# THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST
# TRANSCRIPTS

## EPISODE 49:
## VIKINGS AMONG THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 49: Vikings Among the English and French. In this episode, we're going to turn our attention back to the Vikings, specifically the Viking region of Britain known as the Danelaw. And we'll also examine the creation of separate Viking kingdom in France called Normandy. As we look at these regions, we'll take our first detailed look at the Scandinavian influence on English. So once again, we'll be keeping an eye on all three pieces of our puzzle – the Old English of Wessex, the Norse influence of the Danelaw, and the French influence of Normandy.

But before we begin, I wanted to let you know that the Beowulf Deconstructed audiobook is now available on iTunes and Amazon.com, as well as through the website historyofenglishpodcast.com.

And I wanted to make a quick note about my discussion of the word ***good*** in the last episode. I noted that the construction '***good-better-best***' was the result of a substitution which occurred early on in which the original root word ***bot*** was replaced by the original version of the word ***good***. And I stated that that substitution occurred during the Anglo-Saxon period, but a couple of listeners noted that that same basic construction exists in most Germanic languages. And that wide-spread use confirms that the substitution actually occurred before the Anglo-Saxons arrived in Britain and is therefore pre-Old English. So it is a very old construction – older than English itself. So with that note, let's turn to this episode.

And let's begin where I left off last time – with the death of King Alfred in Wessex. Alfred died at the very end of the ninth century in the year 899. He had secured the Anglo-Saxon culture in the south and west. And because of the reforms which he implemented, English writing flourished there in the years after his death. But at the same time, the Danes were busy settling into the Danelaw in the east. And that created a basic split in the history of English going forward. In Wessex, the language remained more or less the same – a pure form of Old English with some Latin borrowings from the Church and an occasional borrowing from the Norse language of the Vikings. But in the east in the Danelaw, the language was starting to change under the heavy Norse influence. And so from this point until the arrival of the Normans in 1066, the history of English is really two different histories. The western history gives us most of the surviving literature of Old English thanks to Alfred's reforms The eastern history gives us the massive influence of Old Norse on the language. And that geographical divide still exists to a certain extent today. But that also means that all of that Old English literature produced in Wessex and in the West Saxon dialect shows relatively little of the Norse influence which was definitely occurring in the east.

Even though Alfred had passed away, the Danes didn't try to take advantage of the situation to attack Wessex, at least not at first. Thanks to Alfred's military reforms and his new defensive burhs, Wessex was a formidable power in southern Britain. And at his death, Alfred was succeeded by his son Edward.

He was the first of many Edwards to rule to England over the centuries. The numbering of kings, like Edward I, Edward II and so on, didn't really begin until the Normans arrived. So the earlier Anglo-Saxon kings were often given nicknames to distinguish them from the post-Norman Kings. Later Edwards during the Anglo-Saxon period were known as 'Edward the Martyr' and 'Edward the Confessor,' but this particular Edward – the first Edward – is known as 'Edward the Elder.' That name was given to him by later historians since he was the oldest Edward, but he was only about 25 years old when he became King.

So that was the situation in Wessex. In addition to Wessex, the Anglo-Saxons also continued to rule of the western part of Mercia in the Midlands or central part of modern England. As you might recall, Alfred didn't rule directly over Mercia. He chose instead to let a Mercian nobleman named Aethelred serve as the leader there. Nevertheless, Mercia did recognize Alfred as its overlord, sort of like the old-fashioned bretwalda. And Alfred arranged a marriage alliance between his daughter to the Mercian leader to secure his position there. So the local leader Aethelred continued to rule western Mercia after Alfred's death.

And that meant that Alfred's son was now King of Wessex, and his daughter was the wife of the Mercian leader. As we'll see next time, this arrangement was very important because, when the Mercian leader died, Alfred's daughter became the effective leader there. And that left Alfred's son and daughter as the leaders of those two Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. We'll look at those developments next time. For now, it's just important to know that Wessex and Mercia were powerful Anglo-Saxons kingdoms at the time of Alfred's death, and for the most part the Danes in the north and east didn't seek to challenge those kingdoms even with Alfred's passing.

In fact, there was only one significant conflict between the West Saxons and the Danes in the first decade after Alfred's death. And that conflict wasn't really initiated by the Danes. It was actually initiated by another West Saxon – a potential rival for the throne. Alfred had been the youngest of five brothers. And one of his older brothers had a son before he died. Since that son was an infant when his father died, he was never considered for the position of king. But by the time Alfred died, that child – Alfred's nephew – was an adult. So he was a potential rival to Alfred's son Edward. As often happened during this period, the rivalry between the two cousins was ultimately settled on the battlefield. Edward drove his cousin out of Wessex, but the cousin fled to the Danelaw and secured some support there. He later returned and attacked Wessex with a Danish army, but he was killed in the battle. And the death of that cousin effectively ended any threat to Edward's position as King of Wessex. And it also ensured that the power wasn't split between the two rival kings. So all of Alfred's efforts to unify the Anglo-Saxons were preserved. And that was the only recorded battle between the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes in the first decade after Alfred's death.

It appears that the relationship between the Danes and the Anglo-Saxons had actually stabilized during this period. The Danes conquered no more English lands, and no English lands were recovered from the Danes. A stalemate had turned into an uneasy peace. There is actually evidence that the two regions were starting to trade with each other and recognize each other's right to exist.

So let's turn our attention to the Danelaw and try to piece together what was happening on the ground there during this period. As we've looked at the history of the early Middle Ages, we've seen that knowledge of that period is very hit and miss depending on what kind of historical records survive. With respect to the Kingdom of Wessex, it's a hit because we have lots of historical texts after Alfred, including the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. But with respect to the Danelaw, it's a bit of a miss. Much of the literacy in the region had been wiped out by the Viking invaders, and the Vikings themselves weren't literate, outside of an occasional runic inscription. So we don't really have a contemporary history to tell us exactly what was going on within the Danelaw.

However, some of this history can be pieced together from the few sources which do survive, as well as the archaeological and linguistic evidence.

The best evidence for the overall pattern of migration by Scandinavians into the Danelaw is the linguistic evidence – specifically place names. There are more than 1,400 places in England with Scandinavian origins. Some estimates put the number at over 1,500. And most of those places are within the former Danelaw. In fact, relatively few are located outside of that region. So all of those Scandinavian place names in the Danelaw region suggests a high degree of Scandinavian settlement there. As they moved in, they sometimes established new settlements with Norse names. In other cases, they took over existing towns and renamed them.

We've seen previously that the city of York was originally ***Eoforwic*** – an Anglo-Saxon name. The Danes modified it to ***Jorvik***. And over time, ***Jorvik*** simply became ***York***.

Both the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes sometimes called a farmstead or a village a ***thorp***. And the Danes tended to use that word as a suffix in place names. So the former Danelaw region has many place names ending in ***thorp*** including places like ***Nunthorpe***, ***Linthorpe***, and ***Althorpe***.

A similar Norse suffix is ***thwaite***. It meant an isolated parcel of land or a clearing. It is found in modern places like ***Applethwaite***, ***Braithwaite***, ***Ruthwaite***, and many others. Since it usually referred to a cleared piece of land, it came from a Germanic word meaning to 'cut.' And if you drop the 'T-H' from the beginning of ***thwaite***, you can almost hear the English version of that word which is ***whittle***. So Norse ***thwaite*** refers to a piece of land where the trees have been cut down, and ***whittle*** refers to the process of cutting a small piece of wood with a knife.

A Norse word for a homestead was ***toft***. And it is also found in many place names like ***Lowestoft***. ***Toft*** is actually derived from the same Indo-European root which gave Latin ***domus*** meaning a house. And of course, that Latin root gave us words like ***domestic*** and ***domicile***. Under Grimm's Law, the 'D' sound became a 'T' sound in the Germanic languages. This is the same change that gave us ***two*** where Latin had ***duo*** and gave us ***ten*** where Latin ***decem***. And here it gave Old Norse ***toft*** where Latin had ***domus***.

An Old Norse word for a small island was ***holmr*** or ***holm***. It produced the name ***Stockholm*** in Sweden. And it produced a few English names as well like ***Downholme***. Norse ***holm*** is actually cognate with the English word ***hill***, and if we apply Grimm's Law, we know that the 'H' sound in

those Germanic words derived from an original Indo-European 'K' sound. And in fact, ***holm*** and ***hill*** are both cognate with the Latin word ***column*** which is another kind of object that protrudes upward.

Another Old Norse word which appears in English place names is ***dale***. The Danes used the word ***dale*** to refer to a valley or hallow. Old English had the word as well, but it may have been rarely used in English by the time the Danes arrived. Almost all of the early English sources which use the word come from the Danelaw region, so it is believed that the Danes either reintroduced or reinforced the word in Old English. And it was used by the Danes in place names like ***Borrowdale***, ***Langdale***, and ***Patterdale***.

And the Norse word for 'church' was ***kirk***. Remember that the 'K' sound became a 'CH' sound in a lot of Old English words. So if you take a word like ***church***, and you shift those 'CH' sounds at the beginning and end of the word back to their original 'K' sound, you get ***kirk***. On the continent, ***kirk*** is still found in place names like ***Dunkirk***, but in England it is found in Norse place names like ***Kirkby***, ***Kirkstead*** and ***Colkirk***.

But of all the Scandinavian place names in the former Danelaw region, the most common by far are those ending in ***-by*** (B-Y). In fact, more than 40% of all of those Scandinavian place names have that ending. ***By*** – or '***byr***' – was an Old Norse word meaning **'**farm, farmhouse or town.' And it is found in the names of modern towns and cities like ***Whitby***, ***Grimsby***, ***Derby***, ***Rugby***, ***Thornby***, ***Saxby*** and many, many others.

Of course, we also have the word 'B-Y' in English as the word ***by*** – usually used as a preposition as in 'by the side of the road', or 'by the way,' or 'by the rules.' And that English word ***by*** is in fact cognate with the ***by*** found at the end of all of those Scandinavian place names. The original Indo-European sense of the word, and probably the early Germanic sense, was 'around or about,' so it had a sense of location. Within Old English, it retained that original relative sense. So one thing might be located 'by' something else. Meanwhile, within Old Norse, the meaning of the word shifted to refer to a very specific place – a homestead or a town. And English has not only retained the Norse version of the word in place names, but we also have it in a word like ***bylaw*** which was taken directly from Old Norse. We've seen before that the word ***law*** was borrowed from the Vikings. And the laws of a town were the ***bi-lagu*** which became ***bylaw*** or ***bylaws***. And we still use that word to refer to the laws of a corporation or other organization.

So based upon all the many place names with Norse elements, scholars believe there was significant Scandinavian settlement in the Danelaw. It probably began when the earlier Danish Vikings began to spend the winters in Britain, and it continued during the period in which the Danes were defeating the Anglo-Saxons and carving out the Danelaw.

And by comparing those place names with the various Anglo-Saxon place names, and the types of land which were settled by the respective parties, it is believed that the Danes tended to establish their own settlements separate from those inhabited by the Anglo-Saxons. And since the Anglo-Saxons had already secured most of the good land, the Danes tended to take the empty and often poorer land.

But as a result, Scandinavian settlements weren't concentered in one specific area. They were scattered throughout the Danelaw, and often located in close proximity to an existing Anglo-Saxon town. And remember that the Treaty with Alfred required the Danes to convert to Christianity. So they began to share the same religion with their neighbors.

In some of the larger towns like York, the two groups probably lived together. As we've seen, their respective languages were similar enough that they could probably communicate with each other without too much difficulty – at least on some basic level. So that meant the two groups traded with each other. And with a common religion, they began to marry each other. And within a couple of generations, the distinction between Dane and Anglo-Saxon began to break down.

And town names also provide evidence of this type of blending. There are actually quite a few town names which show a blend of English and Norse. And this is very similar to what we saw when we looked the interaction between the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts a few centuries back. Back then, we saw place names that blended Celtic and English words. And that same thing happened here when the Danes arrived.

So for example, the name of the town of Melton is believed to be a blend of English and Norse. It likely began as the Anglo-Saxon settlement of ***Middletoun*** – or the 'middle town.' But in Old Norse, the word ***middle*** was ***meddle***. So the Danes likely changed ***Middletoun*** to ***Meddletoun***, and over time ***Meddletoun*** was shortened to ***Melton***.

Another example is the name of the town of Keswick. It was originally ***cesewic*** (/chay-se-wic/) – C-E-S-E-W-I-C. ***Cese*** (/chay-se/) was 'cheese.' And ***wic*** we've seen before. It meant a trading center or town. So ***cesewic*** was the trading center or town where they sold cheese. And if there had been no Norse influence, it would have probably evolved into ***Cheswick*** or ***Cheswich***. But within Old Norse, that initial 'C' didn't shift to the English C-H sound. It retained its Germanic 'K' sound. So ***cesewic*** (/chay-se-wic/) became ***Keswick***.

In a similar manner, the town of ***Shipton*** became ***Skipton*** with its Norse 'SK' sound at the beginning, instead of its English 'SH' sound. The town of ***Churchton*** was later translated into Old Norse. ***Churchton*** – literally the 'church town' – became the ***Kirk-by*** using the two Norse words which we've already seen. And the town is still known today as ***Kirkby***.

And the city of Durham shows a similar Norse influence. The first part of the name is derived from the Old English word ***dun*** meaning 'hill.' Again we saw that word back in the episode about the interaction with the Celts. And that English word ***dun*** was combined with the Norse word ***holm*** which we saw before in a names like ***Stockholm***.

And the resulting name was ***Dunholm*** which over time became ***Durham*** – the 'H' becoming silent and the 'M' becoming an 'R' under Norman French influence. So the modern name of that city illustrates how English, Norse and French blended together over the next few centuries.

So within the former Danelaw, there is evidence of mixed communities where Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavian settlers were beginning to live together, and gradually the Danes began to assimilate.

Further evidence of this type of blending can be found in family names. Throughout the region of the former Danelaw, it is common to find family names that are Scandinavian in origin. At this point in history, surnames were still not common. Communities were small enough that everyone tended to know everyone else, so surnames weren't really needed to distinguish the residents. People were sometimes known by where they were from or what their occupation was. So if your name was Edward, you might be know as Edward the baker, or Edward from Whitby. And eventually, those types of references did evolve into surnames.

But in Scandinavia, it was common to refer to someone in relation to their father. So the famous Viking Erik the Red had a son named Leif. So Leif was Eric's son. And he became known as Leif Ericsson. They just put ***son*** on the end of the father's name. Well, this type of construction was very common in Scandinavia. And it is also very common in the region of the former Danelaw. It produced names like ***Johnson***, ***Jackson***, ***Stevenson***, ***Harrison***, ***Watson***, ***Gibson*** and so on. And those names were much more prevalent in the Danelaw than elsewhere in Britain.

So the linguistic evidence points to the significant Norse influence in the region. The other big piece of evidence is the large percentage of Old Norse words in the dialects of that region. This is a huge topic in and of itself, and I'm going to explore the overall impact of the Norse vocabulary on English over the next few episodes. But for now, we just need to know that the dialects spoken in the Danelaw changed significantly under the Scandinavian influence.

The evidence also suggests that Scandinavian settlement in the Danelaw wasn't uniform. There were pockets and regions where settlement was more concentrated. And I should also note that in addition to the Danes, there was a separate largely Norwegian settlement in northern and western Britain, especially in parts of Scotland. Most of that settlement came from Vikings bases in Ireland, as well as the islands north of Britain. And that influence had an impact as well.

We should keep in mind that the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria extended into the southern part of modern Scotland, so Old English was being spoken there as well. That Scottish dialect of Old English known as Scots also shows Scandinavian influences, but it is difficult to determine how much of that influence derived from the Norwegian Vikings from the north and west and how much derived from the Danish Vikings further south in the Danelaw.

Politically, the Danelaw region was very complicated. There was no centralized kingdom under the rule of a single king or leader. Governance tended to be more local – centered around burhs and fortified settlements. It was a collection of small autonomous regions under the leadership of one or more local leaders.

Within the overall region of the Danelaw, there were two distinct kingdoms. In the north was the Kingdom of York. In the south was Guthrum's kingdom centered around East Anglia in the eastern part of Britain. But outside of those two kingdoms, much of the Danelaw was comprised

of those autonomous regions ruled by local leaders. Those leaders were capable of mobilizing a local army when necessary, but notice how the tables had started to turn.

At one time, when the Great Danish Army arrived about 50 years earlier, the Danes were united, and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were divided. And the Danes took advantage of that situation. But now the Anglo-Saxons had become more unified under Alfred's leadership, and it was the Danes who had become divided between various autonomous regions. And as you might expect, this situation made the Danelaw vulnerable to the attacks from Wessex and Mercia which were to come over the next few decades.

Within those various parts of the Danelaw, the Danes continued to use the traditional Germanic administrative unit of the hundreds, but if someone disobeyed his or her lord, the Danes tended to impose heavier penalties than the Anglo-Saxons. And many disputes were settled through trial by combat.

As we know, the word ***law*** came from the Vikings. It replaced the Old English word ***dom***, which survives in the word ***deem*** meaning to pass judgment and in the term ***doomsday*** meaning 'judgment day.' But the Norse word ***law*** gradually replaced the Old English word. It is in fact, one of the earliest attested Norse words in Old English. Of course, we have it the name the ***Danelaw***. And an we saw earlier, the laws of a town or ***byr*** were the ***bi-lagu*** – or ***bylaws***.

Someone who was banished from a community or region was an ***outlaw*** – another very early borrowing from Old Norse.

Even though the Old English word ***dom*** disappeared from English in its sense of a 'law,' there was a similar English word which survived. The word was ***riht*** which still survives as ***right***. Today, we use the word as an adjective meaning 'correct or proper or moral.' And we also use it as a noun meaning a legal entitlement or privilege as in the Bill of Rights. And the word had both meanings in Old English, but it could also be used as another word for a law. But this sense of the word died out in English as the word ***law*** became more prominent. However, within other Germanic languages, that same root word still has that original sense of 'law.' The word survives in Modern German as ***recht*** and can be found in the German equivalent of 'Law and Order' – 'Recht und Ordnung.' But again, that usage disappeared from English over time.

Today the word ***right*** is also used in English to refer to the side which is opposite of the 'left' side. Well, this sense of the word came from the original sense of something being correct or proper, but the actual history has to do with our hands.

In Old English, the hand which we know today as the 'right hand' was actually the ***swiþra*** hand meaning the 'stronger hand' since the right hand is the dominant hand for most people. And the left hand was called the ***winestra*** hand which literally meant 'friendly hand.' That term was used somewhat ironically or superstitiously because the left side was considered the unlucky or sinister side – a common belief in many ancient cultures.

But around the year 1200, as Old English was evolving into early Middle English, those Old English terms were gradually replaced with the terms ***right*** and ***left***.

The word ***right*** was applied to the right hand since that particular hand was considered the 'correct or proper' hand to use in most cases – a sentiment not shared by us left-handers by the way. Meanwhile, the word ***lyft*** could mean 'weak or foolish' in Old English. So that term was applied to the supposedly weaker or inferior hand. So by the early Middle English period, we had the right hand and left hand just as we do today. And from there, the terms ***right*** and ***left*** were appropriated for general use to distinguish the two sides of something.

And I should note here that other Germanic languages developed a similar construction with their verison of the word ***right***, but English appears to have developed that usage independently of the other Germanic languages.

So I discussed the English word ***right*** as alternative for the Norse word ***law***. And I have noted that that English word ***right*** was also used to mean the correct way of behaving or doing something. But if you do something improperly or incorrectly, then you are 'wrong.' And ***wrong*** is a Norse word borrowed from the Vikings, presumably in the Danelaw. The original sense of the word ***wrong*** was 'twisted or crooked.' English actually has a native version of that same word which is ***wring*** (W-R-I-N-G) again meaning to twist something. So ***wrong*** was just the Norse version of that same word. So ***right*** meant 'straight,' and ***wrong*** meant 'twisted or crooked, ' and the two words became closely associated with each other as antonyms.

But 'right' not only meant ***straight*** as in a straight line, it also had that sense of being proper or correct. So since ***wrong*** was often used as the opposite of 'right,' the word ***wrong*** began to take on a meaning of 'incorrect or improper or immoral.' So just as ***right*** had dual meanings, so did ***wrong***. But over time, as the word ***right*** generally stopped being used in the literal sense of 'straight.' And in the process, ***wrong*** stopped being used in its original sense of something twisted. And that left ***wrong*** with its later meaning as 'improper, incorrect, or immoral.'

Another word which can mean 'twisted' in a literal sense, or can mean 'immoral or corrupt' in a more figurative sense, is the word ***crooked***. And unlike ***wrong***, ***crooked*** can still be used both ways. It came mean something bent or twisted like a 'crooked line,' or it can mean corrupt like a 'crooked politician.' And guess the ultimate origin of the word ***crooked***. If you guessed the Vikings, you would be correct. The word originated as the Norse word ***crook*** meaning a 'hook-shaped tool or weapon.' By the time of early Middle English, it was being used to describe a dishonest act or deceitful behavior. And something deceitful was therefore ***crooked***. American English later took the term ***crooked*** and created the noun ***crook*** to mean a thief or dishonest person.

But I wanted to explore the etymology of those words because we find something very interesting as we look at Norse words in English. Very often – not always – but very often, they have a negative connotation. English gives us ***right***, and actually also gives us the word ***straight***, but Old Norse gives us ***wrong*** and ***crooked***.

In fact, here are a few more words borrowed from the Scandinavian settlers: ***anger***, ***ill***, ***sick***, ***dank***, ***flaw***, ***dirt***, ***dirty***, ***dreg***, ***grime***, ***muck***, ***muggy***, ***rag***, ***raggy***, ***rotten***, ***slug***, ***tattered***, ***ugly***, ***murky***, ***scant***, ***sly***, ***seemly***, ***scab***, ***scare***, ***scowl***, ***scorch***, ***lug***, ***drag***, ***break***, ***hack***, ***burn***, ***gasp***, ***die***, ***slaughter***, ***lurk***, ***ransack*** , ***raid***, ***snare*** and ***take***. And while there are a few Viking words with a positive connotation, like '***give***' and perhaps the word ***smile***, those are few and far between compared to all of those words which have a negative connotation.

And that may tell us something about the nature of the interactions between the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians. It wasn't always a positive experience. The two groups may have been mixing together, and those Norse words may have been filtering into English, but they often came in with a negative meaning.

Nevertheless, those new words were making English a richer language capable of expressing subtle distinctions in many new ways.

If you want to express the idea of killing something, you could use English ***slay*** or Norse ***slaughter***. If you wanted to express the idea of splitting something, you could use English ***breach*** or Norse ***break***. If you wanted to express the idea of desiring something, you could use English ***wish*** or Norse ***want***.

And notice the subtle distinctions within those pairs. You might ***slay*** a dragon using the English word. That's something noble and heroic. But that Norse word ***slaughter*** seems much more graphic and horrible. The English word ***wish*** sounds like something you might do upon a star or something you do when you blow out candles on a birthday cake, but the Norse word ***want*** sounds much more base and demanding. There's a reason why they call it the 'Make A Wish' foundation and not the 'Have a Want' Foundation. But those Norse words gave English the ability to express subtle distinctions which it couldn't express before.

Beyond the linguistic evidence, archaeology also gives some insight into the early settlements in the Danelaw. The archaeological research shows an extensive trade throughout the region with goods from Scandinavia, Scotland, Ireland, northwestern Europe and even the Middle East. The Danish leader Guthrum ruled the region around East Anglia in the southeastern portion of the Danelaw. He minted his own coins in the late 800s based on the Wessex model. After his death, coins continued to be minted there for several more decades. But instead of using his Danish name Guthrum, he had his coins stamped with his Christian baptismal name Aethelstan. Some of the coins minted further north in York have Thor's hammer on one side and St. Peter's name on the other. So both religions were apparently being practiced side-by-side. And this again suggests that the Anglo-Saxons and Danes were living together and trading with each other using the same coins.

Interestingly, after the early 900s, the written sources stop referring to the Danes as the heathens. So that suggests that the Danes had largely converted to Christianity by that point, and the Germanic pagan religion was dying out in the region.

The archaeological record also reveals settlements which were very similar to Anglo-Saxon settlements. Both Anglo-Saxon and Norse homes were constructed from wood. Beams were placed in the ground and fastened together with wooden pegs. That framework was covered in planks or a heavy basket-like weaving of tree branches. The roof was thatched with straw or reeds. And windows were made by cutting small gaps into walls and covering them with shutters.

But those gaps or holes in the sides of those houses had different names in Old English and Old Norse. The Anglo-Saxons called that type of hole an ***eye-hole*** because you used it see outside. I Old English it was ***ēagþyrl***. ***Eag*** was 'eye,' and ***þyrl*** was 'hole.' The Anglo-Saxons had the word ***hol***, but here they used that other word which has largely died out – '***þyrl***.' That word was cognate with the word ***through*** because a hole was a way through a barrier or object. Even though it has largely disappeared from English, is does still exist in the last part of the word ***nostril*** which was originally the ***nosþyrl*** – the 'nose hole.'

So the Anglo-Saxons called a hole in the side of building an 'eye hole,' but the Danish settlers called it the ***vindauga*** which was literally the 'wind eye.' And as 'eye hole' gradually disappeared from English, the Norse word 'wind eye' replaced it. And of course, 'wind eye' became ***window*** in Modern English.

The Danes also used traditional farming methods even though they sometimes settled on the inferior land which the Anglo-Saxons had left vacant. And not surprisingly, as the Danes and Anglo-Saxons began to marry and mix together, certain Norse words for farming began to enter English. Both English and Norse had the word ***acre*** which originally meant the amount of land a couple of yoked oxen could plow in a day. Another word for that amount of land in Old English was a ***plog*** which became ***plow***. The Scandinavian settlers also had that word, but they applied it to the actual piece of farm implement used to turn the soil. Since English already had the word ***acre*** to describe the amount of land, they didn't need to use the word ***plow*** for that same purpose. So the Anglo-Saxons apparently started using the word the way Danes were using it, as the name for that particular piece of farm equipment. So it thereafter became known in English as a ***plow***.

With respect to animals, the Anglo-Saxons called the outer layer of animal flesh the ***hide*** as we still do today in terms like 'animal hide' or 'rawhide.' But the Danes called the animal hide the ***skin***. And English borrowed that word, and it was even applied it humans over time. We've seen before that body parts are part of our core vocabulary. They're some of the first words that children learn. They tend to be very conservative words meaning they don't tend to change over time. We have the same body parts today that people had thousands of years ago. So once those body parts were named, those names tended to stick. And in fact a lot of names for body parts not only go back to Old English, they also go back to the original Indo-European language. So it is very unusual for a language to start borrowing words for body parts from other languages. Yet English started to do that after the Danes arrived.

Not only was the word ***skin*** borrowed from Old Norse, but the incredibly common word ***leg*** was also borrowed. The original Old English word was ***shank***. And the word ***calf*** as in the back of the leg was also borrowed from Old Norse. ***Calf*** in the sense of a small cow was already in Old

English. So we have both versions of the word in English today. One usage is English, and one is Norse.

The word ***neck*** was also borrowed, or at least reinforced, by Old Norse. Old English sometimes called the neck the ***mane*** which we still use for animals. But the more common word was ***hals*** which derives from the same Indo-Europan root as the Latin word ***collar***. The switch from the 'K' sound to the 'H' sound was one of those common sound changes identified by Jacob Grimm. So English had ***hals*** where Latin had the original version of the word ***collar***. In addition to ***hals*** and ***mane***, Old English had a verison of the Germanic word ***neck***, but it was rarely used. However, ***neck*** was a very common term used by the Danes. And it is believed that the Anglo-Saxons began using that Norse word to the point that it became the standard word for the body part in English over time.

The words ***scalp*** and ***skull*** are also generally believed to have been borrowed from Old Norse. We don't know what the exact circumstances were, but it is very tempting to associate the words ***scalp*** and ***skull*** with the violent activity and warfare of the Vikings.

Both English and Norse used the word ***scab***, but Old English had the basic sound shift which changed the 'S-K' sound to the S-H' sound. So Norse had ***skabb*** where English had ***sceabb*** (/SHAY-ahb/). The fact that the Modern English word is ***scab*** with the 'S-K' sound indicates that the Norse version won out over the English version.

The word ***freckle*** was also probably borrowed from Old Norse. And even though humans don't have one, the very common word ***wing*** was also borrowed from the Danes. The Anglo-Saxons called wings ***feðra*** – the original version of ***feathers***. And after ***wing*** was borrowed from Old Norse, the term ***feather*** was narrowed to its current meaning.

So these types of borrowings suggest a very close and intimate contact between Anglo-Saxons and Danes within the Danelaw. When these types of words enter the core vocabulary of English, it suggests an early period of bilingualism where both words were being used interchangeably. And over time, the Norse version won out. And by the way, those are not even the most common English words borrowed from Old Norse. As we'll see in an upcoming episode, our basic pronouns like ***they***, ***them*** and ***their*** came from Old Norse, as well as many other common English words which we use all the time. So whatever distinctions initially existed between the two groups in the Danelaw, those barriers must have broken down very quickly.

So as we explore the Norse influence on English over the next few episodes, we should keep in mind that the presence of those words reflects a time when there was a mixing of peoples and languages in the northern and eastern portions of modern England. Meanwhile, in the south and west – in Wessex and western Mercia – the language showed very little Norse influence. So the Danelaw border represented both a political barrier and a linguistic barrier, at least for now. But both of those barriers would break down over time. And the political barrier began to break down around ten years after Alfred's death.

In the year 909 – a decade after Alfred died – his son Edward gathered an army in Wessex and Mercia, and he attacked the Danes in Northumbria. The reason for this excursion is not stated in the historical records which survive, but in the following year – 910 – the Northern Danes retaliated and attacked Mercia. Edward sent an army to Mercia so that the Mercians could engage the Danes at full strength. And the Mercians won a decisive victory in which several Danish 'kings' or leaders were killed. This victory effectively broke the power of Danes in the north. Going forward, there would be lots of battles between the southern Danes and the Anglo-Saxons, but the northern Danes wouldn't be able to provide much assistance to their fellow Danes in the south. This was a fundamental turning point in the relationship between the Danes and the English. Before this point, the English lived in fear of Danish attacks. Afterwards, the Danes had to fear the attacks from Mercia and Wessex.

In 911, shortly after the defeat of the Northern Danes, the Mercian leader Aethelred died. He was succeeded by his wife, Aethelflaed – sister of Edward and daughter of Alfred. Next time we'll look at her leadership of the Mercians against the Danes, but for this episode, I want to stop the history of the Anglo-Saxons at this point in the year 911. We are now of the eve of the Anglo-Saxon comeback against the Danes, and the creation of the united nation-state of England.

But in order to understand the history of the English language, we need to briefly turn our attention back across the Channel to France. Because this same year 911 is a very important year in the history of both France and the English language. 911 was the year in which Normandy was formally established in northern France under the leadership of the Viking king Rollo. So in much the same way that the Danes had carved out their own region in Britain, the Normans now did the same thing in France.

So I want to conclude this episode by bringing you up to date on those events in northern France, and that will bring the story line in France current with the storyline in Britain around the year 911.

When we last looked at France, the Frankish Empire had been divided at Charlemagne's death between his three grandsons. The westernmost portion which became modern France was ruled by a grandson named Charles – known to history as Charles the Bald.

During his reign, Charles was plagued by two threats. The first threat was his brother, Louis the German, who received the easternmost part of Charlemagne's Empire roughly corresponding to modern Germany. The two fought with each other throughout much of their adulthood. The other threat was the Viking threat along the northern and western coasts. And since most of that coastline was in Charles' western kingdom, he had the biggest problem with the Viking invaders.

Over time, Charlemagne's river defenses broke down, and the Vikings were increasingly able to sail upriver, and they were able to raid and loot deep inland. Just like in Britain, the Vikings began to establish permanent settlements, especially at the mouth of several important rivers.

The River Seine became the principal route by which the Vikings entered the kingdom. This is the river which extends inland from the North Sea southward through Paris. We saw a few

episodes back that the Danish Viking Ragnar Lodbrok had sailed up the Seine as far as Paris in the year 845. Charles couldn't force the Vikings out, so he had to pay them to leave, and that ultimately led Lodbrok to Britain. And his death there led to the Danish invasion and the creation of the Danelaw. So these pieces are fundamentally connected.

After Lodbrok left France, other Vikings continued to attack the kingdom. About a decade later, Charles organized a major offensive against the Vikings. But soon after the offensive began, his brother Louis the German invaded. And Charles had to stop the Viking offensive to deal with his brother. Afterwards, the Viking invasions ramped up again. And once again, we see this recurring theme. When the Franks or the Anglo-Saxons could unify, they could deal with the Viking threat. But more often than not, they fought amongst themselves, which enabled the Vikings to take advantage of the situation.

To deal with the continuing Viking threat, Charles began to rely more and more on payments and bribes to get them to go away. These payments were called ***Danegeld*** in Britain meaning 'Dane money' or 'Dane payment.' And it proved to be a major long-term problem for both Britain and France.

In France, those payments drained the resources of the kingdom, and they only offered a temporary peace. And in fact, they actually made the situation worse because the payments actually encouraged other Vikings to attack so they could get paid as well. In one classic example, Charles paid one group of Vikings 3,000 pounds of silver to go away and attack a separate group of Vikings, but the second group of Vikings just paid off the first Vikings with 6,000 pounds of silver. So the first group of Vikings actually got paid twice, once by Charles and once by the other Vikings.

To deal with these various external threats, Charles had to rely upon the support of his nobles. He secured that support by granting them land. This was the Frankish tradition, and that was one of the reasons why the Carolingian kings were always looking to expand the size of the Frankish kingdom. The king's supporters could be given land in the conquered regions. But when that expansion stopped after Charlemagne, the king had no new land to give out. So Charles had to start giving out part of his own royal lands. Those local lords were expected to defend their respective regions since there was little centralized power. Since no one knew when or where the next Viking attack would occur, Charles had to give the local lords the autonomy to defend themselves. Over time, the local lords began to ignore Charles and his successors. And this was the same fate which had doomed the Merovingians. Remember how the Merovingian kings became known as the 'Do-Nothing Kings,' and the power passed to the local lords known as the Mayors of the Palace. Well, this process was starting to re-occur, but Charles was not a 'do nothing king,' so he managed this delicate balance as best he could. He gave his nobles the autonomy they needed, but he largely managed to keep his kingdom in tact. Even so, he found himself at war with nobles in Aquitaine in the southwest and Brittany in the northwest. And those were signs of what was to come.

In the year 876, Charles brother Louis the German died in the east. And the very next year, Charles himself died in the west. So the two rival brothers died in quick succession.

After the death of Charles, his descendants fought with each other for control of the kingdom. He was initially succeeded by his son known as Louis the Stammerer, but he fought with his nobles and died two years later. That left the crown to Charles's two teenage grandson. They also were not prepared for the job, and the nobles even invited Louis the German's son in from Germany to attack and destabilize the two young brothers. So the kingdom continued to fracture and split among the competing parties, as well as among local nobles. The two young brothers then died in quick succession (one in 882 and the other in 884.) So there was no adult Carolingian prepared to take the throne in the west.

Of course a different branch of the Carolingians rules in the east in Germany. Those were the descendants of Charles's brother Louis the German. But all of Louis's children were also now dead except for one named Charles – known as Charles the Fat. With all of the competing parties having died in succession, and no other good option on the table, the French nobles invited Louis's son, Charles the Fat, to assume control of the western kingdom. He was already the king of the eastern and middle kingdoms. So the three kingdoms once again were united under a single ruler in the year 884. But this was the last time the Frankish kingdom was ruled by one king and one Emperor.

Having secured his position by circumstance, fate and default, Charles the Fat proved to be a terrible leader. He was completely ineffective. The Empire crumbled around him, and he was unable to do anything about it. And the Viking attacks continued as well.

A year after Charles the Fat became king in the west, a contingent of 700 ships and 40,000 Vikings laid siege to Paris for several weeks. The Parisians were actually able to block the Viking passage up the Seine. Initially, Charles the Fat did nothing as per usual. The hero of the local defense of Paris was actually a local leader named Odo. He was the Count of Paris. And he held the Vikings at bay until Charles the Fat's troops finally arrived several months later. Those troops pushed the Vikings out of Paris, but rather then dealing them a decisive blow, Charles once again opened negotiations. They were paid 700 pounds of silver to leave and plunder another part of the kingdom. The people of Paris who had fought so valiantly were outraged with their king. The contrast between the hero Odo and the weak and pathetic king was too much for the nobles to bear.

In the year 888, Charles the Fat was deposed, and that brought an effective end to the unity of Charlemagne's kingdom. And Odo was actually selected as the new King of the Western Franks even though he wasn't a Carolingian. Well, he got the title of 'king,' but he didn't really get any significant power. The other nobles never submitted to his authority. And each local lord essentially became his own king at that point.

Despite his lack of power over the kingdom as a whole, Odo was able to piece together a Frankish army and turn away the Vikings. And for a period of time, the Viking invasions actually decreased for a while.

But Odo couldn't survive as 'king' without any real power beyond his own domain. I noted earlier that Charles the Bald's son and his two young grandsons had all died, and there was no

other Carolingian descendant in the west who was old enough to take the throne at the time. But by now, there was another grandson of Charles who was old enough to be king. His name was also Charles, and his selection as king meant the Carolingian line could be continued. So in 893, he officially became King of the Western Franks. He was Charles III, but he became known to history as Charles the Simple. So between Louis the Stammerer, Charles the Fat and Charles the Simple, you get a sense of how later historians viewed these later Carolingian kings.

Even though young Charles the Simple became king in title, he had to wait for Odo to die five years later for the nobles to actually rally around him. So he didn't really have any power until then. And even then, it became apparent that he couldn't do anything to offend the local lords. They retained much of their autonomy. So what we know today as France was heavily fractured and divided.

Those various regions were ruled by a variety of nobles. These included counties (the regions ruled by counts), duchys (the regions ruled by dukes), and baronies (the regions ruled by barons). The dialects and vernaculars spoken within those various regions varied significantly. Some spoke Old French, others spoke other Latin and French dialects. And some regions in the east continued to speak a Germanic dialects.

With the arrival of Charles the Simple, we're now at the ruler who ceded Normandy to the Vikings. As I noted, he was the grandson of Charles of the Bald, and the great-great-grandson of Charlemagne. But as his name suggests, he was not considered an effective leader. His reign coincided with the last great raid by the Vikings into France. They were led by a Viking named Hrolf in Old Norse, but he is generally known today by the Latin version of his name – Rollo. Rollo had served with the Viking raiders at the siege of Paris a few years earlier which had made Odo famous.

After that earlier siege, Rollo continued to raid and loot along the lower Seine. Some histories say he left for a while, presumably to England, but he returned around the time Charles the Simple became king. In the summer of the year 911, Rollo sailed up the Seine and attacked Paris again, but this attack was unsuccessful. He then attacked other cities in the region. But he actually experienced a major defeat in July. At this point, Rollo and his Vikings were on the verge of being driven out of France, or at least being so marginalized as to pose no significant threat to the kingdom. And this is where events in the east in Germany changed history, and specifically changed the history of English.

In September, the last Carolingian ruler in the east died. He was the great-grandson of Louis the German, and he is known to history as Louis the Child. He died without an heir. And with the death of the Carolingian line in the east, the only thing which connected the east and west disappeared. The eastern part and the western part had always been distinct culturally and linguistically. And those differences had continued to grow over time. The only thing they had in common was a common Carolingian ruling family and a link to Charlemagne. Now that had ceased to be the case in the east. But a Carolingian – Charles the Simple – still ruled the west.

So henceforth, the name ***Francia*** was applied more specifically to the west where the Carolingians still ruled. And that is why that specific area came to be known as France as ***Francia*** (/Frank-ia/) became ***Francia*** (/France-ia/) and then ***France***. And that term ***Francia*** is never really applied to the east beyond this point.

With the death of Louis the Child in the east, Charles the Simple in the west had notions of reuniting the eastern and western kingdoms. But the eastern nobles weren't having any of it. They refused to recognize Charles's claim, so Charles knew that he would have to take the east by force. But that meant he had to settle the issue with Rollo's Viking raiders. And Rollo was willing to negotiate after the defeats which he had experienced over the Summer.

In order to agree to stop the raiding, Rollo demanded the lands which his Vikings currently occupied around the lower Seine. Given the fractured nature of the kingdom, this would effectively create another semi-autonomous region, but it would also theoretically end the threat from Rollo's Vikings. And it ensured that Rollo would defend the mouth of the Seine from any further Vikings which might attack the region. And that would actually help to secure Paris and other cities upriver. There was also the example set by Alfred the Great a couple of decades earlier. Alfred had ceded the Danelaw to the Vikings in Britain, and up to this point, there had been relative peace between the English and the Danes.

So Charles agreed to the Viking demands as long as Rollo recognized him as the overlord, which would at least allow Charles to save a little face. Rollo agreed, though the recognition of Charles as overlord meant essentially nothing to the Vikings.

According to one famous story, part of the formal ceremony required the Rollo to kiss the French king's foot as a symbolic recognition that the French king was the overlord. Of course, Rollo was having none of it, so he directed one of his lieutenants to kiss the foot for him. Rollo's thane simply grabbed the king's foot and forcefully raised it up to his mouth and the king went tumbling backwards and fell on his back. Whether this actually happened, it is certainly symbolic of the relationship between the French king and the Vikings.

Another version of the same story says that Rollo refused to kiss the King's foot by declaring "Ne se, bi got!" which was literally 'No, by God!' And one theory of etymology is that this expression is the ultimate origin of the English word ***bigot***. 'Bi got' meant 'by God,' and it was the expression of an opinionated person. It was actually a common Germanic expression or oath, and apparently the Normans loved to use it. And the people who they encountered noticed this Norman tendency to use that phrase. So they began to use it as a mocking term for the Normans. Old French used the term in that manner as a derogatory term for the Normans. And after the Norman Conquest in 1066, the Anglo-Saxons also began to use the term in a similar manner. So it initially meant someone who was very opinionated and stubborn. And over time, it has evolved to meant someone who is also prejudiced.

I should note that this is the traditional etymology of the word ***bigot***, but many modern scholars are skeptical, and they have suggested other alternatives.

Whether or not Rollo actually used the expression "Ne se, bi got!," he did get what he wanted from the ceremony. The French king formally recognized the land of the Northmen – or Normans – in the region of the lower Seine. As a result of this new arrangement, Rollo and his Vikings now controlled a large portion of north-central France. And the region became known as Normandy. Rollo supposedly converted to Christianity a short time later and adopted the name 'Robert.'

So where did that leave the French king Charles the Simple? Well, it left him in his kingdom which by this point was very small. He did attempt to invade the east, but he was only able to secure some of the middle region between the two kingdoms that had passed back and forth between the two sides over the years. With the death of the last Carolingian in the east, the leadership soon passed to a Saxon duke named Henry. Henry was an effective leader. He beat down the other lords and recaptured some of the land which had been lost to Charles. He also secured his son Otto as his successor. And Otto became known as Otto the Great and his reign marks the effective beginning of the Holy Roman Empire which comprised most of Germany for the rest of the Middle Ages extending all the way to the 1800s.

Poor Charles was left with the remnants of a once great kingdom in France. By the end of his reign, he only had direct ownership and control over the lands in the areas around Paris. Technically, those lands were the Kingdom of France. The rest of what we know today as France was divided among a myriad of autonomous regions including Normandy in the north.
With the establishment of Normandy in 911, we're only about a century and half away from the Norman Conquest of England. Between now and then, there will be increasing links between Normandy and England. But first, we actually have to get to England. So far we have only spoken of the Anglo-Saxons. But next time, we'll finally be able to speak of the English. The West Saxons and Mercians were on the eve of a great campaign to take the Danelaw back from the Vikings.

And interestingly, the creation of Normandy on the other side of the Channel actually facilitated that process. As the Danes in the Danelaw came under attack from the Anglo-Saxons, many of them fled across the Channel to the safe haven of the new Viking kingdom of Normandy. That migration – even if it was relatively modest – deprived the Danes of warriors which they desperately needed. And this is just an early example of how the existence of Normandy was destined to influence English history, and ultimately the history of the English language.

Next time, we'll look at the Anglo-Saxon conquest of the Danelaw. And as both regions came under the leadership of a single king, the linguistic barriers between the two regions began to break down. And Norse words gradually began to spread throughout the island. So next time, we'll look much more closely at the spread of Norse words into English.

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