English Literature
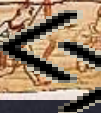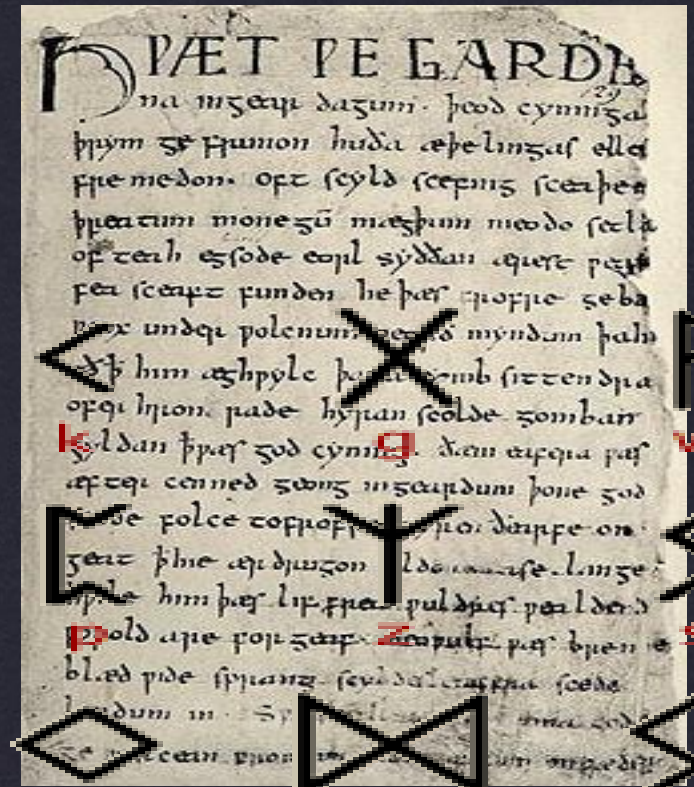
The origins

Department of English

Bidhannagar College

WHEN WAS THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE BORN?

2000 B.C. IBERIANS
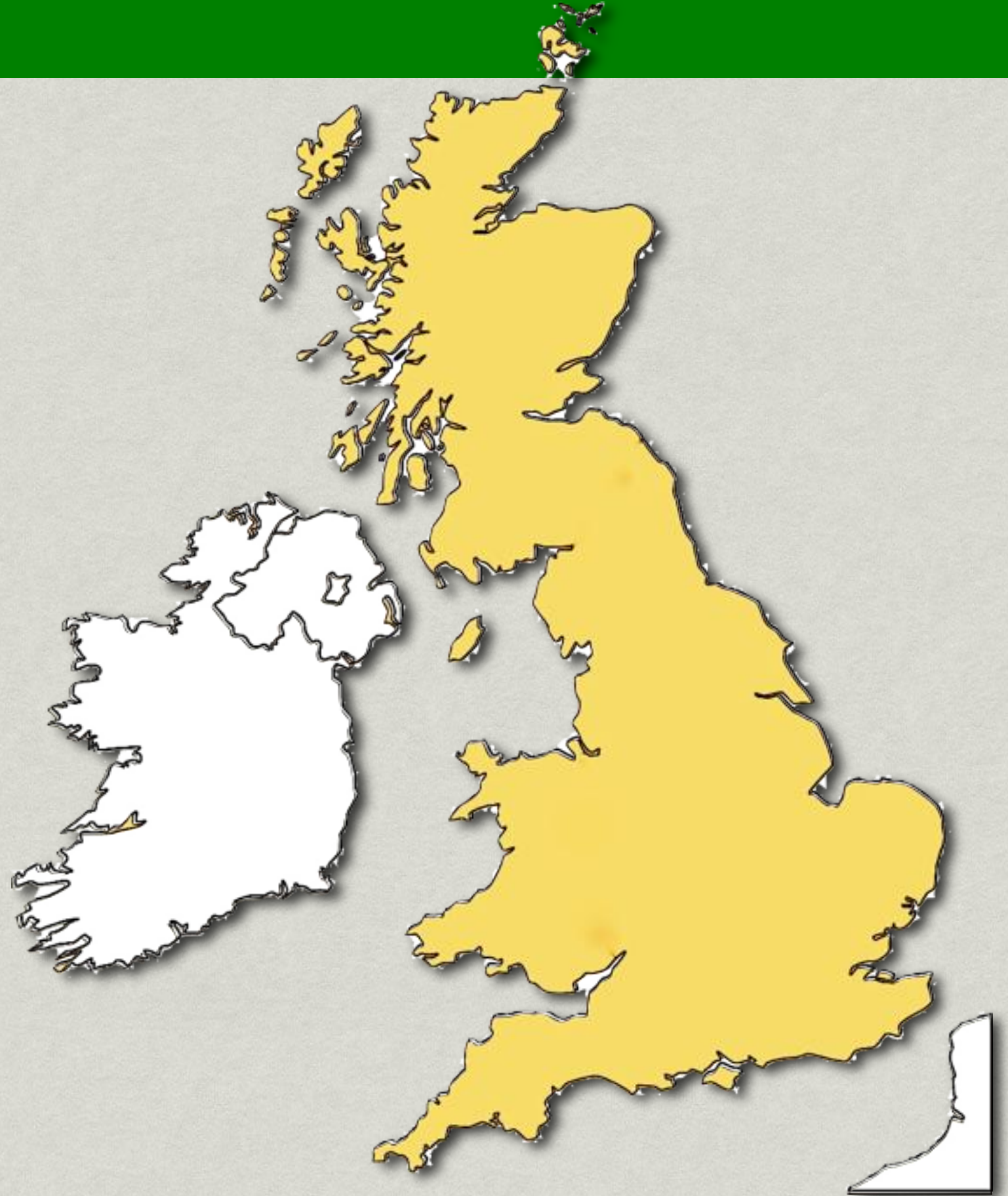
STONHENGE
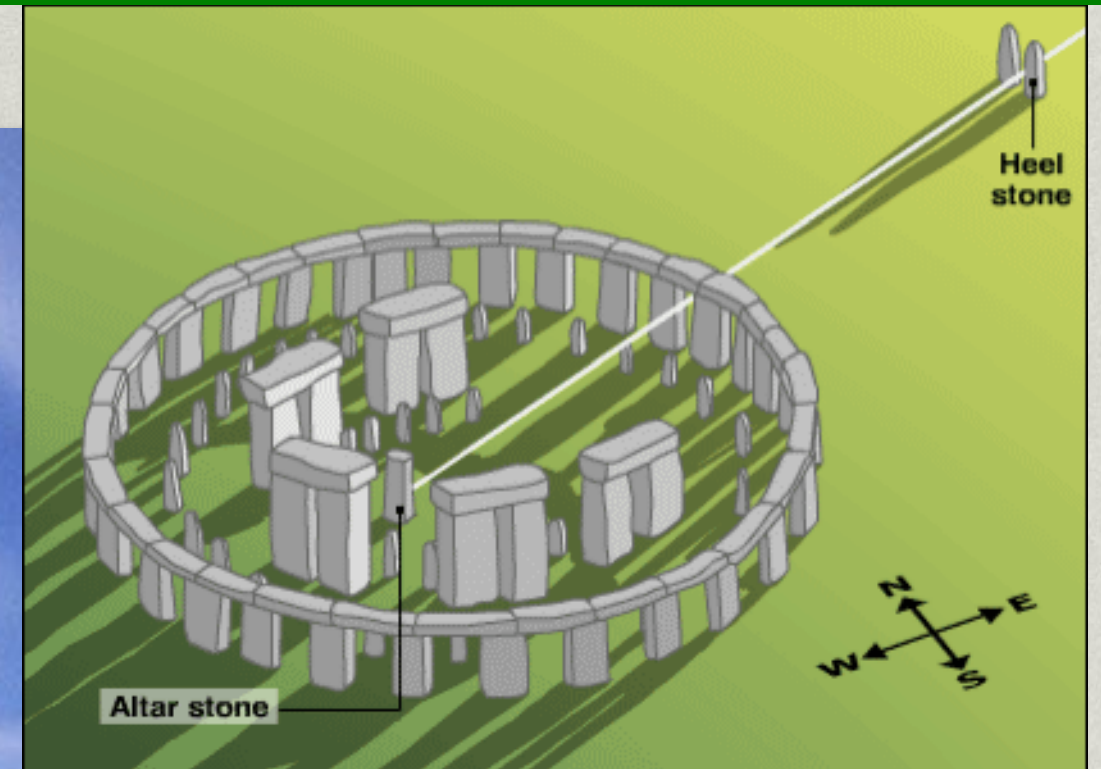
TWO CELTIC MIGRATIONS:

- 7TH CENTURY B.C.

- 4TH CENTURY B.C.

GAELS
Later called
'Scots' by the
Romans

BRITONS

WHERE DID THE CELTS COME FROM?
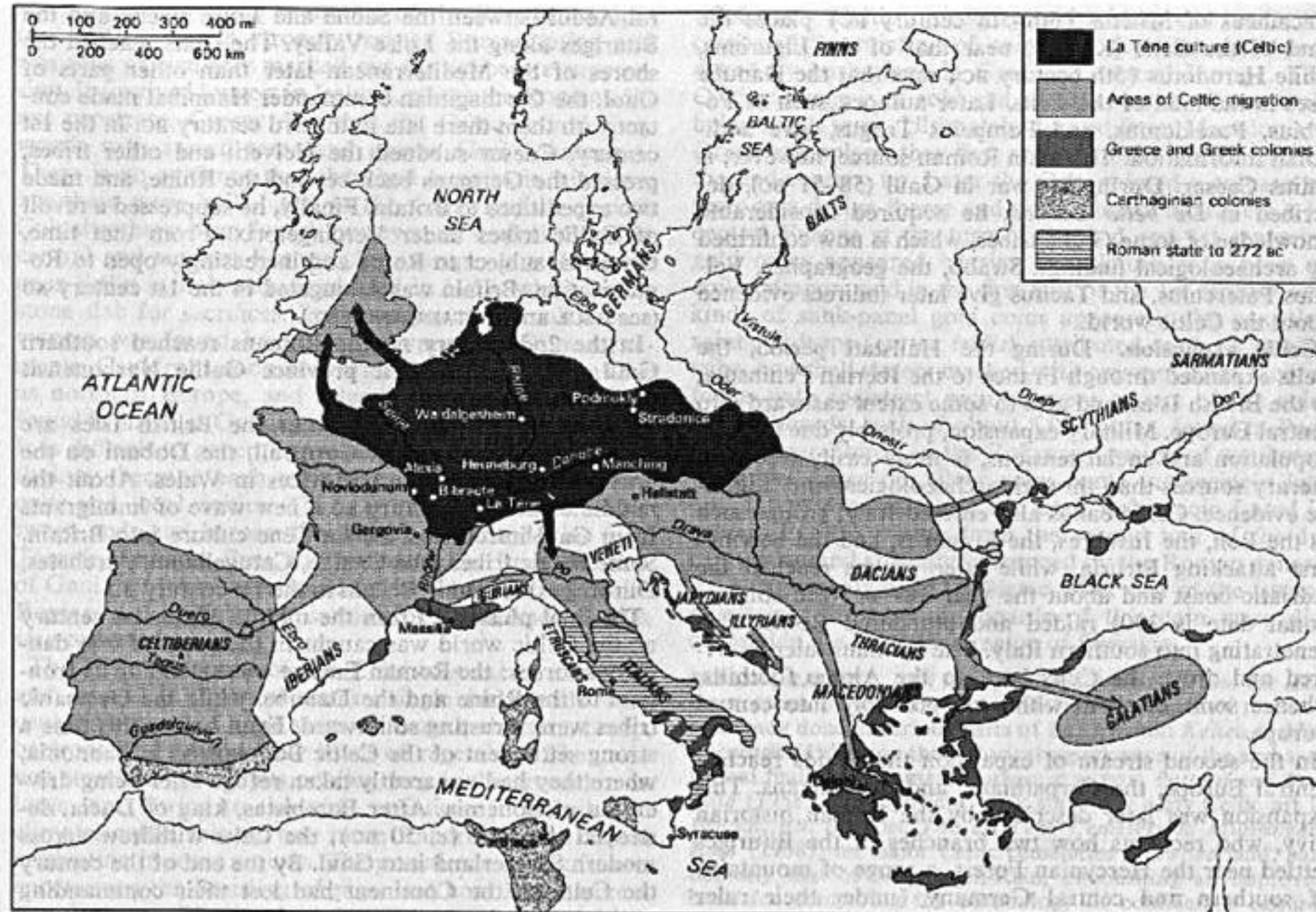
The Celtic migrations.
From Grossen Historischen Weltatlas, vol. I, Vorgeschichte und Altertum (1963); Bayerischer Schulbuch-Verlag, Munich

THE CELTS DIDN'T KNOW TO BE CELTS!

They never formed a unified ethnic group

THE CELTS

1. Were organised in **clans** and **tribes**.

2. Had religious and political leaders: the **druids**.

3. Were **Pagans**. Their religion was known as "animism" (Latin for "spirit").

4. Their language was the **Gaelic**.

ROMAN EMPEROR Julius Caesar INVADED BRITAIN FIRST IN 55 AND THEN IN 54 B.C.

43 A.D.
EMPEROR CLAUDIUS CONQUERS BRITAIN

He was unable to subdue Scotland because he
met with the resistance of
the **Picts** and the **Scots**

EXTENT
OF THE
ROMAN EMPIRE
AT THE TIME OF
EMPEROR HADRIAN
A.D.117

121 A.D.
EMPEROR HADRIAN ERECTS THE WALL

© Roger Clegg

HADRIAN'S WALL:

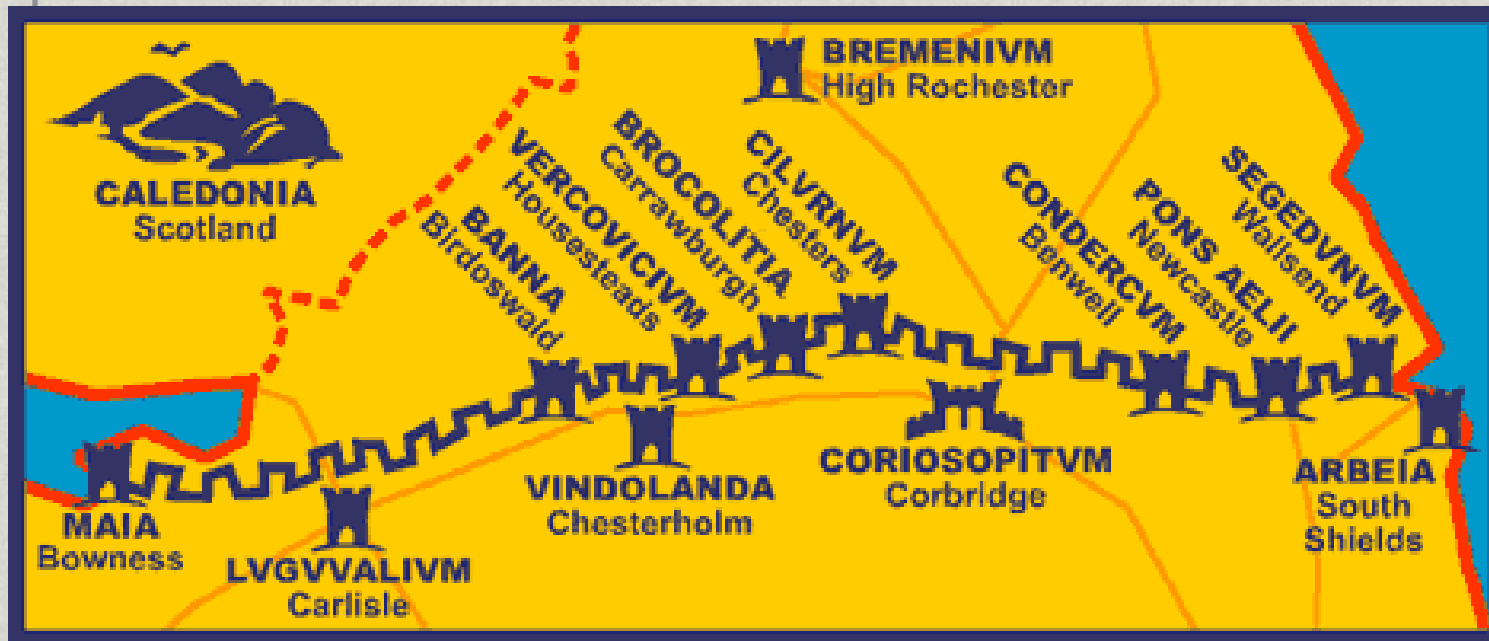## AN EXTRAORDINARY FEAT OF ENGINEERING

- 73 miles long

- 8-10 feet wide

- 15 feet high

- 18 millions of specially prepared blocks of stone

HADRIAN'S WALL:

THE ROMANS FINALLY WITHDREW IN
410 a.d.

WHAT DID THE ROMAN DOMINATION MEAN FOR BRITAIN?

- Civilisation and a law system

- Roads

- Christianity (possibly, we have little archeological evidence of such early christianisation)

Several cities in Britain have a Roman origin, which can be guessed from the their names

Latin roots:

- **Strata via** (paved road)
- **Castrum** (camp)
- **Portus** (harbour)
- **Colonia** (military settlement)
- **Vallus** (wall)

Other Latin borrowings are such words as:

- **Wine** ('vinus')
- **Cheese** ('caseus')
- **Noon** ('nona hora')
- **Dish** ('discus')

Walton

Lancaster

Chesterfield

Colne

Lincoln

Leicester

Stratford

Stratton

Portland

Colchester

Portsmouth

LONDINIUM
The origins of London

- 43 A.D. The Romans built a bridge across the river Thames.

- They established a settlement on the north side of the bridge, called *Londinium.*

- *Londinuim* quickly became an important trading centre (goods were transported by boats on the river).
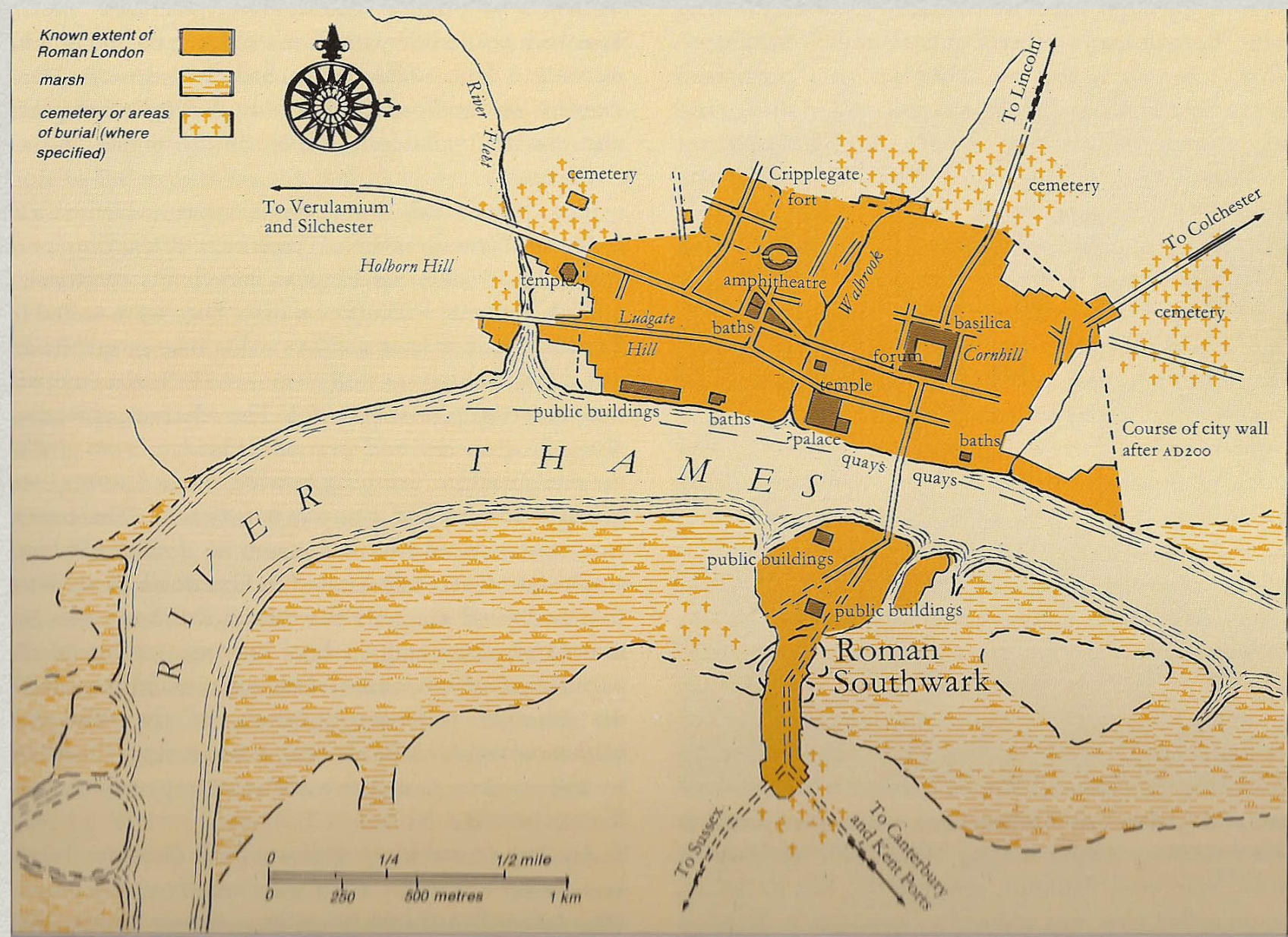
FIFTH CENTURY A.D.
GERMANIC INVASIONS

After the Romans left Britain, three **Germanic tribes** invaded the land
they were the **Angles**, the **Saxons** and the **Jutes**
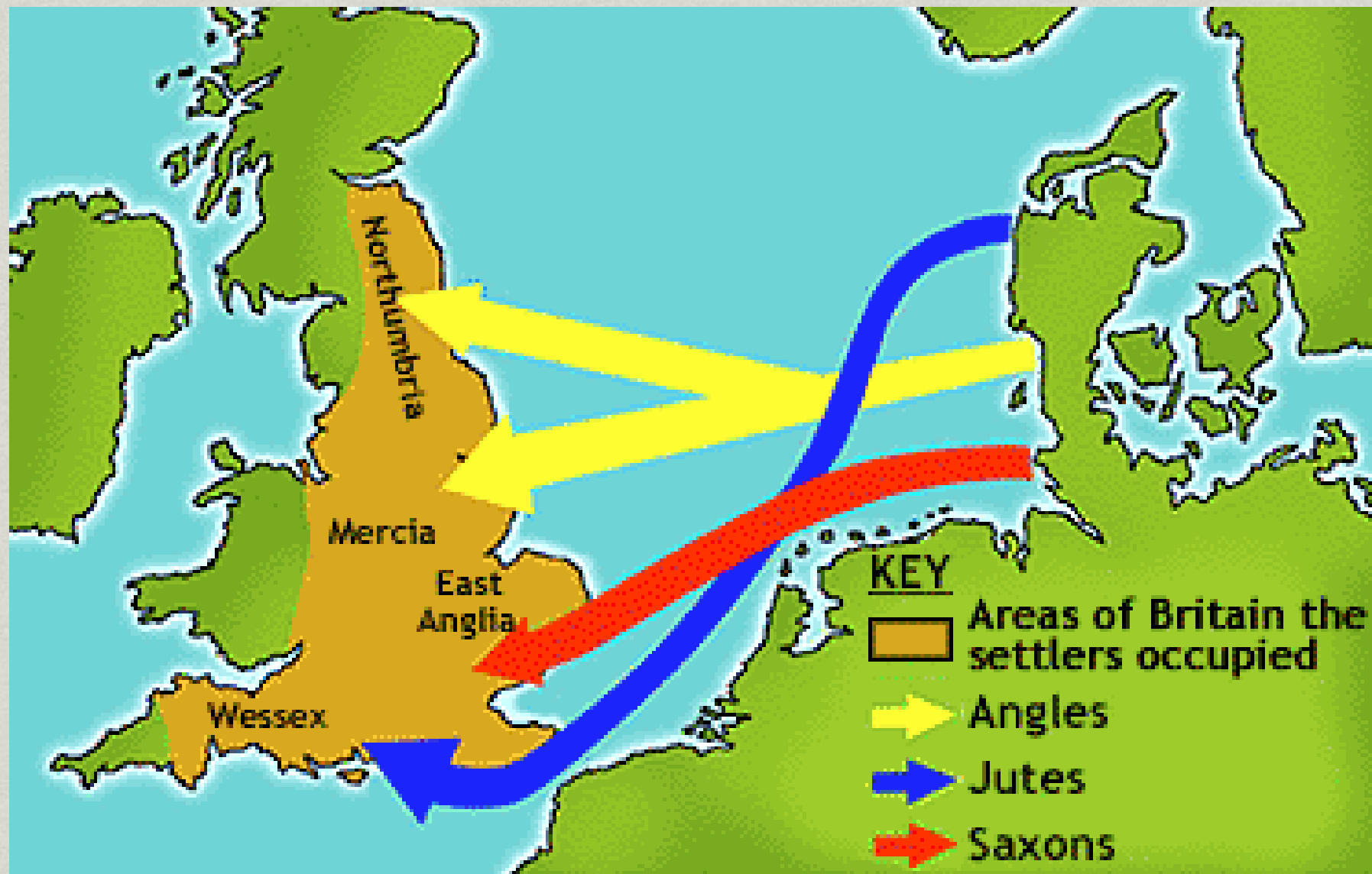
The Angles were called so because they came from a piece of land called the "Angulum". They settled in the East, in the area which, even nowadays, we call England.

THE ANGLO-SAXONS

- Were uncivilized **barbarians**

- Were **pagans**

- Spoke a **Germanic language** (four main dialects: Nurthumbrian, Mercian, Kentish and West Saxon)

Roman civilization was wiped out!

«Secretum illud quod sola reverentia vident, hoc deum appellant» Tacito, *Germania*

Quella cosa misteriosa che essi intuivano in timore e tremore, questo chiamavano Dio.

REVISION

2000 B.C	Iberians
7th - 4th cent. B.C.	Celtic migrations
55 and 54 B.C.	Julius Caesar's invasions
43 A.D.	Claudius' conquest
410 A.D.	Roman withdrawal
5th cent. A.D.	Germanic invasions

OLD ENGLISH

English language is the result of the gradual fusion of the germanic dialects spoken by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. The early form of English is called Old English.

Old English had a particular type of alphabet: the **Futhark** (or Futhork).

The letters of the alphabet were called Runes, from the English 'Rûn' (secret) and 'Runa' (magician).

(The Franks Casket, c. 700)

f	u	th	o	r	c	g	w	
h	n	i	j	ei	p	z	s	
t	b	e	m	l	ng	d	œ	
a	æ	y	io	ea	q	k	st	g

Old English had cases and inflections. The spelling and the pronunciation of Old English are so different from present-day English that, except for a few words, make it virtually incomprehensible to a

The ancient Germanic alphabet was largely supplanted by the Latin alphabet after England's conversion to Christianity between the VIth and VIIth century; but it continued to be employed for inscriptions.

(The Ruthwell Cross, eighth century and its runic inscriptions which spell out passages from 'The Dream of The Rood')

THE ANGLO-SAXON HEPTARCHY

«NON ANGLI SED ANGELI»

The Venerable Bede is the author of the chronicle 'Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum' (c. 731). Although it is not always reliable as historiographic source, yet our knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon period would be incomplete without it.

Bede reports that Gregory the Great, before becoming Pope, came across a crowd of English slaves and was captured by their fair hair and skin. Apparently, he commented by saying that they were 'Angels rather than Angles'. Once Pope, he sent St. Augustine of Canterbury to England in 597 A.D. to bring **Christianity** to the Anglo-Saxons.

DANISH INVASIONS

The Anglo-Saxons were invaded by the Danes (or Vikings) three times between the 8th and the 11th century. They were pagans and just wanted to exploit the land.

The famous Anglo-Saxon King Alfred (later named 'the Great') raised an army during the second invasion and defeated the Danes in the battle of Ethandune in 878 A.D.

LINK TO «THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH IN TEN MINUTES»:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9Tfbeqyu2U&list=PLA03075BAD88B909E

TO SUM UP:

Old English words have different origins:

- The bulk of Old English vocabulary come from the Anglo-Saxon dialects, which gave 'everyday words'

- Latin had little influence in the first instance (the main evidence is in city names), but it introduced new words after the advent of Christianity. Most English words connected to the Chirstian religion and liturgy come from Latin

- The Viking raids too left a mark in the language. Many terms connected to war have a Scandinavian origin