a journey survives from the late tenth century, undertaken by the then archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁴ An existing network of Roman (and pre-Roman) roads facilitated travel within Britain itself. These routes were carefully maintained by kings and other landowners. In 934, as we will see, Æthelstan and his entourage journeyed some 150 miles from Winchester to Nottingham in ten days, thus travelling at a rate of about fifteen miles per day. Detailed maps were not available, so travellers must have relied on the particulars of routes passed by word of mouth and local knowledge of the landscape and routeways.¹⁵ Place-names, many of which were coined for the first time in this period, contain elements which reveal much about the topography of the kingdom. By the early tenth century it was expected that royal officials would be able to read written instructions: it was by means of documents whose purpose was essentially ephemeral—when and where the royal assemblies were to be held—that the details of such assemblies were communicated.

When he formed ‘England’ in 927, Æthelstan was not only the first king to have done so, but he was simultaneously confronted by unprecedented complexities in holding it together. There were various ways in which he could assert his authority and seek to foster a sense of English unity, even if the realities were somewhat different. The England that emerged under his leadership must have looked very different to the person standing on the banks of the River Humber than to the person standing on the River Thames in London, or on the River Tamar in the south-west. In discussing Æthelstan’s formation of an English kingdom, we must not think of it as any kind of homogeneous whole. Instead it should be celebrated for its mix of peoples, languages, cultures, and ideas, in just the same way that England is constituted today.

In writing a biography of Æthelstan it is not possible to take a strictly chronological approach. Such is the nature of the surviving source material that there are too many holes to be plugged. But, by addressing

the main themes of his life and reign, and by comparing his actions to those of his royal predecessors and successors, a very full picture can be constructed of Æthelstan as king and of his approach to kingship. What emerges is a portrait of a quite extraordinary individual who rose from a position of relative weakness, fighting even to confirm his place on the throne, to one of a power so great that it was recognised across contemporary Europe. And he accomplished this all within a reign that would last for a relatively short period of some fourteen years.

In order to reconstruct history of the late ninth and early tenth centuries, we are obliged to rely on a variety of textual and artefactual sources, all of which present their own distinctive challenges. The major narrative source is known by the title *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and it takes the form of a year-by-year account of the major, and some minor, episodes of the period. The allotted title is suggestive of a single text. In fact, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* survives in seven main manuscripts, conventionally labelled 'A' through 'G'. The *Chronicle* seems originally to have been a set of annals developed at the court of King Alfred the Great, Æthelstan's grandfather, which, in the early 890s, were sent out to various parts of the kingdom where copies were subsequently kept up to date in different local centres, and thus contain various elements of local bias.¹⁶ The copy of the *Chronicle* that lies behind versions 'D' and 'E', for example, is thought to have contained a so-called 'northern recension', meaning that details about Northumbrian history are preserved in ways not seen in other surviving copies.¹⁷ For Alfred's reign, and that of his successor, Edward the Elder (Æthelstan's father), the different versions of the *Chronicle* provide a relatively full account of the deeds of the years in question, 871–924. These annals were written in a number of stages and by a number of authors.¹⁸ A major focus is the West Saxon kings' actions in combatting successive viking threats. For some of the annals, notably those for 893–96, the level of detail is such that they may have been written by someone who was close to the action, who perhaps had been involved in meetings of the royal assembly in which tactics were discussed and the outcome of different battles reported. For Edward's reign, in addition to the annals that concentrate on his actions as king, it is fortunate that another set of annals survive embedded in versions 'B', 'C', and 'D'

(covering the years 902–24).¹⁹ Given that the focus of this set of annals is on Mercian affairs and on the ‘lady of the Mercians’, Æthelflæd, the daughter of King Alfred, they are variously referred to as the *Annals of Æthelflæd* or the *Mercian Register*.²⁰ It is greatly to be regretted that the *Chronicle* falls relatively silent for Æthelstan’s reign. Major events are reported, such as the 927 meeting near Eamont Bridge, and a long and celebrated poem is entered in the annal for 937 to commemorate Æthelstan’s momentous success at the Battle of *Brunanburh*, but we would have hoped for more.²¹

By far the fullest account of Æthelstan’s life can be found in a text written by the greatest of the Anglo-Norman historians, William of Malmesbury. Originally composed around 1125–26, and subsequently revised at various points up to 1134, William’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (Deeds of the English Kings) provides, as its title suggests, a monumental history of England up to the author’s own day. As a monk at Malmesbury, it was natural that William took an interest in Æthelstan, who, as we will see, is said to have favoured the religious community there with gifts and donations of land during his lifetime and who would request to be buried there on his death. William was formidably learned and wrote in a range of different genres, in addition to his history. As a companion piece, he also constructed a major history of the English church, the *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* (Deeds of the English Bishops). He was steeped in classical literature, so much so that his writing is instinctively suffused with learned allusions to authors such as Virgil and Lucan. While he was rigorous in the research for his historical writings, he was not above embellishing his works and paying more attention to style than content, while also, at times, trusting too much in popular opinion.

When it comes to William’s treatment of Æthelstan, we are immediately on our guard because of the approximately two-hundred-year gap between William’s time of writing and when his subject had lived. Some of the details William provides are clearly anachronistic and say more about the early twelfth century than they do about the early tenth. For part of his information about Æthelstan, William states that he derived it from ‘an ancient volume’ (*uolumine uetusto*) written by an author whose language was ‘bombastic’ (*suffultum*) and therefore difficult to

follow, and whose ‘manner is excused by the practice of that time, and the excess of panegyric is countenanced by his enthusiasm for Æthelstan, who was then still living’.²² For a subsequent part of his information about Æthelstan, William states that what he has so far written concerning Æthelstan is ‘perfectly trustworthy’ (*fide integra*) but that what follows has been derived ‘more from popular songs which have suffered in transmission than from scholarly books written for the information of posterity’.²³ On the face of it, therefore, William seems to be signalling to the reader when he is drawing from an ‘ancient’ written (and therefore more reliable) source and when he is deploying information that he found in less reliable oral sources.

There are, however, possible difficulties with William’s account. His citing of ‘an ancient volume’ written in ‘bombastic’ style is at first sight encouraging: because tenth-century Latin was renowned for its complexity and use of mannered vocabulary, the description ‘bombastic’ would be appropriate if William did have a tenth-century text in front of him.²⁴ But modern historians have argued about the substance of what follows in William’s narrative, some seeing kernels of tenth-century detail embedded in his work, while others are more sceptical and suggest that most of the relevant text belongs to the late eleventh or early twelfth centuries.²⁵ The matter is very important because, as we will discover, some details about Æthelstan’s life can only be found in the pages of William’s work. A comparison of William’s information about Æthelstan with established features and trends of early tenth-century history allows us to make progress. But caution is needed.

The best category of evidence for Æthelstan’s reign is provided by two classes of royal documents, his diplomas and his law codes. In essence a diploma is a document which, in its original state, comprises a single-sheet record of (most usually) a grant of land and associated privileges by the king to an individual or institution. By the early tenth century, diplomas were highly formulaic and followed certain conventions that had been established since their introduction at some point in the seventh century. A diploma is thought to have been the product of a royal assembly, the occasion when the king called together all of his most senior lay and ecclesiastical advisers to discuss royal business and

official promotions and to promulgate his laws. The royal assembly met at certain points during the years, often coinciding with major religious festivals.²⁶ Those who were present at the meetings of the royal assembly at which the various grants of land were made are listed as witnesses at the end of each diploma. These lists are set out hierarchically, beginning with the name of the king himself, from the form of whose title (known as his 'royal style') various kinds of important information can be gleaned; then there follow, most often, the names of the archbishops of Canterbury and York, then the bishops of the kingdom, then the ealdormen and thegns (both types of royal officials). Because of this hierarchical structure, and because the diplomas themselves are dated, they provide crucial detail for the realpolitik of tenth-century England, of the peaks and troughs of individuals' careers.²⁷

On the basis of their style and content, diplomas issued by Æthelstan can be placed into three main groups according to the period: the years 925–26, 928–35, and 935–39.²⁸ The middle group, as we will see, are the most extraordinary documents of their kind to survive from the whole of the early medieval period. Nothing like them had been produced before, and nothing like them would appear again. Issued in the wake of Æthelstan's making of 'England' in 927, they were clearly designed to proclaim as loudly as possible the king's successes. Historians have attempted to identify the scribe responsible for these diplomas, but the matter has not reached resolution, which means that he continues to be known by the anonymous title 'Æthelstan A'. What is more certain is that he was acting as Æthelstan's royal scribe and had a monopoly on diploma production in the period 928–35. His documents are some of the earliest conclusive evidence we have for the existence of a sort of royal writing office, termed a 'chancery' by historians. Given the expansion of his authority and remit across a newly formed England, Æthelstan certainly had need of such a centralised administrative department. The majority of Æthelstan's diplomas survive only as copies made after the early medieval period and are thus susceptible to having been tampered with by forgers. But a core of authentic documents can be discerned and mined for what they can tell us about his reign, in addition to the re-

markable testimony provided by those few diplomas that have happened to survive in their original, tenth-century form.

It is extremely fortunate that, in the realms of law, a relatively large body of written law (known as law codes) survives from Æthelstan's reign. These laws present difficult questions of interpretation: although one might naturally assume that the laws were intended to be used and implemented in everyday life, some scholars have argued that they are rather to be seen as statements of aspiration on the part of the king, perhaps less connected to the realities of tenth-century life than might at first be expected. Because a greater number of Æthelstan's law codes survive than for other tenth-century kings, we are permitted unusual access to his legislative activity and expectations. A number of concerns are clear in the extant documentation, particularly the issue of theft and how it should be punished. The repetitive way in which this crime is dealt with arguably underlines that it must have been a real contemporary issue, one that was proving difficult to eradicate. Æthelstan and his advisers begin by suggesting the harshest possible punishment (execution) for offenders of above a certain age; then they offer a period in which criminals were pardoned, before—once more, presumably in response to a lack of change—returning to the harshest possible position. Some of the law codes of Æthelstan's reign, as we will see, are not statements of royal law at all but rather reports from different parts of the kingdom to Æthelstan about the reception of his laws, the difficulties in implementing them, and sensible changes that have been made in their operation. Collectively they reveal just how sophisticated governance of the early tenth century had become and how dependent it was on the written word.²⁹

Although we lack a major contemporary narrative source, the evidence of royal diplomas and law codes, when scrutinised closely, provides crucial access to the heart of Æthelstan's royal assemblies and his ambitions as king. It reveals not just his policies but the realities of his attempts to govern England as a whole. We will find a king who could at once be ruthless and cunning, but also deeply concerned about his own—and his kingdom's—intellectual and spiritual welfare.

Artefactual evidence provides further vital detail about early tenth-century England. And, thanks to the ongoing work of archaeologists and metal detectorists, the corpus of material is ever-expanding. As recently as 2009, for example, our understanding of the kinds of objects that were produced in the seventh century was transformed by the discovery in that year of the Staffordshire Hoard, which contained in the region of forty-five hundred items, many of them crafted in gold, and many of them martial in character. For Æthelstan's reign, we will encounter precious silks, relics, and archaeological details, all of which supplement the written record. Coins, of which a few thousand survive from the early tenth century, constitute a particularly important type of evidence and sometimes offer a corrective to surviving texts. At one level, coins—which were stamped with the king's name and title, sometimes an image of his bust, and sometimes with other details, such as the place of minting and/or the name of the moneyer—provide information about the way in which the king wished to be seen by his subjects. Æthelstan tried to keep tight control over his coinage, and the royal titles that he employed on his diplomas following his achievements of 927 were echoed in the inscriptions used on coins. It was a concerted campaign of propaganda, designed to leave no uncertainty about his status. At another level, coins provide details about the socio-economic conditions of early tenth-century England. The mapping of coins found on their own ('single-finds') reveals much about the extent and currency of a particular coin type and how widely it circulated across different parts of England. The survival of large numbers of coins in hoards can help in dating successive coin types and in an assessment of the levels of productivity of different mint places. During Æthelstan's reign there were at least thirty-seven mints in action, which extended from Lydford in the south-west as far north as York.³⁰ Their distribution was not even: the majority are clustered in Wessex, while York is the only mint known to have operated for the whole of Northumbria. At the time of this writing, a collection of some twenty English coins has recently been found as part of excavations at the Palazzo della Rovere in Rome, in an area recognised in the tenth century as the English quarter (the *Schola Saxonum*, 'School of the Saxons' (i.e., English), in early

sources), some of which include specimens from Æthelstan's reign. It is too early to know what further light they may shed on Æthelstan's monetary system, or on trips taken by English travellers to Rome. But they serve as a reminder that there is always the potential for new tenth-century sources to emerge.

Most of the evidence so far mentioned provides an Anglocentric view of matters. It is, of course, important that these texts are compared and contrasted with sources written by outside observers.³¹ These are not as plentiful or as straightforward to access as we might like. Numerous annalistic texts survive from Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, for example, but some only as very late recensions which have suffered in their transmission and whose details are therefore sometimes difficult to verify. Generations of work on them by modern historians, linguists, and textual critics have nevertheless revealed the kernels of contemporary detail that can be ascertained. From Wales we will meet texts such as the *Annales Cambriae* and from Ireland the *Annals of Ulster*, among many others. Scotland is not as well served by written material for the period: its *Chronicle of the Kings of Alba*, which covers events from the mid-ninth to the late tenth centuries, and which is thought to contain a tenth-century king list to which details were added over time, survives only in a manuscript of the fourteenth century.³² If we are looking for a counterpoint to the pro-Æthelstan, pro-English panegyric of the famous poem *The Battle of Brunanburh*, we fortunately find it in the remarkable Welsh prophetic poem known as *Armes Prydein Vawr* (Great Prophecy of Britain). Its tenth-century Welsh appeals for the slaughter of the English are chilling—no less so eleven hundred years on. One wonders how widely held such views were.

Connections between England and Europe were long standing and indeed strengthened during Æthelstan's reign. As a result, details relating to Anglo-European relations appear sporadically in a variety of tenth-century continental texts. We will find the names of English men and women recorded in precious books such as *Libri vitae* (Books of life) held by religious communities across north-western Europe: these were people travelling across the Continent and making stops at the communities in question along the way.³³ European chronicles and

letters give detail about Æthelstan's actions and status: so powerful did the English king become that he is at times shown intervening at crucial junctures in the evolution of different European kingdoms and able to influence their subsequent history. We will encounter the vivid testimony of contemporary West Frankish authors such as Flodoard of Rheims and Folcuin of Saint Bertin, and of East Frankish authors such as Adalbert of Magdeburg and Widukind of Corvey. Hrotsvitha, a tenth-century canoness of the abbey of Gandersheim in modern Germany, who was perhaps the first ever female historian from East Francia, composed a poetical text which, in recording details about the reign of Otto I, 'the Great', also reveals information about that king's relations with Æthelstan's England.

Use of the term 'Anglo-Saxon' has, in recent years, become controversial.³⁴ Its adoption by far right white supremacists as part of their agenda for racial 'unity' and 'purity' has led to reevaluations about deployment of the term in relation to early medieval England. But any notion that early tenth-century England was homogeneous in racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious terms is radically misplaced. Æthelstan knew this better than anyone. From this chronological distance we cannot know his motivations in creating England for the first time. Perhaps it was simply a case of increasing his power and status and of stabilising his position as king. Perhaps it was the most sensible way of galvanising domestic defences against the continued external threat in the form of vikings. In any modern examination of the reign of a man credited as the 'first king of the English', we need to be wary of the dangers of teleology: because we know both that 'England' was formed under Æthelstan and that over subsequent generations it became a lasting reality, we should not assume that historical episodes of the early tenth century led inevitably towards its creation. In fact, events on his death in 939 at first suggested that Æthelstan's England would not survive. But he had provided a potent blueprint, and one from which future kings would build.

As we approach the eleven hundredth anniversary both of Æthelstan's coronation as king in 925 and of his creation of England in 927, his pioneering actions should be marked. He was a master politician, a warring king, and a keen supporter of the church and of intellectual endeavour. He was England's first king, and seemingly one of its greatest.³⁵

INDEX

Page numbers in *italic* indicate maps.

- Aachen, 193
 abbots, 72, 114–16
 Adalbert of Magdeburg, 18, 194
 Adelaide, 195
 Adelard of Ghent, 144, 145
 Adelfolf, 53–54, 62, 181–82, 184
 administrative zones, 72–73
 Ælflæd, 29, 34, 40, 41, 46, 186, 227, 229
 Ælfgifu, 29, 180, 186, 187, 227–29. *See also*
 Eadgifu, possible daughter of Edward the
 Elder and Eadgifu
 Ælfheah (priest), 48, 49, 122
 Ælfheah *Calvus*, 123, 126, 144–46
 Ælfhere, 76
 Ælfred, 118
 Ælfric, 48, 49, 115, 123
 Ælfric Bata, 36
 Ælfthryth, 24, 36, 54, 179, 180, 181
 Ælfwald, 76
 Ælfward, 29, 34, 35, 43–44, 48, 64, 201
 Ælfwine, 88, 112, 125, 126, 201
 Ælfwynn, 38
 Ælle, 21
 Æsberht, 125
 Æthelbald, 179
 Æthelberht, 70, 178
 Æthelflæd, 12, 24, 26, 27, 34–39, 112, 131,
 151–52, 163, 164, 168, 188
 Æthelgifu, 24
 Æthelhelm, 29, 34, 145
 Æthelhild, 29
 Æthelred, brother of King Alfred the Great,
 21, 228
 Æthelred, East Anglian king, 20
 Æthelred II of Mercia, 26, 27, 28, 34–37, 38,
 39, 45, 112, 131, 150, 188
 Æthelred the Unready, 77, 92, 120, 210
 Æthelstan: birth of, 30–31; burial of, 201;
 childhood of, 31–37; church and, 112–46;
 coins issued by, 16–17, plate 16, 57, 61–62,
 100–6, 137, 147–48, 168; coronation of, 19,
 46, 47, 48, 51, 60, 82, 85, 112–13, 201; court
 of, 196–200; death of, 18, 201–3; death of
 Edwin and, 62–64; descriptions of, 206–7;
 foreign policy of, 9; governance by, 70–81;
 historical sources on, 12–18; household
 of, 48–51; as king, 45–46, 48–51, 61–69,
 204; kingdom of, 51–52, 54–59; law codes
 of, 90–100; legacy of, 203–11; lineage of, 2;
 marital status of, 44–45; military chal-
 lenges to, 69; northern kingdoms and,
 162–72; opposition to, in Winchester,
 45–48; portrait of, plate 10, 104, 137; power
 of, 18; recognition of, as king, 1–2; during
 reign of Edward the Elder, 41–42; rela-
 tions with continental Europe, 17–18,
 61, 178–200, 206; Scotland and, 155–56,
 169–70; succession to throne by, 43–44;
 territories of, 2–4; tomb of, plate 24;
 Welsh kingdoms and, 149–62, 205–6
 Æthelstan (Guthrum), 23, 26–27, 31. *See also*
 Guthrum

- Æthelstan (priest), 25, 110
 'Æthelstan A' diplomas, plate 13, 14, 80, 96, 103, 118, 123–26, 129, 143, 203, 210; land grants recorded in 68; physical appearance of, 85–86; uniqueness of, 71–75, 81, 84–89, 154; war with Scots and, 64; witness-lists in 71, 74, 75, 81, 115, 124, 154–56; writing style of, 87–88
 'Æthelstan C' diplomas, plate 15, 90
 Æthelstan Gospels, plate 21, 113, 189–90.
 See also British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. ii
 Æthelstan 'Half-King' (ealdorman), 76–77
 Æthelweard, 24, 28, 31, 35, 177, 186, 201, 208, 228
 Æthelwine, 112, 201
 Æthelwold, 33–34, 62, 143–46
 Æthelwulf, 32, 89, 92, 149, 179
 Alan of Brittany, 196–98
 Alba, 4–5, 40, 59, 81, 148, 176, 185, 205;
 Æthelstan's relations with, 40, 81, 148, 162–72, 176; sub-kings from, 74, 88, 154, 155; vikings in, 164, 165
 Alcuin, 178
 Aldhelm of Malmesbury, 87, 88, 201
alea euangelii (gospel dice), plate 17, 139, 140
 Alfred Jewel, plate 1, 25
 Alfred the Great, 11, 20–28, 30, 43, 178, 204, 210; Æthelstan and, 35; authority of, 26, 28; burial of, 111, 201; as child, 32–33; children of, 24, 26; church and, 117; coins of, plate 2, 26, 51; Cuthbertines and, 131, 163; death of, 33, 105; Guthrum and, 23, 26–27, 31, 196, 205; kingdom of, 204–5; law codes of, 90; legacy of, 211; reforms by, 25, 35, 70, 110–11; rule of, 107; viking attacks and, 21–23, 27–28; Welsh and, 150, 205; will of, 33; writings about, 24, 27–28
 'alliterative' diplomas, 74, 75, 138–39, 157
 All Saints' Day, 118, 129
 Alt Clut, 4, 162–63
 'Altus Prosator', 87
 Amiens, 24
 Amounderness, 65–66, 65, 122, 168
 Anarawd, 150
 Angers, 24
 Anglesey, 148
 Anglo-European relations, 17–18, 61, 178–200, 206
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 2, 5, 11–12, 61, 166–67, 208; on Ælfweard, 44; on Æthelstan, 54–55, 147; on Alfred the Great, 26, 32–33, 211; on Anglo-Welsh politics, 151–52; on Battle of *Brunanburh*, 173, 176; on death of Æthelstan, 201; on death of Edwin, 63–64; on Eamont Bridge meeting, 60; on Edward the Elder, 33, 37, 40, 41, 165–66; northern recension, 11; publication of, 27–28; on Scandinavian influences, 37; on Scotland invasion, 169; version 'A', 165–66; version 'B', 11–12; version 'C', 11–12; version 'D', plate 7, 11–12, 147, 201; version 'E', 11, 167; on vikings, 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 110
 Anglo-Saxons, 18; arrival in fifth century, 109; kingdom of, 26, 27, 31, 34, 51–52, 57, 204, 205
 Anglo-Welsh relations, 149–62
Annales Cambriae, 17, 174
Annals of Æthelflæd, 12. *See also* Mercian Register
Annals of Clonmacnoise, 174, 175
Annals of St-Bertin, 179
Annals of Ulster, 17, 41, 167, 177, 206
 archbishops, 10, 14, 64, 65, 66, 72, 73, 76, 95, 98, 109, 121, 122. *See also specific archbishops*
 archaeological excavations, of royal halls, 31–32
Armes Prydein Vawr (Great Prophecy of Britain), 17, 60, 161–62, 207
 Arnulf I, 184, 184–85, 196
 Artald, 183
 artefactual evidence, 16–17
 Artgal, 163
 Arthur, 2, 58
 Ashdown, 22
 Ashmolean Museum, 25

- assemblies. *See* royal assemblies
- Asser, 23–25, 27–28, 32, 35, 110, 116, 150, 179, 210
- assonance, 87
- Athelney, 22, 110, 114
- attestations, 69 by Æthelstan, 47; by ealdor-men, 73, 76; by Edwin, 47–48; episcopal, 73–74, 88, 114–16, 122–27, 139; by sub-kings, 74, 154–57, 171–72; by Wulfhelm, 121. *See also* witness-lists
- Augustine (saint), 109, 111
- Auisle, 162
- auxiliary bishops, 126
- Bakewell, 39, 40
- Baldwin I, 179
- Baldwin II, 24, 54, 179, 180, 181, 184
- Bamburgh, 1, 22, 40, 54, 58, 68–69, 131, 147, 165, 170; high-reeve of, 68
- Bamburgh Castle, plate 12
- Basing, 22
- Battle of Brunanburh, The*, 17
- Battle of Brunanburh*, 12, 69, 77, 143, 149, 159, 172–77, 201, 207, 208, 210
- Battle of Edington, 23
- Battle of the Holme, 34, 37
- Bavaria, 7
- Be blaserum*, 91
- Bede, 59, 109, 131, 137, 148, 187, 204–5
- behaviour: expectations for, 93–94; of royal officials, 96
- Belgium, 24
- Benedict, 126, 139
- Benedictine Rule, 143
- Benedictus Evernensis, 139
- Beorhtsige, 115
- Beornheah, 114
- Beornstan, 122–24, 126
- Beowulf*, 32
- Bernicia, 4, 58
- Bertha, 178
- Bible, of St Augustine, 109
- bishops, 14, 45, 49, 61, 72, 73, 99, 109, 122–28; archbishops, 10, 14, 25, 64, 65, 66, 72, 73, 76, 92, 95, 98, 109, 121, 122; royal administration duties of, 95, 97, 111–12; at royal assemblies, 64, 65, 72, 73–76, 84–85, 88, 115; Wærferth, 25, 110; of Winchester, 46. *See also* specific bishops
- Boethius, 111
- borders, between territories, 9
- boundary clauses, 70, 82–83, 120
- Branwalatr (saint), 119, 133–34
- Breton church, 132–34
- Breton saints, 133–34
- bribery, 96
- Bridgnorth, 37
- Britain: Æthelstan's control of, 147–77; geo-politics of early medieval, 2–9; languages spoken in, 9; northern kingdoms of, 162–72; roads within, 10; territories of, 2–5; Welsh kingdoms of, 149–62
- British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. ii, plate 21, 113, 189–90
- British Library, Cotton Tiberius B IV, 54
- Brittany, 7, 132–34, 151, 196–97
- Brocavum, 2, 58, 59
- Brochfael, 150
- Brunanburh*, Battle of. *See* Battle of *Brunanburh*
- Brycheiniog, 5, 152
- Buckingham, 69, 81
- Burgred, 21, 149
- Burgundy, 7, 61, 186, 187, 191
- burhs, 37–40, 39, 53, 92, 101, 105, 151, 165, 174, 175
- Bust Crowned coins, plate 16, 104
- Bust type coins, plate 16, 102, 103
- Byrnstan, 49
- Caesar, Julius, 193
- Caithness, 169
- Cambridge, 37, 38
- Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 66, 104, 109, 137, 183, 207
- cancellarius*, 50
- canon tables, 140
- Canterbury, 109, 123

- Canterbury, archbishop of, 10, 25, 100, 121, 127, 138, 144, 183, 191
- capital punishment, 93, 98, 99
- Carolingian empire, 180
- Carolingian kingship, 107
- Carolingian Renaissance, 178
- 'Carta, dirige gressus', plate 8, 56–57, 141
- Cavill, Paul, 176–77
- Cenwald, 123–24, 126, 134, 139, 145–46, 185, 189–91
- Ceolwulf II, 21, 26, 204
- Cerdic, 2
- Cerdicings, 2
- Ceredigion, 5, 150
- 'ceremony of conveyance', 77
- chancery, 14, 89
- Charibert I, 178
- charity, 118
- Charlemagne, 6, 54, 56, 100, 135–36, 178, 181, 182, 193, 206
- Charles III, 109
- Charles the Bald, 179, 180
- Charles the Great. *See* Charlemagne
- Charles the Simple, 40, 54, 180–82, 188, 189
- Cheddar, royal hall at, plate 3, 31–32
- Chester, 27, 31, 37, 43, 102, 106, 112, 159, 163
- Chester-le-Street, 64, 66, 79, 123, 126, 130, 169
- chiasmus, 87
- Chichester, 31, 105
- childhood, of Æthelstan, 31–37
- Chippenham, 22, 23, 155, 184
- Chirbury, 37, 151
- Christ Church, Canterbury, 25, 113, 121, 136, 138, 189
- Christianity, 109–10, 199, 204
- Chronicle of Nantes*, 196
- Chronicle of the Kings of Alba*, 17, 162, 163, 174
- church, Cornish, 127–30
- churches, 62, 73, 92; Æthelstan's support for, 112–46, 200; Breton, 132–34; English, 109–10, 204; land grants to, 114–15, 118–22, 127–30; reforms by, 110–11, 143–44, 146; viking attacks on, 110
- Circumscription type coins, 102, 103, 104, 148
- Cirencester, 156, 162, 172, 205–6
- clergy, 73, 114–15, 116. *See also* archbishops; bishops
- Clyde islands, 6, 148
- Clyde River, 4
- Clydog, 151
- Cnut, 92, 210
- coins, 2, 20, 26; of Æthelstan, 16–17, plate 16, 57, 61–62, 100–6, 137, 147–48, 168; of Alfred the Great, plate 2, 26, 51; Bust type, plate 16, 102, 103, 104; Circumscription type, 102, 103, 148; continental, 105; Cuerdale Hoard, 164; fineness of, 101; of Guthrum, 31; Horizontal Trefoil type, plate 16, 102–3; Horizontal/Two-Line type, 102; of Hywel Dda, plate 19, 158–59; inscriptions on, 16, 101, 102, 103, 159, 203; Northumbrian, 33; pennies, 100; Raven type, plate 25, 203; of Sihtric, 41, 52, 166; standards for, 101; viking, 105; Welsh, 158–59
- Columban, 125, 126
- Conan, 126, 128
- Condé, 24
- Connacht, 5
- Conrad the Red, 186, 194
- Constantine I, 163
- Constantine II, 1, 5, 38, 40, 54, 55, 58, 64, 69, 81, 147, 149, 154, 164–77
- Constantine the Great, 54, 135, 181
- Constantinople, 9
- continental coins, 105
- continental names, 106
- Corbridge, 38, 165, 170
- Cork, 6
- Cornish church, 127–30
- Cornish people, 60–61, 79
- Cornwall, 61, 123, 124, 126–30, 132, 146, 161
- coronation: of Æthelstan, 19, 46, 47, 48, 51, 60, 82, 85, 112–13, 201; of Charles III, 109; of Charles the Simple, 180; of Edward the Elder, 51; rituals, 51
- Coronation Gospels, plate 21, 189–90
- Corpus Irish Gospels, 139–40

- counts, 6
- Crediton, 111, 114, 123, 127
- crime, 15, 93–94, 96–100
- Cross, 54, 135, 181
- Cuerdale Hoard, 164
- Cumbria. *See* Strathclyde/Cumbria
- Cuthbert (saint), plate 5, plate 10, 66, 67, 68, 79, 130, 137, 187, 207
- Cuthbertines/community of St Cuthbert, 58, 123, 130–31, 136, 163
- Cyfeilliog, 151, 152
- Cynath, 115–16, 191
- Cynegils, 132
- Dacre, 55, 59, 166
- Dál Riata, 4
- Danelaw, 23–24, 36–37, 41, 42, 106, 211.
See also East Anglia; east midlands
- Danes, 6
- Davenport, 41, 166
- David, 193
- De arte metrica* (Israel the Grammarian), 140
- De consolatione philosophiae* (Consolation of philosophy) (Boethius), 111
- Deheubarth, 5, 58, 151, 156, 159
- Deira, 4, 58
- Denewulf, 125
- Denmark, 5, 6
- Derby, 37, 38, 53
- De virginitate* (Aldhelm), plate 14, 87, 88
- Devon, 76, 79, 114, 127, 155
- Dialogi* (Dialogues) (Gregory the Great), 111
- diplomas. *See* royal diplomas
- Dol, Brittany, 133
- Dollar, 163
- domboc*, 90
- Domesday Book, 72, 73
- Donald, 5, 163
- Dorchester, 105, 123, 126, 172
- Dublin, 55, 69, 161, 203; Óláf's return to, 174–77; vikings in, 6, 21, 22, 28, 41, 66, 122, 149, 151, 163–68, 172–73
- Dumbarton Rock, 4, 162
- Dunnottar, 163, 169
- Dunsæte*, 159–60
- Dunstan, 62, 123, 127, 144–46, 194
- 'Dunstan B' diplomas, 75
- Duplinter, 139
- Durham bishops, 73
- Durham Cathedral, 187
- Dyfed, 5, 150, 151, 152
- Eadburh, 29, 116, 117, 228
- Eadflæd, 29
- Eadgifu, daughter of Edward the Elder and Ælflæd, 54, 180–84, 188–89
- Eadgifu, possible daughter of Edward the Elder and Eadgifu, 29, 180, 186–89, 227–29. *See also* Ælfifu
- Eadgifu, wife of Edward the Elder, 29, 40, 41, 56, 117, 188–89, 228, 229
- Eadgyth, 29, 61, 132, 180, 185–88, 190–95, 227, 228, 229
- Eadhelm, 48, 49, 122
- Eadhild, 29, 53–54, 180, 181, 182, 184
- Eadred, king, 29, 40–41, 43–45, 50, 116, 159
- Eadred, thegn, 83
- Eadric, 113
- Eadulf, 114
- Eadwig, 58, 78
- Eadwine, 115
- Eadwulf, 40, 54, 68, 147
- Eadwulfu, 116
- Ealdgyth, 227, 229
- ealdormen, 14, 72–77, 107, 115
- Ealdred, 1, 22, 38, 54, 58, 68–69, 147, 165, 170
- Ealdwulf, 90
- Ealhswith, 21, 24, 111, 201, 209
- Eamont Bridge, 1–2, 5, 12, 54, 58–60, 74, 79, 103, 123, 136, 147, 166, 167–68, 170
- Eamont River, 1, 4, 59, 163
- Eanstan, 48, 49
- Earnulf, 125
- East Anglia, 4, 20, 21, 24, 27, 33, 34, 40, 52, 76, 102, 103, 104, 164; Æthelstan's control of, 57–58; Scandinavian influence in, 36–38; viking attacks on, 20, 31

- East Francia, 7, 61, 134–35, 187–90, 192–95, 227–29
- east midlands, 4, 52, 102, 103, 104, 148, 166, 203
- Eberhard of Franconia, 194
- ecclesiastical reforms, 143–44, 146
- ecclesiastical business, 127–28
- Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Bede), 25, 110–11, 131, 187, 204–5
- Ecgberht, king of Wessex, 51
- Ecgberht I, king in York, 21
- Ecgwynn, 28–30, 34, 180, 209, 229
- economy, 100–101
- Eddisbury, 151
- Edgar, 58, 62, 101, 114, 143–44, 148, 208
- Edington, 23, 26, 31
- Edmund, 20, 29, 40–41, 43–45, 90, 116, 122, 145, 159, 161, 173–75, 176, 194, 202–3
- educational reform, 25, 35–36, 110–11
- Edward the Confessor, 50, 199
- Edward the Elder, 4, 11–12, 24, 28–31, 45, 47, 64, 73, 82, 106, 131, 203, 207, 209; Brittany and, 133; burial of, 111, 201; children of, 29, 34–35, 40–41, 43–44, 54, 117, 173, 227, 228, 229; church and, 111–12, 125, 127; coronation of, 51; death of, 43; education of, 36; as king, 33, 34, 52, 53, 73, 205; marriage alliances by, 180; marriages of, 28–30, 34, 40–41, 46, 188; northern kingdoms and, 162, 165–66, 168; threats facing, 33–34, 36–41; vikings and, 31, 164–66; Welsh and, 150–52; witness-lists of, 74
- Edwin, 29, 34, 43, 44, 47–48, 56, 62–64, 118–19, 158, 170, 184, 207
- Edwin, king of Northumbria, 67
- Egbert, 149
- Egbert's stone, 23
- Egill Skalla-Grimsson, 142–43
- Egils saga*, 142–43
- Eiríkr, 199
- Elise ap Tewdwr, 150
- elites, travel by, 9–10
- Elsloo, 24
- English church, 109–10, 204
- English identity, 26, 31, 52, 57, 107–8, 204–5
- English kingdom, 2; after Æthelstan's death, 202–3; Christianity in, 109–10, 204; connections between Europe and, 17–18, 61, 178–200, 206; external threats to, 148–49; formation of, 10, 14, 19, 55–59, 69, 204, 208; fragmentation of, 57–58; Scandinavian influence in, 23–24, 164; state, 107–8; viking attacks on, 20–23, 27–28, 31, 110, 179, 196; Wales and, 149–62
- Eofermund, 106
- Eohric, 34, 37
- episcopal attestations, 73–74, 124–27
- Erluin, 184, 185, 196
- Essex, 30, 31, 38, 51, 115, 155
- Etguin, 158
- Europe: Æthelstan's relations with, 178–200, 206; connections between English kingdom and, 17–18, 61, 178–200, 206; kingdoms of, 7–9; in tenth century, 6–9, 8, 180; vikings in, 24. *See also specific kingdoms*
- Evesham, 116, 191
- Exeter, 22, 27, 31, 60–61, 79, 96, 97, 105, 128, 134, 135, 136, 155, 157
- Faversham, 97
- Ffernfael, 150
- Firth of Forth, 5
- 'Five Boroughs', 37
- Flanders, 7, 24, 179–80, 184–85
- Flodoard of Rheims, 18, 53, 81, 182–85
- Folcuin of Saint Bertin, 18, 62–63, 118, 181–84
- Foot, Sarah, 132
- Fortriu, 162, 169
- Fosse Way, 65
- Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, 163, 164–65
- France, 7, 24, 62. *See also* West Francia
- Francia. *See* East Francia; West Francia
- Franconia, 7
- Frithestan, 46, 47, 124, 125
- Frome, 81, 171

- Gaimar, Geffrei, 210
 Gandersheim Gospels, 188–90
 genealogy, of West Saxon royal house, xii–xiii
 geo-politics, of early medieval Britain, 2–9
 Gerard, 184
 Gerberga, 189
Gesta Abbatum Sithiensium (Deeds of the Abbots of Saint-Bertin) (Folcuin), 62, 181, 182
Gesta Pontificum Anglorum (Deeds of the English Bishops) (William of Malmesbury), 12, 119
Gesta Regum Anglorum (Deeds of the English Kings) (William of Malmesbury), 12–13, 185
 Ghent, 24
 gilds, 98–100
 Giselbert of Lotharingia, 194
 Glywysing, 5, 58, 150, 152, 154, 155, 156, 159
 Godescealc, 134
 gospels, 113, 120, 134, 135, 136; Corpus Irish Gospels, 139–40; Gandersheim Gospels, 188–90; MacDurnan Gospels, 138–39
 governance systems, 70–81, 94, 107–8, 204
 Grately law code, 92–98, 100–6
 Gregory the Great, 25, 109, 111, 204
 Grimbald, 25, 110, 111, 178
 guilt, proving, 95–96
 Gundlaf, 49
 Guthfrith, 41, 55, 166, 167, 168, 170
 Guthrum, 20, 22, 23, 26–27, 31, 196, 205
 Gwent, 5, 54, 58, 147, 150, 152, 154, 155, 156, 159, 160, 167
 Gwriad, 154, 155, 157
 Gwynedd, 5, 58, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 156, 159, 161
 Hadwig, 184
 Hæsten, 27
 Hagia Sophia, 9
 Hákon Haraldsson, 197–200
 Hálfðan, 21–22, 163
 halfpennies, 100–101
 half-sisters, 29, 53, 61, 116–17, 132, 134–35, 180–90, 192, 194–95, 206, 227–29. *See also specific sisters*
 Hampshire, 23, 92, 115, 116, 118, 127, 155
 Harald hárfagri, 197–99
 Hebrides, 6, 148
 Henry of Huntingdon, 63
 Henry the Fowler, 61, 134, 185, 187, 192–93, 227
 Hereford, 60, 102, 123, 126, 151, 154, 160
 Heribert II, 181, 183, 184
 Herman I, 194
 Hiberno-Scandinavian, 6
 Hildewine, 49
 Hincmar, 179
Historia Anglorum (History of the English) (Henry of Huntingdon), 63
Historia de Sancto Cuthberto (History of St Cuthbert), 46, 66, 68, 130, 163, 165, 169
Historia Regum (History of the Kings) (Symeon), 41, 63, 167, 169–72, 174, 176
 Holme, Battle of the, 34, 37
 Holy Island, 66
hordere, 50
 Horizontal Trefoil coins, plate 16, 102–3
 Horizontal/Two-Line coins, 102
 household, 48–51
 Hrothweard, 121–22, 125
 Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, 18, 29, 34, 132, 186, 187–88, 189, 190, 192–93, 195, 228, 229
 Hugh the Great, 53–54, 135, 136, 180–84
 Humber River, 4, 10, 25, 40, 52
 hundreds, 73
 Hungary, 186, 192
 Huntingdon, 37
 Hyfaidd ap Bledfri, 150
 hyperbaton, 87
 Hywel ap Rhys, 150, 152
 Hywel Dda, 1, 5, 54, 58, 147, 151–52, 154–59, 171
 Ida, 194
 idolatry, 54, 60, 147
 Idwal Foel ab Anarawd, 151–52, 154–57
 Illulb, 171

- imperium*, 172, 206, 208
 Ine of Wessex, 120, 121
 Ingimundr, 163, 165
 innocence, proving, 95–96
 inscriptions: on coins, 16, 101, 102, 103, 159, 203; in manuscripts, 136–40, 188–90
Institutes of Polity (Wulfstan), 108
 Ireland, 5, 17, 39, 52, 53, 139, 148; Christianity in, 109; vikings in, 6, 151, 163, 172–73
 Irish Sea, 6, 148, 151, 168
 Isle of Anglesey, 6
 Isle of Man, 6, 39, 148, 151
 Isle of Wight, 184
 Israel the Grammarian, 139, 140–41
 Istanbul, 9
 Italy, 7, 186
 Ívarr, 6, 21, 22, 38, 41, 42, 55, 58, 148, 150, 151, 162–64, 166, 167, 170, 205

 John the Baptist, 142
 John the Old Saxon, 25, 110, 142, 178
 John XI, 103
 John XII, 195
 Judith, 179
 Judoc, 111

 kennings, 143
 Kenstec, 127, 128
 king: power of, 6; proximity to the, 127
 King Alfred's Tower, 23
 King Arthur's Round Table Henge, 2, 58, 59
 kingdom of the Isles, 6, 148
 king of the Picts, 5
 Kingston, 34, 51
 knighthoods, 32

 Lambeth Palace, 138
 Lancashire, 66, 164
 land grants, 13–14, 65–66, 70, 77, 79, 82–85, 107, 113; to churches, 114–15, 118–22, 127–30; to women, 116–17
 languages, 9
 Latin, 25, 36, 56–57, 62, 83, 87, 146, 205
 law codes, 13, 15, 62, 70, 72, 77, 90–100; compliance with, 94; enforcement of, 94–95, 98; fifth, 96, 97; first, 91–92; fourth, 97–98; implementation of, 97; second, 92–98, 100–6; sixth, 98–100; third, 96–97
 Lea River, 27, 31
 Leicester, 37, 38
 Leinster, 5
 Lent, 78
 Leo IV, 32
Liber Eliensis, 45
Libri vitae (Books of life), plate 11, 17–18, 43–44, 46, 67–68, 122–23, 130
 Lichfield, 53, 88, 123, 124, 125, 126, 145
 life expectancy, 9
Life of King Alfred (Asser), 24, 27, 28, 32, 35
Life of St Æthelwold (Wulfstan of Winchester), 144
Life of St Dunstan (B.), 194
Life of St Wilfrid (Stephanus), 77
 Lifton, 79, 155
 Limerick, 6, 172, 173
 Lincoln, 21, 37, 41, 52
 Lindisfarne, 66, 110, 123, 130, 131
 literacy, 9, 25, 56–57, 87
 literary devices, in royal diplomas, 87
 Liudgard, 194
 Liudolf, 194, 195
 Liudolfing royal house, 192
 living conditions, 9
 local assemblies, attendance at, 94
 Loire River, 7, 24
 London, 9, 10, 26, 28, 51, 97, 105, 109, 123, 124, 126, 134, 198, 211
 London peace-gilds, 98–100
 Lothar, 195
 Lotharingia, 7, 194
 Louis IV (d'Outremer), 40, 81, 180–87, 189, 194, 196, 198, 199
 Louis of Burgundy, 180, 186, 188
 Louis the Stammerer, 180

- MacAlpine, Kenneth, 5
 MacDurnan Gospels, 138–39
 Mael Brigitte mac Tornain, 138
 Maenchi, 129
 Magdeburg Cathedral, 195
 Magyars, 186, 192
 Malmesbury Abbey, plate 24, 12, 29, 112, 114,
 136, 201–2, 210–11
 Mancant, 126
 Manchester, 39, 41, 165, 166
 manumission, 48, 49
 manuscripts, 36, 136–40, 187–91. *See also*
 specific titles
 margraves, 6
 marriage alliances, 52–54, 62, 79, 117, 124,
 134–35, 166, 178–92, 194, 206
 Matuedoi, 196
 Matilda, 189–90, 192–94, 228
 Maurice (saint), 54, 135
 Maurice's banner, 54, 181
 Mayburgh Henge, 2, plate 9, 58, 59
 Mercia, 2, 4, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 34, 36, 41, 43,
 44, 45, 52, 72, 73, 102, 110, 124, 131–32, 163,
 165, 173, 188, 202, 204, 205; Æthelstan's
 control of, 51, 52, 53, 57–58; Æthelstan's
 upbringing in, 35, 112, 203; Edward's
 control of, 38, 40; royal assemblies in, 79;
 Scandinavian influence in, 24, 36–37;
 vikings attacks on, 20–21, 22, 31; Wales
 and, 149, 150, 151, 152
Mercian Register, 12, 38, 43, 44, 131
Meretun, 22
 Merfyn Frych, 149
 Merfynion dynasty, 149–50, 152
 Mersea Island, 31
 Middle East, 9
 military forces, 72
 military interventions: in Europe, 185, 197,
 207; in Scotland, 64, 155–56, 169, 207
 Milton Abbas, 119, 133–34
ministri, 49–50, 72
 mints, 16, 103, 105–6
 Monachus, Theodricus, 197
 monasticism, 145–46
 monastic reform, 114
 money, 100–106. *See also* coins
 moneyers, 101–2, 106, 159
 Moray Firth, 5
 Morgan ab Owain, 5, 152, 154–57, 159
 Muchelney Abbey, 119–21
 Munster, 5, 138
 Nantes, 24
 national assemblies, 74
 nation states, 107–8
 Netherlands, 24
 New Minster, 43, 46–49, 52, 56, 111, 112, 114,
 134, 139, 201
 Norman Conquest, 75, 209
 Normandy, 7
 North America, 9
 Northampton, 37
 Northumbria, 1, 4, 6, 11, 16, 20, 24, 40, 79, 81,
 164, 170, 175, 176, 188, 204; Æthelstan's
 control of, 54–58, 64–69, 71, 85, 93, 101–4,
 121, 124, 131, 137, 147, 154, 166, 168; after
 Æthelstan's death, 177, 203; divisions in,
 58; Scandinavian influence in, 22, 36–37;
 vikings in, 21–22, 31, 41, 165
 Norway, 5, 196, 197–200
 Nottingham, 10, 21, 37, 38, 39, 64–66, 79, 156,
 165, 169
 nunneries, 116
 oaths, 95
 Oda, 123, 183
 Odin, 203
 Odo, 180, 181
 Offa of Mercia, 100, 149
 Offa's Dyke, plate 18
 Ólaf, 162–63
 Ólaf Guthfrithson, 69, 172–77, 203
 Ólaf Sihtricson, 55, 122, 166, 176
 Old Bell Hotel, 211
 Old English, 25, 36, 83, 205
 Old Minster, 31, 43, 111

- Old Norse, 106
 Old Welsh, 158
Ordal, 91, 95–96
 ordeals, 95–96
 ‘Ordinance concerning the *Dunsæte*’, 159–61
 ‘Ordinance Relating to Charities’, 118
 Orkney Islands, 6
 Osberht, 21
 Osthryth, 131
 Osulf, 69
 Oswald (bishop of Worcester, archbishop of York), 144
 Oswald (East Anglian king), 20
 Oswald (Northumbrian king and saint), 20, 67, 112, 131–32, 187, 188
 Oswiu, 131
 Otto I (the Great), 18, 29, 61, 132, 134, 140, 180, 184–95, 227–28
 Otto II, 195
 Ouse River, 27
 Owain ap Dyfnwal, 1, 55, 69, 81, 149, 155, 156, 165–70, 172, 174, 177
 Owain ap Hywel, 54, 58, 147, 152, 154, 167
 Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 209
- pagans, 6
 Palazzo della Rovere, 16–17
 pardons, 97
Pastoral Care (Gregory the Great), 25
 Paternus, 135
 peace-gilds, 98–100
 Penda of Mercia, 187
 pennies, 100
 Peter, 49
 Pictland, 4, 162
 Piedmont, 7
 pilgrimages, 10, 157
 place-names, 10
 Plegmund, 25, 110, 127
 poems, 2, 17, 35, 140–43; on Æthelstan’s death, 202; *Armes Prydein Vawr* (Great Prophecy of Britain), 17, 60, 161–62, 207; on Battle of *Brunanburh*, 12, 17, 173–77; *Beowulf*, 32; ‘Carta, dirige gressus’, plate 8, 56–57, 141; ‘Rex Pius Æthelstan’, 113, 141
 poets, 140–43, 146
 Poitiers, 24
 portraits, plate 10, 104, 137
 Powys, 5
 priests, 114–15
 primogeniture, 33
 proem, 82, 86, 89
 propaganda, 16
 proto-parliament, 74
 Provence, 7
 public security, 99
 punishments, 93, 97–100
- Quentovic, 179–80
- Radbod, 133, 135
 Radulf, 181, 182
 Ragnall I, 38–41, 151, 164–67
 Ramsbury, 111, 123, 127, 183
 Raven type coins, plate 25, 203
 Reading, 22
 reeves, 48, 49, 72, 78, 91, 93, 94–96, 98, 99
 reforms, 62, 70; by Alfred the Great, 25, 35, 70, 110–11; church, 110–11, 143–44, 146; education, 25, 35–36, 110–11; monastic, 114
 Regino of Prüm, 24, 194
 Regnald, 106
Regula pastoralis (Pastoral care) (Gregory the Great), 111
 Reichenau confraternity book, plate 23, 191, 192
 relics, 54, 62, 111, 112, 119, 131, 133–36, 146
 religiosity, 117–19, 136, 146
 religious communities, 17, 47, 114–16, 118, 119, 128, 133, 136, 209; at Christ Church, Canterbury, 113–14, 121; at Malmesbury, 12, 29, 112, 114, 136, 201–2, 210–11; at Muchelney, 120; at St Cuthbert’s, 46, 66–68, 79, 104, 124, 130–31, 137, 139, 146, 163; at Worcester, 209

- Repton, 21
 'Rex Pius Æthelstan' ('Holy King Æthelstan'), 113, 141
 Rhodri Mawr, 149–50
 Richer of Rheims, 24, 81, 180, 182, 183
 Robert, duke of Neustria, 181
 Roman Empire, 6, 206
 Roman roads, 10, 59, 65, 79, 83, 168
 Rome, 7, 10, 16, 17, 32–33, 45, 92, 121, 127, 135, 140, 155, 157, 158, 178, 179
 royal assemblies, 13–15, 64–65, 70–81, 107;
 actions taken at, 77; attendance at, 78, 81, 94, 121, 157, 158, 171–72, 205–6; composition of, 71–75, 88, 124–27; convening of, 78–79, 81; ecclesiastics at, 73; laws issued at, 90–91, 99; length of, 78; places held, 79, 80, 81
 royal diplomas, plate 4, 13–16, 25, 36, 45, 57, 62, 70, 71, 77, 78; 'Æthelstan A', plate 13, 14, 64, 68, 71–75, 80, 81, 84–89, 103, 115, 118, 123–26, 129, 154–56, 203, 210; 'Æthelstan C', plate 15, 90; 'alliterative', 74, 75, 138–39, 157; dating clause of, 86–87; dispositive section of, 82–83, 86; 'Dunstan B', 75; evidence of British control in, 147–48; 'mainstream', 75; places of issue for, 79, 80; production of, 89; sanctions in, 83, 84, 86; structure and form of, 81–90; witness-lists, 71–76, 114–15, 123–25, 154, 157
 royal documents, 13–15
 royal halls, 31–32
 royal household, 48–51
 royal scribe, 83, 89, 137
 royal style: on coins, 148; of diplomas, 81–82, 84, 86, 147–48
 royal subscription, 82
 royal titles, 16
 royal vills (townships), 79
 royal writ, 25
Rubisca (Israel the Grammarian), 140
 Rudolf II, 180, 186–88, 195
 Runcorn, 151
 'Saint-Omer Hymn', 140
 saints, relics of, 54, 62, 111, 112, 119, 131, 133–36, 146
 Samson (saint), 119, 133
 Saucourt, 24
 Saxony, 7
 Scandinavian influences, 23–24, 164
 Scandinavian kings, 22. *See also specific kings*
 schools, 35–36
 Scotland, 4, 5, 6, 17, 55, 79, 130, 138, 166, 167, 168, 171, 174, 175; military intervention in, 64, 139, 155–56, 169, 207. *See also Alba*
 Scubilio, 135
 'Second Coronation *Ordo*', 51, 112–13
 secular clergy, 114–15
 Seisyllwg, 151
 Senator, 135
 Shaftesbury, 24, 105, 110, 114, 118
 Sherborne, 111, 114, 123, 126, 127
 Shetland Islands, 6
 shires, 72–73, 112, 208
 Sigehelm, 29
 Sihtric Cáech, 41, 52–56, 79, 151, 164, 166, 180, 203, 229
 skaldic verse, 143
 slaves, 48, 93, 98
 socioeconomic conditions, 16
 Soissons, Battle of, 181, 182, 183
Soliloquia (Soliloquies) (St Augustine), 111
 Solway Firth, 4
 Somerset, 22, 23, 25, 31, 81, 117, 119, 120, 127, 129, 171
 Staffordshire Hoard, 16
 Stamford, 31, 37, 38
 St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, 81, 84–85, 114
 St Cuthbert's community, 46, 66–68, 79, 104, 124, 130–31, 137, 139, 146, 163
 St Cuthbert's tomb, 46, 66
 St Gallen, plate 22, 134, 190–91
 St Germans, 61, 128, 146

- Strathclyde/Cumbria, 1, 4, 58, 69, 74,
132, 148, 149, 151, 156, 161; Æthelstan's
relations with, 55, 81, 88, 148, 152, 154,
155, 162–72, 174, 205; strategic significance
of, 168
- Sturluson, Snorri, 197
- sub-kings, 154–57, 171, 172
- surety, 94, 95
- suspects, proving guilt or innocence of,
95–96
- Swabia, 7
- Sweden, 5
- Symeon of Durham, 63, 170, 172, 174, 175
- Tamar River, 10, 60, 79, 128
- Tamworth, 38, 52–53
- taxes, 60, 72, 79, 91–92, 161–62
- Tees River, 4, 22, 58, 68, 72, 168, 204
- teleology, 18
- Tempsford, 37
- Tettenhall, 164
- Tewdwr ab Elise, 154, 155, 156, 159
- Textus Roffensis*, 44
- Thames River, 10, 27, 31, 51, 105, 106
- theft, 15, 93, 94, 96–100
- thegns, 14, 21, 47, 49–50, 64, 72, 74, 83, 85,
90, 96, 98, 113, 115, 118, 156
- Thelwall, 39, 165
- Theodred, 126, 134–35
- Thetford, 20
- Thietmar of Merseburg, 193, 194
- Thorolf, 142–43
- Thunderfield, 97, 100
- Thuringia, 7
- tithes, 91–92
- Torksey, 21
- Tours, 24
- trade, 101, 178
- Trent River, 39
- Uhtred, 76
- Uí Ímair family, 22
- Uí Neill, 5
- Ulster, 5
- Vale of York viking hoard, plate 20, 167
- viking coins, 41, 52, 105, 164, 166, 167
- viking hoards, plate 20, 164, 167
- vikings: 9, 102, 104, 142; alliances with, 60,
149, 152; attacks by, 4, 11, 18, 20–23, 26–28,
31, 53, 110, 130, 148, 150, 162–65, 179, 196,
210; derivation of term, 5–6; in Dublin,
6, 21, 22, 28, 41, 66, 122, 149, 151, 163–68,
172–73; in Europe, 9, 24, 132; exploration
by, 9; ‘great army’ of, 20–22, 162, 169;
influence of, 23–24; in Ireland, 6, 148, 151,
163, 172–73; landing points for, 168; in the
north, 162–65, 203; settlements of, 4, 6,
23–24, 122, 164, 177, 203; in Wales, 28, 148,
150, 151; in York, 4, 42, 55, 58, 66, 110, 122,
180, 203. *See also specific leaders*
- Vitalis, Orderic, 211
- Wærferth, 25, 110
- Wærwulf, 25, 47, 49, 110
- Wales, 4, 5, 17, 28, 60, 132, 148, 205–6; internal
politics in, 150; kingdoms of, 149–62;
political configuration of, 153; vikings in,
150, 151
- Waltere, 49
- wapentake, 73
- Wareham, 22, 105
- Waterford, 6
- Watling Street, 9, 27, 83
- Wells, 49, 111, 121, 122, 123, 127
- Wentsæte, 160
- Wessex, 1, 2, 4, 16, 20, 26–28, 33, 35, 37, 38,
43, 44, 48, 49, 51, 52, 57, 58, 72, 73, 92, 102,
110, 120, 121, 124, 131, 132, 173, 175, 176, 179,
180, 188, 195, 202–4; royal assemblies in,
79; viking attacks on, 22–23; Wales and,
149, 150
- West Francia, 7, 40, 51, 179, 180–85, 189
- West Saxon royal house, 31, 40, 51, 114,
130–31, 202; genealogy of, xii–xiii
- West Saxons, 20, 21, 22, 34, 37, 149, 152, 160,
174, 202
- Wexford, 6
- white supremacists, 18

- Whittlebury, 99
Widukind of Corvey, 18, 192, 193, 195
Wigferth, 49
Wigred, 125
William of Malmesbury, 12–13, 29, 30, 34, 41, 59, 166–67, 227–29; on Æthelstan, 32–33, 35, 44–46, 60, 135, 168, 178, 181–82, 198–99, 207, 210, 211; on Battle of *Brunanburh*, 174; on Brittany, 132–33; on death of Edwin, 63, 118–19; on Eadburh, 117; on Edward the Elder, 43; on Malmesbury Abbey, 202; on marriage alliances, 53–54, 185–86; on Sihtric, 55; on Welsh kings, 152, 154
Wilton, 22, 41, 114
Wiltshire, 23, 34, 41, 47, 85, 116–19, 127, 155, 184
Winchester, 10, 31, 33, 43, 45–49, 58, 64, 92, 105, 111, 114, 117, 123, 124, 127, 136, 139, 144, 155, 201–2, 205, 228; bishop of, 46, 88, 122, 125, 126, 145; royal palace in, 2
witness-lists, 71–76, 114–15, 123–25, 154, 157
Wolverhampton, 164
women: land grants to, 116–17; in law code, 98; royal, influence of, 180
Worcester, 25, 61, 110, 116, 123–26, 139, 145, 185, 190, 201, 209, 211
‘Worcester Chronicle’, plate 26, 43, 169–71, 176, 209
word-play, 87
writs, 70
Wroxeter, 9, 83
Wulfgar, 76
Wulfhelm, 50, 91, 92, 100, 118, 121, 191
Wulfhere, 121
Wulfstan I, 65, 66, 76, 79, 122
Wulfstan II, 92, 108, 209
Wulfstan of Winchester, 144
Wulfswith, 116
Wye River, 60, 154, 160
Yeavinger, 31
York, 4, 6, 14, 16, 21, 22, 38–42, 52–55, 57–59, 64–66, 68, 69, 74, 76, 79, 81, 102, 103, 106, 108, 110, 121–26, 131, 148, 150, 156, 165–68, 172, 180, 203, 205, 229; Óláf Guthfrithson in, 203; see in, 109, 121–23
Ystrad Tywi, 5, 150