



WIRRAL ARCHAEOLOGY CIC

# ANGLO SAXON TRIBES & CLANS



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# Anglo Saxon Tribes & Clans

## Introduction

When the Germanic Anglo-Saxon tribes began to settle in what we now call England, they were a group of different peoples, namely Saxon, Angles and Jutes, who would in time be referred to as Anglo-Saxons.

## Tribal Hidage

The tribal Hidage, a document or list, which was written between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, named 34 tribes.

It is possible, but not certain, that the tribal hidage was formulated as a tribute list by created by a King. The list pertained to the number of 'Hides' which existed in a number of independent Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms and which included several smaller territories.

A hide was a unit of land which a household needed to ensure that it could feed itself. The usual size of a hide is stated to be 120 acres; however, this cannot be taken as sacrosanct as size may have depended on such things as land quality and other factors.

With regards to the Anglo-Saxon tribes contained within the list, little is actually known about them.

As previously stated, the three different peoples who settled in what is now England, were Saxons, Angles and Jutes but these groups consisted of tribes and clans and their relationships and associations can only be guessed at.

As these Germanic peoples settled in the eastern parts of the country, many of the Celtic or Romano-British peoples were displaced. Many of these peoples fled to the west and there were wars and a number of battles which would result in the expansion, westwards, of the Germanic 'invaders. However, many of the indigenous people were incorporated into the tribes of the Anglo-Saxons and in effect, these people, whatever their origins, would become Anglo-Saxons.

The rulers and their dynasty's may have changed but many of the peoples who were present during this invasion, were just absorbed into the fold of the newcomers.

## Names of the Anglo Saxon Tribes & Clans

The below is the list from the Mercian Tribal Hidage document

Whilst the list contains 34 tribal names, it is likely that more tribes existed and it is certain that each tribe likely consisted of a number of clans, whose names are preserved in modern English names of towns or areas.

Historians cannot agree on many of these Tribal or Clan names as they cannot precisely associate them to particular areas but for what it is worth, here is a list of such tribes.

Peoples	Suggested Locations	Hidage
Myrcna landes is þrittig þusend hyda þær mon ærest Mrycna hæst	'The area first called Mercia'	30,000
Wocen sætna is syfan þusend hida	Wreocenset (Wroxeter)	7,000
Westerna eac swa	Magonset (Hereford)	7,000
Pecsætna twelf hund hyda	Peak Saxons	1,200
Elmed sætna syx hund hyda	Elmetians (the southern half of British Elmet)	600
Lindesarona syfan þusend hyda mid Hæp feldlande	Lindsey (Lincoln) with Hatfield Chase	7,000
Sup gyrwa syx hund hyda	Gyrwe based near Peterborough	600
Norþ gyrwa syx hund hyda	(as above)	600
East wixna þry hund hyda	Possibly Wisbech in Cambridgeshire?	300
West wixna syx hund hyda	(as above)	600
Spalda syx hund hyda	Spalding (Lincolnshire)	600
Wigesta nygan hund hyda	Wiggenhall in the Norfolk marshlands?	900
Herefinna twelf hund hyda	Hyrstingas of Hurstingbourne in Huntingdonshire?	1,200
Sweord ora þry hund hyda	Sweod ora, associated with Sword Point in Huntingdonshire	300
Gifla þry hund hyda	River Ivel (Buckinghamshire)	300
Hicca þry hund hyda	Hitchin (Hertfordshire)	300
Wiht gara syx hund hyda	Wihtware (Isle of Wight)	
Noxgaga fif þusend hyda	Suther-ge (Wokingham, Berkshire & Woking, Surrey)?	5,000
Ohtgaga twa þusend hyda	Suther-ge (Surrey)?	2,000
Þæt is six ond syxtig þusend hyda ond an hund hyda (total)		66,100
Hwinca syfan þusend hyda	Hwicce	7,000

Ciltern sætna feower þusend hyda	Chiltern Saxons	4,000
Hendrica þryu þusend hyda ond fif hund hyda	North Oxfordshire into Buckinghamshire?	3,500
Unecunga-ga twelf hund hyda	Buckinghamshire?	1,200
Arosætna syx hund hyda	River Arrow (Warwickshire)	600
Færpinga þreo hund hyda <i>is in Middelenlum Færpinga</i>	Charlbury, Oxfordshire	300
Bilmiga syx hund hyda	Northamptonshire into Rutland	600
Widerigga eac swa	Wittering & Werrington (Northamptonshire)	600
Eastwilla syx hund hyda	Willeybrook, Northamptonshire into the Old Well	600
Westwilla syx hund hyda	Stream of the Fen area	600
East engle þrittig þusend hida	East Angles (East Anglia)	30,000
Eastsexena syfon þusend hyda	East Saxons (Essex)	7,000
Cantwarena fiftene þusend hyda	Cantware (Kent)	15,000
Subsexena syufan þusend hyda	South Saxons (Sussex)	7,000
Westsexena hund þusend hyda	West Saxons (Wessex)	100,000
Ðis ealles twa hund þusend ond twa ond feowertig þusend hyda ond syuan hund hyda (total, <i>recte</i> 244,100)		242,700

### Location of the Tribes

1. **The Elmetsaete.** A Cumbrian or British speaking people from the North East of Yorkshire.
2. **The Pecsæte.** A tribe that inhabited Derbyshire. Their name is preserved in the name of the region called the Peak District.
3. **Lindisfaran.** A people from the east coast of Northumbria.
4. **Mercians (Miercna).** The collective name for one of the three main Anglic peoples who incorporated several lesser tribes and clans.
5. **Widerigga.** Probably inhabitants of Lincolnshire.
6. **Sweordora.** A Mercian people.
7. **Wrocensaeta.** A Mercian people from Shopshire.
8. **East Angles (Eastengla)** People from East Anglia.
9. **East Wixna.** A people from the fenlands. 10
10. **West Wixna.** A people who occupied the West Fenlands.
11. **East Willa.** A people of Eastern Cambridgeshire

12. **West Willa.** A people of Western Cambridgeshire.
13. **Herfinna.** A people of Huntingdonshire.
14. **Arosaeta.** A people whose tribal land is unknown.
15. **Hwicce.** A people from Worcestershire and Gloucestershire – incorporated into Mercia in the 7th century.
16. **Western Magonsaete.** Incorporated into Mercia. A sub-Kingdom initially, it was in Herefordshire and was known as Westerna.
17. **Bilmiga.** A possible clan whose territory is not known.
18. **North Gyrwe.** A fen people from the area around Peterborough.
19. **South Gyrwe.** A fen people from the south of the Peterborough area.
20. **Unecung-Ga.** Another group whose territory is unidentified.
21. **Spaldingas.** A people who occupied the area around the present-day town of Spalding in Lincolnshire.
22. **Chilternsaeta.** A people who occupied the Chilterns.
23. **Cantawarna.** A people who occupied the area of modern-day Kent.
24. **South Saxons. (Sūpseaxna).** Initially the independent Kingdom of Sussex until conquered and incorporated into Wessex.
25. **West Saxons. (Đestseaxna).** People of Wessex.
26. **Wihthara.** A people who occupied the Isle of Wight.
27. **Hendrica.** A people of Oxfordshire and part of Buckinghamshire.
28. **Ohtgaga (Jutegaga)** A tribe of the Jutes. Possibly occupied a part of Surrey. Unconfirmed.
29. **Faerdinga.** A people from Oxfordshire.
30. **Hicca.** A people from the area of the town of Hitchin in Bedfordshire.
31. **Gifla.** Another people of Bedfordshire.
32. **Brahingas.** A people from Hertfordshire, near the town of Braughring.
33. **Tewingas.** A people from Welwyn in Hertfordshire.
34. **Waeclingas.** A people who occupied territory in the area of St. Albans in Hertfordshire.
35. **Limenwara.** A people from Kent who lived near the river Rother.
36. **Haestingas.** A people who settled in Sussex and gave their name to the town of Hastings. Some academics believed that they were a Frankish tribe but this is not verified.
37. **Southumbrians. (Suðanhymbre').** A people who occupied the area of Northern Mercia. Comparable to the area around the river Humber.
38. **Beormingas.** The people who lived in the area of Birmingham which derives its name from the 'home of the Beormingas'.
39. **Bilsaete.** The people of the ridge who lived near Bilston in the west midlands.
40. **Penceraete.** People of the Penk Valley near Penkridge.
41. **Gaini.** A people who gave their name to the town of Gainsborough.
42. **Husmerae.** A people who settled on the river Stour, near the town of Churchill in Worcestershire.

43. **Snotingas.** A people who settled in and founded the town of Snottengaham, today's city of Nottingham.
44. **Stoppingas.** A people who occupied the area around the river Alne in Warwickshire.
45. **Tomsaete.** A people who lived in the area of Tamworth.
46. **Weorgan.** The people of the winding river who settled the area of Worcester.
47. **Basingas.** A people who settled the area Hampshire. Their name is recalled in the place names of the towns Old Basing and Basingstoke.
48. **Gewisse.** A people who settled near Dorchester on Thames but who may have originated from the area around Old Sarum in Wiltshire.
49. **Meonwara.** A people who settled in Hampshire near the River Meon.
50. **Readingas.** A people who settled in and formed the town of Reading in Berkshire.
51. **Sunningas.** Another people who settled in Berkshire.
52. **Sumorsaete.** A people who settled in Somerset near to the town of Somerton.
53. **Glastening.** A people who settled in Somerset and whose name survives in the name of the town, Glastonbury.

It's highly likely that other sub tribes and clans existed but the smaller groups would be incorporated and absorbed into larger tribes or sub tribes. Very little detail is known about most of these groups but the etymology of many of our villages, towns and cities preserves the names of these enigmatic people.