

Anglo Saxons



As the Learning Team are working from home and don't have access to our actual handling artefacts, we have created a series of learning posts/pages based on our schools Anglo-Saxons loans box replicas. We've also put together a brief Anglo-Saxon history timeline.

As well as the information here there is a short video to go with some objects, available on the website and linked to our social media posts.

Our information is short and easy to read - but remember this is about interesting you in the topic, it's not the whole history of the Anglo-Saxons!

Textiles

During the Anglo-Saxon era, textiles were created from natural materials: wool from sheep, linen from flax and imported silk. In the fifth and sixth centuries, women were the manufacturers of Anglo-Saxon clothing, weaving textiles on looms in their individual dwellings.

Wool

The weaving industry in Anglo-Saxon and Viking England was huge, for it's time. Saxon and Viking women, and in all likelihood men, were very skilled at cloth making. Raw flax and wool was spun into yarn, this was then dyed or bleached, woven into cloth and then cut and sewn into the garments their families needed.



Comb and spinning whorl

What is a spindle whorl used for?

A spindle whorl is a disk-shaped object with a hole in the center, and it is used in the ancient art of making cloth. The presence of a spindle whorl on an archaeological site is an indication of the technological advance of textile production called spinning.



Small loom weights x2—whorls

Spindle whorls are one of the few necessary items used in drop-spinning, a method of spinning used in Anglo-Saxon times that uses weight and friction to bind fibres together into thread.



Carded Wool around a distaff (forked stick)

Wool came from sheep local to the weaver. Fleeces needed to be washed to remove dirt from them, and were then 'carded' or combed with a large iron comb so that they could be rolled into sausage like lengths. Often the prepared wool was put on a distaff to make it easier to spin. This is a forked stick around which the carded wool sausages are wound. The distaff is then tucked under the arm and leant on the shoulder, leaving both hands free for spinning.



Pottery

An important role in Anglo Saxons villages was the potter. They would dig up the clay from the ground, often near rivers. They made pots of various shapes and sizes for everyday use. Some pots were made by coiling clay in long sausages and then winding it round before smoothing it into shape. Some were made on a basic turntable that was spun by foot. To bake the clay they would put it in a pit and covered it with burning ashes. Later Anglo Saxons created kilns to bake the clay in.

Goblet (replica)

The goblet is made from clay and would have been used to drink beer, ale or mead from. Anglo Saxons grew barley for making beer, ale and mead. Mead is a type of sweet beer made with honey.

Pots and cups

Pots were made from clay. They were used for the storage and serving of foods and some liquids. Food was cooked over a fire built in the middle of the home. Pots like this would have been put directly into the fire to cook the food.



Uses of Bone and Antler

Bone and antler were widely used in the Saxon period, often for jobs for which we now use plastics. Quite a lot of bone and antler objects have survived, partly because it was widely used, but also due to the fact that it generally survives well in the ground in most conditions

Most of the bone used came from horses, cattle, sheep and pigs

Bone needle—white Horn needle—black Comb—double sided

Horn bugle Horn cup

Bone and antler were used for a wide variety of uses such as combs, bracelets, pottery stamps, pins, needles, toggles, dice, gaming pieces, spoons, weaving battens, boxes, pendants, weaving tablets, beads, needle cases, spindle whorls, seals, bodkins, whistles, musical pipes, knife handles.



Anglo-Saxon History

Who were the Anglo-Saxons?

The Anglo-Saxons made up of three tribes called the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. They invaded Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries from their homelands in northern Germany, Denmark and northern Holland. They crossed the North Sea in wooden boats to invade. Each boatload of people who came over formed their own settlement. The Angles settled in Northumbria and Mercia. The Jutes settled in Wessex and the Saxons settled in East Anglia. They took control of most of Britain but did not conquer Scotland, Wales or Cornwall. The areas they settled in became now as kingdoms, each with its own royal family. By around 600AD there were 5 main Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms - Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, Kent and East Anglia.

Why did they come to Britain?

The exact reason is not known but it could have been because their land often flooded and growing crops was difficult. They wanted places to settle and farm. After the Romans left Britain in 410 AD they didn't leave a strong army to defend itself. Therefore the invasion by the Anglo Saxons was fairly easy.

Anglo-Saxon Settlements

By the 5th and 6th centuries when the Anglo-Saxons arrived in Britain, they lived in small settlements of just 2 or 3 families and a few buildings. Over time as more people came to settle, these settlements grew into villages and small towns. Each settlement included living accommodation, workshops and store houses, as well as enclosures for animals. The buildings had thatched roofs, wooden walls and often had no windows. The small groups of houses were built around a central larger hall that would have been a place for the village to meet. The houses would have had one room with a central hearth for heating, cooking and light. It is also where they would have slept. Anglo-Saxon families were large—everyone lived under the same roof, from the main family to extended family such as grandparents, unmarried siblings and children.

Job Roles

Anglo-Saxons buried their dead with their belongings. Due to this historians and archaeologists be able to use this evidence to explain the different jobs done by men ad women. Men were buried with knives and spears which suggests they were hunters, and involved in fighting and farming. Women's graves contained tools for sewing and weaving, evidence they were involved in making clothes.

Clothes

Cloth was made by spinning wool into thread which was then woven using an upright loom. Each region had their own style and these styles changed throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.

Women's dress consisted of a ankle length wool tunic over an under-dress of linen or wool with long sleeves and a draw-string neck. with a cloak or wrap, often held in place by a metal brooch or clasp . The long style gowns fastened at the shoulders with brooches or pins. They would have been made of wool or linen, the common fabrics of the time. These dresses were versatile, and simple to fashion with minimal risk of ruining the cloth, which would have been painstakingly woven on a standing weighted loom over a long period of time.

Men wore shorter wool or linen hip-length undershirts with long sleeves under a wool tunic, over a pair of trousers. A belt would be worn at the waist to hang tools from. A cloak would also be worn and held by a metal brooch or clasp.

Anglo-Saxon clothes came in a variety of bright colours, and their jewellery was beautiful and intricate with beaded bracelets and necklaces.

Fun fact: short hair for men was a more Roman fashion, otherwise long hair was the norm. In Alfred's Law Codes there are even fines for people who cut off someone else's hair without their permission.

Saxon words 350AD - 1000AD

Many of these words are still used today.

Bourne: Stream

Burn: Stream

Burg: Large village

Croft: Small enclosure

Cot: Small hut

Delph: Ditch, dyke or stream

Den(n): Pig pasture

Eg; Ey; Ea; Eig: Island

Fall: Area cleared of trees

Fen: Fen

Field: Field

Ham: Village

Hurst: Clearing

Ing: People

Lake: Lake

Ley; Lea: Clearing

Mere: Pool

Moor: Moor

Moss: Swamp

Riding; Rod: Cleared land

Stead: place

Stoc: Summer pasture

Stoke: 'Daughter' settlement

Stow: Holy Place

Ton; Tun: House; Farm

Weald; Wold; High Woodland

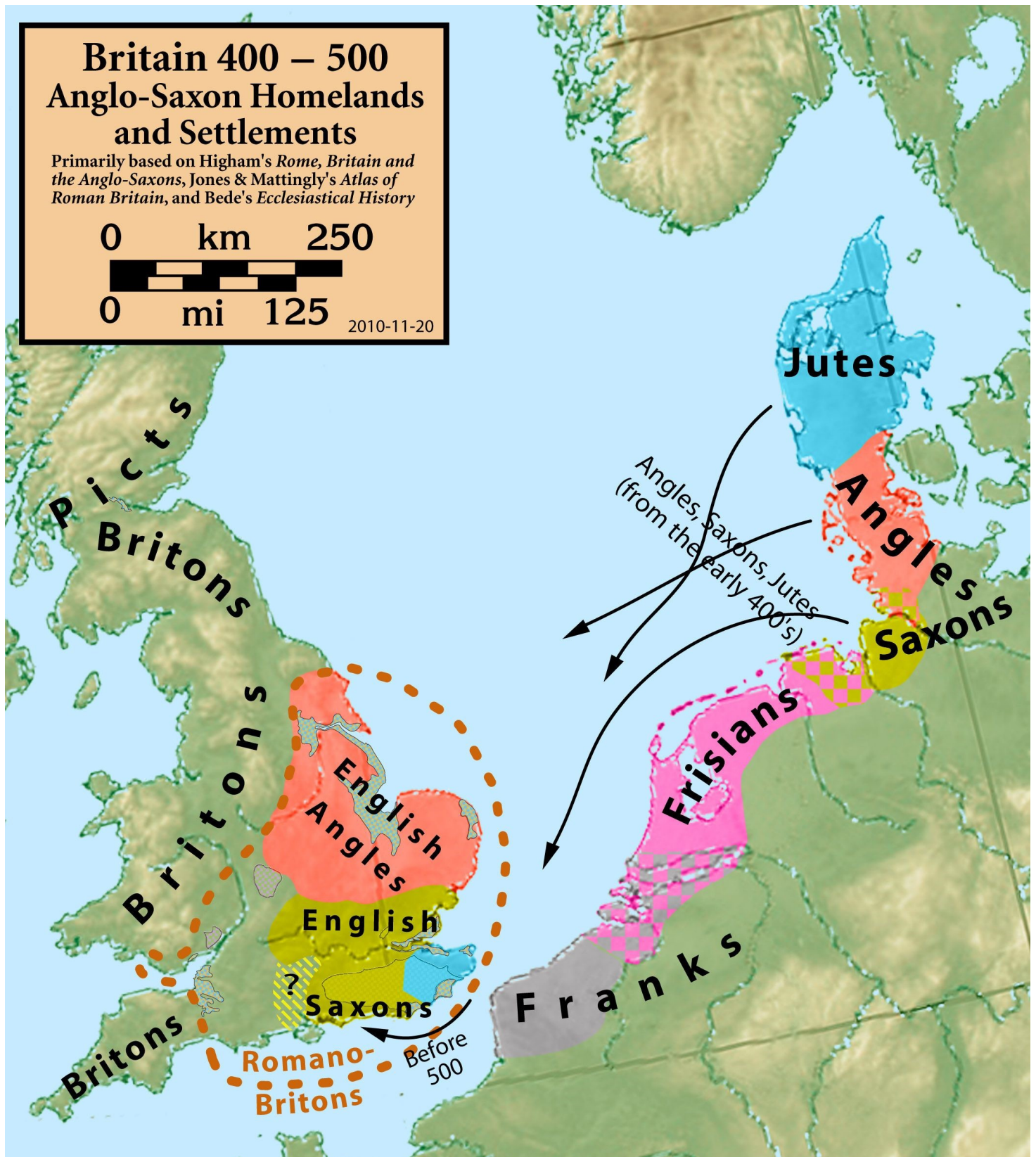
Wic; Wike: Farm; Group of huts

Wood: Wood

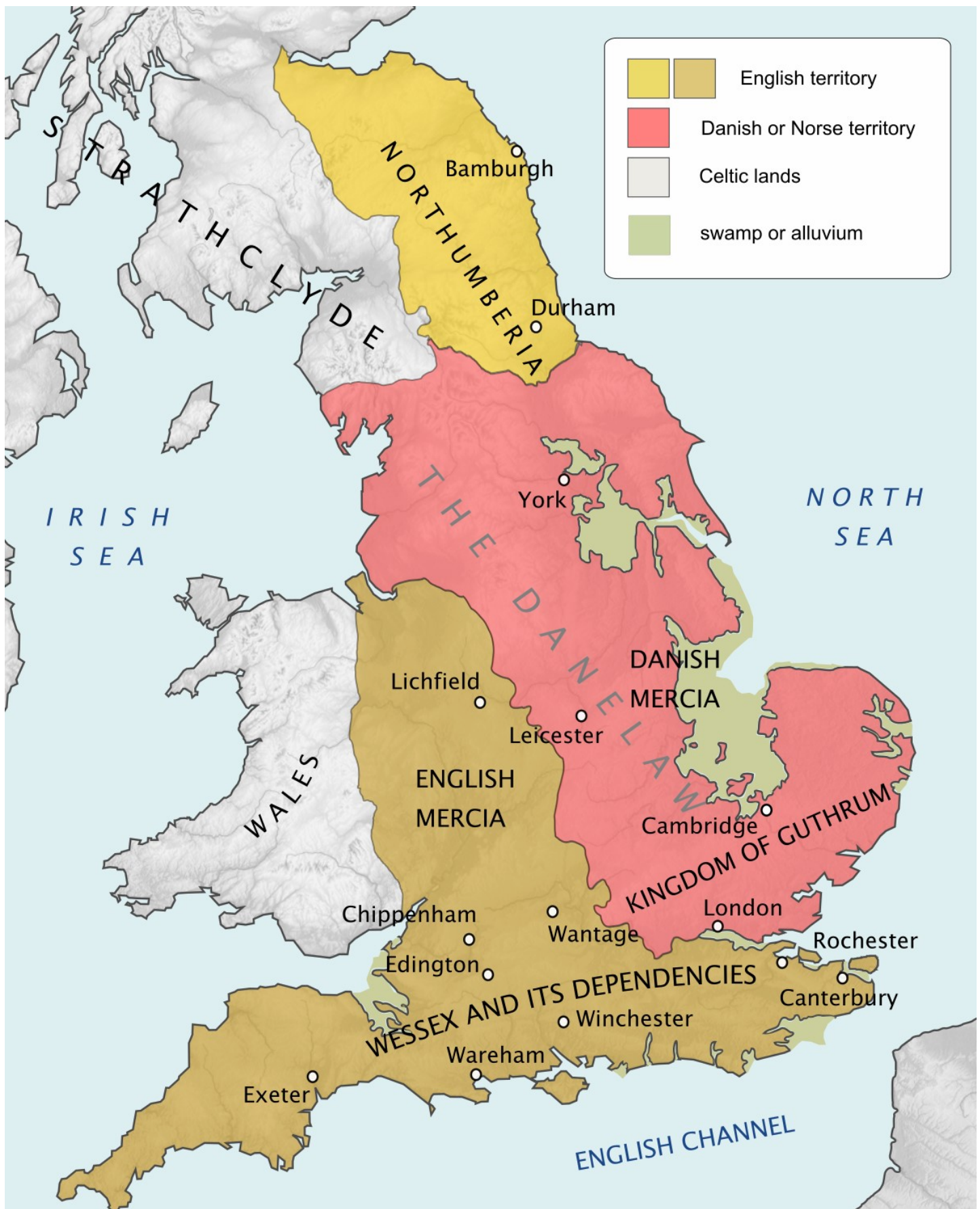
Worth: Fenced land

Worthy: Enclosed land

Where did the Angles, Jutes and Saxons come from?



Danelaw

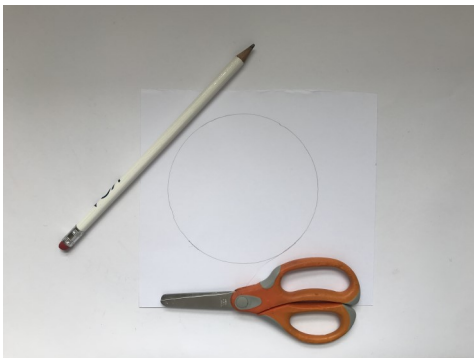


Make your own Anglo Saxon Brooch



Step 1. Gather your materials.

You will need some card, tin foil, some string, glue, scissors and a pencil.



Step 2. Draw a circle on the piece of card and cut it out.



Step 3. Use glue to stick the string on to the card to create a pattern.



Step 4. Wrap foil around the card, then gently smooth it down so the pattern shows through. You can also use pens and scarp card to decorate.



Step 5. You have finished your brooch. Don't forget to share what you have created with us
#SpikeDinosAdventures

Websites we have found useful.

Earlybritishkingdoms.com/kids/index.html

primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/saxons.htm

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zxsbcdm>

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/death-and-memory/anglo-saxon-ship-burial-sutton-hoo>

More interesting objects on display in the Archaeology Gallery to come and find when we are open again.

Anglo Saxon brooches and clasps



Buckles and clasps



Keys and spoons



Brooches, clasps, spoon



brooches



For more information, help with school questions, to book school visits, or just to say hello, please contact us at museumeducation@maidstone.gov.uk.

Thanks for reading, downloading or dipping into our resource.

Roz and Vicky

Maidstone Museum Learning Team

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