

LI: I know how the Anglo-Saxons lived.

There are 3 steps in today's lesson.



1. Read through the information below, and make notes as you read through it.

KING - Rules the country and decides new laws.

NOBLES - Given land by the king. They were wealthy and powerful. Some could advise and persuade the king when he makes new laws.

SHIRE REEVES - Appointed by Nobles to make sure people follow the king's law. Responsible for maintaining law in their local area.

FREEMEN - They could rent or own a small piece of land. They had no say in making the law.

SERFS - They couldn't own land and had to work for others for very low pay. They had no say in making the law.

TOWNS - As people began to move into towns, there was more opportunity for crime to take place. Lots of valuable things, proved irresistible to thieves. There were many people in close contact, who didn't know each other well, which made it easier to get away with a crime in a busy town.



VILLAGES - Most people still lived in villages where everyone knew one another, making it easy to identify and catch a criminal. Local communities were responsible for upholding the law and each area had a Reeve whose job it was to carry out any decisions made by the courts.

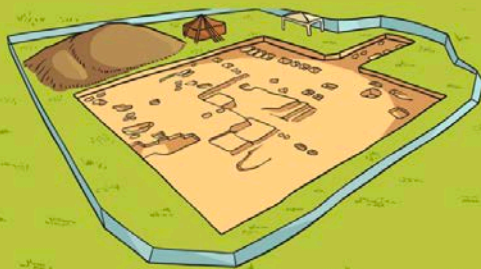


Anglo Saxons believed it was up to the victim to seek justice and the responsibility of everyone in the community to deliver justice. The Anglo Saxons didn't have a police force. In Anglo Saxon times, land was divided into 'Hundreds' and in each Hundred the land was divided into 10 Tithes. One man from each hundred, and one man from each Tithing had to meet regularly with the King's Shire Reeve. These people were responsible for maintaining law and order in their communities.



Settlement

There are many towns and villages that date back to the Anglo-Saxon times, indicating that there should be remains of Saxon buildings in the ground. Unfortunately, archaeologists cannot reach them.



Above is a picture of an excavated site of an Anglo-Saxon house. Houses were built from oak and thatch and we know this from having made such excavations. Though the wood and reeds had rotted away, post holes could still be found in the ground. The holes tell us about the method that the Saxons used to build houses. They would place wooden posts around the outline of the house and then attach planks of wood around a framework. The roofs were then thatched with reeds.

On the right is a photo of a Saxon house built today in a Saxon Village at West Stow, where people re-enact Anglo-Saxon life.



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Remains



Above is a photo of an Anglo Saxon cemetery. Note the holes where the dead were buried.

Farming

Most average Saxons were farmers. Families lived in small villages and grew produce on the land around them.

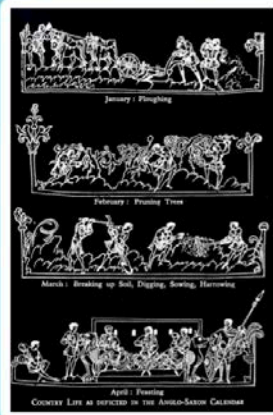
A farming year would begin with ploughing to break the soil up, ready for planting seeds. Crops grown were oats, wheat and barley. The crops grew until summer, when their grains were harvested by threshing them. Threshing was technique used to separate the grains from the stalks.



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A Farmer's Life

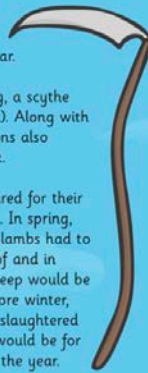


Left: An Anglo-Saxon farmer's calendar.

When threshing, a scythe was used (right). Along with crops, the Saxons also reared livestock.

Sheep were reared for their meat and wool. In spring, the birthing of lambs had to be taken care of and in summer, the sheep would be shorn. Just before winter, they would be slaughtered and the meat would be for use later on in the year.

Cows and pigs were reared for milk and meat. The farm animals were much smaller back then.



Farming

Below is a painting depicting life on a farm. Men and women both had parts to play in farming. Men would do the threshing and ploughing, whilst the women would grind the querns and cereal grains into flour to make bread and cakes. They would also spin yarn from sheep wool.

Milking cattle, making butter and cheese, feeding chickens and ducks and rearing bees for honey were other things had to be done on a farm. In order for meat to be safe to eat, it had to be preserved by rubbing salt on it for winter. Herbs were also grown for medicines and mead was made for drinking.



Jewellery

Below are a selection of Anglo Saxon pendants and brooches found by archaeologists. Metalwork and jewellery are the only forms of early Anglo-Saxon art that have survived to this day.



The brooch on the left has been shaped into a horse.

The brooch on the right has been shaped into a fish.

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Anglo-Saxon Crafts

Pottery



Earlier Saxon pottery was made by piling rings of clay on top of each other and smoothing the sides of the pots afterwards. The clay used was mixed with water, sand, crushed shells and sometimes even grass to bind it together. They were then left to dry and then baked in a kiln afterwards.

Bones

Bones and antlers were also used as a material for making buckles, spoons, needles, and many other things. Antler is tougher than bone so it was used to make combs, like the one in the picture on the right. Without plastic, bones and antlers were the best alternative for the Anglo-Saxons.



Glass

Glass was made from a mixture of sand, potash and natron. This was heated in an oven, which was stirred by the glassmaker to get rid of any bubbles. The glass made was slightly green but was coloured with different copper minerals. On the left is a beautiful stained glass window of a church and items like glass beakers have also been found.

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Christianisation of Britain



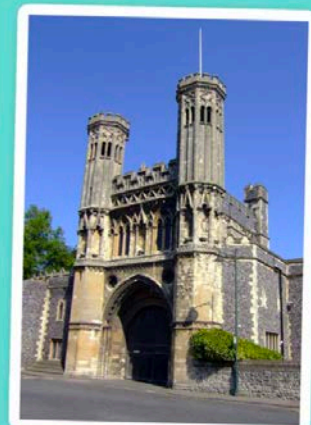
Above: a look at some ornate screens in Anglo-Saxon church, Ears Barton.

Other ways of converting Britain were restoring pagan buildings of worship into a more Christian style and by blending Christian celebrations and festivals with the Pagan one. Christmas, for example, has Pagan origins.

On the right is a photo of St. Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury of Kent, England. It was built for Augustine and his monks to live in.

Before the baptism of the first Anglo-Saxon Christian king, Æthelberht of Kent, previous kings were all pagans. Æthelberht's wife Bertha, was a Christian too. Paganism was the main religion of Britain before it was Christianised.

The monk, Augustine of the Saint Andrew Monastery in Rome, was sent with a troop of monks on a mission to convert people to Christianity. They settled in the town of Canterbury to do this. Augustine and his monks succeeded in converting thousands of Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. This all began in AD597.



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Laws and Justice



The Anglo-Saxons, like many civilisations of the past, had some rather grisly and brutal punishments for people who disobeyed the law. There were no clear law enforcement groups like the police so sometimes, justice had to be claimed by the families of the victims of crimes.

A common oath to obey the king's law and be a good person was sworn by all men from the age of 12. If disobeyed, it would be seen as a betrayal of the king and if serious enough, whole families were also punished!

Punishments

A criminal would be tried by the hundred in the courts. The hundred were the king's law officials and it was their job to bring criminals to justice. Back then, a person's sworn promise meant a lot in the eyes of the law and it was unacceptable to break it.

Some of the most brutal punishments carried out were cutting off limbs, whipping, chaining to stocks, being stretched on a rack and being burned alive.

Though punishments were known to be harsh, King Athelstan (right) was said to have been very concerned about the number of young people being executed. He then decided to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 16 instead of 12 as he thought it was too cruel.

It was around AD930 when this was enforced but we know that this law was not obeyed by all as there is clear evidence of eight to ten year old children being executed for thieving at a much later date!



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2. Follow the links below and watch videos and find out more information about the Anglo-Saxons.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-gUVHKR_qI

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/z36tsbk>

3. Log onto Purple Mash and create a poster about how the Anglo-Saxons lived. (Anglo-Saxon village life).

I cannot wait to see all of your learning :D

Miss Hewer