



Members Handbook
SAXON

Version 1
Published January 2007

*This handbook is based on original material from the Regia Anglorum Members Handbook (1992). It was originally compiled by **Ben and Sue Levick** and **Sue Farr**, with illustrations by **Colin and Ben Levick**. It has been edited and the pictures redrawn by **Ian and Hazel Uzzell** (January 2007). It is not intended to replace the new handbook currently under construction, but to act as a stopgap until it is published.*

The intellectual property of this document is vested in Regia Anglorum. The whole or parts may be reproduced by paid-up members of the Society for onward transmission to other members of Regia Anglorum for use in the context of a training manual. Parts of it may be reproduced for the purposes of review or comment without permission, according to the Laws of Copyright.

Published January 2007

The Saxons

- 1. History of Anglo Saxon England**
- 2. Rank and Organisation**
- 3. Anglo Saxon Social Organisation**
- 4. Anglo Saxon Military Organisation**
- 5. Recommended Clothing and Kit Requirements**
- 6. Saxon Dress**
- 7. Illustrations**
- 8. Saxon Names**
- 9. Saxon Commands and Phrases**

AREA OF ANGLO-SAXON INFLUENCE



A BRIEF HISTORY OF ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

The Anglo-Saxon settlement of England was no overnight affair. The late-Roman army had many Germanic elements and from the fourth century they and their families had settled in Britain. It is, therefore, not surprising that after the withdrawal of the legions at the beginning of the fifth century individual towns looked to Germanic mercenaries to maintain their security. Vortigern, the post-Roman Kentish king, is often left to take the blame, but he was no doubt only one of several leaders who took this course. The fifth and sixth centuries saw increased Germanic settlement although the balance of local power fluctuated between Britons and Saxons. Ultimately, even in areas such as Northumbria, where Germanic settlement was sparse, the English language became the predominant one and the Celtic language and lifestyles became marginalized to Wales, Cornwall and northern Scotland.

The end of the sixth century saw another major new influence on the Germanic invaders - Christianity. Although the Romano-British Church survived and the Anglo-Saxons would have had contact with indigenous Christians, the Church initially existed only on the fringes of English settlement, as paganism remained strong. In 597 a Christian mission sent by Pope Gregory the Great and led by Augustine landed in Kent. Its initial success was dramatic. The prompt conversion of King Æthelberht of Kent (?560-616) and the kings of Essex and East Anglia, then the baptism of Æthelberht's son-in-law King Edwin of Northumbria (617-33) by his bride's Roman chaplain Paulinus established Christianity within the highest echelons of English society. Sees were established at Canterbury, Rochester, London and York.

The four kingdoms soon relapsed into paganism, and initially only Kent was reconverted. The evangelistic initiative passed to the Scottish church based on Iona, founded by the Irishman, Columba, in 563. King Oswald of Northumbria (634-42) was converted while in exile among the Scots and invited Iona to send him a mission: the result was Aidan's foundation of Lindisfarne in 635. The Irish bishops of Lindisfarne consolidated Christianity in Northumbria; their fellow countrymen Duima and Ceollach, and their English pupils, Cedd and Trumhere, re-established the religion in Essex and introduced it to Mercia and the Middle Angles, whose king, Penda (?610-55), was the last great pagan ruler. In none of these kingdoms was there any significant relapse but Iona was out of line with Rome on the methods of calculating the date of Easter. In 663 Bishop Colman was defeated on the issue at the Synod of Whitby and withdrew to Iona, leaving the way clear for the organisation of the English Church by Theodore of Canterbury (669-90). Although the Church of Iona found favour with some of the later kings it was generally the Roman church that was dominant.

Of the seven Saxon Kingdoms (the Heptarchy), the first one to achieve supremacy was Northumbria, whose high culture during the seventh century is reflected in such works as the Lindisfarne Gospels. They ruled the whole area between Derby and Edinburgh and their central territories of Yorkshire and Northumberland remained independent until the Vikings took York in 866, whilst the lordship of Bamburgh continued as an Anglian enclave throughout the tenth century.

The eighth century saw the rise of Mercia who pushed back the Northumbrians and West Saxons and took control of East Anglia and Kent. The peak of Mercian domination came under Offa (died 796), though it remained a potent force until the abdication of Burgred in 874.

The year 793 marked a major change for England with the first major raid by Vikings on the Northumbrian monastery at Lindisfarne (although there is evidence of a small raid four years earlier in Devon). The next decade saw major raids along most of the southern and eastern coasts of England. Most of the raiders were Danes, but the common tongue of the Scandinavians enabled them all to work together. Remember, specific references to Danes and Norsemen are to be treated with caution.

The first part of the ninth century saw the Vikings concentrating on Ireland and the north and west of England and Scotland, until 835 when the Danes began a series of major raids on the whole of England. These culminated in the 'Great Army' of 865 which wintered on the Isle of Thanet before commencing on a twelve year campaign ranging from Exeter to Dumbarton. This finally ended in an agreement with the West Saxon king which left them in control of half of the country.

The house of Wessex also began its rise during the ninth century, commencing with Egbert who defeated the Mercians in 825 (it is ironic that the founder of the West Saxon fortunes actually ruled Sussex, Essex and Kent and based his mint at Canterbury!). It is noteworthy that his son, Æthelwold, was the first king of Wessex to inherit the throne from his father since the seventh century. Æthelwold's four sons succeeded him in turn and the youngest, Alfred, eventually fought the Vikings to a standstill at Edington which produced the Treaty of Wedmore in 878. This led to an uneasy peace and the establishment of the Danelaw.

The early tenth century saw Norse encroachment from Ireland and the Western Isles into Cumbria, Lancashire and the Wirral peninsular. The rulers of Dublin were anxious to dominate York and the North, but the incoming Vikings were as much a threat to the now settled Danelaw as they were to Wessex. Athelstan achieved a decisive victory for Wessex at Brunanburgh in 937, when a coalition of Irish, Norse, Scots and Northumbrians were defeated. Dublin continued to try to exert influence, and fighting continued sporadically until, under Eadred, Eric Bloodaxe was driven out of York and killed at Stainmoor in 954. With external threats temporarily removed King Edgar, who came to the throne in 959, spent the next 18 years trying to weld the formerly disparate states of Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia and Wessex into a single body.

The king's chief agents in this process were the eoldermen. In the ninth century each eolderman had governed only a single shire, but in the tenth century a trusted eolderman could find himself in charge of several shires. Eventually unification was achieved to a strong enough degree that the House of Wessex was universally accepted as the rightful royal family. Weak though it was in some areas, the administration was strong enough to impose a uniform royal coinage on England, and to reap the financial advantage from the country's growing economic prosperity. At the end of the tenth century, when the Viking attacks came again, the prize at stake was nothing less than the 'Kingdom of the English'.

During the reign of Æthelred (978-1016) the Viking attacks on England started again. In the 980's Viking raids along the Welsh coast were extended to include south-west England. At the same time attacks on London and the south-east began from the North Sea and Scandinavia. The 990's saw the operation of great armies under the leadership of Olaf, later king of Norway, and Swein, king of Denmark.

During this period of Viking attacks Æthelred's response was to appoint eoldermen to take control of important military areas. An attack on Essex in 991 was met by the local eolderman, Bryhtnoth, in an infamous encounter at Maldon. In 992 an English fleet assembled at London had some success against the Vikings. However, the time honoured methods of ransom, Danegeld and baptism of Viking leaders continued to be more successful. It has been estimated that between 990 and 1014 around 250,000 pounds (over 102 tons) of silver were paid in Danegeld to the Viking raiders in addition to food, livestock, etc., and any other wealth gained from raiding.

The Viking onslaught came mainly from King Swein of Denmark. From 1003 to 1006, and again in 1013, Swein led devastating attacks on England, while Thorkell the Tall campaigned in the south and east between 1009 and 1013. In 1007 Æthelred ordered the burning of ships and recreated the large eoldermanry of Mercia for Eadric in an attempt to co-ordinate English defences. Unfortunately the fleet assembled at Sandwich in 1009 fell prey to bad weather and English efforts had little effect against Thorkell's determined campaign. This culminated in the capture and murder of Ælfheah, Archbishop of Canterbury. Swein came to England in August 1013 secure in the expectation of conquest. At Gainsborough he received the submission of Northumbria, Lindsey and the Five Boroughs; Oxford, Winchester and south-west England soon followed. Finally, towards the end of the year, the last resistance collapsed, Swein was recognised as king of England and Æthelred fled to Normandy.

Swein died in 1014 after only a few months as king. The Viking fleet immediately proclaimed his son Cnut king, but the English councillors recalled Æthelred. In 1015 Æthelred's eldest son Edmund revolted against his father in an attempt to usurp the throne. This, coupled with the King's ill health and the enmity between Edmund and eolderman Eadric, divided the final stages of the English effort against the Danes.

Æthelred died in 1016 and, in spite of Eadric's defection to Cnut, Edmund held Cnut to a military stalemate. The division of England, giving Edmund Wessex and Cnut the North, was nullified by Edmund's death in 1016 so the Viking Cnut was left to rule all England.

Cnut's conquest of England laid the foundation of a Northern Empire. After his coronation in 1018 and his marriage to Emma, Æthelred's widow (a marriage which ensured the goodwill of her brother, the Duke of Normandy) Cnut's position as king was secured. About a year later he acquired the kingdom of Denmark after the death of his brother Harald.

During this period many Danes settled in England and Cnut gave some of them senior positions of authority. It was at this time the English title 'eolderman' was replaced by the Danish influenced 'eorl', although this

change of name did not mean any change in the nature of the office or the powers of its holder.

Emma, Cnut's English wife was made regent of Norway for their eldest son Swein. Her reign was unpopular and even before Cnut's death she was driven out in favour of Magnus, Olaf's son. On the English side of the North Sea few of Cnut's Danish eorls outlasted the 1020's. At the end of his reign the kingdom was dominated by three eorls -an Englishman of the old aristocracy, Leofric of Mercia; an English newcomer, Godwin of Wessex, married to a Dane; and a Dane, Siward of Northumbria, married to an Englishwoman.

Cnut's empire collapsed after his death (1035). The rebellion of Magnus of Norway led to prolonged war between Norway and Denmark, and this prevented Hardacnut, Cnut's chosen heir (and son of Emma), from crossing to England. In his absence his half-brother Harold was chosen, first as regent and later as king.

After Harold's death in 1040 Hardacnut re-united the two kingdoms, but on his death in 1042 England reverted to the old West Saxon line. The short and troubled reigns of Cnut's sons saw the rise of powerful dynasties in England, most notably the family of Eorl Godwin. From obscure origins in Sussex, this family rose in two generations to the pinnacle of power in England. A turning point in the family's fortunes was the marriage in 1043 of Godwin's daughter Edith to King Edward the Confessor. The advancement of her kinsmen immediately followed; an eorldom was specially created for her eldest brother Swein, her second brother, Harold, became Eorl of East Anglia, and her cousin Beorn Estrithson received an eorldom in the east Midlands, apparently as Harold's subordinate.

Although powerful the Godwinsons were not the only powerful Eorls, and in 1045 half of the country was still not under their control. In the north Eorl Siward was strong and held the Scots at bay. When he died the Scots launched many attacks against the new Eorl Tostig, and later against Morcar.

Swein Godwinson was the black sheep of his family and his wilder exploits - including the rape and abduction of the Abbess of Leominster and the murder of his cousin Beorn -led to his banishment in 1049, although he was later pardoned. Edward obviously resented

his dependence upon Godwin and in 1051 the Eorl and his family were deprived of their titles and exiled, but the king had over-reached himself. In 1052 Godwin's family engineered a successful return, forcing the king to restore their land and titles.

Godwin died in 1053 and was succeeded by his son Harold who became Eorl of Wessex, yielding his East Anglian eorldom to Ælfgar, son of Leofric of Mercia. In 1055, on the death of Siward, Tostig Godwinson, the third brother, became Eorl of Northumbria. When, in 1057, both Leofric of Mercia and Eorl Ralph of Hereford died, Harold added Hereford to the Eorldom of Wessex, Gyrth Godwinson succeeded Ælfgar in East Anglia, and Leofwine Godwinson received an eorldom in the East Midlands. From this time Harold was the real ruler of England. His campaigns against the Welsh, culminating in the conquest of North Wales, added to his prestige and he was described by contemporaries as Subregulus (underking) and Dux Anglorum.

Edward was brought up in Normandy and during his reign many Normans came to England and gained important positions as advisors, church-men or military officers. In fact Edward seemed to favour foreigners unless they were Norse. During his reign much European culture was brought into the country. He was also responsible for a number of church reforms during this period.

The death of Edward in January 1066 left England without an adult male representative of the royal line. William 'the Bastard', Duke of Normandy, claimed that Edward had promised him the kingdom as early as 1051. Harold Godwinson, Eorl of Wessex and for many years the king's right hand man, claimed that Edward had 'committed the kingdom' to him on his deathbed. The Scandinavian kings often fished in troubled waters such as this, as Harald Hardrada of Norway did in September 1066, followed by Swein Estrithson of Denmark after the Conquest. Another factor in the equation was Harold's brother Tostig, exiled in 1065, who attempted to regain his eorldom by force of arms.

When Edward died William started to build a fleet and gather an army in Normandy. In England, Harold and his nobles stationed an army along the south coast and a fleet off the Isle of Wight. But Tostig was first off the mark, raiding the south coast until frightened off by Harold, and the east coast until Eorl Edwin defeated him in Lindsey. Tostig fled to Scotland where he sheltered until joining with Harald of Norway.

Harold watched the Channel from May until September. If William had sailed when he had hoped to, he would have run into a warm reception and his invasion may well have been remembered as just another battle amongst the many that year. William was lucky; the direction of the prevailing wind kept his fleet bottled up in port until the provisions of the English forces had been exhausted. In September Harold disbanded the Fyrd and returned to London where he learned the Norwegians had landed in Yorkshire. Within two weeks he raised an army and force-marched it from London to York. Before he could arrive, Edwin and Morcar stood against Harald Hardrada at Gate Fulford, two miles south of York. Their defeat after a hard battle meant that the local Fyrd could play little part in the events that followed. This left the invaders free to march on York, where men of the shire agreed to help Harald in the conquest of England. Five days later King Harold attacked the Norwegians at their camp at Stamford Bridge, taking them by surprise. The battle raged all day, and by nightfall on the 25th September Harald Hardrada and Tostig lay dead and the shattered remains of their army were in full flight. Harold had defeated one of the foremost warriors of the age. Tradition has it that he was at a feast celebrating his victory when the news arrived that William had landed with his army at Pevensey on the morning of the 28th of September.

Once more Harold was all energy; within 13 days he had completed the settlement of the restless north, marched 190 miles back to London, raised another army, and

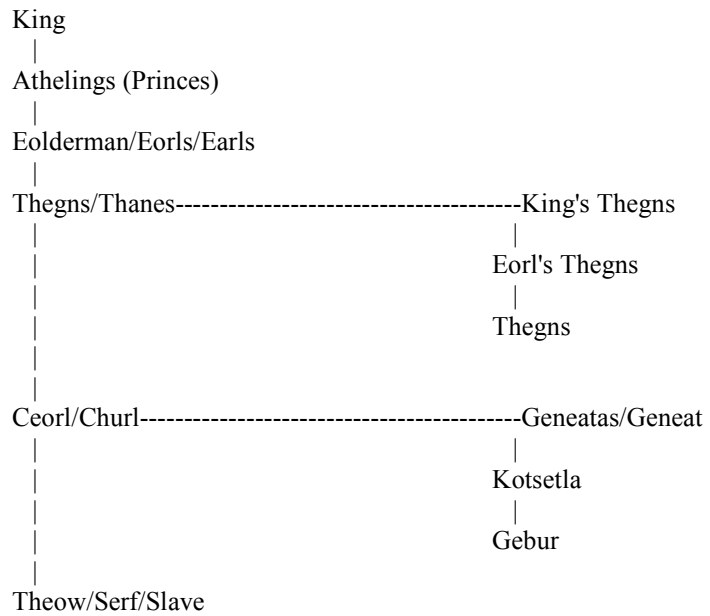
marched a further 50 miles to a point within striking distance of Hastings where the Normans had established their base. Harold has been accused of 'reckless and impulsive haste', and most chroniclers agree that he fought with an army smaller than it need have been. We cannot be certain why he chose to fight when he did. It is possible he was trying to fight before it became known amongst his men that William bore a papal banner and to fight against him could mean excommunication. Alternatively, he may have sought to take William by surprise, a tactic which had worked three weeks before. Whatever his reason, the Norman scouts warned of the English approach on the morning of the 14th of October, and it was the English who were taken by surprise.

It is generally said that each army numbered about 7,000 men, but the figures may have been lower. The English probably deployed about 4,000 Thegns and Huscarls, and 2-3,000 Fyrdsmen recruited on the march through the Home Counties. The Normans fielded perhaps 5,000 infantry, including archers, and up to 2,000 knights.

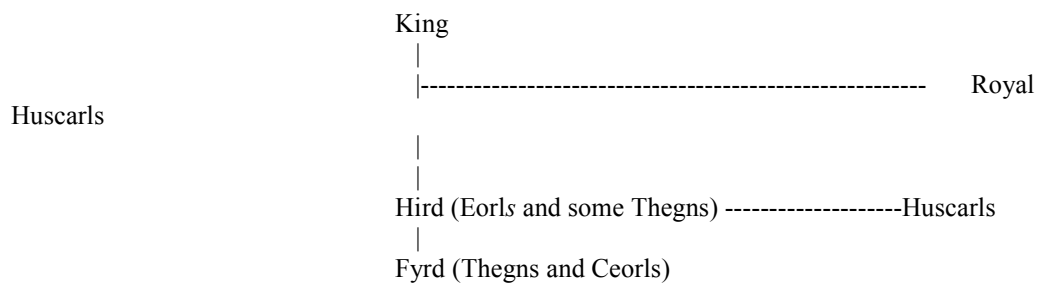
The English took up position on a ridge near Hastings and waited for the Normans to make their move. The Huscarls probably formed the front rank with the lighter armed Fyrdsmen behind them. The Normans made several attacks all of which were repulsed. William tried to use his archers to break the shield wall but they were ineffective, and the battle became a war of attrition. The Norman's lucky break came when their Breton cavalry were routed at the same time as a rumour that William had been killed spread amongst both sides. The Saxon right flank broke and gave chase thinking they had won. William was not dead and rallied his troops, cut off and slew the pursuing Saxons. He was then able to manoeuvre some of his cavalry on to the hilltop and fight the Saxons on level ground. The English shield wall managed to survive the repeated attacks of the Norman knights and the archers until the death of Harold, at dusk. The English survivors then fled into the forests of the Weald, and the day belonged to William. Thus ended the 'Kingdom of the English'.

The Saxons

RANK AND ORGANISATION



MILITARY ORGANISATION



ANGLO-SAXON SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The Anglo-Saxon community in England was basically a rural one, where primarily all classes of society lived on the land. At the top of the social system was the royal house. This consisted of the king and princes (**ATHELINGS**) who claimed a common ancestry with the king; they had special privileges and responsibilities which included military service and command in the field. By the middle of the ninth century the royal family of Wessex was universally recognized as the English royal family and held a hereditary right to rule. Succession to the throne was not guaranteed as the **WITAN**, or council of leaders, had the right to choose the best successor from the members of the royal house.

Below the king were the **EOLDERMEN**, the ruling nobility. The Eolderman was the king's 'viceroys' in a shire, responsible for administration and justice, for calling out the Fyrd and leading its forces in the field. The office was not hereditary, but it became usual in the tenth century to choose eoldermen from a few outstanding families. The same eoldermanry frequently remained in one family for more than one generation. By the early 11th century the term eolderman began to be replaced with **EORL**, possibly influenced by the Danish 'Jarl'. In the second half of the 10th century the title became more important, an eorl now governing several shires. Athelings, eorls, bishops and archbishops formed the **HIGH WITAN**.

The next class down the social ladder was the **THEGN**. Good service by a thegn could result not only in rich gifts but sometimes in the granting of lands and, on rare occasions, elevation to eorl or eolderman. The eoldermen were all high ranking thegns.

Thegns formed the backbone of the Anglo-Saxon army. Most thegns were the 'king's thegns'. These were the thegns whose lord was the king himself, as opposed to one of the richer thegns or eoldermen. They held their lands from the king and could lose them (and sometimes their lives) if they did not answer the king's summons. Their service to the king was performed on a rota and they would accompany him everywhere, both as bodyguards and lesser officials.

Thegns were primarily warriors whose duty was to carry out the 'common burdens' of service in the fyrd, fortress work and bridge building. A thegn's status as a warrior is confirmed by the interchangeable use of the word 'thegn' and 'milites' in contemporary manuscripts depending on whether the text was in English or Latin. The cynges thegn is usually referred to as a 'milites regis' in the Latin texts. A thegn's wergild was set nominally at 1200 shillings.

The thegns were a numerous class; there were approximately two thousand landowners of the thegnly class in Wessex and Mercia. Thegns were not restricted to the king's service for the great eorls had their own thegns; even some of the more powerful and landed thegns had their own lesser thegns. In return for land a thegn performed certain duties which are well described in a late tenth century document which states:

"The law of the thegn is that he be entitled to his chartered estates, and that he

performs three things in respect of his land: military service and the repair of fortresses and work on bridges. Also in many estates further land duties arise by order of the king, such as servicing the deer-fence at the king's residence, and equipping a guard ship and guarding the coast, and attendance on his superior, and supplying a military guard, almsgiving and church dues and many other different things."

A lesser thegn could gain promotion to a king's thegn through service as the early eleventh century document, "Gethynctho", shows:

"3. And the thegn who prospered that he served the king and rode in his household band on riding errands, if he himself had a thegn who served him, possessing five hides on which he had discharged the king's dues, and who had attended his lord in the king's hall, and had thrice gone on his errand to the king - then he (the thegn's thegn) was afterwards allowed to represent his lord with a preliminary oath."

Below the thegns were the **CEORLS**, freemen, farmers and independent landed householders who formed the mainstay of the Saxon kingdom, based as it was on a rural economy. The term free in an Anglo-Saxon context can be misleading, since there were many degrees of freedom. *Ceorls* were *folcfry* (folk-free), that is, free in the eyes of the community. They enjoyed wergilds and had the right to seek compensations for other free kinsmen and kinswomen. They were allowed to bear arms and be considered 'fyrd worthy' and 'moot worthy'. This meant they were considered worthy to serve in the fyrd and take part in folk meetings. They did not have the same degree of freedom as thegns or eoldermen. A ceorl's wergild was set nominally at 200 shillings, one sixth that of a thegn.

There were three main classes of ceorl, although the dividing line between the classes was indistinct. First were the **GENEATAS**, the peasant aristocracy who paid rent to their overlord. **GENEAT** originally meant companion, implying that the class originated from the lord's household, often receiving land as a gift. The geneat's duty was also recorded in the same document as the thegn's law, kotsetla's duty and gebur's duty.

"The geneat's duty varies, depending upon what is determined for the estate. In some he must pay ground rent and one store-pig a year and ride, and perform carrying services and supply cartage, work and entertain his lord, reap and mow, cut deer-fences and maintain hides, build and fence fortifications, conduct strangers to the manor, pay church dues and alms, attend his superior, and guard the horse, carry messages far and near wherever he is directed."

Second were the **KOTSETLA**, who paid no rent but had to perform numerous duties for their overlords.

"The kotsetla's duty depends on what is determined for the estate. At some (estates) he must work for his lord each Monday throughout the year, or three days each week at harvest-time. He need not pay ground rent. He ought to have five acres; more if it be the custom on the estate; and if it is ever less, it will be too little, because his labour must always be available. He is to pay his hearth-penny on Ascension Day, just as every freeman ought, and serve on his lord's estate, if he is ordered, by

guarding the coast, and work at the king's deer-fence, and at similar things according to what his station is; and he is to pay his church dues at Martinmas."

Third were the **GEBUR**, who were totally dependant on their lord. The gebur's life was dominated by the labour services owed to his lord. It is probable that the gebur class started out by giving their land to a thegn in return for protection from raiding parties.

"The gebur's duty varies; in some places they are heavy, in others moderate. On some estates it is such that he must perform such work as he is directed for two week days each week for every week throughout the year, and three week days at harvest-time, and three from Candlemas to Easter; if he performs cartage he need not work while his horse is out. At Michaelmas must pay ten pence tax, and at Martinmas twenty-three sesters of barley and two hens; at Easter one young sheep or twopence. And from Martinmas until Easter he must lie at his lord's fold as often as it is his turn. And from the time when they first plough until Martinmas he must plough one acre each week and prepare the seed in the lord's barn himself; if he need more grass, then he is to earn it as he is allowed. He is to plough his three acres as tribute land and sow it from his own barn. And he is to pay his hearth-penny. And every two are to support one deer-hound. And each tenant is to give six loaves to the swineherd when he drives his herd to the mast pasture."

The arrangement is not totally one sided however as the lord

"...ought to give the tenant, for the occupation of the land: two oxen and one cow and six sheep and seven sown acres on his piece of land. He is to perform all the duties which appertain to him throughout the year. And they are to give him tools for his work and utensils for his home. When death befalls him, his lord is to take charge of what he leaves."

The economy depended on slave labour and although the gebur was a lowly peasant, he was privileged compared to the theow, and had the right and duty to serve in the Fyrd. All ceorls could win promotion through prosperity or military service, and if for example a ceorl possessed five hides of land, he became entitled to the rights of a thegn (although he would not necessarily become a thegn) as the "Gethynctho" tells us:

"2. And if a ceorl prospered, that he possessed fully five hides of his own, a church and kitchen, bell-house and burh-gate, a seat and a special office in the king's hall, then he was entitled to the rights of a thegn."

He could not, however, rise to be an eorl.

Below the gebur were the **THEOW** - slaves or bondsmen. Although theow were slaves they did have many rights and there were rules set down for what they should be provided with:

"One slave ought to have as provisions: twelve pounds of good corn and the carcasses of two sheep and one good cow for eating and the right of cutting wood according to the custom of the estate. For a female slave: eight pounds of corn for

food, one sheep or threepence for winter supplies, one sester of beans for Lenten supplies, whey in summer or one penny. All slaves ought to have Christmas supplies and Easter supplies, an acre for the plough and a 'handful of the harvest', in addition to their necessary rights."

Theow were allowed to own property and could earn money in their spare time. If they earned enough they could even buy their freedom, although slaves were sometimes freed by their owners *"for the good of their souls."* Sometimes, when times were particularly hard, people sold themselves into slavery to ensure they were provisioned, and thus survived.

Before we discuss military organisation it is important to describe the geographical division of Saxon Britain. The basic unit of land was the **HIDE**. This is usually described as enough land to support one family, however the actual size of the hide seems to have varied considerably from estate to estate - estimated at anything from 40 acres to 4 square miles (120 acres seems to be an 'average' hide). More usual (and more evenly supported from contemporary sources) is a unit of land worth approximately £1. For the purpose of assessment of tax and military service, hides were grouped together in units called **HUNDREDS** comprised of approximately 100 hides. In charge of the hundred was the *hundred eolder*. Each shire contained many hundreds.

MILITARY ORGANISATION

The military organisation of the Anglo-Saxons is a notoriously difficult and obscure subject. It is impossible to give firm dates or precise details of developments, mainly because the Saxons did not need to define their military organisation for themselves; it was part of the life of every able bodied man. In the beginning there were simply war bands, small bodies of professional warriors led by their chosen chiefs. Loyalty to a chief was the greatest virtue, and warriors sought out a leader who would further their military career. If a chief or king died in battle his men would die avenging him, although a few might survive after being struck down and left for dead. It was considered dishonourable to leave the battlefield on which your lord had been slain, and those few who did survive were frequently executed by their lord's successor for their disloyalty.

From the beginning of the 9th century the English kingdoms were under attack by other bands of professional warriors - the Vikings. We know from accounts of battles before Alfred's reign (879 - 899) that some form of levy existed to deal with these raids, but we have no details of the organisation. We do know that the king had an 'elite' corps of thegns who made up the king's personal 'Hearth Troop' or hird. These thegns had to become 'professional' warriors, not because they were a trained elite, but because their position depended on it. It is obvious that the king and his hearth troop could not be everywhere at once, so the onus for local defence must have fallen on the eorls. It was their job to summon the fyrd in emergencies, and this they, or their thegns could have done reasonably quickly in the areas affected by the raids.

The personal followers of the leaders, the thegns and numbers of hired mercenaries (often Scandinavians) formed the spearhead of any force. From the early 9th century this was supported by what was later called the fyrd (literally meaning 'journey', it came to have a special meaning of 'armed *expedition force*'). The fyrd was raised by selective recruitment, rather than a general levy, usually drawing one man for every five hides of land. Most of the fyrd would therefore have been thegns, although there are records of 'free men' serving in the fyrd at Hastings. However, the actual obligation was upon each thegn to provide a man, usually himself, for fyrd service. Since a thegn would usually have five hides we have the figure of one man from five hides, but the obligation was upon the man, not the land. Since the obligation was on the man, and not the land, some thegns could own less than the usual five hides (perhaps because a father had split his estate between several sons). Those poor thegns who had only a hide or two were still obliged to provide a fyrdman - fyrd service is almost never left out of charters for land-grants.

By the tenth century there are charters which provide alternative obligations. One such requires five men from thirty hides, in another one, one man for thirty hides. Because of these the fyrd could contain members of the upper peasantry. In these cases the men involved combined to send one of their number (usually the same man) whenever the fyrd was summoned. Several contemporary texts bear this out:

"In Coverham Alsi and Chetel and Turuer had 3.5 carucates of land to the geld... Chetel and Turuer were brothers and after their father's death they divided the land in such a wise however that when Chetel was doing the king's service he should have his brother Turuer's aid."

The representative would ensure that he was well equipped, and ambition and experience would soon create worthy warriors. Indeed the usual armament for a fyrdsman laid out in contemporary documents was a spear, shield, helm, byrnie and a palfrey (riding horse). Often a sword was included in the list. Although a horse is mentioned it was only to allow the fyrd to be mobile. In battle the warriors would dismount and fight on foot.

If the men summoned for the fyrd did not turn up there were severe penalties:

"When the king goes against an enemy, should anyone summoned by his edict remain, if he is a man so free that he has his soke and sake, and can go with his land to whomever he pleases (i.e. king's thegns and eoldermen), he is in the king's mercy for all of his land, But if the free man of some other lord has stayed away from the host and his lord has led another in his place, he will pay 40s to his lord who received the summons. But if nobody at all has gone in his place, he himself shall pay his lord 40s but his lord shall pay the entire amount to the king."

Another document gives us an idea of the fyrdsman's 'pay' as well as the penalty for failure to serve:

"If the king sent an army anywhere, only one soldier went from five hides, and for his provision or pay, four shillings were given him from each hide for his two months of service. The money, however, was not sent to the king but given to the soldiers. If anyone summoned to serve in an expedition failed to do so, he forfeited all his lands to the king. If anyone for the sake of remaining behind promised to send another in his place, and nevertheless, he who should have been sent remained behind his lord was freed of obligation by the payment of 50 shillings."

The towns were also assessed in hides, and the inhabitants were required to send representatives. In some instances the towns could commute their service by paying the crown a sum necessary to hire a replacement. Anglo-Saxon England was still developing a cash economy and most workers were paid in kind, the markets where wages could be spent did not properly exist. For example, Ely Abbey acquitted its lands of *fyrdinge* through the payment of 10,000 eels a year to the king. Other scattered references in The Doomsday Book to lands that 'aided the king's expeditions' imply that pre-Conquest other lesser landowners made similar arrangements with the crown.

A fyrdsman served because his land grant said he had to, and failure to serve led to a fine. The money paid would have gone to the king or eorl to provide food for mercenaries, not wages. The king's obligation to provide food only began after the men had served their full term. Each hide was charged four shillings (in kind) towards the maintenance of the selected representative, twenty shillings for a five hide unit, and as sixty to ninety days was the customary period of service, this meant a wage of three to four pence per day. This is roughly comparable to the wages of a knight post-Conquest, demonstrating that the fyrd was indeed a select body of men.

The reason for the payment going direct to the warrior seems to have been a safety measure. If the money went straight to the king he could call out the fyrd, collect the

money and then disband the fyrd, lining his own coffers as William Rufus did after the Conquest.

There were also laws laid down to govern a fyrdsman's rights and behaviour in the field:

"77. Concerning the man who deserts his lord. And the man who, through cowardice, deserts his lord or his comrades on a military expedition, either by sea or by land shall lose all that he possesses and his own life, and the lord shall take back the property and the land which he had given him. And if he has bokland it shall pass into the king's hand.

"78. Concerning the man who falls before his lord. And the heriot of the man who falls before his lord during a campaign, whether within the country or abroad, shall be remitted, and the heirs shall succeed to his land and his property and make a very just division of the same."

In later years there was also an alternative obligation to supply a warrior seaman for the fleet. For this reason the five hide units were combined in some regions into districts of 300 (or 310) hides, which were called 'SHIP SOKES'. These were required to produce sixty **SOKESMEN** (warrior seamen), and also pay for the construction and maintenance of a warship which the men manned. Some ports, particularly those that later became the Cinque Ports, were also required to supply smaller ships to augment the fleet.

In peace time the thegns (possibly the entire fyrd) had to serve one month in three in rotation so there was always a sizeable force on call. They were not only warriors but also acted as a police force to catch criminals, (in which their mounted mobility helped) and deal with the widespread problem of banditry. In the Welsh and Scottish Marches special conditions existed and the levies might have to serve for fifteen days and accompany expeditions beyond their shire boundaries into Wales and Scotland where their knowledge of the border areas was invaluable. In the military requirements for the Welsh march we are told:

"Anyone who does not go when ordered by the sheriff to go with him into Wales is fined the same (2s. or 1 ox to the king). But if the sheriff does not go, none of them goes. When the army advances on the enemy, these men by custom form the vanguard and on their return the rearguard."

In the Welsh march the recruitment rate often exceeded the one man from five hides ratio and in some cases *"they do not pay tax nor other customary dues, except that they march in the king's army if they have been ordered."*

By the beginning of the 11th century all the thegns usually held estates of five hides or more, and so by this date they probably constituted the bulk of the fyrd.

At the beginning of the century there is the first mention of the elite body of warriors known as huscarls. It is thought that these were introduced after Svein Forkbeard's conquest of England in 1014, and probably raised by Cnut in 1033, although it is possible they had existed at the time of Svein's conquest. Professional

soldiers, they had their own rules of conduct, lived at the king's court and received his pay, as opposed to gifts or kind. They formed a small but efficient and highly organised standing army, both well disciplined and heavily armed. Cnut, we are told, required his **HUSCARLS** to possess "splendid armour" and a double-edged sword with a gold-inlaid hilt, as a condition of acceptance into his military entourage. Although a foot soldier, a huscarl would also have owned a horse to carry him to battle and in pursuit of the defeated enemy, and a variety of weapons, including a mail-shirt, helmet, shield, javelin, and, of course, the "massive and bloodthirsty two-handed axe" that characterised him. Despite being paid in coin their obligation to serve in arms arose from the lordship bond rather than the cash inducement. The rewards were incidental to the service they rendered. As the Beowulf poet wrote some centuries earlier:

"I repaid in war the treasures that he (the king) paid me - with my bright sword... There was no need for him to buy with treasure a worse warrior."

Huscarls served their royal lords in peace as well as war. They appear in the sources as tax collectors, witnesses to royal charters, recipients of land grants and donors of land. They may be best characterised as a group of ministers and attendants upon the king who specialised in, but were not limited to war. Thus we find the same man described as a *'cynge's huskarl'* one charter and a *'minister regis'* in another. Even before this time there is evidence of the king and greater nobles employing *'milites stipendiis'* or mercenary warriors.

The huscarls were retained by Edward the Confessor and Harold Godwinson, and during the reign of the former they appeared to have been recruited by the great eorls as well. Tostig's English and Danish retainers are referred to as huscarls by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, but the word may have become a general term describing all landless soldiers as opposed to thegns who were warriors and land owners under the king.

There are other references to mercenaries in the pay of the king or eorls who were clearly not huscarls. The **LITHSMEN** and **BUTSECARLS** were skilled seamen who also fought on land, and often seem to have sided with the highest bidder. These and other paid warriors provided the late Saxon kings with a highly trained nucleus supported by the eorls and their war bands, and the thegns of the fyrd.

By the mid 11th century the royal huscarls probably numbered about 3,000. Eorl Tostig lost two hundred of his own huscarls during the Northumbrian revolt in 1065 - as some of his huscarls survived and escaped a figure of around 250 - 300 huscarls seems reasonable for an eorl.

A national land-fyrd would have consisted of the following components: the forces of the ealderdoms, shires, hundreds (private and royal), private sokes and various companies of stipendiary troops, and personal retainers brought by the king and his great magnates. Similarly, a ship-fyrd would have included royal warships manned by the king's butescarles and lithsmen, perhaps the private ships of his eorls, vessels supplied and manned by the ship-sokes, and by 1066, the ships owed in lieu of other royal renders by the boroughs that were to become known as the Cinque Ports.

The evidence for the shire as a tactical unit is overwhelming. Below the shire level, however, matters become less clear. Much is unclear about the lesser tactical units of the fyrd, but it seems certain that just as the shires were subdivided into hundreds for judicial and administrative purposes, so the shire levies of the fyrd consisted of hundred contingents. Using the five hide rule this would give basic units of 20 men. Although with the variance in size of a hundred, and the variance in the number of hides required to produce a warrior, a unit of 15 - 25 men would be reasonable. Each unit would usually be led by its hundred eolder.

The old idea of the general levy or "nation in arms" is now considered to be wrong. Although many of the fyrd owned land, they were primarily warriors who farmed when not serving, rather than farmers who fought. Indeed, texts of the time refer to three distinct types of freemen: labourers, soldiers and beadsmen or clergy. As Aelfric wrote:

"The throne stands on these three supports: labourers (laoratores), soldiers (bellatores), clergy (oratores). Labourers are they who provide us with sustenance, the ploughmen and husbandmen devoted to that alone. Clergy are they who intercede for us to God... devoted to that alone for the benefit of us all. Soldiers are they who guard our boroughs and also our land, fighting with weapons against the oncoming army; as St Paul, the teacher of nations, said in his teaching: The cniht beareth not the sword without cause. He is God's minister to their profit."

As a climax to his Colloquy Aelfric has a character called the 'wise councilor' resolve a heated debate over the relative importance of the various secular professions by declaring:

"Whoever you are, whether priest or monk, or peasant or warrior, exercise yourself in this and be what you are; because it is a great disgrace and shame for a man not to want to be what he is and what he has to be."

This would mean that whilst the 'labourers' would take up weapons such as hunting spears, bows, wood-axes and knives if their own area were threatened, they were certainly not a 'general levy of all able bodied men' and would have provided guards for the fyrd's provisions and logistical support for the fyrd proper.

Certainly there are records of towns defending themselves successfully from attack by the whole population manning the walls with more men than they owed for fyrd service. It would of course, be more surprising in these cases if they did not take up arms.

Often the Bayeux Tapestry is quoted as a source for 'peasant levies' using the group of unarmoured men on the hill, or the fleeing Saxons at the end of the battle to support the theory. If studied closely these men on the hill are equipped with sword, broad-axe and kite shield, hardly the weapons of a peasant levy! These figures may represent poorer warriors who could not afford armour in addition to their weapons, perhaps lighter skirmishing troops, or maybe those who shed their armour to allow a faster flight and make themselves less conspicuous.

The deeper the subject is studied, the more convincing the argument is that not only

was there not a 'general levy' in the tenth/eleventh century, but that such a levy never existed except in the imaginations of a few Victorian 'scholars'.

As Richard Abels puts it in his book *"Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England"*:

"The evidence suggests that those who held bookland T.R.E ('Tempore Regis Edwardi' ['in the time of King Edward']) were expected to 'defend' their property in person in the royal host. A thegn who held a great estate, upon which the fyrdfaereld lay so heavily that more than a single warrior was required to discharge the duty, would have been obliged to lead one or more other warriors to the fyrd. How the landowner might obtain the necessary fyrds men was not the concern of the king, so long as these soldiers were sufficiently competent. In some instances bookholders exchanged a lifetime, or multi-lifetime, interest in a parcel of land for their tenant's aimed service. In others they fulfilled their obligation to the king by maintaining fighting men within their own households. Whatever course a magnate chose, he would ordinarily guarantee the loyalty of his warrior-representatives by binding them to himself through commendation. Lordship and land tenure thus provided the twin pillars upon which the military organisation of late Anglo-Saxon England rested. In a very real sense, the royal host never ceased being the king's following arrayed for war. In this lies one of the keys to the turbulent politics of the late tenth and of the eleventh century."

At Hastings the Saxon army, with its elite force weakened through achieving victory at Stamford Bridge, and short of the quota of men from the fyrd, successfully withstood the Norman army in a battle which lasted considerably longer than was normal for the period. At its full strength it could probably have held its own against any army in western Christendom. Its value was certainly not underestimated by its conquerors, who not only adopted the broad-axe, but also perpetuated the fyrd system.

RECOMMENDED CIVILIAN CLOTHING AND KIT REQUIREMENTS

RANK	MALE	FEMALE
Theow	Coarse undyed tunic, waist tie. OPTIONAL: Trousers, hose, leg wrappings, shoes, hood, cloak.	Coarse undyed ankle length dress, cloth waist tie, head cloth. OPTIONAL: Cloak or mantle, shoes.
Gebur	Wool or linen tunic, hose, belt. OPTIONAL: Shoes, cloak, undertunic, hood, leg bindings, trousers, braies, comb, strike-a-light, games or dice, Pewter cloak pins, pouch.	Wool or linen dress, cloth waist tie, head covering. OPTIONAL: Shoes, cloak or mantle, underdress, pewter dress or cloak pin, leg wrappings, comb, scissors, drop spindle, bone or bronze needles, pouch, etc.
Kotsetla	Wool or linen tunic, hose and braies, shoes, cloak, belt. OPTIONAL: Undertunic, hood, leg bindings, trousers, comb, strike-a-light, games or dice, Pewter or bronze cloak pins or brooches, pouch.	Wool or linen dress, underdress, cloth waist tie, shoes, wimple, cloak or mantle, OPTIONAL: Pewter or bronze dress or cloak pins, leg wrappings, drop spindle, comb, scissors, needle case, bone or bronze needles, pouch, etc.
Geneat	Simply decorated wool or linen tunic, undertunic, hose and braies or trousers, belt, shoes, cloak, leg bindings. OPTIONAL: Hood, comb, strike-a-light, games or dice, cloak pins or brooches as above, pouch, etc.	Simply decorated wool or linen dress, underdress, wimple, cloth belt, shoes, mantle or cloak, jewellery as above. OPTIONAL: Leg wrappings or hose, cloak, drop spindle, comb, scissors, needles, needle case, hair/wimple pins, pins or brooches, pouch, etc.
Thegn	Richly decorated wool or linen tunic, undertunic, hose and braies or trousers, shoes, cloak, leg bindings, some silver jewellery as above. OPTIONAL: comb, strike-a-light, pouch, etc.	Richly decorated wool or linen dress, underdress, wimple, cloth waist tie, shoes, mantle, some silver jewellery as above. OPTIONAL: Leg wrappings or hose, cloak, keys, drop spindle, comb, scissors, needles, needle case, hair/wimple pins, pouch, etc.
Eorl's Thegn, King's Thegn, Eolderman or Huscarl	Good, richly decorated wool or linen tunic, fine linen undertunic, hose and braies or trousers, shoes, belt, cloak, leg bindings, gold or silver jewellery, as above. OPTIONAL: comb, strike-a-light, coins, games, reliquary, pouch, etc.	Good richly decorated wool or linen dress, fine linen underdress, linen or silk wimple, shoes, cloth waist tie, mantle, gold or silver jewellery as above, keys. OPTIONAL: Leg wrappings or hose, cloak, drop spindle, comb, needles & needle case, scissors, reliquary, coins, games, hair/wimple pins, pouch, etc.

NOTES:

ALL members are recommended to supply themselves with an authentic knife, bowl, spoon, and mug or horn. A jug and wooden plate are also recommended.

ALL eating knives, **MUST** be scabbarded

All garments **MUST** be properly hemmed and, where necessary, patched.
Half finished garments must not be worn on site.

KEY:

Recommended: Clothing which would be appropriate to the rank shown

Optional: Additional items which may be worn if desired.

SAXON DRESS

MALE DRESS

The basic form of male dress consisted of a woollen tunic reaching the knees or mid thigh when belted, a pair of woollen hose or trousers, a pair of leather turnshoes, a leather waist belt, a small drawstring pouch and a knife. Presumably some form of undergarment or loin cloth would have been worn but no evidence of this has survived.

Tunics could have gussets at the armpits to ease the movement of the arm and reduce tension on the seams. The sleeves were tight fitting on the fore-arm but were usually looser on the upper arm. Triangular gussets added to the lower part of the tunic made a flared 'skirt' to reduce any restriction when working or fighting. In summer work could be done wearing leg bindings but no trousers or hose, so as not to hamper the movement of the legs. Working tunics were often undecorated and those of the poorer gebur and theow were undyed. For the richer kotsetla, geneat etc. linen tunics for lighter wear in summer, or to give an added layer of warmth as an undertunic in winter. The very wealthy would have been able to buy imported silk for decoration, or afford gold-embroidered tunics,

Trousers were straight legged down to the ankle and puttee type bindings were usually used. A gusset was frequently used below the crotch to ease movement and prevent splitting at a point where four seams would otherwise meet.

Saxons are usually depicted wearing very tight legwear. These are often described as being akin to ski-pants, and may be trousers or hose. Either way the fabric might be cut on the bias. This is the technique of cutting the fabric diagonally - following neither the warp nor weft - which allows the fabric a degree of stretch and reduces the tension on the weave. If the legwear was hose and not trousers they would have been worn over a pair of knee breeches (braies), which are sometimes depicted on carvings being worn on their own (although we must remember that much of the depicted detail on sculpture was painted on and is now lost). Burial evidence indicates that whilst the hose may well have been tied to a waistband, they were also pinned at the thighs with small pins or penannular brooches. This pinning may have been to a pair of breeches, or to connect the hose to a waistband in a similar fashion to modern suspenders.

Turnshoes followed the patterns common to northern Europe from the fourth century to the thirteenth century - with either a central upper seam or a flap and toggle. Rich decoration involved tooling and dyed leather. Standard waterproofing measures included either a 50/50 mix of beeswax and mutton fat, or liberal doses of fish oil.

Knives were like small pocket knives generally with blades around 3 - 4 inches long. Handles were mainly wooden, although some antler examples have been found. A few had blades which were hinged to fold back into the handle like a pen-knife.

Hoods may have been worn. They were probably separate items though may have

been attached to cloaks. Cloaks were usually rectangular and pinned at the shoulder (over the weapon arm). Richer folk sometimes had semi-circular full length cloaks and would line them with a contrasting colour and/or add fur trims. Cloaks would be fastened by a cloak pin of wood, bone, bronze, silver or gold according to wealth or status. Circular brooches were the commonest type, although very rarely the Viking style penannular brooch may have been worn. Again, the materials and decoration reflected the wealth of the wearer, ranging from plain bronze items of 2" diameter to silver discs of 6" with gold foil and filigree, garnets and enameling.

The only other common forms of male jewellery were rings, either of twisted wire or cast design, although sometimes the wealthier men may have worn wrist torcs of bronze, silver or gold. Sometimes highly ornate with varying twisted wires and cast terminals, plainer bands could easily be ornamented by stamping designs onto them with an iron die.

FEMALE DRESS

Female Saxon dress consisted of an ankle length linen or wool underdress, an overdress made of wool, turnshoes and some form of head covering.

The dress is similar to the male tunic in construction although it would be ground length and very full in the skirt, with parallel sleeves, loose at the wrist. The underdress was made in the same way as the overdress. The sleeves would be tight and wrist length.

Over the dress a mantle (this is a later term for this garment, and does not seem to be what the Saxons called a *mentel* a term they used for a cloak) was worn. This was based on the shape of an ecclesiastical chasuble, cut in a $\frac{3}{4}$ circle and reaching the mid shin all round, It could be half belted. This garment requires a lot of fabric, and may have been replaced with a cloak by poorer women. Wealthy women may have worn a cloak over their mantle for traveling.

Saxon women **always** covered their heads, usually with a wimple, although poorer women may have worn a simple headscarf. Wimples were secured with pins, metal fillets, or a length of braid. Wealthy women sometimes wore a hood over their wimple.

There is little surviving evidence for underwear but it is thought that women may have worn breeches or knee length shorts and hose. The hose would be tied around the leg above the knee with a band or garter, or be pinned to the breeches. Feet could have been incorporated into the hose. Over the hose from knee to ankle would be leg bindings similar to those worn by men. A loin cloth may have been worn under the breeches, particularly if the woman was having a period.

Women wore turnshoes or ankle boots. These could be decorated by coloured stitching, dyeing or tooling the leather. Boots and shoes could be fastened by a lace around the ankle or by a flap over the top of the foot held in place by a leather, wooden or horn toggle, or a coloured glass bead.

Jewellery, when worn, was similar to men's jewellery, although women sometimes

wore necklaces decorated with amber, glass or wooden beads, semi-precious stones and precious metal in the earlier parts of our period.

THEOW (Summer Wear)

The lowest social rank, their clothes are of the lowest quality, probably their master's or mistress' cast offs. Both are barefoot and are dressed in only rough woolen tunics fastened at the waist with a simple waist tie. The man does not have any leg coverings although some of the luckier ones may have trousers and footwear. Even though only a theow, the woman has made sure her head is covered. All of their clothes are threadbare and patched, although they are not frayed, as theow could not afford new clothes to replace worn garments. They would probably have worn cloaks or wraps in the winter.



GEBUR

The lowest freemen. The man has a rough woolen tunic, wool trousers and simple leather shoes. The woman wears a long woolen dress, a simple head covering and leather shoes. Both carry their belongings in a simple fabric pouch, and have knives which would be used for everything from eating to cooking, carving wood or fighting. Possession of a knife shows them to be free. (He is holding a Hare)



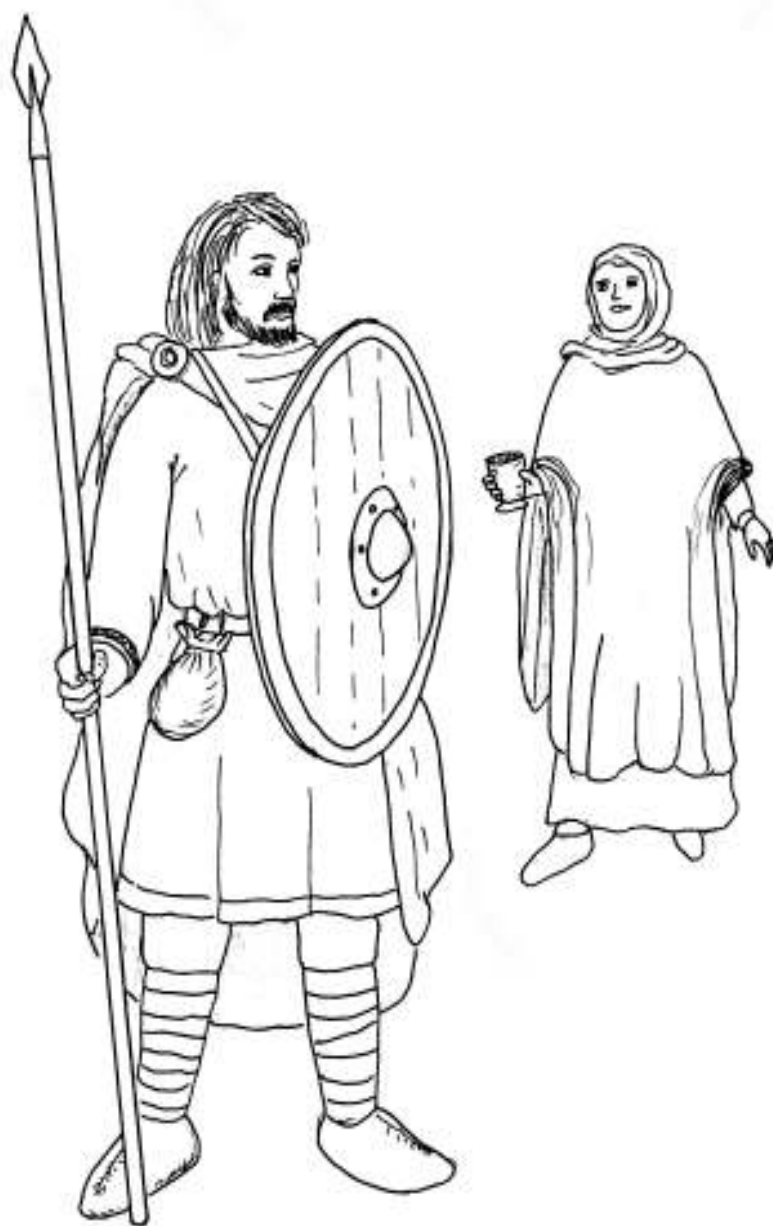
KOTSETLA

The man is dressed similarly to the gebur although he can afford turnshoes, leg bindings and a cloak. He carries his belongings in a leather pouch and is armed with a spear. He also has a knife which he might use to fight with. The woman wears a woolen mantle over her woolen dress. She also wears a wimple and turnshoes. She may have worn a cloak outdoors.



GENEAT

The 'peasant aristocracy', the geneat is the best dressed and equipped of the ceorlish ranks. The man is dressed in a woollen tunic decorated with braid, woollen hose and leg bindings. He also has a woollen cloak, and turnshoes. He is armed with a spear and shield in addition to his knife. Some of the wealthier geneats would also be able to afford a helmet, gambeson, mailshirt and/or a sword. The woman is dressed similarly to the kotsetla, except that her clothing is decorated and of a better quality. She also wears a linen underdress.



THEGN

The true aristocracy, thegns were well equipped and well dressed. The man has a good decorated woollen tunic, a linen undertunic, woollen hose with leg bindings, and turnshoes. For protection he has a padded gambeson (although most thegns would also wear a mailshirt), a conical helm, and a round shield. The woman wears an embroidered overdress over a linen underdress. Her wimple is of linen or silk and is secured with braid. She is holding the warrior's spear and cloak.



EORL'S THEGN AND HUSCARL

The Huscarl (left) is wearing a long mail hauberk and gambeson over his tunic, hose and leg bindings. He has a conical helm of one piece construction, carries a kite shield, and is armed with the feared broad axe and a sword. The Eorl's Thegn (right) has a long mail shirt and gambeson under which he wearing a tunic, hose and leg bindings. His helm is of banded construction and is fitted with a mail aventail. He also carries a kite shield and is armed with a broad axe.



EORL AND LADY

The Eorl, in formal court gear, wears a linen undertunic and hose over which he wears a long robe. This robe is highly decorated with embroidery. He bears no weaponry as at court it would have been unnecessary, maybe even a breach of etiquette, to bear arms. His lady has a linen underdress with an embroidered wool or linen overdress. Her silk wimple is held in place with a length of silk braid and her dress is belted with a woven waist tie.



SAXON NAMES

Saxons only had given names. If someone wanted to distinguish between two people with the same name they would add the person's occupation, home village or, for married women, the husband's name. For example 'Wulfstan the Smith', as opposed to 'Wulfstan of Brycgstow' or 'Aethelburg, Wulfstan's wife'. After the time of Cnut some Saxons adopted the Danish system of using their father's name with a '-son' suffix. Shorter names may have been from an earlier tradition.

MALE SAXON NAMES

Acca Aculf Adalaver Adalbert Adelgar Aefic Aegelbriht Aegelric Aelfferth Aelfgaerd
Aelfgar Aelfgeat Aelfheah Aelfheard Aelfhere Aelfmaer Aelfnoth Aelfred Aelfric Aelfsi
Aelfsig Aelfsige Aelfstan Aelfun Aelfweard Aelfwig Aelfwine Aelfwold Aelfyeat Aelle
Aelmaer Aesc Aescferth Aescwine Aescwulf Aethelbald Aethelberht
Aethelbrlht Aethelbryht Aethelferth Aethelgar Aethelgeard Aethelgeat Aethelheard
Aethelhelm Aethelhere Aethelhun Aethelmaer Aethelman Aethelmod Aethelmund
Aethelnoth Aethelraed Aethelred Aethelric Aethelsige Aethelstan Aethelstand
Aethelthryth Aethelweard Aethelwig Aethelwine Aethelwold Aethelword Aethelwulf
Aethere Atheric Ahlred Aidan Aldfrith Aldhelm Aldred Aldulf Aldwine Alf Alfhun
Alfred Alfwold Alhhun Alric Anna Anwynd Arcenbryht Arcil Arnwi Asser Athelstan
Athelwald Athulf

Baegmund Baegstan Baeldaeg Bald Baldred Baldric Baldulf Baldwin Bass Bealdread
Bealdric Bealdwulf Bede Benesing Beocca Beonna Beorhtferth Beortfrith Beorhthelm
Beorhtlaf Beorhtmaer Beorhtread Beorhtric Beorhtsige Beorhtstan Beorhtweald
Beorhtweard Beorhtwig Beorhtwine Beorhtwulf Beorn Beornhelm Beornmod Beornnoth
Beornraed Beornred Beornulf Beornweald Beornwig Beornwulf Beorthulf Berhtred Biede
Blecca Boneval Bosa Botulf Brand Bregowine Brid Briht Brihteah Brihtnoth Brihtred
Brihtric Brihtwold Brinin Brorda Brunstan Brunwine Burhred Bumoth Byrthelm
Byrhtnoth Byrhtsige Byrhtwold Byrnstan

Cadwallon Ceadda Ceadwalla Ceawlin Cenbryht Cenred Centus Centwine Cenwall
Cenwulf Ceol Ceola Ceolbeald Ceolheard Ceolmund Ceolnoth Ceolred Ceolwald
Ceolwulf Ceorl Cerdic Cnebba Coenbeorht Coenhelm Coenraed Coenric Coenwulf
Colbrand Cola Cole Colinan Criba Cumbra Cutha Cuthbald Cuthbert Cuthbriht Cuthraed
Cuthred Cuthwine Cuthwulf Cwaspatric Cwichelm Cymen Cynebriht Cyneferth Cynegils
Cyneheard Cynehelm Cynemund Cyneric Cynestan Cyneweald Cyneward Cynewulf
Cynred Cynric Cyssa

Daegbeorht Daeglaf Daegmund Daela Dearlaf Dearmod Dearsige Dereheah Deor
Deorweald Deorwine Deorwulf Draca Drythelm Dryhtweald Duda Dudda Dudoc
Dudwine Dunn Dunnere Dunstan

Eaborht Eadbald Eadbriht Eadgar Eadhelm Eadhun Eadmaer Eadmund Eadnoth Eadred
Eadric Eadrige Eadsige Eadstan Eadulf Eadwacar Eadweard Eadwig Eadwine Eadwulf
Eafa Eaha Ealdbriht Ealdulf Ealdwine Ealdwulf Ealhelm Ealhere Ealhheard Ealhstan
Ealmund Ealread Ealsige Ealstan Ealwine Eanbald Eanfrith Eanmund Eanraed Eanwulf
Eappa Eardwulf Earnulf Earnwig Eastmaer Eastmund Eata Eawig Eawulf Eceard Ecga
Ecgbeorht Ecgbryht Ecgferth Ecgheard Ecglaf Ecgulf Ecgwulf Edgar Edmund Edward
Edwin Egbalth Elda Eles Eohric Eomer Eoppa Eormenric Eorpwald Eowils Ercenberht
Ermanaric Ermenred Esla

Feologild Fordraed Forthere Forthred Fraena Framric Freawine Freothogar Frethi
Frithegist Frithewald Frithogyth Frithstan
Gadd Gamal Garulf Garwig Garwulf Gewis Gifel Gifemund Gis Gleadbeald Gleadwine
Goda Godbeorht Godcild Goddaeg Godhere Goding Godlamm Godloef Godmari Godraed
Godric Godrum Godsbrand Godscalc Godser Godstan Godsunu Godwig Godwine
Goldwine Grimbald Grimcytel Guthere Guthlaf Gyric Gyrrth

Harold Heafoc Heahbeorth Heathwulf Hebeca Heca Hedde Hengest Herebeorht Herebryht
 Hereferth Herefrith Heremann Heremond Hereraed Herewig Herewulf Hering Higbald
 Hildraed Hildsige Hildulfr Hildwine Hlothere Holman Horsa Hrothgar Huna Hunbeorht
 Hunberht Hunfrith Hunlaf Hunman Hunraed Hunsige Hunstan Hunwine Hussa Hutha
 Hwaetman Hwaetraed Hwita Hygeberht Hygebryht Hygelac Hygeraed

Iaenberht Ianberht Ida Ifa Ifing Ifllwine Ine Ingild Inguc Ingwald Inwona Iothete Ithamar

Lanbeorht Lanferth Leodmar Leodulf Leodwald Leofa Leofdaeg Leofgar Leofgod
 Leofhelm Leofhyse Leofing Leofmaer Leofman Leofnoth Leofraed Leofric Leofstan
 Leofsunu Leofthegn Leofweald Leofweard Leofwig Leofwine Lilla Liofa Ludeca
 Lytelman

Maccus Maegenraed Maegla Maethelweald Manleof Manna Manni Mansige Mantat
 Mantican Manwine Merewit Merewine Mildred Moll Morcaer Morkere Mul

Nothelm Nun

Odda Offa Ohter Orc Ordbeorht Ordgar Ordheh Ordlaf Ordric Ordulf Ordwig Osbeorht
 Osbern Oscytel Osfram Osfrith Osgar Osgood Oshere Oslac Oslaf Osmaer Osmed
 Osmund Osred Osric Osulf Oswald Osweald Oswi Oswine Oswiu Oswald Oswudu

Peada Pehtwine Penda Pendraed Peotweald Phytwin Plegemund Port Praen Pusa Puttoc

Raedmund Raedwald Raedwine Raedwulf Raegnold Rilberht Rothulf

Saebeorht Saebyrht Saeferth Saeger Saemaer Saeric Saewine Saxulf Scrocmail Scurfa
 Seaxbeorht Selred Seoca Seolwine Sibbi Sibirht Siga Sideman Sidrac Sigebriht Sigebryht
 Sigeferth Sigehelm Sigelm Sighere Sigulf Siric Sithric Siward Smala Smeawine Snell
 Snelling Spearhafoc Sperman Sperling Stanmaer Stigand Stithwulf Stuf Swetric Swithulf
 Sygbald

Tatwine Teothic Theobald Theodric Thurcytel Thurferth Thurstan Tidgar Tidhelm Tidraed
 Tidwine Tidwulf Tilwine Tilwulf Tirweald Tobias Toglos Tohrwulf Torthelm Tredewude
 Tunberht Twicga

Ucede Uhtraed Uhtred Ulf Ulfcytel Ulfert

Wada Waebheard Waedel Waehlheard Waeldhelm Waldere Waltferth Wendelbeorht
 Weohstan Werhtherd Whitgar Widia Wiferth Wig Wigelm Wigferth Wigheard Wighere
 Wiglaf Wigmund Wigthegn Wigulf Wihtgar Wihtgil Wihtmund Wihtred Wihtsige
 Wilbeorht Wilferth Wilfred Wilmund Wilnoth Wilsige Wilwulf Wine Winebeald
 Winebeorht Winedaeg Winegod Winegar Winemaer Winoth Wineraed Winfred Wipped
 Wistan Wlencing Womaer Won Wulf Wulfgar Wulfgeat Wulfheah Wulfheard Wulfhelm
 Wulthere Wulfherr Wulfraf Wulfmaer Wulfnoth Wulfraed Wulfric Wulfstige Wulfstan
 Wulfweard Wulfwig Wulfwine Wynbeorht Wynhelm Wynraed Wynsige Wynstan

FEMALE SAXON NAMES

Aebbe Aedwen Aelfgyfu Aelfgyth Aelflaed Aelfswith Aelfthryth Aelfwyn Aethelburg
 Aethelburh Aethelflaed Aethelgifu Aethelstith Aethelthryth Agatha Agnes Ailred

Beadohild Bebbe Beorngyth Berhtgyth Bucege

Ceolburh Cuthberg Cuthburh Cuthswith Cwenburg Cwenburh Cyneberg Cyneswith
 Cynethryth

Eadburg Eadgifu Eadgyth Ealhild Ealhswith Eanflaed Eangyth Eawyn Ecgfrida Ecgfrithu
 Edith Emma Ercongota Ethelflaed

Frythegith Frithugyth

Geatfleda Godgifu Godgyth Gytha

Heiu Herelufu Hild Hilda Hildeburg Hildegard Hildelith Hildegyth Hildithryth

Inga

Leofgifu Leofgyth Leoflaed Leofrun Leofwaru

Maethild Mathilda Matilda Mildrith

Nothgyth

Oedilburga Osgyth Osthryth

Raenmaeld Ricola Rienmelt Rymenhild

Saegyth Saehild Seaxburg Siflaed

Waerburh Wealhtheow Wihtburg Wulfwaru Wulfwyn Wynflaed

Ymma

SAXON NAME ELEMENTS

Many Saxon names are actually compound words made from two common elements. Some of these are only used by one gender, others are unisex. The following list gives first and second elements for both sexes so you can 'custom build' your own authentic name.

MALE SAXON NAMES

FIRST ELEMENT OF NAME

Aegel Aelf Aesc Aethel Al Ald Alf

Bald Beo Beorht Beorn Briht Bryht Byrht

Cen Ceol Cuth Cyne

Dud Dun

Ead Eal Eald Ealh Ean Ecg Ed Eo Eoh

Frith

Gar God Grim Guth

Here Hild Hu Hun Hyge

Lan Leo Leod Leof

Ord Os

Sid Sig Sige

Theo Thur Tid

Wig Wiht Wil Win Wine Wulf

SECOND ELEMENT OF NAME

bald beorht beorth berht briht bryht byrht

cytel

ferth

gar

heah heard helm here hun

lac

maer mund

noth

raed red ric

sig sige stan

ulf

wald weald weard wig wine wold wulf

FEMALE SAXON NAMES

FIRST ELEMENT OF NAME

Aelf Aethel

Ceol Cuth Cyne

Ead Ealh Ean Ecg Ed

Frith

Here Hild

Leof

Os

Sae

Wiht Wyn

SECOND ELEMENT OF NAME

burg burh

flaed

gifu gyth

hild

ith

swith

thryth

wyn

SAXON COMMANDS AND PHRASES

Form up on the standard, right/left	An cumbol swithren/winstren filciath
Stand at ease	Standeth softie
Attention	Aweccan
Carry weapons	Waepnu nimth
Raise weapons	Waepnu ahebbeth
March forward	Forth gath
Stop	Stop
About turn	Ongean wendeth
Turn right/left	On swithren/winstren wendeth
Shield wall	Scild burh/Bordweall
Stand firm	Stande faeste
Dismiss	Tofayreth
Sit down	Sitteth
Retreat in good order	Ongean gath
Arrows	Strael
Retreat quickly	Abugath
Listen	Liste
Hurry up	Esteth
Await the order...	Abideth bebob...
Advance one pace. ...step	Forth an fotes trim stepath....stepan
Form up towards the center	Trimmiath
Form up battle line	Guth raew filciath
Attack! / Charge!	Onraes!
Quiet!	Stille!
Run (jog, maintaining the line)	Gerinneth
Form two lines behind the standard	Twa raew hinden cumbol filciath
Standard (bearer) halt	Cumbol astand
Standard (bearer) march	Cumbol gath
Protect the standard	Cumbol fortheccath

Advance into engagement	Forth on gewinn gangeth
Counter charge	Witherraes
Retreat	Withertrod
Death to our enemy	Deoth til urum feondum
Harken to the sheep bleating	Lytte til thaem sceap gewarmen
One of small manhood	Lytel manna
Monster	Forath
She goat	Geit
A man doomed to death	Deotha maedra
Smite your enemies	Sle cowere feondas
Buffoon	Day raed
Arrogant fellow	Oll-stoppi
Bastard / Son of a whore	Cifesboren
How much are these?	Hu miclum aerum thissum?
Has the boat landed?	Ist thaet scip cumen up?
Has Bjorn been seen?	Ist Bjorn gesewen beon?
Thank you	Ic thancie thu
Yes / No	Gea/ Na
Farewell	Wes-harl
I sell cups	Ic bledu selle
We need some water	We sum waeter thurfon
I will weave	Ic wille awefan
I shall carve some wood	Ic wille sumu wude ceorfan
My name is Wulfstan	Wulfstan ist mon noma

NOTES ON PRONUNCIATION

OE ModE

ae 'a' as in 'hat'

a 'a' as in 'father'

c before 'e' or 'i' pronounced 'ch', otherwise pronounced 'k'

g before 'e' or 'i' at beginning of word pronounced as a 'y', between vowels pronounced as a 'w', otherwise pronounced like modern 'g'

ge initial 'ge' is usually voiceless

s 'z' in middle of word, 's' at beginning or end of word

f 'v' in middle of word, 'f' at beginning or end of word

h at beginning of word, as 'h' in hound, otherwise like 'ch/sh'

sc 'sh'

an at end of word ignore it!

hw 'wh'

-ht 'ght'

cw 'qu'

-ycg 'idge'

ecg 'edge'