

# Saxon Shield Wall

**The Saxons lived in Britain from around 450AD to 1066 when they were over taken by the Normans.**

The Saxons were fierce warriors and fought in many ferocious battles, against both Vikings and Normans. Their warriors had lots of weapons, such as axes, swords, spears and knives. But they also had protection in the form of helmets, armour and shields. They were in fact famous for using their shields very well, by creating a shield wall.

Read on to learn more about Saxon battle tactics.

## Additional resources

Watch a video all about Saxon shield walls on our YouTube channel.



# Fascinating Facts

## How do you make a shield wall?

A shield wall is a military tactic. Soldiers line up, shoulder to shoulder and hold their shields in front of them. They stand so close together that their shields overlap. This means that they are protected by their own shield, and by the shields held by the soldiers on either side of them.



Image courtesy of Bayeux Museum

## Types of shield

**The Saxons used 2 different styles of shield.**

The most common type was round. They were called 'treborg' shields.

The other type was kite-shaped like the ones in the image.

The 'kite' shield covered more of the body than a round shield but was more awkward to carry.

Which shape of shield would you choose?

## Can you see?

If you look closely at the image you can see that part of the shield wall is together but there are also a few gaps.

What do you think the enemy might do if they saw a gap in the shield wall?

This image is from the Bayeux Tapestry and shows the Saxons and Normans fighting at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

The Saxon shield wall is broken, so it would have been much easier for the Normans to attack and overcome the Saxon warriors.

## What else did the Saxons use in battle?

Look closely at the image. What other armour and weapons are the Saxons wearing and carrying into battle?

# Things to do

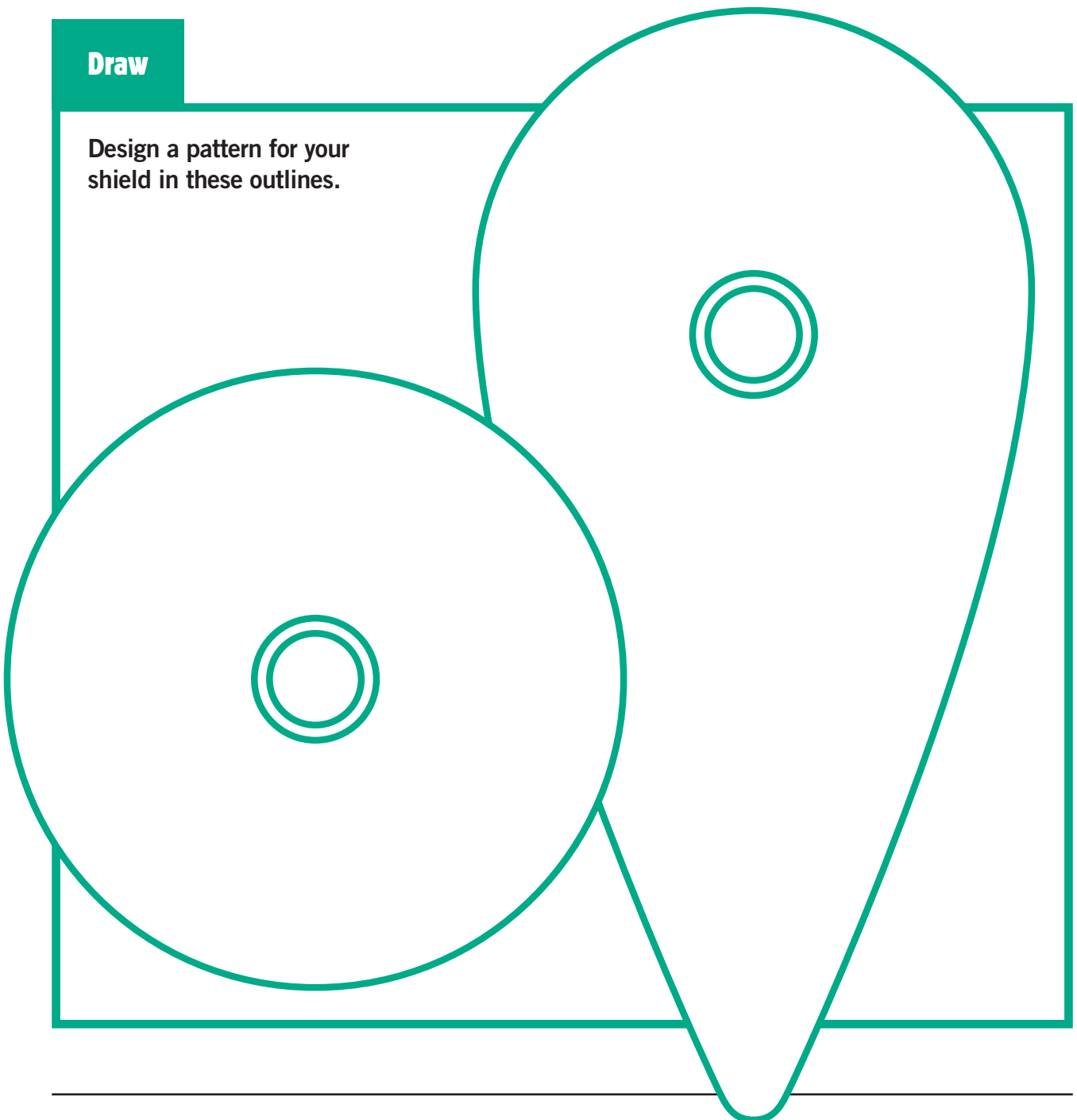
## Make a shield wall

Have a look around the house and find something to use as a shield. Pick something that will protect you - like a saucepan lid or a baking tray. But do not use something that might get damaged, like a mirror or your grandma!

Now imagine you are in a shield wall. Take one step forward, bang your foot on the ground, bang your shield and let out a war cry.

## Draw

Design a pattern for your shield in these outlines.



# Tell the story

Imagine that you are a Saxon soldier who fought in a shield wall.

Write a diary entry describing what it felt like to be in the shield wall.

What could you see?

What could you smell?

What was the result of the battle?

*Date:*

*warrior name:*

*Battle report:*

## Keep in touch

We would love to read your battle report.  
Please email them to [educate.leeds@armouries.org.uk](mailto:educate.leeds@armouries.org.uk)