

A GUIDE TO OLD ENGLISH

SIXTH EDITION

Bruce Mitchell

Fellow Emeritus of St Edmund Hall, Oxford

Fred C. Robinson

*Douglas Tracy Smith Professor Emeritus of English,
Yale University*



**Blackwell
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In Memoriam
DONOVAN F. MITCHELL
AND
IRENE K. MITCHELL

'Everyman, I'll go with thee
And be thy *Guide*.'
And if you don't learn Old English,
Then Devil take your hide.

Foreword to the Fifth Edition

The *Guide* aims at making easier the initial steps in the learning of Old English. It is intended for beginners and will, it is hoped, prove especially useful to those wishing to acquire a reading knowledge of the language. But potential specialists in philology should find it a help in their preliminary studies of the essential grammar. The *Guide* can be used by students working with or without a teacher; for the latter, a section on 'How to Use this Guide' has been provided.

In general, the *Guide* devotes more space than is usual to the simple explanation of difficult points and to ways of reducing rote learning and of solving problems which arise for the reader of Old English texts. Part One is divided into seven chapters – Preliminary Remarks on the Language, a simple treatment of Orthography and Pronunciation, Inflexions, Word Formation, Syntax (where stress is laid on the important differences between Old and Modern English), a brief Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Studies in which language and literature, history, and archaeology, are discussed, and a highly selective Bibliography for the beginner. Part Two consists of Texts (with notes), and Glossary. Phonology is not treated in a separate section, but is integrated with the grammar, important sound-changes being treated briefly when they provide the accepted explanation of apparent irregularities in inflexion. Those seeking more information on sound-changes and their relation to accident are recommended in the first place to the work by R. F. S. Hamer cited in §9 Note. But the *Guide* aims at being self-contained, as far as it goes. Chapter 6, An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Studies, is, like the rest of the book, addressed to the beginner. Its aim is to give in short compass basic facts and background information which will illuminate the prose and verse texts and stimulate the student to pursue paths of interest. This accounts for the mention of some works which to the expert may seem 'popular' or 'out of date', e.g. Jessup's *Anglo-Saxon Jewellery* (§220), with its four colour plates and forty monochrome plates, and Fisher's *Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Architecture and Sculpture* (§220), with over one hundred monochrome plates. The books on metalwork by Wilson and by Hinton, on architecture by Taylor and Taylor, and on sculpture by Cramp and by Bailey – all cited in §258 – are more up to date and offer more detailed information. But in the interests of the beginner, we have retained the simpler books, just as we have provided a Glossary instead of referring him or her to one of the dictionaries.

The prose texts are arranged in order of increasing difficulty. The first

three selections are normalized throughout, and palatal *c* and *g* are distinguished from velar *c* and *g*. The texts in the fourth selection are not normalized, but a few peculiarities have been removed to ease transition to the unnormalized texts in the remainder of the readings. The Glossary is extremely detailed, with heavy parsing of words recorded. Similarly, the notes are full, and cross-references to the grammatical explanations in the *Guide* are frequent. So full an apparatus may seem at times to encumber the student with more help than is necessary, but our intention is to make it possible for the student to begin reading Old English from the outset, without obliging the teacher to take up particular topics in the grammar in a particular sequence before assigning texts for translation. Although individual teachers and readers are thus freed to cover the fundamentals of the language in whatever sequence suits their taste, we do think that the order of topics laid out on pages 3 to 5 is recommended both by logic and by our own experience.

The prose and verse texts selected are on the whole those which have traditionally been offered to beginning students to read. We have resisted the temptation to substitute novel selections for the familiar ones: such passages as King Alfred's Preface, the story of Cædmon, the conversion of Edwin, and Cynewulf and Cyneheard, have been chosen by generations of teachers and scholars as the appropriate introductory texts precisely because these are the essential ones for the proper orientation of beginners towards both the literature and culture of Anglo-Saxon England. Replacement of any or all of these with different selections might give the veteran teacher a refreshing change from the canon, but it would also deprive beginning students of important reference points in their initial study of Old English literature.

The fifth edition rectifies some errors and omissions in text and bibliographies, and fills two gaps regretted by past users of the book. By including Ælfric's life of St. Edmund we provide a specimen of the important Old English genre of the saint's life and also introduce students to Ælfric's alliterative prose. By presenting in Appendix C a brief, general introduction to Old English metre with examples from the poems in the *Guide* we hope to enhance students' appreciation of the verse selections.

Bruce Mitchell's original obligations are recorded in the Forewords to the first and second editions. Thanks are now due to Sarah Ogilvie-Thomson of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, Daniel Donoghue of Harvard University, and Traugott Lawler of Yale University. We also wish to thank Judith Ferster of North Carolina State University for helpful suggestions for improving the *Guide*. We should emphasize that in the poetic texts, as in the prose texts, we make no claim to originality in our emendations and interpretations. Rather we have tried to select what seemed to us the best scholarly view on each point, and usually this has been the view that enjoys a majority consensus among editors and scholars. We have made no effort to name the scholars who originated and have subscribed to the interpretations selected, for this, it

seemed to us, would have cluttered the commentary without serving the student's needs. We make wholesale and grateful acknowledgement here to the Old English scholarly tradition on which we have drawn in preparing this book.

BRUCE MITCHELL
FRED C. ROBINSON

Gregory the Great, 1991

Foreword to the Sixth Edition

The continuing demand for *A Guide to Old English* has encouraged the authors and the publisher to believe that the time is ripe for a sixth edition, which adds the two texts whose absence is most commonly regretted by users – *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *Judith*. Apart from these poems, a paragraph on *Judith* 186b–95a has been added to *A Note on the Punctuation of Old English Poetry*, and minor variations and additions have been made throughout in an attempt to keep the book up-to-date. But its aims and general shape remain unaltered because they seem to satisfy readers. We are grateful and, as always, invite comments and suggestions.

BRUCE MITCHELL
FRED C. ROBINSON

Edward, King of the West Saxons, 2000



Anglo-Saxon England

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Abbreviations and Symbols

LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS

Gmc.	Germanic	nWS	non-West-Saxon
IE	Indo-European	OE	Old English
Lat.	Latin	OHG	Old High German
ME	Middle English	WS	West-Saxon
MnE	Modern English		

Before the name of a language or dialect

e = Early

l = Late

Pr = Primitive

GRAMMATICAL TERMS

acc.	accusative	nom.	nominative
adj.	adjective	pass.	passive
adv.	adverb	p.d.	see §100
compar.	comparative	pers.	person
conj.	conjunction	pl.	plural
cons.	consonant	poss.	possessive
dat.	dative	prep.	preposition
dem.	demonstrative	pres.	present
fem.	feminine	pret.	preterite
gen.	genitive	pret.-pres.	preterite-present
imp.	imperative	pron.	pronoun
ind.	indicative	ptc.	participle
inf.	infinitive	sg.	singular
infl.	inflected	st.	strong
inst.	instrumental	subj.	subjunctive
masc.	masculine	superl.	superlative
neut.	neuter	wk.	weak

's' may be added where appropriate to form a plural.

SYMBOLS

> became

< came from

* This precedes a form which is not recorded. Usually it is a form which probably once existed and which scholars reconstruct to explain the stages in sound-changes; see §103.3.

Sometimes it is a form which certainly never existed but which is invented to show that one sound-change preceded another. An example is *tierfan* in §100, note.

- over a letter denotes a long vowel or diphthong.
- ˘ over a letter denotes a short vowel or diphthong.
- = means 'short and long', e.g. *ē* in §100.
- - in §41 denote a long and short syllable respectively.
- ˙ ˙ x denote respectively a syllable carrying full, secondary, or no, stress.
- [] enclose phonetic symbols.

How to Use this Guide

This section is particularly addressed to those of you who are working without a teacher. We hope that when you have finished with this book you will not disagree too strongly – as far as elementary Old English grammar is concerned, at any rate – with the pithy observations made by Dr Johnson to Boswell in 1766:

People have now-a-days, said he, got a strange opinion that everything should be taught by lectures. Now, I cannot see that lectures can do so much good as reading the books from which the lectures are taken. I know nothing that can be best taught by lectures, except where experiments are to be shown. You may teach chemistry by lectures. – You might teach making of shoes by lectures!

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING AND PARSING

The ability to recognize forms in the texts you are reading and an awareness of the basic structure of Old English are far more important than a parrot knowledge of the paradigms. Hence, from the beginning, you must get into the habit of analysing and thoroughly understanding each form you meet in your texts. Here you will find 'parsing' a great help. Since this word is taboo in many places, it had better be explained if it is to be used here.

All it means, of course, is recognizing what part of speech the word is – noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, and so on – and what particular form the word has in your sentence. If you are uncertain about the meaning of the parts of speech listed below or of other terms such as 'article', 'infinitive', or 'participle', you are advised to consult A. J. Thomson and A. V. Martinet *A Practical English Grammar* (3rd ed., Oxford, 1980, or 4th ed., Oxford, 1986) or David Crystal *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (2nd ed., Basil Blackwell, 1985).

The information needed when parsing Old English words is:

- Noun: Meaning, gender, number, case, and the reason for the case, e.g. accusative because it is object, genitive denoting possession, or dative of the indirect object.
- Pronoun: Same as for noun. Here you need to know the noun to which the pronoun refers. (If it is a relative pronoun, see §162.)
- Adjective: Same as for noun. Sometimes, of course, an adjective is used

with a noun, sometimes it is used alone, either as a complement or where a noun is more usual, e.g. 'The good often die before their time'.

Verb: If you have the infinitive, you merely need the meaning. Otherwise you need to work out the person, number, tense, and mood, and then deduce the infinitive. Unless you are familiar with the verb, you will have to do all this before you can find its meaning. For hints on how to do it, see §134.

Adverbs and interjections (a name given to words like 'Oh!', 'Alas!', and 'Lo!') will give little trouble. It is important to notice the case of a word governed by a preposition, for a difference in case sometimes indicates a difference in meaning; see §§213-214. Conjunctions are a greater source of difficulty. Lists of them are given in §§168, 171, and 184, and references to discussions on them are set out in 'Understanding the Syntax' below.

Note

The importance of gender varies. Sometimes it is obvious, sometimes it is of no real importance. But at times it provides a vital clue. Thus in *Hē gehierp þās word and þā wyrð, þās and þā* could be acc. sg. fem. or acc. pl. Only the fact that *word* is neuter will tell us that we must translate 'He hears these words and does them'.

LENGTH MARKS

Long vowels have been marked (ˉ) throughout, with the exception noted below. A knowledge of the length of vowels (or 'quantity', as it is called) is essential for proficiency in reading, for accuracy in translation (compare *god* 'god' with *gōd* 'good'), for the understanding of OE metre, and for the serious study of phonology. Hence, when you learn the inflexions, you will need to remember both the form of the word and the length of its vowels. Long vowels are marked in the Texts and you should take advantage of this by noting carefully those which occur in both familiar and unfamiliar words.

But since the length-marks are not shown in the Old English manuscripts, many editions of prose and verse texts do not show them. Examples are the standard editions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and of the Homilies of Ælfric and Wulfstan, the texts published by Methuen (in their Old English Library) and by the Early English Text Society, and *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (published by Columbia University Press), which contain all the extant poetry. You will have to use one or more of these works fairly early in your career. In the hope that you will find the transition to such texts easier if you have already seen short passages in the form in which they appear in these works, we have not regularized the spelling (see §3) or marked vowel-length in the illustrative quotations in chapters 5 and 6.

Most of the passages quoted are taken from texts which appear in Part Two. You can use these passages by writing them out, marking in the length-marks yourself, and then comparing them with the correct version. You can check individual words in the Glossary. But you will find it more interesting if you track down the context of the longer prose passages and those in verse with the help of the references in the Glossary. By so doing, you will improve your knowledge of vowel quantity and widen your acquaintance with OE literature.

LEARNING THE INFLEXIONS

Those who want to test their knowledge of the paradigms and to try their hand at translating into Old English (a very useful way of learning the language, especially important since no one speaks it today) will find A. S. Cook *Exercises in Old English* (Ginn, 1895) a useful book. There are second-hand copies about. *An English-Anglo-Saxon Vocabulary*, compiled by W. W. Skeat and printed for private distribution only by the Cambridge University Press in 1879, was reprinted in 1976 by J. D. Pickles of Cambridge, England.

We suggest that those coming to this book without any knowledge of Old English learn the inflexions in the order set out below. But remember that texts must be read and an understanding of the syntax acquired at the same time. Hints on how to do this are given later in this section.

- 1 Read §§1-4.
- 2 Now work through §§5-9. Make sure that you can recognize the new letters *æ*, *þ*, and *ð*, and practise reading aloud the Practice Sentences (Text 1), following generally the natural stress of MnE.
- 3 Now read §§10-12.
- 4 The next step is to learn the paradigms in A below, in the order in which they are set out there.
- 5 (a) When you have learnt the pronouns, nouns, and adjectives, in A, you can see whether §§77-81 help or hinder you. Experience on this point differs.
- (b) When you have learnt the verbs in A, you should read §§131-134.
- 6 You can now turn to the paradigms referred to in B below. B contains what may be called the 'derived paradigms', i.e. those which can be derived from the paradigms set out in A when certain sound-changes are understood. The sound-changes are presented in the hope that they will make your work easier, not as an end in themselves. Thus, if you meet a word *hwatum* in your reading, you will not be able to find out its meaning unless you know that it comes from an adjective *hwæt* 'active, bold'. You will know this only if you have read §70.
- 7 The paradigms in C are important ones of fairly frequent occurrence

which need not be learnt all at once. When you come across one of them in your reading, you can consult the relevant section. In this way, you will absorb them as need arises.

8 Because of the dialectal variations and inconsistencies in spelling noted in §§2–3, there are many ways of spelling even some of the most common words in the language; for examples, see the word *se* in the Glossary. If all the possible forms of this and other words were given in the paradigms in chapter 3, you would not see the wood for the trees. So those less common variants which occur in the texts will be found as cross-references in the Glossary.

A Key Paradigms

These paradigms must be known thoroughly. At this stage, concentrate on them alone; disregard anything else in these sections.

- 1 The pronouns set out in §§15–21. Note particularly §19. (The dual forms in §21 may be passed over at first.)
- 2 *Nama* (§22) and, after reading §§63–64, *tila* (§65).
- 3 Now read §§26–32.
- 4 *Stān* (§33), *scip/word* (§34), and *giefu/lār* (§§47–48).
- 5 The strong declension of the adjectives (§§66–67).
- 6 Now read §§14, 87–89, and 115.
- 7 *Fremman* (§§116–117) and *lufian* (§§124–125).
- 8 *Habban* (§126), *bēon* (§127), and *weorpan* (Appendix A.3 (b)).
- 9 The principal parts of the strong verbs (§§90–95).
- 10 The conjugation of strong verbs (§§110–113).

B Derived Paradigms

The paradigms in this group may be derived from those in A as follows:

- 1 From *nama*, those in §§23–25.
- 2 From *stān*, *scip*, or *giefu*, those in §§35–44, 48–51, and 52–60. See now §13.
- 3 From *tila* and *til*, those in §§68–73.
- 4 From *fremman*, those in §§116–123.
- 5 From *lufian*, those in §§124–125.
- 6 From §§90–95, those in §§96–109.
- 7 From §§110–113, those in §114.

Note

Some nouns which often go like *stān*, *scip*, or *giefu*, once belonged to other declensions. As a result, they sometimes have unusual forms which may cause you

difficulty in your reading. It might be just as well if you learnt to recognize these fairly early in your career. They include: *cild* (§34), *hæleþ* and *mōnaþ* (§44), some nouns in *-e* (§§45–46), the feminine nouns discussed in §§49 and 51, the relationship nouns (§60), and the *u*-nouns (§§61–62).

C Other Paradigms

- 1 Other Strong Nouns (§§45–46 and 61–62).
- 2 Comparison of Adjectives (§§74–76).
- 3 Numerals (§§82–86).
- 4 Verbs
 - (a) Class 3 weak verbs (§126).
 - (b) *Dōn* and *gān* (§128).
 - (c) *Willan* (§§129 and 211).
 - (d) Preterite-present verbs (§§130 and 206–210).
- 5 Adverbs (§135).

LEARNING THE VOCABULARY

Many OE words are easily recognizable from their MnE counterparts, though sometimes the meaning may be different; see §4 and look up the word 'lewd' in the Oxford English Dictionary.

Other words differ in spelling and pronunciation as a result of changes in ME and MnE. The short vowels *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, have remained relatively constant (see §7). But the long vowels and the diphthongs have sometimes changed considerably. Words with a long vowel in OE sometimes appear in MnE with the vowel doubled, e.g. *fēt* (masc. pl.) 'feet' and *dōm* (masc.) 'doom'. Sometimes, they have *-e* at the end, e.g. *līf* (neut.) 'life' and (with, in addition, one of the differences discussed below) *hām* (masc.) 'home' and *hūs* (neut.) 'house'.

Correspondences like the last two are more difficult to spot. Yet a knowledge of them is easily acquired and will save you much hard work. Thus, if you know that OE *ā* often appears in MnE as *oa*, you will not need to use the Glossary to discover that *bār* (masc.) means 'boar', *bāt* (fem. or masc.) 'boat', *brād* 'broad', and *hār* 'hoar(y)'. Words like *āc* (fem.) 'oak', *hlāf* (masc.) 'loaf', and *hlāfas* (masc. pl.) 'loaves', will not present much more difficulty.

The table which follows will help you to recognize more of these correspondences. But it is not complete and the correspondences do not always apply. Thus OE *hāt* is MnE 'hot' and you may find it interesting to look up in a glossary or dictionary the four OE words spelt *ār* and see what has happened to them.

OE spelling	MnE spelling	Vowels	Consonants
fæt (neut.)	vat	æ = a	f = v
rædan	read	æ = ea	
dæd (fem.)	deed	æ = ee	
lang	long	an = on	
halig	holy	ā = o	
hām (masc.)	home	ā = o.e	
āc (fem.)	oak	ā = oa	c = k
hlāf (masc.)	loaf		hl = l
ecg (fem.)	edge		cg = dge
dēman	deem	ē = ee	
frēosan	freeze	ēo = ee	s = z
cild (neut.)	child		ç = ch
mīht (fem.)	might		h = gh
scīp (neut.)	ship		sc = sh
līf (neut.)	life	ī = i.e	
giellan	yell	ie = e	ġ = y
giefan	give	ie = i	ġ = g
dōm (masc.)	doom	ō = oo	
mūs (fem.)	mouse	ū = ou.e	
nū	now	ū = ow	
synn (fem.)	sin	y = i	
mȳs (fem.)	mice	ȳ = i.e	

See §253 for a book which may help you to learn the vocabulary.

The principles on which words were formed in OE are set out in §§136–138. Once you understand these, you will be able to deduce the meaning of some new words by their similarity to words you already know; see §136. For correspondences in endings, see §138.

UNDERSTANDING THE SYNTAX

The fundamental differences between the syntax of Old English and that of Modern English are set out in §§139–153. These, and §§182–183, should be studied as soon as you can read simple sentences with some degree of fluency and before you pass on to the connected passages of Old English recommended below. Other sections which should be read fairly soon are §§154–155, 157–158, and 160 (noun clauses and their conjunctions), §162 (relative pronouns), §§166–167 and §§169–170 (conjunctions introducing adverb clauses), §189 note, and §§195–199 (the uses of the tenses and the syntax of the resolved verb forms).

The remaining parts of the syntax should be used for reference when the need arises; note especially the topics mentioned in §§141–142 and the lists

of conjunctions in §§168, 171, and 184. When you begin to feel some confidence, you can try the exercise in §172.

If at first you find these sections too long and complicated, you are advised to use one of the books cited in §256.

TEXTS TO READ

Part Two of this book starts with a selection of prose texts for beginners, the texts being carefully coordinated with the explanations in the grammar sections. After you have worked your way through these, you will be ready for the poems, which are similarly annotated. This combination of texts should provide a foundation from which you can advance to *Beowulf* and to the prose and verse texts available in Methuen's Old English Library and the Manchester Series.

READING THE TEXTS

Before beginning to read the texts you should do two things: first, study carefully the introduction to the Glossary, and second, familiarize yourself with the function words and word-patterns listed in §§168 and 171. While reading the texts, you should make careful use not only of the Glossary, but also of the Index of Words.

WES þU HAL

It now remains for us to wish you success – and pleasure – in your studies. In 991, before the battle of Maldon, Byrhtnoth called across the cold waters of the river to his Danish foes:

Nu eow is gerymed; gað ricene to us,
guman to ġuþe; god ana wat
hwa þære wælstowe wealdan note.
(*The Battle of Maldon*, ll. 93–95)

This can be paraphrased

'Now the way is clear for you; O warriors,
hasten to the battle; God alone knows
how things will turn out'.

It is our hope and wish that *your* efforts will prosper – *Wel þe þæs geweorces!*

Part One

Preliminary Remarks on the Language

§1 Alistair Campbell defines Old English as 'the vernacular Germanic language of Great Britain as it is recorded in manuscripts and inscriptions dating from before about 1100'. It is one of the Germanic group of the Indo-European family of languages. Those who are unfamiliar with this concept should read about it in one of the histories of the English language cited in the Bibliography.

§2 There are four dialects distinguishable in the extant monuments – Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish, West-Saxon. The differences are apparent in the spelling; otherwise, of course, we should not know about them. After 900 West-Saxon was increasingly used as a standard written language. It is for this reason that, initially at any rate, you learn West-Saxon. But even here the spelling conventions were never as rigidly observed as they are in Great Britain or America today, where compositors, typists, and writers, in different parts of the country use the same spelling, no matter how different their pronunciations may be.

§3 Most OE primers therefore attempt to make things easier for the beginner by 'normalizing', i.e. regularizing, the spelling by eliminating all forms not belonging to the West-Saxon dialect. But difficulty arises because two stages can be distinguished – early West-Saxon (eWS), which is the language of the time of King Alfred (c. 900), and late West-Saxon (lWS), which is seen in the works of Ælfric (c. 1000). Norman Davis, in revising Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Primer*, followed Sweet and used eWS as his basis. Quirk and Wrenn's *Old English Grammar*, however, normalizes on the basis of Ælfric's lWS. For the beginner, the most important difference is that eWS *ie* and *īe* appear in lWS texts as *y* and *ȳ*; this accounts for such differences as Sweet *ieldra*, *hieran*, but Q. & W. *yldra*, *hȳran*. Another is that *ea* and *ēa* may be spelt *e* and *ē* in lWS (and sometimes in eWS) texts, e.g. *seah* and *scēap*, but *seh* and *scēp*. Since the other differences will scarcely trouble you and since there are some disadvantages in the use of lWS, the paradigms are given here in their eWS forms and the sound laws are discussed with eWS as the basis. Any important variations likely to cause difficulty – apart from those mentioned here – will be noted. Full lists of all dialectal variants will be found in the appropriate section of Campbell's *Old English Grammar*.

In the sections on syntax, the spelling of a standard edition has generally been followed, though occasionally an unusual form has been silently regularized. This should ease the transition to non-normalized texts.

Similarly, in the prose texts provided for reading, we have moved from totally normalized to non-normalized texts. We have not normalized the poems.

§4 As has been explained in the Foreword, this book, after a brief discussion of orthography and pronunciation, deals with accidence, word formation, and syntax (including word-order), and attempts simple explanations of those sound-changes which will help you to learn the inflexions. Other sound-changes and semantics are not discussed. On the metre of poetry see Appendix C. It is important, however, to remember that many common words have changed their meaning. *Sellan* means 'to give', not just 'to give in exchange for money, to sell'. *Eorl* cannot always be translated 'earl' and *dēor* and *fugol* mean, not 'deer' and 'fowl', but 'any (wild) animal' and 'any bird' respectively. It is also important to note that, while Old English literature was written and/or transmitted by Christians, the Christian poetry was largely written in an originally pagan vocabulary which embodied the values of the heroic code. However, it does not follow that the poetry is rich in pagan elements. You will find that words like *lof* in *The Seafarer* and *wyrd* in *The Wanderer* have acquired Christian connotations. On this point, see further §§218 and 236–246. The Bibliography contains references to useful introductory discussions on all the topics not discussed in this book.

Orthography and Pronunciation

I ORTHOGRAPHY

§5 As a glance at the facsimile of the OE manuscript on page 254 will show, the letters used by Anglo-Saxon scribes were sometimes very like and sometimes very unlike those used today, both in shape and function. Printers of Anglo-Saxon texts generally use the equivalent modern letter form. Hence the sounds [f] and [v] are both represented by *f*, and the sounds [s] and [z] by *s* because the distinctions were less significant in OE; on these and other differences in representing the consonants, see §9. On the value of *y*, which represents a vowel now lost, see §7.

The following symbols are not in use today: *æ* (ash), which represents the vowel in MnE 'hat', *þ* (thorn) and *ð* (eth or, as the Anglo-Saxons appear to have called it, *ðæt*), both of which represent MnE *th* as in 'cloth' and in 'clothe'. Capital *ð* is written *Ð*. To make the learning of paradigms as simple as possible, *þ* has been used throughout chapter 3.

The early texts of the Methuen Old English Library used the runic 'wynn' *ƿ* instead of *w* and the OE letter *ȝ* for *g*. In the latest volumes, these have been discarded.

As is customary, the punctuation in quotations and selections from OE is modern. But see the Note on the Punctuation of Old English Poetry which follows selection 20 in Part Two.

II STRESS

§6 The stress usually falls on the first syllable, as in MnE, e.g. *mórgen* 'morning'. The prefix *ge-* is always unaccented; hence *gebídan* 'await'. Two main difficulties occur:

1 Prepositional prefixes, e.g. *for-*, *ofer-*, can be either accented (usually in nouns or adjectives, e.g. *fórwyrd* 'ruin') or unaccented (usually in verbs, e.g. *forwiernan* 'refuse').

2 Compound words in which both elements retain their full meaning, e.g. *sæ-weall* 'sea-wall', have a secondary stress on the root syllable of the second element. There is some dispute about three-syllabled words with a long first syllable (see §26). Some say that *bindende* 'binding' and *timbrode*

'*bank*' have a pattern like MnE 'archangels', not like 'hástily'. But not everyone agrees.

III VOWELS

§7 Short vowels must be distinguished from long vowels, which are marked (ː) in this book (except as noted on pp. 2-3). Approximate pronunciations of OE vowels for those working without a teacher are given as far as possible in terms of Received Standard English.

<i>a</i>	as the first vowel in 'aha'
<i>ā</i>	as the second vowel in 'aha'
<i>æ</i>	as in 'mat'
<i>ǣ</i>	as in 'bad' ¹
<i>e</i>	as in 'bet'
<i>ē</i>	approx. as in 'hate', but a pure vowel [cf. German <i>See</i>]
<i>i</i>	as in 'tin'
<i>ī</i>	as in 'seen'
<i>o</i>	as in 'cough'
<i>ō</i>	approx. as in 'so', but a pure vowel [cf. German <i>so</i>]
<i>u</i>	as in 'pull' [NOT 'hut']
<i>ū</i>	as in 'cool'
<i>y</i>	as <i>i</i> , with lips in a whistling position [French <i>tu</i>]
<i>ȳ</i>	as <i>ī</i> , with lips in a whistling position [French <i>ruse</i>]

Vowels in unstressed syllables should be pronounced clearly. Failure to distinguish gen. sg. *eorles* from nom. acc. pl. *eorlas* is characteristic of ME, not of OE.

IV DIPHTHONGS

§8 If you are not sure of the distinction between vowels and diphthongs, you should consult a simple manual of phonetics. It is important to realize that OE words such as *heall*, *hēold*, *hielt*, which contain diphthongs, are just as much monosyllables as MnE 'meat' and 'field' (in which two letters represent one vowel) or MnE 'fine' and 'base', which contain diphthongs. The OE diphthongs, with approximate pronunciations, are

<i>ea</i>	= <i>æ</i> + <i>a</i>
<i>ēa</i>	= <i>ǣ</i> + <i>a</i>
<i>eo</i>	= <i>e</i> + <i>o</i>

If you experiment, you will notice that the vowel in 'bad' is longer than that in 'mat', though MnE [æ] is frequently described as a 'short vowel'.

<i>ēo</i>	= <i>ē</i> + <i>o</i>
<i>ie</i>	= <i>i</i> + <i>e</i> ¹
<i>īe</i>	= <i>ī</i> + <i>e</i>

A short diphthong is equal in length to a short vowel, a long diphthong to a long vowel. But remember that, like the MnE word 'I', they are diphthongs, not two distinct vowels such as we get in the *ea* of 'Leander'.

V CONSONANTS

§9 All consonants must be pronounced, e.g. *c* in *cnaþa*, *g* in *gnæþ*, *h* in *hlāf*, *r* in *þær*, and *w* in *writan*.

Double consonants must be pronounced double or long. Thus, when you see *-dd-*, as in *biddan*, pronounce it as you do when you say 'red D', not as you do when you say 'ready'.

Most of the consonants are pronounced in the same way as in MnE. The main exceptions are set out below.

The letters *s*, *f*, *þ*, and *ð*, are pronounced voiced, i.e. like MnE *z*, *v*, and *th* in 'clothe', between vowels or other voiced sounds, e.g. *rīsan*, *hlāfas*, *papas*, and *hēafdes*. In other positions, including the beginning and end of words, they are voiceless, i.e. like MnE *s*, *f*, and *th* in 'cloth', e.g. *sittan*, *hlāf*, *pæþ*, and *oft*. This accounts for the different sounds in MnE 'path' but 'paths', 'loaf' but 'loaves', and the like. Initial *ge-* does not cause voicing; *findan* and its past ptc. *ge-funden* both have the sound *f*.

The differences described in the preceding paragraph are due to the fact that the pairs *f* and *v*, *s* and *z*, and voiceless and voiced *þ* 'th', were merely variants ('allophones') in OE and not sounds of different significance ('phonemes'). This means that, whereas in MnE speech the distinctions between 'fat' and 'vat', 'sink' and 'zinc', and 'loath' and 'loathe', depend on whether we use a voiceless or voiced sound, both OE *fæt* 'fat' and OE *fæt* 'vat' could be pronounced with initial *f* or *v*, according to dialect.

At the beginning of a word ('initially') before a vowel, *h* is pronounced as in MnE 'hound'. Otherwise it is like German *ch* in *ich* [ç] or *ach* [x], according to the front or back quality of the neighbouring vowel. It can be pronounced like *ch* in Scots *loch*.

Before *a*, *o*, *u*, and *y*, *c* is pronounced *k* and *g* is pronounced as in MnE 'good'. Before *e* and *i*, *c* is usually pronounced like *ch* in MnE 'child' and *g* like *y* in MnE 'yet'. In Part One, the latter are printed *ċ* and *ġ* respectively, except in the examples quoted in chapters 5 and 6. *ċċ* in words like *wiċċecræft* is pronounced like modern *ch*.

¹ The original pronunciation of *ie* and *īe* is not known with any certainty. It is simplest and most convenient for our purposes to assume that they represented diphthongs as explained above. But by King Alfred's time *ie* was pronounced as a simple vowel (monophthong), probably a vowel somewhere between *i* and *e*; *ie* is often replaced by *i* or *y*, and unstressed *i* is often replaced by *ie*, as in *hiene* for *hine*. Probably *īe* had a similar sound.