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opening extract from

A Picture History of Britain

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ANGLO-SAXON BRITAIN

The language and customs of these invaders were different from those of the Roman-British. They were much more primitive.

In 597 a monk named Augustine was sent to Britain by Pope Gregory. The Pope was head of the Christian Church at Rome. Augustine preached Christianity to the Anglo-Saxons (English), and many of them were converted. The Church was the source of law, justice and learning, and Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

Much of the history of this time we learn, from the writings of a monk called the Venerable Bede.



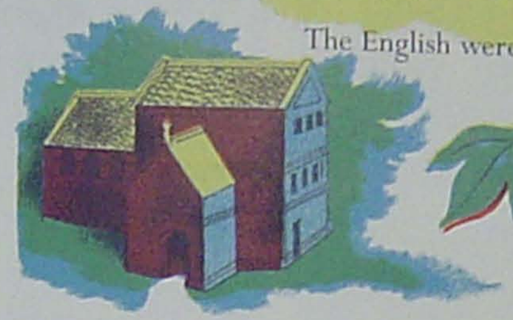
Then the Danes landed on the east coast, and overran the whole of England except the part ruled by Alfred the Great, which was called Wessex and was in the south. Alfred kept them out of Wessex. He reigned for thirty years and did great good for the people. His capital city was Winchester.

Alfred's son was the first king of all England.

The Danes continued to land in England and fight against the English, and for a short time the Danish King Canute reigned, but in 1042 the English Edward the Confessor became King. He founded the first Westminster Abbey. After him came Harold.



The English were great farmers.

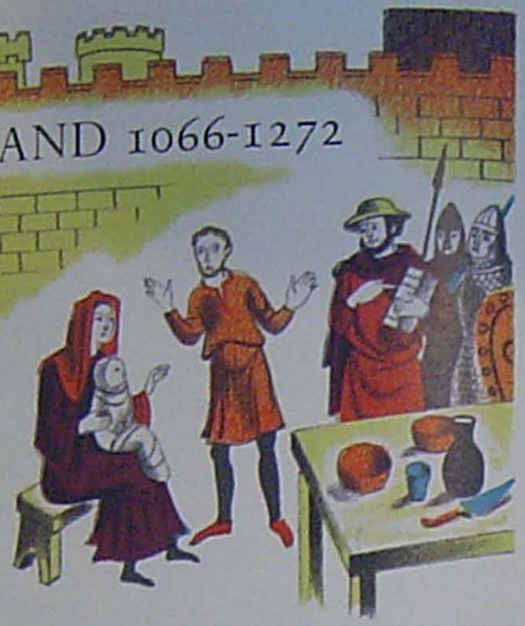


The homes of the poor were smoky huts, but those of the well-to-do were made of timber with thatched roofs, consisting usually of one large room or hall. There are a few stone Anglo-Saxon churches still standing in England today, such as St. Peter's at Barton-on-Humber in Lincolnshire.



The next and last invasion of England was made by the Normans, who came from Normandy in northern France. Under their leader Duke William they landed in 1066, fought and won the Battle of Hastings against Harold, who was killed. William the Conqueror became King of England.

NORMAN ENGLAND 1066-1272



William proclaimed that the whole country belonged to him, but he let the Norman nobles, called Barons, have large estates, so long as they fought for him and paid him taxes. In 1085 he had made the famous Domesday Book, in which was described in detail almost every acre of land throughout the country. This enabled William to keep a record of the taxes due to him.

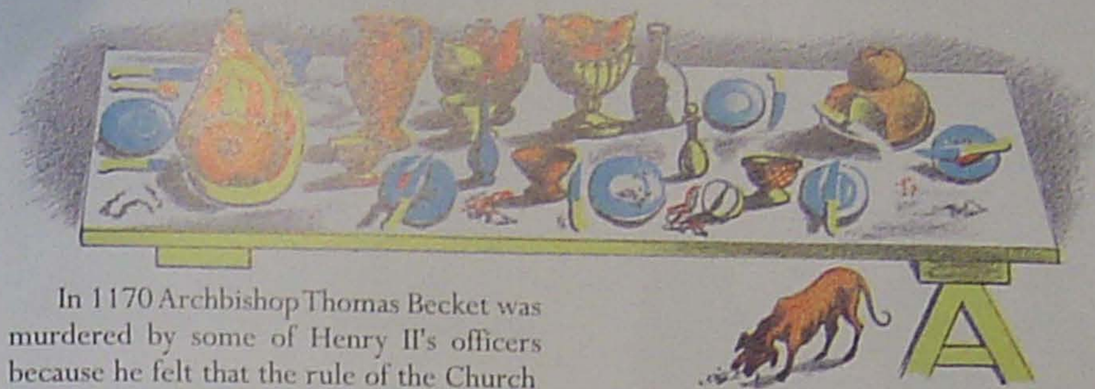


The nobles built themselves great stone castles and often fought each other.

They had followers of knights, squires and soldiers, and when there was no real war they enjoyed mock battles, called tournaments, in the courtyards of their castles.

The Normans and the English soon mixed together, though for some time the King and his Court and the Barons spoke French, while the peasants spoke English.

In the homes of the wealthy were many servants. People were great eaters, their food being mostly salted meats, venison or deer, dried fruits, honey, bread, ale and wine. Sometimes they ate whale.



In 1170 Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered by some of Henry II's officers because he felt that the rule of the Church should come before the law of the land. The people looked upon him as a saint and made pilgrimages to the place of his death at Canterbury.



The people were very religious, and monasteries, churches, cathedrals, almshouses and hospitals were built, and many knights and noblemen went with the Crusaders. These were armies of Christian soldiers who travelled across Europe to what is now called Palestine and there made war against the Muslims to recapture the Temple at Jerusalem for the Christians. These adventures were never wholly successful.

