God-Kings, and the Kings of Kent & Wessex and all of Britain

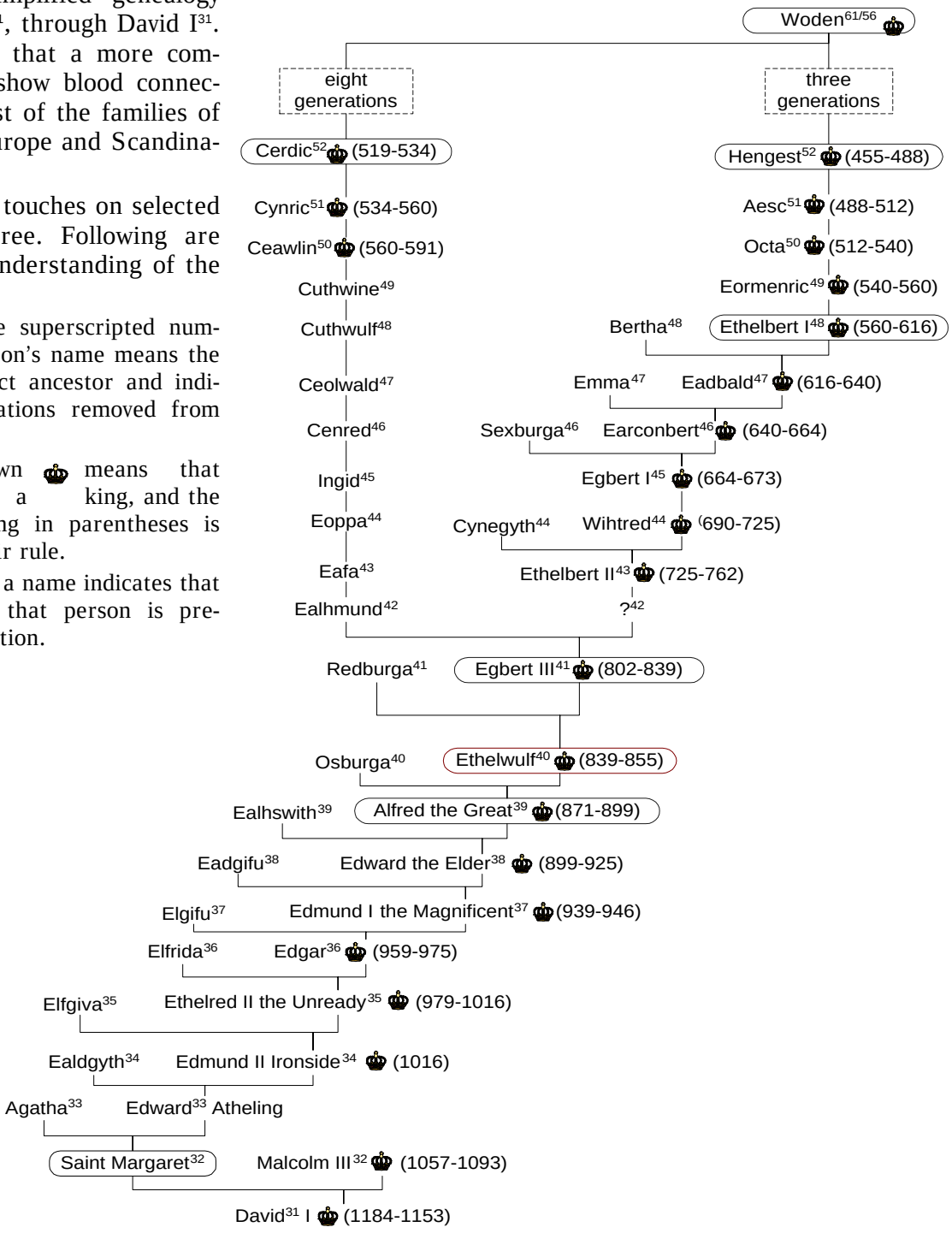
Shown is a simplified genealogy tree from Woden[61], through David I[31]. It is simplified in that a more complete tree would show blood connections between most of the families of royalty in all of Europe and Scandinavia.

The text briefly touches on selected persons in this tree. Following are notes to aid the understanding of the chart:

Remember, the superscripted numbers after a person's name means the person is a direct ancestor and indicates the generations removed from Bart.

The small crown means that the person was a king, and the numbers following in parentheses is the period of their rule.

An oval around a name indicates that a discussion of that person is presented in this section.



the scourge of Romans

Caswallon was King of the Catuvellauni, a tribe whose territory lay north of the Thames. When the Romans invaded Britain in 55bc, they encountered Caswallon, who had organized neighboring tribes under his leadership. He commanded a chariot force and was so successful the Romans were forced to flee Britain, and did not again venture another invasion for over ninety years.

Although his position in the genealogy is not shown on the chart, some researchers claim an unbroken descendancy from him through to present rulers.

God, king, or god-king?

The founders of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms all claimed descent from Woden[61/56], a semi-mythical god-king, who lived in the second or third century a.d.

Not only is he credited as the progenitor of the Kings of Kent and Wessex which are discussed in this section, but the Kings of Bernicia & Northumbria, the Kings of East Anglia, the Kings of Essex, the Kings of Deira, and the Kings of Mercia as well; all of which are interrelated in this genealogy, but not discussed.

Hengest[52], King of Kent

After the Romans left Britain in the mid-400's a.d., Vortigern established himself as king in southern Britain. Unable to protect his borders, he sought the aid of mercenaries from the Continent. To his aid came brothers Hengest[52] and Horsa and their three long-ships in 449ad. Later Hengest and Horsa had a falling out with Vortigern and in the ensuing battle Horsa was killed although Hengest was successful in assuming the crown. He was the first of the Kings of Kent.

the first Christian in a pagan world

King Ethelbert[48] I married a Frankish princess, Bertha[48], daughter of the Merovingian King of Paris. She was a Christian and was allowed to bring her chaplain to Kent with her to practice her religion.

Meanwhile, Pope Gregory the Great had seen some fair-haired, blue-eyed children for sale in the slave market at Rome and after inquiring was told they were Angli. He replied, "*Non Angli, sed Angeli*" (not Angles, but Angels), and resolved that the nation of the beautiful children should receive the light of the Gospel. He sent the monk Augustine to England where he was received by Ethelbert I who was already familiar with Christianity through his wife, Bertha. From this modest beginning Christianity spread throughout the British Isles, although a full millenium later King Henry VIII broke with the Church in Rome and established the Church of England in a conflict about his having too many wives.

Cerdic[52], King of Wessex

The Kingdom of Wessex, which was to eventually absorb all the other Saxon kingdoms, was founded by Cerdic[52], who came to Britain with his son Cynric[51] and five ships in 495ad. In 519 he usurped the Kingdom of the West Saxons.

and the ruler of all Britannia

As a young man Egbert[41] was exiled from Britain and took refuge at the Frankish court of Charlemagne, and it was there that he met and married Redburga[41], niece of Emperor Charlemagne.

He later returned to Britain when he was able to peacefully assume the crown of Wessex, then proceeded to do battle with all around him. He defeated Beornwulf, King of Mercia; Baldred, King of Kent; and the men of Surrey, Sussex, and Essex. The King of the East Angles turned to Egbert as protector. He also made incursions into Northumbria and Wales, where he received tribute. With this consolidation, he became known as ruler of all Britain.

a child bride for Ethelwulf

Ethelwulf[40] received experience as sub-king in Kent, Essex, Sussex, and Surrey; then, upon the death of his father, Egbert[41] in 839, became king of Wessex and all Britain.

He married Osburga[40], who gave him four sons and a daughter. When she died, Ethelwulf was so distraught he resigned his kingdom to his son, Ethelbald, and went on a pilgrimage to

Rome, taking with him his youngest son, Alfred[39].

They were received by Pope Leo IV and spent a year in Rome. On their return journey they stopped at the court of Charles the Bald, King of the Franks, and Charlemagne's grandson, to whom Ethelwulf was related through his mother. Charles had a daughter, Judith, twelve years old, who he gave in marriage to Ethelwulf. Unfortunately, Ethelwulf died only a year later, after his return to Britain with his new child bride.

Alfred the Great[39]

Alfred[39] is the only English born king that has been designated as *the Great*.

When he ascended to the throne, succeeding his brother in 871 as a young man of twenty-three years, the country was largely overrun by Danish invaders. He soon engaged them in battle, struggled mightily, and over the years battles were won and lost.

Several human interest stories of Alfred exist. One tells of the time he disguised himself as a wandering harpist and entered the Danish camp to gain knowledge of his enemy. Another tells of the time he took refuge in a swineherd's hut, again in disguise, and was soundly berated by the swineherd's wife for burning the cakes she had set him to watch.

But over the years Alfred emerged successful in his battles and consolidated his kingdom. He eventually defeated the Danes, and as part of his prerogative as victor, forced the Danish leader, Guthrum, to accept Christianity and stood sponsor at his baptism.

Alfred had a great love of learning, and was perhaps the first British king that learned how to read. For the betterment of the government, he called together a great council of bishops, ealdormen, and thanes to meet twice a year, the first embryo parliament.

the Saintly Queen Margaret

Margaret[32] Atheling (ca. 1045 - 1093): Margaret's father, Edward[33] "the Exile" Atheling, son of Edmund[34] Ironside, King of England, had been sent to Hungary for safety during the reign of Canute. There he met Agatha[33], relative of Saint Stephen of Hungary. They married and had several children, including Margaret[32] and her brother, Edward. Although she was born in Hungary, Margaret was an English princess even though her father never was to reign as king.

Her father, Edward the Exile, was summoned back to England and offered the crown but he died before the coronation. His son, Edward, Margaret's brother, was then the rightful heir to the crown, but he was rejected because the Norman Conquest had just taken place and the might and sword of William the Conqueror took precedence over the right of primogeniture -- the normal ascension of kings.

Agatha and her children, Margaret and Edward, fled England intending to seek safety back in Hungary, but the ship was blown off course in a storm and they took refuge on the shores of Scotland. There Malcolm[32] III, King of Scots, took them into his castle and treated them as royal guests, which they were.

Malcolm fell in love with the Princess Margaret and proposed marriage, but Margaret did not wish to marry for several reasons. One was that she had planned to devote her life to God in a nunnery in Hungary. Another was the fact that the Scots were a crude, coarse people, unlike the refined sophistication she was accustomed to in Hungary and England. Nevertheless, Malcolm won her heart and they married. (See Malcolm[32] III, King of Scots, page 40 for a continuation of the genealogy).

Rather than accept Malcolm's Scottish lifestyle, Margaret set about converting Malcolm, and all about her, to hers.

A historian described her as "*one of those strong, interfering, pious and persistent women of whom England has successfully bred a considerable number*". She introduced continental fashions to the court, checked mirth, and eliminated the coarseness that initially greeted her. She dominated the clergy, forcing them to alter masses and practices that were not true to

the Roman Church; she established abbeys and churches; and she brought in Benedictine monks.

But she is known mainly for being a truly caring and compassionate person. Stories abound of her kind deeds and service to the poor. She would provide a meal each day at the castle for three hundred hungry. Daily she would travel about the countryside with a small group of attendants administering to the unfortunate. There are stories of her removing her royal wraps to give to a shivering beggar; of how, from her knees, she would wash the festering feet of the sick or lame; of how she would give her jewels and personal possessions to provide food for a child. Malcolm, her husband, worshipped her as much as did the poor people, and allowed his treasury to be considerably depleted to support her efforts.

She was canonized in 1249 by Pope Innocent IV, largely due to a laudatory biography written by Turgot, a monk and her Confessor. Her feast day is celebrated by the Church on November 16th each year.

William the ~~Conqueror~~ Bastard

William is commonly referred to by modern historians as *William the Conqueror*, but in his time he was better known as *William the Bastard*, and for good reason. William was the illegitimate son of Robert II, Duke of Normandy, who was a distant cousin by marriage to Edmund Ironside[35]. While William is not a direct ancestor, he figures prominently in the history of several of the families that are, and thus will be discussed.

William was the result of a illicit affair between Robert II and Herleve, the daughter of a tanner. Later in life, when William would capture a town, he would occasionally find animal hides hanging on the sides of buildings, placed there to show disrespect for his humble origins. He would respond by poking out the eyes and chopping off the hands of those who had mocked him thus.

His father, Robert II, was from a long line of nobles who ruled in the Normandy area. When Robert journeyed to the Holy Land to fight the infidels during the Crusades, he named his eight year old bastard son, William, as his heir and successor, as he had no other children. Robert II never returned from the Crusades.

William was forced to mature early: there were numerous challenges to his title and lands by those who thought he was not worthy to hold them. But William proved himself and over the years was able not only to defend his lands, but also to expand upon them and consolidate his power. In time, he held even stronger control over his lands than did the King of France over his. In fact, the King of France, fearing the growing power of William, twice sent armies to depose William, but was defeated each time.

William had a nebulous claim to the crown of England through his father. Although the claim was weak, William's army was strong. Edward the Confessor, King of England, died without leaving a successor (he was religious and even though he was married, he had made a vow of chastity; thus, he fathered no children). William "the Innocent" Atheling, brother of Saint Margaret, was the logical successor through primogeniture, but he was very young and the thanes of England denied him the crown and instead gave it to Harold I, who had no stronger claim than did William. This upset William so he gathered up his army and made for England. Harold had barely had time to assume the crown when he was required to travel to the north of England to fight the Danes. When William arrived on the shores of England, Harold hurried back to do battle, but engaged William with a spent and fragmented army. They met at the Battle of Hastings and William, with his twelve thousand men, defeated Harold and the armies of England. William was coronated King of England on Christmas Day, 1066.

William was an effective and competent king. Historians claim that if any king deserved the title *the Great* it was William, not Alfred who lived several generations earlier. Before William, the kings of England exerted only loose control over a number of powerful nobles holding large, strong fiefdoms. William consolidated power in the crown and became supreme ruler over all of England, as well as over his home lands of Normandy. He established a number of laws and practices that formed the foundation of what England has become today.

Before William the country was frequently invaded by others, often Scandinavians, who

have ruled over the country at times. But William established defenses so effective that England has not since been successfully invaded by a foreign power, save for the troublesome Scots to the north. He was ruthless in his battles, but fair and just in his administrations.

William was a tall, large man with a commanding stature that matched (in fact, likely enhanced) his power and position, although he suffered from corpulence later in life. He married Matilda of Flanders, who was his equal in terms of personal resolve and strength of convictions. Although, Matilda was tiny in size – she stood barely four feet tall. It is said they made quite a sight – the large, commanding William and the diminutive Matilda – when standing in their wedding finery before the alter. Even though William was the supreme ruler over all of England and Normandy, he could not control Matilda who publicly opposed his policies at times. Nevertheless, they had a long and happy marriage and Matilda bore William four sons and five daughters.

William was moderate in his habits and abhorred excessive drinking. Although he had major conflicts with the Pope in Rome, he remained religious and endeavored to attend church services both morning and evening each day.

He died at age sixty from battle injuries suffered while on a expedition in Normandy to punish neighbors to his kingdom who were beginning to impinge upon his lands.

Sources:
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One Hundred Great Kings & Queens of the World; John Canning; 1967.
Various web sites and internet sources.