

Eadgifu of Kent

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Eadgifu of Kent (also **Edgiva** or **Ediva**) (in or before 903 - in or after 966) was the third wife of Edward the Elder, King of the Anglo-Saxons.

Eadgifu was the daughter of Sigehelm, Ealdorman of Kent, who died at the Battle of the Holme in 902.^[1] She became the mother of two sons, Edmund I of England, later King Edmund I, and Eadred of England, later King Eadred, and two daughters, Saint Eadburh of Winchester and Eadgifu.^[2] She survived Edward by many years, dying in the reign of her grandson Edgar.

According to a narrative written in the early 960s, her father had given Cooling in Kent to a man called Goda as security for a loan. She claimed that her father had repaid the loan and left the land to her, but Goda denied receiving payment and refused to surrender the land. She got possession of Cooling six years after her father's death, when her friends persuaded King Edward to threaten to dispossess Goda of his property unless he gave up the estate. Edward later declared Goda's lands forfeit and gave the charters to Eadgifu, but she returned most of the estates to Goda, although retained the charters. Some time after this her marriage to Edward took place. After his death King Æthelstan required Eadgifu to return the charters to Goda, perhaps because the king was on bad terms with his stepmother.^[3]

She disappeared from court during the reign of her step-son, King Æthelstan, but she was prominent and influential during the reign of her two sons.^[2] As queen dowager, her position seem to have been higher than that of her daughter-in-law; In a Kentish charter datable between 942 and 944, her daughter-in-law Ælfgifu of Shaftesbury subscribes herself as the king's concubine (*concupina regis*), with a place assigned to her between the bishops and ealdormen. By comparison, Eadgifu subscribes higher up in the witness list as *mater regis*, after her sons Edmund and Eadred but before the archbishops and bishops.^[4]

Following the death of her younger son Eadred in 955, she was deprived of her lands by her eldest grandson, King Eadwig, perhaps because she took the side of his younger brother, Edgar, in the struggle between them. When Edgar succeeded on Eadwig's death in 959 she recovered some lands and received generous gifts from her grandson, but she never returned to her prominent position at court. She is last recorded as a witness to a charter in 966.^[2]

She was known as a supporter of saintly churchmen and a benefactor of churches.^[2]



Picture of Queen Eadgifu from *The Saxon Cathedral at Canterbury and The Saxon Saints Buried Therein*

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- House of Wessex family tree

Notes

1. Pauline Stafford dates the Battle of the Holme as 903 and Eadgifu's date of birth as in or before 904, but the battle took place on 13 December 902 (Miller; Edward the Elder)
2. Stafford, Eadgifu
3. Molyneaux, *The Formation of the English Kingdom*, pp. 70-71
4. S 514 (AD 942 x 946).

References

- Miller, Sean (2004). "Edward (called Edward the Elder) (870s?–924), king of the Anglo-Saxons". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/8514. Retrieved 10 August 2012. (subscription or UK public library membership required)
- Molyneaux, George (2015). *The Formation of the English Kingdom in the Tenth Century*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-871791-1.
- Stafford, Pauline (2004). "Eadgifu (b. in or before 904, d. in or after 966), queen of the Anglo-Saxons, consort of Edward the Elder". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/52307. Retrieved 10 June 2012. (subscription or UK public library membership required)

External links

- Eadgifu 4 at Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England

Preceded by Ælflæd, wife of Edward the Elder	Queen of the Anglo-Saxons 919–924	Succeeded by Ælfgifu of Shaftesbury
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