

## ASNC: Guide to Reading for Offer Holders

This guide provides some suggestions for reading around the course and learning more about the subjects we study. You may have access to articles online through your local library or through your school. Google books also provides online access to some books (or part of them). You can also search academia.edu where some authors make their articles available online through their own authors' page. If you can access JSTOR (<https://www.jstor.org/>), you can access much material online there also.

### Learning about ASNC

#### *ASNC Resources*

There is a Virtual Open Day of the Department on YouTube, as well as other videos associated with the Department, as well:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClq9imzowZn4yms6PgxZTJA/featured>

Please use the ASNC website as a resource. What is there includes the following: Introductory reading lists for the various papers:

<https://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/currentstudents/undergraduates/reading-lists/index.html>.

Resources for schools and an interested public containing bibliographies and further reading on specific topics: <https://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/schools/index.htm>)

The Spoken Word enabling you to hear what some of the medieval languages we study sound like: <https://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/spokenword/>.

You can learn something about the varied research of our graduate students here: <https://camedievalists.wordpress.com/blog/>

#### *Recent General Contributions (a selection)*

The BBC History Magazine had a recent series on Medieval(ish) matters, including a number on ASNC related topics. See, for example, on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

<https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/king-alfred-christianity-rewriting-history-early-medieval-chronicles-anglo-saxon/>;

and it has a recent podcast on the Picts (with Graham Noble and Nicholas Evans) here: <https://www.historyextra.com/period/ancient-history/picts-scotland-gordon-noble-nicholas-evans-podcast/>

The British Academy has posted a number of recent blogs on aspects of our subject, including:

on Palaeography (by Tessa Webber):

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/what-is-palaeography/>

on multilingualism in the medieval world: [British Academy Summer Showcase Blog, Medieval Multilingualism](#)

The Royal Irish Academy has posted a series of four articles on the relationship between Language and History available to download here:

<https://www.ria.ie/news/dictionary-medieval-latin-celtic-sources/how-linguistics-can-help-historian-part-i>

There are a number of 'lockdown lectures' available for our subject, including one on the language of early Ireland and Wales by Barry Lewis:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5JRd88qiro&feature=youtu.be>

And ASNC matters are often in the news; for example:

The BBC ran a feature about new archaeological discoveries at Navan Fort in Northern Ireland in July and the article underlying the discoveries is on open access here:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ojoa.12198>.

### *Reading across the ASNC range*

Reading material which ranges across various aspects of our course includes the chapters in *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Cambridge 2012)]

*After Rome*, ed. Thomas Charles-Edwards (Oxford, 2003)

*From the Vikings to the Normans*, ed. Wendy Davies (Oxford, 2003)

And for the wider European context, see:

Julia Smith, *Europe after Rome: a New Cultural History 500-1000* (Oxford, 2005)

### *Reading and Resources: Specific Courses (Papers)*

#### Paper 1, England before the Norman Conquest

##### Preparatory Reading

J. Campbell, E. John and P. Wormald, *The Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford, 1982) – available as an [affordable paperback](#). A superb introductory guide, scholarly and insightful as well as elegantly written and well illustrated.

N. J. Higham and M. J. Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (New Haven, 2013) – available as an affordable paperback [here](#); partial view on [Google Books](#). This volume is especially strong for its numerous images and maps.

*The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge et al., 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2014) – partial view online [here](#). An extremely helpful guide to hundreds of specific subjects.

F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971) – available to read freely online [here](#). The classic survey of early medieval English history, first published 1943.

Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War, ed. Claire Breay and Joanna Story (London, 2018) – available [here](#). Accompanied a large exhibition of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and artefacts in 2018–19. A selection of [articles](#) relating to it are also hosted by the [British Library](#).

Key sources:

*Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other Contemporary Sources*, trans. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge (Harmondsworth, 1983) – available as an [affordable paperback](#). This volume contains a wide range of texts relating to Alfred the Great, with detailed contextual discussion.

*Bede: the Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Bertram Colgrave *et al.* (Oxford, 2008) – available as an [affordable paperback](#). A foundational text for Anglo-Saxon history.

Selected online resources:

<https://www.historyextra.com/period/anglo-saxon/>  
<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/period/anglo-saxon>

<https://www.bl.uk/anglo-saxons/articles/who-were-the-anglo-saxons>

## Paper 2, Scandinavian History

Scandinavian History in 2020-2021 will cover the North Atlantic colonies (Michaelmas) and Norway before 1150 (Lent). Recommended reading is:

Jesse Byock, *Viking Age Iceland* (Penguin, 2001)

*The Book of the Icelanders* (in *Íslendingabók. Kristni saga. The Book of the Icelanders. The Story of the Conversion*, translated by Siân Grønlie):  
<http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Text%20Series/IslKr.pdf>

Peter Sawyer, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* (Oxford University Press, 2001)

*Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum: A Twelfth-Century Synoptic History of the Kings of Norway*, ed. and trans. M. J. Driscoll:  
<http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Text%20Series/Agrip.pdf>

A useful blog with links to useful websites is:  
<http://viking-archaeology-blog.blogspot.com/>

### Paper 3. The History of the Brittonic-speaking Peoples

It's a good idea to read Gildas, *On the Ruin of Britain* before you get to Cambridge, if you can. The best translation is: *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom (London: Phillimore, 1978).

Another useful work is the anonymous *Life of Samson of Dol*. It's available in an online translation here:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20100916040115/http://www.lamp.ac.uk/celtic/elibrary/translations/samson.htm>

Or there is a much older translation in book form: T. Taylor, *The Life of Saint Samson of Dol* (Burnham-On-Sea: Llannerch Press, 2007).

St Patrick's *Confession* is a really good starting point. A translation is available online here:

[https://www.confessio.ie/etexts/confessio\\_english#](https://www.confessio.ie/etexts/confessio_english#)

Or a good print book version is: *St Patrick: his Writings and Muirchú's Life*, ed. and trans., A.B.E. Hood (Chichester: Phillimore, 1978)

You might also have a look at reports on excavations at Tintagel in recent years, overseen by English Heritage :

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about-us/search-news/tintagel-archaeology-report/>

### Paper 4, The History of the Gaelic-speaking Peoples

If you can read Adomnán's *Life of St Columba*, that will be a good introduction to many of the themes you will meet. The Penguin edition translated by Richard Sharpe is the best to use, with notes explaining people and places: R. Sharpe (trans.), *Adomnán of Iona. Life of St Columba* (London: Penguin Classics, 1995).

A good overall introduction is: Edel Bhreatnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World, AD 400-1000: Landscape, Kingship, and Religion* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014).

The National Museum of Ireland has a good site about Viking archaeology:

<https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Museums/Archaeology/Exhibitions/Viking-Ireland>

### Paper 5, Old English Language and Literature

#### Preparatory Reading (some suggestions)

On the internet, there are many good websites giving access to Old English texts (in translation and in the original) and introductory guides to Old English language and literature. Recommended are:

• *Beowulf in Hypertext* (<http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~beowulf/>)  
[A full text and translation of this most famous Old English poem, plus other resources.]

• *Old English Poetry Project* (<https://oldenglishpoetry.camden.rutgers.edu>)  
[A good range of poems in translation.]

• The *Woruldhord* project (<http://poppy.nsms.ox.ac.uk/woruldhord/>)  
[A wide range of web resources on Old English language and literature. Try opening the 'fields' tab under 'browse collection keywords' and clicking on 'Old English literature' or 'Old English language'.]

• Old English Literature: A Hypertext Course Pack  
(<http://english.nsms.ox.ac.uk/oecoursepack/>)  
[A collection of electronic texts in Old English, with access to translations and notes.]

If you would like to begin looking at the Old English language, then try these:

• Essentials of Old English (Glasgow)  
(<http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/stella/apps/web/eoe/>)  
[Introduces the Old English language, with sections on alphabet and pronunciation and some grammar. Start here (<https://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/STELLA/apps/web/eoe/basic-book/?id=1>), and you can then begin glancing at a few grammar tables if you want to — but NB there's no pressure to do other than take a quick look before the start of the course in Cambridge, which goes from scratch.]

• If you want to see some more (simple) texts in Old English, there are some examples here (<http://www.oegrammar.ca/texts/>).

If you are able to access printed books (e.g. through your local library), and would like to look at some, then here are some recommendations of things to try:

- H. Magennis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge, 2011)
- M. Godden and M. Lapidge, *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2013)
- B. Mitchell and F. C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 8th ed. (Oxford, 2012) [the standard textbook that we use in the ASNC course]
- P. S. Baker, *Introduction to Old English* (Oxford, 2003) [another good guide to the language]
- S. A. J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1995) [a very full selection of poems in translation]
- E. Treharne, *Old and Middle English: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) [a good selection of texts in the original with facing translation]

### Paper 6, Old Norse Language and Literature

There is a wonderful collection of Old Norse texts that can be downloaded for free from the Viking Society Publications website: <http://vsnrweb-publications.org.uk>

You can also browse Old Norse sagas at the Icelandic Saga Database – <https://sagadb.org> – and explore where they took place on the Icelandic Saga Map site: <http://sagamap.hi.is/is/>

There's a wealth of material on Old Norse poetry available on the Skaldic Project website: <https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/m.php?p=skaldic>

And if you're interested in Icelandic manuscripts, try: <https://handrit.is>

## Paper 7, Medieval Welsh Language and Literature

### Preparatory Reading (some suggestions)

*The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, ed. Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton (Cambridge, 2019) – the seven chapters in Part I, 'Britain, Wales, England' will be useful. O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000)

### Key Sources

*Aneirin: Y Gododdin, Britain's Oldest Heroic Poem*, trans. A.O.H. Jarman (Llandysul, 1988) (there are older less reliable translations online, e.g.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/9842/9842-h/9842-h.htm> - scroll down for translation)

*The Mabinogion*, trans. Sioned Davies (Oxford World Classics, 2008). For an online translation, see here: <https://www.mabinogi.net/translations.htm>

*Dafydd ap Gwilym, a Selection of Poems*, trans. Rachel Bromwich (Penguin, 1985). There is a recent website with text, translation and commentary on his poems here:

[http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net/index\\_eng.php](http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net/index_eng.php)

## Paper 8, Medieval Irish Language and Literature

### Preparatory Reading (some suggestions)

*The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. 1, edited Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary (Cambridge, 2006), containing the following chapters:

Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, 'The Literature of Medieval Ireland to c. 800: St Patrick to the Vikings', pp. 9-31

Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'The Literature of Medieval Ireland 800-1200: from the Vikings to the Normans', pp. 32-73

*The Cambridge History of Ireland*, vol. 1, ed. Brendan Smith (Cambridge, 2017), containing the following chapters (others by Bhreathnach, Hawkes and Woolf will also be useful for both Medieval Irish and Gaelic History):

John Carey, 'Learning, Imagination and Belief', pp. 47-75

Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Perception and Reality, Ireland c. 980 to 1229', pp. 131-56

Mark Williams, *Ireland's Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton and Oxford, 2016), provides a useful introduction to Irish mythology. It is available online: [Williams, Ireland's Immortals, Google Books](#) (and via JSTOR: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvc775gk>).

You can read many medieval Irish tales in translation on 'Irish Sagas Online' (<https://iso.ucc.ie/>). Start with 'The Tale of Mac Dathó's Pig' (*Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*: <https://iso.ucc.ie/Scel-datho/Scel-datho-text.html>); 'The Adventure of Connla the Fair' (*Echtra Chonnla*: <https://iso.ucc.ie/Echtra-chondla/Echtra-chondla-text.html>); 'How Rónán slew his son' (*Fingal Rónáin*: <https://iso.ucc.ie/Fingal-ronain/Fingal-ronain-text.html>); 'The Dream of Oengus' (*Aislinge Óenguso*: <https://iso.ucc.ie/Aislinge-oenguso/Aislinge-oenguso-text.html>) .... and go on from there.

For poetry, there is a recent edition and analysis of an Old Irish poem, Marbán and Guaire, on Twitter (you don't need a Twitter account to access it): <https://twitter.com/i/events/1273884202996465664>

## Paper 9, Insular Latin Language and Literature

### Introductory Surveys

Rosalind Love, 'Insular Latin Literature to 900', in *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. C. A. Lees (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 120-57 (this volume, if you can get hold of it, has several other interesting chapters, on Latin and Old English)

M. Lapidge, 'The Anglo-Latin Background', in S.B. Greenfield & D.G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York, 1986), reprinted as 'Anglo-Latin Literature' in Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* (London and Rio Grande, OH, 1996) which can be found on Google Books [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=toSGDAAAQBAJ&pg=PA1&source=gbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=toSGDAAAQBAJ&pg=PA1&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false).

In T. Charles-Edwards (ed.), *After Rome*, Short Oxford History of the British Isles (Oxford, 2003) see especially A. Orchard, 'Latin and the vernacular languages: the creation of a bilingual textual culture.'

### Selected Texts

*Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. L. Sherley-Price, rev. R.E. Latham & D.H. Farmer, Penguin Classics (reprinted 1990) or J. McClure and R. Collins, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English people*, Oxford World Classics (1994); also online here in a fairly old translation <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/bede-book1.asp>  
To read more about Bede see *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010) some of which can be found on Google Books: [https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The\\_Cambridge\\_Companion\\_to\\_Bede.html?id=cazpM2cTY9YC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The_Cambridge_Companion_to_Bede.html?id=cazpM2cTY9YC&redir_esc=y)

A collection of other texts: *The Age of Bede. Bede: Life of St Cuthbert. Eddius Stephanus: Life of Wilfrid. Bede: Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow. The Voyage of St Brendan*, trans. J.F. Webb & D.H. Farmer, Penguin Classics (reprinted 1998)

There's blog-post on the earliest Latin verse written in England, by Aldhelm of Malmesbury:

[https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The\\_Cambridge\\_Companion\\_to\\_Bede.html?id=cazpM2cTY9YC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The_Cambridge_Companion_to_Bede.html?id=cazpM2cTY9YC&redir_esc=y)

For a translation of a fascinating text written by a Saxon nun called Hygeburc (or Huneburc) at the end of the eighth-century, describing the travels of her relative Willibald in the mediterranean and beyond, go here:

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/willibald.asp>

For the earliest Latin text connected with Ireland, see *St Patrick: His Writings and Muirchú's Life*, trans. A.B.E. Hood (London,, 1978) and also the website [www.confessio.ie](http://www.confessio.ie) with images of manuscripts, alongside text and translation of Patrick's *Confession*.

One of the most popular Latin texts written in Ireland is *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* (The *Voyage of St Brendan*); there is a translation in the Penguin Classics, *Age of Bede*, mentioned above, or J. J. O'Meara, *The Voyage of St Brendan: Journey to the Promised Land* (Dublin, 1976, reprinted 1991) or W.R.J. Barron and G.S. Burgess, *The Voyage of St Brendan* (Exeter, 2001); an older translation can be found online

<https://markjberry.blogs.com/StBrendan.pdf>

## Paper 10, Palaeography and Codicology

Preparatory reading (some suggestions):

- Erik Kwakkel, *Books Before Print* (Leeds, 2018).
- Richard Gameson, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, c. 400–1100* (Cambridge, 2011).
- Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Tessa Webber, ed., *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland 1: To 1640* (Cambridge, 1640), in particular the chapters by Gameson, Ó Néill, Ganz, and Webber.
- Bernhard Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, transl. David Ganz and Dáibhí ó Cróinin (Cambridge, 1990) — not the easiest read, but the classic introduction to the subject.

There are photographs of many of the manuscripts that we will be studying available online. Some of the most famous ASNC-related manuscripts are available here:

- [The Codex Amiatinus](#)
- [The Lindisfarne Gospels](#)
- [The Book of Kells](#)
- [The Book of Armagh](#)
- [The Parker Chronicle](#)



- [The Cambridge Juvenius](#)
- [The Beowulf Manuscript](#)
- [The Book of Leinster](#)
- [The Codex Regius \(Poetic Edda\)](#)
- [Flateyjarbók](#)
- [The Red Book of Hergest](#)

In Palaeography and Codicology we will be working closely with Cambridge libraries with collections of relevant manuscripts. One of them, the Parker Library in Corpus Christi College, has a particularly comprehensive digital version, *Parker on the Web*: <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/>.

For a guide to online resources relevant to palaeography and codicology put together by the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent, see <https://www.memslib.co.uk/manuscript-palaeography-codicology>.

The Dutch palaeographer Erik Kwakkel's blog always has interesting material: <https://medievalbooks.nl/>.

The British Library has a dedicated website to Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, based on the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms exhibition from 2018–19: <https://www.bl.uk/anglo-saxons>.

The Royal Irish Academy has produced a series of recent twitter threads on specific medieval Irish manuscripts (you do not need a Twitter account to access them):

- The Book of the Dun Cow  
([https://twitter.com/Library\\_RIA/status/1252949730633625600](https://twitter.com/Library_RIA/status/1252949730633625600))
- 'The Speckled Book' (*Lebor Brecc*):  
[https://twitter.com/Library\\_RIA/status/1282596330284683264](https://twitter.com/Library_RIA/status/1282596330284683264)
- The Book of Lecan:  
[https://twitter.com/Library\\_RIA/status/1264887908852551681](https://twitter.com/Library_RIA/status/1264887908852551681)
- The Book of Uí Maine: <https://twitter.com/i/events/1269728048737333249>
- Royal Irish Academy B ii 1 (on astronomy and medicine):  
[https://twitter.com/Library\\_RIA/status/1277557795370545152](https://twitter.com/Library_RIA/status/1277557795370545152)
- Twitter thread on the Stowe Missal by Lars Nooij:  
<https://twitter.com/i/events/1258770542255050754>
- Blog post on the Cathach, oak galls and ink: <https://www.ria.ie/news/library-library-blog/memories-manuscripts-and-medieval-ink>
- There is an online exhibition on the Book of Ballymote here:  
<https://sway.office.com/dILDgkv1tnIEXBTg>

The following are links to two recent research projects which show what you can do with medieval manuscripts:

- *Insular Manuscripts AD 650–850: Networks of Knowledge*, led by Jo Story:  
<https://www2.le.ac.uk/projects/insularmss>.
- *From Manuscript Fragments to Book History* (about manuscript fragments in Scandinavian archives), led by Åslaug Ommundsen:  
<https://www.uib.no/en/rg/manuscript-fragments>.