

Life in Anglo-Saxon Times

The Anglo-Saxons arrived in Britain around AD 450, following the departure of the Romans. They came from northern European regions including Saxony, Angeln and Frisia — areas that are now part of Germany and Denmark. Over time, they established kingdoms across England, such as Mercia, Wessex and Northumbria.

Most Anglo-Saxons lived in rural villages and worked as farmers. They cultivated crops including wheat, rye and oats, and raised livestock such as cattle, pigs and sheep. Life could be tough, and the whole community relied on a good harvest to survive the winter.

Homes were rectangular, one-roomed wooden buildings with thatched roofs. Families cooked over a central hearth and slept on straw-filled mattresses. There was very little furniture — perhaps a rough table and some wooden stools.

Anglo-Saxon society was carefully organised. At the top was the king, then noblemen called thegns, followed by free farmers called churls, and at the bottom were slaves.

The Anglo-Saxons were also fine craftspeople, producing intricate metalwork, pottery and woven textiles. They originally worshipped gods like Woden and Tiw, but gradually converted to Christianity after missionaries arrived in the late sixth century.

Questions

1. When did the Anglo-Saxons arrive in Britain?
2. Who had been in Britain before the Anglo-Saxons?
3. Name two Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.
4. Name two crops Anglo-Saxon farmers grew.
5. What were Anglo-Saxon homes mainly built from?
6. What did families sleep on?
7. What was a thegn?
8. What were free farmers called?
9. What religion did the Anglo-Saxons gradually convert to?
10. Why do you think the whole community relied on a good harvest to survive winter?



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