

# Edgar, King of England

**Edgar** (or **Eadgar**<sup>[1]</sup>; c. 944 – 8 July 975) was King of the English from 959 until his death in 975. He became king of all England on his brother's death. He was the younger son of King Edmund I and his first wife Ælfgyfu. A detailed account of Edgar's reign is not possible, because only a few events were recorded by chroniclers and monastic writers were more interested in recording the activities of the leaders of the church.

Edgar mainly followed the political policies of his predecessors, but there were major changes in the religious sphere. The English Benedictine Reform, which he strongly supported, became a dominant religious and social force<sup>[2]</sup>. It is seen by historians as a major achievement, and it was accompanied by a literary and artistic flowering, mainly associated with Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester. Monasteries aggressively acquired estates from lay landowners with Edgar's assistance, leading to disorder when he died and former owners sought to recover their lost property, sometimes by force. Edgar's major administrative reform was the introduction of a standardised coinage in the early 970s to replace the previous decentralised system. He also issued legislative codes which mainly concentrated on improving procedures for enforcement of the law.

England had suffered from Viking invasions for over a century when Edgar came to power, but there were none during his reign, which fell in a lull in attacks between the mid-950s and the early 980s.<sup>[3]</sup> After his death the throne was disputed between the supporters of his two surviving sons; the elder one, Edward the Martyr, was chosen with the support of Dunstan, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Three years later Edward was murdered and succeeded by his younger half-brother, Æthelred the Unready. Later chroniclers presented Edgar's reign as a golden age when England was free from external attacks and internal disorder, especially

Edgar



Edgar in the early fourteenth-century *Genealogical Roll of the Kings of England*

King of the English

Reign	1 October 959 – 8 July 975
Predecessor	Eadwig
Successor	Edward the Martyr

Born

943/944

England

Died

8 July 975 (aged 31/32)

Burial

Glastonbury Abbey

Spouses

Æthelflæd

Wulfthryth

Ælfthryth

Issue

Edward the Martyr

Edith of Wilton

Edmund

Æthelred the Unready

House

Wessex

Father

Edmund I

Mother

Ælfgyfu of Shaftesbury