

## The origins of English vocabulary

**Celtic** influence – very little borrowings:

*binn* (=bin), *torr* (=peak), *carr* (=rock), *bratt* (=cloak); *luh* (=lake); *Thames*, *Avon*, *Exe*, *Wye*, *London*, *Dover*, *Kent*.

**Latin** loans in the early Anglo-Saxon period:

Names of plants, animals, food, drink, household items:

*plante* (=plant), *catte* (=cat), *cyse* (=cheese), *disc* (=dish), ...

Clothing: *belt*, buildings and settlements: *weall* (=wall), *ceaster* (=city), *straet* (=road).

Military and legal institutions, commerce: *pund* (=pound), religion: *maesse* (*Mass*), *munuc* (=monk), *mynster* (=minster).

Some **old English** words were given a **new, Christian meaning**, i.e. they were refashioned semantically:

*heaven*, *hell*, *gospel*, *God*, *Holy Ghost*, *Easter*, *sin*.

### Loans from Latin

Up to 1000 AD loans from **spoken Latin** tended to relate to **everyday matters**:

*alms*, *anchor*, *cancer*, *candle*, *cell*, *chest*, *cloister*, *place*, *giant*, *ginger*, *lentil*, *lobster*, *master*, *noon*, *paper*, *pope*, *priest*, *prime*, *prophet*, *purple*, *radish*, *rule*, *sock*, *temple*, *title*, *tiger*, *tunic*, ...

### Influence of Old Norse

Viking raids - from 787 AD for over 200 years.

Mid 9<sup>th</sup> century - regular settlement.

886 AD - Treaty of Wedmore - the Danes agreed to settle only in the north-eastern third of the country (east of a line running from Chester to London), so-called **Danelaw**.

991 AD - a further invasion, king **Ǫthelred** was forced into exile, the Danes seized the throne.

England was under **Danish rule** for 25 years.

General words from Old Norse - nearly 1000 of them became eventually part of Standard English:

*landing*, *score*, *beck*, *fellow*, *take*, *steersman*, ...

The vast majority of Old Norse loans did not begin to appear until the early 12<sup>th</sup> century:

- *skirt*, *sky*, *skin*; *both*, *get*, *give*, *same*, ...
- *they*, *them*, *their* replaced the OE personal pronoun *hi*, *hie*, *heo*, ...
- *sendon*, OE plural form of the verb *to be*, was replaced by *are* from Old Norse
- spread of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular ending *-s* in the present tense in other verbs.

Norse loans in the Old English period:

*again*, *anger*, *awkward*, *bag*, *band*, *birth*, *bull*, *cake*, *call*, *crawl*, *die*, *dirt*, *egg*, *flat*, *fog*, *freckle*, *gap*, *get*, *guess*, *happy*, *husband*, *ill*, *kid*, *knife*, *law*, *leg*, *loan*, *low*, *neck*, *odd*, *race*, *raise*, *ransack*, *reindeer*, *rid*, *root*, *rugged*, *scant*, *scare*, *seat*, *seem*, *silver*, *sister*, *skill*, *skirt*, *sly*, *smile*, *sprint*, *steak*, *take*, *thrift*, *Thursday*, *tight*, *trust*, *want*, *weak*, *window*, ...

English personal (family) names ending in *-son* are also of Scandinavian origin (*Jackson, Henderson, Davidson, Robson, ...*).

Old English and Old Norse were two related Germanic languages, mutually understandable.

Types of development:

- two phonologically differentiated words of the same origin competed and one form has been retained:

ON	<b><i>egg</i></b>	x	<i>ey</i>	OE
	<b><i>sister</i></b>	x	<i>sweostor</i>	
	<b><i>silver</i></b>	x	<i>seolfor</i>	

- two unrelated expressions with the same meaning competed:

ON	<i>reike</i>	x	<b><i>path</i></b>	OE
	<i>site</i>	x	<b><i>sorrow</i></b>	
	<i>bolnen</i>	x	<b><i>swell</i></b>	

- both words have been retained (but the two words had to develop a difference in meaning):

ON	<b><i>dike</i></b>	x	<b><i>ditch</i></b>	OE
	<b><i>hale</i></b>	x	<b><i>whole</i></b>	
	<b><i>raise</i></b>	x	<b><i>rise</i></b>	
	<b><i>scrub</i></b>	x	<b><i>shrub</i></b>	
	<b><i>sick</i></b>	x	<b><i>ill</i></b>	
	<b><i>skill</i></b>	x	<b><i>craft</i></b>	
	<b><i>skin</i></b>	x	<b><i>hide</i></b>	
	<b><i>skirt</i></b>	x	<b><i>shirt</i></b>	

- sometimes one form has become standard, and the other has been kept in a regional dialect:

ON	<i>garth</i>	x	<b><i>yard</i></b>	OE
	<i>kirk</i>	x	<b><i>church</i></b>	
	<i>laup</i>	x	<b><i>leap</i></b>	
	<i>nay</i>	x	<b><i>no</i></b>	
	<i>trigg</i>	x	<b><i>true</i></b>	

Old English vocabulary preferred **synonymy**.

Lexical construction used:

- ◆ **derivation** (related words formed **lexical families**)
- ◆ **compounding**
- ◆ **loan translations** (calques).

<b>Calques:</b>	Lat.	<i>trinitas</i>	x	<i>priness</i>	OE
		<i>significatio</i>	x	<i>getacnung</i>	
		<i>coniunctio</i>	x	<i>gedēodnys</i>	
		<i>praepositio</i>	x	<i>foresetnys</i>	

French influence before 1066

King Edward the Confessor exiled to Normandy, returned to England in 1041.

Few French loans before 1066:

*servian* (>*serve*), *castel* (>*castle*), *bacun* (>*bacon*), *prisun* (>*prison*), *cancelere* (>*chancellor*)

Old English had approx. 24,000 lexical items. **85 % of OE words are no longer in use.**

OE: 3 % only words were loan words.

ModE: **over 70 % words are loan words.** Nearly **half** of ModE vocabulary comes from Latin or French.

## The Middle English period

From the beginning of 12<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Even a century after the Norman invasion, texts were still being composed in the West Saxon variety.

Dialects of Old English:

- ◆ **Northumbrian** (spoken north of the line between the Humber and Mersey rivers; 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> century)
- ◆ **Mercian** (spoken in the Midlands, i.e. between the river Thames and the river Humber, as far west as the present-day Welsh boundary; texts: 8<sup>th</sup> century)
- ◆ **Kentish** (Jutish settlement)
- ◆ **West Saxon** (the Wessex dialect - south of the Thames and west as far as Cornwall, end of 9<sup>th</sup> century; King Alfred).

Modern Standard English descended from the Mercian dialect (spoken around London), **not** from West Saxon.

12<sup>th</sup> century - English widely used among the upper classes. Frequent intermarriage.

Royal court - still largely monolingual French-speaking.

End of 12<sup>th</sup> century - some children of nobility spoke English as a mother tongue and had to be taught French at school.

The Hundred Years War (1337-1453) – antagonism of the English and French. The spirit of English nationalism grew, the **status of French diminished.**

**10,000 French words** were adopted by English by 13th century – largely related to law, administration, but also medicine, art and fashion. Many of them were ordinary, everyday terms, **over 70 % of them nouns.**

A large number of **abstract terms** – formed by French affixes *con-*, *trans-*, *pre-*, *-ance*, *-tion*, *-ment*.

About **3/4 of the French loans** are still part of the English language.

**Duplicate** words – two possible outcomes:

- **replacement** of the OE word by the French equivalent:

<i>leod</i>	-	<i>people</i>
<i>stow</i>	-	<i>place</i>
<i>wlitig</i>	-	<i>beautiful</i>

- **survival of both** words, development of **different senses or connotations**:

<i>doom</i>	-	<i>judgment</i>
<i>hearty</i>	-	<i>cordial</i>
<i>house</i>	-	<i>mansion</i>

**Lexical triplets:**

<u>OE</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>Latin</u>
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<i>rise</i>	<i>mount</i>	<i>ascend</i>
<i>holy</i>	<i>sacred</i>	<i>consecrated</i>
<i>fast</i>	<i>firm</i>	<i>secure</i>
<i>ask</i>	<i>question</i>	<i>interrogate</i>
<i>fire</i>	<i>flame</i>	<i>conflagratio</i>

**Dialect difference** between Norman French and Parisian French (a prestige dialect):

<u>Norman French</u>	<u>Parisian French</u>
<i>warrant</i>	<i>guarantee</i>
<i>warden</i>	<i>guardian</i>
<i>reward</i>	<i>regard</i>
<i>gaol</i>	<i>jail</i>