

Basildon Borough

Anglo Saxons

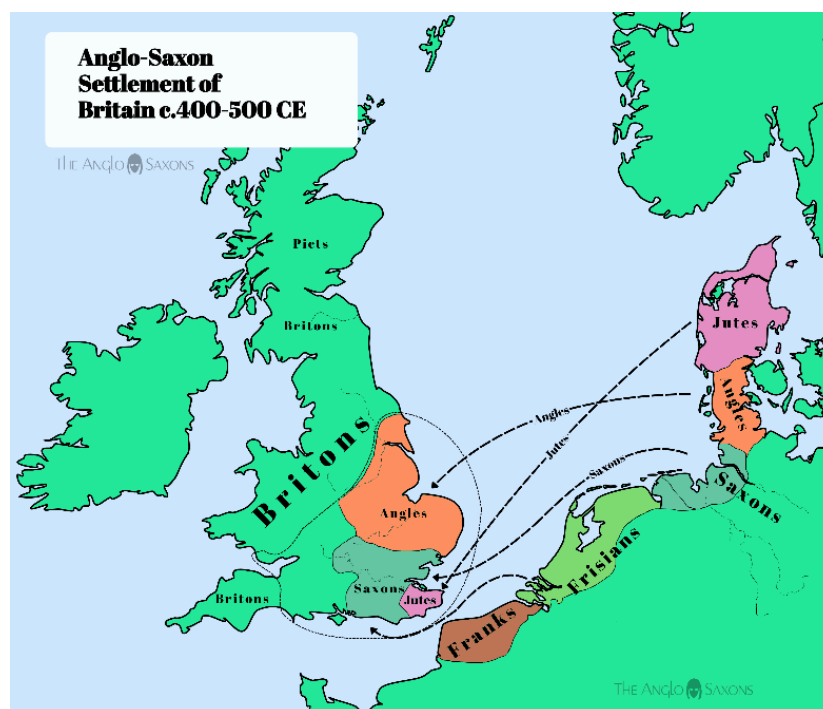
Who were the Anglo Saxons?

The Anglo-Saxons came to Britain over a thousand years ago.

When the Romans left in 450 CE they saw a chance to invade Britain so they left their homes in Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark and sailed over to Britain on wooden boats. Many of them were farmers before they came to Britain and it's thought they were on the look-out for new land as floodwaters back home had made it almost impossible to farm.

Made up of three tribes called the Angle, Saxon, and Jute tribes. The two largest were the Angle and Saxon, which is how we've come to know them as the Anglo-Saxons today.

As well as farmers they were fierce warriors. Each tribe was ruled by its own strong leader who settled their people in different parts of the country.

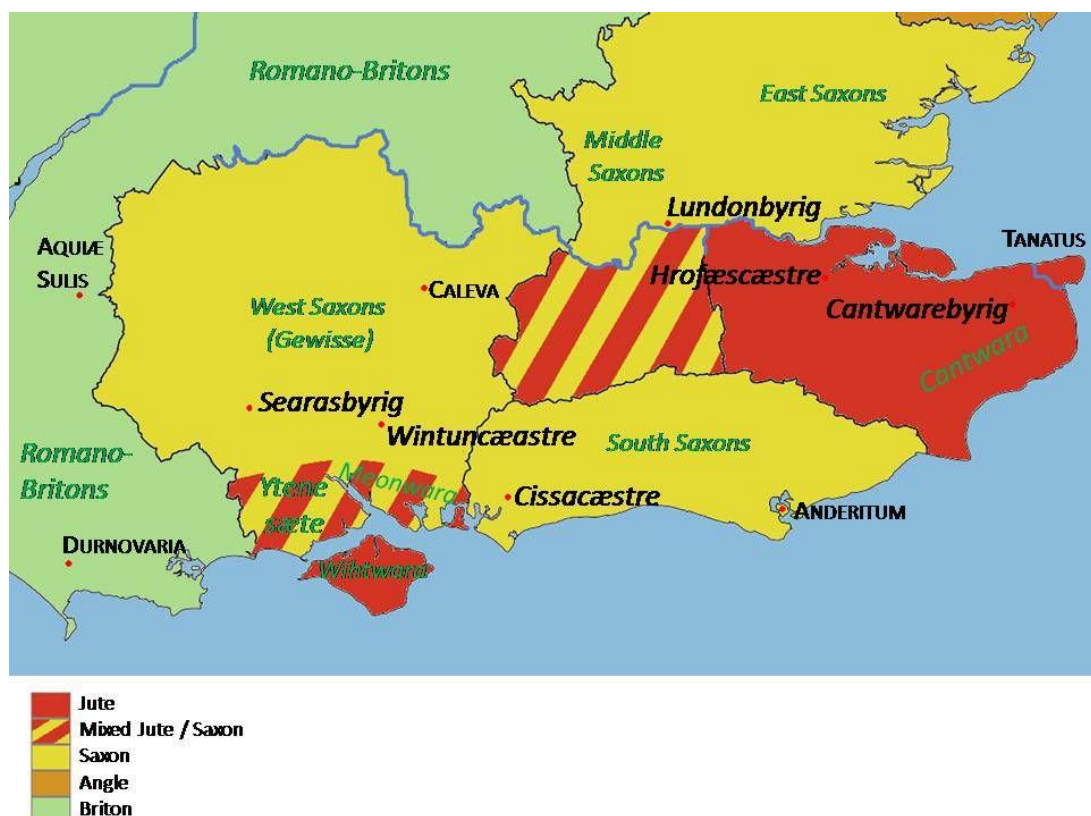


Which tribe settled in this area?

After the Romans left Essex went back to the control of the tribe of Britons known as Trinovantes, who had ruled before the Roman invasion although, after 400 years of Roman rule, many of the people had been influenced by Roman culture so were known as Romano-Britons.

Some Saxon soldiers had been brought to Britain by the Romans and were still living in the south of England, they were reinforced by more settlers from the part of Europe we now call Germany.

During the 7th century, the Basildon area was part of the Kingdom of the East Saxons – now referred to as the Kingdom of Essex. It was then one of the seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of England.

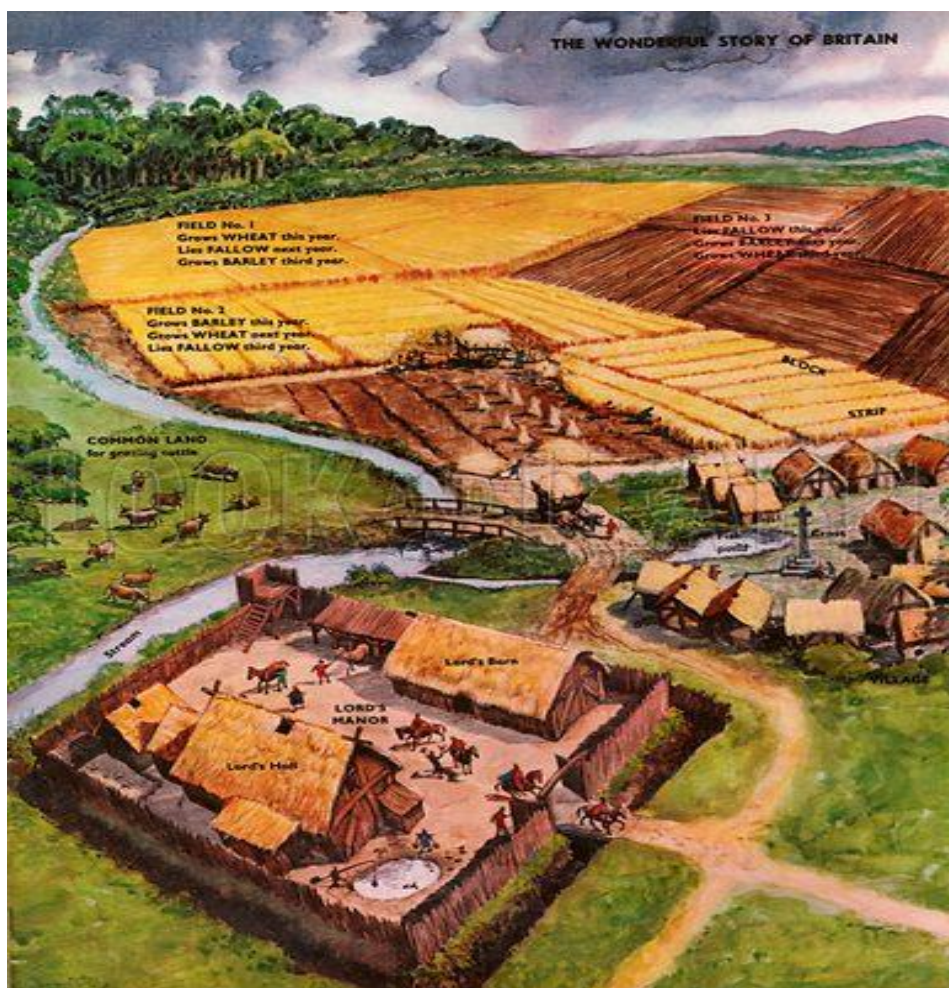


What evidence do we have that the Anglo Saxons lived here?

Throughout history, until the 20th century, the Basildon Borough area had been mostly farmland and woodland dotted with people living in farmhouses and cottages, small villages and a few small towns.

Most Anglo Saxon buildings were timber framed with thatched roofs so very few remain.

Sadly, very few artefacts have been discovered in this area from the Anglo Saxon period but archaeology has uncovered evidence of ancient field and ditch boundaries, raised banks and some building foundations that date back to that time.



An aerial view of an Anglo Saxon village

Great Burstead

In AD 604 the heathens were converted to Christianity by Mellitus, Bishop of the East Saxons, Pope Gregory's emissary to Britain. In the early Saxon period the local villages as we know them today began to take shape.

The Saxons preferred to settle away from Roman towns, so it is possible that the Basildon area became important at this time.



St Mary Magdlene Great Burstead

The site of Great Burstead Church was originally a Saxon settlement. The name Great Burstead is derived from the Saxon *burgh* (a fortified place) and *stead* (farmstead). Both terms suggest that it was a fortified settlement.

Sebert, first Christian King of Essex (King of the East Saxons), may have lived at Burstead and may even be buried in the area where the church now stands.

Foundations of an early wooden church built around 680 remain under the present building.

Billericay

Weaving was an important part of Anglo-Saxon life. In 1990 some Anglo-Saxon loom weights were found at the Billericay School. Weights were used on looms to keep yarn taut during the weaving process. Whilst the Romans and Celts used triangular weights, the Saxons used these circular ones.



What else did the Anglo Saxons leave behind?

One of the most obvious examples of the way Anglo- Saxons influenced our lives is in the language we use every day. In fact, the word English comes from the Anglo- Saxons.

Many of the names of the places where we live originate from this time.

Basildon



Glass Bell Tower Basildon

The name comes from 'Boerthal Hill'. Don (duna) is Anglo Saxon meaning 'hill' and Boerthal is a personal name.

The Domesday Book of 1086 spells the name as 'Berlesduna'. So Basildon is not just a New Town but is well over a thousand years old.

In historical documents, this name had various forms over the centuries, including Berdlesdon, Battlesdon and Belesduna.

Bowers Gifford



Old School London Road

The name Bowers comes from the Saxon 'Bura' meaning dwelling or dwellings.

Gifford was added several centuries later when the manor was granted to the Giffard family

The Bursteads



The name Burstead comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'Burhstede' meaning 'a fortified place'.

We are not really sure where the fortification was but it is believed to have been in the area of Great Burstead Church, St Mary Magdalene.



Before the Norman Conquest in 1066 Earl Godwin held the area we know today as Little Burstead, the father of King Harold. Great Burstead belonged to Inqvar, a thane.

Dunton



St Mary The Virgin Dunton, now a private house

The name Dunton Wayletts is taken from the Anglo-Saxon for Hill Town or settlement on or at a crossroad or path.

Today we only refer to the parish of Dunton but forty years ago the spot on the Arterial Road (A127) where the Ford Dunton flyover now is was known as Dunton Wayletts.

Fobbing (Vange)



Fobbing Farm

The parish of Fobbing north of the A13 has been absorbed into the Borough of Basildon. The northern section of the old Parish prior to the coming of the Basildon Development area butted onto Langdon Hills to the west, Vange and Basildon to the East and Lee Chapel/Laindon in the North.

To help you get your bearings the northern tip of the old parish includes Basildon Hospital and St Lukes Hospice as originally Fobbing Farm.

The name is of Saxon origin, possibly from a personal name, meaning 'the settlement of the people of Fobba'.

Laindon



The oldest known record of Laindon dates from 998 when one man from 'Ligeandune' was required for ship duty.

Laindon means 'Hill by the Lyge'. The Lyge is believed to be a Celtic river name and 'Dun' is Anglo Saxon for 'Hill'.

The Lyge springs from the hill upon which St Nicholas Church stands and is a tributary of the River Crouch but the source has not yet been found.

Langdon Hills



High Road from Crown Hill

Langdon Hills appears in the Domesday Book as Langeduna, being derived from the Anglo Saxon meaning 'Long Hill', 'Lang' meaning 'long' and 'Dun', as we know, meaning 'hill'.

Lee Chapel



Sunset over Lee Chapel

The parish of Lee Chapel links the two parishes of Laindon and Langdon Hills together.

Lee is derived from the Anglo Saxon 'Leam' meaning 'woodland' clearing. Chapel was added at a later date, the chapel was somewhere in the area near the junction of The Knares and Stanway.

Nevendon



Nevendon Hall

Domesday records the name as 'Nezendena', Anglo Saxon for 'at the flat valley'.

North Benfleet



Farm Cottages

North Benfleet is obviously the northern part of the old parish of Benfleet.

Benfleet gets a very early mention in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle of 894, which tells us the Viking fleet was destroyed at Beamfleote by the English. Beamfleote means 'a creek inlet within the woods close by' or 'creek with timbers'.

Pitsea



St Michaels Church Tower Pitsea Mount

Very little is known of the early history of Pitsea, the earliest recorded name, which is in the Domesday Book, is 'Piceseia', a Saxon word meaning Island or low-lying land in marsh or Pics' Island, which refers to the area now known as Pitsea Mount.

Ramsden Bellhouse



Bridge over River Crouch from St Mary's Church to Crays Hill

The name, 'Ramsden', is believed to be derived from 'Ramasdenna' (Domesday Book, 1086), meaning 'Little wooded valley of the ravens'.

The Belhus family moved to the area in the 13th Century adding their name to the area of land they owned.

Vange



Swan Mead School Vange

We first find a mention of Vange back in 963 when King Edgar sold Fengge to Thegn Ingeram who, the same year, sold Fenge to Dunstan, Archbishop of Christ Church and Canterbury.

It was spelt 'Phenge' in the Domesday Book and in the Saxon language 'Van' meant a 'fen' or 'marsh'. The suffix 'ge' meant 'district'.

Wickford



Willowdale Centre Wickford 1970s

Wickford is Saxon in origin. Wick means either a winding river, or village, habitation, castle or dairy farm. Ford is a shallow river crossing, or as it has been suggested a 'sheep farm on a river crossing'.

The earliest reference we can find is in 980 AD when Aethelflaed, widow of King Edmund gave Wicforda to her kinsman Sibriht. However, we know that the town of Wickford was inhabited in prehistoric times and there was a considerable amount of Roman activity in the area.

The towns name has been written as Wickeford, Wyckford or Wygford.