



**What have we learnt in this topic before and what we will learn this year?**

In Year 3, we learnt about the 'Stone Age to the Iron Age' and also the 'Ancient Egyptians'.

In Year 4, we then learnt about the Romans. These were all periods of time that preceded the Viking and Anglo-Saxon era.

This year we will be learning about the change of power within Britain from the Anglo-Saxon reign to the invasion of the Vikings.

**ENRICHING THE CURRICULUM**

To bring this unit to life, we visit the Chiltern Open Air Museum to spend some time recreating life in the Viking period.



**Timeline**

AD 793  
The Vikings attack from Norway. They attack the Monastery of Lindisfarne in Northumbria. The following year they attack northern Britain, in what we now call Scotland.

AD 866  
The Vikings capture the city of York and by 878 they had settled permanently in England, overran Wessex and forced King Alfred into hiding.

AD 871  
Alfred the Great becomes King of Wessex. He drives the invading Vikings from the south but they stay in the north and the east.

AD 886  
King Alfred agrees to a treaty with the Vikings. Alfred keeps the west & the Vikings are given the east which is later known as 'Danelaw'.

AD 954  
The last Viking King of Jorvik (York), Eric Bloodaxe, is forced out of York.

AD 1013  
King Sven of Denmark and his son Cnut sail up the rivers Humber and Trent to claim the throne in Danelaw and the Saxon King (Ethelred) flees abroad. A year later Cnut becomes the King of the Danes and King of England.

AD 1042  
Edward II is invited to return from Normandy to become the King of England. Edward II was better known as 'Edward the Confessor' due to his extreme piety.

AD 1066  
The last Anglo-Saxon king, King Harold, is defeated by William the Conqueror at the battle of Hastings and Norman Britain begins.



**LIFE BEFORE THE VIKINGS INVADED**

**Growing up in an Anglo-Saxon village**  
Anglo-Saxon children had to grow up very quickly. By the time they were ten, they were seen as an adult. They had to work as hard as any adult and would be punished as adults if they stole or broke the law. Girls worked in the home. They were in charge of housekeeping, weaving cloth, cooking meals, making cheese and brewing ale. Boys learned the skills of their fathers. They learned to chop down trees with an axe, plough a field, and use a spear in battle.

They also fished and went hunting with other men from the village. Only a few girls and boys learned to read and write. The sons of kings or wealthy families might be taught at home by a private teacher. The only schools were run by the Christian church, in monasteries. Some children lived there to train as monks and nuns.

**What jobs did the Anglo-Saxons do?**  
Life on an Anglo-Saxon farm was hard work. All the family had to help out - men, women and children. Men cut down trees to clear land for ploughing and to sow crops. Farmers used oxen to pull ploughs up and down long strip fields. Children with dogs herded cattle and sheep. The Anglo-Saxons were great craftsmen too. Metalworkers made iron tools, knives and swords.

The Anglo-Saxons were skilled jewellers, who made beautiful brooches, beads and ornaments from gold, gemstones and glass. The Anglo-Saxons had armies, but their soldiers didn't fight all the time. After a battle, they went home as soon as they could and looked after their animals and crops.



**LIFE AFTER THE VIKINGS INVADED**

The Vikings were not all bloodthirsty raiders. Some came to fight, but others came to Britain to live peacefully. Their longships brought families who settled in villages. There were farmers, who kept animals and grew crops, and skilful craft workers, who made beautiful metalwork and wooden carvings. Everyone lived together in a large home called a longhouse. The Vikings also brought with them their way of life and beliefs. The Norse people worshipped many gods and loved to tell stories of magic and monsters around the fire.

**What jobs did Vikings do?**  
Many Vikings worked as farmers. Everything had to be done by hand on a Viking farm, so life was tough. Farmers grew oats, barley and wheat. Then they ground the grain to make flour, porridge and ale. They planted vegetables too, and kept animals like cows, sheep, pigs and chickens. Other Vikings were craft workers. They made the things that people needed. Woodworkers and leatherworkers made plates, cups, belts and shoes. Jewellers made rings and brooches from precious metals. Blacksmiths hammered and twisted red-hot iron into tools, knives and swords. Potters baked clay pots in an oven heated by wood fires. People took these goods to market to sell. Here a family could buy anything from amber beads and apples, to walrus tusks and wolf-skins. Viking traders sold their goods even further away. They sailed the seas to buy silver, silk, spices and furs to bring back home.

**Where did Vikings live?**  
Many Viking families lived together in a longhouse. This was built from wood or stone and had a thatched or turf roof on top. With just one room for all the family to share with their animals, a longhouse would have been a crowded and smelly place to live. There was no bathroom inside, but the Vikings kept clean by washing in a wooden bucket or beside a stream. Instead of toilets, people used a cesspit, which was a hole outside dug for toilet waste.

**What was Viking society like?**  
At the top of Viking society was the king. He was the most powerful person in all the land and everyone looked up to him. Being a king cost a lot of money, because they had to make sure their kingdom was safe and that their followers were loyal to them. Below the king were the nobles or wealthy Vikings known as jarls. They were rich landowners or traders and they employed men to work for them. Then there were the karls. They were the everyday people and did jobs like farming and craft work. Karls weren't as rich or important as the jarls, but they weren't poor either. At the bottom of the pile were the thralls or slaves. They did the hardest, dirtiest jobs and if they tried to run away they could be killed. However, if thralls could earn enough money they could buy their freedom.



**LINDISFARNE MONASTERY**

Lindisfarne, also known as Holy Island, was one of the first landing sites of the Vikings. Monasteries were places where monks lived and worshipped. Most people respected the monks and gave them money and gifts for their monasteries; however, the Vikings committed terrible violence against the Monks at Lindisfarne.



**BATTLE OF HASTINGS**

It might have taken place 950 years ago, but the Battle of Hastings remains one of the most famous battles in English history.

The bloody battle took place on the 14 October 1066. It was fought between William of Normandy and King Harold – the King of England – and it was the English throne that was at stake.

The Normans were victorious, beating the Anglo-Saxons (the English to you and me). King Harold was killed and William of Normandy became King. Norman language and culture then began to influence the country and changed the future of England.



**KING ALFRED THE GREAT**

Alfred the Great (849-899) was the most famous of the Anglo-Saxon kings. Despite overwhelming odds he successfully defended his kingdom, Wessex, against the Vikings. He also introduced wide-ranging reforms including defence measures, reform of the law and of coinage.

He was a keen champion of education and translated important texts from Latin into English.

Known as a just and fair ruler, Alfred is the only English King to have earned the title 'the Great'.

**Top 5 Facts**

- He had four older brothers who all ruled as king before he did.
- By 870 Northumberland, East Anglia and Mercia has all fallen to the Vikings. Wessex was the only Anglo-Saxon kingdom to hold out against the Vikings.
- In 870 Alfred and his brother Aethelred fought nine battles against the Vikings.
- In 879 Alfred won a decisive victory against the Vikings at Edington.
- Alfred believed that all free born English boys should receive an education and he set up a school at his court to educate his sons, as well as those of the nobles and



**EDWARD THE CONFESSOR**

Edward the Confessor was an Anglo-Saxon King of England. He was the last king from the House of Wessex. Edward was a stepson of Canute the Great and after the death of his half brother Harthacnut, the son of Canute; he briefly resumed the rule of House of Wessex. He is remembered as a pious ruler who was resourceful and energetic.

He successfully defended his kingdom against invasions but after his death, his successor Harold Godwinson was unable to withstand a ruthless Norman conquest and within months England had fallen to the hordes of William the Conqueror. Almost a hundred years after his death, Edward the confessor was canonized by Pope Alexander III. He remained patron saint of England till 1350, when King Edward III approved Saint George as the patron saint of England.

**Top 5 Facts**

- Edward was the son of King Ethelred the Unready and his wife Queen Emma. He had a brother, Alfred, and a sister, Godgifu, and many half-brothers.
- In 1013 the Danes invaded England and Edward and his family escaped to Normandy. His mother, Emma, was a Norman and daughter of the Duke of Normandy
- Edward spent almost twenty-five years in Normandy and when he became King many of his closest advisors were Normans.
- Although Edward was the King of England, much of the power rested in the hands of three Saxon Earls: Leofric of Mercia, Sward of Northumbria and Godwin of Wessex.
- Edward disliked the most powerful of the Earls, Earl Godwin, because of the role Godwin had played in the death of Edward's brother Alfred.



**WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR**

The King of England, Edward the Confessor, died in 1066. He did not leave any heirs to the throne, but William was related to the king through Edward's uncle, Richard III. William also claimed that Edward had promised him the crown. However, there were other men who also claimed the crown of England. One of them was the most powerful noble in England at the time, Harold Godwinson.

The people of England wanted Harold to be king and crowned him King Harold II on January 6, 1066, the day after King Edward died. Another man who claimed the English throne was King Hardrada of Norway. When King Hardrada of Norway invaded England and King Harold II went to meet him in battle, William saw his chance. He gathered an army and crossed the English Channel making camp near the city of Hastings.

After King Harold II defeated the Norwegian invaders, he turned south to face William. William, however, was ready for battle. William had brought archers and heavily armored cavalry called knights. Harold's foot soldiers were no match for William's forces and William won the battle and King Harold II was killed by an arrow.

William continued to march across England and eventually captured the city of London. Shortly after, on December 25, 1066, William was crowned king of England.



**Key Vocabulary**

- Viking   Lindisfarne   Anglo-Saxon   Longboat   Axe   Shield   Scandanavia   Denmark   York   Monastery   Danelaw