

Pronouncing names in *Freedom for Bron*

Most of the names are pronounced as they are written, but you might find this guide helpful. The 'Old English' spoken by Anglo-Saxons sounded quite different to our modern English!

How to say it
like a Saxon!



The Saxon characters

King Bricgnytt (pronounced *Brich-nit*)
He controls Robrivis, the river and lands to the west.

Saxon warriors
Sigwyn (pronounced *Sig-win*)
Edwyn (pronounced *Ed-win*)
Kenhelm (pronounced *Ken-elm*)

Sherwyn (pronounced *Shur-win*)

Other main characters

Lord Beogard (pronounced *Bay-o-gard*)
Beogard controls his own lands, the wild Weald country in the west. He is a Saxon but he is also uncle to the Jute king.

Hrotha (pronounced *Ha-roth-ah*)

Cloda (pronounced *Cloe-dah*)
Cleava (pronounced *Clee-vah*)

Gods

Thunor (pronounced *Thoo-nor*)
Woden (pronounced *Woe-din*)

The Jute characters

King Eormenric (pronounced *Yor-men-rik*)
He controls all the land from the river to the coast

Jute warriors
Jutrad (pronounced *Joot-rad*)
Havrad (pronounced *Hav-rad*)
Fornost (pronounced *For-nost*)

Jute villagers
Rowena (pronounced *Row-ee-na*)
Wigstan (pronounced *Wig-stan*)
Willa (pronounced *Wil-a*)

Paega (pronounced *Pay-ga*)

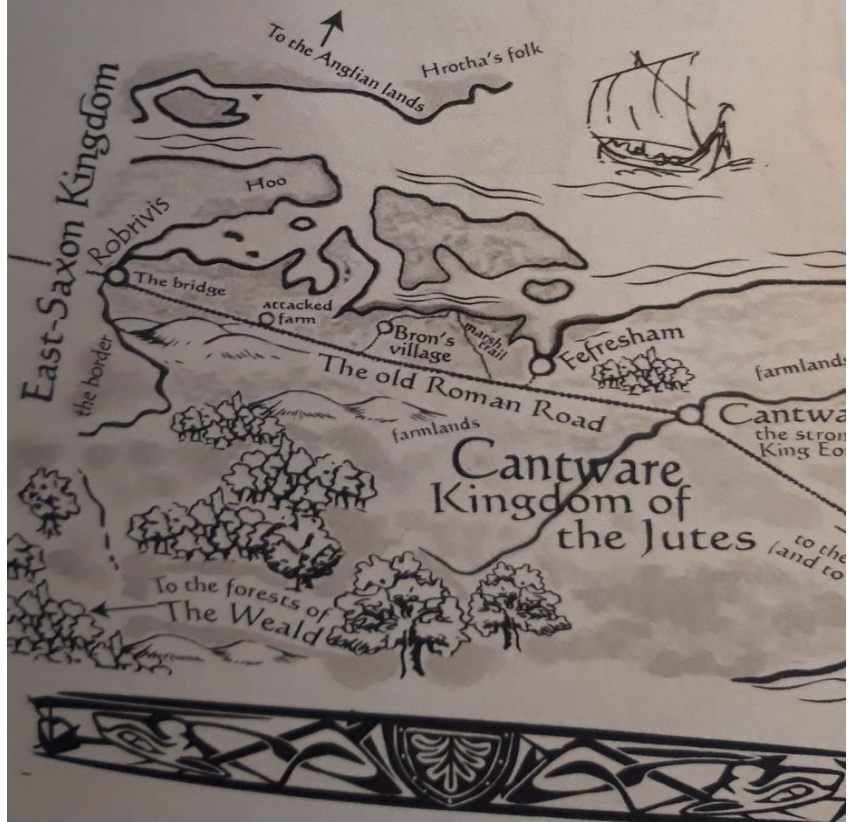
Frumold (pronounced *Frum-old*)
Bron (pronounced *Bron*)

Places

Robrivis (pronounced *Rob-ree-vis*)
Frefresham (pronounced *Fef-ra-shum*)
Cantwareburh (pronounced *Kant-ware-bur*)

The lands of the early Anglo-Saxons and Jutes

South-eastern Britain, circa AD 580



Prologue

*This road through the woods is no longer safe.
It was less dangerous once, when the Romans
ruled here — in those times, it is said, a traveller
could walk for miles without fear.*

*But not any more. These days you must tread
with care and keep your hand close to your sword.
The land has grown wild, the Romans have gone
and new tribes live here.*

*The Saxons hold the west and the Jutes control
the east. And war threatens between them...*

Chapter One

A decision on the road

Beogard cursed and sat down. After a day of walking his leg was stiff and he was getting tired. He shielded his eyes and watched the three Saxon warriors racing up the track towards him.

They were running easily, keeping their spears low.

The hot sun didn't bother them.

Ten summers ago he would have moved like that and he would have been faster than any of them. Five summers even.

But not now.

These days he had to stop and pretend to

adjust his shield strap while really he was catching his breath. And his young companions had to pretend not to notice.

Beogard could tell, even from here, that they'd found something.

Edwyn reached him first and his eyes were bright. Aged sixteen he was carrying a full length sword for the first time.

"Well?" asked Beogard.

"River-men," replied the young warrior, kneeling down next to him. "Five of them, like you said."

Beogard nodded.

"Aye lad, I thought as much. They'll have a boat hidden down there somewhere. A coward's escape on the tide and they'll be back up the coast before nightfall."

He shook his head.

Since that morning they had been following the river-men's trail, away from the burning farm. The farm, a cluster of low thatched buildings, had been a nice place before the raiders found it.

Beogard gripped his axe at the memory.

The farmer had been lying dead, still holding onto the stick that he'd tried to use as a weapon. His sword, if he had one, had been somewhere out of reach. There was no sign of the farmer's family but a dog lay panting beside him. Alive but only just. Its fur was matted and bloody.

The dog had growled feebly until Beogard laid a gentle hand on its head, talking and soothing it, before swiftly breaking its neck.

Edwyn was speaking again.
"Lord Beogard? Lord, we can attack the river-men now, while they're resting. We can make them pay for what they did."

"Do they have prisoners?"

"None that I saw."

"What about dogs?"

"None, lord. And no look-outs either. They don't expect to be caught."

The old warrior fell silent and watched the two others approach.

Sigwyn was a bold lass and Beogard liked her. She was fair-haired like her brother and tall for a woman. She carried her own spear and a sword hung from her belt, given to her by her uncle, King Bricgnytt of the East Saxons.

Beside her came Kenhelm. At seventeen he was already strong, less tall than Edwyn but darker and broader.

"There's another farm down there," Kenhelm panted, his eyes glinting. "The raiders are hiding, watching it."

"Like wolves," snorted Sigwyn.

Beogard nodded.

"And there are *five* you say?"

"Yes. Or maybe six."

Maybe six.

Beogard looked at his young companions.

"That's too many. We can't fight them."

At once Sigwyn protested.

"But the farm! If we hurry we'll be able to help..."

"Six is too many. I promised the king, your *uncle*, that I'd keep you safe. I'll not risk breaking

my oath to go scrapping with bandits.”

“But Lord Beogard, there may be children down there!”

Beogard rubbed at his stiff knee and cursed.

Children. Of course there would be children, there always were.

“Lord?”

They were all waiting, looking at him.

Beogard sighed.

“Very well,” he said at last. “Go on then. Show me this farm.”



Chapter Two

Thunor, God of Thunder

Little Willa was sitting up on the farmhouse roof, waiting for the robin. Where was it? The tiny bird with its pretty song often landed up here. But now it was hiding.

The air felt very hot and still.

Willa lay down and waited. Robin would come soon.

She rested her chin on the thatch. It was warm and she could see beetles scrambling through the brown straws in front of her. If she squinted her eyes they looked like strange creatures in a tangled forest.

Magic creatures. Or wolves maybe. Willa didn't like wolves. She had never seen one, but she knew they lived in the woods. Her big brother had told her stories about them and said she should keep a look-out.

In the distance, there was a rumble of thunder. *Thunor the storm god was waking...*

Suddenly, an odd feeling made Willa look behind her, back towards the hazel trees where the chickens liked scratching at the ground.

Her heart lurched with fear. A group of strange men was walking straight towards the farm.

Their clothes looked funny, they were not Jutes. And they had weapons.

Willa let herself slide down the thatch, ignoring the scratches to her face and ran straight to the work-shed where her mum and her aunts were busy weaving.

"Willa? What is it?"

"Mummy! Strangers..."

Her mum was on her feet before Willa could finish – and her hand was on her dagger.

"Get the men," she hissed. "Run."

Hrotha strode towards the work-shed, smiling broadly. The river gods were being good to him today.

At the first farm, the one they'd raided earlier that morning, his sons had seized tools, silver and some quality cloth.

And his brother Odda had coming dancing out of the farmhouse with a grin on his face and an iron pot stuck on his head. That would keep his wife happy.

Hrotha had not been troubled by killing the farmer. The fool had tried to fight him with a stick. The farmer's two brats had run off crying until his own son, Hartha, had chased them down and killed them too. It pleased Hrotha that the lad was not squeamish.

"Clean your blade," Hrotha had ordered him. "You'll leave an offering at Woden's shrine tonight to pay for the killings."

"Yes father."

Hrotha smiled. Yes, the gods would be satisfied. And now, just as they were approaching their boat, here was a second Jute farm!

His shrewd eyes took in every detail. The menfolk were all away, working in nearby fields he guessed, thanking their gods for this fine weather and hacking away at their wheat crop.

But that left the women and children unprotected.

They looked strong and healthy – good for slaves. They could be put to work on his own land or sold for silver.

A woman was standing in front of the hut now, sheltering others behind.

Hrotha strode towards her.

"Bring us food," ordered Hrotha. "What do you have?"

The woman stood in front of him, her eyes hard but fearful.

"Do it now! I am hungry woman!"

Hrotha raised his fist.

"We have meat," the woman stuttered. "We have ale... good things. Sit for a while. Rest. But afterwards leave us in peace."

Hrotha laughed.

"Feed us. Then we'll see. What's your name woman?"

"I am Rowena, wife of Wigstan."

"And where is Wigstan now? Is he far..."

But before he could say another word a clap of thunder broke across the sky and shook the very ground. Hens ran squawking and birds scattered up from the trees. Rain began to fall in thick, heavy drops.

And then Thunor himself, the storm god, came striding out of the forest.

Old Beogard looked as much like a Saxon god as could be imagined. Though past his fiftieth year he was still broad and powerful.

His thick beard was streaked with grey and beneath his iron war-helm his hair was plaited

at the sides and fell in waves across his mail-clad shoulders.

His arms were heavily muscled from years of cutting timber and he held the great axe in his right hand as if it was no heavier than a willow branch.

There was another roll of thunder and he looked up at the sky and laughed.

He was dripping with water, every inch of him from head to foot, as if he had stepped straight out of the storm clouds.

Hrotha backed away and reached for the sword at his belt – all his men were doing the same.

But the giant warrior seemed not to notice them.

Instead he strode straight past and seized Rowena in his arms.

“My niece! Ah but it is good to see you again!” he bellowed and lifted her, laughing – then he leaned in close and whispered. “Peace. Be calm. I will deal with these men for you.”

He turned and knelt – still not looking at Hrotha or his men – and spoke to little Willa.

“You have grown big and strong,” he said her. “Will you take your old Uncle’s war axe and look after it for him?”

Willa, nodded wide-eyed, and took the gnarled ash handle which he offered to her.

The steel axe-head itself, which would be far too heavy, he let rest on the ground.

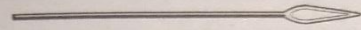
The rain was easing off again, as suddenly as it had come.

“If you can find me a cloth I’ll be able to dry the edge,” he smiled at her. “We must keep it sharp.”

Behind them, Hrotha had finally recovered from his surprise and seemed to make a decision.

He stepped forwards, towards the old warrior’s back, quietly drawing his sword.

Chapter Three



Dragon-Flame

In the trees behind the farm, the three young Saxons watched Beogard talking to Willa – and they saw Hrotha moving towards the old man, sword in hand.

Sigwyn lifted her spear and tensed.

But Kenhelm held her back.

“Lord Beogard told us not to follow.”

“We can’t leave him to face them alone,” she hissed.

“No, but...”

“Sister,” whispered Edwyn. “I think he knows what he’s doing. Look...”

Beogard stood suddenly and seated himself on the bench beside the farmer’s hut. Still he pretended not to notice Hrotha. He leaned back, spreading his legs, and the planks creaked under his great weight.

“You are wondering how I got here first?” he said to Rowena. “You are expecting to see all my sons and my brothers too?”

He chuckled.

“Don’t worry, they are coming. They’ll soon be here. As you know, they are all strong men and half my age, but I raced them and I beat them.”

He glanced towards the trees.

“They’ll be here soon enough, crashing about like boars, roaring and shouting. And they’ll be very annoyed to find me already with you.”

He wiped his nose on his sleeve.

“I won the race though, fair and square. So I’ll collect a silver coin from each of them.”

Little Willa was staring at him, wide-eyed.

“But how could you win? How is an old man faster?”

"Ah, but I'm not..."

Beogard tapped the side of his nose.

"I tricked them, see. Those fine young kinsmen of mine are running like fools for the bridge up yonder," he pointed, "I let them go – and I swum across the river instead."

He let out a bellow of laughter and it was such a hearty sound that Willa laughed – and so did one of the young women standing behind Rowena.

"Yes, I swum. Can you imagine it? Me with all my heavy gear! It is a good job that I am so fat and float well. But I am no fool," continued Beogard.

He was suddenly serious.

"My most precious treasure I held above my head. Dragon-Flame demands respect."

And he leaned forwards, pulled back his dripping wet cloak and revealed his sword – sliding it half from its fur-lined sheath.

It was the most impressive weapon any of them had ever seen.

The bright metal shone, gold and steel. The hilt was decorated with precious stones and the

blade laced with patterns of flame. Its edges were deadly sharp.

And it was completely dry.

"It's beautiful," said Willa.

"Yes little one," chuckled Beogard. "This is Dragon-Flame, the sword of the great Hengist himself, given to me by my father Beorgwulf. For I am a warrior of mighty Hengist's line, a Lord descended from famous kings and conquerors!"

And then he turned.

And finally – now that he was ready at last – he looked directly at Hrotha and fixed him with a stare.

"And who are *you*?" he asked.