



Chippenham Museum

Chippenham Town Council

Beard or No Beard?

We don't know exactly what King Alfred looked like. In the museum our model of Alfred doesn't have a beard but many believe that he did.



Arguments for a beard

Anglo-Saxon Kings are often shown in manuscripts with thick, long beards. To them the beard may have been a sign of masculinity. It appears to be a very personal and visible symbol of honour and pride. Men were known to tug on their beards to show they were honest.

Arguments against a beard

When the Anglo-Saxons converted to Christianity, those men who were part of the church had to be clean shaven so they could be recognised. Over time men began to imitate the clergy and shave their beards, possibly just leaving moustaches. Alfred was very religious so he may have followed this practice, certainly coins minted during Alfred's reign show him as clean shaven.

Colour in King Alfred below then draw what you think he would look like with a beard.

