

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST  
TRANSCRIPT**

**EPISODE 105:  
SUFFIX SUMMARY**

## EPISODE 105: SUFFIX SUMMARY

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 105: Suffix Summary. In this episode, we’re going to look at the changing nature of suffixes in early Middle English. Last time, we explored how prefixes were evolving during this period. So this is really the second part of our look at new word elements that entered English with the arrival of loanwords from across the Channel. Once again, we’ll begin with suffixes that were common during the Old English period before the Norman Conquest. Then we’ll look at some of the new suffixes that were introduced from Latin and French after the Conquest. Along the way, we’ll also look at evidence of these new suffixes in the Ancrene Wisse.

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

So let’s turn to this episode and the evolution of suffixes in the early Middle English period. This time, I’m going to explore some of the common suffixes that were used in Old English and early Middle English. I’m going to focus on those that still exist in Modern English, because it would be almost impossible to discuss every suffix that existed in the earlier periods of English.

Just as we saw with prefixes in the last episode, suffixes range from the very common to the really obscure. And there are so many of them, that it is even difficult for scholars to list all of them.

Back in the late 1800s, a Cambridge professor named Reverend Walter W. Skeat, produced a book titled “An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language.” (1882). Even though it’s a bit dated, it’s a great source for early research in English etymology. In the appendix to the book, Skeat attempted to list the prefixes and suffixes used in English. He included over 400 prefixes, but when he tried to list the suffixes, he apparently gave up. In the section on suffixes, he wrote the following: “The number of suffixes in Modern English is so great, and the forms of several, especially the words derived through the French from Latin, are so variable, that an attempt to exhibit them all would tend to confusion.” So instead of including an actual list of suffixes, he simply referenced other sources where various lists could be found.

Part of the reason why there are so many suffixes in English is because inflections were traditionally added to the end of words. So lots of suffixes serve very specific grammatical functions. If we want to make a noun plural, we usually add something to the end of the word – an *-s*, an *-es*, or an *-en* like in *children*, or an *-i* like in *alumni*, and so on. Those are all suffixes, but I’m not going to focus on those types of grammatical suffixes. Instead, I want to explore the suffixes we use to form new words.

Of course, these suffixes sometimes serve a grammatical function as well. We can take a verb like *inflate* and turn it into a noun by adding an *-ION* to the end producing the word *inflation*.

We can turn that noun into an adjective by adding -ARY to the end producing the word *inflationary*. So sometimes these suffixes allow to create variations of existing words.

And again, there are lots of them in Modern English. Laurence Urdang was a well-known scholar and lexicographer, and he was the managing editor of the Random House Dictionary. He passed away a few years ago, but during his lifetime, he published a collection of English suffixes that was over 250 pages long.

A few episodes back, I mentioned that the first proper English dictionary was composed in the year 1604 by a man named Robert Cawdrey. Over half of the words in his dictionary contained suffixes.

So we deal with suffixes all the time when we speak and write English, and most of the time we don't even give them a second thought. But they are fundamental to the language.

Now if we try to narrow down that long list of suffixes to the basic ones that we use all the time, we would find that we mostly use about 50 or 60 common suffixes in our everyday speech. Those are found in a large percentage of the words we use everyday. And those most common suffixes are a blend of Old English suffixes and suffixes from across the Channel.

Last time, we saw that Old English prefixes experienced a decline in Middle English – as Latin, Greek and French prefixes came in. And the same thing happened with suffixes, but the older suffixes tended to be a little more durable. Many of those Old English suffixes have survived into Modern English even if they are no longer used to create new words. And that's the case with the Old English suffix *-lock*.

*-lock* was usually spelled L-A-C in Old English, and it was used to refer to certain actions or proceedings associated with a given root word. It was somewhat common in Old English. So the word *feohtlac* – or 'fight-lac' – meant 'the action of fighting.' So it meant 'warfare.' But this common Old English suffix fell out of use in Middle English. Today, it only survives at the end of one Modern English word, and that's the word *wedlock*. Since we don't really use that suffix today outside of that one word, most people don't realize that the 'lock' part of *wedlock* is a suffix. Many people think it's the modern word *lock*, so they think of *wedlock* as 'the state of being locked or bound together in marriage.' But it doesn't actually mean that. The 'lock' part of *wedlock* is just a lingering Old English suffix, and it's actually unrelated to the modern word *lock*.

Another Old English suffix that has largely disappeared is the suffix *-red* (R-E-D). It was used to indicate a specific state or condition. It is actually derived from the Old English word *rædan* which meant 'to advise or counsel.' It was sometimes used at the end of Old English personal names – like *Alfred* and *Aethelred*. In fact, you might remember that it was used as a pun on Aethelred's name – "Aethelred the Unready" – which meant 'Aethelred the poorly advised.' This word fell out of use in Middle English, and that included its use as a suffix. Outside of personal names like *Alfred*, it only survives today at the end of the words *hatred* and *kindred*.

Another Old English suffix that experienced a decline was the suffix *-wise*. I've noted before that the Old English word *wisdom* is cognate with the Latin word *vision*. They are both derived from an Indo-European root word that meant 'to see.' The sense of observing the world around you and acquiring knowledge led to the modern sense of the Old English words *wisdom* and *wise*. But the word *wise* also acquired a different sense in Old English. If you observed the world around you, you noticed how things worked and how they behaved. You noticed habits and customs and routines. And that led to the word *wise* as a noun which referred to a particular manner or way or condition. And it was sometimes combined with other words as in the word *otherwise* from Old English. It continued to be used well into the Middle English period forming words like *likewise*, *crosswise* and *lengthwise*. It even made it into the Modern English period in the word *clockwise*. But the only common word ending in *wise* that was coined in the past century is the word *streetwise* – but that word uses *wise* in the more usual sense as 'smart.' So it isn't really the traditional *-wise* suffix. That means there hasn't really been a common word formed with that suffix in English since *clockwise* in the late 1800s.

A couple of other common Old English suffixes were *less* and *ful*, both of which also survive as distinct words. Of course, *-less* was used as a suffix to indicate the lack of something, and *-ful* was used a suffix to meant a great deal of something. We have the *-less* suffix in words like *hopeless*, *timeless*, *reckless*, and so on. And we have the *-ful* suffix in the Old English words *wonderful*, *careful* and *handful*. The Ancrene Wisse also gives us the first recorded use of the word *dreadful* which is a combination of the Old English word *dread* and the *-ful* suffix.

The *-less* and *-ful* suffixes have remained popular over the centuries, and they have routinely been attached to root words from Latin, French and other languages. That has given us hybrid words like *useless*, *regardless*, *graceful*, *grateful*, and *beautiful*, just to name a few. In all of those words, the Old English suffix is attached to Latin or French root words.

By the way, the word *full* is derived from an Indo-European root word that meant 'to fill' and has been reconstructed as *\*pele-*. Remember that the Indo-European 'p' sound became an 'f' sound in the Germanic languages. Well, the Latin version of that word produced the words *plural* and *plenty*. And I mention that because the word *plenty* also appears for the first time in the Ancrene Wisse. And in the 1400s, the *-ful* suffix was added to the word *plenty* producing the word *plentiful*. So the word *plentiful* is technically redundant – it literally means 'full of fullness.' The root word and the suffix are cognate and both mean 'full or abundant.'

Old English also had several other suffixes that were used to form adjectives from other parts of speech. So if you wanted to create a word to describe something, you could use one of these suffixes. Several of these are still used in Modern English. One was the E-N suffix – *-en*. It allows us to turn *gold* into *golden*, and *old* into *olden*. *Wood* turns into *wooden* and *wool* into *woolen*. This suffix was once very common, but has stopped being used to create new words in English. Today, we generally ignore the prefix and just use the root word if we want to use an adjective.

So rather than referring to a 'golden ring,' we are more likely to just refer to a 'gold ring.' Rather than discussing the 'olden days,' we are more likely to just refer to the 'old days.' Instead of a

‘wooden chair’ and a ‘woolen sweater,’ we are just as likely to refer to a ‘wood chair’ and a ‘wool sweater.’ So today, that suffix is generally optional for adjectives, and when we use it, it tends to make our word choice sound older and more formal.

Another Old English way to form adjectives was the E-D suffix – *-ed*. Of course, we also use an E-D suffix on verbs when we want to express past tense – “I talked.” “You listened.” But that’s a completely different suffix, even though it looks the same. That suffix is attached to verbs, but the suffix I’m discussing here is attached to nouns to convert them into adjectives. So it turns ‘a man with a beard’ into a ‘bearded man.’ A ‘giant with two-heads’ into a ‘two-headed giant.’ A ‘truck with six wheels’ into a ‘six-wheeled truck.’ Other examples include a ‘saber-toothed’ tiger and a ‘wooded’ area. So this suffix is still used quite a bit today.

Another way to form an adjective was to use the Old English suffix *-some* – S-O-M-E. It allows us to convert *lone* into *lonesome*, and *whole* into *wholesome*, and *awe* into *awesome*, and so on.

We can also form adjectives by adding a simple *-y* suffix to a word – to convert *blood* into *bloody*, and *thirst* into *thirsty*, and *dream* into *dreamy*. Of course, this is still a very common suffix, and it was originally a very common Germanic suffix rendered in Old English as *-ig* – spelled I-G. That ‘g’ may have been pronounced early on, but it was probably silent for much of the late Old English period. So *sandy* was rendered in Old English as S-A-N-D-I-G. And *dusty* was D-U-S-T-I-G. But modern scholars are confident that the ‘g’ was silent in late Old English because almost all of the words with this suffix were re-spelled in the earliest Middle English documents without the ‘g’. That suggests that the ‘g’ was just a standard spelling convention within Old English. And after the Conquest, the French-trained scribes completely disregarded what had become a silent letter at the end. That just left an ‘i’ at the end which was re-spelled as ‘y.’

And this *-y* suffix remained very popular in early Middle English producing words like *happy*, *needy* and *sleepy* during that period. And it lives on to this day in new words. If a stew has a lot of onions in it, we might say that it has an *oniony* flavor. It might be served with mashed potatoes that are *lumpy*. And when you’re finished eating, you might leave a table that is *messy*. Those are all Modern English words formed with that very old suffix.

And I should also note that Greek and Latin gave English another *-y* suffix attached to some words borrowed from those languages or borrowed from French. And it serves much of the same function as the native English suffix. So as a very general rule, when we see that *-y* at the end of a native English word, it usually came from Old English, and when we see it on the end of a loan word, it usually came in via Latin and Greek. But outside of tracing the etymology, there is no easy way to distinguish those two *-y* suffixes in Modern English. And as far as Modern English is concerned, it is really just one suffix today.

Another Old English suffix that was used to form adjectives was the suffix I-S-H – *-ish*. And this particular suffix has found renewed life in Modern English. The suffix is used to form words like *childish*, *foolish* and *selfish*. It is also used to form words related to national origin and languages associated with those regions – thus words like *English*, *Spanish*, *Danish*, and so on.

But it is in its sense as ‘somewhat’ or ‘sort of’ that it has gained renewed vigor in Modern English. Traditionally, that ‘sort of’ sense has been used in reference to things like colors – producing words like *reddish*, *greenish*, *brownish*, and so on. But it has also been applied to other adjectives to express that same sense of ‘almost, but not quite.’ Rather than meeting someone at exactly nine o’clock, we might plan to meet at ‘9-ish.’ We might describe a slightly humorous movie as ‘funny-ish.’ A recent television show in the United States about an upper middle-class African-America family was called “Black-ish.” So this very old suffix is still very popular.

Now we find that Old English suffix at the end of a word like *childish*. But we also have the word *childlike*. And they are somewhat interchangeable in Modern English. And we once had the word *childly* which had essentially the same meaning. So *childish*, *childlike* and *childly* have all existed as English words. And those other two suffixes *-like* and *-ly* (L-Y) are both native to Old English. They can all be used to form adjectives, and L-Y is actually the main way that we turn an adjective into an adverb. So from *quiet* to *quietly* and from *large* to *largely*. The adjective and adverbs forms of that suffix were slightly different in Old English, but in Middle English they converged into the same L-Y form for both.

Now sometimes we still use both the *-like* suffix and the *-ly* (L-Y) suffix with the same root word. So we have the words *womanlike* and *womanly* and *godlike* and *godly*. And not only are those two suffixes used in similar ways, they are also related. The L-Y suffix was originally -L-I-C in Old English. It was a word that meant ‘body or corpse.’ It was attached to the end of nouns to create adjectives to mean ‘in the form of’ or ‘in the appearance of’ the noun. So if something was in the form of a child, it was *cildlic* – C-I-L-D-L-I-C. But that final C or ‘k’ sound became silent over time especially in the south of England. And that produced the word *childly* that I mentioned earlier.

But in the north of England, that C or ‘k’ sound at the end was retained. There may have been some Norse influence at work as well since Old Norse had a version of that same word where the ‘k’ sound was retained. Anyway, that word eventually emerged as the distinct word *like* in Middle English. And that northern form eventually spread south and was adopted as the *-like* suffix with a similar meaning as the older L-Y suffix. By the 1500s, English had the word *childlike* which eventually replaced the older form *childly*.

But as I noted, in some cases both versions still exist in Modern English with pairs like *womanlike* and *womanly* and *godlike* and *godly*. And *gentlemanlike* and *gentlemanly*.

So we’ve looked at a variety of Old English suffixes used to create adjectives and sometimes adverbs. That includes *-wise*, *-ful*, *-less*, *-en*, *-ed*, *-some*, *-y* (which is just the letter Y), *-ish*, *-like*, and *-ly*. All of these are still used to some extent in Modern English, and that shows how durable Old English suffixes have been.

We’ve looked at the creation of adjectives and adverbs in Old English. Now let’s turn to nouns. Old English gave us several suffixes used to create abstract nouns. These nouns were usually used to express a general state or condition.

One of those suffixes was *-dom* – D-O-M. It was used in Old English words like *kingdom*, *earldom*, *wisdom* and *freedom*. You might remember that word *dom* (D-O-M) meant a ‘law’ or ‘judgment’ in Old English. And that was the origin of this D-O-M suffix. In words like *kingdom* and *earldom*, it had a sense of the realm that was subject to the king’s judgment or the earl’s judgment. So it has a sense of jurisdiction. And from there, the meaning was extended to refer to a general state or condition. The state of being ‘wise’ was *wisdom*, and the state of being ‘free’ was *freedom*. The *-dom* suffix survived into Middle English, but it has been in decline ever since then. Today, it mostly exists in old words coined before the Modern English period. However, it hasn’t completely disappeared in new words. Within the past century or so, it has been used to form new words like *fandom* and *stardom*.

Another Old English suffix used to form abstract nouns was *-hood* – H-O-O-D. Again, much like *-dom*, it was used to express a certain ‘state or condition of being.’ It gave us words like *childhood*, *manhood*, *womanhood*, *likelihood*, and so on. The suffix was *-had* in Old English, and it meant ‘condition or quality or status.’ And much like *-dom*, this *-hood* suffix experienced a decline in Middle English. It has rarely been used to form new words since then. Over the past few centuries, it has produced the words *boyhood* and *girlhood*, but those words are really just an extension of older terms like *manhood*, *womanhood*, *brotherhood*, and *sisterhood*. And other than those specific exceptions, the *-hood* suffix is mainly a relic today.

Another Old English suffix with a meaning similar to *-dom* and *-hood* was *-ship*. Again it was used to form abstract nouns. It was used to form Old English words like *friendship* and *worship*. By the way, this *-ship* suffix is not directly related to the word *ship* as in a boat even though they both existed in Old English. The suffix *-ship* is actually related to the word *shape*. Anyway, this suffix was common in Old English, and it survived into the Middle English period. In the Ancrene Wisse, it appears in the words *hardship* and *fellowship* which are both recorded for the first time in that document. Like the other similar suffixes *-dom* and *-hood*, this *-ship* suffix underwent a decline in Middle English. Very few words have been formed with that suffix since then. One of the few words to appear with that suffix in Modern English is the word *relationship*.

So *-dom*, *-hood*, and *-ship* all declined in Middle English as new borrowed suffixes started to come in. But it wasn’t just the new suffixes that replaced *-dom*, *-hood*, and *-ship*. It was also another Old English suffix – the suffix *-ness* (N-E-S-S).

This has been the most durable of the four Old English suffixes used to create abstract nouns. It gave us Old English words like *darkness*, *sickness* and *sadness*. I noted a few episodes back that Layamon’s Brut contained the first use of the word *wilderness* which was literally ‘wild deer ness.’ That word also appeared several times in the Ancrene Wisse.

Now as I said, this *-ness* suffix has really overtaken some of those other Old English suffixes like *-dom*, *-hood*, and *-ship*. It has become a standard way for us to convert an adjective into a noun. In the Modern English era, we have new words like *randomness*, *homesickness*, and *cohesiveness*.

Over time, this *-ness* suffix has even replaced some of the other suffixes like *-ship*. Layamon's Brut used the word *boldship*, but that word was later replaced by the word *boldness*. During this same period in the early 1200s, the words *cleanship* and *cleanness* were both in common use – sometimes in the same document. (*Hali Meid*). But again, *cleanness* with the *-ness* suffix won out over time.

Even though the *-ness* suffix has taken up some of the space left behind by the other Old English suffixes, it has not been without challengers – especially from Latin and French. Consider the word *clear*. It's a French word, and it entered English in the late 1200s. English speakers soon took that word and added the English suffix *-ness* to the end producing the word *cleanness* as a noun. So *cleanness* is a hybrid word – a French root word with an Old English suffix. The word *cleanness* was once very common in English, and it's still used to a certain extent in Modern English. But a short time after the word *cleanness* was coined, English borrowed the noun version of the word *clear* directly from French as *clarity*. So ever since then, *cleanness* and *clarity* have existed side-by-side. *Cleanness* has the Old English suffix *-ness*, and *clarity* had the Latin and French suffix – I-T-Y. Over the past few centuries, *clarity* has emerged as the more accepted version within English. And that shows how much French and Latin suffixes have been embraced by English to the extent that they are often preferred over native suffixes. So with that, let's shift our focus from Old English suffixes to those borrowed from Latin and French.

And let's begin with that I-T-Y suffix that I just mentioned in a word like *clarity*. It was borrowed from Latin and French where it was used to change the root word into a noun. So the word *pure* can be converted into *purity*. Now the word *purity* appears for the first time in the Ancrene Wisse.

In fact, in Middle English, the suffix was often spelled as I-T-E and sometimes as E-T-E. So the Ancrene Wisse also gives us the first use of the French words *chaste* and *chastity*. *Chastity* is spelled as C-H-A-S-T-E-T-E. The document also gives us the first recorded use of the word *adversity* in English which was spelled with I-T-E. The word *authority* also appears for the first time again spelled with I-T-E. And familiarity is also attested for the first time in the Ancrene Wisse also spelled with I-T-E. These words didn't get their modern spellings until the Modern English period.

I should note that the suffix T-Y as in *beauty* and *safety* and *plenty* is also derived from same original Latin suffix as I-T-Y. So one version has an 'I' and one doesn't. Again, in early Middle English, it usually appeared as T-E instead of T-Y. As I noted earlier, the French word *plenty* appeared for the first time in the Ancrene Wisse, and it was spelled P-L-E-N-T-E. Interestingly, the original Latin root word was *plenitas*, so it had the 'I' in the original Latin suffix. And that word was borrowed into English for a second time in the 1600s as *plenity*. So *plenty* and *plenity* existed side-by-side in English for about a century or so, before *plenity* finally disappeared.

Another very common suffix that we use to form nouns is the I-O-N suffix – often rendered as T-I-O-N. Again, this suffix was borrowed from French and Latin. We typically use it to turn an adjective into a noun – so from *act* to *action*, *motivate* to *motivation*, *direct* to *direction*, and so on.



This new suffix appears in quite a few words for the first time in the Ancrene Wisse. It appears in words like *contemplation*, *devotion*, *temptation*, *distinction*, *salvation* and *presumption*. Again, all were first attested in the Ancrene Wisse.

In most of these words, the suffix is actually spelled C-I-U-N which was common in early Middle English. The T-I-O-N spelling didn't really become common until later in the Middle English period. This original spelling is interesting because spellings were mostly phonetic during this period, and C-I-U-N indicates that the pronunciation was close to Modern English – either /see-un/ or /shun/. So why do we spell it T-I-O-N today?

Well, it's because most of these words can be traced back to Latin where they ended in T-I-O (/tee-oh/). And Latin had a lot of inflectional endings, one of which converted that ending to *-tionem* (T-I-O-N-E-M). So this original Latin form of *distinction* was *distinction-em*. And the Latin form of *temptation* was *temptation-em*. The 'em' part at the end was dropped in French and English. So that produced the T-I-O-N suffix, but again, the original pronunciation was /tee-own/. Then in late Latin and early French, certain consonant sounds turned into sibilant sounds.

In earlier episodes of the podcast, we saw that this process was called assibilation or palatalization. We saw that the 'k' sound shifted to an 's' sound before the front vowels (E and I). And the hard 'g' sound shifted to a soft 'g' sound before the same front vowels. Well, this same process affected the 't' sound before I in the suffix T-I-O-N. It became /she-own/ and /see-own/. And that converted *distinction* (/dis-tinc-tee-own/) to *distinction*, and *temptation* (/temp-tah-tee-own/) to *temptation*. This was really just a slurring and softening of the pronunciation. And it wasn't limited to this suffix. It also helps to explain why we pronounce I-N-E-R-T-I-A as *inertia* and not /in-er-tee-ah/. And P-A-T-I-E-N-C-E as *patience* and not /pah-tee-ence/. So this was just a common sound change that took place in late Latin and early French. By the way, the word *patience* appears for the first time in the Ancrene Wisse.

As I noted earlier, this suffix often appears as T-I-O-N in Modern English, but it sometimes follows a Latin root word that ended in I-O rather than T-I-O. So the suffix sometimes just appears as I-O-N instead of T-I-O-N. So in the Ancrene Wisse, we get words like *champion* and *scorpion* with a simple I-O-N suffix, both of which are recorded for the first time in English. Regardless of form, this I-O-N or T-I-O-N suffix is one of the most common suffixes in the English language today.

Another very common suffix that we use to form nouns is the suffix *-ment* – M-E-N-T. This suffix was borrowed from French, and it ultimately comes from the Latin suffix *-mentum*. It appears in the Ancrene Wisse in words like *judgment* and *ornament*. Both of those words appear for the first time in English in that text. Over the centuries, the *-ment* suffix has been usually attached to French and Latin root words. But it has become so accepted within English, that it is sometimes attached to native English root words. When combined with English roots, it has resulted in words like *acknowledgment* and *atonement*.

Another suffix borrowed from Latin and French to convert a verb into a noun was *-ance* (A-N-C-E) which also appears as *-ence* (E-N-C-E). These can be traced back to the Latin suffixes *-antia*

(A-N-T-I-A) and *-entia* (E-N-T-I-A). This was really the same suffix. The form varied depending on the vowel sound in the root word that the suffix was attached to. In French, these two separate versions converged into *-ance* (A-N-C-E). But then, the form with the ‘e’ started to be adopted when the original Latin root word ended in *-entia* (E-N-T-I-A). So over the years, English has borrowed words with both versions of the suffix.

In the Ancrene Wisse, the -A-N-C-E suffix appears in the words *ignorance* and *acquaintance*, which both appear for the first time in English. And the -E-N-C-E ending appears in the word *patience*, which as I noted earlier is also recorded for the first time in English in the Ancrene Wisse.

Another suffix that is used to create nouns in English is the suffix *-age* – A-G-E. This is another suffix from Latin and French, and it has an interesting history within English. It came in very early on with the Normans, and it is actually more common in Modern English than Modern French. So it was one of those French suffixes that was embraced in the early Middle English period, and it has thrived ever since. Today we have it in words like *message*, *beverage*, *average*, *storage*, *damage*, *postage* and so on. But if we go back to the origin of the suffix in English, we would find that it has a close association with European feudalism.

The original Latin suffix was *-aticus* or *-aticum* depending on how it was being used in a sentence. That original suffix meant ‘belonging to’ or ‘related to.’ Though it was used in many words in Latin, it had one particular association with words related to payments. For example, Latin had the word *pulveraticum* which was a payment for hard agricultural labor. It became *pulverage* in French.

As the feudal system became ingrained in France in the early Middle Ages, it was a system that depended on a variety of relationships typically defined by various services and obligations, and also defined by specific payments. As these new types of payments and obligations emerged, new words had to be coined within French to describe those features. And many of those new words were modeled on existing words like *pulverage* which was a specific type of payment.

Within French, this produced words like *homage*. As we know, a vassal had to swear an oath of homage to his lord. A toll or fee on the use of a cellar or storehouse was called *cellarage*. A collection of prominent nobles was known as the *baronage*. And a collection of vassals was the *vassalage*. The peasants or villeins were called the *villeinage*.

We can see this link between feudalism and the *-age* suffix very early on in English. One of the first words to appear in an English document with this *-age* suffix was another word associated with feudalism. But interestingly, it was a native English construction. In a charter that was written down in the year 1195, the word *hideage* appears. You might remember that a *hide* was a specific amount of land in Old English. So *hide* is an Old English word. After the Norman Conquest and the forced introduction of feudalism to England, a tax was levied on each hide of land. And English speakers were already familiar enough with French terms associated with feudalism, that they coined their own term *hideage* based on the model of similar French terms.

English soon coined other words in this same manner – by attaching the *-age* suffix to a native English words. The word *thane* – meaning the land held by a thane – appeared around the current point in our story in the early 1200s. The word *bondage* appeared a short time later. *Bond* is a native English word, and the word *bondage* referred to the system of obligations that bound a vassal to a lord. English also coined the word *barnage* in early Middle English. *Bairn* was an Old English word for a small child. It still survives in northern England and Scotland. So *barnage* meant ‘childhood or infancy.’

This suffix also made an appearance in the Ancrene Wisse. It appeared in the word *heritage* which is the first recorded use of that word in English. The document also contains the first English use of the word *pottage*, which is an early form of the word *porridge*.

And from there, it became a very common suffix in English forming other words like *marriage*, *village*, *package* and even the word *language* – which is kind of important to this podcast.

So that’s the suffix *-age*. Another very common English suffix borrowed from Latin and French is *-E-R-Y* – as in *robbery*, *treachery*, *bribery*, *pottery*, *bakery* and *battery*. In fact, the first two of those words, *robbery* and *treachery*, appear for the first time in the Ancrene Wisse. That suffix is closely related to the *A-R-Y* suffix that we also use in English, as in *necessary*, *secretary*, *dictionary*, *glossary*, and *January*. We also have it in the word *anniversary* which appeared for the first time in the Ancrene Wisse.

Both of these suffixes are ultimately derived from Latin, specifically the related Latin suffixes – *-arius* and *-arium*. Early on, there was a split in the way this suffix evolved in the various French dialects. Within Norman French, and more specifically the Anglo-Norman dialect spoken in England, it evolved into the *-A-R-Y* suffix that we use today. But within the dialects of central France, the suffix evolved into *-I-E-R*, which produced the *E-R-Y* suffix in Middle English words borrowed from French.

The important thing to take from all of that is that the *-A-R-Y* suffix is really derived from the early Anglo-Norman dialect, and is really a development that mostly took place within England. Back in France, the original Latin suffix evolved into *-aire* (*A-I-R-E*). That is why English has *contrary* where French has *contraire*.

So when English borrowed words from French, it tended to replace that French *-aire* suffix with the more English version *-ary*. So English has *necessary* where French has *nécessaire*. And English has *solitary* where French has *solitaire*. In fact, English borrowed the word *solitaire* from later French, so English actually has both versions of that word today.

Sometimes, the French *-aire* suffix has been borrowed in beside a word with the *-ary* suffix, and over time, the version with the French *-aire* suffix has emerged as the standard version in English. So for example, Middle English has the word *questionary* which meant ‘a list of questions.’ But in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the modern French word *questionnaire* replaced it. So the newer French suffix replaced the original Anglo-Norman suffix.

I should also note that the pronunciation of that *-ary* suffix varies within Modern English. Over the past couple of centuries, many Modern English dialects have shortened this suffix from *-ary* to just /-ree/ in a lot of words. So *secretary* became /secretree/. But American English has held onto that original *-ary* pronunciation.

So that has left use with lots of different pronunciations of that old suffix. Today, we have American English /sec-re-tary/, British English /secretree/ and French ‘secrétaire.’ But again, these are all variations of the same suffix that can be traced back to Latin.

Now in addition to the -E-R-Y and -A-R-Y suffixes from Latin and French, we also have the -O-R-Y suffix *-ory*. We have it in words like *oratory*, *observatory*, *purgatory* and *dormitory*. This suffix was mainly derived from the Latin suffixes *-oria* (O-R-I-A) and *-orium* (O-R-I-U-M). Again those suffixes became *-orie* (O-R-I-E) in the Norman dialect of England, and eventually came to be spelled as O-R-Y.

Sometimes, we have both the Norman-English version of a word and the original Latin version. That’s the case with *crematory* and *crematorium*.

This suffix is attested for one of the first times in English in the Ancrene Wisse. It appears in the word *purgatory* which is the first recorded use of that word in an English document. The Ancrene Wisse also includes a few other French word with that ending – words like *memory*, *history* and *story*, but in those words the endings are not actually suffixes. They’re just part of the root word. But I wanted to mention those word, specifically the word *memory*, because it shows how this suffix has evolved separately within Modern French.

Again the word *memory* is recorded for the first time in English is the Ancrene Wisse. *Memory* reflects the Norman pronunciation of that word ending as /-ory/. But in standard French, it became ‘-oire’ (/wahr/). And English borrowed that word again from later French as *memoire* (/mem-wah/ or mem-wahr/). American English tends to pronounce the ‘r’ sound at the end, British English doesn’t.

Another word that appears for the first time in the Ancrene Wisse is the word *arms* as in weapons. It was borrowed from French. And a short time later, English borrowed the word *armory* which meant ‘a weapons arsenal’ or ‘a place where weapons were kept.’ But in the 1500s, that word was borrowed again from French as *armoire* with its Modern French ending. And today, we use that Modern French version of the word to mean a cupboard or wardrobe.

Now before I conclude, let me mention one other French and Latin suffix that appeared in the Ancrene Wisse. The suffix *-ous* (O-U-S) appeared in words like *jealous*, *malicious* and *dangerous*. It is based on the Latin suffix *-osus* (O-S-U-S) which became O-U-S in French, and was introduced to English around the time of the Ancrene Wisse.

So as you can see, a lot of Latin and French suffixes were starting to pour into English in the early 1200s, and the *Ancrene Wisse* contains a lot of those suffixes for the first time in an English document. Over the past couple of episodes, I've tried to focus on prefixes and suffixes that were being used in the 1200s. So that included those from Old English as well as some of the early borrowings from Latin, French and Greek. As the Middle English period progressed, more and more of those elements from across the Channel came in. And I'll probably look at some of those prefixes and suffixes that came in later in future episodes.

But for now, I'll leave the topic there. Over the next couple of episodes, we'll move the story forward into the mid and late 1200s. We'll pick back up with the historical narrative as we progress deeper into Middle English period. And we'll explore some other interesting developments that impacted the evolution of English.

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