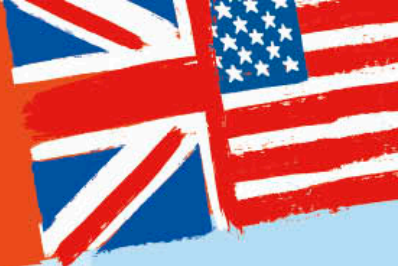# EVERYTHING YOU WERE NEVER TOLD!

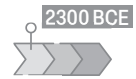## Fiches de **civilisation britannique** et **américaine**

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ellipses

The Beaker People: First inhabitants of the British Isles?

Some 4,000 years ago, a group of people, farmers that we know very little about, arrived in the British Isles, with a distinctive form of pottery, called "beaker pottery". That pottery was also found in other places across Europe; but for many years people believed that it was simply a fashion. Now, thanks to DNA analysis of gravesites and examination of bones, it has become evident that these people were of the same ethnic group.

In today's world in which some are vociferous about migration, in an attempt to stem it, they fail to look back into their own pasts and see that everyone comes from some form of migratory experience, at some point in time. The creation of the nation-state has marred that, however.

The Beaker people were the second population of farmers who migrated to the British Isles. DNA analysis suggests that they would have had light-to-medium coloured skin, with light hair, and light eyes. They migrated from continental Europe, the Eurasian Steppe, and their arrival saw the end of the Neolithic period, and the start of the Early Bronze Age. They replaced the Neolithic people who had migrated from modern-day Turkey and arrived in the British Isles around 6,000 years ago. They came from the Mediterranean and were a farming population also. DNA analysis of skeletons suggests that they would have had brown hair, and brown eyes, and intermediate-to-dark-brown skin tones.

Before these Neolithic people, around 11,700 years ago, when glaciers receded, and sea levels were still low enough, hunter-gathers migrated to the British Isles and lived in small populations there. DNA analysis suggests that they would have had blue eyes, or blue-green eyes, and their skin would have been intermediate brown to black, with dark hair.

Perhaps the most-famous skeletal remains to be found in the British Isles, are the skeleton of what is known as the Cheddar Man the almost-complete skeleton of an adult male in his twenties, unearthed in 1903. Analysis of his DNA shows that he was a Western-European hunter-gather, and would have had blue or green eyes, black hair and dark or dark black skin. His remains are on show at the London Natural History Museum.

He was, soon after the discovery, billed as the first Englishman. However, since the notion of England did not exist at the time that he lived, it seems rather strange. The oldest remains ever to be found in the British Isles are that of Homo heidelbergensis, in fact, dated at around 500,000 years ago. Cheddar Man is, however, the oldest almost-complete skeleton in the British Isles to be found to date. Neanderthals would have arrived in the British Isles around 400,000 years ago. A skull of a young Neanderthal female was discovered in Swanscombe, Kent.

The Celts arrived in the British Isles around 1,000 BCE. After the Celts, there were the Romans (arriving in c. 43 CE, until around c. 410 CE), and then the Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, Jutes in c. 449 CE) Slavs, and Huns (600 CE). The Vikings should also be added to the long list of migrants (around 793 CE) into the British Isles. We can't forget the Normans either in 1066, or William the Conqueror.

To Remember

- What happened to the pre-Beaker population of the British Isles is today unknown. There is no evidence that they were killed or replaced. Suggestions have been made that either they were not resistant to new diseases, brought by the Beaker migrants, that they were naturally declining, they moved away, or that there was climate change.
- But 90% of the previous gene pool was replaced at the time by the incoming migrant group from the continent.

- The Beaker people are the first people to have a phenotype similar to the majority of modern-day British people.
- Cheddar Man, the "first Englishman", was most likely black skinned. It is believed that Europeans acquired whiter skin over time, in order to absorb light more, and subsequently levels of vitamin D.

📖 Vocabulary

Some	Quelques		Skeletal remains	Vestiges squelettiques
Farmers	Fermiers / Agriculteurs		In his twenties	Dans la vingtaine
Pottery	Poterie		To unearth	Déterrer
Beaker	Beaker (bécher / gobelet)		Remains	Vestiges / Restes
Gravesites	Sépultures		On show	Exposés
Bones	Os		To be billed	Être présenté comme
Vociferous	Vocifère		In fact	En fait
DNA	ADN		Skull	Crâne
To suggest	Suggérer		To be discovered	Être découvert
Skin	Peau		Celts	Celtes
Neolithic period	Période néolithique		Then	Puis
Early Bronze Age	L'Âge du Bronze ancien		Should	Devrait
Turkey	Turquie		To add	Ajouter
British Isles	Îles britanniques		To forget	Oublier
Skeletons	Squelettes		Either	Soit / Non plus
Around	Autour de		William the Conqueror	Guillaume le Conquérant
Glaciers	Glaciers		Unknown	Inconnu
To recede	Reculer		Disease	Maladie
Sea levels	Niveaux de la mer		To decline	Décliner / Baisser
Low	Bas		Climate change	Changement climatique
Hunter-gathers	Chasseurs-cueilleurs			

2 Did the Anglo-Saxons really arrive in exactly 449 CE?
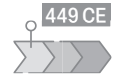
It is often believed that when the Roman Empire collapsed in the 5th century CE, all the Romans left the British Isles and moved out, going somewhere else. This seems like a nice story, even more so by those who wish to construct an untrue reading of the history of the peoples of the British Isles, but it is nothing more than that: a story.

Historically, the Roman Empire declined over a greater period of time, and gradually some people left to go elsewhere, while others remained in the British Isles. With the collapse of the Roman Empire, however, Britain entered the Dark Ages, and saw great changes in terms of social make-up, economic decline, and fragmentation politically, after the centralised structure afforded by the Romans. This period also opened up the possibility of the migration of the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes, and the setting up of their kingdoms and the emergence of Anglo-Saxon England in places such as Mercia, Wessex, and Northumbria, which would then vie for power.

The local Romano-British people who remained behind had difficulty, without the legions behind them, to enforce their decisions and maintain order. There were increased raids taking place also by the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings, before they migrated and settled there on a more-permanent basis. These groups of people all merged into one group over hundreds of years and became assimilated together. While Christianity had been introduced during the Roman Empire's period of control of the British Isles, it continued after the Romans left. It was a source of unity, cohesion, an also unified forms of learning, writing, and recording of events.

Our understanding today of these periods of time are assisted by the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (*Historia ecclestiastica gentis Anglorum)* by the Venerable Bede (b. 672 or 673 CE) in the Kingdom of Northumbria. He was a prolific writer and made contributions to such fields of study as theology, history, and linguistics, amongst others.

Bede, despite the period of time in which he lived, had a modern approach to history, emphasizing the importance of using documentary sources, eye-witness accounts, and critical analysis. However, there are occasions when he is not accurate. He is tainted by ethnic bias, believing that people in the British Isles are solely descended from the Anglo-Saxons and that they have always been Christians. This was not the case for the people who preceded and mixed into the populations. He favoured the Anglo-Saxon point of view, which we now know to be different (see following chapter). He also, as a religious man, emphasized the miraculous side to events, which did not meet the standards today of evidence-based historical analysis. He also overlooked and downplayed such sources that did not contribute to his agenda. He was similarly working with the limited knowledge that people had at that time.

Bede suggests that the Anglo-Saxons arrived in exactly 449 CE. This is biased and based on the genealogies of the Saxon kings, as well as oral tradition and myth of the time. Today, this should be taken with great caution. It is understood today after analysis of artefacts and settlements patterns that the Anglo-Saxon tribes arrived probably over a more gradual period of time, ranging from the late 4th to the early 5th century CE. Modern historians continue to revise these dates, still today, since dating of such patterns, sites, and remains is challenging.

To Remember

- The Anglo-Saxons spoke Old English, the earliest form of the English language. It would mostly be unintelligible today to modern speakers of English.
- Old English was modified by Old Norse (Vikings), Latin, and Old French (Normans, and the Church).
- Old English did influence grammatical structure, however.
- Anglo-Saxons used the Futhorc runic alphabet, deriving from the first six letters of the alphabet.
- Runes are angular shapes, each representing a specific sound, or phoneme. It was later replaced by Latin.

📖 Vocabulary

To believe	Croire	Learning	Apprentissage
To move out	Déménager	Writing	Écriture
To go	Aller	Recording	Préservation / Archivage / Écriture
Somewhere else	Ailleurs	Event	Événement
To decline	Décliner / Baisser	Prolific writer	Écrivain prolifique
Gradually	Progressivement	Approach	Approche
To collapse	S'effondrer	Eye-witness accounts	Témoignages oculaires
Dark Ages	Âges sombres / Haut Moyen Âge	To be tainted by	Être entaché de
Make-up	Composition	Bias	Parti pris
Economic decline	Déclin économique	Solely	Uniquement
To open up	S'ouvrir	Side	Côté
To set up	Mettre en place	Knowledge	Connaissance
Emergence	Émergence	To suggest	Suggérer
To vie for	Se disputer	Artefacts	Artefacts
Power	Pouvoir / Puissance	Settlement	Établissement / Installation / Colonisation
Legions	Légions	Patterns	Schémas / Modèles
To enforce	Imposer	To range from X to Y	Aller de X à Y
Raids	Raids	To revise	Réviser
To merge into one	Fusionner en un seul	Remains	Restes
Hundreds	Centaines	To be challenging	À remettre en question
Control	Contrôle		

Did the Anglo-Saxons replace the Britons?

It is only relatively recently with the power of DNA analysis that it has been discovered that the invading Germanic tribes did not kill off and replace the peoples who had preceded them. But they largely interbred with each other.

Or, rather it is believed by some studies that there may have been some form of apartheid that took place, enabling the Anglo-Saxons partially to breed out the people who had been present in the British Isles prior to their arrival. Within 15 generations, according to the study in 2006 by a biologist at University College, London, more than 50% of the population of native Britons had been bred out. It is suggested that the Germanic tribes had greater military power, and economic backing than the Britons, and so it was easier for them to have more children and quickly outnumber them. This enabled the Germanisation of the culture and the biological, genetic replacement of them. The people of England have the same genetic markers as those living in Saxony, in Northern Germany, today. This is not the case for those who are Scottish or Irish and Welsh, for example. Interestingly, "Welshman" actually was applied to all those in the British Isles by the Germanic tribes, meaning "foreigner", and "slave". It is for this reason that there is a belief that the native Britons were segregated from the Anglo-Saxons by making them the servants or slaves of the latter.

However, this begs the question as to why the Germanic tribes might have migrated to the British Isles. Firstly, the warriors of the Germanic tribes were employed by the Romans. Secondly, they came since their own farmlands were constantly flooded and they had difficulty in growing their crops. Lastly, it is believed that they were also invited by the Britons themselves to assist them in defending their territory from the Picts and the Scots in the north.

Therefore, the Anglo-Saxons migrated to the British Isles for economic opportunity, due to political instability, but also possible conflict from other tribes who were also invading their own territories. Largely, however, the decline of the Roman Empire enabled for far greater freedom of movement of peoples.

So, who are the Anglo-Saxons? They were a group of peoples from modern-day Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands. It is understood today that there were perhaps many tribes which migrated, and not just the Angles and the Saxons. There were also the Jutes, and it is believed, many other minor tribes, or smaller groups of people. The Angles and the Saxons were the largest groups, however, and the ones with the greatest influence in that migration. Nevertheless, all of these tribes spoke similar languages, and practiced the same form of agriculture and had similarities in terms of culture. They also adhered to similar structures in terms of political and social make-up of their groups.

Historically, over time, the term "Anglo-Saxon" has been used as a shortened version of those tribes who came to migrate to the British Isles. However, the other tribes should not be forgotten when discussing the migration of the Germanic peoples to that location. There were the Frisians (inhabiting the coastal regions of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark), for example. However, they are not as well documented as the Angles and the Saxons, or even the Jutes. The Frisian-Saxons also migrated and settled around modern-day Lancashire. The Chauci lived in the northern reaches of Germany and the Netherlands; and the Lombards (southern Scandinavia). It is believed that they too migrated, although in far smaller numbers.

To Remember

- The Anglo-Saxon period lasted from the end of the Roman Empire in the early 5th Century, until the Norman conquest of 1066 CE.
- These periods all marked society, structure, and politics in the British Isles.
- The settlement of the Germanic tribes is often described as an "invasion". Yet, this was not the case, since it occurred over such a wide period of time and was not a single or unified military assault.

📖 Vocabulary

Only	Seulement / Uniquement
To be discovered	Être découvert / À découvrir
Invading	Envahissant
To kill off	Tuer / Exterminer
To replace	Remplacer
Studies	Études
To breed out	Éliminer par les gènes
Prior to	Avant
Within	En
According to	Selon
To be suggested	Être suggéré
Military power	Puissance militaire
Backing	Soutien
To outnumber	Surpasser en nombre
To enable	Permettre
To apply to	S'appliquer à
Belief	Croyance
To be segregated from	Être séparé de
Servant	Serviteur
Slave	Esclave
To beg a question	Poser une question

Why	Pourquoi
Warriors	Guerriers
Farmlands	Terres agricoles
Crops	Cultures
Therefore	Par conséquent
Decline	Déclin
Far greater	Bien plus grand
Freedom	Liberté
So	Alors / Donc
Who	Qui
Modern-day	De nos jours
Netherlands	Pays-Bas
Just	Seulement / Juste
To adhere to	Adhérer à
Make-up	Composition
Over time	Au fil du temps
To shorten	Raccourcir
To be forgotten	Être oublié
To settle	S'installer
Far smaller numbers	Nombres très inférieurs

Christianisation of the British Isles

It was in or around the year 580 CE that Bertha, a Frankish princess, married Æthelbhert, King of Kent. Æthelbhert was a pagan, and Bertha was a Christian. One condition attached to the agreement to marry was that Bertha should be allowed to bring her religion to the court, and to practice it freely. Æthelbhert agreed. That marriage changed the course of history for the British Isles, and yet Bertha is relatively unknown and little spoken of.

Bartha was the daughter of Charibert I, King of the Franks, and her presence at the court of Kent influenced her husband's attitude towards Christianity. She provided him with a link to the richest kingdom of Europe at the time, that of the Franks.

Bertha was instrumental in the success of the agreement to receive the emissary sent by Pope Gregory, and Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury. Æthelbhert provided him with a piece of land to found the mission. A church was said to have been built dedicated to Saint Martin, and this became the site of the first cathedral in England. It is today the seat of the Anglican Church. Augustine died in around 604 CE and at some stage became a saint. Canonisation was not a formal process at the time and was based upon local devotion and worship. While he is not the first saint of the British Isles, he is considered to be an early one. Saint Alban is considered to be the first Christian martyr of Britain (304 CE)

Æthelbhert's decision to convert to Christianity is unknown. However, there are events that may have convinced him to do so. The Franks were powerful and aligning with the religion of the Franks would allow him to increase his stability and power in the British Isles. It was also a means of unifying his population, since the same religion meant the same precepts and teachings. It was,

consequently, a decision, perhaps, of diplomacy and alliance. Closer ties through the embracing of the Christian religion of Bertha meant an increase in trade. There would also be support from the papacy and the wider context of Christianity growing in importance in the world. He may also have been genuinely interested in Christianity, its teachings and the spirituality of the religion. Christianity promised something that paganism did not. It gave the opportunity of an afterlife, and salvation, forgiveness, and sinning and repenting in order to be saved eternally. That was compelling. The conversion of Æthelbhert and his court would have meant changes in the organisation and structure of the society in which people lived and interacted. It provided a new framework, a moral code, and a social order. That moral code would later be decisive in future generations and decision-making processes of the other kingdoms, and of England, once it became united.

The role of Bertha in the Christianisation process of the British Isles has been largely forgotten. There has traditionally been a focus on male figures of history. Much attention has been paid, for example, to Augustine, Pope Gregory, and the King of Kent. Bertha's role in that has been downplayed or has come to be overshadowed. She was also a foreign Queen, and her Frankish origins and background may also have contributed to her being forgotten. History is oftentimes nationalistic and conscious choices are made. Without Bertha's influential persuasion, Æethelbhert appears to be an Anglo-Saxon king making a conscious decision and acting with agency. The historical records related to this period are also sparce, and even sparcer for females. However, this is changing and there are growing interests expressed in the role that she played, for example.

To Remember

- Augustine is said to have performed miracles which impressed Æthelbhert, such as the raising from the dead of a pagan man.
- Augustine is also said to have healed and cured the sick and infirm.

- Æthelbhert agreed only to meet Augustine outside of Canterbury, first. Perhaps this was out of fear, or for political reasons. It is not known why he chose to do so, and it is still open to conjecture.

📖 Vocabulary

Frankish	Francs		Worship	Culte
Pagan	Païen		To convert to	(Se) Convertir
To be attached to	Être attaché à / À joindre à		Powerful	Puissant
Agreement	Accord		Precepts	Préceptes
To bring	Apporter		Teaching	Enseignement
To practice	Pratiquer		Ties	Liens
Freely	Librement		Trade	Commerce
Course	Cours		Afterlife	Vie après la mort
To influence	Influencer		Forgiveness	Pardon
Husband	Mari		Sinning	Péché
Attitude	Attitude		To repent	Se repentir
Towards	Envers		Compelling	Attirant
Christianity	Christianisme		To be forgotten	Être oublié
To provide with	Assurer / Fournir		To be downplayed	Être minimisé
Success	Réussite		Records	Archives
Emissary	Émissaire		Sparce	Rare
To be sent	Être envoyé		To play	Jouer
To found	Fonder		To perform	Jouer
To become	Devenir		To heal	Soigner / Cicatriser / Guérir
To die	Mourir		To cure	Guérir / Traiter
Canonisation	Canonisation			