***The 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th centuries***

***The traditional date for the end of Roman Britain is 410CE (though in reality it was all a lot more complicated!). The first recorded Viking raid of England was in 793AD. So what went on in between? This is the first half of the early Midlle ages!***

**Power and conflict**

In the 5th century, Roman Britain was being invaded from all sides. From what is now Denmark and north Germany, came the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. The Romano-Britain Gildas wrote that God was punishing the British. Each war band had a leader and strong leaders became 'cyning' (king). There were many wars between these kings, but by about 600CE there were five who were most important. These were the kings of Kent, Mercia, Northumbria, Wessex and East Anglia. Sometimes there was a 'bretwalda', meaning ruler of all. By the 8th century these invaders were known across Europe as the Anglo-Saxons, and they called themselves the ‘Anglii’, or ‘English’. York, known as Eoforwic, became part of the kingdom of Northumbria and the ‘-wic’ suggests it was important.

**Faith and fears**

The invaders were pagans and we can assume that they destroyed Roman Christianity where they found it. They believed in many gods, the chief of whom was Woden. Wednesday is Wodensdag and other gods’ names were used for days e.g. Tiwesdag and Frigedag. At the end of the 6th century, Christian missionaries from Rome and Ireland began converting the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. Edwin King of Northumbria converted in 627CE and was baptised in a wooden chapel in York – the very first York Minster.

**Home and health**

Life was hard. People relied on herbs, faith and good health to see them through. There were no doctors. Life was violent, most people died young and childbirth was life-threatening.

Reconstructed Anglo-Saxon house

**Art and Architecture**

The Anglo-Saxons are famous for their metal work and their illumination of manuscripts. Smiths had status in the community – the most common English family name is ‘Smith’. Monks illuminated holy books that are now world treasures.

  

Purse cover and helmet from the Sutton Hoo ship burial The Lindisfarne Gospels

**News and views**

The monk Bede never left the north-east of England, but his ‘Ecclesiastical History of the English People’ written in 731 is world famous and our best source of information for England in the early Anglo-Saxon period.

Alcuin was Eoforwic’s most famous son. Born in the 730s, he was given to York Minster as a child and became a star scholar. He worked as a teacher in York and went to Rome in 781. On his way home he met the great king of the Franks, Charlemagne, who persuaded him to stay and be one of his chief educational and religious advisers, and a founder of schools. He established a great library at Aachen and it became arguably north-west Europe’s first university.

**Wider world**

Europe in 700 looked rather different from the Europe we know today.

**Medieval remains**

Manuscripts and metalwork remain and are now great treasures. However, the greatest influence the Anglo-Saxons had upon today is that the modern version of their language is now the most widely learnt second language. It’s how the world communicates!

*“Hwæt is þin nama? ["hwat iss thin nam-uh"]*