A Children's Guide to Shropshire Place-Names

Written by Susan kilby

Original illustrations by ione beau jones

adapted for print by ben Marshall

kb zipa dee doo dah font by khrys bosland

UK RI — Arts and Humanities Research Council

University of Nottingham
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

Contents

introduction

join Wulfwynn, an Anglo-Saxon wise-woman from Lurkenhope in south-west Shropshire, as she guides us around some of Shropshire's exciting place-names!

Meet Wulfwynn. She is an **Anglo-Saxon** wise-woman, and she is here to help you find out more about medieval Shropshire by examining its place-names. She is from Lurkenhope, a tiny place near Clun, close to the Welsh border. The name Lurkenhope was created by the Anglo-Saxons, and it means 'the hidden valley of the wise-woman'. You are probably now thinking: what was a wise-woman? That would be a very good question! We don't really know what an Anglo-Saxon wise-woman did, but she was probably very knowledgeable about medicine, especially medical remedies made from plants.

Lurkenhope is an example of a Shropshire place-name. You can see that place-names can be very useful for finding out about medieval Shropshire. Without the name Lurkenhope, we wouldn't know about our Shropshire wise-woman! As you can guess, Wulfwynn is very clever, and she is going to be your guide as you explore medieval Shropshire through its place-names.

What is a place-name?

All of the cities, towns and villages in England have names. But Wulfwynn says: did you know that lots of these names are many hundreds of years old, and that very often, they were generated by the **Anglo-Saxons**? She tells us that when the Anglo-Saxons arrived in England in the mid-fifth century, lots of them decided to settle here, and they often lived in small settlements consisting of a few houses. So that people could tell the difference between each of the villages and towns, they all had names. Wulfwynn says that some of the names were originally created by the **Britons** or the **Romans** – people who lived in Britain before the Anglo-Saxons arrived. You can find a timeline for invasions and immigrations into Britain at the end of this introduction. Most of the place-names of England, however, were first used by the Anglo-Saxons.

Understanding place-names

You already know lots of place-names – they are names like London, Shrewsbury, and Ludlow. These are the names of big cities and towns. Smaller places were also given names – these were not just villages and hamlets, but also forests and woods, moorland, hills and mountains, rivers and streams and even fields. Wulfwynn has a test for you! Here is a list of Shropshire names – see if you can match the name to the correct feature (answers at the end of the chapter!):

That was easy, wasn't it? At first glance, it isn't too difficult to tell what kind of places these are, especially if you live in Shropshire. But what's that, Wulfwynn? Each of these names is also hiding secret information about Shropshire's past! That sounds exciting! Wulfwynn says that the 'Wyre' part of the name Wyre Forest comes from a very old name for the city of Worcester, which means '**Roman** town of the Weogoran people'. So, Wyre Forest was the 'forest of the Weogoran people'. The Weogoran people were **Britons** who lived in what is now the West Midlands before the Romans arrived. The River Severn is also a very old name, and it was known by the Romans as *Sabrina*. Again, it is a name that pre-dates the arrival of the Romans. And, says Wulfwynn, the Long Mynd is a name that combines two languages: 'long' was originally the **Old English** word *lang*. Old English is the language of the **Anglo-Saxons**; and *mynd* was an **Old Welsh** word that meant 'mountain'. Old Welsh was spoken in Wales more than 900 years ago. So, using just these three place-names, we have travelled about 2,000 years back in time! You can see that it is possible to look back across hundreds of years and catch a glimpse of the people who lived in Shropshire. Wulfwynn says that is why place-names are so valuable – they are like a secret code that we can use to find out about Shropshire's exciting past!

Why can't we understand place-names as easily today?

Yes, that's a good question, Wulfwynn – why is that? Wulfwynn explains that because so many of England's place-names were first thought up hundreds and hundreds of years ago, they have undergone a lot of changes. First of all, we wouldn't understand the language of the people who created them. The Anglo-Saxons spoke an earlier form of our language called **Old English**, and both the structure of this language and its vocabulary changed as part of its development into the modern English language that we speak today. Whilst some of the words used by the Anglo-Saxons have survived, like 'hill' and 'brook', many other words are no longer part of our everyday speech. Some of the place-names were created in other languages, like Welsh, French and **Latin**. Place-names were also created using an even earlier language, **British** – spoken by the people who lived in Shropshire before the Anglo-Saxons arrived. This means that place-names 'hide' much older words that help us to understand what they mean. Luckily for us, Wulfwynn says that she can help us to work out what the words of all these different ancient languages meant!

So, place-names can tell us all sorts of exciting things about the ways in which medieval people pictured England. This book concentrates on the place-names of Shropshire. So, are you ready? With Wulfwynn to guide us, let's go and find out all about Shropshire's past through its place-names.

Quiz answers! Wyre Forest = forest   Severn = river   Long Mynd = mountain
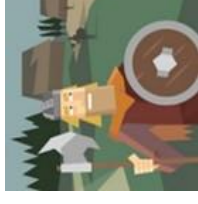
The Britons
750-500 BCE

The Romans
43 CE

The Anglo-Saxons
c. 450

The Vikings
793

The Normans
1066

The Britons spoke a language called British

The Romans spoke a language called Latin

The Anglo-Saxons spoke a language called Old English

The Vikings spoke a language called Old Norse

The Normans spoke a language called Anglo-Norman, and also wrote in Latin

Place-names that sound funny

There are lots of funny-sounding place-names. Wulfwynn says you might be surprised when you find out what they really mean! You have probably already seen some on signposts as you travel around the county. Shropshire has lots – take a look at these:

homer

Oh, this sounds like a place that was named after a character from The Simpsons! But Wulfwynn is giggling – she says that in fact it has absolutely nothing to do with the boys' name Homer, or with cartoon people: it means 'the pond in a hollow'. Homer is a name that was originally written down in **Old English**, the language of the **Anglo-Saxons**. So, not quite as exciting as being named after a TV cartoon star, but then medieval people didn't have TV, and knowing where to find the nearest pond was quite important!

Pant

You are probably conjuring up all sorts of images now – I know that I am. Does this name relate to a panting dog, perhaps, Wulfwynn? Or maybe a pair of pants? Wulfwynn says that if you speak Welsh, you may have already guessed what this name means, because pant is the Welsh word for 'valley'. Ah! So some Shropshire names have Welsh origins!
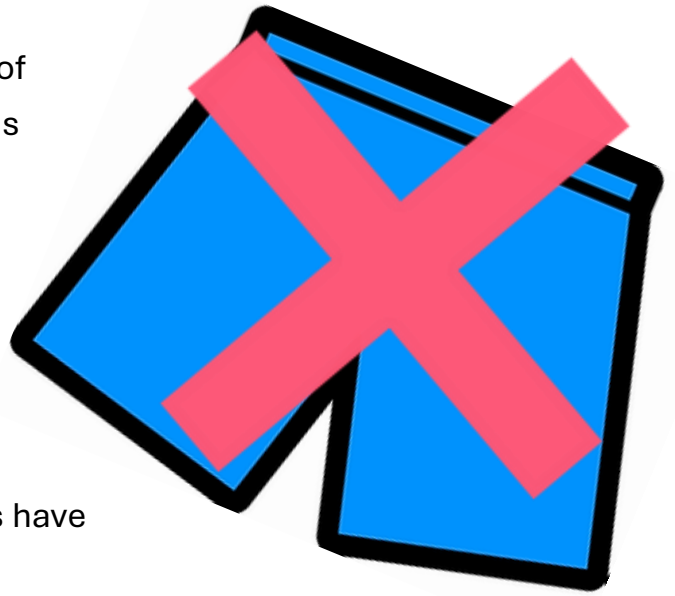
knockin

'Knock knock.' … 'Knock knock.' … 'KNOCK KNOCK!' I keep on knockin', but there's no-one there! Yes, I know, that was a terrible joke. But what on earth does Knockin mean, Wulfwynn? Believe it or not, she says, it means 'the small hill'. It's from another Welsh word – cnycyn. Are you beginning to get the impression that there are a lot of Welsh words in Shropshire place-names? Well, Wulfwynn says that you'd be right! Why do you think that was?

Wigwig

Now that is a really funny name! I'm sure that right now, all of you have a picture in your head of one of those fancy seventeenth-century powdered wigs. I know I have. Well, apparently, we can forget all about that, because Wulfwynn says that Wigwig (which is near Homer) has absolutely nothing to do with wigs! Astonishingly, it means 'Wicga's dairy-farm'. Wicga must have been the name of an **Anglo-Saxon** man who owned the farm. And one of the **Old English** words for farm was *wic*. So now it is easy to see how Wicga's *wic* became Wigwig. Thank you Wulfwynn!

Custard

Come on Wulfwynn! There can't really be a place called Custard in Shropshire, can there? Have you just slipped that in here to see if we're paying attention?

Wulfwynn is shaking her head – no, she hasn't. Well then, Custard sounds like a place that needs investigating very thoroughly indeed – it's making me feel very hungry! I wonder if it's next to a place called Rhubarb..? Uh-oh, Wulfwynn is sighing at me. She says that Custard is in fact the name of a field in Tugford. Originally, it was probably an **Old English** word – *cot-stow* – which meant 'cottage site'. I wonder if they made custard there?

Neen Savage

Ooh, that sounds like it must have been a dangerous place – are you sure you've put this in the right chapter of the book, Wulfwynn? Wouldn't it be better in the 'scary-sounding places' chapter? No, no – Wulfwynn says that it is a perfectly nice, safe place-name – nothing frightening to see here. Can you see that this name is made up of two words? Each of these words tells us something about this village. The first part of the name, Neen, is a very ancient river-name. It is the old name for the River Rea, that runs through the parish. This part of the name is super-old, and it pre-dates the **Anglo-Saxons**! The second part of the name, Savage, isn't scary, but it relates to the name of the medieval family who owned the village just after the **Normans**

arrived in 1066. Before they arrived, the village was simply called Neen! So this name tells us about two different stages in the history of Neen Savage!

What have we learned?

These funny names have taught us quite a lot about Shropshire. We've learned quite a bit about medieval Shropshire, and some of the **Anglo-Saxons** who came here.

- Some Shropshire place-names use Welsh words, which tells us that people who spoke Welsh also lived in Shropshire in the past.

- Some of the names tell us about Shropshire's landscape, and suggest that it was important to the people who lived there.

- We have learned that river-names are usually very old, and that they were significant enough to survive for many hundreds of years.

- And we have found out about some of the buildings that we might have expected to see in medieval Shropshire, like cottages and farms, and what they were used for, like the dairy farm at Wigwig.

- Finally, we have discovered that sometimes names are not fixed, but that they can change, like at Neen Savage. Such a lot of information from just a few names!

Shall we go and explore some more?

Place-names that tell us about people

Wulfwynn says that we can learn all sorts of things about the people who lived in Shropshire in the past by looking at some of the place-names. So what are you waiting for? Come and meet some of Shropshire's past residents!

Clungunford

HELLO, MY NAME IS GUNWARD

This name, Wulfwynn tells us, dates back to **Domesday Book** in 1086, when it was just called Clun, but was owned by a man called Gunward. As a result, it became Clun Gunward, which slowly changed over time to Clungunford. Gunward is a Viking name, and the 'Clun' part of the name relates to the River Clun. The name reveals that in 1086, a man with a **Viking** name lived in this part of Shropshire. Wulfwynn says that the Vikings didn't generally settle in Shropshire, and Clungunford is quite far west. Was Gunward a Viking, do you think, or just someone who had a Viking name? What was he doing in Shropshire? How did he come to settle there? Perhaps you could write a story about this!
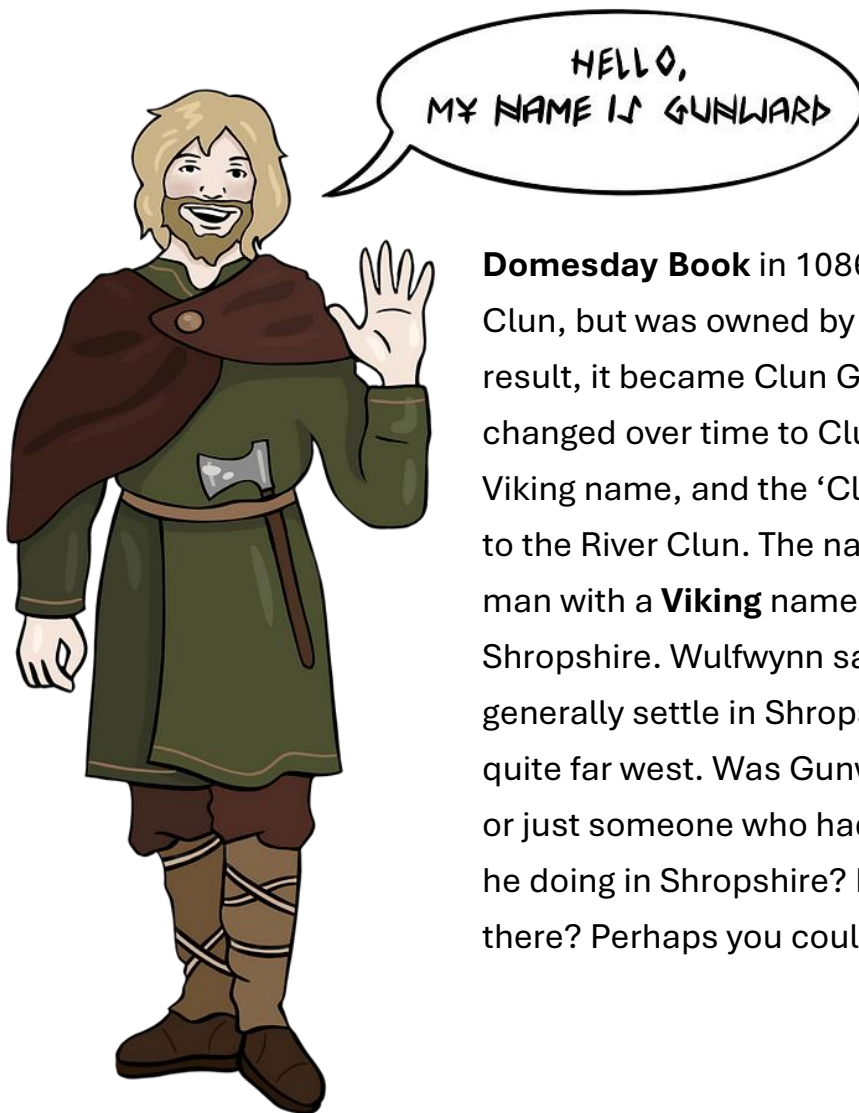
Wroxeter

According to Wulfwynn, this is a very clever name that tells us about two different kinds of people living in Shropshire. The **Anglo-Saxons** created the name Wroxeter, which means 'the **Roman** town called Uricon', and this tells us that they recognised that Roman towns were distinctive. The Roman name for Wroxeter was quite long: Viroconium Cornoviorum, which means the Viroconium of the Cornovii. The Cornovii were the **British** people living near the Wrekin before the Romans arrived. That's a lot of information contained in one name! Thank you for the history lesson, Wulfwynn!

Ellesmere

Wulfwynn says that Ellesmere means 'Elli's lake', and that Elli was an **Anglo-Saxon** man who owned this village. She says that lots of Shropshire place-names are associated with the names of Anglo-Saxon people, and they provide lots of evidence for the people who lived in the county during that time.

Walcot

This sounds like a place where you'd find a baby! But Wulfwynn is tapping her foot, so I think that can't be right. She says there were once three places in medieval Shropshire called Walcot. One near Chirbury, another near Wrockwardine, and the third near Lydbury North. The name means 'cottages of the **Britons'**, and names of this type can be found all over England. The Britons were the people living in Britain before the **Anglo-Saxons** arrived. They spoke a different language to the Anglo-Saxons – the language that developed into modern Welsh. Wulfwynn says that names like Walcot are important, because they show us that there were still groups of Britons living together in the Anglo-Saxon period.
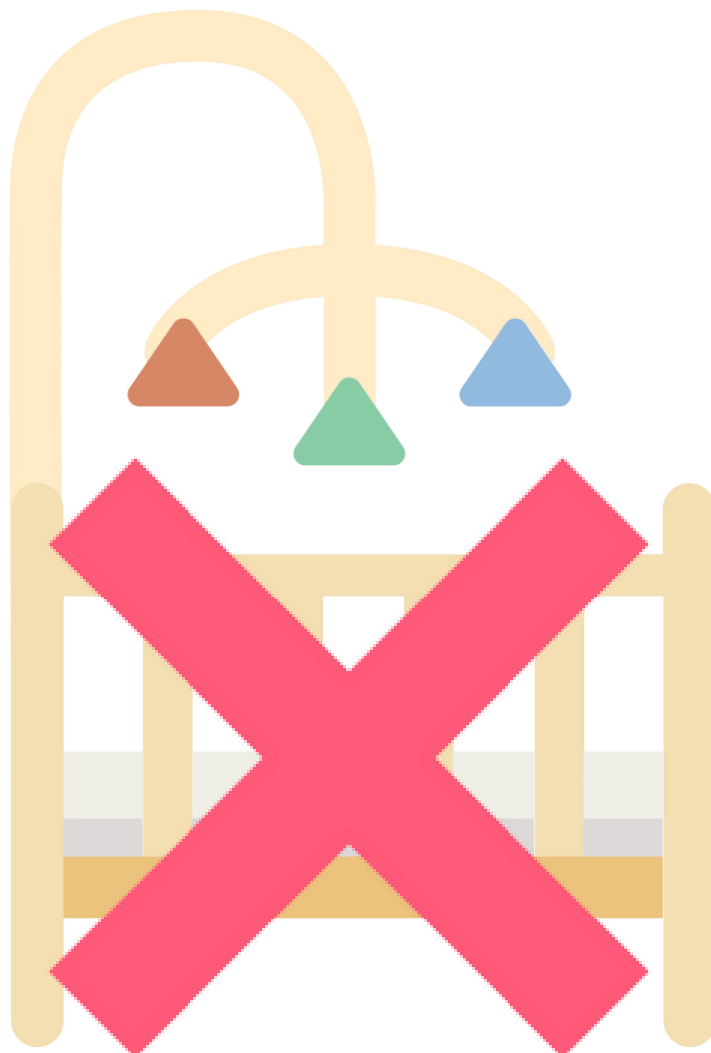
Alveley

I wonder what sort of person this name reveals? Wulfwynn tells us that Alveley means 'Ælfgyð's clearing'. Perhaps like me, right now, you are probably wondering what kind of language that name is written in, and how to say it. Wulfwynn says that the letters are all part of the **Old English** alphabet, but that they are not all used now. Let's have a look at the two strange-looking letters: first, **Æ**. This letter is called '**ash**' and it is pronounced like the 'a' in 'cat'. Next, **ð**. This letter is called '**eth**', and it is pronounced like 'th' in 'the', 'that' and 'there'. Wulfwynn says that Ælfgyð is a girl's name that means 'Elf battle', and it tells us that an **Anglo-Saxon** woman owned Alveley. That is a super-cool name, isn't it!

Trefarclawdd

I think that this name looks very similar to some Welsh place-names, don't you? Wulfwynn is beaming at me, so I think that I must have got it right! She says that Trefarclawdd means 'settlement on the dyke', and it is a place that's right next to **Offa's Dyke**, close to the border between England and Wales. There are lots of Welsh names in Shropshire, and Wulfwynn says that this is because there were many **Welsh-speaking people** living in Shropshire in the medieval period.

What have we learned?

Looking at the people hidden within our place-names has taught us a lot about medieval Shropshire.

- We have learned that different languages were spoken there – not just English, but also Welsh.

- We now know that the **Old English** alphabet was a little bit different from the one we use today.

- We've also found out that medieval people could recognise that **Roman** towns were different from **Anglo-Saxon** settlements.

- Some of the names reveal the people who lived in Shropshire before the Romans arrived – that's around 2,000 years ago!

- And we've discovered that important women, as well as men, were associated with some Shropshire places through their names.

Thank you Wulfwynn, for introducing us to the people of Shropshire's past! Now, let's go and explore some more names!

Places that tell us about people's occupations

Sometimes, place-names can tell us about what people did in Shropshire hundreds of years ago, and so we can learn about some of the different kinds of jobs that people had. I wonder what sorts of things people did for a living in Shropshire – shall we go and have a look?

Sheriff hales

Sheriff Hales sounds a bit like a character in a Wild West movie, doesn't it? I'm picturing someone in a cowboy hat, sitting on a big horse. But Wulfwynn is shaking her head, so that can't be right. According to her account, when it was first written down in **Domesday Book** in 1086, this place was called *Halas*, which meant 'nooks'. But at that time, the village was owned by Reginald de Balliol, who was the sheriff of Shropshire. A medieval sheriff was responsible for law and order on behalf of the king, so it was a very important job indeed.

Smethcott

Smethcott means 'cottages of the smiths', and it tells us that people who worked as smiths lived there hundreds of years ago. A smith was a very skilled worker who made metal objects, like swords, tools, and horseshoes at a forge. Wulfwynn says that in **Anglo-Saxon** folklore, smiths were particularly admired because they could make things out of metal, and this was seen as an almost magical process.

Preston Gubbals

Ooh, this is a good name – it's the sort of name that a baddie in a story might have … 'mean old Preston Gubbals lived in a smelly, ramshackle old house, and never shared his gobstoppers', that sort of thing. Wulfwynn is sighing – I think my imagination has gone too far again! She says that there are five places in Shropshire called Preston, and they all mean 'estate of the priests'. In 1086, Preston Gubbals was owned by a priest called Godebold, which eventually became Gubbals, so this village was named after Godebold the Priest.

Lower Tan House

Lower Tan House is the name of a field in Clunton – Wulfwynn is handing us all some pegs to put on our noses. She says that this is quite a smelly place! A tan-house was where a tanner worked with animal hides to make leather.

Wulfwynn says that wee and poo were both used to help turn animal skins into leather, so now you know why you need a peg on your nose! The tan-house was usually right on the edge of a village or town, so that the smell didn't bother the neighbours too much. Yuck! Time to wash our hands, I think!

Shelderton

Wulfwynn says that this may be a very exciting name, as it could mean 'settlement of the shield-makers'. Woah! Now that's the kind of job that I like the sound of! Shelderton is located on what was once the **Roman** road called **Watling Street**, which would have been a very busy highway – the perfect place to make and sell shields to people travelling along the road, perhaps. Can you think why they might have needed shields?

Porkeman's Rough

Porkeman's Rough is a field in Clungunford – that's a funny-sounding name, isn't it? According to Wulfwynn, a 'porkman' was probably a man who looked after pigs – in other words, a swineherd. She says that there would have been lots of farm animals in Shropshire hundreds of years ago, just as there are today.
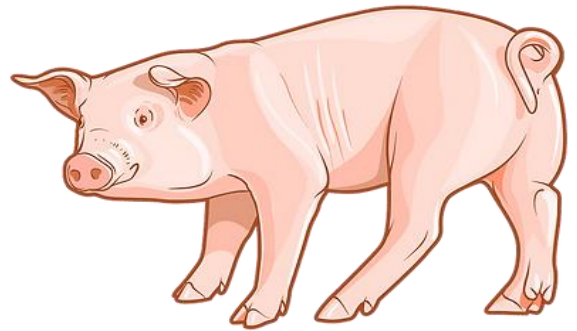
What have we learned?

This chapter has helped us think about all sorts of medieval occupations, almost all of which are very different from the jobs that people do in Shropshire today.

Which one of these jobs would you like to have done? I can't decide between the Sheriff of Shropshire or one of the shield-makers of Shelderton. I think I might give Clunton's tan-house a miss, though – far too stinky!

Place-names that tell us how people travelled about

When you travel a long way, I imagine that you use a map, or even a satnav to plan your route. Wulfwynn is looking puzzled – she doesn't know what either of those things are, and she says that the **Anglo-Saxons** used place-names to help them to get around and find their way. That sounds interesting, doesn't it? Shall we have a look at some of these names and see what she means?

burford

In the medieval period, crossing rivers and streams could be very difficult. Wulfwynn explains that a ford was a place at which the level of the water was low enough for people to be able to cross on foot, on horseback, or with a cart, so these were very important landscape features. Burford means 'the ford by the fort or stronghold', and so this would have helped people to locate the ford when travelling through Burford.

bridgnorth
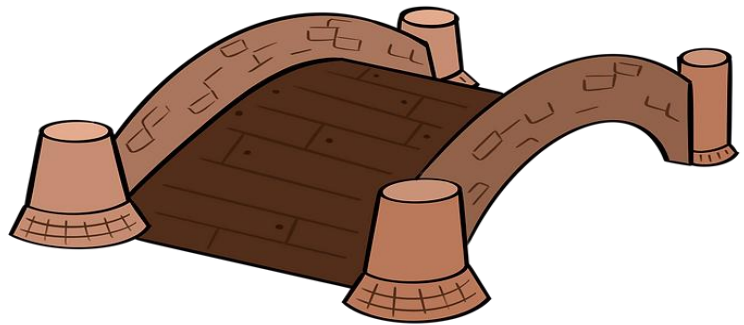
Even though the name Bridgnorth was first written down in medieval times, the way we say it hasn't changed very much for about 800 years! Wulfwynn says that Bridgnorth was once just called 'Bridge', and that this was because bridges were quite rare in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Back then, local people would have known where 'Bridge' was, but when more bridges began to be built, the place-name changed to Bridgnorth, so that people knew which bridge was being referred to. Bridges would have provided a much easier and safer way of crossing the River Severn.

Pottersload

Pottersload is a place in Alveley, close to the River Severn – Wulfwynn says that this is another name that helped medieval people to cross the River Severn. She says that the last part of Pottersload is an **Old English** word – *ge-lad* – which has a very particular meaning of 'difficult crossing'. This name would have helped people to decide whether to try this tricky crossing, or to carry on a bit further and look for an easier place to cross the river.

hints

This sounds like quite a strange name, doesn't it? Wulfwynn says that's partly because Hints is a very old name indeed, one that was probably created by the **Britons** – the people of Britain who lived in Shropshire before the **Anglo-Saxons** arrived. This name means 'road' or 'path', and the village lies very close to a **Bronze-Age** road.

harpswood

Harpswood is in Morville. This sounds like a place where people once played music doesn't it? I can just imagine everyone settling down on a blanket in the woods to listen! Ah, Wulfwynn says that's not right, and that Harpswood is a much more exciting name. She says that we can tell from the medieval spellings of this name that it would have been written as *here-pæðes-ford*, which means 'ford of the army road'.

There are two letters in those words that are strange, and that's because they are no longer part of our alphabet. The first one – æ – is called the letter '**ash**', and it sounds like the 'a' in 'cat'. The second letter – ð – is the letter '**eth**', and it sounds like 'th', as in 'the', 'this' and 'that'. An army road sounds exciting, doesn't it? Where were the soldiers going, do you think?

Pomprine

This is the name of a field in Bishop's Castle – that's quite a funny-sounding name, isn't it? I can't think what it might mean. Wulfwynn says you might not recognise it, because it is from a Welsh word – *pompren* – which means 'foot bridge over a watercourse'. She says that a bridge like this might have been made from planks of wood, so it would have been quite a small bridge. You'd have needed quite good balance to cross it, I think!

Pinkham

Pinkham is the name of a street in Cleobury Mortimer – Wulfwynn says that although this is now a street-name, it used to be the name for a whole district in Cleobury Mortimer, next to the River Rea. She tells us that this name was formed from an old Shropshire word – *pinkern*, which means 'narrow boat', and refers to a very narrow kind of boat that was used on the River Severn.
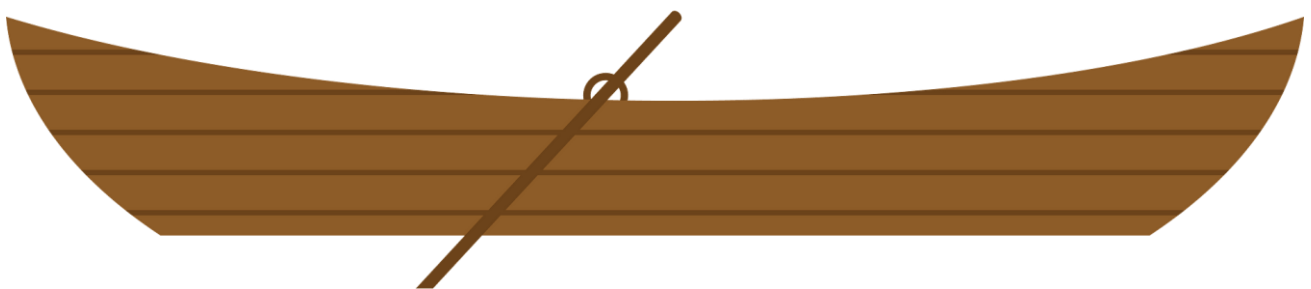
What have we learned?

- Place-names can tell us quite a lot about how medieval people travelled around the county.

- Looking at these names, we've found out about how people travelled in Shropshire from the Bronze Age to the medieval period and beyond!

- Place-names helped people to find their way in a time before everyone could use maps, especially helping them to cross major obstacles like rivers and streams.

There are more place-names for us to look at – shall we carry on exploring?

Places that tell us about farming

There are lots and lots of farms in Shropshire today, but did you know that people have been farming in Shropshire for hundreds and hundreds of years? Place-names can tell us all sorts of things about farming activities – shall we go and have a look?

Cheswardine

Wulfwynn thinks we'll like this one very much. It relates to something that most of us like to eat. You might like it in sandwiches with some pickle, on toast, or perhaps on top of a nice spaghetti Bolognese. Can you guess what it is yet? Of course you can, it's cheese! Cheswardine means 'cheese-producing settlement', and so the people living there in the medieval period were cheesemakers! We don't know whether they made cheese from cows' milk or sheep's milk, or perhaps both – but it sounds like they made a lot of delicious cheese!
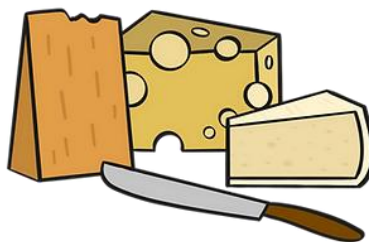
ryecroft bank

Ryecroft Bank is a field in Marton – this name tells us about one of the crops that medieval farmers grew, which was of course rye! Rye is a cereal grain grown by farmers, and it is sometimes used to make flour for baking bread. Do you know what a croft is? Wulfwynn informs us that it is a small enclosure, which also tells us that the rye here was grown in a small area.

the Shipcoate Leasowe

The Shipcoate Leasowe is a field in Farlow – this sounds more like something you'd find by the seaside rather than on a farm, Wulfwynn! No, Wulfwynn says it doesn't mean 'ship' but 'sheep'! This name comes from the medieval word *shepe-cot*, which means 'sheep-cote', in other words, a shelter for sheep. Leasowe means 'pasture' or 'meadowland', and the whole name tells us there must have been a sheep-cote in this field hundreds of years ago.

bitterley

Wulfwynn thinks that although you might not guess this name straight away, you will definitely know what it is. She says that you might spread it on a crumpet, or perhaps put a dollop on a hot baked potato.

Ah! Have you got it? It's butter, isn't it? Yes, this name means 'butter pasture', suggesting that butter was made in medieval Bitterley. Perhaps the pasture there was very rich, producing cows' milk that was really creamy – perfect for making tasty butter!

deyhouse Leasow

Deyhouse Leasow is the name of a field in Clunton – Wulfwynn says that *dey-hous* is a medieval word that means 'dairy', and so this field was once the location of a medieval dairy, where perhaps butter and cheese was made. Dairy products might have been made from the milk of cows, sheep or even goats. That all sounds very tasty to me!

barlow home farm

Barlow Hope Farm is in Hopesay – Wulfwynn tells us that there was a small settlement called Barlow which was recorded in **Domesday Book** in 1086 by scribes working for **William the Conqueror**. Barlow means 'barley open woodland', and so it tells us that barley was a crop that was grown here by medieval farmers. People often used barley to brew beer to drink, so perhaps that's what they were doing in Barlow!

Oxenbold

This name means 'building for oxen', and it tells us that there were people looking after oxen in Oxenbold, which was a place that was once near Monkhopton. Wulfwynn says that this is an interesting name because the spelling of 'oxen' preserves one of the ways in which the **Anglo-Saxons** expressed the plural form of a word. Today, most of our plurals end in 's', don't they – like dogs, books, and pizzas. But the plural form of some of our modern English words still end in 'en'. Can you think of any more, children?

Wheathill

Wulfwynn says she's left this one until last, because you can easily guess it! That's right, Wheathill means 'wheat hill', and it's a place where wheat was grown for making bread in the **Anglo-Saxon** period.

What have we learned?

We've learned a lot about farming in medieval Shropshire by looking at these place-names.

- They can tell us about the sorts of crops that were grown, like wheat, barley, and rye.

- We've learned about dairy farming and found out that butter and cheese were produced here hundreds of years ago.

- And we've learned about some medieval farm animals, and where they lived.

There's still more to find out though, so shall we look at some more place-names?

Place-names that tell us about industry

Shropshire is famous all over the world as being the birthplace of the **Industrial Revolution**, so Wulfwynn says we absolutely have to look at names that tell us about Shropshire's industrial past – let's go!

ironbridge

Wulfwynn says that we have to start with Ironbridge, because it is described as the birthplace of modern industry, right here in Shropshire! Ironbridge is quite a modern name, as it refers to the iron bridge that was constructed over the River Severn in the late eighteenth century. The bridge is famous because it was the first iron bridge in the world to be constructed.

near and far Colley hill

These are the names of fields in Kinlet. Could they relate to collie dogs perhaps? Or, how about cauliflowers? No, no, no says Wulfwynn – we're thinking about industry!

These two fields refer to the manufacture of charcoal in the medieval period, and the **Old English** word relating to charcoal was *colig*. The 'g' at the end of this word would have been pronounced a little bit like a modern 'y', giving us 'colley'. Charcoal was usually produced by people living in woodland communities, and today Kinlet is on the edge of the Wyre Forest.

tentre bank

Tentre Bank is the name of a field in Worthen – I have no idea what this could be, I think we will definitely need Wulfwynn's help with this one. She says that the first part of this name refers to a 'tenter', which was a special frame that was used for stretching cloth after it had been made, so that it would not shrink after drying. So, the name Tentre Bank tells us that there were medieval clothworkers in Worthen!

dyehouse Meadow

This is the name of a field in Marrington. Wulfwynn tells us that this place-name also relates to the production of cloth, as a dye-house was a building in which a dyer worked – a dyer was a person who created coloured cloth by dying it. In Marrington, the very first Ordnance Survey map shows us that there was also a 'walkmill', and this was a special kind of mill used for making cloth. There is also a field called Tainter Field in Marrington. Can you guess what that means? That's right! It's another 'tenter', like the one we just read about in Worthen. So, we can now picture the people living in Marrington making their living from the manufacture of cloth in the Middle Ages. That's exciting, isn't it?

Masons quarrel

This is the name of a field in Bucknell. Ooh, this sounds like a place in which people had an argument and fell out, doesn't it? But Wulfwynn is shaking her head, so I think that's wrong. Oh! She says that *quarelle* is a later medieval word that meant 'quarry', so that's what we have here in Bucknell – a medieval quarry. A quarry was a place where stone was extracted from the ground.

Melverley

Wulfwynn says that this is quite an exciting name, because **Melverley** means 'clearing by a mill-ford' and it tells us that there was a water mill in Melverley in the eleventh century. That's over 800 years ago! I think that mills must have seemed like very exciting new technology back then, don't you?

What have we learned?

I don't know about you, but I've learned all sorts of things about Shropshire's industrial past by looking at place-names.

- We now know that there was a great deal of industrial activity in the county for many hundreds of years before the Industrial Revolution, and that this included all sorts of practices.

- Milling wasn't only concerned with turning corn into flour, but some mills produced cloth, and people with lots of different skills were needed to make and finish the cloth.

- Place-names also tell us that mining was a popular activity all over Shropshire, and that in areas with large woods and forests, charcoal was being made.

Place-names really do help us to learn more about Shropshire's history – shall we go and find out more?
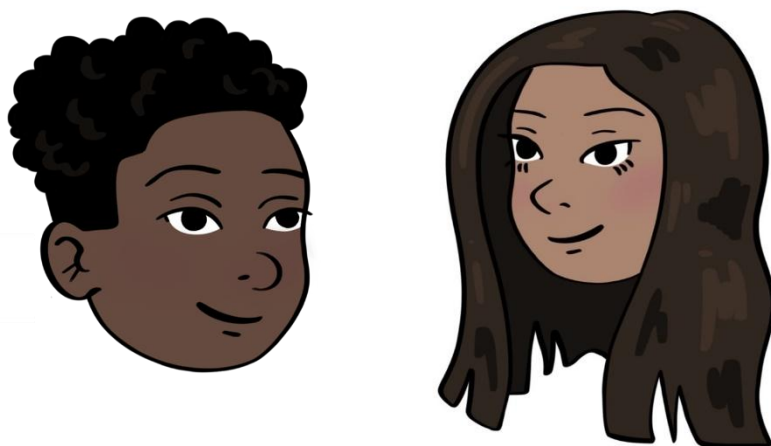
Places for getting together

Some Shropshire place-names can tell us about places where people got together for all sorts of reasons – perhaps for a meeting, or to play games. Shall we go and find out what they were all up to?

Plowsters

Plowsters is the name of a field in Kempton – Well, I think this sounds like a farming kind of name, doesn't it? But Wulfwynn says no, that's not at all right. Plowsters comes from a word that that the Anglo-Saxons used that meant a 'playing place': *pleg-stow*. Wulfwynn tells us that the 'g' in this word was pronounced a bit like a modern 'y'. So Plowsters was where **Anglo-Saxon** people went to play games together!

race field

This is a field in Chirbury – Wulfwynn says this name is quite straightforward. It relates to a place where people got together to race horses. There are still lots of horses in Shropshire, and this sounds like it would have been lots of fun!
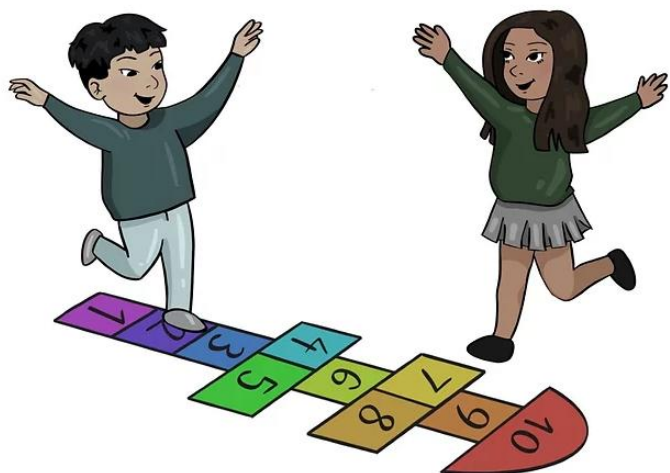
Whittery Wood

This wood is in Chirbury. Now pay attention, because Wulfwynn says that this is quite an important name! That's because it may tell us about the place where the most important local people held meetings in medieval times. It means 'the tree of the men of the hundred'. A medieval hundred was a territory – bigger than a village but smaller than a county. Wulfwynn says that this was a very special place indeed because it was where all the important local matters were decided.

Hundred House

Hundred House is in Clunbury – If you're thinking that this sounds a bit like the kind of meeting that took place at Whittery, you'd be right! Wulfwynn says that meetings were held in every hundred, and some of the places where they were held became known as the Hundred House. After the **Norman Conquest**, when **William the Conqueror** became king of England, a court was held at the Hundred meeting place.

gospel ash

This is another field-name, this time from a field in Oldbury – Wulfwynn says that this would have been an ash-tree at which people would have gathered to hear the gospel being read – in other words, extracts from the bible. But, she says, did you know that the modern word 'gospel' comes from the **Old English** word *god-spell*?

What have we learned?

We've learned lots about people getting together in medieval Shropshire, and the reasons why they all met up.

- Sometimes, it was for the serious business of making important decisions and holding courts to administer justice.

- Some meetings were for religious purposes.

- At other times, people got together to have a good time!

There are still more exciting place-names to explore – where shall we look next?

Place-names that tell us about castles and strongholds

If you live in Shropshire, you may already know quite a lot about castles there, in towns like Shrewsbury and Ludlow, and of course at Stokesay. But Wulfwynn says that place-names tell us about all sorts of castle sites, including some that are now hidden. Shall we go and have a look for some?

Castle ring

Wulfwynn tells us that this is a very old castle indeed, and that you will find it in Meadowtown, close to the border with Wales. It refers to an **Iron-Age** hill-fort which sits on top of one of the biggest hills in Meadowtown. The Iron Age came just before the **Roman** period, so from about 800 BCE up to 43 CE, more than 2,500 years ago!
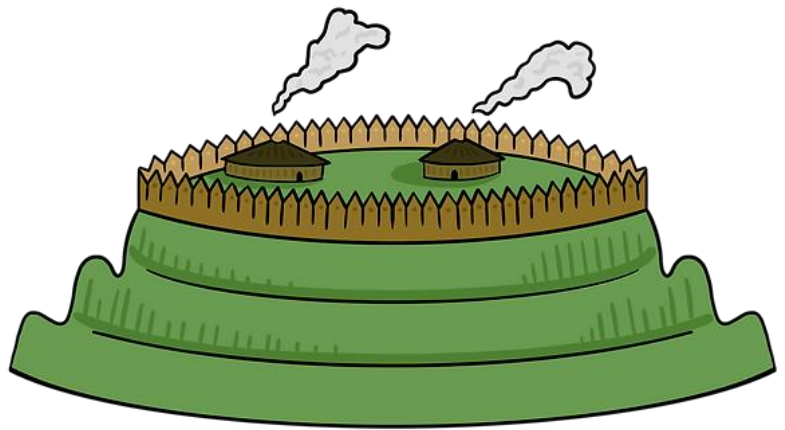
Caerbre

Caerbre is in Marrington, near Chirbury. You may recognise this as a Welsh-sounding name, and if so, you'd be right! Because Wulfwynn says that this is a place-name made up of two Welsh words: *caer* 'fort, castle' and *bre* 'hill', giving us a hill-fort!

broseley

According to Wulfwynn, Broseley is quite an exciting name. It means 'the open woodland of the fort-guardian'. It suggests that in the **Anglo-Saxon** period, a person who was a fort-guardian lived there, although we don't know anything about the fort that the guardian looked after. Can you imagine what the fort looked like, and who lived there?

Chirbury

Chirbury means 'church fort or manor', and usually it would be quite difficult to tell whether this meant that Chirbury was an **Anglo-Saxon** fort. But Wulfwynn says that in the tenth century, Æthelflæd, the female ruler of **Mercia** built a fort at Chirbury. Æthelflæd was the daughter of **King Alfred the Great**, and Mercia was an Anglo-Saxon territory that once stretched from Shropshire right across England to the east coast.

Treverward

Oh, this is a great name! I bet the person who lived there hundreds of years ago was called Trevor! Uh-oh, Wulfwynn is raising her eyebrows, so that can't be right. She says that Treverward is another settlement that's very close to the border with Wales. This name is made from a combination of **Old English**, the language of the **Anglo-Saxons**, and **Welsh**. The first part of the name is in Welsh, and it means 'settlement'. Taken together, the whole name means 'settlement of the stronghold-guardian'. Wow, that's exciting, isn't it? Wulfwynn says that 'stronghold' is another word that has a similar meaning to fort, or castle. I think I'd have liked to have been a stronghold-guardian - how about you?

bishop's Castle

Bishop's Castle is a town quite close to the border with Wales. Wulfwynn says that a castle was first built there in the twelfth century by the Bishop of Hereford who owned the great estate of Lydbury North, of which Bishop's Castle was a part. Because of this, at first it was called Lydbury Castle, and it was only called Bishop's Castle from the thirteenth century onward, around the time that **King John** signed **Magna Carta**. Wulfwynn tells us that the castle is no longer there, but that you can still visit the site where it once stood.

What have we learned?

These names have helped us to learn about different types of castles, forts and strongholds in Shropshire. They would all have looked very different too. There are lots of forts and castles in Shropshire, aren't there?

- Some were very, very old, like the **Iron-Age** fort at Meadowtown.

- Others were much more recent, like the one at Bishop's Castle.

- Have you noticed that lots of them are found in the western-most part of Shropshire? Can you think why that might have been the case?

There are still lots of brilliant Shropshire place-names for us to explore – so come on, let's go and look at some more!

Look-out places

Shropshire has lots and lots of hills, mountains, and high places. Wulfwynn says that back in the Anglo-Saxon period, these were very useful for helping people to see for many miles. This would have been quite important, as they would be able to see who was on the move, and it would have made it much harder for armies and bands of soldiers to sneak up on towns and villages.

Tuthills

This is now a field in Kinlet, but Wulfwynn says that this place-name means 'look-out hill', and it is on a hill right at the boundary of Kinlet parish. It is a name that was created by the **Anglo-Saxons** living in Kinlet, who must have used Tuthills to keep an eye on what was happening beyond their boundary, and to see who was approaching their village.
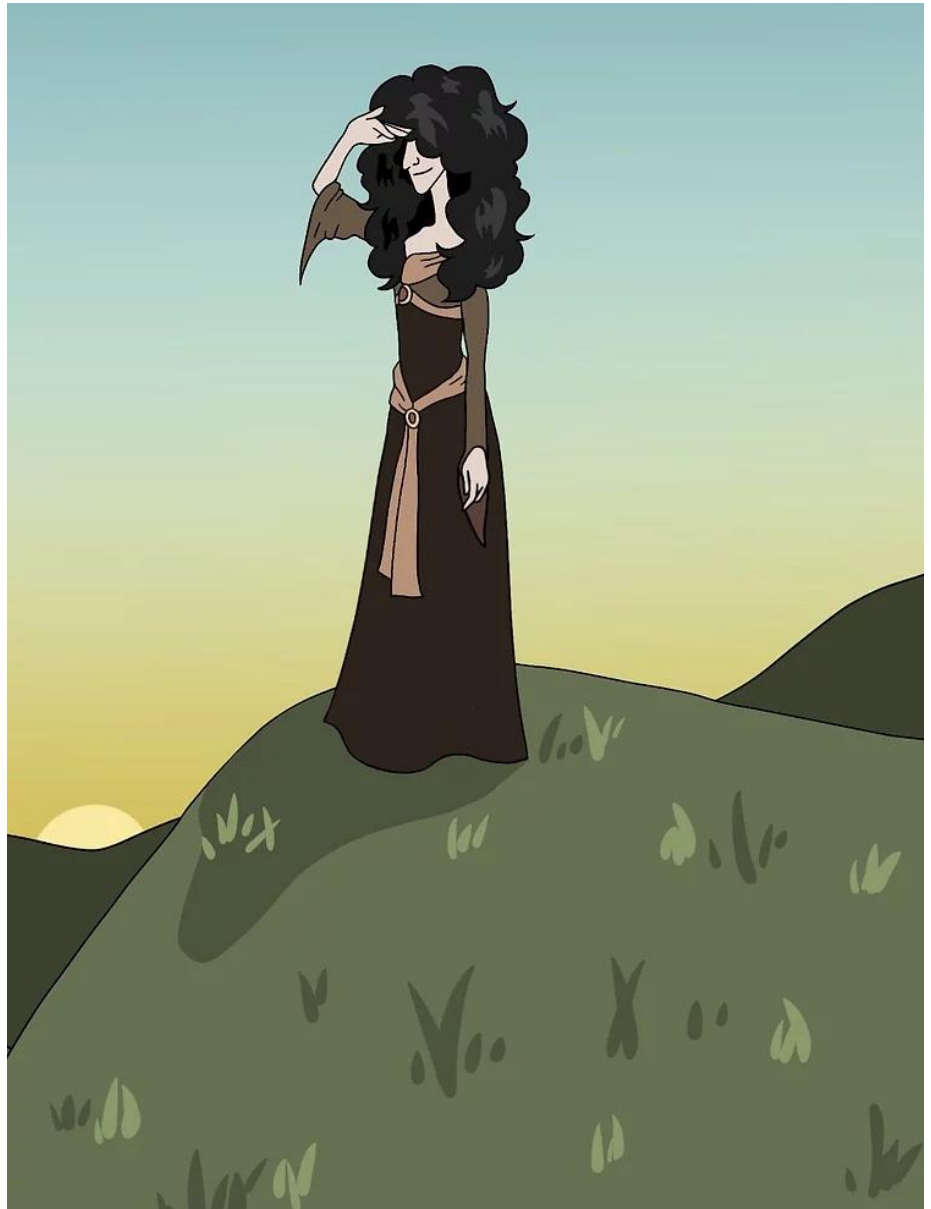
Wart hill

This funny-sounding hill is in Hopesay. Perhaps if you go there, you'll grow warts! But Wulfwynn is looking at me sternly, so perhaps not ... she says it has absolutely nothing to do with warts! Thank goodness for that! In **Old English**, the name was originally *weard hyll*. *Weard* is another word that the **Anglo-Saxons** used to mean 'look-out'. Wulfwynn tells us that from the top of Wart Hill you can see several roads, and so it seems like it was a very good choice as a look-out hill.

Wordall

Wulfwynn reports that this is a group of fields in Bishop's Castle, and they also include the same 'look-out' word that we have just seen in Wart Hill: *weard*. Rather than a look-out hill though, Wordall was a 'look-out nook'. She says that although Wordall is quite high up, there is a hollow which would have been very useful for hiding in to look out over the surrounding area. People there would have had a very good view of the main road between Clun and Shrewsbury and would have been able to report on who was using the road.

Capsall

Wulfwynn says that this field in Hogstow near Chirbury reveals yet another word that the **Anglo-Saxons** used to mean 'look-out': *cape* – 'look-out place'. She says that Capsall is on part of a hillside that offers very wide views. According to Wulfwynn, there are lots of look-out place-names in Shropshire, like these two fields in Kempton near Lydbury North: Le Wardens is a name that might originally have been an Old English word: *weard-dun*, meaning 'watch-hill'. And another field there, *Watchnor Meadow*, seems likely to have

been 'look-out ridge'. The people of Kempton seem to have been quite keen on keeping an eye out for people coming!

What have we learned?

Did you imagine that there would be so many look-out places in Shropshire? We've learned that Shropshire had lots of special look-out places!

- The Anglo-Saxons didn't have telescopes or binoculars, and so if they wanted to see who was coming, they had to climb up to high places from which they could see for many miles.

- What sort of people do you think that they were looking out for?

- Why do you think they might have been sneaking up on Shropshire villages and towns?

Place-names that tell us about animals and birds

According to Wulfwynn, the Anglo-Saxons were very good at noticing animals and birds, and many Shropshire place-names tell us about the kinds of creatures that they saw. Some of them are animals that you will recognise today, but others might be quite surprising! Let's take a look!

Lee brockhurst

Can you guess what kind of animal Lee Brockhurst was named after? It's an animal that we still sometimes call 'brock' today. The animal that the **Anglo-Saxons** saw in Lee Brockhurst was a badger! The **Old English** word for badger was brocc, and so Lee Brockhurst means 'a wooded hill where badgers are found'.

Coreley

This name relates to a bird, but it's another creature that we no longer see in Shropshire today. It's a bird called a crane, which looks a little bit like a heron. Cranes like to build their messy nests high up, and so they would have been quite easy to spot, and there were probably lots of them in Coreley!

Until recently, cranes were extinct in Britain, but they used to visit us every summer.

Wooffley

Wooffley is the name of a field in Ashford Carbonel – Ah! Here's one I think I know! Wooffley! It must be a dog, right? Why are you shaking your head Wulfwynn? I'm almost right, did you say? Can you give me a clue please? Wulfwynn says that if we think of her name, we might be able to guess this animal. Can you think what it could be?

Of course you can – it's a wolf! We can now guess what the Old English word for wolf was, using Wulfwynn's name: *wulf!* Even though there are no wild wolves in Shropshire now, when the Anglo-Saxons lived here, they roamed around the countryside. Names like Wooffley, which means 'wolves' open woodland' show us that the Anglo-Saxons knew where the wolves could be found.

Lostford

Are you sure that you've put this name in the right chapter Wulfwynn? It doesn't sound as though it belongs here – we are looking at animals and birds! Wulfwynn says that the animal contained in the name Lostford lived in Shropshire hundreds of years ago. It was a very big cat – can you think what kind of cat it was? It wasn't a lion or a tiger, but a lynx! Have you ever heard of a lynx? Lynx are secretive animals, and they live in remote places with lots of trees.

Earnwood

Wulfwynn says that this is quite a difficult one to guess, because the word that the **Anglo-Saxons** used for this creature – *earn* – is rather different from the modern word that we use today. You're going to have to tell us Wulfwynn! It's an eagle! In the medieval period, eagles flew in the skies above Shropshire, and lots of place-names reveal where they could be found. Earnwood is in Kinlet, and you can still visit it today, because it is a publicly-accessible woodland. But you will have to imagine the eagles that once flew there!

Wigley

Wulfwynn has given you this easy one, because the others in this chapter have all been quite hard! Can you guess what kind of animal is hiding within this place-name? It is a very wiggly creature! Wigley, which is in Westbury, was named after wiggling insects.

It seems that the **Anglo-Saxons** noticed really small animals as well as those that were quite large. They certainly were observant, weren't they?

What have we learned?

Looking at animals and birds in Shropshire place-names has been fascinating, hasn't it?

- We've learned all sorts of things, especially about animals that once lived here a long time ago. I don't know about you, but I wasn't

expecting to read about Shropshire wolves, lynxes, eagles and cranes today!

- Medieval Shropshire sounds like a very exciting place to have lived in!

Place-names that tell us about magical creatures

This sounds very exciting! Wulfwynn says that if you want to learn about fantastic beasts and where to find them, then medieval Shropshire is a very good place to start! Shall we go with her and meet some of Shropshire's strangest inhabitants?

near and far diagonal

These are fields in Brompton near Shrewsbury. They sound a bit boring, don't they, but I'm guessing that they won't be. Shhh! Can you hear that rumbling sound, Wulfwynn? Whatever is it? Wulfwynn wants us to guess: a creature with a scaly back and long tail...huge wings for soaring into the sky... Can you guess what it is yet? Wulfwynn says that it breathes fire. Oh! It must be a dragon!

This field-name doesn't sound very much like it could refer to a dragon, does it? Wulfwynn tells us, however, that an earlier spelling of this name was *drakenal*, which meant 'dragon's nook'. The **Old English** word for dragon was *draca*. This tells us that medieval

people living in Brompton believed that a dragon lived in one of their fields! How very exciting! Wulfwynn says that dragons were often thought to have been guarding treasure – and that seems to have been the case at a place called *Drake Ley Heath* in Stanton upon Hine Heath. This name means 'dragon mound', and mounds were often places where buried treasure could be found. Was that what the Brompton dragon was up to in his nook, do you think?

the Pouckpytt

This is the name of a field in Much Wenlock. Wulfwynn says we must tread carefully and quietly over this field because we don't want to disturb the … goblins! Ooh, goblins, wow! She says that *Pouckpytt* means 'goblin pit', and the first part of this name comes from the **Old English** word *puca*. This kind of goblin was quite mischievous, and we can imagine the Much Wenlock goblin lying in wait in his pit to make people jump as they walked past!

Wulfwynn also knows lots of other goblin-related places – how about *Powkehole Field* in Claverley. Or my favourite one of all: *Poukhole between the Drains* in Kempton near Lydbury North. Why do you think goblins like hiding in pits and holes?

51

grymsty

This is another field-name, this time it's in Shifnal. This field-name is probably making you think of pigs, isn't it? The 'sty' used here isn't a pig-sty, though. Wulfwynn tells us that this word meant 'a climbing path', and that the whole name means 'the climbing path of the spectre or goblin'.

So, this could be yet another goblin! Wulfwynn says that there was also a *Goblin Styles Field* in Pontesbury. It's beginning to sound as though there were goblins all over medieval Shropshire!

dustbatch

What a strange sounding-name! Do we need to get our dusters and polish out? Oh, Wulfwynn is laughing, so I don't think so – thank goodness for that, I hate housework! She says that *Dustbatch* is the name of a field in Highley, and we can tell from the earliest spellings of this name that it was once called *Thursbache*, which means 'giant's stream'.

Giants featured frequently in the **Anglo-Saxon** imagination – if you have been reading **Beowulf** in class, you will have heard about the giant called **Grendel**. Wulfwynn doesn't know the name of the Highley giant. Or at least, she's not telling us if she does!

What have we learned?

These place-names show us a hidden medieval world of giants, dragons and lots and lots of goblins!

- From names like these, we can learn quite a lot about **Anglo-Saxon** beliefs, especially that people thought that these creatures lived in the Shropshire landscape. The creatures we have met in this chapter have been in streams, hills, pits and nooks, and also near paths and stiles.

- According to Wulfwynn, if you were to walk around in medieval Shropshire, you would soon meet a goblin, a dragon or a giant! It's a good job you were there to keep us safe, Wulfwynn!

Let's see what else place-names can tell us about Shropshire's past!

Place-names that sound scary

Shropshire is full of places that sound scary, and Wulfwynn is going to tell us all about them. I don't know about you, but I'm going to stay very close to Wulfwynn as we explore these names! Are you ready?

Le Waretrerewe

Le Waretrerewe is the name of a field in Harley. This medieval field-name means 'the gallows row', and Wulfwynn says that a gallows was where criminals were hanged in **the Middle Ages**. This name uses an **Old English** word *wearg-treow* – *wearg* means 'a criminal', and *treow* means 'tree', so in Harley, the gallows was a tree. That does sound scary! I don't know about you, but I'm very glad they don't do that anymore!
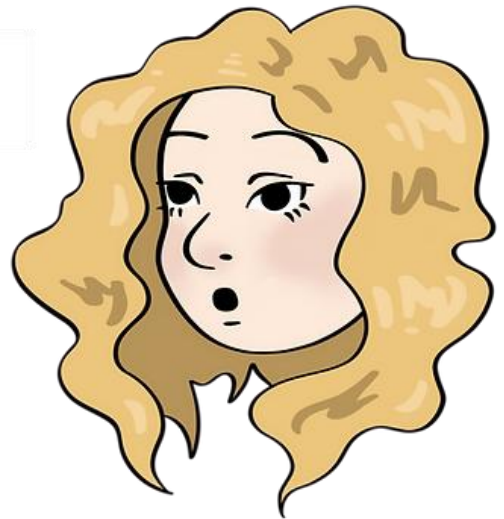
Gallows field

Ooh, this is another gallows site, this time in Bridgnorth. For many hundreds of years, this was one of the ways in which criminals were dealt with, and so there would have been lots of gallows sites across Shropshire. This one was located on the main road to Worcester where lots of people would have seen it. Wulfwynn says this helped people to remember to be good!

Shoplatch

Shoplatch is the name of a street in Shrewsbury, and Wulfwynn says it's still there today! This place-name was written down in 1209, a few years before **King John** signed **Magna Carta**. The earliest spellings of this name tell us that it originally meant 'archery place', which is a place where people used bows and arrows. Why do you think they were shooting bows and arrows in Shrewsbury? You would certainly have needed to have been careful crossing the road in medieval Shoplatch – I wonder whether they had a Health and Safety Officer?

Wormelake

Wormelake is the name of a field in Lilleshall. But worms aren't really scary Wulfwynn – are you sure you've put this in the right chapter? What? It means 'snake', not 'worm'? Ooh, that is a bit more scary, I suppose! Wulfwynn says that because the **Old English** word *wurm* means 'snake', this name means 'snake stream', and a stream full of snakes really does sound quite scary – I wouldn't fancy having a paddle in that stream, would you?

Shuker's Coppice

This is a wood in Hodnet – Wulfwynn says we need to be careful walking through this wood, because this place-name means 'robber's coppice'. It sounds like a place where robbers had a hide-out – definitely a place to avoid after dark, I think!

Llanyblodwel

Llanyblodwel is close to the border with Wales, so is this a Welsh name, Wulfwynn? I'm nearly right, she says, as the first part of the name is Welsh, but the rest of it was created by the **Anglo-Saxons**. She says that when this

name was first written down in the medieval period, it was just *Blodwelle*, which means 'blood spring'. A spring is a source of water, usually a place where water emerges from the ground. Wulfwynn doesn't know why this spring was related to blood – perhaps there was once a battle there, or maybe the water looked red in colour? Why do you think it was called the 'blood spring'? Later on, *Blodwelle* became Llanyblodwel, which means 'the church of the blood spring'.

deddedene

Deddedene is the name of a field in Wistanstow. Wulfwynn says that this medieval name means 'dead valley', which makes it sound like the perfect location for a zombie movie – I can just picture it: lots of zombies wandering around Shropshire! But Wulfwynn is giggling, and I think she might have tricked us with this one. Although it sounds scary, it actually isn't, because it means 'infertile valley', in other words, a place where nothing grows. That sounds much more boring than a 'valley of the dead'!
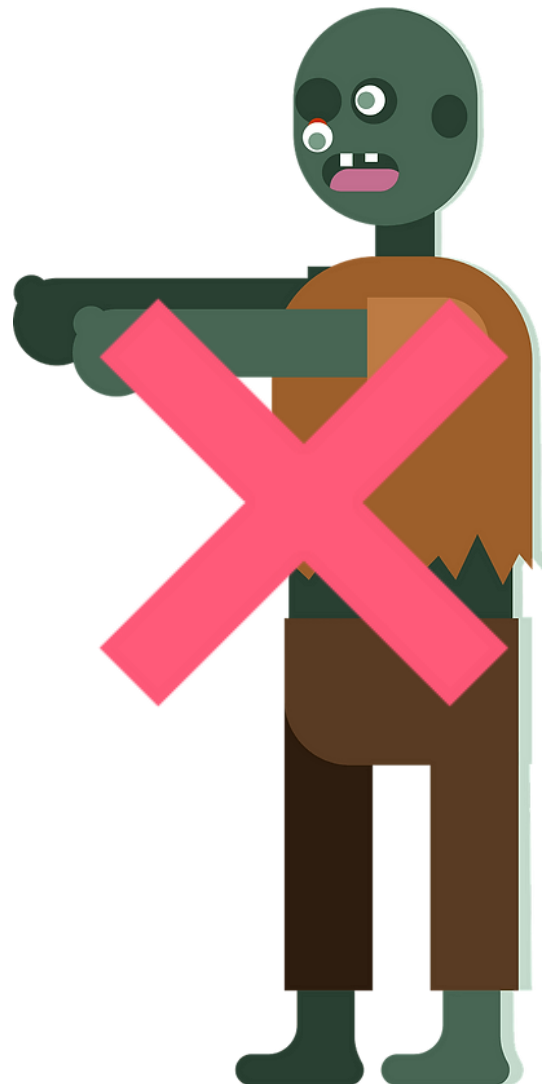
What have we learned?

These scary (and not so scary) sounding names have been lots of fun to explore and to think about.

- We've learned more about the ways in which criminals were dealt with in Shropshire hundreds of years ago, and about the sorts of places that robbers chose to hide in.

- We've learned that there was a special place in Shrewsbury where archers gathered, and about a stream seething with snakes!

Shall we carry on and explore some more place-names?

dirty places

Wulfwynn says that medieval people were very good at describing the appearance of places, and they had a very large vocabulary, so that they could be quite precise about what they saw. Some place-names describe dirty, muddy, sticky places – shall we have a look at some of them? I hope you've got your wellies on!

fenemere

Fenemere is in the parish of Baschurch, and this place-name means 'mouldy lake'. You can still see the lake today. Wulfwynn says that it is quite close to a place called Eyton, which means 'farm on an island surrounded by marsh', so we can imagine how wet and boggy it must have been around Fenemere hundreds of years ago.

Lorteleye

Lorteleye is a wood in Lee Brockhurst – This name comes from the **Old English** word lorte, which means 'dirty', so here we have a 'dirty wood'. Perhaps this wood was a bit boggy, and you might have got your shoes dirty walking through it. Yuck!

Wem

This is quite a funny-sounding name, isn't it? Well, Wulfwynn tells us that it has quite a funny meaning: it comes from an **Old English** word, *wemm*, which means 'filth'. This suggests that when the **Anglo-Saxons** first saw Wem, that it seemed to them to be quite dirty! Wulfwynn says that although now it's a very nice town, she certainly wouldn't have wanted to live there 1,000 years ago!

Ozey

This is the name of a field in Clunbury. Ooh, this sounds like a sticky, oozy kind of name, doesn't it! Wulfwynn says that this field is very close to the River Clun, and so we can imagine that it can sometimes be very dirty and wet. And it shows us yet another **Old English** word that means 'mud or mire' – *wase*. We are beginning to build quite a collection of words meaning 'dirty', aren't we!

Sleap

Is this name in the right chapter Wulfwynn? It sounds more like a place you might visit when you're tired! But no, Wulfwynn is shaking her head. It doesn't mean 'sleep' at all. This name was created from an Old English word *slǣp*, which means 'slippery, muddy place'. Sleap is very close to Wem and Lee Brockhurst, where we found Lorteleye. I think that this must once have been a very sticky, muddy part of Shropshire, don't you?

What have we learned?

These dirty-sounding names have been lots of fun to explore and to think about.

- We've learned about how people looked at the landscape in the medieval period, and what kinds of things they noticed about it.

- We now know that medieval people had a very large vocabulary, and used lots of words to describe things in the landscape in detail.

- We've also discovered that parts of Shropshire were quite sticky and boggy in the Middle Ages!

Shall we carry on and explore some more place-names?

Place-names that tell us about the languages spoken in Shropshire

Because place-names were written down, they can tell us lots about the languages that have been used in Shropshire during its long history. Sometimes, place-names were written in languages that were spoken in Shropshire – like **Welsh**, **British** and **Old English**, and sometimes they were noted in languages that were usually just written down. These were the languages of administration, like **Latin** and **Anglo-Norman**. Anglo-Norman was a version of French used in medieval England. Other names were influenced by languages - like **Old Norse** - that were spoken elsewhere in England. Shall we go and find out more about these languages? How many different languages do you think we'll find in Shropshire place-names?

Ash Magna & Ash Parva

Well, these names sound quite exciting, don't you think? Ash Magna sounds like a place where a volcano once erupted, filling the sky with a big black cloud that rained ash down on all the people... What's that Wulfwynn? I'm getting carried away again? Oh dear, you'd better tell us what it really means then. Wulfwynn says that *magna* and *parva* are both **Latin** words. Latin is a very old language that was once the language of the **Romans**. *Magna* means 'big', and *parva* means 'small'. Latin was usually the language that official documents were written in in medieval times, and so it seems likely that a

clerk or scribe added Latin words to these place-names, so that he could tell which one he was writing about. So these aren't named after volcanoes, but after places that had ash-trees! Wulfwynn says that if both places were just called Ash, it would be hard to tell which one people meant, so they became 'Big Ash' (Ash Magna) and 'Little Ash' (Ash Parva)!

Latin Class

magna = BIG

parva = small

hodnet

Wulfwynn says that even she finds this place-name quite hard, because it is a **British** name. British was the language that was spoken in Britain before the **Anglo-Saxons** arrived, and it is the ancestor of the **Welsh** language. Hodnet means 'pleasant valley', and I think that it sounds like a very nice place to live, don't you?

beauregard

Beauregard is a place in Clunbury – can you tell what language this name is written in? It's French! Beauregard means 'beautiful outlook', and it was a very common place-name in France, although this is the only time it was used in England. Beauregard was first written down in the fourteenth century, in medieval times. Who do you think named Beauregard?

Cantreyn

Cantreyn is in Astley Abbotts. Wulfwynn says that this is one of her favourite place-names, because it means 'singing frog' in **Old French**, the language that pre-dated modern French. She says that this place was named after the noisy frogs that lived nearby. Have you ever heard a frog singing? I don't know about you, but that's definitely something that I'm going to put on my 'to-do' list!
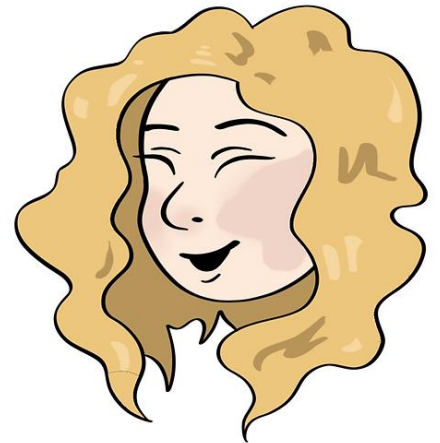
hale bank

Hale Bank is the name of a field in Onibury – I think that this field-name sounds very English, don't you? Have you put this one in here to check that we are paying attention, Wulfwynn? Oh, Wulfwynn says that the word 'bank' was not originally English, but **Old Norse**! Old Norse was the language that the **Vikings** spoke, and although hardly any Vikings lived in Shropshire, their language had a huge impact on the English language right across England.

Oswestry

In medieval times, Wulfwynn says, Oswestry, which was a name created by the **Anglo-Saxons**, also had a **Welsh** name – *Croesoswallt*. Oswestry means 'Oswald's tree or cross', and that's exactly what it means in the Welsh version of the name! So, in the **Middle Ages**, Oswestry was known by English and Welsh names.

What have we learned?

Goodness me, I didn't realise that place-names could tell us so much about the languages used in Shropshire hundreds of years ago, did you?

- We've learned about languages that were spoken before the **Anglo-Saxons** arrived, like **British**.

- We've learned that some names were written down in **Welsh**. There are lots of examples of Welsh names throughout this book – can you find them all, do you think?

- As well as the Anglo-Saxons, more people who arrived from other countries also influenced Shropshire place-names, including the **Vikings**, the **Normans** and the French!

- And we've learned that sometimes, languages that were no longer spoken but were used to write things down – like **Latin** – also helped to shape our place-names.

I had no idea that Shropshire place-names were made up of so many different languages, did you?

Glossary

Alfred the Great

Alfred the Great was an Anglo-Saxon king in the ninth century. He was king of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex. His daughter, Æthelflæd, was the ruler of Mercia in the tenth century. Shropshire was in Mercia.

Anglo-Norman

This was the language spoken by the Normans. It was not spoken by the English - they spoke in Old English, which eventually became Middle English, and then finally the modern English language that we speak today.

Anglo-Saxons

The Anglo-Saxons were people from what is now mainland Europe who migrated to Britain in the fifth century and settled here. They came from what is now know as Germany and Scandinavia.

The letter 'ash'

This letter - æ - was part of the Old English alphabet, and was called the letter ash. It was pronounced like the 'a' in cat, mat and hat.

Beowulf

Beowulf is the title of a very long Anglo-Saxon poem about a hero called Beowulf. Beowulf kills a monster called Grendel, who had been attacking the people living in a place called Heorot. The story is set hundreds of years ago, in the Anglo-Saxon period.

British

This was the language spoken by the Britons. This language eventually developed into modern Welsh.

Britons

These were the people living in Britain before either the Romans or the Anglo-Saxons arrived here. They continued to live in Britain after the Roman invasion and the Anglo-Saxon migration.

Domesday Book

Domesday Book was a great survey of England by William the Conqueror, listing most of its towns and villages. It was written in 1086, twenty years after the Normans conquered England.

The Bronze Age

In Great Britain, the Bronze Age is the period between 2100-750 BCE (before common era).

The letter 'eth'

This letter - ð - was part of the Old English alphabet, and was called the letter eth. It looks a bit like a modern 'd' that's a bit curly, and has a cross through the curly upward stroke. It was pronounced like the 'th' in the, there and then.

Industrial Revolution

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution changed Britian from a largely agricultural society into an industrialised one, powered by iron machinery. Ironbridge in Shropshire is often considered to be the 'birthplace' of the Industrial Revolution.

The Iron Age

In Great Britain, the Iron Age is the period between 800 BCE (before common era) and 43 CE (commn era). In this period, there was a gradual introduction of iron working technology.

King John

John was king of England between 1199-1216. He was not considered to be a very good king, and he fell out with many English lords. This led to the creation of Magna Carta - a very important 'great charter' that gave certain rights to the English people.

Latin

Latin was the language spoken by the Romans. Much later on, the Normans used it to write things down.

Magna Carta

Magna Carta is Latin for 'great charter', and it refers to the charter that was signed in 1215 by King John, giving certain rights to the English people.

Mercia

Mercia was a large Anglo-Saxon kingdom. In the early part of the Anglo-Saxon period, it was centred on the Midlands, but it later extended to include London. Shropshire was part of Mercia.

The Middle Ages

The Middle Ages is a term that historians use to describe the medieval period, which began in the fifth century when the Anglo-Saxons arrived, and ended after the death of King Richard III, in 1485.

Normans

The Normans conquered England in 1066, under the leadership of William the Conqueror, who became king. They came from Normandy in France.

Norman Conquest

The Norman Conquest is the name that historians give to the succesful invasion of England by the Normans in 1066, led by Duke William of Normandy. William later became known as 'William the Conqueror'.

Offa's Dyke

Offa's Dyke was a very, very long ditch that was constructed by the Anglo-Saxons. It was associated with Offa, the king of Mercia in the eighth century. Mercia was an Anglo-Saxon kingdom that included what is now modern Shropshire. The ditch separated Mercia and Wales.

Old English

Old English was the language spoken by the Anglo-Saxons. The English language that we all speak today developed from this ancient language.

Old French

Old French was the language spoken in northern France in the Middle Ages.

Old Norse

Old Norse was the language spoken by the Vikings in the Middle Ages. The English language contains many words of Old Norse origin, including 'they', 'window', 'skip' and 'reindeer'.

Old Welsh

The Welsh language went through several stages of development. British, the language spoken by the Britons, developed into Old Welsh which was spoken between about 800 and 1200 CE.

Ordnance Survey

The Ordnance Survey produces the official series of maps for Great Britain.

Romans

The Romans first arrived in Britain around the year 55 BCE, and returned as invaders in 43 CE, staying until the early fifth century. The Roman language was Latin.

Vikings

The Vikings first arrived in Britain at the end of the eighth century. They were originally raiders, but eventually lots of them stayed and settled in England, mostly in the northern and eastern parts of the country.

Watling Street

Watling Street is the name of a road built by the Romans. It was very long, and at one time it stretched from Richborough on the south coast in Kent, all the way to Wroxeter in Shropshire, via London. Another branch of Watling Street in Shropshire ran from Wroxeter, through Church Stretton and on into Herefordshire.

William the Conqueror

King William I is popularly known as William the Conqueror, because his Norman army beat King Harold II at the battle of Hastings in 1066, and therefore conquered the kingdom of England. Historians call this event 'the Norman Conquest', and it marks the end of the early medieval period in England. Before becoming king, William was the Duke of Normandy, which is in modern France.