

Kent - Anglo-Saxon Kingdom c500AD to c900AD

Kent, one of the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England, probably geographically coterminous with the modern county, famous as the site of the first landing of Anglo-Saxon settlers in Britain, as the kingdom that received the first Roman mission to the Anglo-Saxons, and for its distinctive social and administrative customs.

According to tradition, the first settlers, led by Hengest and Horsa, landed at the invitation of the British king Vortigern at Ebbs Fleet in Kent around the mid-5th century. After the reigns of Hengest and of his son Aesc, or Oisc (from whom members of the Kentish royal house were named Oiscingas), nothing is known of Kentish history from 512 until the reign (560–616) of Aethelberht, who by 595 had become overlord of all the kingdoms south of the River Humber. His wife Bertha, daughter of Charibert, the Frankish king of Paris, was a Christian, and it may have been for that reason that Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine's mission to Aethelberht's court in 597. Aethelberht, after his conversion, gave a dwelling place in Canterbury to the missionaries, and hence this became the first and senior archiepiscopal see of the English church.

No Kentish kings ever recovered the overlordship held by Aethelberht, but his great grandson Egbert (664–673) was king in Surrey as well as in Kent. From the mid-8th century, Offa, king of Mercia, established his power in Kent, which remained subject to Mercia until conquered by Egbert, king of Wessex, in 825. Henceforward, Kent was a province of Wessex, whose kings became kings of all England in the mid-10th century.

The social organization of Kent had many distinctive features, which support the statement of the Venerable Bede that its inhabitants were a different tribe from the Angles and Saxons, namely the Jutes. The place of their continental origin is disputed. Instead of two classes of nobles, or *gesithcund*, as in Wessex and Mercia, Kent had only one, the *eorlcund*; and the Kentish *ceorl*, or peasant, was a person of considerably greater substance than those elsewhere. Freehold land in Kent was usually subject to *gavelkind*, or partible inheritance; administratively, Kent was divided into *lathes*, apparently centred on royal *vills*.

Reference and more information: [Kent | historical kingdom, England | Britannica](#)