Germanic Languages

1. Indo-European Family. The Germanic group of languages:
   - East Germanic
   - North Germanic
   - West Germanic

Linguistic characteristics

- Word stress
- The Germanic Vowel Shift
- The First Consonant Shift (Grimm's Law)
- The Second Consonant Shift (Verner's Law)
- Germanic Rhotacism
- West Germanic Lengthening of consonants (Germination)

Germanic languages in the modern world are:

- English (Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries);
- Danish (Denmark);
- German (Germany, Austria, Luxemburg, Switzerland);
- Afrikaans (South African Republic);
- Swedish (Sweden);
- Icelandic (Iceland).

Germanic Languages today
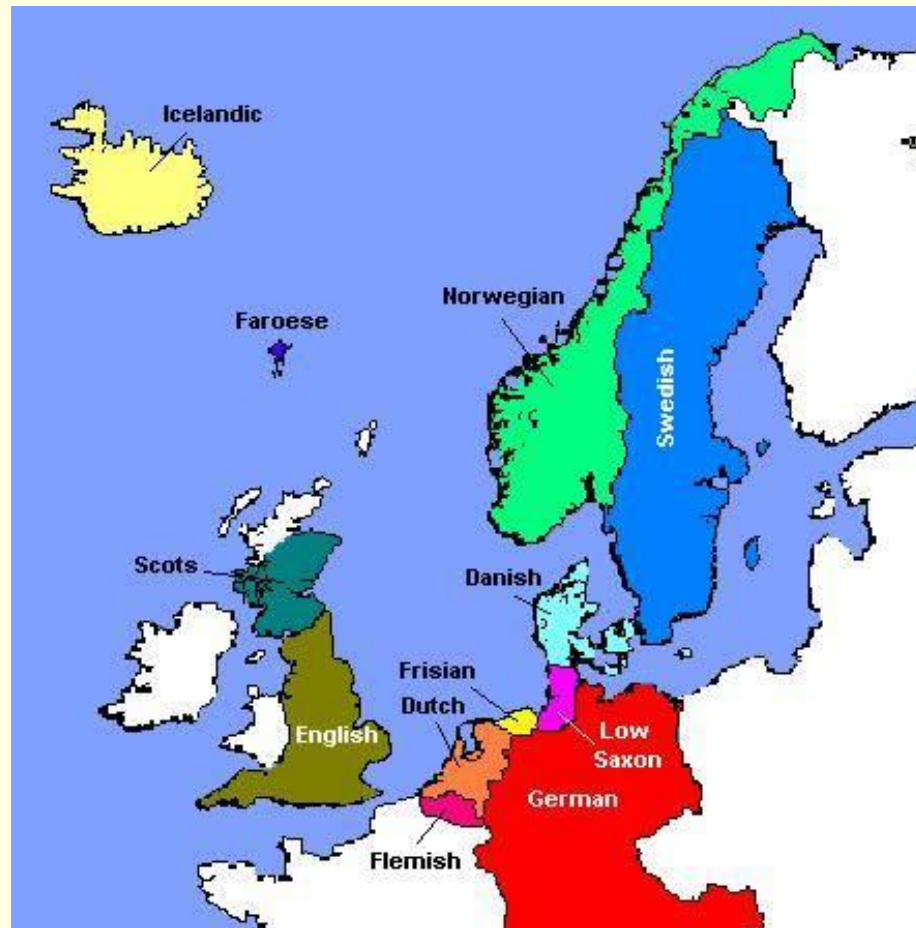
the parent-language

- the Proto-Germanic language
- split from related IE languages between the 15th and 10th c. B.C
- was never recorded in a written form
- in the 19th century it was reconstructed by methods of comparative linguistics from written evidence in descendant languages

Indo-European groups in the 2nd millenium BC
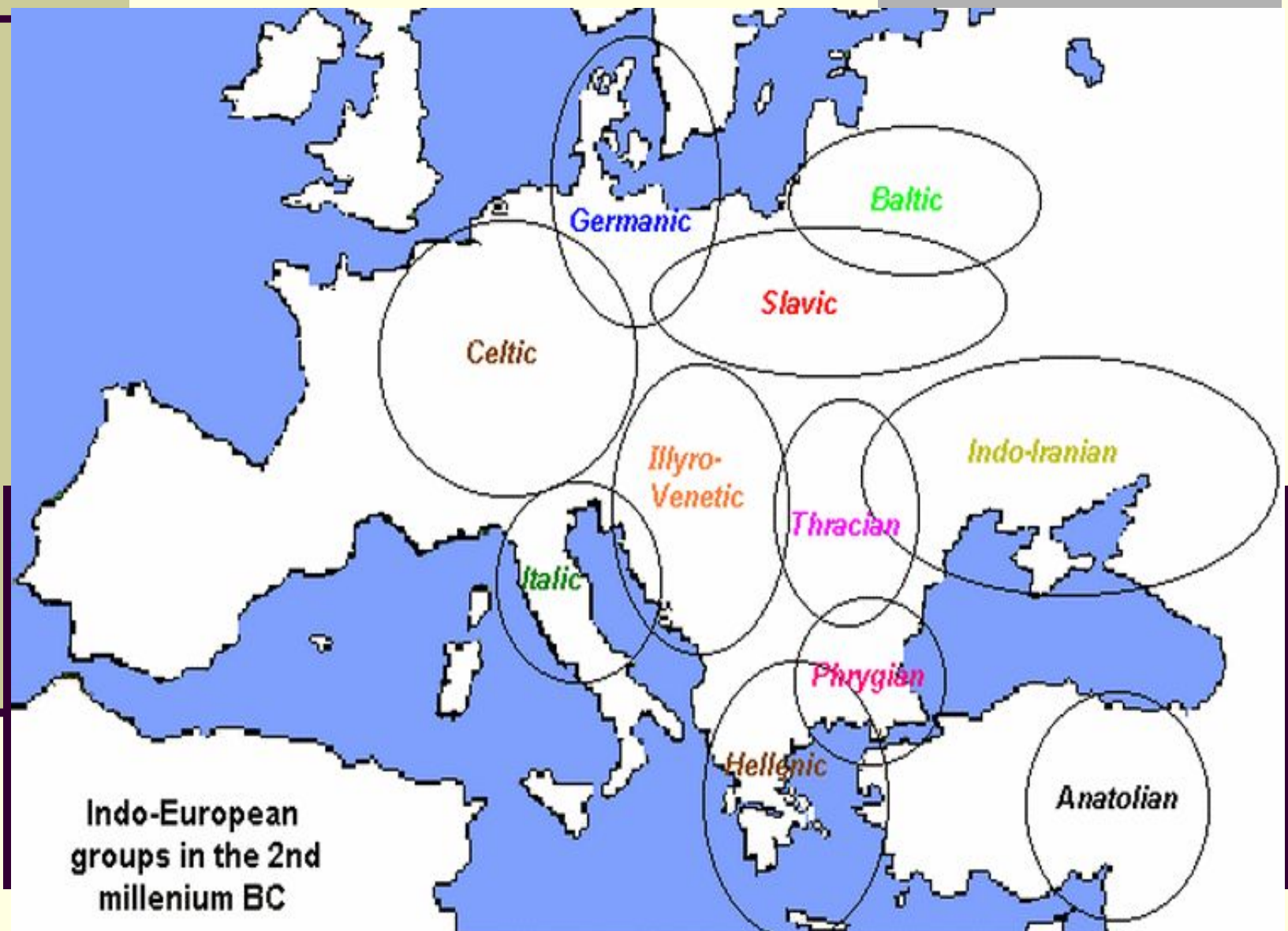
The Old Germanic languages form 3 groups

- East Germanic

- North Germanic

- West Germanic

East Germanic

- was formed by the tribes who returned from Scandinavia at the beginning of our era
- the Goths were the most powerful
- *the Gothic language* is presented in written records of the 6th c.
- Ulfilas' Gospels – a manuscript of about 200 pages, 5th -6th century

Ulfilas Gospels

- a translation of the Gospels from Greek into Gothic by Ulfilas

- Ulfilas, a West Gothic bishop
-

East Germanic languages

- Vandalic, Burgundian

- left no written traces

North Germanic

- the North Germanic tribes lived on the southern coasts of the Scandinavian peninsula and in Northern Denmark (since the 4th c.)
- spoke Old Norse or Old Scandinavian
- runic inscriptions dated the 3d - 9th c.
- Runic inscriptions were carved on objects made of hard material

North Germanic

- Old Danish
- Old Norwegian
- Old Swedish
- Icelandic
- Faroese

West Germanic

- dwelt in the lowlands between the Oder and the Elbe

- spoke Old High German (8th c.)

- Old English (7th c.)

- Old Saxon (9th c.)

- Old Dutch (12th c.)

West Germanic Languages

Scots
Frisian
Dutch
German
English

Word Stress

- In ancient IE the stress was free and movable
- it could fall on any syllable of the word. It could be shifted (e.g. R. домом, дома, дома).
- in late PG its position in the word was stabilized
- was fixed on the first syllable
- other syllables - suffixes and endings – were unstressed

Word stress

- was no longer movable

- unstressed syllables were phonetically weakened and lost

- weakening affected mostly suffixes and endings

Word stress

- PG   fiskaz
- Gothic   fisks
- O Iclandic   fiskr
- OE   fisc

The Germanic Vowel Shift

- vowels showed a strong tendency to change:

qualitative change

quantitative change

dependent change

independent change

The Germanic Vowel Shift

- IE short *o* and *a* > in Germanic more open *a*

e.g. *octo -- acht*

- IE long *o* and *a* were narrowed to long *o*

e.g. Lat.*pous* -- OE *fot*

The First Consonant Shift (Grimm's Law)

- was formulated by Jacob Grimm in the early 19th c.
- consists of **three** major consonant changes:
1. IE voiceless stops > Germanic voiceless fricatives
- p > f   *Latin piscus – OE fisc*
- t > th   tres   -- /th/reo
- k > h   octo -- ea/h/ta

Grimm's Law: act 2

2. IE voiced stops > Germanic voiceless stops

- b > p   *Latin dubus – OE deop*
- d > t   *duo   -- twegen*
- g > k   *genu   -- kneo*

Grimm's Law: act 3

- IE aspirated voiced stops > Germanic voiced stops (**lost their aspiration**)
- bh > b *Sanskrit bharami -- OE beran*
- dh > d   *rudhiras --   read*
- gh > g   *hostis   --   giest*

Exceptions to Grimm's Law:

■ In *sp, st* and *sk* the second element didn't change:

 e.g. *Ukr.cmamu – Gothic standan*

■ In *pt* and *kt* only the first element changed but the second one did not

e.g. *Latin cleptus -- OE hliftus*

octo   -- ea/h/ta

The Second Consonant Shift (Verner's Law)

- Danish scholar Carl Verner
- late 19th century
- the voiceless fricatives became voiced   in a voiced environment and when the stress in IE was on the syllable which preceded this consonant. E. g.
- f > v
- th > d
- k > g

- E. g. f > v
  - t /th > d *Sanskrit pitar -- Gothic fa'dar*
  - k > g   *Greek decas -- Gothic ti 'gus*
  - s   z

Germanic Rhotacism

- from Greek name of the letter r (rho)

- z --- r

- The consonant /z/ that resulted from the voiceless fricative /s/ by Verner's Law developed into /r/ in North and West Germanic Languages

- /r/ in North Germanic, e.g. *OIcl   dagr*
- /s/   in East Germanic, e.g. *Gothic dags*
- /r/ or it could disappear at the end of the word in West Germanic e.g. *OE daeg*

West Germanic Lengthening of Consonants

- Germination

Short /single consonants except r were lengthened if preceded by a short vowel and followed by i or j

E.g. *Gothic badi – OE bedd*

Periods of the History of the English Language

- Traditional periodisation

- Henry Sweet's division of the History of the Language

- Approach of Yuri Kostyuchenko

Traditional Periodisation

- Old English (sometimes referred to as Anglo-Saxon, 449 – 1066)

- Middle English (1066 - 1475)

- Modern English (1476 – up to now)

Important Dates

- 449 – Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain

- 1066 – the Norman Conquest

- 1475 – Introduction of Printing

Henry Sweet's division

- OE is the period of **full inflections** (e.g. *nama, gifan, caru*)

- ME of **leveled inflections** (*naame, given, caare)*

- Modern E of **lost inflections** (*naam, giv, caar).*

Approach of Yuri Kostyuchenko

- Period to 449
- Period after 449 is subdivided into:
  - Old English   V-XI centuries
  - Middle E   XII-XV
  - period of formation of the standard language XV-XVII
  - New English – the second half of the 17th century up to now
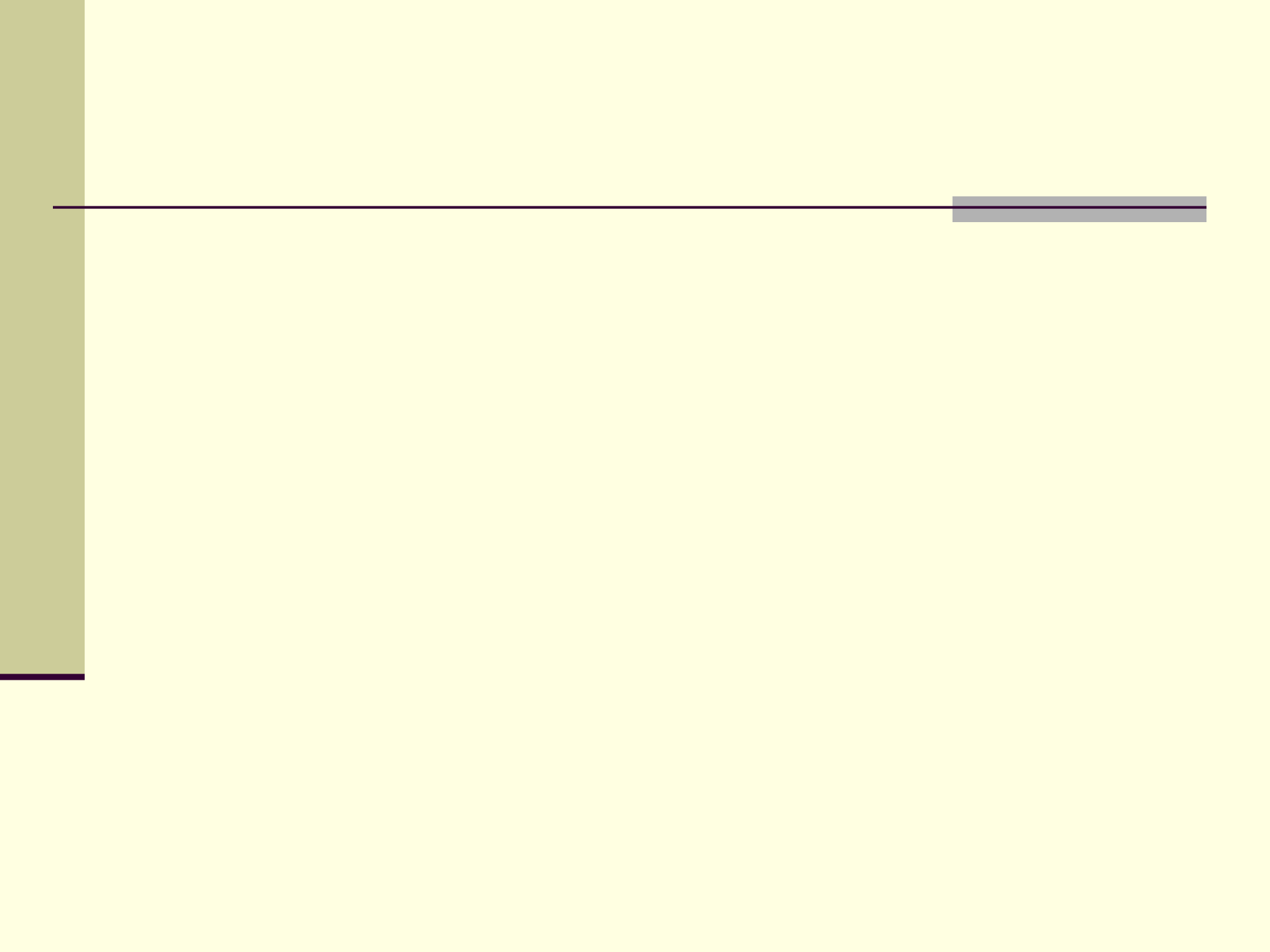
Celtic Languages

Scottish Gaelic

Irish

Welsh

Manx
(extinct)

Cornish
(partly revived)

Breton

Pictish

- From the North and North-West of Britain comes the soundest evidence for the survival of a non-Celtic and probably non-Indo European language. This is Pictish, the language of the people known as the Picts. The first reference to them is made in 297 AD together with the *Hiberni*, both mentioned as enemies of the Britanni, the Celts of southern Britain. The term *Scoti* is later used for Hiberni, this giving us modern Scotland, Scottish, etc. The term is problematic as it means 'painted' or 'tattooed' in Latin and may be a corruption of the original name of the people for themselves. If the term is taken to denote all the people north of the Clyde and Forth then the *Picti* refer to two distinct groupings, one Celtic and the other non-Celtic. In the sixth century, Christianity was introduced from the West of Scotland, probably via Ireland into this part of the country and the Picts were Gaelicised in the process. Their language would appear to have survived unimpaired. But in the ninth century with the arrival of the first Scandinavians the Pictish empire was practically destroyed and the people, driven out of the area, killed or assimilated by later Scandinavians.

Roman Britain

- Written history in Britain starts with Julius Caesar who in 55 or 54 BC invaded the island and left an account of this for posterity. The Romans were never really interested in Britain and did not take the trouble to conquer it entirely. Thus in the West Cornwall and Wales remained firmly Celtic, as did the North and all of Scotland. It is true that Hadrian's Wall (built c. 122-130) is quite far north (near the present-day border with Scotland but Roman settlements in the north of England are rare. The two main Roman groups are the Catuvellauni north of the Thames and the Atrebates south of this river. The Roman groupings in Britain tended to distance themselves from Rome and to some extent enter alliances with local (Celtic) leaders. The Celtic areas provided welcome refuge for Roman leaders who were in trouble with fellow Romans in Britain. Things came to a head in the early part of the first century AD and a Roman invasion of Britain in 43-47 AD under the emperor Claudius was supposed to put an end to this strife. Military engagements continued throughout the first century and into the second with an approximate status quo being achieved with the building of Hadrian's Wall. Wales remained a stronghold of Celtic resistance to Roman rule and no attempt to subdue the Welsh was successful
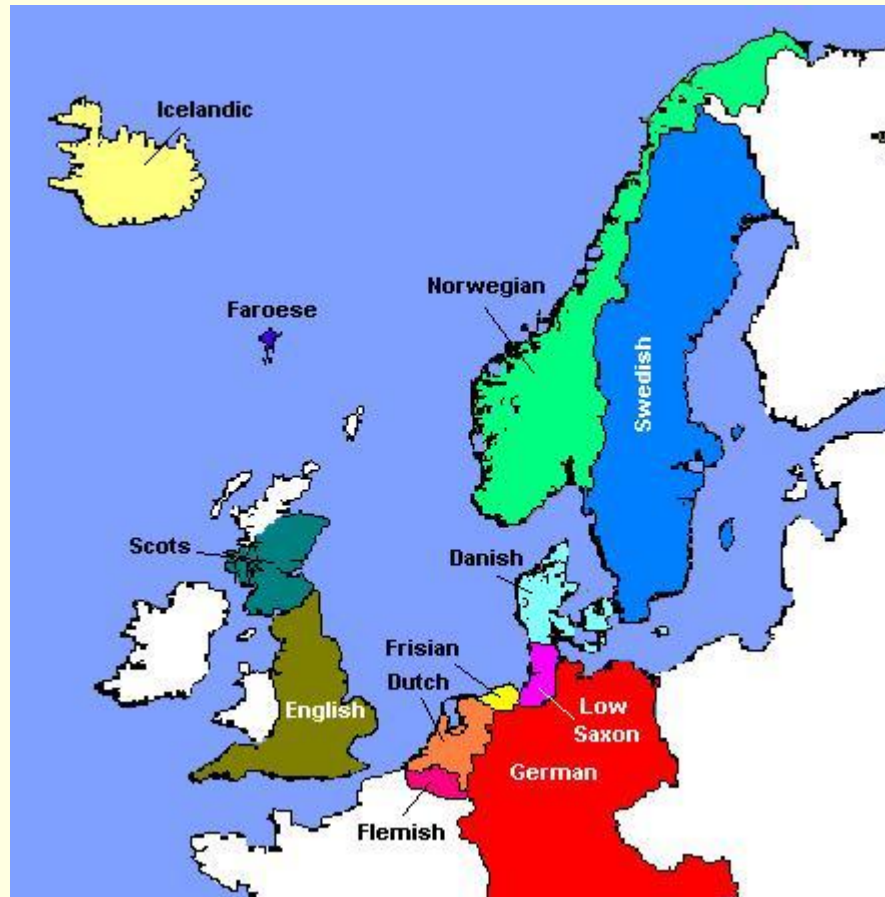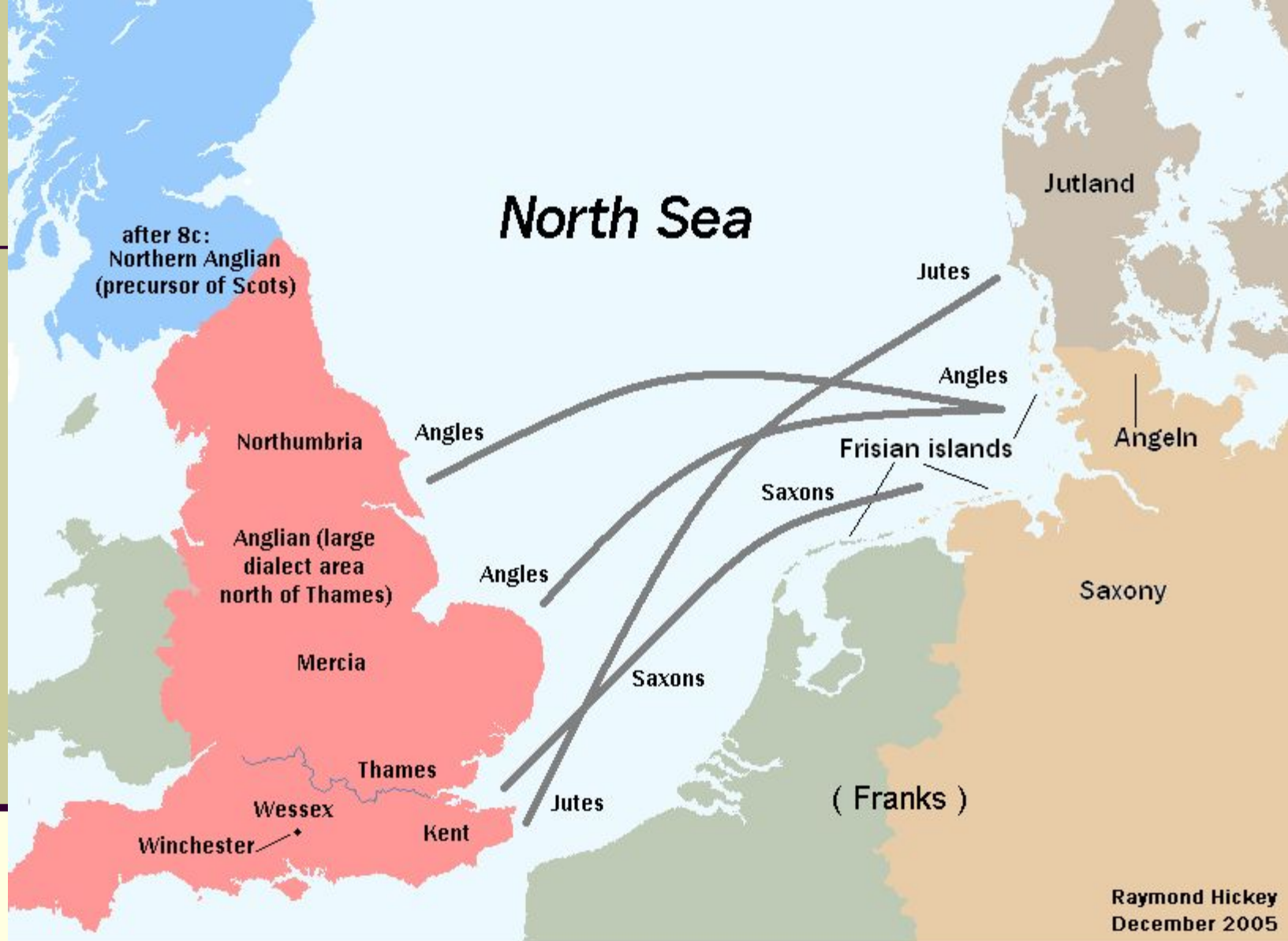
Hadrian Wall

Hadrian's Wall

West Germanic Languages

Scots
Frisian
Dutch
German
English

Germanic Languages today

Routes taken across the North Sea by Germanic tribes in the 5c. The Jutes came from Jutland and settled in Kent. The Saxons came from the area of present-day (Lower) Saxony and settled largely south of the River Thames. The Angles came from the lower part of the the Jutland peninsula which is now Schleswig Holstein in Germany and settled in central and northern England.

Germanic Invasion

- The withdrawal of the Romans from England in the early 5th century left a political vacuum. The Celts of the south were attacked by tribes from the north and in their desperation sought help from abroad. There are parallels for this at other points in the history of the British Isles. Thus in the case of Ireland, help was sought by Irish chieftains from their Anglo-Norman neighbours in Wales in the late 12th century in their internal squabbles. This heralded the invasion of Ireland by the English. Equally with the Celts of the 5th century the help which they imagined would solve their internal difficulties turned out to be a boomerang which turned on them.

Penguin Classics

BEDE

A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH
CHURCH AND PEOPLE

- According to this work — written in Latin — the Celts first appealed to the Romans but the help forthcoming was slight and so they turned to the Germanic tribes of the North Sea coast. The date which Bede gives for the first arrivals is 449. This can be assumed to be fairly correct. The invaders consisted of members of various Germanic tribes, chiefly Angles from the historical area of Angeln in north east Schleswig Holstein. It was this tribe which gave England its name, i.e. *Englaland*, the land of the Angles (*Engle*, a mutated form from earlier **Angli*, note that the superscript asterisk denotes a reconstructed form, i.e. one that is not attested).

- Other tribes represented in these early invasions were Jutes from the Jutland peninsula (present-day mainland Denmark), Saxons from the area nowadays known as Niedersachsen ('Lower Saxony', but which is historically the original Saxony), the Frisians from the North Sea coast islands stretching from the present-day north west coast of Schleswig-Holstein down to north Holland. These are nowadays split up into North, East and West Frisian islands, of which only the North and the West group still have a variety of language which is definitely Frisian (as opposed to Low German or Dutch).

- The indigeneous Celts of Britain were quickly pressed into the West of England, Wales and Cornwall, and some crossed the Channel in the 5th and 6th centuries to Brittany and thus are responsible for a Celtic language — Breton — being spoken in France to this day, although Cornish, its counterpart in south-west England, died out in the 18th century

- The Germanic areas which became established in the period following the initial settlements consisted of the following seven 'kingdoms': Kent, Essex, Sussex, Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria. These are known as the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy. Political power was initially concentrated in the sixth century in Kent but this passed to Northumbria in the seventh and eighth centuries. After this a shift to the south began, first to Mercia in the ninth century and later on to West Saxony in the tenth and eleventh centuries

Old English 'kingdoms' around 800

Dialects of Old English

- The dialects of Old English are more or less co-terminous with the regional kingdoms. The various Germanic tribes brought their own dialects which were then continued in England. Thus we have a Northumbrian dialect (Anglian in origin), a Kentish dialect (Jutish in origin), etc. The question as to what degree of cohesion already existed between the Germanic dialects when they were still spoken on the continent is unclear. Scholars of the 19th century favoured a theory whereby English and Frisian formed an approximate linguistic unity. This postulated linguistic entity is variously called Anglo-Frisian and Ingvaeonic, after the name which Tacitus (*c* 55-120) in his *Germania* gave to the Germanic population settled on the North Sea coast. Towards the end of the Old English period the dialectal position becomes complicated by the fact that the West Saxon dialect achieved prominence as an inter-dialectal means of communication.