

**LECTURE 6**  
**THE MIDDLE ENGLISH  
PERIOD.**

**MAIN HISTORICAL EVENTS**

- 1. Main historical events of ME.**
- 2. ME dialects.**
- 3. Rise of the London dialect.**
- 4. Orthographical changes.**



# Literature

**Расторгуева Т.А. История английского языка. – М.: Астрель, 2005. – С. 149-160, 184-187.**

**Ильиш Б.А. История английского языка. – Л.: Просвещение, 1972. – С. 134-146.**

**Иванова И.П., Чахоян Л.П. История английского языка. – М.: Высшая школа, 1976. – С. 17-33.**

**Студенець Г.І. Історія англійської мови в таблицях. - К.: КДЛУ, 1998. – Tables 61-74.**





The period we call **Middle English** runs from the beginning of the 12th century until the middle of the 15th.



# Main historical events of the ME period



By the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> c. more than half of England had been occupied by the Scandinavian invaders.

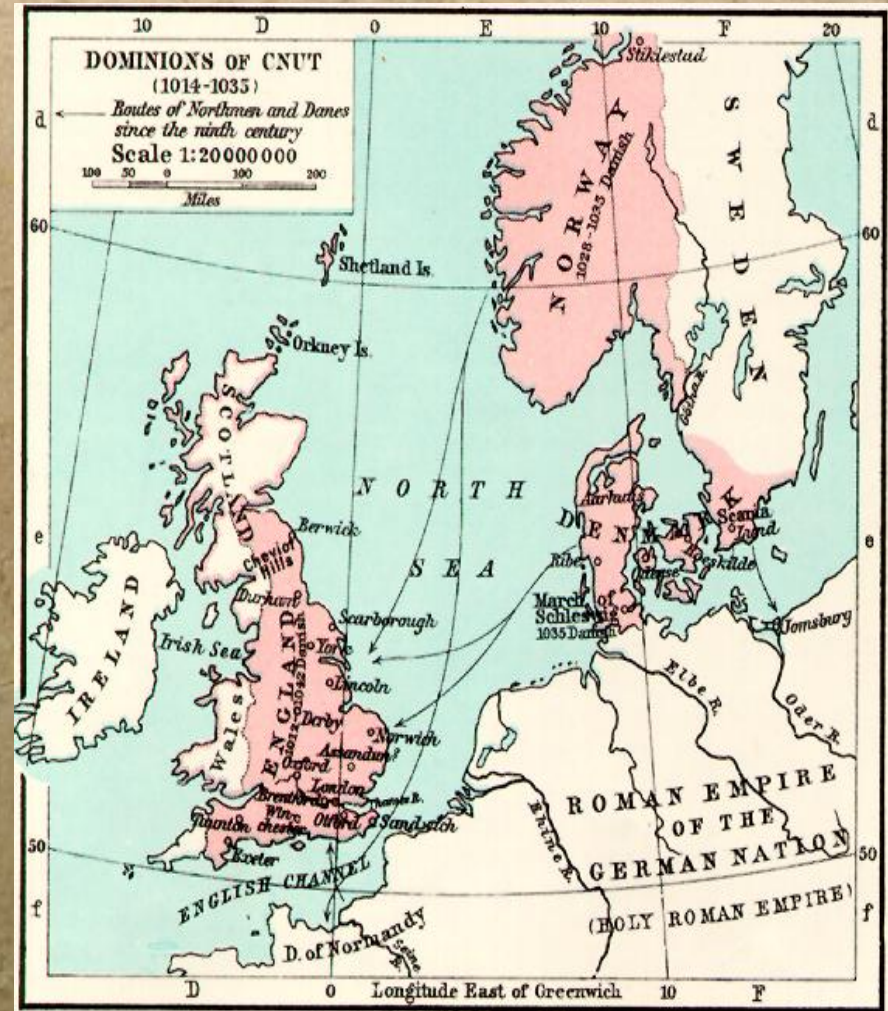
The territory was recognized as Danish territory **Danelaw** (**Danelaw** - **Danish law**)

In the early years of occupation the Danish settlements were little armed camps.



In the late 10<sup>th</sup> c. war was resumed and in 1013 the whole country fell to the invaders. King Æthelred escaped to Normandy.

- In 1016 the Danish king **Cnut** (Canute) became ruler of England. England became part of the Scandinavian empire in Northern England. Eventually the Scandinavians merged with the local population both ethnically and linguistically.





The Scandinavian invasion and settlement, the constant contacts and intermixture of the English and the Scandinavians brought about many changes in different spheres of the English language: word-stock, grammar and phonetics.

- The influence of Scandinavian dialects was especially felt in the North and East parts of England where mass settlements of invaders and inter-marriages with the local population were common.
- The relative ease of the mutual penetration of the languages was caused by the following circumstances:
  - **no political / social barriers;**
  - **no cultural barriers;**



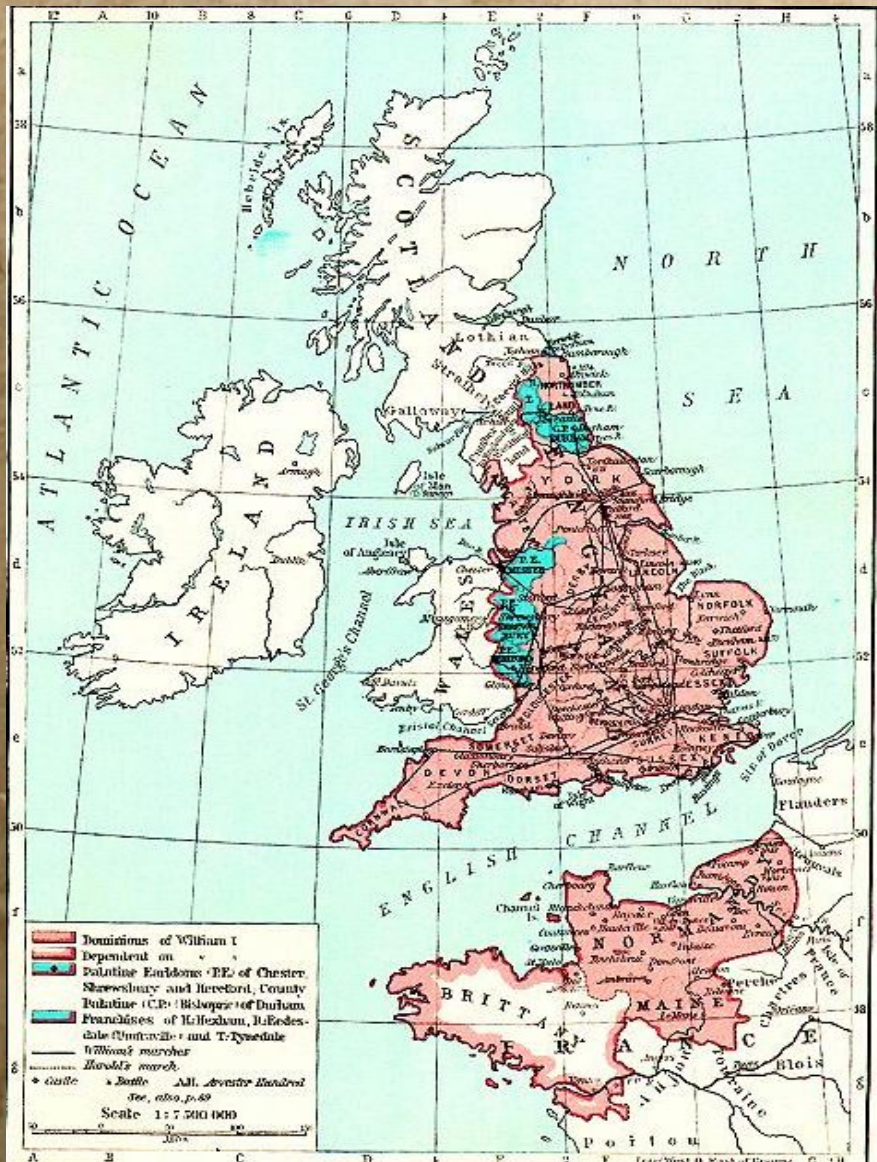
- In the areas where the Scandinavians outnumbered the Anglo-Saxon population, the linguistic influence was strong. Up to 75% of the place names are of Danish or Norwegian origin.

## Greenwich

<b>-by</b>	<b>byr - town</b>	<b>Derby,</b>
<b>-beck</b>	<b>bakkr - rivulet</b>	<b>Whitby</b> <b>Trautbeck</b>
<b>-dale</b>	<b>dalr - valley</b>	<b>Avondale</b>
<b>-ness</b>	<b>nes - cape</b>	<b>Inverness</b>
<b>-toft</b>	<b>toft – a piece of land</b>	<b>Langtoft</b>
<b>-wick</b>	<b>vik - bay</b>	<b>Greenwich</b>



# Norman Conquest



Soon after Canute's death (1042) and the collapse of his empire, the old Anglo-Saxon line was restored, but their reign was short.

The new English king, Edward the Confessor brought to England many Norman advisors and favourites.



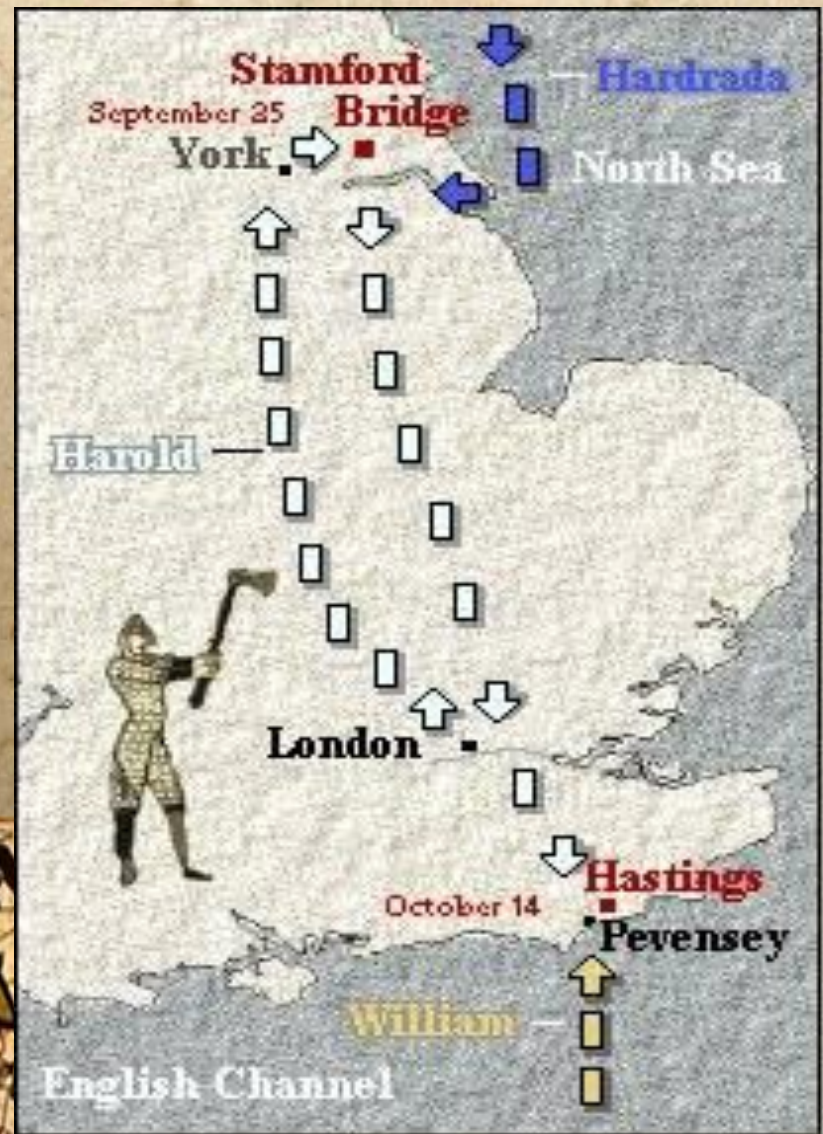


In 1066, after Edward's death, **Harold God** was proclaimed King of England. As soon as the news reached **William of Normandy**, he mustered a big army and landed in Great Britain.





- In the battle of Hastings (1066) Harold was killed and the English were defeated.
- The date is known as the date of the Norman conquest



The Invasions of England, 1066





The Normans became masters of England. William replaced the old English nobility by a new Norman nobility. Soon, every important position in government, church and at universities was held by a Norman.

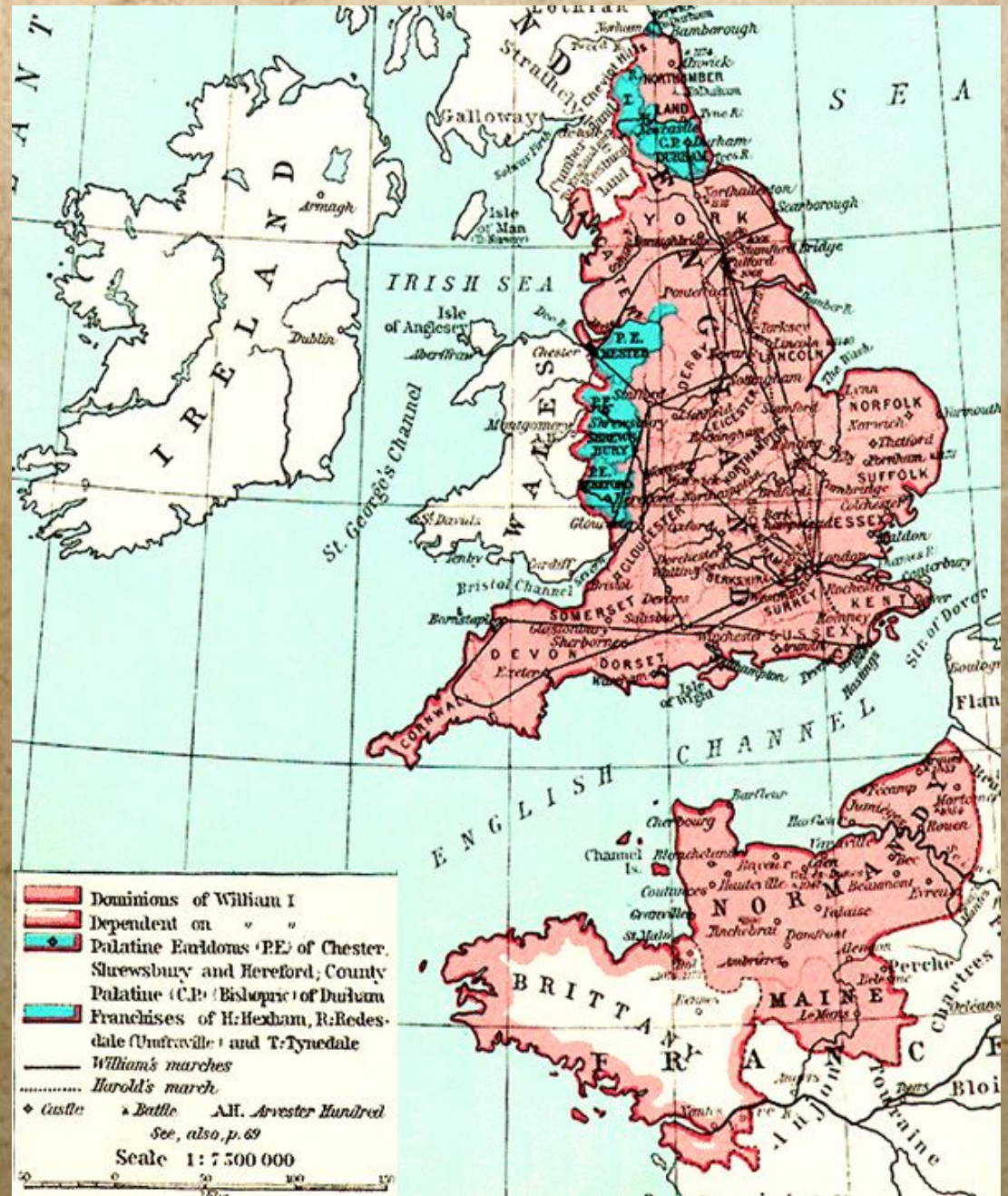
William made the bishops at Westminster Abbey crown him king.

1204 Loss of Normandy



# Norman property in England and France

## 1204 Loss of Normandy





# English in the 13th century

**After loss of Normandy:**

**French remains  
the dominant language  
of the upper classes.**

**At the end of the 13th  
century, English is used  
more commonly by  
the upper classes.**



**King Henry III  
1216-1272**



# The growing importance of English

- Upper classes need to communicate with their people.
- After the loss of the Normandy, French was no longer needed.
- Speaking French was fashionable in the 13th century, but Norman French had much lower prestige than the French spoken in Paris.

# French loan words

## Government and administration

government

empire

court

traitor

liberty

prince

sir

crown

realm

parliament

treason

office

baron

madam

state

authority

assembly

exile

mayor

duke

mistress



# **French loan words**

## **Church and religion**

**religion**

**prayer**

**chant**

**abbey**

**saint**

**faith**

**virtue**

**sermon**

**lesson**

**sacrifice**

**cloister**

**miracle**

**mercy**

**preach**

**confess**

**passion**

**chapter**

**virgin**

**mystery**

**pity**

**pray**



# French loan words

## Law

justice

crime

bill

evidence

ransom

award

prison

blame

pledge

acquit

property

entail

equity

judge

petition

proof

verdict

fine

accuse

arrest

condemn

fraud

estate

just

judgment

attorney

complaint

bail

sentence

punishment

indict

seize

convict

perjury

heir

innocent



# Army and navy

**army**

**navy**

**pace**

**enemy**

**battle**

**combat**

**siege**

**defense**

**ambush**

**retreat**

**soldier**

**guard**

**spy**

**captain**

**besiege**



# Fashion

**dress**

**habit**

**fashion**

**robe**

**coat**

**collar**

**veil**

**mitten**

**adorn**

**embellish**

**blue**

**brown**

**fur**

**jewel**

**ivory**



# Meals and food

dinner

supper

boil

taste

appetite

salmon

beef

veal

pork

sausage

bacon

gravy

cream

sugar

salad

fruits

orange

roast

lemon

cherry

peach

spice

mustard

vinegar



# **Furniture, social life**

**couch**

**chair**

**screen**

**lamp**

**blanket**

**wardrobe**

**recreation**

**leisure**

**dance**

**fool**

**music**

**chess**

**stable**

**retrieve**

**falcon**

**forest**

**park**

**tournament**



# Art, learning, medicine

<b>art</b>	<b>painting</b>	<b>beauty</b>
<b>color</b>	<b>figure</b>	<b>image</b>
<b>tone</b>	<b>cathedral</b>	<b>ceiling</b>
<b>tower</b>	<b>porch</b>	<b>bay</b>
<b>column</b>	<b>vase</b>	<b>poet</b>
<b>rime</b>	<b>story</b>	<b>paper</b>
<b>pen</b>	<b>study</b>	<b>logic</b>
<b>geometry</b>	<b>grammar</b>	<b>noun</b>
<b>clause</b>	<b>copy</b>	<b>medicine</b>
<b>stomach</b>	<b>ointment</b>	<b>poison</b>



# Loss of Germanic words

## *French borrowing*

poor

people

guilty

army

warrior

air

confess

praise

## *Lost English word*

earm

leod

scyldig

here

cempa

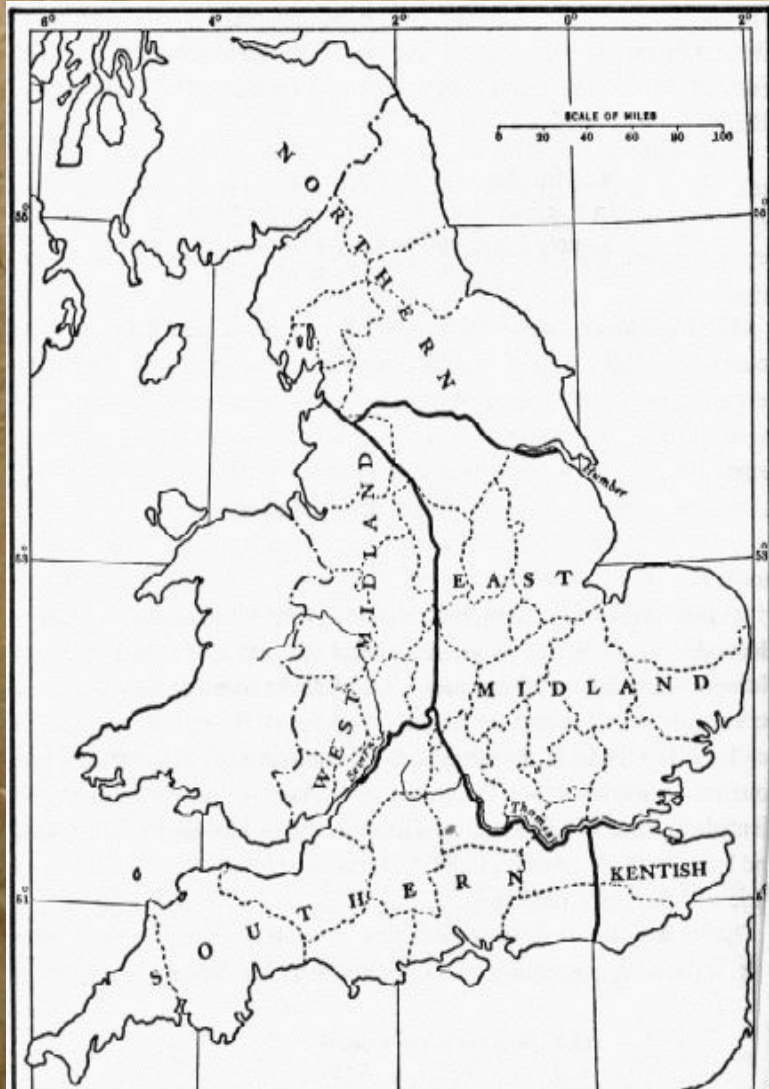
lyft

andettan

hearlan



# Middle English dialects



- **Northern:** had developed from the Northumbrian dialect of OE.
- **West Midland** (Mercian in OE).
- **East Midland:** had developed from East Anglian, Essex.
- **Southern:** a descendant of the OE Saxon dialect (West Saxon and East Saxon).
- **Kentish:** a direct continuation of any of the OE dialects, and Kentish covers nearly the same geographical locations.



- **In the present state of our knowledge it is impossible to fix the exact boundaries where one dialect ends, another begins. OE dialects were given new names.**
- **In Early ME French was the state language, the main language of literature and local dialects were relatively equal.**
- **In Late ME, when English had been reestablished as the main language of administration, one of the regional dialects prevailed over the others.**



# The Rise of the London Dialect

- **Growth of commerce and industry, development of money circulation were the main factors of social change + extension of trade, growth of towns with mixed population.**
- **New social relations created the need for a unified national language, standing above dialects equally intelligible in all parts of the country.**



# Reasons for Rise of the London Dialect

1. **Midland dialects: middle position between North and South (a workable compromise).**
2. **East Midlands: the largest, most populous area – fertile, prosperous, agricultural area with larger wealthier population.**
3. **Influence of Oxford and Cambridge, rapidly developing, role of monasteries decreasing.**
4. **Role of Chaucer, popular in his days and in the 15th c.**
5. **Role of London as capital city, political and commercial center of England, seat of royal court, law court, social, intellectual activity, much movement of people in and out of the city – local dialects mixed together to form a combination – the London standard (what began as a southern dialect, ended up as East Midland)**



# Reasons for Rise of the London Dialect


6. **Chancery** (government, writing office) **standard**. The clerks in London, who prepared the king's documents, introduced a written standard. Before 1430, the official records were mainly in Latin / French, after that date they began to use English.
7. The Chancery built a foundation of written English that was developed by Caxton, when he set up his printing press in Westminster in 1476.





# Orthographical changes of ME

In ME the runic letters passed out of use:

 thorn (Ð) and crossed d (d̄, d̅) were replaced by the digraph **th**, which represented the same sounds [θ - ð].



*English*



*Runic*

The “wynn” was replaced by “double u” (w) to prevent confusion with “p”.

The ligatures (æ, œ) passed out of use.

During several centuries after the Norman conquest the business of writing was in the hands of French scribes. They introduced into English some peculiarities of French graphic habits.



<ou> for [u:]		<ie> for [e:]		<ch> for [tʃ]	
OE	ME	OE	ME	OE	ME
ūt	out	feld	field	cild	child
hūs	hous	OF chief	chief	ceap	cheap
OF double	double			cinn	chinn
<g> for [dʒ] [g]		<c> for [s] [k]		The letters <j, k, v, q>	
strang	good	mercy	cours		

In addition <sup>e</sup>to **ch, ou, ie, th SH** was introduced to indicate the new sibilants [ʃ] and [dʒ] before front vowels  
**OE scip – ME ship, ME edge, joye, gender**  
The digraph **wh** replaced the OE combination **hw**



Long sounds were shown by double letters

ME wīd, wide, wiid [wi:d]

[e:]	<eo>, later ee, ie +	OE deop – ME deop,
[ɛ:]	<ea>	ME spread, east
[o:]	<oo>	ME blood, good
[ɔ:]	<oa>	ME broad

The introduction of the digraph gh helped to distinguish between [x], [xʰ] and [h]:

ME knyght [knixʰt], he [he:]



Some replacements were made to avoid confusion

**<u>** was used not only to indicate **[o]**, but also **[u]**.

It happened when **<u>** stood close to **<m, n, v>** for

they were all **made up of vertical strokes** and

were hard to distinguish in hand written texts **OE**

**munuc, lufu – ME monk [munk], love**

To determine the sound value of **<o>** one can look up the origin of the sound in OE.

**[i]** - **<i, y>** , **[ei]** - **<ei, ey>** - seien, seyen

**[ai]** - **<ai, ay>** - dai, day

**[u:]** - **<ou, ow>** hous, now (OE hūs, nū), cow (cū), **[ou]** – slou, snow, low.



*Seo 14 festis. Seo Marie uirginis.*

**S**e godspellepe Lucas sægd on þyssen  
godspelle. ꝥ se hælend com in to sumen  
cæstele. 7 sum þif hine underþeng in  
to hire huse. þære þæs to name *martha*. Seo  
hæpde ane suster þe þæs genæmd *maria*.  
Seo þæs sittende æt upes drihtenes foten. 7  
hlyste hit worden. Ac *martha* bespæc 7  
bestudede þa lichamlice beheþden. Seo stod.  
7 cþ to þan hælende. La drihten. 7 is þe  
na gemýnde. ꝥ min suster lett me anen  
þenigen. Sæge hire ꝥ heo me fylste.  
Se hælend hire andspæcde 7 cþ. *martha*  
*martha*. þu eart bisig 7 gedreþd on wealle  
þingan. Ac anhyrig þing is beheþe. *ma*  
*ria* hæpð geopen ꝥ beoðe dæl. ꝥ hire næ  
fre ne byð pidrogan.

**S**ume ungelæneðe menn pundriged hþæt  
þis godspell belimpe to þære eadigen  
*marien* cristes moder. 7 hi man æt hire  
þenunge genæde þis godspell. Ac us þincð  
ꝥ hit rihtlice to hire gebýred beo þan þe



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ATTENTION!**