

1 ANGLO-SAXON INFLUENCE: PLACES

Many new settlements were founded too, and these of course had Saxon names. The commonest Saxon place names are those ending in *-ton* or *-ham*. These two words are derived from the Old English (O.E.) words *Tun*, meaning fenced area or enclosure, and *Ham*, meaning village, estate or home (or sometimes the O.E. word *Hamm*, meaning meadow). Often these were joined with the name of the person who founded the settlement, or an important person who lived there, such as *Ceatta's Ham* (Chatham) - the home of 'Ceatta'. Other times the name described some feature of the area, such as *Brom Tun* (Brompton) - 'the enclosure where broom grew'. These are not the only Saxon place name elements to survive today, there are literally hundreds. Some of the other more common ones are - wick or - wich from O.E. *wic* meaning dwelling or village, e.g. Sandwich - 'The village on sandy soil'; *-worth*, the O.E. word for homestead, e.g. Mereworth - 'Meara's homestead'; *-den* from the O.E. *denn* meaning pasture, e.g. Marden - 'the mares pasture'; *-hurst* from the O.E. word *hyrst* meaning wooded hill, e.g. Staplehurst - 'the wooded hill where posts were got'; *-ness* from the O.E. *næss* meaning headland, e.g. Sheerness - 'bright headland'; *-bridge* from the O.E. *brycg* meaning bridge, e.g. Tonbridge - 'Tunna's bridge'; *-ford* the O.E. word for a river ford, e.g. Aylesford - 'the Angles ford'; *-stow* the O.E. word for an inhabited place, e.g. Halstow - 'holy place'; *-burton* or *-bury* from the O.E. *burh* meaning fort, e.g. Canterbury - 'the fort of the Kentish people'; *Sutton* from the O.E. *Suth Tun* meaning southern enclosure, e.g. Sutton Valence (the Valence part is a post conquest addition to the name); *-bourne* / *-burn* from the O.E. *burna* meaning stream; *-cot* from the O.E. *cot* meaning small hut or cottage; *-ley* from the O.E. *leah* meaning clearing; *-mere* from the O.E. *mere* meaning a pool or lake; *-moor* from the O.E. word *mor* meaning a moor; *-stoc* / *-stock* from the O.E. *stoc* meaning hamlet or *stoc* meaning stump; *-dene* / *-dun* from the O.E. *dun* meaning hill; *Wickham* from the O.E. *wic-ham* meaning a Romano-British village; and many more besides (the Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names lists almost 400 common place name elements of Anglo-Saxon origin.)

Some places were named after the gods and goddesses of the pagan Anglo-Saxons. The place-name elements *Thun*, *Thunder*, *Thunor*, *Thunres*, *Thur*, *Thures* and *Tus* come from the name of *Thunor*, the thunder god; *Tig*, *Tis*, *Tyes* and *Tys* come from the name of *Tig*, a god of battles; *Wednes*, *Wodnes* and *Woodnes* come from the name of *Woden*, a war god; *Easter* comes from the name of *Eostre*, the goddess of fertility; there are probably many other places that were named after local gods and goddesses whose name we do not even know.

2 ANGLO-SAXON INFLUENCE: EVERYDAY WORDS

It was not just place names that changed however, the whole language of England changed (even the name England comes from the Germanic language and means 'Land of the Angles'). The Saxons called the native Britons *wealas* (which meant foreigner or slave.....) and it is from this word we get the modern word Welsh.

The names of the days of the week are also Anglo-Saxon in origin: *Monandæg* (the day of the moon), *Tiwesdæg* (the day of the god *Tiw* or *Tig*), *Wodnesdæg* (the day of the god *Woden*), *ƒunresdæg* (the day of the god *ƒunor* or *Thunor*), *Frigedæg* (the day of the goddess *Friga*), *Sæternesdæg* (the day of the Roman god Saturn), *Sunnandæg* (the day of the sun). Several of our modern festivals have an Old English name, for example *Easter* gets its name from the pagan Saxon goddess *Eostre*, whose festival was in April, and *Yule*, from the pagan midwinter celebration of *Geol* (pronounced 'yule').

Of the hundred or so key words which make up about half of our everyday speech, most are Old English. Some are even spelt the same way such as *and*, *for*, *of*, *in*, *to*, *under*, *on* ; others have changed their spelling a little like *æfter* (after), *beforan* (before), *behindan* (behind), *bi* (by), *eall* (all), *hwæt* (what), *hwy* (why), *ofer* (over), *uppan* (up), *æt* (at), *æg* (egg), *socc* (sock), *scoh* (shoe), *scyrte* (shirt), *hætt* (hat), *mete* (meat), *butere* (butter), *milc* (milk), *hunig* (honey), *cese* (cheese) and many more beside. All our words for the close family come from Old English *-faeder*, *moder*, *sunu*, *dohtor*, *sweoster*, *brothor* as do many of our swear words!

Below is a prayer written down in later Saxon times. At first glance it looks difficult to understand:

*Thu ure fæther, the eart on heofonum, sy thin nama gehalgod.
Cume thin rice, Sy thin wylla on eorthan swaswa on heofonum.
Syle us todæg urne daeghwamlican hlaf.
And forgyf us ure gyltas swaswa we forgyfath thampe with us agyltath.
And ne lae thu na us on costnunge, ac alys us fram yfele*

However, when it is spelt phonetically it becomes instantly recognisable to any modern person:

Thu our father, thee art on heavenum, say thine nama holyod.
Come thine rich, say thine will on earth swas-wa on heavenum.
Sell us today ourne day-wham-lick hloaf.
And forgive us our guiltas swas-wa we forgiv-ath themp with us a-guilt-ath.
And no lee thu us on costnun-ya, ash all-lees us from evil.

3 VIKING IMPACT: NAMES

When the Viking invasions started a new language appeared - Old Norse (O.N.). Since the Vikings came from different parts of Scandinavia they all used their own dialect of Old Norse although the basic language was the same (much like modern English, American and Australian). Old English and Old Norse were in many ways similar since they had both developed out of the same language (like modern English and German), in fact, the language spoken in Denmark at this time was mostly understandable by the Anglo-Saxons and vice-versa. This meant that there were many words that were similar in both languages. For example Old English had several words for child ; two of these were *cild* and *bearn*. The commonest Old Norse word for a child was *barn*. In the southern parts of Britain, where the Vikings hardly settled child has become the normal word, however, in the north of Britain, where there was heavy Viking settlement, the dialect word for a child is bairn. This is because it was a word both peoples could easily understand. Sometimes this gives us two meanings for the same word in today. The Old Norse word *gata* and Old English word *geat* are both words originally meaning 'a way through.' In English it came to predominantly mean a way through a wall or fence, so we get the word gate. Gate is seen in street names in the north of England, but generally does not refer to an opening. The Vikings used their word to mean a way through a settlement, so it came to have the meaning of street e.g. Coppergate - 'The Street of the cup makers'.

Other words were introduced into the language with no similar word in Old English so we have words in modern English which are Norse in origin, such as; take, call, die, rugged, flat, tight, kid, steak, anger, awe, bait, boon, crooked, law, them, wand, wrong, freckle, etc.. Despite these introductions the basic language of England did remain Old English or a dialect of it.

One area where Old Norse had a heavy influence on the language was in place names. When the Viking invaders arrived they found some place names hard to pronounce, so they altered the sound of the name to suit the sounds of their own language. For example the name of York was changed from *Eorforwic* (meaning wild boar settlement) to *Jorvik* (meaning wild boar creek).

They also introduced many new names as they founded new settlements. These can be identified from particular name elements such as *-beck* from O.N. *bekkr* meaning brook, e.g. Birbeck - 'The brook where birch grew'; *-by* from O.N. *byr* meaning farm, or village (where we get our modern word 'bye-law' from) e.g. Haxby - 'Hakr's farm'; *-fell* the O.N. for hill or mountain, e.g. Hampsfell - 'Hamr's hill'; *-scale* from O.N.

skali meaning hut, e.g. Portinscale - 'Prostitute's hut'; *-toft* the O.N. for homestead, e.g. Lowestoft - 'Hlothver's homestead'; *-thwaite* from O.N. *thveit* meaning meadow, e.g. Braithwaite - 'Broad meadow' (the Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names lists just over 80 common place name elements of Viking origin).

4 VIKING INFLUENCE: PERSONAL NAMES

Although much of our modern language comes from the language of the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, very few Christian names do. There are a few, such as Alfred, Agatha, Agnes, Cuthbert, Edgar, Edmund, Edward, Edith, Edwin, Godfrey, Harold, Hilda and Matilda from the Anglo-Saxons and a few, such as Erik, Freda, Harald, Helga, Jon, Karl and Neil from the Vikings, but most Anglo-Saxon and Viking names sound very strange to modern ears, names such as Æthelberht, Offa, Wulfstan, Godwin, Beorhtweard, Cyneric, Leofwine, Ælfgifu, Ealswith, Wulfwyn, Arnbjorn, Guthrum, Halfdan, Grimketil, Snorri, Arnbjorg, Gerd and Gudrun.

However, when you look at Surnames, there is much more evidence of our Saxon and Viking past. Although the Anglo-Saxons did not have surnames in the same way that we do today, they distinguished between two people with the same name by adding either the place they came from or the job they did to their first name, for example a woman named Edith who lived in the town of Blackburn would be known as Edith of Blackburn, or just Edith Blackburn: a man named Edward who was a blacksmith would be known as Edward the Smith, or just Edward Smith. Many of our modern surnames are actually 'occupational names' - Bowyer, Baxter, Baker, Weaver, Fisher, Fowler, Hunter, Farmer, etc...