

# Summer Solstice - Johannisnacht Midsummer Night

Summer Solstice is a celebration of the longest day of the year. Northern European countries marked it with bonfires, feasts, and dancing.

Midsummer's Eve was the second greatest festival in the Germanic holy year and druids saw it as the union of heaven and earth. It celebrates the shortest night, fertility and nature.

The church placed St. John the Baptist's feast day on June 24, possibly due to the summer solstice symbolizing victory of light over darkness.



## Fire & Water

Engaging in the act of jumping over or through a fire is believed to bring good luck to couples, and those seeking love. The fire has the power to ward off demons and evil spirits.

Both waters and brooks were believed to possess healing properties, and taking a dip during "Johannisnacht" was thought to hold special powers. The tradition of cleaning and embellishing wells and fountains continues to endure.



## Herbs & Plants

Priests and healers believed herbs harvested during Summer Solstice would be at the peak of their medicinal value. Additionally, collecting them at sunrise, when the lingering morning dew enhances their fragrance, was believed to be particularly beneficial.

Classic examples are Saint John's Wort, Calendula, Rosemary, Lavender, Basil, Lemon Balm, Vervain, and Elderberry.

Lavender and vervain for banishing worries and St. John's Wort for bringing sunshine to sorrow.



**St. Johns Wort**



**Lavender**



**Vervain**

# The Elderberry Tree



The Elder Tree's folklore and connection to medieval customs evoke a sense of awe and mystery. With its diverse properties, it stands as a remarkable marvel of nature. Archaeological evidence dates its use back to the Neolithic era, highlighting its enduring historical significance.

## Medicinal Use

In medieval times, Elder trees were vital in medicine. The roots served as a diuretic, while the berries relieved hemorrhoids (Belvoir Fruit Farms, no date). Elderflower infusion still eases colds and sore throats, and hot elderflower tea or elderberry wine can combat cold and flu symptoms (Kendall, 2020).



Carrying Elder wood cured rheumatism (Daniels, 2003 [1903]: 783), and chewing Elder twigs relieved toothache by saying "Depart, thou evil spirit" (Daniels, 2003 [1903]: 782). Swedish pregnant women kissed the Elder tree for childbirth luck in the 19th century (Daniels, 2003 [1903]: 782), showcasing its enduring folklore and customs.



## Folklore

The Elder Tree was considered sacred by German and Scandinavian people, believed to be inhabited by the spirit of the Elder Mother. This divine presence, also known as Holle/Hulda/Holda, bestowed blessings upon the tree's flowers, berries, and wood. Various parts of the tree, such as dried leaves, were believed to protect against evil spirits.



The Elder Tree was also associated with fairies, with legends of sleeping under it or standing beneath it on Midsummer's Eve. Fairies were said to favor musical instruments made from Elder wood.

# Deities & Days of the Week

## Woden

King of the gods, a wise and warlike ruler who gave his name to Wednesday. He had two ravens, Huginn and Muninn, who flew around the world and brought him news.



Woden

## Thunor

God of thunder, who wielded a mighty hammer called Mjolnir. He was the son of Woden and the protector of the people.



Thunor

## Eostre

Goddess of spring, who brought fertility and new life to the land. She was associated with hares, eggs, and flowers, and her festival was celebrated in April. Easter is derived from her name.



Eostre



Frige

## Frige

Goddess of love, marriage, and home. She was the wife of Woden and the mother of many gods. She knew the fate of all beings, but kept it secret.



Loki

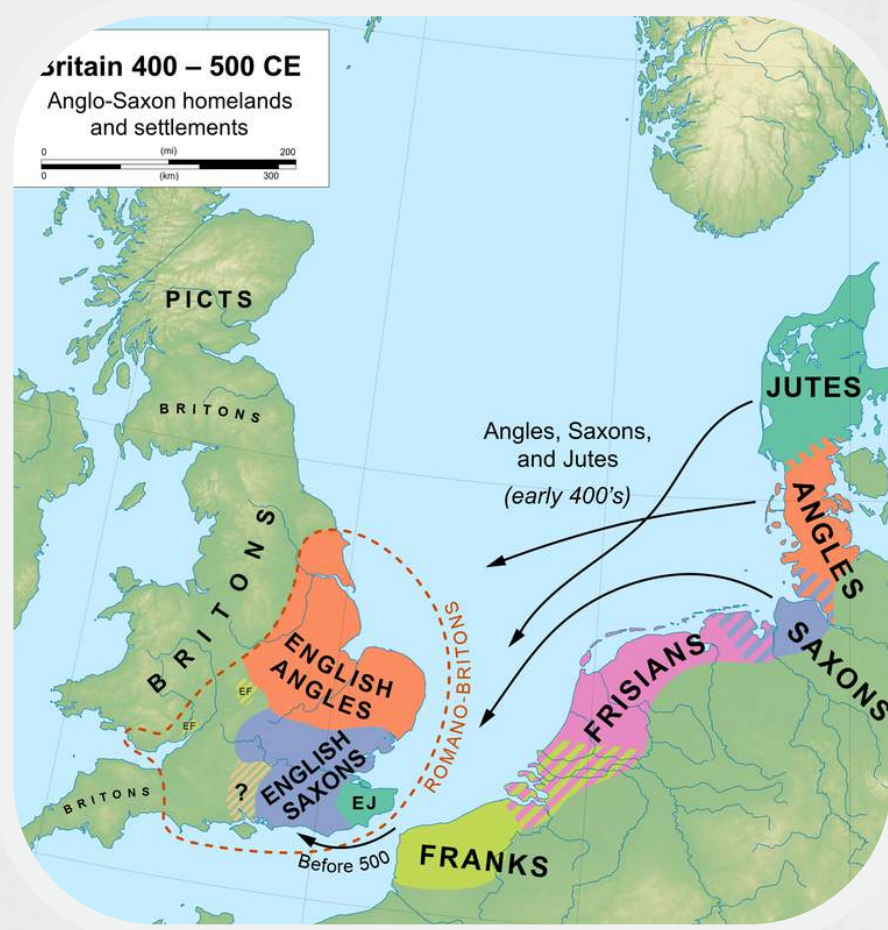
## Loki

God of mischief, who often caused trouble for the other gods with his cunning and trickery. He could change his shape and gender, and fathered many strange creatures, such as the wolf Fenrir and the serpent Jormungand.

Day of the Week	Norse Names	God/Goddess
Sunday	Sól	Goddess of the Sun
Monday	Máni	Moon personified
Tuesday	Týr	God of Justice and War
Wednesday	Woden	Godfather
Thursday	Þórr (Thor)	God of Thunder
Friday	Frígg	Goddess of Love
Saturday	Saturn	God of Time

# Anglo-Saxon & Norse Mythology

## Origins & History



The Anglo-Saxons, including the Angles, Saxons, Frisians, and Germans, migrated to Britain from Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and Germany. They gave rise to the modern English language. Our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon mythology is limited, but studying Scandinavian mythology provides some insight. The Norse of Iceland and the English shared a common ancestry in 6th-century Denmark. The Anglo-Saxons, mostly illiterate, relied on oral transmission of stories through traveling minstrels and scopos who recited in verse.

## Beliefs & Influence

The Anglo-Saxons believed in supernatural creatures such as elves, dwarves and giants (Etins) who often brought harm to men.

Anglo-Saxons worshiped the same gods as the Norse and other Germanic peoples with slight name changes.

Example: Thunor Anglo-Saxon - Thunor; Norse - Thor; German - Donar.

These beliefs have had influence into modern times, such as naming of the week days.

English: Thunor/Thor - Thursday

German: Donar - Donnerstag



## Modern Influence

The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien draws inspiration from Northern European myths, which has influenced the fantasy genre as a whole. It introduced popular fantasy elements like elves, dwarves, and giants.

Tolkien created his own mythology by incorporating Anglo-Saxon, Irish, and Welsh myths.

J.R.R. Tolkien's family has roots in Kreuzburg, a town in East Prussia, which was established during the medieval German eastward expansion around 1620.

