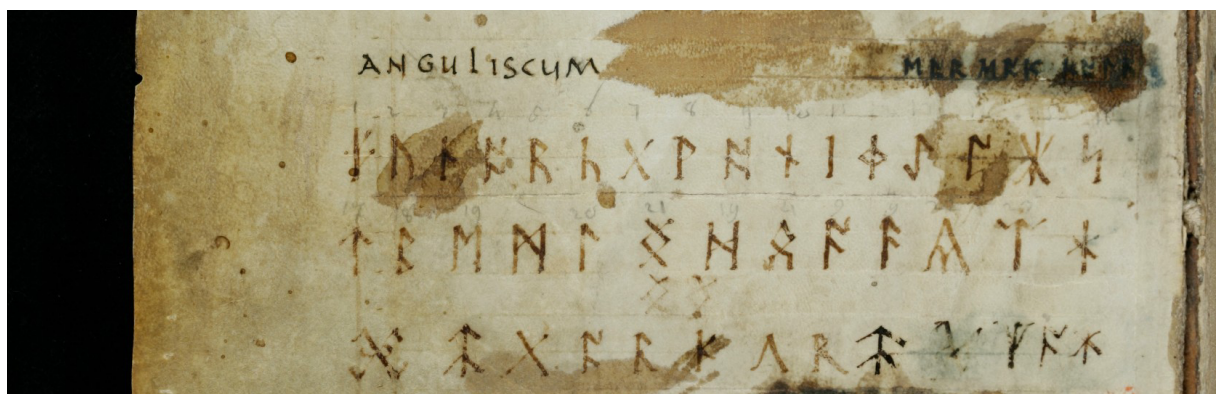## Anglo-Saxon Runes

The Anglo-Saxons brought their own writing system with them when they invaded the British Isles in the 5th century AD. The letters are called runes and were engraved on stone monuments and also on jewellery and weapons. This alphabet is called the *futhorc* – can you guess why?



(Note: þ = th)                    (Source: R.I. Page. An Introduction to English Runes, 1999)

(1)  Write your name in runes.

(2)  Exchange a short message with your neighbour.

(3)  The Anglo-Saxons had seen the Roman capital alphabet on public buildings and monuments. Are there any similarities between runes and the Roman capital letters we also use today?

(4)  Below you can see one part of a manuscript from the Abbey Library of St Gall with Anglo-Saxon runes on it. Compare this Anglo-Saxon alphabet with the one above. Can you spot any differences or extensions? Are there even characters that are not listed above? You can also visit this website https://unicode-table.com/en/blocks/runic/ if there is an unknown symbol.



Codex Sangallensis 878, p. 321

## Model Answers

(1)  Names: If the letter <v> is needed, use <f> or <w> instead; for <z> see the link.

(2)  Similarities with Roman capitals:

$$\mathsf{P} = \text{F} \qquad\qquad \mathsf{h} = \text{S}$$

$$\mathsf{R} = \text{R} \qquad\qquad \mathsf{\uparrow} = \text{T}$$

$$\mathsf{I} = \text{I} \qquad \mathsf{B} = \text{B}$$

$$\mathsf{H} = \text{H}$$

(3)  (Note: the origin of the runic script is unclear; the Roman alphabet or similar scripts probably played a role. Anglo-Saxon runes are distinct from South Germanic runes, which are found, for example, on the Scheibenfiebel from Bülach, on display in the Landesmuseum in Zurich).

(4)  Cod. Sang. 878: The rune list is reasonably similar to the one printed on the worksheet as far as rune 28 ea, afterwards, there is the "star" rune (perhaps the same as rune 12); a similarl rune is used in one Old High German text for the prefix *gi-* or *ga-* (Modern German *ge-*) and is perhaps a combination of the runes for *g* and *i*. The third row starts with rune 29, afterwards we find a baffling sequence of runes, which scholars can't fully decipher. The Christmas-tree-like symbol is probably a word-separator (or a double t-rune?). Many things about runes still remain a secret! (Note: the word *rune* actually means 'secret'!)