



Welcome to All Saints Kingston. More than 1000 years ago, Kingston Upon Thames was the place where England began. Before All Saints Church was constructed, the site was an important estate of the West Saxon Kings and host to a number of royal coronations. The Saxon King Egbert held his Great Council of 838AD ‘in that famous place called Cyningestan’ (trans. King’s estate) and over the following centuries as



many as eight Saxon Kings were consecrated here. The most well known of these was Athelstan, the first ruler who could truly be considered the King of England. After being crowned in Kingston in 925AD, Athelstan defeated the Scots and Vikings, unifying regional kingdoms into one nation.

Building of All Saints

All Saints Church was built in the 12th Century, possibly by Gilbert the Norman, sheriff of Surrey, under the orders of King Henry I. The date of the building is disputed. We think that the 1120s/1130’s is a safe assumption, but there is some evidence that points to a later date in the 12th century. All Saints was a cruciform in shape, with a nave the same length as the present one, but probably without the aisles, and with a central tower.



Crowning Saxon Kings

It is traditionally claimed that seven Saxon kings were crowned at the site of All Saints. Athelstan was crowned in Kingston in 925AD, Edred in 946AD and Ethelred the Unready in 979AD. Other Kings believed to have been crowned here include Edward the Elder (900AD), Edmund (940AD), Edwy (55AD) and Edward (975AD). Some modern historians believe that Edgar was crowned in Kingston in 959AD although there is not enough evidence so say so with certainty, so between three and eight kings were crowned at Kingston.

A Saxon Cross fragment is in the glass case near the west door which formed part of a larger cross possibly erected to commemorate one of these coronations. The coronation stone is still on display in Kingston (by the Guildhall) and said to have been the stone which the Kings sat upon whilst they were crowned.

King Athelstan

The most notable of the Saxon Kings crowned in Kingston was Athelstan, grandson of Alfred the Great and the first King of England. He was crowned here on 4th September 925AD in a ceremony which laid the foundations for our modern coronation service.

Athelstan first greeted his people in the marketplace before entering a church which was probably wooden, and stood on the site of our present All Saints Church. Athelstan was the first King to be ordained with a crown placed on his head, rather than a helmet and a replica crown and coronation ring is in our glass cabinet by the west door. For the first time the coronation service laid out the responsibilities the king and his people had to each other, and the Christian hymn 'Te Deum' was sung as it is now. The coronation 'ordo' compiled for Athelstan was used for subsequent coronations through to the coronation of King Charles III in 2023.

Athelstan became the first true King of England, as during his reign regional kingdoms were united as one nation. As King of the English from 927AD, he was the first English King to conquer northern Britain and was a particularly successful warrior King, defeating a combined army of Scots and Vikings at the battle of Brunanburh in 937AD.



Embroideries

A series of seven richly detailed contemporary embroidered artworks was commissioned by the Seven Saxon Kings Embroidery project, set up to honour the legacy of this somewhat less recognised period of our heritage. Renowned contemporary embroidery artist, Dr Jacky Puzey and embroidery artist and beader Beatrice Mayfield included

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hidden references to the reign of each king which you may learn about from nearby information panels. The Embroidery project aims to bring Kingston's heritage alive, making it visible and accessible to Kingston residents and visitors. Four are now complete with funds being raised for the final three through our "book of names" appeal. We hope to unveil all seven embroideries in 2025 when the town will be celebrating the 1100th anniversary of Athelstan's coronation. We offer free group talks on the embroideries, please email comms@allsaintskingston.co.uk

Coronation Stone

Although a millenium has passed since the coronations of the Saxon kings at Kingston, the 'coronation stone' remains on display at the town outside Guildhall. There were plans to return it to All Saints Churchyard but these have not come to fruition. This sarsen stone was probably recovered from the ruins of St Mary's chapel next to All Saints and by 1793 the Ambulator, a guidebook to London was reporting that it was the stone on which the Saxon kings sat while being crowned. This tradition, which culminated in the stone being mounted on a plinth and surrounded by railings in the marketplace in 1850, is now itself an important part of Kingston's history.

