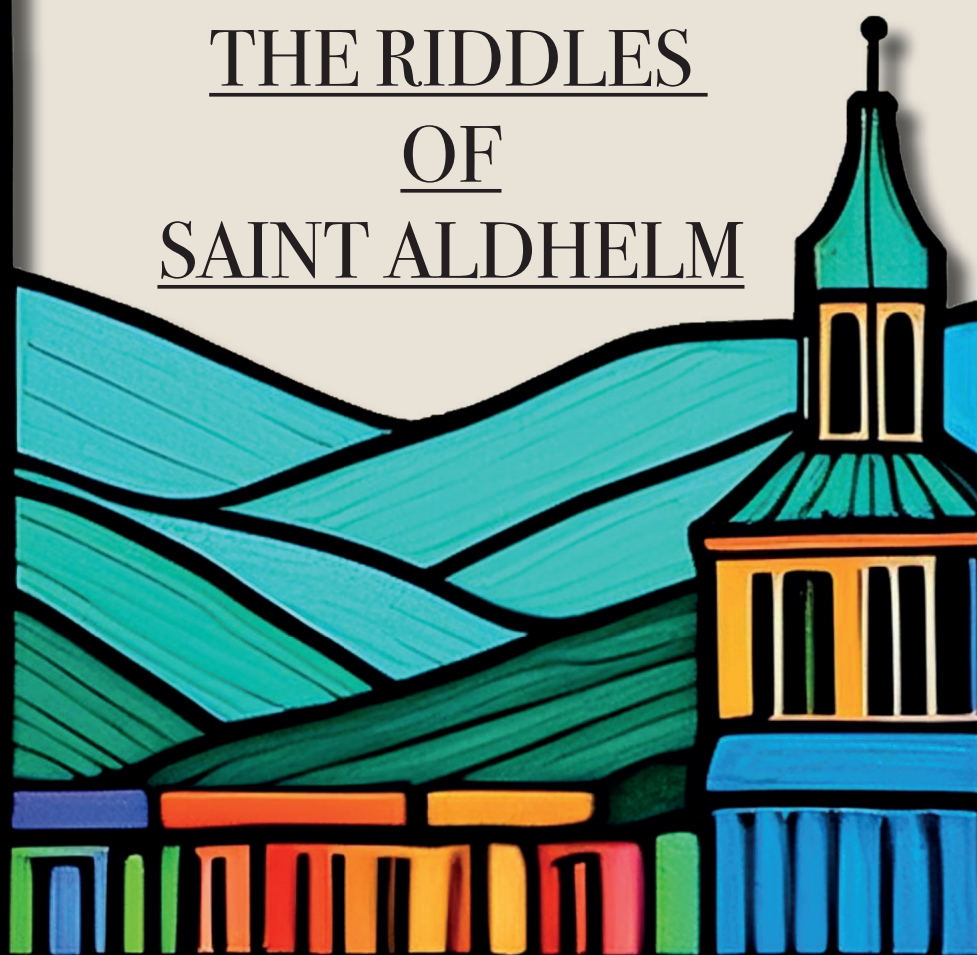


THE RIDDLES
OF
SAINT ALDHELM



All poems written by Saint Aldhelm have been translated from their original Latin by A.M Juster and published by the University of Toronto Press 2015.

Images were generated using adobe firefly.

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The Athelstan 1100 team had the opportunity to interview the famous historian Michael Wood and he told us about the influence Saint Aldhelm had on King Athelstan.

Michael said: "Malmesbury was very important to Athelstan and that stemmed from his reverence for St Aldhelm, who became the Abbot of Malmesbury Abbey from around 671 to 675 AD. I believe Aldhelm's story influenced Athelstan deeply in childhood and that connection continued into his adulthood. He gifted land and holy relics and many treasures to the abbey including a crystal reliquary holding a fragment of the True Cross which Malmesbury tradition said he wore around his neck in his battles."

"St Aldhelm was one of the most important people in early English culture. He was a brilliant Latin poet and he wrote poems in the vernacular. He was a member of the West Saxon royal family, brother of King Centwine, yet he renounced the world of power and became a holy man. It's clear that Athelstan was devoted to Malmesbury and its association with St Aldhelm. He buried his cousins there (who were killed at Brunanburh) and alone among the kings of Wessex he was buried there himself."

We know Athelstan enjoyed Saint Aldhelm's riddles, we hope you do as well!

THIS PAMPHLET WAS CREATED BY BATH SPA UNIVERSITY STUDENT LAUREN BILTON.



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SAINT ALDHELM

Aldhelm was born in Wessex, 639 AD and is thought to be the son of a king of the West Saxons. Aldhelm was educated in Malmesbury by an Irish monk, before going to Iona and then to Canterbury for further education.

He could read, write and speak Latin, Greek and Anglo-Saxon English.

To encourage Anglo-Saxon people to embrace religion, he would stand on the town bridge in Malmesbury and preach in an energetic way (using jokes and music) to encourage people to come to church. During his time as abbot, he established Malmesbury Abbey as place for spirituality and advanced study.

In the late 7th century he wrote a collection of 100 Latin riddles, the *Aenigmata*. At this time, riddles were already established as a literary genre in Greek and Latin.

He influenced English riddlers who came after him, including Boniface (the Apostle of Germany, known for spreading faith during the Dark Ages) and the anonymous writer of the Book of Exeter (a book of Anglo-Saxon riddles, but unfortunately the answers were never written down).

When he died his burial place in Malmesbury became a popular visiting site for pilgrims who left offerings (such as flowers) to honour him.



KING ATHELSTAN

Born in 894, Athelstan was the son of King Edward the Elder and his first wife Ecgwynn, and grandson of King Alfred the Great.

During King Athelstan's reign (924–939) he never lost a battle, earning him the title 'Athelstan the Glorious'. He was the first ever king who ruled over the entirety of England.

Both Athelstan and Saint Aldhelm belonged to the royal house of Wessex. Athelstan was a very religious man himself (he oversaw the translation of the Bible into English) and he was very proud of his connection with the Saint.

As Saint Aldhelm was buried in Malmesbury, King Athelstan took an interest in the church and the community there.

It is said that Athelstan owed his victory at the Battle of Brunanburh in 937 to Saint Aldhelm who was believed to have performed a miracle and retrieved the sword that King Athelstan lost during the fight.

'By chance his sword fell from its scabbard; when all things were full of dread and blind confusion, he invoked God and St. Aldhelm, and replacing his hand on the scabbard he found a sword, which today is kept in the kings' treasury on account of the miracle. It can, as they say, be engraved on one side, but never inlaid with gold or silver.'

— William of Malmesbury, a renowned 12th century historian, and translated by Dorothy Whitelock.

PICK-A-MIX CHALLENGE



We're the pick-a-mix sweets,
 We're colourful delights and delicious treats.
 We've solved Saint Aldhelm's riddles,
 But you have to meet us in the middle,
 As we've decided to make it into a game,
 So you may act as vikings and chase after fame.
 To solve the riddles we've given you two pictures
 as helpful clues,
 You'll have to put them together and from there
 it'll be no sweat, plain sailing, you'll cruise!



Riddle 1

I'm cast as 'child of Thaumas' in quaint speech
 But basics of my birth I'll first reteach:
 Born in cloud's water, I am sun's red daughter.
 I seek clear skies; in storms I do not rise.



Riddle 2

The early evening stuck its name on me;
 I cloak the western world from my high height.
 When Titan dips life-giving flesh in sea
 Lost in grey-blue waves, sky drops from sight,
 I follow glassy plains while hiding light —
 And I'm not snatched from Heaven, blessedly,
 As light keeps clearing gloomy shades of night.



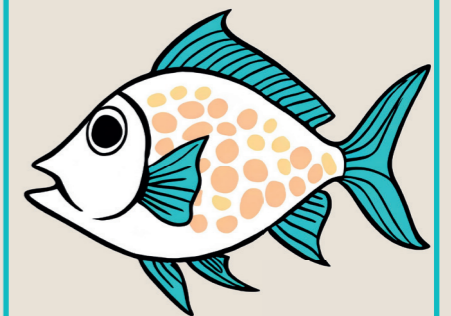
Riddle 3

My nature rightly copies my twin name
 Since birds and shadows each retain a claim.
 I'm rarely seen by people in a clear light
 For I will hide in star-borne nests at night.
 In mid-flight it is common that I shriek.
 I'm in Rome's books, but with a sound that's Greek
 As I protect the shadows with my name.



Riddle 4

Seeing life's spectacles now entertains;
 With fishy, scaly flocks, I search the sea plains.
 With mobs of birds I also rise through the sky,
 And yet I can't survive in a breeze that's high.



SOAP SUDS CHALLENGE



Quick! Please help! Don't delay!
The answers to Saint Aldhelm's riddles have fallen into a bucket of soapy water, Solve the riddles and draw a line to the correct answers in the bubbles, Before they all float up and away!

Riddle 1

When times of year for weaving threads resume,
My hairy threads fill fallow flesh with weight,
And soon I climb the leafy tips of broom,
To craft small balls, then rest with twists of fate.

Riddle 2

Shades shifting as I leave the Earth and sky,
My place is not on land; it's not up high.
No one else dreads his exile with such fears,
But I would make the world be lush with tears.

Riddle 3

I torture torturers, but freely balk
At harm or torturing — unless a prime
And guilty suspect goes for my green stalk
His stained limbs swell up, fevered, in no time,
Thus I avenge with barbs and conquer crime.

Riddle 4

My sweet voice warbles ways that are unique;
I will not trill songs with a raucous beak.
I'm drab, but still my singing's hard to spurn,
So I keep singing though the future's bleak.
Cold routs me, but in heat I'll soon return.

Nettle



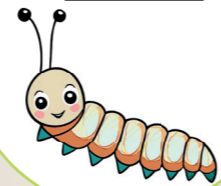
Cloud



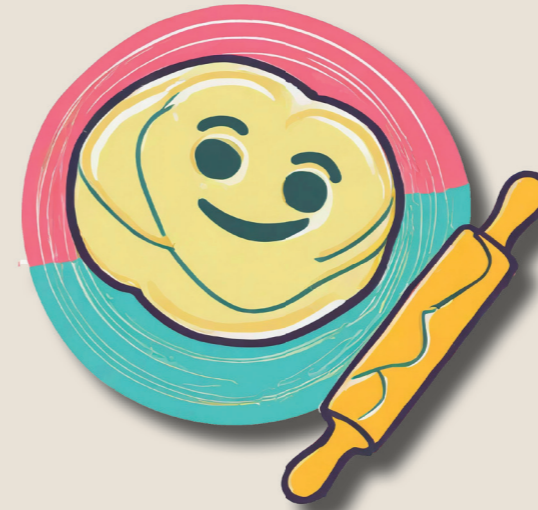
Nightingale



Silkworm



KNEADING DOUGH CHALLENGE



It's your turn to write a riddle, can you rise to the trial?
I have some inspiration, play around with style:

- A stony gargoyle.
- A quacking duck.
- A tall pine tree.
- An intelligent octopus.

Feeling creative?
Bready, set, go!

I've written you an example, it's the yeast
I could do:

My species is hard-working and a group of us is called a labour,
However, unless I'm looking for a partner, I'm far too territorial
to live near a neighbour.

With my pink paws, I dig tunnels as complex as the London
Underground,

But I'd never live in the city as I am sensitive to sound.
I am far too shy, so I only come out when the world is still,
But come on now, please, there's no need to make a mountain
out of such a small hill.

What am I? (Hint: I'm a mammal!)



SCRAMBLED EGG CHALLENGE



I've been a bit of a devilled egg and I've poached some lines,
 Written by the egg-cellent Saint Aldhelm who specialised in rhymes.
 To complete my challenge you must solve the riddles to un-scramble the answers,
 They'll get more and more difficult to crack as you go on, do you fancy your chances?

OVER-EASY EGGS

Riddle 1

Yes, armed with wrinkled horns, I'm quite a fright.
 I chew huge mouthfuls of the meadow grass,
 Yet starry swarms escort me as I pass;
 They rise in hordes to Heaven's highest height.
 Headstrong, I bang the turrets of the town
 So its tall fortress walls will tumble down.
 With twisted thread I fill a man's clothing needs;
 I'm right at home if letter fifteen leads.

Scrambled answer = MAR
 Write the un-scrambled answer below

Riddle 2

Spawned without seed, produced in ways of wonder,
 I load my sweetened breast with floral plunder;
 Kings' honeyed fare grows gilded through my flair.
 Sharp spears of fearsome war are what I bear,
 And I beat — handless! — craftsmen's metalware.

Scrambled answer = EBE
 Write the un-scrambled answer below

MEDIUM-MARINATED EGGS

Riddle 3

From frozen bowels of dewy Earth I'm bred;
 From woollen fleece with bristles I'm not made.
 They pull no yarn, no humming threads cascade,
 No Chinese silkworms weave their yellow thread,
 I am not plucked from wheels, no stiff combs beat,
 And yet I'm labelled 'clothing' on the street.
 Long quivers' arrows do not wstir my dread.

Scrambled answer = RUMARO
 Write the un-scrambled answer below

Riddle 4

I'm born from dripping drops in soggy sky
 And grow in swelling froth where rivers flow,
 But no hand sways me while I'm swimming by
 Or else my guts are spilled out everywhere
 And fragile breath disperses in thin air.
 I lead my team downstream with throngs in tow,
 Since many friends have birthdates that we share.

Scrambled answer = BELBUB
 Write the un-scrambled answer below

HARD-BOILED EGGS

Riddle 5

In limbs and face my look is not the same.
 Armed with these horns, my other features frame
 A fearsome man. In Gnoasian fields my fame
 Is clear: Crete's illegitimately born unclaimed in shame,
 A beast and man when I am called my name

Scrambled answer = MONTIARU
 Write the un-scrambled answer below

Riddle 6

As pounded gaping metal — wide, gross, round —
 I hang untouched by boundless sky or ground.
 Glowing in flames and fevering with bubbles,
 I thus confront two fronts with different troubles
 As I survive both being scorched and drowned.

Scrambled answer = LARDCUNO
 Write the un-scrambled answer below



FEELING BLUE? HAVE A CLUE!

BANISH YOUR CONFUSION, HERE IS YOUR SOLUTION!



Pick-a-mix-challenge hints:

- Riddle 1: What do clouds make when they're dark and grey? What do you tie a ribbon into when you decorate a gift?
- Riddle 2: What time of day is it when the sun sets? What are constellations majorly made up of?
- Riddle 3: What time of day is it when the sun rises? What black bird is bigger than a crow but looks very similar?
- Riddle 4: What common insect buzzes when it flies and tastes with its feet? What swims in the sea?

Soap suds challenge hints:

- Riddle 1: In Ancient China, only the nobility were allowed to wear the material made from this creature.
- Riddle 2: The three main types are cirrus, cumulus and stratus.
- Riddle 3: This has been used for food, herbal remedies and dyes for hundreds of years.
- Riddle 4: Although commonly referred to in romantic poetry, only the male of this species sings.

Do you knead some inspiration for the dough challenge? Use one of these beginning lines:

A chicken:

Wondering what I am? Let me first give you a clue,
I was born from an egg and once I hatched, I grew, grew, grew!
OR

A sunflower:

I am golden, but pirates do not seek me like glittering treasure,
I love to make new friends, so to meet you is my pleasure.

Scrambled egg challenge hints:

- Riddle 1: What is the name of a male sheep?
- Riddle 2: What sort of insect makes honey?
- Riddle 3: What did knights use to wear in battle?
- Riddle 4: What can you pop?
- Riddle 5: What creature from Greek mythology is half man and half bull?
- Riddle 6: What do witches use to brew potions?

Pick-a-mix challenge answers in English (and their Latin translations):

- Riddle 1: Rainbow (Iris)
- Riddle 2: Evening star (Vesper sidus)
- Riddle 3: Night-raven (Nycticorax)
- Riddle 4: Flying fish (Luligo)

Soap suds challenge answers in English (and their Latin translations):

- Riddle 1: Silkworm (Bombyx)
- Riddle 2: Cloud (Nubes)
- Riddle 3: Nettle (Urtica)
- Riddle 4: Nightingale (Acalantida)

Kneading dough challenge:

Example riddle answer: Mole
Write the answer to your riddle below.

Scrambled egg challenge answers in English (and their Latin translations):

Over-easy eggs

- Riddle 1: Ram (Aries)
- Riddle 2: Bee (Apis)

Hard-boiled eggs

- Riddle 5: Minotaur (Minotaurus)
- Riddle 6: Cauldron (Lebes)

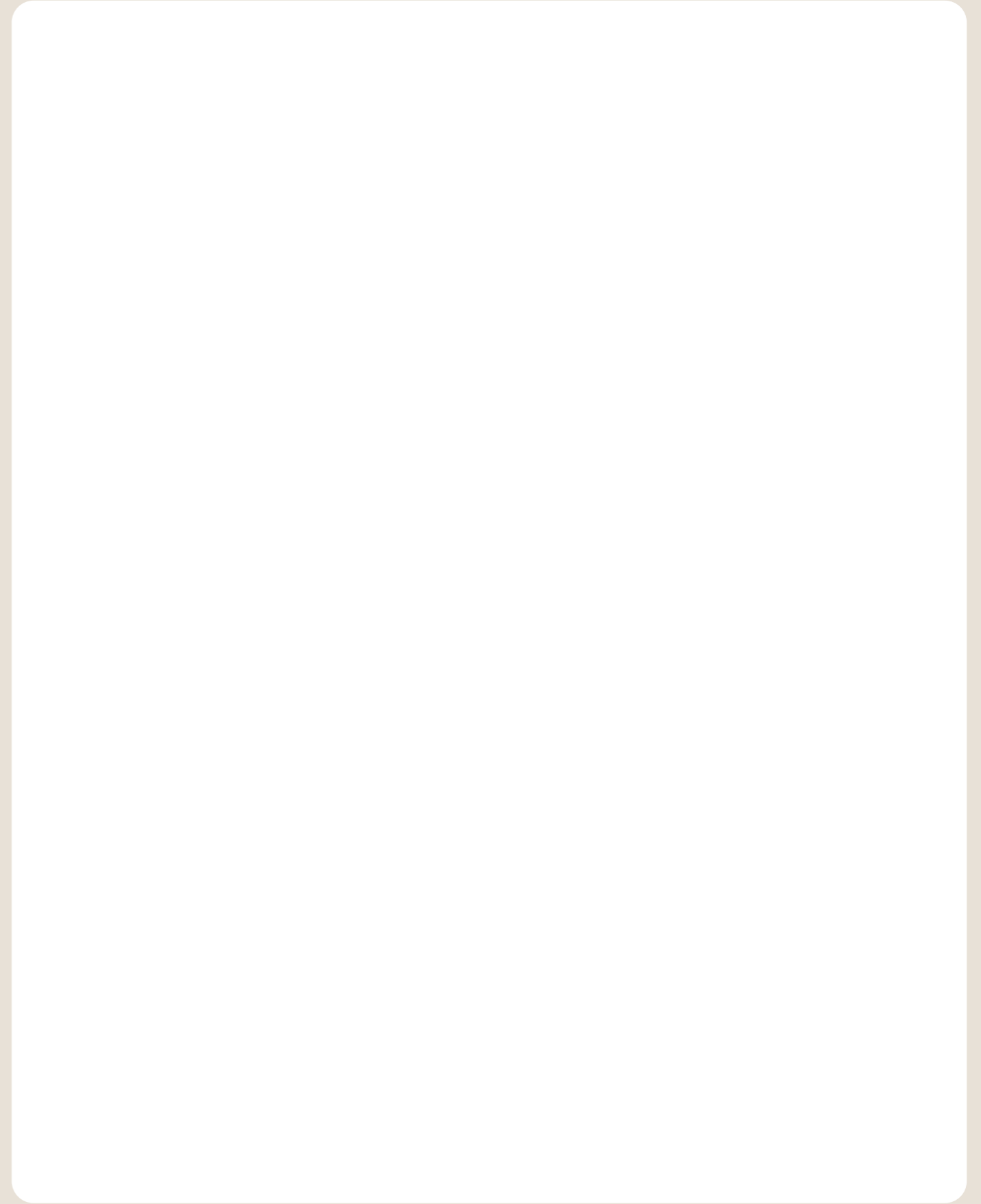
Medium-marinated eggs

- Riddle 3: Armour (Lorica)
- Riddle 4: Bubble (Famfaluca)

NOTES



NOTES





This booklet is a celebration of the riddles that Saint Aldhelm wrote and his connection to the historical town of Malmesbury. He became the first ever abbot of Malmesbury between the years 671 and 675 (until he became bishop in 705).

Inside this booklet you will find a series of fun activities such as the scrambled egg challenge and the soap sud challenge.

But worry not! There's a hints page for when you need a helping hand.

There is also an answers page, unlike the Book Of Exeter, a series of Anglo-Saxon riddles by an anonymous writer who never wrote the answers down!

