

## The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles

For much of the Saxon period what became Oxfordshire was frontier territory between the kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia, and then from the 870s subject to Danish incursions.

It is not surprising then that local places are referred to in this best-known of the chronicles of the period. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was compiled at the court of King Alfred of Wessex c.892. Its year by year account of important military and political events begins, in understandably rather sketchy fashion, in 60BC and continues, incorporating entries from post-Alfredian chroniclers, until 1042.

The Chronicle deals with events throughout the country but gives particular prominence to the West Saxon kingdom and its dynasty. The Chronicle offers a rare and valuable overview of the period, if with a recognisable emphasis. This has contributed to the heroic, proto-nationalistic view of Alfred's Wessex found in the accounts of many later historians, local and national.

A translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles may be viewed at <http://omacl.org/Anglo/>.

Extract for A.D. 1015.

This year was the great council at Oxford; where Alderman Edric betrayed Sigferth and Morcar, the eldest thanes belonging to the Seven Towns. He allured them into his bower, where they were shamefully slain. Then the king took all their possessions, and ordered the widow of Sigferth to be secured, and brought within Malmsbury. After a little interval, Edmund Etheling went and seized her, against the king's will, and had her to wife. Then, before the Nativity of St. Mary, went the etheling west-north into the Five Towns, and soon plundered all the property of Sigferth and Morcar; and all the people submitted to him. At the same time came King Knute to Sandwich, and went soon all about Kent into Wessex, until he came to the mouth of the Frome; and then plundered in Dorset, and in Wiltshire, and in Somerset. King Ethelred, meanwhile, lay sick at Corsham; and Alderman Edric collected an army there, and

Edmund the etheling in the north. When they came together, the alderman designed to betray Edmund the etheling, but he could not; whereupon they separated without an engagement, and sheered off from their enemies. Alderman Edric then seduced forty ships from the king, and submitted to Knute. The West-Saxons also submitted, and gave hostages, and horsed the army. And he continued there until midwinter.