

= Eadbald of Kent =

Eadbald ( Old English : ǣdbald ) was King of Kent from 616 until his death in 640 . He was the son of King Æthelberht and his wife Bertha , a daughter of the Merovingian king Charibert . Æthelberht made Kent the dominant force in England during his reign and became the first Anglo -@- Saxon king to convert to Christianity from Anglo -@- Saxon paganism . Eadbald 's accession was a significant setback for the growth of the church , since he retained his indigenous paganism and did not convert to Christianity for at least a year , and perhaps for as much as eight years . He was ultimately converted by either Laurentius or Justus , and separated from his first wife , who had been his stepmother , at the insistence of the church . Eadbald 's second wife was Emma , who may have been a Frankish princess . She bore him two sons , Eormenred and Eorcenberht , and a daughter , Eanswith .

Eadbald 's influence was less than his father 's , but Kent was powerful enough to be omitted from the list of kingdoms dominated by Edwin of Northumbria . Edwin 's marriage to Eadbald 's sister , Æthelburg , established a good relationship between Kent and Northumbria which appears to have continued into Oswald 's reign . When Æthelburg fled to Kent on Edwin 's death in about 633 , she sent her children to Francia for safety , fearing the intrigues of both Eadbald and Oswald . The Kentish royal line made several strong diplomatic marriages over the succeeding years , including the marriage of Eanflæd , Eadbald 's niece , to Oswiu , and of Eorcenberht to Seaxburh , daughter of King Anna of East Anglia .

Eadbald died in 640 and was buried in the Church of St Mary , which he had built in the precincts of the monastery of St Peter and St Paul in Canterbury ( a church later incorporated within the Norman edifice of St Augustine 's ) . At that time , his relics were translated for reburial in the south transept ca . A.D. 1087 .

He was succeeded by Eorcenberht . Eormenred may have been his oldest son , but if he reigned at all it was only as a junior king .

= = Early Kent and early sources = =

Settlement of Kent by continental peoples , primarily Jutes , was complete by the end of the sixth century . Eadbald 's father , Æthelberht , probably came to the throne in about 589 or 590 , though the chronology of his reign is very difficult to determine accurately . Æthelberht was recorded by the early chronicler Bede as having overlordship , or imperium , over other Anglo -@- Saxon kingdoms . This dominance led to wealth in the form of tribute , and Kent was a powerful kingdom at the time of Æthelberht 's death in 616 , with trade well @-@ established with the European mainland .

Roman Britain had become fully Christianized , but the Anglo -@- Saxons retained their native faith . In 597 Augustine was sent by Pope Gregory I to England to convert them to Christianity . Augustine landed in eastern Kent , and soon managed to convert Æthelberht , who gave Augustine land in Canterbury . Two other rulers , Sæberht , king of Essex , and Rædwald , king of East Anglia , were converted through Æthelberht 's influence .

An important source for this period in Kentish history is The Ecclesiastical History of the English People , written in 731 by Bede , a Benedictine monk from Northumbria . Bede was primarily interested in the Christianization of England , but he also provides substantial information about secular history , including the reigns of Æthelberht and Eadbald . One of Bede 's correspondents was Albinus , abbot of the monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul ( subsequently renamed St. Augustine 's ) in Canterbury . A series of related texts known as the Legend of St Mildrith provides additional information about events in the lives of Eadbald 's children and throws some light on Eadbald himself . The Anglo -@- Saxon Chronicle , a collection of annals assembled in about 890 in the kingdom of Wessex , also provides information . Other sources include papal letters , regnal lists of the kings of Kent , and early charters . Charters were documents drawn up to record grants of land by kings to their followers or to the church , and they provide some of the earliest documentary sources in England . None survive in original form from Eadbald 's reign , but some later copies exist .

= = Ancestry and immediate family = =

The ancestry of Æthelberht , Eadbald 's father , is given by Bede , who states that he was descended from the legendary founder of Kent , Hengist . However , historians believe that Hengist and his brother Horsa were probably mythical figures . It is known that Æthelberht married twice as Eadbald married his step @-@ mother after his father 's death , to the consternation of the church .

Eadbald had a sister , Æthelburg , who was probably also the child of Bertha . Æthelburg married Edwin , King of Northumbria , one of the dominant Anglo @-@ Saxon kings of the seventh century . It is possible that there was another brother , named Æthelwald : the evidence for this is a papal letter to Justus , archbishop of Canterbury from 619 to 625 , in which a king named Aduluald is referred to , and who is apparently different from Audubald , which refers to Eadbald . There is no agreement among modern scholars on how to interpret this : " Aduluald " might be intended as a representation of " Æthelwald " , and hence this may be an indication of another king , perhaps a subking of west Kent ; or it may be merely a scribal error which should be read as referring to Eadbald .

Archbishop Laurence of Canterbury persuaded Eadbald to accept Christianity and give up his wife . He then remarried , and his second wife , according to Kentish tradition recorded in the ' Kentish Royal Legend ' , was a woman named Ymme of Frankish royal blood , though recently it has been suggested that she may have instead been the daughter of Erchinoald , mayor of the palace in Neustria , the western part of Francia .

= = East and West Kent = =

The surviving regnal lists show only one king reigning at a time in Kent , but subkingdoms were common among the Anglo @-@ Saxons and from the reign of Hlothhere , in the late seventh century , there is evidence that Kent was usually ruled by two kings , though often one is clearly dominant . It is less clear that this is the case before Hlothhere . Forged charters preserve a tradition of Eadbald ruling during his father 's reign , presumably as a subking over west Kent . The papal letter that has been interpreted as indicating the existence of Æthelwald , a brother of Eadbald 's , refers to Æthelwald as a king ; if he existed , he would presumably have been a junior king to Eadbald .

The two kingdoms within Kent were east and west Kent . Western Kent has fewer archaeological finds from the earliest periods than east Kent , and the eastern finds are somewhat distinct in character , showing Jutish and Frankish influence . The archaeological evidence , combined with the known political division into two kingdoms , makes it likely that the origin of the subkingdoms was the conquest of the western half by the eastern , which would have been the first area settled by the invaders .

= = Accession and pagan reaction = =

Eadbald came to the throne on the death of his father on 24 February 616 , or possibly 618 . Although Æthelberht had been Christian since about 600 and his wife Bertha was also Christian , Eadbald was a pagan . Bertha died some time before Eadbald 's accession , and Æthelberht remarried . The name of Æthelberht 's second wife is not recorded , but it seems likely that she was a pagan , since on his death she married Eadbald , her stepson : a marriage between a stepmother and stepson was forbidden by the church .

Bede records that Eadbald 's repudiation of Christianity was a " severe setback " to the growth of the church . Sæberht , the king of Essex , had become a Christian under Æthelberht 's influence , but on Sæberht 's death , at about the same time , his sons expelled Mellitus , the bishop of London . According to Bede , Eadbald was punished for his faithlessness by " frequent fits of insanity " , and possession by an " evil spirit " ( perhaps referring to epileptic fits ) , but was eventually persuaded to abandon paganism and give up his wife . Eadbald 's second wife , Ymme , was a Frank , and it is

possible that Kent 's strong connections with Francia were a factor in the King 's conversion . The missionaries in Canterbury seem to have had Frankish support . In the 620s , Eadbald 's sister Æthelburg came to Kent , but sent her children to the court of King Dagobert I in Francia ; in addition to the diplomatic connections , trade with the Franks was important to Kent . It is thought likely that Frankish pressure had been influential in persuading Æthelberht to become Christian , and Eadbald 's conversion and marriage to Ymme are likely to have been closely connected diplomatic decisions .

Two graves from a well @-@ preserved sixth and seventh @-@ century Anglo @-@ Saxon cemetery at Finglesham have yielded a bronze pendant and a gilt buckle with designs that are related to each other and may be symbolic of religious activity involving the Germanic deity Woden . These objects probably date from the period of the pagan reaction .

= = = Bede 's account = = =

Bede 's account of Eadbald 's rejection of the church and subsequent conversion is quite detailed but not without some internal inconsistency . Bede 's version of events are laid out as follows :

24 February 616 : Æthelberht dies and Eadbald succeeds .

616 : Eadbald leads a pagan reaction to Christianity . He marries his stepmother , contrary to church law , and refuses baptism . At about this time Mellitus , bishop of London , is expelled by the sons of Sæberht in Essex and goes to Kent .

616 : Mellitus and Justus , bishop of Rochester , leave Kent for Francia .

616 / 617 : Some time after Mellitus and Justus depart , Laurence , the archbishop of Canterbury , plans to leave for Francia but has a vision in which St Peter scourges him . In the morning he shows the scars to Eadbald who is converted to Christianity as a result .

617 : Justus and Mellitus both return from Francia " the year after they left " . Justus is restored to Rochester .

c . 619 : Laurence dies , and Mellitus becomes archbishop of Canterbury .

619 ? 624 : Eadbald builds a church which is consecrated by Archbishop Mellitus .

24 April 624 : Mellitus dies and Justus succeeds him as archbishop of Canterbury .

624 : After Justus 's succession , Pope Boniface writes to him to say that he has heard in letters from King Aduluald ( possibly a scribal error for Eadbald ) of the king 's conversion to Christianity . Boniface sends the pallium with this letter , adding that it is only to be worn when celebrating " the Holy Mysteries " .

By 625 Edwin of Deira , king of Northumbria , asks for the hand in marriage of Æthelburg , Eadbald 's sister . Edwin is told he must allow her to practice Christianity and must consider baptism himself .

21 July 625 : Justus consecrates Paulinus bishop of York .

July or later in 625 : Edwin agrees to the terms and Æthelburg travels to Northumbria , accompanied by Paulinus .

Easter 626 : Æthelburg gives birth to a daughter , Eanflæd .

626 : Edwin completes a military campaign against the West Saxons . At " about this time " Boniface writes to both Edwin and Æthelburg . The letter to Edwin urges him to accept Christianity and refers to the conversion of Eadbald . The letter to Æthelburg mentions that the pope has recently heard the news of Eadbald 's conversion and encourages her to work for the conversion of her husband , Edwin .

= = = Alternative chronology = = =

Although Bede 's narrative is widely accepted , an alternative chronology has been proposed by D.P. Kirby . Kirby points out that Boniface 's letter to Æthelburg makes it clear that the news of Eadbald 's conversion is recent , and that it is unthinkable that Boniface would not have been kept up to date on the status of Eadbald 's conversion . Hence Eadbald must have been converted by Justus , as is implied by Boniface 's letter to Justus . The pallium accompanying that letter indicates

Justus was archbishop by that time , and the duration of Mellitus 's archiepiscopate means that even if Bede 's dates are somewhat wrong in other particulars , Eadbald was converted no earlier than 621 , and no later than April 624 , since Mellitus consecrated a church for Eadbald before his death in that month . The account of Laurence 's miraculous scourging by St Peter can be disregarded as a later hagiographical invention of the monastery of St Augustine .

As mentioned above , it has been suggested that King " Aduluald " in the letter to Justus is a real king Æthelwald , perhaps a junior king of west Kent . In that case it would appear that Laurence converted Eadbald , and Justus converted Æthelwald . It has also been suggested that the pallium did not indicate Justus was archbishop , since Justus is told the limited circumstances in which he may wear it ; however , the same phrasing occurs in the letter conveying the pallium to Archbishop Augustine , also quoted in Bede . Another possibility is that the letter was originally two letters . In this view , Bede has conflated the letter conveying the pallium with the letter congratulating Justus on the conversion , which according to Bede 's account was seven or so years earlier ; but the grammatical details on which this suggestion is based are not unique to this letter , and as a result it is usually considered to be a single composition .

The letter to Æthelburg makes it clear that she was already married at the time the news of Eadbald 's conversion reached Rome . This is quite inconsistent with the earlier date Bede gives for Eadbald 's acceptance of Christianity , and it has been suggested in Bede 's defence that Æthelburg married Edwin substantially earlier and stayed in Kent until 625 before travelling to Rome , and that the letter was written while she was in Kent . However , it would appear from Boniface 's letter that Boniface thought of Æthelburg as being at her husband 's side . It also appears that the letter to Justus was written after the letters to Edwin and Æthelburg , rather than before , as Bede has it ; Boniface 's letter to Edwin and Æthelburg indicates he had the news from messengers , but when he wrote to Justus he had heard from the king himself .

The story of Æthelburg 's marriage being dependent on Edwin allowing her to practice her faith has been questioned , since revising the chronology makes it likely , though not certain , that the marriage was arranged before Eadbald 's conversion . In this view , it would have been the church that objected to the marriage , and Æthelburg would have been Christian before Eadbald 's conversion . The story of Paulinus 's consecration is also problematic as he was not consecrated until at least 625 and possibly later , which is after the latest possible date for Æthelburg 's marriage . However , it may be that he traveled to Northumbria prior to his consecration and only later became bishop .

A revised chronology of some of these events follows , taking the above considerations into account .

616 : Eadbald leads a pagan reaction to Christianity .

616 : Mellitus and Justus , bishop of Rochester , leave Kent for Francia .

c . 619 : Laurence dies , and Mellitus becomes archbishop of Canterbury .

Early 624 ? : Justus converts Eadbald . Messengers go to Rome . Also at about this time Æthelburg 's marriage to Edwin is arranged , perhaps before the conversion . Eadbald builds a church , and Mellitus consecrates it .

24 April 624 : Mellitus dies and Justus succeeds him as archbishop of Canterbury .

Mid 624 : Edwin agrees to the marriage terms and Æthelburg travels to Northumbria , accompanied by Paulinus .

Later 624 : the pope receives news of Eadbald 's conversion and writes to Æthelburg and Edwin .

Still later 624 : the pope hears from Eadbald of his conversion , and also hears of Mellitus 's death . He writes to Justus to send him the pallium .

21 July 625 or 626 : Justus consecrates Paulinus bishop of York .

This timeline extends the duration of the pagan reaction from less than a year , in Bede 's narrative , to about eight years . This represents a more serious setback for the church .

= = Relations with other English kingdoms and church affairs = =

Eadbald 's influence over other Anglo @-@ Saxon kingdoms was less than Æthelberht 's . Eadbald

's reduced power is apparent in his inability to restore Mellitus to the see of London : in Bede 's words , his authority in Essex " was not so effective as that of his father " . However , Kentish power was still sufficient to make alliance with Eadbald 's relatives attractive to other kingdoms . Edwin 's marriage to Eadbald 's sister , Æthelburg , was probably also motivated by a desire to gain better access to communications with the continent . The relationship would have been valuable to Eadbald , too ; it may have been as a result of this alliance that Edwin 's overlordship of Britain did not include Kent . Another factor in Edwin 's treatment of Kent may have been the location of the archbishopric in Canterbury : Edwin was well aware of the importance of Canterbury 's metropolitan status , and at one time planned to make York an archbishopric too , with Paulinus as the planned first incumbent . Paulinus eventually returned to Kent , where at Eadbald 's and Archbishop Honorius 's request he became bishop of Rochester , and York was not made an archbishopric for another century . Within a year of Edwin 's death in 633 or 634 , Oswald took the throne of Northumbria , and it seems likely that his relations with Eadbald were modelled on Edwin 's . Oswald 's successor , Oswiu , married Eanflæd , who was Edwin 's daughter and Eadbald 's niece , thereby gaining both Deiran and Kentish connections .

Eadbald and Ymme had a daughter , Eanswith ( who founded the very first nunnery on English soil at Folkestone , 15 miles from Canterbury ) , and two sons , Eorcenberht and Eormenred . Eormenred was the older of the two , and may have held the title of *regulus* , perhaps implying that he held the junior kingship of Kent . He appears to have died before his father , leaving Eorcenberht to inherit the throne . An additional son , Ecgrith , is mentioned in a charter of Eadbald 's , but the charter is a forgery , probably dating from the eleventh century .

Several of Eadbald 's near relatives were involved in diplomatic marriages . King Anna of East Anglia married his daughter , Seaxburh , to Eorcenberht , and their daughter Eormenhild married Wulfhere of Mercia , one of the most powerful kings of his day . Eanflæd , Eadbald 's niece , married Oswiu , king of Northumbria and the last of the northern Angles Bede listed as holding *imperium* over southern England . Eadbald 's granddaughter Eafe married Merewalh , king of the Magonsæte .

= = Trade and connections to the Franks = =

There is little documentary evidence about the nature of trade in Eadbald 's reign . It is known that the kings of Kent had established royal control of trade in the late seventh century , but it is not known how early this control began . There is archaeological evidence that suggests that the royal influence predates any of the written sources , and it may have been Eadbald 's father , Æthelberht , who took control of trade away from the aristocracy and made it a royal monopoly . The continental trade provided Kent access to luxury goods , which was an advantage in trading with the other Anglo @-@ Saxon nations , and the revenue from trade was important in itself . Kent traded locally made glass and jewelry to the Franks ; Kentish goods have been found as far south as the mouth of the Loire , south of Brittany . There was probably also a flourishing slave trade . The wealth this commerce brought to Kent may have been the basis of the continuing , though diminished , importance of Kent in Eadbald 's reign .

Coins were probably first minted in Kent in Æthelberht 's reign , though none bear his name . These early golden coins were probably the shillings ( *scillingas* in Old English ) that are mentioned in Æthelberht 's laws . The coins are also known to numismatists as " *thrymsas* " . *Thrymsas* are known from Eadbald 's reign ; but few are known that carry his name : one such was minted at London and inscribed " *AVDVARLD* " . It has been suggested that kings did not have a monopoly on the production of coinage at that time .

Connections with Francia went beyond trade and the royal marriages Æthelberht and Eadbald made with Frankish princesses . Eadbald 's granddaughter , Eorcengota , became a nun at Faremoutiers , and his great @-@ granddaughter , Mildrith , was a nun at Chelles . When Edwin was killed in about 632 , Æthelburg , escorted by Paulinus , fled by sea to Eadbald 's court in Kent , but in a further sign of her family 's ties across the channel she sent her children to the court of King Dagobert I of the Franks , to keep them safe from the intrigues of Eadbald and Oswald of

Northumbria .

= = Succession = =

Eadbald died in 640 , and according to most versions of the Kentish Royal Legend was succeeded solely by his son Eorcenberht . However , an early text ( Caligula A.xiv ) refers to Eormenred as ' king ' , suggesting either he was a junior king under Eorcenberht , or had a shared kingship . One suggestion is that the some other version of events in the ' legend ' , which give him no title , may have been an attempt to discredit royal claimants from Eormenred 's line .