

### 3 The Anglo-Saxons, 430 - 1066

During the nineteenth century it became accepted that the years in European history between about 450 and 1500 should be called **The Middle Ages**, on the grounds that they stood between the classical world of Greece and Rome and the 'modern' European world created in the late 15th century by the discovery of new technologies and new lands beyond Europe as well as a rejection by many Europeans of the Roman Catholic religion. The term **medieval**, derived from the Latin 'medium' (middle) 'aevum' (age) served as a suitable adjective for this period. Historians have additionally used the term '**Dark Ages**' to describe the period from about 450 to 800 when both Christianity and high standards of civilization and culture were under threat from pagan tribes.

Some historians take the view that one of the chief causes of the fall of the Roman Empire was the Christian religion. Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem about AD 33, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius and on the orders of Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judaea. However, Jesus' loyal followers, in particular Peter and Paul, were exceptionally successful in spreading the message of his teachings throughout the Mediterranean world within a few decades of his death. The new religion was outlawed by the Roman authorities, and Peter, who established himself as the first leader of the Christians in the city of Rome, was put to death there about AD 64. As Jesus had indicated that Peter was his most trusted disciple, Peter's successors as leaders, or *bishops*, of the church in Rome began to claim for themselves authority over Christians everywhere.

This claim was much strengthened during the reign of the Emperor Constantine I (312-337) who is said to have become a Christian himself and certainly tolerated Christian worship within the empire. It was under his influence that a church Council met at Nicaea in 325 and hammered out a 'creed' or statement of beliefs which was to be the official basis of Christianity thereafter. In 330 Constantine founded a new capital at Byzantium (Constantinople) which was to become a major rival to Rome. All these changes led in due course to a decline in the Emperor's position as head of the state religion as well as the state itself (in the early years of the empire the Emperor had been declared a god), while arguments between Christian leaders over 'heresy' caused internal dissent. Moreover, the growth of Constantinople as an alternative capital to Rome led eventually to a division in the empire, with rival emperors ruling in both cities. These were weaknesses fully exploited by powerful tribes on the frontiers of the western empire who overran it during the fifth century.

Constantine's support of the Christian religion meant that Christianity became accepted in Roman Britain, where Christian churches were built. However, one of the most influential of the early Christian heretics was a Briton or Irishman called Pelagius (d. 420) whose teachings were held to deny the official doctrine of original sin. He was condemned by the church authorities, but his views persisted nonetheless, especially in Britain. In 429 the Bishop of Rome sent Germanus of Auxerre to visit Britain in the hope of strengthening ties between British Christians and Rome, and possibly to prevent this happening the Romano - British leader Vortigern invited friendly pagan Saxons from the Rhineland area to settle on Britain's east coast and defend it. The Saxons began to arrive about 430 but in 442 they rebelled and a long period of conflict began between the Romano-British people and the Saxons, more and more of whom came to settle in Britain in search of land and fortune. Little is known about the details of this period, but if there *is* a historical **King Arthur**, he was probably a British leader fighting against the Saxons towards the end of the fifth century.

About 500 the British won a victory over the Saxons at 'Mons Badonicus', a site not yet identified, and this halted Saxon progress for a time. By 550, however, the Saxons were driving west again and by 600 they were in control of most of Britain except for the present Devon and Cornwall, Wales and Scotland. The main literary authority for the arrival of the Saxons is the monk **Bede** who wrote two hundred years later and whose information was often incomplete or faulty. It was he who explained that the invaders were mostly Angles and Saxons, from the Ems-Weser area of Germany, and Jutes from near Denmark. Hence the years from about 600 to 1066 are known as the **Anglo-Saxon** period, and the Angles eventually gave their name to 'England'.

Other familiar names soon developed, such as Wessex, where the west Saxons settled, and Sussex, Essex, and East Anglia, all of them small kingdoms together with Kent, where most of the Jutes lived. In the midlands the kingdom of Mercia was established, with Northumbria farther north. The fate of the Romano-British people and their institutions is not easy to determine but when they were not fighting, the Anglo-Saxons were a farming people who lived in villages and had little time for the fine architecture of the former Roman towns and villas, most of which fell into disuse. From time to time one of the Saxon kings was recognized as overlord by the others, and Ethelbert, King of Kent, set down a code of laws at the end of the sixth century by which most Anglo-Saxons came to be governed. The king stood at the head of society with his *ealdormen* (earls) and *thanes* (lords), and took advice from the *Witan* (council of thanes). Below them were the *ceorls*, free peasant landowners, and lowest of all were the slaves. A man relied for protection on his kindred (family) and had a strong obligation to his lord. Men accused of crimes were heard by an assembly of freemen and, if guilty, they were punished according to the law of custom. A man's life was valued according to his status in society: a thane was worth a fortune, a slave was worth *nithing*.

Though much of Britain had been under Christian influence during the Roman occupation the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons, who worshipped the heathen god Wodin, had the effect of pushing Christianity into areas remote from Anglo-Saxon settlement. The evangelist **Ninian** is credited with bringing Christianity to Scotland around the turn of the fifth century, while **Patrick**, a Briton who was abducted as a teenager and sold into slavery in Ireland, escaped after a few years and trained as a priest on the continent. About 432 he returned to Ireland as a missionary bishop and in the next thirty years established a thriving Christian community there. His work was vigorously continued by **Brigid** (d 523) one of the most remarkable women of this period, and by **Columba** (d 597) who founded monasteries at Derry and Durrow before establishing the famous monastery at Iona, on the south-west tip of the Isle of Mull. From here he and his monks were able to spread their brand of Celtic Christianity across the north of Britain. One of Columba's notable miracles is said to have been the driving away of a monster in Loch Ness by making the sign of the cross.

While so-called 'Celtic Christianity' was in this way establishing itself in the north and west of the British Isles, Gregory I, Bishop of Rome (or 'Pope' as that bishop later came to be known in English from *papa*, the ecclesiastical Latin form of 'father') in 597 sent a deputation of monks to Britain with orders to convert the Anglo-Saxons. The monks were led by **Augustine** and they landed in Kent, then the most dominant of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. They were successful in converting its king, Ethelbert, partly because his wife Bertha, a Frankish princess, was already a Christian. Augustine was at first permitted to hold services in ruined churches dating from Roman times and then allowed to establish a new

church on the site of the present cathedral in Canterbury, as well as a large monastery outside the town. In 601 Gregory appointed him Archbishop of the English with instructions to set up two archbishoprics, equal in status, one based on London, the other on York, with twelve bishops attached to each. Augustine attempted to persuade the Celtic Christians of Wales to join him, but failed because they considered him too haughty. By the time he died (c 604) he had only managed to set up two more bishoprics, one in nearby Rochester, and the other in London, the capital of the east Saxons. In 627 one of Augustine's former followers, Paulinus, succeeded in baptising Edwin, king of Northumbria, in a wooden church at York, and Pope Gregory's original scheme for a Christian Britain came one step nearer. In fact political upheavals in the Saxon kingdoms, including the accession of kings who refused to become Christians, led to Rome's acceptance of Canterbury, not London, as the seat of the southern archbishopric, while York never succeeded in attaining the size and importance envisaged by Gregory.

Though Edwin had been converted by Paulinus, the influence of Iona was very strong in Northumbria and when during the seventh century Northumbria was the dominant Saxon kingdom Celtic missionaries were active in southern England too. Roman and Celtic Christians had a great deal in common but there were important differences between them such as the calculation of the date of Easter. In 664 these problems were resolved at a meeting between leaders of the two churches at Whitby so that Theodore, consecrated in 668, was the first Archbishop of Canterbury to be recognized throughout England. Under him the English church was thoroughly organized and regulated according to the Roman system which had been established in Europe. Through the Roman services and their use of Latin, England became a part of the 'universal church', closely linked to the main stream of cultural and political events on the continent. For many centuries to come English kings would, with other European rulers, spend much time and effort attempting to resist the interference of the Pope in their internal affairs though his growing authority as the recognized head of the religion which became firmly established in most of Europe was difficult to deny.

During the seventh and eighth centuries the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms fought among themselves and with the Celtic tribes of Scotland and Wales, only slowly establishing more stable frontiers to their territories. Historians have called this period the **Heptarchy**, from the Greek for seven kingdoms. Northumbria was the first kingdom to dominate the others under its impressive king, Edwin, but the fact that he was defeated and killed in 632 by the combined forces of the Welsh and the Mercians shows how unstable the situation was. Penda, the Mercian king, then took the lead until he was killed in battle more than twenty years later. His eventual successors Ethelbald (716-757) and **Offa** (764-796) ensured that the eighth century was a period of Mercian predominance, and indeed Offa seems to have controlled most of England except for Northumbria. He was considered grand enough for Charlemagne, the ruler of France and Germany, to seek a marriage between his son and Offa's daughter. Very fine coins bearing the king's head were minted in Offa's reign though little is known of his political or legal administration. Offa's greatest visible achievement was the construction of the great dyke named after him, running southwards from near Prestatyn on the north Welsh coast to Chepstow in the south. This marked the western boundary of Mercia and by so doing created a territory for the independent tribes of Wales. Meanwhile the Christian church continued to flourish with the establishment of monasteries and the development of parishes. In 786 the first legates (ambassadors) from the Pope since 597 reached Britain and drew up regulations which were accepted by the provinces of Canterbury and York, and Offa's son Egfrith was consecrated king in 787.

The Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of the seventh and eighth centuries did not succeed in creating anything of great architectural importance. Most of the population of about a million lived in villages while the kings tended to be nomadic rather than based on any capital town. There are few signs of a significant royal palace and other domestic dwellings were rudimentary constructions made of wattle, daub and thatch. There were stone churches but most of them were plain and small. However, as a result of the influence of Christianity, Britain developed a reputation for scholarship during this period. The influence of Irish scholars and monks who had not suffered from conquest by the Saxons in the fifth century was strong in Northumbria while Canterbury benefited from the Mediterranean links of Archbishop Theodore who established centres of learning in his diocese.

The Northumbrian monk **Bede** (672-735) worked from his monastery in Jarrow to produce influential volumes of theology and history, notably his *Ecclesiastical History*, upon which much of our information about the early history of the Anglo-Saxon period is based. Anglo-Irish manuscript illumination produced the magnificent Lindisfarne gospels during this period, and it is possible that the Old English poem *Beowulf* originates from this time. The discovery at Sutton Hoo in 1939 of a complete wooden ship containing the body of an Anglo-Saxon king (possibly Redwald, d 625) together with many treasures shows that at the highest levels of society the Anglo-Saxons could be dressed magnificently with ornaments of great artistry and quality.

In the last decades of the eighth century the pagan warriors of northern Germany and Scandinavia set out in their sleek rowing boats aided with sails and voyaged far afield in search of plunder. Exactly why so many of these people from the north (Norsemen) chose to do this is far from clear but the movement has been linked to a rapid increase in their population and a shortage of land. From Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the northern coast of Germany these **Vikings** (wanderers) sailed to Kiev, on the river Dneipr, across the Atlantic to the coast of North America, into the Mediterranean as far as Constantinople and across the North Sea to Iceland, Greenland, Ireland and Britain. At first the Vikings were content to raid and then return home but later they decided to settle. In France, for instance, they established themselves in an area named after them 'Normandy'. Wherever they roamed or settled they presented a grave threat to the Christian church.

Most of the Vikings who attacked Britain came from Denmark, and the first recorded raid took place on the east coast in 789, after which there was a constant risk of sudden attack. After the death of Offa in 796 the Mercian kingdom was ruled less ably and the balance of power swung in favour of Wessex. Moreover, faced with the Danish threat the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were more disposed to unite together. Egbert of Wessex, hailed as 'King of England' as early as 828 defeated a Danish force in 838 and his son Ethelwulf defeated another in 851. In 865 a large Danish army, intent on conquest and settlement, arrived on the east coast and established itself securely, capturing York and East Anglia. In 871 the Danes were again defeated in a great battle at Ashdown and in that year **Alfred**, a son of Ethelwulf, succeeded to the throne of Wessex. He made peace with the Danes, who turned their attention towards Mercia and Northumbria but in 878 they attacked Wessex again, so successfully that Alfred was forced to withdraw to the Somerset marshes - the scene of the legend of his burning the cakes of a local peasant who gave him refuge. By the following year Alfred had reorganized his forces and defeated the Danes at Edington.

The results of this battle were momentous. Guthrum, leader of the Danes, made peace, converted to Christianity and agreed to restrict his people to the area of eastern England henceforth known as the **Danelaw** - where Danish law and customs prevailed. Alfred's military and political skills ensured the survival of Wessex and after his capture of London in 886 he became the acknowledged leader of all the Anglo-Saxons. There were more Viking attacks in 892 and 896 but Alfred withstood them. His greatness lies in the fact that he was not only an outstanding military leader and politician but also an able administrator and scholar. He issued a code of laws, reformed his finances and encouraged education. It was he who ordered the compilation of the **Anglo-Saxon Chronicle**, a great history of his people which continued to be written until the twelfth century. Alfred was also a conscientious Christian who attempted - though without real success - to revive the monastic ideal which had withered under the constant attacks of the Vikings, who regarded monasteries as rich stores of easy plunder.

Alfred died in 899 but his two successors proved worthy of him. His son Edward crushed another Danish attack at Tettenhall in 910 and carried through Alfred's policy of defending the frontiers of Wessex by building fortified 'burhs' or villages. Edward's sister Elfreda married the Earl of Mercia, who also fortified his territories against Danish attack. Edward then embarked on an ambitious campaign to reconquer the Danelaw and succeeded in recovering Essex, East Anglia and the East Midlands. Elfreda - one of British history's warrior women - attacked from Mercia and won back the region round Derby and Leicester. She died in 918 but soon afterwards all the Danes in Mercia recognized the authority of her brother. Edward of Wessex died in 924 to be succeeded by his able son **Athelstan** who was able to seize control over Northumbria and make the claim to be the first effective ruler of all England. He was also strong enough to receive the submission of Hywel, ruler of Wales, and Constantine, King of Scotland.

While England was occupied in this great conflict between the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes, **Ireland** continued to be ruled by its many petty kings, with the family of Ui Neill, based at Tara, claiming the title and dignity of High King. From the seventh to the tenth century the kings of Munster, a line founded by Oengus who was baptised by St. Patrick, were undoubtedly powerful, though much of their history is unknown. Though politically incoherent, Ireland was far from uncivilised: it escaped the devastation caused by the pagan Saxons who had destroyed Roman Britain and through its many monasteries it maintained a high standard of Christian scholarship and art. However, the Vikings caused major disruption in the ninth and tenth centuries, firmly establishing themselves on the east coast and making Dublin into a Viking capital. From there they crossed to England and in 919 Raegnald, a Viking leader from Dublin, declared himself king in York. Edward of Wessex confronted him in 920 and forced his submission, though York remained a Norse centre until 954.

When the Romans withdrew from **Wales** in 410 power fell to the Celtic warrior Cunedda whose base was at Deganwy, on the north coast. In the sixth century, Romano-British victims of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain fled westwards to the safety of the Welsh mountains, though they maintained contact for a time with the Celts of Cornwall and southern Scotland. During the seventh century the Saxons cut off these links to the south and north, while Offa's dyke, constructed in the eighth century, gave 'Wales' a boundary. As with Ireland, the 'Welsh' (the word means 'foreigner' in Old English) were ruled by many minor chieftains - between 400 and 500 - centred on the major regions of Gwynedd, Powys, Dyfed, Gwent and Glamorgan. Norse attacks in the ninth century resulted in the emergence of the first notable

Welsh leader, Rhodri Mawr (Roderick the Great), who succeeded his father as ruler of Gwynedd in 844 and by his death in 877 had gained dominance over most of Wales. The reason why he and others failed to establish a strong ruling dynasty was that Welsh law demanded that an inheritance should be divided equally among all brothers, rather than passing to the eldest. Even Hywel Dda (Hywel the Good), whose ascendancy lasted for half a century (900 to 950) was not able to overcome this problem despite providing the Welsh with important new laws himself.

North of Hadrian's Wall the kingdom of Dalraida, home of the Scots, lay to the west, while the Pictish kingdom was established in the north and east. Norwegians crossed to settle in the Western Isles while Angles, Saxons and Jutes formed the lowland kingdom of Strathclyde in the sixth century. The sequence of political events is by no means clear, but it seems that the three kingdoms were united by the Pictish king **Kenneth McAlpin** (844 to 859) in which case **Scotland** can claim to be a more ancient kingdom than that of Athelstan's united England. In 934, Constantine, king of Scotland, was, as we have seen, defeated by Athelstan, but three years later, in alliance with Olaf Guthfrithson, king of Dublin, and Owain of Strathclyde, Constantine invaded England again, only to be crushed by Athelstan at Brunanburh. With some reason, therefore, Athelstan was proud of his achievements, proclaiming himself 'King of All Britain' on some of his coins. Three of his sisters married European princes, Charles the Simple, King of the Franks; Otto, son of the German prince Henry the Fowler and Hugh, Duke of the Franks. Athelstan held impressive courts, quelled all revolts and repelled all invaders. But he did not marry, and on his death in 939 the crown passed to his half-brother Edmund. He had to fend off more Viking invasions to maintain control of Northumbria, as did his brother Edred, but with the defeat and death of the Norse king Eric Bloodaxe in 954, Northumbria became an accepted part of the English kingdom.

Therefore by about 950 the British Isles had roughly developed the political frontiers that were to last more than a thousand years. In the north there was a united kingdom of Scotland, composed of Celtic Picts and Scots as well as Norwegians, Angles, Saxons and Jutes. The united kingdom of England, peopled by many Danes in the east, by Angles, Saxons and Jutes in the centre and south, and by Celts in the far south-west covered the rest of the country east of Offa's dyke. Behind the dyke lay the Welsh, a mainly Celtic people. Ireland was at this time still ruled by many minor chiefs, some of them Vikings, the majority Celts.

By 950 the Christian Church was dominant throughout the British Isles. It was governed by archbishops and bishops and divided at the local level into parishes. In each bishopric there was a cathedral though they were not especially large or beautiful. Monasteries had been established since the sixth century, though by 900 they were in decline. Under the English king Edgar (959-979) there was a major drive to restore monastic life and to reform outdated practices in the English Church. The chief agents of this movement were Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury from 961 to 988, and his supporters Oswald, Archbishop of York and Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester. As a young man Dunstan had revitalized the abbey at Glastonbury and he encouraged the foundation of new monastic houses, especially in the former Danelaw. These followed the religious rule of St. Benedict, who had founded the monastic movement in Italy in the sixth century, but they were inspired by a new reforming spirit which had resulted in the establishment of great monasteries at Cluny and Fleury in France. Along with the revival of monasticism went a resurgence of both Latin and Anglo-Saxon literature, manuscript production and illumination. Emphasizing the king's commitment to the Church and its support of him, Edgar was the central figure in the first

religious coronation of a king of England in 973. This ceremony took place at Bath and the form of the service has changed remarkably little to the present day.

With Edgar's death in 975 the promising development of the Anglo-Saxon state suffered a major setback. His son and successor Edward was murdered near Corfe Castle in 979 by his stepmother Queen Elfrida, whose thirteen-year old son **Ethelred II** then became king. The conflicts and upheavals caused by this shocking deed might have been avoided by a strong personality, but Ethelred, called *Unraed*, 'the badly-advised', did not inspire confidence. To make matters worse, his reign coincided with a new series of Viking raids beginning in 980 and led by some of the greatest warriors of the age, in particular Sweyn, king of Denmark. Ethelred and his advisers developed a policy of giving the invaders money to go away (Danegeld), but this only encouraged them to return for more.

In 1002 Ethelred ordered a massacre of Danes in England on St. Brice's day (13th November) and it is said that among those killed was Sweyn's sister Gunnhild, who had been taken hostage. Inevitably Sweyn used this as an excuse for vengeance and raids continued throughout the next decade. The continuous warfare and heavy taxation needed to raise Danegeld eventually led the English to desert Ethelred and to accept Sweyn as king in 1013. Ethelred fled to the court of duke Richard of Normandy, the brother of his wife Emma, but when Sweyn died the following year he returned to England to reclaim the crown. However, Sweyn had left an exceptional young son called **Cnut** who was determined to press his claim to the English crown. Danish invasions began again and in April 1016 Ethelred died. His son Edmund did his best to resist Cnut but he was defeated at the battle of Ashingdon in October 1016 and died soon afterwards.

In this way the Anglo-Saxon kingdom was conquered by a young Dane who proved to be one of the most able men of the eleventh century. Cnut was only about 22 years old in 1016 but in the course of that year he had deposed his elder brother to become king of Denmark and won the crown of England by conquest. Fourteen years later he also conquered Norway. The great advantage to England of Cnut's accession to the throne was that the Danish attacks which had been such an expensive and disruptive fact of life for the past 35 years abruptly ceased. In order to minimize the chance of internal disputes, Cnut married Ethelred's widow Emma, and he did not attempt to dispossess large numbers of English nobles, though some of his Danish supporters were rewarded with land. His main political change was the creation of a few large earldoms in place of several smaller ones, but apart from this he left the established English law, customs and administration well alone. The result was that until his death in 1035 England enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity during which Cnut won the respect of his new subjects and a legendary reputation for wisdom. In 1031 Cnut marched north to wage a successful campaign against King Malcolm II of Scotland and English warriors fought alongside him in Scandinavia. He proved a strong supporter of the Church and travelled to Rome in 1027 to attend the coronation by the Pope of the Emperor Conrad.

When Cnut died in 1035 there was confusion because his only legitimate son, Harthacnut, felt it necessary to remain in Scandinavia to retain control over Denmark and Norway. In these circumstances his illegitimate half-brother Harold was first declared regent and, in 1037, king. His short reign was marred by the death of Ethelred II's youngest son Alfred, who was visiting England to see his mother when he was seized and blinded so savagely that he later died of the wounds. This crime was generally blamed on Godwin, one of Harold's supporters. Harold died in 1040 whereupon Harthacnut was declared king but he died only

two years later, apparently drunk at a wedding-feast, aged about 25. This brought Cnut's royal line to an abrupt and premature end, destroying much of his good work. Denmark and Norway passed to other rulers, while in England the Witan reverted to the Anglo-Saxon royal house and in 1042 elected to the throne **Edward**, the remaining son of Ethelred II.

At the beginning of the new reign England had a population of about one million, the great majority of them young people and nearly all speaking Anglo-Saxon, though Latin was known by churchmen and scholars. It was overwhelmingly an agricultural community in which there were only about twenty towns with a population much over a thousand. During the previous hundred years the countryside had been divided into 'shires' and the shires into 'hundreds'. Large open fields were divided into long strips in which a variety of crops were grown. In the towns there was a modest amount of trade, with the silver penny being used as coinage. The king, advised by his Witan, ruled through his great nobles, the earls, who had responsibility for several shires. In each shire the king was represented by a shire-reeve (sheriff). A loose form of feudalism was in force, drawn from the Europe of Charlemagne's time : this imposed an oath requiring obedience to one's lord and an obligation to work for him to some extent. Great matters of law were decided by the king and his Witan but in the countryside justice was done by the sheriff in the shire court or the local thane in the hundred court. Most of the people were semi-free *ceorls* (churls), though some were still regarded as slaves.

Though the new ruler was the son of Ethelred II and as such the direct heir of the ancient line of Anglo-Saxon kings he was also half a Norman by virtue of the fact that his mother was Emma, the daughter of Duke Richard I of Normandy. During the reigns of Cnut and his sons Edward had spent much of his time in exile from England, some of it at the Norman court where he spoke French and came under strong Norman influences. He also travelled extensively in Europe and had experience as a soldier. When he became king in 1042 at the age of about forty he found himself faced with a legacy of Cnut's creation - three overmighty subjects, the great earls of Wessex, Northumbria and Mercia. He saw the need to ally with the strongest of these, Godwin of Wessex, whose daughter Edith he married in 1045, and he carefully avoided both foreign wars and internal conflicts. Moreover he earned for himself a reputation for piety which led to his nickname **The Confessor**, and for chastity, which may have been the reason why he sired no children. His lack of a direct heir was to prove disastrous for the Anglo-Saxon kingdom

Edward's tendency to favour Normans irritated Godwin, whose long period of co-operation with Edward came to an end in 1051 over three issues - the appointment of the Norman Robert of Jumieges as Archbishop of Canterbury, the damage caused by Count Eustace of Boulogne in part of Godwin's earldom, and the building of a castle by a Frenchman (Osbern) near Hereford. Godwin and his two sons Harold and Swein raised troops and attempted to force the king to punish Eustace and dispossess Robert and Osbern. Edward refused and was supported by the other two great earls, so that Godwin was forced to flee the country. However, he returned with an army the following year and Edward, this time abandoned by the other earls, was obliged to give in to Godwin's demands. Archbishop Robert left the country to be replaced at Canterbury by the Saxon Stigand whose appointment was not fully endorsed by the Pope.

Godwin died in 1053 to be succeeded as Earl of Wessex by his able son **Harold**, a born leader, and in 1055 Harold persuaded Edward to appoint his half-brother Tostig to the vacant



earldom of Northumbria. Two other brothers, Gyrth and Leofwine, became earls of East Anglia and the south-east respectively. Hence in the last decade of Edward's reign Harold and his brothers were in positions of great power and influence. The king turned increasingly towards his religious interests, in particular an ambitious scheme for building at Westminster a great abbey in the architectural style of the vast new church at Jumieges in Normandy. Edward lived just long enough to see its completion, the largest and most impressive building ever constructed in the British Isles to that date.