

A Social and Cultural History of English

S. Gramley, WS 2009-10

5th – 7th centuries; the Germanic
invasions; the Heptarchy

Brittene igland is ehta hund mila lang. 7 twa hund brad. 7 her sind on þis iglande fif geþeode. **Englisc.** 7 **Brittisc.** 7 **Wilsc.** 7 **Scyttisc.** 7 **Pyhtisc.** 7 **Bocleden.** Erest weron bugend þises landes Brittes. þa coman of **Armenia.** 7 gesætan suðewearde Bryttene ærost. Þa gelamp hit þæt Pyhtas coman supan of **Scithian.** mid langum scipum na manegum. 7 þa coman ærost on norþ **Ybernian** up. 7 þær bædo Scottas þet hi ðer moston wunian. Ac hi noldan heom lyfan. forðan hi cwædon þæt hi ne mihton ealle ætgædere gewunian þær. 7 þa cwædon þa Scottas. we eow magon þeahhwaðere ræd gelæron. We witan oþer egland her be easton. þer ge magon eardian gif ge willað. 7 gif hwa eow wiðstent. we eow fultumiad. þet ge hit magon gegangan. Ða ferdon þa Pihtas. 7 geferdon þis land norþanweard. 7 supanweard hit hefdon Brittas. swa we ær cwædon. And þa Pyhtas heom abædon wif æt Scottum. on þa gerad þet hi gecuron heor kynecinn aa on þa wifhealfa. þet hi heoldon swa lange syððan. 7 þa gelamp hit imbe geara rina. þet Scotta sum dæl gewat of Ybernian on Brittene. 7 þes landes sum dæl geeodon. 7 wes heora heratoga Reoda gehaten. from þam heo sind genemnode **Dælreodi.** (MS E: <http://asc.jebbo.co.uk/e/e-L.html>)

Text 1: The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Introduction (MS E)

Brittene igland is ehta hund mila lang. 7 twa hund brad.

The island Britain is 800 miles long, and 200 miles broad.

7 her sind on þis iglande fif geþeode. Englisc. 7 Brittisc. 7 Wilsc. 7 Scyttisc. 7 Pyhtisc. 7 Bocleden.

And there are on the island five languages; English & British & Welsh & Scottish & Pictish & Latin.

Erest weron bugend þises landes Brittes. þa coman of Armenia. 7 gesætan suðewearde Bryttene ærost.

The first inhabitants were the Britons, who came from Armenia, and first peopled Britain southward.

Þa gelamp hit þæt Pyhtas coman supan of Scithian. mid langum scipum na manegum. 7 þa coman ærost on norþ Ybernian up. 7 þær bædo Scottas þet hi ðer moston wunian.

Then happened it, that the Picts came south from Scythia, with long ships, not many; and, landing first in the northern part of Ireland, they told the Scots that they must dwell there.

Ac hi noldan heom lyfan. forðan hi cwædon þæt hi ne mihton ealle ætgædere gewunian þær. 7 þa cwædon þa Scottas. we eow magon þeahhwaðere ræd gelæron.

But they would not give them leave; for the Scots told them that they could not all dwell there together; And then, said the Scots, we can nevertheless give you advice.

We witan oþer egland her be easton. þer ge magon eardian gif ge willað. 7 gif hwa eow wiðstent. we eow fultumiad. þet ge hit magon gegangan.

We know another island here to the east. There you may dwell, if you will; and whosoever withstandeth you, we will assist you, that you may gain it."

Ða ferdon þa Pihtas. 7 geferdon þis land norþanweard. 7 suþanweard hit hefdon Brittas. swa we ær cwedon.

Then went the Picts and entered this land northward. Southward the Britons possessed it, as we before said.

And þa Pyhtas heom abædon wif æt Scottum. on þa gerad þet hi gecuron heor kynecinn aa on þa wifhealfa. þet hi heoldon swa lange syððan.

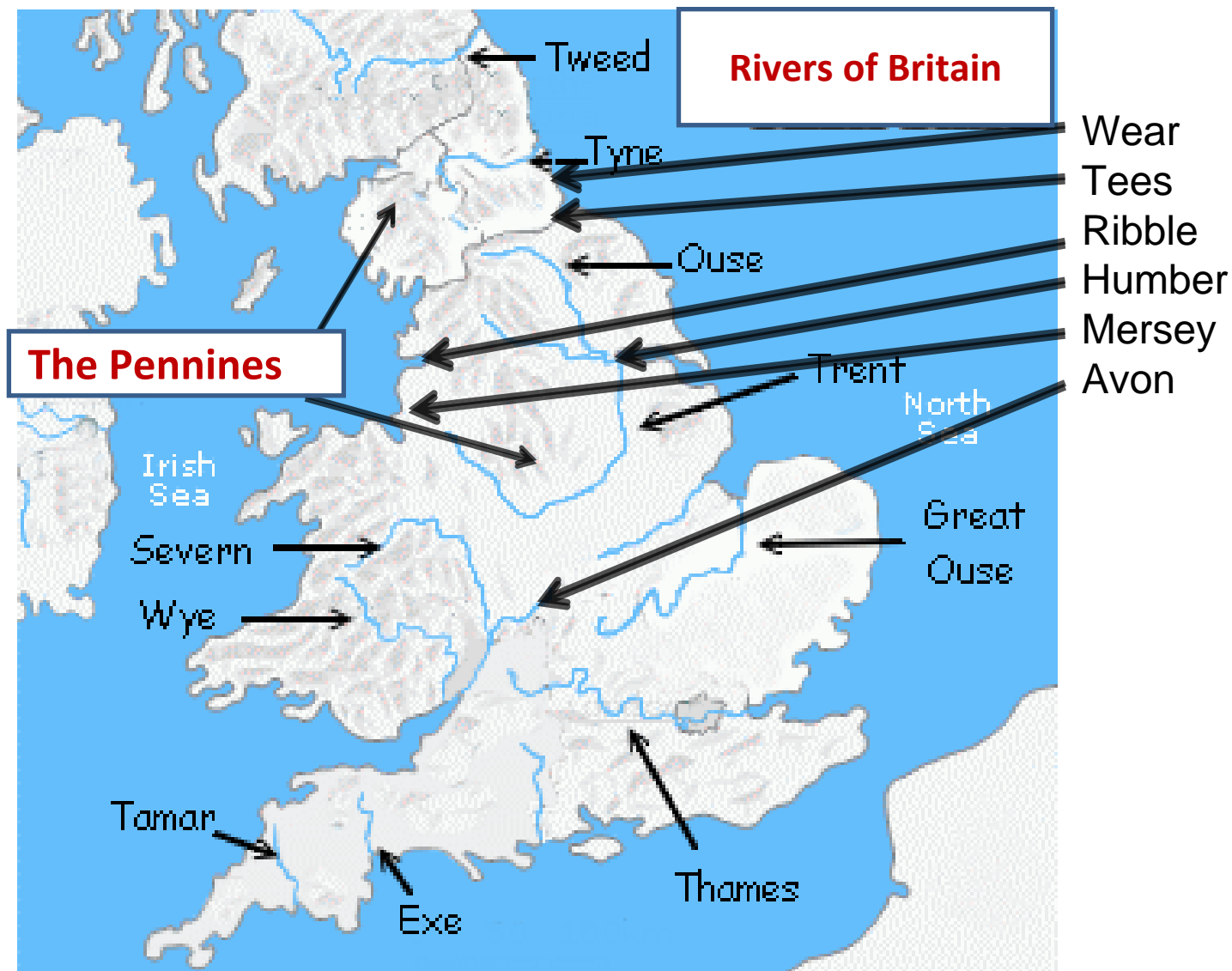
And the Picts obtained wives of the Scots, on condition that they chose their kings always on the female side; which they have continued to do, so long since.

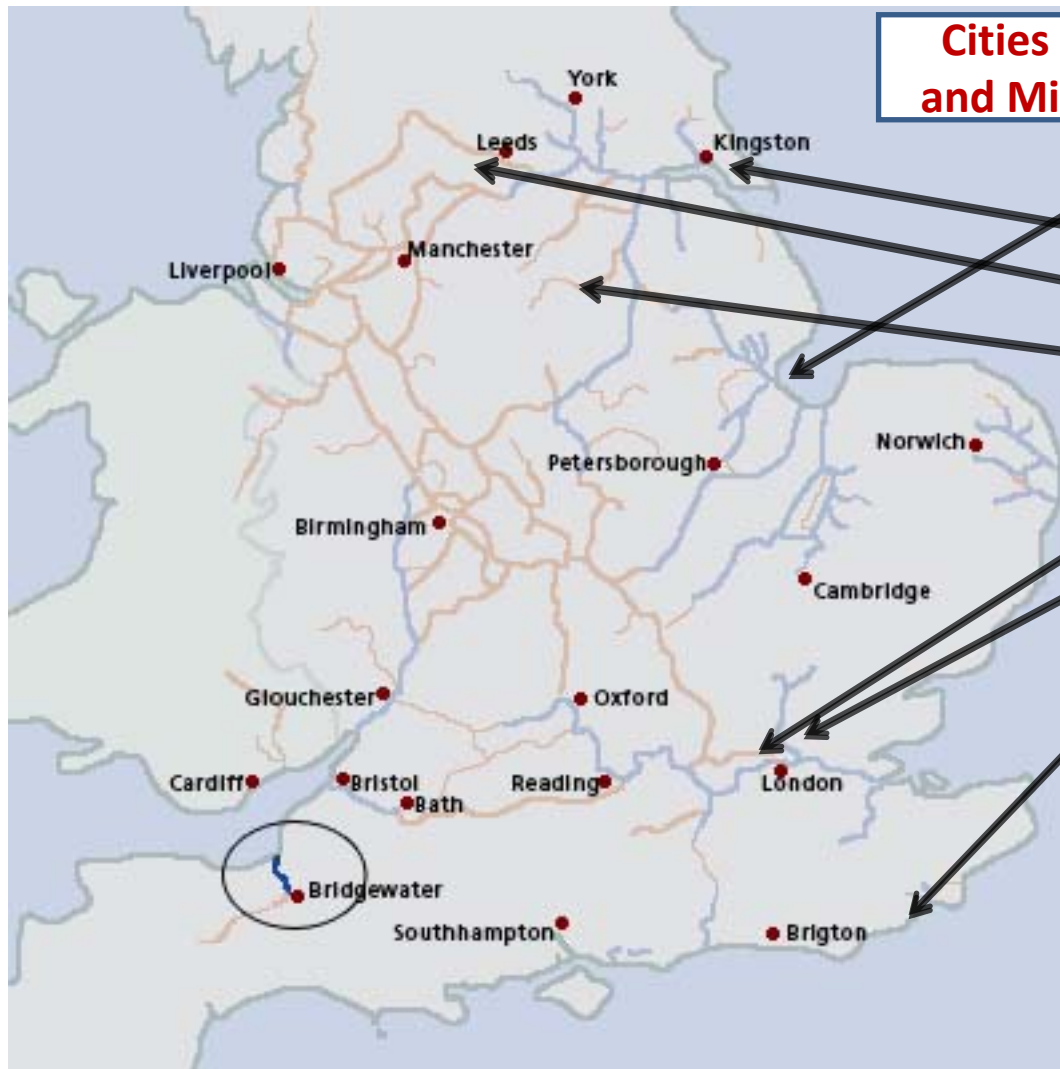
7 þa gelamp hit imbe geara rina. þet Scotta sum dæl gewat of Ybernian on Brittene. 7 þes landes sum dæl geeodon.

And it happened, in the run of years, that some party of Scots went from Ireland into Britain, and acquired some portion of this land.

7 wes heora heratoga Reoda gehaten. from þam heo sind genemnode Dælreodi.

Their leader was called Reoda, from whom they are named Dalreodi (or Dalreathians).





Cities of Southern and Middle England

The Wash

Hull

Bradford

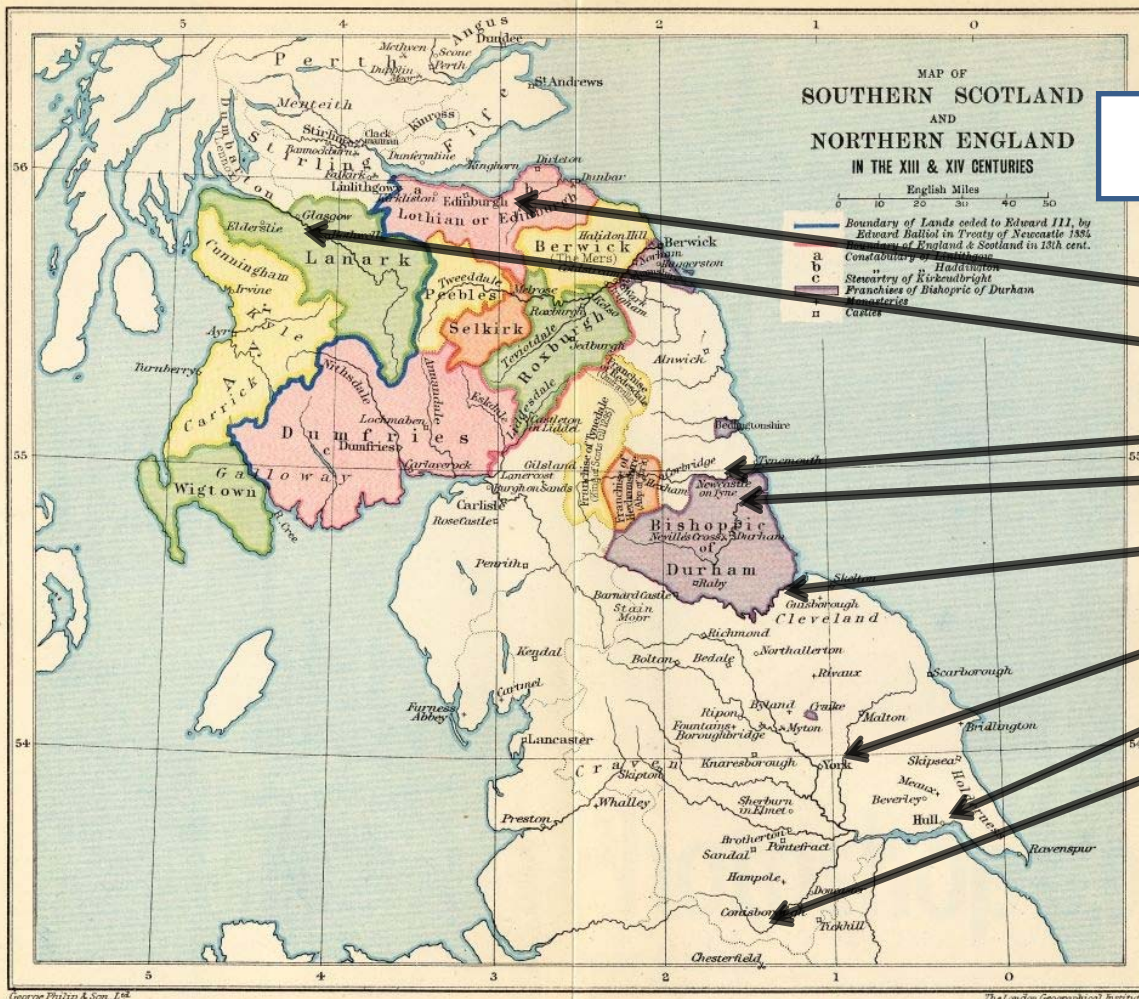
Sheffield

Watford Gap

Potters Bar

Hastings

Cities of Scotland and Northern / Middle England



Edinburgh

Glasgow

Newcastle

Durham

Middlebrough

York

Hull

Sheffield



Cities of Ireland

Derry

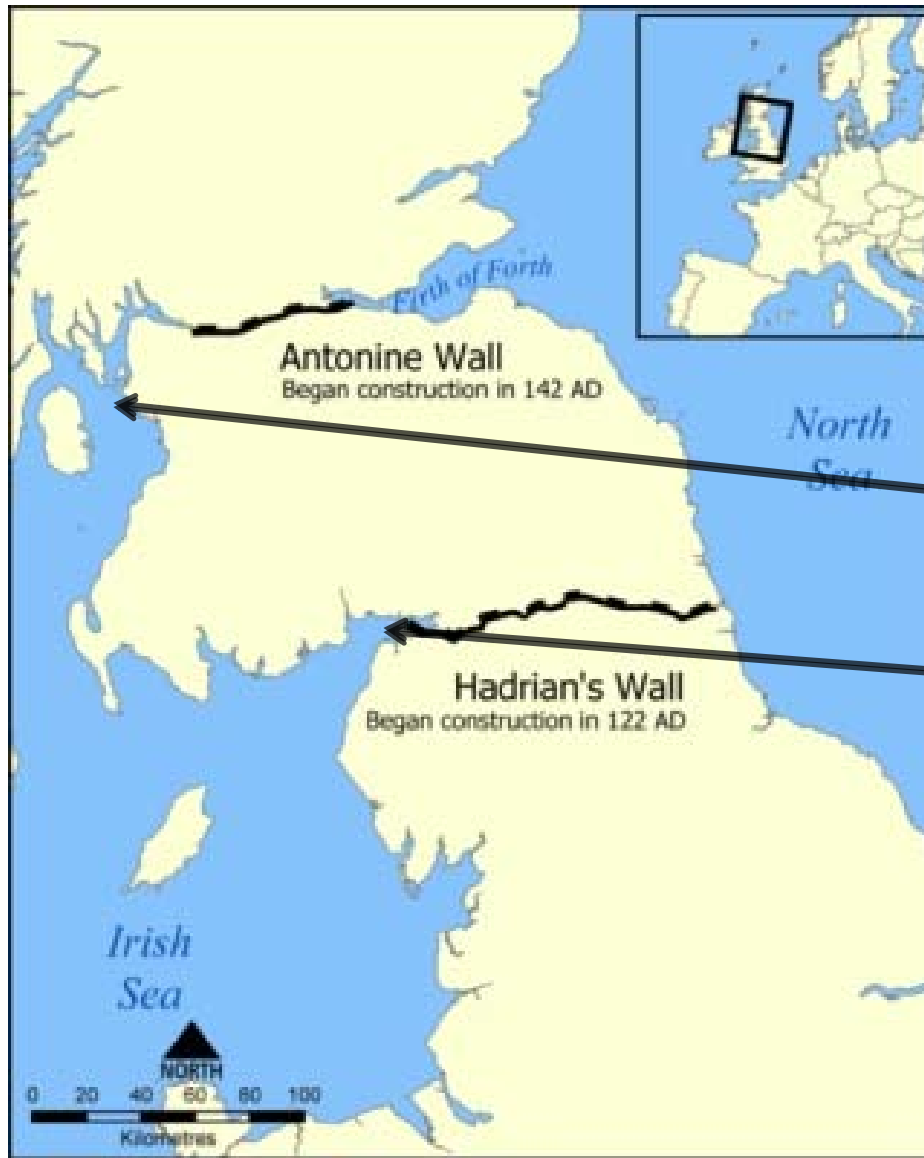
Belfast

Dublin

Cork

Waterfor

dWexford



Other places

Antonine Wall
Firth of Clyde
Firth of Forth
Hadrian's Wall
Solway Firth

Text 2: The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: The Arrival of the Anglo-Saxons

Text 3: The Venerable Bede CHAP. XV. *How the Angles, being invited into Britain, at first drove off the enemy; but not long after, making a league with them, turned their weapons against their allies.*

Celtic Britain	(late) Bronze Age – 500 BCE (?)
Roman reconnaissance	55-53 BCE (under Julius Caesar)
Roman conquest	43 CE (under Claudius)
Romanization	a period of more than 300 years
Roman withdrawal	from 4 th century on
Incursions of the Picts and Scots	from 4 th century till 449
Germanic incursions and help	449 and continuing for a century +
Germanic settlement and conquest	Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Kent, Essex, Wessex, Sussex
Germanic kingdoms (the Heptarchy)	

Periods of English

Old English (450-1150) (“period of full inflections”)

Middle English (1150-1500) (“period of leveled inflections”)

Modern English (1500-present) (“period of lost inflections”)

Linguistic features of English

1st Germanic sound shift (Grimm’s Law)

Strong and weak verbs

Strong and weak adjective declinations

Strong stress on the root syllable

Linguistic features of Old English

Spelling

...7 gesætan suðewearde Bryttene ærost.

...and first peopled Britain southward.

Pronunciation

Brittene igland is ehta hund mila lang.

<g> is /j/ or /g/

<h> is /x/

7 her sind on þis iglande fif geþeode

<þ> is /ð/ or /θ/

Linguistic features of Old English

Vocabulary

what words of non-Germanic origin can we find in the introductory text by Bede?

Mila

(Boc-)leden

Otherwise: only the proper names (Latin: *Picti*, *Scyttisc*, *Armeni*, *Yberniana*; Greek: *Scithian*; Celtic: *Brittisc*)

A large proportion of present-day English vocabulary is non-Germanic. However, much (most) of the basic vocabulary is Germanic, including auxiliary verbs, pronouns, basic prepositions, and many conjunctions.

Linguistic features of Old English

Grammar

Brittene igland is ehta hund mila lang.... Erest weron bugend þises landes Brittes.

míl (f), plural *mila*; *þises landes* (n), genitive plural; *Brittes* (m) nom. pl.

Þa gelamp hit þæt Pyhtas coman supan of Scithian

infinitive	pret-sg	pret-plur	pp
<i>(ge-)limpan</i>	<i>lamp</i>	<i>lumpon lumpen</i>	
<i>cuman</i>	<i>cóm</i>	<i>coman cumen</i>	

Note that the word order is VS (after an introductory adverbial) in both these examples.

Old English literature

Three important traditions

- **the pagan**: *Beowulf* (a long epic poem); the *Wanderer*, *Battle of Maldon*, *Battle of Brunanburh*, *Seafarer*, *Widsith*, *Deor*
- **the Christian**: numerous translation of Latin religious texts, *Juliana elene*, *Christ*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, *Andreas*, *Judith*, *The Phoenix*, *Christ and Satan*
- **histories** of the English people (in English): the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*

All of these are mentioned in B & C, § 52.

Excerpt from “The Wanderer” (perhaps as early as the end of the 6th century) (ll. 8-14)

"Oft ic sceolde ana	uhtna gehwylce
mine ceare cwipan.	Nis nu cwicra nan
þe ic him modsefan	minne durre
sweotule asecgan.	Ic to sope wat
þæt biþ in eorle	indryhten þeaw,
þæt he his ferðlocan	fæste binde,
healde his hordcofan,	hycge swa he wille.

Often I had alone to speak of my trouble
Each morning before dawn. There is now no one living
To whom I dare clearly speak
Of my innermost thoughts. I know it truly,
That it is in men a noble custom
That one should keep secure his spirit-chest,
Guard his treasure-chamber, think as he wishes.

Homework reading:

Baugh and Cable 2002: chapter 4 (§§ 53-80)

Text 4: Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: The coming of the Danes