

**Explorations Lectures, LLC**  
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## **History of the Anglo Saxons**

### **Short Lecture Descriptions - 8 Week Session**

**March 15, 22, 29 April 5, 12, 19, 26 May 3**

#### **Week 1: The Fall of Roman Britain: The Emergence of the Anglo-Saxons**

The abandonment of Britain by the Romans unleashed a series of events that transformed the former province into a patchwork of small, scrabbling, Celtic tribal territories. In this anarchy small states sought protection from their neighbors by employing the migrant Anglo-Saxons as mercenaries. Eventually the Anglo-Saxons, sensing incredible opportunity would conquer and eject their Celtic-Romano overlords.

#### **Week 2: The Early Period: Conflict, Chaos, and King Arthur 400 CE to 600 CE**

Rising from small raiding groups to organized armies, the Saxon incursions would sweep away the fragmented small Celtic kingdoms that formed in the wake of the Roman withdrawal. We will examine this period through the life of one of the first Saxon "high kings". He would finish his days within a burial ship at Sutton Hoo. His grave and its burial goods would reshape our concepts of this period.

#### **Week 3: The First Anglo-Saxon Kings: The Treasures of the Sutton Hoo Burial Ship**

This is a comprehensive presentation of the treasures of the Sutton Hoo burial ship. What we see reflected is a powerful ruler with far flung political ties. These objects came from the very limits of the world of his time and are breathtakingly beautiful. This discovery literally heralded the end of the use of the term "Dark Ages" by archeologists and historians!

#### **Week 4: The Middle Period: King Alfred the Great and the Vikings 600 CE to 900 CE**

The Middle Period is a scene of consolidation of political and economic power across Anglo-Saxon Britain. The dozens of small kingdoms resolved themselves into 7 great states, Northumbria, East Anglia, Kent, Mercia, Essex, Sussex, and Wessex. The Anglo-Saxons would convert to Christianity by 900. But then, in 793 CE the Lindisfarne Raid announced a 100+ year struggle against the Norse driving the Anglo-Saxon to the edge of their survival.

### **Week 5: The Defeat of the Vikings: Alfred's Burg System**

The Vikings conquered all the Saxon kingdoms excluding Wessex. Its new King Alfred fought off or bribed the Viking armies into a standoff. Alfred found a strategic solution to the Vikings invaders' advantage of speed and surprise. It combined a mobile royal army, militia forces, and fortified towns and bases called burgs. The burgs would eventually strangle Viking military efforts.

### **Week 6: The Late Period: Triumph, Nationhood, and Collapse 900 CE to 1080 CE**

Alfred's grandson Athelstan would pacify the Norse and complete the process of unifying the territory we now call England. He would defeat the large coalition of Northumbrian and Irish Norse, Picts and Scots, and the Earls of the Orkney and Shetland Islands. With victory at the Battle of Brunanburh he was to unite what was first called Engalanda. Unfortunately, factional infighting led to a string of weaker rulers that paved the way for later troubles.

### **Week 7: Downfall! The Year 1066 CE: The Norse and Norman Invasions**

The 900s would see the formation of the Scandinavian kingdoms of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. In addition, the Saxon royal line was about to be usurped by an ambitious family of distant relatives, the House of Godwin. A twisted series of fateful events, combined with entangled heritages, lead to a three-way competition between King Harald Hardrada, King Harold II of England and a French warlord, Duke William of Normandy. Follow us through this final blood-soaked chapter that would call to a close the era of the Anglo-Saxons.

### **Week 8: The Anglo Saxons in the Laboratory - Ships, Treasures, and Genetics**

Many branches of STEM have become the hand maidens of Archeology. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics have unveiled richness and complexity in the archeological record undreamed of only fifty years ago. We will examine three approaches. The first is historical reconstruction of ancient technologies. The second is the isotopic composition and abundance of rare elements in ancient artifacts. The last is a detailed study of the genetic impact of ancient immigration to the British Isles.