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**Title** *An Introduction to Old English*  
**Description** Topics include who the Anglo-Saxons were, where they came from, and where they settled; the rough period covered in Old English; differences and similarities between Old English and Modern English; the use of runes and more.  
**Presenter(s)** Stuart Lee  
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**Contributor** So I'm sure everyone has said this to you already but welcome to Oxford, welcome to the English faculty, well done for getting here. It's the finest English faculty in the world. I can say that without dispute. And congratulations above all for working out that if you're going to do a report in English language and literature it's quite sensible in your first week to come to where it all starts and what I'm going to be taking you through in these lecture session is the beginning of English literature, the beginning of the English language.

And try and make it as reasonably entertaining as possible so today's lecture is Introduction to Old English, who, where, what, when, why bother? As in why would you want to bother to study old English and not necessarily in that order, I can't remember but anyway.

So let us start with some old English. Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum, þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon, hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon. Now that might look like a nightmare to you, you're thinking "What on earth is that?" That is old English that is the English that people, your ancestors possibly were speaking about a thousand years ago. For the record it's the opening three line to a poem called Beowulf and I think it was in Annie Hall Woody Allen said "Whatever you do don't do course where they make you do Beowulf." So obviously you've never seen that film.

But anyway that is the start of the epic three thousand lines. Now I'm not expecting you to translate that or to understand what's going on there, we'll work through that. So the aims of this lecture series, give you a bit of basics about old English, the language, literature and the culture. If you are going on to do Paper 3A, Mods Paper 3A which is old English then this is kind of a bit of a preparation. Above all, this may sound like an impossible task but it's to promote an enjoyment of old English and to kind of force you to start thinking about why it is an incredibly important subject and important period in English literature.

Those are the lectures, old English language next week, old English poetry, old English pro's, old English films. You may think the Anglo-Saxon's didn't make many films but I'm here to put you straight on that matter.

As you can see I don't put much imagination into my lecture title I put them all into the content. And it is all on the web, well it's kind of all on the web so if you didn't get a hand out don't worry but there is a screen shot there of 'Web learn' as it's called which is the virtual learning, well anyway it's the website where I will be putting all the handouts, course material, slides, audio recordings possibly, of the lectures and also there's all kinds of things going on there.

I had great fun over the summer as you can see looking at Facebook and Twitter and all kinds of things. So it's all there, it's a kind of site for Anglo-Saxon studies, old English studies while you're in Oxford and you log in, dadadadadada, follow those instructions okay? But I'll send a note around the faculty mailing list so that you at least know what I'm talking about and you can just follow the link.

Right, we're going to start with an icebreaker, it's your first week in Oxford, maybe your second week in Oxford, you probably don't know many people here already, you don't know the person sitting next to you, so you're about to learn who they are.

So what I want you to do over the next couple of minutes is just turn to the person to your left or right or wherever and just discuss this question. What does the term Anglo-Saxon mean to you? And then we'll have a shout out bit. Go.

Alright that'll do, you're very talkative, previous years they all sit here and stare at me going "What if we don't know?" Well done. Okay so what did we get, what does the term Anglo-Saxon mean to you or nowadays or whatever?

English Saxons, actually yes that's kind of a nice twist on the Anglo-Saxon, English Saxon, I like that.

Absolutely but we're not in the interview now, you're at Oxford! What does the term Anglo-Saxon mean? Today I mean if you went out in the street there and grabbed someone, legally that is, and said "Hey what does the Anglo-Saxon mean to you?" What would you think they'd say?

Beards and helmets, okay, old. Beowulf? Do you really think? You don't go to the same pubs I do but anyway alright. Well actually that's interesting because normally people say swear words or something like that and Google. Google ha, where would we be without Google? Google alerts is quite funny if you type in Anglo-Saxon, this is the sort of thing you get.

So what have we got here? The Anglo-Saxon model of Governance, I've no idea what that is, the Supreme Court, the last last redoubt of the white Anglo-Saxon. Protestant, there's a bit about Freddy Flintoff here using Anglo-Saxon words to one of his colleagues.

It's only really [ [?? 0:04:46] ] anything approaching what we're going to be talking about and that because the term is slightly misused. If you go on Youtube and type in Anglo-Saxon, as well as getting a few clips of meaningful stuff, you get this strange bloke in his bedroom with a guitar singing songs about right wing nationalism because there is this notion that the Anglo-Saxons and this is complete bonkers as we will go onto in a second, is that it's something to do with extreme right wing thoughts etc, etc, so be careful and it is a phrase which is banded about.

I think the French talk about the Anglo-Saxons, the Anglo-Saxon business model and things like that, I mean I have no idea what they are referring to but we don't want to be talking about that. Now of course it came into the news, how I scripted this, a couple of weeks ago, the Staffordshire hoard where some bloke near Litchfield with his metal detector unearthed probably the same amount of the combined amount of treasure we have from the Anglo-Saxon period in one dig. I used to live in Staffordshire it's really frustrating.

So that was really good because then you got a lot of articles spawning these sorts of things, "Oh a discussion about Anglo-Saxon." "Oh that's actually quite nice treasure maybe these people weren't a bunch of barbarians with beards and helmets sitting in huts hitting each other over the head with an axe. They might have had something about them." And that's really the first lesson of today is that we are talking about a really civilised period and that's what I'm going to try and expose and introduce you through the literature.

So, some professional terminology in your first week, there are various phrases which are banded about. First of all old English as I used it in the title, we tend to use old English to refer to the language and literature but not the historical period, we do not talk about the old English people.

Medievalism is an all encompassing term and really to take a rough idea, stretches from around the fifth century up possibly the beginning of the sixteenth century.

But again you might be looking at medieval language, medieval literature, the medieval historical period, medieval people; well medieval man, medieval woman, is a really bad phrase to use because you're talking about a thousand years, they slightly different from the beginning and the end of the period. Anglo-Saxon pretty much means everything.

You can talk about the Anglo-Saxons the Anglo-Saxon's period, you are here to learn Anglo-Saxon, you are going to read Anglo-Saxon literature but in this faculty we tend to favour old English because it shows that what you are doing here is part of the English syllabus.

Now the phrase that everyone uses or did use 'the dark ages', this is a no, no this is forbidden, it basically means, it's referring to the early period and I'll talk about the dates in a second, when there wasn't much known about it, but what it generally people use it for is "Oh they were the dark ages, nothing happened in those times you know, there was the Romans disappeared and then the Normans came along and they were so nice and really polite and everything like that. It was just in the middle and there was these bunch of savages who no one could understand." Don't use 'the dark ages'.

So let's define old English. Old English is a term used to refer to the language and literature spoken and written in England, whatever that is, during the rule of the Anglo-Saxon's four fifty up to the middle of the mid eleventh century. So I want to see that in every essay you that you now put out to you tutor's okay.

And the questions I am going to cover in this lecture; When, what period of history are we really talking about? I've given some indication there, who are the Anglo-Saxon's? Where do they come from? Where did they go to? What's old English? And why on earth is any of this important to you?

Oh as the Saxon's would have put [ [?? 0:08:18] ] which hopefully indicates to you there're some similarities here in the language. You may notice a pattern there that in modern English we have just reversed the 'W' and the 'H' on those words and that really came in the middle English period when the scribes who thought "What on earth is all this, swop the letters round." But actually if you say the word [ [?? 0:08:42] ] you tend to say the 'H; before the 'W' so the Saxon's had it right.

So let's talk about 'when', when are we really talking about? So I'm going to show you a clip of a film, there's floods of film clips in these lectures and I want you to think, you can talk to that person next to you, what is right with this film? If we did what was is wrong with it, well anyway, you'll see what I mean there's a lot happening. So think about what's right and what's wrong. That's Kurt Douglas by the way and that's Tony Curtis.

Alright what was wrong with that then apart from the acting? Yes, no they didn't have castles, it's only in the ninth century castle's are generally a period of post conquest although I have to say that there is a theory that some of the stone works in Oxford Castle, the foundations are Anglo-Saxon but we do have stone buildings from the Anglo-Saxon period down on Cornmarket Street, face Kentucky Fried Chicken turn around, and there's an Anglo-Saxon stone building for you.

What else, chain mail, they did have chain mail yes, maybe not as much as that but they did have chain mail.

Yes, no that's it you are right yes, tactically they were slightly better off than that although actually the formation the steel formation's probably there. Okay one more? Well they didn't t throw axes at draw bridges because there weren't any drawbridges. [ [?? 0:10:03] ] you're quite right, they did throw axes, it was a throwing weapon but yes the usual thing is archery, did they have the long bows? No they didn't and so [ [?? 0:10:11] ].

The point is, is if you go and watch films about this period from Hollywood, you're going to get this idea, castles, people running around, people in distress, Vikings usually are the good hard guys, the Saxon's are the people who hide behind things. This is of course nonsense.

So when are we talking about, mid fifth century as I said, Bede the venerable Bede says that when the Saxon's came over in four, four nine, the Anglo-Saxon's, he publishes his book in the early eighth century and we're going up to what is normally called October fourteenth ten, sixty six which is the date of the battle of Hastings.

Now that date is of course nonsense because that does not mean on October the fifteenth everyone woke up and wasn't an Anglo-Saxon, they were quite happy, they were the same people. In fact Anglo-Saxon's ruled up until Christmas and never gave the Normans a bit of peace.

But if you think about that, if I can find some chalk, there's chalk mountain here, I must tell the EC. If we, as a chalk mountain it didn't work, right, if we do a chronological, let's say to the year two thousand, the year one thousand and they year dot. So we're over here, we're talking about that amount of period of English language, English literature, English history. No problem in five lectures. If you're doing Victorian novel you've got a little bit here, you've got lots more, if there's not much coming from this but that is the balance, we're talking about a long period of history.

And this is a clip from a T.V programme that was on channel four, I don't know if you saw it? I'll start it, it was called ten sixty six, the battle for middle earth. I'll tell you why it was called 'The Battle for Middle Earth' later on. But anyway this is a bit more what we're thinking of in terms of the type of settlements, the type of environment the people were in. Anyway, it's a wedding, they're getting married, it's not a nice story because obviously they go off to fight the battle of Hastings which doesn't end too well. Anyway it's a reasonably accurate wedding faraday and you're hearing old English there.

No, no priest because the church didn't really care about weddings they didn't want anything to do with them until much later. But anyway that's the type of culture we're looking at, not castles with dragons and people etc, and damsels in distress.

A word of warning, I'm going to have to put this in because it does come up again and again, you may instantly be thinking of [ [?? 0:12:42] ] Vikings, boats, horn, helmets. I'll give you the boats, I'll give you the Vikings but that isn't old English, that's what we call old Norse so that is the language and literature and culture of the people who predominantly were living in Norway, Denmark and Iceland. Although of course this impacts on the Anglo-Saxons in many ways this is not old English what we are talking about there although there is an overlap as we will see later.

And the interesting thing that people forget is that all of this mythology about the Vikings, this Old Norse mythology isn't written down until the thirteenth century. So that's talking about things that happened four, five hundred years before whereas in old English you're getting stuff written down in the vernacular in English from the period.

Okay well we're up to 'Who' now in any case. Who were they? Someone quite rightly said Anglo-Saxon Jutes which is the traditional list of these three tribes who came over and settled what we called mainland Britain but there was many, many others; Franks, Huns etc. Where did they go to? I'll show you some maps. The Angles tend to settle in the north and the midland of England this is, the Saxons, South West and around Essex, the Jutes, the poor little Jutes in Kent and the Isle of Wight.

And this is where they came from, there they are, we're coming over the North Sea and the English channels. So they're coming from this area here; Denmark, Northern Germany, I'll talk a bit more about this next year. This by the way, why we call it 'The age of migrations' you can see the Germanic tribes where on the March as the Roman Empire began to crumble.

But these are the people we're particularly interested in but you can see that even in if you follow the routes of some of these, the Goths etc, we're all talking about a massive migration of people

and their cultures from around this area of Europe and that explains quite a bit. This is where our lot ended up so you have the Angles, that's why you have East Anglia, you have the Mercian Kingdom's here, you have the big kingdoms, you have the Jutes down here and then you have the Saxon's so that's why we have East Saxon's or Essex, South Saxons, Sussex and so on, that's where they tended to settle.

But they were from a very small area in Northern Germany and Denmark. Now this is of course very interesting culturally and topically for today because what this basically says is fifteen hundred years ago the English came over here as the economic migrants. So the next time a nasty little man from the British Nationalist Party knocks at your door, you can tell him this, tell him to go home and read some history and not talk the complete nonsense that they do, the horrible little swine's.

Now of course it wasn't an empty land for people to just say "Oh look, hey look let's have Mercia." There were people here before, the poor Celts, I'm Irish, I have sympathy. We were kind of pushed to the periphery basically so the Celts are gradually retreating or they had a kingdom's already but that's why you had the Celtic periphery if you like of Cornwall, Wales, Scotland and Ireland of course. They were occasionally called 'the Britonic' and there were other people lurking around called the Romano British, these were the Roman's who were intermingled with the indigenous tribes and stayed there.

Now it's very difficult, we don't know what happened to those people because what ever happened their culture and their language really doesn't survive. The Anglo-Saxons come in and dominate.

So what else did they bring, apart from their ponies? Well they brought their society, mainly a tribal society to begin with but it eventually becomes kingdoms, it eventually of course becomes one kingdom, mainly the Kingdom of England which I will take about in a second, which is probably the longest surviving nation state in the sense of its borders but by definitions so are Wales and Scotland, in Europe. So Kings, [[?? 0:16:38]] that's where we get the world churlish, these are sort of free people and they did have slaves.

They brought their religions, their legends and their stories with them and these would have been very similar we assume to the Old Norse things but we don't know much about this and there's reasons for that later on in the history but we do get glimpses of what possibly they really believed in, in those old days, pre-Christian.

For example the days of the week, [[Tiwesdaeg, Wodnesdaeg, Thunresdaeg Frigedaeg 0:17:04]]. They talk about - they had a word called 'craeft' and 'wiccecræft' so there was obviously some form of what we might assume is magic in those days and they have tales or mentions at least of things like elves, dwarfs, dragons, trolls, giants and orcs so all that sort of German mythology certainly would have come over with them to a certain degree.

Their outlook on life which you find in the literature, loyalty, feuds, exiles, things such as transients, the transient nature of life, the passing of worldly glory etc, they were quite a gloomy lot in that sense and their language which is what we're particularly interested in.

So, we're dashing through this, [[?? 0:17:47]] which is my favourite word in old English. It means 'what' but it always means 'Oi'. So you can just use it whenever you want, if anyone's annoying you, you just go '[[?? 0:17:59]]!' and it will draw their attention no doubt. They might think you're a giant duck but anyway that's by the by.

What is old English? Well I've kind of answered this already but particularly I'm talking about the language here. Before we do that let's just say "Why English?" That is why I liked your 'English Saxons', Anglo-Saxons, why do we use the term English? Well, that is the Anglo-Saxon word for English, 'E N G L I S C' which you may think is pronounced 'Englisc', but if you know a simple rule, 'S' and 'C' in old English is pronounced 'Sh', so if you come across that word it's not something to dump your rubbish in it's something to go to sea in, a 'Ship', English.

The Celts strangely called everyone Saxons so that's why we get the word 'Sasonac' etc and that's what survives in. But we really I suppose kind of have to thank Pope Gregory the Great, if you remember the story when he is in Rome he sees the slaves in the market and he says "Who are they?" and they said "Oh they're the Angles," and he says "Oh no, they're not Angles, they're Angels," which is probably the only joke Pope Gregory ever made but there we are.

But it kind of started so that's why we have 'Angeli' or 'Angly' or 'Gens' and 'Glorum', people of the English. Bede uses this term, he was of course an 'Angle' but he talks about the whole of, everyone who's living there and he uses generally as an all encompassing term for the Anglo-Saxons and Jutes.

And Alfred the Great, he was around the late ninth century and he talks about Angle King which is interesting because he is a Saxon but by then there was an emerging a general term for everyone living in what we would now roughly define as 'England'. And then that becomes 'Angelcynn' or 'Englaland' by the time of [ [Knut 0:19:47] ] and that is why there is English and England.

So old English fits into the story of the English language, generally up and around to the twelfth century we have people writing down roughly what we describe as old English. Then we have the middle English period twelfth to the fifteenth, early modern English, modern English and so on. So it's important to know that old English is a continuation of English. And you may think back to those opening lines of Beowulf and you think "That's not like any English I've ever pronounced." Well yes, and no and we'll come onto that in a second.

So let's show you an example and apologies to using in terms, the Bible here because that may not be your religious or cultural background but it is a text that survives through the period so it's a very easy one to look at how language changed. So this is how, I think this is King James Bible, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name", in the time of middle English which is "Ourer Fader thic arth in heofnas, hollowed be thee nama" and you think "Well there's some strange things going on there." We'll come onto this in a second.

Now towards the end of the Saxon period, the late tenth century, "Thu ure Fader the eart on heofonum seething nama gehalgod." Now there's differences well we're talking about six hundred years there but there are similarities, "Ure Fader the eart on heofonum," "Who art in heaven." The strange things which might be puzzling you are those characters there one looks like a 'P' with a thing above and the other one looks like a 'D' falling over with a little bar, I'll talk about those in a bit, they just pronounce 'The' so if you see, let's think, if you see that, it's not 'P' it's 'The', it's the word 'The'.

If you see, this it's not something you do in the toilet, it's this, it's actually when you start to get this into your head and start reading it out loud or in your mind then you will be able to understand it a bit more.

So is it a foreign language? Well I use these couple of examples they're from Lacy and Danziger 'The Year 1000'. They're quite nice, the first one, Churchill's speech the second one Neil Armstrong's speech and the point that they make in the book which is a valid one, is that every word there is from old English with the exception of one word. Does anyone want to guess which one it is? Surrender, exactly that's from French, which I'm not saying anything.

So if a Saxon, Anglo-Saxon was around in nineteen sixty nine and somehow was watching a T.V., I know we've got to use a bit of a imagination, jump air what they'd make of a T.V I don't know and they heard one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind or [ [?? 0:22:51] ] they'd have understood. They would have understood, they wouldn't have understood how that person got to the moon but they would have understood it. So what I'm trying to show you there, a very simple example is that it does carry on.

So this is a commonly used fact, it's actually probably even bigger than that and we note it's Anglo-Saxon words, we looking at more popular words in English are from Anglo-Saxon, of

course English is spoken worldwide, alinguo franca, and it is the language of the internet or as the Saxons would have said “The [ [?? 0:23:24] ].

So a bit of old English poetry, can anyone recognise any of them? Sorry? Yes [ [?? 0:23:37] ] the Gallagher brothers, those famous Anglo-Saxon poets. Kaiser Chief’s yes. [ [?? 0:23:47] ] and of course the best band ever [ [?? 0:23:58] ], the Beatles exactly. So there you are, look we are, thirty four minutes into the lecture and you’re already translating old English directly into modern English, you see, it’s easy, easy, easy, easy.

Okay now we’ve mentioned these silly little characters here so let’s have a little word about the Anglo-Saxons a bit more about the writing, about the things you’re going to encounter. First thing to say is, when they came over and for a long part of their history we would define them as an oral culture. That really means that their passing things on by word of mouth; Ideas, facts, stories are passed down from generation to generation. This is opposed of course to a literate culture where you write things down.

Now this is quite interesting because it challenges something’s which you might normally take for granted when you’re studying English literature. First of all, things like sounds, names, memory. These are all elevated because you haven’t got a written document to refer to, you’re passing on the story. And this is not alien to us, this happens in all kinds of cultures still where histories, where laws, where genealogies are passed down and they are remembered and are passed on to the next generation and so on.

What it tends to mean is though it’s stories can remain fixed in a certain degree, you don’t add to them, you don’t add so knowledge itself is hard to accumulate that really comes out of a literary culture. You start writing some facts down, someone reads that and goes “Well actually I can add to that.” whereas in an oral culture things are tended to be moved on and on.

More importantly texts, the text, whatever that is, changed. I might tell a story in my generation, I pass it to you, you tell roughly the same story but you might change it to a adapt to what you’re around so that really challenges all kinds of ideas, particularly what is an author in an oral culture, is it me, is it the person that then changes it? Who, where before me? Performance, you’ve got to think about how this literature was performed and who the audience was?

It is wrong however to say that they were completely illiterate, they did have some writing and some writing skills and these are normally what we would term ‘Runes’ so there is some Runic inscriptions, writings in Runes, the sort of thing you will see, you must be very familiar with, which they brought over. We called their Runic alphabet ‘Futhark’, which is the first six letters which I’ll show you. Rune is an odd word in old English it’s spelt ‘Run’, R U N. It means ‘secret’, so Runestaff or Rune [ [?? 0:26:39] ]. So that might be where we get these ideas about magic etc, being associated with the idea of Runes.

Although there are some references in old English and particularly in old Norse to Runes having magical powers. And we do find them, I think we’ve got about, yes about seventy inscriptions from the Anglo-Saxon period. There’s none in the Staffordshire Hoard on stones, coins, jewellery etc and there is this of course reference to ‘casting the Runes.’

That is the Anglo-Saxon Runic alphabet which I will come back to in a second but our next film ‘Casting the Runes’ is an interesting idea, was actually a short story by M.R James a great medievalist as well but also a ghost story writer and it became a film in the nineteen fifties. So I’m going to show you this because again it’s these types of ideas which we’ve got to get rid of, move away from, a head clear out before we approach this subject.

I won’t spoil the ending for you, it’s worth seeing actually, for this hilarious giant demon that appears at the end. And it does because it’s a film that uses the line “It’s coming, it’s in the trees,” which was sampled by Kate Bush many, many years ago. There you go a bit of movie trivia for you.

Anyway I did actually freeze frame it and work out what the hell was written on this bit of paper which is probably a bad thing because I might get the demon coming at me or these PowerPoint slides might but anyway.

And it says that you'll be pleased to know so I don't think we are in any danger what so ever. However back on to this, if Runes do appear, this is an Anglo-Saxon stone cross which is very interesting, it's up in Rothwell in Dumfriesshire and you can see Runic inscriptions coming down here, this is from the eighth century and what's very interesting about this is these lines form a few lines of a poem which you may have heard of, if you haven't, you will do called 'Dream of the Rood.' So how did that text get passed on from stone carving to manuscript three hundred years later? I won't answer there.

Here is some more Runic inscriptions, this is from the Francs casket in the British Museum and if you translate them you got 'Fisc' F I S C, and 'Flod', fish and the sea and up there is says 'hwæl bænen' which is whale bone, that's what the casket is made out of. And there's little pictures, this is actually a guy called Whalen, Whalen the Smith from Norse Gods, over here there is the Adoration of the Magi when the three kings give their present to Christ, that is interesting, Pagan image with Christian image and that's where the Simpson's got Whalen Smithers from.

Also mentioned old English poems, the husbands message is basically a Runic inscription talking to someone. We have the imaginary named Runic poem, I'll talk about these in some of the magic spells that also survived the Anglo-Saxon period and often mentioned in old Norse and this is probably worth about a tuppence now but this is an Icelandic bank note and there's the thorn. It's still surviving, The Thorn and it's still used in Scandinavian languages. Icelandic is probably as damn near as you're going to get to what the Vikings spoke.

However, Runes were not sufficient when Christianity came and it comes in five nine seven, you become part, again of a much wider empire and things to a more literate culture and monks and priests who obviously supported Christianity because they're a product of them needed to communicate with the rest of Europe and they couldn't have done that with Runes because not anyone could understand them apart from a few Vikings but they didn't really care.

And so they adopted the alphabet and here is the old English alphabet and it's pretty much the type of thing you would expect and you will see this, this is why you can read old English poetry and old English books etc. And you will note in here there is out little 'P' and our little 'D' which I will say in a second. There's a few characters missing, 'G', 'V' and 'Z' they do appear in Roman inscriptions etc or Latin but anyway that's it.

So those problem characters, first of all there's this 'A E' which goes together which is called the 'Ash' but it's just pronounced 'a'. So that is the word for that, that's all you have to remember. Then we have the 'P' with the descender which we call the 'thorn', remember that was a Rune as pronounced 'T H'. We have the 'D' that's the capital version of it which kind of looks like a differential sign and that's called the 'ev' and again it's pronounced 'T H', 'the'.

You may think "Why did they have two different sounds for 'TH'?", if you ever say the word thither you will know that there are two different ways of pronouncing 'Th' and that's what this is coming from. They didn't use the character 'W' they used what we called the 'win' which kind of looks like a thorn but when you're reading your text you will see it as a 'W' just to make life a bit easier for you.

Right, here we have some Anglo-Saxon in its original form just to show I'm not making this up. This is a manuscript extract, sitting in the Bodleian Library called Julius Eleven, don't worry about that. So there's our little 'Ev', 'Th', there's our 'thorn', there's a our 'ash' and there's the 'win' Can anyone see any words there they recognise?

Good yes, 'C A I N' and then this looks like a seven which just mean 'and' 'A B E L', Cain and Abel. So you might get their mum and dad somewhere. 'A D A M E S' funny 'S', Adames and



Euan, Eve, E U A N. And there is Adam with his little handbag and Eve. They had to go off and do their shopping from Eden superstores.

Okay so we've answer quite a few and now coming to the [ [?? 0:32:53] ] why is this also important? Because you may be thinking well this is fascinating stuff but this is literature this isn't anything at all important to me whatsoever. Of course, I'm sure you're not but just in case there's one or two doubters in there, let's go on.

Why is old English so important? Because it is, I've just told you so, so you can take it from and the fact that it's on the English syllabus here and you probably will end up doing it or if you don't do it next term you might do it in the third year but that's not sufficient reason I suppose. God I'm technical aren't I.

Right this is 'Wordle', so what I did here [ [?? 0:33:31] ] I took the chapter from a very good book you should get hold of, Cambridge Companion of Old English Literature, the first chapter, Anglo-Saxon Society and its Literature by Patrick Wormald and I chucked it in and I thought "What words come up with these meanings?"

We've got literature, we've got the Anglo-Saxons then we've got things like [ [London 0:33:50] ], Beowulf things we'd expect but; Kings here, Christian, Laws, Bead people like that, Christianity, Kingdom, European, Warrior, Heroic etc, political. So the things that we talk about in the Anglo-Saxon period although there are some names and terminology which are perhaps not familiar or have died out or whatever but a lot of them, the idea's, what's the background? is important in modern day culture.

Shows us where English comes from and how it relates to other languages and we talk about that more next week. Also tells us about the history, the society and the geography of English. This is five hundred years of English history or British history if you want. Before this there was no concept of a land called England, after it of course there is a language called English and also the geography of England.

It was well structured society particular near the end so we had...does anyone want to guess how that's pronounced? 'Shire', exactly we had shires, most of the shires that we now talk about were around in the eight century and you would name the shire after the county town, the main town which was where the royal person used to live. So Hampshire, Hampton is actually, it's the South Hampton because they had to distinguish between a North and South Hampton, Hampshire is of course Hampshire, Wiltshire, Wiltshire, these are where these names come from.

These are well organised people, they were governed by tribal leaders and [ [?? 0:35:39] ] but they had administrative people so they had Shire Reeves or in the Wild West, Sheriffs but also the names tell us something, the names of places. For example is anyone here from Birmingham? Be proud. Why's it called Birmingham? Two years ago someone said "Because it mings." Which is not fair on Birmingham if you've ever been, anyone know?

So why are many places called 'ingham' in Britain? It's kind of, well it's not really English but that just mean the settlement and that means the descendents. So someone like [ [?? 0:36:28] ] or something like that would have changed slightly, this is where the descendents of him lived. So if we have, Nottingham for example and so on, my favourite place where I used to live in Essex, East London, Walthamstow which means 'The welcoming place' which is kind of ironic if you've ever been to Walthamstow, it's certainly anything but.

But it tells us about the geography of English, it tells us about the place names. Also we are living in medieval lands, you might not think we are but we are, Houses of parliament a great Gothic monstrosity perhaps, full of equally monstrous Goths, was designed in the Victorian Gothic revival because they were harping back to the medieval period and in particular with Albert and Victoria on the throne they were trying to hark back to when the German's were nice, when they like the German's, back to the Anglo-Saxon periods and pointing out the routes.

And indeed another Gothic place here is our own very Natural History Museum and you'll see Gothic architecture around and we'll talk about that in the fifth lecture about medievalism and how that survives and how it was important.

There is also a cultural importance, I've mentioned the Staffordshire Hoard, I can't spell Staffordshire there quite clearly. As we will find out, some of the great writers of English literature drew on old English for their inspiration; Hopkins, Pound, Auden, Heaney, Jones, Hill and I'll talk about those in probably the fifth lecture, indeed I will but let us have a look at this.

Okay so a clip from Jackson's *The Two Towers* the second film in *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, if you have a handout then look at the front page if not, don't worry but think of those lines the lines are actually spoken by Aragorn in the book but that's by the by. They're pretty much a paraphrase of an Anglo-Saxon poem called 'The Wanderer' which is a quite stunning poem it really is, it talks about a person that's been exiled and musing on their fate and talks about at one point in particular 'The Passing of Worldly Glory' which is a poem that means a lot to many people and particularly as you get older.

There's a translation from it, I'll read that out;

'Where has gone the steed, where has gone the man, where has gone the giver of treasure. Where has gone the place of the banquets, where are the pleasures of the hall? Alas the gleaming chalice, alas the armoured warrior, alas the majesty the prince. Truly that time has passed away has grown dark under the helm of night as if it had never been.'

Or in the old English; [ [0:39:08] ]. Now I'm not expecting you to translate it but you can go away and match those two things there but the interesting thing there is, why did Tolkien include some lines from an Anglo-Saxon poem in his great book of the twentieth century? The reasons I'm sure you know is that Tolkien taught old English at Oxford University and middle English and too occasionally old Norse.

And that book and his mythology is infused with all the stories and all the texts that he read and enjoyed and taught and in this particular instance those people there which Bernard Hill was leading the [ [?? 0:40:01] ] are pretty much his idea or a depiction of the Anglo-Saxons.

Now regardless of what you think of J.R.R Tolkien or his books, you may think they are biggest load of rot ever written. What you have to recognise is a book that draws heavily on medieval literature and in this particular instance on old English literature did rather well in the twentieth century and are still doing very well and those films have done well, so it hits a cultural chord.

I don't know why, I don't know what but it does. So to dismiss old English, even if you forget Tolkien but remember Auden remember, Heaney, remember Hill, remember Jones etc, is to dismiss a quite a big swathe of modern literature. So it is culturally important.

Okay in summary, old English is a language and literature of the Anglo-Saxons which you probably new. Anglo-Saxons ruled England from around four fifty A.D to the Norman Conquest. Old English is directly related to modern English, many of our words come from old English. I hope I've demonstrated that to a certain degree. It's an oral culture with some Runic inscriptions but then it moves to a literate culture using an alphabet, writing on manuscripts and we'll talk about them a bit later, not today, in other lectures and it is culturally important honestly.

But in case you want to come away with something completely useful for this, here's a few things you can go down the pub and say "Recommend the Eagle and Child" because I know the barman [ [?? 0:41:25] ] two beers, three beers, four beers, I couldn't work Gin and Tonic but anyway you can do it. [ [?? 0:41:33] ] is a pit you go on, so basically your toilet's knackered. If you see someone you like [ [?? 0:41:41] ] I'm sure you can work that one out. [ [?? 0:41:45] ] is a mobile or going, 'rim' is a number so it's your mobile number and if it gets a bit larey [ [?? 0:41:53] ] which means outside now.

Okay so if you are being set any translation exercises, four o'clock next Wednesday and then theirs a second one following on, basic, basic, basic introduction to grammar and how to struggle with old English but if you've done German or whatever, don't worry it's should be very basic for you. Handouts, ask any questions. What I would like you to do is if you get a chance, go and find a poem called 'The Rune in Translation' don't read it in the old English for next time.

What we're going to be doing next week is language, why do we say 'How' and the Germans say [ [?? 0:42:26] ] but the French [ [?? 0:42:27] ] and things like that. Why do we use apostrophes in a phrase like 'The girl's car', why do people from the north say 'Nought' and 'Ought' and much, much more.

Thank you, I hope I see you next week.

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