

Beowulf's Britain

The birth of Britain after the Romans and before the Normans, 450-1066

Course #	20SBB
Format:	Seminar
Moderator(s):	Bob Pyers and Nancy Denig
Date and Time:	Tuesday, 1:30-3:30 10 weeks, starting Feb. 25, 2020
Location:	Rockridge Retirement Community, Northampton, meeting room
Maximum number of participants:	18
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: The purpose of this seminar is to usurp the Game of Thrones and clear the Mists of Avalon in favor of the actual history and culture of Anglo-Saxon Britain.

Description: The British Isles were once attached to continental Europe in prehistoric times, and later incorporated into the global Roman Empire. This seminar focuses on the years between Roman rule and the Norman invasion, when Britain absorbed barbarian, Germanic and Scandinavian "hordes" into its native tribal populations, forged its unique identity as an island kingdom and developed early stages of its language that now speaks for the world. Beowulf will be read as a reflection of such historical and linguistic developments.

Role of participants: Participants will read Beowulf (the celebrated Anglo-Saxon epic that we should have read in school, and many of us didn't) during the course of this seminar. Some may choose to present portions of such readings in class; our primary focus, however, will be to prepare, present and lead discussion on aspects of the epic's historical/cultural context.

Resources: Seamus Heaney's translation of Beowulf (W.W. Norton and Company, 2000) will be required reading. The internet and moderator's suggestions are starting points for research on topics such as: settlement patterns & place names, Christianization of Britain, art & architecture, the Heptarchy (seven kingdoms), period laws and codes, and King Alfred the Great and his legacy, among others.

About the Moderators: Bob Pyers is a newcomer to LIR, and a retired economist with an avid lifelong interest in British history. Nancy Denig is a retired landscape architect and an experienced moderator with a love of history, art and literature.