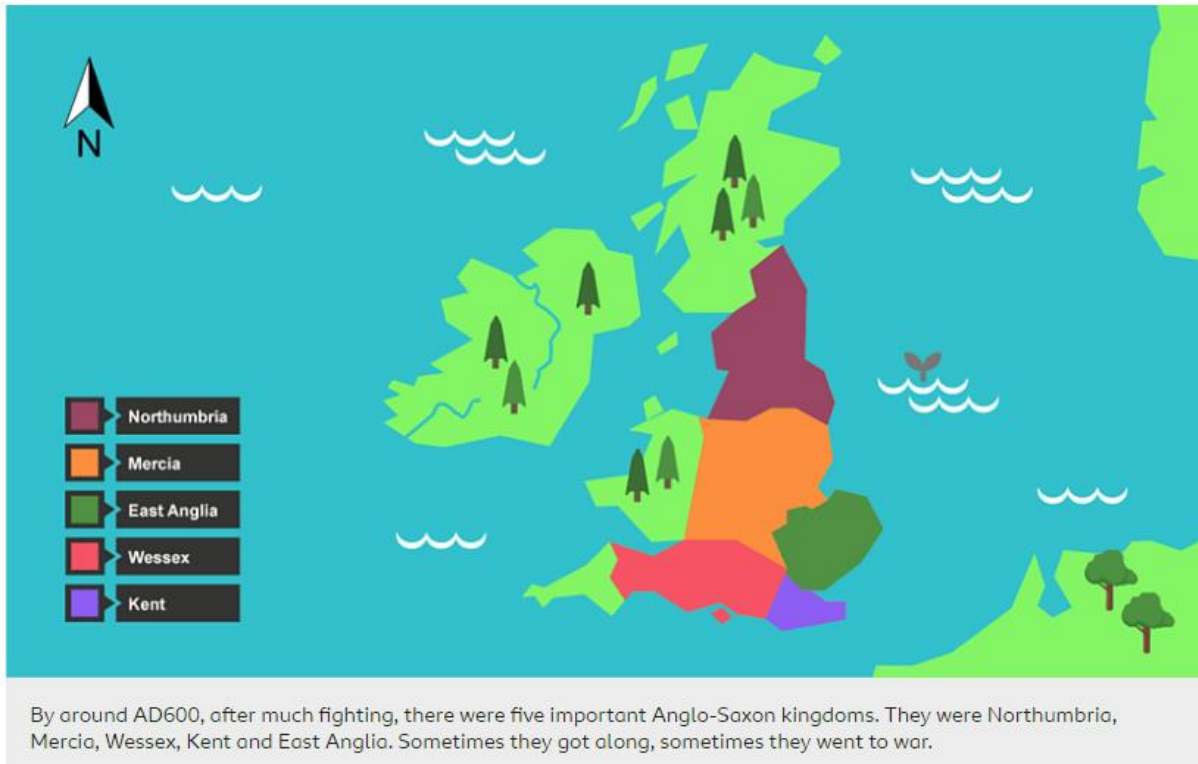


How was Anglo-Saxon Britain ruled?

Anglo-Saxon Britain wasn't ruled by one person and the Anglo-Saxons were not united. They invaded as many different tribes and each took over different parts of Britain.

Each group of Anglo-Saxon settlers had a leader or war-chief. A strong and successful leader became 'cyning', the Anglo-Saxon word for 'king'. Each king ruled a kingdom and led a small army.

From time to time, the strongest king would claim to be 'bretwalda', which meant ruler of all Britain.



Did they have laws?

The Anglo-Saxons didn't have prisons. People found guilty of crimes were either executed or punished with fines.

If they ran away, they became 'outlaws' (outside the law), and anyone could hunt them down - unless they hid in a church. The fine for breaking into someone's home was five shillings (25p), paid to the home-owner. For minor crimes like stealing, a nose or a hand might be cut off.

The Saxons had a system called 'weregild', which meant that if you injured someone, you had to pay for the damage!

If a person killed someone, they paid money to the dead person's relatives. The idea was to stop long fights or 'blood feuds' between families by making them pay money instead.