

Edward the Confessor (c.1003-1066)

Edward the Confessor was the penultimate (one before last) Anglo-Saxon king of England. His father was Ethelred II 'the Unready' and his mother was Emma, daughter of Richard I of Normandy. Britain was very different then. Wales, Scotland and England were separate countries, and England was made up of many different kingdoms.



- 1 Sit down with the children and show them the series of pictures overleaf. You may wish to lay the sheets out either on a table or the floor, and then read the story.
- 2 Look at the map of ancient Britain and discuss how our country has changed. Can you recognise any names that exist today?
- 3 Edward was called “the Confessor” because he was very religious. According to legend, he was the patron saint of England for a while. Who is the patron saint now?
- 4 These events happened before a great change in our history. Discuss which famous king invaded and conquered England after Edward’s death.



Please remember to recycle this activity

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In 1013 the Danes (or Vikings), led by King Sweyn and his son Canute, invaded England and forced Edward and his family into exile in Normandy. In 1014 Ethelred was reinstated as king and returned to England.

When King Ethelred died in 1016, Edmund Ironside (his son and Edward's half-brother) became king, but the Danes re-invaded and defeated Edmund. King Canute then married Edward's mother, Emma. Edward fled back to Normandy.



In 1040, Hardecanute, the son of King Canute and Emma, became King of England. The next year he invited Edward (who was his half-brother) back to England.

King Hardecanute died in 1042 and Edward became King of England.

His reign was mostly peaceful and prosperous.



When King Edward returned to England, he brought many friends from Normandy with him.

He gave his Norman friends positions in the court.

The old families of Mercia and Wessex were powerful and important. They were not pleased to see Edward's Norman friends in the English court.



In 1045, Edward married Edith. She was the daughter of Godwine, Earl of Wessex. Yet King Edward and the Earl of Wessex continued to distrust one another.

Over the next few years, King Edward enlisted the support of Leofric, Earl of Mercia. They managed to outlaw the Wessex family and banished them from England.



The Earl of Mercia grew angry because Edward continued to give his Norman friends positions at court and in the church.

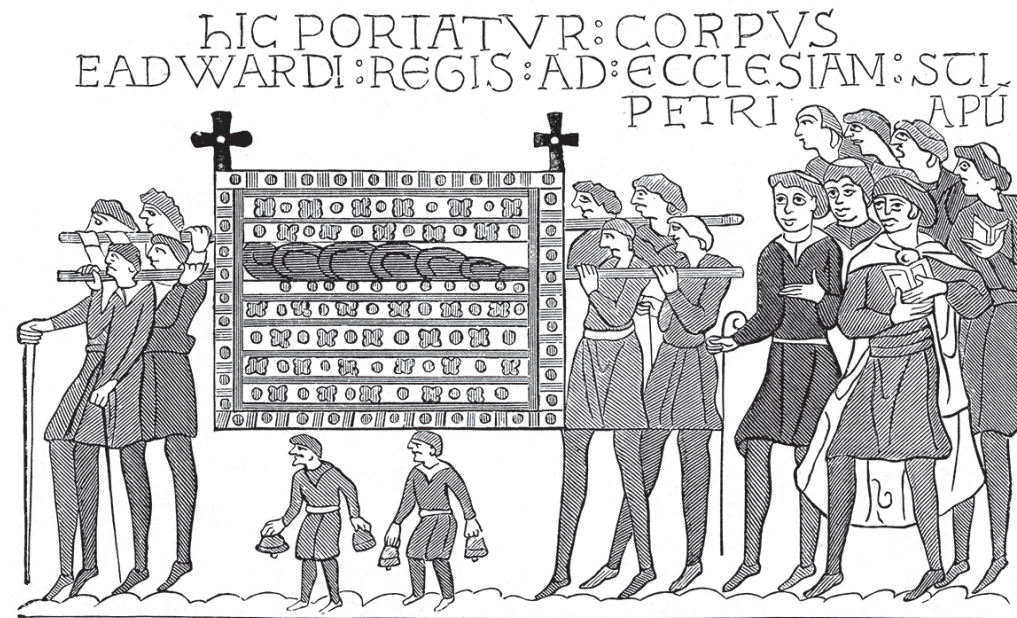
In 1052 Godwine of Wessex and his sons returned. Edward hoped the family of Mercia would fight for him, but they refused. Edward was forced to send his friends back to Normandy and to return Godwine's lands.



In 1053 Godwine died and his son, Harold, became Earl of Wessex.

Shortly before he died, King Edward named Harold, his brother-in-law, as his successor.

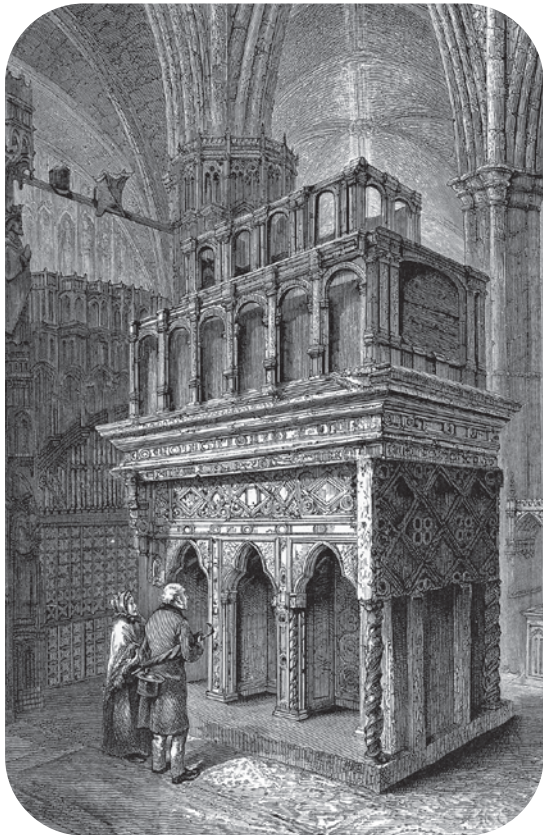
But it is widely believed that he had almost certainly already promised the crown to his distant cousin, William, Duke of Normandy.



King Edward died on 4th January 1066.

**He was buried in the abbey he had built at Westminster,
the Collegiate Church of St Peter.**

This is now Westminster Abbey.



Saint Edward was regarded as the national saint of England. Then in about 1350, King Edward III chose Saint George to be England's patron saint instead.

St Edward's Day is celebrated on 13th October.