



Alfred the Great: The Truth Teller, Maker of England, 848-899

Beatrice Adelaide Lees

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He has been classed with Canute, William the Conqueror, Henry II and Edward I as one of the “conscious creators of England’s greatness,” but to this day Alfred remains the only English King to be called “the Great.”

Born in what is now Wantage, Berkshire, Alfred was a learned, fair-minded man and became the first King of the West-Saxons to style himself King of the Anglo-Saxons.

An adapter rather than a creator, Alfred modified foreign ideas, selecting and combining from the Frankish and Scandinavian models with “an English dress,” to give his subjects what he thought they needed most.

Alfred established a tradition of government, where the king and witan worked through the local communities, and the monarchy, balanced by powerful aristocracy, rested on a broad basis of popular support.

First published in 1915, Lee’s comprehensive biography of Alfred the Great also highlights his military defeats, victories and reorganisations, without which he may not have lived to initiate such important changes.

‘Without question this biography is the best account of Alfred’s reign’ *The American Historical Review*

Beatrice Adelaide Lees (1858-1940) was a tutor at Somerville College, Oxford. A historian, she also wrote the works *King Alfred to Edward I* and *The Central Period of the Middle Age*.

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