

Village Life

Who were the Anglo-Saxons?: Groups including Angles, Saxons and Jutes came from areas now called Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands. Many settled to farm fertile land.

Villages and homes: Most lived in small farming villages near water. Houses had timber frames, thatched roofs and often wattle-and-daub walls. A hearth gave heat and light.

Farming and food: Families grew wheat, barley and vegetables. They kept animals such as sheep, pigs and cattle. They ate bread, porridge and vegetables, with some meat and fish.

Jobs and clothing: Farmers grew food; smiths made tools; potters made pots; people spun and wove wool or linen. Children helped with everyday work.

Beliefs: Early settlers worshipped several gods, including Woden and Thunor. Many later became Christians. Christianity had already existed in Roman Britain.

Historical evidence: Postholes show where wooden buildings stood. Pots, tools and animal bones help historians work out how people lived.

Timeline of Events

43 CE: The Roman conquest of Britain begins.

Around 410 CE: Roman rule in Britain ends.

400s–500s CE: Anglo-Saxon migration and settlement increase.

By around 600 CE: Several Anglo-Saxon kingdoms develop, including Kent, Wessex and Mercia.

597 CE: Augustine arrives in Kent to spread Christianity.

Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon Britain

Settlements: Romans built towns, though most people farmed. Early Anglo-Saxon life centred on villages; many Roman towns declined.

Buildings: Roman towns had stone or brick buildings and bathhouses. Anglo-Saxon village houses were mainly wood and thatch.

Rulers and language: Roman Britain was part of an empire; Latin was used in government. Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had their own kings; Old English developed.

What stayed similar?: Farming remained essential. Both societies had craftspeople, trade and differences between rich and poor.

Key Vocabulary

Anglo-Saxon: A name for the peoples and culture that developed after settlers arrived from northern Europe.

migrate: To move from one place to another to live.

settlement: A place where people make their homes.

kingdom: Land ruled by a king or queen.

rural: In the countryside.

thatch: Straw or reeds used to cover a roof.

wattle and daub: Woven sticks covered with a mixture of mud, straw and other materials to make walls.

pagan: Here, someone who worshipped the old Anglo-Saxon gods.

convert: To change to a different religion.

artefact: An object made or used by people in the past.

hearth: A fireplace used for warmth and cooking.

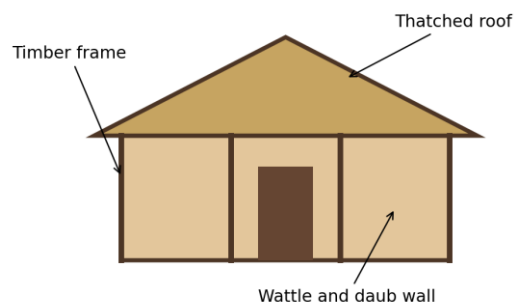
An Anglo-Saxon Village



Illustration: A possible village around 600 CE. This is a modern reconstruction, not a photograph or surviving Anglo-Saxon picture.

Look closely: Find the houses, crops, animals and water. Why would these be useful to the villagers?

How a House Was Built



Building materials: Wood was available nearby. Woven branches formed wall panels, which could be covered with daub. Straw or reeds made the roof.

Everyday Life

Inside the home: Many homes had one main room, with few windows. Smoke from the hearth escaped through openings in the roof. Wooden furniture and bedding were simple.

Working through the seasons: In spring, farmers sowed crops. In summer, they tended crops and animals. In autumn, they harvested and stored food. In winter, they repaired tools and made useful objects.

Making food: Grain was ground into flour using quern stones. Bread and porridge were common. Food had to be stored carefully because there were no fridges or supermarkets.

Useful animals: Sheep supplied wool; cattle could provide milk and help with farm work; pigs supplied meat. Animals also provided hides for leather.

Crafts and trade: Smiths made iron tools. People made pots, baskets, cloth and wooden objects. Goods could be exchanged. Coins and long-distance trade became more important later in the period.

Family and community: Children helped with animals, gathering and household jobs. Most did not attend school. People had different levels of wealth and freedom; some were enslaved.

Leisure: People told stories, played games and made music. Feasts and gatherings could take place in a large hall.

Changes and Connections

After Roman rule: Britain no longer had Roman imperial government. Different rulers competed for land. Anglo-Saxon kingdoms grew over time; change did not happen everywhere at once.

Roads and towns: Roman roads continued to be used. Many Roman towns became smaller or were abandoned. Towns grew again later in the Anglo-Saxon period.

Comfort and wealth: Some wealthy Roman homes had mosaics and underfloor heating. Most people in both periods had much simpler homes. Compare wealthy and ordinary people fairly.

Religion over time: Christian communities survived in parts of Britain. Missionaries helped spread Christianity among Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Churches and monasteries became important centres of learning.

Important people: Augustine helped spread Christianity in Kent from 597 CE. Bede was a monk who wrote about early English history in 731 CE. Offa ruled Mercia from 757 to 796 CE.

Home Learning Project

Carry out some research about the Anglo Saxons

Show how much you have learned by:

Making a model of an Anglo Saxon house

Producing a fact file about the how the Anglo Saxons lived.

Writing a non-chronological report about the Anglo Saxon village life.