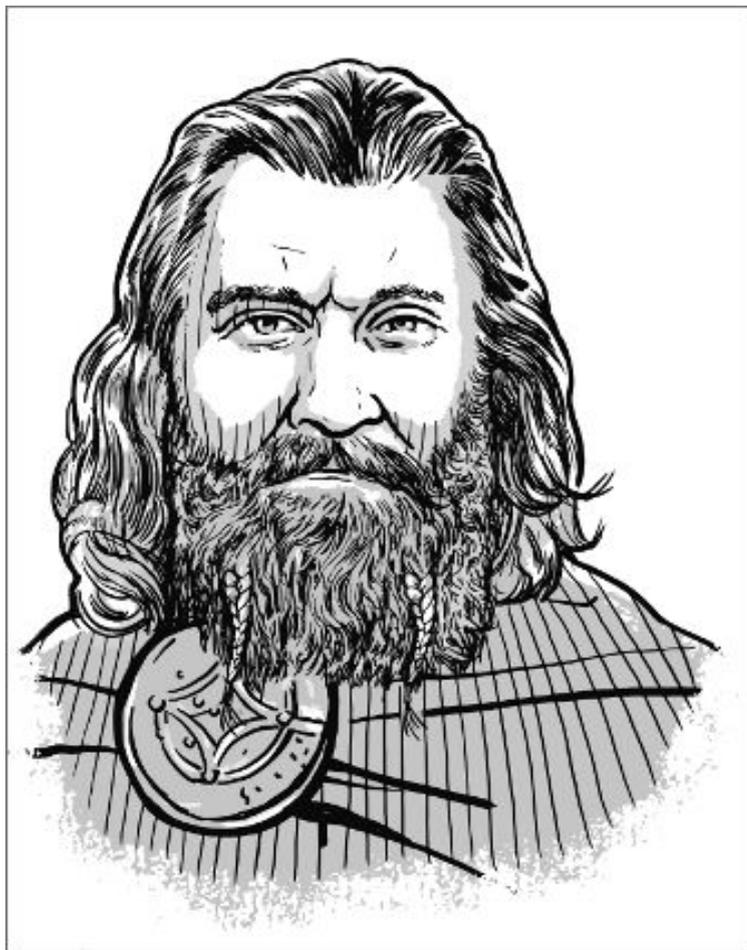


— ISLE OF WIGHT —
**HIDDEN
HEROES**

Primary School Education Resource

King Arwald (686AD) -

Last Jutish King of the Isle of Wight



Artist impression of King Arwald

Who was Arwald?

King Arwald was the last Jutish pagan king who ruled the Isle of Wight in the 7th century and died defending it from a merciless Anglo-Saxon barbarian, making it the last place to be converted to Christianity in England.

What do we know of Arwald's time?

In the Early Middle Ages, while the rest of England's inhabitants had been converted to Christianity at sword-point, the Wightwarians, as people from the Isle of Wight were known at the time, were still independently pagan and ruled by a king called Arwald.

England during Arwald's reign was divided into kingdoms controlled by tribal lords forever fighting each other. While much of England was being converted from paganism to Roman Christianity, the Island was peacefully unaware of the slaughter to come.

The Roman's had abandoned the Island long ago, and from around 530AD, the Jutes, a people who had migrated from Northern Denmark, lived and ruled on the Isle of Wight. King after king was toppled until a man called Arwald found himself in control around the late 600s. King Arwald presided over 300 families, which may have been only around 1200 people.

The pagan Jutes on the Island lived in clearings surrounded by forest, in small hamlets of several families in thatched and wooden-tiled homes. They ground corn by hand and wove their own clothing.

They made everyday items from wood, clay and iron, and crafted sophisticated and beautiful jewellery. They were connected to nature and worshipped pagan gods like Woden and Thor.

While the rest of England was brutally being converted to Roman Christianity, King Arwald was determined to preserve the Island's pagan way of life.

Meanwhile on the mainland, Rome's evangelising pope was taking advantage of any Anglo-Saxon barbarian with a desire to conquer new land and convert the people 'ignorant of the name and faith of God' to the ways of the Lord.

One such powerful bishop was called Wilfred who befriended a man called Caedwalla, a barbarian king of Wessex, a warmonger with revenge on his mind mainly because, as a youth, he had been exiled from Wessex. Caedwalla had later returned to kill the South Saxons and their king called Aethelwealh in what is now Sussex. It was written that he went through the English counties 'by merciless slaughter'. And slaughter he did. But as Caedwalla looked across the Solent he set eyes on the last remaining pagan outpost, the Isle of Wight. With blood still dripping from his sword, he amassed his army and set sail.

Arwald must have put up a brave fight because his quarry, Caedwalla, was badly injured in the battle for the Island, but, alas, it wasn't enough. It has been written that Caedwalla destroyed all the inhabitants of the Island, killing Arwald and forcing the remaining Islanders to renounce their beliefs and convert to Christianity. After the battle, the injured Caedwalla made a pilgrimage to

Rome to be baptised - was this to absolve his guilt for all the slaughter? - only to die ten days later.

Vestiges of Arwald's family, his two brothers, their names still unknown, fled the Island across the Solent to the New Forest, but were eventually betrayed and captured by Caedwalla. He forced them at sword-point to convert to Christianity, before being murdered.

They were described as 'the first fruits' of the massacre of the population of the Island, and later canonised collectively as St Arwald, in memory of King Arwald. The day is now remembered, although not by many, annually on the 22nd April.

Why is Arwald a Hidden Hero?

King Arwald's passing marked the Isle of Wight's importance in being the last place in England to be converted to Christianity. Again, the Island showed its independent spirit until the bitter, and bloody, end.

King Arwald Facts

- King Arwald was killed in battle as the last pagan king of the Isle of Wight until the Vikings settled in the North.
- King Arwald's unnamed brothers were forced at sword point to convert to Christianity and later canonised as saints and celebrated on St Arwald's Day every 22nd April.
- The Isle of Wight was the last place in England to be converted to Christianity.
- Artefacts from Arwald's time, including jewellery, iron swords and spear heads, have been found in cemeteries in Chessell and Bowcombe Down on the Isle of Wight.
- When the Jutes settled on the Isle of Wight they called it Wihtwara (meaning Men of Wiht) and it is the likely origination of the Island's name.
- Pagan Jutes settled in England in the 6th Century, originally migrating from Jutland in northern Denmark.

King Arwald Timeline

43 AD - Romans discovered England during the reign of Claudius.

400 AD - Jutes, Angles and Saxons began raiding and ruling the Isle of Wight from this time.

410 AD - The last of the Roman troops left England.

450 AD - The Jutes conquer Kent.

530 AD - Cerdic, the Anglo-Saxon King of Wessex, and his son, Cynric, leading a Saxon and Jutish army, conquered the Isle of Wight. The pagan Jutes ruled the Island from that point until Arwald's death.

534 - After Cerdic died, Cynric ruled and then the Island was given to Cerdic's nephews, Stuf and Wihtgar.

544 - Wihtgar died and was buried at Carisbrooke.

635 - Wessex converted to Christianity.

661 - Wulfhere, King of Mercia (what the Midlands was referred to from 6th-10th century) raided the Isle of Wight and gave it to his Godson, Æthelwealh, the first Christian King of Sussex.

686 - King Arwald, the last Jutish pagan, was killed in battle, defending the Island by the invading Caedwalla, King of Wessex.

688 - Caedwalla abdicated to travel to Rome to be baptised.

731 - Venerable Bede, a monk, writes down history of English churches and wider history. First recorded written reference of King Arwald.

787 - The Vikings (also pagan) started raids on England.

896 - Viking raids recorded on the Isle of Wight.

1066 - The Norman invasion of England.

1086 - Doomesday Book.

Educational Resources

School Trips

Classroom and facilitated visits to Newport Roman Villa and the Museum of Island History available; please contact the Heritage Education Officer for more information:

Estelle Baker, Heritage Education Officer, Isle of Wight Heritage Service, based at Carisbrooke Castle Museum, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1XY

Email: estelle.baker@iow.gov.uk

Mobile: 0781 3021486

Tel: 01983 523112

The Museum of Island History

Visit The Museum of Island History and see some artefacts from Arwald's time. More information and artefacts from Jutish and Saxon times during the early middle ages is available at The Museum

of Island History in Newport, Isle of Wight. On display within the museum is an Anglo-Saxon skilnet, dating from the 7-9th century. The skilnet was probably used for baptism ceremonies. It was found on the Isle of Wight in 2005 and is recognised as a nationally important artefact.

Guildhall
High Street
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 1TY

01983 823433

<https://www.iwight.com/Residents/Libraries-Cultural-and-Heritage/Heritage-Service/MuseumofIslandHistory/Museum-of-Island-History>



An Early Christian Baptismal Skillet from Shalfleet, Isle of Wight - © Isle of Wight Council

Newport Roman Villa

Visit Newport Roman Villa to experience what life was like when the Romans lived here, before the Jutes invaded and settled.

Cypress Road
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 1HA

01983 823433

<https://www.iwight.com/Visitors/Where-to-go/Newport-Roman-Villa/Intro>

Ideas for Incorporating Arwald into the Classroom

Arwald and other Hidden Heroes can link into many areas of the [National Curriculum](#), including history, geography, design and technology, computing and art and design.

Below is a breakdown of subject areas and content quoted from the National Curriculum where it might be appropriate for Arwald, plus some ideas for study:

History

We don't know much about Arwald's activities or life, but there have been significant finds uncovered in places like Chessell Down Cemetery and Shalfleet on the Isle of Wight, and from other locations around England. These range from helmets and swords, to bowls and fine jewellery.

Link to [National Curriculum for history](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study>

Ideas:

- Visit Isle of Wight museums to see artefacts from Arwald's time and imagine what it would be like for a typical pagan family, what would they eat, what would their home be like, what Gods would they worship?
- Study the Anglo-Saxon invasion of England and the Christian conversion referencing Arwald's part in the story of Christianity.

Art

The craft skills in Arwald's time were more sophisticated than one might think. There are artefacts including jewellery, brooches, rings and clothing that suggests a high degree of sophistication, and

had a use beyond the functional. These artefacts could provide some reference but there's much to be left to artistic interpretation.

Link to [National Curriculum for Art and Design](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-art-and-design-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-art-and-design-programmes-of-study>

Ideas:

- Nobody really knows what King Arwald looked like so it's all open to interpretation. A great place to start for an artistic interpretation.

Website Links

Wikipedia link:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arwald>

PASE - The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE) is a database which aims to provide structured information relating to all the recorded inhabitants of England from the late sixth to the late eleventh century:

<http://www.pase.ac.uk/>

Detailed background historical evidence of the south east area:

<https://library.thehumanjourney.net/2597/>

The Roman Period: Resource Assessment

https://library.thehumanjourney.net/2597/211/Solent-Thames_chap-11_Roman%20Period_Resource%20Assessment.pdf

Archaeological Resource Assessment of the Isle of Wight: Early Medieval period

<http://www.iwhistory.org.uk/resourceassessment/Early%20Medieval%20Isle%20of%20Wight.pdf>

The Early Medieval Period: Resource Assessment

https://library.thehumanjourney.net/2597/223/Solent-Thames_chap-13_Early%20Medieval_Assessment.pdf

Archaeological Resource Assessment of the Isle of Wight: Early Medieval period

<http://www.iwhistory.org.uk/resourceassessment/Early%20Medieval%20Isle%20of%20Wight.pdf>

Roman and Saxon finds from the Isle of Wight can be viewed on the database of the Portable Antiquities Scheme

<https://finds.org.uk/>

Isle of Wight Council's Archaeology service

<https://www.iwight.com/Residents/Libraries-Cultural-and-Heritage/Heritage-Service/Archaeology/About-us>

Oldest Historic Source Texts

The only real oldest source text with the first mention of King Arwald is from Bede's Ecclesiastical History of The English People, written by the Venerable Bede, an English monk, around AD 731. It is available online for free at many places include the following link.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/38326/38326-h/38326-h.html>

A primary source of history about the Middle Ages is The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, assembled during King Alfred's reign (871–899):

<http://www.britannia.com/history/docs/asintro2.html>

Books

- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Folk Tales by Michael O'Leary.
- The Making of the Wight - An Illustrated History of the Isle of Wight from Pre-historic times to the 1970 Isle of Wight Pop Festival by J C Medland.
- Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the Isle of Wight by C J Arnold.