

The Battle of Edington (May 878)

The Battle of Edington took place near Edington, which is in Wiltshire in the south-west of England. Can you find it on a map?

The Vikings had been making raids on Britain for several years. Alfred the Great had tried to keep them out, but he had failed. At first, the Vikings had been happy to land on a sea-side town, take all they wanted (which included people to be their slaves) and go away. Now they wanted more. They wanted to stay in Britain and live there. The trouble was that they would have to live on what they could steal from the Saxons. King Alfred had tried offering them money if they went home, but they would take the money and move further into the country. What was he to do about the problem?

King Alfred had spent the winter hiding in a marsh with a few followers. When the spring came, he gathered together a larger group of men, who together with himself, challenged the Vikings to a battle. It was a battle like they had never had before with the Vikings. King Alfred had his men form a protective wall of shields, from which they fought behind. It was a long hard battle. After nearly a whole day fighting, King Alfred and his men won the victory. They chased the Vikings all the way back to their fort, where there were only a few Vikings left. The Vikings surrendered. King Alfred was able to obtain peace for his county, so that they no longer had to live in fear of the Viking raiders.