

Comparing life as an
Anglo-Saxon to
life in Baghdad

Settling Down

The Anglo-Saxons preferred to live very differently to the Romans who had established large towns in Britain during their rule. Places like London and Cirencester, which were thriving centres under the Romans became much smaller and quieter during the Anglo-Saxon times, and some towns were completely abandoned and the buildings were left to go to ruin.

- The Anglo-Saxons chose to live in small villages instead, which were often set up by clearing away a part of a forest.
- The Anglo-Saxons lived in family houses which were built around a central hall where the village chief lived.



In the Village

Look at this picture of a typical Anglo-Saxon village. What can you see?

The Anglo-Saxons positioned their villages near a water source, such as a river or lake, which would provide drinking water and fish to eat.

The chief of the village lived in a larger house in the centre of the village. This house might also contain a meeting hall.

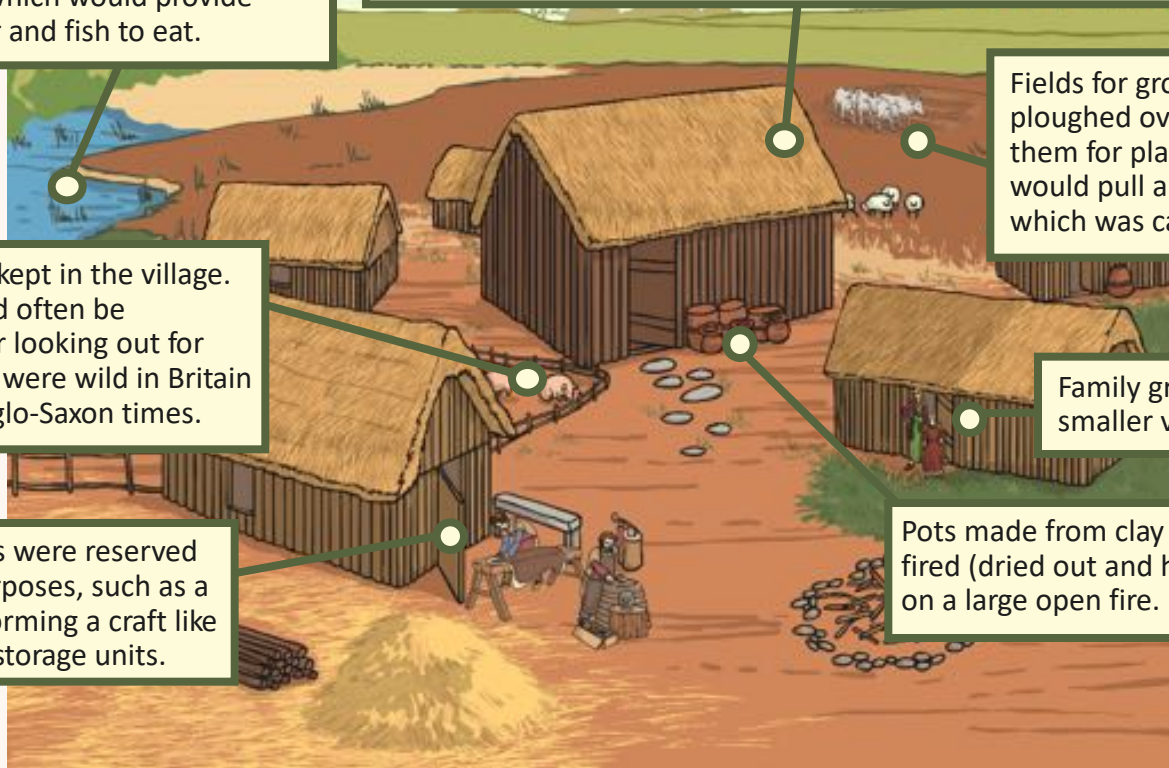
Fields for growing crops were ploughed over to prepare them for planting. Oxen would pull a basic plough which was called an ard.

Livestock was kept in the village. Children would often be responsible for looking out for wolves, which were wild in Britain during the Anglo-Saxon times.

Family groups lived in smaller village houses.

Some buildings were reserved for specific purposes, such as a space for performing a craft like weaving or as storage units.

Pots made from clay were fired (dried out and hardened) on a large open fire.



In the House

What can you see happening inside this house? What can this picture teach us about how the Anglo-Saxons lived?

People played instruments to provide entertainment. This man is playing a lyre.

The roof of the house is thatched with straw.

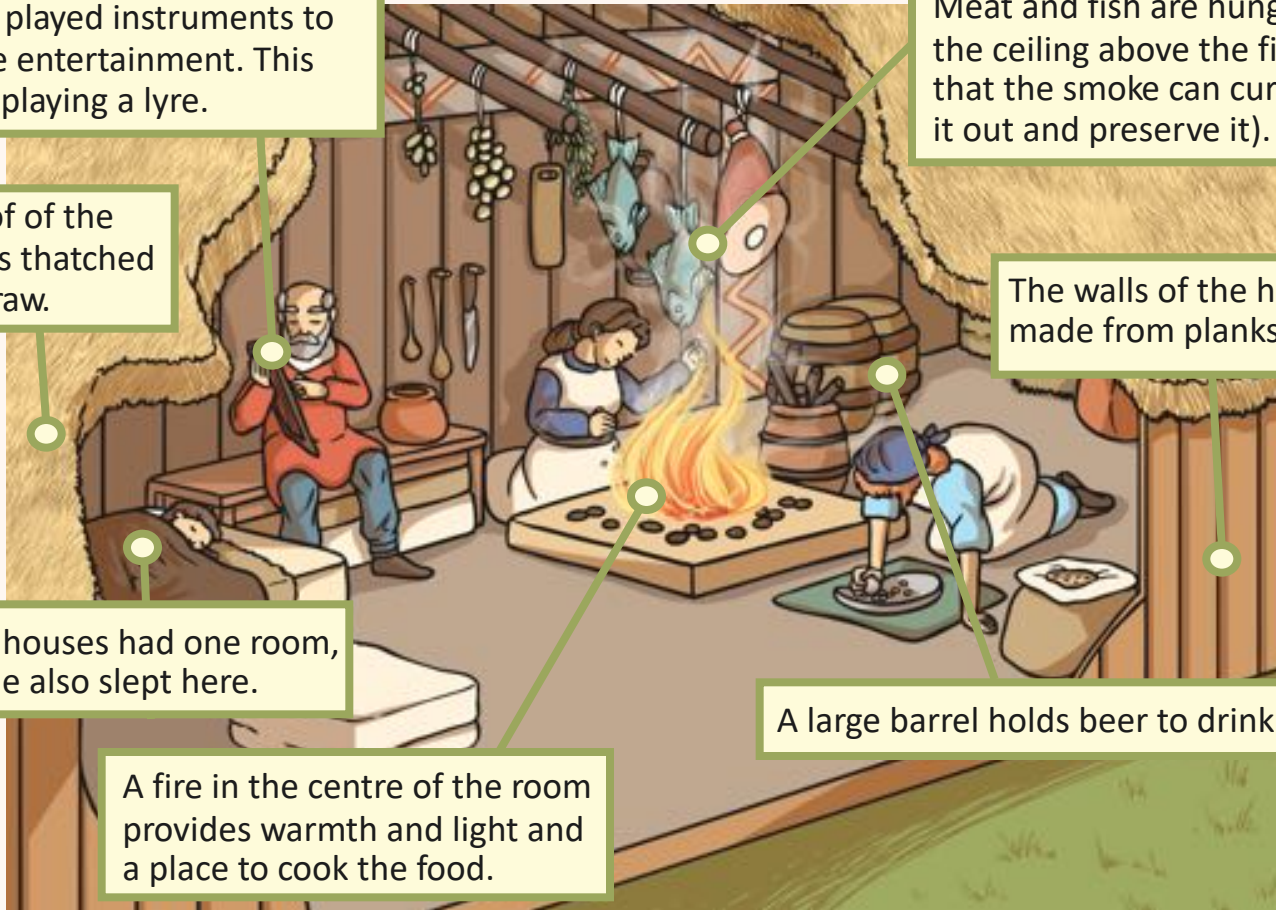
Most houses had one room, people also slept here.

A fire in the centre of the room provides warmth and light and a place to cook the food.

Meat and fish are hung up at the ceiling above the fire so that the smoke can cure it (dry it out and preserve it).

The walls of the house are made from planks of wood.

A large barrel holds beer to drink.



Village Jobs

Everyone who lived in an Anglo-Saxon village contributed to its running in some way.

There were a variety of every day jobs to be done including:

- Clearing and ploughing the ground.
- Grinding flour and making bread.
- Growing crops and tending to livestock.

Some people had more specialised jobs:

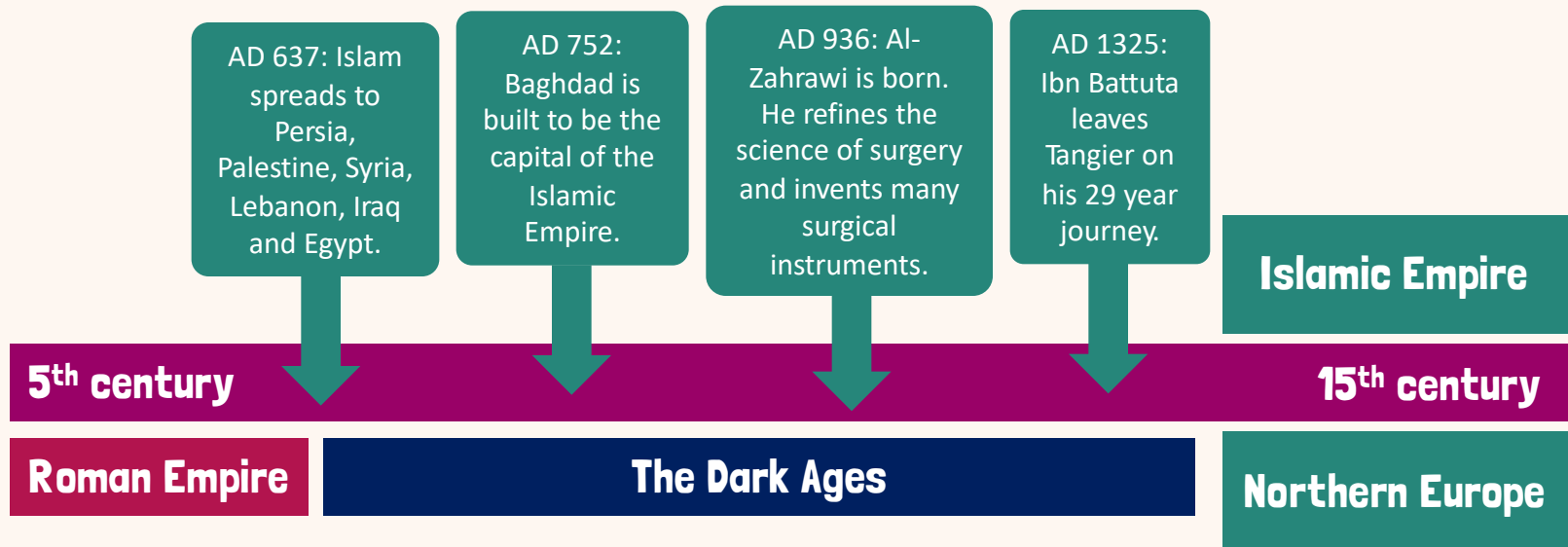
- Blacksmiths forged metal to make tools and weapons.
- Woodworkers made bowls, wheels and furniture.
- Jewellers made brooches and ornaments for the rich.



What other jobs do you think needed to be done?

Baghdad

The Rise of the Islamic Empire



For around a thousand years (around AD 700), a vast Islamic civilisation spread from Baghdad, through North Africa and into Spain. Whilst Northern Europe was involved in many wars across its various Christian kingdoms, for the countries of the Islamic Empire this period was one of general peace and had a huge emphasis on scientific and mathematical knowledge.

The Rise of the Islamic Empire



Questions

1. Which country is Baghdad located in?
2. What does the terrain look like?

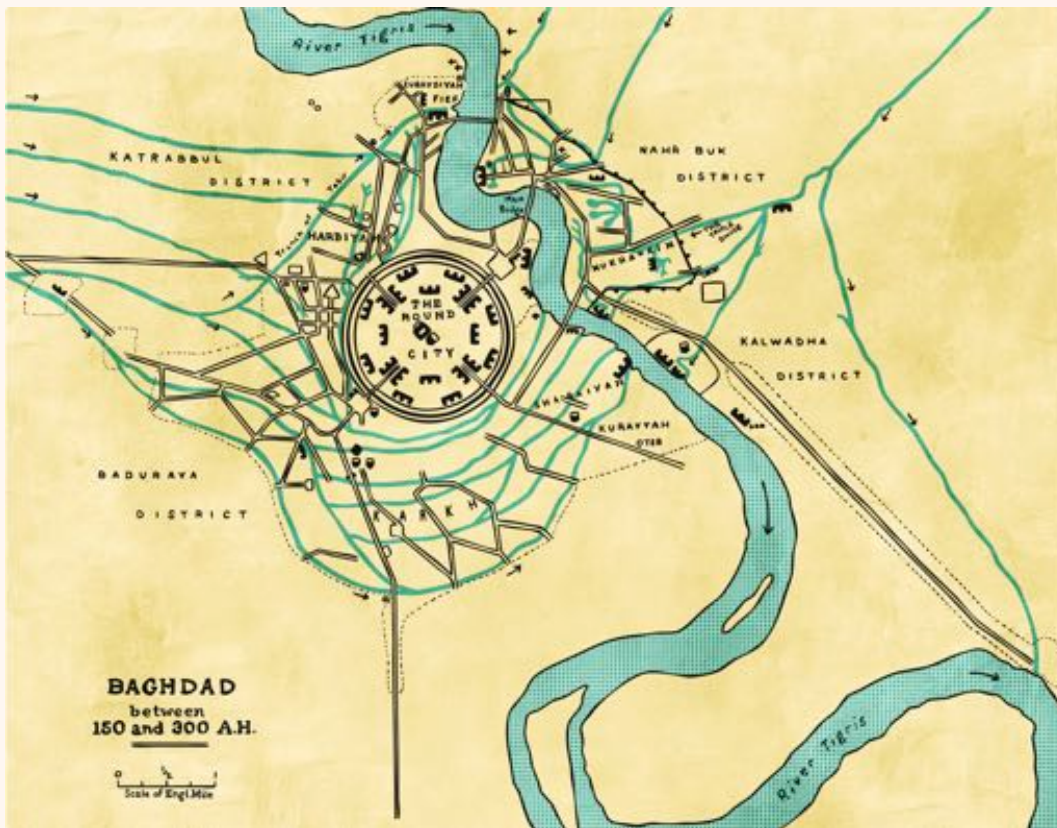
Which other cities can you think of that have a river running through them or close by?



Source: Google, Maps data, 2015.

Baghdad in AD 900

This is an old map of Baghdad.



1. Can you see the river?
2. What shape does Baghdad look like?

Baghdad in AD 900

Baghdad was built in **AD 752** by **Caliph Al-Mansur** as the new capital of the Islamic Empire.

It was built in a **circle**, about 1km in diameter, with the **mosque and guard headquarters** in the centre. Houses were built around the city walls.

Baghdad's **location** was perfect for the city to succeed. It was close to water and established trade routes.

Major roads crossed through the city, and many traders set up **markets** around the entrances.



Baghdad in AD 900

Baghdad became known as the cultural and learning capital of the world. The world's **first universities and hospitals** were built there.



A **banking system** was set up so that people could trade and encouraged more people to settle close to the city.



Over **1 million people** lived in Baghdad.



The **House of Wisdom** was built in Baghdad as the centre of learning and knowledge. Many scholars travelled there.

Life in Baghdad and London

Questions

1. What do you think it was like to live in Baghdad and London in AD 900?
2. Where would you want to live? Why?
3. What questions would you want to ask people living in each place?

