

Old English: 500 - 1100 CE

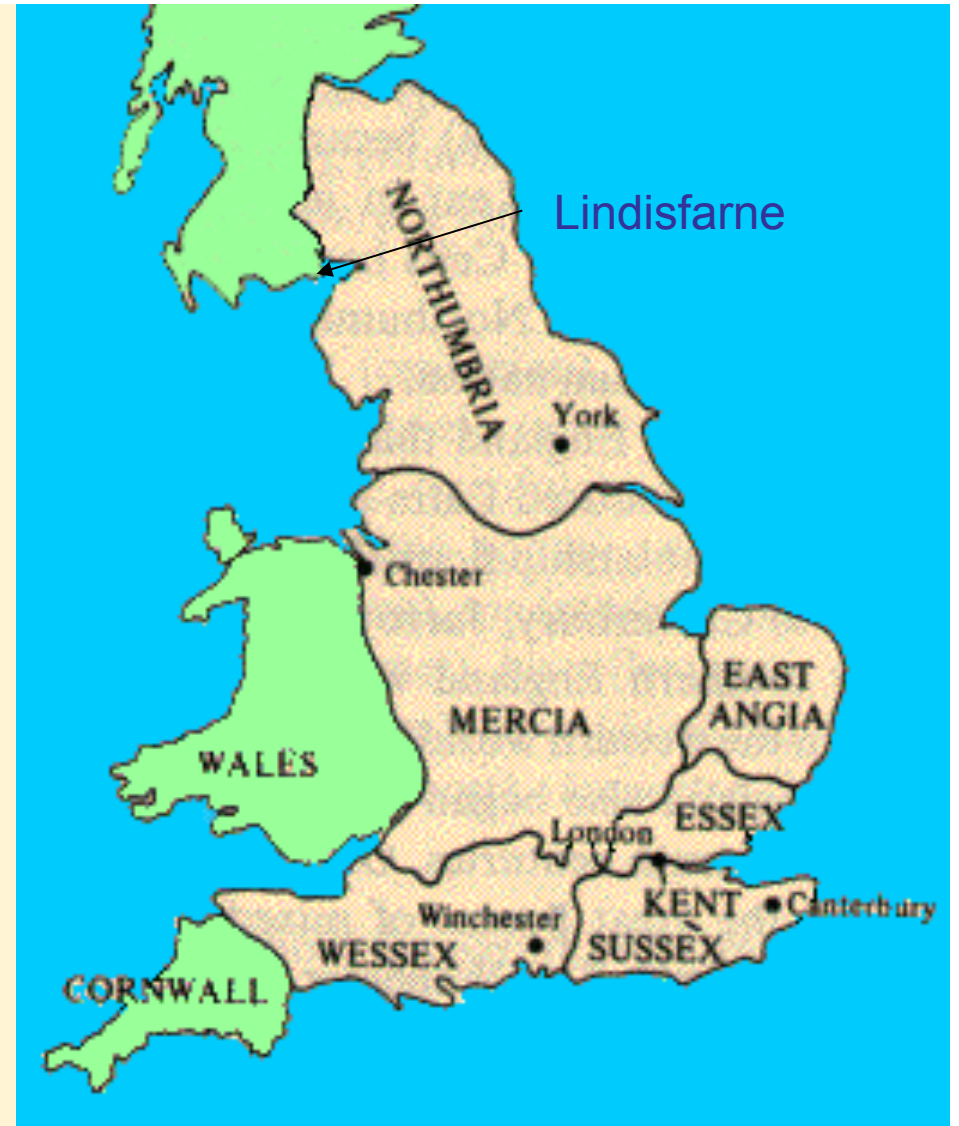


Mercator: Map of England, Scotland and Ireland.

Olde England

wasn't particularly merrie -- or murry, or myriz.

the Heptarchy,
or 7 kingdoms



17th c. map of the Heptarchy by Joan Bleau



The church of St. Paul's, at Jarrow, home of the Venerable Bede, was built in the 7th century.



the chancel, left, survives from the original building.

features of Old English

- OE is a *synthetic* language; it uses case endings and other *inflections* to mark syntax
- n,v,adj,det, and pronouns all heavily inflected
- weak and strong declensions of nouns and adjs
- weak and strong conjugations of verbs
- Gmc vocab; 85% is no longer in use in MnE
- words form from compounds, prefixing and suffixing; little borrowing
- gender was grammatical, not natural

sounds of Old English

- **r** is trilled
- **sc** is pronounced **sh, /ʃ/**
disc > dish
- **cg** is pronounced **dj or /j/**
ecg > edge
- **f, þ, ð, s** could be voiced or voiceless
- **hw, gn, kn** all pronounced: **hwaet, gnaw,**
cneo, 'knee'

- Unlike MnE, OE has high, front, rounded vowels:

yrre, 'angry'

ystig, 'stormy'

OE gender is grammatical

- wif, neuter
- mann, masculine
- wifmann, 'woman,' is masculine
- natural gender begins replacing grammatical gender as inflections are lost

OE Inflection: the cases of nouns

- nominative
- accusative
- genitive
- dative
- instrumental

A simple OE noun declension for *fisc*, 'fish'

	sg	pl
nom	<i>fisc</i>	<i>fiscas</i>
acc	<i>fisc</i>	<i>fiscas</i>
gen	<i>fisces</i>	<i>fisca / fiscana</i>
dat	<i>fisce</i>	<i>fiscum</i>
instr	<i>fisce</i>	<i>fiscum</i>

Adjectives decline too,

good man

	sg	pl
nom	god guma	gode guman
gen	godes guman	godra guman
dat	godum guman	godum guman
acc	godne guman	gode guman

OE personal pronouns

	sg	dual	plural
first per.	<i>I</i>	<i>we two</i>	<i>we</i>
n	<i>ic</i>	<i>wit</i>	<i>wē</i>
a	<i>mec, mē</i>	<i>unc, uncit</i>	<i>usic, us</i>
g	<i>mīn</i>	<i>uncer</i>	<i>user, ure</i>
d	<i>mē</i>	<i>unc</i>	<i>ūs</i>

second pers	<i>you</i>	<i>you two</i>	<i>you</i>
n	<i>đū</i>	<i>git</i>	<i>gē</i>
a	<i>đec, pē</i>	<i>inc, incit</i>	<i>ēowic, ēow</i>
g	<i>đin</i>	<i>incer</i>	<i>ēower</i>
d	<i>đē</i>	<i>inc</i>	<i>ēow</i>

third person: he, it, she, they

	m	n	fem	plural
n	hē	hit	hēo, hīe	hēo, hīe
a	hine	hit	hēo, hīe	hēo, hīe
g	his	his	hire	hira, heora
d	him	him	hire	him, heom

the OE verb

class I	pres	pret sg	plu	ppl
<i>drifan</i>	<i>drīfþ</i>	<i>drāf</i>	<i>drīfon</i>	<i>drīfen</i>
class ii				
<i>cēosan</i>	<i>ciest</i>	<i>cēas</i>	<i>curon</i>	<i>coren</i>

class iii	pres	pret sg	plu	ppl
<i>bindan</i>	<i>bint</i>	<i>band</i>	<i>bundon</i>	<i>bunden</i>
class iv				
<i>beran</i>	<i>bi(e)rþ</i>	<i>bær</i>	<i>bæron</i>	<i>boren</i>

class v	pres	pret sg	plu	ppl
<i>cwepan</i>	<i>cwipþ</i>	<i>cwæþ</i>	<i>cwædon</i>	<i>cweden</i>
class vi				
<i>faran</i>	<i>færþ</i>	<i>fōr</i>	<i>fōron</i>	<i>faren</i>

OE verb conjugation

pres	sg	plural
1 per	<i>ic drīfe</i>	<i>wē drīfað</i>
2 per	<i>ðu drīfst</i>	<i>zēow drīfað</i>
3 per	<i>hēo drīfð</i>	<i>hī drīfað</i>
past		
1 per	<i>ic drāf</i>	<i>wē drīfon</i>
2 per	<i>þu drīfe</i>	<i>zēow drīfon</i>
3 per	<i>hē drāf</i>	<i>hī drīfon</i>

to be (or not)

		pres		pret
sg	1	<i>eom</i>	<i>beo</i>	<i>wæs</i>
	2	<i>eart</i>	<i>bist</i>	<i>wære</i>
	3	<i>is</i>	<i>biþ</i>	<i>wæs</i>
pl		<i>sind,</i> <i>sindon</i>	<i>beoþ</i>	<i>wæron</i>
subj sg		<i>sie</i>	<i>beo</i>	<i>wære</i>
subj pl		<i>sien</i>	<i>beon</i>	<i>wæren</i>

The story of Cædmon, the first English poet

According to Bede, Cædmon was a shy cowherd who leaves a banquet ashamed that he can't take a turn singing, goes home, falls asleep, and has a dream. Literary dreams are always significant, and in Cædmon's dream a man, or angel, appears to him and says,

"Cædmon, sing me hwæthwugu."

(something)

Cædmon replies, "Ne con ic noht singan; and ic for þon of þeossum gebeorscipe ut eode ond hider gewat, for þon ic naht singan ne cuðe."

(I can sing nought [nothing] and for that reason I went out from this banquet and came hither [here], because I did not know how to sing.)

But the man insists, "Hwæðre þu meahht me singan."

(However you can sing for me)

Cædmon asks, "Hwæt sceal ic singan?"

(shall)

And the answer, "Sing me frumsceaft."

(creation)

Cædmon's Hymn

Nu sculon herigean heofonrices Weard,
Meotodes meahte on his modgeðanc,
weorc Wuldorfæder, swa he wundra gehwæs,
ece Drihten, or onstealde.

He ærest sceop eorþan bearnum
heofon to hrofe, halig Scyppend;
þa middangeard moncynnes Weard,
ece Drihten, æfter teode
firum foldan, Frea ælmihtig.

Now (we) should praise of the kingdom of heaven the Warden,
Of the Creator the might, and his mind-thought (purpose),
the work of the Gloryfather, just as he of wonders,
eternal Lord, created the beginning (of each).

He first created for the children of earth
heaven as a roof, holy Shaper;
then Middle Earth mankind's Warden,
eternal Lord, after created
for men the earth, Ruler almighty.

