

The stone itself is of hard silicified sandstone and is of the same nature as the famous circle of stones at Stonehenge. The stone is mounted on an heptagonal base and surrounded by railings with Saxon-type spearheads. On the stone plinth are the names of the kings with the dates of their coronations. A coin of each sovereign, presented by the British Museum, is inserted in the plinth below each name.



The stone remained in the Saxon chapel of St Mary and was known to have been there when part of that building collapsed in 1730. (The foundations of the chapel are marked out in the south side of All Saints churchyard.) It was then placed near to the old Elizabethan Guildhall in the Market Place and used as a public mounting block. Later the stone was moved to the Assize Courts yard and in 1850 was placed in a prominent position in the road near the market – approximately at the point of the raised flower bed in front of the Guildhall.

When the Guildhall was built in 1935 the stone was moved to a concrete raft over the Hogsmill River.

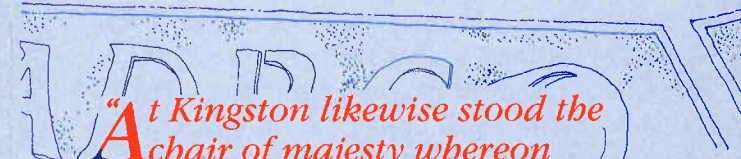
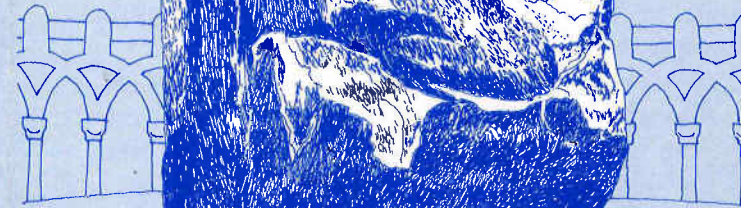
Kings Crowned in Kingston



Edward the Elder	899
Athelstan	924
Edmund	941
Edred	946
Edwy	955
Edward the Martyr	975
Ethelred	978



The Coronation Stone



*At Kingston likewise stood the
A chair of majesty whereon
Athelstan, Edwin and Ethelred sate at
their Coronation and first received
their scepter of Imperiall Power."*

John Speed 1627



The Coronation Stone is one of the Royal Borough of Kingston's most important possessions. It was on this stone that at least seven Anglo-Saxon kings are thought to have been crowned, and it is to these coronations and this stone that Kingston owes its ancient style of 'Royal Borough'.

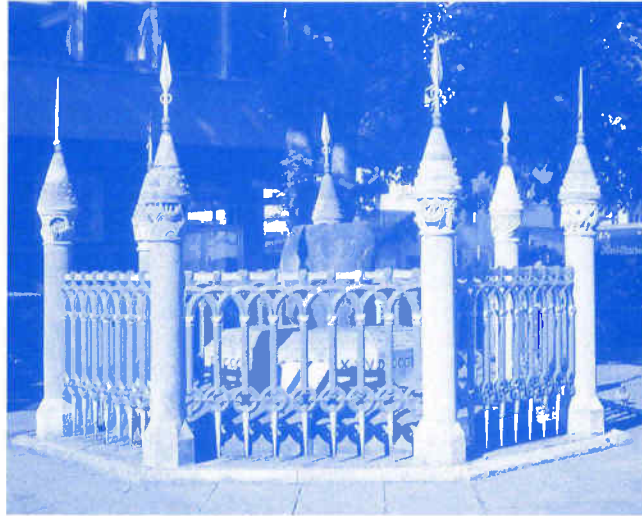
The stone is a physical reminder of the Royal associations of this Royal Borough and forms a tangible link with the pre-conquest history of Kingston and indeed the whole of England.

It is often suggested, incorrectly, that Kingston derives its name from 'King's Stone' – meaning the Coronation Stone. In fact the name is a derivation of Cynningestun, meaning a royal estate or palace and the first written reference to it is contained in a document of 838 which refers to 'a great Council presided over by King Egbert held in Cynningestun, that famous place in Surrey' (a facsimile of this document can be seen in the Charter Gallery of the Guildhall).

Kingston's place in the history of England was firmly established in the 10th century as the coronation place of Anglo-Saxon kings. The solemn ceremony of consecration would have been in a church, either the predecessor to the present All Saints Church or in St Mary's Chapel, sometimes known as the Chapel of the Coronations, which was situated to the south of the church.

The first Kingston coronation was that of Edward the Elder, son of Alfred the Great, in 899. Edward was the organiser of one of the best sustained and most decisive campaigns in the whole of the Dark Ages who spent much of his reign co-ordinating the defence of the West Saxon Kingdom against the Danes.

He was succeeded by his son, Athelstan in 924 whose energy and humanity made him the one West Saxon King to compare with Alfred.



On his death, Athelstan was succeeded by his eighteen-year-old brother, Edmund who was murdered only five years later. Edmund's brother Edred then became king, and when he died in 955, after having expelled Eric Bloodaxe, he was succeeded by Edmund's son, Edwy.

Edwy's coronation is the most ill-famed. According to the life of St Dunstan, Edwy left

the coronation banquet to enjoy the 'caresses of loose women' and had to be dragged back forcibly to the feast by Dunstan.

In 959 Edgar was acclaimed king. He ruled peacefully fostering the church and extending his powers. He was followed by his son, Edward the Martyr, crowned in 975 and murdered three years later in circumstances of abominable treachery and, reputedly, at the instigation of his stepmother. Ethelred (his half-brother, later named The Unready after the Old English 'unread' meaning 'ill-advised'), then became king. He was only eleven years old when he was crowned at Kingston.

An account of Ethelred's coronation tell us . . .

"Two Bishops with the Witan shall lead him to the Church. When the King arrives at the Church he shall prostrate himself before the altar and the Te Deum shall be chaunted. When this is finished the King shall be raised from the ground and having been chosen by the Bishops and people shall, with a clear voice, before God and all the people, promise that he will observe three rules."

There followed the Coronation oaths, the crowning ceremony and the giving of the sceptre and the rod. The whole ceremony bears a remarkable similarity to that of the coronation of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, which included part of the old Saxon service – the lesson from Matthew XXII.25, three prayers and the anthem, "Zadok the Priest and Nathan the prophet annointed Solomon king".