THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST
TRANSCRIPTS

EPISODE 62:
FLESH AND BLOOD

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast - a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 62: Flesh and Blood. In this episode, we're going to move the story of English a little but closer to the year 1066. Last time we looked at the reign of King Canute – the Danish king of England. This time, we'll explore what happened when Canute died. The underlying theme of this episode is flesh and blood. And we'll explore both senses of that term. We'll look at how two mothers competed against each other to promote their own flesh and blood to the English throne. And we'll also explore the more literal sense of 'flesh and blood' – that is, the human body. So we'll look at Old English words for parts of the body, as well as Old English words for sickness and disease.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can always reach me at kevin@historyofenglishpodcast.com. And I am on twitter at englishhistpod.

Now I had planned to move the historical narrative up to the year 1066 with the episode, but I have too much to cover before we're done with Old English. So in terms of the chronological history, this time I'm going to cover the years between the death of Canute and the restoration of the Wessex monarchy under Edward the Confessor. Next time, we'll close out the Old English period with the last few years of Anglo-Saxon rule. Then we'll move on to the Normans and the transition into Middle English.

Now as I said, the underlying theme of this episode is flesh and blood. So let's start with a closer look at that term. Both 'flesh and blood' are Old English words. And in fact the phrase 'flesh and blood' is first attested from around our current point in the overall history of English. It first appeared in an Old English translation of the Book of Matthew from the Bible.

We use the phrase today to refer to our children or other very close relatives. But I want to begin with the more literal use of that phrase to mean the human body. In fact, that is really more of the original sense of the phrase. It meant mortal humans, as opposed to God or spiritual beings. According to that translation of the Book of Matthew, divine revelations come from God, not from 'flesh and blood.' In the original Old English, the passage reads, "Hit þe ne onwreah flæsh ne blod" – 'It was revealed by neither flesh nor blood.' So the term meant mankind – the mortal beings living in the physical world. And mortal beings are composed of flesh and blood.

So let's begin by taking a closer look at the human body and Old English words for parts of the body. As I've noted throughout the podcast, the core vocabulary of English has actually remained remarkably stable over the centuries. There are certain basic words which we learn as children and pass on to the next generation with very little change. And one group of those words within that core vocabulary is body parts. Most of our basic words for body parts can be traced back to Old English, and in many cases can be traced back to the original Indo-European language.

Let's start with the word ***body***. It's an Anglo-Saxon word. You might also remember that there was an Old English compound word for 'body' was '***flæsc-hama***' – literally the 'flesh home.' So that phrase is actually similar to the phrase 'flesh and blood.'

As we examine the names for the various parts of the body, let's start at the top and work our way down. At the top, we have the Old English word ***head***, which was originally ***heafod***. Continuing down, we have ***eye*** and ***ear*** – ***eage*** and ***eare*** respectively. ***Nose*** was ***nosu***. ***Nostril*** was ***nosþyrl*** – literally 'nose hole.' ***Mouth*** was ***muþ***. ***Tooth*** was ***toð***. ***Tongue*** was ***tunge***.

And ***neck*** was ***hnecca***, though the more common word was ***hals***. The word ***neck*** was rarely used in Old English, but the Vikings used their Norse verison of that word. And it was apparently under Norse influence that the English verison of ***neck*** replaced the other word ***hals***.

Moving down, ***shoulder*** was ***sculdor*** or ***eaxl***, basically the word ***axle***. ***Arm*** was ***earm***. ***Elbow*** was ***elnboga***. It was later shortened to just ***elbow***. ***Wrist***, ***hand*** and ***finger*** also come to us virtually unchanged.

Heart, ***lung***, ***liver***, ***guts***, ***rib*** and ***bone*** are also Old English.

As we move down further, ***hip*** was ***hype***. ***Leg*** was generally ***shank*** in Old English. The word ***leg*** was borrowed from the Vikings. Moving down, ***foot*** and ***toe*** also came from Old English.

So as you can see, the words for our basic body parts have remained amazing resilient.

Of course, English has borrowed a few words for body parts through the years. I mentioned a couple of words that came from the Vikings. The word ***stomach*** was borrowed from French. Before ***stomach*** was borrowed, the Anglo-Saxons used the word ***hriff*** to refer to the belly or the waist area. Since the ***hriff*** is located near the middle of the body, it came to be known as the ***mid-hriff***. The word died out in the early Modern English period, but it was resurrected by the fashion industry in the twentieth century as ***midriff***. So the ***riff*** in ***midriff*** was an Old English word for the stomach or waist.

Old English also used the word ***belly***, which has survived over the centuries.

And speaking of the stomach or belly, another borrowed word was ***organ***. ***Organ*** actually came from Greek where it originally meant 'something you work with' or 'something that does a particular type of work.' And believe it or not, the word ***organ*** is actually cognate with the English word ***work***. They share the same Indo-European root, which was something like ****werg***. The initial 'w' sound was lost in the Greek verison and that ultimately produced the word ***organ***.

It its sense as something that does work, it could refer to a tool or a musical instrument. And that musical sense led to the word ***organ***, as in a 'pipe organ.' But of course, body parts also did specific work. The heart pumped blood. The lungs captured oxygen. The brain allowed people to think. So these were also called organs. And Middle English borrowed this secondary meaning of the word ***organ***. And when you put a bunch of organs together, you get an ***organism***. And when

a bunch of individual parts work together, they are ***organized***. And if you put together a bunch of organisms like people, you get an ***organization***. So all of those variations of ***organ*** are interconnected.

Of course, one function of certain organs is to procreate. We call these reproductive organs or sexual organs today. In Old English, they were called ***gecyndlim*** – literally the 'kin limbs' – the 'limbs or body parts that produce kin.' It was a term that could be used for either male or female organs, but over time, it became more associated with the male organ. The female reproductive organs were sometimes called a ***wamb*** which became ***womb***. And here is where we can make some interesting linguistic connections.

The original Indo-Europeans had a word which meant to 'blow, thrive or bloom.' The basic sense was to enhance or increase in size or scope. It was something like ****bleh***. It actually produced modern words like ***blow***, ***ball***, ***balloon*** and ***blast***. It also produced the words ***bloom*** and ***blossom*** – a flower bud that opens or expands into a beautiful flower. And in fact, as we've seen before, the Indo-European 'B' sound sometimes became an 'F' sound in Latin and Greek. That's why English has ***brother*** and Latin had ***fraternal***. Well the same thing happened here. Where English has ***bloom*** and ***blossom*** , Latin had ***flora*** with an 'F' sound – as in 'flora and fauna.' And ***flora*** gave us ***floral***, ***florist*** and ***flower***. So ***bloom***, ***blossom***, ***floral***, ***florist*** and ***flower*** are all cognate. All of those words associated with blooming flowers come from this common root which meant to expand outward.

So what does all of that have to do with humans and human procreation? Well, that same root word that produced ***bloom***, ***blossom***, ***floral*** and ***flower*** also produced the word ***phallus*** with an 'F' sound thanks to that same sound change. A ***phallus*** was a word for the male reproductive organ which has a tendency to expand in size. And within Old English, that root word produced the word ***beallucas***, which became ***bollocks*** meaning testicles. So ***phallus*** and ***bollocks*** are cognate. They came from the same root word.

Another Old English word related to ***bollocks***, ***ball***, and ***balloon*** is the word ***belly***. And that is because the belly is another part of the body which expands or grows, especially when it belongs to a pregnant mother. An Old Norse version of the same root word gave us the modern words ***bloat*** and ***bloated***, which is another word for swelling.

Of course, sometimes people feel bloated because they have flatulence. And ***flatulence*** is another Latin version of the same root word related to ***phallus*** in the sense of a swelling feeling. Of course, if something is swollen, we might say that it is ***inflated*** another version of the same root. And I noted that ***ball*** and ***balloon*** are English versions of that same root. So when you 'inflate' a 'ball' or 'balloon,' now you know that ***inflate***, ***ball*** and ***balloon*** all come from the same root word.

The idea of something swelling or expanding or blowing in the air also led to a couple of other Latin 'F' words from this same root – the words ***fluent*** and ***fluid***. Of course, ***fluent*** describes something that flows freely. So if you're words flow freely, you are ***fluent*** in a given language. And ***fluid*** can be a liquid or it can describe something that is constantly changing, like a 'fluid'

situation. Within the body, one of type of fluid is urine. And the organ that expands as it collects urine is the ***bladder***, another Old English word from the same root.

So in case you were trying to keep track, all of that means that the following words came from the same Indo-European root word: ***blow***, ***ball***, ***balloon***, ***bloom***, ***blossom***, ***belly***, ***bladder***, ***bloat***, ***bloated***, ***bollocks***, ***phallus***, ***flatulence***, ***inflate***, ***fluent***, ***fluid***, ***flower*** and ***florist***.

And there's another word that comes from that same root – a word which brings us full circle. And that is the word ***blood***. ***Blood*** is another aspect of the body which swells, gushes or spurts. And that means that ***blood*** is cognate with the word ***fluid***, which may not be surprising. But it's also cognate with words like ***bollocks*** and ***phallus***. So that's the linguistic connection between blood and reproduction. And as we've already seen, that connection also exists in the term 'flesh and blood' which can refer to your offspring.

Before people understood the concept of DNA, they expressed similar notions with blood. And so your 'flesh and blood' carried on your bloodline. After all, 'blood is thicker than water.'

And this idea was fundamental to royal dynasties. I mean there was no particular reason why a kingship should pass from a father to a son, but there was something special about a bloodline. The son carried part of his father with him in that shared blood. And so it was always important to maintain a particular bloodline from a great king. And that's why the current Queen of England, Elizabeth II, can trace her bloodline all the way back to kings like Alfred the Great and William the Conqueror.

But she can't trace her bloodline back to Canute – the Danish King of England – because Canute interrupted that bloodline. And at his death, there was a major question as to which bloodline would continue. And that's where we pick up the story from the last episode.

This part of our story begins in the year 1035 with the death of Canute – King of England and ruler of much of Scandinavia. With his death, the leadership of England was up for grabs. As we saw last time, there were five children waiting in the wings with some claim to the throne. But they represented two different royal bloodlines. So let's do a quick review. The old Wessex king, Aethelred the Unready, had two children with Emma of Normandy. So they were half-English and half-Norman. But they were the primary heirs to the Wessex bloodline. When Aethelred and Emma fled England for Normandy, those two children went with them. Even after Aethelred and Emma returned to England, those two children remained in Normandy where they continued to live with their uncle, the Duke of Normandy. As I said, they had the best claim to continue the old Wessex line of their father. But almost twenty years had passed since their exile. So those two young sons, Alfred and Edward, lacked the political connections on the ground in England to make a strong claim.

After their father's death, their mother Emma had married Canute. And Emma was still alive having survived Canute. So one might expect that she was now angling for those sons in Normandy to come back to England to be king. But she wasn't. And that was because she had

had a son with Canute named Harthacanute. And Harthacanute was the designated heir to the throne. So Emma was focused on getting Harthacanute on the throne.

But here was the problem. Harthacanute wasn't in England either. Canute had basically put him in charge of Denmark several years earlier. And with Canute's death, Harthacanute became King of Denmark. But Denmark was involved with a conflict with Norway at the time, so Harthacanute couldn't leave Denmark right then to go back to England.

So Emma is a key figure in our story. She was Norman by blood. She had two children by the old Anglo-Saxon king Aethelred, and she had one child by the Scandinavian king Canute. So she was the one link between the claims of the Normans, the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians. And with Aethelred and Canute now dead, and no king on the throne, she emerged as a powerful figure behind the scenes. She had those three children, and any of them could make a claim to the throne. So she was a virtual king-maker at this point. But there was one major problem – none of those three children were actually in England.

So with those three children out of the country, that left Canute's other two sons. Remember from lat time that Canute had been married briefly to the daughter of a Mercian noble before he became king and before he married Emma. That first wife's name was Aelgifu, and he had two children with her named Sweyn and Harold. Harold became known to history as Harold Harefoot. So as surviving children of Canute, they had a claim to the English throne as well.

Well, actually only one of them had a claim – Harold. That's because the other son Sweyn had just died. Sweyn had been put in charge of Norway for a brief period of time during his father's reign, but he was soon forced out and succeeded by the prior king's son Magnus. Sweyn had returned to England and died around the same time as his father Canute. So he was out of the picture. Meanwhile, Magnus back in Norway started to threaten Denmark, which is what was keeping Harthacanute died down over there.

So of the five potential heirs at Canute's death, we're now down to four, and three of them were out of the country. That left the last son Harold Harefoot. He was the other son from Canute's first marriage to Aelgifu. And he was the one of the four that was actually in England at the time. So in the power vacuum that followed Canute's death, Harold's mere presence on the ground gave him a strong claim to the throne.

Of the surviving claimants, Aethelred's sons over in Normandy didn't really have any support on the ground among the English nobles. They had been away too long. The only two candidates with a chance to be selected by the witan were Canute's two surviving sons – Harthacaute, the designated heir, and Harold Harefoot, the son who was actually in the country.

But remember, even though they were both sons of Canute, they had different mothers – Emma and Aelgifu. And this is where things really started to get interesting because those began to battle each other behind the scenes. Each one was trying to get her own son on the throne to continue her own bloodline.

To this end, each mother began to make alliances with the powerful earls of the kingdom. Aelgifu was the daughter of a Mercian noble, and her son Harold had been largely raised in Mercia. So she appealed to the earl of Mercia. That was Leofric, who you might remember was the husband of Lady Godiva. So Aelgifu and her son Harold quickly formed an alliance with Leofric.

Meanwhile, Emma was down in Wessex at Winchester where Canute's royal court had been located. And the Earl of Wessex was Godwin. Godwin had been very close to Canute and with Emma. So Emma appealed to him to support the claim of her son Harthacanute over in Denmark. The two quickly formed an alliance which opposed the claims of Harold.

Now as we know, the king was selected by the Witan – a group of prominent political and church leaders. A full meeting of the Witan was soon held at Oxford to decide what to do about Canute's succession. And thanks to those alliances with the two mothers, the two most prominent earls supported opposing claims.

After some considerable debate, a deal was made. They applied the Judgment of Solomon, and they decided to split the baby. Harold would rule Mercia and the other lands north of the Thames. Meanwhile, Harthacanute would rule Wessex in the south. Of course, Harthacanute was still in Denmark, so it was agreed that Earl Godwin and Emma was rule Wessex as Harthacanute's proxies until he could get there. It appears that everyone thought Harthacanute would soon be on his way, but that didn't really happen.

Harold started to use his brother's absence to consolidate his position as king in the north of England. And as Harold's position became stronger, Emma's position in Wessex became more and more precarious. She was technically holding Harthacanute's place, but as more time passed, it became increasingly apparent that he wasn't going to show up. And without a rival in the south, Harold could just claim the whole country.

Well, if Harthacanute wasn't coming, Emma still had those two other sons – the ones from her first marriage to Aethelred the Unready. They were the heirs to the old Wessex bloodline, and they were still hanging out in Normandy. So at this point, a very controversial letter was written.

Messengers brought the letter from England to those two sons in Normandy, Alfred and Edward. It stated that their rightful inheritance was being deprived with every passing day. It stated that their inheritance had been usurped by Harold, and Harold was building support in England while they were doing nothing in Normandy. The letter concluded by noting that the nobles and earls of England would much prefer for one of them to be king over Harold if they would make their claims known.

That letter bore Emma's signature. But did she actually send it? Emma's later biography was composed by those who were close to her and knew her personally. And that biography claims that the letter was a forgery, actually signed by King Harold himself. It was an attempt to lure the brothers over to England where they would be killed. Now, this is still a matter of dispute. And

the reason it is in dispute is because the letter did in fact tempt one of those sons to his death. So Emma's biographers may have been trying to absolve her of any responsibility.

Either way, Emma's son Alfred was tempted by the letter. Toward the end of 1036, Alfred returned to England, and he landed at Kent with a sizeable number of troops. Alfred was apparently on his way to Winchester to meet with his mother when he was intercepted by Godwin's troops. Alfred was told that Godwin was the earl of Wessex and was his mother's ally. Godwin and Alfred then met, and Godwin apparently offered to accompany Alfred to Winchester. But in the middle of the night, Alfred was seized and his troops were rounded up by Godwin's forces. Alfred's troops were soon killed, and Alfred was taken to a remote part of East Anglia where he was blinded by being held down and literally having his eyes cut out. This was actually a common punishment at the time, especially for those who challenged a king's power. The injury was so severe and brutal that Alfred soon died.

It is unclear if the goal was to kill Alfred or just to blind him. After all, he could have been killed on the spot if that was the intent. But he was allowed to live, at least for a while. Anglo-Saxon medicine was primitive compared to today. So severe wounds often led to infections and death. And in this case, whatever the intent, Alfred soon died from his wounds.

Many Anglo-Saxons were apparently shocked by this murder. When an important event occurred, like a major battle or the death of a prominent person, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle sometimes commemorated that event with a poem. And for the occasion of Alfred's gruesome murder, one verison of the Chronicle included a poem to describe the events. The reason why this poem is significant to the History of English is because it is one of the first poems composed in English which uses rhyming verse rather than alliteration. As we know Old English poetry adhered to a very specific structure with repeating sounds at the beginning of certain words in each line. From time to time, a couple of lines would rhyme at the end, but isn't entirely clear if that was done intentionally or if it was just a coincidence. But now, for the first time in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, we have a solemn memorial poem mostly composed with rhymes. Let me read the first few lines if the poem in Old English so you can get a feel for the sound of the rhymes:

This is part of the entry for the year 1036:

Ac Godwine hine þa gelette
7 his geferan he todraf
Sume hi man wið feo sealde,
sume hi man bende,
sume hamelode,
Ne wearð dreorlicre dæd
syþþan Dene comon
7 hine on hæft sette
7 sume mislice ofsloh.
sume hreowlice acwealde.
sume hi man blende,
sume hættode.
gedon on þison earde
7 her frið namon.

Well, it isn't exactly iambic pentameter, but it is rhyming verse. Let's go back through it one more time and do an Old to Modern English translation:

Ac Godwine hine þa gelette	But Godwin hindered him (‘him’ being Alfred)
7 hine on hæft sette	and set him in captivity
7 his geferan he todraf	and drove away his friends
7 sume mislice ofsloh.	and killed some of them in different ways
Sume hi man wið feo sealde,	Some they sold for feo – or money
sume hreowlice acwealde.	Some were killed wretchedly
sume hi man bende,	Some were bound (or chained)
sume hi man blende,	Some were blinded
sume hamelode,	Some were mutilated
sume hættode.	Some were scalped
Ne wearð dreorlicre dæd	Nor was a more dreary or bloody deed
gedon on þison earde	done on this earth or land
syþþan Dene comon	since the Danes came
7 her frið namon.	and here peace was made.

Now as I noted, the gruesome nature of this murder apparently shocked many people. To have one’s eyes cut out was gruesome and gory. I should note that the poem above uses the term ***dreorlicre***, which is a version of the word ***dreary***. And you might remember from an earlier episode that ***dreary*** originally meant ‘bloody.’ So there we see that use. Whereas, ***dreary*** has lost most of its original association with blood, the word ***gore*** has gone in the opposite direction. Today, ***gore*** or ***gory*** refers to something brutal and bloody. But in Old English, it just meant dirty.

The shift in meaning probably occurred under the influence of the word ***gar***, which you might remember meant a spear. I’ve given the example of ***garlic*** before. It was originally /gar-leek/ – a spear-shaped leek. And ***gar*** produced a Scottish word ***gorren*** which meant ‘to stab.’ And that led to the verb ***gore***, as in ‘the bullfighter was gored by the bull.’ And that sense of the word ***gore*** may have influenced that old noun ***gore***. So the meaning of the noun ***gore*** shifted from meaning something dirty to something bloody, like the gore associated with the blinding of Alfred.

We don’t know the specific details of Alfred death’s beyond his blinding, but bloody wounds often resulted in infection. And if the wound itself didn’t cause death, the infection often did.

The word ***infection*** is a Latin word based on the word ***infect***. Now today, we know that infections aren’t necessarily infectious. You don’t necessarily catch an infection from someone else. Infections are caused by micro-organisms, and they can set in naturally from a dirty wound. But people in the Middle Ages didn’t fully understand that. They thought you caught an infection from someone else. In other words it was contagious.

And that is why the modern word ***infectious*** means something that spreads from one person to the next, but as infections became better understood, it was soon realized that an infection wasn’t necessarily infectious. And that created the modern distinctions between those two related terms.

It was usually very apparent when a lesion or wound became infected. So the Old English word for infection was a word that meant sore or blemish. The word was ***smitte*** or ***be-smitenes***. It comes from the same root as the word ***smite***. So today, if you are ***smitten*** by someone, you might be in love. But in Old English, if you were smitten, you had an infection or blemish.

But they didn't actually use the word ***blemish*** because ***blemish*** is a French word which came with the Normans. But, that word ***blemish*** is important to us. Because ***blemish*** comes from the same root as the word ***blind***. So Alfred's brutal blinding may have led to infection or ***smitte***, and ***smitte*** meant a type of blemish, and ***blemish*** is cognate with the word ***blind***. So there you go – full circle

That original Indo-European root of ***blind*** and ***blemish*** was a word which was pronounced something like ****bhel***, and it meant fire, flash or burn. It is the same root word that produced the word ***black*** in English, and also produced the word ***blanco*** in Spanish and ***blanc*** in French meaning 'white.' And that may ring a bell, because we've seen those words before.

That original sense of 'flash' or 'burn' led to one set of words having to do with brightness and another corresponding set of words having to do with darkness. And that is apparently because when something is burning, it is very bright. But after it has burned, it is charred and blackened.

So on the bright side, we get words like ***blaze***, ***bleach***, ***blank*** and ***blond***. We also get ***blemish***, which originally had a sense of turning pale. And we also get those Latin-derived words ***blanco*** and ***blanc*** meaning'white.'

But then we have the corresponding words on the dark side. ***Black*** and ***blue*** for colors. And ***blind*** which meant to be enveloped or surrounded by darkness.

Now here's the interesting thing about that Indo-European root word which produced those words I just mentioned. It was identical to the root word which produced all of those other words which I discussed earlier in the episode – words like ***blow***, ***ball***, ***bloom***, ***belly***, ***bladder***, ***bloated*** and ***blood***.

Now some scholars think these were two separate Indo-European words with the same pronunciation. In other words, they were homonyms. One meant to 'swell, expand or blow' and the other meant 'fire or burn.' But other scholars think these two Indo-European words were originally the same word, and they had the same basic meaning at the one time. And the connection there is the fact that a fire also swells or expands outward from its source. The fire, flames, smoke and heat emanate outward. And if that theory is correct, that means that all of these words come from the same ultimate root word. So words like ***blind*** and ***blemish*** are actually cognate with words like ***blood***, ***belly***, ***bladder***, ***bollocks***, ***bloated***, ***phallus*** and ***flatulence***. So we therefore get lots of words associated with the human body and the human condition from that original source word which meant to 'expand or swell.'

We also get another word from that same root which relates to disease or illness and which really connects the original two meanings of that Indo-European root word. And that's the word ***boil***. As a noun, it's a type of blemish. It 'swells and expands' outward from the skin. But as a verb, it's what happens when you put a liquid over a fire. It boils. So ***boil*** has ties to both of those original meanings. Interestingly, the noun form – the skin condition – came from Old English. But the verb form – as in a manner of cooking – came from French. But it appears that both forms of the word came from this same Indo-European root word.

So we've connected blindness with boils and blemishes and blood. So that's blindness. But what about deafness. Well, the word ***deaf*** is also an Old English word, as is the word ***dumb***. And we still use those two words together when we refer to someone as being 'deaf and dumb' meaning unable to hear and unable to speak.

Now over time, the meaning of ***dumb*** shifted to mean 'stupid or ignorant,' and that's the way we typically use the word today. And when that change happened, people became uncomfortable using the word ***dumb*** to refer to a person who couldn't speak. So they increasingly used a Latin word which came in from French with the Normans. That was the word ***mute***. So ***mute*** has largely replaced ***dumb*** in this context because the meaning of ***dumb*** has shifted over time.

So we have the Old English words ***deaf*** and ***dumb***. Many people who were deaf also lacked the ability to speak or communicate verbally, so those two words were closely associated with each other. And as you might have guessed by now, they are both cognate. ***Deaf*** and ***dumb*** come from the same Indo-European root word.

The original root word was ***dheu***, and believe it or not, that word meant 'dust, mist or smoke.' In fact, the word ***dust*** also comes from that same root. But the sense of the word as 'mist or smoke' led to the sense of the word as 'confusion or disorientation.' Even today, when we're feeling disoriented, we say that everything is 'hazy.' And that sense of confusion led to the word ***dizzy*** from the same root, and it probably produced the word ***daze*** via Old Norse. So again, if you're dizzy or dazed, you may feel like you're in a smoky haze, and that's the original sense of the common root word. Well, if you're in a haze or disoriented, you're disconnected from the world around you. You might not notice that someone is speaking to you. So you might be ***deaf***, which comes from that root. And you also might not be able to speak. So you would be ***dumb***, in the original sense of the word. So all of that means that ***deaf***, ***dumb***, ***dizzy***, ***dazed*** and ***dust*** are all cognate.

So what does ***deaf*** and ***dumb*** have to do with 'disease' and 'infections'? Well, that same Indo-European root word meaning 'smoke or fog or haze' passed into Greek where it produced the word ***typhos*** which meant 'smoke' in Greek. And the Greeks made this same connection between smoke, haze and disorientation. When a person experienced a very high fever, they became dazed and disoriented, and they experienced delirium. It was like they were in a fog or haze. So the Greeks used the word ***typhos*** meaning 'smoke' to describe that condition. And that produced the word ***typhus*** which is a type of fever accompanied by delirium. And it also produced the word ***typhoid*** which literally meant 'typhus-like.' So that make ***typhus*** and ***typhoid*** cognate with words like ***deaf***, ***dumb***, ***dizzy*** and ***dazed***.

Now by this point, you should have noticed a common theme – specifically the manner in which flames and smoke and heat emanate from a burning fire. The Indo-Europeans described the brightness of that fire with a word which produced the words ***blaze*** and ***blemish***. They described the smoke which emanated from that fire with a word which ultimately produced the words ***deaf***, ***dumb***, ***dizzy***, ***daze***, and ***typhus***. They described the general process of something emanating outward from a source, like flames or heat, with a word which produced the words ***boil***, ***blood***, ***belly***, ***bladder***, ***bollock***, ***ball***, ***phallus*** and ***flatulent***. And they described the burnt remnants from the aftermath of that fire with a word which later produced the English word ***blind***.

So all of those words having to do with the human condition may have originated with a group of early Indo-Europeans sitting around a fire, or at least originated with the words they used to describe that fire.

So thanks to all of that, we see the linguistic connection between words like ***blind*** and ***blood***. And with that connection, we can now turn back to our historical narrative and the bloody blinding of the young prince Alfred.

With Alfred's death, another one of the five children who had a claim to the throne was now dead. That left just three. The whole episode actually strengthened Harold's position within England. Another rival claimant had been eliminated. His brother Harthacanute still showed no signs of returning to England. And Godwin, the Earl of Wessex, who had been such a close ally of Emma had now turned his support to Harold. Godwin had seen the writing on the wall. And he was shrewd enough to cast his lot with the apparent victor in this struggle. Harold no longer just claimed to be king of the area north of the Thames. He now claimed to be king of all of England.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for the year 1037 confirms that Harold's authority now extended to the entire country. The entry reads:

"Her man geceas Harald ofer eall to cinge," – 'Here was chosen Harold over all as king'
"7 forsoc Harðacnut," – 'and Harthacanute was forsaken'
"forðan he wæs to lange on Denemarcon" – 'because he was too long in Denmark'

Harold was now King of all of England. Down in Wessex, Emma had run out of options. She had lost the fight against Aelgifu to place a son on the throne. Her son Alfred was now dead. And her other two children were out of the country. Harthacanute was still in Denmark and Edward was still in Normandy. And now, her ally Godwin had switched sides and abandoned her. So with no other good options on the table, and with Harold claiming all of England, Emma had little choice but to flee the country. She soon left and was given refuge in Flanders.

So we're down to three claimants to the English throne. Three separate children – three separate claims – living in three separate countries.

Between these three claims, Edward over in Normandy was the only one who wasn't actually a king at this point. Harold was King of England. Harthacanute was King of Denmark. Both were ruling parts of their father's Scandinavian Empire. But Edward was the son of the formerly exiled Aethelred. So he was the only one without a kingdom. He may not have had a kingdom, but that didn't prevent him from claiming the title of 'King.' During this period, he was witnessing and signing land charters in Normandy which identified him as 'King,' and one specifically identified him as 'King of the English people.' So it is very clear that Edward retained his claims to English throne. He just wasn't in a position to actually enforce those claims.

But his half-brother Harthacanute in Denmark was capable of enforcing his claims. He just hadn't shown any inclination to do anything about it. But now that finally changed. Harold's murder of Alfred and his exile of Emma made it personal for Harthacanute. Emma was Harthacanute's mother, and the murdered Alfred was his half-brother. And Harthacanute apparently despised Harold for his actions.

And something else very important happened at this point. Harthacanute finally resolved the on-going conflict with Norway that had kept him tied down in Denmark. The conflict was resolved with an agreement between the leaders of the two regions. And I have to mention this agreement here because it had far-reaching implications.

As I noted earlier, the leader of Norway was Magnus. He was actually the son of the old King Olaf – the guy who tore down London bridge which I mentioned in the last episode. Well, the ongoing conflict between Magnus and Harthacanute was finally resolved with this agreement. The two leaders agreed that neither would make any additional claims to the other's territory during their lifetimes. But when one of them died, the survivor would inherit the other's kingdom. So if Harthacanute died first, Magnus in Norway would get Denmark, and any other lands which Harthacanute ruled. And that was the key here. If Harthacanute did in fact become King of England some point, then theoretically England would be part of this larger agreement. If he took England and died before Magnus, Magnus in Norway would have a claim to both Denmark and England. And as we're getting ready to see, that's exactly what happened. So this agreement had two important implications – one long-term and one short-term. In the long-term, it gave Magnus and his Norwegian heirs a claim to the English throne. A claim which wouldn't be resolved until 1066.

But in the short-term, this agreement settled the disputes between Denmark and Norway, and it freed up Harthacanute to finally return to England. Now at this point, it appeared that a great battle was about to happen the English king Harold and his half-brother, the Danish king Harthacanute. But that didn't happen. As it turns out Harold was sick, so sick that he was about to die. So we return to our theme of disease.

We don't know what Harold was dying from, but part of the reason we know he was sick is because an official document from the end of his reign says so. By this point, he had ruled for about three years, yet there are almost no surviving documents concerning his reign. Most of what we know about this period comes from that biography of Emma which I mentioned earlier.

But one official document from Harold's reign did survive the centuries. It was written at the very end of his reign, and it concerned the port at Sandwich in the southeast, and it states that Harold directed the port to be returned to Canterbury. But it also states that the king was at Oxford, and he was so sick that he had little chance of survival.

Now we don't know if he was dying from disease or some other condition, but there is no report of a wound or an attack. So it appears to have been natural causes. As I've noted before, the state of medicine and medical care was very primitive in Anglo-Saxon Britain. Diseases that are easily treatable today were often deadly 1,000 years ago. So that contributed to the high death rate at the time. And it was one of the reasons why the average life expectancy was so low.

Though disease was common, the word ***disease*** was not because ***disease*** is a Latin word which entered English shortly after the Norman Conquest. You may have never noticed it, but the ultimate meaning of ***disease*** is right there if you look at it. ***Disease*** was literally 'dis-ease' in Latin. It combined the Latin prefix ***dis-*** meaning 'without or away from,' and the word ***ease*** meaning comfort or well-being. So ***disease*** was the opposite of ***ease***, just like ***disappear*** is the opposite of ***appear***.

But again, the Anglo-Saxons didn't use this word. The most common word for disease in Old English was ***adl*** – typically spelled 'a-d-l.' So gout for example, was called ***fotadl***, literally 'foot disease.' And paralysis was called ***lyftadl*** – literally the 'lifting disease.'

Another word paralysis was ***lama***, which became ***lame*** in Modern English. A person who couldn't walk due to this condition was said to be a ***crypel***, which became ***cripple*** in Modern English. The person was also sometimes called a ***creopere*** – literally a ***creeper***. So it appears that ***creep*** and ***cripple*** are cognate.

So we saw that Old English used that word ***lyftadl*** meaning the lifting disease. And that word ***adl*** meaning 'disease' has apparently disappeared from Modern English. I can't find any example of it still being used today, and it is not related to modern word ***addle*** ('a-d-d-l-e').

Even though ***adl*** has disappeared from the language, other Old English words for disease or sickness have survived. In fact, one of those words was ***seocnes*** – literally 'sickness.' So ***sick*** is also an Old English word.

The Anglo-Saxons also used the word ***broc*** to mean 'sickness' or 'disease.' And just as it sounds, ***broc*** meant 'broke' or 'broken.' It was literally a broken body or a broken condition. And to understand that a little better, we have to consider the word ***health***, which also came from Old English. ***Health*** comes from the word ***heal***, which comes from the some root as the word ***whole*** ('w-h-o-l-e'). So ***health*** was literally to be 'whole' – to be unbroken. But if you were sick, you were not whole. You were broken, or in Old English, ***broc***.

Another word for ***health*** or ***wholeness*** was ***gesund*** (/yeh-soond/), which is based on the root of the word ***sound***. So it was similar to the sense of the word ***sound*** in the phrase 'safe and sound.' So if you were healthy, you were 'sound' – or ***gesund***. But remember that Old English developed

a ‘Y’ sound from an original Germanic ‘G’ sound. So the German version of that word ***gesund*** (/yeh-soond/) meaning ‘health’ is ***gesund***, which you probably recognize from the word ***gesundheit***, which English borrowed directly from German and literally means ‘health’ or ‘good health.’ And we use ***gesundheit*** to wish someone good health when they sneeze, so it is the German equivalent of English ‘bless you.’ But the fact that we wish someone good health when they sneeze is a holdover from a time when contagious diseases were common. And a sneeze might be a sign that a person was getting sick. So it was customary to wish someone good health if they sneezed.

Getting to the root cause of a disease was a challenge in Anglo-Saxon England. The cause was often left to superstition. One common belief was that sickness or disease was caused by elves – a belief inherited from the earlier Germanic culture. So a common Old English word for a deadly disease or virus was ***elfshot*** – literally shot or attacked by elves. And this may seem like a funny and quaint old word, but it was a seriously held belief at the time. The Anglo-Saxons blamed lots of problems on malicious elves. They even thought elves caused nightmares. So they combined the word ***elf*** and that word we saw earlier for disease - ***adl***. And that produced the word ***ælfadl*** meaning a nightmare, but it literally meant ‘elf disease.’

It was also thought that hair which became tangled and knotted was the result of elves causing mischief. So strands of tangled hair were called ‘elf lock’ or ‘elf knots.’ Hiccups were also though to be caused by elves. So hiccups were sometimes caused ***ælfsogoða*** – which combined the word ***elf*** with a word that meant ‘heartburn’ or ‘stomach irritation.’

If someone was suffering from disease, they were said to be ***eglan*** – literally ‘ailing.’ So ***ail***, as in ***ailment***, goes back to Old English. The original Germanic sense of the word ***ail*** was to be ‘afraid or frightened.’ And that sense still survives in the Norse version of that word which is ***awe***. So ***ail*** comes from the Anglo-Saxons, and ***awe*** comes from the Vikings. But the connection between those two words is the common sense of fright, and it shows that people were afraid of sickness and disease because it often led to death.

Another word which some linguists connect to ***ail*** and ***awe*** is the word ***ache***. Again, this link is not universally accepted because some linguists think there were two different Indo-European roots. But others think the words ***ail***, ***awe*** and ***ache*** ultimately evolved from a common root.

Another word for ***ache*** was ***ange***. That word comes from an Indo-European root word which also gave us lots of other words from other Indo-European languages. From Old Norse, we got ***anger***. Someone who is in pain tends to be irritable, so that appears to be the connection between ***ange*** – meaning ‘pain’ – and ***anger***. From German, that root gave us the word ***angst***. From Latin, it gave us ***anxious***, ***anxiety***, and ***anguish***. From Greek, it gave us ***angina*** which is a painful suffocating feeling. And again, in Old English, it gave us that word ***ange*** meaning ‘pain.’

Now ***ange*** basically disappeared from English, but it actually survives in one surprising place. A painful corn or sore on the foot was called an ***angnail*** in Old English. It was literally ‘a painful nail.’ But it didn’t refer to the toe-nail. It meant that it was the type of sharp pain similar to the pain you experience when you step on a nail. So a hard corn on the foot was an ***angnail*** –

literally 'pain nail.' That word lingered into early Modern English long after the word ***ange*** had disappeared from the language. So people no longer understood what ***angnail*** originally meant. Since the word was ***angnail***, people apparently though that the word had something to do with the toenail itself. So it was applied to a sore or infected toenail. The most common type of nail sore occurred when part of the nail grew out into the flesh around the nail. So people began to assume that the word was originally ***hangnail***, and that it was simply being mispronounced as ***angnail***. People often dropped the 'H" at the beginning of words anyway. That's how ***Hello*** became '***ello***' in a lot of dialects. So ***angnail*** gradually became ***hangnail***. So the modern assumed meaning of ***hangnail*** has nothing to do with the original meaning of the word. Linguists call this type of assumed, but incorrect, meaning a 'folk etymology.' And this is a good example of a folk etymology.

So Old English ***ange*** still survives in the word ***hangnail***. Of course, a hangnail is only one type of pain. Some of us have lots of aches and pains, especially as we get older. ***Pain*** is a French word that came with the Normans. So this is a classic example of how Modern English often has two ways of saying the same thing – one from Old English (***ache***) and one from French (***pain***).

In the earlier Germanic language, a disease or sickness that caused pain was called a ***sar***. And that word passed into Old English with two slightly different meanings. Those two meanings of ***sar*** were retained into the modern form of the word which is ***sore***.

We use the word today the same way the Anglo-Saxons did, as an adjective to describe a painful condition like a sore back, and as a noun meaning a painful blemish or boil. So you might have 'sores' on your body. But again, the original sense of that word was pain or a painful condition.

If you were sick or ill, afflicted with 'sars' or sores, you were ***sarig***, which has evolved into the modern word ***sorry*** (s-o-r-r-y). It originally meant a sick or bad condition, so like we might say that something is in a 'sorry state' today. The modern sense of the word ***sorry*** as 'regret,' as in "I'm sorry," was a later development. And it was probably caused by confusion with the word ***sorrow***.

Another type of sharp pain was the pain you received when you were stabbed with a stick. As I noted in the last episode, this type of pain was sometimes called a ***stice*** or ***stitch***. And it produced the phrase 'he had me in stitches' to refer to the pain caused by laughing too much.

I also noted in an earlier episode that the word ***smart*** originally meant 'painful.' And that original sense of the word survives when we injure ourselves and say "Ouch, that smarts." That's the Old English meaning of the word. The sense of the word evolved over time from a 'sharp or biting pain' to a 'sharp or biting wit.' So it came to mean 'clever.' And that's the general sense of the word ***smart*** today.

Another modern word for sickness is ***ill*** or ***illness***. And that word ***ill*** came to England with the Vikings. It's another Old Norse word. The original sense of the word was 'wicked, bad or hostile.' And that was the original meaning in English. So when we refer to someone as ill-tempered or describe someone as being in an ill mood, we're using the word in its original Norse

sense. So it originally referred to a bad or negative mental state. It later was extended to refer to a bad physical state. And that's how it acquired its modern meaning to refer to someone who is sick or under the weather.

Of course, a lot of diseases are accompanied by fever. And ***fever*** was also a word used by the Anglo-Saxons. But it was originally borrowed from Latin. It came in very early on soon after Christian missionaries arrived in Britain. Monasteries were sometimes used to house and treat sick people, so the monks who were fluent in Latin introduced the Latin word ***fever*** very early on.

So as you can see, a lot of our words for pain and sickness and disease go back to the Anglo-Saxons, the Vikings and the Normans. Almost all of these words which I just explored were in place at the current point in our story in the eleventh century, or they were in place within next century or so after the Normans arrived.

So turning back to our story, we now have the death of another one of those original five children – the death of the English king, Harold Harefoot, and his death from an unknown illness finally paved the way for the arrival of Harthacanute from Denmark.

Remember that the Wessex earl Godwin had been an early advocate for Harthacanute. He had arranged that agreement whereby Wessex was held for Harthacanute whenever he arrived from Denmark. But when it became apparent that Harthacanute wasn't coming, Godwin had flipped sides to support to Harold. Now Godwin and the other earls invited Harthacanute to take the crown which he father had intended him to have. Harthacante finally arrived in 1040 and was quickly proclaimed king.

As I noted earlier, Harthacanute detested Harold for killing his half-brother Alfred and for sending his mother Emma into exile. So when he arrived, Harthacanute had Harold's body dug up from the ground and thrown in the Thames. It was later retrieved by fishermen and re-buried.

Now the Wessex earl Godwin was in a precarious position. He had supported Harthacanute early on, then flipped sides to support Harold, and now he was supporting Harthacanute again. So given that he was a bit of flip-flopper, he tried to smooth everything over with the new king.

He gave Harthacanute a large warship. And he swore an oath that he didn't know that Alfred was going to be killed a few years earlier. Godwin swore that he had been ordered to retain Alfred after he arrived from Normandy, but he had no knowledge of the murder plot. And apparently Godwin was persuasive, because he was allowed to retain his earldom and his influence in Harthacanute's court.

But Harthacanute made some serious mistakes as soon as he became king. He imposed heavy taxes on the kingdom, including a 21,000 pound tax, followed by a separate 11,000 pound tax. Even though he had been handed the crown, he was also ignoring the witan, though to be fair, he probably didn't trust the earls who had previously supported Harold. He had ruled Denmark as tyrant, and now he was going to rule England the same way, but that wasn't the English tradition.

The economy soon began to decline, possibly due in part to crop failure, as well as those new taxes. And in the next year, he sent more tax collectors across the country to collect more taxes. Two of those collectors were murdered near Worcester, and a near rebellion broke out there. Harthacanute retaliated with a fierce attack on the town and the surrounding shire. His forces burned and looted the town of Worcester. In the aftermath of those events, Harthacanute realized that ruling England was a lot more difficult that ruling Denmark. He was facing significant opposition to his policies.

By this point, we are down to just two of those original five children with claims to the throne. Harthacute was the king, and he was son of Canute and Emma, so his bloodline was half Dane and half Norman. He didn't have any English blood. The other surviving child was Edward, the remaining son of Aethelred and Emma. So Edward 's was bloodline was half English and half Norman. And that meant that the Norman bloodline was involved with either claimant thanks to Emma.

As it turned out, Harthacanute wasn't married and he didn't have any children. So his next closest male relative was actually Edward – his half-brother. And Edward was not only his close relative. He also continued that old Wessex bloodline through his father Aethelred the Unready. So Edward could actually be an ally to Harthacanute. He could provide a stable successor which was important, and he would provide a connection to the old Wessex bloodline. Of course, they both shared the same mother Emma, who was likely encouraging an arrangement which ensured that one son would succeed the other. Again, she wanted to keep her flesh and blood on the throne. And even the powerful earl Godwin probably approved of an arrangement with Edward. Edward had no established base of support in England, so Godwin likely saw Edward as a prince who could be controlled and manipulated if anything happened to Harthacanute.

So at this point, Harthacanute made a crucial decision. He invited Edward to come to England to become the designated heir to the throne.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for the year 1041 summarizes these events. It describes Harthacanute's efforts to put down the near rebellion in Worcester. It then states:

"þæs geres sona com Eadward his broðor on medren" – 'Soon after that year came Edward, his brother on his mother's side'

"fram begeondan sæ" – 'from beyond the sea'

"Æþelrædes sunu cinges," – 'king Aethelred's son'

"ðe wæs ær for fela gearon of his earde adrifen" – 'who had for many years been driven from the land'

"7 ðeh wæs to cinge gesworen" – 'and he was sworn in as future king'.

Edward may have been designated as the future king, but he was a fish out of water. He had spent most of his life in Normandy, so he was really more Norman than English. He spoke Norman French, and he was accompanied by Norman supporters and advisers. He was quite a bit older than Harthacanute. So even though Edward agreed to the arrangement, he probably expected to live out his life as the 'king in waiting,' but never actually 'king.' But just a few months after he arrived in England, all of that changed.

It appears that Harthacanute was a heavy drinker. And in June of 1042, he was attending a wedding, and he had been drinking heavily all day. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, he fell to the ground and died. Though the exact cause of death is unknown, one theory is that he had a stroke caused by drinking too much alcohol.

The word ***stroke*** can be traced back to the Old English word ***strike***. It could refer to a person being 'struck down' in battle. But in later English, it was said that a person who died suddenly without warning had received 'a stroke from the hand of God'. And that led to the modern sense of the word ***stroke*** as a sudden and unexpected seizure. So Harthacanute may have been the victim of a stroke in the year 1042. Whatever the exact cause, he was now dead, having ruled England for just two years.

And that left the last of those original five children – Edward. Edward was promptly declared to be Harthacanute's successor. And with his coronation, the Wessex bloodline was restored to the throne – at least temporarily. But Edward was only half-English. He was also half-Norman. And as I noted, he had spent most of his life in Normandy and probably spoke Norman French as his primary language. So we start to see Norman influences in the English court during his reign. But under Edward, most of the real power in England was held by the earls – especially Earl Godwin of Wessex. Those earls effectively ran the country. Meanwhile, Edward largely dedicated himself to spiritual matters. And that is why he is known to history as Edward the Confessor.

Next time, we'll explore the reign of Edward – the man who restored the Wessex bloodline. We'll also examine another type of restoration – the restoration of health from all of these diseases and illnesses which we have explored in this episode. So next time, we'll look at restorations and remedies. And we'll conclude with the death of Edward in 1066 – a death which triggered an invasion from Normandy. And that invasion brought an end to the period of English known as Old English. So until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.