

Edward the Confessor's coronation at Easter 1043

In the Cathedral's Kings & Scribes exhibition, music from the Winchester Troper and a report about Edward the Confessor's coronation are played from the audio bench in the triforium. This note offers the historical context.

Edward succeeded his half-brother Harthacnut in 1042 but delayed his coronation at Winchester, probably in the Old Minster, until Easter in the following year. Edward and the younger Harthacnut were both sons of Emma, the Norman woman who was the wife of Ethelred II (Edward's father) and the Dane, Cnut (Harthacnut's father). This succession of Edward is reported in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*¹ in four versions.

The Winchester (A) version simply states:

*1042. Here King Harthacnut passed away
1043. Here Edward was consecrated as king*

The Abingdon version (C) adds more colour:

1042. Here Harthacnut died as he stood at his drink, and he suddenly fell to the earth with an awful convulsion; and those who were close by took hold of him and he spoke no word afterwards, and he passed away on 8 June. And all the people received Edward as king, as was his natural right.

The Worcester manuscript (D) injects more drama for 1043:

1043. Here Edward was consecrated as king at Winchester on the first day of Easter. And that year, 14 days before St Andrew's Day [30 November], the king was so counselled that he – and Earl Leofric and Earl Godwine and Earl Siward and their band – rode from Gloucester to Winchester on the Lady [Dowager Queen Emma] by surprise, and robbed her of all the treasures which she owned, which were untold, because earlier she had been very hard on the king

¹ These extracts are from: Michael Swanton, (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, revised edition. London: Phoenix Press, 2000, 162-5.

her son, in that she did less for him than he wanted before he became king, and also afterwards ...

The Peterborough manuscript (E) validates Edward's selection as king and describes his coronation:

1042. [Harthacnut was buried in the Old Minster, with his father Cnut] ... And before he was buried, all the people chose Edward as king in England – may he hold it as long as God grants him ...

1043. Here Edward was consecrated as king in Winchester on Easter Day with great honour, and Easter was then on 3 April. Archbishop Eadsige consecrated him, and fully instructed him before all the people, and fully admonished him as to his own need and that of the people ... [The E version also reported that Edward had seized his mother's lands and her treasures 'because earlier she had kept them too firmly'].

In the Abingdon C version, Edward's succession was hailed as 'as was his natural right', which Edward himself believed was long overdue. In the 1050s, a Norman monk wrote that Edward had been anointed as Ethelred's successor shortly before his death in 1016.² However, in the same year Cnut defeated Edward's brother Edmund Ironside who had succeeded Ethelred and Edward fled to Normandy where he remained for most of the next quarter century. In 1041, Edward returned and was recognised as Harthacnut's heir. On his half-brother's death, Edward was accepted as king.³

As was the custom, Edward's coronation was delayed to allow for diplomatic exchanges and the attendance of representatives of other kings at the event. It has been assumed that Edward's coronation was held at the Old Minster, but this is not recorded.⁴

In these times, the coronation ceremony transformed a man, albeit a royal prince and king-designate, into a consecrated king who became 'a sacred conduit through whom God might act for His people'.⁵ Through the liturgy of the service,

² Tom Licence, *Edward the Confessor – Last of the Royal Blood*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020, 36, 59-60.

³ Ann Williams, "Edward the Confessor". In *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, edited by Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald Scragg. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, 161.

⁴ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, 86.

⁵ Licence, *Ibid.*, 87.

Edward reached back to great Jewish leaders and kings such as Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon, as well as being a servant of Christ. As Christ was the ultimate model for Christian kings, Edward held his coronation in 1043 on Easter Day, the day of Christ's resurrection. The service used at the coronation appears to have been a version of the 'Second Ordo' which appeared in the tenth century and was based on coronation rites of the Western Franks in continental Europe.

During the service Edward would have prostrated himself before the altar while the *Te Deum* was sung. He would have promised in the name of Christ to maintain peace; forbid plundering and other wickedness among men; and to uphold equity and mercy in all legal judgments. He was then anointed and invested with the regalia of his office 'as Christ's ruler in earthly affairs'.⁶ After the service was completed, he would probably have appeared before his people on a balcony on the tower westworks of the Old Minster.

As for the raid on the dowager queen Emma's Winchester treasury in later 1043, Edward was able to refresh his own treasury and reward those who helped him to power. Politically, he also dispelled any thoughts that his mother was the power behind the throne.⁷

The *Winchester Troper*, from which music is played in the Kings & Scribes exhibition's triforium level, refers to two eleventh-century manuscripts of liturgical plainchant and two-voice polyphony believed to have been used in the Old Minster. Both manuscripts contain a variety of liturgical genres, including Proper and Ordinary chants for both the Mass and the Divine Office.⁸ This liturgy may have been sung in Edward's coronation, which was preceded and followed by Masses, but there is no record of the ceremony or the Masses.

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⁶ Licence, *Ibid.*, 88.

⁷ Licence, *Ibid.*, 96.

⁸ Susan Rankin, *The Winchester Troper, Facsimile Edition and Introduction*. London: Stainer & Bell, 2007, xi.