

Lecture 3: The Anglo Saxons and the Vikings**Revision of Lecture 2**

1. **The Iberians:** during the Neolithic period, the Iberians who arrived from the South of Europe populated Britain. They left remains at Salisbury plains called “Stonehenge”.
 2. **The Celts** arrived in **700 B.C.** from the north west of Germany. In our recent time, their language remains “**Welsh**” in Wales and “**Gaelic**” in Scotland. They were farmers, anglers, hunters and metalworkers. Their leaders and heroes were warriors. Their religious men called the Druids focused on education, medicine, religion and justice.
 3. **The Romans:** invaded Britain in **55 B.C.** but did not conquer it as Emperor Claudius (**43-47**) had already conquered it. The Romans introduced their culture and language. They also built cities, roads, villas, baths, Etc. Most of towns they built used to be military camps (**Castra**) like Lancaster, Gloucester, and Manchester. **The Romans** wanted to invade Scotland but they failed. **Emperor Hadrian** ordered to build **the Hadrian Wall** to make a border between the Britons and the Scots. Nowadays, long stretches of this wall still exist.
- I. **The Anglo Saxons (410-1066)** the Germanic invasion was colonial rather than large-scale settlement. However, during the **5th** century some tribes came from northwestern Europe and settled down in large numbers. Among them were the “**Angles**” and the “**Saxons**” who invaded the southeast of Britain and came from **Germany** whereas the **Jutes** came from **Denmark**. In the west, the Celtic army of Britons under the command of their hero King Arthur stopped their invasion*. Nevertheless, by the end of the **6th** century, they and their culture spread across almost all England and in regions of southern Scotland. What happened to Celtic Britons? They were either Saxonized or escaped to the west and south west of **Scotland, Wales and Cornwall** where their culture could take hold and survive.

I. **a. Christianity in Britain:**

The Anglo Saxons were pagan when they came to Britain. Christianity reached Britain only in the 6th to 7th centuries from Rome when St. Augustine arrived in the year 597 and established his headquarters at Canterbury in the south east of England. It had already been introduced into northern England, Scotland and Ireland, which were Christianized more than 150 years earlier.

***King Arthur:** King Arthur is a great example of distortion of popular history. He was a legendary leader and hero who had loyal Knights of the Round Table. They provide a perfect image of chivalry and nobility in the Medieval Ages. In fact, he lived before the MA and was a Romanized Celt who tried to hold back the invasion of the Anglo Saxons “the very people who would become the English”.

II. **The Vikings:** another Germanic invasion that came to Britain in the 8th century was the invasion of Vikings, Norseman and Danes from Scandinavia. In the 9th century, they invaded Scotland and parts of Ireland. However, King Alfred of Saxons Kingdom of **Wessex** halted their invasion. As a result, England was divided into regions, Wessex in the south and west, and the “Dane law”, ‘kingdom of Vikings’ in the north and east.

III. **a. King Alfred of Wessex and the Vikings:** he was the only Saxon to fight against the Vikings. He was not a military leader but was keen on education, translation of literary works from Latin to English as well as writing the history of England: the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. He also made the English law official. Because he was a great leader, he was named ‘**Alfred the Great**’- and this title was given only to King Alfred. He is also popularly famous for **the story of the burning of cakes**.

Source

Britain by James O’DRISCOLL, 2006, Oxford University Press.