

= Doom 3 =

Doom 3 (stylized as D00M3) is a science fiction survival horror first @-@ person shooter video game developed by id Software and published by Activision . Doom 3 was first released for Microsoft Windows on August 3 , 2004 . The game was later adapted for Linux , as well as being ported by Aspyr Media for Mac OS X. Developer Vicarious Visions ported the game to the Xbox console (now backwards compatible to the Xbox 360) , releasing it on April 3 , 2005 . British developers Splash Damage also assisted in design for the multiplayer elements of the game .

The game is a prequel of id Software 's Doom franchise . Doom 3 is set in 2145 on Mars , where a military @-@ industrial conglomerate has set up a scientific research facility to research into fields such as teleportation , biological research and advanced weapons design . However , the teleportation experiments inadvertently open a gateway to Hell , resulting in a catastrophic invasion by demons . The player , an anonymous space marine , must fight through the base and find a way to stop the demons attacking Earth . Doom 3 features an award @-@ winning game engine , id Tech 4 , which has since been licensed out to other developers , and later released under the GNU General Public License in November 2011 .

The game was a critical and commercial success for id Software ; with more than 3 @.@ 5 million copies of the game sold , it is the most successful game by the developer to date . Critics praised the game 's graphics and presentation , although reviewers were divided by how close the gameplay was to that of the original Doom , focusing primarily on simply fighting through large numbers of enemy characters . The game was followed by Resurrection of Evil , an expansion pack developed by Nerve Software in April 2005 , while a Doom film loosely based on the series was released in October 2005 . A series of novelizations of Doom 3 , written by Matthew J. Costello , debuted in February 2008 . An expanded and improved BFG Edition was released in the fourth quarter of 2012 .

= = Gameplay = =

= = = Single @-@ player = = =

Doom 3 is a story @-@ driven action game played from a first @-@ person perspective . As with previous Doom games , the main objective is to successfully pass through its levels , defeating a variety of enemy characters intent on killing the player 's character . Doom 3 's more story @-@ centered approach , however , means that the player often encounters friendly non @-@ player characters , who provide key plot information , objectives and inventory items . The game incorporates ten weapons for the player 's use to survive , including conventional firearms and explosives such as a submachine gun , shotgun and grenades , experimental plasma weaponry , and the traditional BFG 9000 and chainsaw weapons of the Doom franchise . Enemies come in multiple forms and with different abilities and tactics , but fall into two broad categories of either zombies or demons . Zombies are humans possessed by demonic forces , who attack the player 's character using their hands and melee weapons or a variety of firearms , while demons are creatures from Hell , most of which attack using claws and spines , or by summoning plasma @-@ based fireballs . The corpses of demons are reduced to ashes after death , leaving no trace of their body behind .

The game 's levels are fairly linear in nature and incorporate several horror elements , the most prominent of which is darkness . This design choice is not only intended to foster feelings of apprehension and fear within the player , but also to create a more threatening game environment in which the player is less likely to see attacking enemies . This aspect is further enhanced by the fact that the player must choose between holding a weapon and holding the flashlight (until the BFG editions released in 2012 made the " duct tape mod " a standard feature) , forcing the player to choose between being able to see and having a readied weapon upon entering a room , which consequently leads to a more deliberate pace for the player . In addition , the levels are regularly

strewn with corpses , dismembered body parts and blood , sometimes used in conjunction with the game 's lighting to disorient the player .

Frequent radio transmissions through the player 's communications device also add to the atmosphere , by broadcasting certain sounds and messages from non @-@ player characters meant to unsettle the player . Early in the game , during and directly after the event that plunges the base into chaos , the player often hears the sounds of fighting , screaming and dying through their radio transmitter . The ambient sound is extended to the base itself through such things as hissing pipes , footsteps , and occasional jarringly loud noises from machinery or other sources . Often ambient sounds can be heard that resemble deep breathing , unexplained voices and demonic taunting from the game 's antagonists .

Early in the game , the player is provided with a personal data assistant (PDA) . PDAs contain security clearance levels , allowing the player to access certain areas that are otherwise locked and off @-@ limits . Additionally , the PDA can be used to read e @-@ mails and play videos that the player 's character acquires during the game . Whenever the player picks up any of the other PDAs found throughout the game , its contents are automatically downloaded to the player 's own device . Other PDAs often contain e @-@ mails and audio logs for other characters , which can provide useful information such as storage or door key codes , as well as significant plot details .

= = = Multiplayer = = =

Doom 3 was released with a four @-@ player multiplayer element , featuring four game modes . However , the game 's community created a modification to boost this to eight or sixteen players . The Resurrection of Evil expansion would later officially increase the player limit to eight . The four game modes are all deathmatches . The standard deathmatch game mode involves each player moving around a level , collecting weaponry and killing the other players , with the player with the highest kills when the time runs out winning . A team variation of this involves the same principle . The third game mode is " last man standing " , in which each player has a limited amount of respawns , with players losing a life when they are killed . Eventually , all but one player will be eliminated from the game , leaving the survivor as the winner . The final game mode is " tournament " , in which two players fight each other while the other players watch as spectators . The victor of the battle remains in the arena , facing each other player one at a time until the winner of previous rounds is defeated . The loser then moves to the spectators and the new winner remains to fight the next player . The Xbox version of Doom 3 also incorporates an additional two @-@ player co @-@ operative mode for the main single @-@ player game .

As of April 15 , 2010 , The Xbox Live service was shut down , thus online multiplayer for original Xbox games through the service is no longer available .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

Doom 3 is set in the year 2145 . Much of the game 's story and dialogue was created by author Matthew J. Costello . According to the game 's backstory , the Union Aerospace Corporation (UAC) has grown to become the largest corporate entity in existence , and has set up a research facility on Mars . At this base , the UAC are able to conduct research into several scientific areas , including advanced weapons development , biological research , space exploration and teleportation . On Mars , the UAC can perform its operations outside of legal and moral boundaries . As the player progresses through the game , they learn that the employees on the base are unsettled due to a large number of incidents involving hearing voices , unexplained sightings and increasing cases of paranoia and insanity , often leading to fatal accidents with the facility 's machinery . Rumors regarding the nature of experiments in the UAC 's Delta Labs division are especially prevalent among the base 's employees .

== Characters ==

There are five main characters in Doom 3 . The player assumes the role of an anonymous space marine corporal who has just arrived on the UAC 's Mars base . The player 's non @-@ commissioned officer in @-@ charge is Master Sergeant Thomas Kelly , voiced by Neil Ross , who gives the player objectives and advice over the player 's radio for the first half of the game . The antagonist in the story is Dr. Malcolm Betruger , head scientist of the UAC 's enigmatic Delta Labs division , who is revealed to be working in collaboration with the forces of Hell to cause the subjugation of humanity . Betruger 's demonic voice , provided by Philip L. Clarke , frequently taunts the player as the game progresses . The final two principal characters are Elliott Swann and Jack Campbell . Swann , voiced by Charles Dennis , is a representative of the UAC 's board of directors , sent to check up on Betruger 's research as well as investigate the rising number of accidents on the Mars base after a request for assistance from a whistleblower . He is almost always accompanied by Campbell , another space marine who acts as Swann 's bodyguard and is armed with a BFG 9000 . Campbell is voiced by Andy Chanley . Swann and Campbell are often shown in the game to be a few steps ahead of the player , but cannot be reached and directly communicated with until late in the game . The game also incorporates a large host of minor characters who add details to the story or assist the player in certain segments . The player encounters multiple scientists involved in the various research and development programs and archaeological digs through the UAC base , as well as fellow marines and security guards . Civilian employees engaged in bureaucratic work and maintenance workers are also seen .

== Plot ==

The story of Doom 3 is conveyed through in @-@ game dialogue and cut scenes , as well as e @-@ mails , audio logs and video files found throughout the game . The game opens with UAC board member Elliott Swann and his bodyguard Jack Campbell arriving at Mars City , the main access to the UAC 's Mars base , disembarking from an Earth transport , with the player 's anonymous marine just behind them . Swann and Campbell , here to investigate multiple incidents , have a heated conference meeting with the man in charge of the Mars laboratories , Dr. Malcolm Betruger while the marine heads to Master Sergeant Thomas Kelly for orders . Kelly gives the marine instructions to find a scientist from the Delta Labs who has gone missing . The marine finds the scientist in a nearby decommissioned communications facility , where he is frantically trying to send a warning to the UAC on Earth about Betruger 's teleportation experiments . However , as he tries to explain the situation to the marine , another teleportation test takes place and loses containment , at which point the entire Mars base is swept with an unnatural shockwave . This transforms most of the base 's personnel into zombies as the forces of Hell invade through the teleporter 's portal .

Now forced to fend off attacks from zombified base personnel and the demons from Hell , the marine returns to Mars City , where Kelly remotely gives the marine orders to link up with another squad of marines (Bravo Team) and get a transmission card containing a distress call to the main communications facility to call for reinforcements . As the marine progresses through the base , he learns that Swann and Campbell have survived , and are also en route to the communications facility to prevent any messages being sent in hope of containing the situation on Mars . The marine squad is ambushed by demons and slaughtered in the EnPro Plant , and although the marine recovers the transmission card , he is too late to prevent the bulk of equipment at the communications facility being destroyed by Campbell . Kelly , however , directs the marine to a backup system , where the marine is given the choice of whether to obey Kelly 's orders to send for reinforcements , or accept Swann 's argument to keep Mars isolated until the exact nature of the invasion is understood , so as not to endanger Earth . The marine is told to go to the Delta Labs by Kelly or Swann , depending on whether the transmission is sent or not .

On the way to the Delta Labs , the marine is contacted by Betruger , who is now clearly shown to

be working in cooperation with Hell in order to invade Earth . If the marine did not send the distress call to Earth , Betruger does so himself , hoping to use the ships bringing reinforcements to transport the demons to Earth . Betruger then unsuccessfully attempts to kill the marine using the toxic gases in the base 's recycling facilities . Upon arriving at the Delta Labs , the marine learns of the details behind the teleportation experiments , expeditions into Hell to retrieve specimens and Betruger 's increasing obsession with the tests , as well as of an archaeological dig under the surface of Mars . The dig is excavating the ruins of an ancient civilization discovered on Mars , and has produced a relic known as the Soul Cube . According to a scientist the marine finds alive in the labs , the Soul Cube is a weapon created by the ancient civilization to defend against the forces of Hell . The scientist also reveals that the invasion began when Betruger took the Soul Cube into the portal at the beginning of the game , depositing it in Hell . The marine pursues Betruger through the labs , but is pulled into the main teleportation portal after being lured into a trap by Betruger .

The portal takes the marine directly into Hell , where he proceeds to fight his way through the large number of demons to the Soul Cube , defeating its demonic guardian . The marine is then able to reinitialize the teleportation equipment left by research expeditions into Hell and return to the Delta Labs . Betruger , however , tells the marine that although the main UAC teleporter has been destroyed , Hell is opening a Hellmouth on Mars , capable of bringing millions of demons to Mars . Further in the Delta Labs , the marine encounters the injured Swann . Swann informs the marine that Kelly has been working with Hell for possibly the whole time , and has been transformed by the demons . Telling the marine that Campbell has gone after Kelly , Swann gives the marine his PDA containing information on the location on the Hellmouth under the surface of Mars and assures him that he will try to make his way out of the base alone .

However , when the marine catches up with Campbell in the central computer processing sector of the base , Campbell is mortally wounded and only has enough strength to say that Kelly has taken Campbell 's BFG 9000 weapon before expiring . Kelly then begins to taunt the marine in a demonic voice . The marine eventually faces off with Kelly in the central computer core , revealing Kelly as a cybernetic human grafted onto a tank @-@ like base . The marine is able to kill Kelly and takes the BFG 9000 before proceeding deeper under the Martian surface to Site 3 , the archaeological dig site where the Soul Cube was unearthed . At the primary excavation site , the marine discovers the Hellmouth , defended by Hell 's mightiest warrior , the Cyberdemon . Using the Soul Cube , the marine defeats the Cyberdemon in combat , and the Soul Cube then seals the Hellmouth . The ending cut scene shows the reinforcements from Earth arriving at the base to discover the carnage . They find the marine alive , but discover that Swann has died . They are , however , unable to locate Betruger , who in the final scene is shown in Hell , reincarnated as a dragon @-@ like demon .

= = Development = =

= = = Production = = =

In June 2000 , id Software 's game engine designer John Carmack posted an internal company plan announcing a remake of Doom using next generation technology . This plan revealed controversy had been growing within id Software over remaking Doom . Kevin Cloud and Adrian Carmack , two of id Software 's owners , were always strongly opposed to remaking Doom , believing that id was going back to the same formulas and properties too often . However , after the positive reception to Return to Castle Wolfenstein and the latest improvements in rendering technology , most of the employees agreed that a remake was the right idea and presented the two owners with an ultimatum : allow them to remake Doom or fire them . After the reasonably amicable confrontation (although artist Paul Steed , one of the instigators , was fired in retaliation) , the agreement to work on Doom 3 was made. id Software began development on Doom 3 in late 2000 , immediately after finishing Quake III : Team Arena . In 2001 , it was first shown to the public at Macworld Conference & Expo in Tokyo and was later demonstrated at E3 2002 , where a fifteen @-@ minute gameplay demo was shown . It won five awards at E3 that year .

Early in Doom 3 's development , Trent Reznor of the band Nine Inch Nails , a fan of the Doom games , was set to compose the music and sound effects to Doom 3 . However , due to " time , money and bad management " , none of Trent Reznor 's sound effects or music made the final product . Eventually , Nine Inch Nails ' former drummer , Chris Vrenna , composed and performed the game 's theme song .

We never really did come to an actual agreement with Trent . The original idea was just for him to do all of the sound design for the game . I don 't think Trent anticipated how long and how involved that process was and what is involved in game design versus what he does in the music and production side . It just wasn 't a good mix with how much time it was going to take him , the value it was going to provide to the game , and what we could afford to pay . Trent 's a popular guy . He 's a rock star , and his time is valued in rock star dollars .

Doom 3 was also intended to be more storyline focused than previous id titles , as was demonstrated by the developers ' conscious effort to have more professional voice acting . Late in 2002 , two employees at ATI Technologies leaked a development version of Doom 3 onto the Internet . One year later , a new trailer was shown at E3 2003 and soon afterwards id Software 's website was updated to showcase Doom 3 as an upcoming project , although it was also announced that Doom 3 would not be ready for the 2003 holiday season . According to John Carmack , the development took longer than expected .

== = Music = = =

Chris Vrenna ? a former Nine Inch Nails band member ? and Clint Walsh composed the main theme for the game .

== = Technology = = =

According to John Carmack , the lead graphics engine developer at id Software , the technology of Doom 3 was supported by three primary features : unified lighting and shadowing , complex animations and scripting that showed real @-@ time with fully dynamic per @-@ pixel lighting and stencil shadowing , and GUI surfaces that add extra interactivity to the game . The key advance of the id Tech 4 graphics engine developed for Doom 3 is the unified lighting and shadowing . Rather than computing or rendering lightmaps during map creation and saving that information in the map data , most light sources are computed in real @-@ time . This allows lights to cast shadows even on non @-@ static objects such as monsters and machinery , which was impossible with static non @-@ directional lightmaps . A shortcoming of this approach is the engine 's inability to render soft shadows and global illumination .

To increase the interactivity with the game @-@ world , id Software designed hundreds of high @-@ resolution animated screens for in @-@ game computers . Rather than using a simple " use key " to operate these computers , the crosshair acts as a mouse cursor over the screens allowing the player to use a computer in the game world . This allows for in @-@ game computer terminal to perform more than one function , from operating security door codes , activating machinery , toggling lights or unlocking weapons lockers . According to the Doom 3 manual , GUI designer Patrick Duffy wrote over 500 @,@ 000 lines of script code , and generated more than 25 @,@ 000 image files to create all of the graphical interfaces , computer screens , and displays throughout Doom 3 . Other important features of the game engine are normal mapping and specular highlighting of textures , realistic handling of object physics , dynamic , ambient soundtrack , and multi @-@ channel sound . Doom 3 on Xbox supports 480p widescreen video display resolution and Dolby Digital 5 @.@ 1 surround sound .

== Release ==

Doom 3 achieved gold status on July 14 , 2004 and a Mac OS X release was confirmed the next day . Doom 3 was released in the United States on August 3 , 2004 and to the rest of the world on

August 13 . Due to high demand , the game was made available at select outlets at midnight on the date of release . Additionally , a Linux version was released on October 4 , 2004 by Timothee Besset . The Mac OS X version was released on March 14 , 2005 and on February 20 , 2006 the patch 1 @.@ 3 Rev A included a universal binary , adding support for Mac OS X on the x86 architecture . Finally , the modified Xbox conversion was released on April 3 , 2005 , featuring a limited steel book edition which included Ultimate Doom and Doom 2 .

A week before the game 's release , it became known that an agreement to include EAX audio technology in Doom 3 reached by id Software and Creative Labs was heavily influenced by a software patent owned by the latter company . The patent dealt with a technique for rendering shadows called Carmack 's Reverse , which was developed independently by both John Carmack and programmers at Creative Labs. id Software would have placed themselves under legal liability for using the technique in the finished game , so to defuse the issue , id Software agreed to license Creative Labs sound technologies in exchange for indemnification against lawsuits .

During the keynote address at QuakeCon 2011 , John Carmack announced that the source code for the Doom 3 engine would be released . The source code was open @-@ sourced under the GPL on November 22 , 2011 . It contains minor tweaks to the shadow rendering code to avoid potential patent infringement with a patent held by Creative Labs . Art assets such as 3D models , music , sound effects etc. remain subject to the EULA .

= = Versions = =

= = = Expansion = = =

On April 3 , 2005 , eight months after the release of Doom 3 , id Software released an expansion pack for Doom 3 on Windows . The expansion , entitled Resurrection of Evil , was developed by Nerve Software , a company that had partnered with id Software on several other projects , including Return to Castle Wolfenstein and the Xbox conversion of Doom . Once again published by Activision , a Linux version was released on May 24 , 2005 , and an Xbox version followed on October 5 , 2005 . The expansion featured a new twelve @-@ level single player campaign , set two years after the original storyline , as well as three new weapons , one of which is geared towards manipulating the physics in the game . Several new enemy characters were also introduced . Multiplayer gameplay was enhanced , officially increasing the player limit to eight and adding new game modes such as capture the flag . Resurrection of Evil 's reception was not as positive as it had been for Doom 3 , but still received generally favorable reviews from the industry 's critics .

= = = BFG Edition = = =

A re @-@ release of Doom 3 called Doom 3 : BFG Edition , which was published by Bethesda Softworks , was released on October 15 , 2012 , in Australia , October 16 , 2012 in North America , October 19 , 2012 in Europe and November 22 , 2012 in Japan for PC , PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 . The BFG Edition features enhanced graphics , better sound with more horror effects , a checkpoint save system , and support for 3D displays and HMDs . The game also includes the previous expansion Resurrection of Evil and a new single @-@ player expansion pack called The Lost Mission . Additionally , it includes copies of the original Doom (the Ultimate Doom edition with the add @-@ on fourth episode , " Thy Flesh Consumed ") , and Doom II with the expansion No Rest for the Living , previously available for the Xbox 360 . The BFG Edition also features the ability to use the flashlight while holding a weapon , in the form of the so @-@ called armor @-@ mounted flashlight . The PC version of Doom 3 : BFG Edition requires the Steam client and a valid Steam account for installation , play and achievements . The versions of Doom I and II released with BFG have been censored in some ways . And in doom 3 with the noticeable removal of the co @-@ op campaign for single player campaign .

== Reception ==

Doom 3 was a critical and commercial success for id Software ; by the beginning of 2007 , over 3 @.@ 5 million copies of Doom 3 had been sold , making it the most successful project by id Software to date . The game engine for Doom 3 , id Tech 4 , has been licensed out for the use of other developers , such as in Human Head Studios ' Prey , Raven Software 's Quake 4 , Splash Damage 's Enemy Territory : Quake Wars , Raven Software 's Wolfenstein and Splash Damage 's Brink ; however id Tech 4 has not been widely licensed compared to Epic Games ' Unreal Engine .

Doom 3 received a favorable reception from critics , with the PC version of the game holding an 87 percent score and an 88 percent score at the review compilation sites Metacritic and GameRankings respectively . Much praise was given to the quality of Doom 3 's graphics and presentation ; GameSpot described the game 's environments as " convincingly lifelike , densely atmospheric , and surprisingly expansive " , while PC Gamer UK described the graphics and non @-@ player character modeling and animation as simply " flawless " , stating that Doom 3 signalled the return of the Doom franchise to the forefront of the computer and video game industry , eleven years after the release of the original Doom . IGN 's Dan Adams noted that the game 's presentation comprised a remarkably high proportion of the game , stating that " without the atmosphere , Doom 3 is a plain shooter that harkens back to those of the ' 90s . " In addition , several reviewers praised id Software for making the game still look surprisingly good even on lower graphics levels .

A number of reviewers also praised the attention paid to the game 's premise and setting ; GameSpot 's Greg Kasavin described getting " the impression that Doom 3 takes place in a fully realized world " while IGN noted that " the UAC base also has a very worn and lived @-@ in feel that adds to the realism . " Eurogamer in particular pointed out that the game 's opening sequence " feels like a fitting tribute to the excellent ideas " of Valve Software 's genre @-@ defining Half @-@ Life .

Many reviewers noted that Doom 3 stuck with a similar " run and gun " gameplay style that was successful with its predecessors , and the game was alternately praised and criticized for this element . Several reviews were critical of a perceived repetitiveness in gameplay after a while . In addition , the game 's artificial intelligence was not regarded as particularly challenging , with GameSpot noting that " enemies follow the same sorts of predictable patterns that [players] may remember from previous Doom games " while GameSpy stated the way enemies would spawn to attack the player was " gimmicky " ; the reviewer noted that players would realize that picking up a lone armor vest would cause a variety of zombies to emerge from hidden compartments in the dark . In addition , several reviewers noted that the game 's methods of conveying the story were " ineffectual " , compounded by the lack of an identity for the player character . Finally , the game 's multiplayer was seen as lacking in innovation , with its low player limits and small number of game modes , particularly in contrast to id Software 's influential Quake III Arena .

The Xbox version of Doom 3 received a similar level of critical support , holding a score of 88 percent on Metacritic and an 87 @.@ 7 percent score on GameRankings . The game was praised and faulted on many of the same issues as the PC version , although the game was praised for maintaining smooth and user @-@ friendly controls on a gamepad , as well as for including a two player co @-@ operative multiplayer mode , which IGN described as " worth the price of admission alone . " However , some criticism was directed towards slow @-@ downs in play due to the game engine , despite being scaled down for the Xbox , still being demanding on the Xbox hardware .

== Legacy ==

In early 2008 , a new series of Doom novels by Matthew J. Costello were published , an author who had worked on the story and scripts for Doom 3 and Resurrection of Evil ; previous Doom novels had expanded the storyline of the original two Doom games . The series of books aim to novelize the story of Doom 3 , with the first installment , Worlds on Fire , published on February 26 , 2008 . The second book in the series , Maelstrom , was released in March 2009 .

On November 22 , 2011 , the source code of the Doom 3 engine was released under the GPL , but

the game 's artwork content still remains under the EULA . A later source code drop also included the changes made for the BFG Edition , allowing the re @-@ release to potentially be ported to other previously unsupported platforms such as Linux and OS X , and such a port was eventually released .

= = = Film adaptation = = =

A Doom film , loosely based on the franchise was released on October 21 , 2005 in the United States and in the United Kingdom on December 2 , 2005 . It was directed by Andrzej Bartkowiak and starred Karl Urban , Rosamund Pike , and The Rock . The film did not fare well and received a poor critical response , with ticket sales for the opening weekend totalling more than US \$ 15 @.@ 3 million , but promptly dropping to \$ 4 @.@ 2 million in its second weekend .

= = = 2016 reboot = = =

id Software eventually went on to do another remake , this time following the series ' original roots in minimal storytelling and fast @-@ paced action . Simply titled Doom and powered by the new id Tech 6 , the game was released on May 13 , 2016 by Bethesda Softworks for Microsoft Windows , Xbox One , and PlayStation 4 with cross @-@ platform support in its " Snapmap " multiplayer mode . Development was announced in May 2008 , then slated to run on the id Tech 5 engine and initially titled as Doom 4 .

The 2016 release marks a second reboot for the Doom series following the release of Doom 3 , in 2004 .

= Æthelstan =

Æthelstan or Athelstan (Old English : Æpelstan , Æðelst?n , meaning " noble stone " ; c . 894 ? 27 October 939) was King of the Anglo @-@ Saxons from 924 to 927 and King of the English from 927 to 939 . He was the son of King Edward the Elder and his first wife , Ecgwynn . Modern historians regard him as the first King of England and one of the greatest Anglo @-@ Saxon kings . He never married , and was succeeded by his half @-@ brother , Edmund .

When Edward died in July 924 , Æthelstan was accepted by the Mercians as king . His half @-@ brother Ælfweard may have been recognised as king in Wessex , but died within weeks of their father 's death . Æthelstan still encountered resistance in Wessex for several months , and was not crowned until September 925 . In 927 he conquered the last remaining Viking kingdom , York , making him the first Anglo @-@ Saxon ruler of the whole of England . In 934 he invaded Scotland and forced Constantine II to submit to him , but Æthelstan 's rule was resented by the Scots and Vikings , and in 937 they invaded England . Æthelstan defeated them at the Battle of Brunanburh , a victory which gave him great prestige both in the British Isles and on the Continent . After his death in 939 the Vikings seized back control of York , and it was not finally reconquered until 954 .

Æthelstan centralised government ; he increased control over the production of charters and summoned leading figures from distant areas to his councils . These meetings were also attended by rulers from outside his territory , especially Welsh kings , who thus acknowledged his overlordship . More legal texts survive from his reign than from any other tenth @-@ century English king . They show his concern about widespread robberies , and the threat they posed to social order . His legal reforms built on those of his grandfather , Alfred the Great . Æthelstan was one of the most pious West Saxon kings , and was known for collecting relics and founding churches . His household was the centre of English learning during his reign , and it laid the foundation for the Benedictine monastic reform later in the century . No other West Saxon king played as important a role in European politics as Æthelstan , and he arranged the marriages of several of his sisters to continental rulers .

= = Background = =

By the ninth century the many kingdoms of the early Anglo @-@ Saxon period had been consolidated into four : Wessex , Mercia , Northumbria and East Anglia . In the eighth century , Mercia had been the most powerful kingdom in southern England , but in the early ninth , Wessex became dominant under Æthelstan 's great @-@ great @-@ grandfather , Egbert . In the middle of the century , England came under increasing attack from Viking raids , culminating in invasion by the Great Heathen Army in 865 . By 878 , the Vikings had overrun East Anglia , Northumbria , and Mercia , and nearly conquered Wessex . The West Saxons fought back under Alfred the Great , and achieved a decisive victory at the Battle of Edington . Alfred and the Viking leader Guthrum agreed on a division that gave Alfred western Mercia , while eastern Mercia was incorporated into Viking East Anglia . In the 890s , renewed Viking attacks were successfully fought off by Alfred , assisted by his son (and Æthelstan 's father) Edward and Æthelred , Lord of the Mercians . Æthelred ruled English Mercia under Alfred and was married to his daughter Æthelflæd . Alfred died in 899 and was succeeded by Edward . Æthelwold , the son of Æthelred , King Alfred 's older brother and predecessor as king , made a bid for power , but was killed at the Battle of the Holme in 902 .

Little is known of warfare between the English and the Danes over the next few years , but in 909 , Edward sent a West Saxon and Mercian army to ravage Northumbria . The following year the Northumbrian Danes attacked Mercia , but suffered a decisive defeat at the Battle of Tettenhall . Æthelred died in 911 and was succeeded as ruler of Mercia by his widow Æthelflæd . Over the next decade Edward and Æthelflæd conquered Viking Mercia and East Anglia . Æthelflæd died in 918 and was briefly succeeded by her daughter Ælfwynn , but in the same year Edward deposed her and took direct control of Mercia .

When Edward died in 924 , he controlled all of England south of the Humber . The Viking king Sihtric ruled the Kingdom of York in southern Northumbria , but Ealdred maintained Anglo @-@ Saxon rule in at least part of the former kingdom of Bernicia from his base in Bamburgh in northern Northumbria . Constantine II ruled Scotland , apart from the southwest , which was the British Kingdom of Strathclyde . Wales was divided into a number of small kingdoms , including Deheubarth in the southwest , Gwent in the southeast , Brycheiniog immediately north of Gwent , and Gwynedd in the north .

= = Early life = =

According to William of Malmesbury , Æthelstan was thirty years old when he came to the throne in 924 , which would mean that he was born in about 894 . He was the oldest son of Edward the Elder and also the tallest . He was Edward 's only son by his first consort , Ecgwynn . Very little is known about Ecgwynn , and she is not named in any pre @-@ Conquest source . Medieval chroniclers gave varying descriptions of her rank : one described her as an ignoble consort of inferior birth , while others described her birth as noble . Modern historians also disagree about her status . Simon Keynes and Richard Abels believe that leading figures in Wessex were unwilling to accept Æthelstan as king in 924 partly because his mother had been Edward the Elder 's concubine . However , Barbara Yorke and Sarah Foot argue that allegations that Æthelstan was illegitimate were a product of the dispute over the succession , and that there is no reason to doubt that she was Edward 's legitimate wife . She may have been related to St Dunstan .

William of Malmesbury wrote that Alfred the Great honoured his young grandson with a ceremony in which he gave him a scarlet cloak , a belt set with gems , and a sword with a gilded scabbard . Medieval Latin scholar Michael Lapidge and historian Michael Wood see this as designating Æthelstan as a potential heir at a time when the claim of Alfred 's nephew , Æthelwold , to the throne represented a threat to the succession of Alfred 's direct line , but historian Janet Nelson suggests that it should be seen in the context of conflict between Alfred and Edward in the 890s , and might reflect an intention to divide the realm between his son and his grandson after his death . Historian Martin Ryan goes further , suggesting that at the end of his life Alfred may have favoured Æthelstan rather than Edward as his successor . An acrostic poem praising prince " Adalstan " , and

prophesying a great future for him , has been interpreted by Lapidge as referring to the young Æthelstan , punning on the old English meaning of his name , " noble stone " . Lapidge and Wood see the poem as a commemoration of Alfred 's ceremony by one of his leading scholars , John the Old Saxon . In Michael Wood 's view , the poem confirms the truth of William of Malmesbury 's account of the ceremony . Wood also suggests that Æthelstan may have been the first English king to be groomed from childhood as an intellectual , and that John was probably his tutor . However , Sarah Foot argues that the acrostic poem makes better sense if it is dated to the beginning of Æthelstan 's reign .

Edward married his second wife , Ælfflæd , at about the time of his father 's death , probably because Ecgywnn had died , although she may have been put aside . The new marriage weakened Æthelstan 's position , as his step @-@ mother naturally favoured the interests of her own sons , Ælfweard and Edwin . By 920 Edward had taken a third wife , Eadgifu , probably after putting Ælfflæd aside . Eadgifu also had two sons , the future kings Edmund and Eadred . Edward had several daughters , perhaps as many as nine .

Æthelstan 's later education was probably at the Mercian court of his aunt and uncle , Æthelflæd and Æthelred , and it is likely that the young prince gained his military training in the Mercian campaigns to conquer the Danelaw . According to a transcript dating from 1304 , in 925 Æthelstan gave a charter of privileges to St Oswald 's Priory , Gloucester , where his aunt and uncle were buried , " according to a pact of paternal piety which he formerly pledged with Æthelred , ealdorman of the people of the Mercians " . When Edward took direct control of Mercia after Æthelflæd 's death in 918 , Æthelstan may have represented his father 's interests there .

= = Reign = =

= = = The struggle for power = = =

Edward died at Farndon in northern Mercia on 17 July 924 , and the ensuing events are unclear . Ælfweard , Edward 's eldest son by Ælfflæd , had ranked above Æthelstan in attesting a charter in 901 , and Edward may have intended Ælfweard to be his successor as king , either of Wessex only or of the whole kingdom . If Edward had intended his realms to be divided after his death , his deposition of Ælfwynn in Mercia in 918 may have been intended to prepare the way for Æthelstan 's succession as king of Mercia . When Edward died , Æthelstan was apparently with him in Mercia , while Ælfweard was in Wessex . Mercia acknowledged Æthelstan as king , and Wessex may have chosen Ælfweard . However , Ælfweard outlived his father by only sixteen days , disrupting any succession plan .

Even after Ælfweard 's death there seems to have been opposition to Æthelstan in Wessex , particularly in Winchester , where Ælfweard was buried . At first Æthelstan behaved as a Mercian king . A charter relating to land in Derbyshire , which appears to have been issued at a time in 925 when his authority had not yet been recognised outside Mercia , was witnessed only by Mercian bishops . In the view of historians David Dumville and Janet Nelson he may have agreed not to marry or have heirs in order to gain acceptance . However , Sarah Foot ascribes his decision to remain unmarried to " a religiously motivated determination on chastity as a way of life " .

The coronation of Æthelstan took place on 4 September 925 at Kingston upon Thames , perhaps due to its symbolic location on the border between Wessex and Mercia . He was crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury , Athelm , who probably designed or organised a new ordo (religious order of service) in which the king wore a crown for the first time instead of a helmet . The new ordo was influenced by West Frankish liturgy and in turn became one of the sources of the medieval French ordo .

Opposition seems to have continued even after the coronation . According to William of Malmesbury , an otherwise unknown nobleman called Alfred plotted to blind Æthelstan on account of his supposed illegitimacy , although it is unknown whether he aimed to make himself king or was acting on behalf of Edwin , Ælfweard 's younger brother . Blinding would have been a sufficient

disability to render Æthelstan ineligible for kingship without incurring the odium attached to murder . Tensions between Æthelstan and Winchester seem to have continued for some years . The Bishop of Winchester , Frithestan , did not attend the coronation or witness any of Æthelstan 's known charters until 928 . After that he witnessed fairly regularly until his resignation in 931 , but was listed in a lower position than entitled by his seniority .

In 933 Edwin was drowned in a shipwreck in the North Sea . His cousin , Adelolf , Count of Boulogne , took his body for burial at St Bertin Abbey in Saint @-@ Omer . According to the abbey 's annalist , Folcuin , who wrongly believed that Edwin had been king , he had fled England " driven by some disturbance in his kingdom " . Folcuin stated that Æthelstan sent alms to the abbey for his dead brother and received monks from the abbey graciously when they came to England , although Folcuin did not realise that Æthelstan died before the monks made the journey in 944 . The twelfth @-@ century chronicler Symeon of Durham said that Æthelstan ordered Edwin to be drowned , but this is generally dismissed by historians . Edwin might have fled England after an unsuccessful rebellion against his brother 's rule , and his death probably helped put an end to Winchester 's opposition .

= = = King of the English = = =

Edward the Elder had conquered the Danish territories in Mercia and East Anglia with the assistance of Æthelflæd and her husband , but when Edward died the Danish king Sihtric still ruled the Viking Kingdom of York (formerly the southern Northumbrian kingdom of Deira) . In January 926 , Æthelstan arranged for one of his sisters to marry Sihtric . The two kings agreed not to invade each other 's territories or to support each other 's enemies . The following year Sihtric died , and Æthelstan seized the chance to invade . Guthfrith , a cousin of Sihtric , led a fleet from Dublin to try to take the throne , but Æthelstan easily prevailed . He captured York and received the submission of the Danish people . According to a southern chronicler , he " succeeded to the kingdom of the Northumbrians " , and it is uncertain whether he had to fight Guthfrith . Southern kings had never ruled the north , and his usurpation was met with outrage by the Northumbrians , who had always resisted southern control . However , at Eamont , near Penrith , on 12 July 927 , King Constantine of Scotland , King Hywel Dda of Deheubarth , Ealdred of Bamburgh , and King Owain of Strathclyde (or Morgan ap Owain of Gwent) accepted Æthelstan 's overlordship . His triumph led to seven years of peace in the north .

Whereas Æthelstan was the first English king to achieve lordship over northern Britain , he inherited his authority over the Welsh kings from his father and aunt . In the 910s Gwent acknowledged the lordship of Wessex , and Deheubarth and Gwynedd accepted that of Æthelflæd of Mercia ; following Edward 's takeover of Mercia , they transferred their allegiance to him . According to William of Malmesbury , after the meeting at Eamont Æthelstan summoned the Welsh kings to Hereford , where he imposed a heavy annual tribute and fixed the border between England and Wales in the Hereford area at the River Wye . The dominant figure in Wales was Hywel Dda of Deheubarth , described by the historian of early medieval Wales Thomas Charles @-@ Edwards as " the firmest ally of the ' emperors of Britain ' among all the kings of his day " . Welsh kings attended Æthelstan 's court between 928 and 935 and witnessed charters at the head of the list of laity (apart from the kings of Scotland and Strathclyde) , showing that their position was regarded as superior to that of the other great men present . The alliance produced peace between Wales and England , and within Wales , lasting throughout Æthelstan 's reign , though some Welsh resented the status of their rulers as under @-@ kings , as well as the high level of tribute imposed upon them . In Armes Prydein Vawr (The Great Prophecy of Britain) , a Welsh poet foresaw the day when the British would rise up against their Saxon oppressors and drive them into the sea .

According to William of Malmesbury , after the Hereford meeting Æthelstan went on to expel the Cornish from Exeter , fortify its walls , and fix the Cornish boundary at the River Tamar . This account is regarded sceptically by historians , however , as Cornwall had been under English rule since the mid @-@ ninth century . Thomas Charles @-@ Edwards describes it as " an improbable story " , while historian John Reuben Davies sees it as the suppression of a British revolt and the

confinement of the Cornish beyond the Tamar . Æthelstan emphasised his control by establishing a new Cornish see and appointing its first bishop , but Cornwall kept its own culture and language .

Æthelstan became the first king of all the Anglo -@-@ Saxon peoples , and in effect overlord of Britain . His successes inaugurated what John Maddicott , in his history of the origins of the English Parliament , calls the imperial phase of English kingship between about 925 and 975 , when rulers from Wales and Scotland attended the assemblies of English kings and witnessed their charters . Æthelstan tried to reconcile the aristocracy in his new territory of Northumbria to his rule . He lavished gifts on the minsters of Beverley , Chester @-@ le @-@ Street , and York , emphasising his Christianity . He also purchased the vast territory of Amounderness in Lancashire , and gave it to the Archbishop of York , his most important lieutenant in the region . But he remained a resented outsider , and the northern British kingdoms preferred to ally with the pagan Norse of Dublin . In contrast to his strong control over southern Britain , his position in the north was far more tenuous .

= = = The invasion of Scotland in 934 = = =

In 934 Æthelstan invaded Scotland . His reasons are unclear , and historians give alternative explanations . The death of his half @-@ brother Edwin in 933 might have finally removed factions in Wessex opposed to his rule . Guthfrith , the Norse king of Dublin who had briefly ruled Northumbria , died in 934 ; any resulting insecurity among the Danes would have given Æthelstan an opportunity to stamp his authority on the north . An entry in the Annals of Clonmacnoise , recording the death in 934 of a ruler who was possibly Ealdred of Bamburgh , suggests another possible explanation . This points to a dispute between Æthelstan and Constantine over control of his territory . The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle briefly recorded the expedition without explanation , but the twelfth @-@ century chronicler John of Worcester stated that Constantine had broken his treaty with Æthelstan .

Æthelstan set out on his campaign in May 934 , accompanied by four Welsh kings : Hywel Dda of Deheubarth , Idwal Foel of Gwynedd , Morgan ap Owain of Gwent , and Tewdwr ap Griffri of Brycheiniog . His retinue also included eighteen bishops and thirteen earls , six of whom were Danes from eastern England . By late June or early July he had reached Chester @-@ le @-@ Street , where he made generous gifts to the tomb of St Cuthbert , including a stole and maniple (ecclesiastical garments) originally commissioned by his step @-@ mother Ælflæd as a gift to Bishop Frithstan of Winchester . The invasion was launched by land and sea . According to the twelfth @-@ century chronicler Simeon of Durham , his land forces ravaged as far as Dunnottar in north @-@ east Scotland , while the fleet raided Caithness , then probably part of the Norse kingdom of Orkney .

No battles are recorded during the campaign , and chronicles do not record its outcome . By September , however , he was back in the south of England at Buckingham , where Constantine witnessed a charter as subregulus , that is a king acknowledging Æthelstan 's overlordship . In 935 a charter was attested by Constantine , Owain of Strathclyde , Hywel Dda , Idwal Foel , and Morgan ap Owain . At Christmas of the same year Owain of Strathclyde was once more at Æthelstan 's court along with the Welsh kings , but Constantine was not . His return to England less than two years later would be in very different circumstances .

= = = The Battle of Brunanburh = = =

In 934 Olaf Guthfrithson succeeded his father Guthfrith as the Norse King of Dublin . The alliance between the Norse and the Scots was cemented by the marriage of Olaf to Constantine 's daughter . By August 937 Olaf had defeated his rivals for control of the Viking part of Ireland , and he promptly launched a bid for the former Norse kingdom of York . Individually Olaf and Constantine were too weak to oppose Æthelstan , but together they could hope to challenge the dominance of Wessex . In the autumn they joined with the Strathclyde Britons under Owain to invade England . Medieval campaigning was normally conducted in the summer , and Æthelstan could hardly have expected an invasion on such a large scale so late in the year . He seems to have been slow to

react , and an old Latin poem preserved by William of Malmesbury accused him of having " languished in sluggish leisure " . The allies plundered English territory while Æthelstan took his time gathering a West Saxon and Mercian army . However , Michael Wood praises his caution , arguing that unlike Harold in 1066 , he did not allow himself to be provoked into precipitate action . When he marched north , the Welsh did not join him , and they did not fight on either side .

The two sides met at the Battle of Brunanburh , resulting in an overwhelming victory for Æthelstan , supported by his young half @-@ brother , the future King Edmund I. Olaf escaped back to Dublin with the remnant of his forces , while Constantine lost a son . The English also suffered heavy losses , including two of Æthelstan 's cousins , sons of Edward the Elder 's younger brother , Æthelweard .

The battle was reported in the Annals of Ulster :

A great , lamentable and horrible battle was cruelly fought between the Saxons and the Northmen , in which several thousands of Northmen , who are uncouthed , fell , but their king Amlaib [Olaf] , escaped with a few followers . A large number of Saxons fell on the other side , but Æthelstan , king of the Saxons , enjoyed a great victory .

A generation later , the chronicler Æthelweard reported that it was popularly remembered as " the great battle " , and it sealed Æthelstan 's posthumous reputation as " victorious because of God " (in the words of the homilist Ælfric of Eynsham) . The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle abandoned its usual terse style in favour of a heroic poem vaunting the great victory , employing imperial language to present Æthelstan as ruler of an empire of Britain . The site of the battle is uncertain , however , and over thirty sites have been suggested , with Bromborough on the Wirral the most favoured among historians .

Historians disagree over the significance of the battle . Alex Woolf describes it as a " pyrrhic victory " for Æthelstan : the campaign seems to have ended in a stalemate , his power appears to have declined , and after he died Olaf acceded to the kingdom of Northumbria without resistance . Alfred Smyth describes it as " the greatest battle in Anglo @-@ Saxon history " , but he also states that its consequences beyond Æthelstan 's reign have been overstated . In the view of Sarah Foot , on the other hand , it would be difficult to exaggerate the battle 's importance : if the Anglo @-@ Saxons had been defeated , their hegemony over the whole mainland of Britain would have disintegrated . According to historian Michael Livingston :

... it would be no small stretch to consider the battle the moment when Englishness came of age . The men who fought and died on that field forged a political map of the future that remains with us today , arguably making the Battle at Brunanburh one of the most significant battles in the long history not just of England but of the whole of the British Isles .

= = Kingship = =

= = = Administration = = =

Anglo @-@ Saxon kings ruled through ealdormen , who had the highest lay status under the king . In ninth @-@ century Wessex they each ruled a single shire , but by the middle of the tenth they had authority over a much wider area , a change probably introduced by Æthelstan to deal with the problems of governing his extended realm . One of the ealdormen , who was also called Æthelstan , governed the eastern Danelaw territory of East Anglia , the largest and wealthiest province of England . After the king 's death , he became so powerful that he was known as Æthelstan Half @-@ King . Several of the ealdormen who witnessed charters had Scandinavian names , and while the localities they came from cannot be identified , they were almost certainly the successors of the earls who led Danish armies in the time of Edward the Elder , and who were retained by Æthelstan as his representatives in local government .

Beneath the ealdormen , reeves ? royal officials who were noble local landowners ? were in charge of a town or royal estate . The authority of church and state was not separated in early medieval societies , and the lay officials worked closely with their diocesan bishop and local abbots , who also

attended the king's royal councils .

As the first king of all the Anglo-Saxon peoples , Æthelstan needed effective means to govern his extended realm . Building on the foundations of his predecessors , he created the most centralised government that England had yet seen . Previously , some charters had been produced by royal priests and others by members of religious houses , but between 928 and 935 they were produced exclusively by a scribe known to historians as " Æthelstan A " , showing an unprecedented degree of royal control over an important activity . Unlike earlier and later charters , " Æthelstan A " provides full details of the date and place of adoption and an unusually long witness list , providing crucial information for historians . After " Æthelstan A " retired or died , charters reverted to a simpler form , suggesting that they had been the work of an individual , rather than the development of a formal writing office .

A key mechanism of government was the Royal Council (or witan) . Anglo-Saxon kings did not have a fixed capital city . Their courts were peripatetic , and their councils were held at varying locations around their realms . Æthelstan stayed mainly in Wessex , however , and controlled outlying areas by summoning leading figures to his councils . The small and intimate meetings that had been adequate until the enlargement of the kingdom under Edward the Elder gave way to large bodies attended by bishops , ealdormen , thegns , magnates from distant areas , and independent rulers who had submitted to his authority . Frank Stenton sees Æthelstan's councils as " national assemblies " , which did much to break down the provincialism that was a barrier to the unification of England . John Maddicott goes further , seeing them as the start of centralised assemblies that had a defined role in English government , and Æthelstan as " the true if unwitting founder of the English parliament " .

== = Law = = =

The Anglo-Saxons were the first people in northern Europe to write administrative documents in the vernacular , and law codes in Old English go back to Æthelberht of Kent at the beginning of the seventh century . The law code of Alfred the Great , from the end of the ninth century , was also written in the vernacular , and he expected his ealdormen to learn it . His code was strongly influenced by Carolingian law going back to Charlemagne in such areas as treason , peace-keeping , organisation of the hundreds and judicial ordeal . It remained in force throughout the tenth century , and Æthelstan's codes were built on this foundation . Legal codes required the approval of the king , but they were treated as guidelines which could be adapted and added to at local level , rather than a fixed canon of regulations , and customary oral law was also important in the Anglo-Saxon period .

More legal texts survive from Æthelstan's reign than from any other tenth-century English king . The earliest appear to be his tithe edict and the " Ordinance on Charities " . Four legal codes were adopted at Royal Councils in the early 930s at Grately in Hampshire , Exeter , Faversham in Kent , and Thunderfield in Surrey . Local legal texts survive from London and Kent , and one concerning the ' Dunsæte ' on the Welsh border probably also dates to Æthelstan's reign . In the view of the historian of English law , Patrick Wormald , the laws must have been written by Wulfhelm , who succeeded Athelm as Archbishop of Canterbury in 926 . Other historians see Wulfhelm's role as less important , giving the main credit to Æthelstan himself , although the significance placed on the ordeal as an ecclesiastical ritual shows the increased influence of the church . Nicholas Brooks sees the role of the bishops as marking an important stage in the increasing involvement of the church in the making and enforcement of law .

The two earliest codes were concerned with clerical matters , and Æthelstan stated that he acted on the advice of Wulfhelm and his bishops . The first asserts the importance of paying tithes to the church . The second enforces the duty of charity on Æthelstan's reeves , specifying the amount to be given to the poor and requiring reeves to free one penal slave annually . His religious outlook is shown in a wider sacralization of the law in his reign .

The later codes show his concern with threats to social order , especially robbery , which he regarded as the most important manifestation of social breakdown . The first of these later codes ,

issued at Grately , prescribed harsh penalties , including the death penalty for anyone over twelve years old caught in the act of stealing goods worth more than eight pence . This apparently had little effect , as Æthelstan admitted in the Exeter code :

I King Æthelstan , declare that I have learned that the public peace has not been kept to the extent , either of my wishes , or of the provisions laid down at Grately , and my councillors say that I have suffered this too long .

In desperation the Council tried a different strategy , offering an amnesty to thieves if they paid compensation to their victims . The problem of powerful families protecting criminal relatives was to be solved by expelling them to other parts of the realm . This strategy did not last long , and at Thunderfield Æthelstan returned to the hard line , softened by raising the minimum age for the death penalty to fifteen " because he thought it too cruel to kill so many young people and for such small crimes as he understood to be the case everywhere " . His reign saw the first introduction of the system of tithing , sworn groups of ten or more men who were jointly responsible for peace @-@ keeping (later known as frankpledge) . Sarah Foot commented that tithing and oath @-@ taking to deal with the problem of theft had its origin in Frankia :

But the equation of theft with disloyalty to Æthelstan 's person appears peculiar to him . His preoccupation with theft ? tough on theft , tough on the causes of theft ? finds no direct parallel in other kings ' codes .

Historians differ widely regarding Æthelstan 's legislation . Patrick Wormald 's verdict was harsh : " The hallmark of Æthelstan 's law @-@ making is the gulf dividing its exalted aspirations from his spasmodic impact . " In his view , " The legislative activity of Æthelstan 's reign has rightly been dubbed ' feverish ' ... But the extant results are , frankly , a mess . " In the view of Simon Keynes , however , " Without any doubt the most impressive aspect of King Æthelstan 's government is the vitality of his law @-@ making " , which shows him driving his officials to do their duties and insisting on respect for the law , but also demonstrates the difficulty he had in controlling a troublesome people . Keynes sees the Grately code as " an impressive piece of legislation " showing the king 's determination to maintain social order . David Pratt describes his legislation as " a deep and far @-@ reaching reform of legal structures , no less important than developments under King Alfred two generations earlier " .

= = = Coinage = = =

In the 970s , Æthelstan 's nephew , King Edgar , reformed the monetary system to give Anglo @-@ Saxon England the most advanced currency in Europe , with a good quality silver coinage , which was uniform and abundant . In Æthelstan 's time , however , it was far less developed , and minting was still organised regionally long after Æthelstan unified the country . The Grately code included a provision that there was to be only one coinage across the king 's dominion . However , this is in a section that appears to be copied from a code of his father , and the list of towns with mints is confined to the south , including London and Kent , but not northern Wessex or other regions . Early in Æthelstan 's reign , different styles of coin were issued in each region , but after he conquered York and received the submission of the other British kings , he issued a new coinage , known as the " circumscription cross " type . This advertised his newly exalted status with the inscription , " Rex Totius Britanniae " . Examples were minted in Wessex , York , and English Mercia (in Mercia bearing the title " Rex Saxorum ") , but not in East Anglia or the Danelaw .

In the early 930s a new coinage was issued , the " crowned bust " type , with the king shown for the first time wearing a crown with three stalks . This was eventually issued in all regions apart from Mercia , which issued coins without a ruler portrait , suggesting , in Sarah Foot 's view , that any Mercian affection for a West Saxon king brought up among them quickly declined .

= = = Church = = =

Church and state maintained close relations in the Anglo @-@ Saxon period , both socially and politically . Churchmen attended royal feasts as well as meetings of the Royal Council . During

Æthelstan 's reign these relations became even closer , especially as the archbishopric of Canterbury had come under West Saxon jurisdiction since Edward the Elder annexed Mercia , and Æthelstan 's conquests brought the northern church under the control of a southern king for the first time .

Æthelstan appointed members of his own circle to bishoprics in Wessex , possibly to counter the influence of the Bishop of Winchester , Frithestan . One of the king 's mass @-@ priests (priests employed to say Mass in his household) , Ælfheah , became Bishop of Wells , while another , Beornstan , succeeded Frithestan as Bishop of Winchester . Beornstan was succeeded by another member of the royal household , also called Ælfheah . Two of the leading figures in the later tenth @-@ century Benedictine revival of Edgar 's reign , Dunstan and Æthelwold , served in early life at Æthelstan 's court and were ordained as priests by Ælfheah of Winchester at the king 's request . According to Æthelwold 's biographer , Wulfstan , " Æthelwold spent a long period in the royal palace in the king 's inseparable companionship and learned much from the king 's wise men that was useful and profitable to him " . Oda , a future Archbishop of Canterbury , was also close to Æthelstan , who appointed him Bishop of Ramsbury . Oda may have been present at the battle of Brunanburh .

Æthelstan was a noted collector of relics , and while this was a common practice at the time , he was marked out by the scale of his collection and the refinement of its contents . The abbot of Saint Samson in Dol sent him some as a gift , and in his covering letter he wrote : " we know you value relics more than earthly treasure " . Æthelstan was also a generous donor of manuscripts and relics to churches and monasteries . Indeed , his reputation was so great that some monastic scribes later falsely claimed that their institutions had been beneficiaries of his largesse . He was especially devoted to the cult of St. Cuthbert in Chester @-@ le @-@ Street , and his gifts to the community there included Bede 's Lives of Cuthbert . He commissioned it especially to present to Chester @-@ le Street , and out of all manuscripts he gave to a religious foundation which survive , it is the only one which was wholly written in England during his reign . This has a portrait of Æthelstan presenting the book to Cuthbert , the earliest surviving manuscript portrait of an English king . In the view of Janet Nelson , his " rituals of largesse and devotion at sites of supernatural power ... enhanced royal authority and underpinned a newly united imperial realm " .

Æthelstan had a reputation for founding churches , although it is unclear how justified this is . According to late and dubious sources , these churches included minsters at Milton Abbas in Dorset and Muchelney in Somerset . In the view of historian John Blair , the reputation is probably well @-@ founded , but " These waters are muddied by Æthelstan 's almost folkloric reputation as a founder , which made him a favourite hero of later origin @-@ myths . " However , while he was a generous donor to monasteries , he did not give land for new ones or attempt to revive the ones in the north and east destroyed by Viking attacks .

He also sought to build ties with continental churches . Cenwald was a royal priest before his appointment as Bishop of Worcester , and in 929 he accompanied two of Æthelstan 's half @-@ sisters to the Saxon court so that the future Holy Roman Emperor , Otto , could choose one of them as his wife . Cenwald went on to make a tour of German monasteries , giving lavish gifts on Æthelstan 's behalf and receiving in return promises that the monks would pray for the king and others close to him in perpetuity . England and Saxony became closer after the marriage alliance , and German names start to appear in English documents , while Cenwald kept up the contacts he had made by subsequent correspondence , helping the transmission of continental ideas about reformed monasticism to England .

= = = Learning = = =

Æthelstan built on his grandfather 's efforts to revive ecclesiastical scholarship , which had fallen to a low state in the second half of the ninth century . John Blair described Æthelstan 's achievement as " a determined reconstruction , visible to us especially through the circulation and production of books , of the shattered ecclesiastical culture " . He was renowned in his own day for his piety and promotion of sacred learning . His interest in education , and his reputation as a collector of books

and relics , attracted a cosmopolitan group of ecclesiastical scholars to his court , particularly Bretons and Irish . Æthelstan gave extensive aid to Breton clergy who had fled Brittany following its conquest by the Vikings in 919 . He made a confraternity agreement with the clergy of Dol Cathedral in Brittany , who were then in exile in central France , and they sent him the relics of Breton saints , apparently hoping for his patronage . The contacts resulted in a surge in interest in England for commemorating Breton saints . One of the most notable scholars at Æthelstan 's court was Israel the Grammarian , who may have been a Breton . Israel and " a certain Frank " drew a board game called " Gospel Dice " for an Irish bishop , Dub Innse , who took it home to Bangor . Æthelstan 's court played a crucial role in the origins of the English monastic reform movement .

Few prose narrative sources survive from Æthelstan 's reign , but it produced an abundance of poetry , much of it Norse @-@ influenced praise of the King in grandiose terms , such as the Brunanburh poem . Sarah Foot even made a case that Beowulf may have been composed in Æthelstan 's circle .

Æthelstan 's court was the centre of a revival of the elaborate hermeneutic style of later Latin writers , influenced by the West Saxon scholar Aldhelm (c.639 ? 709) , and by early tenth @-@ century French monasticism . Foreign scholars at Æthelstan 's court such as Israel the Grammarian were practitioners . The style was characterised by long , convoluted sentences and a predilection for rare words and neologisms . The " Æthelstan A " charters were written in hermeneutic Latin . In the view of Simon Keynes it is no coincidence that they first appear immediately after the king had for the first time united England under his rule , and they show a high level of intellectual attainment and a monarchy invigorated by success and adopting the trappings of a new political order . The style influenced architects of the late tenth @-@ century monastic reformers educated at Æthelstan 's court such as Æthelwold and Dunstan , and became a hallmark of the movement . After " Æthelstan A " , charters became more simple , but the hermeneutic style returned in the charters of Eadwig and Edgar .

The historian W. H. Stevenson commented in 1898 :

The object of the compilers of these charters was to express their meaning by the use of the greatest possible number of words and by the choice of the most grandiloquent , bombastic words they could find . Every sentence is so overloaded by the heaping up of unnecessary words that the meaning is almost buried out of sight . The invocation with its appended clauses , opening with pompous and partly alliterative words , will proceed amongst a blaze of verbal fireworks throughout twenty lines of smallish type , and the pyrotechnic display will be maintained with equal magnificence throughout the whole charter , leaving the reader , dazzled by the glaze and blinded by the smoke , in a state of uncertainty as to the meaning of these frequently untranslatable and usually interminable sentences .

However , Michael Lapidge argues that however unpalatable the hermeneutic style seems to modern taste , it was an important part of late Anglo @-@ Saxon culture , and deserves more sympathetic attention than it has received from modern historians . In the view of historian David Woodman , " Æthelstan A " should " be accorded recognition as an individual author of no little genius , a man who not only overhauled the legal form of the diploma but also had the ability to write Latin that is as enduringly fascinating as it is complex ... In many ways the diplomas of " Æthelstan A " represent the stylistic peak of the Anglo @-@ Saxon diplomatic tradition , a fitting complement to Æthelstan 's own momentous political feats and to the forging of what would become England . "

= = = British monarch = = =

Historians frequently comment on Æthelstan 's grand and extravagant titles . On his coins and charters he is described as Rex totius Britanniae , or " King of the whole of Britain " . A gospel book he donated to Christ Church , Canterbury is inscribed " Æthelstan , king of the English and ruler of the whole of Britain with a devout mind gave this book to the primatial see of Canterbury , to the church dedicated to Christ " . In charters from 931 he is " king of the English , elevated by the right hand of the almighty to the throne of the whole kingdom of Britain " , and in one manuscript dedication he is even styled " basileus et curagulus " , the titles of Byzantine emperors . Some

historians are not impressed . " Clearly " , comments Alex Woolf , " King Æthelstan was a man who had pretensions , " while in the view of Simon Keynes , " Æthelstan A " proclaimed his master king of Britain " by wishful extension " . But according to George Molyneux " this is to apply an anachronistic standard : tenth @-@ century kings had a loose but real hegemony throughout the island , and their titles only appear inflated if one assumes that kingship ought to involve domination of an intensity like that seen within the English kingdom of the eleventh and later centuries . "

Foreign contemporaries described him in panegyric terms . The French chronicler Flodoard described him as " the king from overseas " , and the Annals of Ulster as the " pillar of the dignity of the western world " . Some historians take a similar view . Michael Wood titled an essay , " The Making of King Aethelstan 's Empire : an English Charlemagne ? " , and described him as " the most powerful ruler that Britain had seen since the Romans " . In the view of Veronica Ortenberg , he was " the most powerful ruler in Europe " with an army that had repeatedly defeated the Vikings ; continental rulers saw him as a Carolingian emperor , who " was clearly treated as the new Charlemagne " . She wrote :

Wessex kings carried an aura of power and success , which made them increasingly powerful in the 920s , while most Continental houses were in military trouble and engaged in internecine warfare . While the civil wars and the Viking attacks on the Continent had spelled the end of unity of the Carolingian empire , which had already disintegrated into separate kingdoms , military success had enabled Æthelstan to triumph at home and to attempt to go beyond the reputation of a great heroic dynasty of warrior kings , in order to develop a Carolingian ideology of kingship .

= = = European relations = = =

The West Saxon court had connections with the Carolingians going back to the marriage between Æthelstan 's great @-@ grandfather Æthelwulf and Judith , daughter of the king of West Francia (and future Holy Roman Emperor) , Charles the Bald , as well as the marriage of Alfred the Great 's daughter , Ælfthryth to Judith 's son by a later marriage , Baldwin II , Count of Flanders . One of Æthelstan 's half @-@ sisters , Eadgifu , married Charles the Simple , king of the West Franks , in the late 910s . He was deposed in 922 , and Eadgifu sent their son , Louis to safety in England . By Æthelstan 's time the connection was well established , and his coronation was performed with the Carolingian ceremony of anointment , probably to draw a deliberate parallel between his rule and Carolingian tradition . His " crowned bust " coinage of 933 ? 938 was the first Anglo @-@ Saxon coinage to show the king crowned , following Carolingian iconography .

Like his father , Æthelstan was unwilling to marry his female relatives to his own subjects , so his sisters either entered nunneries or married foreign husbands . This was one reason for his close relations with European courts , and he married several of his half @-@ sisters to European nobles in what historian Sheila Sharp called " a flurry of dynastic bridal activity unequalled again until Queen Victoria 's time " . Another reason lay in the common interest on both sides of the Channel in resisting the threat from the Vikings , while the rise in the power and reputation of the royal house of Wessex made marriage with an English princess more prestigious to European rulers . In 926 Hugh , Duke of the Franks , sent Æthelstan 's cousin , Adelolf , Count of Boulogne , on an embassy to ask for the hand of one of Æthelstan 's sisters . According to William of Malmesbury , the gifts Adelolf brought included spices , jewels , many swift horses , a crown of solid gold , the sword of Constantine the Great , Charlemagne 's lance , and a piece of the Crown of Thorns . Æthelstan sent his half @-@ sister Eadhild to be Hugh 's wife .

Æthelstan 's most important European alliance was with the new Liudolfing dynasty in East Francia . The Carolingian dynasty of East Francia had died out in the early tenth century , and its new Liudolfing king , Henry the Fowler , was seen by many as an arriviste . He needed a royal marriage for his son to establish his legitimacy , but no suitable Carolingian princesses were available . The ancient royal line of the West Saxons provided an acceptable alternative , especially as they (wrongly) claimed descent from the seventh @-@ century king and saint , Oswald , who was venerated in Germany . In 929 or 930 Henry sent ambassadors to Æthelstan 's court seeking a wife for his son , Otto , who later became Holy Roman Emperor . Æthelstan sent two of his half @-@

sisters , and Otto chose Eadgyth . Fifty years later , Æthelweard , a descendant of Alfred the Great 's older brother , addressed his Latin version of the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle to Mathilde , Abbess of Essen , who was Eadgyth 's granddaughter , and had apparently requested it . The other sister , whose name is uncertain , was married to a prince from near the Alps who has not definitely been identified .

In early medieval Europe , it was common for kings to act as foster @-@ fathers for the sons of other kings . Æthelstan was known for the support he gave to dispossessed young royalty . In 936 he sent an English fleet to help his foster @-@ son , Alan II , Duke of Brittany , to regain his ancestral lands , which had been conquered by the Vikings . In the same year he assisted the son of his half @-@ sister Eadgifu , Louis , to take the throne of West Francia , and in 939 he sent another fleet that unsuccessfully attempted to help Louis in a struggle with rebellious magnates . According to later Scandinavian sources , he helped another possible foster @-@ son , Hakon , son of Harald Fairhair , king of Norway , to reclaim his throne , and he was known among Norwegians as " Æthelstan the Good " .

Æthelstan 's court was perhaps the most cosmopolitan of the Anglo @-@ Saxon period . The close contacts between the English and European courts ended soon after his death , but descent from the English royal house long remained a source of prestige for continental ruling families . According to Frank Stenton in his history of the period , Anglo @-@ Saxon England , " Between Offa and Cnut there is no English king who played so prominent or so sustained a part in the general affairs of Europe . "

= = Death = =

Æthelstan died at Gloucester on 27 October 939 . His grandfather Alfred , his father Edward , and his half @-@ brother Ælfweard had been buried at Winchester , but Æthelstan chose not to honour the city associated with opposition to his rule . By his own wish he was buried at Malmesbury Abbey , where he had buried his cousins who died at Brunanburh . No other member of the West Saxon royal family was buried there , and according to William of Malmesbury , Æthelstan 's choice reflected his devotion to the abbey and to the memory of its seventh @-@ century abbot , Saint Aldhelm . William described Æthelstan as fair @-@ haired " as I have seen for myself in his remains , beautifully intertwined with gold threads " . His bones were lost during the Reformation , but he is commemorated by an empty fifteenth @-@ century tomb .

= = Aftermath = =

After Æthelstan 's death , the men of York immediately chose the Viking king of Dublin , Olaf Guthfrithson (or his cousin , Anlaf Cuaran) , as their king , and Anglo @-@ Saxon control of the north , seemingly made safe by the victory of Brunanburh , collapsed . The reigns of Æthelstan 's half @-@ brothers Edmund (939 ? 946) and Eadred (946 ? 955) were largely devoted to regaining control . Olaf seized the east midlands , leading to the establishment of a frontier at Watling Street . In 941 Olaf died , and Edmund took back control of the east midlands , and then York in 944 . Following Edmund 's death York again switched back to Viking control , and it was only when the Northumbrians finally drove out their Norwegian Viking king Eric Bloodaxe in 954 and submitted to Eadred that Anglo @-@ Saxon control of the whole of England was finally restored .

= = Legacy = =

The reign of Æthelstan has been overshadowed by the achievements of his grandfather , Alfred the Great , but he is now considered one of the greatest kings of the West Saxon dynasty . Modern historians endorse the view of twelfth century chronicler William of Malmesbury that " no one more just or more learned ever governed the kingdom " . Frank Stenton and Simon Keynes both describe him as the one Anglo @-@ Saxon king who will bear comparison with Alfred . In Keynes 's view he " has long been regarded , with good reason , as a towering figure in the landscape of the tenth

century ... he has also been hailed as the first king of England , as a statesman of international standing " . David Dumville describes Æthelstan as " the father of mediaeval and modern England " , while Michael Wood regards Offa , Alfred , and Æthelstan as the three greatest Anglo @-@ Saxon kings , and Æthelstan as " one of the more important lay intellectuals in Anglo @-@ Saxon history " .

Æthelstan is regarded as the first King of England by modern historians . Although it was Eadred who would achieve the final unification of England by the permanent conquest of Viking York , Æthelstan 's campaigns made this success possible . His nephew Edgar called himself King of the English and revived the claim to rule over all the peoples of Britain . Simon Keynes argued that " the consistent usages of Edgar 's reign represent nothing less than a determined reaffirmation of the polity created by Æthelstan in the 930s " . Historian Charles Insley , however , sees Æthelstan 's hegemony as fragile : " The level of overlordship wielded by Æthelstan during the 930s over the rest of Britain was perhaps not attained again by an English king until Edward I. " George Molyneux argues that :

The tendency of some modern historians to celebrate Æthelstan as " the first king of England " is , however , problematic , since there is little sign that that in his day the title rex Anglorum was closely or consistently tied to an area similar to that which we consider England . Indeed , when Æthelstan 's rule was associated with any definite geographical expanse , the territory in question was usually the whole island of Britain .

Simon Keynes saw Æthelstan 's law @-@ making as his greatest achievement . His reign predates the sophisticated state of the later Anglo @-@ Saxon period , but his creation of the most centralised government England had yet seen , with the king and his council working strategically to ensure acceptance of his authority and laws , laid the foundations on which his brothers and nephews would create one of the wealthiest and most advanced systems of government in Europe . Æthelstan 's reign built upon his grandfather 's ecclesiastical programme , consolidating the local ecclesiastical revival and laying the foundation for the monastic reform movement later in the century .

Æthelstan 's reputation was at its height when he died . According to Sarah Foot , " He found acclaim in his own day not only as a successful military leader and effective monarch but also as a man of devotion , committed to the promotion of religion and the patronage of learning . " Later in the century , Æthelweard praised him as a very mighty king worthy of honour , and Æthelred the Unready , who named his eight sons after his predecessors , put Æthelstan first as the name of his eldest son . Memory of Æthelstan then declined until it was revived by William of Malmesbury , who took a special interest in him as the one king who had chosen to be buried in his own house . William 's account kept his memory alive , and he was praised by other medieval chroniclers . In the early sixteenth century William Tyndale justified his English translation of the Bible by stating that he had read that King Æthelstan had caused the Holy Scriptures to be translated into Anglo @-@ Saxon .

From the sixteenth century onwards Alfred 's reputation became dominant and Æthelstan largely disappeared from popular consciousness . Sharon Turner 's History of the Anglo @-@ Saxons , first published between 1799 and 1805 , played a crucial role in promoting Anglo @-@ Saxon studies , and he helped to establish Brunanburh as a key battle in English history , but his treatment of Æthelstan was slight in comparison with Alfred . Charles Dickens had only one paragraph on Æthelstan in his Child 's History of England , and although Anglo @-@ Saxon history was a popular subject for nineteenth @-@ century artists , and Alfred was frequently depicted in paintings at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1904 , there was not one picture of Æthelstan .

According to Michael Wood : " Among all the great rulers of British history , Æthelstan today is the forgotten man " , and in medieval historian Ann Williams 's view : " If Æthelstan has not had the reputation which accrued to his grandfather , the fault lies in the surviving sources ; Æthelstan had no biographer , and the Chronicle for his reign is scanty . In his own day he was ' the roof @-@ tree of the honour of the western world ' " .