THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST TRANSCRIPTS

EPISODES 96 - 100

Presented by Kevin W. Stroud

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EPISODE 96: FROM ALPHA TO OMEGA

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 96: From Alpha to Omega. In this episode, we're going to look at an early vowel shift that took place in early Middle English. This vowel shift helps to illustrate a basic link between the 'A' sound and the 'O' sound throughout the history of English. As we look at this sound change, we'll also continue our overall historical narrative, and we'll explore the bitter feud between King John and the man who was Pope during his reign. That man was Pope Innocent III. And we'll see how that feud led to the closing of all the Churches in England during John's reign.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast at Patreon.com/historyofenglish. And as always, you can reach me by email at kevin@historyofenglishpodcast.com

So let's turn to this episode, and this time, I want to begin the story far away from England and far away from the early Middle English period. I actually want to begin in Greece and the first Greek alphabet that was developed nearly 3000 years ago. As we know, the Greeks didn't invent the alphabet – they borrowed it from the Phoenicians. And the Phoenicians spoke a Semitic language which was very rich in consonant sounds, but was more limited in its vowel sounds. In fact, the Semitic alphabet didn't have any letters for vowel sounds. But the Greek language was just the opposite. It was very rich in vowel sounds. And when the Greeks borrowed the Phoenician alphabet, they needed to create letters for the vowels.

Now the Greeks could have just made up some new letters, but what they chose to do instead was to take some of the extra Phoenician letters that they didn't need, and they just used those for the Greek vowel sounds. That's what they did with the first letter which was called ***aleph*** in the Phoenician alphabet. It represented a consonant sound that the Greeks didn't have, so the Greeks used it to represent the /ah/ vowel sound. And ***aleph*** became ***alpha*** in the Greek alphabet. And it retained its position at the front of the line. Of course, this is the ultimate ancestor of our modern letter A, and it remains the first letter of the alphabet to this day. But rather than its Modern English /ay/ sound, it originally had the /ah/ sound. And throughout the Middle Ages, most western European scribes used the letter A for that /ah/ sound.

Now in the middle of the Phoenician alphabet was a letter that came after the early version of letter N and before the early version of letter P. So it occupied the position of our modern letter O, and in fact it was the original version of letter O. But again, it represented a consonant sound. It was a guttural consonant sound in the back of the throat that didn't exist in Greek. The letter was called 'ayin' which meant 'eye,' and the letter was originally a simple representation of an eyeball. So it was circle-shaped. Once again, the Greeks took this letter and decided to use it for their /oh/ vowel sound. And this became the letter O.

Now as I've noted before, vowel sounds can be pronounced short or long, and the Greeks used their individual vowel letters for both the long and short sounds – just like we do today. But sometime between 600 BC and 700 BC, the Greeks decided that they needed to distinguish the short 'O' sound from the long 'O' sound. So they decided to use their early version of letter O in the middle of the alphabet for the short 'O' sound – like in ***hop*** or ***dog***, and they decided to create a new letter O for the long 'O' sound – /oh/ – like in ***hope*** or ***snow***. The original letter O came to be known as 'O micron' – which meant 'the little O' – since it represented the short O sound. The new letter O was called 'Omega' – which meant 'the big O' – since it represented the long O sound. Since this new letter O called ***Omega*** was a brand new letter, it was added to the end of the Greek alphabet.

By the time the Greeks came up with Omega as a distinct letter, the alphabet had already been adopted by the Etruscans, and from there was on its way to being adopted by the Romans, and then the Anglo-Saxons. So those versions of the alphabet never had Omega at the end. The original letter O in the middle of the alphabet was used for both the long and short sounds of O. And that's the way we still use it today.

But the Greek version of the alphabet was different in that it had Omega at the end. So the Greek alphabet began and ended with a vowel. The first letter was alpha – or A – and the last letter was Omega – the 'big O.' Whereas today, we might describe the entirety of something as "everything from A to Z" (or "A to zed"), the Greeks referred to "everything from alpha to omega."

Most of the New Testament of the Bible was composed in Greek, and this helps to explains the context for the well-known passage from Revelations where Christ speaks through an angel and says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." This passage uses the names of the Greek letters ***alpha*** and ***omega*** to illustrate the idea of being the first and the last.

So by this point, you're probably asking, "What do the Greek letters alpha and omega have to do with Middle English in the early 1200s?" Well, the English language has experienced several important sound changes over its history. But around the current point in our story, an important early vowel shift occurred. The Old English long /ah/ sound – represented by letter A – started to change – and it eventually evolved into our modern /oh/ sound – represented by letter O. So this vowel change was essentially a shift from A to O – or in the language of the Greeks – from alpha to omega. Again, the changes began in early Middle English, but it was really a two-step process. The first step took place around the current point in our story, and the second step took place during the Great Vowel Shift near the end of the Middle English period.

The net result of these changes is that most words that had the /ah/ sound in Old English have the /oh/ sound in Modern English. The Old English word ***ban*** (/bahn/)– spelled B-A-N – became our modern word ***bone***. The Old English word ***gat*** (/gaht/) – spelled G-A-T – became our modern word ***goat***. ***Hlaf*** became ***loaf***. ***Mast*** became ***most***. And ***mal*** became ***mole***. There are many more examples of this basic sound change, and we'll look at a lot more as we go through this episode.

But before we go any further, let's take a closer look at the way this sound changed. When we talk about the changes that have occurred to English vowels over the centuries, we usually focus on the major set of changes that took place in the 1400s and 1500s – generally known as the Great Vowel Shift. This series of sound changes was one of the most important events in the history of English because all of the long vowel sounds shifted around. But vowel sounds were unstable in English throughout the Middle English period. There were some subtle shifts and changes before the Great Vowel Shift, but this early shift involving the /ah/ sound was more significant. So I wanted to focus on it in this episode.

I should also note that I talked about vowels back in Episodes 88 and 89. And I discussed some vowel changes in those episodes, but I mostly focused on changes in length or quantity. So I explained how some short vowels become long vowels, and long vowels that became short vowels. But I didn't discuss how one vowel sound shifted to a completely different vowel sound. That was a more significant change. And that type of change wasn't very common in Old English. But during the 1100s and 1200s, these types changes started to occur and they became more common throughout the Middle English period – culminating in the Great Vowel Shift.

As we look a little closer at vowel changes throughout the history of English, we see a consistent connection between the 'A' sound and 'O' sound. Think about words like ***what*** and ***swan*** – spelled with an A – and ***hot*** and ***not*** – spelled with an O. All of those words have the same vowel sound despite the difference in spelling. Now even though American speakers and British speakers tend to pronounce that vowel sound a little differently, each set of speakers tend to pronounce the vowel in all of those words the same way. So in those cases, we are using the letters A and O to represent the same sound. And that is a clue that there is some fundamental connection between these sounds.

Now if you think back to some of the early episodes of the podcast, I talked about the front vowels and back vowels. The front vowels were those pronounced toward the front of the mouth, and the back vowels were those pronounced in the back of the mouth or the throat region. And here is where we start to find that fundamental connection between A and O. They were both back vowels in Old and Middle English.

The vowel sound that is pronounced farthest back in the throat is the /ah/ sound – which was the traditional sound of the letter A. If we raise that sound toward the middle part of the back of the mouth, we get the /oh/ sound. So /ah/ is pronounced lower and /oh/ is pronounced higher. And if we continue to raise that sound to the top part of the back of the mouth, we get the /oo/ sound – which was represented by letter U.

If fact, if you say those three sounds in succession – /ah-oh–oo/ – you can feel it raise in the back of the mouth. But let's just focus on the first two sounds – /ah/ and /oh/ – the originals sounds of letters A and O. If you say those two sounds very slowly and blend them together – so /ah—oh/ – you might notice that there is another vowel sound in between /ah/ and /oh/. It's the /aw/ sound in words like ***law*** and ***call*** and ***ball***. And in fact, this sound is also a bit more rounded than /ah/ and /oh/, so the lips are more rounded when we pronounce this sound. So to break that down, it goes /ah/ - /aw/ - /oh/. Each sound is progressively higher in the back of the mouth.

Now if you follow that progression from /ah/ to /aw/ to /oh/, you can hear how the sound evolved within many English words. In fact, as a general rule, when English vowel sounds have changed throughout history, they have tended to be raised – moving slightly higher in the mouth. And that's what happened with this change as well.

The first shift from /ah/ up to /aw/ occurred at the beginning of Middle English. And the second shift up from /aw/ up to /oh/ occurred at the end of Middle English during the Great Vowel Shift. So these changes book-ended the Middle English period. And it means that the words affected by this change were pronounced differently during each period of English.

So let me give you some examples of this change. In keeping with the overall theme of this episode, let me begin with the word ***holy***. In Old English, it was ***halig*** (/hah-lee/). Then in Middle English, it became /haw-lee/. And then in Modern English, it became ***holy***. The vowel sound was raised with each period of English.

Now one of the basic concepts within Christianity is the idea of the Trinity – the father, the son and the holy ghost. And just like the word ***holy***, the word ***ghost*** also underwent this same sound change. It was ***gast*** (/gahst/) in Old English. Then it became /gawst/ in Middle English. And then it became ***ghost*** during the early Modern English period.

This process also converted ***ban*** into ***bone*** – /bahn/ - /bawn/ - /bone/. It converted ***gat*** into ***goat***. ***Hlaf*** into ***loaf***. ***Mal*** into ***mole***. And so on. And we'll look at a lot more examples throughout this episode.

Now you may be wondering how modern linguists know that this vowel sound changed from /ah/ to /aw/ in the early Middle English period. After all, there were no tape recordings. Well, part of the answer lies in the fact that scribes changed the way these words were spelled in early Middle English. In the words that experienced this change, they routinely replaced the A with an O. So the word ***bone*** was spelled B-A-N in Old English, and around the current point in our story, when English writing started to re-emerge, it was routinely spelled B-O-N. This spelling change occurred in most words that had a long /ah/ sound in Old English. And that was a signal that people were pronouncing that vowel sound differently. The sound had been raised closer to the /oh/ sound, so scribes started to spell those words with a letter O. Since there wasn't a specific letter for the /aw/ sound, scribes apparently felt that it was best represented by letter O. By the way, this was primarily the case in southern and central England. This change didn't really happen in the north, and northern scribes tended to retain the letter A when they spelled these words.

Now all of this raises another interesting question. If the scribes started to spell these words with an O, how do we know that the words weren't pronounced as /oh/ – which was the traditional sound of letter O. Well, the answer has to do with historical linguistics and the Great Vowel Shift that was to come later. The short answer is that the /oh/ sound has its own unique history, and it experienced its own sound changes that are different from the changes I am describing in this episode. So if these /ah/ words had been pronounced with an /oh/ sound in Middle English, they would have undergone the same changes as other /oh/-sounding words. But they didn't. So

linguists are confident that this new sound was distinct from the /oh/ sound. /ah/ was raised to /aw/, but it never quite merged with the /oh/ sound.

So once again, Old English ***halig*** (/hah-lee/) became Middle English /haw-lee/, and then later, during the Great Vowel Shift, it became ***holy***. And ***gast*** (/gahst/) became /gawst/, and during the Great Vowel Shift, it became ***ghost***.

So if the Old English /ah/ sound changed in this manner, why didn't the /ah/ sound completely disappear from English? Well, part of the answer is that shortly after this change occurred, in early Middle English, lots of French and Latin words were borrowed into English with the /ah/ sound – still spelled with the letter A. And since those words came in after this sound had changed in English, they filled the gap that was left behind. So a French word like ***dame*** came in after this change. And it came in with its original French /ah/ sound – as in Notre Dame. But again, thanks to the later Great Vowel Shift, the /ah/ sound shifted to an /ay/ sound in the 1500s, and that gave us the modern long sound of letter A. So the French and Middle English word /dahm/ became /dame/ around the time of Modern English. And the French and Middle English word /fahm/ became ***fame*** in Modern English. French and Middle English /cahge/ became Modern English ***cage***. And French and Middle English /chahs/ became Modern English ***chase***.

So those are the two basic rules we have to keep in mind when we think about words with the /ah/ sound. In the case of very old words from Old English, most of them underwent this gradual shift from /ah/ – to /aw/ – to /oh/. These words were affected by sound changes at the beginning and at the end of Middle English. But for newer words that were borrowed during the Middle English period with the same /ah/ sound, they only experienced the later sound change at the end of Middle English – from /ah/ to /ay/. Remember these later changes were part of the Great Vowel Shift. So the Great Vowel Shift affected these words differently because they had distinct vowel sounds when the Great Vowel Shift occurred.

Now all of this helps linguists to identify when a word entered English. If a word was pronounced with an /ah/ sound, and it was in the English language before the early 1200s, it typically took the first course and is pronounced today with an /oh/ sound. But if the word came in after the early 1200s, it took the second course and it pronounced today with an /ay/ sound. And if a word was borrowed in Modern English – after the Great Vowel Shift – it didn't experience either sound shift, and so it is still pronounced with it original /ah/ sound.

One of the best examples we can use to illustrate this history is the word ***papa*** which we sometimes use today as another word for ***father***. Believe it or not, it has been borrowed into each stage of English – Old English, Middle English and Modern English. And each time it was borrowed, it came in with the same /ah/ vowel sound. But each version was affected by the sound changes I just described. And thanks to those changes, it gave us the modern words ***papa***, ***papal*** and ***Pope***. So let's take a closer look at what happened.

The word ***papa*** is ultimately a Greek word. It was ***papas*** in Greek, and it passed into Latin as ***papa*** – spelled P-A-P-A. It is related to the Greek and Latin words ***pater*** – which meant 'father.'

After the advent of the Christian Church, the head of the Church was like the head of a family. He was the 'father' of the Church, so he was known as ***papa***. And when St. Augustine brought Christianity to Canterbury around the year 600, the term ***papa*** also passed in Old English. But it specifically meant the head of the Church.

Then, in early Middle English, around the current point in our story, the first sound change affected the word ***papa*** (/pah-pah/), and it became /paw-peh/ – increasingly spelled with an O. Then at the end of the Middle English period, during the Great Vowel Shift, it became ***Pope*** /pope/. So since this was an old word in the language, and it took that first linguistic course, and it experienced both sound changes – from /ah/ to /aw/ to /oh/.

Now in 1300s, after the current point in our story, English borrowed the word again – this time as an adjective and this time from French. The word was ***papal*** (/pah-pul/), and it was used to describe things associated with the Pope. It came in from French with its original /ah/ sound. But since this word came in after that initial sound change, it took the second linguistic path from /ah/ to /ay/ – so from ***papal*** (/pah-pul/) to ***papal*** (/pay-pul/). In other words, it was only affected by the second sound change during the Great Vowel Shift.

Then, after the Great Vowel Shift in the 1600s, English borrowed the word ***papa*** again from French – this time as another word for 'father.' And since it came in after the Great Vowel Shift, it retains its original /ah/ sound unaffected by any vowel shifts.

So this basic word ***papa***, and it variants ***Pope*** and ***papal***, illustrate the history of these sound changes in English. The specific vowel sound we use today depends entirely on when that version of the word was borrowed, and therefore, which set of sound changes it experienced.

Now let me leave the linguistics there for a moment and focus on the word ***Pope***. As I noted, the word was probably pronounced something like /paw-peh/ in the early 1200s. One of the reasons why we know the vowel in this word was changing around this time is because Layamon used the word ***Pope*** several times in his poem called 'Brut,' which we explored a couple of episodes back. In the original version, it was spelled with an A, but when the later scribe copied the poem in the mid to late 1200s, he spelled it with an O. So the second scribe changed the spelling to indicate this change in pronunciation.

Now at this time, in the early 1200s, the Pope was Pope Innocent III. He was a very important and influential figure, and he was also VERY dogmatic. He believed in the power of the Church and the Papacy, and he thought that the Church even had supremacy over the kings of Europe. Of course, the kings didn't tend to share that opinion.

Innocent organized the Fourth Crusade which was intended to reclaim Jerusalem, but the plans went awry, and the Crusaders ended up sacking Constantinople – the capital of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Around this same time, he launched an offensive against a break-away Christian sect in southern France that he deemed to be heretics. He sent in an army of knightly Crusaders to wipe out this new sect, but in their zeal, they ended up wiping out most of the troubadour culture in southern France as well. Many of the troubadours fled to Spain and Italy.

Most of the troubadours who remained decided to stop singing about earthly love, and they started composing songs with religious themes. So the early troubadour period of southern France came to an effective end around this time.

As I noted, Innocent felt that his authority extended over all Christians in Western Europe – and that included the various kings of Europe. But up in England, one King John had other ideas. And it was probably inevitable that the two leaders would come into conflict. And that's exactly what happened when the Archbishop of Canterbury died in the year 1205.

The Archbishop was named Hubert Walter. Walter had accompanied Richard the Lionheart on the Third Crusade, and he helped to raise the money for Richard's ransom when Richard was taken prisoner on his way back home from the Crusade. He was later rewarded by Richard with the position of Archbishop. In fact, when Richard made the selection, he didn't even consult with the English bishops, but the Pope at the time consented to the appointment anyway.

Now in the year 1205, when Walter died, there was a new Pope and new king. The new Pope was Innocent III, and the new king was John, and they were destined to butt heads over the selection of Walter's successor.

I should note that the exact procedure for selecting a new Archbishop wasn't exactly set in stone. Technically, the monks of Canterbury Cathedral had a right to select the Archbishop, and they usually consulted with the bishops of England. But the king traditionally claimed a role in the process. Using his influence over the bishops and local clerics, the king usually let his preference be known. Usually, the various parties agreed on a choice, and that person was then consecrated by the Pope. But sometimes, that process broke down. And that's what happened here.

John wanted an archbishop who would be a loyal ally, so he put forth the bishop of Norwich named John Gray. Gray was a judge and diplomat who had served as John's secretary. But down in Canterbury, the monks had other ideas. They ignored John's wishes and chose their subprior named Reginald. They knew that the Pope had to approve and sanction the choice, so they sent Reginald to Rome to inform the Pope that he had been elected by the monks.

When John got word of this, he hit the roof. He couldn't believe that the monks in Canterbury had completely defied his wishes. I mean, who did that think they were? So John headed down to Canterbury to give them a piece of his mind.

Now as I said, the process for selecting an archbishop wasn't exactly set in stone, but there was something in Canterbury that was set in stone. And that was Canterbury Cathedral. The Cathedral had its origins in the time of St. Augustine and the first Christian missionaries over six centuries earlier. But it had been damaged by fire several times over the centuries and had been repaired and re-built each time. A massive fire had occurred there about 30 years before in the year 1174. After that fire, the cathedral underwent major renovations and expansions, and it started to take the shape it has today.

Most notably, the new design used a brand-new style of architecture which we know today as 'Gothic.' I talked about that word in an early episode about the Goths. As I noted in that episode, the word ***Gothic*** doesn't really have anything to do with the Goths, but it was becoming the popular construction style during this period. And Canterbury Cathedral reflects that style with its flying buttresses and pointed arches.

The construction required a lot of stone – much of which was imported from Normandy. And it wasn't just Canterbury Cathedral that was being designed in this style. During this period in the early 1200s, many castles started to be built in this style. Up to this point, most castles were constructed of wood, but around this time, designers started to build elaborate stone castles.

And I mention all of this new stone work because ***stone*** is another word that has undergone the changes I described earlier. It was ***stan*** (/stahn/) in Old English – usually spelled S-T-A-N. But by this point, it was probably pronounced as /stawn/ in southern and central England. And the word started to be spelled with an O to reflect that change. In fact, Layamon's Brut also captured this change. Once again the original version of the poem usually spelled the word with an A, but the later scribe changed the spelling to an O. So ***stan*** was probably /stawn/ by this point – well on its way to becoming ***stone*** by the end of the Middle English period. But again, this change didn't occur in the north of England and Scotland. And I'll have more to say about that a little later.

So John arrived in Canterbury with its new Gothic Cathedral and fancy stonework. And he proceeded to lay into the clerics at the Cathedral about the selection of the new archbishop. He ultimately forced them to change their selection and go along with John's choice. But the bishops never approved the change.

Meanwhile, down in Rome, the Pope was faced with two different options for the new archbishop. There was John's choice, John Gray. And there was the monk's choice, Reginald, which the monks had technically rescinded under pressure, but Reginald was still being supported by the bishops. If Pope Innocent sided with John's choice, he would alienate the bishops and much of the clergy, but if sided with the clergy, he would alienate John. So the Pope contemplated the decision for a few months.

I mentioned that John had traveled down to down to Canterbury, and he wasn't the only one. Canterbury had become a haven for pilgrims, most of whom traveled there to see the shine dedicated to Thomas Becket. I talked about Becket a few episodes back. He was the archbishop who fought with John's father – Henry II. And Becket ended up dead. It was one of the few set-backs that Henry had to deal with during his reign. Henry struggled to deal with the fallout from that murder. And it was a reminder of the dangerous stakes that were at play when the King battled with the Church.

During this period in 1205, John was also dealing with another problem. He had lost control of Normandy the year before, and there was fear that the French king Philip was going to invade England and do away with John for good. John mobilized his defenses and – he ordered every

boy and man over the age of 12 to swear an oath to defend the country and preserve the peace. Failure to take the oath was treated as an admission of treachery.

Now I mention this oath because its another word that underwent the changes I described earlier. It was ***að*** (/ahth/) in Old English – spelled with an A. But around this time, it became /awth/ – and on its way to becoming ***oath*** in Modern English. But again, these changes didn't happen in the north.

By the summer of 1205, it became apparent that Philip was not going to invade England. And John was confident enough in his position, that he decided to turn the tables and launch an invasion of Normandy to take back the land he had lost. It was designed to be a two-pronged attack with a separate force landing in northern Aquitaine to recapture some territory that had been lost there as well.

John ordered the largest military mobilization since the Third Crusade. He seized all of the boats and shipping vessels that could be converted and used for war. This enabled John to amass a considerable navy which had been growing since Richard's expedition to the Holy Land a few years before. England was well on its way to having a formidable navy, something Philip didn't really have in France.

Now I mention the boats that John seized because ***boat*** is another word that has undergone the changes I mentioned earlier. It was ***bat*** (/baht/) in Old English – spelled B-A-T. But around this time, it was probably pronounced as /bawt/ – on its way to modern ***boat***.

Now unfortunately for John, his massive army and navy couldn't go anywhere because his most prominent nobles balked at the expedition and refused to support the mission. This was really one of the first signs of trouble between John and his nobles. It was a conflict that would eventually lead to civil war, and ten years later would lead to Magna Carta.

At this point, the nobles hadn't been forced to choose sides between John and Phillip, and they were trying to hold onto their lands on both sides of the Channel,. They feared that John's expedition would fail and Philip would confiscate their lands in Normandy if they sided with John. So at the same time that John was dealing with difficult monks down in Canterbury, he was also dealing with uncooperative nobles throughout England.

He had already lost most of his territory in France. Rumors were spreading that he had killed his nephew Arthur. He had killed 22 prisoners in Aquitaine – most from noble families – by starving them to death. He already had a bad reputation, and he was making it worse. And it was becoming apparent that he didn't have a lot of friends in the nobility or the Church.

So it was this point that John went on a mission to make some friends. Many of the nobles in southern and central England had indicated their reluctance to support John's mission in France, so John decided to head north to meet with the nobles there. As I've noted before, most English kings rarely traveled to the north of England unless they were engaged in a military expedition

there. So John saw an opportunity to win over the northern nobles by meeting with them face to face.

Now when John traveled to the north of England, he traveled along primary roads that had been in place since the Roman period. Beyond four or so main roads that criss-crossed the country, there were a variety of smaller roads that were really little more than paths or trails. When the king traveled, he was accompanied by a large group of retainers and courtiers. So when the traveling court left the main roads, the movement tended to slow to a crawl. It is reported that John often rode ahead of the court, and when he arrived at the next stop, he would go hunting while waiting for his traveling court to catch up.

One of the biggest obstacles to travel by road was rivers and streams. Each one required a bridge, and many of the bridges had fallen into disrepair over the centuries. Even London Bridge had become impassable. It is reported that John needed a boat to take his traveling court across the Thames late in his reign. So during John's reign, he continued a bridge-building program that had begun a few years earlier in the late 1100s. Most of the old bridges had been built out of wood, but the new ones were mostly built with stone – making them more permanent and reliable. By the way, this included London Bridge. The old wooden bridge was finally replaced with a stone bridge. The work began in 1176 and was completed in the early 1200s. The bridge-building program was so important – and such a burden on local towns who had responsibility for the bridges – that a portion of Magna Carta (Clause 23) was devoted to the issue to give the towns some relief from the obligations.

So as John traveled to northern England in early 1206, he was traveling on bridges and roads that had been upgraded for the first time in centuries. And I mention this because the word ***road*** is another word that underwent the changes I discussed earlier. It was originally ***rad*** (/rahd/) in Old English – spelled R-A-D. It is related to the word ***ride*** – and ***rad*** originally meant 'the act of riding.' By the time John traveled to northern England, it was probably pronounced /rawd/. And few centuries later, it would be known as a ***road*** – the sense having evolved from 'the act of riding' to 'the place where riding takes place.'

So John's English-speaking courtiers probably called this process /rawd/. But when they arrived in the north, they probably heard people referring to the same thing as /rahd/ – the way the word had been pronounced in Old English. And that's because, as I noted earlier, this particular sound change didn't really occur in the north of England and Scotland. So southern /rawd/ was northern /rahd/.

This difference is pronunciation is evident from manuscripts composed during the 1200s. As we've seen, southern texts spelled these words with an O, but northern texts continued to use an A. Now you might think that northern scribes were just more conservative in their spelling, but this difference was consistent throughout Middle English. Nearly two centuries later, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote about all of those pilgrims traveling down to Canterbury to visit Becket's shrine. Of course, that was the Canterbury Tales. And when he introduced characters from the north of England, he would try to mimic or represent their accent. I've noted this before. So when one of his northern characters would speak, he would spell the words in their dialogue with an A where

he would normally spell those words with an O elsewhere. In doing this, Chaucer was trying to show that northerners still pronounced those words with the original /ah/ sound rather than the southern /aw/ sound.

For example, in the Reeve's Tale, a couple of northern students ask a miller to grind some corn, so they can carry it "ham" – spelled H-A-M. This is the original version of the word ***home***. In the south of England, people said /hawm/ and /rawd/, and they spelled those words with an O. But in the north, people still said /hahm/ and /rahd/, and still spelled those words with an A.

Now let's think about that northern accent for a moment. They were still pronouncing those words with an /ah/ sound. And I noted earlier than English was borrowing more and more French and Latin words with that /ah/ sound. And a few centuries later – during the Great Vowel Shift – that /ah/ sound became an /ay/ sound. And a word like ***dame*** (/dahm/) became ***dame*** (/dame/). And a word like ***fame*** (/fahm/) became ***fame*** (/fame/).

Well, these later changes associated with Great Vowel Shift also affected dialects in the north – though not to the same extent. And this /ah/ sound also shifted to /ay/ in the north during the Great Vowel Shift. And since northern English speakers still had a lot of those Old English words with the /ah/ sound, those words also experienced the same sound change – from /ah/ to /ay/. So ***ham*** (/hahm/) – meaning the place where you live – became ***home*** in the south, but it became ***hame*** (/hame/) in the north. And ***ban*** (/bahn/) – meaning a part of the body – became ***bone*** in the south, but ***bane*** (/bane/) in the north. And ***stan*** (/stan/) – meaning the stuff bridges and castles were made of – became ***stone*** in the south, but ***stane*** (/stane/) in the north. All of these northern variations – ***hame***, ***bane*** and ***stane*** – can still be found in the modern Scots dialect in Scotland.

Along the same lines, the word ***rad*** (/rahd/) became /rawd/ and then ***road*** in the south, but it became ***raid*** in the north. And that northern variation eventually filtered back south. In the north, the word ***rad*** had acquired a different meaning over time. From its original sense as 'the act of riding,' it later came to mean 'an attack on horseback.' Thanks to the literature of later writers like Sir Walter Scott, the northern form ***raid*** passed back to the south, and it entered the English dialects spoken there in the 1800s. So all of that means that ***road*** and ***raid*** are just two different versions of the same word – one southern and one northern. And both are cognate with the word ***ride***.

So John's retinue 'rode' north on the revamped 'roads' of Britain and tried to gain support for a 'raid' on France. And the trip was successful. John secured the support of the northern nobles – and in early 1206, he was finally able to launch his invasion.

As I mentioned earlier, part of northern Aquitaine had been lost to the French king Phillip, and John headed there first. He was able to take back the lost territory in Aquitaine, and he then headed north. But John soon realized that Phillip was too powerful in the north, and he didn't have enough men or resources to take back Normandy. So in October of 1206, John and Phillip agreed to a truce, and John headed back to England – having only secured his position in Aquitaine.

Many historians think that John's failure to reclaim Normandy drove him to build up a massive war chest that would be capable of supporting a full-fledged invasion of France. John knew that he needed as much money as possible to build a war machine and pay the mercenaries that would be required to defeat Philip in northern France. Whatever his ultimate motivation, there is no doubt that John spent much of the remainder or his reign nickle-and-diming the people of England for every bit of revenue he could gather. And this will be a major factor leading the revolt of the barons – which we'll explore next time.

By the time John returned to England in late 1206, he had another rival to contend with – and that was Pope Innocent III. I mentioned earlier that John and monks at Canterbury had each favored different contenders for the vacant position of Archbishop of Canterbury. Well, the Pope had been pondering that decision, and he finally made up his mind. Rather than siding with John or the monks, Pope Innocent decided to go in a completely different direction (in March of 1206). He recommended that the position of archbishop be filled by a man named Stephen Langton. Langton was an English cardinal who had been teaching theology at the university in Paris. He was very distinguished and well-known among the scholars in Paris, but he was largely unknown in England.

As soon as the Pope proposed Langton for the position, he was promptly elected and approved by the monks at Canterbury. Langton was later consecrated as archbishop in Rome in June of 1207.

Now I should mention one interesting bit of trivia about Stephen Langton. I noted that he was a well-respected scholar of theology. Well, he is the person credited with dividing the books of the Bible into the chapters that are used today. Previously, there has just been blank lines to separate the various passages within each book. But Langton divided them into numbered chapters, and those are the standard chapters still used today.

So by the middle of 1207, Langton was now officially the Archbishop of Canterbury. He had been selected by the Pope and approved by the monks at Canterbury. But there was one person who had not approved the selection. And that was King John. And let's just say that he was not very happy about the choice.

While John had been away gathering support to invade France – and then actually invading France – he thought that his choice for archbishop was destined to be approved by the Pope. But then he got word that the Pope had chosen someone altogether different without even consulting him about the choice. John probably had visions of another Thomas Becket coming to England to tell him how to run the Church. And he wasn't having any of it.

Not only did John reject Langton as Archbishop, he refused to even allow Langton to enter the country. He declared the Langton an enemy of the Crown. But he wasn't done. John wanted to send a message to the Pope, so he drove all but the oldest monks at Canterbury into exile. And he took possession of the see at Canterbury. He confiscated the estates of the archbishop, and he seized all of the property held by Canterbury Cathedral. John probably thought that he had sent a clear message to Rome. But he was dealing with a Pope that just as hard-headed as he was.

The following year (1208), Pope Innocent put England under interdict. Now you may be wondering what that means. Well, it was something that was actually pretty rare and had never happened in England before. It was basically a general strike by the Church and its clergymen. Almost all Church services were suspended. There were to be no more sacraments of the Church. No masses, no confessions, no church burials, no sins forgiven, no Church bells were rung. It was basically an order to shut everything down until the king got back in line. There were a few minor exceptions. For example, baptisms and last rites were still permitted in some cases. But for the most part, the Church business in England came to an end.

Now as we know, this was an age in which the Church permeated every corner of society. Most people were Christians, and they lived their life surrounded by Christian rituals – from baptism, to Christian marriage, to regular confessions, to mass, to even the last rites given in death. It was a very religious age. So for the Pope to order the Churches to be closed and Church business to be suspended – well that was a big deal. It affected every almost aspect of their life – and death. Without Christian funerals and burials, people didn't know what to do when a family member died. Bodies were buried in woods and ditches. There are even reports of bodies left unburied in churchyards.

Now you might think that this would have been enough to get John back in line, but it wasn't. If John had been a pious king – like Edward the Confessor – it might have worked. But John wasn't pious at all. And he wasn't about to be dictated to by some Pope down in Rome. So all of this just made John even more angry and furious.

John decided to push back even harder. He now seized the property of any and all clergymen who complied with the interdict. If they refused to carry out services, John took their property.

As it turned out, all of this proved to be really good business for John. Whenever John seized a piece of Church property, he was able to take all of the revenues from the property. When he seized the property held by Canterbury Cathedral, he was able to claim nearly 1,500 pounds a year in extra revenue. When he seized the property of clergymen, he would not only take the income, but sometimes he would often turn around and sell the property back to them. He would make them purchase the right to hold their own lands. So rather than punishing John, the Church restrictions actually made John even richer.

By the following year – 1209 – it had become apparent to Pope Innocent that the Interdict wasn't working. So the Pope decided to raise the Church's punishment to the next level. In January, he started the proceedings to excommunicate John. This process was completed and made official in November. This was the most serious personal punishment that the Pope could deliver to a king. But alas, John was no typical king. He didn't really seemed all that bothered at all by the punishment. In fact, John just used it as an excuse to seize more Church property.

In fact, John now turned from claiming fees and revenues to outright plunder. He seized communion vessels and decorative items from Churches and melted them down for their silver and gold.

During this period, there was a mass exodus of clergymen from England. Every single bishop left the country except for one – the bishop of Winchester named Peter des Roches. So England was basically left with this one single bishop. He was the only one. And that term 'only one' is kind of important. Because it is yet another example of the sound change we've examined throughout this episode.

As I've noted before, the word ***one*** is a native Old English word – as are most of our numbers. But in Old English, it was pronounced ***an*** (/ahn/) – spelled A-N. So based on the sound change rules I've discussed in this episode, ***an*** should have become /awn/ around the current point in our story – and should have become /own/ in Modern English. But of course, we don't say /own/ – we say ***one*** (/wun/). So what happened?

Well, first of all, everything I just said 'should' have happened actually 'did' happen. The word ***one*** was pronounced /own/ shortly after the Great Vowel Shift in the 1700s. And that pronunciation still survives in lots of variations of that word – like the word ***only***. ***Only*** is literally 'one-ly.' But it retains its original pronunciation from Early Modern English.

Let's also consider the words ***alone*** and ***atone***. I noted back in Episode 86 that ***alone*** is actually a combination of the words ***all*** and ***one***. It meant 'all by oneself.' Again, the modern pronunciation of ***alone*** preserves the pronunciation of ***one*** as /own/.

The word ***atone*** has a similar history. It is actually a combination of the words ***at*** and ***one***. So the original sense of ***atone*** was to be 'at one.' It basically meant a state of harmony. Sometimes writers wrote about 'at onement' – or /at-ownment/ – to mean 'at one or in harmony with something else.' Over time, these phrases were adopted by writers who wrote about Christianity. They used the phrases 'at one' (/at-own/) and 'at onement' (at-ownment/) to refer to the reconciliation of God and man through Christ. And in the 1500s, those words contracted into single words, and that produced the words ***atone*** and ***atonement***. And notice how those words have retained the original pronunciation of the number ***one*** as /own/.

So if words like ***only***, ***alone*** and ***atone*** all preserve that original pronunciation, what happened with the number ***one***? Well, the short answer is that it has its own unique history, and it developed some unique sound changes over time that led to its modern pronunciation.

When we look at ***one*** as a distinct single syllable word – so not in a multi-syllable construction like ***only*** or ***alone*** or ***atone*** – but just by itself, it started to acquire a slight 'w' sound at the front as early as the 1400s, but becoming more and more widespread throughout the 1500s and 1600s. Initially, this pronunciation was restricted to the west of England and Wales. So it was very much a western pronunciation, and it is reflected in some documents that were composed in those regions. It actually became common for a while to put a slight 'w' sound before words that began with an /oh/ sound – especially if they were short single-syllable words.

The word ***oats*** began as the Old English word ***atan*** (/ah-tan/). In keeping with the sound change rules I've discussed, it became /aw-tes/ in Middle English, and ***oats*** in Modern English. But some documents spell the word as W-O-T-E-S – suggesting that it was sometimes pronounced /wotes/.

I mentioned the word ***oath*** a little earlier in this episode. It began as Old English ***að*** (/ahth/) – then became Middle English /awth/ and then Modern English ***oath***. But again, some old documents spell the word as W-O-T-H-E – suggesting that it was sometimes pronounce /woath/.

Oak has the same story. In Old English, it was ***ac*** (/ahk/) – spelled A-C. It then became Middle English /awk/ and Modern English ***oak***. But some documents spelled it W-O-K-E – suggesting that ***oak*** was sometimes pronounced /woke/.

And the word ***old*** has the same history. From ***ald*** (/ahld/) to /awld/ to ***old***. It had the same sound change, but it was sometimes spelled W-O-L-D – suggesting a pronunciation as /wold/.

And the words ***one*** /own/ and ***once*** /ownce/ were the early versions of ***one*** and ***once***, but they were sometimes spelled W-O-N and W-O-N-S, respectively. So this initial 'w' sound was once a common pronunciation, at least in some regional dialects, but it was short-lived. By the late 1600s, most of these 'w' pronunciations had disappeared. But for some unknown reason, they survived in the words ***one*** and ***once***. And by the 1700s, the initial /w/ sound had become standard throughout English.

So that helps to explain the initial 'w' sound, but the history of the vowel sound is far more complicated. It is always had a lot of regional variation, but the standard pronunciations today in America and England show evidence that the sound was raised to an long U – or /oo/ – sound (/woon/), and was then shortened to short U sound, ultimately giving us the modern pronunciation ***one*** (/wun/). Again, the vowel sound has a unique history, and has been the subject of extensive and detailed studies.

But the main point I wanted to make is that even though the word ***one*** has a unique history, other variations of the word followed along quite nicely with the general sound changes that I have highlighted in this episode. And that explains how we went from ***an*** (/ahn/) – to /awn/ – to ***only***, ***alone*** and ***atone***.

And speaking of ***atone***, it had become increasingly apparent by this point that King John had no intention to atone for his sins by giving in to the Pope.

This was the sad state of affairs around the years 1210 and 1211. England was under interdict. Church doors were locked. England was down to only one bishop. And the king had been excommunicated. Meanwhile, John was getting rich by taking advantage of the whole process.

Next time, we'll complete our look at John's reign. We'll see how the strains ultimately led to a showdown with the barons and a civil war that culminated in the Magna Carta – which was literally the 'Great Charter' – or the 'Big Charter.' In fact, the word ***magna*** in Magna Carta

comes from the same Indo-European root as the word ***mega*** in the Greek letter Omega. So Omega – or the 'Big O' – is actually cognate with the Magna Carta – or the 'Big Charter.' Next time, we'll move on from the 'Big O' to the 'Big Charter,' and we'll explore the events that led to one of the most important documents in English history.

Until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.

EPISODE 97: LET'S PUT IT IN WRITING

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 97: Let's Put It In Writing. In this episode, we're going to look at the events leading to Magna Carta, one of the most important documents in the history of the English-speaking world – even though it was composed in Latin. Though most of the provisions were directed at feudal concerns and became antiquated over the centuries, the charter established a basic idea that the king was subject to the law, and those laws could be spelled out in a written document. In fact, Magna Carta was really the product of a period in which the use of official documents was exploding. So this time, we'll look at the growing role of the written word and the rise of the bureaucratic state.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast at Patreon.com/historyofenglish. And as always, you can reach me by email at kevin@historyofenglishpodcast.com

So let's turn to this episode, and let's explore the road to Magna Carta. Our story actually begins in New York City of all places on April 30, 1939. That was the day when the World's Fair opened in New York. One of the themes of the fair was the world of the future. Many new inventions were featured, and visitors were invited to take a look at the "World of Tomorrow." To mark the occasion, the RCA pavilion introduced television to the mass public, and Franklin Roosevelt's opening address was not only broadcast over the radio, but also on television. About a thousand people saw that broadcast one of the 200 or so televisions sets that were available at the time in New York City.

The theme of the exhibition may have been the future, but the British Pavilion contained something very old – something that was produced over seven centuries earlier. It was one of the four surviving copies of the original Magna Carta. It was the first time an original copy had been displayed outside of Europe.

By the time the fair ended the next year, Britain was at war with Germany in World War II. But the United States was not – at least not yet. So rather than risk a perilous journey back across the Atlantic in wartime, the British government decided to let the document stay in the United States until the war was over. The document was soon moved to Washington where it was displayed in the Library of Congress beside the US Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. For many the U.S., the old charter was considered a foundational document of the United States as well. During the American Revolutionary War, the rallying cry "No taxation without representation" was based in part on arguments stemming from Magna Carta. In 1775, the colony of Massachusetts adopted as its seal a Patriot carrying Magna Carta in one hand and a sword in the other. Though technically not part of U.S. law, it has been cited as authority by the United States Supreme Court in over 100 Supreme Court decisions.

Now back in 1941, the British government was so eager to get the United States to go ahead and join the Second World War that it even considered letting the U.S. keep that copy of Magna Carta. They wanted to show the important values that were at stake in the war, and Magna Carta was seen as a symbol of that shared democratic history. That gift never happened. The events at Pearl Harbor ended America's neutrality, and as it turned out, the copy of the Magna Carta being exhibited in the U.S. didn't belong to the British government anyway. It belonged to Lincoln Cathedral where it was later returned and where it is still maintained today.

One of the other four copies is maintained at Salisbury Cathedral. The other two surviving copies are part of the British library, and they were both received from Sir Robert Cotton's famous library in London. I talked about Cotton's library in earlier episodes of the podcast. It housed the great collection of Old And Middle English manuscripts that Cotton had collected during his lifetime. But you might remember that the library caught fire, and many of those manuscripts were destroyed. The only copy of Beowulf was damaged in that fire, and one of his two copies of Magna Carta was severely damaged. Most of it was destroyed in the fire, but fortunately, the other copy avoided any major damage.

These four surviving copies were not the only original copies. No one is sure exactly how many there were. But we are told that copies were made and sent out to every shire. It has been estimated that there may have been around 40 original copies. All of them were written on parchment. And all of them were copied by an unknown number of scribes who worked quickly to produce the documents so the king's seal could be attached to them before they were sent out to the four corners of the country.

All of this reflects an era in which official documents held a special and important place. The fact that so many copies were produced so quickly shows how the English bureaucracy had grown by the early 1200s. And in fact, the story of Magna Carta is ultimately a story about the power of the written word – the legal power, the political power and the economic power. So in this episode, we're going to look at the nexus between money, power and the written word.

And let's start with the material that was used for the written word in the Middle Ages. That material was parchment. At one time, in ancient history, people had used natural objects like stone and tree bark and clay. But one of the earliest man-made writing materials was papyrus – produced from the papyrus plant. But papyrus didn't grow in Europe. In fact, it was mostly grown in Egypt. And as writing spread from the Mediterranean into Europe, a new type of writing material was needed.

The story of parchment really begins in modern-day Turkey in a city called Bergama today, but which was known as Pergamum in the Second Century BC during the era of Classical Greece. It had one the great libraries of the ancient world, so it imported a lot of papyrus. But the people of Pergamum were finding it increasingly difficult to get papyrus from Egypt. They soon learned that animal hides could be used as an alternative. They developed a technique whereby animal hides could be cleaned and processed and used as a writing material.

Unlike papyrus, scribes could write on both sides of this new material. It was also more durable and, most importantly, you didn't need access to the papyrus plant. This material soon spread to Rome where it was called ***pergamum*** after the city where the technique had originated. That word passed into Old North French as ***parcamin***. But as we've seen before, the French of Paris tended to pronounce the C-A – /ka/ sound – as /cha/. So around Paris, ***parcamin*** became ***parchimin***, and the word passed into early Middle English as ***parchment***.

During the Middle Ages, parchment became the primary material for writing. It was made from various animals, including sheep, goats and cows. As I've noted before, the parchment made from calfskin was called ***vellum*** from the same Latin root as the word ***veal***.

Parchment had another advantage of papyrus. It could be folded. Papyrus didn't last very long if it was folded. The crease would break and tear. So papyrus documents were stored for safe-keeping by rolling them up. And initially, that traditional method was used for parchment as well.

These were called ***rolls*** – a word which entered English in the early 1200s from Latin and French. They were also called ***scrolls***, which entered English about a century later also from French.

Now today, you might 'scroll' up or down on a computer screen or tablet, and that is actually a brand-new use of the word ***scroll*** having only appeared in the past few decades. And it shows how history has a funny way of repeating itself sometimes. At one time, a long document was attached to a roll at each end. The reader would hold one roll in the right hand and the other roll in left hand. He or she would then unwind the document from the first roll and wind it or gather it around the second roll. The advent of books made this process unnecessary. But in the computer age, it became common to compose an entire long article on single page – a digital page. So rather than flipping through pages, we have once again reverted back to scrolling though a long narrow page. And the word ***scroll*** has found a renewed application in Modern English.

Now the process of winding and turning those scrolls to read a document led the Romans to coin another word for this type of document. They sometimes called it a ***volumen***, which became ***volume*** in Old French. It literally meant 'something that was rolled,' and we have that same root word in a word like ***revolve*** meaning 'the process of going round and round.' The word ***volume*** entered English in the 1300s, and it was later applied to large written document, typically a large book. And that gave us the modern sense of the word as a large book.

The word ***volume*** was later used to refer to the specific size of a book. So you might speak of a book with great volume. And that led to the sense of the word as the 'volume' of liquid in a container or the 'volume' of sound coming out of a stereo.

So ***roll***, ***scroll*** and ***volume*** all originated as terms for Medieval documents – rolled-up and bound for storage and safe-keeping. Again, that was true for papyrus and parchment. But parchment scrolls were bulky and not very efficient. And the entire method of using a scroll was sometimes tedious. If you wanted to read a small portion of the document, you might have to unroll the entire scroll to get to the portion you were looking for. And this is where parchment really had an advantage over papyrus.

As I noted, parchment could be folded. And several pieces could also be sewed together. It was durable and flexible. This eventually allowed the Romans to create the book format that we have today –what they called a ***codex*** at the time. And books were more efficient because you could flip through the pages without having to unwind and wind a scroll.

But not all parchment was bound together in a book. Sometimes it was simply folded in half. And that's how many official documents were prepared, even during the Roman period. For example, when officials traveled to other regions, they carried an official document allowing safe passage, and that document was usually written on a piece of folded parchment. Because it was folded, it was double the thickness of a normal piece of parchment. It was sort of like those commercials for two-ply paper towels. They're double the thickness, so they absorb better.

Well, the Roman term for these documents was based on a Greek word that meant 'two-ply' – in fact, it literally meant 'two ply.' It used the Greek word for 'two' which was ***di***, and the Greek word ***ploos*** which meant 'fold.' If fact, ***ploos*** in an Indo-European word that's cognate with that Latin word ***ply***. And thanks to the 'p' to 'f' sound change in the Germanic languages, it is also cognate with the English word ***fold***. So this word meaning 'two-fold' or 'two-ply' was ***diploos***. And that produced the word ***diploma*** which was literally 'a folded document,' but it came to mean 'an official document,' especially those used when traveling to other nations.

After the term entered English, the people who carried these folded documents or ***diplomas*** were called ***diplomats*** – literally 'the people who carried folded parchment.' And when they negotiated with other countries, they were said to engage in ***diplomacy***. Most of these words have retained their original meanings in English, but ***diploma*** has become more restricted to the paperwork you receive when you graduate from school. Those early university diplomas were usually written on parchment – often on the skin of a sheep – which is why a diploma is also known as a ***sheepskin*** in Modern English.

So when we think back to official Medieval documents, we had ***rolls***, and ***scrolls***, and ***volumes***, we can now add in ***diplomas*** as well. They all referred to parchment documents. Now, I've talked about papyrus, which was replaced by parchment, but you may be wondering about paper. By the way, the word ***paper*** is actually derived from the word ***papyrus***, even though paper is a completely different material made through a completely different process. Paper has been used in China for around 2,000 years, and it spread into the Arab word in the 700s. And by the current point in our story, it was being used and produced in parts if Italy and Spain in southern Europe. But it would take another couple of centuries for paper to find its way to Britain and most of northern Europe. So I'll deal with paper in a future episode when it starts to arrive in Britain in the late 1300s. But for now, we're mostly dealing with parchment.

I said that the word ***paper*** is derived from the word ***papyrus***. Well, the Greeks had another word for papyrus. They sometimes called it ***khartes***. And ***khartes*** literally meant a piece or page of papyrus, and that word was soon borrowed by the Romans. Since the Greeks and early Romans used a lot of papyrus for their official documents, the word ***khartes*** came to mean an official document in Latin. And Greek ***khartes*** became Latin ***carta***.

Once again, the Latin C-A – or /ka/ sound – was often pronounced as /cha/ around Paris. So in early French, ***carta*** became ***charter***. And around the early 1200s, that French version ***charter*** was starting to pass into Middle English. Old English had been using the native word ***book*** for most types of written documents – including charters.

In addition to ***carta*** and ***charter***, French also had a shortened version of those words, which were ***carte*** and ***chart***. ***Carte*** passed into English as ***card***, and ***chart*** also passed into English. So English ended up with ***charter***, ***chart*** and ***card*** – all variations of the same word. So it's probably not surprising that English speakers soon found ways to distinguish those words. ***Chart*** started to be restricted to documents that contained illustrations, especially maps. ***Card*** came to be used for small single page documents, especially playing cards when they started to appear in Britain in the next century. And ***charter*** was used for official government documents.

Now charters were used in England before the Norman Conquest. Again, they were sometimes called a ***boc*** – or 'book' – using the native English word. The granting of a charter was called ***bocian*** from the same word. A single page of parchment was called ***leaf*** – or 'leaf' – again using a native word. By the way, I mentioned that a folded piece of parchment was called a ***diploma*** back on the continent – literally a 'two-ply document.' Well, it was called a ***cine*** in Old English. Obviously, that word has disappeared over time.

Now just like in Continental Europe, the Anglo-Saxons composed their charters in Latin. It was an elaborate form of Latin, and they typically involved some type of grant. So for example, they were used in Anglo-Saxon England for land grants. Kings also used charters whenever they needed to grant permission or authority for something to be done.

After the Norman Conquest, it became a common practice for new kings to issue a charter when they were crowned in order to formally recognize the laws and traditions of the kingdom. For example, if we think back to the sons of William the Conqueror, there was William Rufus who was king, but he was shot with an arrow and killed while hunting. So his younger brother Henry rushed and had himself crowned as the new king, even though his older brother Robert was Duke of Normandy and had a better claim to the throne. In order to secure his position with the nobles, Henry issued a Charter when he was crowned.

I actually mentioned that Charter way back in Episode 72. Henry promised to rule as a good king and to avoid the abuses of his older brother. He also made some concessions to the leading barons. He forgave certain debts and past offences, and he agreed to stop claiming excessive fees and fines from them. Henry's idea was to put his promises in writing to give the barons something tangible, so they would have a good reason to support him. And it worked. The

Charter was called the Charter of Liberties. And make a mental note about that Charter because it's going to became very important a little bit later in this story.

Now you might remember that Henry I was a great tax collector, and he initiated the office of the Exchequer to help collect taxes. And he also started to keep permanent records of the Exchequer's accountings. Those records were called the Pipe Rolls. And that really marked the beginning a new era, where the government bureaucracy was used to generate revenue for the crown.

But if we go back to Henry's time – in the early 1100s, we would find that charters were different from those produced in King John's day a century later. Those earlier charters were usually undated, and they typically referred back to some grant or transaction that had already happened. So they weren't used to document a transaction as it was taking place. They were used as a record 'after the fact.' In part, this was because a literate scribe was required to compose a complicated Latin charter. And there weren't a lot of those around in the early 1100s. So a king or baron had to wait until a scribe was available to record a grant or transaction at a later date. For some transactions, the charter might be prepared weeks or months after the fact.

But by the time we get to the early 1200s – about a century later – that had started to change. Now, around the time of King John, those charters were being prepared at the time the grant or transaction was made. They no longer referred back to events that had already taken place. They now referred to acts that were done at the time the charter was executed. Now this may seem like a technical distinction, but it reveals how much the bureaucracy had grown. Thanks to all of those burgeoning universities that I discussed a few episodes back, there were now lots of trained scribes who could quickly prepare charters and other documents.

The best example of this change can be found in the evolution of property deeds. And in fact, it is also revealed in the word ***deed*** itself. ***Deed*** is an Old English word, and it meant an act or transaction or something done. In fact, it's related to the words ***do***, and ***did*** and ***done***. So if you 'did' something honorable, you performed a 'good deed.' And if you 'did' something dishonorable, you performed a 'bad deed.'

Well at a time before charters were immediately available, how did you transfer a piece of land? There was no document to be signed or sealed. Well, you did it by 'deed' – in the original sense of the word. You performed an actual deed . You 'did' something. If you were the person receiving the land, you would bring some witnesses to the land, and you would meet the owner. The owner would acknowledge you as the new owner in front of the witnesses. You might give him something in return – like a knife or a hunting dog. That helped to confirm the transaction. The old owner would then leave and you would take physical possession of the property.

At some later date, a charter might or might not be prepared to record what had happed. Even if a charter was prepared, it was only some evidence of the transaction. It didn't really prove anything. After all, anyone could make up a charter at a later date. So the charter itself didn't prove ownership. To prove the case, the witnesses had to be called to testify.

Well by the time we get to the early 1200s, it was common for a charter to be prepared 'at the time' the property was transferred. And it was common for the parties to put their seal on the charter at that time. So the nature of the charter changed. Now, it became proof of the actual transaction. In fact, in the year 1234, a court case in the royal courts called Dun vs Basset established a rule that a land grant could be proven by either witnesses or by a charter. So if the witnesses were no longer living or available, the charter itself was sufficient to prove title. So the 'deed' was no longer limited to some physical action – something you 'did.' It could now include the document itself. And by the 1300s, that type of document was being called a ***deed***. So the sense of the word ***deed*** was extended from an action to a written document. This shows how the culture was changing – from an older society governed by memory and recollections and physical actions – to a new society governed by the written word.

One of the keys to this change was the increased use of seals to make documents official. Seals had been around since the earliest civilizations, but their use had almost always been confined to royalty and the highest government officials. Throughout history, most leaders were illiterate, so rather than signing a document, they authorized documents by attaching the official seal. Also, documents and signatures could be easily forged, but once a seal was attached, everyone knew it was the real thing.

The late Anglo-Saxon kings had also used seals, but in the century or so after the Norman Conquest, the use of seals spread throughout the aristocracy, and by the early 1200s, towns and free landholders had their own seals. Over the next century, even merchants, tradesmen and artisans started using seals. Seals helped to authenticate documents and give them validity, so as more and more people used them, it allowed the use of official documents to spread throughout society.

By the time John became king in 1199, the English government was producing so many documents that it had to find a way to keep track of all of them. I've already mentioned the Pipe Rolls of the Exchequer. Those detailed financial records had been maintained for several years. And now the Chancery started to keep records of the other documents that were being generated.

In the same year that John became king, charters started to be kept as permanent records. These were the so-called Charter Rolls. Sometimes the Chancery issued less formal documents. They were instructions or orders sent to local officials on small pieces of parchment. Just like with charters, the royal seal was attached to them. But some of them were deemed to be private and confidential. These confidential documents were called ***letters close*** because they were folded and closed so no one could read them. The year after John became king, the Chancery started to keep a record of those letters in what was called the Close Rolls.

If the letters were not confidential, they were left open for anyone to read. These were called ***letters patent***. ***Patent*** was a Latin and French word that meant 'open,' but it was ultimately an Indo-European word that meant 'to spread far and wide.' It has the same root as the word ***pass***, as well as ***passage*** and ***expand***. So a letter patent was open and available for anyone to read. And in the year 1201, the Chancery started to keep a record of those letters as well in the so-called Patent Rolls.

Now I should note here that this type of open letter – or letter patent – eventually became known as simply a ***patent*** during the 1300s. These letters usually granted some right or privilege, and by the 1600s, it had come to mean an exclusive right to an invention or innovation. So today, when we talk about someone applying for a 'patent' for some invention, the term goes back to the letters patent issued by the Medieval Chancery, and ***patent*** literally meant open for anyone to read.

By the way, the word ***letter*** also entered English around this time from French. The Latin root also gave us the words ***literate*** and ***literacy***. And in French the word ***letter*** could refer to either an individual letter of the alphabet or a written document. And both senses of the word were borrowed into English in the early 1200s, and of course the word ***letter*** still has both of those meanings today.

Now in addition to these official letters and charters, the English Chancery also started to keep a variety of other records. So who was responsible for all of this record-keeping and all of this bureaucracy? Well, even though it began during the reign of King John, it wasn't really John that brought about this innovation. It was the man who John appointed as Chancellor – named Hubert Walter. At least, it appears that he was the person who directed these records to be kept. And Hubert wasn't just John's Chancellor. He had another loftier title. He was also the Archbishop of Canterbury. And it was his death in the year 1205 that led to the dispute with the Pope over his successor that I discussed in the last episode.

Now we can start to see why John was so adamant about the selection of Walter's successor. He wanted another Archbishop that he could work with. Walter had been a government administrator and a bureaucrat. He was no Thomas Becket. He hadn't tried to put the interest of the Church over the interest of the king. And if John had any say, the next Archbishop would follow the same approach.

But as we saw last time, that didn't happen. Pope Innocent III ultimately selected Stephen Langton as the new Archbishop. And John's refusal to accept that appointment led to England being placed under interdict, and ultimately led to John being excommunicated. John retaliated by kicking out clerics and confiscating Church property.

As I noted in the last episode, all of this actually made John richer, so he wasn't really all that concerned about the stalemate. Certainly people grumbled, but there wasn't much they could do about it.

And this really brings us to one of the main causes of the upcoming break with the barons – money. The barons could tolerate John's cruelty. And they could tolerate the break with the Church. And they could even tolerate paying taxes and fees for war and other reasons. But what John was doing in terms of taxation and confiscations went beyond anything they had ever seen. It went beyond raising government revenue, and it started to look like outright robbery and plunder. And much of that plunder was done with the official seal of the king.

John used his expanding bureaucracy to rake in money on an unprecedented scale. In fact, one of the few positive things that historians have to say about John is that he was great administrator. But for John's subjects, that was precisely the problem. The one thing John really excelled at was using that administration to take people's money and property.

Some of John's efforts to raise money were innocent enough. I noted a few episodes back that John issued a license to the organizers of the Donnybrook fair in Ireland very early in his reign. In order for a town to hold a fair, it had to get a charter from the king. The king had to grant permission for the fair. And the town had to pay for it. The same thing was true for a simple market. If you wanted a market it your town, you had to go buy a charter from the king. And all of those charters had to be renewed at regular intervals – for a fee of course.

In fact, it went beyond fairs and markets. John saw the value in actually creating new towns. And when I say that he saw the value, I mean he saw the economic value. In order for a town to be established, guess what you needed? A charter. The king had to grant permission for the land to be used for a town. But that initial fee for the charter was small potatoes compared to what followed.

The town charter granted the townspeople their "liberties and free customs." That meant that people who moved to the town didn't have to perform labor services for their land – like peasants on the farm did. And they were free to sell, and lease and pass on their property to their heirs. They did have to pay rents to the king or other lord, but the rents were usually set very low to attract settlers.

So the king collected rents from the people who lived in his towns. And as the towns grew, that meant he got more rents. And as the towns grew, there was an increased need for markets and even occasional fairs. So John could charge for those charters too. When Domeday Book was compiled in 1086, the country of Oxfordshire had just two markets. By the end of John's reign, it had nearly a dozen.

John didn't just establish his new towns anywhere. He preferred to establish them along the coast so they could function as ports. John then imposed a duty on all goods entering and leaving the country, so by establishing more port towns, it meant that more goods were subject to import and export duties.

One of the towns that John founded was Liverpool near the northwestern coast of England. It was established on an empty site along a tidal creek in the Mersey estuary. The ***pool*** part of the name is obvious because ***pool*** meant a body of water. The meaning of the first part – ***liver*** – is uncertain. It has been the subject of many different theories. The word ***lifer*** was sometimes used in Old English to mean 'thick or muddy water,' so that may have been the source. Some theories suggest that the word is derived from a Celtic word that meant 'a flood or current of water.' Either way, the town was established by a letter patent issued by John in the year 1207.

At least 57 new towns were established in the 50 year period between 1180 and 1230. And some historians have seen these town charters are a preliminary step toward Magna Carta. Towns

received their "liberties and free customs" in exchange for certain agreed-upon payments to the king. And this agreement was set forth in writing in a royal charter. So these were basically contracts between the king and the townspeople. And it wasn't that much of a stretch to extend that same idea to the country as a whole. Maybe the king could be compelled to sign a charter concerning the rights and privileges of the entire country.

If some of the barons were starting to make these connections, it would be understandable because most of John's taxes and fees were aimed directly at them. And John exploited every legal loophole to gouge them.

For example, consider what happened when an older baron died. He usually left his land holdings to one or more of his children. But that didn't happen automatically. This was still the feudal system. The baron held his lands from the king. So technically, the lands reverted back to John, and John would then grant them back to the heirs. But of course, he did that for a fee. It was sort of like an early version of an inheritance tax or estate tax. But in feudal Europe it was called a ***relief***. In terms of etymology, the 'relief' was the relief of the heir from disinheritance. For a fee, the heir was placed back in the position of the deceased parent. This feudal sense of the word ***relief*** once existed side-by-side with the more modern use of the term. But the feudal sense died out with the end of feudalism.

Now the standard rate of the relief – or inheritance tax – was typically 100 pounds, which was a lot of money in the early 1200s. But John raised the rate up to as high as 400 pounds – so quadruple the usual rate. Sometimes it was higher than that. To put this in to some perspective, the average baronial income was only about 200 pounds a year. So the relief could be double the average annual income which meant that the heirs ended up going into debt and owing money to John whenever they received their inheritance.

The problem for heirs didn't end with the payment of the relief. If there was a surviving widow or daughter who inherited landholdings, they couldn't just remarry. Their husband effectively controlled the lands, and a feudal lord had a say in who controlled his vassal's lands. So that meant that the king had to consent if a widow or daughter wanted to marry. Of course, John often sold that consent to the highest bidder. Very often the widow or daughter had little or no say in the whole process. John would force a marriage to another noble or child of another noble.

If a child who inherited the property was a minor, John had the right to appoint a guardian to manage the estate until the child was an adult, but this feudal guardian didn't really have any obligations to the child that a modern legal guardian does. The feudal guardian was entitled to possession of the property and all income that it produced. So once again, the guardianship was usually sold to the highest bidder, and the property was exploited for every penny until the child got older.

Now these problems weren't just the concerns of the barons' wives and children. They were also the concerns of the barons themselves because they didn't want their wives and children to be exploited in this manner. And they didn't want their children having to live their entire lives indebted to the king for various payments.

And these were just the problems encountered when a baron died. During his lifetime, a baron had other problems to deal with. And the biggest one was something called ***scutage***. This funny-sounding term was another type of feudal tax or fee. It literally meant the 'shield fee' or 'shield money.' The term ***scutage*** is actually related to the word ***squire*** which was a knight's assistant. The Latin word ***scutum*** meant 'a shield.' In French, the young man who carried the knight's shield was called an ***esquire*** which meant a shield carrier – from the same root. That word was later shortened to just ***squire***.

Now when a baron received property from the king, he had an obligation to provide the king with a certain number of knights in return. But sometimes, the baron didn't have access to enough knights, so he was allowed to pay the king the money equivalent. In French, this was called ***escuage*** from the same Latin root. It literally meant the 'shield money,' and in English, it was Anglicized to ***scutage***.

Over time, it became standard practice for the barons to just pay scutage rather than providing actual knights. The king could use that money to go out and hire mercenaries if he needed soldiers. Sometimes, John just kept the money.

Now the king had a right to levy scutage whenever miliary service was needed. But this is where John found his loophole. He levied the tax over and over again without actually going to war. John's father, Henry II, and his brother, Richard, had ruled England for 45 years. And they demanded scutage 11 times total in that 45 year period. Then John became king. And in the 16 years before Magna Carta, he also collected it 11 times. So it went from about once every 4 years to once every 18 months.

John's fees and taxes weren't limited to the aristocracy. In the year 1207, he levied a massive tax on all lands, goods, revenues and moveable property. This tax as called a ***thirtieth*** because the tax rate was literally 1/30th of the value of all of those goods. It raised an incredible amount of money.

Now the barons had already been stretched thin before John came to power. They had to pay for Richard's Third Crusade, and then they had to pay an exorbitant ransom when Richard was taken hostage on his way back home. Then John got hold of the Exchequer and started squeezing more and more money out of them.

Frankly, it was more money than most barons could pay. They had to give John an IOU, and John was just fine with that, because it gave John control over the barons. They were left in perpetual debt to him. If a baron got out of line, John could call all of his debts due, and if couldn't pay up, John would declare default and seize all of the baron's lands. So there wasn't much the barons could do without risking everything.

The dilemma of the barons is represented by the case of William de Brioze. William was a Marcher Lord from the Welsh border region. He came from a prominent Norman family in the region, and he became indebted to John over time. Much of the debt was acquired when William sought the lordship of Limerick in Ireland. John granted him the title in exchange for 5,000

marks. John also granted him other properties, including some property that had been confiscated from the Church during the Interdict. Of course, William had to agree to large payments for those properties. William soon became the most powerful English baron in southern Wales. He and John were close for many years, but eventually, they fell out with each other. No one is sure what the cause of the disagreement was. But afterwards, John called William's debts due, and William couldn't pay.

John then seized William's properties – eventually forcing William and his family into exile. William ended up in France, but his wife and young son fled to Scotland, where John's men detained them. John then threw the wife and the young boy in prison – where they were both starved to death. The barons were appalled at John's actions. John had established that he was willing to drive them into bankruptcy and exile – and even kill their wives and children. More and more barons started to reach their breaking point.

In 1211 and 1212, John had to deal with occasional uprisings in Wales. He led an expedition there in 1211 which helped to subdue the rebels. He was back again in 1212. Once again, he cracked down on the rebels, but then his men discovered several anonymous letters in Nottingham. The letters were addressed to John, and they warned that if he continued the war in Wales, he would either be slain by his own nobles or delivered to his enemies for destruction. Suddenly, John realized that some of his own barons were plotting to murder him.

By all accounts, John became paranoid after discovering the plot. He used his bureaucracy to compose letters to all of his barons demanding that they deliver him hostages to ensure their good behavior. The opposition was especially strong in the north. So John marched to the north of England and forced a couple of rebel barons into exile. He traveled with armed body-guards everywhere he went.

But John had even bigger problems. He soon discovered that Pope Innocent had made an alliance with the French king Phillip. They were plotting to take John out. The Pope was going to sanction an invasion of England by Phillip. That was bad enough, but now John started to realize that some of his own barons might join with Philip. The primary Welsh leader had already formed an alliance with Phillip. And having lost most of his French lands to Phillip, John now realized that he might lose the British Isles as well.

But this is where John showed how shrewd he could be. Late in 1212, John reached out to the Pope and agreed to give in. And John went further than anyone expected – even the Pope. John agreed to recognize Stephen Langton as the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he agreed to restore the Church property and to reinstate the banished priests. And then he proposed that all of England and Ireland be submitted to the Pope. Technically, they would be turned over to the Pope, and the Pope would grant them to back to John who would hold them as the Pope's vassal. So the Pope would become the feudal lord of England and Ireland. Furthermore, John agreed to pay 1000 marks a year to the Holy See. It was an incredible turnaround. But it worked.

The Pope agreed to rescind John's excommunication. The Interdict remained in effect - but there were discussions to have it withdrawn if John went through with his promises. In May of 1213, John issued a charter to the Pope to confirm the arrangement.

The Pope was completely won over. He now became John's closest ally, and he withdrew his support for the French invasion of England. After all, England was now a papal fiefdom. Meanwhile, John managed to destroy much of the French fleet that had gathered at Flanders. Together, these two events prevented the French invasion.

England's status as a papal fiefdom continued for the next century and half, and for the remainder of John's reign, he could count on the Pope for support – even when he went to war with his barons.

John had managed to save himself, but many in England thought he had gone too far. He had given up too much. Even the new archbishop, Stephen Langton, thought John had made a bad deal by allowing papal authority to extend to England. And the barons weren't happy either. For years, they had backed John against the Pope. Now they were technically vassals of both John and the Pope.

About three months after John issued his charter to the Pope, a great meeting was held at St. Paul's Cathedral to discuss the lifting of the Interdict and to get the Churches back open again. The new Archbishop, Stephen Langton, attended the meeting, as did many of the barons.

A chronicler named Roger of Wendover wrote an account of this period. And he wrote that Langton used the meeting as an opportunity to address some of the barons directly. He pulled them aside and addressed them in secret. Then he pulled out a copy of that coronation charter issued by Henry I. Remember that? That was that charter that John's great-grandfather had issued when he became king to win the support of the barons back in the year 1100.

According to Roger's account, the Archbishop told the barons that the old charter had come to light, and if they wished, they could use it to recover their lost liberties. He placed the charter before the barons and had it read to them. Among other provisions, Henry's old charter specifically stated that his subjects should be allowed to inherit their estates on payment of a "lawful and just" relief. It also agreed to protect widows, and to fix the financial penalties for crimes at an ancient rate. Henry also agreed to abide by the traditional laws of Edward the Confessor. Roger reports that the barons heard all of this, and they rejoiced. All they had to do was to get John to sign a similar charter. They just needed him to agree to uphold the terms of his great-grandfather's charter. Supposedly the barons in attendance agreed to force the issue by taking up arms against John if they needed to.

Meanwhile, John was starting to feel confident in his position again. With the Pope now on board, and with coffers that were overflowing, John decided that it was time to turn the tables on Philip. In late 1213, he made preparations for another massive invasion of France to take back his lost territories. The mission would also include an expedition to Poitou in southern France.

To pay for that mission, John levied another scutage. It was a whopper – three times the traditional rate. For the first time, many barons outright refused to pay. Much of the opposition was centered in the north of England. The northern barons argued that they had no obligation to fight across the Channel in France – and certainly not all the way down in Aquitaine.

Now at this point, we have evidence that some of the barons were already working on a draft of a charter to hold John's feet to the fire. In the 1800s, a parchment document was discovered in the royal archives of France. It was unknown prior to that point, and it was published in the 1860s. It turned out to be a rough draft of the Magna Carta. It doesn't have a date on it, so no one is absolutely certain when it was drafted. Today, it is known as the "Unknown Charter of Liberties."

The document is really a blend between Henry I's Coronation Charter and the final draft of Magna Carta, so most historians agree that it was a preliminary draft. It begins by reciting the parts of Henry's Coronation Charter that I mentioned earlier. It then includes specific provisions limiting the king's ability to assess fees and taxes. It also required the king to protect the rights of widows and underage heirs. And then it had a provision which didn't make it to the final draft. It said that the king could not compel military service outside of England, except for missions to Normandy and Brittany. So no forced expeditions in southern France. Now given this particular provision, most scholars think this draft was put together after the northern nobles refused to support John's invasion of southern France. This indicates that a charter was being negotiated over a year before Magna Carta.

Despite the refusal of several barons to support the French expedition, John moved ahead anyway. Most of the barons were still on board. So in February of 1214, John headed across the Channel to take back what he had lost a decade earlier. John's English force headed down to Poitou, while a separate group of continental allies invaded Flanders with plans to advance into Normandy. The plan was for the two forces to link up with each other in northern France.

John actually had some early success in Poitou, but his forces were defeated as they started to head north. Meanwhile, the northern force got tied up in Flanders and were soundly defeated at a battle known as the Battle of Bouvines. It was a crushing defeat for John and his allies.

The loss at Bouvines settled John's fate. He limped back to England with his tail between his legs. Everything John had been planning for a decade had completely fallen apart. Ten years of outrageous taxation had come to nothing, Now even more barons joined the opposition. They had had enough and were ready for rebellion.

It's important to note than many barons continued to remain loyal to John. Initially, about one-third joined the rebellion. The other two-thirds continued to side with John.

At Christmas of 1214, several of the opposition barons met with John and demanded that he issue a charter based on Henry I's Coronation Charter. John said he would get back to them. A follow-up meeting in January ended in deadlock. Another meeting was scheduled for April but John never showed.

By this point, the rebel barons in the north had been joined by several prominent barons in the east of England. And the citizens of London were showing their support for the rebels as well. John tried to keep the Londoners on board by issuing a new charter in May giving them a right to elect their own mayor every year. But the concession didn't work. The rebels soon marched into London, and with the loss of London, John realized that he would have to give in.

At this point the rebels were merely asking for a charter, with specific terms still being negotiated. John probably thought it would buy him some time to just go along with the demands and put something in writing. In retrospect, it seems likely that John never had any intention to abide by it because he ended up renouncing it as soon as he signed it.

Nevertheless, the two sides met at Runnymede just up river from London in June of 1215. The two sides soon reached a preliminary agreement on the terms of the charter. The working draft was set forth on a piece of parchment and the king's seal was affixed to it. But this was not the final document. It was a preliminary document called the Articles of the Barons, and it still exists today in the Canterbury Cathedral archives.

This working draft had removed many of the provisions from Henry I's charter, but it set out the basic terms of the agreement. It also stated that a charter would be drafted to codify the agreed-upon terms. On June 15, John and the barons met face-to-face and swore oaths to each other to abide by the terms of the agreement. This was really the execution of the Charter. Remember that bit about deeds? It was the performance of the deed that mattered – in this case the swearing of oaths. The charter was just evidence of what they had agreed to.

The actual charter were then prepared, and it is generally agreed it took about four days for the scribes to complete it. On the 19th, the parties met again, and it was on that date that the two sides re-confirmed the agreement, and John's seal was actually attached to it. No one knows what happened to copy that was present on that day. But John's bureaucrats immediately produced several more copies – perhaps as many as 40. They were drawn up on sheepskin parchment, and the king's seal was attached to each of them. These copies were then sent out to various cathedrals and royal officials in different parts of the country to let them know that peace had been restored between John and his barons. As I noted at the beginning of this episode, four of these copies still survive today, though one is heavily damaged by fire. That also happens to be the only one that still retains its original seal, though the seal itself is also burned and damaged.

Now when the copies were sent to the shires, they were read out loud at meetings of the local county courts. But the charter was composed in Latin – not English. So most people probably had no idea what it said when it was read aloud.

It is almost certain that the charter was translated and read in French for the benefit of local nobles who spoke French. French was still used as an official language in England. In fact, its use as an official language was actually increasing during this period. Property deeds were still drafted as Latin charters, but around this time, those deeds also started to be composed in French. In fact, the oldest surviving property deed in French is dated to this same year – 1215. So as a

second official language, John's charter was probably read in French as well as Latin in most county courts.

Scribes actually produced French translations of the charter around this time. And we know that because at least one of the French copies has survived. It appears that this particular French copy was commissioned by the sheriff of Hampshire in the south of England. And that's because the scribe who wrote it out included a note that his version was based on the copy addressed to the 'sheriff of Southamptonshire' – which was an old name for the county of Hampshire.

So if the charter was composed in Latin and translated into French, what about English? Well, the short answer is that we don't know. It seems very likely that the document would have been read aloud in English since most of the audience would have only understood English. But there are no reports of the document being read in English at the time, and there are no surviving English translations from this period.

About a century later, in the year 1300, John's grandson King Edward I issued a proclamation that Magna Carta be read aloud in Westminster Hall. The proclamation was written in Latin and it said that Magna Carta was to be read in its original Latin and also in the "lingua patria" – which translates as 'the language of the country.' That has been interpreted by many scholars as English, but it doesn't actually say English. French was still the language used for parliamentary and legal records. So it could have meant French. In fact, there is no surviving English translation of Magna Carta from the entire period of Middle English.

The first known English translation of the entire charter didn't appear until the 1500s – three centuries later. So that should tell you something about the relative state of English as an official language during this period.

The first full English translation appeared in 1534 – shortly after the introduction of the printing press in England. The translation was made by a Tudor courtier and poet named George Ferrers and was published by a printer named Robert Redman. It was titled "The Boke of Magna Carta" because the word ***book*** still retained its original Old English meaning as a document – especially a legal document or charter.

It was only after the advent of the printing press – when books in the modern style were mass produced – that the term ***book*** came to be restricted to its current meaning. This also means that the oldest surviving English copy of Magna Carta appears on paper – not parchment.

Now you might assume that this marks a larger trend – the gradual disappearance of parchment in the face of cheap and plentiful paper. And that's true. But parchment didn't disappear from the English government bureaucracy.

Centuries of parchment scrolls are still maintained by the British government. And in fact, English law still requires that all Acts of the British Parliament have to be printed on vellum for safekeeping because it is more durable than paper. Ireland has a similar rule.

Now this fact actually made the news in Britain last year. In February of 2016, the House of Lords announced that it was going to stop printing laws on vellum to save money. This would have ended a tradition going back to the Anglo-Saxon period. The shift from parchment to paper would have saved about 80,000 pounds a year. But a few days later, the Cabinet Office stepped forward and offered to pick up the costs to maintain the use of vellum. So at least for now, the tradition of using parchment continues.

I'm going to conclude this episode on that note. Next time, we'll look at why Magna Carta became such an important document in Western history. We'll look at the what the document actually says, and what it doesn't say. And we'll see how John's death a short time later actually preserved the legacy of the Charter. We'll then look at the early reign of John's 9-year old son and how that reign shaped the role of the French language that was being spoken in England. The old Norman dialect was on its way out, and the standard Parisian dialect was on its way in. This change actually affected English in some interesting ways. So we'll look at those developments as well.

Until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.

EPISODE 98: THE GREAT DEBATES

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 98: The Great Debates. In this episode, we're going to look at the aftermath of Magna Carta. Rather than settling the dispute between the king and his barons, it actually sparked a renewed debate over the power of the king. And that wasn't the only debate that was taking place during this period. The art of debating was taught in schools and universities. The burgeoning legal profession used those techniques to try cases in the newly-reformed court system. And poets composed poetry in a popular style that featured characters engaged in a dialogue or debate about various topics. So this time, we'll look at the art of debate in 13th Century England.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast at Patreon.com/historyofenglish. And as always, you can reach me by email at kevin@historyofenglishpodcast.com

This time, I want to look at the what happened in the immediate aftermath of Magna Carta. And I had planned to take the story beyond the death of King John, but I won't have time to get there this time because there is an important Middle English poem that I want to discuss. The poem is called the Owl and the Nightingale, and while the date of the poem is unclear, many scholars think it was composed during John's reign. It an important text in the overall history of English because it is one of the earliest pieces of English poetry to be composed after the Norman Conquest. There were a few other poems like Layamon's Brut, but most of those other poems were translations or interpretations of earlier Latin or French texts. The Owl and the Nightingale was different though because it appears to have been composed in English, and it is not based on an earlier poem in another language.

Now even though it appears to be a native poem, it does rely on certain literary styles that were very popular in Latin and French. For one thing, it is a rhyming poem which was common on the continent, but was still pretty rare for poems written in English. English tended to use alliteration. And even a poem like Brut mixed alliteration and rhyming. But this particular poem uses a consistent rhyming scheme based on a style used in Latin and French poetry.

The poem also uses another technique borrowed from Latin and French poetry, and that's the idea of a debate between two characters – in this case two birds. This type of poetry is sometimes called debate poetry, and it was very popular on the continent during this period. And in fact, it had been popular there for about a century. But the Owl and the Nightingale is one of the first poems in this style to be composed in Middle English.

Since one of the themes of this episode is the art of debate, let's take a closer look at that word ***debate***. The word was borrowed into English in the mid-1300s from French. It combines that standard Latin prefix ***de-*** with the root word ***-bate*** which meant 'to strike or beat.' We have that

same root in other borrowed words like ***battle*** and ***combat*** and ***battery*** (as in 'assault and battery'). All of those words came from Latin.

The prefix ***de-*** meant 'down' as in ***descend***. So ***to debate*** was literally 'to beat down' or 'to fight.' In that sense, it could refer to a physical battle or confrontation. And that was the original meaning of the word when it entered English in the 1300s. It later came to mean a verbal dispute in which each side exchanges arguments to support their position. But originally, it had more of a sense of a physical confrontation. And we get a sense of that physical confrontation when we consider those other closely-related words ***battle*** and ***combat*** and ***battery***.

Now I said that all of those words came from a Latin root word that meant 'to strike or beat,' but the history of that root word beyond Latin is unclear. Many scholars think that it was borrowed by the Romans from a Celtic word in Gaul when Gaul was still a Roman territory. And the Celtic word appears to share the same Indo-European root as the Old English word ***beat***. The Franks also had a version of that word, and that version passed into French as ***butt*** as in 'to butt heads,' and it's also found in the words ***rebut*** and ***rebuttal*** – which is part of a debate. ***To rebut*** is literally 'to strike back' – 'to return the blow.' And in a formal debate, one side makes an argument, and the other side offers a rebuttal. So it appears likely that ***debate*** and ***rebut*** share the same root meaning 'to strike or beat.'

Now so far, we've seen the connections between ***debate***, ***rebut***, ***battle***, ***combat***, and ***battery***, all of which came from Latin, but none of them are apparently native to Latin. They came from either Celtic or Germanic root words. So the Romans borrowed those roots from the people who lived on the fringes of the Empire.

And one of the reasons why scholars know that those words are not native to Latin is because the Indo-European root word began with a 'b' sound as in ***beat*** and ***battle***, but that Indo-European 'b' sound tended to shift to an 'f' sound within Latin. We've seen that sound change before. English has the native word ***brother*** where Latin gave us the word ***fraternal*** from a shared root. So if we're looking for native Latin words from this same Indo-European root, we should expect to find words with an 'f' sound instead of a 'b sound. And that's exactly what we find in the word ***refute*** which is a native Latin word. So ***rebut*** and ***refute*** are cognate. ***Rebut*** has the Germanic 'b' sound and probably came into French from the Franks. And ***refute*** has the Latin 'f' sound, and it came into French from the Romans. But they both have common Indo-European roots.

So as we examine these words, we find all of these words relate to some type of confrontation or fight. Some relate to physical violence, like ***beat*** and ***battle*** and ***combat*** and ***battery***. Others are limited to verbal disputes, like ***debate*** and ***rebut*** and ***refute***. And the relationship between these words shows that there is a fine line between a verbal confrontation and a physical confrontation. Sometimes, if the parties can't settle their argument with words, they resort to violence. As I noted, a ***debate*** is literally a 'down beat' – or 'beat down' – and sometimes it can actually lead to a beat down. And that's what happened in the debate over Magna Carta.

The adoption of Magna Carta in 1215 did not end the debate between John and his barons, it actually sparked a new debate. The question that was raised after the charter was "Who had the final say in the political affairs of England?" Was it still the king or was it now the barons? This debate raged for a while and, without a resolution, it ultimately led to civil war.

In order to understand this debate and what happened next, we have to look more closely at the document itself. And this actually takes us to a debate that continues to this day. Was Magna Carta a foundational document of Western democracy, or was it just a feudal charter designed to protect the interests of a bunch of wealthy barons? Again, this is still the subject of some debate. So let's take quick look at each of side that argument.

And let's start with those who take the latter view – that Magna Carta was the product of a specific time and place, and it actually has little relevance to us today. This view suggests that there is a 'Myth of Magna Carta.' The advocates of this view are quick to note that the Charter was largely forgotten within England in the centuries that followed. When Shakespeare composed his play about the life of King John in the late 1500s, he didn't even mention Magna Carta which seems odd in retrospect.

Those who argue for the so-called 'Myth of Magna Carta' point out that it was ultimately a feudal document which addressed specific feudal concerns, and it had little practical effect after the feudal system began to disappear over the next couple of centuries. The document contained 63 separate clauses, but only three still remain in effect in English law.

I should that the clauses in the original document were not numbered, but later scholars decided to assign numbers to them for easier reference. The word ***clause*** is actually a French and Latin word, and it appears for the first time in English around the current in our story in the early 1200s. It's related to the word ***close*** which also appears for the first time around this point. And both of those words are also related to the word ***conclude***. So when one thought concluded, and a new idea began, that marked the shift from one clause to the next.

The first clause of Magna Carta guaranteed the rights of the Church, and that's one of the provisions that still remains in effect in English law. It is generally accepted that that provision was inserted at the beginning of the document thanks to the Archbishop Stephen Langton who was the key figure in negotiating the document.

Most of the next dozen or so provisions deal with the financial concerns of the barons that I discussed in the last episode. Those provisions imposed limits on feudal taxes like scutage, and aid, and reliefs. Those were the taxes imposed on the barons that I discussed last time. So these specific fees or taxes were restricted.

The Charter also has a specific provision dealing with a noble's debts. It says that a noble's lands won't be seized to pay a debt to a lord as long as the noble has other property to pay the debt. The seizing of land to pay a debt was called ***distraint*** in feudal law, and keep that idea in the back of your mind – because its going to become very important in a moment.

Also, let me digress for a moment and mention something about that word ***debt***. It's a Latin and French word, and it appears in English for the first time around this point in the early 1200s. And remember that words were spelled phonetically during this period. So the word ***debt*** did NOT have a 'B' in it during the period of Middle English. It was usually spelled D-E-T-T-E. And we know from earlier episodes that double consonants – like double T's – were used to indicate that the preceding vowel was pronounced as a short vowel. So in this case, it meant that the letter E was pronounced as /eh/ instead of /ay/. And that's the same vowel sound we use today in the word ***debt***. So all of that means that ***debt*** was pronounced the same way in Middle English that it is pronounced today. The spelling actually made sense at the time. But of course, today we spell that word with a 'B' – D-E-B-T. So where did that 'B' come from?

Well, we can thank early Modern English scholars for that. Many of them were fascinated by Latin and by the origin of English words. So they thought that English should clearly indicate when a word had been borrowed from Latin.

In Latin, the word ***debt*** was ***debitum***. And we actually have a more direct borrowing of that word in the word ***debit*** – like a 'debit card.' Well, these scholars thought that people should know that words like ***debt*** and ***debit*** were related. So in the 1500s, as English spelling started to become standardized and fixed, it was decided to insert a 'B' in the word ***debt*** to indicate that the original Latin word had a 'B' in it. So we ended up with the modern spelling with a silent 'B.'

Now the word ***debt*** first appears in a text that I am going to look at after the next episode. It's called the Ancrene Riwle – or the Anchoress's Rule. That same text also contains the first use of the word ***sign*** as in a 'stop sign.' And ***sign*** is another word that has a silent letter in it as a Latin marker. Of course, it the letter 'G.' We don't really need that 'G' in there. But compare the word ***sign*** with the word ***signal***. Also when you 'sign' your name on piece of paper, that is called your ***signature***. All of those words are derived from the Latin root word – ***signum***. So there was a 'G' in there in Latin. And when the word ***sign*** was borrowed into English around the current point in our story, it was sometimes spelled with a 'G' and sometimes without a 'G.' In fact, in that original text, it was rendered in its plural form as 'signs' – spelled S-I-N-E-S. So that suggests that the 'g' sound was already being dropped from the word by the time it entered English. But that 'G' has been retained in modern spelling to indicate the ultimate origin of the word and to show the connection to related words like ***signal*** and ***signature***.

So if you ever 'co-sign' for someone on a debt, now you know that ***sign*** and ***debt*** both came into English at the same time, and they both have silent consonant letters to reflect their Latin roots. And in feudal England, debts were often collected by seizing a debtor's lands. And if you co-signed or obligated yourself on someone's else's debt, your land could also be taken. Now King John had abused that privilege – again called ***distraint***. He had forced a lot of vassals into debt - and then seized their lands when they couldn't pay. So Magna Carta imposed limits on the king's ability to do that. Again, these were very specific provisions that related to feudal property law, and they have no real application to the modern world.

Also, last time I talked about John's ability to force a barons' widow to remarry. He could effectively sell her and her property to the highest bidder. And he essentially did the same thing

when young children inherited lands from their father. John would sell the guardianship to the highest bidder. Well, the early clauses of Magna Carta also restricted those abuses by John.

So as we can see, most of these provisions were aimed squarely at John to deal with his financial abuses. And they were designed to benefit the barons specifically – not the general population of England. And most of these provisions had no real effect beyond the feudal age.

Many of the other provisions were also aimed at specific issues of the time. One clause required the removal of fish traps from the Thames. Another provision called for the removal of eight named persons from the royal service. A provision required the return of certain Welsh hostages held by the king, and another clause requires specific dealings with the then King of the Scots named Alexander. The Charter also called for the abolition of royal forest land that been established during John's reign.

So as we can see, a lot of these provisions are locked in a time that has long since passed. There is no mention of a Parliament. And very few of the provisions extend to the common people of England. The document does contain a clause giving a group of 25 barons the right to enforce the Charter, but there is no mention of any kind of representative body beyond that, and certainly no mention of a popularly-elected assembly. The document was not really intended as a permanent constitution. It was simply a peace treaty to confirm a truce between John and his baron. By the way, the word ***truce*** also appeared for the first time around this point. So for the critics of Magna Carta, any notion that the document was a cornerstone of modern democracy is a myth – a myth created by later statesmen whenever they had a grievance against the king and needed a legal argument to support their position.

So that's one side of the debate. But what about the other side? What's the rebuttal? Well those who revere the Charter point to its philosophical underpinnings. To them, the Charter represents the more basic and fundamental idea that the king himself was subject to the law. The Charter was based on the notion that there was no absolute or divine right of kings. Prior to this point, the monarch was above the law – able to impose laws on a whim. But now, the king acknowledged that he was bound by the law itself. So the Charter established the idea that there was a higher set of laws which applied to everyone – including the king. And if the king violated those laws, he could be held to account for those violations.

Clause 12 of Magna Carta dealt with the king's ability to assess feudal taxes like scutage and aid. It provided that those taxes should not be imposed except by "the common council of our kingdom." Now the Charter didn't specify exactly what that meant, but it clearly implied that the taxes were not to be imposed whenever the king felt like it. There was to be some type of "common council." When later colonists in America argued that there should be "no taxation without representation," they pointed to that clause in Magna Carta.

Another more notable provision in the Charter was Clause 39. This is probably the most quoted part of the Charter. And its used to point out how revolutionary the Charter was at the time. Here is what it says:

"No free man shall be arrested, imprisoned, dispossessed of his goods, outlawed, exiled, or in harmed in any way except by the judgement of his peers according to the law of the land."

Many legal scholars point to this clause as an early statement of what we know today as Due Process of Law. It's the idea that a person should not be arrested or imprisoned for no reason. Everyone is entitled to the judgment "of his peers" and "according to the law of the land." Many later scholars have also argued that this clause established a basic right to a trial by jury – even though the wording is not that specific. The most important part is probably the final few words – the part where it says that judgement should be rendered "according to the law of the land." Again, that phrase is not clearly defined, but it implies some vague set of legal principles to which everyone is bound. And it is certainly clear that whatever was meant by "the law of the land," it was something other than the king's whim. It was something beyond the king's personal judgement.

So Magna Carta contains an early expression of the idea that the king or the government is bound by the law – and it can't just do whatever it pleases. These specific clauses may have been buried deep in the document, but they are there, and they were acknowledged by both sides at the time.

So in a nutshell, that's the two sides of the debate concerning the legacy of Magna Carta – either antiquated feudal charter or the foundational document of Western democracy. While that debate rages on, I want to focus on another debate – the debate that ensued immediately after the Charter was adopted. I said earlier that the Charter didn't really settle the debate between John and his barons. It actually sparked a new debate. And that debate concerned who was really in charge of the county after the Charter.

The key to this particular debate centered around another clause that was added near the end of the document known as Clause 61. This was the enforcement provision – the so-called Security Clause. It said that the barons would establish a committee of 25 barons who would oversee the enforcement of the Charter to make sure that John abided by the terms of the agreement. If anyone felt that the king was not complying with the Charter, they could bring their grievances to the committee. The committee of barons could then take action against the king. They could seize his castles and other properties until it was determined that he was in compliance.

You remember earlier when I mentioned that word ***distraint***? It was what happened with a vassal couldn't pay his debts. The lord could step and in and seize his property. It was a basic part of feudal law, but it was only available to a lord to be used against a vassal who didn't comply with some condition. So it could be used by the king against his subjects. But here, it was being applied in reverse. Now, the same process could be used by the barons against the king. It was a remarkable provision, and it raised the issue of who was really in charge of the country at that point.

From John's perspective, if a committee of barons could overrule his decisions and seize his properties, then they were the ones in charge of the country. He had been effectively dethroned. Rather than achieving a balance of power with the king, the barons had essentially seized the throne itself. In response, the barons argued that the Charter was pointless if John could simply

ignore it at will. There needed to be some type of enforcement mechanism. Without a clear way to arbitrate those disagreements, it was inevitable that more conflicts would occur. So this was the debate that erupted in the wake of Magna Carta and, without a resolution, it was destined to lead to war.

The conflict was heightened when the barons filled that committee of barons with 25 of John's sworn enemies. Not surprisingly, the committee soon seized two of John's castles and gave them to a prominent noble who claimed them. Despite Magna Carta, the king and his barons were once again on a collision course.

I noted earlier that the word ***debate*** came into English in the 1300s. So at the current point in our story in the early 1200s, English tended to use a native Old English word to refer to a verbal dispute. They called it ***motian***. It's related to the word ***moot*** which refers to something that is endlessly debatable. Of course a ***moot court*** is a mock court where students go to debate certain legal issues. The word ***motian*** is also related to the words ***meet*** and ***meeting***. When a meeting was held, people tended to debate certain matters on the agenda. And you might remember that an Anglo-Saxon assembly was called a ***gemot*** from the same root. During the Anglo-Saxon period, the king's advisors were called the witan – and when they assembled to debate political issues, it was called the ***witenagemot***.

The old Anglo-Saxon witan included prominent nobles and church officials, but the witan didn't survive the Norman Conquest. And Parliament was still a few decades away. So at this point in the early 1200s, there was no formal assembly where these issues could be debated and resolved.

Without that institution, John and the barons tried to negotiate with each other as best they could, but to no avail. A Charter had been executed, but it hadn't solved the fundamental problem of who had final say on political matters in England. The two sides planned a meeting at Oxford in July of 1215 to resolve some of these issues, but it accomplished nothing. The barons didn't even stand when John entered the room. A follow-up meeting was scheduled for the next month, but John didn't bother to attend.

With no third party to resolve the dispute, the Church played an important role. The Church was in a position to help moderate the dispute. But even within the Church, there were an internal debate. The Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton had been very active in procuring the Charter, and he was inclined to side with barons. Meanwhile, the bishop of Winchester named Peter des Roches had remained loyal to John. He was the only bishop who had remained in England during the Interdict.

That division within the English Church meant that the Pope was destined to be the tie-breaker. And this is where John's mea culpa a few years earlier really paid off. As we saw last time, John had completely given in to the Pope and had even designated the Pope was the feudal overlord of England. And the Pope had rewarded that decision by lifting the interdict and revoking John's excommunication. The Pope actually became John's firm ally, and John probably knew that he could count on the Pope's support in this debate.

Within days after the Charter was signed, John wrote to the Pope in secret and asked him to declare the Charter null and void. While John awaited the response, he prepared for war – and so did the barons. In late August, the Pope rendered his verdict and, not surprisingly, he sided with John. He declared Magna Carta null and void. He declared that the Charter was invalid because John had been forced to sign it and, furthermore, the Pope himself was now the overlord of England so no such Charter could be valid without the Pope's consent which had not been given. Pope Innocent directed the barons to recognize John as the supreme political authority in England. The Pope even went one step further. He suspended Stephen Langton as archbishop for siding with the barons.

In many respects, this was the final straw. With papal support, John formally withdrew his consent to the Charter. He marshaled his forces, and he moved against the barons, and the country entered another period of open civil war. Once again, a debate had led to battle. At the end of 1215, Magna Carta was deemed a failure. It was ultimately a peace treaty, but the country was once again at war.

This was a dispute that would continue until John's death, which was actually just around the corner. A bout of dysentery would soon bring an end to John and, ultimately, bring an end to this dispute. I'll look at those events next time, but for now, I want to look at that word ***dispute*** because it was another brand-new word in the language at this point. Like the word ***debate***, it was borrowed from Latin and French. And also, like the word ***debate***, the word ***dispute*** was derived from an Indo-European root word that meant to 'strike or hit.' It also meant 'to cut.' The same root word that gave us the word ***dispute*** also gave us the word ***amputate***. The word ***dispute*** found its way into English around the current point in our story. And it appeared for the first time in that poem I mentioned earlier – "The Owl and the Nightingale." So with that, let's turn our attention to that poem.

I think it is important to begin by putting this poem into some overall context. In many ways, it was the product of many of the themes that we've explored over the past few episodes. It reflects the re-birth of English literature that took place in the early 1200s. And the fact that the poem is structured as a long debate reflects the important role of the debate format at that time. The debate format was very popular in Latin and French literature, and that type of literature was probably influenced the growth of education during this period which later scholars called the Twelfth Century Renaissance. In many schools, and in many of those new universities, classes were taught using the Socratic method which was really just a type of debate. A master would take a position and pose questions to his students and the students would have to respond in a logical manner. And I noted that much of that education centered around rhetoric – the art of making logical arguments. So in that sense, a debate was really an extension of logic and rhetoric.

A few episodes back, I also looked at the legal reforms instituted by John's father, Henry II. I noted how those legal reforms led to the rise of the legal profession. And those new lawyers were trained in those new universities. And with the rise of the government bureaucracy and record-keeping which we looked at last time, that meant that court decisions started to be maintained as permanent records. So when a case came before a judge, the judge could now go back and see

how similar disputes had been settled in the past. The judge could evaluate the legal arguments made by the competing parties and their lawyers, and he could render a decision that was consistent with the judgment made in those earlier cases. This gave birth to the English Common Law – a body of law based on written legal precedents. And it ensured a more consistent form of justice. It allowed lawyers to make reliable legal arguments based on those earlier precedents. And with the rise of legalism, again there was an interest in the art of debate – the give-and-take of competing legal arguments.

So we can start to see how many of these themes were interconnected – universities, logic, rhetoric, recording-keeping, legal reforms. They all fed into each other. And they all encouraged a respect and reverence for the art of debate. And that may help to explain why this style of debate poetry became so popular during this period.

Up to this point, that type of poetry had been composed mainly in Latin and French, but around the current point in our story, we get this first major debate poem in Middle English.

Now I should make a quick note about the date of this poem. The date is actually unknown. The poem survives in two manuscripts that were written down in the second half of the 1200s, but those two surviving versions are copies made from an earlier original. The language of the poem is definitely early Middle English – not Old English – but it has very few French or other loan words, and it even retains some Old English inflectional endings that were largely gone by the end of the 1200s. So it has traditionally been dated to the early 1200s.

The only clue within the text itself is a reference to a deceased King Henry. At one point in the poem, the Nightingale tells a story about a knight who was jealous of any man who spoke to his wife, so he locked his wife in a room in his castle so no one could speak to her. The wife was sad, so the nightingale sang to her to keep her happy. The knight became angry at the bird, and tried to have the nightingale captured and killed. The bird says that King Henry discovered what the knight tried to do, and deprived him of his property. In other words, Henry exercised his right of distraint against the knight. The specific reference to Henry reads as follows: "The events were discovered by King Henry. May Jesus have mercy on his soul!" In the original Middle English, the passage reads: "That underyat the king Henri. Jesus his soule do merci!" So this passage implies that the poem was written after the death of a King Henry.

Well Henry I died in 1135, but the language and structure of the poem seems far too advanced to be that old. So it has generally been assumed that the 'Henry' referenced in the poem was John's father, Henry II who died in 1189. But John's son was also named Henry, and he became Henry III in 1216 when John died. And he reigned for a very long time until he died in 1272. Now some scholars think the reference is actually to John's son, Henry – Henry III. But the general lack of French words and the use of Old English inflections suggest an earlier date. So most scholars tend to favor the view that the reference is to John's father, Henry II. Also, since John's son Henry became king in 1216, most scholars think that a reference to a "King Henry" would have been ambiguous after that date. Any reference to a Henry after 1216 might have been confusing to readers without some clear indication who the poet was referring to. So those scholars tend to favor the view that the poem was composed before John died and his son Henry became king.

That would date the poem to the year 1216 or earlier. Again the debate over the date will continue, but Oxford English Dictionary follows this traditional line of thought and it estimates the date of the poem as the year 1216 – at the current point in our overall story. So I'm going to go with that date as well. But again, the exact date is uncertain.

Also, the author if the poem is also unknown. The poem does make a reference to person identified as Master Nicholas of Guildford. Guildford is a town south of London. In the poem, Nicholas is identified as the person who will ultimately judge the debate between the two birds. Some scholars think that Nicholas himself was the author. Others think that the author was a close friend of Nicholas – and just included Nicholas's name in the poem. At any rate, nothing is really known about Nicholas, so we'll just leave the author as anonymous.

Now the poem begins with the following passage. As always, I'll give you a Modern English translation first, and then the original Middle English. So here are the first few lines:

I was in a Summer dale in a very secluded hollow
I heard a great tale being held between an owl and a nightingale

Ich was in one sumere dale,
in one suþe diȝele hale,
iherde ich holde grete tale
an hule and one niȝtingale.

You'll notice the rhyming verse. And also, each line is based on a specific number of beats and syllables. Each line has four beats and eight syllables, so there is rhythm to the poem. This structure was common in Latin and French poetry at the time, so the Owl and the Nightingale uses that same scheme.

A few other quick notes about the vocabulary in that opening passage. We see the Old English word ***an*** meaning 'one' rendered as O-N-E for one of the first times in English – maybe the very first time. A few episodes back, we saw the long /ah/ sound was in the process of shifting to an /aw/ sound during this period – on its way to the modern /oh/ sound. And I noted that the word /an/ became /awn/, and then later /own/ – as in the word ***only*** – before finally evolving into the modern word ***one***. And that initial sound change from /an/ to /awn/ is indicated by a change in spelling. The A was replaced with an O in many of those words. So here, we see Old English ***an*** – spelled A-N – now being spelled O-N-E, and probably being pronounced as /awn./

The poet also says that the two birds were in a ***hale*** – which is literally 'a hole,' but it meant a secluded place. And we can see in that a passage how the words ***hole*** and ***hollow*** are connected. If something is hollow, it has a hole in it – or an empty cavity. So a secluded valley was sometimes described as a hole or a hollow place. And that produced the modern sense of the word ***hollow*** as a valley. Of course, some rural American dialects pronounce it as a ***holler***.

Lastly, the passage says that the two birds held a great ***tale*** – or tale. Remember that the word ***debate*** wasn't borrowed until the next century. So here, the poet used the native word ***tale***. The original sense of the word was broader than the modern sense. It meant it a discussion. In fact, the word ***tale*** is closely-related to the word ***talk***. So when the poet says that the birds held a tale, he meant that they were taking. The next few lines read:

The pleading was stiff and stark and strong
sometimes soft and sometimes loud
And each against the other swelled
and let out that evil mood completely.

Þat plait was stif & starc & strong,
sum wile softe & lud among;
an aiþer aȝen oþer sval,
& let þat vuele mod ut al.

Now here, the poet describes the debate as a ***plait*** or 'a pleading.' This is a French term, and it is an early version of our modern words ***plea*** and ***plead***. It shows a certain fascination with the legal process and legal debates. In fact, some scholars have argued that the entire poem is structured around the typical procedure used in a lawsuit at the time. For example, legal procedure required the trail to start with a plea, and here the poet says that pleas were made by both sides – 'stiff, stark and strong.' The two birds swelled at each other, and let out their 'evil mood' or anger.

We're then told that the nightingale began the speech in the corner of a breach or clearing, and sat upon a 'fair bow' – or branch – surrounded by 'blossoms enough.'

Þe niȝtingale bigon þe speche,
in one hurne of one breche,
& sat up one vaire boȝe,
þar were abute blosme inoȝe,

We're told that the nightingale sat upon a 'vaire boȝe' – a 'fair bough' – or a 'fair branch.' The word ***bough*** is a very old word for a branch or limb. And notice that the poet described it as 'fair.' But he spelled it with a 'v' – not an 'f.' So he pronounced it as /vaire/ – not /fair/. He does this a lot in the poem – using a 'v' for an 'f'. And that is an indication that the poet was from the far south of England. It was common in Middle English for certain unvoiced consonants to be voiced in the far south of England. So 'f's were pronounced as 'v's, and 's's were pronounced as 'z's. Now this feature still exists in the southwest of England where you will hear the region of 'Somerset' pronounced as /zumerzet/.

I'll look a little more closely at this accent feature in future episodes, but at one time, these features were common throughout the far south of England, including Kent in the southeast. So a word like ***fox*** was often pronounced as /vox/. And a female fox was a ***vixen***. And that southern English word ***vixen*** passed into standard English. So today, we might think of a ***vixen*** as a 'foxy

lady,' but ***vixen*** is actually cognate with the word ***fox***, and it's really just a product of this same southern accent. So when the poet uses the word ***vaire*** for ***fair***, we know that he probably spoke with that accent as well.

The poet tells us that the nightingale sang a beautiful song as if the music came from a harp or a pipe. As the nightingale sang, an owl stood on a stump nearby. The nightingale looked at the owl and found the owl disgusting. "Monster, she said, away you should fly!"

"Unwiȝt," ho sede, "awei þu flo!"

Now throughout the poem, the poet uses feminine pronouns for the birds. So they were both females, but the poet doesn't use the pronoun ***she***. You might remember that the word ***she*** did not exist in Old English. It was first attested in the Peterborough Chronicle after the Norman Conquest. Given that this poet doesn't use that word, that suggests that the word ***she*** was not in common use yet in the far south of England. The poet continued to use the Old English feminine pronouns like ***ho***, ***heo***, and ***hie***. The poet also doesn't use the new Norse pronouns ***they*** and ***them*** and ***their***. He still uses older English forms that begin with an 'h' sound like ***hi***, ***ho*** and ***heo***. As I've noted before, all of these similar 'h' forms encouraged the adoption of alternate forms. And over the next few decades, the feminine form ***she*** and the plural forms ***they*** and ***them*** and ***their*** all passed into standard English. But for now, this particular poet continued to use the older forms.

The nightingale says that she is disgusted by the owl's ugly appearance. She says,

My heart flies away and my tongue
fails me when you thrust yourself upon me.
I would rather spit than sing
about thine full yelling (or hooting).

min horte atfliþ & falt mi tonge,
wonne þu art [to me] iþrunge.
Me luste bet speten þane singe
of þine fule ȝoȝelinge.

We're told that the owl took the abuse and held back until it was evening, until she couldn't take it anymore. The owl then lashed out at the nightingale. She said, "You insult me and say things to upset me." And then the owl threatens the nightingale. The owl says,

If I held you in my feet,
as it happens that I could do,
and you were out of your branch,
you would sing another tune.

ȝif ich þe holde on mine vote,
so hit bitide þat ich mote!
& þu were vt of þine rise,
þu sholdest singe an oþer wise.

The nightingale responds by saying,"That is why all kinds of birds hate you, and drive you away, and screech at you. You are ugly to look at."

Both your eyes are as black as coal and broad
as if they were painted with woad.

þin eȝene boþ col-blake & brode,
riȝt swo ho weren ipeint mid wode.

Now woad was a type of plant that was used for making certain types of dyes. It is another one of those words that experienced that vowel change we've seen before. It was ***wad*** in Old English – /wawd/ in Middle English – and /woad/ in Modern English.

Also, the passage says that the owl's eyes were black as if ***ipeint*** – or 'painted' – with woad. This is actually the first recorded use of the word ***paint*** in the English language. It is one of the few French and Latin words used in the poem. By the way, the word ***paint*** is related to the words ***picture*** and ***pigment*** and ***depict*** – all of which came in later.

The nightingale then says that the owl is disgusting and fowls her own nest. Meanwhile, the owl fumes and knows that the nightingale is trying to humiliate her.

And nonetheless she answered
"Why not fly into the air
and show which of us both
has a brighter hue and a fairer complexion

& noþeles ho ȝaf andsuare,
"Whi neltu flon into þe bare,
& sewi ware unker bo
of briȝter howe, of vairur blo?"

The nightingale replies:

No. Thou has well sharp claws
that thou keeps to claw me.
Thou havest talons so strong
thou will grab me as one does with tongs

No, þu hauest wel scharpe clawe,
ne kepich noȝt þat þu me clawe.
þu hauest cliuers suþe stronge,
þu tuengst þar-mid so doþ a tonge.

So in these passages, we see that the owl has basically challenged the nightingale to a battle – or physical confrontation. But the nightingale prefers to battle with words. She proposes that the two should stop insulting each other and agree to a proper debate.

Though we not be of one accord
we should rather argue with fair words
without strife and fighting
we should plead what is relevant and right
and may each say what she will
with right sayings and with reason

Þeȝ we ne bo at one acorde,
we maȝe bet mid fayre worde,
witute cheste, & bute fiȝte,
plaidi mid foȝe & mid riȝte:
& mai hure eiþer wat he wile
mid riȝte segge & mid sckile

The owl agrees to the request, but asks who will mediate the debate. The nightingale replies:

‘I know well” quoth the nightingale
There is no need to talk about it further
Master Nicholas of Guildford
He is wise and careful with words.

"Ich wot wel" quaþ þe niȝtingale,
"Ne þaref þarof bo no tale.
Maister Nichole of Guldeforde,
he is wis an war of worde:

So we’re told that Nicholas of Guildford will judge the debate. As I noted earlier, some scholars think that Nicholas was a real person and he was the person who wrote the poem, but there is no way to know for sure.

The owl then agrees that Nicholas will judge the debate, and the debate begins. The nightingale asks the owl why she does what evil creatures do – she sings by night and not by day. The nightingale says:

You fly by night and not by day
that I wonder and well may
for every thing that shuns right
it loveth darkness and hates light

Þu fliȝst aniȝt & noȝt adai,
þarof ich wundri & wel mai,
vor eurich þing þat schuniet riȝt,
hit luueþ þuster & hatiet liȝt.

The nightingale then quotes a proverb attributed to King Alfred for support. She says:

For King Alfred he said and wrote
"He that knows he has fouled himself is shunned and keeps to himself."
I think that is what you do also
for you fly at night evermore.

for Alured King hit seide & wrot:
"He schunet þat hine vul wot."
Ich wene þat þu dost also,
vor þu fliȝst niȝtes euer mo.

The nightingale then points out that thieves and villains also operate in the night, so in that way, the owl is like them.

Medieval legal scholars point out that this passage is in keeping with the proper format of a legal debate at the time. It wasn't enough to make a statement or proposition. You had to support it with evidence or testimony. So you had to call a witness. In this case, the nightingale is essentially calling King Alfred as a witness by quoting his proverb.

The owl then has the opportunity to respond. She presents a series of counter-arguments. She says that small birds scream and squawk at her everyday, but she prefers peace and quiet and chooses to sit in her nest. "The wise men say that one should not argue with fools." The owl also quotes a proverb of King Alfred in response to the nightingale. The owl says,

At times I have heard tell
how Alfred once said in a spell
"Look to avoid any place
where there is arguing and strife
let fools chide each other, and you go your own way,"
and I am wise and do this also.

At sume siþe herde I telle
hu Alured sede on his spelle:
"Loke þat þu ne bo þare
þar chauling boþ & cheste ȝare:
lat sottes chide & uorþ þu go."
& ich am wis & do also

So the owl has presented counter-evidence against the nightingale by employing her own proverb from Alfred the Great.

The owl then rejects the argument that her hooting is ugly and hard to listen to. She says that her voice is confident and strong. She says;

My voice is bold and not worn
it is like a great horn
And your's is like a pipe
made of a small weed that is unripe
I sing better that you do-est
you chatter like an Irish priest
I sing in the evening at the right time
and then again when it is bedtime
and a third time at midnight
And so I prepare my song at daylight
when I see from afar
the daybreak and the morning star
I do good with my throat
And call men to their note.

Mi stefne is bold & noȝt unorne,
ho is ilich one grete horne,
& þin is ilich one pipe,
of one smale wode unripe.
Ich singe bet þan þu dest:
þu chaterest so doþ on Irish prost.
Ich singe an eve a riȝte time,
& soþþe won hit is bed-time,
þe þridde siþe at middel-niȝte:
& so ich mine song adiȝte
wone ich iso arise vorre
oþer dai-rim oþer dai-sterre.
Ich do god mid mine þrote,
& warni men to hore note.

In this passage, the owl counters the nightingale's arguments that she operates in the dark by pointing out that she regulates the night by hooting at nightfall, and hooting again at bedtime, and hooting for a third time at midnight, and finally hooting shortly before daybreak to make sure that everybody knows when the night is over and it is time to start a new day. The owl then notes that the nightingale sings all night long without stopping which assaults everyone's ears. Even the loveliest songs grow tied after a while. So the nightingale devalues her song by never stopping. The owl then quotes another King Alfred proverb:

Everything may lose its value
through lack of moderation and overuse or overdeeds.

Evrich þing mai losen his godhede
mid unmeþe & mid ouerdede.

So the owl has offered her rebuttal to the nightingale's arguments. I should note that the passages I just read include a couple of notable words. When the owl says that the nightingale "chattered like an Irish priest," that is one of the first uses of the word ***chatter*** in the English language. The ultimate source of the word is unknown, but it exist today in various forms such as ***chatter***, ***chat***, and ***chit-chat***.

And when the owl says that she sings at "bedtime," that is the first known use of the term ***bedtime*** in the English language. Both ***bed*** and ***time*** are Old English words, but this is the first time that are recorded together in an English document.

From here, the two birds continues to exchange arguments back and forth. I don't have time to go through the whole poem. In fact, I've only covered about one-fifty of the poem here. But the birds continue to debate until the every end when they agree that Master Nicholas is waiting for them. They agree to take their arguments to Nicholas so he can render his final judgment in their debate.

The poet then concludes with the following passage:

With these words forth they fared
without an army or fyrd
to Portesham they both had come.
And how they succeeded in that judgment (or doom)
I can no more tell
for there is no more to this spell.

Mid þisse worde forþ hi ferden,
al bute here & bute uerde,
to Portesham þat heo bicome.
Ah hu heo spedde of heore dome,
ne can ich eu namore telle:
her nis namore of þis spelle.

So we don't get a final decision. We don't know who won the debate. We're simply told that there is no more to the story. And that seems like a good way to end this episode because there is no more to this story either.

Next time, we'll look at the civil war between King John and his barons, and we'll see how John's death brought an end to the debate over Magna Carta. The war also brought about another invasion from France, and that invasion consisted of both soldiers and words. The soldiers were eventually turned back, but the words stuck around. In fact, English got a fresh injection of French words after John died. So as English literature continued to re-emerge during the 1200s, it did so with more and more French words in place of Old English words.

So we'll look at these developments next time. Until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.

EPISODE 99: THE SECOND FRENCH INVASION

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 99: The Second French Invasion. In this episode, we're going to look at an important development that took place in England in the first half of the 1200s, and that was the arrival of a new wave of French influences from across the Channel. William the Conqueror had brought Norman French to England in 1066, but with the loss of Normandy in 1204, that Norman culture was starting to wane. The written evidence suggests that fewer and fewer English nobles spoke French as their first language, and when they tried to learn French, they preferred to study the French of Paris rather than the Norman French of their ancestors. But at a time when Norman culture was in decline in England, a new round of French influences came in from central and southern France. These influences came in the form of military troops, and nobles, and courtiers, and they also came in the form of the central French dialect spoken around Paris. This second invasion reinforced the French influences that were already present in England, and it ensured the survival of French as an official language of England for several more generations. So this time, we'll look at those developments, and we'll see how they influenced Modern English.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast at Patreon.com/historyofenglish. And as always, you can reach me by email at kevin@historyofenglishpodcast.com

Now this time, I want to look at the period from the end of King John's reign through the first half of his son's reign. This is the period from 1215 through the early 1250s. In terms of language, this is a fascinating period because it was a time during which English manuscripts were starting to reappear. Last time, we looked at the Owl and the Nightingale. And a few episodes back, we looked at Layamon's Brut. Up to this point, the documents we've examined have shown relatively little French influence. A few French words were used, but for the most part, the vocabulary was still mostly from Old English. But that started to change around the current point in our story. By the mid-1200s, French words were becoming much more prominent in English documents.

Part of the reason why this is so fascinating is because this was a period when Norman French was actually in decline in England. We've seen that scribes and writers were starting to use English again. And there is increasing evidence that the children of English nobles were now speaking English as their first language. Textbooks started to appear that were designed to teach children how to speak French. And those textbooks were almost certainly designed for the children of nobles and the well-to-do. I'll look more closely at some of this evidence in an upcoming episode. But all of that raises an interesting question. If Norman French was in decline, why did English borrow so many French words over the next two centuries?

Well, part of the answer lies in the fact that Norman French was about to be overtaken by a new type of French – the French of Paris and central France. There were many reasons for this second French invasion. Paris itself was enjoying a period expanding influence thanks to the growing power of the royal court there. The French king Philip had enjoyed a great deal of military and political success, and had essentially destroyed the rival Angevin Empire that had been established by Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. The royal court at Paris had not enjoyed that much influence and power since the days of Charlemagne. And at the same time, the University of Paris was one of the most important universities in Western Europe, and it was producing a lot of scholars. French literature was also being composed in the dialect of Paris. Parisian French was quickly emerging as the new standard for the French language. And that meant that the old Norman French dialect was losing a lot of its old prestige. As we'll see in future episodes, Norman French speakers in England were becoming self-conscious about their form of French, and they were starting to apologize for their 'poor' French.

These trends were reinforced by the political events in England in the early 1200s. The loss of Normandy weakened Norman influences in England. And then a series of developments led to the arrival of a lot of new Frenchmen from central and southern France. This second French invasion meant that the French influences in England were becoming much more diverse. Normandy no longer had a monopoly on the version of French that was spoken in England.

As we move into the middle part of the 1200s, there was a distinct shift toward Parisian French. And we can see evidence of this shift in the history of English. When we look at French loanwords from the early and mid-1200s, we can see that Parisian words were being borrowed alongside Norman words. In many cases, those words were identical. But since the Parisian dialect was different from the Norman dialect, that meant that English sometimes borrowed two different versions of the same French word. One version was from Normandy and reflects a northern French pronunciation, and the other version was from Paris or some other part of central France, and it reflects a central French pronunciation. English scholars can use those dialect differences to determine the actual source of many French words that were borrowed during this period.

For our purposes, it isn't really important whether the word came from Normandy or Paris. What is important is that we see loanwords from both regions during the early 1200s. That suggests that the French influences in England were becoming more and more diverse. And the political developments confirmed and reinforced that trend.

Before I go any further, let me make a quick comment about terminology. For the most part, I am going to refer to the Norman dialect versus the Parisian dialect, but what I am really talking about are northern French dialects versus central French dialects. The Norman dialect was the most important and influential dialect in the north of France, and it was certainly the most influential in England. But there were other dialects in northern France that had similar features. Along the same lines, the French dialect spoken around Paris was one of many similar dialects spoken in central France. But as I noted, the dialect of Paris was emerging as the national standard during this period. So very often, when I refer to the Parisian dialect, I am also including the other central French dialects within that term

Now we've actually looked at some of the differences between the Norman and Parisian dialects before. You might remember that the Norman dialect preserved the traditional C-A – or /ka/ – sound that was used in Latin. But in Parisian French, that sound became a C-H-A – or /cha/ – sound. And then in later French, it evolved into a /sha/ sound. One of the classic examples of this was the Latin word ***cappa*** which meant a cape or cloak. Of course, it gave us the words ***cape*** and ***cap*** which both preserve that Latin C-A – or /ka/ – sound.

And you might remember that St. Martin's famous ***cappa*** or cloak was housed in a building which was called a ***cappella***. But in Parisian French, the /ka/ sound became a /cha/ sound, and ***cappella*** became ***chappella*** – which later became ***chapel***. Then during the 1200s and 1300s, that sound started to change again within the Parisian dialect. It went from /cha/ to /sha/. So this type of head covering came to be called a ***chapeau*** which was also borrowed into English. A specific type of head covering was also called a ***chaperon*** from the same root word. And since a ***chaperon*** protected the head, the word came to mean a protector. And from there, it came to mean a person who protects or guards another person. And today we use it to refer to a person who accompanies another person. So from ***cape*** and ***cap*** – to ***chapel*** – to ***chapeau*** and ***chaperon*** – we can hear how English has preserved that sound change within French. It all depends on when the word was borrowed into English, and how it being pronounced at the time it was borrowed.

Now that word ***cappa*** meaning 'a cloak or head covering' is derived from the Latin word ***caput*** which meant 'head.' We actually have that Latin word in a term like ***decapitate*** meaning 'to remove the head.' Well, the head of a command – so the person in charge of a group of people – was called a ***captain***, again preserving that original 'C-A' – or /ka/ – sound. But in Parisian French, a ***captain*** became a ***chieftain*** or ***chief*** – with a 'C-H' sound. And then in later French, the chief of a kitchen became a ***chef*** with an S-H sound. So again, from ***captain*** – to ***chief*** – to ***chef***. We can hear that sound change.

I've given those examples before, but I'm going to give you a lot more examples of that sound change throughout this episode.

Also, we've seen before that Parisian French speakers had a problem pronouncing the 'W' sound at the beginning of words. They usually pronounced those words with a 'G' sound instead. But the Normans didn't have that problem. An initial 'W' sound was common in Germanic languages. And remember that the Normans were originally Vikings who spoke a form of Old Norse. So when they adopted French, they continued to pronounce that initial 'W' sound in a lot of Germanic words that came from the Franks. So this emerged as a clear marker of a Norman dialect. The Normans pronounced the initial 'W,' but the Parisians used a hard 'G.' So we ended up with the Norman name ***William*** – and Parisian name ***Guillaume***.

And we might 'wage' war with the Norman word ***wage***, or we might 'engage' the enemy with the Parisian word ***engage***. ***Wage*** and ***engage*** are really just two different versions of the same root word. So again, this 'W' versus 'G' pronunciation is a clue as to which dialect produced the borrowed word. There were a few other dialect differences which I'll discuss at the end of the episode, but I'm mostly going to focus on those two traditional differences.

Now as I return to the political developments in England, I want you to notice that it wasn't just words that were coming in from other parts of France in the early 1200s. It was also people. Throughout this period, there were several waves of new French arrivals in England. And almost all of these new arrivals were from central and southern France – not Normandy. These immigrants brought their words and their pronunciations with them. So as we'll see, this second French invasion expanded and diversified the French influences in England.

So let's pick up our overall historical narrative where we left off last time – with the civil war that erupted in England after the collapse of Magna Carta. As I noted last time, King John had been forced to agree to Magna Carta, but as soon as his seal was attached to it, he started to look around for ways to nullify it. John soon convinced the Pope to declare the Charter to be illegal and invalid, and with Papal backing, John rejected the Charter and prepared for war against the rebel barons. The civil war that erupted late in the year 1215 really began as a war over Magna Carta.

John moved first against the rebels by heading down to Dover on the southeastern coast to meet up with some mercenaries he had paid to fight on his behalf. He then moved up and captured Rochester Castle between Dover and London. This was John's first strategic victory. And it affords us a good example of an early Norman loanword. We've seen before that the word ***castle*** was used in the Peterborough Chronicle. As we would expect from such an early loanword, it has the initial 'C-A' – or /ka/ – sound associated with the Norman dialect. But in the 1700s, this word was borrowed again as ***chateau*** with the later French 'S-H' sound. That original Norman word ***castle*** survives alongside central French ***chateau***. And that castle at Rochester gave John a foothold in the southeast of England.

The rebels continued to hold the city of London. And it soon became apparent that they had a problem in trying to take on the King of England. They didn't really have a good alternative. The country had fought civil wars before, but they were always wars between two rival claimants to the throne, like the period of anarchy when Stephen and Matilda fought each other. But this time, the barons were really fighting for principle – not a rival claimant. And it soon became apparent to the rebels that they needed to come up with an alternative to John – someone they could rally around and someone who could lead the rebellion and fill John's shoes when he was gone. They needed a rival claimant, and they found one across the Channel in Paris.

As we know by now, the French king was Philip. Philip had repeatedly defeated John's forces, and he had deprived John of Normandy and most of his other lands in northern and central France. And now, the rebel barons looked to Philip's court in Paris to lead the rebellion in England. Philip himself didn't take the bait. Since John had the Pope's support he didn't want to risk excommunication and interdict in France. However, he had no problem with his son Louis taking part in the rebellion in England. So the English barons approached Louis and offered him the English crown if he would join with the rebels to defeat John. Louis accepted the offer, and 150 years after the Norman Conquest, a second French invasion of England was planned.

Late in the year 1216, Louis assembled a force of 7,000 men – including 140 knights. They were sent to England with plans for Louis to follow with a second contingent of Frenchmen a few months later. This first wave of French troops crossed the Channel and headed to London which was still a rebel stronghold.

Now when I say that the troops crossed the Channel, obviously I'm referring to the English Channel. The word ***channel*** is another word borrowed from French during the Middle English period. And in case you never realized it, the word ***channel*** shares the same Latin root as the word ***canal***. The Latin root was ***canalis***. So the word ***canal*** retains that initial Latin /ka/ sound and was actually borrowed into English from Latin. But the word ***channel*** – with its 'C-H' sound – shows the influence of the central French dialects around Paris. ***Channel*** first appears in English in the late 1300s. So again, this word ***channel*** shows that English speakers were borrowing from the central French dialects during this period.

And by the way, since English didn't have the word ***channel*** until the late 1300s, you may be wondering what English speakers called the English Channel before them. Well, one term was the 'French Sea.' And in late 1216, a contingent of Frenchmen cross this French Sea to support the rebels in England.

At this point, John turned his attention to the rebel bases in the north of England. He traveled to the north and ravaged the countryside and rebel bases. For a while, it looked like John had the upper hand, and several prominent rebels abandoned the cause and came back to John's side. In doing so, they had to swear the allegiance to John, and they also had to renounce Magna Carta.

By this point, the rebels were in desperate need of Louis's full French army. And in May of 1216, the rebels finally got the boost they needed when Louis arrived in England with reinforcements. They joined with the troops that Louis had sent earlier. It was the lift that the rebels needed. They recognized Louis as the new king and did homage to him.

At first, Louis advanced with very little opposition. He proceeded to Rochester and took Rochester Castle back from John's supporters. He then headed to London where he was welcomed by the rebels. Four days later, he headed down to Winchester to confront John, but John had already fled. The barons in London took the opportunity afforded by John's retreat to head east and capture territory throughout the southeast of England. By this point, about two-thirds of the English barons had abandoned John. And Louis soon controlled most of the eastern counties of England.

At this point, it looked like a repeat of William the Conqueror's campaign of 1066. And it looked like the French king's son was about to become King Louis I of England. In fact, as far as the rebels were concerned, he was already the king. A second French conquest was underway, but this conquest was centered in Paris – not Normandy.

Up to this point, everything had gone according to plan for Louis. But then he started to get bogged down. He tried to attack John's strongholds at Dover and Windsor, but after two months, the sieges had accomplished nothing. Louis's momentum soon came to an end.

In September of 1216, John decided to head east to confront the rebels in eastern England. But while he was there, he became violently ill with dysentery. He then headed back west and pressed on despite being in excruciating pain. While trying to cross a river, part of John's baggage train was lost in the water and quicksand. In the process, John lost most of his household belongings, including a huge collection of valuables including holy relics, goblets, jewels and all of the regalia used for coronations.

The valuables were in a carriage that was lost, and ***carriage*** is another French word that was borrowed from northern France. It first appeared in the 1400s, but before that – in the early 1300s – we find the word ***car*** which is really just another version of the word ***carriage***. Both words were derived from the Latin root word ***carrus*** which meant 'a vehicle.' Notice that we have a ***car*** and ***carriage*** – not a 'char' and a 'charriage.' So that suggests that these words came in from the Norman dialect or another northern French dialect where those words were still pronounced with a 'C-A' – or /ka/ – sound. We also have the words ***carry*** and ***carrier*** which are also derived from that same root. You use a ***car*** or ***carriage*** to ***carry*** things, so that makes them a type of ***carrier***. Again, all of those words were borrowed from French, and they all appear for the first time in English documents in 1300s and 1400s. They all start with a 'C-A' – or /ka/ – sound, so they all represent northern French forms.

But mixed in with those northern French forms, we also have central French forms used in the Parisian dialect. At the same time that words like ***car*** and ***carry*** and ***carriage*** were coming in, English also borrowed the word ***chariot***. And ***chariot*** is another French word derived from that same Latin root. But in this case, the word ***chariot*** has the initial 'C-H' sound that was common around Paris. That suggests that it came in from central France.

And ***chariot*** is not the only version of the word to come in with a 'C-H' sound. In the early 1200s – around the current point in our overall story – we also got the word ***charge***. Now at first glance, it may be hard to see how ***charge*** is connected to words like ***chariot*** and ***car*** and ***carry***. But the connection has to do with what happens to a carriage or other vehicle when its loaded down with goods. That was the original sense of the word ***charge*** in the early 1200s. It referred to a vehicle loaded with goods or other items. So it came to refer to a heavy load or burden. From there, it came to mean any type of load or burden, so anything you might be responsible for. You might be ***charged*** with taking care of someone. In that case, you were put ***in charge***. Sometimes you had the burden and responsibility to lead a group of people. You had to ***take charge***.

Sometimes that left you with a heavy financial burden. And that sense of financial obligation led to the financial sense of the word ***charge***. A merchant might charge you a certain amount of money for his goods. And in later English, you could pay on the spot or ***charge it*** and have the burden of paying for it later. So we use the word ***charge*** in many different ways today, but they are all related to that original sense of the word as a vehicle that carried goods or people. And since the word ***charge*** begins with a 'C-H' sound, we know that it came in from the central French dialect spoken in places like Paris.

So in the words ***car***, ***carriage***, ***carry***, ***carrier***, and ***chariot*** and ***charge***, we can see how English borrowed liberally from both French dialects.

Now I noted that John lost a lot of valuables when part of his carriage train was lost in water and quicksand, and that included much of his royal wardrobe. And that brings us to another Norman French word – ***wardrobe***. The 'W' sound at the beginning is a giveaway. The word is actually a compound word – combining the words ***ward*** and ***robe***. The ***robe*** part is pretty straightforward, but it's the ***ward*** part that indicates the origin of the term.

The word ***ward*** meant someone who oversees or keeps guard. It's a Germanic word that passed into French, and the Normans retained the Germanic 'W' sound at the front. The word eventually passed into English as ***ward*** and ***warden***. And it came in as part of this compound word ***wardrobe***. But as we've seen, people in Paris and central France had a problem with that initial 'W' sound. So they used a 'G' sound in its place. In that dialect, ***ward*** became ***guard***, and ***warden*** became ***guardian***. Again, all of those words passed into English, so we see how English borrowed from both dialects.

That etymology indicates that a ***wardrobe*** is literally the place where robes or other clothing are guarded and protected. But here's the thing. If we were to return to the Middle English period, we would find that Middle English had both ***wardrobe*** and ***garderobe***. So it had both the Norman version and the Parisian version. And in fact, ***garderobe*** was still in common use throughout the 1800s, and can still be found in some places even today.

During the time of King John, there was a special royal department called the Wardrobe that was responsible for maintaining the king's clothing and other valuables. The Wardrobe officers traveled with the King. And it was presumably some of those officials who perished when the carriages carrying John's valuables were lost in the waters of eastern England.

Needless to say John was very upset at the loss of so many valuables, apparently including his crown and many other important objects. To sooth his grief, John decided to have a dinner of peaches and new cider, which was a horrible choice for someone suffering from dysentery. Following the dinner, John's condition quickly deteriorated, and it soon became apparent that he was dying. On his deathbed, John named his 9-year old son Henry as his heir, and he designated William Marshall as regent and guardian of the young boy. John died a short time later on October 18, 1216. A well-known chronicler of the time named Matthew Paris wrote the following about John's death. He wrote, "Foul as it is, Hell itself is defiled by the foulness of John."

Now I mentioned that William Marshall became the regent and guardian of John's young son. That name may sound familiar because I've mentioned Marshall before. In fact, if this was a proper history of England, I would have probably mentioned him a lot more. He had been an important figure in the background of English politics for several decades. I mentioned Marshall way back when I talked about knights in Episode 80. I noted in that episode that William Marshall became the most famous knight in England because of his success in various tournaments around France and England. That was way back in the mid-1100s.

He later became an important noble and baron. He was a supporter of John's father, Henry II, and John's brother, Richard. When Richard died, you might remember that the crown was disputed between John and John's nephew Arthur. Well, Marshall was a key figure in supporting John's claim to the throne. That's not to say that he and John always saw eye-to-eye. But, ultimately, Marshall remained loyal to John and didn't join the rebellion. By this point, he was nearly 70 years – a very advanced age for the 1200s. Despite his age, John's supporters trusted Marshall, and they knew that he could effectively rule England in the name of John's young son.

Ten days later, the young boy was anointed and crowned as the new king at a makeshift ceremony. He thereby became Henry III. At only 9 years of age, he was the first child to inherit the throne since Aethelred the Unready. And given his age, he was really just a figurehead. Marshall and several close advisors were now in charge, and they decided to make an overture to the rebels to try to end the war. The first thing they did was to re-issue Magna Carta. It was a slightly scaled-back version of the Charter, but it was an olive branch, and it was a major reversal from John's refusal to recognize the Charter.

Ultimately, the war had been fought over the king's refusal to recognize Magna Carta. So by re-issuing the Charter in young Henry's name, it was an attempt to reconcile the two sides. At the very least, this move undercut much of Louis's support. Why support a French king when there was a young English king willing to uphold a version of the Charter? Most of the rebels' anger had been aimed at John, and with John's death, the source of much of that anger was gone. Many of the rebel barons started to abandon Louis, but Louis pressed on.

In the spring of the following year, Louis's troops had set up camp in the town of Lincoln in the East Midlands, and they were besieging Lincoln Castle. Marshall and his allies decided to confront Louis's troops in the town, and he caught the French troops completely by surprise. Louis's forces were soundly defeated at what became known as the Battle of Lincoln. Louis's forces had set up camp, but William Marshall defeated them and became the champ. ***Camp*** is a Norman word for a place where troops are stationed, but the person who controls the battlefield is the ***champ*** – or ***champion*** – using the Parisian form of the word. ***Champion*** actually appeared in English for the first time around the current point in our story.

With Marshall emerging as the champion at Lincoln, Louis's campaign largely came to an end. French reinforcements were soon sent to England, but the fleet was intercepted and defeated before they could reach the English shores. That sealed Louis's fate. Louis cut his losses, and left England for good in September of 1217.

With the civil war over, the decision was made to re-issue Magna Carta yet again. This version – the 1217 version – more or less followed the version issued the prior year with only a few minor changes. For example, the provision that allowed a committee of twenty-five barons to enforce the Charter was removed. The provision that gave the Barons the right to consent to taxation had been omitted the year before, and it was omitted again. But despite that omission, it became a standard practice going forward for the king's council to consult with the barons when most taxes were levied.

There was another important change to this 1217 version of the Charter. The original charter had several provisions dealing with the royal forest. This was such a concern for the barons that it was decided to pull those provisions out of the main charter and put them in a separate, smaller charter called the Charter of the Forest.

This was actually a big deal because it explains how Magna Carta got its name. The Charter of the Forest was the smaller of the two charters going forward. The main charter was the bigger of two charters. So it became known as the big charter – or in Latin – the Magna Carta. So it was only at this point that the charter started to be called Magna Carta.

Now as we know, ***carta*** is a Latin word, and ***charter*** is the French and English version of that word with a 'C-H' sound. That 'C-H' sound indicates that the word was borrowed from the dialects of Paris and central France. The word ***charter*** – or ***chartre*** – first appeared in English around the current point in our story in the mid-1200s. But English also had the Norman version ***cartre***. By the 1300s, the Parisian form ***charter*** had won out.

I should also note that we have the words ***card*** and ***chart*** which are also two variations of the same word and which are both derived from the Latin word ***carta***. And it would be tempting to assume that ***card*** in the Norman version and ***chart*** is the Parisian version. But actually, both forms came from Paris and the surrounding regions of central France. ***Chart*** is clearly a Parisian form with its 'C-H' form. But that dialect also borrowed the word ***carte*** from Italian. Italian maintained the original 'C-A' – or /ka/ – sound of Latin. So that gave Parisian French ***chart*** and ***carte***. And both words meant 'a piece of paper.' In Modern French, the word ***carte*** usually refers to a menu. And even in English, we might order something 'a la carte.' Eventually, both forms of the word were borrowed into English. And that gave Middle English ***chart*** and ***carte*** with very similar meanings. Over time, ***carte*** became ***card*** in English. So today, we have ***chart*** and ***card***. But again, those are really just two different forms of the word, and both can be traced back to the standard French of Paris.

So at this point, we have the big charter – also known as Magna Carta . And we have the small charter – called the Charter of the Forest. And before I move on, let me mention a couple of things about that smaller Charter of the Forest. Up to the time of these charters, the king had complete control and say over the royal forests. Remember that the royal forests were to be preserved for deer and other wild animals. Anyone who hunted without the king's permission or cut down trees for firewood was subject to severe punishment – even blinding, castration or death.

As we've seen in earlier episodes, hunting was one of the favorite pastimes of kings. ***Hunt*** is an Old English word. The French word was ***chacier*** or, as we know it today, the ***chase***. That word also became a verb – ***to chase*** – meaning to pursue something vigorously. ***Chase*** with its initial 'C-H' is the Parisian form of the word. But we also have the word ***catch*** from the same root. And ***catch*** is the Norman form of the word with its initial 'C-A' – or /ka/ – sound. So you might 'chase' a deer using the Parisian word, and you might 'catch' a deer with the Norman word.

And when you catch a small animal, you might need to put it in a bag or other container. That container came to be called a ***case***. So ***chase*** and ***case*** are also two variations of the same word. ***Chase*** is the Parisian version and ***case*** is the Norman version.

So kings loved the chase – or the hunt. And that meant they needed a lot of forest land. And over time, more and more land in England had been designated as royal forest land. During John's reign, nearly one-third of England was considered royal forest. So this was what the barons were trying to address with they carved out the forest provisions from Magna Carta and established that new forest charter.

The new charter basically said that all forest land should be rolled back to the time of Henry II about 30 years earlier. So any forest land created by Richard or John was revoked. But this actually had little effect because Richard and John didn't really add much new land to the forest. It was their father Henry who had created so many new forests. So going back to his time didn't provide much relief.

However, other provisions did provide some relief. For one thing, the most severe punishments like blinding, castration and death were no longer allowed for violations of the forest law. Violators could only be punished with a fine or, if they failed to pay, with imprisonment. Just as importantly, if a person held land in a forest, that person could gather wood and exploit the natural resources as long as he or she didn't harm the rights of any neighbors.

And that was a big change, and it was related to a traditional ancient right that people had over common lands. Prior to the Norman Conquest, a lot of land was held by the commons or the community. And a peasant could take limbs and wood from the commons as long as he didn't damage the land. So a peasant was not allowed to take an ax and chop down trees, but he could remove damaged limbs and brush.

So you may be wondering how a peasant or farmer collected the limbs and branches if he couldn't use an ax? Well, he was permitted to use a hook-shaped tool to reach up and pull down damaged limbs or branches. As long as he could reach them with his hook and pull them down, he was fine. Well ***hook*** is an Old English word. But around the current point in our story, the Norse word ***crook*** started to appear in English documents for the first time. ***Crook*** also referred to a hook-shaped tool – especially the type used by shepherds. So a peasant was entitled to collect all that he could gather with a hook or a crook in the common lands or on the lands of his landlord. And this is the most popular explanation for the phrase "by hook or by crook" to mean 'by any means necessary.' A version of that phrase appears as early as the late 1300s. There are some other theories about the origin of that phrase, but this connection to forest land appears to carry the most weight.

Now as with any charter or agreement, there needed to be a way to enforce the provisions. And the Charter of the Forest had a specific provision requiring certain officers to inspect the forest to make sure that there were no violations or encroachments. These officers were called ***regarders***. The word appears in Latin in these early charters, but it was soon borrowed into English. The regarders were twelve knights who were chosen as officers of the forest. The inspection of the

forest was called a ***regard***, and the area under the jurisdiction of a regarder was also called a ***regard***. So the regarders were inspectors who guarded and protected the respective rights of the king and the people in the forest. And that helps to explain the etymology of the word ***regard***. ***Regard*** is a combination of the prefix ***-re*** and the word ***guard*** meaning 'to protect.' The word also had a broader sense meaning to inspect or consider something. And this is sense that still survives in Modern English. When we ***regard*** something today, we take it under consideration.

So ***regard*** is really just a variation of the word ***guard***. And I mentioned that word ***guard*** earlier in reference to the term ***wardrobe***. As we saw, ***guard*** and ***guardian*** are the Parisian forms of the word with their initial 'G' sound. And ***ward*** and ***warden*** are the Norman versions of the word with their initial 'W' sound. And notice that today, a modern officer of the forest is sometimes called a ***game warden***, especially in the US. So a medieval ***regarder*** is a modern ***game warden***. ***Regarder*** is the Parisian form of the word, and ***game warden*** is the based on the Norman form.

By the way, as we might expect, the Norman word ***warden*** appeared in English first – around the current point in our story in the early 1200s. But the Parisian forms ***guard*** and ***guardian*** and ***regard*** appeared about a century later in the 1300s. So once again, the Parisian forms joined the older Norman forms over time.

So if ***guard*** and ***ward*** are ultimately the same word, does that mean that ***regard*** and ***reward*** are also two different versions of the same word? Well, yes. The words ***regard*** and ***reward*** once existed side-by-side in English, and they had the exact same meaning. One was the Parisian form, and one was the Norman form. Both words meant 'to regard or consider or determine something.' But over time, English started to distinguish the two words.

Regard was used to refer to the process of considering or inspecting something, and r***eward*** was used to refer to the consequences of that inspection. So if you were in violation of forest laws or any other laws, you might be punished. But if you were in compliance, you might receive some benefit or token of appreciation. Believe it or not, ***reward*** could be used both ways in Middle English. If you were fined or imprisoned or punished for a violation, that was sometimes called a ***reward***. But that negative sense of the word died out over time. Obviously, the positive sense survived. And today we associate a ***reward*** with good behavior and as a benefit for some accomplishment.

So returning to our overall narrative, we find ourselves in the year 1217. The civil war has been brought to an end. A new version of Magna Carta has been issued, together with a separate smaller charter called the Charter of the Forest. And we have a new boy king named Henry III whose affairs were being managed by an elderly regent named William Marshall. Again, 'William' Marshall using the Norman version of the name, not the Parisian form 'Guillaume.'

I've noted before that English was starting to make a comeback during this period. And we have more evidence of this from the following year – the year 1218. As we know, Latin was the language of the Church. But around the year 1218, the diocese of Salisbury issued a set of rules related to the baptism of children in the case of an emergency where no traditional priest was available. The rules allowed laymen to baptize children in those cases, and they were permitted

to conduct the baptism in 'either French or English.' The rules also dealt with wedding ceremonies. They ordered the words of the wedding service to be taught to the bride and groom in either French or English. This shows that English was acquiring an acceptance in certain formal situations – even some church proceedings. But it also shows that French was being used side–by-side with English. This was a trend that would continue for the next few centuries. French was increasingly used in place of Latin in many government and legal proceedings. And eventually, English would also be used in those proceedings, but that would take a while longer.

In the following year – 1219 – William Marshall died. So that left young Henry without a regent or guardian. The next few years witnessed a power struggle between two different men who wanted to take control of the English government while Henry was a child. On one side, there was Hubert de Burgh who held the position of Justiciar, and he controlled the judiciary and the Exchequer. On the other side, there was a bishop named Peter des Roches who I have mentioned in earlier episodes. He was the one bishop who remained loyal to King John during the Interdict when all the churches were closed. He was a Frenchman and he had remained loyal to John throughout his struggle with the barons. As a result, many of the English barons resented him and favored the other official, Hubert de Burgh. Meanwhile, most of the Frenchmen in the English government favored the bishop, Peter des Roches. So an English and French division started to emerge within the government.

Initially, the Justiciar Hubert de Burgh won the power struggle and, by the year 1224, he was firmly in control of the government. The bishop, des Roches, lost his position at court. He left England for a while to join the Holy Roman Emperor on a crusade.

By this point, the old French king Philip had died, and his son Louis finally succeeded him as King of France. So even though Louis failed to become King of England, he had finally become King of France. During this period, Louis had tried to seize the northern part of Aquitaine called Poitou. That region was still claimed by England, so as the effective head of the English government, Hubert de Burgh launched a military campaign in France to try to secure Poitou. But over the next three years, his forces were defeated and the whole mission largely fell apart.

In 1227, young Henry had reached 20 years of age. So he finally declared himself to be of age, and he started to rule England in his name without de Burgh. A truce was reached with France, but Henry was not at all happy with de Burgh. Henry apparently blamed de Burgh for the failed expedition in France. When Henry tried to launch his own campaign in France to recover the lands that had been lost there, de Burgh objected. DeBurgh felt that the French lands were lost for good. And another protracted war in France would just re-create the situation that had existed in John's time. The English barons didn't want to fight in France, and they certainly didn't want to pay the taxes that were required to support another campaign. De Burgh felt that another war would lead to another revolt by the barons.

But in many ways, Henry was truly his father's son. He didn't have his father's cruelty, but he was prone to making bad decisions, and he really wanted to be a major player in European politics and society. He wanted to be seen as a leader in France, as well as England. He wanted to piece back together the great empire that had been lost by his father. And that is really the key

to understanding what happened over the next few years. Time and again, Henry courted and favored Frenchmen who might help him establish a prominent role in French politics. And as we'll see, he brought many French nobles to England over the next few decades.

In 1230, Henry ignored the advice of de Burgh, and he launched his own expedition in France to recover Poitou. Several months passed without any major victories, and eventually his army dissolved. Henry returned home bankrupt and humiliated. He was able to maintain his control over the far southern part of Aquitaine called Gascony. But that was the only French province still under English control.

Henry continued to blame de Burgh for all of these failures. So after he returned home to England, he dismissed de Burgh and recalled Peter des Roches – the French bishop who had been so loyal to his father. The bishop and the bishop's nephew soon took control of the administration of England. They proceeded to dismiss most of the native English officers – who had supported DeBurgh. They then brought in Frenchmen to take their place – especially men from Poitou. About 2000 knights and soldiers where imported from Poitou and Brittany. A contemporary chronicler named Roger of Wendover wrote an account of the period in Latin. He wrote that King Henry "invited such legions of people from Poitou that they entirely filled England, and wherever the king went he was surrounded by crowds of these foreigners; and nothing was done in England except what the bishop of Winchester and his host of foreigners determined."

Roger also wrote that the new Frenchmen took control of counties and baronies and castles throughout England, and they oppressed the native Englishmen. Many of the English nobles who had supported DeBurgh had their lands confiscated without legal process. The common perception among many of the English barons was that young Henry was following his father's path and had no intention of honoring Magna Carta. They also felt that he was only interested in French politics and had no interest in England or the concerns of the English barons.

One consequence of these developments is that there were more and more French-speaking nobles and officials who spoke a form of central and southern French. They didn't speak Norman, so Norman French continued its decline. This may help to explain why English started to borrow so many French words from other parts of France during this period.

In fact, the renewed French influence in England may be revealed in a Charter that was issued in 1233 – the same year that des Roches and his nephew were recalled to England. That royal charter stated that all English laws had been translated into French so that "everyone will understand." Now, by 'everyone,' the Charter presumably meant all of those French nobles because it doesn't say anything about English. And maybe that comment was a reference to the fact that fewer people were speaking Latin which was the traditional language used for Norman laws. So this charter shows that French was starting to be used as a legal language in place of Latin. But it is interesting that the laws were written in French to make them more understandable – not English. That suggests that the people in charge of enforcing the laws still spoke French and had no need for a version in English.

Later in that same year, William Marshall's son, Richard, led a revolt against Henry in the Welsh Marches. Richard was eventually killed in the uprising. And this was apparently a breaking point for many of the native Englishmen. The English bishops and the archbishop-elect of Canterbury threatened to excommunicate Henry if he didn't get rid of des Roches and all the Frenchmen in his court. Henry eventually bowed to the pressure and dismissed des Roches and his nephew.

But Henry just couldn't resist the allure of Frenchmen. A couple of years later, in 1236, he married a French woman named Eleanor of Provence. She was second daughter of the count of Provence, and her older sister was married to the French king Louis. So Louis and Henry now became brothers-in-law. With this marriage, a new influx of southern Frenchmen started to arrive in England. They were Eleanor's relatives and courtiers, and they were given offices and lands throughout England. One of her uncles was given the earldom of Richmond. Another uncle was made the archbishop of Canterbury. Another Frenchman in her court was named the bishop of Hereford.

Earlier, I mentioned a well-known chronicler of the period named Matthew Paris. He wrote the following about this situation: "Our English king ... has fattened all the kindred and relatives of his wife with lands, possessions, and money, and he has contracted such a marriage that he cannot be more enriched, but rather impoverished."

And Henry wasn't done. After his father John died, his mother had returned to southern France where she was from. And she soon married a local noble there. When she died a few years later, Henry invited many of her second husband's relatives to England. They were also given land and titles in England. One was made bishop of Winchester. Their daughters were married to English nobles.

All of this culminated in another revolt by the barons in the mid-1250s, and that revolt led to the creation of an early version of Parliament. But we'll deal those developments in an upcoming episode. For now, the important point is that England was experiencing a second French invasion. It wasn't a military conquest like the Norman invasion. It was a gradual influx of Frenchmen from central and southern France, and they were taking a prominent position throughout the English nobility. They also reinforced the French influences that were already on the ground in England. So I want to focus on the linguistic consequences of all of this renewed French influence.

As we've seen, England was increasingly exposed to a variety of French dialects – not just the Norman dialect to which it had become accustomed over the prior century and a half. So French words continued to pour in, but they increasingly came in from central France with slightly different pronunciations.

So far, I've focused on two of the most obvious distinctions between the traditional Norman dialect and the dialect of Paris. We've looked at the 'C-H' sound of Paris versus the 'C-A' sound of Normandy, and the 'G' sound of Paris versus the 'W' sound of Normandy.

Those distinctions can also found in a few other words that I haven't mentioned in this episode, but I have mentioned in other episodes. For example, we have the Norman word ***cattle*** and the Parisian word ***chattel***. As we might expect, the Norman version ***cattle*** is attested first – around the year 1200 – when John was King. The Parisian version ***chattel*** came in a few decades later in the mid-1200s – around the time that Henry was inviting in all of those new Frenchmen.

I noted in an earlier episode that the Latin word for lattice work was ***cancellus***. The court official who worked behind a lattice barrier was called a ***cancellarius*** in Latin, and in the Norman French dialect, that title become the ***canceler***. But in the central French of Paris, it became ***chancellor***. Throughout the 1200s, both versions were used in England. But by the end of the century, the Parisian form ***chancellor*** had won out.

This sound change tended to happen at the beginning of words, but sometimes it was found in the middle. So you might go to a ***market*** using a northern French word with a 'K' sound in the middle, and while you are there, you might encounter a ***merchant*** using a Parisian word with a 'C-H' sound in the middle. The ultimate origin of ***market*** is not certain, but it does follow a form used in northern France, and it first appeared in the Peterborough Chronicle at a time when Norman influence was very strong. ***Merchant*** appeared for the first time around the current point in our story in the early 1200s at a time when other French dialects were pouring in.

So those are just a few examples of Norman and Parisian pairs – or doublets – that entered English during the early Middle English period. Now I've focused on those two common sound differences – the Norman 'C-A' versus the Parisian 'C-H' and the Norman 'W' versus the Parisian 'G.' But there are actually a couple of other sound differences that distinguish those dialects. So let me conclude by mentioning those.

The first difference has to do with the assibilation of the 'K' sound in French. Remember that? That was one of the first sound changes I discussed in the podcast way back in Episode 5. In the standard French of Paris, the hard 'K' sound switched to an 'S' sound before the front vowels – E and I. That explains why English has so many words where the letter C represents the 'S' sound – like ***center*** and ***civil***. When a C appears before an E or an I in English, it is usually pronounces as an S because that's what happened in standard French, and those rules were imported to English.

Well, in the Norman dialect, the hard 'K' sound tended to shift to 'C-H' sound before an E or an I. That was actually the same change that happened in Old English. Anyway, all of that means that Norman words tended to have a 'C-H' sound where many Parisian words had an 'S' sound. So I gave the classic example of ***catch*** and ***chase***. ***Catch*** is the Norman word and ***chase*** is the Parisian word. And in that earlier discussion, I focused on the sounds at the beginning of those words. But let's look at the end of those words. The Norman word ***catch*** ends in a 'CH' sound whereas the Parisian word ***chase*** ends in an 'S' sound. So once we put this sound change together with that earlier change, we can see exactly how those two words developed.

Let's also compare the word ***launch*** and ***lance*** which are variations of the same word. ***Launch*** is the Norman version of the word with the 'C-H' sound at the end, and ***lance*** is the Parisian word with the 'S' sound at the end. Both words were recorded around the same time in the late 1200s and 1300s. ***Launch*** literally meant to wield a lance, but today we use it more specifically to refer to the process of throwing or hurling something.

Another good example of this sound difference can be found in the words ***chisel*** and ***scissors***. Believe it or not, these are two variations of the same Latin root word. And the difference between the Norman and Parisian dialects can be heard at the beginning of those two words. Latin had the word ***caedere*** meaning to cut. In the standard French of Paris, the initial 'K' sound eventually shifted to an 'S' sound and produced the word ***scissors***. But in Normandy, the 'K' sound shifted to a 'C-H' sound and produced the word ***chisel***. Both words appeared in English for the first time in the late 1300s and early 1400s.

Now there is one last sound difference that I want to discuss, and it helps to explain a lot of other word pairs that we have in Modern English. When late Latin evolved into early French, a new vowel sound was created within very early French. It was actually a diphthong, so it was two different vowel sounds squeezed together. It was pronounced something like /ei/, and it was often spelled 'EI.' It was similar to the sound we have in words like ***vein*** (V-E-I-N) and ***reign*** (R-E-I-G-N) which both entered English from French in the 1200s.

This sound remained unchanged in the Norman dialect. But in the prior century, in the 1100s, the sound had changed in the central dialects spoken in places like Paris. There, the sound became /oy/ – typically spelled either O-I or O-Y. Now this sound didn't exist in English. But in the early 1200s, some of these Parisian words started to come in – and this new sound was introduced to English.

I actually mentioned this when I went through Layamon's Brut. In that episode, I pointed out the word ***Babylon*** which was rendered as ***Babiloine*** (spelled B-A-B-I-L-O-I-N-E). I noted that that was one of the first words to enter English with that /oy/ sound.

Well that /oy/ sound had developed within those central dialects of France like the dialect of Paris. But it wasn't as common in Normandy or in the south of France. So this helps to explain the difference between word pairs like ***regal*** and ***royal***, and ***legal*** and ***loyal***. ***Regal*** is based on the Latin root word ***regalis***. Norman French had the word as ***real***, which is unrelated to our modern word ***real***. But Parisian French had this sound change, and the word was rendered as ***royal*** in that dialect thanks to that sound change. So English originally had the Norman form ***real*** which first appeared in the early 1300s. Then in the late 1300s, the Parisian form ***royal*** came in, as did the Latin form ***regal***.

The same thing happened with the words ***legal*** and ***loyal***, which are also separate versions of the same word. The original Latin version was ***legalis***, and that ultimately produced the word ***legal***. The Norman version was ***leal*** , and the Parisian version was ***loyal***. A vassal who met his obligations to his lord was in compliance with the law. So he was ***legal***. And by meeting his obligations, he was also ***loyal*** to the lord. When the vassal swore an oath to his lord, it was a

legal oath and it was an oath of loyalty. So that helps to explain the connection between the words ***legal*** and ***loyal***. Again, ***legal*** is the Latin form, ***leal*** is the Norman form, and ***loyal*** is the Parisian form with the /oy/ sound. By the way, the Norman version ***leal*** disappeared from standard English, but it still exists in the English dialects of Scotland.

This Parisian sound change from /ei/ to /oy/ also helps to explain the difference between ***display*** and ***deploy***. Again, these are both derived from the same word. They both originally meant 'to roll out.' So you might roll out or ***display*** a flag, or you might roll out or ***deploy*** troops on a military campaign. ***Deploy*** is the Parisian verison of the word with the /oy/ sound And ***display*** represents the form found in Normandy and other parts of France.

This sound change also accounts for the difference between ***feeble*** and ***foible***, which also share the same root. And also the difference between ***convey*** and ***convoy***. Both of those words originally meaning to travel together. ***Convey*** came to refer to transportation, and then the general act of transferring something from one person to another. ***Convoy*** is the Parisian version of the word, and it retains more of the original meaning as a group of people traveling together.

Now I should note that the /oy/ sound continued to evolve within the standard French itself. If you are familiar with French, you probably know that words spelled with 'OI' are not pronounced /oy/. They're pronounced as /wa/ with an aspirated 'W' sound. Compare the Modern English and French versions of the word ***royal***. The French word is spelled like the English word, except the French version has an extra 'E' on the end. The English word is pronounced /royal/, but the French word is /wa-yell/. Also, think about more recent loanwords from French like ***patois***, ***soiree***, and ***foie gras*** and ***film noir***. All of those are spelled with an O-I, but because they are recent loanwords, they have the modern French pronunciation as /wa/ instead of /oi/. So when we come across a word spelled OI or OY, and pronounced as /oy/, it is usually a word borrowed from standard Parisian French during the Middle or early Modern English period. When words with that spelling are pronounced as /wa/, it usually represents a more recent French loanword. But both of those pronunciation are the product of the standard Parisian dialect. Old words from neighboring French dialects didn't tend to have those sounds.

I think the important point to take from all of this is that English has borrowed a lot of words from French over the centuries. But they didn't all come from a single, uniform dialect. They came from a variety of dialects. The earliest loanwords were mainly from the Norman dialect, which was the speech of the Norman conquerors. But around the current point in our story in the early to mid 1200s, a lot of words started to come in from other parts of France, especially the Parisian dialect of central France which was emerging as a national standard. And Modern English preserves a lot of that history in the words we use all the time.

I'm going to conclude on that note. As we move forward with the story, we are going to focus more and more on those French words that were starting to pour in. I've talked a lot about that influx, but we've only seen a few French words in the documents we've looked at so far. As we move into the mid-1200s, that is going to change. The entire vocabulary of English is about to experience a major shake-up. So as we move forward, we'll explore how the English language abandoned much, but not all, of its Germanic roots.

Until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.

EPISODE 100: DECODING ENGLISH

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 100: Decoding English. So, this is Episode 100, and I thought this might be a good time to do a special episode to commemorate the accomplishment. When I first began the podcast, I had planned to do 100 episodes in total with about 25 dedicated to each period covered in the podcast – Pre-English, Old English, Middle English and Modern English. I actually maintained that plan for a while, but I abandoned that idea some time back. So rather than this being the culmination of the podcast, it is just an anniversary episode.

I thought this might be a good time to discuss the overall arch of the podcast – where we've been and where we're going. And I'm wedging this episode between the regular episodes, so hopefully you won't have to wait the full three weeks before the next episode.

For some time now, I've been wanting to discuss the way that sound changes provide clues about the origins of English words. If we go back and look at all the specific sound changes I've covered in the podcast and put them together, we can actually come up with a set of general rules that can help us identify where a particular word came from. These rules can help us figure out if a word is a native Old English word or a loanword from another language. So this time, I want to do a quick review of the basic sound changes we've covered over the past 100 episodes, and I want to point out how we can use those changes to decode the origin of English words.
But before I begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com and I'm on twitter @englishhistpod . And as always, you can reach me by email at kevin@historyofenglishpodcast.com

Now let me begin by making a few general announcements about the podcast. First of all, I always mention at the beginning of each episode that you can support the podcast at Patreon. The direct link is Patreon.com/historyofenglish. You can also go to the main website and link from there. I want thank all of you who have signed up there. The response has been great, and I really appreciate that support. I don't mention Patreon as much as I probably should, but let me mention a couple of things about that option if you're not a member. First of all, everyone who signs up to support the podcast at $5 a month receives a short bonus episode in between each regular episode. By combining Patreon with the regular podcast, I try to provide new content on a regular basis. So every week or two, there is a new episode on one of the two feeds.

The bonus episodes at Patreon are a bit of a hodge-podge. Sometimes, the episodes explore some aspect of the most recent regular episode in more detail. Sometimes, I discuss issues completely unrelated to the narrative in the regular podcast. For example, I've put together a series of episode that explore how English has created new words over the centuries. And that is an ongoing theme.

I am also working on a series of episodes that will explore the history of language prior to original Indo-European language. I intend to explore how the Indo-European family relates to some of the other language families, especially those in Northern Europe and Asia. And I'll look

at the arguments and evidence for an even older proto-language. I didn't cover that period in the regular podcast because it involves a lot of speculation and unproven theories. But I thought it might be interesting to try to tackle that topic in those bonus episodes. So there is a lot of bonus content over at the Patreon site, and if you're concerned about long-term commitments, there aren't any. You can cancel your support at any time. But again, that Patreon support helps me to keep the podcast going on a regular basis – and it helps me to keep it ad-free.

Also, I get a lot of questions about the transcripts of the old episodes, and I continue to work on those when I have time. I have released some updates recently, and I should have some more in the near future. So you can go to the Transcripts page of the website for those. Again, the main site is historyofenglishpodcast.com.

I also get questions about putting the material in a more traditional book format. I noted in an earlier episode that I intend to do that. That's another project on the 'to do list,' but I want to update the transcripts first. So stay tuned, for more updates in the future about those projects.

And lastly, I wanted to make an announcement about the Voice Samples. About a year and half ago, I invited all of you to leave a voice sample at the website for use when I get to Modern English accents. Well I'm happy to report that I got a LOT of responses to that request. I have received over 200 voice samples from all over the world, and I am still working through them and categorizing them for future use. I recently updated the voice sample page of the website to include a list of sentences. And I made that change because those sentences help to highlight certain vowel sounds that tend to vary among English speakers. So I want to continue to invite all of you to leave a sample whether it be a personal story about funny words or phrases you have encountered or simply a reading of the sentences on the website page. And you can leave a new sample by reading the sentences even if you have left a sample before. As I said, my plan is to incorporate some of those samples into the podcast when I get to the development of Modern English. And again, that is the Voice Samples page at the main website – historyofenglishpodcast.com.

And this is probably a good point to discuss where we are in the overall story of English and where we are headed. We're currently in the early to mid 1200s, so we're still in the early Middle English period. You may have noticed that I have slowed down the narrative a bit as we explore this period. And I have done that on purpose because this is one of the most fascinating periods of English.

It was during this period from the late 1100s through the mid-1300s that English went from a very foreign-sounding Germanic language to a language that we can actually read and understand today. By the time we get to Chaucer in the late 1300s, we'll have a language that most modern speakers can understand. There will still be a lot of unusual words, and spellings will be much more fluid that Modern English. But it will clearly be an early form of English.

So if we want to understand how Old English became Modern English, I think we really need to focus on what was happening during this period – especially the period of the 1200s and early 1300s. That's why I want to take my time with this period, and I want to make sure we take a

look at the few surviving major manuscripts from this period. Over the next few episodes, we'll continue to look at those texts, and we'll try to pinpoint how the language was changing.

Eventually we'll find our way to Chaucer in the late 1300s, and then we'll start to look at the Great Vowel Shift during the 1400s and 1500s. We'll then turn to Shakespeare and the early Modern English period. And that will take us to the expansion of English to North America and beyond. I've spent a lot of time looking at the history of England and the British Isles. And as we move into the Modern English period, I'll continue that approach, but I'll be focusing more on the history of North America, Australia and New Zealand, and the other regions where English spread. And as we get into this later period, we'll also look at the development of regional English accents and dialects. And that's where all of those voice samples will really come in handy. So that's the game plan going forward.

Now this time, I wanted to take this opportunity to review the sound changes we've explored since the beginning of the podcast series. This is one of my favorite topics because I think it really shows how various Indo-European languages are connected. It's amazing how a couple of basic sound changes can explain how various cognates are related. It also helps to see how the various Indo-European languages have evolved over time. So sound changes are a fundamental part of the story of English. And that's why I began the podcast with the sound changes identified by Jacob Grimm.

Unfortunately, the various sound changes have been spread out over the past 99 episodes, so it is probably difficult to keep track of all of the changes. I have been looking for a good place to review those changes to show how the pieces fit together, and I thought this would be a good time and place to do that. But rather than just listing all of those sound changes, I want to show you how those changes can help us to identify if a word is a native Old English word or a borrowed word from another language.

So let's start with Grimm's Law – the series of sound changes identified by Jacob Grimm. As we saw early on, these changes were the changes that took place within the original Germanic language as it evolved from Proto-Indo-European. So generally speaking, these changes apply to all of the Germanic languages, even though some of these sounds have continued to evolve within some of those languages.

Grimm actually identified nine specific early sound changes, but three of them didn't really have much affect on Old English so I didn't focus on them early on. But those three Indo-European sounds did change in some notable ways within early Latin, so they do play a role in our story. So let me being with those three sounds.

These were three very aspirated or breathy sounds, and within the Germanic languages, they just lost their aspiration or breathiness. There was an aspirated 'b' sound – /bhh/ – that just became a regular 'b' sound. And there was an aspirated 'd' sound that became a regular 'd' sound. So within the Germanic languages, these sound changes were very subtle.

But when those two sounds passed to Latin, they both produced an ‘f’ sound there. So this helps to explain why certain Old English words have a ‘b’ or ‘d’ sound where the related Latin words have an ‘f’ sound.

We see this distinction in Old English ***brother*** and Latin ***fraternal*** – both from the same root word. We also see it Germanic ***bloom*** and ***blossom*** and Latin ***flower*** – again from the same root. Also, Germanic ***blaze*** and Latin ***flame***. Germanic ***birth*** and Latin ***fertile***. ***Rebut*** comes from a Germanic root, and ***refute*** comes from a related Latin root. We have Germanic ***break*** and ***breach*** on the one hand and Latin ***fracture*** and ***fragment*** on the other hand. And if you like fava beans (with a nice chianti), the term ***fava bean*** shows this same distinction. ***Fava*** and ***bean*** are actually cognate. ***Fava*** is a Latin word for bean, and ***bean*** is the native Old English word. So that was the aspirated ‘b’ sound. It produced a Germanic ‘b’ sound and a Latin ‘f’ sound.

The same thing happened with the original aspirated ‘d’ sound. It became a regular ‘d’ in the Germanic languages and an ‘f’ sound in Latin. From an Indo-European word that meant doorway, it gave us the English word ***door*** and Latin words for things found outside of the door like ***forest*** and ***foreign***. We also see the distinction in the Germanic word ***dust*** and the Latin word ***fume***. And the English word ***deed*** and the Latin word ***feat***. So that was the aspirated ‘d’ sound.

And the original Indo-European language also had an aspirated ‘g’ sound that became a regular ‘g’ sound in the Germanic languages, but it shifted to a variety of sounds with Latin, depending on the context. In many words, it shifted to an ‘h’ sound, which explains why English has the native word ***guest***, but Latin gave us the words ***host*** and ***hotel***, all from the same root. It also explains the link between the Germanic word ***garden*** and the Latin word ***horticulture***.

So these three changes didn’t directly impact Old English that much, but they do explain some links with Latin words. Then there were six other specific sound changes that did impact Old English. And these changes show how sound changes are often the result of a domino effect – where one sound changes, it often triggers a series of changes. So we just saw that the aspirated or breathy ‘b’, ‘d’ and ‘g’ sounds lost their aspiration, and they just became regular ‘b’, ‘d’ and ‘g’ sounds within the Germanic languages. But the original Indo-European language already had regular ‘b’, ‘d’ and ‘g’ sounds. So those existing sounds shifted to new sounds. The ‘b’ sound became a ‘p’ sound, ‘d’ became ‘t’, and ‘g’ became ‘k’. And I gave lots of examples of those changes back in the episode on Grimm’s Law. But those three new sounds – ‘p’, ‘t’ and ‘k’ – also existed in the original Indo-European language. So words that had those three sounds were also affected, and once again the domino effect pushed those sounds to new sounds. So the ‘p’ sound became an ‘f’ sound, ‘t’ became ‘th’ and ‘k’ became ‘h’. And that accounts for all nine changes identified by Jacob Grimm. And again, those changes were the result of a domino effect, and it produced that cascading series of sound changes. As we’ll see when we get to the great vowel shift near the end of the Middle English period, the same thing happened with the long vowels in English. As one shifted, it pushed several others out of the way.

Now out of all of those changes identified by Jacob Grimm, there is one that can help us determine if a word is an Old English word. I noted that the ‘b’ sound shifted to the ‘p’ sound.

Well, the original Indo-European language had very few words that began with a 'b' sound. So very few Germanic words acquired a new 'p' sound at the front. And almost all of the existing words that had a 'p' sound at the front were affected by one of the other rules – that shift from the 'p' sound to the 'f' sound which produced the English word ***father*** which exists beside the Latin word ***paternal***. So thanks to those two changes under Grimm's Law, the 'p' sound virtually disappeared at the front of Germanic words. And Old English had very few words that began with a 'p' sound. It had the word ***pound***, and ***pin*** – as in a needle, and ***pen*** – as in a cow pen, and a few others that have disappeared over time. So, as a general rule, when we come across a Modern English word that begins with a 'p' sound, if its not ***pound***, ***pin*** or ***pen***, we can assume that it is not an Old English word. It was borrowed from somewhere else – mostly from Latin and French. So that's our first rule.

Now after exploring Grimm's Law and the Indo-European migrations, we turned to ancient Greece, and we looked at the Greek influence on English. And Greece also had three very aspirated sounds that lost their aspiration or breathiness over time. And we can see evidence of those sound changes in certain words borrowed from Greek. And by spotting those changes, we can identify those words as Greek loanwords, so they are not native Old English words.

The three Greek breathy sounds that changed over time were an aspirated 'p' sound, an aspirated 'c' or 'k' sound, and an aspirated 'r' sound. And the Romans borrowed a lot of words from the Greeks that had those Greek sounds. Now the Greeks had specific letters for those sounds, but the Romans didn't have those letters because those sounds didn't exist in Latin. So when the Romans borrowed Greek words with those sounds, they had to figure out how to represent those sounds.

Since these consonant sounds were breathy or aspirated, the Romans decided use the letter for the closest consonant sound in Latin, and they decided to add an H after the letter to reflect the fact that the Greeks pronounced them in a very breathy way. Keep in mind that the 'h' sound is really just a slight breathy sound. So the Romans thought that was a good way to indicate aspiration in those borrowed Greek words.

Using that new spelling technique, the Romans spelled words with the breathy 'p' sound with a PH letter combination. And words with the breathy 'r' sound were spelled with an RH letter combination. And words with a breathy 'c' or 'k' sound were spelled with CH – because you might remember that the Romans used the letter C for the 'k' sound.

Now that breathy 'p' sound – spelled as PH by the Romans – was in the process of shifting to an 'f' sound when the Romans borrowed those words. And within Latin, those Greek words were usually just pronounced with a straight-forward 'f' sound. But that PH spelling lingers as a marker of those Greek words that once had that breathy 'p' sound. So as a general rule, when we encounter a word where the 'f' sound is spelled with a PH, we are usually looking at a loanword from Greek. That includes words like ***philosophy***, ***phone***, ***physics***, ***pheasant***, ***phonetics***, ***elephant*** and so on.

Now this rule works best when the PH appears at the beginning of a word. It doesn't work as well when the PH appears at the end of a word – especially in names like ***Adolph***, ***Rudolph***, ***Randolph***, and so on. Those are actually Germanic names where the spelling has been revised under Greco-Roman influence. But if we stick with words that begin with PH, it's a pretty good rule. So again, words that begin with PH – pronounced as 'f' – are usually words borrowed from Greek, so they're not Old English words.

Now Greek also had that breathy 'r' sound which lost its aspiration or breathiness over time. Those words came to be pronounced with a regular 'r' sound, but the RH spelling remains as a marker of that original Greek sound. So again, when we encounter a word where the 'r' sound is spelled with an RH, we are usually looking a Greek loanword. That is true for words like ***rhinoceros***, ***rhyme***, ***rhythm***, ***rhetoric***, ***rhapsody***, ***rhubarb***, and so on.

Then Greek also had a breathy 'k' sound that the Romans represented with the letter combination CH. This was actually the first use of the CH letter combination which was later applied to other sounds. But originally since the letter C was used for the 'k' sound, the Romans used the CH to refer to a very breathy 'k 'sound – something like /x/ – not the /ch/ sound that we tend to use it for today. And this new CH letter combination was a common spelling in words borrowed from Greek. Now once again, that aspiration or breathiness disappeared over time. So within these words, the CH came to just represent a regular 'k 'sound. And many of those words were eventually borrowed into English.

So today, when we come across a word that begins with a CH, but the CH represents a 'k' sound – not a /ch/ sound – we are usually looking at a loanword from Greek. That includes words like ***choir***, ***chorus***, ***chrome***, ***chronic***, ***character***, ***chaos***, ***chasm***, ***chameleon*** and so on. This also helps to explain why we sometimes use the CH letter combination for the 'k' sound.

So we now have four general rules that help us to pick out a loanword. If a word begins with a P, a PH, an RH, or a CH pronounced as 'k,' then we are almost always dealing with a loanword. Those are not usually native Old English words.

Now after we looked at the Greeks, we turned our attention to the Romans and the Latin language. And during the late Latin period, we saw that Latin itself experienced quite a few sound changes, and those changes continued as the various Romance languages emerged.

First of all, the 'h' sound started to disappear from Latin around the second and third centuries. And that left late Latin with a lot of silent H's – especially at the beginning of words. And those silent H's passed into French and then ultimately into English. So as a general rule, when we encounter a word with a silent H, we are usually looking at a French loanword. That includes words like ***honor***, ***honest***, ***hour***, ***heir***, and the American pronunciation of H-E-R-B as /erb/. So this gives us another general rule. Whenever we encounter a silent H at the beginning of a word, we're usually looking at a loanword – not a native Old English word.

Now shortly after the 'h' sound began to disappear in Latin, the 'y' sound also started to change. You might remember that words like /yoo-lius/ and /yoo-piter/ became ***Julius*** and ***Jupiter***. So the

‘y’ sound shifted to a ‘j’ sound. This ‘j’ sound was a unique sound at the time. It was a brand-new sound in Latin, and it was also uncommon in the Germanic languages. English was an exception because it did have a ‘j’ sound, but its use was very limited. It usually appeared at the end of words like ***bridge*** and ***hedge*** and ***ridge***. So even English words didn’t start with a ‘j’ sound. That meant that this relatively new ‘j’ sound in Latin tended to distinguish English and Latin words. When that ‘j’ sound appeared at the front of a word, it usually indicated a Latin or French word and not a native Old English word. So words like ***justice***, ***jury***, ***jetty***, ***jeopardy***, ***join***, ***juice*** and so on, they are all loanwords. And when we come across a word that begins with a ‘j’ sound, we can generally assume that it is not from Old English.

So the ‘y’ sound shifted to a ‘j’ sound in Latin, and around the same time, the Latin ‘w’ sound shifted to a ‘v’ sound. This helps to explain the link between ***wine*** and ***vine*** or ***vineyard***. They began as the same Latin word – ***winum***. Old English borrowed the word from the Romans before the sound change. So Old English ended up with the word as ***wine*** with a ‘w’ sound. Meanwhile, the ‘w’ sound shifted to a ‘v’ sound in late Latin, and that produced the word ***vine*** from French which literally meant a grape vine or the plant that produces grapes. Old English had created the word ***wine-geard*** for the place where wine got its start, so the place where grapes were grown. And after the French word ***vine*** was introduced in the 1300s, English changed the term from ***wine-geard*** to ***vineyard***.

Now again, this ‘v’ sound was similar to the ‘j’ sound in that it was new and little unusual at first. It was a brand new sound in Latin. And at the time, it was rare in the Germanic languages. Again, English was an exception because it did have a ‘v’ sound in very limited situations. As we’ve seen before, a word like ***leaf*** became ***leaves*** with a ‘v’ sound at the end when it was made plural. So English did have a ‘v’ sound, but it only occurred in certain limited situations where the ‘f’ sound became voiced and switched to a ‘v.’ This could happen in the middle of a word or at the end of a word, like when a word ending in F was made plural.

So ***leaf*** and ***leaves***, ***thief*** and ***thieves***, ***knife*** and ***knives***, and so on. So Old English had a ‘v’ sound, but it didn’t really appear at the beginning of a word. But as we just saw, the Latin ‘w’ sound switched to a ‘v’ sound, so Latin and French words started to come into English with a ‘v’ sound at the front. So when a word started with a ‘v’ sound, it was usually a loanword.

So during the Middle English period, words started to come into English with an initial ‘j’ sound or ‘v’ sound. And those were probably funny sounding words at first because Old English didn’t start words with those sound. And today, we can use that fact to identify loanwords. Again words that begin with a J are usually loanwords, and words that being with a V also tend to be loanwords – usually from Latin or French. But sometimes from other languages like ***vodka*** from Russian and ***veda*** from Sanskrit.

Now as you may know, other Germanic languages also experienced that same shift from the ‘w’ sound to the ‘v’ sound, but that shift happened later in those language. And English has borrowed a few of those words as well. For example, we have ***Viking*** and ***Valhalla*** from the Scandinavian languages. But again, those are still loanwords.

Now there are a small number of exceptions where a native English word has a 'v' sound, and I actually mentioned this exception in the recent episode where I discussed the Owl and the Nightingale. I noted that people in the far south of England tended to pronounce their F's as V's. Mechanically, those are very similar sounds. The only difference is that the F is voiceless and the V is voiced. So speakers in the far south tended to voice that 'f' sound, thereby making it a V. In this far southern dialect, a word like ***fox*** was often pronounced as ***vox***, and it ultimately gave us the word ***vixen*** for a female fox. It gave us ***vane*** – as in a weather-vane – from Old English ***fana***. And it gave us ***vat*** – meaning a large tub – from the Old English word ***fæt***. But other than those three words, that dialect had very little effect on Modern English, and other than those exceptions, most words that begin with a V are loanwords.

Late Latin also had the 'z' or 'zed' sound which was not common in English. English did have the 'z' sound in certain limited situations. It was kind of like when the 'f' sound turned into a 'v' sound in certain situations – so when F became voiced. Well, S and Z worked the same way. S is a voiceless sound, but when it is voiced, it becomes a 'z' sound. Well, Old English has the 's' sound, and in certain limited situations it would become voiced and switch to a 'z' sound. But it was so rare, that Old English didn't even use a separate letter for that sound. So it didn't have a letter Z – or zed. It just used the S. And even though the S was sometimes pronounced as a Z, that never really happened at the front of a word, except again in the far south of England. And even when it did occur, those words were still spelled with an S. So today, when we come across a word spelled with a Z – especially words that begin with a Z – it is usually a loanword, not a native Old English word.

So we're still in the Late Latin period. And during that period, as the various modern Romance languages began to emerge, the 'k' sound and the hard 'g' sound both moved from the back to the throat to the front of the mouth when they appeared before the front vowels – E and I. This was that process I looked at early on in the podcast called assibilation or palatalization. This process actually affected most of the languages of Western Europe in different ways, but we're mainly concerned about its effects on Old English and early French because that's where many of our modern words come from. I'm going to deal with Old English in a minute, so let's focus on the French sound changes first.

As we saw early on, both Latin and English represented the 'k' sound with the letter C. And in early French, that 'k' sound moved forward in the mouth and became an 's' sound before E and I which were the front vowels. So C before A, O, U remained the same. It remained as a 'k' sound. But C before E and I, it became an 's' sound. So in French, the letter C came be used for the 's' sound in these situations. And even today, when we use the letter C for the 's' sound, we're really using a technique that originated in France. Other languages experienced a similar change. For example, Spanish also used the letter C in that way. But English borrowed much more heavily from French. So as a general rule today, when an English word uses a letter C for the 's' sound – especially at the beginning of a word – it is usually loanword. It's not a native Old English word. So ***cemetery***, ***cent***, ***certify***, ***cider***, ***cigar***, ***cinnamon***, ***civil***, ***city***, ***circle*** – they're all loanwords.

Now the hard ‘g’ sound in the back of the throat experienced a similar change in late Latin and early French. Keep in mind that the ‘k’ and ‘g’ sounds are very similar. K is voiceless and G is voiced, but otherwise they are mechanically the same sound. So it isn’t surprising that they both experienced similar changes over time. And the ‘g’ sound also shifted forward in the mouth when it appeared before the front vowels. In very early French, it became a /j/ sound. So it was essentially the ‘j’ sound that we looked at earlier. But when this sound is represented by letter G, we usually just call it the ‘soft G’ sound. So the soft G in ***giraffe*** or ***Germany*** is really just the ‘j’ sound found in words like ***Julius*** and ***Jupiter***. And thanks to those two distinct sound changes in late Latin and early French, English took in a lot words with that sound. In fact, English is the only Germanic language that routinely uses the /j/ sound. So again, words that begin with this sound are usually loanwords whether spelled with a J or a soft G. So ***gender***, ***gem***, ***general***, ***generous***, ***gentle***, ***gigantic***, ***ginger***, ***giraffe***, ***gist*** – they’re all loanwords.

So the hard ‘g’ and ‘k’ sounds softened before the front vowels – E and I. Then a little later, in Paris and the central part of France, the ‘k’ sound also started to soften before the ‘a’ sound – even though A is a back vowel. This is the sound change I discussed in the last episode – where the Parisian dialect has a lot of words that begin with CHA where Latin and other Romance dialects have those words with a traditional CA. Latin ***cappa*** became French ***chapel***, and all that. Well, this sound didn’t change before the letter A in Old English. A C before an A remained /ka/ in Old English. So as a general rule, when we come across words in English that begin with CHA, they’re usually loanwords. ***Chain***, ***chapel***, ***chalice***, ***chance***, ***chamber***, ***chase***, ***change***, ***chart***, ***charge*** – they’re all loanwords.

Then in later French, that CHA – or /cha/ – sound shifted to an SHA – /sha/ – sound. So we got words like ***chapeau***, ***chaperon***, ***chateau***, ***champagne*** and so on. That gives us another general rule. When a word is spelled with CH – and that CH represents the /sh/ sound – it is almost always a loanword.

And around the same time, in later French, the traditional ‘j’ sound shifted to the modern French /zh/ sound as in ***Jacques*** and ***bonjour***. This sound passed into English is words like ***mirage***, ***rouge***, and also words like ***vision*** and ***treasure***. Words that have this /zh/ sound are almost always loanwords. So again, they’re not Old English words.

And in French, the final consonant is often silent. And English has borrowed some words in recent centuries which still retain those silent letters at the end – especially a silent S or T. So words that have a silent S or T at the end are usually loanwords from French – words like ***debris***, ***buffet***, and ***bouquet***.

I also noted in the most recent episode that French developed the /oy/ vowel sound – a diphthong, and that sound also passed into English. So words that have the /oy/ sound – spelled OI or OY – are usually loanwords. That includes words like ***joy***, ***voice***, ***oil***, ***ointment***, and so on. Words like ***boy*** and ***toy*** have uncertain origins, but they didn’t appear until the Middle English period. So again, the /oy/ sound usually suggests a loanword or a word that came in after Old English.

Now before we turn to the sounds of Old English, let me stop here and summarize the rules I've just covered. These are all general rules that signify a loanword – a word borrowed from another language and generally came into English after the Old English period.

This includes words that begin with any of the following letters – a P, a V, a Z, a J, a soft G, or a silent H. Also words that begin with CHA. And words that begin with a letter C where it is pronounced as S – as in ***civil*** and ***cease***.

Also, words that begin with a CH where the CH represents either the /sh/ sound or /k/ sound, those are usually loanwords. When they have the /sh/ sound, as in ***chapeau*** or ***chateau***, they're usually from French. And when they have the /k/ sound, as in ***choir*** or ***chemistry***, they're usually from Greek.

And words that have an RH spelling for the 'r' sound – like ***rhinoceros***, or a PH spelling for the 'f' sound – like ***philosophy***, those are also usually loanwords from Greek.

And words that have the /zh/ sound or the /oi/ sound are also usually loanwords. As are words then end in a silent S or a silent T.

So those are all good general rules to help you identify a loanword. There are occasional exceptions, but they work most of the time.

Now up to this point, we've looked at sound changes outside of English to help us identify loanwords. That means that we can exclude those words as Old English words. Now let's do the opposite. Let's turn to Old English and look for rules that'll help us pick out words that are actually native English words that have been around since the Anglo-Saxons.

Modern English has a few spellings that represent sounds that were once common in Old English, but have since disappeared or changed. But again, those spellings have lingered on. So when we encounter those spellings, we can usually assume that we are looking at a very old word that has been around since Old English. That includes words that begin with a KN like ***knife***, ***knight***, ***knee***, ***knit***, ***knave***, ***know*** and so on. The K was originally pronounced, so those words originally began with a /kn/ sound, and the KN spelling reflects that history. By the way, the word ***knife*** may have been borrowed from Old Norse, but it is well attested in late Old English. And there are a few exceptions where the word came in from another Germanic language like ***knob*** and ***knapsack***. But that KN usually indicates an Old English word.

Old English also had words that began with a GN or /gn/ sound. That sound is represented in the spelling of words like ***gnat*** and ***gnaw***. But words like ***gnarl*** and ***gnash*** with their GN spellings came in later from uncertain origins. And ***gnome*** is a Latin and French word. So the GN spelling doesn't work as well when trying to identify Old English words.

We also know that Old English had the /x/ sound which has singe largely disappeared from the language. That sound was spelled with a G or an H in Old English, and it became GH in Middle English. In most cases, the GH is silent today, but in a few cases it represents an F sound as in

cough and ***laugh***. Either way, the GH spelling usually indicates an Old English word. Again, there are a few exceptions. ***Ghoul*** is actually an Arabic word. ***Gingham*** – with its GH in the middle – comes from Malaysian. And ***gherkin*** comes from Persian via Dutch. But these are really just a few exceptions to the general rule.

It was also common for Old English words to begin with an 'hw' sound – a slight 'h' or breathy sound before a W. Some English dialects still retain that pronunciation or a similar pronunciation, but for the most part the initial 'h' sound has disappeared from those words. So today, the initial consonant is really just the 'w' sound. Now in Old English, most of those words had been spelled with an initial HW, but when the 'h' sound disappeared or declined, the letters were reversed to WH. So when we encounter words that begin with a WH like ***what***, ***why***, ***when***, ***where***, ***white***, ***wheat***, ***wheel***, ***whale***, and so on, we're usually dealing with an Old English word.

Again, there are a few exceptions – mostly from Old Norse. Those include Norse words like ***whim***, ***whirl***, and ***whisk***. We also have the word ***whiskey*** from Gaelic. But again, those are just a few limited exceptions.

Now earlier, I talked abut the assibiliation of the 'k' and 'g' sounds in early French. Those sounds shifted forward and changed before the front vowels E and I. Well, Old English experienced similar changes, but the new sounds were different.

First, the 'hard G' sound shifted forward to a 'y' sound before the front vowels in Old English, and it produced words like ***year*** and ***yard*** and ***yell***. So English got a lot of words with an initial 'y' sound which was somewhat unusual in the Germanic languages. Again, this initial 'y' sound in Old English evolved from a 'hard G' sound in most cases. And most other Germanic language retained that 'hard G' sound. So Germanic ***gear*** became Old English ***year***, and ***geard*** became ***yard***. And we can still hear that link in the Frankish word ***garden*** and the Old English word ***yard***. And Germanic ****gel*** became Old English ***yell***. The Germanic word ****gel*** meant 'to cry out or sing.' And we can still hear that original Germanic root at the end of the word ***nightingale***. So thanks to this change in Old English, English was somewhat unique among Germanic languages in that it had a lot of words that began with a 'y' sound.

Now let's remember that Latin also once had a lot words that began with a 'y' sound like /yoo-lius/ and /yoo-piter/. But that sound had shifted to a 'j' sound in late Latin. So /yoo-lius/ and /yoo-piter/ became ***Julius*** and ***Jupiter***. That meant that Old English had a lot words that began with a 'y' sound, but Latin and French didn't. All of that means that when we come across a word that begins with a 'y' sound, it is usually an Old English word. So ***yellow***, ***yield***, ***yoke***, ***yolk***, ***young***, they're all Old English words. There are a few exceptions like the word ***yacht*** from Dutch and the word ***yam*** from West African languages. But generally speaking, that initial Y indicates a native English word.

So let's think about the evolution of that 'hard G' sound before the front vowels in Old English and French. As we've seen, it shifted to a 'y' sound in Old English, and it became a 'soft G' or /j/ sound in French. But that 'hard G' didn't really change before the front vowels in Old Norse.

So when we come across a word spelled GE or GI where the G is pronounced as a 'hard G,' we are usually dealing with a Norse word because the 'g' sound changed in that environment in English and French. That includes words like ***get***, ***give***, ***gift***, ***gear***, ***gill*** and ***girth***. We can also add in the word ***geyser*** from Icelandic. And there are a few exceptions like ***gibbon***, ***giblets*** and ***gizzard*** from French. And ***gecko*** and ***gingham*** from Malaysian. And ***girl***, ***gig*** and ***giggle*** all have uncertain origins. But the main point here is that a 'hard G' before an E or an I usually suggests a loanword – not a native Old English word. Native words switched that 'hard G' to a 'y' sound early on. And that accounts for most of our words that begin with a 'y' sound today.

The other consonant sound that changed before the front vowels was the 'k' sound represented by letter C. As we saw, this sound shifted forward to the 's' sound before E and I in French. But in Old English, it shifted froward to a 'ch' or /ch/ sound. And those words were later re-spelled in English with a CH. So we have Norse ***kirk*** and Old English ***church***. We also have Spanish ***queso*** and Old English ***cheese***. But over time, English has borrowed a lot of words with the CH sound and spelling. So I don't really have a good rule to help you to distinguish Old English words with that sound from borrowed words with that sound.

Another Old English sound change that we explored was the shift from the 'sk' or /sk/ sound to the 'sh' or /sh/ sound. I discussed that change in the context of the Viking invasions because Old Norse did not experience this change. And it gave English a lot of English and Norse word pairs or doublets where the native word has an SH sound and the Norse word has an SK sound. The classic example of this is Old English ***shirt*** and Old Norse ***skirt***.

For our purposes, the important thing to take from this change is that Old English words don't tend to begin with an 'sk' or /sk/ sound. Again, that sound shifted in Old English. So when we find a word that begins with that sound – whether its spelled SK, SC or SCH – it is usually a loanword.

There is one remaining rule that you can use to spot an Old English word. I touched on this rule earlier. It concerns those words that end in an 'f' sound. When those words are made plural – and the F switches to a V in the plural form – those words are usually from Old English. This includes words like ***leaf*** and ***leaves***. And ***thief*** and ***thieves***. And ***knife*** and ***knives***. Old English made that sound change in those situations. But other languages didn't. So after the Norman Conquest, English borrowed words that ended in an F, and those words didn't follow that traditional Old English pattern. And that provides a convenient shorthand to distinguish a native word from a borrowed word. If the F switches to V when a word is made plural, it is probably an Old English word. But if the F remains an 'f' sound – like ***chef*** and ***chefs*** and ***chief*** and ***chiefs*** – then it is probably a loanword.

So in summary, the following evidence suggests a native Old English word. Words that begin with a KN, or a Y, or a WH. Also words that begin with or otherwise have a GH. And words where the F at the end of a word switches to a 'v' sound when they're made plural.

So I hope you found that interesting. I know it's a lot of information, but I wanted to review the major sound changes that we've explored so far in the podcast. And I wanted to put them all in

one place. So this episode may come in handy for future reference. And I also wanted to give you some general rules to help you spot an Old English word, and to help you identify a word as a loanword. I think a lot of these rules will be helpful as we go through the remainder of the story when loanwords started to flood into English.

I'm going to wrap up on that note. Next time, I'm going to continue to look at the evolution of English in the first half of the 1200s. So stay tuned for that, and until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.