

ARTHUR AND THE ANGLO-SAXON WARS



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Introduction

The Arthurian Age—the Celtic Twilight—the Dark Ages—the Birth of England: these are the powerfully romantic names often given to one of the most confused yet vital periods in British history. It is an era upon which rival Celtic and English nationalisms frequently focus. How far, for example, were the Romano-Celtic culture and population of Britannia obliterated by invading Angle, Saxon and Jutish barbarians? Or are the British Isles still essentially Celtic, even though the larger part of their population now speaks a Germanic tongue?

Such questions will probably exercise historians and archaeologists for generations. But one thing is clear: it was an era of settlement, and of the sword. Since title to the land was both won and maintained by force of arms, the military or socio-military history of the early medieval period is of fundamental importance. Paradoxically it is an aspect which has received relatively little attention, with too many historians dismissing Anglo-Saxon and Celtic warfare as little more than a disorganised but bloody brawl.

This view now seems grossly oversimplified, yet great problems remain. Lack of evidence is one, and the difficulties posed by what little survives is another. Written sources tend to be unreliable. The late Roman *Notitia Dignitatum* military list was probably out of date for Britain. Histories range from the almost unintelligible, such as Gildas, to those written long after the event, such as Bede, Nennius, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the Pictish List of Kings. Military terminology can be equally misleading, since these sources often use anachronistic classical terms or fanciful poetic imagery. Pictorial representations, apart from their general crudity, pose exactly the same problems and often reflect Roman or Byzantine originals. Certainly the

craftsmen and artists who made them rarely worked ‘from life’. Despite these difficulties, however, it now seems that warfare and weaponry in the so-called Dark Ages were more sophisticated than was once thought, as were the societies involved.

Chronology

(Anglo-Saxon victories in *italics*, Celtic victories in **bold type**, Norse victories underlined.)

AD

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 300 | Capital of Roman Empire transferred to Constantinople (Istanbul). |
| c.360–432 | Egyptian-style monastic community established at Candida Casa on Solway Firth. |
| 383 | Many Roman troops withdrawn to Continent by Magnus Maximus. |
| 407 | Last Roman regular troops withdrawn from Britain. |
| 410 | Roman Emperor tells Britons to look to own defence. |
| c.429 | Britons under St Germanus of Auxerre defeat Anglo-Saxon and Pictish pagan raiders in ‘Alleluia’ battle. |
| c.432 | St Patrick’s mission to Ireland. |
| c.442–456 | <i>Rebellion by Anglo-Saxon troops in south-east Britain.</i> |
| c.446 | ‘Groans of the Britons’, appeal for help to General Aetius in Gaul. Plague ravages Britain. |
| 449 | Traditional ‘arrival of Hengest and Horsa’ in Kent. |
| c.456 | <i>Anglo-Saxons (and Jutes) of Kent defeat Britons at ‘Crecaanford’, Britons retreat to London.</i> |

- c.464 Saxon king Adovacrius ruling area near Loire estuary in Gaul.
- c.468 British king Riothamus (Ambrosius Aurelianus?) fights Visigoths in Gaul.
- 476 Deposition of last Western Roman Emperor.
- 477 Traditional 'arrival of Aelle' in Sussex.
- c.500 Aelle of Sussex recognised as Bretwalda (senior Anglo-Saxon king).
- c.516 **Britons under Arthur defeat Anglo-Saxons (of Sussex?) at Mount Badon.**
- 520 Foundation of monastery at Clonard in Ireland.
- 520–550 Childebert, king of the Franks, attempts to dominate Anglo-Saxon kings?
- c.537 Traditional 'death of Arthur' at battle of Camlann.
- c.542 Bubonic plague ravages Europe.

A relief from the Antonine Wall, c.AD 143, erected by Rome's Second Legion. The Picts are shown carrying square shields of possible Roman inspiration, but their nakedness is probably an artistic convention. (Nat.Mus. of Antiquities, Edinburgh)

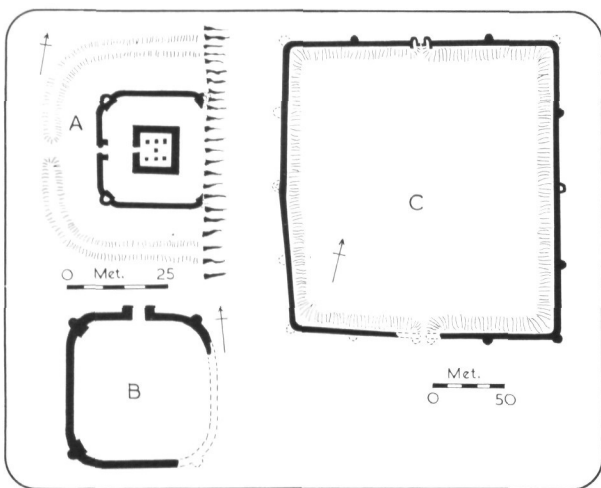


- c.550 *Angles occupy Bamburgh, creation of kingdom of Bernicia.*
- 563 St Columba establishes monastery at Iona, start of Irish mission to Anglo-Saxons.
- c.577 *Wessex defeats Britons at 'Dyrham' and captures Bath, Gloucester and Cirencester.*
- 596–597 Foundation of Benedictine monastery at Canterbury and start of St Augustine's mission to Kent.
- c.600 *Northumbria defeats Strathclyde-Gododdin at Catterick.*
- c.615 *Northumbria defeats Britons near Chester.*
- 627–634 Northumbria converted to Christianity.
- c.628 Anglo-Saxon Hwicce (Gloucester) annexed by Mercia.
- 634 *Northumbria defeats Gwynned at Hexham.*
- 635 Bernicia, Deira and Celtic Elmet formally united as the kingdom of Northumbria.
- 653 Essex converted to Christianity.
- 655 Pagan Mercia defeated by Northumbria and converted to Christianity.
- 658 *Most of Somerset conquered by Wessex.*
- 664 Synod of Whitby.
- 679 Northumbria defeated by Mercia at Trent.
- 681–686 Sussex converted to Christianity.
- 685 **Northern Picts defeat Northumbrians at Dunnichen.**
- 686 Isle of Wight annexed by Wessex, conversion of this last Anglo-Saxon realm to Christianity.
- c.690–720 *Devon absorbed by Wessex.*
- 700–710 Lindsey absorbed by Mercia.
- c.730 Chiltern-Saeten (Chiltern Hills) annexed by Mercia.
- 741 King Oengus of the Picts defeats Scots of Dal Riata.
- 793 Lindisfarne monastery raided; first dated Norse attack.
- c.800 **Northumbria loses Dumfries to Strathclyde.**
- 814 *South Welsh Dumnonia (Cornwall) conquered by Wessex.*
- 816 *Welsh kingdom of Rhufuniog conquered by Mercia.*
- 841 Norse found city of Dublin.
- c.843 'Treachery of Scone', Southern Pictish

The British Isles
5th to 8th centuries

-  Roman forts & signal stations
-  Major Roman roads
-  Major defensive dykes
-  Germanic burials c.420 AD
-  Approx. frontier c.796 AD
-  KENT Kingdoms
-  (FIB) Provinces or previous kingdoms
-  Anglo-Saxon conquest to c.500 AD
-  Anglo-Saxon conquest to c.600 AD
-  Anglo-Saxon conquest to c.660 AD



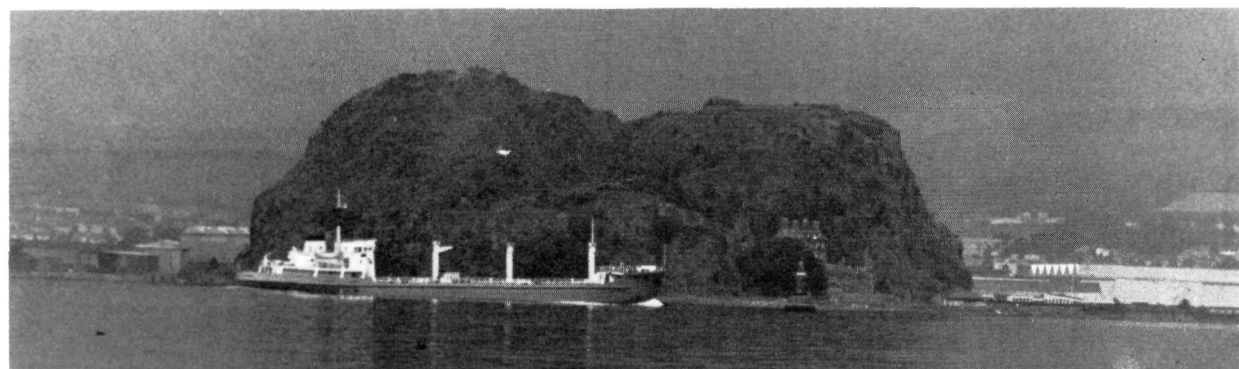


4th-century Roman fortifications: (A) Signal station at Scarborough; (B) Signal station without central tower, on Alderney; (C) Fort at Cardiff. (After Johnson)

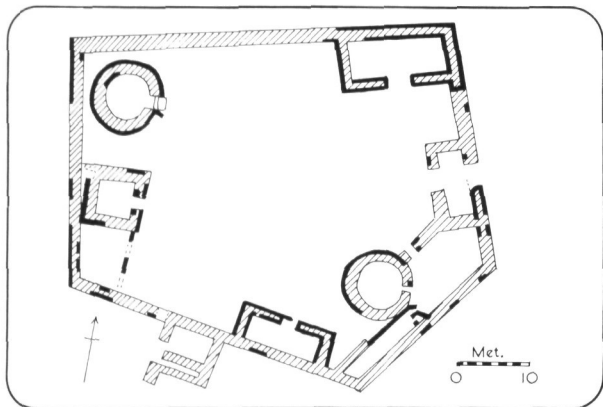
- leaders murdered by Scots of Dal Riata. Picts put under Scottish king, formation of united kingdom of Alban.
- 865–867 Norse ‘Great Army’ raids across England, captures York.
- 870 Norse capture Dumbarton, Strathclyde capital.
- 871 *Alfred of Wessex halts Norse advance at battle of Ashdown.*
- 875–900 Norse settle in Galloway.
- 876 Norse begin to settle in England.
- 876–879 Norse force Alfred of Wessex to retreat to Athelney.
- 879 *Wessex defeats Norse of East Anglia.*
- c.910–920 **Northumbria loses Carlisle and northern Cumbria to Strathclyde.**
- 911 London and Home Counties north of Thames annexed by Wessex.
- 912–917 *Norse East Anglia conquered by Wessex.*

- 917–918 ‘Danish’ (Norse) Mercia conquered by Wessex.
- 919 ‘English’ Mercia annexed by Wessex.
- 919–927 *Norse kingdom of York conquered by Wessex.*
- 920 Edward of Wessex recognised as senior king in Britain.
- 937 *Wessex defeats Celtic-Norse ‘Grand Alliance’ at Brunaburgh.*
- 956 Strathclyde loses Menteith and Lennox to Alban.
- 959 Unification of England under king Edgar of Wessex.
- 962 **Northumbria loses Edinburgh and Midlothian to Alban.**
- 973 **Northumbria cedes suzerainty of Lothian and ‘Borders’ to Alban.**
- 1006 *Alban defeated by Northumbria.*
- 1014 **Celtic-Irish defeat Norse and Norse-Irish at battle of Clontarf.**
- 1015 Strathclyde temporarily annexed by Alban.
- 1016 Knut the Great joins England to his ‘empire’ of Denmark and Norway.
- 1018 **Alban defeats Northumbria at Carham, annexes Lothian and ‘Borders’.**
- 1034 Strathclyde finally annexed by Alban.
- 1038 Galloway annexed by Alban (effective creation of united kingdom of Scotland).
- 1062–1063 *Earl Harold of Wessex defeats Gruffydd, high king of Wales.*
- 1066 *Anglo-Saxons defeat Norse at Stamford Bridge. Normans defeat Anglo-Saxons at Hastings, conquer England.*

Dumbarton Rock is a volcanic plug overlooking the Clyde. Here the British kingdom of Strathclyde had its capital.



- 1068— Unsuccessful Anglo-Saxon rising against
- 1069 Normans north of the Thames.
- 1081 Anglo-Saxon exiles in Byzantine service (Varangians) defeated by Normans of southern Italy at Dyrrhachium.
- 1098 Frontier of Norse Kingdom of the Isles agreed by treaty with Scotland.



4th-century defended hut group at Din Lligwy, Anglesey. Two of the rectangular buildings were iron-smelting workshops. (After Houlder)

The Arthurian Age

The End of Britannia

The last years of Roman rule saw Britain divided into four Provinces, with a belt of allied British tribes acting as a buffer between Hadrian's Wall and the Picts of the northern Highlands. These Roman provinces were defended by three military commands: the *Dux Britanniarum*, who commanded north Britannia and the Wall from his HQ at York; the *Comes litoris Saxonici* (Count of the Saxon Shore), who was responsible for the defences of the south-eastern coasts; and the more recently created *Comes Britanniarum* who led a mobile frontier force.

By the late 4th and early 5th centuries Hadrian's Wall had ceased to be a clearly defined frontier. It was now a ramshackle structure between forts which were more like armed and densely populated villages. The Wall itself, its turrets and mile-castles had been abandoned, and the forts were inhabited by the families of second-grade, and probably hereditary, frontier auxiliaries.

The most effective Roman troops were now cavalry. They generally fought in an Iranian style,

with lance rather than bow, as the influence of Turkish or Hunnish horse-archery would not be fully reflected in Romano-Byzantine tactics until the 5th century. The heavily armoured *cataphractii* were no longer seen only in the east of the Empire. Stirrups were not necessary for such 'shock-troopers', as their rôle remained that of breaking the foe's infantry or light cavalry rather than facing other heavy cavalry. Shields were rarely carried, as lances were often wielded with both hands. Spurs were, however, used. So were javelins, particularly by horsemen of Alan or Sarmatian descent.

Foot soldiers remained important. Light infantry carrying small shields fought as skirmishers with javelins, bows or slings. Armoured infantry fought in ranks carrying large shields, but were otherwise equipped much like the *cataphractii*. Archery seems to have been as important in Britannia as elsewhere in the Empire. The late Roman bow was descended from the so-called Scythian type, being of composite construction, about hip-high, double curved and with bone 'ears'. Many archers would have been of Arab, Syrian or Parthian ancestry, but it is also possible that the descendants of East African or Sudanese Blemys were stationed in Britain. The *sagittarii Gallicani* of Gaul may have had such African origins, for the *Notitia Dignitatum* shows two confronted Moorish heads as their shield emblem. There is little doubt that the Romans also had crossbows, but were such weapons for war or only for the hunt? A device for shooting short heavy arrows was used by some infantry, while Vegetius, writing around AD 385, mentioned *manubalistae* and *arcubalistae* as weapons for light troops. Two centuries later Byzantine troops were using the simple *solenarion* crossbow, and the weapon possibly survived north of Hadrian's Wall. Fragments of a crossbow were also found in a late Roman burial at Burbage, Wiltshire, in 1893.

Other late Roman weapons pose fewer problems. Relatively light *lancea* javelins were thrown by ranks of infantry drawn up behind a shield wall, five normally being carried according to Vegetius. Axes are seen rarely as weapons in late Roman carvings, and the sword retained pride of place as a close-combat weapon. The short *semispatha* would generally have been used by the infantry while the longer Iranian-style *spatha* was more suitable for cavalry.



Traprain Law is one of a series of extinct volcanoes in the Lothian region; on its summit are ruins dating from the days of the Votadini and later from Gododdin.

The late Roman *cassis* helmet was normally of two-piece construction, a form which probably dated from the 4th century. The segmented *spangenhelm* of ultimate Turkish Central Asian origin (via the Sarmatians) may have been brought to Britain by the Anglo-Saxons. Mail was the most common form of armour, but scale and lamellar defences were also known in most parts of the Empire. The disappearance of plate armour reflected, of course, changing military priorities and not a decline in technological capability. The term *cataphracta* might sometimes have applied to heavy armour in general but it normally meant scale or lamellar. The mail *lorica hamata* often had alternating punched and riveted rings. *Toracibus* probably meant a scale hauberk when being used specifically, though the late Romans also made widespread use of a form of linked-scale armour. In this the iron or bronze scales were joined by metal staples to form a relatively inflexible pseudo-lamellar protection. This was probably referred to as a *lorica squamata*. Occasional references to leg defences almost certainly meant splinted protections rather than the plate greaves of earlier times.

Siege engines were, of course, still used, though more in defence than attack. The most widespread were probably anti-personnel weapons like the stone-throwing *onager* and the large frame-mounted crossbow, or *toxoballista* of early Byzantine sources.

The Roman army which 'withdrew' from Britannia was still a formidable and well-equipped fighting force. The last regulars who supposedly left with Constantine III in AD 407 probably consisted

of the small mobile force. According to the early 6th century Greek historian Zosimus, the Britons effectively seceded from an impotent Rome; and around AD 410 the Emperor, perhaps accepting a *fait accompli*, told the cities of Britannia to look to their own defences. The north of the island was still dominated by the army in the early 5th century, and many troops probably remained with their families when Roman authority was officially withdrawn. The two static commands of the *Dux Britanniarum* and the *Comes litoris Saxonici* could well have remained to defend the island for its new independent rulers.

The forces garrisoning the various forts, particularly those of the auxiliary Lesser Schedule, had to a large extent already been assimilated into the surrounding Celtic or Romano-British population, and would have acted as little more than a local militia. It is even possible that much of the Major Schedule of supposedly effective 'legions' remained as garrison troops until overwhelmed or absorbed.

Sub-Roman Britain

The provinces of what had been Roman Britannia, plus the region of British *foederati* north of Hadrian's Wall, saw neither anarchy nor major social upheaval after the Roman withdrawal. Town life continued, though the towns had been declining for years. Outside the tribal hill-country, society was still Romanised and largely Christian. The men who led resistance to Pictish, Irish and Anglo-Saxon raiders were probably not an anti-Roman Celtic élite but were the same Romano-British aristocracy of *curiales* who had held power for generations.

The military organisation of this area was, however, not uniform. In the early 5th century the north was still dominated by the remnants of the Roman army. Many later northern British dynasties claimed descent from a certain Coel Hen (now remembered as 'Old King Cole'), a leading figure in the final years of the Wall garrison. He might, in fact, have been the last *Dux* or commander of a unified Wall command. It is also worth noting that many of the forts of both the Antonine and Hadrian's Walls were in continuous occupation through the medieval period. In contrast, the hills of western Britain were still dominated by Celtic tribal leaders; while the south-east was effectively held by large estate owners defended only by local

militias. Here there may also have been some remnants of the Roman field army, including Germanic *gentiles* who would by now have been thoroughly Romanised. Raids by Picts from the north and Irish from the west were crushed. British central authority was strong enough, at least under the shadowy figure of Vortigern (meaning 'great king'), for whole peoples such as the Votadini to be forcibly moved from one region to another as a defensive measure.

Even after the 'Saxon Revolt' of the mid-5th century city life continued. In the south-east the inhabitants of some towns either came to terms with the conquerors, or carefully dismantled their buildings, presumably to transport them westwards. Here some cities declined gradually while others were violently destroyed. In other cases shanties were built amid the ruins of wood-framed halls. In Vortigern's possible military capital of Wroxeter, as elsewhere in the west, there are indications of a shrunken and enfeebled form of Romanised administration surviving for generations. Fortifications were maintained, probably by the local inhabitants, and most of the defended positions associated with battles against the Anglo-Saxons were of Roman origin rather than being Celtic hill-forts.

Certain centres maintained trade contact with Ireland, Gaul and the Mediterranean exporting metals, including tin or silver, and importing wine or religious items. This society might have been

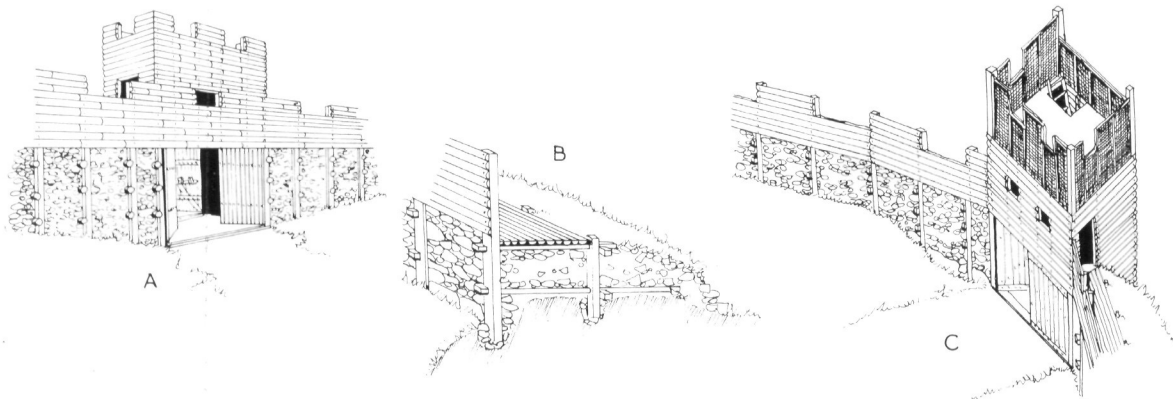
Christian, but its peasantry was deeply influenced by Pelagianism, an attractive heresy of British origin which emphasised personal responsibility and initiative. Meanwhile many of the Celtic hill-tribes were still largely pagan.

Then came two calamities which were so close to each other that a connection seems highly likely. One was the disastrous plague of *c.* AD 446. The second was a rebellion by the numerous Anglo-Saxon mercenaries who had traditionally been brought in by Vortigern. When these troops were not paid they are said to have gone on the rampage, while the Romano-British either retreated to ancient hill-forts, fled the country or, like the bulk of the peasantry, became second-class citizens. The result was the infamous 'Groans of the Britons', which similarly dates from around AD 446. In this document the Romano-British leadership asked General Aetius, military leader of the crumbling western half of the Roman Empire, for aid. Whether the crisis of the plague led to the Saxon Revolt, or the Revolt caused enough chaos to result in an epidemic, is unknown.

Legends abound, but one thing is clear. Central authority collapsed, perhaps as a result of disagreement between the *Dux*, the *Comes* and the urban authorities now that the unifying hand of Rome had gone. The shadowy figure of Ambrosius emerged as the leader of a localised, fragmentary but still largely successful British resistance based upon re-occupied hill-forts. These were now smaller than their pre-Roman originals, being bases for a warrior aristocracy rather than tribal retreats.

At least part of the Wall was repaired and defended into the 6th century, as were some

Reconstructions of 'Arthurian' defences at South Cadbury, Somerset: (A) Main gate of timber and stone; (B) Section through timber-laced, stone-faced earthen rampart with timber walkway and palisade; (C) South-west gate-tower of wickerwork, timber and stone. (After Alcock and Whitton)





The Devil's Ditch in Cambridgeshire is one of several ramparts which may have been erected by the Britons after the battle of Mt.Badon as a barrier against the East Angles; or it may have marked the later frontier between Mercia and East Anglia. Its flanks originally rested on thick forests.

Pennine forts. Various defences at the western end of the Wall and along the Yorkshire coast were destroyed in battle, but most of the Saxon Shore forts were simply abandoned. The well-documented British migration across the Channel stemmed largely from western Britain, and included some 12,000 of the Romano-British aristocracy. These formed a useful fighting force who laid the foundations of a future 'Brittany' in Armorica. Those members of this élite who remained in Britain organised a British counter-attack, first under Ambrosius and later under the even more mysterious figure of Arthur. It was largely successful, although the invaders retained control of enclaves along the eastern and southern coasts. The centre of British resistance seems to have been in the Severn Valley, and much of the fighting appears to have taken place in Wiltshire, near the Icknield Way or in the Cambridge area.

Arthur was probably a military rather than a civil leader; but who was he? Was he one real man, or a legendary figure assembled from the exploits of two or more forgotten historical figures? The epic quality of the Arthurian tales was later inflated by Geoffrey of Monmouth (*c.*1136 *Historia Regum Britanniae*) as a British rival to Charlemagne of France and various other Anglo-Saxon and Norman 'national' heroes. Yet Arthurian tales had been popular in both literature and art across much of Christendom long before Geoffrey's day. Arthur's memory had been cherished for centuries by the defeated and frequently oppressed Celts of Wales, southern Scotland, Cornwall and Brittany, just as that of Drustan had been by the conquered Picts—and in fact this latter 8th century northern leader

was subsequently incorporated into the Arthurian Cycle as 'Tristan'.

Clearly, the man or men upon whose exploits the epic figure of Arthur was built made sufficient impact in their own day for their memories long to outlive them, particularly in folk tradition and oral tales. Equally clearly, something dramatic did happen in late 5th century Britain for which 'Arthur', justifiably or otherwise, was given credit. It is a historical fact that in Britannia, alone among the western provinces of the Roman Empire, a native population halted the wave of Germanic invasion for a significant time. One or more military leaders appear to have united the disparate Celtic tribes and citizens of Britannia. This must have been essential to their temporary success, just as the inability of 'Arthur's' successors to maintain such a unity was a primary cause of the Saxons' final victory.

There is also reason to believe that at some level 'Arthur' created a unity embracing all of Celtic Britain, even beyond Hadrian's Wall, and perhaps exercised suzerainty over the first Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Such fleeting authority probably extended to Armorica (Brittany), while the traditional exploits of various heroes suggest that the Celts continued to involve themselves in the turbulent politics of early Merovingian Gaul.

The minimal written historical or literary record, first in the *Gododdin* (*c.*AD 600) and later in Nennius (*c.*AD 800), the *Annales Cambriae* (*c.*AD 955) and the *Spoils of Annwn* (10th century), are probably less significant than the fact that an oral tradition preserved memories of effective leadership, Celtic unity and successful cavalry warfare. The record of place-names along the known 5th-6th century Anglo-Celtic frontier further supports the fact that both Arthur and Ambrosius existed as separate individuals.

Paradoxically, the very success of the Celtic resistance contributed to the ultimate Anglicisation of most of Britain. The devastatingly swift Germanic invasions of Gaul, Iberia and Italy created a very shallow aristocratic veneer which was then rapidly absorbed by the Latin or Latinised-Celtic native population. In Britain the invaders were at first contained in a small area which was soon thoroughly Germanised. By the time the people of this proto-England resumed their

gradual wave of conquest they had themselves become 'natives' of these islands. The subsequent struggle between Celt and Anglo-Saxon, Christian and pagan, was consequently an internal affair rather than, as elsewhere, being a battle between a decadent Empire and barbarian invaders with a native population as almost powerless onlookers.

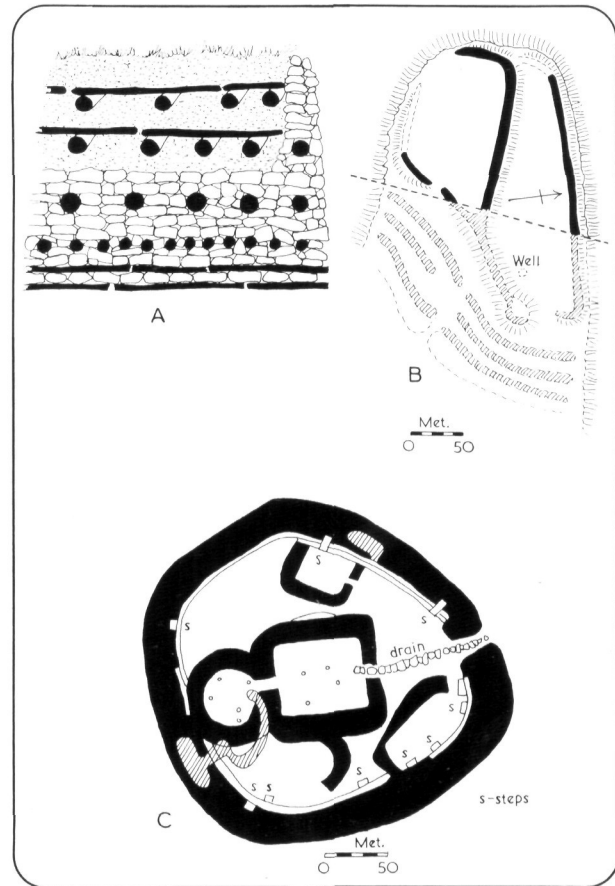
The new 'Welsh' identity of the *Cymry* or *Cumbrī* (*Combrogī* originally meaning fellow-countrymen) was born out of the first, and successful, phase of this Celtic resistance. The 6th century was an era of relative peace and many refortified hill-forts were again abandoned between AD 500 and 550, but the unified system built by Ambrosius and Arthur did not long survive them. Roman social cohesion and values had long gone, and economic decline meant that the army had to be paid with tribute or food-rents from unwilling towns and a reluctant peasantry. The relatively efficient system devised by the Romans when produce replaced their devalued coinage was presumably beyond the skills of the 6th century. The ruler and his army ate their way across the land in a way which seems to have caused serious resentment.

Gildas used the pejorative terms *superbus tyrannus* and lesser *tyranni* to describe local rulers, who probably referred to themselves as *regum* or king. These same men, known to the Anglo-Saxons as *cyniges*, probably stemmed from the old *magistras* of the British towns. Fragmentation and civil wars clearly followed although, paradoxically, the 7th century seems to have seen more ambitious long-range campaigning. The British disasters which began in the late 6th century did not lead to the extermination or even the uprooting of the bulk of the Celtic population. Outside their original coastal enclaves the victorious Anglo-Saxons probably became a culturally dominant minority while the numerically superior Celts gradually adopted the English tongue. Even so, there were still Celtic-speaking communities as far east as the Fen country in around AD 700. Probable Celtic influences on some early Anglo-Saxon spearheads might even suggest that a few British warriors fought for their new overlords. In the Thames Valley there is also strong evidence that British smiths made traditional Celtic weapons for the Anglo-Saxon newcomers.

The warrior aristocracy of Arthurian Britain generally fought as light cavalry with sword and

javelin, but rarely as *cataphractii* with heavy lances. Those Britons who fled to Armorica were later famous as horsemen, and cavalry clearly predominated in southern Scotland, the Pennines and West Midlands. The men of Wales, however, were mostly infantry. The loss of horse-raising areas such as the Cotswolds, Salisbury Plain and Hampshire must have been a serious blow to the Britons. What little written evidence survives suggests that surprise dawn attacks were a favourite tactic, as was the defence of river lines with consequently frequent battles at fords. In the rarely recorded sieges the Britons were almost invariably the besieged, and here the defenders were probably a form of urban militia. British resistance, in fact, probably resembled a guerrilla campaign from fortified base-

(A) Section through the ramparts of North Pictish Burghead; the timber lacing of this 4th–5th century stone and earth citadel has recently been questioned; (B) Only the western half of Burghead now survives; the rest, including three advance ramparts, was destroyed in the 19th century (after Roy); (C) Fort at Leacanabuaile in County Kerry. The layout of this typical early medieval Irish fortified farmstead is far less regular than in Roman-influenced Britain.

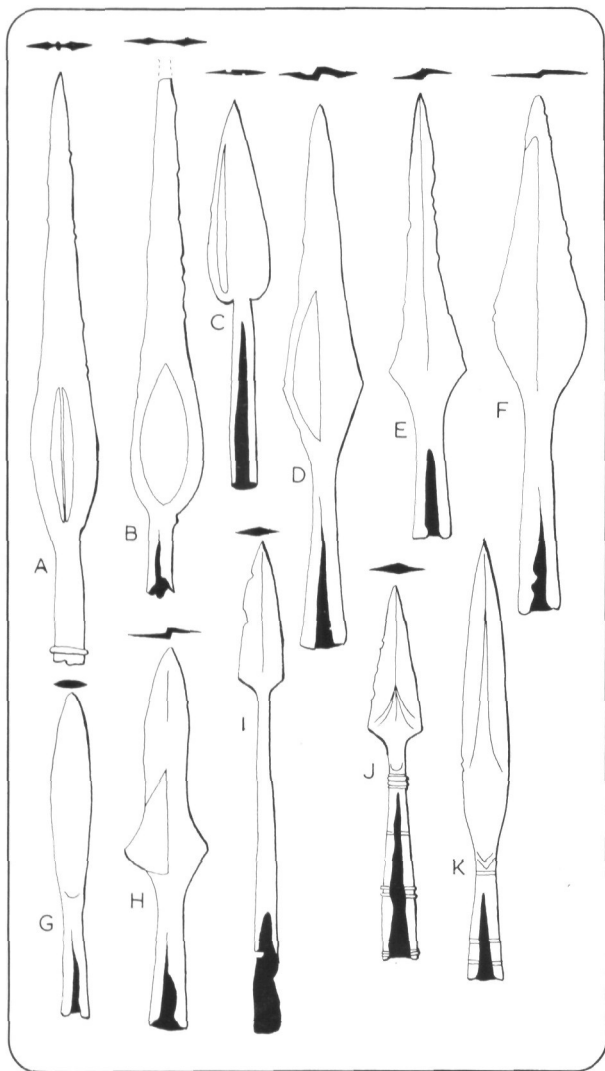


areas by small groups of horsemen against scattered Anglo-Saxon settlements. The foot-slogging Saxons were, by contrast, better able to build field fortifications and so to consolidate their territorial expansion.

Very few Romano-Celtic weapons have been found, particularly in the south, where a deeply engrained Christianity ensured that the dead were not buried with their weaponry. What little is known suggests that British equipment was similar to that of their foes, even including a large *sax* dagger. Celtic swords do, however, seem to have

been smaller than those of the Anglo-Saxons. The Britons were at first richer in such armours as the *lluric* and *seirch* (from the Latin *lorica* and perhaps *sarcia*) according to sources such as the '*Gododdin*'. This Celtic poem also mentions 'square-pointed spearheads' which might parallel the 'four-sided mail-piercing weapons' of early Scandinavian sagas. Archery played a minor rôle, even though sophisticated composite bows of Hunnish type had been widely used in the last years of the Roman Empire. Javelins—heavy, light or of the barbed *angon* type—were the normal missile weapon.

Early Anglo-Saxon spearheads: (A–D) Anglo-Celtic forms, 5th to early 6th century, Thames Valley area; (E) c. AD 550–600, from Harnham Hill; (F) Early 6th C., from Alton; (G) 6th C., from Fairford; (H) 6th C., from Harnham Hill; (I) 7th C., from Brentford; (J) 7th C., from London; (K) 7th to 9th C., from London.



The Pagan English

The Angles, Saxons and Jutes, the three peoples who traditionally conquered England, are believed to have come from Denmark, northern Germany and part of Holland. These Anglo-Saxons may have been pushed into migrating by pressure from other Germanic tribes as much as by the lure of plunder, and so many came that parts of their homeland were deserted for centuries. Unfortunately we have little archaeological evidence from these territories to compare with the wealth of weaponry found in Anglo-Saxon England.

The exact dates of their arrival are even more unclear. Recent excavations indicate that many of the first settlers came as mercenaries in the 5th century, later than was once thought, perhaps to fight in Romano-British civil wars and to defend the island from Pictish and Irish raiders. This is close to the traditional dates given by Gildas and Bede. Angles and Saxons had, of course, been raiding since the 3rd century, and the Saxon Shore system of forts was named after the menace it faced from these pagan warriors, not from the men who manned it. A few Saxon *laeti* or auxiliaries might have been stationed in East Anglia in the 3rd century, but again, this is unclear. Some German *gentiles* troops, including senior officers, were almost certainly stationed along the Wall, in fortified towns, large estates and the Saxon Shore forts, to judge by the number of ceremonial *cingulum* belts with Germanic decoration that have been found.

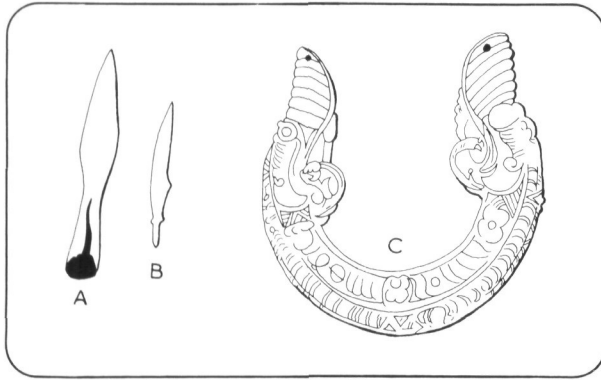
Following the Saxon Revolt of the mid-5th century much territory fell into the hands of these

The Sutton Hoo burial of a 7th-century East Anglian leader included this famous masked helmet. Modelled on late Roman cavalry parade styles, it is almost certainly much earlier than the burial, perhaps dating from around AD 500. (British Mus.)

Anglo-Saxon mercenaries. Their conquest was in places bloody; but elsewhere the newcomers settled down either as neighbours to the Celtic population, or as a newly dominant minority which had driven

out the Romano-British aristocracy, these differences depending upon time, place and political circumstances. The English conquest also had its setbacks. After Arthur's semi-legendary





(A–B) Spearhead and knife from 6th–7th century Dal Riata; (C) Silver Pictish scabbard chape from the St Ninian's Isle treasure, 8th C. (Nat.Mus. of Antiquities, Edinburgh)

victory at Mount Badon the Anglo-Saxons were driven back towards the eastern and southern coasts, where they consolidated their hold. Many even left in search of easier plunder on the Continent. One highly characteristic form of Anglo-Saxon spearhead suddenly reappeared in north-western Europe around this time, and might reflect a reverse migration that was also encouraged by the Frankish rulers of Gaul. These Merovingians not only needed fighting men, but perhaps also hoped to draw Britain into their empire.

During the 6th century a smaller number of more organised Anglo-Saxon kingdoms emerged. It was these mini-states which carried out the next and most decisive phase of Anglo-Saxon expansion in the late 6th and early 7th centuries. Thereafter there was another pause until the late 8th century, by which time the Anglo-Saxons were Christian. The social and military organisation of these little kingdoms was quite complex. There was more local autonomy and regional variety than among the Celts. Anglo-Saxon society was also changing faster. While warrior-aristocratic privilege was balanced by a theoretical tribal equality, in reality society was highly stratified, with differing groups having different *wergilds*—the blood-prices to be paid as compensation for a slaying. The early rôle of the low class *ceorl* varied between Wessex, where he seems always to have been both farmer and fighter, and Northumbria, where he probably had no military obligation. In fact Northumbria differed from other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in many respects, and its isolation, plus the stiffer resistance it faced from its British neighbours, may have led to a

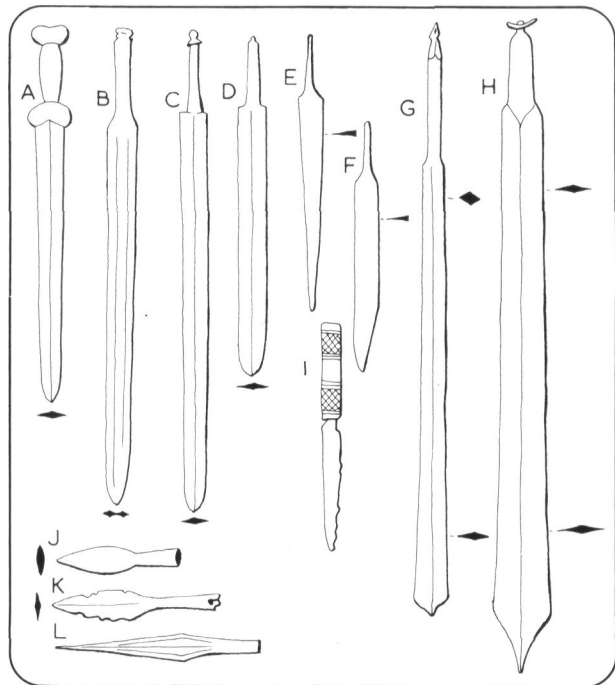
greater mingling of the invading Angles and the native Celts.

Duelling with swords and shields in a clearly marked area in which each opponent had his own 'square' of a pegged-out cloak was a prestigious way of settling quarrels. In war the method of fighting was much the same, at least for a sword-armed élite. Even this élite fought on foot. A leader might remain mounted until all preparations were completed, and hence his saddle could be called a *hildesett* or battle-seat. To throw the shield over one's back and wield a sword with both hands was considered exceptionally brave; it might also have been the origin of the term *berserk* or 'bare-breasted' fighting. The majority of men were armed only with spears or javelins, plus the *sax*, a large dagger or short sword. Anglo-Saxon tactics were much the same as among most German peoples, namely a rush in a roughly wedge-shaped formation followed by individual combat with spear and shield. The troops involved were normally a local militia perhaps stiffened by a royal bodyguard. Periods of hard hewing, in which honour lay in the strength rather than the number of blows, could then be followed by a mutually agreed pause for rest. Yet tactics did evolve over the years and in response to different situations. A more defensive manoeuvre was the close-packed *scild-weall* or shield-wall which, like the wedge-shaped formation, was probably learned from the Romans.

The appearance of such an Anglo-Saxon army could be fearsome. Judging from the East Anglian Sutton Hoo grave goods, some ruling dynasties sought to imitate the insignia of Imperial Rome. On the other hand the Northumbrian élite described in the Celtic '*Gododdin*' appear in barbaric splendour with gilded armour (one apparently of scale construction), white sheaths for knives rather than swords, four-piece *spangenhelms* and animal-skin cloaks. Anglo-Saxon body armour would normally have consisted of a mail *byrne*. Iron splinted armour for the limbs, of probable Oriental inspiration, may also have been known. It is, however, worth recalling that northern Germany, whence these invaders originally came, was relatively richer in armour than southern Germany in the immediate pre-migration period. Other defences might have been of leather, but their construction remains unknown. Some short-sleeved mail hauberks from

pre-migration Denmark incorporate gilded rings, and one early medieval German mail shirt even included a coif. In these early centuries most northern European mail, much of it imported from the East, was made of alternating punched and riveted rings, the former being smaller and flatter than the latter. In addition to a probable splinted vambrace lower-arm defence with mail mitten for the right sword-arm, comparably splinted greaves with mail foot-covering sabatons have been found at sites of the so-called 'Vendel' culture in pre-migration Sweden.

Helmets were rare among the Anglo-Saxons, and some were at least partly of leather. Visored helmets of the Sutton Hoo type were probably only for a ruler's ceremonial purposes, and such styles stemmed from late-Roman cavalry parade armour. The semi-visored Vendel type of helmet was worn for war. The later Benty Grange *spangenhelm* was originally covered with a 'chevron pattern' of horn plates riveted to each other and to the framework. Some sagas also refer to painted helmets, and there is conclusive evidence for the use of the Asiatic or Byzantine-style mail aventail in both Scandinavia and England. The newly discovered mid-8th century Northumbrian helmet from York has just such an aventail. All warriors would also have had a



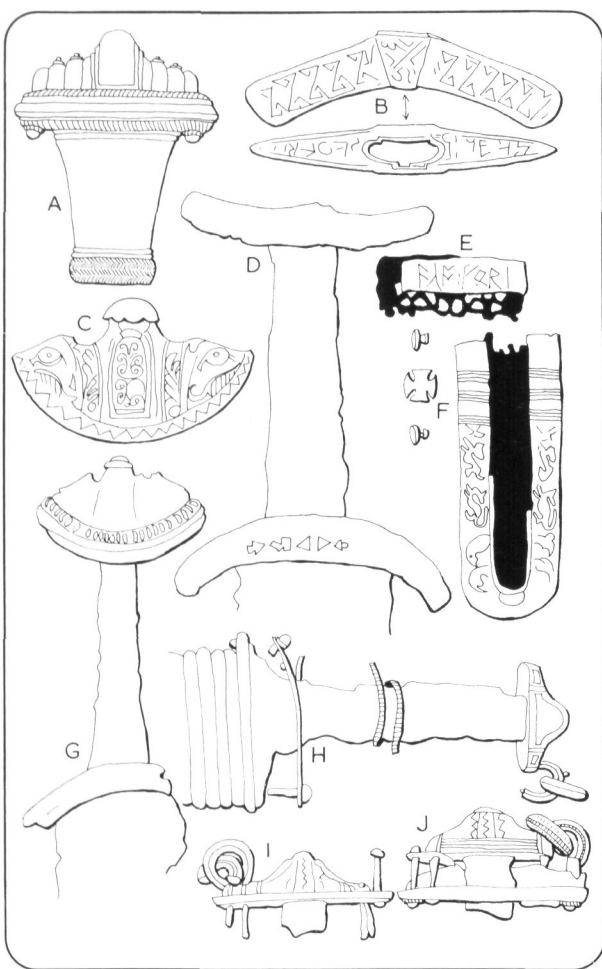
Early Irish sword types (after Rynne): (A) 'Ultimate La Tène', 1st-4th Cs.; (B) 'Grooved', c. AD 650; (C) 'Sub-Roman spatha', 5th-7th Cs.; (D) 'Sub-Roman gladius', 5th-7th Cs.; (E-F) *Sax* short swords, 6th-7th Cs., from Lagore Crannog; (G) 'Crannog', 7th-9th Cs.; (H) 'Expanded', mid-7th C.; (I) Knife with bone handle, 5th C., Lagore Crannog; (J-L) Spearheads from Garryduff, Lough Neagh, Ballinderry.

A late 7th-century iron *spangenhelm* was found at Benty Grange in the 19th century. It was originally covered with horn scales, and is very similar to another animal-crested helmet in the 8th-century *Poems of Paulinus of Nola*. (City Mus., Sheffield)



shield, normally round and of leather-covered lime wood with a large iron boss.

The spear was the most common weapon, and it also had heraldic significance among the pagan Anglo-Saxons. The names given to such weapons showed that some were for throwing, some primarily for thrusting, and others also for lateral cutting, while certain excavated examples may have been long enough for use as pikes. An extraordinary variety of spearheads have been found, and these indicate differences between major cultural zones, from the Anglian East Midlands and upper Thames to the Jutish south-east. A Celtic influence may also be seen in Wessex and the Thames basin, but most spears were clear developments of pre-existing Continental forms. Interestingly, square-section armour-piercing blades disappeared in the late 7th century, which suggests that armour was becoming less common. Perhaps mail shirts of late-Roman manufacture were finally wearing out. Delicate long-necked spears also died out at this time, perhaps indicating



Anglo-Saxon swords: (A) Silver-gilt hilt, late 8th-early 9th Cs.; (B) Bronze pommel-guard, 9th-11th Cs.; (C) Silver pommel-mount, 9th-10th Cs.; (D) North-east English or Pictish hilt, 9th-10th Cs.; (E) Back of scabbard mount with runic inscription, Chessel Down, 5th-6th Cs.; (F) Chape and mounts from Brighthampton, 5th-6th Cs.; (G) From Norfolk, 9th C.; (H-J) Hilt and pommels from Kent, late 6th C.

that the hard press of more disciplined shield-wall tactics was taking precedence over disorganised individual combat. Cords fastened to some javelin-shafts were not, of course, to retrieve these weapons, but either spun the javelin as it was thrown or added extra momentum to a throw.

The large *sax* dagger was a popular weapon in these early years, though later it would shrink to a short, broad knife. Battleaxes were rare, though the iron-hafted axe-hammer from the Sutton Hoo grave is now believed to have been a weapon. Saxon swords were larger than those of the Celts, and great care was devoted to their manufacture. Their almost magical rôle would later be converted into

the sword's special significance for a Christian knight. Many had so-called 'life stones', perhaps a form of religious totem attached to their scabbards. As with mail, good quality swords had been more common in northern Germany and Scandinavia than in the south. Their frequent appearance among pagan Anglo-Saxon grave goods indicates that they were also abundant in Britain. Though swords were buried in many graves it was more normal for such a costly weapon either to be handed down from generation to generation, or to be returned to the leader who first gave it. A sword might also be given when a youth became a man, particularly by an elder who was no longer able to wield it effectively; or it might be won in battle, or be donated by a foreign ruler. Swords also inherited the 'luck' of their previous owners, and were closely associated with kinship ties, loyalty to a leader, kingly power and battle-frenzy.

By contrast the bow had little social significance, although archery might have been more important in battle than was previously thought, particularly in the Frankish-influenced south-east. Almost all were simple longbows, the Anglo-Saxons having introduced this type of weapon to Britain. An example from the Isle of Wight was less than two metres long, though this particular bow might have been a hunting weapon, as most pre-migration Continental longbows were well above man-height.

Saxon and Celt

The Welsh

The Celtic culture which survived in western Britain following the disasters of the early 7th century was no longer Romano-British, though it did retain many elements from earlier days. It was now the world of the *Cymri* or, to use the Anglo-Saxon word for 'foreigner', of the Welsh. With few exceptions it survived in hilly country, the most fertile lowlands having fallen to the Anglo-Saxons. These western uplands were not, however, flooded by Romano-British refugees although the thorough Christianisation of the area during the years of disaster probably reflected a concentration of Romano-British culture in the west. Christianity had previously been strongest in the south-east, the



The lid of the whalebone Franks Casket shows Christian and pagan scenes, and was made in early 8th-century Northumbria. The helmet of the second figure from the left is similar to that recently found in York. (Bargello Mus., Florence; Brit.Mus. photo)

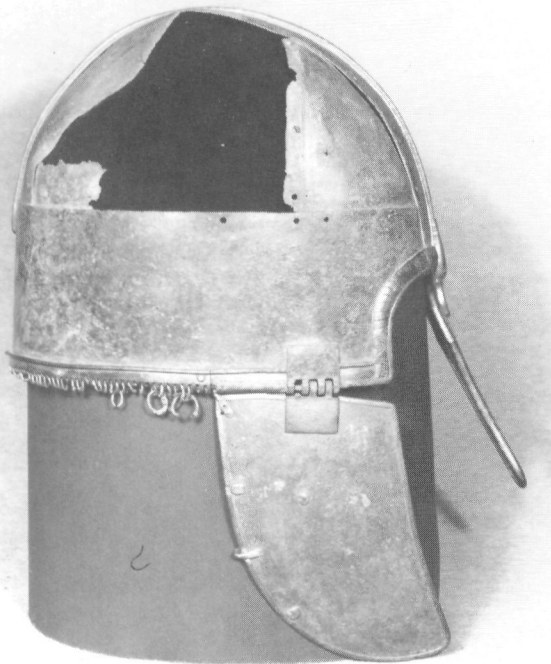
Vale of York and around the Solway Firth. A few small Christian communities may have survived in the east, in Frankish-influenced Kent and in London. Nor was the west a world of 'Celtic Twilight' clinging to the edge of the known universe while the rest of Europe was plunged into barbarian darkness. The Celtic kingdoms kept in touch with the Christian Mediterranean. Syrian and later perhaps Muslim Andalusian traders still arrived via the Atlantic and the Straits of Gibraltar. Along this route came the ideals of those early Egyptian monks who were the models of Celtic monasticism, as well as Greek wines, Sicilian olive oil and tableware from Antioch and Constantinople. In return the Cornish exported tin, the Welsh perhaps other metals, and the Irish their famous hunting dogs.

The military organisation of the Welsh kingdoms is reflected in the slightly later Laws of Hywel Dda. A king took one-third of booty, and also received taxes to support his men. Armies were led either by the king or a member of his family. Fighting was the duty only of freemen, while bondsmen supplied pack-horses, servants or axes to construct strongholds.

Defence was based upon the *caer*, which was normally a substantial fortified site. Young warriors kept fit by wrestling, throwing iron bars and racing up and down hills. Armies were now very small and continued to be largely of cavalry, except in Wales itself where infantry predominated. The king's son or nephew headed the royal bodyguard, and men were organised into *teula* kinship groups, many of which had held their land from time out of mind. Society was highly stratified, with many serfs but

few slaves, though the heritage of Roman Law led to a greater degree of real equality than among the Anglo-Saxons.

The British areas were divided into a multitude of states, the most important being Strathclyde around Glasgow, Rheged around Carlisle, Elmet around Leeds, Gwynedd in north Wales and Powys on the Welsh borders. Southern Wales was a confusing patchwork of some eight competing kingdoms, while in Cornwall and Devon the 'West Welsh' of Dumnonia clung to their independence. For many years Gwynedd led the British resistance until its greatest leader, Cadwallon, fell on the field of Hexham in AD 634. In the north Strathclyde led the struggle in many epic battles against Northumbria. The British kingdom of Gododdin, heir to the ancient Votadini, probably had its strongholds at Stirling, Edinburgh and Traprain Law. Gododdin was soon crushed by the Angles of Northumbria, however, leaving Strathclyde to fight on from its long-occupied capital at Dumbarton Rock. Further south, the Mote of Mark was fortified in the 6th century as a major centre of resistance for Rheged-Cumbria. A Northumbrian decline in the late 8th and 9th centuries led to a revival of Strathclyde and Rheged-Cumbria, so that the British or 'North Welsh' held sway from Loch Lomond to the North Riding of Yorkshire. Surrounded by foes, these British areas were finally swallowed by the rising Celtic kingdom of Scotland in the 11th century.



Three angles of the magnificent iron helmet recently found at the Coppergate site in York, dating from the period around AD 750. It has brass decorations, and—not shown here—an iron mail aventail. (York Archaeological Trust)

The warriors of Gododdin, Strathclyde and Rheged-Cumbria were mostly spear- or javelin-armed horsemen who lived an almost nomadic life of cattle-raising. Yet their apparently primitive society was able to erect major earthworks in a probable effort to contain Northumbrian expansion, while in Carlisle such civic amenities as the old Roman aqueduct were kept in working order at least until the late 7th century.

Far to the south in Dumnonia a mixture of Roman and Celtic tradition lay behind the territorial and military system of *trigg* or *tryger*. This term came from the Latin *tri* 'triple' and the probably proto-Celtic *corio* 'army'. It seems that such areas normally contained three *keverang* 'military gatherings' which in turn included approximately 100 farmsteads, each presumably supplying one fighting man. Gradually forced back to the unbridged River Tamar, the West Welsh fought on until AD 814 from such fortified natural strongholds as Castle an-Din, Castle Dor and Tintagel. Here were the castles of such leaders as Drustans and his father Cynomori, who were probably the real people behind the later medieval



romantic heroes Tristan, his father King Mark and their fair lady Iseult.

Little is known about Cornish tactics or weaponry, but they are likely to have mirrored those of Wales, with a reliance on spear-armed infantry, perhaps with small swords of Irish type. Some Celts, including the Welsh, also used poisoned javelins, and there was some archery, mostly with the flat-bow. This short, broad and very powerful weapon was small in size and thus suitable for fighting in the close conditions of rocky western Britain.

Irish and Scots

The Irish, or 'Scottias' as they were known to the Britons, began raiding western Britain before Roman rule collapsed; but early in the 5th century their attacks became far more serious, particularly under the fearsome King Niall. Ireland had been on the edge of Rome's world for centuries, escaping Roman domination and remaining a primitive place without towns where most of the population lived in farms surrounded by wooden or dry-stone defences. Others lived on man-made islands in the many marshes. Warfare was endemic, but was more a matter of ritual than of slaughter. Kingdoms existed but were very small and ever-changing. Each was similar to a tribe led by a king who might himself be occasionally subject to a High King such as King Niall.

Irish efforts to colonise southern Wales were ruthlessly crushed in the 6th century, leaving almost no archaeological trace. Further north, along the coasts and islands of what is now Argyll, they fared better. The first recorded Scotti settlement in this area, under a chief named Cairbre Riada, dated from the 3rd century and might have been encouraged by the Britons of Strathclyde as a barrier against the threatening Picts. If so then the Britons were merely following the long-established Roman practice of playing barbarians off against each other. This was the birth of the kingdom of Dal Riata, whose inhabitants would eventually give their name to the entire kingdom of Scotland.

Like the Britons, the Irish made full use of the sea to maintain wide trade contacts, and it was along these that Christianity reached Ireland. St Patrick was not the first missionary, and some Irishmen were Christian before he arrived. Yet Patrick, a



A rare illustration of a 'Benty Grange' type helmet with an animal-shaped crest. 'Goliath', *Poems of Paulinus of Nola*, 8th C. English. (Leningrad Pub.Lib., Ms.Q.v.XIV.1)

Briton from Cumbria, was by far the most successful, and the conversion of Ireland was more peaceful than that of most other countries. Meanwhile a new and effective High King, Loigaire, appeared on the scene to sort out Ireland's laws and bring a new sense of order to the country.

The island was now divided into three major kingdoms: Cashel in the south, with two states ruled by the O'Neill clan in the north. Irish kings, who were rulers of men rather than of territory, had greater real power than those of Celtic Britain, and the island's unfree peasantry were totally subjected to various free classes. These ranged from *soercheli* who owed military service and tribute, through *airig* nobility and *feni* military leaders to the 'sacred free' of *soernemed* ruling families. Irish sumptuary laws of the 7th or 8th centuries describe the different colours that each class could wear: yellow and black for subjects, grey, brown or red for nobles, and purple and blue for kings; slaves were not permitted to wear more than one colour at a time, subjects two, six for the learned *filid* class and seven for a ruler. Generally speaking a linen tunic or *leine* of probable Roman origin, plus a large coloured *brat* cloak, were the dress of the upper classes. Long or short trousers in the universal Celtic and Germanic tradition seem to have been worn by common folk. Military organisation was based on units of a hundred. According to later texts a nobleman led a *cet* of one hundred. A *tuatha* army, which seems to have averaged around 700 men, was divided into territorial groups. Clergy were also apparently

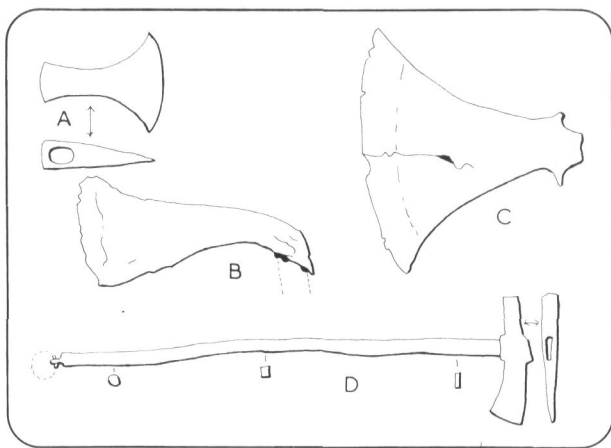
often involved in warfare, although this duty normally fell to the *laich* or warrior laity.

The taboos which traditionally surrounded Irish warfare, including neither seizing territory nor overthrowing a rival dynasty, were not always reflected in reality. Nevertheless vengeance, personal glory and loot, particularly in cattle, were the main causes of conflict. Irish warfare was, in fact, more like a dangerous aristocratic pastime than the matter of survival it was in Britain. This may be reflected in Irish military equipment which, judging by archaeological evidence, was inferior to that of any other European country before the arrival of the Norsemen. The tiny Aristocratic warrior élite fought as unarmoured infantry with few and feeble weapons, while the lower classes carried the wooden club which would persist until modern times as the shillelagh.

Weapons were small and outmoded, brittle swords of ancient Celtic 'La Tène' and sub-Roman *spatha* type being half the size of those seen in Europe. Some very unusual 7th century sword types may even reflect Oriental influence via the Atlantic trade routes; Arab-Islamic swords of this period were, in fact, also noted for their small size. Broad spearheads were developments of ancient pre-Roman Celtic forms, while axes and bows shooting flint-headed arrows were probably only work tools or hunting weapons. Shields and shield-bosses were comparably small.

Backward as Ireland may have seemed in military matters, its warriors were able to conquer a sizeable part of western Caledonia. Here in the Scottish kingdom of Dal Riata a perhaps more

Offa's Dyke, just east of Welshpool. This immense earthwork was clearly erected with the agreement of the Welsh, and is not a continuous defensive line but rather a barrier against cattle-rustling.



Anglo-Saxon war axes: (A) From Petersfinger, 6th-7th Cs.; (B) *Francisca* from Howlett's, Kent, 9th C.; (C) Anglo-Danish, from London, 11th C.; (D) Axe-hammer with iron haft from Sutton Hoo, c. AD 625.

deadly version of Irish military tradition evolved. The kingdom was divided into three major dynastic *cenela*, plus some small chieftainships, each subdivided into *davach*, which were normally multiples of 20 *tech* households. Two warriors would be expected from each three houses for a sea muster, three men from each two houses for a land muster. A leading *cenel* could call upon from 600 to 800 warriors and oarsmen. Dal Riata was essentially a naval power, its isolated inhabitants being linked only by the ocean, and its navy was by the early 8th century able to fight fleet actions in the open sea. Dal Riata's ships, like those of the coastal Picts, were basically large hide-covered, wooden-framed *curachs*. Though many carried a single sail such ships relied mostly on oars, their 14 oarsmen and six 'marines' sitting at seven benches. This, then, was the military power which overcame the southern Picts in AD 843 and laid the foundations of modern Scotland.

The Picts

Little is known about Pictish society, but it does seem that the people of what are now the Scottish Highlands had much in common with the Irish or Scots. Culturally they were a mixture of Celtic and earlier peoples who accepted a matrilineal line of succession. They referred to themselves as Cruthni, and their numerous tribes were divided into northern and southern groups or kingdoms. Militarily the Picts appear to have been well

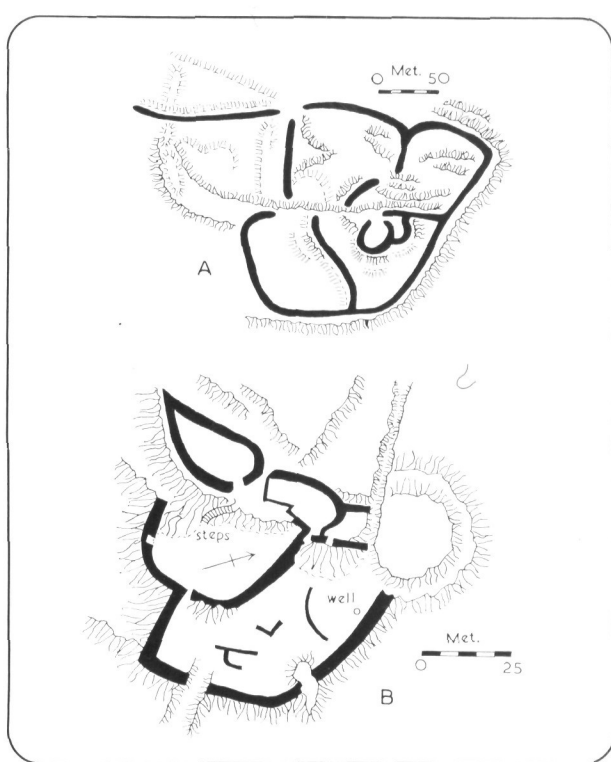
organised and well equipped, under army commanders called *toiseachs* and local lords known as *mormaers*. The basic territorial unit was probably the *pelta* or manor. From the 6th to mid-8th centuries the Picts were also a dominant power in northern Britain. They could fight at sea and, unlike most other peoples of the British Isles, in the depth of winter. Specially trained war-dogs were also a fearsome addition to the Pictish armoury. At times northern and southern Pictland were united under a single ruler who, after the famous northern King Bridei, normally came from the southern region.

Dunkeld and later Scone were centres of the southern Caledones tribe. Forfar was the Cirinn centre and Kilrymont that of the Fib tribe of Fife. The great fortress of Burghead on the Moray Firth may have been the northern Pictish capital. The people of the far north, beyond Loch Ness, seem to have been few in number, having no centralised authority, no fortifications, no division of wealth and virtually no warfare. There is, however, no evidence for a 'clan' system comparable to that of the later medieval and modern eras.

Were the Picts painted? Even if these northern warriors had once used tattoos or war-paint in earlier times, they almost certainly did not do so by the end of the Roman era. It is, however, worth pointing out that the simple dyes used by Highlanders even in recent centuries tended to run and to stain their wearers, as this region lacked the mordants necessary to make colours fast in heavy northern wools. Mystery also surrounds the abstract symbols carved on many Pictish stones. They may have been tribal insignia, signs of rank or heraldic marks of ownership. Pictish ships were probably identical to those of the Irish; according to Gildas, both peoples used skin-covered *curachs* during their early attacks on Britain.

The southern Picts were first defeated by, and then placed under, the Scottish kings of Dal Riata in the mid-9th century. This created the kingdom of Alban which, following the decline of Northumbria, not only advanced into the British and Anglo-Saxon south of Scotland but successfully resisted the Viking invasions which followed. As such the kingdom of Alban mirrored the rôle of Wessex in the south. The Picts of the far north were, however, slowly absorbed into the Norse kingdom of Orkney.

Little is known of Pictish weapons. War



(A) Pictish fort at Dundurn, Perthshire, 7th C. (after Christison and Peachem). (B) Scottish Dal Riata fort at Dunadd, Argyll (after Christison).

trumpets, presumably made from horns, were characteristic of such northern armies, while spears were the most common weapons, perhaps being used as pikes. Composite bows of Hunnish design had been known in southern Scotland in late Roman times but are most unlikely to have been used thereafter. Pictorial sources suggest that the Pictish élite wielded broad, short, and blunt-ended swords of somewhat Irish appearance.

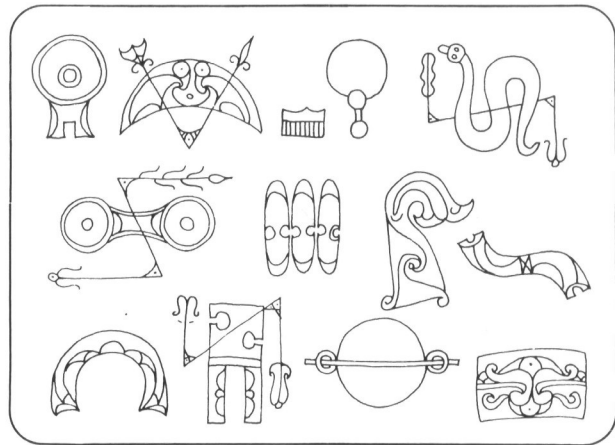
One very intriguing question concerns the possible survival of a late Roman form of crossbow in this area. Such a weapon almost certainly appears in the crudely carved late 9th century Drosten Stone. A crossbow nut made of bone was also excavated at Bustan Crannog in Ayrshire in 1880; this British lake-dwelling of the 6th or 7th century lay not far from the Pictish region. Normally, of course, it is assumed that crossbows did not reappear in north-western Europe until the 10th century.

The Christian English

The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity

was perhaps the most important development in early medieval British history. It did not happen overnight, however, and was the result of both 'Roman' missionary effort from the south and 'Celtic' efforts from the north and west. St Augustine landed in Kent in AD 597. Here King Ethelbert's wife was already Christian, and a Christian community may even have survived since the Romans left. But further progress was slow, particularly in the kingdoms of Sussex, Wessex and Mercia. In Northumbria the two missionary efforts met—and quarrelled. Of particular importance to the triumph of Christianity was the battle of Winwaed near Leeds in AD 655. Here King Penda of Mercia, the champion of paganism, led Mercians, East Anglians, 'Celtic' Christian Welsh and Northumbrian rebels from Deira to disaster when his large army was crushed by a far smaller Northumbrian force. Penda was slain, and the victorious Northumbrian king Oswy determined to end the rivalry between the Celtic and Roman

This fragment of an 8th-century Pictish cross-slab shows a man riding a small pony. Note also the large chape of his sword, similar to that from the St Ninian's Isle treasure. (Stone no.3, Meikle Mus.)



Pictish symbols, from various sources.

churches: the result was the famous Synod of Whitby in AD 664.

The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons led to no immediate changes in military organisation, but its long-term effects were profound, as Britain was now rapidly drawn into the orbit of Christian European civilisation. Yet many earlier features survived, including the *hundred*, the basic administrative unit which originally, and theoretically, provided 100 fighting men. Military burdens fell heaviest on those holding land, and the *hide* was supposedly a single peasant family's holding as well as being the basic unit for tax and military assessment. During the 8th century, however, equipment became more expensive, which clearly meant that the military élite was once again more heavily armoured. Hence one hide could no longer support a warrior, and the five-hide unit gradually became the theoretical basis of military obligation. A co-operative effort was often needed among those holding less than this amount to ensure that every five hides did in fact support one warrior.

Few written records survive from Anglo-Saxon England, but the link between land-holding and military service is clear. It seems to have been reinforced in the early 8th century when a king's élite following of *gesithas* or *comites* began expecting their reward in land rather than portable treasure. Later, when land was given to the church, this link persisted, and ecclesiastical authorities were still expected to support a number of troops.

Loyalties were still more local than national and were cemented by oaths rather than being directly associated with land-holding. Nevertheless, once

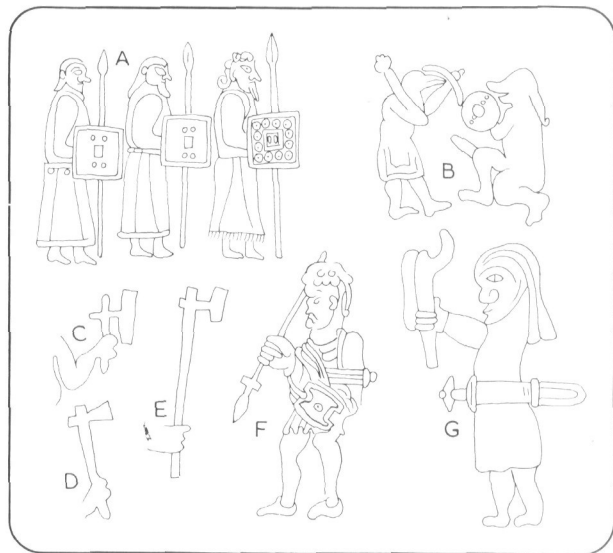
Anglo-Saxon unity had been achieved the army remained the ruler's instrument, and there was far less fragmentation of military authority than in the rest of western Europe. Under Offa in the late 8th century free men faced three levels of military obligation: army service, garrison duties and the building or maintenance of bridges and fortifications. Military summonses were similarly graded from the 8th to 10th centuries. The *fyrð* represented the nation in arms and there were no geographical limitations to its obligations. It could, however, also be summoned by a local authority such as an *ealdorman* in case of local need. Such forces were rarely mounted, were slow-moving, and consisted largely of the *ceorls* and *geburs* of shire and borough who provided their own rudimentary equipment. A lesser *fyrð* called upon only a local élite of theoretically five-hide holding *thegns*, and this was naturally better equipped. A second sort of summons involved provincial armies which stemmed from the original small Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. This needed a royal summons, was directly responsible for local fortifications and consisted largely of *thegns*. It might still be led by a local *ealdorman* and might also serve outside its own region, though in such cases it would be associated with other provincial forces. Failure to answer a royal summons led to a very heavy fine; failure to respond to a lesser call, a lesser fine. In general it would be true to say that even before the Norse invasions of the 10th century Anglo-Saxon England was not a commonwealth of free peasants and warriors. In Mercia, Northumbria, Kent and particularly in the south-west local lords had power over many villages. In fact, when the Normans seized power in 1066 they were astonished by the number of different classes they found, each group claiming different degrees of personal freedom and military obligation.

Tactics also changed during these centuries but are even less well documented. Clearly the local militias of the 7th century were very different from the standing armies of the mid-11th. A typical early Anglo-Saxon battle was probably a confused affair which started with javelins and other missiles and ended with individual combats between groups of variously armed men. Certain weapons did have specific tactical functions. The renowned Anglo-Saxon shield-wall was not necessarily stationary or

defensive, and military leaders clearly imposed a degree of tactical organisation. Whereas three javelins or light spears were the typical equipment of an early warrior, the development of protective langets beneath a spear-blade made it a heavier close-combat weapon. Horizontal lugs beneath a spear-blade also had a tactical purpose, and were seen in Britain from the 8th century. They were rarely long enough to be anti-penetration devices, and were probably designed to catch an enemy's blade when such weapons were used as pole-arms with lateral cutting strokes. As such they had much in common with the quillons of a sword. Fighting in this manner with a pole-arm might also indicate a greater degree of discipline among men on foot. As these lugs were also seen on the spears of horsemen a comparable cutting technique might have been used on horseback. It would, in fact, have been suitable for men lacking stirrups, carrying small or no shields, and almost always illustrated with their spears held in both hands. A very few narrow spear-blades with heavier tips have survived, and these might have been genuine cavalry weapons. References to flags, drums and trumpets may also indicate a greater degree of tactical control and organisation.

Other Anglo-Saxon weapons developed similarly. Larger and more massive swordblades

Pictish carvings: (A) Slab from Birsay, 7th C. (Nat. Mus. of Antiquities, Edinburgh); (B) 7th C. slab (Murthly, Perthshire); (C-E) Axes on 8th C. slabs from Papil, Glamys and Aberlemno; (F) Sarcophagus, 8th 9th Cs. (St Andrew's Cathedral); (G) From Inchbrayock, 8th C. (Montrose Mus.).





The *Canterbury Psalter* from 8th-century southern England includes a rare illustration of a warrior carrying a small hand-held buckler and a *sax* short-sword. (Brit.Lib., Ms.Cott. Vesp.A.I.)

appeared between AD 700 and 850 but after AD 900 lighter and more tapering blades evolved. These swords, the first of which might have been imported from the Rhineland, were of largely homogenous rather than pattern-welded construction and, having the point of balance closer to the hilt, were more suited to a fencing style of sword-play. The *sax* or *scramasax* was still used, judging from a mid-9th century sculpture recently found at Repton in Derbyshire. Slings, particularly the *staef-lidere* or staff-sling, remained a common weapon among poorer folk. Anglo-Saxon body armour was almost entirely of mail and may have been more common than was once thought. The mail found inside a mid-8th century helmet recently excavated in York proved to be a mail aventail rather than the coif of an early *halsbeorg* or hauberk.

Naturally there were significant regional variations within Anglo-Saxon England. Kent, a compact, relatively heavily populated area had long been under strong Frankish influence. This was reflected in the design of weapons such as spears and in the use of a few *francisca* throwing axes. Terms such as *leorde* for a royal army and *grafio* for a senior leader, though later replaced by Anglo-Saxon words, also reflected early Continental influence. There was, however, no evidence for a great landed nobility holding territory from the king in Kent. Urban life was more developed and had probably never completely died out. Fortifications also reappeared relatively early in this kingdom. Around the same time, late in the 8th century, it also became normal for many Kentish warriors to serve only within Kent itself.

Sussex had early been a very important kingdom, but declined after the battle of Mount Badon and

played only a minor rôle during the Christian period. Wessex rose in importance, and was apparently built on a mixed population of native Britons and colonising Anglo-Saxons. This fact is again reflected in the design of local spearheads. Here the nobility often owned a *burg*, though most such strongholds belonged to the king or church. Additional lands were granted by the ruler in return for military service, but could equally be taken back if a man fell from favour. Wessex stood on the Celtic frontier and so had scope for territorial expansion. This meant that such grants continued for a long time, but later the ownership of land was 'fossilised' by custom. Wessex was almost constantly involved in minor wars, external or internal, and this led the landed nobility to become an easily mobilised and effective military élite of *thanes*. Landless professional warriors were also a feature of the royal army, however. Men from church estates were required to serve as early as AD 739, and whereas the obligation to maintain bridges had existed for a long time, fortress-work came late to Wessex, perhaps no earlier than the mid-9th century.

Almost nothing is known of the military organisation of East Anglia as no written records survive, but Mercia, despite being among the last areas to convert to Christianity, is quite well documented. Mercia dominated Anglo-Saxon England for much of the 8th and 9th centuries and its rulers had close relations with Continental Europe, particularly with the Carolingian Emperor and the Roman Papacy. The western frontier between Celt and Anglo-Saxon was now relatively stabilised, and this was reflected in the many dykes which are still a feature of the Anglo-Welsh borders. There is clear evidence that the Mercians abandoned some territory to the west of such dykes, which further suggests that these defences marked a mutually agreed frontier. Such a situation did not, of course, preclude further Anglo-Saxon aggression, and in AD 816 the small Welsh kingdom of Rhufuniog was taken over by the Mercians. Two years earlier Wessex had overrun Cornwall, blotting out the independence of Celtic Dumnonia. The organisation of the Mercian army seems to have been aimed more at major expeditions than at local defence, and included a class of powerful nobles, the *twelfhynde*, whose land holdings theoretically equalled those of six *coerls*. The king and his

leading nobility lived in defended *burhs*, and the ruler made singularly heavy military demands upon his subjects. All, including monks, had to work on bridges or forts from the second half of the 8th century. The danger of Welsh raids rather than those of the early Vikings probably lay behind such an early development of fortifications in Mercia.

Northumbria, like Wessex, was a kingdom in which Anglo-Saxon and Celtic elements mingled. Checked by their now-Christian neighbours to the south and by the rising power of Alban to the north, Northumbria was torn by civil war for decades. Military organisation became confused and localised. A relatively large social gap between lord and peasant probably reflected the large Celtic element in the latter class. Land was given in return for military service well into the 8th century, but the corruption of this system led to many young warriors being landless. Nevertheless many peasants also had military obligations. Northumbrian armies tended to be very static, guarding difficult or extended frontiers and controlling a large subject Celtic population. Only rarely, after the disaster of Dunnichen in AD 685, were these forces gathered together for a major foreign expedition.

Britain and the Vikings

The Norse Assault

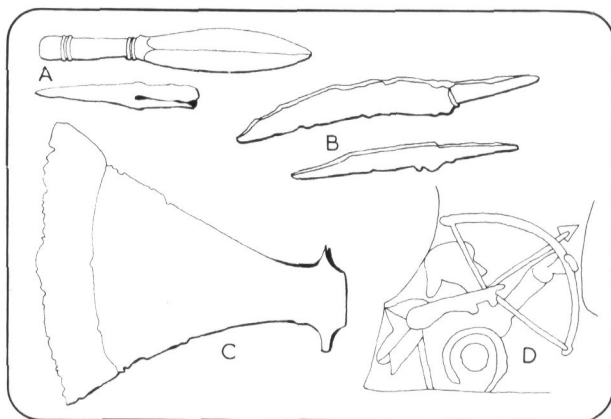
According to legend the Norse Vikings descended on England to avenge the death of Ragnar Lodbrok, slain by the Northumbrian king in a pit of snakes. In reality these pagan Scandinavians were probably spurred into action by overpopulation at home. Greater military power and wealth resulting from greatly increased northern and eastern trade also enabled the Norse to tackle their more civilised neighbours to the south. Switching easily between the rôles of merchant and raider, many Norsemen went 'Viking'. In AD 865 East Anglia was temporarily occupied by their 'Great Army'. The following year these same warriors wiped out a Northumbrian army, and in AD 867 returned south to hold Nottingham against the combined forces of Mercia and Wessex.

This was the beginning of decades of disaster for Anglo-Saxon England and the Celtic kingdoms.

Although bewildered Christian chroniclers wrote of huge war-fleets and thousands of ruthless warriors, most raids consisted of a hundred or so men in a handful of ships. Nor were these Norsemen much fiercer than their foes. They were, in fact, businesslike about battle, preferring a bribe of Danegeld if a fight could be avoided. In war, however, they do seem to have had some technological advantages. The superiority of their ships is well known. Having learned of stirrups from the Avars and Magyars, the Norse made wider use of them than did their British and Anglo-Saxon foes. But it was not until the second Scandinavian assault on England in the late 10th and early 11th centuries that war-stirrups were generally adopted in Britain. The Norse also apparently made greater use of archery, and this played a particularly important part in their successes against Celtic foes. Most Scandinavian bows were simple longbows, though composite weapons of Eastern inspiration were known, while the flat-bow was also used in the far north.

Another form of equipment to have had an influence was the Scandinavian helmet. These were not, of course, 'horned' as in Victorian popular imagination, but might have included a form of brimmed *chapel de fer* or war-hat. It is even possible the Anglo-Saxon references to the 'winged' or 'horned' helmets of their persecutors were poetic images based on just such brimmed war-hats. No such doubt surrounds the Norse war axe, which was to be widely adopted by both their Anglo-Saxon

(A-B) Strathclyde spearhead, spearfoot and knives, 7th-8th Cs., from Bustan Crannog; (C) War axe from Caerlaverock, AD 1050-1100 (Dumfries Mus.); (D) Stone cross, late 7th C. (Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire).





The most complete picture of Pictish military equipment is on the back of the 8th-century Aberlemno cross-slab. This shows horsemen, infantry, and assorted gear including helmets similar to those on the Franks Casket. (Aberlemno churchyard)

and Celtic foes. The single-edged Viking sword had developed out of the common Germanic *sax* of earlier centuries, but this does not appear to have been copied.

The most important impact of the invasions was the establishment of Norse kingdoms. The Danish kingdom of York was one example. From it grew the Danelaw, an area of England stretching from the Scottish borders to a line linking the Thames estuary and the Mersey. Though ultimately destroyed by Wessex in the mid-10th century, this Danelaw left a permanent mark on the military organisation of later Anglo-Saxon England. Danish settlers took over the existing *hundreds*, renaming them *wapentakes*, but then made the ownership of six *carrucæ* units of land the normal basis of military obligation. The Danes also settled in the major towns and improved the defences of many originally Roman cities. Other towns were fortified as military bases, and this trend was reinforced when the Danelaw found itself on the defensive against Anglo-Saxon counter-attacks.

The military organisation of Wessex also changed as a result of Norse invasions. At first this kingdom was concerned solely with survival

following the crushing defeat suffered by King Alfred in the winter of AD 876/77. For many months his men fought a savage guerrilla war from their inaccessible base in the Somerset marshes; but from AD 879 to AD 954 and the conquest of the Norse kingdom of York, Anglo-Saxon Wessex was normally on the attack. Alfred also modified some military laws.

These now encouraged a man to fight in defence of his own or his lord's kin before appealing to his local *ealdorman* for aid. Only as a last resort was he to appeal to the king. Such devolution made for more flexible defence but also led to a certain fragmentation of authority. There was a parallel decline in the old tribal democratic conventions and a corresponding increase in the power of local magnates. Fortified *burghs* increasingly became the focus of local defence and local government. From the early 10th century a system called *burghal hidage* organised the protection of these fortified towns, drawing upon manpower from the surrounding

areas. The fortifications of those Roman cities having strategic value were repaired. Such ancient defences still stood, of course, to a considerable height. Some fortifications were of quite wide extent, and cities like Canterbury, York and Nottingham had already expanded beyond their original Roman walls.

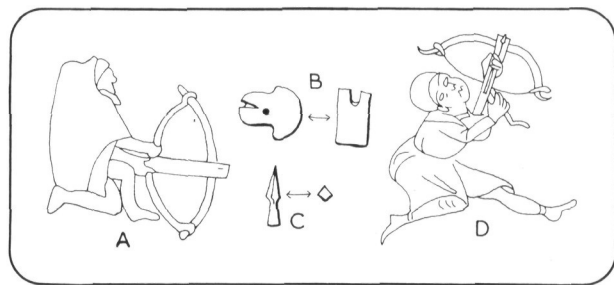
The Norse impact on the Celtic kingdoms varied considerably. In Scotland the Scandinavian legacy is vitally important. The Vikings also altered many aspects of Irish civilisation, particularly in the military field, whereas the Norse impact on Wales was minimal. For several centuries the thoroughly Scandinavian (and romantically named) Kingdom of the Isles survived in the Shetlands, Orkneys, Hebrides and Isle of Man.

Since there was a noticeable eastern European and Byzantine influence on Scandinavian arms and armour, it is possible that such influences permeated to the Celtic fringe of Europe. Returning Norse Varangians certainly brought some weapons home with them from Constantinople. Eastern European and Asiatic-style lamellar armour was known in Sweden, and may have been used in the Norse areas of Ireland. The Scandinavian, or so-called 'Danish' war axe was certainly adopted in Ireland and Scotland. On the other hand Norse settlers in Ireland adopted a light, barbed and probably feathered Celtic javelin which they knew as the *gafeluc*. This same weapon was also adopted by the Anglo-Saxons from their Celtic foes during the 10th century.

The Norwegian settlers in Ireland mixed rapidly with the native population to produce a new and distinctive people, the Gaill-Gaeddills, who dominated the island for many years from their newly founded city of Dublin. Though they became Irishmen and adopted many local customs, they had a profound effect on Irish warfare. Battles were no longer the concern primarily of tribal champions fighting on foot. Light cavalry appeared, as did organised war fleets. Better Norse weapons, particularly heavier swords, sturdier spears and war axes, were widely adopted by the Celtic Irish during the late 9th century. Norse bows and relatively abundant armour were not, however, imitated. Though they copied Scandinavian weapons, the Irish often modified them to their own tastes, making smaller versions of the Viking sword, using

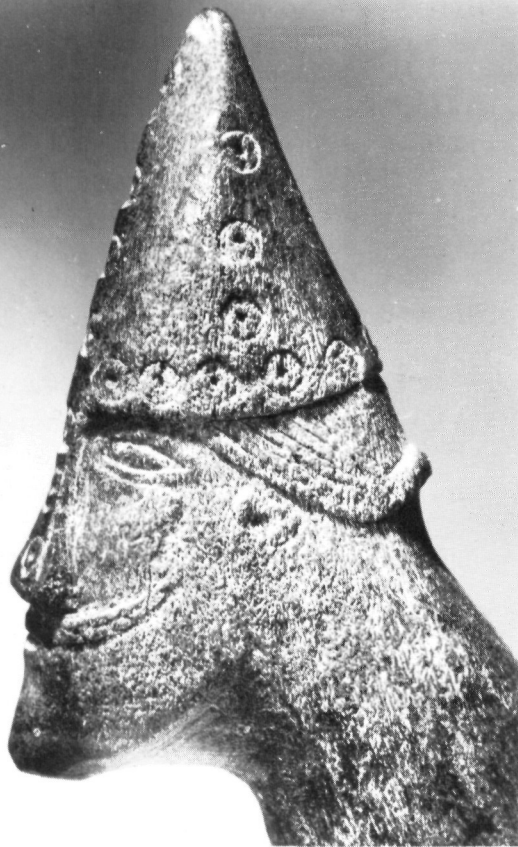
only one rivet to hold a spearhead instead of the original two, and forging slender axes which lacked a thickened bevelling immediately behind the cutting edge. This preference for lighter weapons almost certainly reflected Ireland's lack of iron resources. Guerrilla warfare and raids seem to have been the preferred tactics, particularly against external foes. Irish horsemen rode ponies or small horses, used no stirrups and had only the most basic padded and unframed saddles. All troops, however, made effective use of light javelins with hazelwood shafts as well as slings.

The Scandinavian impact on Scotland was in many ways similar to that on Ireland. The military



The mystery of the north British crossbow! (A) Hunter on late 9th C. Drosten Stone (St Vigean's Mus.); (B-C) Antler crossbow nut, and arrow- or bolt-head, 7th-8th Cs., from Bustran Crannog; (D) is from a French Ms. of AD 1009; note that the bow is held in the same way as on the Drosten Stone. (Bib.Nat., Ms.Lat.12302, Paris)

organisation of 11th century Alban differed noticeably from earlier centuries. This was a poor and sparsely populated kingdom whose few fertile areas were mostly divided into very small shires. Here a *thane* had duties comparable to those of the *thegns*, *drengs*, or Norse *sokemen* of north-eastern England upon whom he was modelled. Regional earls, also of Anglo-Saxon inspiration, had the duty of calling up the 'Scottish' or 'common' army of their earldoms, while *thanes* did the same at shire level. After taking over the British areas of Strathclyde and Cumbria, Alban introduced a small Scots aristocracy; along the eastern coast north of the Tweed an existing Anglo-Saxon élite came to terms with Alban after Northumbria lost control of the region. The acquisition of these British and Anglo-Saxon areas altered the character of the kingdom of Alban, eventually turning it into modern Scotland. Its rulers were obliged to impose a feudal structure as a means of unifying



This small piece of Swedish carved antler dates from the 11th century, and shows a warrior wearing a riveted *spangenhelm* with a long nasal, as used by most 'Vikings'. (Statens Historiska Museer, Stockholm)

their enlarged kingdom. The enlistment of a small number of Norman knights by King Macbeth in the early 1050s may have been part of this feudalising policy. They were refugees from an anti-Norman backlash on the Anglo-Welsh borders, but were too few in number to influence Scottish tactics. These Normans were, apparently, all slain in battle against Anglo-Saxon horsemen in 1054. One originally Norse weapon which was to become peculiarly Scottish was the long-hafted war axe. During the 11th century the downward- and rearward-facing 'beard' of a typical Scandinavian axe was gradually replaced by an upward- and forward-facing horn or projection. This would eventually lead to the *guisarme*, and ultimately to the post-medieval Jeddart and Lochaber axes. The kingdom of Alban, or Scotland as it had effectively become, was no longer a windswept wilderness beyond even Rome's furthest frontier. It was rapidly being drawn into the new medieval Europe,

where this tiny and rugged kingdom would play a surprisingly important rôle.

Before being absorbed by Scotland the British kingdom of Strathclyde was also deeply affected by Viking invasions. The Norse seizure of York in AD 866 was followed four years later by the Viking capture of the Strathclyde capital on Dumbarton Rock. The south-western region fared even worse, with heavy settlement by Norse and Gaill-Gaeddills from Ireland leading to the creation of the new kingdom of Galloway.

Wales escaped relatively lightly, and was in a position to supply priests and scholars to Alfred of Wessex when he set about rebuilding Anglo-Saxon culture. Nevertheless it remained a patchwork of tiny kingdoms, occasionally being united by one strong ruler. Such a man was Hywel the Good who reorganised the laws of Wales, including those dealing with warfare, in the 10th century. These stated that 'The captain of the royal warband is entitled to two men's portions of the spoils acquired out of the country; and of the king's third he is to have a portion. He is the third person to have a portion with the king; the other two being the queen and the chief falconer.' Mention of a falconer in this context recalls just how close were regulations governing war and hunting. Small though the Welsh kingdoms were, their armies were not mere disorganised bands of archers and spearmen. Most certainly fought on foot; archers using flat-bows became typical of the south, whereas spearmen still dominated the more conservative north. There were even a few horsemen riding mountain ponies. The only identifiable Norse influence seems to have been the borrowing of certain Viking war cries in the 11th century. Other Welsh weapons of this period included traditional light Celtic javelins and long trumpets.

Welsh tactics were amazingly, and perhaps significantly, similar to those of late Roman armies, namely rapid attack and retreat repeated again and again. This tactic was even used by their lightly equipped archers, who shot both as they advanced and as they retired.

Anglo-Scandinavian England

Anglo-Saxon England triumphed over the Norse attacks of the 9th and 10th centuries, but fell completely under Danish domination early in the

11th. This second and successful Scandinavian invasion was very different from the first. The Danes were now at least nominally Christian; and their attacks were well planned, co-ordinated, and carried out by a highly paid professional army. On one side stood Svein Forkbeard, a man of exceptional military skill, and on the other stood Aethelred II, known as Unraed or 'the badly advised'. Both rulers died before the war ended in AD 1016, but it was a Dane, Knut the Great, who was recognised as king of England.

Twenty-six years later a member of the old Wessex royal family, Edward the Confessor, regained the throne peaceably but by then the military organisation of England had been deeply influenced by Scandinavia. It was, in fact, largely an Anglo-Scandinavian England which was defeated on the battlefield of Hastings in AD 1066.

Eleventh-century Scandinavian equipment showed strong Oriental influences resulting from flourishing trade connections with the Slav lands, Byzantium and eastern Islam. To some degree it was the disruption of this Oriental trade by the Saljuq conquest of Samanid Transoxania which turned Scandinavian energies once again westward. Characteristic of eastern military influence was the tall conical helmet and the heavier mail hauberk. On the other hand some Scandinavian warriors clung to the winged or flanged spearhead long after it had died out elsewhere in western Europe.

A three-fold obligation to serve in the army, help build fortresses and construct bridges was now normal for all who held land. Fortress and bridge work was levied at one man from every *hide*, army duty at one man from every five *hides*. Many *thegn*s' halls were in fact fortified with a stockade, ditch, rampart and gate-house. Bridges were, of course, essential to ensure a rapid movement of troops. If a man owned enough land he was automatically of *thegn*ly rank and so had military obligations, but the Anglo-Scandinavian warrior was also often given land as a reward for faithful service when he left the lord's or king's immediate service as a *huscarl*. Hence a *thegn*'s position was similar to that of the 11th-century Continental feudal warrior. The Anglo-Scandinavian *cniht* in particular had much in common with his successor, the Anglo-Norman *miles* or knight. Such *cnihtas* were superior members

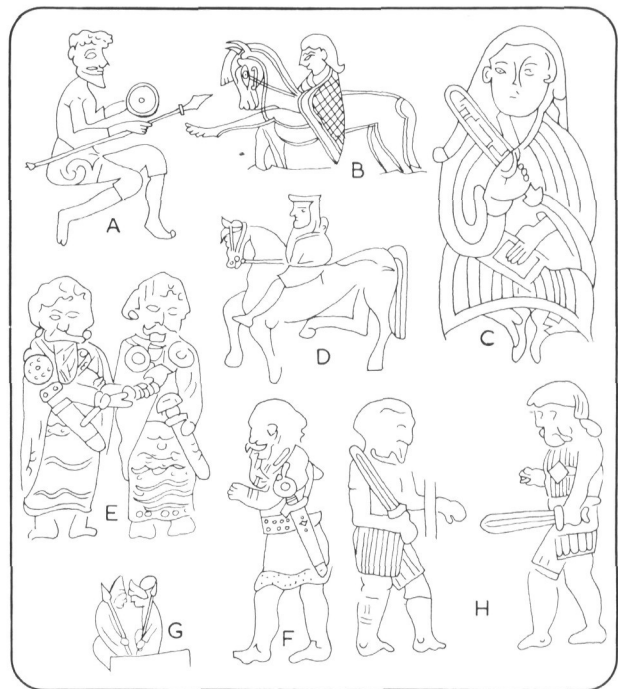
of the king's personal following of *huscarls* and household *thegn*s. This royal guard of *huscarls* was started in AD 1018 by Knut the Great, who maintained a force of 1,000 paid troops, probably modelled on the earlier professional *Jomsvikings* who had come to England with Svein Forkbeard.

Though many such men spent some time on garrison duty in fortified boroughs they were essentially a highly mobile and well-trained army designed for offensive campaigns and raids. A larger force of levies, the *fyrð*, was normally now only raised for defensive purposes. Welsh auxiliaries are also recorded, but these may have been either mercenaries or the followers of allied Welsh princes. *Butsecarls* or 'marines' and *lithsmen* or 'sailors' formed a comparable mercenary navy under Edward the Confessor, at least until AD 1051.

The army's baggage train and commissariat was now probably as complicated as in later medieval times. This very effective Anglo-Scandinavian military structure may have included cavalry and archers. Certainly many of the richer *thegn*s, as well as the *huscarls*, were mounted, though they normally fought on foot.

There were still considerable regional variations,

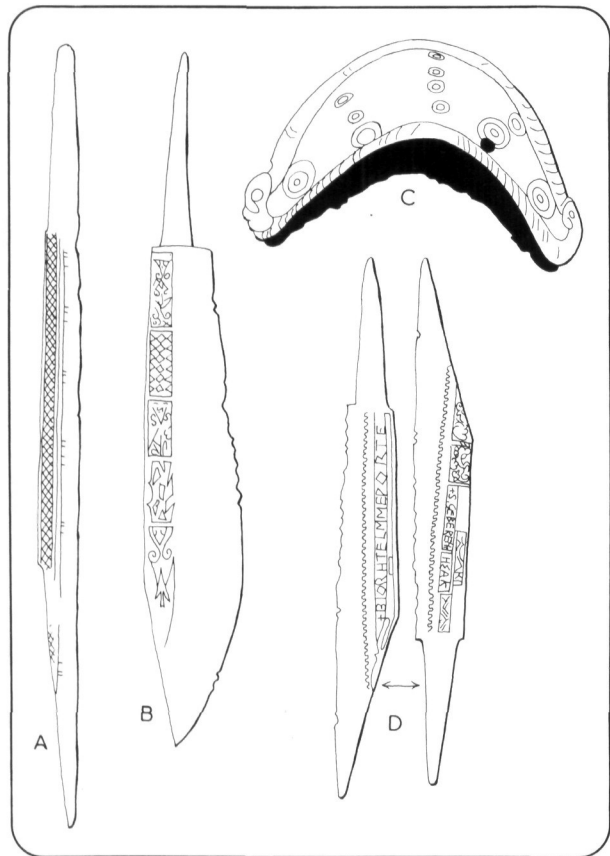
Irish Mss. and carving: (A-B) Book of Kells, c. AD 800 (Trinity College Lib., Ms. A.1.6, Dublin); (C) Garland of Howth, 8th C. (Trinity College Lib., Dublin); (D-G) 10th C. crosses (Clormacnois); (H) 10th C. Cross of Muiredach (Monasterboice).



and the nucleus of the old kingdom of Wessex carried a heavier military burden than did the north or east. The bulk of the population now had less military rôle than in earlier centuries, and there was greater reliance on taxation to pay professional mercenaries. This again made Anglo-Scandinavian England similar to Anglo-Norman England. In battle the *thegns* fought around a nucleus of *huscarls*, though probably being organised under their own earls, bishops, sheriffs or high reeves. When summoned, *ceorls* holding a single *hide* would follow their local *thegns*. Such men were, however, normally only used for local coastal or urban defence and in the rare cases of siege warfare. Nor were they a poverty-stricken peasantry, being socially not far inferior to the *thegns*. The earlier military rôle of *ealdormen* had now been superseded by the earls, who governed great provinces and controlled the *fyrð* in their own regions.

Laws concerning military equipment, especially

(A-B) 9th C. *sax* (Brit.Mus.); (C) Bone *sax* pommel from Kent, 7th C. (County Mus., Liverpool); (D) *Scramasax*, 9th-10th Cs. (Brit.Mus.).



the Laws of Knut, suggest an army similar to those seen elsewhere in 11th-century western Europe. Under regulations governing *heriot*, or the inheritance of military equipment, a man beneath the rank of *thegn* would have a spear but not a sword. While an earl or king's *thegn* owed the ruler four helmets on inheriting his rank from a predecessor, an ordinary *thegn* paid neither helmet nor mail hauberk. Generally speaking much arms and armour was loaned by a superior to his men, an ordinary *thegn* getting a horse plus military gear, while an earl got eight horses, some of which were ready saddled. Such laws were very similar to those of the Carolingian Empire, of 11th-century western Europe or of post-1066 Anglo-Norman England. Regulations from AD 1008 suggest that the ownership of eight *hides* obliged a man to serve with helmet and mail *byrnie*, while other laws show that certain coastal towns not only provided ships but equipped their crews with hauberks, helmets, swords, shields and war axes.

Compared to the south, Northumbria remained a chaotic and lawless land of feud and vendetta, thinly populated by Angles, Danes, Britons, Norwegians and Irish Gaill-Gaedhills. The early 11th century was also a time of retreat in the face of successful attacks by the kingdom of Alban. Since AD 1018 the Anglo-Scottish border, despite subsequent advances and retreats, has remained much the same to this day.

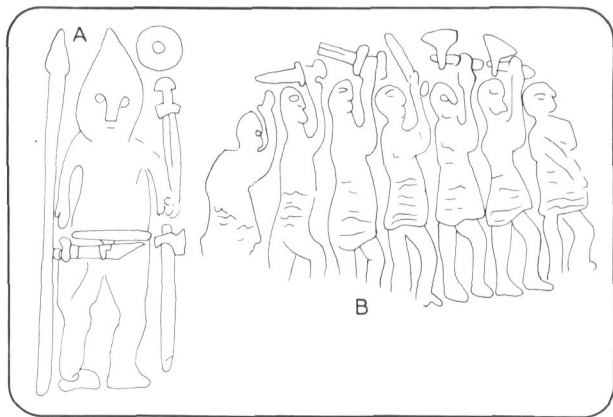
While it may be true that Anglo-Scandinavian professional warriors were normally mounted infantry, there is clear evidence that the Northumbrian and Yorkshire élites could also fight as light cavalry skirmishers. Their weapons in such cases were light spears or javelins of the Celtic *gafeluc* type, and they certainly did not fight as shock-cavalry with couched lances. In fact they would have differed only slightly from early Norman horsemen. The general adoption of stirrups did not revolutionise western cavalry tactics, and the big change only occurred early in the 12th century. Cavalry *cnichtas* were also being employed on the Welsh border in AD 1055 and 1063, and these included Norman mercenaries as well as local men. This being the case it would seem likely that horse-warfare was at least as common in the rich lowlands of the east and south. It might, indeed, have been recorded in Kent as early as AD 1016 against Danish

invaders. It is also possible that the *waepnboras* was an assistant who carried a *cniht's* additional javelins. Another characteristic of the northern and western borderlands was the leading rôle taken by the church in military organisation and muster.

To what degree later equipment was influenced by Continental forms is hard to judge. But the Anglo-Saxons apparently wore shorter hauberks than the Normans at Hastings, perhaps reflecting the higher priority they gave to fighting on foot. Heavy axes certainly remained in favour, and these were infantry weapons. The Old English *bil* might similarly have been a specialised long-hafted infantry weapon developed from the axe. The question of late Anglo-Saxon archery is more difficult. It had been used against the Danes and again perhaps against the Norse at Stamford Bridge in AD 1066. The non-appearance of Anglo-Saxon archers at Hastings in the same year might suggest that such troops were of humble status and, lacking horses, could not keep up with Harold's mounted élite of *huscarls* and *thegns*. It is even possible that a simple form of crossbow was known in England by this time: certainly Knut was concerned enough to ban it as a hunting weapon in his Forest Laws.

The sudden and catastrophic collapse of Anglo-Saxon England in AD 1066 was not the result of military backwardness, technical inferiority or decadence. Duke William of Normandy did not regard his victory as inevitable, and retained sufficient respect for his foes to employ large numbers of Anglo-Saxons in his army after the Conquest. Nor had Edward the Confessor's preceding reign been one of particular military decline. One crushing defeat, largely resulting from a lack of political cohesion and from poor military leadership, would nevertheless cause a fundamental re-orientation in English history. But this decisive defeat at Hastings had not been a rout. Harold II was slain (though probably with a sword, and not an arrow in the eye). Duke William of Normandy, with his motley army of Normans, Bretons, Flemings, French and a few mercenaries from further east, broke the Anglo-Saxons who, though they ran, rallied more than once. Continuing Anglo-Saxon resistance meant that William the Conqueror passed to his son neither a Norman nor an Anglo-Saxon kingdom but an Anglo-Norman one. This was something new, in which a Norman-

French element joined the existing Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Scandinavian mixture to produce the England we know today.



(A) Early 10th C. Anglo-Danish cross (Middleton, North Yorks); (B) Norse tombstone, 9th–10th Cs. (Lindisfarne Mus.).

Further Reading

A large amount has been written about the so-called Dark Ages in British history and the following is only a selection of recent publications of interest to the military historian.

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- G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots* (London, 1973)
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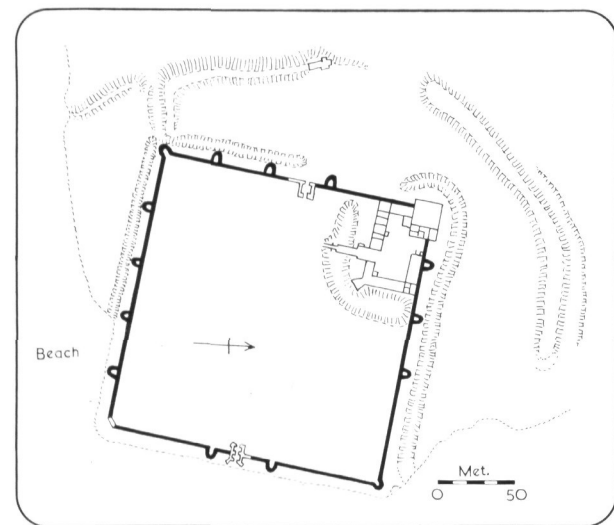
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Portchester Castle, Hampshire, with the Roman Saxon Shore fortress surrounded by probable late Anglo-Saxon earthworks. (After HMSO)



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The Plates

A1: Roman cavalry officer, c.AD 400

This man's equipment shows just how far Roman arms and armour had moved since the late Republic and early Empire. The helmet, with fairly massive semi-precious stones set into its surface, is clearly for parade purposes, though its general shape and construction follow closely several other examples from both ends of the late Empire. The scale hauberk shows strong Asiatic, perhaps Sarmatian influence. The shield, taken from the *Notitia Dignitatum*, bears the design identified with the Equites Honoriani Seniores, a Vexillatio Comitatus (cavalry unit of perhaps 300 men) believed to have been based in Britain.

Sources: Cavalry parade helmet, 4th–5th C. (Vojvodanski Mus., Novi Sad); 'Arch of Galerius', c.AD 300 (*in situ*, Thessaloniki); 'Triumph of Constantius II', silver dish, c.AD 350 (Hermitage, Leningrad); 'Life of St Paul', 5th C. ivory plaque (Bargello, Florence); 'Tetrarchs' carving, 4th C. (*in situ*, St Mark's, Venice); *Notitia Dignitatum*, 15th C. copy of 5th C. original (Ms. Canon Misc. 378, Bodleian Lib., Oxford).

A2: Roman cavalryman, c.AD 400

A mail hauberk—*lorica hamata*—was the normal protection for late Roman cavalry. This trooper also wears a type of helmet which is often associated with infantry—in the confused conditions of early

5th-century Britain such distinctions probably meant very little.

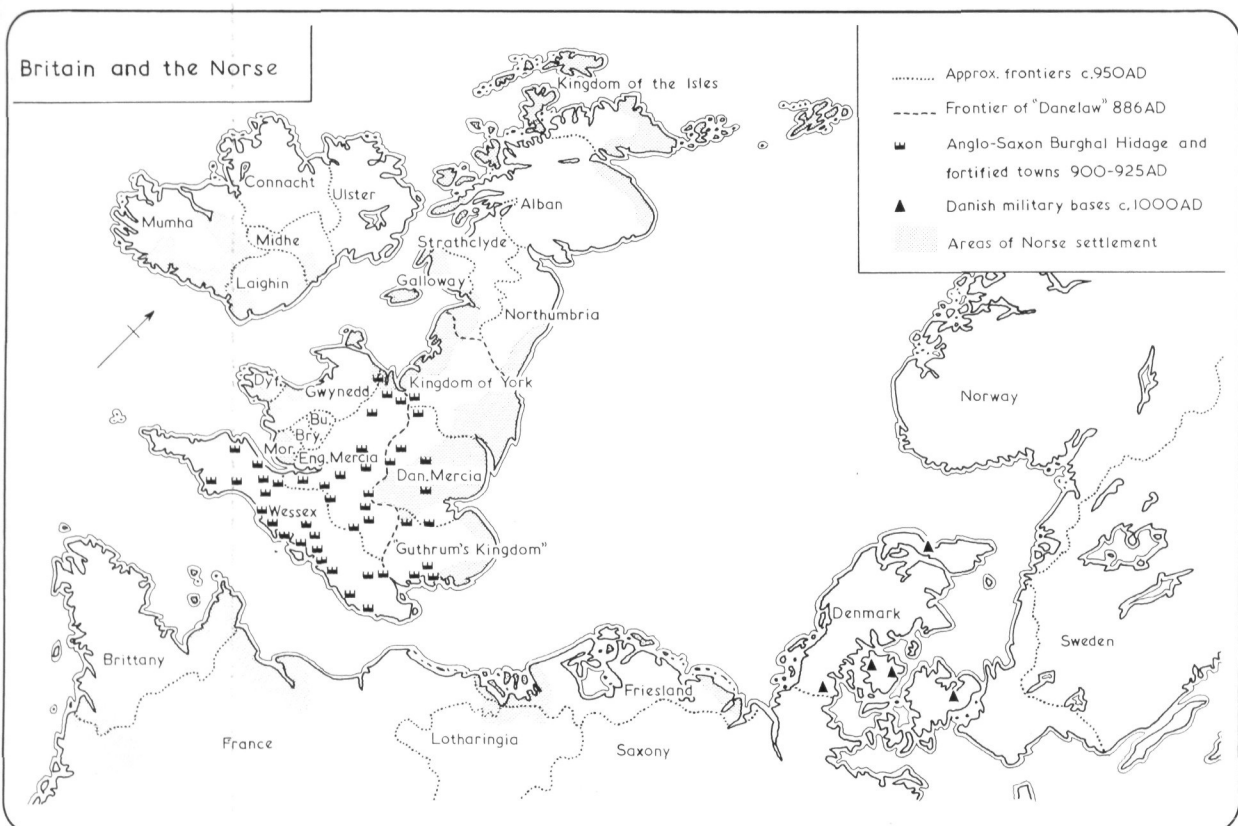
Sources: 'Drowning of Pharaoh's Army', wall painting, mid-4th C. (*in situ* catacomb, Via Latina, Rome); 'Trojan Council', *Virgilius Vaticanus*, early 5th C. (Ms. Lat. 3225, Vatican Lib.); Coptic wood carving, 5th C. (?) (Staats Mus., West Berlin); Roman helmet, 4th–5th C. (Mus. der Stadt, Worms); Roman cavalry sword from Nydam (Nat. Arch. Mus., Copenhagen); 'Achilles dish', Roman silver, c.AD 350 (Romermuseum, Augst).

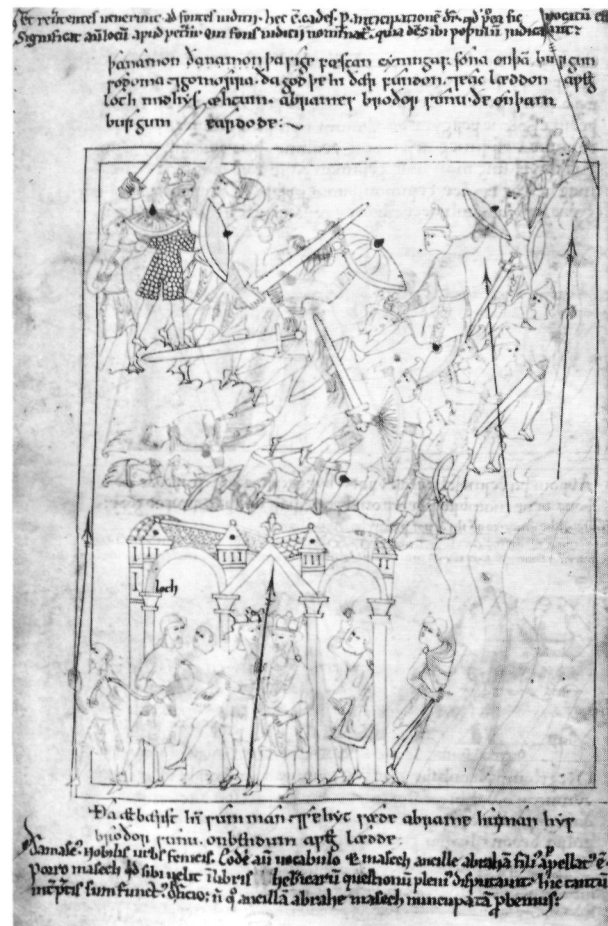
A3: Sailors, Saxon Shore Fleet, 4th century

Little is known about the clothing and equipment used by Roman seamen at this period, except that their tunics—like the sails of their ships—were of a pale blue colour: this must be one of the earliest examples of camouflaged equipment in military history.

Sources: Coptic carving, 4th C. (Coptic Mus.,

The Abermethy Tower in Fife is a rare 11th-century Scottish example of a type of refuge more commonly found in Ireland. All have their doors high above the ground, and were primarily a defence against Norse raiders.





One of the finest later Anglo-Saxon manuscripts is an *Old Testament* dating from around AD 1000. Note that only the king wears a mail hauberk. (Brit.Lib., Ms.Cott.Claud.B.IV)

Cairo); 'Massacre of the Innocents', 5th C. Provençale ivory book cover (Staatliche Mus., West Berlin).

A4: Junior officer of Roman infantry, early 5th century

This man's decorated equipment and clothing, and crested helmet suggest that he might be an officer. This kind of appliqué decoration of tunics was widely seen during the late Empire; some modern students suggest that the particular details, e.g. the squares on the skirt, may have been associated with rank. The use of long-sleeved tunics and long trousers by Roman infantry can be seen on grave stelae as early as the end of the 2nd century. We take his shield motif from the *Notitia Dignitatum*, where it is associated with the *Secunda Britannica*, a *Legio Comitatensis* of about 1,000 men. Part, at least, of this unit is listed as serving on the Saxon Shore. It

has been suggested that its title may indicate the last descendants' of the old *Legio II Augusta*, one of the original garrison legions. This soldier is probably one of the first generation of Anglo-Saxon mercenaries, and some of his gear reflects his Germanic origins.

Sources: *Notitia Dignitatum*; late Roman military buckle (Colchester Mus.); 5th C. javelin head from Carvoran, Hadrian's Wall; Anglo-Saxon scabbard mounts, 5th–6th C., from Brighthampton and Chessel Down; Hunnish sword fragments, 5th C., from Win-Leopoldau and Altusheim; 4th–5th C. Roman helmet from Intercissa (Nat.Arch.Mus., Budapest).

B1: Anglian king, early 7th century

Though based on the famous Sutton Hoo Treasure, this figure also wears other pieces of equipment which were probably known at this time. Many Anglo-Saxon leaders tried to imitate the military splendour of Imperial Rome. The king's helmet combines elements of a Roman cavalry parade piece with the decorative style of the Swedish 'Vendel' culture. The leather jerkin, with its jewelled shoulder clasps, apes the 'muscle cuirass' of a Roman senior officer. Other items—such as the war axe, and the splinted limb armour—reflect the strong Central Asian influence seen in much early medieval European armour, and found from the Near East to Scandinavia.

Sources: helmet, axe, belts, shoulder clasps, scabbard and purse from Sutton Hoo (Brit.Mus.); decorative plaques from Vendel helmets (State Hist.Mus., Stockholm); Anglo-Saxon sword, late 6th C.; from Gilton (Liverpool Mus.).

B2: Mercian warrior, 7th century

Most Anglo-Saxons would have been protected only by their shields; this man also has an iron-framed helmet covered with horn scales and with a boar crest. His *seax* short-sword is a splendid weapon, with a carved horn pommel and silver-inlaid blade.

Sources: *Seax* pommel from Sibertswold (County Mus., Liverpool); 7th–8th C. helmet from Benty Grange (Sheffield Mus.); *Poems of Paulinus of Nola*, 8th C. English (Ms.Q.v.XIV.1, Leningrad State Pub.Lib.); 8th C. English *Canterbury Psalter* (Ms.Cotton Vesp.A.I., Brit.Lib., London).

B3, B4: Anglo-Saxon warriors, 7th century

These two figures illustrate some of the wide-ranging influences of the early medieval period. Their spear and javelin have the rather primitive tightly bound split socket which was characteristic of England but not the rest of Germanic Europe; their helmets are clearly imports from Vendel Sweden.

C1: Romano-British militiaman, 6th century

Very little is known about the fighting men of the 'Arthurian Age'. What little information is available suggests that late Roman traditions persisted for many generations. This figure must stand as representative of the men who defended the surviving cities of central Britain. His Christian faith is proclaimed by his shield motif, the *chi-rho* used in late Roman days; his spearhead is of a form characteristic of the mixed Celtic and Anglo-Saxon population of the Thames Valley area.

Sources: Anglo-Celtic spear-blade from Berkshire (Reading Mus.); ivory 'Buckle of St Caesarius', mid-6th C. (St Trophime Treasury, Arles); *Cotton Genesis*, 6th C. (?) (Ms. Cotton Otho. B.BI, Brit. Lib.); *Vienna Genesis*, 6th C. (?) (Cod. Theol. Gr.31, Nat.Lib., Vienna).

C2: North British cavalryman, 6th century

As far as can be judged, this Celtic warrior was the reality behind the 'Arthurian knight'. His arms, armour and method of fighting all stem from late Roman originals. We base his red and white

costume upon the North Welsh 'Gododdin' epic. The 'dragon standard' occurs in some of the later myth-cycles, and it seems safe to identify it with this 'windsock' pattern—originally borrowed by the Romans from the Sarmatians, much used in the latter centuries of the Empire, and still in use in England in late Anglo-Saxon days, as clearly illustrated in the Bayeux Tapestry.

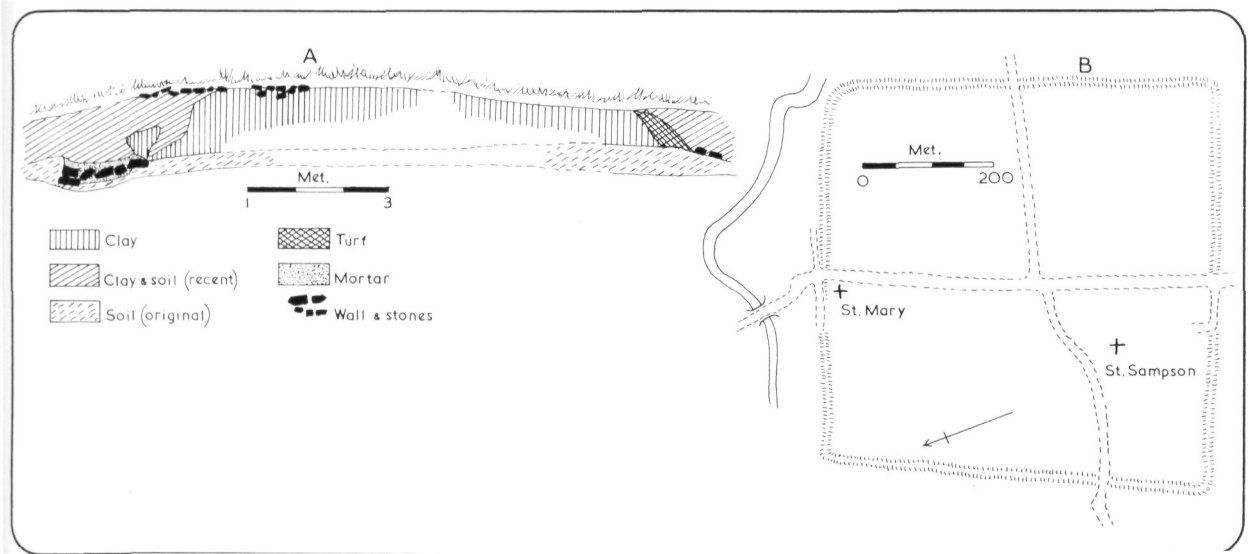
Sources: *Virgilius Romanus*, 6th C. (Cod.Lat.3867 Vatican Lib.); 6th–7th C. harness from Nocera Umbra (Mus. Alt. Medioevo, Rome); 'David Plates', early 7th C. Byzantine silver (Met.Mus., New York); Romano-British brooch from Caerwent, 4th C.; Romano-Byzantine helmet, 5th C. (Coptic Mus., Cairo); North British weapons from Bustan Crannog, 7th–8th C. (Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Edinburgh).

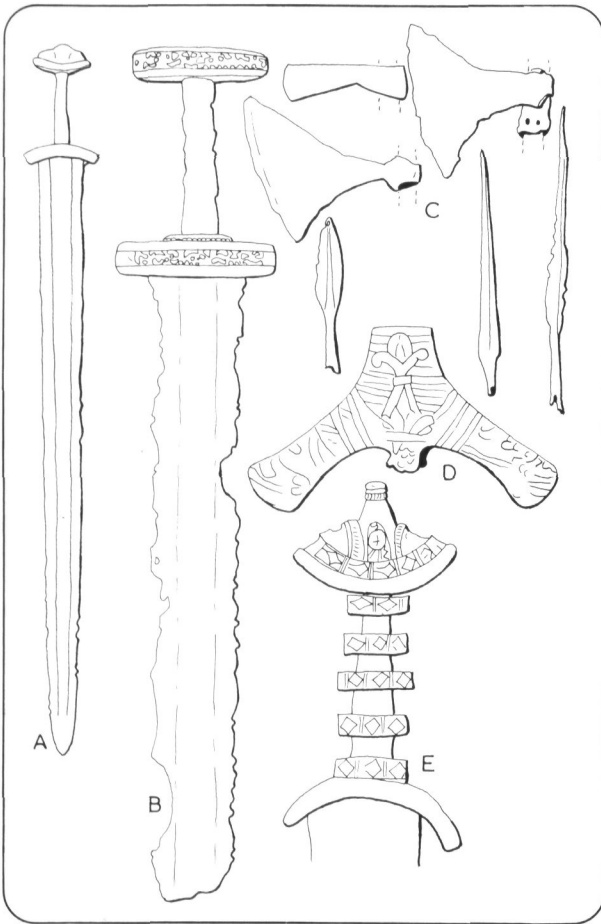
C3: Welsh tribal warrior, 5th–6th century

Even less is known about the tribal warriors of the Celtic highlands. We have given this man the ubiquitous Celtic checkered fabric for his cloak, a late-Roman bow of composite construction, and a simple dagger of Irish form.

Sources: 6th–7th C. Irish dagger from Meath (Nat.Mus. of Ireland, Dublin); 6th C. brooch from Glamorgan; fragments of Roman bow from Carnuntum; *Evangelaria*, 8th C. Northumbrian (Ms.A.II.17, Cathedral Lib., Durham).

Cricklade: plan of the late Anglo-Saxon burgh surrounded by earthworks, with a section through the existing rampart and ditch. (After Raleigh Radford)





(A) Norse sword from London, 10th–11th Cs. (London Mus.); (B) Anglo-Saxon sword from Reading, ?9th C. (Ashmolean Mus., Oxford); (C) Norse axes and spearheads, c.AD 1000, from London Bridge (London Mus.); (D) Norse bronze quillons of eastern European style from London, 10th–11th Cs. (London Mus.); (E) Gold-mounted north English sword, ?10th C. (York Mus.).

D1: Pictish nobleman, 8th–9th century

Paradoxically enough, we have a much better idea of the appearance of the otherwise very mysterious Picts. This leader's helmet and hauberk were probably imported or captured from Northumbria; his shield decoration is based upon one of the enigmatic symbols seen in so much Pictish art.

Sources: Pictish cross-slabs, 8th C. (Meigle Mus., Montrose Mus., and *in situ*, Aberlemno churchyard).

D2: Southern Pictish or north British huntsman, 8th century

Did the late Roman crossbow survive in early medieval Scotland; and if so, was it used in war, or only in the hunt? Relics of a sophisticated form of

crossbow have been found in the north British area; and a hooded huntsman almost certainly using such a weapon appears on one Pictish carving.

Sources: 'St Andrew's Sarcophagus', 8th–9th C. Pictish carving (St Andrew's Cathedral, Fife); 'Drosten Stone', 9th C. Pictish carving (St Vigean's Mus.); boltheads and crossbow nut from Bustan Crannog, Ayrshire; Pictish cloak pin, 5th–7th C. (Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Edinburgh).

D3: Northern Pictish chieftain, 7th–9th century

Archaic forms of equipment, such as the basically rectangular shield with cutaway edges which are seen on earlier Roman carvings from Hadrian's Wall, survived for some centuries among the Northern Picts. These people were, however, certainly not backward in metalwork, as can be seen from fragments of surviving military equipment. Note the very broad short-sword.

Sources: Pictish carved slab from Birsay, 7th C., and carved relief from Ross-shire, 8th C. (Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Edinburgh); 'St Andrew's Sarcophagus'; 'Cadboll Brooch', c.AD 780, from Sutherland; scabbard chapes from St Ninian's Isle Treasure, 8th C. (Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Edinburgh); 9th–10th C. sword from SE Scotland of NE England (private collection).

E1: Irish sub-king, 7th–8th century

Laws governing the costumes and colours permitted for wear by each class—'sumptuary laws'—were very strict in early medieval Ireland. This man is, of course, a member of the leading class; but his weapons are still of the relatively small and feeble form normal in pre-Viking Ireland.

Sources: Grooved sword, c.AD 650 (Nat.Mus. of Ireland, Dublin); *Garland of Howth*, early 8th C. Irish Ms. (Trinity Coll.Lib., Dublin); 10th C. carvings on 'Cross of the Scriptures' (*in situ* Clonmacnois); brooch from Ardagh, 9th C. (Nat.Mus. of Ireland, Dublin).

E2: Warrior from Dal Riata, 8th–9th century

The 'Scottish' (i.e. Irish) warriors of the kingdom of Dal Riata were also great sailors. This man has probably just stepped from the rowing benches of a merchant vessel. He holds a peculiar type of sword which appeared quite suddenly in Ireland, and which might even indicate trading links with Spain.

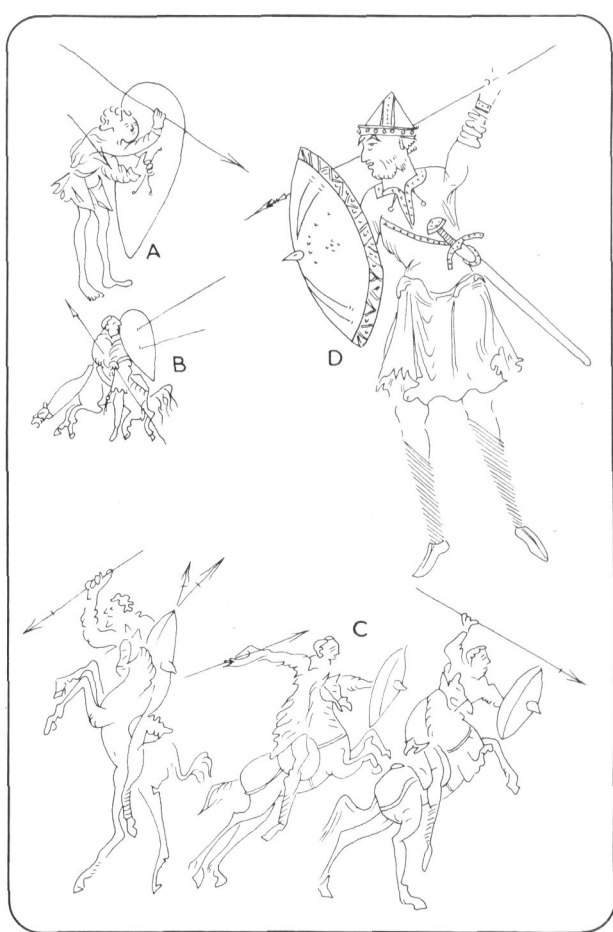
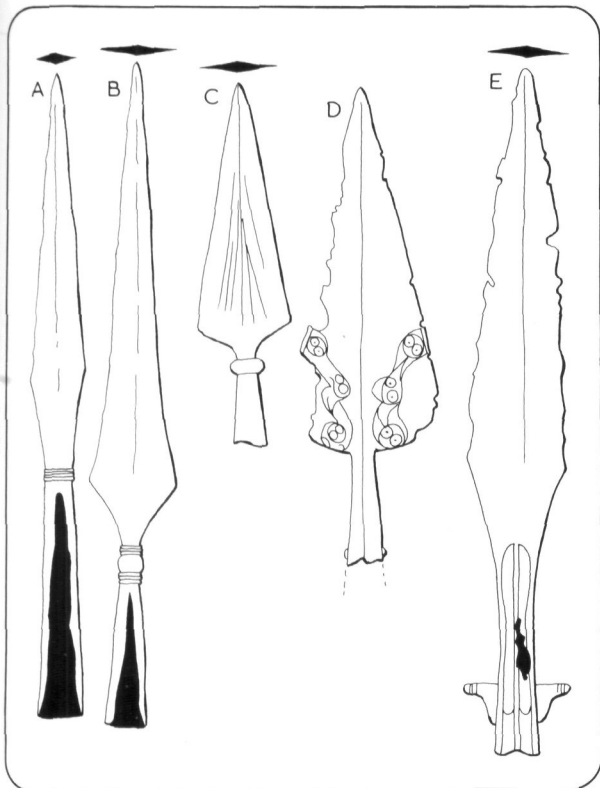
Sources: 7th–8th C. sword and daggers (Nat.Mus. of Ireland, Dublin); carvings on 10th C. 'Cross of Muiredach' (*in situ* Monasterboice); knife and spearheads from Argyll, 6th–7th C. (Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Edinburgh); 10th C. Irish *Psalter*, (Ms.C.9., St John's Lib., Cambridge); *Book of Kells*, c.AD 800 (Ms.A.I.6., Trinity Coll.Lib., Dublin).

E3: Irish warrior, 9th–10th century

Early medieval Irish riding equipment was even more backward than the country's arms and armour. This was not, however, the result of poverty or technological inferiority, nor even, perhaps, of isolation. It was probably because Ireland's small military élite had yet to face a serious external threat.

Sources: *Book of Kells*; 7th C. (?) spearhead from Ballinderry (Nat.Mus. of Ireland, Dublin); 'Cross of the Scriptures', Clonmacnois; brooch, c.AD 900, and 'Athlone Plaque', 8th C. Irish metalwork (Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Dublin).

Later spearheads: (A) 8th–11th Cs., from London; (B) 8th–9th Cs., from North Weald; (C) 9th–12th Cs. cavalry type, from Ely; (D) 9th C. ceremonial type, from Dachet; (E) 9th–12th Cs., from Reading.



Anglo-Saxon manuscripts: (A–C) *Utrecht Psalter*, mid-11th C. (Brit.Lib., Ms. Harley 603); (D) 11th C. *Psalter* (Brit.Lib., Ms.Cott.Tib.C.VI).

F1: English king, 9th century

Carolingian fashions were soon to be seen in Anglo-Saxon England, in both civil and military costume. Royal regalia also showed just how prosperous this area had become.

Sources: 9th C. English sword pommel from the Seine (Brit.Mus.); sword from Abingdon (Ashmolean Mus., Oxford); *Benediction of St Aethelwald*, 10th C. English Ms. (Chatsworth House); *Life of St Cuthbert*, English Ms. c.AD 930 (Corpus Christi Coll., Cambridge); cloak pins from River Witham, late 8th C. (Brit.Mus.).

F2: Benedictine monk, 9th century

Monks were rarely exempt from some sort of military service. Normally the only literate members of society, they had their own particular skills to offer.

Sources: 8th–11th C. spearhead (London Mus.); *De Laudis Crucis*, 10th C. English Ms. (Trinity Coll.Lib., Cambridge).

F3: Northumbrian thegn, 8th–9th century

Recent archaeological discoveries demonstrate just how heavily armed some elite Anglo-Saxon warriors could be. This man wears a type of helmet which would soon be abandoned in favour of styles spread by the Vikings; this early type could also have an attached mail aventail. He is armed with a spear, javelin, and *scramasax* short-sword.

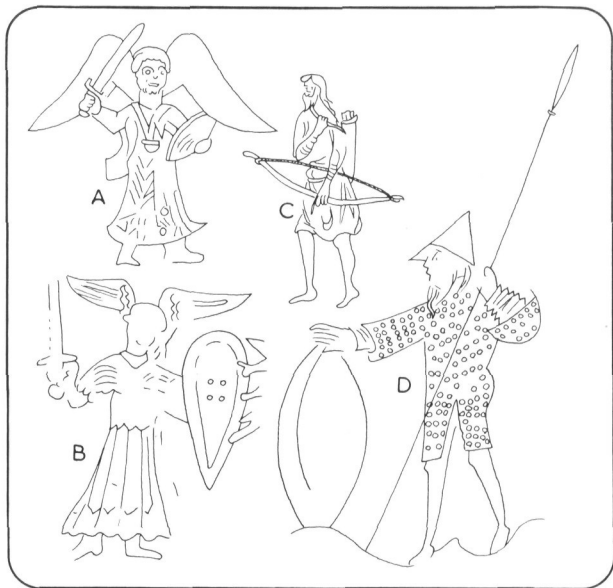
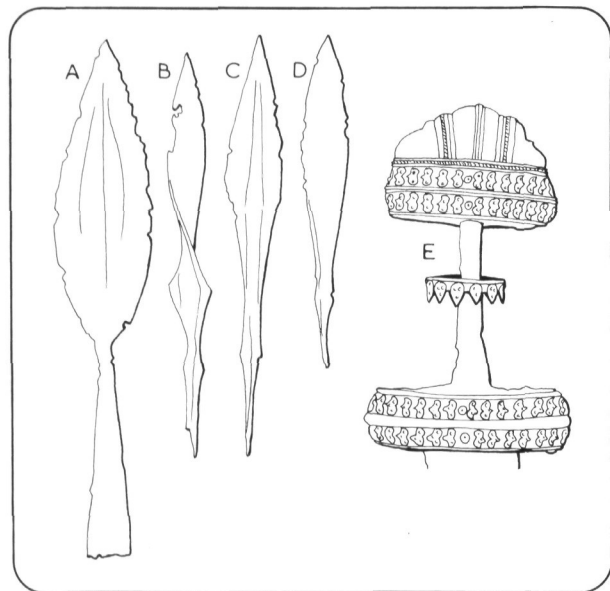
Sources: 8th C. Northumbrian carved bone 'Franks Casket', 9th–10th C. *scramasax* and 8th–9th C. pommel (Brit.Mus.); helmet, c.AD 750, from Coppergate, York (York Archaeological Trust).

G1: Scandinavian mercenary, 10th century

This man may be a Swede. His equipment is certainly in the eastern Scandinavian style, with lamellar armour and a segmented *spangenhelm* showing strong Asiatic influence, perhaps via the so-called 'Varangian Road' through Russia to Byzantium. The bronze quillons of his single-edged sword also show a Hungarian or Byzantine connection.

Sources: Viking quillons, 10th–11th C. (London Mus.); 9th–10th C. picture-stones (*in situ* Gotland,

(A–D) Anglo-Norse spearheads, ?10th C. (Nat.Mus. of Ireland, Dublin); (E) Irish-Norse sword from Kilmainham, 9th C. (Nat.Mus. of Ireland, Dublin).



(A) Mid-11th C. Anglo-Saxon carving of 'St Michael' (Southwell Minster); (B) 11th C. Anglo-Saxon carving (Church of St Nicholas, Ipswich); (C) *Pentateuch and Joshua*, mid-11th C. (Brit.Lib., Ms.Cott.Claud.B.IV); (D) 'Goliath', early 11th C. Anglo-Saxon manuscript (Brit.Lib.).

and Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Stockholm); shield, 9th C., from Gokstad (University Mus., Oslo); carved antler showing helmeted warrior and lamellar armour, from Birka, AD 800–950 (Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Stockholm); Anglo-Danish carved cross, early 10th C. (*in situ* Middleton, Yorks.).

G2: Anglo-Danish warrior, 9th–10th century

While the so-called 'Danish axe' was widely known and feared in the hands of England's Scandinavian settlers, use was also made of the longbow. Apart from the axe—soon adopted by the Saxons themselves, and certainly associated with English warriors by the 11th century—the Vikings enjoyed no particular technological advantages over their Anglo-Saxon foes.

Sources: 10th C. Norse longbow (Nat.Mus. of Ireland, Dublin); 10th C. Norwegian helmet (Oslo Mus.); 9th–10th C. picture-stones (*in situ* Gotland); 9th C. tapestry from Oseburg (Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Oslo); Viking axes, c.AD 1000 (London Mus.).

G3: Hiberno-Norse jarl, early 11th century

Documentary records show that some Norse settlers adopted Celtic dress in Scotland and the Islands. While Scandinavians habitually wore trousers, upper class Celts had long ago adopted tunics of

Roman origin. Light Celtic-type javelins were also used by many Hiberno-Norse warriors. This man's framed saddle and iron stirrups are, however, purely Scandinavian.

Sources: Norse shoulder brooches (Nat.Mus. of Antiq., Edinburgh); 'Cross of the Scriptures', Clonmacnois; 10th–11th C. Viking stirrups (Brit.Mus.); Norse spearheads, 10th–11th C. (Nat.Mus. of Ireland, Dublin); 9th–10th C. spurs and bridle (University Mus., Oslo).

H1: Anglo-Danish huscarl, early 11th century

The Scandinavian influence on late Anglo-Saxon military equipment was considerable. Most of these new ideas, including the *spangenhelm* with a broad nasal, and the longer, heavier mail hauberk, were ultimately of Central Asian origin. This man's early version of the kite-shaped shield is, however, likely to have reflected French or Norman influence.

Sources: 11th C. English *Psalter* (Ms. Cotton Tib.C.VI, Brit.Lib.); late 11th C. Anglo-Norman 'Bayeux Tapestry' (Tapestry Mus., Bayeux); early 11th C. *Genesis* from Canterbury (Ms. Junius 11, Bodleian Lib., Oxford); war axe from Caerlaverock, mid-11th C. (Burgh Mus., Dumfries); *Utrecht Psalter*, early 11th C. English (Ms. Harl.603, Brit.Lib.); English Ms., c.AD 1000 (Ms. Cotton Claud. B.IV, Brit.Lib.).

H2: Fyrd warrior of the Anglo-Welsh borders, mid-11th century

This man may, in fact, be a Welshman, since he is armed with the powerful Welsh flat-bow. Otherwise his simple equipment shows him to be a villager summoned to join the local *fyrd* militia.

Sources: *Bury Psalter*, English, c.AD 1045 (Ms. Reg. Lat. 12, Vatican Lib.); 11th C. English *Psalter* (Ms. Cotton Tib.C.VI, Brit.Lib.); 11th C. English Ms. (Ms. Cotton Cleo.C.VIII, Brit. Lib.).

H3: English cavalry of the Welsh March, mid-11th century

Late Anglo-Saxon attempts to raise and train cavalry on the Norman model were not particularly successful, even when a few Norman mercenaries were recruited. Such troops fought both with spears and with heavy javelins. They were identical in almost all respects to the heavy cavalry that now dominated European warfare from Spain to Germany and Byzantium.

Sources: *Utrecht Psalter* (Brit.Lib.); *Beatus of St Sever*, mid-11th C. French (Ms. Lat. 8878, Bib. Nat., Paris); English *Psalter*, early 11th C. (Ms. Arundel 155, Brit.Lib.); sword from Battersea, early 11th C. (Pitt Rivers Mus., Oxford); 10th–11th C. spearhead from Thames (London Mus.).

From the Bayeux Tapestry: all except the two mounted Normans are Anglo-Saxons. Note the axes, javelins, the variety of shield types, and the fact that neither of the two elderly bearded warriors carries the latest kite-shaped cavalry shield.





- 1: Roman cavalry officer, c.AD 400
2: Roman cavalryman, c.AD 400
3: Sailors, Saxon Shore Fleet, 4th C
4: Junior officer, Roman infantry, early 5th C

- 1: Anglian king, early 7th C
2: Mercian warrior, 7th C
3, 4: Anglo-Saxon warriors, 7th C



- 1: Romano-British militiaman, 6th C
2: North British cavalryman, 6th C
3: Welsh tribal warrior, 5th-6th C





- 1: Pictish nobleman, 8th-9th C
2: Pictish or north British hunter, 8th C
3: North Pictish chieftain, 7th-9th C



1: Irish sub-king, 7th-8th C
2: Warrior from Dal Riata, 8th-9th C
3: Irish warrior, 9th-10th C

- 1: English king, 9th C
2: Benedictine monk, 9th C
3: Northumbrian thegn, 8th-9th C



- 1: Scandinavian mercenary, 10th C
2: Anglo-Danish warrior, 9th-10th C
3: Hiberno-Norse jarl, early 11th C



- 1: Anglo-Danish huscarl, early 11th C
2: Fyrd warrior, Welsh border, mid-11th C
3: English cavalry, Welsh March, mid-11th C

