Defending Against Invaders



By the late 8th century, Britain was attracting the attention of raiders from Scandinavia. The raiders were called Vikings.

Can you think why the Vikings wanted to attack Anglo-Saxon Britain?

Anglo-Saxon Britain was wealthy with treasures that the Vikings could steal. Later, some Vikings decided that they wanted to settle in Britain because of its fertile land.

The building of the burhs

In an attempt to defend themselves against the Vikings the Anglo-Saxons started to build burhs.

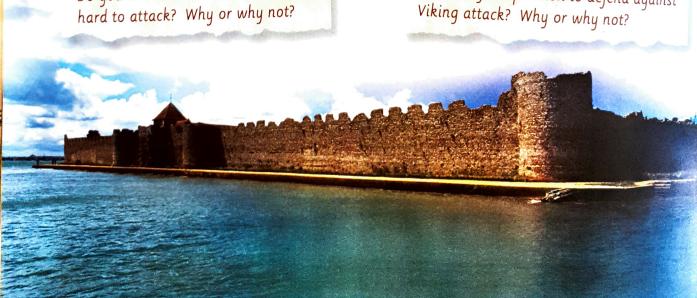
A burh was a fort or town surrounded by defensive walls and ditches for protection. Burhs were mainly built under the orders of <u>Alfred the Great</u>, a powerful Anglo-Saxon king.

The Vikings usually attacked <u>ports</u> and other places on the <u>coast</u>, so this is where lots of burhs were built. Burhs were either built from scratch on sites that would be <u>easy</u> to <u>defend</u> or put <u>inside</u> old Roman <u>walled cities</u>.

This picture below shows the ruins of Portus Adurni on the south coast of Britain. It was built by the Romans in the 3rd century. The Anglo-Saxons used it as a burh.

Do you think Portus Adurni would be

Is it in a good position to defend against Viking attack? Why or why not?

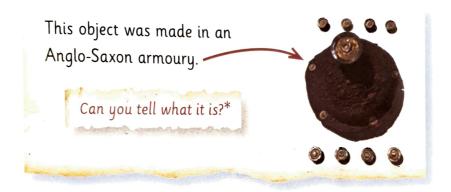


Towns at last

Larger burhs became the first real Anglo-Saxon towns. They were centres of trade, where people could come to buy and sell goods. They were also usually where important buildings were.

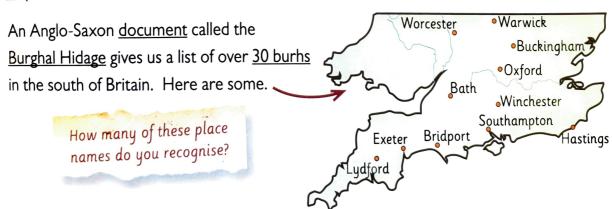
What sort of important buildings do you think were built inside burhs? Why do you think important buildings were built inside burhs?

Mints are very important buildings — these are places where <u>coins</u> are made. It was useful to have mints inside the burhs because the people buying and selling goods needed coins. Armouries are where <u>weapons</u> are made. Soldiers stationed inside burhs needed easy access to weapons, so it was useful to have armouries <u>nearby</u>. Having mints and armouries inside the walls of the burhs also helped to <u>protect</u> them from Viking attack.



Building over Britain

King Alfred didn't want any village to be more than <u>20 miles</u> away from a burh, in case of a <u>surprise attack</u> from raiders, so lots of burhs were built.



The Vikings are coming...

The Anglo-Saxons had started off as invaders. They settled in Britain, developed its culture and made it wealthy again. But after a few hundred years, the Anglo-Saxons became threatened by overseas raiders themselves — in the form of the Vikings.