

1 A Short History



Hadrian's Wall, built by the Romans

Back in England's oldest times, people lived in big groups called tribes. They were farmers – they grew their food, and kept animals for meat and eggs. They lived in villages, in wooden or mud⁴ houses, and there was often fighting between the different tribes. Life was simple but dangerous.

Then in AD 43, forty thousand Roman soldiers invaded⁵ England from the area of Europe that is now Italy. The Roman army was very well-organized and had good weapons⁶. The soldiers built a wall around themselves every night so they were safe. They moved across the country, fighting and winning battles⁷ against the different tribes, and after four years they controlled⁸ the south of England.

The Romans had to fight for many years before they controlled all of England. They made many changes in the country, such as building towns and cities, and good roads. They brought a new language to England – Latin – and made laws, so people knew what they could and could not do. The religion⁹ of Christianity came to England in Roman times too.



The Romans never took control of^p Scotland, which is north of England, and Scottish tribes came to fight against them in the north of England again and again. Because of this, in the second century AD, the Romans built a wall to stop the Scottish tribes coming to England. This wall between England and Scotland was one hundred and twenty kilometres long, and was called Hadrian's Wall.

For English people in towns and cities, life in Roman times was good. Towns now had clean water and sewers (pipes taking away dirty water), and there were strong walls around them, so people felt safe. People came to the towns to buy and sell things, and food became more interesting and enjoyable. To relax, people could go to special bath houses, where they met their friends, kept clean and exercised.

There are many stories in England about King Arthur, who fought against the Anglo-Saxons. No one knows if King Arthur ever really lived, but he is important in a lot of English art, music and literature¹⁰. One famous story about Arthur is the story of the sword¹¹ in the stone. Arthur was the son of King Uther, but these were dangerous times in England, and Arthur's family wanted to keep him safe. So when Arthur was a baby, he was taken to live with another family, who took care of him along with their own son Kay. When King Uther died, no one knew that he had a son. The important people in England did not know who should be the next king. But then they saw a strange white stone with a sword in it. Gold writing on the stone said, 'The man who can pull out this sword will be King.' Many men tried to pull out the sword, but no one could move it. One day Arthur, who was looking for a sword for Kay, pulled it out. Then everyone knew he was the next king.



But after AD 250, Roman soldiers began to leave England. They had to fight in other parts of the world, and it was too expensive and difficult for them to keep England safe. By AD 411, all the Roman soldiers had left England. Then the Anglo-Saxons, from Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark, began to arrive. The Anglo-Saxons had come to England several times before, but the Romans had always defeated¹² them. Now, with the Romans gone, the English could not win battles against the Anglo-Saxons, and many Anglo-Saxons came to live in England.

The Anglo-Saxons did not like the Romans' towns, so they did not use them, and the towns stayed empty. The Anglo-Saxons built their own villages near rivers or the sea and made

