

# Anglo-Saxon 1:

AD 410-AD 1066



## Anglo—Saxon Age

AD 410—AD 1066

The last Roman soldiers left Britain in AD 410, new settlers arrived in ships , the Anglo-Saxons. They were a mixture of tribes from Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands, the main three tribes were the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. The land they settled was called Angle-land.... England.

Each group of settlers had a leader or war-chief. Powerful leaders became *cyning* (king) and the strongest of these would claim to be *bretwalda* (sovereign of Britain).



By around AD 600 there were five major kingdoms, sometimes at peace and sometimes at war with each other. From this time the pagan Anglo-Saxons began to convert to Christianity.



The early Anglo-Saxons were pagans and believed in many gods, much like the Scandinavian Vikings. King of the Anglo-Saxon gods was *Woden* (from this comes 'Woden's day' or Wednesday). *Thunor* (*Thursday*) was the god of thunder, *Frige* (*Friday*) the goddess of love and *Tiw* (*Tuesday*), god of war.



Burials can tell us a lot about these people. Warriors would be buried with their spear and shield although we may only find the bones and metal parts remaining during excavation. The graves of women may include weaving tools and jewellery.

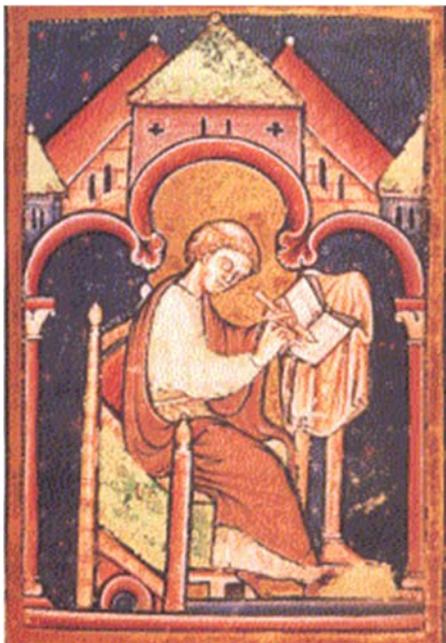
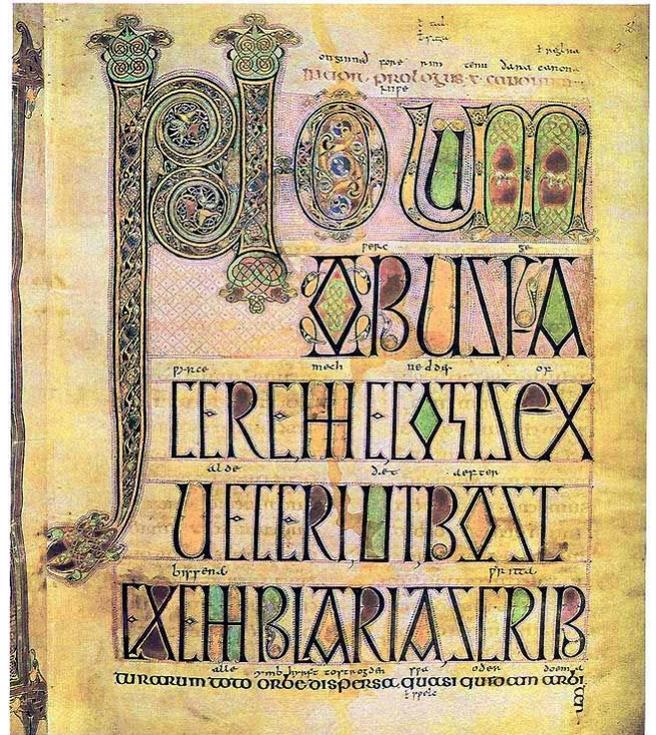
The [Lakenheath Warrior](#) (left) was buried in a wooden coffin with his sword, shield and spear lain on top. He was also buried with his horse. The burial also contained food for the afterlife.

The [Sutton Hoo](#) cemetery site contains burial mounds. One of these, (believed to be [Raedwald](#), King of East Anglia) contained a complete ship (only the outline and rivets survived), the ceremonial helmet (right), metalwork dress fittings (below), weapons and silver plate from Byzantium.



The Pope in Rome sent the missionary **Augustine** in AD 597, to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. He convinced **King Ethelbert** of Kent to become a Christian and over time the rest of pagan England followed suit.

Monasteries were built where monks and nuns spent time in prayer, study and worked in fields and workshops. Manuscripts, such as the **Lindisfarne Gospels** (right) were copied out using vivid colours to decorate the pages.



The most famous monk of this time was the **Venerable Bede** who was at the monastery in Jarrow. Among his many works was **Historia Ecclesiastica Gentes Anglorum** or 'The Ecclesiastical History of the English People'.

Conversion to Christianity seems to have been a 'top-down' affair, as a king became a Christian, this would lead to many of his people being baptized.

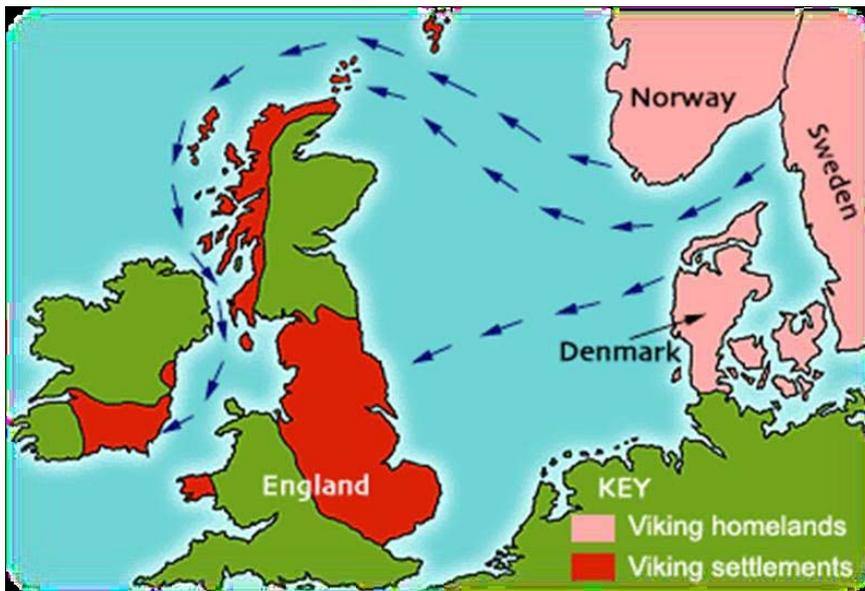


## The Viking Age in England

AD 793—AD 1066

The raid on [Lindisfarne Abbey](#) in AD 793 marked the start of Viking raids on Anglo-Saxon England. The Vikings came from Denmark, Norway and Sweden using longships. They came to plunder treasure but also to find land to settle on. In AD 865 a great Viking army landed in England and one by one the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms fell until by AD 874 only Wessex remained.

[Alfred the Great](#) (right), King of Wessex, defeated the Vikings in battle but had to negotiate a peace agreement with the invaders. The land in the west of England remained under the control of Wessex, the rest became known as the [Danelaw](#) under Viking control.



In AD 1016 [Cnut the Great](#) (son of [Sweyn Forkbeard](#), King of Denmark) became king of all England as well as Denmark, Norway and parts of Sweden. His death in AD 1035 marked the end of Viking rule in England. In AD 1066 a Viking army led by [Harald Hardrada](#) was defeated at Stamford Bridge by [Harold I](#) shortly before his defeat to [William the Conqueror](#) at the Battle of Hastings. This marked the end of Anglo-Saxon England and ushered in the [Normans](#).

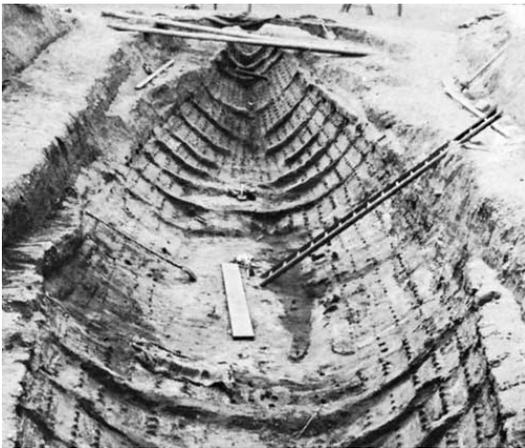
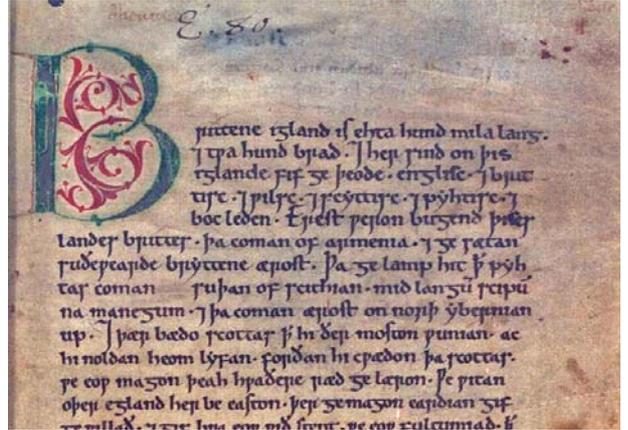
## Further Study

Discover more about Anglo-Saxon England with some of these suggested references.

## The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

A collection of annals written in Old English.

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126532.html>



## Sutton Hoo

Anglo-Saxon royal cemetery.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sutton-hoo>

## The Staffordshire Hoard

Largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold ever found

<http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/>



## Winchester

Main city of Wessex and home of Alfred the Great



## Activities

Anglo-Saxon activities to try out in the classroom or at home.



### Anglo-Saxon Brooch

Cut out discs of card, cover in gold or silver foil/paper. Decorate with coloured beads or paper to represent gems.

### Runes

Write your name or secret message using runes. The alphabet was known as *futhorc*, can you guess why?



### Make your own Anglo-Saxon pot

See our sheet '*How to make an Anglo-Saxon pot*'.

Arrange a trip to [Hands on Heritage](http://handsonheritage.weebly.com/) to try out ancient crafts and skills.

Visit: <http://handsonheritage.weebly.com/>

