

# A Viking King of England? YES!

**Cnut the Great** (Old Norse: *Knútr inn ríki*) b. circa 985 or 995 – d.12 November 1035, also known as **Canute**, was a Viking King of Denmark that through conquest became King of England in 1017. At the height of his power he ruled Denmark, Norway, England and commanded loyalty from areas of Sweden, Ireland and Scotland. This made him one of the most powerful men in Medieval Europe. After the death of his heirs within a decade of his own and the Norman conquest of England in 1066, his legacy was largely lost to history. Under his rule, Viking settlements expanded, including Caithness & Western Isles of Scotland. During this period, those of Viking blood mixed with the inhabitants of these lands and lived as one. CNUT brought about vastly increased trading and economic stability for the extended Kingdom resulting in a very rare period in history of union & prosperity. Historian Norman F. Cantor has made the paradoxical statement that he was "the most effective king in Anglo-Saxon history", despite his not being Anglo-Saxon.

## The Enduring Legend of CNUT

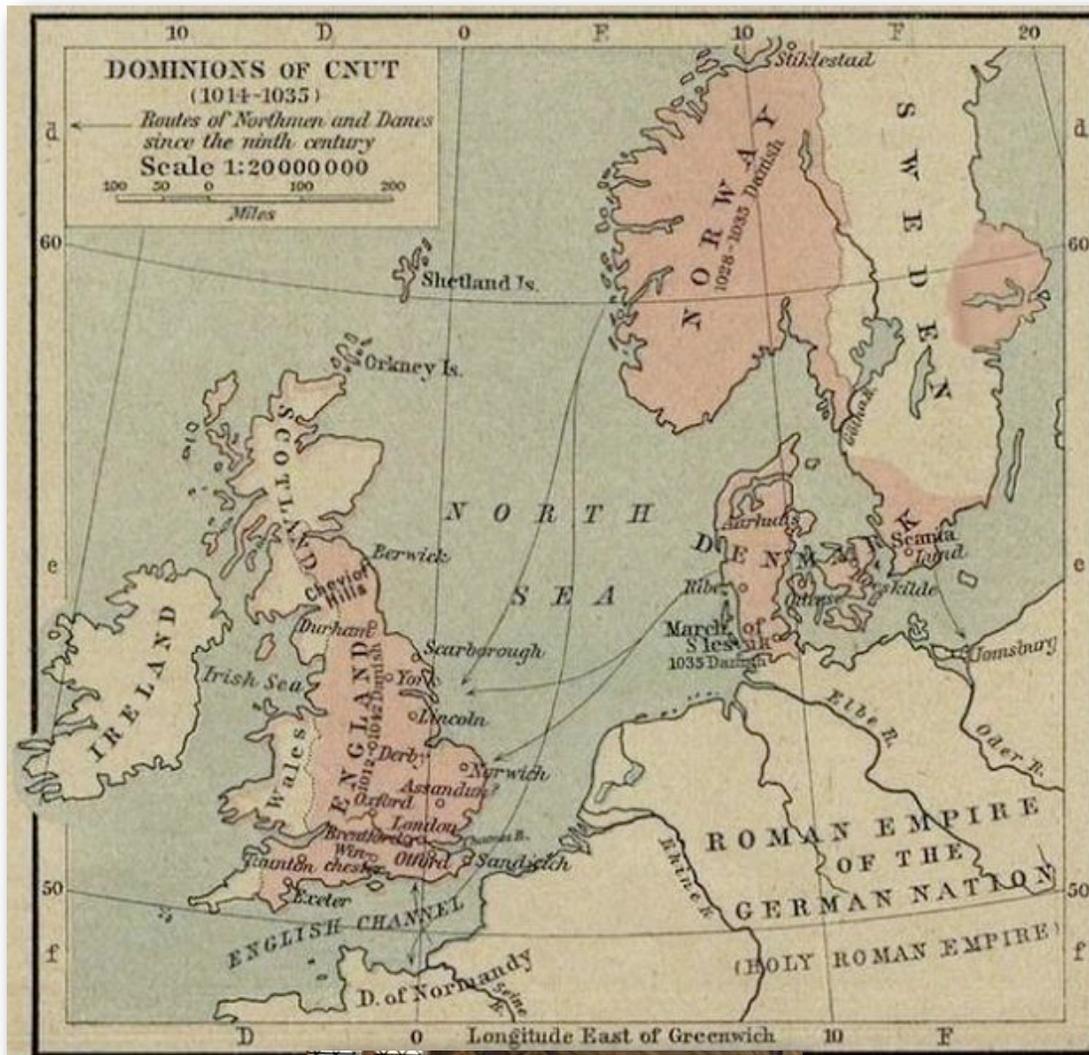
*"Let all men know how empty and worthless is the power of kings. For there is none worthy of the name but God, whom heaven, earth and sea obey".*

So spoke King Canute the Great, the legend says, seated on his throne on the seashore, waves lapping round his feet. Canute had learned that his flattering courtiers claimed he was "So great, he could command the tides of the sea to go back". Now Canute was not only a religious man, but also a clever politician. He knew his limitations - even if his courtiers did not - so he had his throne carried to the seashore and sat on it as the tide came in, commanding the waves to advance no further. When they did advance, he had made his point that, though the deeds of kings might appear 'great' in the minds of men, they were as nothing in the face of God's power. For a old Viking, the Sea was held in reverence, no doubt his reaction.

Note: Christianity, at this point had replaced the Norse Pagan Gods for many. Assimilation became politically necessary for survival . . . while some held on to the old ways longer, especially in areas of Sweden.



Cnut's 'Quatrefoil' type penny with the legend  
"CNUT REX ANGLORU[M]"  
(*Cnut, King of the English*)



Burial at Winchester Cathedral  
aside the Kings of England

## Marriages and Heirs

- 1 – [Ælfgifu of Northampton](#)
  - Daughter (c. 1012 - 1020), drowned in Bosham Creek in 1020, aged eight and was buried in Bosham Church.
  - [Sweyn Knutsson](#), King of Norway (inheritance)
  - [Harold Harefoot](#), King of England (inheritance)
- 2 – [Emma of Normandy](#)
  - [Harthacnut](#), King of Denmark and England (inheritance)
  - [Gunhilda of Denmark](#), wed [Henry III, Holy Roman Emperor](#).