

= Willie wagtail =

The willie (or willy) wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) is a passerine bird native to Australia , New Guinea , the Solomon Islands , the Bismarck Archipelago , and Eastern Indonesia . It is a common and familiar bird throughout much of its range , living in most habitats apart from thick forest . Measuring 19 ? 21 @. @ 5 cm (7 1 ? 2 ? 8 1 ? 2 in) in length , the willie wagtail is contrastingly coloured with almost entirely black upperparts and white underparts ; the male and female have similar plumage .

Three subspecies are recognised ; *Rhipidura leucophrys leucophrys* from central and southern Australia , the smaller *R. l. picata* from northern Australia , and the larger *R. l. melaleuca* from New Guinea and islands in its vicinity . It is unrelated to the true wagtails of the genus *Motacilla* ; it is a member of the fantail genus *Rhipidura* and is a part of a " core corvine " group that includes true crows and ravens , drongos and birds of paradise . Within this group , fantails are placed either in the family *Dicruridae* , alongside drongos , or in their own small family , *Rhipiduridae* .

The willie wagtail is insectivorous and spends much time chasing prey in open habitat . Its common name is derived from its habit of wagging its tail horizontally when foraging on the ground . Aggressive and territorial , the willie wagtail will often harass much larger birds such as the laughing kookaburra and wedge @-@ tailed eagle . It has responded well to human alteration of the landscape and is a common sight in urban lawns , parks , and gardens . It was widely featured in Aboriginal folklore around the country as either a bringer of bad news or a stealer of secrets .

= = Taxonomy = =

The willie wagtail was first described by the English ornithologist John Latham in 1801 as *Turdus leucophrys* . Its specific epithet is derived from the Ancient Greek words *leukos* " white " and *?phrys* " eyebrow " . Other early scientific names include *Muscicapa tricolor* by Vieillot , and *Rhipidura motacilloides* by naturalists Nicholas Aylward Vigors and Thomas Horsfield in 1827 , who erected the genus *Rhipidura* . The generic term is derived from the Ancient Greek *rhapis* " fan " and *oura* " tail " .

John Gould and other early writers referred to the species as the black @-@ and @-@ white fantail , although did note the current name . However , willie wagtail rapidly became widely accepted sometime after 1916 . Wagtail is derived from its active behaviour , while the origins of willie are obscure . The name had been in use colloquially for the pied subspecies of the white wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) on the Isle of Man , and Northern Ireland .

Other vernacular names applied include shepherd 's companion (because it accompanied livestock) , frogbird , morning bird , and Australian nightingale . Many Aboriginal names are onomatopoeic , based on the sound of its scolding call . *Djididjidi* is a name from the Kimberley , and *Djigirridjdjigirridj* is used by the Gunwinggu of western Arnhem Land . In Central Australia , southwest of Alice Springs , the Pitjantjatjara word is *tjintir @-@ tjintir* (*pa*) . Among the Kamilaroi , it is *thirritirri* . In Bougainville Island , it is called *tsiropen* in the Banoni language from the west coast , and in Awaipa of Kieta district it is *maneka* . In the Solomon Islands Pijin it is sometimes called the *polis* (*police*) or *pris* (*priest*) bird , because of its black @-@ and @-@ white colouring .

The willie wagtail is unrelated to the Eurasian wagtails of the family *Motacillidae* . It is one of 47 members of the fantail genus *Rhipidura* ; some authorities classify this group of birds as a subfamily *Rhipidurinae* within the drongo family *Dicruridae* , together with the monarch flycatchers , while others consider them distinct enough to warrant their own family *Rhipiduridae* . Early molecular research in the late 1980s and early 1990s revealed that the fantails belong to a large group of mainly Australasian birds known as the parvorder *Corvida* comprising many tropical and Australian passerines . More recently , the grouping has been refined somewhat and the fantails have been classified in a " core corvine " group with the crows and ravens , shrikes , birds of paradise , monarch flycatchers , drongos and mudnest builders .

= = = Subspecies = = =

The following three subspecies are widely recognised :

R. leucophrys leucophrys , the nominate subspecies , is the most widely distributed form found in Australia . The description below refers to it . There is negligible variation within this form , and little between the three ; all have very similar plumage .

R. leucophrys picata was described by John Gould in 1848 . It is found across northern Australia , from northern Western Australia to Queensland . It has shorter wings , and it has a gradient in wing length between latitudes 18 ° 22 ° S across the Australian continent where this subspecies intergrades with *leucophrys* . The subspecific epithet is Latin *picata* " smeared with pitch " .

R. leucophrys melaleuca was described by French naturalists Jean René Constant Quoy and Joseph Paul Gaimard in 1830 . It occurs in eastern Indonesia , New Guinea , the Solomon Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago . It is significantly larger , with longer bristles and larger bill . Its subspecific name is derived from the Ancient Greek *melas* " black " , and *leukos* " white " .

= = Description = =

An adult willie wagtail is between 19 and 21 cm (7 8 in) in length and weighs 17 24 g (0 6 0 85 oz) , with a tail 10 11 cm (approx 4 in) long . The short , slender bill measures 1 64 1 93 cm (around 0 75 in) , and is tipped with a small hook . This species has longer legs than other fantails , which may be an adaptation to foraging on the ground . The male and female have similar plumage ; the head , throat , upper breast , wings , upperparts , and tail are all black , with a white eyebrow , " whiskers " and underparts . The bill and legs are black and the iris dark brown . Immature birds in their first year after moulting from juvenile plumage may have pale tips in their wings , while juvenile birds themselves have duller plumage , their upperparts brown @-@ tinged with some pale brown scallops on the head and breast .

= = = Vocalisation = = =

The wagtail is very " chatty " and has a number of distinct vocalisations . Its most @-@ recognised sound is its alarm call which is a rapid chit @-@ chit @-@ chit @-@ chit , although it has more melodious sounds in its repertoire . The alarm call is sounded to warn off potential rivals and threats from its territory and also seems to serve as a signal to its mate when a potential threat is in the area . John Gould reported that it sounded like a child 's rattle or " small cog @-@ wheels of a steam mill " . In his book *What Bird is That ?* (1935) , Neville Cayley writes that it has " a pleasant call resembling sweet pretty little creature , frequently uttered during the day or night , especially on moonlight nights " .

= = Distribution and habitat = =

Widespread and abundant , the willie wagtail is found across most of Australia and New Guinea , the Solomon Islands , the Bismarck Archipelago , and eastern Indonesia . It is sedentary across most of Australia , though some areas have recorded seasonal movements ; it is an autumn and winter visitor to northeastern New South Wales and southeast Queensland , as well as the Gulf Country and parts of Cape York Peninsula in the far north . It is a vagrant to Tasmania , and on occasion reaches Lord Howe Island . There is one record from Mangere Island in the Chatham Islands archipelago east of New Zealand in 2002 . The willie wagtail was released in Hawaii around 1922 to control insects on livestock , but the introduction was unsuccessful and the last sighting was at Koko Head in 1937 .

The willie wagtail is at home in a wide variety of habitats , but avoids densely forested areas such as rainforest . It prefers semi @-@ open woodland or grassland with scattered trees , often near wetlands or bodies of water . In New Guinea , it inhabits man @-@ made clearings and grasslands , as well as open forest and mangroves . On Guadalcanal , it was reported from open areas and

coconut groves . It has responded well to human alteration of the landscape and can often be seen hunting in open , grassed areas such as lawns , gardens , parkland , and sporting grounds . The species spread into the Western Australian Wheatbelt after the original vegetation had been cleared for agriculture .

= = Behaviour = =

The willie wagtail is almost always on the move and rarely still for more than a few moments during daylight hours . Even while perching it will flick its tail from side to side , twisting about looking for prey . Birds are mostly encountered singly or in pairs , although they may gather in small flocks . Unlike other fantails , much of its time is spent on the ground . It beats its wings deeply in flight , interspersed with a swift flying dip . It characteristically wags its tail upon landing after a short dipping flight .

The willie wagtail is highly territorial and can be quite fearless in defence of its territory ; it will harry not only small birds but also much larger species such as the Australian magpie (*Cracticus tibicen*) , raven (*Corvus coronoides*) , laughing kookaburra (*Dacelo novaeguineae*) , or wedge @-@ tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*) . It may even attack domestic dogs , cats and humans which approach its nest too closely . It has also been observed harassing snake @-@ neck turtles and tiger snakes in Western Australia . When harassing an opponent , the willie wagtail avoids the head and aims for the rear . Both the male and female may engage in this behaviour , and generally more intensely in the breeding season . Territories range from 1 ? 3 ha (2 @.@ 5 ? 7 @.@ 4 acres) in area . A pair of birds will declare and defend their territory against other pairs in a diving display . One bird remains still while the other loops and dives repeatedly before the roles are reversed ; both sing all the while .

The bird 's white eyebrows become flared and more prominent in an aggressive display , and settled and more hidden when in a submissive or appeasement display .

= = = Feeding = = =

The willie wagtail perches on low branches , fences , posts , and the like , watching for insects and other small invertebrates in the air or on the ground . It usually hunts by hawking flying insects such as gnats , flies , and small moths , but will occasionally glean from the ground . It will often hop along the ground and flit behind people and animals , such as cattle , sheep or horses , as they walk over grassed areas , to catch any creatures disturbed by their passing . It wags its tail in a horizontal fashion while foraging in this manner ; the exact purpose of this behaviour is unknown but is thought to help flush out insects hidden in vegetation and hence make them easier to catch . The willie wagtail takes ticks from the skin of grazing animals such as cattle or pigs , even from lions asleep in a zoo . It kills its prey by bashing it against a hard surface , or holding it and pulling off the wings before extracting the edible insides .

The adaptability and opportunistic diet of the willie wagtail have probably assisted it in adapting to human habitation ; it eats a wide variety of arthropods , including butterflies , moths , flies , beetles , dragonflies , bugs , spiders , centipedes , and millipedes , and has been recorded killing small lizards such as skinks and geckos in a study in Madang on Papua New Guinea 's north coast . The tailbones of these lizards have been found in their faeces although it is unclear whether the whole animal was eaten or merely the tail . Either way , lizards are only a very occasional prey item forming between 1 and 3 % of the total diet . Evidence from the study in Madang suggested that the willie wagtail selectively fed nestlings larger prey .

= = = Breeding = = =

Willie wagtails usually pair for life . The breeding season lasts from July to December , more often occurring after rain in drier regions . Anywhere up to four broods may be raised during this time . It builds a cup @-@ like nest on a tree branch away from leaves or cover , less than 5 m (16 ft)

above the ground . Rafters and eaves may also be used . It has been observed to build its nest in the vicinity of those of the magpie @-@ lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) , possibly taking advantage of the latter bird 's territoriality and aggression toward intruders . Similarly , it is not afraid to build near human habitation .

The nest consists of grass stems , strips of bark , and other fibrous material which is bound and woven together with spider web . Even hair from pet dogs and cats may be used . It has also been observed attempting to take hair from a pet goat . An alpaca breeder in the Mudgee District of New South Wales has observed alpaca fleece in the nests of willie wagtails (the results of scraps of fleece not picked up at shearing time) . The female lays two to four small cream @-@ white eggs with brownish markings measuring 16 mm x 21 mm (0 @. @ 63 in x 0 @. @ 83 in) , and incubates them for 14 days . Like all passerines , the chicks are altricial and nidicolous ; they are born naked and helpless with closed eyes , and remain in the nest . Both parents take part in feeding the young , and may continue to do so while embarking on another brood . Nestlings remain in the nest for around 14 days before fledging . Upon leaving , the fledglings will remain hidden in cover nearby for one or two days before venturing further afield , up to 20 m (66 ft) away by the third day . Parents will stop feeding their fledglings near the end of the second week , as the young birds increasingly forage for themselves , and soon afterwards drive them out of the territory .

The female pallid cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) will lay eggs in a willie wagtail nest , although the hosts often recognise and eject the foreign eggs , so successful brood parasitism is rare . Parasitism by the fan @-@ tailed (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) , brush , (*C. variolosus*) , Horsfield 's bronze (*Chrysococcyx basalis*) , and shining bronze cuckoo (*C. lucidus*) has also been reported .

Although the willie wagtail is an aggressive defender of its nest , predators do account for many eggs and young . About two thirds of eggs hatch successfully , and a third leave the nest as fledglings . Nestlings may be preyed upon by both pied butcherbirds , (*Cracticus nigrogularis*) black butcherbirds (*C. quoyi*) , the spangled drongo (*Dicrurus bracteatus*) , and the pied currawong (*Strepera graculina*) , as well as the feral cat (*Felis catus*) , and rat species . The proximity of nesting to human habitation has also left nests open to destruction by children .

Although generally a peaceful bird , which lives quite happily alongside humans , the willie wagtail will defend its nest aggressively . Willie wagtails are known to swoop at passers by , much like the Australian magpie . While attacks from willie wagtails are not as common or as formidable as the magpie , they do come as a great shock to recipients .

= = Cultural depictions = =

The willie wagtail was a feature in Australian Aboriginal folklore . Aboriginal tribes in parts of southeastern Australia , such as the Ngarrindjeri of the Lower Murray River , and the Narrunga People of the Yorke Peninsula , regard the willie wagtail as the bearer of bad news . It was thought that the willie wagtail could steal a person 's secrets while lingering around camps eavesdropping , so women would be tight @-@ lipped in the presence of the bird . The people of the Kimberley held a similar belief that it would inform the spirit of the recently departed if living relatives spoke badly of them . They also venerated the willie wagtail as the most intelligent of all animals . Its cleverness is also seen in a Tinputz tale of Bougainville Island , where Singsing Tongereng (Willie Wagtail) wins a contest among all birds to see who can fly the highest , by riding on the back of the eagle . However , the Gunwinggu in western Arnhem Land took a dimmer view and regarded it as a liar and a tattletale . The willie wagtail was held to have stolen fire and tried to extinguish it in the sea in a dreaming story of the Yindjibarndi people of the central and western Pilbara , and was able to send a strong wind if frightened . In the Noongar language dialects , the willie wagtail is known as the Chitti @-@ chitti along the Pallinup River , and the Willaring in the Perth region .

The Kalam people of New Guinea highlands called it konmayd , and deemed it a good bird ; if it came and chattered when a new garden was tilled , then there would be good crops . It is said to be taking care of pigs if it is darting and calling around them . It may also be the manifestation of the ghost of paternal relatives to the Kalam . Called the kuritoro bird in New Guinea 's eastern highlands , its appearance was significant in the mourning ceremony by a widow for her dead husband . She

would offer him banana flowers ; the presence of the bird singing nearby would confirm that the dead man 's soul had taken the offering .

A tale from the Kieta district of Bougainville Island relates that a maneka , the willie wagtail , darting along a river bank echoes a legendary daughter looking for her mother who drowned trying to cross a flooding river in a storm . The bird has been depicted on postage stamps in Palau and the Solomon Islands , and has also appeared as a character in Australian children 's literature , such as Dot and the Kangaroo (1899) , Blinky Bill Grows Up (1935) , and Willie Wagtail and Other Tales (1929) .

= Ælle of Sussex =

Ælle (/ ?æɫ? / ; also Aelle or Ella) is recorded in early sources as the first king of the South Saxons , reigning in what is now called Sussex , England , from 477 to perhaps as late as 514 .

According to the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle , Ælle and three of his sons are said to have landed at a place called Cymensora and fought against the local Britons . The chronicle goes on to report a victory in 491 , at present day Pevensey , where the battle ended with the Saxons slaughtering their opponents to the last man .

Ælle was the first king recorded by the 8th century chronicler Bede to have held " imperium " , or overlordship , over other Anglo @-@ Saxon kingdoms . In the late 9th @-@ century Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle (around four hundred years after his time) Ælle is recorded as being the first bretwalda , or " Britain @-@ ruler " , though there is no evidence that this was a contemporary title . Ælle 's death is not recorded and although he may have been the founder of a South Saxon dynasty , there is no firm evidence linking him with later South Saxon rulers . The 12th @-@ century chronicler Henry of Huntingdon produced an enhanced version of the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle that included 514 as the date of Ælle 's death , but this is not secure .

= = Historical context = =

Historians are divided on the detail of Ælle 's life and existence as it was during the least @-@ documented period in English history of the last two millennia .

By the early 5th century Britain had been Roman for over three hundred and fifty years . The most troublesome enemies of Roman Britain were the Picts of central and northern Scotland , and the Gaels known as Scoti , who were raiders from Ireland . Also vexatious were the Saxons , the name Roman writers gave to the peoples who lived in the northern part of what is now Germany and the southern part of the Jutland peninsula . Saxon raids on the southern and eastern shores of England had been sufficiently alarming by the late 3rd century for the Romans to build the Saxon Shore forts , and subsequently to establish the role of the Count of the Saxon Shore to command the defence against these incursions . Roman control of Britain finally ended in the early part of the 5th century ; the date usually given as marking the end of Roman Britain is 410 , when the Emperor Honorius sent letters to the British , urging them to look to their own defence . Britain had been repeatedly stripped of troops to support usurpers ' claims to the Roman empire , and after 410 the Roman armies never returned .

Sources for events after this date are extremely scarce , but a tradition , reported as early as the mid @-@ 6th century by a British priest named Gildas , records that the British sent for help against the barbarians to Aetius , a Roman consul , probably in the late 440s . No help came . Subsequently , a British leader named Vortigern is supposed to have invited continental mercenaries to help fight the Picts who were attacking from the north . The leaders , whose names are recorded as Hengest and Horsa , rebelled , and a long period of warfare ensued . The invaders ? Angles , Saxons , Jutes , and Frisians ? gained control of parts of England , but lost a major battle at Mons Badonicus (the location of which is not known) . Some authors have speculated that Ælle may have led the Saxon forces at this battle , while others reject the idea out of hand .

The British thus gained a respite , and peace lasted at least until the time Gildas was writing : that is

, for perhaps forty or fifty years , from around the end of the 5th century until midway through the sixth . Shortly after Gildas 's time the Anglo @-@ Saxon advance was resumed , and by the late 6th century nearly all of southern England was under the control of the continental invaders .

= = Early sources = =

There are two early sources that mention Ælle by name . The earliest is The Ecclesiastical History of the English People , a history of the English church written in 731 by Bede , a Northumbrian monk . Bede mentions Ælle as one of the Anglo @-@ Saxon kings who exercised what he calls " imperium " over " all the provinces south of the river Humber " ; " imperium " is usually translated as " overlordship " . Bede gives a list of seven kings who held " imperium " , and Ælle is the first of them . The other information Bede gives is that Ælle was not a Christian ? Bede mentions a later king as " the first to enter the kingdom of heaven " .

The second source is the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle , a collection of annals assembled in the Kingdom of Wessex in c . 890 , during the reign of Alfred the Great . The Chronicle has three entries for Ælle , from 477 to 491 , as follows :

477 : Ælle and his 3 sons , Cymen and Wlencing and Cissa , came to the land of Britain with 3 ships at the place which is named Cymen 's shore , and there killed many Welsh and drove some to flight into the wood called Andredes leag .

485 : Here Ælle fought against the Welsh near the margin of Mearcred 's Burn .

491 : Here Ælle and Cissa besieged Andredes cester , and killed all who lived in there ; there was not even one Briton left there .

The Chronicle was put together about four hundred years after these events . It is known that the annalists used material from earlier chronicles , as well as from oral sources such as sagas , but there is no way to tell where these lines came from . It should also be noted that the terms ' British ' and ' Welsh ' were used interchangeably , as ' Welsh ' is the Saxon word meaning ' foreigner ' , and was applied to all the native Romano @-@ British of the era .

Three of the places named may be identified :

" Cymen 's shore " (" Cymenes ora " in the original) is believed to be located at what is now a series of rocks and ledges , in the English Channel off Selsey Bill , on the south coast , known as the Owers . It has been suggested that Ower is derived from the word ora that is found only in placenames where Jutish and West Saxon dialects were in operation (mainly in southern England) . It is possible that the stretch of low ground along the coast from Southampton to Bognor was called Ora " the shore " , and that district names were used by the various coastal settlements , Cymens ora being one of them .

The wood called " Andredes leag " is the Weald , which at that time was a forest extending from north @-@ west Hampshire all through northern Sussex .

" Andredes cester " is thought to be Anderitum , the Saxon Shore fort , built by the Roman rebel Carausius in the late 3rd century , at Pevensey Castle , just outside the town . Some believe Andredes cester may have been an imperial stronghold somewhere else as Henry of Huntingdon described the place as a fortified city and gave a very full account of the siege which is inconsistent with the geography of ancient Pevensey and little archaeological evidence of sustained settlement there . Also , in his " Britannia " , William Camden suggests that it could be Newenden , Kent

The Chronicle mentions Ælle once more under the year 827 , where he is listed as the first of the eight " bretwaldas " , or " Britain @-@ rulers " . The list consists of Bede 's original seven , plus Egbert of Wessex . There has been much scholarly debate over just what it meant to be a " bretwalda " , and the extent of Ælle 's actual power in southern England is an open question . It is also noteworthy that there is a long gap between Ælle and the second king on Bede 's list , Ceawlin of Wessex , whose reign began in the late 6th century ; this may indicate a period in which Anglo @-@ Saxon dominance was interrupted in some way .

Earlier sources than Bede exist which mention the South Saxons , though they do not name Ælle . The earliest reference is still quite late , however , at about 692 : a charter of King Nothelm 's , which styles him " King of the South Saxons " . Charters are documents which granted land to followers or

to churchmen , and which would be witnessed by the kings who had power to grant the land . They are one of the key documentary sources for Anglo @-@ Saxon history , but no original charters survive from earlier than the end of the 7th century .

There are other early writers whose works can shed light on Ælle 's time , though they do not mention either him or his kingdom . Gildas 's description of the state of Britain in his time is useful for understanding the ebb and flow of the Anglo @-@ Saxon incursions . Procopius , a Byzantine historian , writing not long after Gildas , adds to the meagre sources on population movement by including a chapter on England in one of his works . He records that the peoples of Britain ? he names the English , the British , and the Frisians ? were so numerous that they were migrating to the kingdom of the Franks in great numbers every year . Although this is probably a reference to Britons emigrating to Armorica to escape the Anglo @-@ Saxons . They subsequently gave their name to the area they settled as Brittany , or la petite Bretagne (literally little Britain) .

= = Evidence from place names in Sussex = =

The early dates given in the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle for the colonization of Sussex are supported by an analysis of the place names of the region . The strongest evidence comes from place names that end in " -ing " , such as Worthing and Angmering . These are known to derive from an earlier form ending in " -ingas " . " Hastings " for example , derives from " Hæstingas " which may mean " the followers or dependents of a person named Hæsta " , although others suggest the heavily Romanised region may have had names of Gallo @-@ Roman origin derived from " -ienses " .

From west of Selsey Bill to east of Pevensey can be found the densest concentration of these names anywhere in Britain . There are a total of about forty @-@ five place names in Sussex of this form , however , personal names either were not associated with these places or fell out of use . This does not necessarily mean that the Saxons killed or drove out almost all of the native population , despite the slaughter of the Britons reported in the Chronicle entry for 491 ; however , it does imply that the invasion was on a scale that left little space for the British .

These lines of reasoning cannot prove the dates given in the Chronicle , much less the existence of Ælle himself , but they do support the idea of an early conquest and the establishment of a settled kingdom .

= = Reign = =

If the dates given by the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle are accurate to within half a century , then Ælle 's reign lies in the middle of the Anglo @-@ Saxon expansion , and prior to the final conquest of the Britons . It also seems consistent with the dates given to assume that Ælle 's battles predate Mons Badonicus . This in turn would explain the long gap , of fifty or more years , in the succession of the " bretwaldas " : if the peace gained by the Britons did indeed hold till the second half of the 6th century , it is not to be expected that an Anglo @-@ Saxon leader should have anything resembling overlordship of England during that time . The idea of a pause in the Anglo @-@ Saxon advance is also supported by the account in Procopius of 6th century migration from Britain to the kingdom of the Franks . Procopius 's account is consistent with what is known to be a contemporary colonization of Armorica (now Brittany , in France) ; the settlers appear to have been at least partly from Dumnonia (modern Cornwall) , and the area acquired regions known as Dumnonée and Cornouaille . It seems likely that something at that time was interrupting the general flow of the Anglo @-@ Saxons from the continent to Britain .

The dates for Ælle 's battles are also reasonably consistent with what is known of events in the kingdom of the Franks at that time . Clovis I united the Franks into a single kingdom during the 480s and afterwards , and the Franks ' ability to exercise power along the southern coast of the English channel may have diverted Saxon adventurers to England rather than the continent .

It is possible , therefore , that a historical king named Ælle existed , who arrived from the continent in the late 5th century , and who conquered much of what is now Sussex . He may have been a

prominent war chief with a leadership role in a federation of Anglo @-@ Saxon groups fighting for territory in Britain at that time . This may be the origin of the reputation that led Bede to list him as holding overlordship over southern Britain . The battles listed in the Chronicle are compatible with a conquest of Sussex from west to east , against British resistance stiff enough to last fourteen years . His area of military control may have extended as far as Hampshire and north to the upper Thames valley , but it certainly did not extend across all of England south of the Humber , as Bede asserts .

The historian Guy Halsall argues that as Ælle immediately preceded the late sixth @-@ century King Ceawlin as Bretwalda , it is far more likely that Ælle dates to the mid sixth century , and that the Chronicle has moved his dates back a century in order to provide a foundation myth for Sussex which puts it chronologically and geographically between the origins of the kingdoms of Kent and Wessex .

= = Death and burial = =

Ælle 's death is not recorded by the Chronicle , which gives no information about him , or his sons , or the South Saxons until 675 , when the South Saxon king Æthelwalh was baptized .

It has been conjectured that , as Saxon war leader , Ælle may have met his death in the disastrous battle of Mount Badon when the Britons halted Saxon expansion . If Ælle died within the borders of his own kingdom then it may well have been that he was buried on Highdown Hill with his weapons and ornaments in the usual mode of burial among the South Saxons . Highdown Hill is the traditional burial @-@ place of the kings of Sussex .