**Anglo Saxon Riddles**

This is a riddle about fire. The two dumb creatures in the second line are two sticks rubbed together to make a flame (or two stones struck together to make a spark).

A wonderful warrior exists on earth.
Two dumb creatures make him grow bright between them.
Enemies use him against one another.
His strength is fierce but a woman can tame him.
He will meekly serve both men and women
If they know the trick of looking after him
And feeding him properly.
He makes people happy.
He makes their lives better.
But if they let him grow proud
This ungrateful friend soon turns against them.

The Anglo-Saxons loved riddles. They told each other riddles as well as listening to poems at their feasts. Some of the riddles were written down, so we are able to read them today.

Some Anglo-Saxon riddles have survived as playground rhymes. This one comes from Tiptree in Essex. It may be over a thousand years old, and has been kept alive by children learning it from one another and repeating it in the playground.

Four dilly-dandies (teats on the udder)
Four stick standies (legs)
Two crookers (horns)
Two lookers (eyes)
And a wig wag (tail)

The answer is a cow.

Here are some more riddles for you to solve.

When I am alive I do not speak.
Anyone who wants to takes me captive and cuts off my head.
They bite my bare body
I do no harm to anyone unless they cut me first.
Then I soon make them cry.

Answer: an onion.

This one is about a creature and its home. Can you guess what it is?

My home is not quiet but I am not loud.
The lord has meant us to journey together.
I am faster than he and sometimes stronger,
But he keeps on going for longer.
Sometimes I rest but he runs on.
For as long as I am alive I live in him.
If we part from one another
It is I who will die.

Answer: a fish in a river.

Can you guess this next one? There are lots of these in the story of Beowulf.

I am all on my own,
Wounded by iron weapons and scarred by swords.
I often see battle.
I am tired of fighting.
I do not expect to be allowed to retire from warfare
Before I am completely done for.
At the wall of the city, I am knocked about
And bitten again and again.
Hard edged things made by the blacksmith's hammer attack me.
Each time I wait for something worse.
I have never been able to find a doctor who could make me better
Or give me medicine made from herbs.
Instead the sword gashes all over me grow bigger day and night.

Answer: a shield.

This last one is about a type of bird. What do you think it is?

I was abandoned by my mother and father.
I wasn't yet breathing.
A kind woman covered me with clothes,
Kept me and looked after me,
Cuddled me as close as if I had been her own child.
Under that covering I grew and grew.
I was unkind to my adopted brothers and sisters.
This lovely woman fed me
Until I was big enough to set out on my own.
She had fewer of her own dear sons and daughters because she did so.

Answer: a cuckoo.