

Bealdor

- The God of Light and Truth.
- Son of Woden and Frige.
- The most popular of all gods, he was loved by both men and gods.
- His story:
 - Bealdor dreamt of his own death. So his mother told everything in the World that it must swear never to harm him.
 - But she didn't ask the mistletoe because she thought it was not important enough.
 - The gods' favourite game was throwing things at Bealdor. They would just bounce off.
 - Loki, the god of cunning and deceit, made a spear out of mistletoe wood and gave it to Bealdor's blind brother to throw at him.
 - Bealdor was killed and had to go and live in the after-life, ruled over by Hell.
 - Hell promised to return Bealdor if everyone in the World wept for him.
 - Everyone did except for a giantess which turned out to be Loki in disguise. So Bealdor was unable to return to his family.



Eostre

- The goddess of Spring and of Rebirth.
- She seems to have been associated with the countryside waking up after Winter, and perhaps also with the Moon.
- Her sacred animal was probably the hare. Her other sacred symbol was probably the egg.
- Hares are famous for their complicated partner-choosing rituals that they do in Spring. Most birds begin to lay eggs again in Spring.
- Eostre's special month was April, which in Early English, was called 'Eostre's Month'.
- Easter is named after her. Easter eggs and the Easter Bunny come from her symbols.
- Hot-cross buns may also originally have been pagan offerings. They would have represented the four quarters of the Moon.
- Christians took over this pagan festival. They replaced the rebirth of the countryside with the resurrection (rebirth) of Jesus.



Freo

- Freo was the Anglo-Saxon goddess of Love. She should not be confused with Frige.
- She was the sister of Ingui (God of Fertility and King of Elves).
- She is incredibly beautiful and rules in matters of wealth and fertility as well as love.
- She wept golden tears when she was unhappy.
- Her sacred animals are the cat and the boar. Cats pulled her chariot, while she sometimes rode a boar. She also had a magic cloak of falcon feathers.
- One story tells how her necklace called 'Brisingamen' was stolen by Loki, the god of cunning and deceit. This is briefly mentioned in the Saxon poem, 'Beowulf'.
- A Viking story tells how the King of the Giants wanted to marry her and Thunor was forced to intervene.



Frige

- Frige was the Anglo-Saxon goddess of Marriage, Child-birth and the Home. She should not be confused with Freo.
- She was also a goddess of the Earth and the Harvest, and was married to Woden.
- She was the Queen of all Gods and Goddesses, her name means 'Beloved'.
- Her sacred animal was the stork. Her sacred tool was the spinning wheel.
- Her sacred constellation in the stars was 'Orion's Belt'. It is sometimes called 'Frige's Distaff'
- Her special day was Friday which means 'Frige's Day'.
- Her special month may have been September when the harvest was. This was called 'Holy Month' in Old English.



Thunor

- Thunor was the Anglo-Saxon god of Storms, Lightning and especially Thunder. He was the son of Woden and Frige.
- When Thunor was angry, he would strike his anvil with a huge hammer. The sound became thunder. The sparks became lightning.
- His sacred animal was the goat. Goats pulled his chariot. His sacred weapon was the hammer.
- There are lots of Viking stories about Thunor. Particularly popular was the one about his stolen hammer:
 - The King of the Giants stole Thunor's hammer.
 - With the help of Loki and Freo, he found out who the thief was.
 - The King would only return the hammer, if Freo would marry him, but she refused.
 - So Thunor dressed himself up as Freo in women's clothes!
 - The giant king was suspicious when he saw how Thunor's eyes burned and how much he drank. But he was told this was due to exhaustion because the bride had not slept for eight days and nights in her eagerness to be with him.
 - Then the bride was given the hammer. Thunor threw off his disguise and used his weapon to beat up the giants.
- His special day was Thursday which means 'Thunor's Day'.



Tiw

- Tiw was the Anglo-Saxon god of War and Combat.
- He was also a Sky God.
- His sacred animal was the wolf. He was usually shown with only one hand.
- This Viking story explains why:
 - The gods decided to tie up the giant 'Fenris Wolf' because they had predicted that it would kill Woden.
 - To do this, the dwarves made a special unbreakable ribbon.
 - But the wolf would not let the gods near him unless one of them put their hand in his mouth.
 - Tiw agreed to do this and so the gods were able to tie up the wolf.
 - The gods were then happy. All except Tiw, because, when the gods grabbed the wolf, it had bitten off his hand!
- His special day was Tuesday which means 'Tiw's Day'.



Wayland

- Wayland was the Anglo-Saxon god of metalworking.
- He was usually shown as a bearded man with a bent leg, working in a forge.
- The Vikings told this story about him:
 - Wayland was famous throughout Northern Europe and Scandinavia for the fabulously beautiful metalwork and jewelry that he made. All the gods and kings wanted to own it.
 - Niduth, the King of Sweden, decided he wanted to own everything Wayland made. So he sent his soldiers to capture him.
 - While they slept, Wayland and his brother, Egil, were tied up and brought to the Royal palace. Wayland was put to work on an island. To stop him escaping, the King shattered his leg with his own hammer. While Wayland made fantastic things for the King, he also plotted his revenge.
 - He had his brother catch wild birds from whose feathers he made a pair of magic wings.
 - Curious about his forge, Wayland was visited by the King's sons. The smith-god killed them and made their skulls into jewel-encrusted cups which he gave to Niduth and his queen.



- When it was found that the princes were missing, search parties were sent out across the kingdom.
- Their sister came searching on Wayland's island with her maidservant. He attacked them. Then put on his magic wings and flew off across the North Sea.
- English legend says that he eventually landed in Southern England. He set up home on the Berkshire Downs and was thought to have built a stone chambered house for himself. It is still known as 'Wayland's Smithy'.

Woden

- Woden was the Chief or King of the Anglo-Saxon gods. He also had the nickname of 'Grim'.
- He was the most powerful of the gods, and was particularly associated with Death and War. The Anglo-Saxons made sacrifices to him before battles.
- He was also a God of Wisdom and discovered (or invented) the Germanic writing system called runes.
- His sacred animal was the wolf. He had two pet wolves. He may be shown with them on the purse from the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial.
- His sacred bird was the raven. His sacred plant was the ash tree. His sacred weapon was the spear.
- He is sometimes shown with one eye.
- His special day was Wednesday which means 'Woden's Day'.
- He led the 'wild hunt'. These hunters rode across the night's sky on their black horses and with wild black dogs, searching for non-believers to punish.
- The Saxons often thought he must have built the huge prehistoric banks, ditches and barrows whose origins they didn't understand.

