

Anglo-Saxon and Scots Invaders

By around 410AD, the last of the Romans had left Britain to go and defend their own country as invaders who wanted to take over their land were attacking them. This meant England was left to look after itself for the first time in about 400 years even though it was still under constant attack from the Picts, Scots and Saxons. Emperor Honorius told the people to defend themselves, but after being protected by Roman soldiers for so long they were not prepared for fighting!



The Scotti, who came from Ireland, were descendants of the Picts, who had earlier invaded Ireland around 200AD. Historians believe that these Irish Scots invaded and took land in Scotland in the 4th and 5th centuries. The Scots divided the land in Scotland into 4 separate kingdoms, which were named Dal Riata, Pictland, Strathclyde and Bernicia. The Picts and the Scots were always trying to get into England and take more land for themselves and it was hard for the people in England to fight them off without help from the Romans. The Picts and Scots were described as 'foul' and with 'a lust for blood' by an historian from the time, called Gildas. They are said to have jumped over Hadrian's Wall, killing everyone in their way.

The British King Vortigem was left in charge after the Roman armies left, but he found it difficult to organise troops to hold back the Picts and Scots. Vortigem was worried that these powerful and excellent fighters would take over in England. Then Vortigem had an idea how he could keep the Picts and Scots out of England. He asked two brothers called Hengest and Horsa from Jutland to come and fight for him and keep England safe from the Picts and Scots.



Hengest and Horsa were glad to help and they fought well to keep the Picts and Scots out. However, the men liked what they found in England and decided that they wanted to stay and take land for themselves. They knew that the people were not strong fighters so they would be easy to control. Hengest and Horsa brought more warriors to England and over time the invaders began to settle and the Brits were pushed farther and farther out!

The brothers and their warriors weren't the only ones who had their sights set on taking over land in England. Other tribes had also been invading for some time, and without Roman protection the Brits could not keep them out. We know these invaders as the Anglo-Saxons because the two biggest invading tribes were called the Angles and the Saxons. Other invaders were the Jutes, Franks and Frisians. They came from the modern places of Germany, Holland and Denmark.

The Anglo-Saxons went on to rule in England until the 11th century AD. It was William the Conqueror from Normandy's victory over King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings in 1066AD that marked a dramatic end to Anglo-Saxon rule and saw the beginning of the Norman era.



Questions

1. By what time had the last of the Romans left Britain?

2. What groups of people were attacking England at this time?

3. Why were the British people not prepared for fighting?

4. Who were the Scotti people? Where did they come from?

5. What were the names of the 4 kingdoms the Scots split Scotland into?

6. Why was King Vortigern worried about the Scots and the Picts?

7. Who did King Vortigern ask for help? Where did these men come from?

8. Why are the Anglo-Saxons called the Anglo-Saxons?

9. Until when did the Anglo-Saxon rule in England?

10. What happened at the Battle of Hastings?

Answers

1. By what time had the last of the Romans left Britain?
The last of the Romans had left Britain by around 410AD.
2. What groups of people were attacking England at this time?
The Picts, Scots and Saxons were attacking England at this time.
3. Why were the British people not prepared for fighting?
The British people were not prepared for fighting because they had been protected by Roman soldiers for so long.
4. Who were the Scotti people? Where did they come from?
The Scotti were descendants of the Picts and they came from Ireland.
5. What were the names of the 4 kingdoms the Scots split Scotland into?
The 4 kingdoms were called Dal Riata, Pictland, Strathclyde and Bernicia.
6. Why was King Vortigern worried about the Scots and the Picts?
King Vortigern was worried because the Scots and Picts were excellent fighters and he thought they might try to take over England.
7. Who did King Vortigern ask for help? Where did these men come from?
King Vortigern asked for help from two brothers, Hengest and Horsa. They came from Jutland.
8. Why are the Anglo-Saxons called the Anglo-Saxons?
The Anglo-Saxons are called this because the two biggest invading tribes were called the Angles and the Saxons.
9. Until when did the Anglo-Saxons rule in England?
The Anglo-Saxons ruled in England until the 11th century AD.
10. What happened at the Battle of Hastings?
William the Conqueror defeated King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings, which marked an end to Anglo-Saxon rule and saw the beginning of the Norman era.