BathAbbey

King Edgar

The Saxon King Edgar was crowned at Bath Abbey in 973. It was an important event because he was made King of the English and parts of his Coronation are still used today.

It is celebrated by a stained glass window in the Abbey, made in 1949.

King Edgar was crowned King of the English on Whitsunday. He chose the date carefully as it is an important Christian festival.

He also made the choice to hold his coronation at Bath Abbey, partly because it was a growing monastery where monks followed the teachings of Saint Benedict.

Edgar had a strong faith and wanted to send a clear message to his people was that he was God's chosen representative on the throne.

Edgar was crowned by Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury and helped by Oswald, Archbishop of York. He took an oath to guard the church, forbid violence and show justice and mercy.

After the coronation, a great feast was held. Edgar's wife, Queen Elfthrith (or Elfrida), was also crowned on the day and she had her own celebrations in a separate hall.

He was later known as Edgar the Peaceful as he avoided wars during his reign, partly because he had a strong army and navy which put off foreign invaders.

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The coronation ceremony for King Edgar set the pattern for all coronations since then. The Archbishop of Canterbury still places the crown on the head of the monarch.

To commemorate the 1000 years since King Edgar's coronation, Queen Elizabeth II visited Bath Abbey in 1973. There is a stone plaque in the floor to mark her visit.

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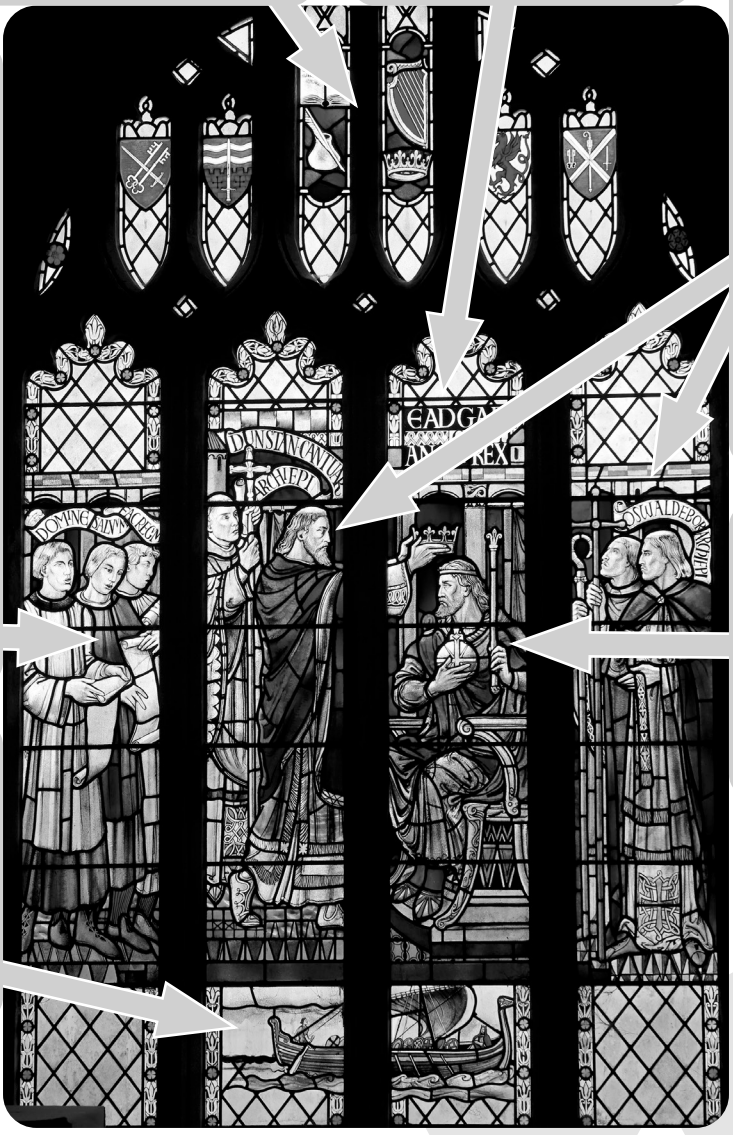
The book, pen and ink and harp represent the importance of learning and culture in Edgar's peaceful reign.

The inscription in Latin is: Edgar King of all England

Archbishop Dunstan and Bishop Oswald created a ceremony similar to the ordination (admission into the Church) of a priest. This may have been so that Edgar made sure his people understood he was called to become King by God, in the same way as priests are called by God.

The Benedictine monks lived a simple and hardworking life, aiming to achieve holiness through prayer and worship. Edgar wanted to be a strong ruler and the support of the monasteries (he created 10 during his reign) made him feel more safe from danger.



The orb and sceptre represent the King's power. The orb has a cross on top to symbolise the Christian world.

Edgar steers his ship following his Coronation. He is rowed by Welsh and Scottish kings to show their respect.

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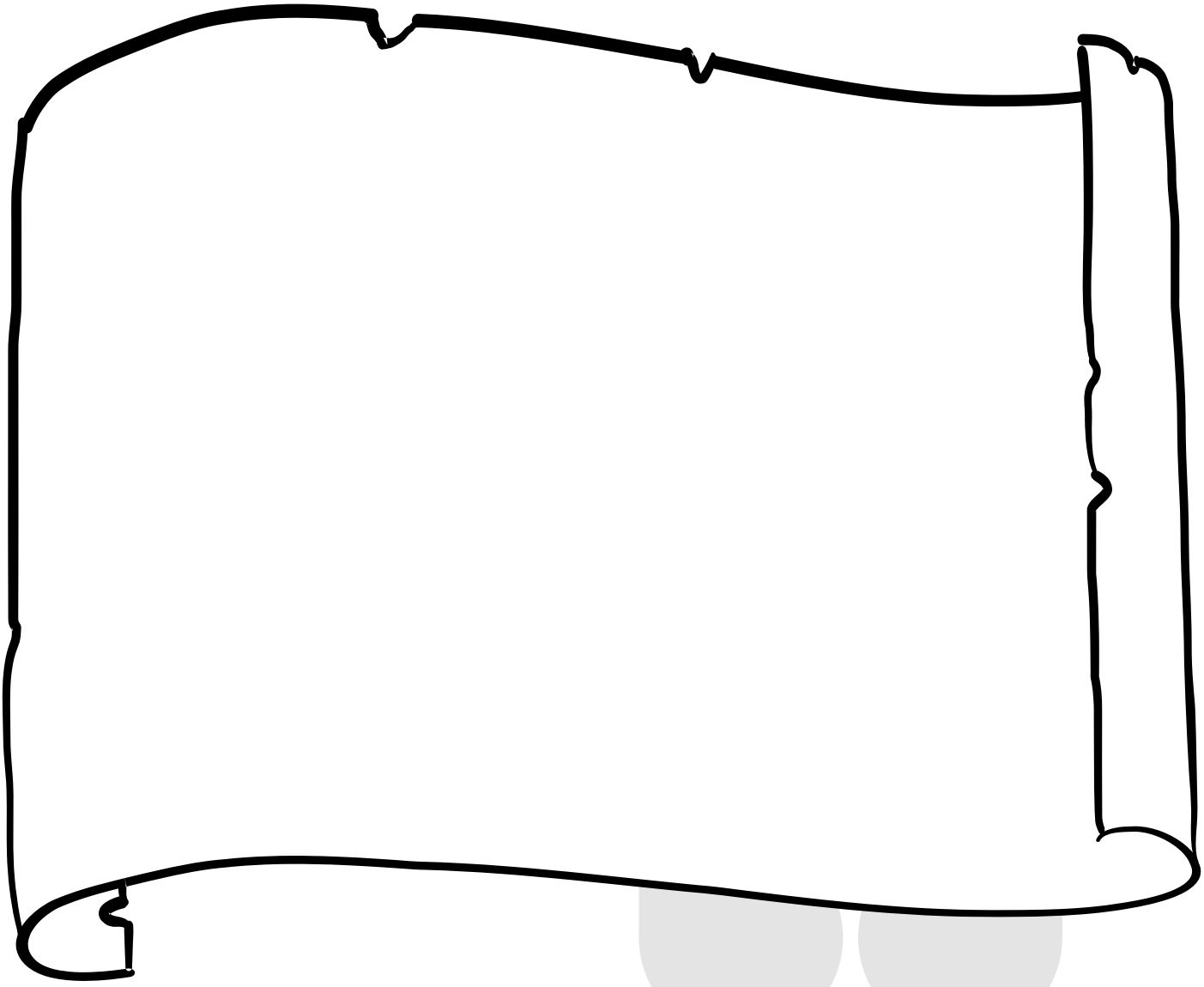
Activity ideas

1. If you could plan your own coronation, what elements would you include? For example, an orb and sceptre, hymns or special clothing? On the outline below, draw a picture of your special day.
2. What would your vows be to the people you rule? Would you promise to defend them or to be fair? You could write a proclamation announcing your promises on the outline as well.
3. Edgar's wife, Queen Elfthrith, is not included in the stained glass window. Do you think that's fair? You might like to draw or write about the separate coronation party she had.
4. King Edgar was the father of two Kings: Edward the Martyr and Ethelred the Unready. See what you can find out about them. This is a helpful website about Anglo-Saxons: www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zxsbcdm



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