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GOVERNMENT IN BRITANNIA FROM THE ROMANS TO THE MODEL PARLIAMENT

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ROMAN BRITAIN


- o Island of **Britannia** and the native **Britons** who lived there, were ruled by the **Roman empire**
- o Conquered in **43 CE** under **Emperor Claudius**
- o Roman troops pulled out by **410 CE** as Rome declined
- o Established city of **Londinium**
- o Ruled according to **Roman law**
- o **Germanic tribes** began invading Britain in the **early 400s** as Rome declined



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THE ANGLO-SAXONS

- o A collection of Germanic tribes (**Angles, Saxons, Jutes**, and more)
 - From Angeln, Lower Saxony, Jutland peninsula, and elsewhere
 - Invaded along the eastern and southern coasts
 - Settled in farming villages rather than in trading cities
 - o Pushed the bulk of native Britons to the west (to places like Cornwall and Wales)
 - Spoke **Old English**
- o Eventually converted to Christianity




Helmet found at the Sutton Hoo archaeological dig (a burial site). It probably belonged to Raedwald of East Angles (died circa 624 CE).

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KING ALFRED'S RESPONSE TO THE VIKING INVASIONS

- Anglo-Saxon kings ruled various kingdoms, like Sussex and Wessex
- Alfred of Wessex – became first English king, **Alfred the Great**
 - Helped to repel **Viking invasions** which started circa **800 CE**
 - Set up the **burghal system**
 - Alfred lived ca. 849-899, reigned 871-899




A map of England showing the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms: Northumbria, Mercia, East Angles, Middle Angles, East Saxons, West Saxons, Kent, Essex, Sussex, and Wessex. The map highlights the regions of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex in yellow.

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BURGHAL SYSTEM UNDER THE ANGLO-SAXONS

- Burhs (boroughs)** established under Alfred the Great
 - Fortified towns
 - Expensive to man and maintain
- Shires**
 - Administrative districts
 - Shire* is synonymous with *county*
 - Shire was expected to pay for the support and maintenance of its borough
 - Shires were governed by a **shire reeve**, or **sheriff**
 - Reeve - Term dating back to Old English that means a representative of the crown




A small blue circular icon.

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DANELAW

- Danelaw** describes the territory ruled by the Danes (**Vikings**), the treaties between the Danes and the Anglo-Saxons, and the laws of the Danish settlers
- Wergild** (*were = man, geld = money*) – payment for the death of a person
 - The higher the person's rank, the higher the payment
- But we would not recognize most of the Danish system of law and government



A historical map of England and Wales showing the Danelaw region in the north and east, and the Anglo-Saxon territories in the south and west. The map is titled 'ENGLAND AND GREAT BRITAIN IN THE REIGN OF ALFRED THE GREAT'.

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MODEL PARLIAMENT, 1295

- **King John** succeeded by his son, **Henry III** (reigned 1216-1272)
 - **Henry III** succeeded by his son, **Edward I** (reigned 1272-1307)
- **Edward I**
 - At war with the French, Scots, and Welsh, and needed money for these wars
 - Called a meeting of a **parliament** to establish taxes to support these wars
 - Edward I knew that the nobles did not want to pay more tax money
 - He needed another group to check the power of the wealthy, powerful lords
- **Model Parliament**, November, 1295
 - Edward I summoned **bishops** and **nobles (lords)**
 - Edward I also summoned two **burgesses** (wealthy, property-owning non-nobles) and two **knights** from each county (i.e. shire)
 - This mixture of **commoners** and the **nobility** served as a model for later parliaments

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DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENT

- **14th century**
 - Kings continued to call together this mixture of people when new taxes were needed
- **Houses of Parliament** gradually developed
 - **House of Lords** – nobles
 - **House of Commons** – burgesses and knights
- **Parliament** was started by Edward I to check the power of the lords
 - Gradually, Parliament became powerful
 - Parliament grew to be a check on the power of the monarchy
- Future monarchs would have to deal with the power of Parliament

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did English law develop under Henry II?
2. How did royal judges create common law?
3. Describe how early juries functioned.
4. Why was King John unpopular?
5. What rights were established under the Magna Carta?
6. In creating the Model Parliament, how did Edward I attempt to check the power of the lords?
