

Anglo Saxon England



For most of the Anglo-Saxon period England wasn't one country but made up of several kingdoms. These changed as some got larger and others were taken over by their neighbours. England was finally unified under King Edgar in 973 AD.



Locate some key places associated with this period on this map:

- Canterbury
- Kent
- London
- Denmark
- Norway
- Sweden
- France



There were seven main Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms before 973 AD. Some of them have familiar names.

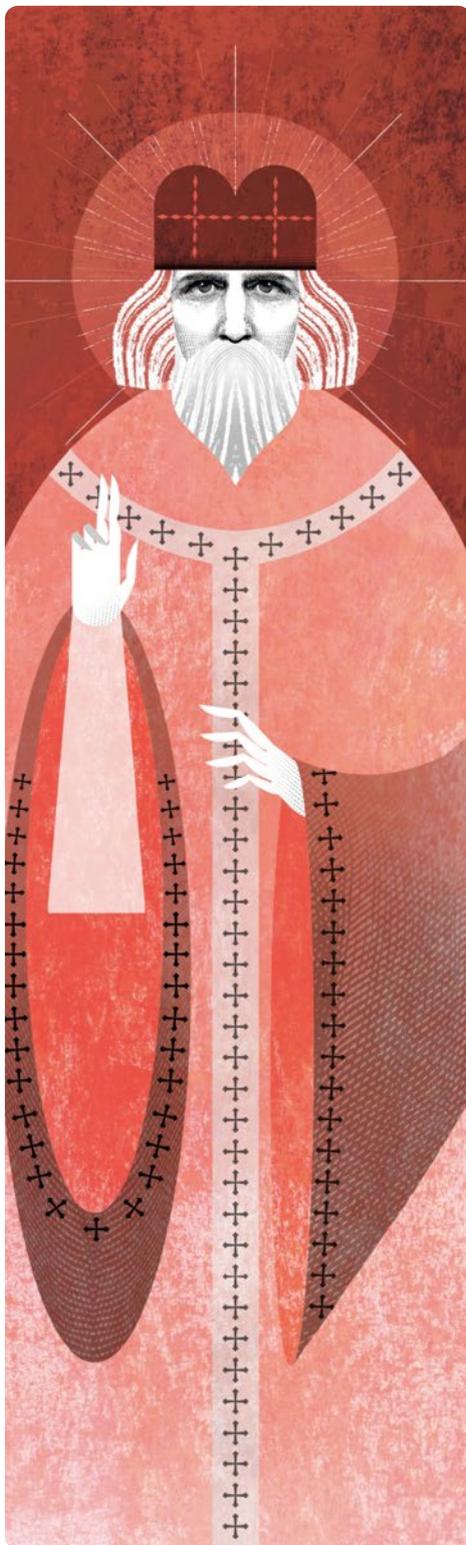
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What are their names as we know them by today?

Northumbria East Anglia Wessex
Essex Sussex Mercia Kent

Saint Augustine

Not much is known about Saint Augustine's life before he was sent by Pope Gregory the Great to England. We do know he was a monk in Rome and therefore he must have been well educated and used to living in a civilised city. Rome was considered to be one of the greatest cities in the world at this time and would have been a safe and comfortable place to live with decent plumbing and a warm climate. This might explain why Augustine was apparently less than keen about his mission to England. The Venerable Bede, an English Historian, who wrote over one hundred years after Saint Augustine's mission, records that Augustine and the other monks were not happy being sent to England.



“ They set off obediently, but were soon seized with terror and wanted to return home instead of going to this barbarous, fierce and unbelieving nation where they did not even know the language.

The monks tried to return home but Pope Gregory wrote them a stern letter to encourage them to keep going.

“ Do not let the toil of the journey or the tongues of men discourage you.

Pope Gregory reminded them that they would be rewarded in Heaven for their bravery.

Saint Augustine



Imagine you are Augustine or one of his fellow monks. Discuss all the reasons why you have to go to England and all the reasons why you don't want to go to England.

Create a travel diary, either presenting it as a Vlog or in written form, showing how Augustine is feeling as he leaves Rome and makes his way to Kent. Remember the journey will take at least three months. It will involve walking over the Alps and crossing the English Channel.

What other difficulties might Augustine experience?

Reasons to go to England

Reasons not to go to England

Travel Diary

Saint Bertha

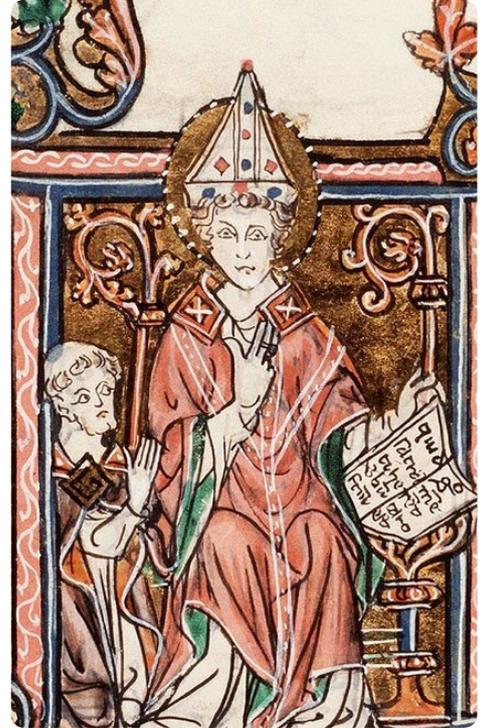
Queen Bertha (b. early 560s - d. after 604) was a French princess who married King Ethelbert of Kent, one of the most powerful Kings in Saxon England. She was a Christian and part of the marriage agreement was that she should be allowed to continue to practice as a Christian, even when she moved to Kent.

Most Saxons at this time were pagan. This means that they were not Christian but

worshipped many different gods. Some of our days of the week are still named after these gods, for example Tuesday is named after Tiw, the god of war, Wednesday is named after Woden, the chief Saxon god and Friday is named after his wife Freyja.

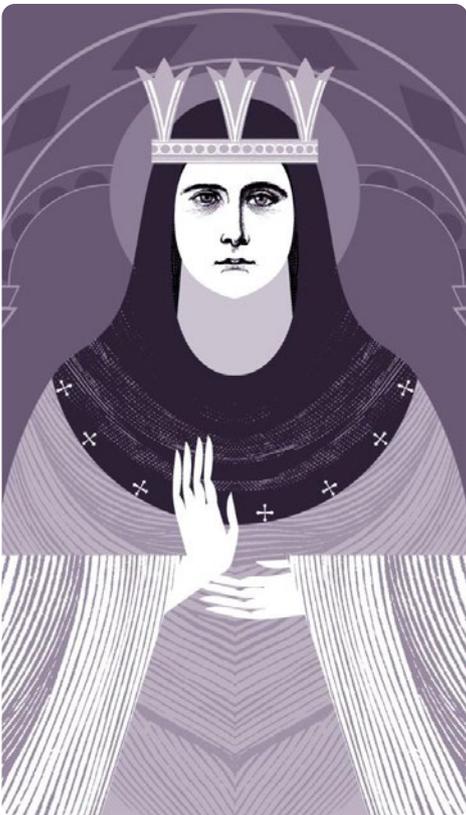
Pope Gregory wanted St Augustine (with Queen Bertha's help) to convert the English to Christianity, but this would not be easy. A letter sent from Pope Gregory to Bertha in 601 tells Bertha that she should be doing more to convert her husband to Christianity, but he also thanked her for the warm welcome St Augustine received.

When St Augustine first arrived, the King did not want to let him into the City of Canterbury because some people were worried the monks might be sorcerers. To be safe, the King arranged to meet the monks in the open air on the Isle of Thanet, near modern day Ramsgate, where St Augustine and his monks had just arrived after their long journey from Rome.



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King Ethelbert did give St Augustine land to build an Abbey outside Canterbury, which is now called St Augustine's Abbey. He also passed laws to protect the Christian Church. He was the first Saxon king to convert to Christianity (soon after the Pope's letter to Queen Bertha). A few years after her death, Queen Bertha was made a saint to recognise her persuasiveness and hard work in helping convert the English to Christianity.



Saint Bertha



- a. Imagine you are Queen Bertha. Deliver a persuasive argument to your husband, King Ethelbert, about why he should become a Christian.



- b. Imagine you are King Ethelbert and your wife is trying to convert you to Christianity. Deliver a persuasive argument to remain pagan.



You could deliver these arguments in the form of a debate and ask your audience to vote for who they felt won the debate.