

The Crane's Call

Shire of Caer Dun
April 2023 LVII



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Seneschal/Knights Marshal: Karsas Sarmatea, caerdun.seneschal@gleannabhann.net caerdun.marshal@gleannabhann.net

A&S Minister: Bailey Rose Marsh, caerdun.aands@gleannabhann.net

Chronicler: Devin ODonnabhain, caerdun.chronicler@gleannabhann.net

Deputy Chronicler: Karisa Jones

Exchequer: Ellisif Hallbjarnardottir, caerdun.exchequer@gleannabhann.net

Deputy Exchequer: Maiosara Azparou

Historian: Avarr Helloflagi, caerdun.historian@gleannabhann.net

Webminister: Randall Guillaume, caerdun.webminister@gleannabhann.net

Deputy Webminister: Rebecca Rosol

APRIL 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2 Fighter Practice	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Fighter Practice	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 Regional Equestrian Practice	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 Fighter Practice	24	25	26 Business Meeting	27	28	29
30 Fighter Practice						



Kingdom of
Gleann Abhann



Newbie Collegium

April 14 @ 5:00 pm - April 16 @ 10:00 am

Camp Formosa 1118 AR 336 Hwy W, Clinton

Beltaine

April 28 @ 5:00 pm - April 30 @ 10:00 am

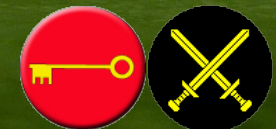
**Piersol Group Camp, Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park 910
Riddick Road, Millington, TN**

Seneschal & Knights Marshal

Gulf Wars has passed. I hope that all who were able to attend had a great time. We now have much work to do for our Shire. Coronation ends the month of March. I hope we have many that could attend. Coming up in April, we have a Regional Equestrian Practice on the 16th. Maiôsara has put much work into building this legacy for us! In support of this, we will have both our Heavy Fighting and Rapier Fighting Champions tournaments at this Practice. I also would like to do a very simple fundraiser lunch to benefit our expansion. We can discuss that more in planning.

We have garnered several new interested members. I truly hope everyone can start attending more Fighter practices since these are our only current weekly meetings and can serve for new members to meet existing members and learn of the many arts & interests our group actually represents. Fighter Practice has been moved to Lum Cumbest Park in Hurley MS and will be held every Sunday this month. This location seems to be more central to our members overall and is easily accessible. Our Business meeting will be the 26th of April at Aunt Jenny's Catfish House. Overall it will take the effort of us all to continue this current growth we are seeing. I hope to see you all at all our meets this month!

**YIS Ld Karsas Sarmatae called Talan
Seneschal and Knight Marshal
Shire of Caer Dun**



CHRONICLER

Well my journey to London was wonderful. I was supposed to meet members of the Shire of Thamesreach but no one ever reached out. I was sad, but I still had a great time. The pictures that I have are all mundane except a few that were of the Tower of London. If you want to see the mundane ones, then find me on the Book of Faces.

My time as Chronicler is almost up. It has been wonderful to be the Chronicler for this group. Please submit things for the May issue and for the new Chronicler coming on. We are a family!

**Baron Devin ODonnabhain
Chronicler**



Arts & Sciences

Greetings all. I'd like to thank everyone who came out to Fighter Practice on the 26th. I enjoyed meeting our newest potential members.

There are many aspects of the SCA that can cause confusion. Such as your garb and heraldry. Many chose garb for comfort, others have a specific era and style in mind. But to get started, many opt for a T-tunic. Which is a basic medieval t-shirt.

At the next Fighters Practice I will have a class on making a t-tunic. I will have a hand-out that you can take home which will have your measurements. Please bring a roomy t-shirt as we will be using it as a pattern (don't worry, we won't be cutting it up.) If you have basic sewing skills, making a tunic will be easy.

I will also bring a couple of Kumihimo looms for anyone interested in making a multicolored cord.

**Best regards,
Baroness Bailey Rose Marsh
Caer Dun A&S Officer**



Was Athelstan England's First and Greatest King?

Britain has had more than sixty monarchs over the centuries. Some have been good; some have been bad, but few are held in as high regard as King Athelstan. King Athelstan, often described as the first king of England, has one of the best reputations of all the English monarchs. Famed for his morals, knowledge of politics, and leadership skills, Athelstan reigned over some of the greatest victories in early British history. But does the historical record support this? Can he really be deemed Britain's greatest king?



The Ups and Downs of Athelstan's Early Life

Athelstan was born around 894 AD, the son of King Edward the Elder and his first consort, Ecgwynn. Little is known about his mother, and historians have been arguing for centuries over her social rank. Some have described her as born from noble stock, but some contemporary sources claimed she was low-born.

There is evidence that his grandfather, King Alfred the Great, favored Athelstan as his ultimate heir to the throne from an early age. As a young man, Athelstan was gifted a scarlet cloak, a jeweled belt, and a sword with a gilded scabbard by his grandfather at an elaborate ceremony. Some historians believe this was a move by Alfred to make it clear that of the possible candidates he saw Athelstan as a potential heir.

Athelstan's early luck began to run out around the time of his grandfather's death. The course of his mother's life is unknown, but his father Edward married a second wife, Ælfflæd. Edward had two sons with Ælfflæd, and it would appear she did her best to promote her sons, Ælfweard and Edwin, over Athelstan.

Edward later went on to have a third wife, Eadgifu, with whom he had two more sons, Edmund and Eadred. All this means that the young Athelstan, whose succession was once guaranteed, now had serious competition.



Athelstan's Rise to Power

King Edward died in northern Mercia on July 17th, 924 AD. It is unclear what Edward had planned for his kingdom after his death. It would seem that he had planned for Ælfweard, his eldest son by Ælfflæd, to be either king of Wessex or king of his entire kingdom. If he had intended to split his kingdom, then it is likely he expected Athelstan to become king of Mercia while Ælfweard ruled Wessex. All we know for sure is that at the time of Edward's death, Athelstan was with him in Mercia and Ælfweard was in Wessex. This worked in Athelstan's favor.

Immediately after Edward's death, Mercia acknowledged Athelstan as its king, while Wessex probably chose Ælfweard, although sources are spotty. Unfortunately for Ælfweard, he only lived sixteen days after Edward's death.

This doesn't mean things were made easy for Athelstan, however. Wessex, especially Winchester, stayed opposed to Athelstan's rule even after Ælfweard's death. Athelstan was crowned over a year after his father's death, on September 4th, 925. He chose to be crowned at Kingston upon Thames, on the border of Mercia and Wessex. While he was clearly sending a message to Wessex by his choice of venue, he was careful to only act as king of Mercia, not wanting to rile up the people of Wessex into open rebellion.



Opposition to Athelstan seems to have continued long after his coronation. His primary opponent was his half-brother, Edwin. It has been claimed by some historians that Edwin was responsible for several plots against Athelstan that were designed to make him ineligible to be king. One such plot involved an attempt at blinding the king.

Ultimately, the matter was solved in 933 AD when Edwin drowned in a shipwreck on the North Sea. It is believed Edwin may have been fleeing the country after attempting a rebellion against Athelstan. At least one contemporary, anti-Athelstan source claimed Edwin's death was in fact an assassination ordered by Athelstan, but this claim has been thoroughly disputed. Whatever the truth, Wessex's opposition against Athelstan died with Edwin.

Miniature of Athelstan from a 13th century genealogy (Public Domain)

King Athelstan: First King of the English

King Athelstan was only getting started. Although he had both Wessex and Mercia under his control, he still had the Danes to contend with. The Danish king Sihtric Cáech (also known as Sigtryggr Gále) ruled over the Viking Kingdom of York. Rather than go to war, Athelstan decided to try his hand at diplomacy.

In 926 AD, he married his only full-blooded sister to Sihtric. The two agreed not to attack or invade each other, nor to help prop up each other's enemies in proxy wars. Athelstan stuck to his word for a full year. In 927 AD, Sihtric died and Athelstan wasted no time in invading.

The Danes did not go down without a fight, however. Sihtric's cousin, Guthfrith, attempted to come to York's rescue, bringing a fleet from Dublin with him. It was all in vain, however; Athelstan easily took York and soon accepted the Danish inhabitants' surrender. It is unclear whether Guthfrith even reached York in time for there to be a battle.

Athelstan was the first English king to have taken the north and united it with the south. The northern peoples were outraged, but their leaders were wiser. On July 12, 927, various Northern kings and leaders met at Eamont, near Penrith, to officially declare Athelstan their leader and superior. What followed was a rare seven year period of peace.

Next on Athelstan's list was Wales. He had technically inherited authority over the Welsh kings from his aunt and uncle, who had ruled over Wales. They had sworn allegiance to his father and then brother before transferring it across to him.

After claiming the north at the meeting of Eamont, Athelstan summoned the various Welsh kings to his court. At this meeting, he announced a heavy annual tribute and fixed the border between Wales and England at the Hereford area along the river Tamar. The Welsh kings attended Athelstan's court between 928 and 935 AD, and Athelstan was always careful to show them the utmost respect. This all meant England and Wales enjoyed a healthy period of peace during Athelstan's reign. As such, Athelstan was the first king of the Anglo-Saxon people. He spent much of his rule trying to keep the various parts of his kingdom happy.

Despite his best efforts, Britain was never one big happy family. The people of Wales and the northerners never stopped resenting his rule, and Athelstan spent much time and money making sure their leaders stayed in line. However, these feelings of resentment would crop up later in his rule and cause him major headaches



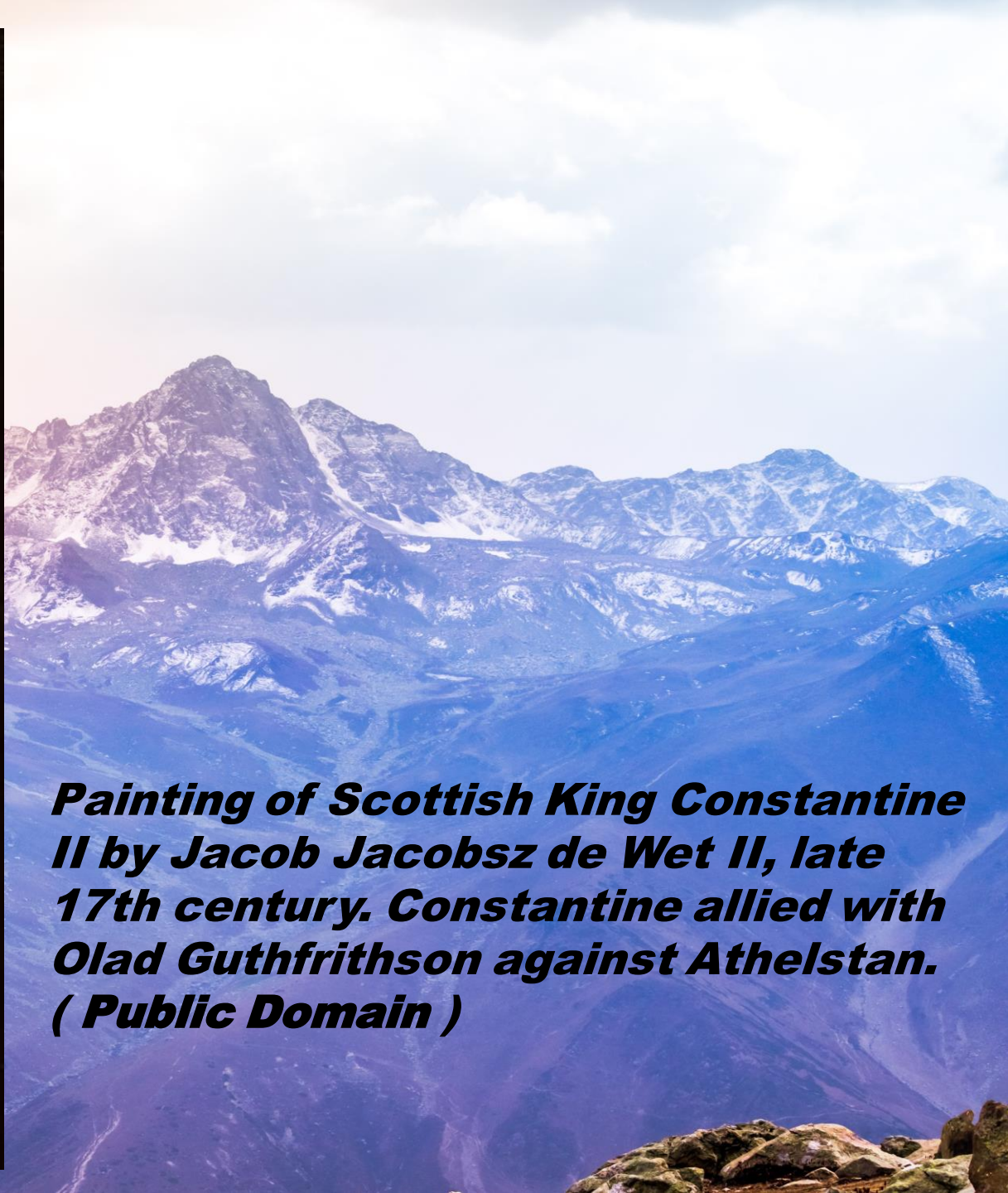
British Isles in 10th century represented with the coastline at the time. King Athelstan was the first king to unite England. (Ikonact/ CC BY SA 3.0)

Athelstan's Conquest of Scotland

Now that Athelstan had both the north of England and Wales, there was only one thing left that Athelstan desired: Scotland. In May of 934 AD, Athelstan began his invasion, although the reason for his exact timing is unclear. It seems likely that he finally felt confident to attempt it after the death of his half-brother Edwin in 933 AD, combined with newfound support from northern England and Wales.

Athelstan was accompanied in his invasion by four of the Welsh kings, as well as 18 bishops and 13 earls (6 of whom were Danes). His invasion appears to have made quick progress, and by July of the same year, he had made it to Chester-le-Street. His land forces eventually made it as far as Dunnottar in the northeast, and his naval fleet raided Caithness and even the Norse kingdom of Orkney.

No great battles were recorded during his invasion, and its ultimate outcome is unclear. We know that by September, Athelstan was safely back in Buckingham in the south of England. A charter was signed stating Athelstan's overlordship over Scotland and its primary leader, Constantine.



Painting of Scottish King Constantine II by Jacob Jacobsz de Wet II, late 17th century. Constantine allied with Olad Guthfrithson against Athelstan. (Public Domain)

If Athelstan's conquest of Scotland appears to have been too easy to be true, it was. That same year, Olaf Guthfrithson replaced his father, Guthfrith as the Norse king of Dublin. Olaf had his heart set on not only taking the rest of Ireland, but also reclaiming York.

By 937, Olaf had taken control of the Viking part of Ireland by defeating several of his rivals. His next target was York, but he was well aware that he lacked the numbers needed to take on Athelstan. Likewise, Constantine wanted Athelstan's influence out of Scotland and the north, but he too lacked the numbers. So Olaf and Constantine became firm allies, cementing the alliance with a marriage between Olaf and Constantine's daughter. The alliance was further bolstered by Owain of Strathclyde and his men.

Traditionally, medieval campaigns were carried out in the summer, when conditions were most favorable. Seeking to surprise Athelstan, Olaf, Constantine and Owain waited until autumn to make their move against Athelstan. The ploy appears to have worked; contemporary sources initially criticized him for having "languished in sluggish leisure".

Athelstan was no fool, however. While the northern allies raided English territory, Athelstan took his time to gather his own army of allies. Athelstan was a student of history and knew what could happen if he allowed himself to be baited into a fight before he was ready.

The two opposing armies finally met at the Battle of Brunanburh . Despite initially being at a disadvantage, and having been abandoned by the Welsh, the battle was a decisive win for Athelstan. History is often written by the victors, so accurate representations of the battle are hard to find. It is likely though that the Battle of Brunanburh was one of the bloodiest and hardest-won in English history. When the dust settled, Olaf had fled back to Dublin with what remained of his men and allies. Constantine survived, but had lost at least one son. The English, too, had suffered heavy losses.

The battle has been described as the first example of English nationalism, the first time people from all over England had united under one banner to take on an invading force. Historians today disagree on how important to Athelstan's rule the battle ultimately was. Less than two years after he had won the battle, Athelstan died. Olaf bided his time and moved into Northumbria following Athelstan's death, meaning all the fighting had been for nothing.

Others disagree, pointing out that while Athelstan gained little from winning, he would have lost everything by losing. If the Anglo-Saxon forces had lost at Brunanburh, it is likely the whole kingdom would have fallen shortly thereafter.

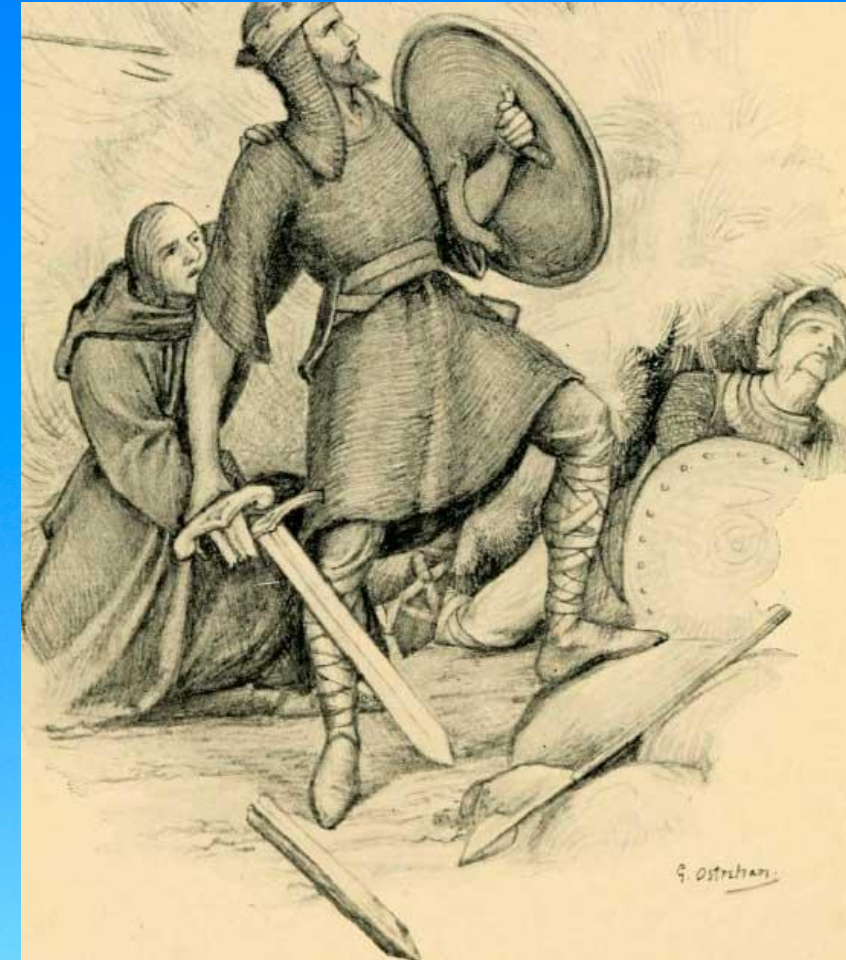
Evaluating Athelstan's Rule

Athelstan's rule was not all expansionism and fending off enemies. He is also remembered as a wise ruler and great king outside of battle. For example, he created the most centralized government the Anglo-Saxon people had ever seen.

Anglo-Saxon kings had traditionally made heavy use of the king's council to govern. Traditionally, kings moved around a lot and so too did the council. The meetings had traditionally been small and intimate. Athelstan changed all of his.

He held the majority of his councils in Wessex, and summoned leading figures from across his realm to join him at them. These 'national assemblies' helped to unify the country by making sure every realm felt equally represented. Some historians have gone even further, describing it as a kind of early version of the English parliament.

Athelstan was also seen as a godly and exceedingly moral leader. He was a devoted Christian who took a vow of celibacy as a young man. He never married or had children. He possessed a vast collection of religious relics and manuscripts. Rather than hoarding his collection, it was widely known that he was a generous donor who gifted many churches and monasteries parts of his collection.



King Athelstan at the Battle of Brunanburh (Public Domain)



Athelstan presenting a book to St. Cuthbert, an illustration in a manuscript of Bede's Life of Saint Cuthbert, probably presented to the saint's shrine in Chester-Le-Street by Athelstan when he visited the shrine on his journey to Scotland in 934. It is the oldest surviving portrait of an English king and the manuscript is the oldest surviving made for an English king, circa 930 AD. ([Public Domain](#))

Athelstan's Death

Athelstan died in Gloucester on October 27, 939 AD. The men in his family had traditionally been buried at Winchester, but Athelstan chose to break with tradition. Winchester had too often been a thorn in his side, and so he chose to be buried at Malmesbury Abbey with his loyal cousins who had died at the Battle of Brunanburh.

The country he had fought so hard to defend began to quickly unravel after his death. The people of York turned to Olaf Guthfrithson for leadership, and he easily took control of northern England.

Both of Athelstan's successors, Edmund and Eadred, would devote their reigns to retaking the north. It took fifteen years, but in 954 AD, the north finally returned to Anglo-Saxon control with the death of Olaf's replacement, the Norwegian king Eric Bloodaxe.



**The tomb of King Athelstan in Malmesbury Abbey, Malmesbury, England. There is nothing in the tomb beneath the statue, the relics of the king having been lost in the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539.
(Public Domain)**

Conclusion

Ultimately, modern opinions on Athelstan vary greatly. He had no official biographer, and reliable tenth-century sources are hard to find. History tends to be written by the victor, and Athelstan was pretty much always the victor.

This issue is compounded by the fact that his reputation peaked after his death. For a while, he became somewhat of a legend, as the king who united the Anglo-Saxon peoples. His deeds and actions have a tendency to be exaggerated by contemporary chroniclers.

This means some historians view him as instrumental to the founding of England, a great leader who did what no man before him had managed. Others take a dimmer view, claiming he did little more than lay the groundwork and that it was his successors who deserve most of the praise.

In all likelihood, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Athelstan's skills as a king have perhaps been exaggerated. Yet at the same time, his record speaks for itself. For a short period, he was the first man to unite England, Wales, and even Scotland. Anyone with even a passing familiarity with British history will know that has never been an easy feat.

By Robbie Mitchell

Top image: The impact of the Battle of Brunanburh is still debated today; however, the English win by Athelstan prevented additional Viking gains for a time. Source: [Public Domain](#)

Additional information can be found at:

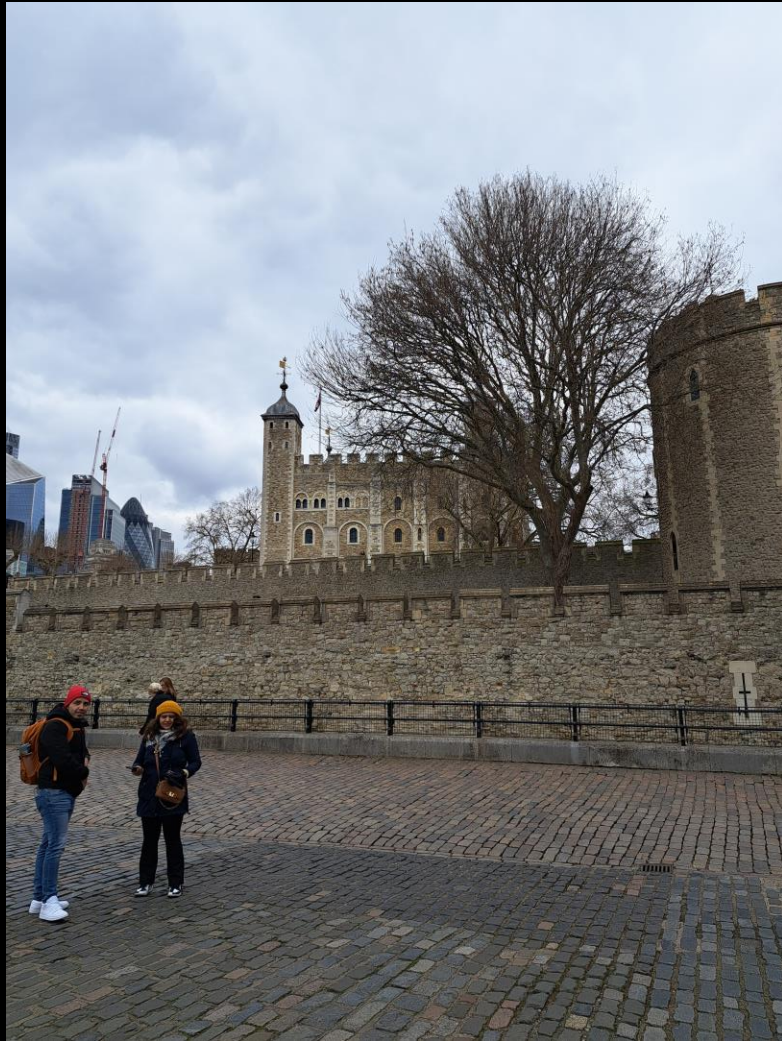
[Was Athelstan England's First and Greatest King? | Ancient Origins \(ancient-origins.net\)](#)

www.ancientorigins.net

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The Tower of London



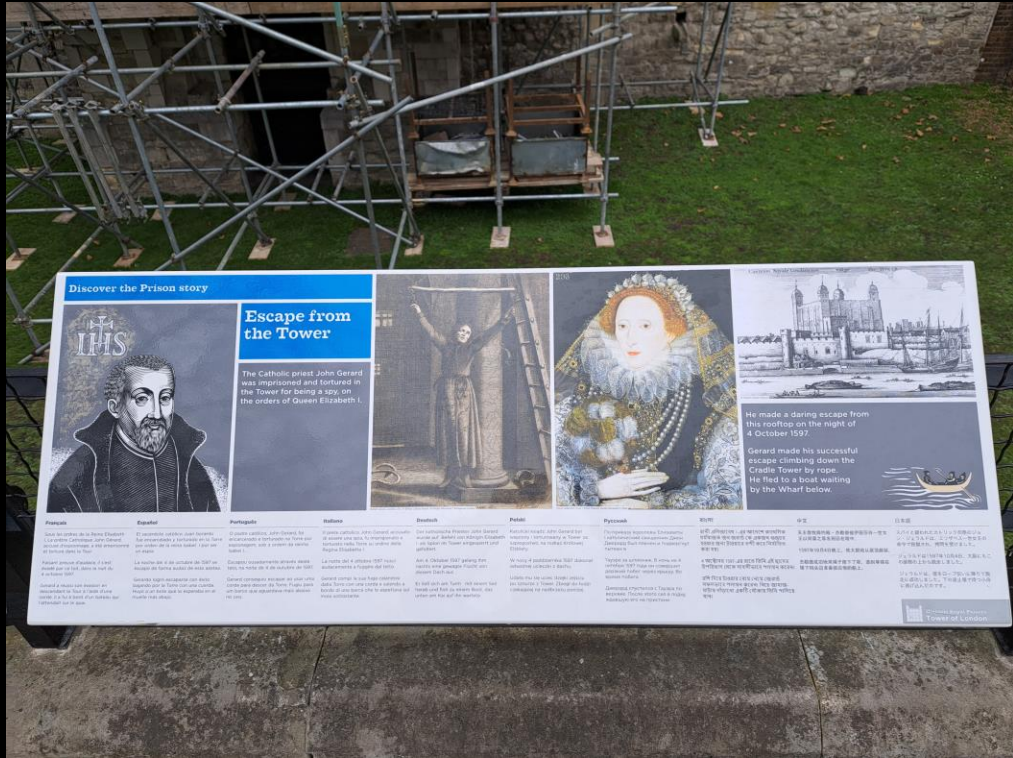


Pictures of the Tower of London from my trip to London, UK.

--Devin ODonnabhain

Founded by William the Conqueror after his famous victory at Hastings in 1066. The Tower of London used part of the huge defensive Roman wall, known as London Wall. The mighty Tower of London fortress was built by William's men to subdue the inhabitants of London.





There was extensive restoration work going on. Here are informative story boards.





**Tower Bridge, because it is
a beautiful bridge!**



Shire of Caer Dun Fighter Practice, March 26th 2023







Pics by Jehanne Darc de la Coste

Meeting Places

*** Please note that the month of April has some changes for Fighter Practice as well as The Equestrian Regional Practice. Please see the Calendar on page 4***

Business Meeting; Held the 4th Wednesday of every month at Aunt Jenny's Catfish Restaurant, 1217 Washington Ave. Ocean Springs, MS. Meeting begins at 6:30 pm.

Fighter Practice; Held every Sunday. Check calendar for dates and the Shire Facebook page for any updates. Fighter Practice is held at Lum Cumbest Park, 18417 MS-613, Moss Point, MS. 39562

Updated Statement of Core Values At the Board of Directors July 2018 meeting, the following policy was approved and is to be considered effective immediately: SCA Statement of Core Values In pursuing its mission, the SCA is committed to excellence in its programs, communications and activities and to act in accordance with the chivalric virtues of honor and service; value and respect the worth and dignity of all individuals; practice inclusiveness and respect pluralism and diversity; promote a safe and respectful environment for all SCA events; act with transparency, fairness, integrity and honesty; be a responsible steward of SCA resources; and, be committed to maintaining the trust of its members and participants. It is the expectation of the SCA that its members and participants, in all events and activities of the SCA, will conduct themselves in accordance with these tenets. Comments are strongly encouraged and can be sent to: SCA Inc. Box 360789 Milpitas, CA 95036 You may also email comments@lists.sca.org. This announcement is an official informational release by the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. Permission is granted to reproduce this announcement in its entirety in newsletters, websites and electronic mailing lists. Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion <https://www.sca.org/dei-office/><https://www.sca.org/dei-office/dei-resources/><https://www.sca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/DEI-handbook.pdf><https://www.sca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/DEIMissionVision>

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