

Becoming Anglo-Saxon

Timeline



From the middle of the 6th century onwards, we have more trustworthy sources to describe what was happening at the time. Gildas, for example, was now writing about things that happened when he was alive.

Can you think of any reasons why we might still not be able to trust everything that Gildas writes?

Under new management

By about AD 550, Britain had been broken up into many small kingdoms, each ruled by a different leader. A large part of Britain was ruled over by Angles, Saxons and Jutes.

This was the start of the 'Anglo-Saxons', a mix of tribes from northern Europe who settled in Britain and began to change its culture.

Who went where?

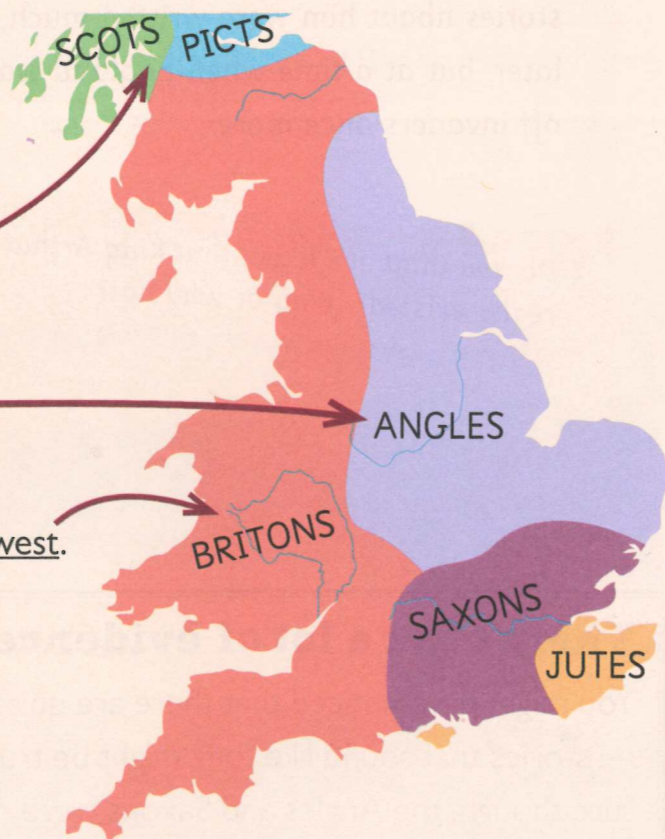
This map shows the different groups of people living in Britain in around AD 550.

In the north, the Scots from Ireland had settled alongside the Picts. The Scots' kingdom was known as Dál Riata.

The Angles, Saxons and Jutes ruled what's now England in the east.

The Britons controlled most of Wales and the west.

The map of Britain didn't stay looking like this. By AD 600, the Anglo-Saxon tribes were moving further west.



The proof is in the place names

So how do we know where the Anglo-Saxons settled? Well place names give us one clue. East Anglia, on the east coast of Britain, is named after the Angles who settled there. Some towns and villages have old Anglo-Saxon words in their names. For example, 'ton' and 'ham' both meant village.

Can you think of places with 'ton' or 'ham' in their name today?

Luton, Taunton, Birmingham and Framlingham are just a few examples.

Are any of these places near where you live? What do you think this means?



A great place to stay

So why were the Anglo-Saxons so keen to make a permanent home for themselves in Britain? One reason may have been the farmland.

The Saxons originally came from flat lands in northern Germany. The Angles and Jutes lived in similar areas. These lands used to flood, so they weren't ideal for farming. Britain on the other hand had very fertile land — perfect for growing crops.

Why do you think good farmland might have been so important to the Anglo-Saxons?

A new age begins

Did you know that the Angles gave their name to their new country? It's where the name 'England' ('Angle-land') comes from. Place names were just one of the many new things that the Anglo-Saxons would end up bringing to their adopted country.

Becoming Anglo-Saxon

By AD 550, different tribes had all claimed their own bits of land in Britain.

Read page 14 of the Study Book.

1. This map shows part of Britain. Use colouring pencils to show where each of the tribes below settled. Fill in the key to show which colour you've used for each tribe.



Key:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | = Angles | <input type="checkbox"/> | = Picts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | = Saxons | <input type="checkbox"/> | = Scots |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | = Britons | <input type="checkbox"/> | = Jutes |

2. Where had the Scots tribe come from? Circle the correct answer from the choices below.

- Ireland Scotland Wales
 Northern Europe Africa

3. Tick the statement below that best describes how the map above would look by AD 600.

- The Anglo-Saxon tribes would have moved further west.
 The Britons would have moved further east.
 The Anglo-Saxons kingdoms wouldn't have changed.

One piece of evidence that tells us where the Anglo-Saxons settled in Britain is place names that come from Anglo-Saxon words.

Here are some Anglo-Saxon words and their meanings:

	Meaning
ley	= a clearing in a wood
ford	= a river crossing
ham	= a village
stow	= a holy/religious place

Here are some place names in England:

Oakley	Ashley
Altrincham	Chelmsford
Oxford	Padstow

4. From the place names in the box above, can you find:

- A town that used to be a village —
 A town that used to be a holy place —
 A place that used to be a clearing in an oak wood —
 A place where oxen could cross the river —

5. Read page 15 of the Study Book. Fill in the speech bubble below to explain why a Saxon farmer might have wanted to settle in Britain.



A Saxon Farmer

I want to settle in Britain because

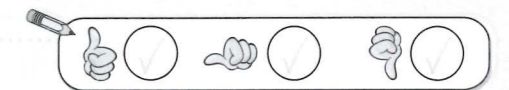
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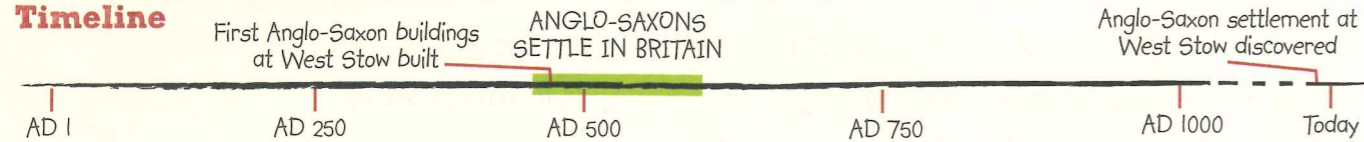
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"I understand when, where and why the Anglo-Saxons might have settled in Britain."



Anglo-Saxon Settlements

Timeline



To begin with, the Anglo-Saxons avoided using Roman towns and buildings and built their own settlements instead.

Early Anglo-Saxon settlements were small communities where people would work together to farm and produce the things they needed. Each village had a chief who protected the villagers.

This picture shows what an Anglo-Saxon settlement might have looked like.



*How is the chief's house different to the villagers' houses?
Why do you think the chief's house has a big wall around it?*

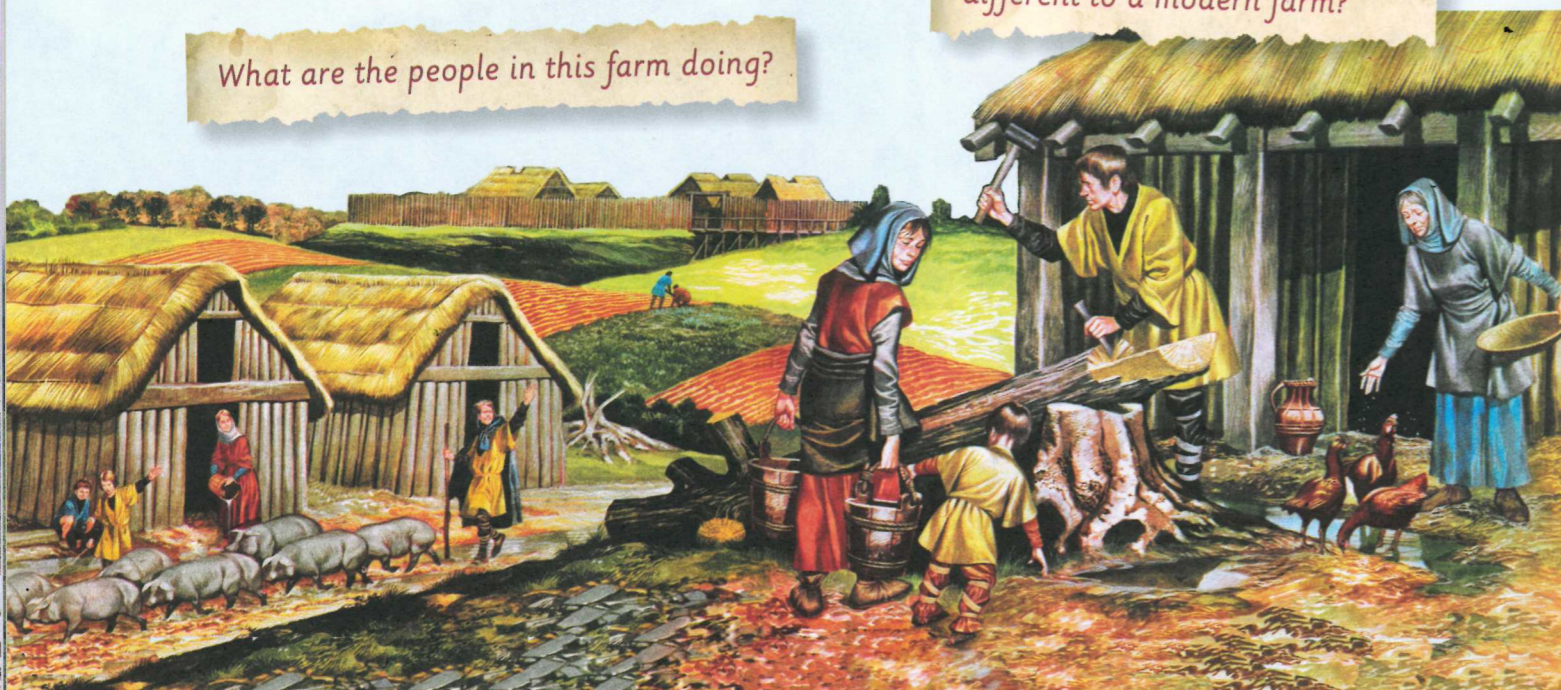
Settling down

In Anglo-Saxon times, you had to grow food and farm animals yourself if you wanted to eat. Skilled craftspeople would often trade their skills for food, but most Anglo-Saxons were farmers. One reason they wanted to settle in Britain was to take advantage of good farmland. The picture below shows what an Anglo-Saxon farm might have looked like.

What animals can you see on this farm?

Can you think how this farm is different to a modern farm?

What are the people in this farm doing?



Home sweet home

Archaeologists have found the remains of an Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow in Suffolk. Using evidence that the archaeologists uncovered, the village has been rebuilt to show what life was like when the Saxons lived there.



The houses at West Stow are very simple. Like most early Anglo-Saxon buildings, they're built of wood and have thatched roofs. The walls are plastered with a mixture of mud, animal dung, hair and chopped up straw.

Most of the houses have only one room. Sometimes, an Anglo-Saxon family would have shared this room with the animals as well! Although this would have been smelly, the animals helped to keep the house warm in winter and were kept safe from wolves and bears.

A feast fit for a king

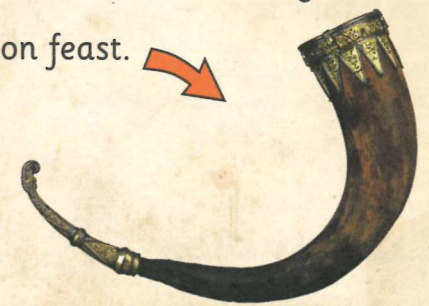
Not all Saxon buildings were small and simple.

Kings had large and impressive halls to entertain guests in.

The king would give huge feasts in a great hall. Everyone drank mead and beer, ate a lot of roasted meat, and exchanged presents. People would tell stories and there would often be music, played on a stringed instrument called a lyre.

This object would have been used at an Anglo-Saxon feast.

*What do you think this is? How do you think the Anglo-Saxons might have used it?**



Animals = very messy house guests

Animals were extremely important to Anglo-Saxons. They were a source of meat, and cows and goats could be farmed for their milk too. Britain was very wild in Anglo-Saxon times, so keeping the animals inside made sure they were safe from wild animals...

*This is a drinking horn. It was filled with mead and passed between guests at a feast.

Anglo-Saxon Settlements

Most Anglo-Saxons were farmers who lived in small villages.

Read page 16 of the Study Book.

If we wanted to eat some vegetables, we could just go to a shop and buy them.

1. How would an Anglo-Saxon get vegetables to eat?

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Read page 17 of the Study Book.

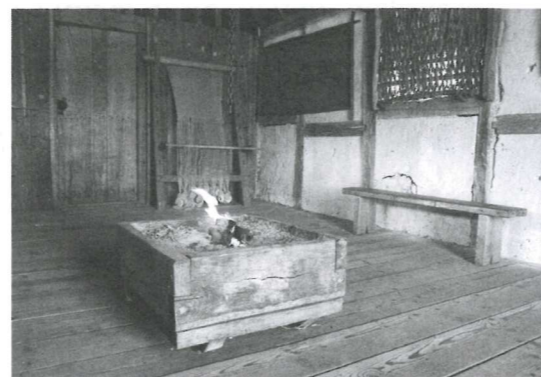
West Stow is an Anglo-Saxon settlement that has been rebuilt in modern times.

2. What are the houses at West Stow made from?

Circle five correct materials below.

- Wood Mud Animal dung Metal
- Bricks Stone Hair Straw

This picture shows the inside of a house at West Stow.



3. What do you think living in an Anglo-Saxon house would be like? Why do you think this? Use the information on page 17 of the Study Book and this photo to help you.

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Anglo-Saxons sometimes kept their animals inside their houses.

4. Using page 17 of the Study Book, write down two reasons why they did this.

1)

2)

The king would often throw feasts in the great hall.

5. Fill in the table below to show the differences between an Anglo-Saxon feast and a modern-day party. Use the information on page 17 of the Study Book to help you.

	At an Anglo-Saxon feast	At a modern-day party
People would eat...		
People would drink...		
People would listen to...		
People might give these things as presents...		

"I understand what life in an Anglo-Saxon house and village might have been like."