

Reading:

## Kings of Northumbria

### King Æthelfrith



In 593, Æthelfrith became the new King of Bernicia in the North-East of England. Without a formidable opponent, like Urien, his power seemed assured even in the Celtic regions. Large areas of the north instantly became Anglo-Saxon. The settlement of Anglo-Saxons was extensive, but Celts were still predominant in Cumbria, the Pennines, the Celtic Kingdoms of Loidis (Leeds), Elmet and Meicen (in Hatfield, the marshy country near Doncaster).

In 603 Æthelfrith turned his attention to the Celts of the far north, going into battle with Aidan MacGabraín, King of the Dalriada Scots, and he was victorious. With his power and prestige assured, Æthelfrith usurped the crown of Deira in Yorkshire. He thus became King of both Deira and Bernicia, uniting all the Angle territory north of the River Humber into one kingdom called Northumbria.

In 616 he finally met his end in battle against Raedwald King of East Anglia at Bawtry on the River Idle.

### King Edwin

After Æthelfrith's death in battle, Edwin rose to the throne. He was a Derian prince, son of Aelle. He expanded the kingdom south into modern-day Lincolnshire. Edwin defeated the West Saxons in a great battle in Wessex after an assassination attempt. As a result, Edwin proclaimed himself 'overking' of all England.

He was a very important figure in the Christianity of Northumbria. He burned down pagan temples and attributed his success in battle to Christianity.

On October 12, 633, Edwin was killed in battle.

### King Ecgfrith

Son of King Oswy, he succeeded him in 668. Wilfrid established a grammar school at St Peters in York and commenced the building of a new minster in the city. He also established a new monastery at Ripon.

In the background to these Christian developments Northumbrian military and political expansion continued, and by 672 the Celts of Cumbria and Dumfries were conquered by the Northumbrians under Ecgrith's leadership, whilst the Picts of Caledonia were defeated in battle. In the following year Ecgrith would also defeat the Mercians (Midlanders) in battle. Northumbrian supremacy was once again confirmed.

The year 674 saw the establishment of what would become one of the most important Roman Christian monasteries in the north. The monastery of St Peters, Monkwearmouth. A great library would develop here, with books from France and Rome and the first coloured glass in England would be introduced to the monastery by continental glaziers. Gregorian chanting was introduced and many other advanced aspects of Christian culture

On May 20 685, King Ecgrith of Northumbria was killed fighting Brude, King of Caledonia. It symbolized an end to the period of Northumbrian expansion.

## QUESTIONS

1) What was Æthelfrith main contribution?

- a) Commerce
- b) Religion
- c) Military
- d) All are correct

2) Who succeeded Æthelfrith?

- a) His son
- b) A Derian prince
- c) Edwin
- d) All are correct
- e) B and C are correct

3) What was Edwin's self-proclaimed title?

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4) Which king contributed to the expansion of Northumbria?

- a) Æthelfrith
- b) Edwin
- c) Oswald
- d) All are correct
- e) A and B are correct
- f) B and C are correct
- g) A and C are correct





Listen to an extract about King Edwin taken from <https://englandsnortheast.co.uk/> and answer **True (T)** or **False (F)**:



|                                                                                  |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Edwin's claim to the throne was fully recognized                                 |  |
| Edwin's death was similar to Æthelfrith's                                        |  |
| Edwin's son was killed in battle                                                 |  |
| Edwin was the first Anglo-Saxon king to convert to Christianity                  |  |
| Roman Christianity was not fully established in the north by the time Edwin died |  |