Celt and Saxon: Interaction in pre-Viking Britain, c.600-800

Volume I

by

Martin R. Grimmer, B.Sc. (Hons), M.Psych.Org.

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania

November 2003
Copyright Statement

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

[Signature]

Martin R. Grimmer
12 November 2003
Declaration

I declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of another higher degree or diploma in any tertiary institution nor, so far as I am aware, any material published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Martin R. Grimmer
12 November 2003
Abstract

The thesis aims to present a history of the interaction between Anglo-Saxons and Celts in pre-Viking Britain, c.600-800. The study is organised into three parts which examine, respectively, Anglo-Celtic relations for southern, northern and midland Britain. Part One considers relations between the West Saxons and the Britons of Dumnonia and the south-west. Part Two investigates the Northumbrians and their contacts with the Britons of the north, the Scots of Dalriada, and the Picts. Part Three covers relations between the Mercians and the Britons of Wales. Each part of the thesis begins by presenting the relevant ethnographic material, as well as evidence for the development of kingship within the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic kingdoms under study. This is followed by an examination of the evidence for warfare, conquest and territorial expansion, as well as for military alliances as appropriate. Issues of assimilation, continuity and social exchange are then explored, pertaining in the first instance to the secular world, and subsequently to ecclesiastical interaction.

It is argued that the historian of Anglo-Celtic relations in pre-Viking Britain is confronted with a series of paradoxes. On the one hand, there is no doubt that aggression and antagonism remain central and continuing themes in the primary source material. But on the other, there are equally undoubted instances of alliance and accommodation. In part, the apparent paradoxes in the evidence exist because there has been no broad study in which different data and events are synthesised over a significant period of time, and over a wide geographical area. By providing an integrated and cross-regional study of Anglo-Celtic interaction, it is intended that a more considered and even-handed understanding of relations can be approached.

The thesis seeks to show that Anglo-Celtic relations in pre-Viking Britain cannot be categorised in any simplistic or essentialist manner. Interaction 'on the border' reveals that the contest between Anglo-Saxon and British kingdoms, and to a lesser extent Pictish and Scottish, was an important stimulus to their own political and economic development in the period. In addition, the degree of social exchange and cultural borrowing that occurred between Celts and Anglo-Saxons was moderated by the relative geographic distance of the different peoples from one another. It is concluded
that those Celts who had the greatest intensity of social exchange with the Anglo-
Saxons were not the neighbouring Britons but the more distant Scots and Picts.
Acknowledgments

As with any work the scale of a PhD, there are numerous people to thank. First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisors, Emeritus Professor Rod Thomson and Professor Michael Bennett of the School of History and Classics. Rod has been so generous with his time, and his books, which he will eventually get back! I have benefited enormously from his formidable grasp of the source material and the literature for medieval Britain, and for his willingness to drop everything to pursue a query for me. Michael’s knowledge of medieval, and early modern, British history is also formidable, and he too has been exceedingly generous with his time. He has been a source of insight and encouragement, and I appreciate the faith that he and Rod have shown in me throughout my candidature.

Thanks are due to Nick Higham, Duncan Probert and Alex Woolf for generously sending me copies of their work. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of those scholars who have replied to my often obscure e-mail inquiries: John Blair, John Hines, Simon Keynes, Lynnette Olson, Oliver Padel, Patrick Sims-Williams, and especially Nicholas Orme. I have benefited greatly from being involved in the debates on the ‘Northern Britain Discussion Group’ on Yahoo, and thank Craig Cessford, Tim Clarkson, Graeme Young, and especially Michelle Ziegler, also editor-in-chief of The Heroic Age. Michelle has been a reservoir for references, feedback and encouragement.

To my friend and colleague Clive Willingham, a wealth of thanks are due for proof-reading and editing the manuscript and for doing so with such diligence, dedication and good humour. I would like to express my appreciation to my workmates at the School of Management, for their support for what in their eyes has been a rather unusual research project, and to the Document Delivery staff at the Morris Miller Library, who have provided an excellent service in locating a large proportion of my bibliography. Last and by no means least, I would like to thank my partner Liane Anderson for her constant support and patience, and her willingness to endure far more early medieval British history than is probably healthy for a normal person. Liane has been a source of encouragement and solace and I could not have done this without her.
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. iv

Acknowledgments .............................................................................................................. vi

List of Tables ....................................................................................................................... xi

Abbreviations ....................................................................................................................... xii

Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
  General Introduction ......................................................................................................... 1
  Historiography ............................................................................................................... 6
  Primary Sources and their Problems ............................................................................ 21
  Conceptual Issues and Questions .................................................................................. 25
    Matters of Ethnicity ....................................................................................................... 25
    Warfare and Conquest .................................................................................................. 30
    Assimilation, Continuity and Social Exchange ............................................................ 34
  Summary .......................................................................................................................... 39

PART 1: WESSEX AND THE BRITONS OF THE SOUTH-WEST .................................. 41

Chapter 2: Mapping the Territory of the West Saxons and Britons of the South-West ...... 42
  West Saxons ................................................................................................................... 42
  Britons of the South-West ............................................................................................. 46
  Summary .......................................................................................................................... 50

Chapter 3: Warfare, Conquest and Territorial Expansion .............................................. 51
  The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle ........................................................................................... 51
  Warfare and Territorial Expansion in the Seventh Century .......................................... 56
  Warfare and Territorial Expansion in the Eighth Century ............................................ 59
  Summary .......................................................................................................................... 63

Chapter 4: Assimilation and Intermarriage ..................................................................... 65
  Social Segmentation of West Saxons and Britons:
    The Law Code of King Ine ......................................................................................... 65

vii
Interruption amongst West Saxons and Britons
and the Survival of British Identity .................................. 78
Summary .............................................................................. 86

Chapter 5: Ecclesiastical Interaction ..................................... 87
British Christianity in the South-West .................................. 88
Continuity from British to West Saxon Christianity .............. 91
Archaeological Evidence for British Ecclesiastical Continuity .. 92
Survival of Dedications to Celtic Saints ................................. 97
Monastic Charters and British Ecclesiastical Continuity ........ 101
Glastonbury ........................................................................ 102
Sherborne .......................................................................... 116
Aldhelm and the Letter to Geraint of Dumnonia .................. 124
Summary ............................................................................. 133

CONCLUSION TO PART 1 ....................................................... 135

PART 2: NORTHUMBRIA AND THE CELTS OF THE NORTH .......... 140

Chapter 6: Mapping the Territory of the Northumbrians
and Northern Celts ............................................................. 141
Northumbrians ...................................................................... 141
Northern Britons .................................................................... 150
Picts ..................................................................................... 157
Scots .................................................................................... 160
Summary ............................................................................. 164

Chapter 7: Warfare, Conquest and Territorial Expansion .......... 165
Northumbrians and Northern Britons .................................... 166
  Northumbrian Expansion Westward: Elmet and Rheged ...... 172
  Northumbrian Expansion Northward: Gododdin and Strathclyde . 187
Northumbrians and Picts ....................................................... 205
Northumbrians and Scots ..................................................... 217
Summary ............................................................................. 225

Chapter 8: Exile, Intermarriage and Assimilation .................... 227
Exiles and Travellers: Northumbrians Abroad in Celtic Lands .... 227
  Exile into British Lands ..................................................... 228
  Exile into Scottish Lands .................................................. 230
Chapter 9: Ecclesiastical Interaction ...........................................................................288
The Northumbrian and Northern British Churches ..............................................289
British Christianity in the North ..........................................................................290
Continuity from British to Northumbrian Christianity .......................................295
Archaeological Evidence for British Ecclesiastical Continuity ..............................296
Place-names and the Evidence of Dedications ......................................................298
The Evidence of the Life of Wilfrid ......................................................................304
The Case of Whithorn ............................................................................................305
The Columban Church in Northumbria .................................................................314
The Columban Mission to Northumbria .................................................................315
The Synod of Whitby and its Aftermath .................................................................323
The Northumbrian and Pictish Churches ...............................................................334
Pictish Christianity ...............................................................................................334
Ecclesiastical Interaction and Northumbrian Overlordship ...............................341
King Nechtan and the Introduction of Roman Christianity .................................346
Attitudes between Northumbrians and Northern Celts .......................................352
Bede and the Northumbrian Sources ....................................................................352
Adomnán and the Northern Celtic Sources ..........................................................360
Summary ...............................................................................................................363

CONCLUSION TO PART 2 .........................................................................................365

PART 3: MERCIA AND THE BRITONS OF WALES ..................................................368

Chapter 10: Mapping the Territory of the Mercians and Britons of Wales ......369
Mercians and Angles of the West Midlands ..........................................................369
Britons of Wales ....................................................................................................381
Summary ...............................................................................................................388
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 11: Warfare, Conquest and Territorial Expansion</th>
<th>390</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military Interaction in the Seventh Century</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the British Alliances of Penda of Mercia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Interaction in the Eighth Century</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the Building of Offa's Dyke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 12: Assimilation and Intermarriage</th>
<th>417</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermarriage amongst Angles and Britons</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Survival of British Identity</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 13: Ecclesiastical Interaction</th>
<th>427</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Christianity in Wales and the West Midlands</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity from British to Anglo-Saxon Christianity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the West Midlands</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence for the Conversion of Pagan Anglo-Saxon Immigrants</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Survival of British Christian Influence</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological Evidence for British Ecclesiastical Continuity</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place-name Evidence for British Ecclesiastical Continuity</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topographical Evidence for British Ecclesiastical Continuity</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Interaction between the Anglo-Saxon Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the Church of the Britons of Wales</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Augustine's Oak Conferences</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Interaction and Attitudes beyond Augustine's Oak</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION TO PART 3 .................................................. 469

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 14: Conclusion</th>
<th>472</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warfare, Conquest and Territorial Expansion</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation, Continuity and Social Exchange</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Conclusions</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bibliography .......................................................... 496
List of Tables

Table 1. Comparative *Wergilds* of Saxons and Britons in Ine’s Law Code ..........69

Table 2. Early West Saxon Charters with Scribal Attestations .........................108
Abbreviations

AC


AG


Aldhelm, *Epist.*


Alfred


Anon. *VCuth*


ASC


ASE

*Anglo-Saxon England*

ASSAH

*Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*

Asser


AU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>BBCS</em></td>
<td><em>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bede.VCuth</em></td>
<td><em>Vita Sancti Cuthberti auctore Beda</em>, cited by chapter from Colgrave, <em>Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>CMCS</em></td>
<td><em>Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies</em> (to 1991); <em>Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>EHR</em></td>
<td><em>English Historical Review</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Ine The Laws of Ine, laws cited by number from EHD, no. 32, pp. 364-72; text from Attenborough, The Laws of the Earliest English Kings, pp. 36-60.

JEH Journal of Ecclesiastical History


MGH Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Auct. antiqui Auctores antiquissimi
Epist. Epistolae
Poetae Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini

NH Northern History


Welsh History Review

Anglo-Saxon Charters


E.H. Bates (ed.), *Two Cartularies of the Benedictine Abbeys of Muchelney and Athelney in the County of Somerset*, Somerset Record Soc. 14, 1899.


Chapter 1

Introduction

General Introduction

In his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, Bede states that Æthelfrith, king of the Northumbrians (c.592-616), ‘ravaged the Britons more extensively than any other English ruler’, over-running British territory and ‘exterminating or enslaving the inhabitants’.\(^1\) In 603, Æthelfrith also fought against Aedan, king of the Scots of Dalriada, defeating him and destroying most of his army. Yet, Æthelfrith’s sons found safety in exile with the very same Scots, after their father was killed in 616, becoming Columban Christians and learning to speak their language fluently.\(^2\) It is further learned from Bede that Cadwallon, king of the British kingdom of Gwynedd (d.634), in his turn ‘[meant] to wipe out the whole English nation from the land of Britain’, and ravaged in Northumbria for a full year.\(^3\) Yet he readily allied with Penda, king of the Mercians (c.630-655) — who, unlike himself, was a pagan — as did his son Cadafael.\(^4\) Ecgfrith, king of the Northumbrians (c.672-685) and a grandson of Æthelfrith, fought campaigns against the Picts, on one occasion ‘filling two rivers with corpses’ and reducing them to ‘slavery’.\(^5\) Yet, his uncle Eanfrith had a son, Talorcan, who became a king of the Picts (c.653-657).\(^6\) In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the West Saxons are presented as pushing relentlessly westwards after their initial landings in the east, slaughtering Britons as they go.\(^7\) But Cerdic, the putative founder of the West Saxon house of the Gewisse, had a name which is probably derived from the British Caraticos.\(^8\)

These examples illustrate that any examination of the nature of relations between the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts of early medieval Britain is, in many respects, an exercise in the attempted illumination of paradox. On the one hand, there can be no doubt, even

---

1 *HE* I.34.
2 *HE* III.1,3,25.
3 *HE* II.20.
4 *HB* 65.
5 *VW* 19.
6 *AU* 657.
7 For example, *ASC* s.aa. 495, 508, 514, 527, 552, 571, 577, 614, 658, 682.
assuming some embellishment in the primary sources, that aggression and antagonism are central and continuing themes. But on the other, there are equally undoubted instances of alliance and accommodation. While it may be easy to talk in terms of mutual dislike between Anglo-Saxons and Celts, an understandable urge in light of the often lurid accounts of Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the actual picture is likely to be much more complex and multifarious.

There is general agreement amongst scholars that the nature of relations between the Anglo-Saxons and Celts is one of the central questions in the history of early medieval Britain. On general grounds, the history of any territory or kingdom needs to be placed within a broader context of regional interaction and relations. For Britain, this is no less true than elsewhere, given the long record of contact, or at least potential contact, between England and the Celtic-speaking countries. In addition, the early medieval period was a time of great historical transition from the ancient Roman world, when kingdoms were first emerging in Britain, and when significant ethnographic and cultural changes were occurring amongst the population. The matter of Anglo-Celtic interaction during this period is one of particular importance.

David Dumville has stated in regard to the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic kingdoms that ‘we can never hope fully to understand the culture of one without reference to those of the others’. Elsewhere he has spoken of ‘the complacently Anglocentric student of the early mediaeval (sic) culture of the British Isles [who] will miss much not only of its rich diversity but also of what cannot be explained in English history save by reference to that of the Britons’. To the Britons might be added the Scots and the Picts. Wendy Davies has similarly argued that the history of early Medieval Britain has been coloured by a decidedly ‘Anglocentric historiography’. While the dominance of the Anglo-Saxons over the Celts has been emphasised — typically in terms of conquest and settlement — the possibility of influence in the opposite direction has often been understated. It has been seen as easier to study the available evidence in terms of the

---

12 Dumville, "Beowulf" and the Celtic world", p. 110.
14 Davies, Patterns of Power, p. 68.
spread of Anglo-Saxon hegemony in Britain, rather than in terms of Celtic continuity, resistance, or even dominance. To fully understand the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts of Britain – their politics, culture and society – their mutual histories must be understood. These peoples, however they are identified, cannot be comprehended in isolation.

Despite the centrality of the matter, Anglo-Celtic relations in early medieval Britain have attracted only intermittent direct scholarly attention. In his inaugural lecture at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, delivered in 1978, Rees Davies observed that: ‘The study of the interactions of Saxons and Celts on each other and on their perception of the development of human organisation and society is a fascinating but strangely neglected field of study’. To be sure, this is a deficit which has been increasingly addressed in the literature over the last two decades. However, there remain major gaps. In 1981, Dumville complained that there existed no general survey of Anglo-Celtic contacts in the early medieval British Isles. He specifically stated that ‘there is no satisfactory comprehensive survey of Anglo-Brittonic links in the seventh and eighth centuries’. The question of relations in the fifth and sixth centuries has been taken up by scholars such as Kenneth Jackson, Patrick Sims-Williams, Dumville himself, and more recently by Nicholas Higham, Kenneth Dark and Chris Snyder, albeit in some cases from more specialist versus generalist positions, and not always specifically encompassing the Scots and Picts. Relations in the ninth

---

19 Some of the major works are canvassed in subsequent footnotes.
20 Dumville, ‘“Beowulf” and the Celtic world’, pp. 109-10, & n. 3.
21 Dumville, ‘“Beowulf” and the Celtic world’, p. 110, & n. 4.
22 K.H. Jackson, Language and History in Early Britain (Edinburgh, 1953).
26 Dark, Civitas to Kingdom.
27 Snyder, Age of Tyrants.
and tenth centuries have been canvassed by Dumville,\textsuperscript{28} and in the eleventh and later by Kari Maund\textsuperscript{29} and Rees Davies.\textsuperscript{30} However, for the seventh and eighth centuries, while there have certainly been individual studies of note,\textsuperscript{31} there has been a dearth of any work of synthesis or integration.

Thirteen years later in 1994, Dumville voiced a similar lament over the lack of a general survey during a conference on the early Anglo-Saxons, the proceedings of which were published in 1997.\textsuperscript{32} In a concluding symposium discussion entitled ‘Current Issues and Future Direction in the Study of the Early Anglo-Saxon Period’, he asserted that one of the problems in trying to understand the Anglo-Saxons and their neighbours was that ‘there was no “book” which contained readily accessible single items on [their] relationship’.\textsuperscript{33} He went on to say that ‘it would be a provisional effort, but an enormously useful book for a lot of people’. The need for such a work was upheld by others at the symposium, such as Heinrich Härke and John Hines, who affirmed that more attention could be given to relations between the Anglo-Saxons and the ‘British, Gaelic and Pictish populations in the West and North’.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{30} R.R. Davies, Domination and Conquest. The Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100-1300 (Cambridge, 1990).
\textsuperscript{31} From a gradually expanding list, the following studies could be mentioned: L.M. Alexander, ‘The legal status of the native Britons in late seventh-century Wessex as reflected by the Law Code of Ine’, \textit{Haskins Society Journal} 7 (1995), pp. 31-8; S. Bassett, ‘How the west was won: the Anglo-Saxon takeover of the west Midlands’, \textit{ASSAHand Conquest}. The Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100-1300 (Cambridge, 1990).
\textsuperscript{32} This conference, entitled ‘The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century’, was the second in a series on ‘Studies in Historical Archaeoetymology’, and published as Hines, \textit{Anglo-Saxons}.
\textsuperscript{34} Ausenda, ‘Current issues and future directions’, p. 432.
\end{flushright}
Perhaps part of the apparent paradox in Anglo-Celtic relations comes from there being no clear overview in which different data and events are synthesised over a significant period of time, and over a wide geographical area. It cannot be assumed that events took the same course in all parts of Britain; regional differences assuredly exist, both in terms of the available evidence and in terms of the nature of the peoples residing therein. There have, certainly, been early medieval histories written recently of the different polities of Britain: of Wales, Cornwall, and Scotland, and of Anglo-Saxon England and its major kingdoms. However, interaction between the different Anglo-Saxon and Celtic kingdoms and relations between their respective peoples, while necessary to acknowledge in view of the primary source material, has not received adequate attention. The present thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature by providing the first comprehensive survey of interactions between the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts in pre-Viking Britain, c.600-800.

In order to provide the necessary cross-regional integration, this thesis is organised into three parts which, in turn, examine Anglo-Celtic relations for southern, northern and midland Britain. Part One considers relations between the West Saxons and the Britons of Dumnonia and the south-west. Part Two investigates the Northumbrians and their contacts with the Britons of the north, the Scots of Dalriada, and the Picts. Part Three covers relations between the Mercians and the Britons of Wales, also encompassing the other polities of the West Midlands. This structure – namely, drawing out the nature of Anglo-Celtic interaction in these three regions separately – is intended to facilitate a

35 Hills, 'Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England', p. 52.
36 W. Davies, Wales in the Early Middle Ages (Leicester, 1982); K. Maund, The Welsh Kings (Stroud, 2000).
comparison between them, and avoid any over-simplification that might arise from the treatment of all 'Anglo-Saxons' and 'Celts' as homogeneous peoples.\footnote{The issue of ethnicity and 'peoples' will be considered presently (infra., pp. 25-30).} The thesis will conclude with an overall synthesis in which the different regions are compared, and relations between the Anglo-Saxons and their different Celtic neighbours integrated so as to evaluate the possibility of an overall pattern of interaction. The remainder of the current chapter will review background material necessary in order to understand the study of Anglo-Celtic relations in pre-Viking Britain. A brief historiography of the question of Anglo-Celtic interaction will be provided, followed by a discussion of the source material. Several conceptual issues which underlie the questions of interest to this investigation will be discussed, namely, those of identity and ethnicity, warfare and conquest, and assimilation and continuity. The structure of the thesis will be summarised at the conclusion of the chapter.

**Historiography**

The period c.600-800 has not attracted a long history of direct scholarship concerning Anglo-Celtic interaction in Britain. Conceptions of the topic have, rather, been influenced by, and subsumed under, the more pervasive and enduring debate surrounding the nature of the Anglo-Saxon arrival in Britain. While the Anglo-Saxon \textit{adventus} encompasses the sub-Roman period in Britain, c.400-600, and therefore precedes the one under investigation in the current thesis, its portrayal has nevertheless had a direct influence on how general notions of Anglo-Celtic interaction in the early middle ages have been constructed. In this regard, thinking about the \textit{adventus} has leaked over to inform views of how the Anglo-Saxons and Britons, in particular, related to one another in the succeeding pre-Viking centuries in Britain and how the border between them developed. A closely-linked development in historical thinking that has also affected how relations between Anglo-Saxons and Celts have been viewed – and one which draws in not just the Britons but also the Scots, and to a certain extent the Picts – concerns their representation as structural opposites.\footnote{S. Piggott, \textit{Celts, Saxons and the Early Antiquaries: The O'Donnell Lecture 1966} (Edinburgh, 1967), p. 3. See also D.E. Evans, 'Celts and Germans', \textit{BBCS} 29 (1981-2), pp. 230-1; M. McDonald, 'Celtic ethnic kinship and the problem of being English', \textit{Current Anthropology} 27 (1986), p. 336; P. Sims-Williams, 'The visionary Celt: The construction of an ethnic preconception', \textit{CMCS} 11 (1986), p. 71.} These issues will be reviewed in the current section.
When the first substantive modern narrative histories of the Anglo-Saxons and their arrival in Britain appeared in England in the first half of the nineteenth century, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic scholarship had already witnessed several centuries of development. The emphasis of Anglo-Saxon scholarship up to that point had centred around the adulation of the Anglo-Saxon period 'as a golden age of free institutions' and of popular liberties. As England broke with Catholic Europe in the sixteenth century and the Church of England was created, interest was stimulated in the primitive Anglo-Saxon church. Reformers wished to demonstrate that England was simply returning to an older, purer, more religious orthodoxy that had been lost in the centuries after the Norman Conquest. With the dissolution of the monasteries, secular scholars began to retrieve Anglo-Saxon records that had been housed therein, and thus more sources were brought to light which could be used to assist in the creation of a distinctively English history. In the seventeenth century, what had been an overriding interest in the antiquity of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, gave way to a concern for their political and legal institutions. Parliamentarians found that Anglo-Saxon England could be used to provide a historical rationale for the alleged antiquity of Parliament, and the protection afforded by Common Law could be traced, correctly or otherwise, to the variety of Anglo-Saxon law codes. This theme of democracy and freedom was given further impetus in the eighteenth century and was picked up, for example, by elements in the English migration to America, who constructed Anglo-Saxon England as a land free from the constraints of feudalism.

Early Celtic scholarship in Britain had a strong philological emphasis. Indeed, it was not until the early inhabitants of Britain and Ireland were collectively labelled by philologists as Celts around the turn of the eighteenth century that it even became

---

46 Frantzen & Venegoni, 'Desire for origins', p. 144; Piggott, Celts, Saxons and the Early Antiquaries, pp. 11–12. Note, for example, Richard Verstegan's Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities concerning the most Noble and Renowned English Nation of 1605, in which he was anxious to demonstrate the glories of the Anglo-Saxon past.
48 Thomas Jefferson, for example, had a deep interest in Anglo-Saxon studies and even proposed putting the legendary Anglo-Saxon leaders, Hengist and Horsa, on one side of the Great Seal of the United States. See Horsman, 'Origins of racial Anglo-Saxonism', p. 80.
possible to talk of a 'Celtic' past for Britain or of 'Anglo-Celtic' relations.\textsuperscript{49} The word Celt had been used in various forms during the sixteenth century and earlier, principally in reference to the inhabitants of Gaul.\textsuperscript{50} By the end of that century, however, it began to be applied to the ancient Insular peoples. George Buchanan in his \textit{Rerum Scoticarum Historia} of 1582 suggested a Celtic origin for the Irish and Scottish Gaels (or Highlanders).\textsuperscript{51} A century later, the Breton scholar Paul-Yves Pezron linked the ancient Britons with the Gauls, resulting in the Britons receiving the appellation 'Celts'.\textsuperscript{52} Yet, it was the publication of Edward Lhuyd's \textit{Archaeologia Britannica} in 1707 that provided the first secure assessment that Welsh, Breton, Scottish Gaelic and Irish shared a linguistic similarity. He was the first to promulgate the term 'Celt' to link all these languages and \textit{ipso facto} peoples.\textsuperscript{53} It is from Lluyd's work that is gleaned the 'p-Celtic' versus 'q-Celtic' dichotomy to differentiate the Brythonic/Brittonic language group (i.e. Welsh, Cornish and Breton) from the Goidelic/Gaelic (i.e. Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx).\textsuperscript{54} What Lluyd's work also served to do was stimulate increasing interest in the ancient, now 'Celtic', peoples of Britain during the eighteenth century, which heralded the beginnings of their romantic idealisation.\textsuperscript{55}


\textsuperscript{50} See Piggott, \textit{Celts, Saxons and the Early Antiquaries}, p. 6, and the examples quoted therein. I am not here considering ancient uses of the term Celt by Classical writers, but rather how it was employed in early modern scholarship.

\textsuperscript{51} Collis, 'Celtic myths', p. 197; E.J. Cowan, 'The invention of Celtic Scotland', in Cowan & McDonald, \textit{Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages}, p. 7; Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celto scepticism', p. 15. This was not translated from the Latin until 1827 by J. Aikman. Cowan, 'The invention of Celtic Scotland', pp. 5-22, has recently reviewed the medieval and early modern historiography of the Scottish Gaels and of their inclusion under the 'Celtic' banner.

\textsuperscript{52} This was not an altogether original idea; authors of antiquity such as Tacitus (e.g. \textit{Agricola}, ch. 11) had commented upon their similarity. And Pezron was perhaps just the most noticeable of a range of scholars engaging in debate on the topic at the time. But it was with the translation of Pezron's 1703 work \textit{'L'Antiquite de la Nation et de la Langue des Celtes'} into English three years later by David Jones as \textit{'The Antiquites of Nations: More particularly of the Celtae or Gauls, Taken to be Originally the same People as our Ancient Britains'}, that the ancient Britons first came to be called 'Celts'. See McDonald, 'Celtic ethnic kinship', p. 335; Piggott, \textit{Celts, Saxons and the Early Antiquaries}, pp. 10-11. Camden, in his \textit{Britannia} (1586), had earlier argued for the affinity of Gaulish and British, though without applying the term 'Celtic'.

\textsuperscript{53} M. Chapman, \textit{The Celts: The Construction of a Myth} (New York, 1992), p. 205; B.F. Roberts, 'Edward Lluyd and Celtic linguistics', in D.E. Evans, J.G. Griffith & E.M. Jope (eds.), \textit{Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies} (Oxford, 1986), p. 7. Contra. Cowan, 'The invention of Celtic Scotland', pp. 11-12, who would prefer to give prime position in this use of the term Celt to John Toland, an Edinburgh-trained Celtic philologist who was drafting his ideas in the 1690s. It may have been Toland who inspired Lluyd to visit the Highlands, and thus to expand beyond his previous focus on Wales and the Britons.

\textsuperscript{54} Roberts, 'Edward Lluyd and Celtic linguistics', p. 6.

\textsuperscript{55} McDonald, 'Celtic ethnic kinship', pp. 335-6; Piggott, \textit{Celts, Saxons and the Early Antiquaries}, pp. 18-20. The eighteenth century saw the Celts associated with a revived interest in Druidism, with monuments such as Stonehenge (thanks to John Aubrey), with the enormously influential Ossianic forgeries produced by James Macpherson, and with Edward Williams (renamed Iolo Morganwg) and his invented Gorsedd rites performed on Primrose Hill, London, in 1792. Cowan, 'The invention of Celtic Scotland', p. 19.
It was as a consequence of this period of romanticism that notions emerged of the Celts as being somehow different, or removed, from the better known peoples of Europe, including the English. The Celts came to be constructed as 'other-worldly': impractical, natural, fickle and poetic. This conception of 'Celt as other' was not entirely a new idea. Peoples who were now called Celts had been subject to the primitivist thinking of earlier writers. Englishmen had long regarded the Irish as degenerate and savage, the Scottish Highlanders as barbarian, and the peoples on the 'Celtic border' as brutes of the first order. The Welsh, though, did come to enjoy the reflected prestige of their association with the Tudor dynasty, and indeed with that most celebrated Briton, King Arthur. Celts too had often colluded in the racial myths offered to them by the English. It also needs to be acknowledged that both Celts and Anglo-Saxons had been subject to the romanticism of the eighteenth century. The call to the 'free Anglo-Saxon' past, frequently made by those advocating renewal or revolution, was not dissimilar to the elaboration of the Celts as unpredictable, natural and free. However, the nineteenth century saw a transformation of views such that the Anglo-Saxons came to embody progress, materialism, industrialisation and

quotes the controversial scholar John Pinkerton, writing at the end of the eighteenth century: 'this may be called the Celtic century, for all Europe has been inundated with nonsense about the Celts'.

57 Sims-Williams, 'The visionary Celt', p. 72. This view of the Celts was given full voice in the work of nineteenth-century figures such as Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold (infra., pp. 13-14).
civilisation — in other words, the antithesis of the Celts. The Anglo-Saxon period was mined as a 'rationale for the domination of peoples', rather than for their liberty.

A number of developments explain this shift in position, which it is not the intention to rehearse here in any detail. The new interest in racial theory and the so-called 'science of man' played a part, resulting in arguments for national 'racial' unity, and for the superiority of the Germanic race, with the Anglo-Saxons being the realisation of the full potential of the German. The nineteenth century also witnessed the unparalleled spread of the British Empire across the world, into Asia, Africa and the Pacific. By the 1820s, dominion was claimed over roughly twenty-five per cent of the world's population. It was in this climate that scholars looked to the Anglo-Saxon period for the origins of the manifestly obvious ability of the English, at the head of the Empire, to dominate. Thus, the Anglo-Saxon arrival in Britain came to be given substantive treatment in the standard histories of the day.

Two influential themes are discernible in nineteenth-century views of the Anglo-Saxon adventus, and subsequent interactions with the Celts of Britain. The first is represented in the work of John Mitchell Kemble, arguably the most important Anglo-Saxon scholar of the nineteenth century. In The Saxons in England, published in 1849, Kemble interpreted the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain as a process of complete, though gradual, Germanisation; he did not accept that there was any Romano-British survival in terms of institutions or language. However, he exercised a great degree of scepticism concerning the sources for the invasion, which he regarded as, 'a confused mass of traditions borrowed from the most heterogeneous sources, compacted crudely and with little ingenuity, and in which the smallest possible amount of historical truth is involved...

---

63 McDonald, 'Celtic ethnic kinship', p. 336; Sims-Williams, 'The visionary Celt', p. 74.
64 Horsman, 'Origins of racial Anglo-Saxonism', p. 77.
67 See B. Dickins, 'John Mitchell Kemble and Old English scholarship', Proceedings of the British Academy 25 (1939), pp. 51-84; R.A. Wiley, 'Anglo-Saxon Kemble: the life and works of John Mitchell Kemble 1807-1857, philologist, historian, archaeologist', ASSAH 1 (1979), pp. 165-273. Kemble had studied in Germany, and was one of the first English scholars to introduce the objectivist methods of German philology into the English mainstream. This gave his work a greater air of scholarship and technical proficiency than had been evidenced in English histories up to that time.
in a great deal of fable'. His convictions regarding the Germanisation of Britain came more from his research into the philology of Old English. Nonetheless, the Anglo-Saxon period provided Kemble with the foundations for the legitimacy of English institutions and imperial rule. Donald White has summarised Kemble's views thus: 'England owed nothing to "degenerate Greeks and enervated Romans" not to mention the Celts whom the Anglo-Saxons had driven out or enslaved.'

This latter theme struck a chord in the hearts of other English scholars, namely, Kemble's expression of the legitimacy of English rule as a continuous heritage from the Anglo-Saxon period. This was reflected in contemporary notions of the Manifest Destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race to dominate, and also to shelter, protect and support other less-favourably blessed races such as the Celts. And as Christopher Hill pointed out, 'Only when Saxon freedom had ceased to be a rallying cry for the discontented masses did it begin to be enthusiastically taught in the lecture-rooms of Oxford'. In essence, Kemble's work provided the foundation for the transformation of Anglo-Saxonism into an expression of dominance which was in structural opposition to the marginal 'fringe-dwelling' Celts.

What did not strike a chord, though, were Kemble's views on the usefulness of the primary sources. Later nineteenth-century historians, rather, followed the lead of the antiquarian Edwin Guest, who is representative of a second theme of nineteenth-century thinking regarding the Anglo-Saxon invasion. In 1849, the same year in which Kemble's *The Saxons in England* was published, Guest read a paper before the Salisbury meeting of the Archaeological Institute – Kemble was in the chair – in which he presented an account of the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons which both defended and

---


70 *The Saxons in England* was, indeed, dedicated to Queen Victoria, 'our exalted Lady, who sits safe on her throne ... secure in the affections of a people whose institutions have given them all the blessing of equal law' (*Saxons in England*, vol. I, p. v).


72 For instance, in commenting on Kemble's work, the *Edinburgh Review* concluded that 'the true mission of the Germanic people [in the 5th and 6th centuries] was to renovate and reorganise the western world ... re-infusing life and vigour ... into the effete and marrowless institutions of the Roman world' (*Edinburgh Review* 89, January 1849, p. 82, cited in Horsman, 'Origins of racial Anglo-Saxonism', p. 93).

73 This view was popularised amongst other outlets, in the short-lived magazine of 1849 and 1850 called *The Anglo-Saxon* (see Horsman, 'Origins of racial Anglo-Saxonism', pp. 97-8).


showed a complete confidence in the literal truth of the primary sources.\footnote{This paper is reprinted in Guest's \textit{Origines Celticae} (London, 1883), vol. II. See also White, 'Changing views of the \textit{adventus Saxonum}', pp. 587-8.} For Guest, Bede's account of the advent of the Anglo-Saxons was sacrosanct, as was that of the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle}, and both showed that the Britons had been removed in a violent displacement, with explicit references to extermination and massacre. Under this view, the border was pushed back through violent struggle and terrible slaughter; and the Celtic Britons were ultimately confined within the isolation of the mountainous and remote west and north of Britain.

Both Kemble's legitimation of English dominance, and Guest's credulous acceptance of the primary sources became united into the orthodoxy of the later nineteenth century, represented at its most extreme in the work of the 'Teutomaniac' Edward Freeman.\footnote{Freeman is famously quoted: 'Though the literal extirpation of a nation is an impossibility, there is every reason to believe that the Celtic inhabitants of those parts of Britain which had become English at the end of the sixth century had been as nearly extirpated as a nation can be. The women would doubtless be often spared; but as far as the male sex is concerned, we may feel sure that death, emigration or personal slavery were the only alternatives that the vanquished found at the hands of our fathers ... How far the vanquished were slain, how far they were simply driven out, we can 'never tell. It is enough that they were exterminated, got rid of in one way or another, within what now became the English border' (\textit{Four Oxford Lectures: Teutonic Conquest in Gaul and Britain}, London, 1888, pp. 74, 76). The 'Teutomaniac' reference is from Gilley, 'English attitudes to the Irish in England', p. 86.} More moderate and influential were others such as William Stubbs and John Richard Green, who both produced some of the standard academic and popular texts of their day.\footnote{For example, J.R. Green, \textit{A Short History of the English People} (London, 1894); W. Stubbs, \textit{Selected Charters Illustrative of English Constitutional History} (Oxford, first published 1870, revised 1913-69), and \textit{idem., The Constitutional History of England, In its Origin and Development} (Oxford, 1891).} Green achieved possibly the widest currency in his work, and for him:

\begin{quote}
Not a Briton remained as subject or slave on English ground. Sullenly, inch by inch, the beaten men drew back from the land which the conquerors had won; and eastward of the line which the English sword had drawn all was now purely English.\footnote{J.R. Green, \textit{History of the English People} (London, 1877), vol. 1, p. 28.}
\end{quote}

The representation of the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons as an 'invasion' of entire tribes thus became the prevailing nineteenth-century conviction. This has been variously labelled as the 'Germanist view' or the 'clean-sweep theory': one of wholesale displacement of the Celtic Britons, by a mass migration of Anglo-Saxons.\footnote{Higham, \textit{Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons}, p. 3; K.H. Jackson, 'Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria,' in H. Lewis (ed.), \textit{Angles and Britons: O'Donnell Lectures} (Cardiff, 1963), p. 73.} According to this view, the Anglo-Saxons simply 'swept-up' the British population wherever they went, driving many westwards, killing off the majority of the remainder, and allowing
remnants to live on only as slaves. The true 'racial' and institutional heritage of England was held to be Germanic, not Celtic.  

And Anglo-Celtic interaction was regarded as exclusively antagonistic.

This is not to say that there were no qualifications made of the pure Germanist view, nor any dissenting voices. Sir Francis Palgrave had, earlier in the century, argued for the survival of the British population after the Anglo-Saxon adventus, in the form of a dependent peasantry on estates which were taken over by new Anglo-Saxon lords.  

Green himself, though accepting that the Britons were driven out of the east, did argue for more interaction and assimilation in the west, closer to what became the Welsh border. Indeed, the pure Anglo-Saxonist view could be a 'tangle of inconsistencies' that ranged from pure bigotry to bona fide acknowledgment of difference. Freeman and his compatriots did not go unchallenged, and the Celts of course had their nineteenth-century champions. The essayist Grant Allen, for instance, argued for a significant Celtic contribution to Anglo-Saxon England. Anthropologists and natural scientists such as Thomas Huxley and John Beddoe spoke of the mixed racial 'stock' making up the population of England, which included an appreciable Celtic component. Of most importance were Matthew Arnold and his colleague Ernest Renan. Arnold's influential Oxford Lectures given in 1865-6 on The Study of Celtic Literature, inspired wide popular and scholarly interest in Celtic-speaking peoples, and their culture. What the work of Renan and Arnold served to do, however, was perpetuate the traditional antithesis of Celt versus Saxon, but with the Celt in the

81 Ward-Perkins, 'Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?', p. 518.
82 This was first argued by Palgrave in his The Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth of 1832. Palgrave also argued for the continuity of Roman institutions and law in western Europe after the fifth century; though he was less easily able to uncover relevant evidence for Britain, he emphasised the continuity of Roman 'symbols' and rulership such as in Bede's list of imperium-wielding kings (HE II.5). See the references cited in R. Smith, 'European nationality, race, and commonwealth in the writings of Sir Francis Palgrave, 1788-1861', in A. Smyth (ed.), Medieval Europeans: Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe (Hampshire, 1998), pp. 233-53, and esp. pp. 239-41.
84 S. Gilley, 'English attitudes to the Irish in England', p. 88.
85 Ward-Perkins, 'Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?', p. 519.
87 T. Huxley, 'The forefathers and forerunners of the English people', Pall Mall Gazette, January 10 (1870), pp. 8-9, reprinted in Biddiss, Images of Race, pp. 159-69; J. Beddoe, The Races of Britain (London, 1885).
88 Published as M. Arnold, On the Study of Celtic Literature (London, 1867). Renan's most influential essay, 'La Poesie des races celtique', 'The poetry of the Celtic races', was published in 1854. At a similar time, the 'rediscovery' of Scottish (Gaelic-speaking) Highland culture and history was being promoted through the work of the largely unsung scholar W.F. Skene, especially his three volume Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban (Edinburgh, 1876-80). On Skene's contribution, see Cowan, 'The invention of Celtic Scotland', pp. 1-4.
favourable position. The structural opposition remained secure, as did the generalised Romantic picture of the Celts.\textsuperscript{89}

Notwithstanding these qualifications, the Germanist view persisted well into the twentieth century even though ingenuous belief in the veracity of the primary sources did not. W.H. Stevenson, for example, attacked those historians – notably Guest – who unreservedly accepted the received accounts of the Anglo-Saxon invasion, calling ‘the methods old … the evidence loosely interpreted or perverted’ and claiming that there could be no justification for the uncritical manner in which the chronicles were used.\textsuperscript{90} Hector Munro Chadwick, on the basis of early Anglo-Saxon law codes, postulated a more layered view of Anglo-Saxon society which allowed for Celtic survival predominantly at the lower levels of the social hierarchy.\textsuperscript{91} L.F. Rushbrook Williams similarly provided a considered analysis of the status of the Britons in seventh-century Wessex as revealed by Ine’s Law Code – the ‘alien population in his western dominions’.\textsuperscript{92}

Even with a more critical eye to the sources, the Germanist view prevailed amongst both the scholarly community and in more popular volumes, though without the overt racialism that could be seen in nineteenth-century scholarship.\textsuperscript{93} Some still spoke in quite vivid fire and sword imagery.\textsuperscript{94} Sir Frank Stenton in his Anglo-Saxon England first published in 1943, was less emotional but still argued that the sources were ‘unlikely to be very far from the truth’, and he talked of the English over-running the Britons, referring to their arrival as a ‘folk migration’.\textsuperscript{95} Dorothy Whitelock writing in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[89] Davies, Historical Perception, p. 19; McDonald, ‘Celtic ethnic kinship’, p. 336; Sims-Williams, ‘The visionary Celt’, p. 74.
\item[90] W.H. Stevenson, ‘Dr Guest and the English Conquest of South Britain’, \textit{EHR} 17 (1902), pp. 625-42.
\item[93] Gelling, ‘Why aren’t we speaking Welsh?’, p. 53; Sims-Williams, ‘The settlement of England’, p. 4; White, ‘Changing views of the \textit{adventus Saxorum}’, p. 589. See especially R. Lennard, ‘The character of the Anglo-Saxon conquests: a disputed point’, \textit{History} New Series 18 (1933), p. 204, for a summary of the views of his day: ‘today it would, I suppose, be more orthodox to maintain … that “the Saxons, Jutes and English worked together against the Britons”, that “the Saxons swept with fire and sword all over eastern Britain, and even as far as the Western Sea”’. \textit{Contra.} J.N.L. Myres, \textit{The English Settlements} (Oxford, 1937), pp. 444-5, who offered a different opinion: ‘While there have been few advocates at any time of the idea that the native population was completely annihilated, there have been many scholars who displayed the tendency to reduce its survival to the lowest terms and to speak of it as an altogether negligible factor … the best anthropological opinion would appear to envisage a very considerable degree of British survival’. He argued that ‘the survivors of the native population were mostly to be found in the slave class, which appears to have been very large in early times’ (p. 447).
\item[94] For example, G.M. Trevelyon, \textit{History of England} (London, 1926), pp. 28-9, talked of the English ‘storming the earthwork camps … burning the towns and villas … slaughtering and driving away the Romanised Britons’.
\item[95] F.M. Stenton, \textit{Anglo-Saxon England} (Oxford, 1943), pp. 1, 18, 30-1, 64.
\end{footnotes}
1952, similarly did not entertain the possibility of any significant ethnic continuity between Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England. The validity of the Germanist view was simply assumed by many scholars, and any new work had to be reconciled with it. This was facilitated by the development of history syllabuses in the early twentieth century that, while being labelled 'British', were more accurately 'English'. And indeed, placename research and archaeology both seemed to confirm this view, at least in a general way. The small number of Celtic placenames in England; the truism that English is spoken in most of Britain and not Welsh, and the limited presence of the Britons in the archaeological record all implied that there were considerable numbers of Anglo-Saxons, and that there could not have been a substantial survival of Britons within Anglo-Saxon England.

The principal thrust of the scholarship which eventually led to an alteration of the Germanist hegemony occurred after World War II, when there appears to have been some anxiety within archaeological circles to redress the direct equation of Anglo-Saxons with Germans. There was perhaps an impetus to distance the ancestors of the modern English from the ancestors of the Germans. Archaeologists began to argue more frequently for continuity between Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England, in terms of issues such as Roman forms of land tenure, so-called Romano-Saxon pottery, the survival of the 'Celtic field' system, and of Celtic art forms. In addition, the migratory explanation for the origin of peoples began to go out of vogue, partly due to its association with earlier European imperialism, but also because it came to be viewed as a crude explanation for social and cultural change. Within historical circles, the

97 J. Moreland, 'Ethnicity, power and the English', in W.O. Frazer & A. Tyrrell (eds.), *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (London, 2000), p. 28. Moreland notes, for example, the tendency for early twentieth-century archaeologists to attempt to locate their work within the context provided by Bede.
98 Davies, *Historical Perception*, pp. 24-5; Lowenthal, 'British national identity and the English landscape', *Rural History* 2 (1991), p. 209. Davies argued that 'It is one of the oddities, even absurdities, of academic history courses in Britain that they have generally chosen to ignore the peoples of Scotland, Ireland and Wales except at those moments when they have impinged, often unpleasantly and obstreperously, on the history of England'. Indeed, even the recent television series hosted by Simon Schama, his *History of Britain* which screened in Australia in 2001-02, remained Anglo-centric in its content and approach.
most persistent attacks on the Germanist view of the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons came from Celtic scholars, who began to argue for large scale Celtic British survival within eastern Britain.\textsuperscript{104} Celtic peoples had been the first to bear the brunt of English expansionism, and thus might otherwise have been expected to harbour a continued antagonistic impression of Anglo-Celtic relations. However, the traditional Germanist view presented a dismal picture of the Celtic Britons: a people emasculated by Roman occupation, harassed and bewildered by repeated invasion, incapable of defending themselves, and thus easy prey for the heroic Anglo-Saxon invaders. This was hardly a flattering image. In promoting large scale British survival, and a small scale Anglo-Saxon settlement, Celticists were arguing for a re-evaluation of this representation.

The impact of this scholarship can be demonstrated most clearly by looking at one of the main avenues through which it first began to be promulgated, namely, the O'Donnell Lectures. These lectures were established under the terms of the will of Charles James O'Donnell, an Irishman who died in 1934, and were founded to encourage discussion of the relations between the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon peoples of Britain and Ireland.\textsuperscript{105} Specifically, O'Donnell wished that the lectures should examine the 'British or Celtic element in the existing population of England', which he firmly believed to be 'quite nine tenths of the whole'.\textsuperscript{106} He considered that the Britons largely survived the Anglo-Saxon arrival, and to quote Leslie Alcock, that 'if you scratch an Englishman, you will find a Briton beneath the skin'.\textsuperscript{107}

O'Donnell's agenda necessarily permeated the lectures given under his name.\textsuperscript{108} Even if some of the speakers were not persuaded by his overtly partisan ideology, many

---


\textsuperscript{105} Sims-Williams, 'The visionary Celt', p. 71. The first lecturer appointed was J.R.R. Tolkien in 1954. A catalogue of O'Donnell lectures from 1955-90 has been compiled by C. Parker, at http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/sewms/swmss/online/modern/odonnell/odonnell.html; the collection is held at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

\textsuperscript{106} See Evans, 'Celts and Germans', p. 230, and H. Lewis (ed.), \textit{Angles and Britons: O'Donnell Lectures} (Cardiff, 1963), p. v, for the terms of O'Donnell's will which were more specifically directed towards 'the British or Celtic element in the English language'.

\textsuperscript{107} L. Alcock, \textit{Economy, Society and Warfare among the Britons and Saxons} (Cardiff, 1987), p. 267

\textsuperscript{108} O'Donnell's agenda, particularly after World War Two, also served the cause of the various elements of Celtic nationalism. For example, there was a nationalistic surge in Wales in the 1960s (G. Evans & D. Trystan, 'Why was 1997 different?', in B. Taylor & K. Thomson (eds.), \textit{Scotland and Wales: Nations Again?}, Cardiff, 1999, p. 96). In 1962, Saunders Lewis gave a BBC Wales Radio Lecture entitled 'The Fate of the Language', in which he warned against the imminent demise of spoken Welsh (F. Delaney, \textit{The Celts}, London, 1986, p. 156). It served the fight for the Welsh language to have Celticists present...
presented arguments for Celtic survival, and began to examine contacts between the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts, and their cultures, for the first time. As the lectures came to be published, rather than just delivered, they reached a wider audience.\textsuperscript{109} Kenneth Jackson – one of the great Celtic linguists of the twentieth century – felt able to claim in his O'Donnell Lecture published in 1963 that the Germanist view was well on the wane, and that, ‘nowadays the difficulty for the Celtic scholar is the reverse: to restrain some historians from putting up Celts from every bush’.\textsuperscript{110} H.P.R. Finberg's \textit{Lucerna} was arguably the seminal work of the 1960s and its publication represented the turning point, if there could be a single one, in the transformation of the once-dominant Germanist view of the Anglo-Saxon invasion.\textsuperscript{111} By the end of the decade, this view had few defenders, and the revisionist argument of small-scale settlement was being incorporated into mainstream Anglo-Saxon scholarship, and the relationship between Celt and Saxon was being reassessed.

The last forty years has seen a consolidation of support for the notion of a small-scale settlement of Anglo-Saxons in Britain, and for the assimilation of the native British population amongst the newcomers.\textsuperscript{112} Archaeologists found common cause with the Celticist reassessment. Dissatisfaction with the paucity of the documentation led some to declare that the initiative for the study of the period had passed from the historians' hands into theirs.\textsuperscript{113} The new sub-area of landscape archaeology produced revised estimates of the population of late Roman Britain as being in the order of four to five

\textsuperscript{109} For example, Lewis, \textit{Angles and Britons: O'Donnell Lectures}. Note also the studies on early contacts between the Britons and Anglo-Saxons that were collected in N.K. Chadwick (ed.), \textit{Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border} (Cambridge, 1963). In the 'Introduction' to this volume, Chadwick commented that further study was 'badly needed' on the 'intercourse between the old-established Celtic peoples and their more recently established Teutonic neighbours on the line which eventually became known as the Marches, or the Border' (p. 1).

\textsuperscript{110} Jackson, 'Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria', p. 73. Loyn, \textit{Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest}, p. 12, similarly warned that 'There is a need ... to guard against a modern tendency to look for Celts under every stone'. Cf. N.K. Chadwick, 'England is Celtic too!', \textit{The Irish Digest} 82 (1965), pp. 77-80, and her O'Donnell Lecture: 'The British or Celtic part in the population of England', in Lewis, \textit{Angles and Britons: O'Donnell Lectures}, pp. 110-147.


\textsuperscript{113} For example, Arnold, \textit{Roman Britain to Saxon England}, p. 7. Snyder, \textit{Age of Tyrants}, p. 132, has complained that the reductionism of archaeologists such as Arnold, who exclude written evidence, has led to 'even less illumination of this murky period of Britain's past'.
million people. It came to be considered unlikely that a population of such a size could be displaced by an inferior number of incoming Anglo-Saxons. Thus, just as Celticists had done some decades earlier, archaeologists also argued that most of the Britons stayed where they were and, to quote Celtic scholar Charles Thomas, ‘in some enigmatic fashion eventually became not Britons at all but Saxons or Angles and ultimately English’. There has subsequently been much debate concerning the process of culture change or ‘ethnogenesis’ that must have occurred in sub-Roman Britain. Nicholas Higham, for example, argues for a model of voluntary acculturation under which the Celtic Britons gave up their linguistic and material culture in order to improve their status within the new Anglo-Saxon social structure.

Much of the work that is currently being published on cultural and political continuity...
from British and Anglo-Saxon rule in Britain, and on Anglo-British interaction, is based on the presumption of a minimalist Anglo-Saxon settlement.¹¹⁹

Recent decades have also witnessed a surge in interest in Celtic studies and Celticism, as well as the advent of the term ‘Celtomania’ to describe the phenomenon.¹²⁰ With the re-emergence of Celtic nationalism and Celtic consciousness, in the face of England’s retreat as a global power and the concurrent political changes in Europe, the past has become fertile ground for self-conscious Celts searching to justify their distinctiveness as well as their separateness from the English.¹²¹ As such, the structural opposition between the material Anglo-Saxon and spiritual Celt has been perpetuated in such notions as Celtic Christianity and spirituality, Celtic literature and folklore, and Celtic art.¹²² The supposed uniqueness of Celtic ‘heroic’ society has also become a topic of examination, with some scholars mining the relatively under-used resource of written documents from the Celtic-speaking countries,¹²³ much to the annoyance of more sceptically-minded Celticists such as Dumville.¹²⁴

There has at the same time been a legitimate concern in some recent literature to redress the Anglo-centric historiography of the previous century, and to locate the Celtic


peoples within treatments of Anglo-Saxon and early medieval British history. Much of this literature has pertained to the influence of the various Celtic ecclesiastical cultures on early Anglo-Saxon Christianity. While there has long been a general consciousness of Irish and specifically Columban influence on the early Anglo-Saxon Church, the topic only came to be addressed in earnest from the 1970s. Ecclesiastical interaction between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons and the Picts has similarly begun to be considered in more depth. Attempts have also been made to link Irish and Anglo-Saxon literatures. The emergence of this scholarship has informed a gradually-increasing interest in examining points of contact between Anglo-Saxons and Celts in terms of such issues as intermarriage, regularised ‘foreign relations’ and military cooperation.

125 Altschul, ‘Celtic fringe or Celtic centre?’, p. 121. The most forthright attempt to bring the Irish to the fore in early medieval history is surely Thomas Cahill’s How the Irish Saved Civilisation (London, 1995).
129 See Dumville, ‘“Beowulf” and the Celtic world’, and the references cited therein. Dumville notes a ‘sporadic’ history of attempts to link Beowulf with the various Celtic literatures, dating back to the late nineteenth century. See also Wrenn, ‘Saxons and Celts in south-west Britain’, p. 38, who quotes James Carney from 1955: ‘the subject of the relationship between Irish and Anglo-Saxon literature has hardly been touched’. I have not here considered artistic links, for example, the so-called ‘Hiberno-Saxon’ art style. On this topic, see E. Campbell & A. Lane, ‘Celtic and Germanic interaction in Dalriada: the seventh-century metalworking site at Dunadd’, in R.M. Spearman & J. Higgitt (eds.), The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland (Edinburgh & Stroud, 1993), pp. 53-4.
Conceptions of Anglo-Celtic relations have, therefore, undergone a transformation within the last fifty years. The traditional Germanist view of the Anglo-Saxon arrival in Britain created an entrenched picture of Anglo-Celtic interaction as being characterised by antagonism and aggression, and also explained the clear dominance of Old English and of Anglo-Saxon institutions. In this regard, it was easy to talk in terms of an inherent opposition between Celt and Anglo-Saxon.\(^{131}\) The more recent shift from this traditional conception to representing the Anglo-Saxon arrival as a small scale ‘settlement’ or as a ‘political conquest’, has informed a new anxiety within the literature to emphasise cooperation and compromise rather than aggression and antagonism. While the structural opposition between Celt and Anglo-Saxon is still proclaimed, albeit with decreasing intensity within the last decade,\(^{132}\) the search for the Celts within British history has meant that there is an increased awareness of their role as co-habitants of the island, not just as ‘dwellers on the fringe’.\(^{133}\) This thesis aims to provide the first comprehensive view from the Celtic border during the pre-Viking centuries in Britain.

**Primary Sources and their Problems**

It is trite to state that the primary sources for early medieval Britain are not abundant.\(^{134}\) This is especially the case for the issue of Anglo-Celtic interaction in the pre-Viking centuries. There is no one source which is devoted to the topic; rather, the issue has to be approached by examining often peripheral and sometimes incidental references in a range of texts which were written for a variety of different purposes. It can also be observed that the bulk of the surviving evidence for Anglo-Celtic interaction is English, or rather Anglo-Saxon, in its provenance and orientation. Indeed, sources from the Celtic-speaking countries are more limited than those for Anglo-Saxon England and,

---

\(^{131}\) Sims-Williams, ‘The visionary Celt’, p. 96.


with the exception of the annals and hagiography produced on Iona, unlikely to have been compiled prior to the ninth century. But even within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, there is great variation in the survival rate of written information, most of which is in any case ecclesiastical. There are, for example, no surviving annals or narrative histories for pre-Viking Mercia. Nor are there any charters or law-codes from pre-Viking Northumbria which might provide evidence for Anglo-Celtic interaction. With the exception of King Ine, the deeds of most early West Saxon kings are poorly recorded until the ninth century. For much of the pre-Viking period we are in large part reliant on the word of Bede. His work is of course of the greatest value, but many events are seen through his eyes only. The record of Anglo-Celtic contacts is thus often one-sided; uneven across the different regions of Britain, as well as being lacunose across the two centuries under study.

These caveats aside, a reasonable corpus of work survives which can be accessed to inform an understanding of how Anglo-Saxons and Celts interacted with one another. Much of this corpus is represented by the standard canon of early Anglo-Saxon and Celtic written sources. These include, of an Anglo-Saxon provenance: Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*; the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; the so-called 'Anglian Collection'; the *Tribal Hidage*; works of hagiography such as Stephen of Ripon's *Life of Wilfrid* and the two *Lives of Saint Cuthbert*; prose and verse writings by churchmen such as Aldhelm; as well as what might be termed administrative documentation such as monastic charters and law-codes, the latter represented by that of King Ine of Wessex. Relevant Celtic sources include: Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae*; the various collections of Irish annals most fully represented in the *Annals of Ulster*; the *Historia Brittonum*; the *Annales Cambriae* or ‘Welsh Annals’; and works of hagiography, principally Adomnan’s *Life of Columba*. Some recourse can also made to Welsh saga poetry or

---

135 Davies, *Patterns of Power*, pp. 4-5; Dumville, ‘The origins of Northumbria’, pp. 216-7; K. Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’, in *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 1,8; Moisl, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish’, p. 106. Sims-Williams, ‘The uses of writing in early medieval Wales’, pp. 20-1, notes that hardly any Insular Celtic manuscripts have survived from before the eleventh century in their countries of origin. He also provides a critical analysis of the frequent recourse to Celtic orality to explain this lack of surviving manuscripts (pp. 16-18).


englynion, though this material is particularly difficult to use. The principal sources to be used in this investigation will be scrutinised in more detail throughout the thesis.

Of the written sources, those of particular value are examples which are contemporaneous with the period under investigation, such as Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. Those which are not may be used to provide contextual information, or to shed light on views from another time. Gildas, for example, was writing prior to the seventh century and so before the period under study; nevertheless, his narrative can provide information about the development of kingdoms in the Celtic west of Britain, as well as about the state of British Christianity. The *Historia Brittonum* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in contrast, were produced in the ninth century; while this means that their compilation perhaps reveals more about the attitudes and concerns of their time, they may incorporate earlier material.

Archaeological and onomastic evidence can be used to supplement the documentary sources. The disparate and uneven nature of the written evidence for Anglo-Celtic interaction means that recourse must be made to as wide a variety of evidence as possible. Archaeology may tell of social relations and interaction which escaped the notice of early medieval authors, for example, in the discovery of 'Anglo-Saxon' goods within otherwise British, Scottish or Pictish contexts, or in the continued use of British secular and ecclesiastical sites by Anglo-Saxons. Place-name evidence may reveal the survival of identifiable British communities within an Anglo-Saxon milieu; the sharing of personal names may unveil evidence for intermarriage and assimilation. Neither archaeological nor onomastic evidence is without its problems, as will be shown within the thesis. Both types of evidence are prone to multiple interpretations, not the least of which concerns designations of ethnicity.140 Archaeology is one area for which the available data is continually expanding, and new excavations may lead to the revision of existing conclusions. Onomastic evidence similarly does not necessarily allow for certitude due to its fluidity.141 As this thesis is historical in its orientation, the principal emphasis will be on the textual sources. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider the scholarship which is based around these other types of evidence.

---

It finally needs to be acknowledged that the three regions examined in this thesis are served by different combinations of the available evidence. For Wessex and the Britons of the south-west, the written sources are entirely West Saxon.\footnote{142} While it is possible to gain a picture of the West Saxon perspective, the position of the Britons is nearly impossible to determine, except as it might be reflected in West Saxon sources. For Northumbria and the Celts of the north, by contrast, documentary evidence derives from Celtic as well as Anglo-Saxon sources, principally those originating from Iona. There are also some slightly later British sources which contain relevant information, such as the Historia Brittonum and the Annales Cambriae. The great advantage here, of course, is that the question of Anglo-Celtic interaction is seen not only through Anglo-Saxon eyes. Thus, events or attitudes which do not conform to an Anglo-Saxon bias stand a better chance of having been recorded. For Mercia and the Britons of Wales, the situation differs again. Here there survive relatively more sources from the British point of view, such as those just mentioned. Within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms under study, there are also differences in the type of source which can be accessed. For Wessex, it is possible to not only make use of narrative and annalistic evidence, but also charters and law-codes. For Northumbria on the other hand, the sources are almost entirely narrative or annalistic. Patrick Wormald refers to this state of affairs as ‘a major and inadequately acknowledged paradox of early Anglo-Saxon history’.\footnote{143} For Mercia there are neither any native annals nor narrative histories. Much of early Mercian history must therefore be studied through West Saxon or Northumbrian sources, kingdoms which were often subject to Mercian aggression.\footnote{144}

These observations suggest that there are unavoidable differences between regions in the types of written evidence which can be employed to examine Anglo-Celtic interaction. This may lead to some variation in the issues which can be studied and the types of conclusions that can be drawn. There will inevitably be more space given to

\footnote{142}{A possible exception may be what appears to be a Dumnonian pedigree surviving in a fourteenth-century manuscript: Jesus College, Oxford, MS. 20 ff. 23r-41r, now in the Bodleian library. See Pearce, Kingdom of Dumnonia, pp. 139-40.}

\footnote{143}{Wormald, Bede and the Conversion of England, p. 1. Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 149, also notes that without charters to fill out the evidence, the post-Bede narrative for eighth-century Northumbria becomes ‘skeletal’. This is not to say that charters and laws were never drawn up in the north. Bede provides ample grounds for the existence of charters, for example, in his Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, cc. 1, 4, 7 (Plummer, Bede, vol. I, pp. 364-5, 367-8, 370-1), and in his Letter to Bishop Egberht (Bede, Epist. Ecg. 12). His record of the canons of church councils (e.g. HE IV.5, the Council of Hertford; HE IV.17, the Council of Hatfield) should also allow us to assume that law-making occurred in the secular sphere. Yet such documentation does not survive outside of Bede’s efforts, probably due to later Scandinavian involvement in the region.}

\footnote{144}{Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 100.}
those matters for which the evidence is more available. It must be recognised, however, that the relative abundance or lack of evidence from one region does not necessarily mean that it should be viewed as more or less important than the others. The argumentum ex silentio, in this regard, is a proclivity of which the early medieval historian must be constantly aware.

Conceptual Issues and Questions

A number of conceptual issues underlie the questions about Anglo-Celtic interaction to be examined in this thesis. The most important of these concerns ethnicity. As a function of social interaction, ethnic identification and difference pervade many aspects of how Celts and Anglo-Saxons may have related to and thought about each other.

Matters of Ethnicity

In a modern work examining relations between ‘Anglo-Saxons’ and ‘Celts’, so-called, it is impossible to avoid the issue of ethnicity. Ethnicity and the nature of ‘peoples’ have re-emerged in the last decade as topics of intense interest to medieval scholars. Recent work on ethnicity has rejected the notion that it is an objective phenomenon. Rather, it has been emphasised that ethnicity has always been subjective and malleable; something which could be manipulated or constructed, and which was context dependent. In this regard, ethnicity has been thought of as a construct that only mattered when it was practised, or when it motivated decisions and actions, as is embodied in the expression ‘ethnicity for something’. Ethnicity, therefore, can be conceived of as one of a suite of elements which made up a person’s identity; as one of

---

145 R.R. Davies, ‘The peoples of Britain and Ireland 1100-1400’, p. 1, in a presidential address to the Royal Historical Society in 1993, declared that ‘Peoples are back on the historian’s agenda’. He attributed this to the growing awareness of the influence of ethnicity in our contemporary world, and to the decreasing importance placed by historians on the centrality of the unitary nation state as an inevitable and desirable unit of political organisation. J. Hines, ‘The becoming of the English: identity, material culture and language’, ASSAH 7 (1994), p. 49, similarly observed that ethnicity, ‘a topic that was derided and virtually unmentionable in self-consciously “modern” archaeology only ten years ago has now become a popular and urgent object of study’.


the factors which could be brought into play within the context of social interaction and identification. As a social phenomenon, ethnicity is now thought of as something which was evoked in the face of difference: a relational construct in which comparison to some 'other' was a necessary antecedent. John Hines offers a working definition of ethnic identity as: 'a certain form of attributed membership of a group of people'. Under this definition, ethnic identity might be self- or externally attributed, and these conceptions need not match each other. Similarly, it becomes possible for an individual to possess more than one ethnic label, depending upon the point of reference.

What this current thinking on ethnicity implies is that the identification of peoples called Celts and Anglo-Saxons, interacting with one another as homogeneous groups, is not necessarily clear-cut. This ambiguity is most evident in the term 'Celt' itself, the application of which to the Britons, Scots/Irish and Picts is a modern phenomenon.

No early medieval Insular 'Celt' would have thought of themselves as such. The Celts of the British Isles were, rather, known in the sources by the more specific
designations of Britannii (or Brittones), Scotti or Picti, with there being yet more precise names within these groupings which may have more accurately reflected how they regarded themselves.\textsuperscript{156} Thus, it is anachronistic to argue for any such thing as a self-conscious Celtic solidarity or a ‘pan-Celticism’.\textsuperscript{157} Any coming together of Celtic peoples against Anglo-Saxons does not, therefore, necessarily reflect ethnic kinship versus, say, the identification of a mutual enemy.\textsuperscript{158} It should also not be assumed that all Celtic societies were developing along similar lines in the early medieval period; diversity may have been as much a feature of British, Scottish and Pictish cultures as similarity.\textsuperscript{159}

There is perhaps less controversy surrounding the term ‘Anglo-Saxon’; it is, after all, rooted in the contemporaneously-used names Angli and Saxones (to which might be appended the \textit{Iutae} or Jutes).\textsuperscript{160} The names themselves are relatively archaic, which affords them some credibility.\textsuperscript{161} Nevertheless, there an increasing scepticism about their application to specific Germanic ‘settler’ groups, and about the homogeneity which they imply.\textsuperscript{162} Indeed, much of our knowledge of early Anglo-Saxon ethnology is derived from material which may be in fact be a later schematisation which has been imagined into the past.\textsuperscript{163} The \textit{Tribal Hidage} and Bede himself provide evidence for a

\textsuperscript{156} Davies, ‘The peoples of Britain and Ireland 1100-1400’, p. 7; Davies, \textit{Patterns of Power}, pp. 18-21; Snyder, \textit{Age of Tyrants}, pp. 66-72, 249-50. These more precise names will be presented, as is relevant, throughout the thesis.

\textsuperscript{157} Sims-Williams, ‘Celtomania and Celtoscepticism’, pp. 11-12.

\textsuperscript{158} T. Clarkson, ‘The \textit{Gododdin} revisited’, \textit{The Heroic Age} 1 (1999), http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/1/hatf.htm#gododdin, p. 4; Sims-Williams, ‘Celtomania and Celtoscepticism’, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{159} Collis, ‘Celts and politics’, pp. 172-3; Davies, \textit{Patterns of Power}, p. 89; Ó Corráin, ‘Ireland, Scotland and Wales’, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{160} These groups represent Bede’s ‘three very powerful peoples of Germany [\textit{de tribus Germaniae populis fortioribus}]’ (my translation), which he says came to Britain during the fifth century (\textit{HE} I.15).


\textsuperscript{162} For example, Hines, ‘The becoming of the English’, p. 51; Moreland, ‘Ethnicity, power and the English’, p. 25; Reynolds, ‘What do we mean by “Anglo-Saxon” and “Anglo-Saxons”?’, p. 400.

tangible degree of diversity amongst the early Germanic peoples of Britain.\textsuperscript{164} There has also been a recognition of the problem of linking material or archaeological cultures to recorded ethnic groups – for instance, in the assumption that ‘Anglo-Saxon’ grave-goods signify straight-forward, static group memberships.\textsuperscript{165}

The various criteria which have been employed to denote ethnicity – such as birthplace, language, dress and custom, religion, law-code – may, therefore, offer only a ‘statistical clue’ as to the ethnic identity of any one individual or group.\textsuperscript{166} However, it would be erroneous to conclude that one’s ethnic identity was purely voluntaristic or self-appointed.\textsuperscript{167} Ethnicity was not, and is not, entirely arbitrary; it incorporates pre-existing similarities and groupings.\textsuperscript{168} John Hines’ point is well made that, ‘although theoretically exchangeable, it may in practical terms be impossible for an individual to successfully divest himself of one identity and to adopt another’.\textsuperscript{169} There were factors that denoted a people; Patrick Sims-Williams, for example, comments upon the overlap between spoken language and geographical location, and argues for the importance of language as a factor in ‘the process of ethnographical classification’.\textsuperscript{170} Thomas Charles-Edwards, in similar vein, notes that ‘the roots of a sense of nationality amongst the Cymry [Britons] were largely linguistic and cultural’.\textsuperscript{171} Bede, of course, differentiated the peoples of Britain according to the language they spoke, English, British, Irish/Scottish, and Pictish, and regarded them as coherent ethnicities, albeit

\textsuperscript{164} HE V.9. The \textit{Tribal Hidage} is discussed later in the thesis (infra., pp. 174-5). For a discussion on the early diversity within Anglo-Saxon England, see S. Bassett, ‘In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms’, in \textit{idem.}, \textit{Origins}, pp. 3-27. Woolf, ‘Community, identity and kingship in early England’, p. 99, warns, however, against over-emphasising this diversity, noting that eighty-nine per cent of the land assessment enumerated in the \textit{Tribal Hidage} is taken up by only ten per cent of the named peoples.


\textsuperscript{168} Which Geary, ‘Ethnic identity as a situational construct in the early middle ages’, p. 25, himself notes.

\textsuperscript{169} Hines, ‘The becoming of the English’, p. 50.

\textsuperscript{170} Sims-Williams, ‘Celtomania and Celtoscepticism’, pp. 26-9. In discussing the ethnicity of the Celts, he states that ‘linguistic evidence is underrated by modern sceptics’, and argues that ancient peoples could hardly have noticed when they needed an interpreter, even if other characteristics might have been indistinguishable. J. Hines, ‘Cultural change and social organisation in early Anglo-Saxon England’, in G. Ausenda (ed.), \textit{After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe’s Barbarians} (Woodbridge, 1995), p. 89, has also commented upon the importance of birthplace as a determinant of a range of adopted, or rather socialised, customs and cultural features.

\textsuperscript{171} Charles-Edwards, ‘Language and society amongst the insular Celts’, p. 714.
The perceived importance of language can be observed in the tendency of some modern scholars to talk in terms of ‘Celtic-speaking’ or ‘Germanic-speaking’ peoples and countries. Ethn

Ethnic identity evidently mattered to the people of early medieval Britain. Bede, again, talked quite clearly in terms of gentes, populi and nationes. Irrespective of whether early medieval writers were recording invented myths of common descent and common blood, the salient point is that they believed in such constructs. Ethnic labels were applied to individuals in early medieval Britain as well as groups, even if in some cases the individual was ‘out of place’ and so required comment. It is also possible to observe a belief in the unitary identity and distinctiveness of certain peoples when they were viewed by outsiders. To the Celtic inhabitants of Britain, in this regard, the Germanic peoples were perceived as having a recognisable identity, namely as Saxones, a term that is consistently used in Celtic sources throughout the pre-Viking period. There is no apparent evidence for a reciprocal belief on the part of the Anglo-Saxons in the unity of all the Celtic peoples of Britain as belonging to one gens. However, there was an understanding of the Britons, the Scots and the Picts each being regarded as cohesive entities. The sense of an ‘us and them’ is evident, for example, in the Anglo-Saxon use of the word wealh (plural wealas) to denote the Britons. In origin, this term seems to have meant ‘foreigner’: someone who was not of their gens. Though there

172 HE I.1. Bede also included Latin as the unifying language of them all.
175 Geary, ‘Ethnic identity as a situational construct in the early middle ages’, p. 23, argued that the ethnic identity of individuals was most commonly commented upon when they were ‘out of place’, either geographically or religiously. Individuals’ ethnic identities are noted by Bede (HE III.10), Adomnan (VC III.10, III.22), and on numerous British memorial inscriptions, to name some examples.
176 Davies, ‘The peoples of Britain and Ireland 1100-1400’, p. 7; Foot, ‘The making of Angelcynn’, pp. 41–4; Hines, ‘The becoming of the English’, p. 58; Mortett, ‘Historians and languages’, p. 64; Richter, ‘Bede’s Angli: Angles or English?’, pp. 105–7; Snyder, ‘Celtic continuity in the middle ages’, p. 166; Wormald, ‘Bede, the Bretwaldas and the origins of the Gens Anglorum’, p. 122. Bede famously observed that ‘the Angles and Saxons, who now live in Britain ... to this day ... are by a corruption called Garmani by their neighbours the Britons’ (HE V.9). While the terminology is different from Celtic sources, Bede’s statement still establishes that the Angles and Saxons were regarded by their neighbours as possessing a common identity.
was obvious diversity amongst the Anglo-Saxons, they probably had more in common with each other than they did with the Britons, or the Scots and Picts.  

Ethnicity is, therefore, a construct that requires careful usage. On the one hand, it is important to recognise the subjectivity and multiplicity of ethnic identities, as well as their conscious manipulation; on the other, it should not be assumed that such identities were infinitely malleable and voluntaristic. A point on which most scholars agree is that ethnic identification in the early medieval period emerged in connection with the creation of kings and kingdoms. It is argued that a ‘people’ would have gained its identity by being subject to one king or one kingly lineage, as well as through the consequence of acting together for that king, such as in going to war. This inchoate shared identity may then have been reinforced through the construction of myths of common descent and the elaboration of royal genealogies. In this regard, ethnicity could become ‘nationalised’ within emerging political boundaries, which in turn could confine the limits, broadly speaking, of certain linguistic and cultural characteristics.

What these observations imply is that it is necessary within the current thesis to consider the evidence for the development of kingship and kingdoms at the commencement of the period under study. Each part of the thesis will begin, therefore, by locating the relevant Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples as accurately as is possible, presenting the ethnic labels which were employed, and expounding the evidence for kings and kingdoms. This will provide a basis for subsequent discussion of their interaction through the pre-Viking period.

**Warfare and Conquest**

If ethnicity can be conceived of as an expression of political circumstance and development, then the creation of identifiable Anglo-Saxon and Celtic kingdoms by the

---


seventh century in Britain means that ethnicity may have acted as a point of focus in their relations. One of the points made in the preceding section was that the existence of some ethnic commonality, invented or otherwise, often occurs due to opposition to an identified 'other'.183 In this regard, ethnic difference is routinely marshalled — both in theoretical terms and in real politics — as an instrument of competition and conflict.184 Thus, a sense of common ethnic identity could be mobilised in opposition to an enemy; and the prosecution of warfare itself would serve to enhance any pre-existing identification and difference.185 Alex Woolf even argues that group identity amongst early Anglo-Saxon peoples would have been created through their assembly, or 'some analogous shared experience such as the Frankish Marchfeld'.186 Under this view, the gens becomes the expression of a people's loyalty to their war leader and their preparedness to fight for him. Similarly, the identity of the Celtic peoples may have been reinforced by some shared sense of being threatened by the invading Anglo-Saxons: a recognisable 'barbarian other'.187 The Britons in particular may have gained an added level of self-consciousness from having been displaced from the greater part of erstwhile Britannia.188

As was canvassed earlier, the traditional view of relations between the Anglo-Saxons and Celts emphasised war and antagonism.189 This was informed by a somewhat credulous and selective reading of the primary sources. More recent scholarship has discounted this view, and focussed more closely on issues of assimilation and

187 McDonald, 'Celtic ethnic kinship', p. 334, and Ward-Perkins, 'Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?', p. 531, note that Celtic identity today is often constructed as a shared sense of having been oppressed by the more populous English.
188 The perception of displacement would have been just as important in the development of an identity as any putatively real expulsion from former British territory. Gildas, for example, clearly indicates that some former British lands were now 'no-go areas', such as Verulamium, or St Alban's (DEB 10.2).
189 Supra., pp. 11-15.
cooperation. Some archaeologists have argued that accommodation was more representative of Anglo-Celtic interaction than antagonism. Yet, is the place of warfare, and of conquest, being under-played?

The most likely avenue through which warfare may have manifested itself in pre-Viking Britain concerns political expansion and land-taking by the Anglo-Saxons, most specifically from the Britons. Though it will be possible to provide some definition of the territories of the peoples of pre-Viking Britain, it would be erroneous to assume that they necessarily had fixed boundaries. Territories and borders, however these were imagined, were being routinely located and relocated as Anglo-Saxon control expanded in the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, certainly with longer periods of stability within the eighth, as will be seen. It would not be unreasonable to presume that warfare was a common method by which boundaries were extended, defined and defended. Indeed, the causes of war during the pre-Viking period were probably closely linked to the processes of territorial and political amalgamation and consolidation.

It can also be argued that as kingship began to emerge in the Anglo-Saxon territories, it was the physical expression of power which had the greatest currency. As Rosamund Faith states, 'leadership in battle was an important legitimisation of other kinds of rule'. Thus, expansion and land-taking from Britons may have occurred forcibly at this time, as the origins of kingship were rooted in the exercise of force, and prestige was to be gained through success in battle. Encounters with the Picts as Northumbrian control spread north may similarly have been marked by aggression, though the greater geographical distance of the Scots, by contrast, suggests fewer opportunities for them to have met an Anglo-Saxon enemy on the battlefield.

---

190 For example, Bassett, 'Church and diocese in the West Midlands', pp. 13-40; idem., 'How the west was won', pp. 107-18; Cessford, 'Exogamous marriages between Anglo-Saxons and Britons', pp. 49-52; Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', pp. 5-25.
191 Esmonde Cleary, Ending of Roman Britain; Evison, 'Lo, the conquering hero comes', pp. 8-9; Härke, 'Finding Britons in Anglo-Saxon graves', p. 7; K. Nurse, 'Awkward angles: ancestral burial ground indicates gradual acculturation from British to Anglo-Saxon society', History Today 43, no. 7 (1993), pp. 3-4.
192 D.N. Dumville, The Churches of North Britain in the First Viking-Age (Whithorn, 1997), p. 8, for example, has observed 'among [his] academic colleagues a profound disinclination to admit the extent of violence involved in many aspects of mediaeval (sic) life and in many turns of mediaeval history'.
193 Land and population pressure are cited by anthropologists as underlying reasons for most warfare in pre-industrial society (Halsall, 'Anthropology and the study of pre-Conquest warfare and society', p. 157).
195 Halsall, 'Anthropology and the study of pre-Conquest warfare and society', pp. 170-1.
197 Halsall, 'Anthropology and the study of pre-Conquest warfare and society', p. 158.
It could, therefore, be argued that wealth and land were most easily won by warfare, and in the emerging and expansionist kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England, that successful kingship and state formation was founded upon these bases.\textsuperscript{198} The fate of an early medieval kingdom was intricately linked with the success or otherwise of its warband.\textsuperscript{199} Warfare did not necessarily have to involve pitched battles, but could be prosecuted in other ways, such as raiding and ravaging.\textsuperscript{200} Warfare could also be fought for a variety of different reasons. Apart from attempts to take land and extend territory, wars might be fought to seize war-loot, to impose overlordship and enforce the payment of tribute, to maintain frontiers, or to exact retribution.\textsuperscript{201} Guy Halsall differentiates, in anthropological terms, between two levels of warfare: endemic or ‘ritual’, and large scale ‘non-ritual’.\textsuperscript{202} The former consists of small-scale activities such as feuds, ‘banditry’, raids and counter-raids, which provide a framework for individual feats of arms, bravery and honour.\textsuperscript{203} These were fairly routinised and ongoing encounters that bear witness to the level of violence that characterised the early middle ages. The latter refers to perhaps less frequent ‘wars of conquest’, which can occur when there is an imbalance in power with one or more strong groups being able to vanquish, expel or eliminate weaker ones, as was arguably the case in early medieval Britain. These ‘wars of conquest’ were more likely to lead to the permanent acquisition of land and property, the movement of populations, and more apparent changes in political systems.\textsuperscript{204}

It is important within the current thesis to examine the evidence for warfare between Anglo-Saxons and Celts, and where possible identify the nature of any such engagements as well as their consequences. It is essential to consider the extent to which a military victory had political implications, in addition to how any political control was enacted.\textsuperscript{205} This includes investigating the nature of overlordship, the consequences of which are more extensive than the simple loss of a battle, and include the rendering of tribute, the provision of military support, along with the loss of


\textsuperscript{199} Evans, \textit{Lords of Battle}, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{200} Hooper, 'The Anglo-Saxons at war', p. 197.

\textsuperscript{201} Alcock, \textit{Economy, Society and Warfare}, p. 305; Yorke, \textit{Wessex}, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{202} Halsall, 'Anthropology and the study of pre-Conquest warfare and society', pp. 156-9, 163-4.

\textsuperscript{203} Evans, \textit{Lords of Battle}, p. 36; Richter, \textit{Ireland and Her Neighbours}, pp. 90-1.

\textsuperscript{204} Halsall, 'Anthropology and the study of pre-Conquest warfare and society', p. 159. See also his 'anthropological model' of warfare and society (p. 161).

\textsuperscript{205} Davies, \textit{Patterns of Power}, pp. 1-2.
autonomy in military affairs.\textsuperscript{206} It is possible, in this regard, to conceptualise gradations in the extent of Anglo-Saxon rulership over Celtic territory. The recognition of an overlord might still allow for limited native rule; however, this would differ from a situation where the ruler was an actual Anglo-Saxon, with his own officials and ealdormen.\textsuperscript{207} More extreme again would be the situation where land was seized and 'ethnic' Anglo-Saxon colonists settled to make up the bulk of the population. Is it possible to differentiate between these situations when considering warfare between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons, Scots and Picts? The Anglo-Saxons were the primary 'intrusive' peoples of pre-Viking Britain, and so fulfil the role as the primary aggressor – though the Scots were also technically intrusive. However, this should not preclude Celtic-instigated warfare and lordship, nor the possibility of Anglo-Celtic military alliances and treaties. As was stated earlier, it should not be assumed that ethnicity necessarily acted as the exclusive determinant of inter-group relations.\textsuperscript{208} As a function of military interaction these eventualities will also be explored during the discussions of warfare and conquest.

\textbf{Assimilation, Continuity and Social Exchange}

The eventuality of Anglo-Saxon rule being achieved over extant Celtic populations, as well as the possibility of Anglo-Celtic alliances, raises a further series of questions concerning their interaction. It is in circumstances of close contact between different ethnic groups that it might be presumed matters of ethnicity would be brought to the fore.\textsuperscript{209} If ethnic identity is regarded as a social construct that derives from some manner of comparison with an 'other', then it would be expected that the direct encounter of Anglo-Saxons and Celts would elicit some form of conscious differentiation and categorisation.\textsuperscript{210} Anglo-Celtic contact might thus be expected to confirm and even accentuate their respective ethnic identities.\textsuperscript{211} The process of interaction may also have led to some mutual influence in how Anglo-Saxons and Celts


\textsuperscript{207} D. Hill, `Mercians: the dwellers on the boundary', in Brown & Farr, \textit{Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe}, pp. 177-8, explains the working of such a gradation along the Welsh border.

\textsuperscript{208} \textit{Supra.}, pp. 26-8.

\textsuperscript{209} As stated earlier (\textit{supra.}, pp. 25-6) ethnic identities derive from the circumstances of social interaction.

\textsuperscript{210} Moreland, 'Ethnicity, power and the English', pp. 40-1. It has been the interest of structural anthropologists and social psychologists to argue for the innate tendency of human beings to identify themselves in terms of what they are not, and thus to seek out 'opposites' within any social circumstance. See Graves-Brown, 'All things bright and beautiful?', pp. 88-91; M.A. Hogg & D. Abrams, \textit{Social Identifications} (London, 1988).
viewed themselves; indeed, people's self-perception is often affected by how they think others see them. Yet, it remains the case that there must be some level of contact for inter-group differences to be recognised. In a broad sense, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic societies, as exemplars of early medieval 'Barbarian' cultures, shared similar features of social organisation. This should, therefore, have facilitated some level of interchange. In addition, it must be kept in mind that hostile relations between peoples do not necessarily mean cultural or linguistic ignorance – overlordship, tribute collection and hostage-taking, for instance, imply a level of mutual linguistic familiarity. Though a language barrier would have existed, at least initially, between Anglo-Saxons and Celts, there is no reason to suppose that this was an exclusive divide, nor that bi- or multi-lingualism would have been unknown, especially amongst the aristocracy. The acceptance of exiles would also require a basis of mutual intelligibility. What, therefore, may have occurred in terms of social exchange between these peoples?

One of the features of recent work on the border kingdoms of Wessex, Northumbria and Mercia has been an emerging consensus that a substantial British population was subsumed under and persisted within their territorial bounds as they expanded to the west and north. Of particular importance is the question of how these Britons were accommodated within Anglo-Saxon institutions and social structures. If there were Britons living within newly-gained Anglo-Saxon territory, were there pressures for them to assimilate within the new culture? The question of how one group of people is

---

211 Davies, 'The peoples of Britain and Ireland 1100-1400', p. 8.
212 Frazer, 'Introduction: identities in early medieval Britain', p. 5; Pohl, 'Ethnic names and identities in the British Isles', p. 10.
214 Dumville, "Beowulf" and the Celtic world', p. 114; Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', p. 61 n. 50.
215 Geary, 'Ethnic identity as a situational construct in the early middle ages', p. 20; Gelling, 'Why aren't we speaking Welsh?', p. 55; Higham, Northern Counties, pp. 270, 281.
absorbed within another is itself a complex issue. Dawn Hadley has made the excellent point that ‘People do not integrate and adopt the social structures and belief systems of others by a process of unconscious osmosis; real and relevant decisions must be made, survival strategies adopted, and resistance encountered’. In this regard, it cannot simply be argued that Britons within Anglo-Saxon territory voluntarily abandoned their ethnic identity and became Anglo-Saxons. As has been explained, ethnicity may not be very easy to forsake, except perhaps over the course of generations. The implication of Hadley’s statement is that conscious decisions would have to be made by both groups, Britons and Anglo-Saxons, for assimilation to occur. What must, therefore, be considered are the mechanisms under which assimilation may have been engineered, for example, intermarriage, or the enacting of laws, as well as any evidence pertaining to the relative status of the Britons within Anglo-Saxon social structures.

In such circumstances – namely, that of Britons living within territory under Anglo-Saxon control – it may also be asked how much of British identity and culture continued. One of the most pressing issues regarding how Anglo-Saxons and Celts interacted at a local level has concerned the fate of the native Britons within territory taken into Anglo-Saxon control. Indeed, the question of British ‘survival’ in sub-Roman Britain has long been a vexed one, and goes hand in hand with changing views of the nature of the adventus Saxonum. It is not my intention to examine the extent to which the population of erstwhile Britannia survived the Anglo-Saxon invasion; this is a matter that relates to the period before the one under study. Rather, what will be considered is evidence for the survival of a British identity and British cultural influence within Wessex, Northumbria and Mercia into the seventh and eighth centuries. If there was a substantial British substrate amongst the populations of these border kingdoms, some evidence of their continued presence and influence should be expected. To what

---

217 Hadley, ‘‘Cockle amongst the wheat’’: the Scandinavian settlement of England’, p. 114, was talking about integration of Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons within the Danelaw. However, her comments are equally germane to the integration of Britons and Anglo-Saxons.

218 Such a criticism might be directed at the voluntary acculturation model (supra., pp. 18-19).

219 Supra., p. 28. One is tempted to draw comparison with the so-called nouveau riche — people who are usually identified as pretenders by not having the correct cultural credentials.


221 The issue of British survival in sub-Roman Britain, in any event, has largely become an archaeological debate. See, for example, Arnold, Roman Britain to Saxon England, p. 7; Dark, Civitas to Kingdom; Evison, ‘Lo, the conquering hero comes’, pp. 8-9; Faull, ‘British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria’, pp. 1-56; Higham, Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons; Nurse, ‘Awkward angles’, pp. 3-4; Snyder, Age of Tyrants.
extent can these Britons be seen in the written sources, or perhaps identified by archaeological and onomastic evidence?

The concept of continuity, as is implied in the survival of identity and culture, remains one of central interest to scholars researching the transition from British to Anglo-Saxon control.²²² Yet it is also one fraught with problems concerning both its meaning and the evidence that would be necessary to establish such an eventuality.²²³ Does continuity refer to the survival of people or of institutions? Does the Anglo-Saxon occupation of a British site represent a clear transition from British to Anglo-Saxon possession — and so the survival of a British presence and institutions — or simply its re-use after a lapse of decades or even centuries? Does the survival of a British Celtic place-name mirror a monoglot British enclave, or simply that there were Britons in the vicinity to pass on a toponym? Christopher Snyder asserts that the continuity issue is partly a semantic one, that continuity means different things to different scholars.²²⁴ John Blair similarly states that the question of continuity is often posed too starkly, without appreciation of what is actually meant.²²⁵ In addition, ‘genuine’ continuity needs to be distinguished from ‘created’ continuity. It must be recognised that visible representations of the past — such as monuments and cemeteries — could be actively used by early medieval peoples in order to create an impression of longevity and tradition.²²⁶ Richard Bradley talks of the imagined or remote past being used as a ‘resource in the hands of the living’, for particular groups to establish their own unchallengeable position of dominance.²²⁷ He suggests that this practice was especially likely to occur during times of uncertainty and change. This means that one must be aware of the deliberate and specious appropriation of the past to legitimise control over people, land and resources.²²⁸ Thus, the continued use of an older site by Anglo-Saxons might have multiple interpretations, in addition to


²²⁴ Snyder, Age of Tyrants, p. 220.


²²⁶ This would be similar to the creation of genealogies and origin myths in order to invent a link between ‘legitimating origins and present times’ (Pohl, ‘Ethnic names and identities in the British Isles’, p. 9). Blair, ‘Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review’, p. 242, similarly states that ‘contemporaries, like ourselves, were capable of making deductions (right or wrong) from physical evidence’.

a genuine link with the immediate British past. Assessments of continuity must consider what would actually have been passed on from British to Anglo-Saxon periods.

The question of continuity is particularly acute in the ecclesiastical domain. Religion can operate as a mechanism for creating and cementing a shared social identity, and once the Anglo-Saxons converted, the potential for cultural intercourse and influence with the Christian Britons would have been greatly increased. It is currently popular to assert that the West Saxon, Mercian and to a lesser extent Northumbrian churches were exposed to a considerable degree of British influence, especially on their western and northern margins, prior to the arrival of Roman and Irish/Columban missionaries. However, uncovering evidence for this putative contribution is not so straightforward. The siting of an early Anglo-Saxon church over or near some previous cult site — such as a cemetery, holy well, Roman mausoleum, or even an earlier church or related curvilinear enclosure — can be generally established; yet the meaning of such an occurrence is less clear. To prove Christian continuity from British to Anglo-Saxon periods at any given site requires the enumeration of excavated phases of occupation and usage. Of more benefit would be evidence for the continued veneration of a British saint by the Anglo-Saxon church. The perpetuation of a Celtic dedication, for example, from before the Anglo-Saxon conquest of a British region would imply the continuation of the church institution, not just the consecutive use of the same site. More useful again would be evidence for British involvement in the conversion of Anglo-Saxon immigrants.

Debate over the issues of assimilation and continuity between the Anglo-Saxons and Britons can also be carried over into the examination of social interchange with the

229 Williams, 'Ancient landscapes and the dead', p. 24. Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to argue that the re-use of a Bronze Age barrow for the placing of the dead during the early Anglo-Saxon period represented the survival of a sub-British cultural practice, though some understanding of the ancient sanctity of the site might be assumed.
230 Higham, Northern Counties, p. 27; C. Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, pp. 354-5.
231 For example, Bassett, 'Church and diocese in the West Midlands', pp. 13-40; idem., 'Medieval ecclesiastical organisation in the vicinity of Wroxeter and its British antecedents', Journal of the British Archaeological Association 145 (1992), pp. 1-28; Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review', p. 265; idem., 'Churches in the early English landscape', p. 6; Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 51; Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 101; idem., 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 12; Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature in Western England, pp. 78-9; Smith, 'The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland', pp. 24-5; Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 266.
232 This is cogently explained by Blair, 'Churches in the early English landscape', p. 7.
Scots and Picts. Though they lived at more of a geographic distance from the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms – with only the Picts sharing a contiguous border with Northumbria – this should not preclude the possibility of interaction between them beyond just warfare. It can even be argued that because of the greater separation of the Picts and the Scots from Anglo-Saxon territory, as compared to the Britons, there was less ‘ethnic pressure’ or ‘ethnic tension’ and so less of a need for conscious differentiation and categorisation, or for the subsequent engineering of assimilation. In such circumstances, Anglo-Saxons may have more readily accepted the cultural practices of the Scots, and perhaps the Picts, than those of the Britons. Indeed, it may have been that the Christianity of the Britons, for example, acted as a rallying point of opposition and ethnic differentiation between them the Anglo-Saxons, rather than a mechanism for their assimilation. The influence of the more distant Scots, by contrast, might be seen in the Irish and Columban missions to Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century. It is also important to examine other evidence for exchange in the north of Britain, such as Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical involvement in Pictland, as well as matters of intermarriage and the acceptance of exiles.

**Summary**

The purpose of this thesis is to present a history of the interaction between Anglo-Saxons and Celts in pre-Viking Britain, c.600-800. As has been shown, there is a multiplicity of issues concerning warfare and conquest, assimilation, continuity and social exchange between these peoples. A focus on any one dialectic – Anglo-British, Anglo-Scot, or Anglo-Pictish – while informative, may reveal only part of the picture. It is through a cross-regional synthesis that the full canvas of Anglo-Celtic interaction can best be understood. Such a synthesis covering a range of source information will allow for a degree of cross-examination, and facilitate the evaluation of a more considered and even-handed view of relations than would be achieved by privileging only one set of sources. The paradox of Anglo-Celtic interaction, alluded to earlier, may indeed derive, in part, from the variety of studies which have narrowly focussed on specific issues or events or types of evidence. When one region is placed in comparison

---

235 As well as to address a gap in existing scholarship, the c.800 terminus for the thesis has been chosen so that relations between the Anglo-Saxons and Celts could be considered before the advent of a further intrusive group, namely, the Vikings.
236 Supra., pp. 1-2.
with another, when the various Celtic and Anglo-Saxon peoples are analysed together, when different issues are jointly surveyed, and when the full range of available evidence is considered, only then might some understanding of Anglo-Celtic interaction be approached.

This thesis does not attempt to provide an exhaustive investigation of the history of pre-Viking Britain. Rather, events concerning the histories of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic countries will be canvassed only to the extent that they impinge upon the topic under investigation. The terms 'Celt' and 'Anglo-Saxon' will be employed; though problematic, they are not entirely arbitrary and in any event are too much in general use to be abandoned. However, within each part of the thesis, more specific ethnic names will be reviewed so as to provide a more nuanced view of how the respective peoples may have seen themselves and each other. Each part of the thesis will, therefore, begin by presenting the relevant ethnographic material, as well as evidence for the development of kingship within the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic kingdoms under study. This will be followed by an examination of the evidence for warfare, conquest and territorial expansion, as well as for military alliances as appropriate. Issues of assimilation, continuity and social exchange will be explored next, pertaining in the first instance to the secular world. Matters of ecclesiastical interaction will follow. Anglo-Celtic relations will be examined for southern, northern and midland Britain in turn. The three parts of the thesis are thus presented in an order that proceeds from the Anglo-Saxon kingdom for which survives the greatest variety of textual evidence, namely Wessex, to the kingdom for which survives the least, namely Mercia. All parts of the thesis will consider relations between the relevant Anglo-Saxon peoples and the Britons; relations with the Scots and Picts will be considered specifically in part two, pertaining to Northumbria and the Celts of northern Britain. The final chapter of the thesis will present a conclusion to the investigation, focussing on the conceptual issues canvassed in this introduction.

237 Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtscepticism', p. 33, comments that uses of the term Celtic 'have some historical validity and are far too useful to abandon'. He adds that 'there is no problem so long as we do not use the concept 'Celtic' unthinkingly'. Reynolds, 'What do we mean by "Anglo-Saxon" and "Anglo-Saxons"?', p. 414, points out that 'it would be over-presumptuous to attempt to stop the terminological world of historians - let alone the general public', but rightly cautions that if we wish to use the term Anglo-Saxon, we 'ought to think hard about what we mean, and what others may think we mean, by the name we have chosen to use'.

Part 1

Wessex and the Britons of the South-West
Chapter 2

Mapping the Territory of the West Saxons and Britons of the South-West

West Saxons

According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Saxons arrived in the south of Britain in the third quarter of the fifth century. Successive ship-loads of invaders progressively defeated the Britons of Kent, Sussex and southern Wessex — in the case of Wessex, under the leadership of Cerdic and his son Cynric who were said to have arrived in 495 — before moving north up the Thames Valley and beyond, establishing themselves over much of the territory of the Romano-Britons. Bede’s Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum, on which much of the early material in the Chronicle is based, tells of Angle, Saxon and Jutish mercenaries invited to protect Britain from foreign incursion, but who rebel against their ‘slothful British’ patrons, their real intention being to subdue the island for themselves. Gildas’s De excidio Britanniae, which Bede in his turn used, presents a picture of the Romano-Britons — civilianised by the Pax Romana, demilitarised by the removal of Roman troops — falling victim to the savagery of their Saxon foederati protectors. They are either massacred, forced to flee, or surrender to the Saxons as slaves.

Accounts in the primary sources such as these, of antipathy and aggression, informed traditional thinking about the arrival of Anglo-Saxons in Britain and about Anglo-British relations. More recent scholarship has been increasingly critical of the sources, placing them under closer scrutiny within an historiographical context. Lack of contemporaneity, ethnocentricity of orientation, and partisanship of purpose have all been complaints levelled at the early medieval accounts. Yet, as these are the extant

---

1 ASC s.aa. 449, 456/7, 477, 495, 501, and 514. See also P. Sims-Williams, ‘The settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle’, ASE 12 (1983), p. 27, for a general discussion on the Anglo-Saxon ‘invasion’ as portrayed in the ASC.


4 DEB 23.1-2; 23.5; 23.1-3.

documentary sources, the challenge facing the historian is in finding a navigable course through the available evidence, such that credulity and naïveté are avoided, but not to the extreme of being closed-minded.

There is no denying that the sub-Roman period in Anglo-Saxon history – roughly the fifth and sixth centuries – was a time of flux and change: of settlement and re-settlement, invasion and retreat. It was a period when interaction between the various peoples of Britain would have been quite dynamic. Borders between territories would have been continually shifting, and relationships between different peoples occupying the same territory would have been regularly redefined. The focus in this part of the thesis is on the West Saxons and their interaction with the Britons of the south-west. As well as being the best-represented of the southern Anglo-Saxon peoples in the sources, the West Saxons are the ones who interacted most explicitly with the Britons in the period under study, versus the South Saxons, or the people of Kent.

On the basis of archaeological evidence, it has conventionally been asserted that there were Saxons in southern Britain before the cessation of Roman authority at the beginning of the fifth century. However, it is now accepted that the evidence for Saxon settlement in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries is much slighter than it was once considered to have been. Relatively few sites have been found which can be dated to before c.450, and all of these fall between the Thames and the Humber. More sites can be dated to before c.475, and these are more extensively distributed, including sites south of the Thames in Hampshire and Wiltshire in what became Wessex as far west as the Salisbury region on the Avon. John Hines notes that this archaeological

---


S. Esmonde Cleary, The Ending of Roman Britain (London, 1989), p. 189. The most often cited example for an early Saxon presence in Britain was the cemetery at Caistor-by-Norwich, which was originally dated to as early as the third century.


See J. Hines, 'Philology, archaeology and the adventus Saxonum vel Anglorum', in A. Bammesberger & A. Wollmann, (eds.), Britain 400-600: Language and History (Heidelberg, 1990), pp. 26-7, for a list of the sites that fall into this category.

There is an isolated site below the hill-fort of Hod Hill, on the River Stour (Dorset), at which mid-fifth-century Anglo-Saxon goods have been recently discovered. This location is in area which is otherwise considered to have been under British control at that time, so the meaning of the finds is uncertain, especially considering they were not from a mortuary context but rather were casual finds. B. Eagles, 'The archaeological evidence for settlement in the fifth to seventh centuries AD', in M. Aston & C. Lewis (eds.), The Medieval Landscape of Wessex (Oxford, 1994), p. 27, who suggests that these goods were
chronology actually seems fairly consistent with the traditional historical chronology represented by Bede’s dates for the *adventus Saxonum* of 449x456.  

Extending the date to include the first quarter of the sixth century, there is even greater expansion of sites, westwards to the upper reaches of the Thames and its tributaries, including a concentration around Dorchester-on-Thames (Oxon.). In the south-west, expansion is limited to the borders of Dorset, perhaps due to the obstruction of the east-facing Bokerley Dyke. There is limited evidence for pagan Anglo-Saxon burials for this period in Somerset, which was further protected by the barrier of the Selwood, and along its northern boundary by the West Wansdyke.

When all sites dateable to before the end of the sub-Roman period are considered, there is little actual extension of territory after the early decades of the sixth century, but greater consolidation and ‘in-filling’ within the limits of expansion set earlier, in Berkshire, Hampshire and most of Wiltshire. This implies a hiatus in Saxon expansion from the middle of the sixth century. Expansion into the seventh century is more difficult to map due to changes in burial custom, probably because of the advent of Christianity. Pagan Anglo-Saxon burials are dated to the seventh century in Dorset, centred on Dorchester, and predominantly to the east of or close to the Fosse Way in Somerset, for example at Camerton. Even if these sites should not be taken to exactly represent the incursion of so-called ethnic Saxons, they do reveal the spread of this material culture and the definite intrusion of new burial customs.

The actual connection between the *foederati* troops of the historical sources and the Saxon settlements described by the archaeological evidence, however, is not

---

from ‘the families of Saxon warriors in British employ’, is perhaps placing too much faith in the relationship between material culture and ethnic designation; they could as easily have resulted from trade or war-loot. See J. Moreland, ‘Ethnicity, power and the English’, in W.O. Frazer & A. Tyrrell (eds.), *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (London, 2000), p. 34, for a discussion of ethnicity and material culture. Eagles (p. 14), also provides a list of the putative fifth-century Anglo-Saxon sites in Wessex.

13 Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 22-3, 50, suggests that these may have been ‘recognised frontiers’.
15 Hines, ‘Philology, archaeology and the *adventus Saxonum vel Anglorum*’, p. 28. It should be noted that to pagans, especially in the early Christian period in Anglo-Saxon England, were not confined to pagans; there appears to have been a period of overlap in burial practice. See the discussion in H. Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England, c.600-850* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 132-6.
straightforward; they do not have to be the same cohort, nor even related cohorts of people.\textsuperscript{17} It is not even clear how these \textit{foederati} would have been organised during the sub-Roman period nor if they should be located in the south of Britain.\textsuperscript{18} There is also a problem in attempting to identify a distinctively ‘West Saxon’ material culture, as opposed to a generalised ‘Saxon’ one which appears to be widely dispersed in eastern and southern Britain.\textsuperscript{19} There is no guarantee that fifth- or sixth-century material finds in the region of Wessex are indicative of self-conscious \textit{West} Saxons. A similar caveat applies when relating the invaders to the eventual rulers of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England were creations of the later sixth and seventh centuries, and despite the existence of royal genealogies which trace Anglo-Saxon ancestry back to, and beyond, the conquering heroes from the continent, there is no compelling reason to connect the ruling dynasts with the original invaders.\textsuperscript{20}

The kingdom of Wessex was eventually created by the house of the \textit{Gewisse}, largely within the seventh century.\textsuperscript{21} According to Bede, the West Saxons had been ‘in early days … called the \textit{Gewisse}’,\textsuperscript{22} a name which may have derived from OE \textit{gewis}, ‘sure, reliable’.\textsuperscript{23} Early in his \textit{Historia ecclesiastica}, when discussing the provenance of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, Bede states that the West Saxons were one of the peoples who came from ‘the region \textit{[regione]} now known as Old Saxony’.\textsuperscript{24} The original locus of Wessex is difficult to identify precisely, but by the seventh century the upper Thames Valley certainly held some centres of power, such as Dorchester-on-Thames where Birinus the first bishop to the West Saxons established his episcopal see, c.635.\textsuperscript{25} By the end of Cædwalla’s reign (c.685/6-688), the West Saxon heartlands appear to have encompassed Wiltshire and Hampshire, including southern Hampshire and the Isle of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{17}] Yorke, \textit{Wessex}, p. 29.
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] See also the discussion regarding early Northumbria in Chapter 6 (\textit{infra.}, pp. 141-2).
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] Yorke, \textit{Wessex}, pp. 6, 34.
\item[\textsuperscript{22}] \textit{HE} III.7.
\item[\textsuperscript{23}] R. Coates, ‘On some controversy surrounding \textit{Gewissae/Gewissei, Cerdic and Ceawlin}’, \textit{Nomina} 13 (1989-90), p. 3. In the \textit{ASC} s.a. 855, one Gewis is given as the great grandfather of Cerdic, the alleged founder of the West Saxon dynasty. Coates (p. 1) states that this is ‘almost certainly an eponymous invention back-formed from the plural \textit{Gewissae}’.
\item[\textsuperscript{24}] \textit{HE} I.15.
\item[\textsuperscript{25}] \textit{HE} III.7. In the 660s a new see was established at Winchester. See also Yorke, \textit{Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England}, p. 132; \textit{idem.}, \textit{Wessex}, pp. 34-5, 58.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Wight which had been classified by Bede as previously being independent Jutish provinces. West Saxon territory in the upper Thames Valley was, however, reduced during the course of the seventh century by the expansion of Mercia.

Beyond the early entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recording the exploits of pairs of founding heroes with alliterative names, often derived from Latin placenames, the first king for whom some independent account survives is Ceawlin (c.581-588). Bede includes Ceawlin second in his list of *imperium*-wielding kings. Though Ceawlin is called by Bede ‘king of the West Saxons [*rex Occidentalium Saxonum*]’, it is probable that the term ‘West Saxon’ only came into regular use in the later seventh century. Bede only begins to routinely refer to the Gewissian dynasty as being West Saxons from the reign of Ine, c.688-726. The term ‘king of the West Saxons’, as distinct from ‘king of the Saxons’, is used in some charters from the late seventh and early eighth centuries. However, this does not become commonplace until after c.760.

### Britons of the South-West

In contrast to the West Saxons, the Britons of the south-west are somewhat harder to define. As alluded to in the Chapter 1, the documentary sources are almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon, with the exception of Gildas’s *De excidio Britanniae* for the

---

26 *HE* IV.16. Bede also states here that the boundary between the Gewisse and the South Saxons lay opposite the Isle of Wight. According to M. Aston and C. Lewis, ‘Introduction’, in *idem.*, *The Medieval Landscape of Wessex*, p. 1, the counties which made up the heartland of Wessex came to include Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset, with Berkshire and Devon on the periphery. There was further expansion in the ninth century. Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 3 notes that none of the reconstructed Roman civitas boundaries seem to correspond with later shire boundaries.

27 Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 62. The north-eastern boundary of Wessex at the end of the seventh century may have been the Marlborough/Berkshire Downs, and the north-western boundary (with the Hwicce), the line of the Avon. Expansion of political control to the south-west will be discussed in Chapter 3 (*infra.*, pp. 56-63).


29 *HE* II.5. This list is discussed in more detail in the context of the *imperium*-wielding Northumbrian kings (e.g. *infra.*, pp. 168-9, 176).

30 In a South Saxon charter dated to 692, Coenred, Ine’s father, attests as *rex Westsaxonum* (S45/BCS78, p. 292). In a charter dated to 725, Ine attests as *rex Westsaxonum* (S251/Glastonbury Cart. 903, pp. 38-40). In the prologue to Ine’s Law Code, promulgated between 688-694, Ine is described as *Wesseaxna kyning* (*EHD*, no. 32, pp. 364-72), though this may be interpolated. A charter dated to Aethilheard’s reign (726-740) gives his title as *rex Westsaxonum* (S253/Glastonbury Cart. 648, pp. 38-40).

31 H. Edwards, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom* (Oxford, 1988), p. 309, states that the usual style after c.760 was *rex Occidentalium Saxonum*, though she points out that *rex Gewissorum* was still used (e.g. S256/BCS170, pp. 116-19; S262/BCS200, pp. 259-61; S273/BCS389, pp. 150-3).

sixth century and a much later pedigree for south-western Britain surviving in a fourteenth-century manuscript, and thus focus on Anglo-Saxon people and events. The Britons were relevant only so much as they impinged upon the narrative of English success. The territory of Wessex fell within the late Roman British province of Britannia Prima, administered from Cirencester (Corinium Dobunorum), also the civitas capital of the Dobunni. Other centres in the south-west included Dorchester (Durnovaria), the civitas capital of the Durotriges, and Exeter (Isca Dumnoniorum), the capital of the Dumnonii. While the civitates of the Dobunni and the Durotriges were both subject to a degree of Romanisation — villas were common, and Bath (Aquae Sulis) within the territory of the Dobunni was arguably the most thriving of small towns in late-Roman Britain — amongst the Dumnonii, Romanisation remained weak with Exeter being the only truly urban community. There do not appear to have been any towns west of Exeter, and the only known villas lay close to the eastern boundary of the civitas, around Ilchester (Roman Lindinis; Somerset). David Dumville has voiced a suspicion that significant parts of the south-western peninsula had not witnessed effective Roman government since at least the third century.

It is unclear how and in what form the former Romano-British civitates survived the end of Roman authority. There is certainly evidence for the desertion of the civitas capitals even before the arrival of the Saxons, with some exceptions such as Exeter, which suggests a collapse in Roman civil administration. Overt signs of Romanisation pass away equally throughout the south; so the arrival of the Germanic peoples in the east cannot be taken as the primary motivation for Roman civil disintegration. But it is

36 The civitas of the Dumnonii may have included at least one sub-division for the Cornovii of the extreme south-west, perhaps separated from their eastern neighbours by the River Tamar. See Eagles, 'The archaeological evidence for settlement', p. 25.
37 Snyder, Age of Tyrants, p. 150.
38 Dark, Civitas to Kingdom, p. 91; Higham, Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons, pp. 36, 40.
39 The River Parrett in Somerset may have formed the boundary between the Dumnonii and the neighbouring Durotriges (I would like to thank Duncan Frobert, pers. comm., 22 October, 2002, for providing me with this information). Yorke, Wessex, p. 86, notes that Ilchester has been nominated as the civitas capital of the northern Durotriges during the third century.
unclear what alternative form of government emerged. It is possible, given the evidence for fifth century re-fortification of hill-fort sites such as South Cadbury and Cadbury-Congresbury (Somerset), that there was a reversion from urban administration to Iron-Age-style chieftainship. Certainly, the lack of effective late-Roman government in the south-west may indicate that native British rule survived or was re-invented in these more distant locales, and that hill-forts were re-used by a controlling elite who were either part of this tradition or who emerged out of the more Romanised civitates. However, it is important to be wary of assuming too much in the way of continuity from the distant Iron-Age past; the re-use of such sites may simply represent a desire for greater security in a turbulent time. There is no direct archaeological evidence that any hill-fort was in fact the seat of a sub-Roman chieftain.

Gildas provides the name for the only known sub-Roman British polity surviving in the region, namely Dumnonia, ruled at the time he was writing (conventionally taken to be c.540) by the ‘tyrant [tyrannicus]’ Constantine. Rendered by Gildas as ‘Damnonia’, this polity is usually regarded as the successor of the south-western Romano-British civitas, the name of which was in turn derived from that used for the people living in the region, the Dumnonii, mentioned by classical authors such as Ptolemy and Solinus.

Gildas’s Constantine is tentatively identified as the Custennin of the Dumnonian pedigree. Beyond this pedigree, which is by no means a reliable account, the record

---

42 Dumville, ‘The idea of government in sub-Roman Britain’, p. 179, comments on the ‘almost total lack of evidence [for] how government in the Romano-British civilian zone changed in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries’.
43 Dark, Civitas to Kingdom, pp. 90-1; Snyder, Age of Tyrants, pp. 179-80, 206.
44 Yorke, Wessex, p. 19.
45 A. Woolf, ‘The Britons: from Romans to barbarians’, in H. Goetz, J. Jarnut & W. Pohl (eds.), Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World (Leiden, 2003), p. 362, in this regard provides a criticism of Dark’s, Civitas to Kingdom, p. 42, insistence on late-Roman hill-fort use being an expression of political continuity from the pre-Roman period.
48 DEB 28.1.
49 Pearce, Kingdom of Dumnonia, p. 2.
50 EWGT, p. 45, § 11. In the pedigrees found in twelfth-century tract Bonedd y Saint (‘Lineage of the Saints’), the name is rendered as Custennyn Gomeu (‘of Cornwall’), EWGT, p. 58, §§ 27, 28. See Pearce, Kingdom of Dumnonia, pp. 140-1; C. Thomas, Celtic Britain (London, 1986), p. 67. Custennin appears to have been the son of Cynfawr/Kynwawr, who may be the Cunomorus of the well-known inscription at Castledore near Fowey (Cornwall): ‘DRUSTANUS HIC IACET CUNOMORI FILIUS’, ‘Drustanus lies here, the son of Cunomorus’ (E. Okasha, Corpus of Early Christian Inscribed Stones of South-West Britain, London, 1993, no. 10, pp. 91-6). Caution is required here, however, as the inscription is not
of Dumnonian kings is extremely sparse. The only other king whose personal existence is certain is the Geraint (‘Gerontius rex’) who was a correspondent of Aldhelm c.672/3, and called by him ‘the lord who guides the sceptre of the western kingdom [occidentalis regni]’, which he elsewhere names ‘Domnonia’. The existence of this kingdom into the pre-Viking period is thus assured, even though no other Anglo-Saxon source mentions the kingdom by name, nor identifies its inhabitants any more specifically than just calling them Britanni/Brittones or some variation on wealas or Brettas. The evidence of Gildas does allow for assumption that by the time he was writing kingdoms had developed in some of the former civitates – variously led by persons Gildas refers to as tyrants, kings and judges (tyrannos, reges, iudices) – and that their ruling houses had existed for at least two generations. A number of his kings had Latin names, such as Constantine, and the fact that Gildas wrote in Latin presumably implies that he expected to be understood by his audience, even if it may have been a predominantly clerical one. The elite of post-Roman Britain certainly cannot have been unfamiliar with Latin, a language which had a significant effect on the British dialects. The survival of Latin in the south-west is supported by the evidence of Latin inscriptions on memorial stones. There is some possibility that there were layers of rulership within Dumnonia below that of the king. A memorial stone from Sourton (Devon), commemorating a princeps Iuriucus, may represent evidence of a lesser

precisely datable to the sub-Roman period. See Pearce, Kingdom of Dumnonia, p. 141; Thomas, Celtic Britain, p. 70; idem., And Shall These Mute Stones Speak? (Cardiff, 1994), pp. 279-80. Drustanus and Cunomorus are often linked (unreliably) with the Tristan and King Mark of Cornish Arthurian legend; see O.J. Padel, ‘The Cornish background of the Tristan stories’, CMCS 1 (1981), pp. 77-9. Aldhelm, Epist. IV, pp. 155-60, at p. 155. This letter is discussed in Chapter 4 (infra., pp. 124-33). In the ASC s.a. 710, for example, Geraint (‘Gerente’) is simply referred to as ‘king of the Britons [Walacyninge I Weala cininge]’. The more specific West Wealas used to refer to Dumnonia (or perhaps Cornwall) first occurs in the ASC s.a. 813 (recte 815); the yet more precise Cornwallum is used for the first time s.a. 891. Gildas’s reference in DEB 28.1 to Constantine as the ‘tyrant whelp of the filthy lioness of Dumnonia’ might also imply a dynasty of a sort. On the other hand, this could just be Gildas’s rhetoric; ‘filthy lioness’ might not refer to a specific person. Dumville, ‘The idea of government in sub-Roman Britain’, p. 183. M. Lapidge, ‘Gildas’s education and the Latin culture of sub-Roman Britain’, in Lapidge & Dumville, Gildas: New Approaches, p. 47, presents an argument for the Latin in the DEB being representative of the late Roman school, rather than being early Medieval. On this point, see also C. Stancliffe, ‘The British church and the mission of Augustine’, in R. Gameson (ed.), St Augustine and the Conversion of England (Stroud, 1999), p. 116; N. Wright, ‘Aldhelm, Gildas and Acircius’, in idem., History and Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval West: Studies in Intertextuality (Hampshire, 1995), 1-28. Dumville, ‘The idea of government in sub-Roman Britain’, pp. 185-6, 190.
ruler.\textsuperscript{58} Another stone from Madron (Cornwall) commemorates one Ri(g)alobranus, whose name appears to contain the Celtic element \textit{rix}, 'kingly/royal'.\textsuperscript{59} The \textit{Life of St Samson} also includes a reference to a \textit{comes} Guedianus (or Vedianus), said to be the leader of the \textit{pagus} Tricurius, the hundred later called Trigg in the Tintagel area in Cornwall.\textsuperscript{60} While these terms may not have been used with full cognisance of their classical meaning, they provide some evidence for a hierarchy of authority in the south-west, and perhaps of sub-groups such as the descendants of the Cornovii ruled by local leaders under the suzerainty of the Dumnonian king.\textsuperscript{61} Indeed, a permutation of the name of the Cornovii, that is 'Cornubia', appears in several pre-Viking sources, and suggests the persistence of this regional identity.\textsuperscript{62} We remain uninformed, however, as to the fate of any other hypothetical southern British kingdoms or polities that Gildas failed to mention, and despite efforts at reconstruction, no documentary evidence survives for any such kingdom south of the Thames apart from Dumnonia.\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{Summary}

It is therefore possible to clearly identify only one British polity in the south-west that existed within the period under study, though this may have consisted of dependent sub-groups of people under the rulership of the Dumnonian king. Though it should be allowed that other polities may have existed, the West Saxons were thus confronted with only one identifiable Celtic kingdom as they expanded into the south-west during the pre-Viking period. In this regard, Wessex is distinct from the other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms under examination which, as will be shown throughout the thesis, potentially interacted with a variety of Celtic peoples.

\textsuperscript{57} Infra., pp. 90-1.


\textsuperscript{59} The full inscription read: 'RIALOBRANI / CUNOVALI FILI', '[stone of] Ri(g)alobranus, son of Cunovalus' (Okasha, \textit{Corpus of Early Christian Inscribed Stones}, no. 31, pp. 174-8). As the first element in personal name compounds, \textit{rix} appears as \textit{rigo}-.

\textsuperscript{60} VS I.48. An eighth-century date for the \textit{Life} has recently been deduced by the French translator, Pierre Flobert, who demonstrates that the author knew literature from the first third of this century. See his \textit{La Vie ancienne de Saint Samson de Dol} (Paris, 1997), pp. 102-11. For Trigg, see also DEPN, p. 480.

\textsuperscript{61} Thomas, \textit{And Shall These Mute Stones Speak?}, p. 214.

\textsuperscript{62} For example, Aldhelm in the \textit{Carmen rhythmicum} (M. Lapidge & J. Rosier, \textit{Aldhelm: The Poetic Works}, Cambridge, 1985, p. 177); \textit{AC} s.a. 722. \textit{Cornubia} ultimately gave the name Cornwall.

\textsuperscript{63} It has been argued, for example, that the shires of \\textit{Dornscete} (Dorset) and \textit{Sumorscete} (Somerset), attested in the \textit{Tribal Hidage} and the \textit{ASC} s.a. 837 (\textit{recte} 840) and 845 (\textit{recte} 848) respectively, were originally sub-Roman British polities. See M. Costen, \textit{The Origins of Somerset} (Manchester, 1992), pp. 70-3; Dark, \textit{Civitas to Kingdom}, p. 154; J. Hines, 'Cultural change and social organisation in early Anglo-Saxon England', in Ausenda, \textit{After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians}, p. 83; Yorke, \textit{Wessex}, pp. 85-6. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 4 (infra., pp. 85-6).
Chapter 3

Warfare, Conquest and Territorial Expansion

In order to understand the process of the expansion of West Saxon political control over British territory in the pre-Viking centuries, it is axiomatic that the evidence of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle must be considered. On the face if it, the Chronicle enumerates a compelling narrative of West Saxon expansion over the Britons by military conquest and aggression. Earlier authors who have followed the Chronicle's account have, therefore, accepted the premise of a steady and inevitable West Saxon advance into the south-western peninsula. More recent scholars, however, are sceptical of such a view. This chapter will involve an examination of this important West Saxon source, before warfare and territorial expansion is considered for the seventh and eighth centuries respectively. Other evidence for warfare and expansion will also be discussed to extend the picture provided by the Chronicle.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

The Chronicle, which exists in several versions, was compiled c.890 at the behest of King Alfred of Wessex, and thus has a political and geographic bias in favour of his kingdom. It purports to record, in annalistic format, the origin and foundation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of the south and their subsequent development and history. Most recent scholarship, however, has been particularly critical of the Chronicle's early material. Patrick Sims-Williams has asserted that the annalistic framework should be regarded as 'snare and delusion which has misled generations of readers into regarding it as a coherent work of history rather than as an artificial amalgam of heterogeneous traditions'. Others have expressed reservations, but have still considered the material

---

1 See, for example, W.G. Hoskins, The Westward Expansion of Wessex (Leicester, 1960), pp. 3-22, who faithfully employed the ASC to plot the West Saxons' advance westwards, referring to 'the victorious movement which carried the warriors and colonists of Wessex ... into Devon and onwards to the Atlantic coast' (p. 3). See also H.P.R. Finberg, 'Sherborne, Glastonbury and the expansion of Wessex', in idem., Lucerna: Studies of Some Problems in the Early History of England (London, 1964), pp. 95-115.


Thus there appear to be contrasting views about how the *Chronicle* is to be employed by historians. The central issue in terms of the value of the *Chronicle* for the pre-Viking centuries concerns the contemporaneity of the early material. The most salient point in this regard is that until the coming of Christianity, the Anglo-Saxons were pre-literate and so cannot have kept annals. Although St Augustine arrived in Kent in 597, the first West Saxon king to be christened was Cynegils, in 635. It is reasonably assumed that the subsequent establishment of religious houses in Wessex throughout the seventh and eighth centuries meant that the production of written records became possible, and that documentation began to be kept that could form the basis for later compilations. What is less straightforward is the genesis of the pre-Christian entries, and specifically when this material was first written down: at the advent of literacy or at some later point? It is often assumed that the first contemporary annals in the *Chronicle* date from the second half of the seventh century, when the entries become more circumstantial. But there is nothing in the language of the earlier annals to assist in dating, and there is no compelling argument to suggest whether or not they were written in the seventh century, or even the eighth.

It is therefore required that the early material in the *Chronicle* be regarded as oral history repackaged into an annalistic structure, which much of the actual content suggests. It must also be acknowledged that oral histories from pre-literate societies are likely to contain a blending of the mythical and the real. Hence, it is a speculative endeavour to use the *Chronicle* to try to construct a critical and comprehensive narrative of West Saxon conquest over the Britons of the south-west, especially for the years

---

5 K.R. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity 300-800* (Leicester, 1994), p. 107, for example, argues that 'Anglo-Saxon texts may give some hope (in their emphasis on warfare with the British kingdoms) of reconstructing something of sub-Roman political geography'.
7 *HE* I.25, III.7; *ASC* 635.  
8 Yorke, 'Fact or fiction? The written evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries', p. 47.  
9 B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), p. 128; *idem.*, *Wessex*, p. 52. The entries which are considered to mark contemporaneous recording are *ASC* 648 'Here Cenwalh gave his relative Cuthred “3 thousands” of land', and *ASC* 671 'Here there was a great mortality of birds'. Entries prior to this time are devoid of such things as natural disasters and events that are characteristic of contemporary records, except for two that also occur in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (i.e. *ASC* 538, 540, both of which record an apparent solar eclipse). See Sims-Williams, 'The settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle', p. 27.  
11 For example, the pairs of founding heroes with alliterative names mentioned earlier (*supra.*, p. 46). See also D.N. Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain: history and legend', *History* New Series 62 (1977), pp. 77-81.
prior to the conversion of the West Saxons. However, if the *Chronicle* is used for what it is—a later West Saxon view of how they wanted to see their origins and interaction with the Britons—it may reveal something of the attitude with which Britons were regarded, an attitude which might itself be enduring.

The *Chronicle* presents a clear picture that relations between Saxons and Britons were antagonistic; virtually the only type of interaction mentioned for the pre-Viking period is warfare. Nineteen engagements are recorded as having been fought between the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons in the sub-Roman period to 597 - at least two of which could be duplications - and there are two further general references to warfare.\(^{12}\) For the seventh century, on the other hand, only three battles between West Saxons and Britons are listed, with two further engagements having no identified antagonist.\(^{13}\) Four further entries for the eighth century refer to warfare between West Saxons and Britons,\(^ {14}\) one of which is likely to have been a campaign against Britons in southern Wales.\(^ {15}\) This reduction in the number of battles for the seventh and eighth centuries could either reflect the more accurate recording of events or perhaps more stable relations between the Britons and Saxons in these centuries, or a bit of both. But since the number of battles listed is unlikely to be accurate in any case, especially for the sub-Roman period, it would not be wise to conclude too much from these figures. Indeed, while the *Chronicle* only records one battle fought by Centwine of Wessex, for the year 682 against the Britons, Aldhelm writes in his *Carmina ecclesiastica* that Centwine waged war in *three* battles.\(^ {16}\) Given that Aldhelm was Abbot of Malmesbury at the time, he is certainly a better witness for Centwine than the compilers of the *Chronicle*.\(^ {17}\) In addition, it is not always possible to locate battle sites; some engagements are recorded

\(^{12}\) The nineteen battles are ASC s.aa. 455, 457, 465, 473, 477, 485, 491, 495, 501, 508, 514, 519, 527, 552, 556, 571, 577, 584, 597. The entry for 514 appears to duplicate that for 495; 508 appears to duplicate 501. \(ASC\) 449 and 597 refer to warfare between the Britons and Anglo-Saxons in general. From \(ASC\) 495, all the entries refer to West Saxons specifically, or at least battles in West Saxon territory. See H. Kleinschmidt, 'Beyond conventionality: recent work on the Germanic migration to the British Isles', *Studi Medievali* 3\(^{rd}\) Series 36 (1995), p. 993; Sims-Williams, 'The settlement of England in Bede and the *Chronicle*', pp. 34-7; Yorke, 'Fact or fiction? The written evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries', pp. 45-50.

\(^{13}\) ASC s.aa. 614, 658, 682. The additional two without an identified antagonist are for ASC s.aa. 652 and 661. The latter of these two, s.a. 661, is sometimes claimed to have been fought against the Britons (e.g. Hoskins, *Westward Expansion of Wessex*, p. 14; Todd, *The South West to AD 1000*, p. 272), but this is not stated in the annal.

\(^{14}\) ASC 710, 743, 753, 755 (recte 757). The entry s.a. 755, does not refer to a specific engagement but states that Cynewulf 'often fought great battles against the Britons'.

\(^{15}\) ASC s.a. 743, records that Aethelbald of Mercia and Cuthred of Wessex fought against the Britons. See also Chapter 11 (infra., p. 405).

without a location even being mentioned. Thus, even when records could have been contemporaneous, there is no guarantee that everything of import was actually written down.

There is no reason, however, to doubt the historicity of warfare between West Saxons and Britons. Participation in warfare was a mark of status in 'heroic' society, which might be evidenced archaeologically, for the Saxons, by the large number of weapons found in pagan graves. If the poem Beowulf can be taken to provide any clues, Hrothgar and his warriors appear to have been on a permanent war-footing: 'It was their habit always, at home or on campaign, to be ready for war', and raiding into the territory of neighbouring peoples appears as a usual activity. In the world described by the poem, honour is to be gained by 'glorious action', and death considered a better option than an 'existence of disgrace'. The poem Y Gododdin — if it is at all representative of the southern Britons, and it may not be — similarly commemorates that for the Britons, participation in battle was a noble ambition, and one way to win reputation was to 'slay a great host'. Even Old English religious poetry, such as The Dream of the Rood, evokes Christ as a young warrior hero. At the very least, therefore, warrior ideals were upheld by later generations of Saxons and Britons who passed on these stories. But there is no question that warfare in pre-Viking Britain was

---

18 For example, ASC 682, 710, 753.
19 L. Alcock, Economy, Society and Warfare among the Britons and Saxons (Cardiff, 1987), p. 221; R. Faith, The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship (London, 1997), p. 7; N.J.Higham, The Kingdom of Northumbria AD 350-1100 (Gloucestershire, 1993), pp. 90-1. H. Härke's, 'Early Saxon weapon burials: frequencies, distributions and weapon combinations', in S. Chadwick-Hawkes (ed.), Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England (Oxford, 1989), pp. 49-62, study of fifty-four Pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, which included a sample of 331 burials from the Saxon regions in the south, found that forty-seven per cent of identifiable adult male burials were furnished with weapons, with a range of eleven to ninety per cent across individual cemeteries. When all inhumations were considered, eighteen per cent contained weapons, with a range of one to thirty-six per cent across cemeteries. There is some disagreement over the extent to which the ownership and deposition of weapons was ceremonial versus functional. See the discussion in H. Härke, 'Early Anglo-Saxon social structure', in Hines, Anglo-Saxons, pp. 160-3.
20 Beowulf, lines 1247-8 (all references to Beowulf are from M. Swanton, ed. & trans., Manchester, 1978).
21 Beowulf, lines 1202-14, describe how Hygelac the Geat was killed on an expedition into Frisia.
22 Beowulf, lines 25-4, 2889-90.
23 The Britons of Gododdin were from a region never subsumed under Roman control, and so their traditions may have been different from the, albeit unevenly, Romanised Britons of the civil provinces.
‘an essential ingredient of political success’. Penda of Mercia provides a clear instance here for how the expansion of political control could be prosecuted, as does Æthelfrith of Northumbria. And the existence of the dykes mentioned earlier, if they were not purely erected for the demarcation of early boundaries, indicates the need to provide some defensive barrier to incursion.

Apart from warfare fulfilling these warrior ideals, there were solid material gains to be had. Wars might be fought in attempts to take land and extend territory, to impose overlordship or enforce the payment of tribute, to seize war-loot or exact retribution, or to maintain frontiers. There is some challenge, however, in trying to specifically link many of the entries in the Chronicle with these various purposes. The Invasion Period entries, that is those prior to c.600, certainly seem straightforward. There are entries recording what appears to be territorial expansion, and there are several references to Saxons putting the Britons to flight, perhaps also implying land-taking. Two entries also refer to war-loot being seized. However, these annals are entirely suspect in their detail and chronology and can scarcely be relied upon to construct an accurate picture of early warfare between West Saxons and Britons. The first seventh-century entry in the Chronicle concerning warfare, under the year 614, should also be included amongst this corpus of early ‘pre-literate’ entries. Here it is said that Cynegils and Cwichelm fought at the unlocated Beandun, but the reference to 2065 Britons being slain smacks of the mythical, and was doubtless an invented detail to glorify the ancestors of the West Saxon dynasty.

26 Yorke, Wessex, p. 67.
27 Supra., p. 44.
28 On the dykes of Wessex, see the slightly dated discussion by D. Bonney, ‘Early boundaries in Wessex’, in P.J. Fowler (ed.), Archaeology and the Landscape: Essays for L.V. Grinsell (London, 1972), pp. 168-86. It is not clear when all the dykes were constructed, but the Bokerley Dyke and the two Wansdykes may be sub-Roman.
29 Alcock, Economy, Society and Warfare, p. 305; Yorke, Wessex, p. 66.
30 Supra., p. 33.
31 Ranging from the generalised entry in the ASC s.a. 501 of Port and his two sons seizing land, to the much-cited entry s.a. 577 of Cuthwine and Caewlin taking the cities of Gloucester, Cirencester and Bath after the battle of Dyrham. Other examples are ASC 571, 584.
32 ASC 457, 473, 477, 514, 552
33 ASC 473, 584.
34 Sims-Williams, ‘The settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle’, pp. 32-9, provides a devastating critique of many of the early entries in the ASC. Yet, some authors still rely on certain of these Invasion Period entries to provide a chronology of West Saxon takeover. See, for example, M. Costen, The Origins of Somerset (Manchester, 1992), p. 71.
35 ASC s.a., ‘Cynegils and Cwichelm fought on Beandun and killed 2 thousand and 65 Britons (Walas)’.
36 Hoskins, Westward Expansion of Wessex, pp. 7-10, identified Beandun as Bindon in east Devon, though his argument is now outdated.
Warfare and Territorial Expansion in the Seventh Century

As stated, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is generally thought to become more reliable from about the middle of the seventh century, though the actual dates given should best be regarded as approximations unless corroboration exists from other sources. The two seventh-century entries from this period that refer to warfare with the Britons follow some of the Invasion Period entries in recording them referring to warfare with the Britons. The entry under the year 658 has Cenwalh driving the Britons in flight as far as the River Parrett in Somerset, after a battle fought at *Peonnum*. Derived from British *pen*, 'hill/head', this has traditionally been identified as Penselwood, 'the head of Selwood', near the meeting of the borders of Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset. Pen Hill outside Yeovil (Somerset) has also been suggested. This battle seems to have taken place, therefore, in south-eastern Somerset, and from the mention of the Parrett it could be inferred that the river had become the new frontier between the West Saxons and the Britons of Dumnonia. Nevertheless, the meaning of the entry is by no means certain. In the first instance, there is no indication as to whether this defeat and flight by the Britons simply represented a raid for war-loot such as slaves, or whether Cenwalh was able to dispossess the Britons of their control of the region. The example of Northumbria shows that battles could be fought at some distance from securely held territory: Æthelfrith, for example, attacked Chester. Thus it is axiomatic that a Saxon victory at a certain location in Wessex does not necessarily identify the position of a frontier. It is also unclear whether Cenwalh's victory was followed by West Saxon colonisation. It seems likely that settlers would have been necessary for the absorption of new territory.

---

37 Supra., p. 52.
38 *ASC* s.a., 'Here Cenwalh fought at *Peonnum* against the Britons (*Walas*), and drove them in flight as far as the Parret (sic)'.
39 Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 53. This was the location of a major battle with the Vikings recorded in the *ASC* s.a. 1016, in which the same name form was used.
41 As stated earlier (see note 39, supra., p. 47), the Parrett may have formed the boundary between the *civitates* of the Dumnonii and the Durotriges. In this regard, it is conceivable that the Britons being driven as far as the Parrett were not Dumnonians after all, but the successors of the Durotriges (Duncan Probert, pers. comm., 22 October, 2002).
42 Slaves would have been one of the commodities gained as loot. Gildas described slavery as the likely fate awaiting captured Britons (*DEB* 25.1-3), and British and English slaves are mentioned in the Laws of Ine (Ine 23.3, 54.2, 74, 74.1, 74.2). On this topic, see D. Pelteret, 'Slave raiding and slave trading in early England', *ASE* 9 (1981), p. 99.
43 *HE* II.2. Sims-Williams, 'The settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle', p. 31, refers to this as the 'Entebbe factor'. The battle of Chester is discussed in Chapter 7 (*infra.*, pp. 170-2).
into Wessex. But on the other hand, Cenwalh may have been concerned here simply with extending his overlordship of the Britons – with its associated tributary obligations – and there may have been minimal West Saxon land-grabbing. Overlordship does not necessarily mean that the suzerain will interfere with the internal workings of a subordinate territory. There are even more problems with the other seventh-century entry in the Chronicle, under the year 682, which simply records that Centwine drove the Britons ‘as far as the sea’. If the event commemorated is indeed authentic, there is nothing that can reveal exactly which sea is meant: the English or Bristol Channels, or even the Atlantic off northern Cornwall. The Chronicle provides no basis for assessing these different interpretations.

It is possible, however, to gain some picture of West Saxon expansion in the seventh century using evidence from charters of land grants from West Saxon kings to religious houses in the west of Wessex such as Malmesbury, Glastonbury and Sherborne. If a king was in a position to grant land to a religious institution, he must have exercised control over the surrounding region. Wessex is comparatively well-served by charters, the earliest of which date from the second half of the seventh century, albeit not in the original. It must be acknowledged, however, that it was not until 635 that a West Saxon king was christened, and pagan Anglo-Saxons as a rule did not grant land to Christian houses. Charters, therefore, can only provide a fairly late terminus ante quem for West Saxon control.

The first reliable charter from a West Saxon to Malmesbury in north Wiltshire dates from the reign of King Centwine (676-685). This charter records an exchange of lands between one Baldred and Abbot Aldhelm, with the consent and confirmation of Centwine, including 100 hides near to the south of Malmesbury and adjacent to the

---

45 Unfortunately, there is no pre-Viking evidence from Wessex regarding tribute arrangements to help elucidate this matter. However, the Laws of Ine do stipulate food-rents which may have been similar to tribute (e.g. Ine 70.1). On this point, see W.G. Runciman, ‘Accelerating social mobility: the case of Anglo-Saxon England’, _Past and Present_ 104 (1984), p. 14.
48 ASC s.a., ‘Centwine put the Britons (Bret wealas) to flight as far as the sea’.
49 This latter suggestion was made by Hoskins, _Westward Expansion of Wessex_, pp. 17-18.
50 Maddicott, ‘Two frontier states: Northumbria and Wessex’, p. 27.
51 That is, Cynegils; _ASC_ 635, _HE_ III.7.
52 For further discussion on West Saxon charters, see Chapter 5 (infra., pp. 101-2).
53 _ASC_ 676, 685.
Avon. Before this, Malmesbury appears to have been in Mercian control. Northern Wiltshire, then, must have been in Anglo-Saxon hands from c.680 at the latest. Further west in Somerset, Glastonbury was also given land during the reign of Centwine. This time referred to as rex, Baldred gave land at Pengerd (West Pennard) approximately five kilometres to the east of Glastonbury to Abbot Haemgils. A date of 681 is given for the charter, and though this is likely to have been an interpolation, Heather Edwards has assessed it as being approximately correct since it accords with the persons mentioned on the witness list. Centwine himself gave two parcels of land to Abbot Haemgils in 682 at Crycebeorh (Creechbarrow Hill) and Quantock Wood near Taunton, which suggests that he had gained territory west of the Parrett, and may have therefore been in control of much of western Somerset. Edwards has evaluated an earlier Glastonbury charter from King Cenwalh (642-72) dated to 670 as a fabrication. The same conclusion has been reached for a grant of privileges dated to 671 from Cenwalh to Sherborne in Dorset. Hence, if Cenwalh had driven the Britons as far as the River Parrett in 658, there is no reliable charter evidence that he consolidated this victory by confiscating and regranting their land. The earliest genuine charter that actually survives in the Sherborne cartulary is a grant of land made by King Cynewulf (757-786), though a fourteenth-century list of lost charters includes Cenwalh and Ine as early benefactors.

As far as the charters can explicate, therefore, there seems to have been a period of westward expansion which is first securely documented in the charter evidence for the

---

54 S1170/BCS71, pp. 94-7. Aldhelm gave to Baldred 100 hides east of Braydon (Bradon) wood in exchange for the 100 hides adjacent to the River Avon (Abon) around a wood called Stelcanlaeg (possibly Startley, about five kilometres south of Malmesbury) and Cnebhanburg (perhaps the nearby Nable's Farm). H. Edwards, The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom (Oxford, 1988), p. 95, argues that Baldred's grant was a single tract of land, defined by these three qualifiers.

55 Two charters survive that are likely to be authentic: one from King Aethelred of Mercia granting land to Abbot Aldhelm in 681 (S71/BCS59 (duplicated in S73/BCS58), pp. 90-2); the other from a King Berhtwald doing the same in 685, under the consent of Aethelred (S1169/BCS65, pp. 93-4).

56 S236/BCS61, pp. 11-15.

57 Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, p. 11.

58 S237/BCS62, pp. 15-7. Taunton is mentioned again in the ASC s.a. 722, in a context which suggests that it was securely in West Saxon hands by that time.

59 S227/(Glastonbury Cart. 644), pp. 20-3.


61 ASC s.a.

62 Excepting here the possibility that he granted land at Lanprobi (infra., pp. 117-23).

63 S263/BCS224, pp. 241-3, and O'Donovan, Charters of Sherborne, pp. 4-5. An earlier charter of 739 does survive in the Exeter archive (infra., p. 62). For Cynewulf see ASC s.a. 755/7, 784/6.

64 See Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, pp. 243-51. This list is discussed in the context of continuity at Sherborne in Chapter 5 (infra., pp. 116-124).
reign of Centwine. King Ine's grants to Malmesbury, Glastonbury and Muchelney show that he was fully in control of northern Wiltshire and much of Somerset during his reign (688-725); by extrapolation, it may be supposed that most of Dorset was also ruled by the West Saxons by this time. It is possible that part of Devon was under West Saxon control by c.680; the young St Boniface was said to have entered into a monastery in 'Adescancastre', taken to be Exeter, at about that time under an abbot who had an Old English name (i.e. Wulfheard). However, this may be presuming too much from personal name evidence.

Warfare and Territorial Expansion in the Eighth Century

It is not until the early eighth century that the first record for warfare appears in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which clearly identifies a Dumnonian enemy. This is the entry under the year 710 in which it is said that Ine and Nunna fought against Geraint, king of the Britons. Previous entries which referred to warfare between West Saxons and Britons provide little in the way of detail regarding the latter's identification, or the particular polity to which they belonged. In the 710 entry, by contrast, a British king is mentioned who can be reasonably identified, in this case as the Geraint of Dumnonia who was the recipient of a letter from the West Saxon cleric Aldhelm. Unfortunately, little other information is supplied about the engagement. There is no explicit

65 S. Pearce, The Kingdom of Dumnonia - Studies in History and Tradition in South Western Britain AD 350-1150 (Cornwall, 1978) pp. 111-13; Yorke, Wessex, p. 60. There are two surviving charters from Malmesbury for Ine: S243/BCS103 and S245, pp. 105-114. There are six surviving charters from Glastonbury for Ine: S238/(Glastonbury Cart. 979), S246/(Glastonbury Cart. 200), S247/(Glastonbury Cart. 774), S248/B113, S250/B142, S251/(Glastonbury Cart. 903), pp. 23-34, 36-40. For Muchelney, the earliest charter from Ine is dated to 693 (S240/(Muchelney Cart. 5), pp. 198-201. The other Muchelney charters for Ine are: S244/(Muchelney Cart. 106), pp. 201-4; S249/(Muchelney Cart. 1), pp. 204-6.

66 There survives in the Shaftesbury (Dorset) cartulary a charter of a grant by the West Saxon subregulus Coenred of land to an Abbot Bectun, dated to c.670-75 (S1164/BCS107, pp. 229-34). Although Shaftesbury is in north-eastern Dorset of a similar longitude to Malmesbury, this monastery was not founded until the time of King Alfred, and the actual location of Bectun's monastery is unknown. Aldhelm became bishop of Sherborne further in the west of Dorset in 705/6 (HE V.18), suggesting the presence there of a West Saxon community before this time. The possibility of a late seventh- or early eighth-century grant of land in Cornwall from Geraint of Dumnonia to Sherborne in Dorset will be discussed in Chapter 5 (infra., pp. 123-4). According to the ASC s.a. 718, Ine's sister Cuthburh founded 'the life' (i.e. a monastic community) at Wimborne (Dorset).


68 There is the otherwise unattested possibility that Wulfheard was abbot of a British house, or perhaps of a mixed Saxon-British community.

69 ASC s.a., 'Ine and Nunna, his relative, fought against Geraint (Gerente), king of the Britons (Walacyninge)'. The MS. A entry was inserted in the tenth century.

70 The sub-Roman entries in the ASC s.aa. 508 and 577, which mention Natanleod and Coinmail, Condidan and Farinmail respectively, though unreliable, are exceptions here.
indication as to the aggressor in the battle, though this role is generally credited to Ine.\textsuperscript{72} Ine and Nunna are also typically assumed to have defeated Geraint, even though the entry actually states only that they \textit{fought} against him.\textsuperscript{73} The circumstances surrounding the battle also remain unspecified. As will be discussed in Chapter 5,\textsuperscript{74} it is likely that Geraint had ongoing interaction with Aldhelm, who was also first bishop of Sherborne (c.705/6-709). The fact that Geraint was at war with Ine and Nunna the year after Aldhelm’s death may imply that Aldhelm played a role in keeping Dumnonia and Wessex away from outright warfare.\textsuperscript{75} But with Aldhelm no longer alive, the accord broke down and warfare ensued. An independent record of warfare in the south-west contained in the \textit{Annales Cambriae} may also attest to conflict between West Saxons and Dumnonians during Ine’s reign. Under the year 722, three battles are recorded in which it is said that ‘the Britons were the victors \textit{[Brittones victores fuerunt]}’, one of which took place at ‘\textit{Hehil apud Cornuenses}’, that is, among the Cornish.\textsuperscript{76} If the entry can be read at face value, it appears that the battle was fought against a non-British, probably West Saxon, enemy. Hehil may be related to the Old Cornish \textit{heyl}, ‘salt river, estuary’, which is represented in the modern place-name Hayle, of which there are several surviving examples and doubtless many lost ones.\textsuperscript{77} While some of the details of this engagement remain unresolvable, at the very least, the record in the \textit{Annales} provides a counter-point to the tale of unremitting West Saxon success presented in the \textit{Chronicle} by commemorating a British victory.

After the battle between Ine and Nunna and Geraint in 710, subsequent eighth-century entries in the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle} revert to the non-specific form when talking of the Britons. Thus, under the year 753, it is recorded that Cuthred (740-756) fought against the Britons, and under the year 755 (\textit{recte} 757), that Cynewulf (757-786) often fought.

\textsuperscript{71} Supra., pp. 49.
\textsuperscript{72} For example, Hoskins, \textit{Westward Expansion of Wessex}, p. 19; Pearce, \textit{Kingdom of Dumnonia}, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{73} For example, Lapidge & Herren, \textit{Aldhelm: Prose Works}, p. 142; Pearce, \textit{Kingdom of Dumnonia}, p. 113; C.L. Wrenn, ‘Saxons and Celts in south-west Britain’, \textit{Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion} (1959) p. 72.
\textsuperscript{74} Infra., pp. 124-33.
\textsuperscript{75} Prior to the entry for 710, the last actual engagement with Britons referred to in the \textit{ASC} is the non-specific entry for 682, in which Centwine is said to have ‘put the Britons to flight as far as the sea’. There may, therefore, have been a period of peace from that time to 710, though there is no guarantee that everything of import was actually written down.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{AC} s.a. This reference to the \textit{Cornuenses} should probably best be taken to represent the compiler of the \textit{Annales} understanding the ethnography of south-western Britain in his time, rather than how the Britons of the south-west necessarily saw themselves in the first half of the eighth century.
\textsuperscript{77} Duncan Probert (pers. comm., 22 October, 2002). Hoskins, \textit{Westward Expansion of Wessex}, p. 19, plumps for \textit{Haegel} as the location for this battle, which was the old name for the Camel estuary. See also \textit{DEPN}, p. 228.
great battles against the Britons. This latter entry entails more of a summary statement of Cynewulf's career, rather than a record of any specific engagement, but it does present the king as a successful war leader against the Britons, whoever they happen to have been. This assessment does, however, need to be placed in the context of the rest of this entry, which describes the famous Cynewulf/Cyneheard episode in which, significantly, a loyal British (Bryttisc) hostage is badly wounded defending the king. Donald Scragg has recently interpreted this episode as being a lesson in loyalty and lawfulness. With regard to Cynewulf's battles with the Britons, he argues, 'That this is the only information we have of his activities as a king is not coincidental, for it allows the author to display yet another selflessly loyal act'. In other words, Cynewulf is presented as a king who 'defends [his kingdom] stoutly in wars against the Celts'. There may, therefore, be something of a topos woven into the Chronicle's description of Cynewulf's kingship. The account of this episode does, nevertheless, provide the only direct evidence for the period under study of a Briton being taken as a hostage by a West Saxon king. Hostage-taking was typically performed in order to guarantee compliance with a treaty, or to maintain a particular political status quo, or even to impose an overlord's political will on a subordinate king or lesser ruler. Presuming that there were agreed-upon terms, the hostage in his turn was often expected to participate in the warband of his lord-captor, as seems to have been the case in this situation. If this British hostage is not merely a detail invented to drive home the lesson that loyalty to one's lord transcends ethnic boundaries, then the account in the Chronicle requires the presumption that Cynewulf came to some formal arrangement,

---

78 ASC s.a. 753, 'Cuthred, king of Wessex, fought against the Britons (Walas)'; ASC s.a. 755 (recte 757), 'Cynewulf often fought great battles against the Britons (Bretwalas)'. The entry s.a. 743, as mentioned earlier (supra., p. 53), does not seem to have involved Cuthred fighting the Britons of Dumnonia, but rather those of Wales, in coalition with Aethelbald of Mercia. Such a possibility gains some support from an albeit problematic Abingdon charter dated to 709x737 (S93/BCS155, pp. 177-9). Intended to record gifts from Aethelbald (716-757), the charter contains a subscription by Aethelheard of Wessex (726-740), Cuthred's predecessor, which states that he confirms the grants with his companions 'in expedicione ultra fluvium Sabrina adversus Britonum gentem' (the names of the companions are not included). This subscription appears, therefore, to attest to a campaign involving Aethelheard against the Britons across the River Severn, an eventuality which would likely have involved the Mercian king Aethelbald. Aethelbald's campaign's against the Britons are discussed in Chapter 11 (infra., pp. 405-6).

79 Halsall, 'Anthropology and the study of pre-Conquest warfare and society', p. 162.


81 Scragg, 'WifcyPfie and the morality of the Cynewulf and Cyneheard episode', p. 183.

82 Scragg, 'WifcyPfie and the morality of the Cynewulf and Cyneheard episode', p. 185.


84 Scragg, 'WifcyPfie and the morality of the Cynewulf and Cyneheard episode', p. 184, draws our attention to the Northumbrian hostage in the Battle of Maldon.
perhaps even as overlord, with a British kingdom. In the second half of the eighth century, given Offa's supremacy over the West Midlands, this is likely to have been Dumnonia.

There are no further entries for the pre-Viking period in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which refer to warfare with the Britons, nor any other type of interaction. The evidence of charters provides some further detail concerning the process of expansion of West Saxon control in the eighth century. The consolidation of West Saxon interests in northern Wiltshire, Somerset and probably Dorset during Ine's reign (688-726) has already been mentioned.\(^85\) Two charters from the time of Ine's successor Aethelheard (726-740) reveal evidence for control having extended into Devon north of Dartmoor. In 729, Aethelheard gave to Glastonbury ten hides at Torric, in the valley of the River Torridge in north-west Devon,\(^86\) and in 739, he gave to Bishop Forthhere of Sherborne twenty hides at Cridie (Crediton) closer to Exeter, for the founding of a monastery.\(^87\) In south Devon, however, the first certain evidence for West Saxon land-holding does not occur until 833, during the reign of Ecgberht, though in a context which suggests that West Saxon control was well-established by then.\(^88\) Early English place-names can be found in much of the south-west — such as those ending in *-tun* in Somerset and Dorset, and in *-cot* in north Devon\(^89\) — though these can be very difficult to date with any precision prior to the eleventh century and do not necessarily refer to places of West Saxon, versus British, habitation. But the existence of reputedly early English place-names, possibly from the eighth century, as far west as the River Tamar does attest to the spread of West Saxon influence.\(^90\) Indeed, the proportion of English versus British place-names surviving in Devon is quite pronounced.\(^91\)

\(^85\) *Supra.*, pp. 57-9.
\(^87\) S255/(Napier & Stevenson 1), pp. 255-8. This charter survives in the Exeter archive. While problematic, it seems to contain genuine elements, and Edwards considers the grant to be plausible.
\(^88\) S277/BCS410, pp. 234-5, in the Shaftesbury cartulary.
\(^89\) Costen, *Origins of Somerset*, pp. 87-93; M. Gelling, 'Why aren't we speaking Welsh?', *ASSAH* 6 (1993), pp. 55-6. According to D. O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings: a review of some Dark-Age problems in north-west England', in J.R. Baldwin & I.D. Whyte (eds.), *The Scandinavians in Cumbria* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 26, there are no examples in Devon of the more clearly early *-ing* or *-ingas* compounds; though there is one *-ingaham* name.
\(^91\) O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', pp. 26-7. It must be allowed, however, that many early place-name forms have been lost. On this point, see B. Cox, 'The placenames of the earliest English records', *English Place-Name Society Journal* 8 (1976), pp. 12-66.
A final charter of note for the eighth century is not significant so much for the location of the land being granted, but for the circumstances under which the grant was made. This is a charter contained in the Wells archive which relates to a donation by Cynewulf dated to 766 of two hides of land adjacent to the River Wellow, south of Bath in Somerset. What is peculiar about the charter is that the grant is recorded as having been given 'in return for some harassment of our enemies the Cornish [pro alique (sic) vexacione inimicorum nostrorum Cornubiorum gentis]'. It seems likely that this refers to harassment or raiding by the Britons of Cornwall, which led to damage or loss of property (unlocated) owned by Wells. As well as indicating a role for the king in compensating the loss of monastic possessions, the charter supports the evidence previously discussed regarding Cynewulf's 'great battles' against the Britons. Taken together, these references suggest that Cynewulf's reign witnessed a period of conflict with the Britons which seems to have included cross-border raiding. Perhaps the British hostage referred to in the Cynewulf/Cyneheard episode was taken in an attempt to stabilise relations between the two peoples. It is uncertain if there is any significance in the use of Cornubiorum gentis – which mirrors the Cornuenses used in the Annales Cambriae – versus Dumnoniorum gentis, to describe the enemy. It may mean that these were Britons from the region west of the River Tamar who had retained their identity as a territorial sub-unit. Alternatively, it could be that independent British political control was, by that time, confined to Cornwall, and consequently this was how the Britons of the south-west were now described.

Summary

The character of warfare between the West Saxons and the Britons of the south-west in the pre-Viking period remains difficult to define in many instances due to the brevity of the annal entries from which the evidence primarily derives. Divining the meaning of any specific battle, therefore, is not always possible and much of the discussion of warfare can only proceed in general terms. Yet, it is reasonable to use the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to argue that West Saxons and Britons did wage war with each other and that the West Saxons did drive westwards, given the limits placed on northward expansion.

92 S262/BCS200, pp. 259-61. This charter is the only evidence for a community at Wells prior to its creation as an episcopal see in the early tenth century.
93 Supra., pp. 60-1. Compare also the subscription in charter S93 discussed earlier (see note 78, supra., p. 61).
94 AC 722. For discussion on the AC, see note 55 (infra., pp. 149-50).
by the growth of Mercia in the seventh century. It is also possible to identify instances of raiding and hostage-taking, and perhaps of overlordship. There is no positive evidence to suggest that expansion into British territory was by land-hungry peasants; rather, the impression is of king-led aggression driven by political desires. The administration of newly-acquired lands appears to have fallen to subreguli, such as Baldred, but also to abbots and bishops who were established in large border monasteries and sees, such as Glastonbury and Sherborne. There was no guarantee that success in battle would bring long-lasting results; this would have depended on the relative strength of the antagonists, as well as the broader context of political events throughout southern Britain. Neither can it be assumed that the Britons of Dumnonia were easy neighbours for the West Saxons in the pre-Viking centuries just because little is heard of them. Given that the West Saxons continued to do battle with the 'West Walas' across a fluctuating border into the ninth century, it seems that outright conquest was difficult to achieve. However, there may well have been periods of peace, such as during the abbacy and episcopate of Aldhelm.

---

96 Yorke, Wessex, p. 57.
98 Yorke, Wessex, pp. 66-7.
99 Yorke, Wessex, p. 67.
100 According to the ASC s.a. 813 (recte 815), Ecgberht raided amongst the West Walas 'from east to west'. A further battle with the Britons (Walas) presumably of the south-west, not explicitly involving Ecgberht, is recorded s.a. 823 (recte 825). A charter from the Winchester cartulary of 825, states that it was drawn up when Ecgberht was involved in military service contra Britones (S273/BCS389, pp. 150-3). In the ASC s.a. 835 (recte 838), Ecgberht is again found fighting the West Walas, this time when they apparently allied with a Danish raiding-army. Asser, ch. 81, also implies that Cornwall was independent from Wessex.
Chapter 4

Assimilation and Intermarriage

Accounts of warfare and aggression in the primary sources informed traditional thinking about relations between Saxons and Britons in pre-Viking Wessex. As explained in Chapter 1, however, recent scholarship has been increasingly sceptical of these accounts.\(^1\) In addition, it has become more apparent that there are other sources of evidence for interaction between West Saxons and Britons surviving from the pre-Viking centuries which do not conform to an exclusively bellicose picture of events. To be sure, there is no reason to doubt, even assuming some embellishment in the sources, that antagonism does remain a continuing theme in how West Saxons and Britons engaged with one another. But there are equally undoubted instances of less bellicose interaction. It is the aim of this chapter to first of all examine one of the documentary sources that reveals this latter picture of Anglo-British relations in pre-Viking Britain, namely, the Law Code of Ine, king of Wessex c.688-726.\(^2\) This will be followed by a consideration of evidence for intermarriage and for the survival of British identity within Wessex.

Social Segmentation of West Saxons and Britons: The Law Code of King Ine\(^3\)

The Law Code of Ine was promulgated between c.688-93.\(^4\) It is the earliest West Saxon law code to survive, and has done so only as an appendix to the Laws of Alfred, both of which are contained at the earliest in a c.930 manuscript.\(^5\) The fact that Ine’s laws were

---

\(^1\) Supra., pp. 17-19.

\(^2\) ASC s.a.a. 688, 726 (MS. E), 728 (MS. A).

\(^3\) A version of this section has been published as M. Grimmer, ‘Britons and Saxons in pre-Viking Wessex: reflections on the Law Code of King Ine’, Parergon 19, no. 1 (January, 2002), pp. 1-17.

\(^4\) In the prologue to his Code, Ine says that he had been consulting with ‘my bishop Earconwald’, who died on 30 April in 693 (P. Wormald, The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century Vol. I, Legislation and its Limits, Oxford, 1999, p. 103). Ine also speaks of his father Coenred as still being alive, which would indicate a date early in his reign — although the laws may have been extended and built upon throughout his kingship.

\(^5\) See L.M. Alexander, ‘The legal status of the native Britons in late seventh-century Wessex as reflected by the Law Code of Ine’, Haskins Society Journal 7 (1985), p. 31; and Wormald, Making of English Law, pp. 163-263. Ine’s Laws and those of Alfred survive at the earliest in Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS. 173 ff. 32r-52v (‘E’ also known as the ‘Parker MS.’), which was compiled from c.930, though not all its contents were written at the same time. Later manuscripts include Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS. 383 ff. 13-42 (‘B’) of c.1100-1125 and the Textus Roffensis ff. 9r-31v of c.1123-4. There is also a fragment of Ine from the prologue to Ine 23 in British Library Burney MS. 277 f. 42 dating from c.1060-70. A further manuscript, British Library Cotton MS. Otho B.xi of c.1000-1015, was partly destroyed in
appended to Alfred's raises the question of whether they may have been revised or supplemented or abridged in the late ninth century. Alfred, in his own Code, states that he 'left out [forlet] those laws of Ine - and of Offa of Mercia and Æthelberht of Kent - which he had not 'gathered [gegaderode] into his own.' This may indicate some form of abridgement. Yet it is also the case that some of Alfred's laws contradict those of Ine, which indicates that Alfred did not tamper with the text as it had descended to him. It should be noted that the use of the word forlet does not mean that he rejected earlier laws that he did not like, as is often claimed, but rather that he left them alone. This can be taken to mean that Ine's laws were left unaltered by Alfred, except so far as they were abrogated by elements of his own code. So, while it is likely that the surviving text is a redaction of Ine's Code, it does appear unlikely that the redactor was Alfred.

What is significant about Ine's Code with regard to the question of Anglo-British relations is that it is the only surviving pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon law code which actually includes explicit provision for Britons, granting them legal status. If it is assumed that laws can be defined as 'written statements of observed and enforceable social norms', then in codifying these social norms, Ine expected there to be situations in his kingdom involving Britons that could be met with by legal action. His Code thus unveils a West Saxon society which has Britons living within it, as supported by the Cottonian fire of 1731, but a copy was fortunately made by Laurence Nowell in 1562, and subsequently glossed, and is contained in British Library Additional MS. 43703 (the so-called 'Nowell transcript'). Ine's and Alfred's codes are the only ones surviving for Anglo-Saxon Wessex.

Indeed, it should be acknowledged that the appending of Ine's Code to Alfred's was not necessarily the deliberate intention of Alfred himself. There is no statement in Alfred's introduction which indicates that this was the case; just that he consulted the laws of his predecessors. Alfred 49.9. On this point see Wormald, Making of English Law, pp. 278-9.

For example, fines for theft: Ine 43, 60 shillings, compared to Alfred 9.2, 120 shillings. There are also differences in the sums levied in fighting before an ealdorman (Ine 6.2; Alfred 15 & 38), or felling another's trees (Ine 43.1; Alfred 12), or differences in the actual circumstances surrounding fighting in the king's hall (Ine 6; Alfred 7-7.1).


Wormald, Making of English Law, p. 279. F.L. Attenborough (ed. & trans.), The Laws of the Earliest English Kings (Cambridge, 1922), p. 63, for example, translates forlet as 'rejected'.

There is one other instance of a wergild structure for Britons (wealas) being included in an Anglo-Saxon text: the early eleventh-century re-statement of Noroleoda laga by Archbishop Wulfstan II of York. This is discussed in Chapter 8 (infra., pp. 284-5); see also note 54 (infra., p. 75).

Wormald also refers to Ine's laws as "Germanic" in the sense they are predicated on the mechanisms of feud.

Alexander, 'Legal status of the native Britons', p. 32.
the evidence of Bede, but in an inferior social position to their West Saxon counterparts, as will be shown.

There are eight laws that relate specifically to Britons: five regarding free persons, and three regarding slaves. The Britons are described using variations of the Old English terms wealh (plural wealas) or wyliscmon, which in origin seems to have meant 'foreigner', but which came to mean 'Briton', and by the tenth century transformed to also denote 'slave'. This latter development must indicate that a sizeable number of Britons had ultimately been deprived of their freedom. Ine's Code contains the first Insular-written occurrence of the word wealh, and it can be reasonably deduced that 'Briton' is the correct interpretation in this context as the Code makes use of other terms for foreigner and slave: ēðeōdigan and ēow, respectively. The laws pertaining to free Britons are essentially about the setting of their wergild: the sum payable to the next of kin of a slain person in order to buy off a feud. This was, of course, one of the two basic rights of a free person which afforded them protection in Germanic society; the other was being considered 'oathworthy', namely, able to give an oath in popular court, a right which was also extended to Ine's British subjects.

The wergild for a Briton ranged from a maximum of 600 shillings down to a minimum of 60 shillings, such that: a Briton with five hides of land had a wergild of 600 shillings; a Briton who was a horse-rider (horswealh) for the king, 200 shillings; one with one

---

14 In his chapter on the writings of Aldheltn, Bede mentions Britons being subject to the West Saxons in the final quarter of the seventh century (HE V.18).
17 M. Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', Past and Present 108 (1985), p. 8, argued that those groups discriminated against on ethnic grounds were particularly subject to enslavement. However, Pelteret, 'Slave raiding and slave trading', p. 107, cautions that the context for wealh permutating to mean 'slave' could be to do with the later integration of Cornwall into Wessex in the ninth and tenth centuries.
18 For example, Ine 23 & 74. Wealth could not yet stand alone to mean slave, but had to be qualified by ēow, i.e. ēowwealh. On this point see M. Faull, 'The semantic development of Old English Wealth', Leeds Studies in English 8 (1975), pp. 20, 26. Faull maintained that wealth in Ine 23.3 meant both 'Briton' and 'slave', though this interpretation is questionable; see Pelteret, 'Slave raiding and slave trading', p. 107, and Whitelock, EHD, p. 367. Wealth is also recorded as a personal name element in all of the four main Old English dialects (Faull, 'Semantic development of Wealth', p. 31). In this regard, it should probably be allowed that the use of the element in the name Cenwalh (ASC 658) appears to predate Ine's Code. For what it is worth, wealth may also be observed in Beowulf (line 612) in the person of Hrothgar's Queen Wealhþeow. In this case it is uncertain exactly what meaning should be ascribed to wealth; she is unlikely to have been a British slave herself.
hide of land, 120 shillings; a rent-payer (gafolgelda), also 120 shillings; the son of a rent-payer, 100 shillings; a Briton with half a hide, 80 shillings, and a Briton with no land, 60 shillings (see Table 1). The wergild for a Saxon, on the other hand, was not so explicitly stated. Their identity, though defined in some instances by the terms Englisc or Engliscmon, is principally assumed when none other is specified. Nevertheless, Saxons appear to be granted a wergild ranging from 1200 down to 200 shillings. A member of the king’s household (a geneat), had a wergild of 1200 shillings. Elsewhere, a basis of a 200 shilling wergild is used to establish the amount of compensation due for a man killed by a raiding party with the instruction that the same formula be applied ‘in the case of the nobler born’. This can be taken to mean that a 200 shilling man was not of the nobility and was therefore a ceorl. A further law sets out compensations for 200, 600 and 1200 shilling men, from which it might be deduced that a 600 man was of a class higher than ceorl: perhaps of the gesið class.

It is possible then to determine that there was a disparity between the value placed on the life of a Briton and that of a Saxon in Ine’s Code. A Briton who was a horse-rider in the service of the king— a position which could reasonably be regarded as one of status— only attracted a wergild equivalent of a Saxon ceorl, namely, 200 shillings. While Britons could own land, they are not included in the top-most layer of society: 600 shillings is the highest wergild mentioned, in comparison with 1200 shillings for a Saxon. Further, their status seems to have been more tied to land ownership than to birthright. The wergild of Britons was essentially stratified according to how many hides of land they owned, at a rate of approximately 120 shillings per hide. A Saxon

---

21 Ine 23.3, 24.2, 32, 33. Ine 23.3 also states that a Briton must pay 12 shillings to avoid a flogging.
22 Ine 24, 46.1, 54.2, 74. The use of the term Englisc in the law code of a Saxon king is somewhat curious. B. Ward-Perkins, ‘Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?’, EHR 115 (2000), p. 524, suggests that it might be possible the term was introduced in a later version of the text when the concept of ‘Englishness’ may have had more currency, perhaps in the ninth or tenth centuries.
24 Ine 34-34.1.
25 Ine 70. Gesiðcund seems to have meant the same class that was referred to in the earlier Kentish laws as eorlcund (Runciman, ‘Accelerating social mobility’, p. 23). It may have been derived from an original meaning denoting a member of a king’s comitatus (Whitelock, EHD, p. 362). The 200-600-1200 differentiation can be seen more explicitly in the laws of Alfred, where it is made clear that 1200 and 600 men are definitely not of the ceorl class (for example, Alfred 10, 18.1, 18.2, 18.3, 26, 27, 28, 39.2, 40).
26 A king’s horse-rider is usually thought to have been a noble (Faull, ‘Semantic development of Wealth’, p. 29), though not so elevated as a king’s horsdegn (ASC 897). The horse-rider of Ine’s Code might be compared to the ‘messenger’ (laadrincmannan) of Æthelberht of Kent’s early seventh-century Code (Æthelberht 7, EHD, no. 29, pp. 357-9).
Table 1. Comparative *Wergilds* of Saxons and Britons in Ine’s Law Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saxons</th>
<th><em>Wergild</em> (shillings)</th>
<th>Britons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Geneat</em> <em>(of the king’s household)</em></td>
<td>1200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified <em>(gesiō -born?)</em></td>
<td>600</td>
<td>Owner of 5 hides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not of noble birth <em>(ceorl?)</em></td>
<td>200</td>
<td><em>Horswealh</em> <em>(in the king’s service)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Owner of 1 hide;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>gafolgelda</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Son of a <em>gafolgelda</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Owner of ½ hide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Owner of no land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ceorl seems to have been protected at 200 shillings with no particular specification for land-ownership, though it should be allowed that the 600 and 1200 men may have been differentiated this way.27

British slaves were also valued less than their Saxon counterparts. An oath of twelve hides was required to compel the public whipping of a British slave; however, a Saxon slave could only be whipped with a thirty-four hide oath.28 In general, though Britons were oathworthy, their word held less value than that of a Saxon; the accusation of cattle-theft could be denied by an oath to the value of sixty hides if the accuser was British, but a Saxon accuser could only be denied by an oath of 120 hides.29

One can, therefore, conceptualise the society described in Ine's Code as being arranged in what Thomas Charles-Edwards refers to as a ‘parallel hierarchy’: it is almost as if there are two nations existing within the one polity with the Saxons in the more favourable position.30 The sense of ethnic superiority on the part of the Saxons is not unusual in the context of Germanic law codes from the Continent. The Frankish Lex Salica, for example, distinguished Gallo-Romans from Franks, and recorded for them a half-wergild, and a reduced oath-value.31 As conquered peoples, the Gallo-Romans and Britons were of inferior status and their place in the law codes reflects this.32 What is unique about Ine's Code is the relatively late date at which this differentiation occurs – the end of the seventh century – a time when there was increasing diffusion and

27 H.M. Chadwick, Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 93-8, argued that the difference between a 600 and a 1200 man was that the latter owned land. In this sense, the distinction being made in Ine's Code may have been between the landless young warrior employed in the king's service (the 600 man), and the veteran who had settled down with land and family (the 1200 man). Such a conceptualisation is echoed in the geogod (youth) versus dugud (veteran) distinction drawn in Beowulf (e.g. lines 160, 621). I would like the thank Mr. Patrick Wormald for drawing these references to my attention.

28 Ine 54.2. Whitelock (EHD, p. 370) suggests that the original reading might have been a twenty-four hide oath for a Saxon slave – double the oath for a Briton – rather than a thirty-four hide oath. This would be consistent with their comparative wergild structure. J. Moreland, 'Ethnicity, power and the English', in W.O. Frazer & A. Tyrrell (eds.), Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain (London, 2000), p. 45, notes that slaves in Burgundian law codes had no ethnicity, as compared to the upper ranks of society. But they clearly do in Ine's Code.

29 Ine 46-46.1.


31 The clause which most clearly distinguishes Franks and Romans is Lex Salica Title XLI, though other instances include Title XIV.1-3, Title XXXII.3-4, and Title XLII.1-4. See K. Fischer Drew (ed. & trans.), The Laws of the Salian Franks (Philadelphia, 1991), pp. 79, 95, 104-7. On the status of Franks and Romans in the Lex Salica, see Faull, 'Semantic development of Wealth', p. 21; Wormald, Making of English Law, p. 42.

32 This point should probably not be pressed too far; it was possible for Gallo-Romans of the senatorial class to becomes bishops and counts in early Frankia.
uniformity within Anglo-Saxon England, perhaps due to the influence of Christian culture.\textsuperscript{33}

In this context, therefore, what stands out as most remarkable about Ine's Code is that Britons were legislated for at all; a point given added emphasis when one considers their shadowy presence in the other Anglo-Saxon documentary sources. The fact of their inclusion in the Code obviously implies a large enough population of Britons in Wessex to require protection under the law. It is has been argued that in doing so, Ine was attempting to placate British interests: that he was in a political position that required him to do so.\textsuperscript{34} The \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle} certainly provides evidence that during his reign, Ine was engaged on a number of his frontiers: against Kent, against Mercia, against the South Saxons, and against Geraint of Dumnonia; as well as having to deal with internal disputation within Wessex itself.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, it is possible to construct a scenario whereby it was prudent for Ine to refrain from antagonising his British subjects and thereby decrease the likelihood that he would have to deal with a rebellion at an otherwise inopportune time.\textsuperscript{36}

One of the difficulties with this argument, however, is that the Britons were not afforded equal status with their Saxon counterparts; thus there is a limit to how much they might have been 'appeased' by such an arrangement. The fact that Britons had a \textit{wergild} implies the king's protection, and that at least in theory they could pursue accusations against Saxons.\textsuperscript{37} But they needed twice the oath-help of a Saxon to proceed with any accusation, and their lives were compensated at a significantly lower value. It is unlikely that the Britons would have simply accepted Ine's promulgation with naïve gratitude; there would still have existed the potential for discontent. It could equally be as likely that what Ine's Code represents was not an attempt to placate British interests, but rather to set a framework for settling disputes between Saxons and

\textsuperscript{33} B. Yorke, 'Settlement, Anglo-Saxon', in \textit{Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE}, pp. 415-6. Material culture, for example, becomes more uniform; Anglian, Saxon and Jutish variations in clothing (especially female) disappear.

\textsuperscript{34} For example, Alexander, 'Legal status of the native Britons', pp. 36-7; L.F. Rushbrook-Williams, 'The status of the Welsh in the Laws of Ine', \textit{EHR} 30 (1915), pp. 273, 276-7.

\textsuperscript{35} According to the \textit{ASC}, in 694 the inhabitants of Kent 'came to terms with Ine and granted him 30,000 [pounds]'. Before Ine, Cædwalla had ravaged Kent in 686 and 687. In 715, Ine fought Ceolred of Mercia at Woden's Barrow in Wiltshire, and in 725 he fought against the South Saxons, killing Ealdberht, an \textit{cetheling} he had previously expelled from Wessex. There may have been other internal disputation in Wessex, for in 721 Ine killed the \textit{cetheling} Cynewulf. In addition to his military campaigns against other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, it has been shown that Ine fought with Geraint of Dumnonia in 710 (\textit{supra.}, pp. 59-60).

\textsuperscript{36} Alexander, 'Legal status of the native Britons', p. 37.
Britons who had kin and indeed lords within Wessex capable of waging vendettas and disturbing the peace, making it essential for him to include them in the Code. Indeed, Ine’s laws differ from the earlier Kentish codes in reflecting a more aggressive stance on enforcement and payment of fines against the social order, incorporating the king more prominently in the vocabulary of atonement.\(^{38}\)

This of course begs the question of who the Britons in Ine’s Code actually were. In particular, were they descendants of Romano-Britons still living in the long-conquered eastern half of Wessex (roughly Hampshire, Wiltshire and parts of Dorset)?\(^{39}\) Or, given that there appears to have been a period of westward expansion in the seventh century up to and including the reign of Ine which ultimately encompassing Dorset, Somerset and some of Devon, were the Britons in the Code farmers and landowners whose land had been incorporated into a newly-enlarged Wessex?\(^{40}\)

In order to answer this question, it is first necessary to speculate on a number of matters implied by the Code. To begin with, it must be assumed that there existed some mechanism, some ‘British’ feature or features, that allowed for Britons to be recognised as such. One of the central conclusions that can be drawn from Ine’s Code regarding relations between West Saxons and Britons is that complete assimilation had not yet occurred between the two groups, such that a distinction could still be made in terms of ethnicity. There must have been some sense of British identity as distinct from Saxon identity: it would have been nonsensical to talk in terms of differentiating Britons from Saxons in the law Code if it was practically impossible to do so. And indeed, it would have been important, especially for a Saxon as a person of higher status than a Briton, to be able to be differentiated given the differences in wergild. Further, the use of the term \textit{wealh} – with its implication of foreignness – does provide some sense of British and Saxon identities being in binary opposition,\(^{41}\) and it is significant that the only instances in which the term \textit{Englisc} is used in the Code are whenever the context involves a

\(^{37}\) Yorke, \textit{Wessex}, p. 72.


\(^{39}\) The distribution of Saxon material culture, reflected for example in grave goods, can be taken to indicate Saxon control of the eastern shires of Wessex by the end of the sixth century (Yorke, \textit{Wessex}, pp. 12-13). The argument that the Britons in the code were descended from the original Romano-British inhabitants has been promoted by L. Alcock, \textit{Arthur’s Britain: History and Archaeology AD 367-634} (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 312, and Faull, ‘Semantic development of \textit{Wealh}’, p. 23, and is implied by Alexander ‘Legal status of the native Britons’, p. 36.


contrast with the Britons. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that Ine's Code reflects a society that was segmented, or at least able to be segmented, on ethnic grounds.

How then would a Briton have been identified? Style of Christianity is a possibility; Britons conceivably may have continued to eschew Roman practice. However, this is unlikely to have been the case within Wessex, especially the eastern half, by the time of Ine's reign. The Synod of Hertford, which sought to extend the decisions of Whitby to the rest of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, had been held some twenty years earlier in 672. It was about this time that the West Saxon cleric Aldhelm wrote to Geraint of Dumnonia, exhorting him to instruct his priests/bishops to follow Roman practice. It is very doubtful that non-orthodox practice within Wessex would have been tolerated by the end of the seventh century.

There are other cultural characteristics which may have operated as potential identifiers, such as dress, social custom, diet, mode of housing and style of agriculture. However, a more enduring mechanism would have been language and oral culture. Language can operate as one of the most definitive markers of ethnic identity, as well as acting as a means of maintaining and reinforcing that identity. Indeed, Bryan Ward-Perkins argues that since the people of Ine's Wessex were Saxons, the use of the word Englisc in the Code, if it is not a later interpolation, suggests that it was the speaking of a particular language (i.e. 'English') that for the Saxons in Wessex was the determinant of ethnicity. Bede, of course, differentiated the peoples of Britain according to the language they spoke: English, British, Irish, and Pictish. And in the story of the

---

42 T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Language and society among the Insular Celts 400-1000', in M.J. Green (ed.), The Celtic World (London, 1995), p. 733. However, see note 22 (supra., p. 68) regarding the use of the term Englisc.

43 HE IV.5.


46 See note 22 (supra., p. 68).


48 HE I.1. Bede also includes Latin as the unifying language of them all. In the Topographical Preface of the ASC MS. E, British (Britticas) is distinguished from Welsh (Wilse), perhaps referring to Cornish versus
Northumbrian thegn Imma who, when captured by Mercians, attempted to pass himself off as a peasant but was found out by his mode of speech, Bede also provides grounds for allowing that a person’s status could be determined by how he or she spoke.\(^{50}\) While it is not being suggested here that Imma’s status was necessarily revealed by the *language* he used, as opposed to his vocabulary or grammar or phonology, the point to be made is that it was possible to use mode of speech to differentiate amongst people in Anglo-Saxon England.\(^{51}\)

In order to accept the first proposition canvassed that the Britons in Ine’s Code were those descended from the original Romano-British inhabitants in eastern Wessex, it must be assumed that the language of the Britons survived and continued to be a valid marker of identity from the Invasion Period through to the end of the seventh century. It must also be assumed that to be a numerically significant proportion of the population, the Britons must to some extent have remained separate from the Saxons so that they could pass on their language and oral culture in such a way that their distinct identity was not extinguished by assimilation. Further, it has to be assumed that this policy of separation, which had continued in some form for up to 200 years, at some point after Ine’s reign fell out of practice so that assimilation then began to occur, and the language of the Britons, as well as their cultural distinctiveness, disappeared to such a complete extent in eastern Britain that it had almost no influence on Old English.\(^{52}\)

It would be more reasonable to opt for the second proposition: that the Britons referred to in Ine’s Code were principally those living in territory in western Wessex that was acquired in the second half of the seventh century. This westward expansion could certainly have meant an increase in the number of British subjects within Wessex, necessitating their inclusion within the law Code. There would also have been less time for assimilation to occur, such that the language of the Britons could still have been spoken, and other distinctive cultural conventions still practiced. To quote Susan Reynolds, ‘Apartheid is hard enough to maintain even when physical differences are

---


\(^{51}\) For a recent discussion of the Imma episode within an ethnographic context, see Moreland, ‘Ethnicity, power and the English’, p. 48.

\(^{52}\) This latter point might be qualified to allow that language-borrowing from British to Old English was also impeded by the perceived lower status of the former. Thus, the limited influence of British may not have been solely due to its rapid demise within Wessex and the other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, but rather its perceived inferiority in Saxon eyes. In addition, this does not mean that assimilation began only after Ine’s reign. See Charles-Edwards, ‘Language and society among the Insular Celts’, pp. 730-1.
obvious, political control is firm, and records of births, deaths and marriages are kept. In other words, given the inevitable pressure to assimilate by the dominant culture, the incorporation of British subjects into Wessex via westward expansion in the seventh century would make it more probable that Britons could still have been readily distinguished from Saxons.

Further support for this argument derives from the provisions contained under Ine 74 and 74.1. These laws set out the procedures pertaining to a British slave who killed a Saxon freeman. The owner of the slave was to surrender him to the lord or kinsmen of the slain man, or pay sixty shillings: the value of the slave. If however, the owner would not do this, he was required to set the slave free, and the slave’s free kindred, if he had any, were to pay the set wergild. Finally, if the slave did not have any free kindred, then the avengers were free to ‘deal with him’. In the first instance, it is pertinent that this specific situation was legislated for, when there was no similar law regarding a Saxon slave killing a Saxon, or a British, freeman. Presumably, this must have been an issue in Ine’s Wessex: British slaves killing Saxons. Assuming that it is the slaves who are new to their bondage who are the most likely to be recalcitrant, then it would be fair to suggest that these were Britons who were newly-conquered or captured as war-booty, if they were not victims of penal enslavement. The option for their kinsmen, if there were any, to intercede, would imply that the expansion of political control by the West Saxons was the likely context; the kinsmen of slaves taken in raids outside of Wessex or captured in battle would not otherwise have come under Ine’s rule. Secondly, the fact that the provisions in Ine 74.1 pertaining to the responsibility of a British slave’s kindred have no parallel in any law applying to Saxons could indicate that Britons living within Wessex were able, at least in part, to follow their own customs. This is, again, more likely to have been the case for Britons who had not lived under West Saxon rule long enough for full assimilation to occur.

54 It is instructive here to note that a similar circumstance may account for the only other instance in which a wergild structure for Britons (wealas) is recorded in an Anglo-Saxon text, namely, the early eleventh-century Northleoda laga (‘Northland law’). Immediately prior to the time of Wulfstan, the British province of Cumbria (or Cumberland) suffered invasion and annexation by English kings, for example, Edmund (ASC 945) and Æthelred II (ASC MS. E 1000). Such an eventuality no doubt resulted in the very problem that Ine had faced in seventh-century Wessex: of Britons newly living under Anglo-Saxon control. See the discussion in Chapter 8 (infra., p. 284-5).
55 See also Ine 23.3: ‘a (British) slave is to be paid for with 60 (shillings), some with 50’. This is the same value as the wergild of a landless Briton under Ine 32.
56 Alexander, ‘Legal status of the native Britons’, p. 35.
There is some question over the value of Germanic law codes and the extent to which they provide an accurate mirror of the society that produced them. It has been argued, for example by Patrick Wormald, that it was important in the years following the decline of the Western Empire for so-called Barbarian kings to ape Roman legal precedent and to promulgate something that looked like a written law code, irrespective of its actual judicial value.\textsuperscript{57} It was necessary for a Barbarian king's code to have had the symbolic significance of literate form so as to legitimise Barbarian rulership over conquered Roman citizens – arguably more of an issue on the Continent than in Britain, and for the fifth and sixth centuries rather than the seventh. Thus, a Germanic law code might tell more about the image which the Barbarian kings and their advisers wished to project of themselves and their people rather than actual 'on the ground' conditions.\textsuperscript{58}

That said, Wormald has also explained that such a symbolic purpose was characteristic of only certain early Germanic codes, for example, the Frankish, Lombardic and Alamannic laws.\textsuperscript{59} Others, such as the Visigothic and Burgundian, seem rather to display real law-making in response to individual circumstances and conditions.\textsuperscript{60} Roger Collins has also argued that these southern European codes had practical value, and similarly notes instances of Visigothic, Ostrogothic and Burgundian codes which show examples of 'case law' and of laws adapted to specific fifth- or sixth-century social realities, thus indicating that law-making was an active judicial exercise.\textsuperscript{61} In addition, Wormald states that the former group of laws did eventually evolve to become more like the latter, incorporating measures designed to deal with newly-occurring situations of real import to the peoples being legislated for.\textsuperscript{62} Thus to quote Wormald, 'kings who learned to state laws in writing as emperors were accustomed to, soon learned to make law as they had' (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{59} P. Wormald, \textit{Inter cetera bona ... genti suae: law-making and peace-keeping in the earliest English kingdoms'}, \textit{Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'alto Medioevo}, 42 (1995), at p. 968.
\textsuperscript{60} Wormald, \textit{Inter cetera bona ... genti suae'}, pp. 967-8.
\textsuperscript{62} Wormald, \textit{Inter cetera bona ... genti suae'}, pp. 968, 980-1. See also J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, \textit{The Barbarian West 400-1000} (Oxford, 1985), p. 73.
\textsuperscript{63} Wormald, \textit{Making of English Law}, p. 106.
Ine's Code certainly appears to conform to this pattern. Even though the laws are preserved as a single text, they look more like a series of successive pronouncements, each developed to accommodate an eventuality that needed legislative attention. Indeed, a large number of laws give the impression that Ine was responding to particular cases as they were presented to him by petitioners, such as those regarding a British slave killing a Saxon freeman. Strictly speaking, this of course means that not all the laws in Ine's Code are necessarily his; there could conceivably have been an original core of enactments that was added to over years or decades by his successors. Nevertheless, the conclusion of most significance here is that the Code probably does, more or less, represent conditions in Ine's time or in the time of his immediate successors.

What Ine's Code achieved was to ensure that the Saxons in Wessex, at least in a legal sense, were entrenched in the superior position. The code reveals that complete integration between Saxons and Britons had not yet occurred in Wessex. But the fact that the Code did legislate for Britons as well as Saxons reveals one stage in the process of assimilation. Irrespective of Ine's motivation in the matter, it was possible for Britons to own land; their inclusion in the Code gives them legal standing and shows that they were part of West Saxon society. This permits a broadening of the picture of West Saxon and British interaction from that gained in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and other sources to allow that relations were not exclusively antagonistic.

In addition, there does not appear to be anything in Ine's Code which explicitly prohibited assimilation, beyond the caveat that people of different social strata do not generally associate as equals. The laws tell us that Britons and Saxons co-existed in Wessex, under the same authority. The fact of their differentiation in the Code strongly suggests the circumstance of West Saxons living amongst Britons, or vice versa; otherwise there would have been no need for the enacted provisions. In this regard, it has been argued, most recently by Bryan Ward-Perkins, that the Code may

64 Wormald, 'Inter cetera bona ... genti suae', pp. 981-2.
65 Supra., p. 75. Examples include Ine 74-74.1, which sets out the legal procedure to be followed when a British slave kills a Saxon free-person; or Ine 67, a complex statement regarding procedures for the enlargement of a ploughed landholding. On this point, see Wormald, 'Laws', p. 279; and idem., Making of English Law, pp. 104, who states that Ine's Code is 'much the least organised post-Roman legal statement' and thus difficult to conceptualise as being pre-planned in its extant form.
66 Wormald, Making of English Law, p. 105.
67 Yorke, Wessex, p. 72.
have acted as a mechanism of social engineering which in fact encouraged assimilation. It was a liability in Ine’s Wessex to be identified as a Briton, given their inferior wergild and oath values. It may have been Ine’s deliberate policy to enact laws which were designed to compel the Britons within his kingdom to abandon their separate identity and become Saxon. Thus, a political and social imperative could have been embedded into his laws for the Britons. The question of whether this process of assimilation was accompanied by intermarriage between Britons and West Saxons, and the extent to which Ine’s Britons retained their identity within Wessex, will be examined in the following section.

**Interruption amongst West Saxons and Britons and the Survival of British Identity**

Interruption is one of the most common mechanisms proposed for integration between peoples, and for language change. It has already been stated that settlers would have been necessary for the absorption of new territory into Wessex, and indeed, the evidence of Ine’s Code strongly intimates that certainly some Britons and West Saxons lived in close proximity with one another. Interruption may therefore have occurred between settlers and natives. It is noteworthy that the OE suffix -sæte, as in Sumorsæte (Somerset) or Dornsæte (Dorset), can in fact mean ‘settlers’. If this is the correct interpretation in these instances, then Somerset and Dorset may have become known as ‘frontier’ territories that were colonised by West Saxon immigrants. It has also been proposed that West Saxon control of newly-acquired British territory might have been assisted by intermarriage between families of West Saxon and British leaders. The suggestion is that West Saxon expansion was not always won by military aggression, but could have occurred along ‘diplomatic’ lines with pacts sealed by marriage alliances. There is, unfortunately, no direct evidence for such a policy having been implemented, and no way of assessing the conditions under which such marriage

---

72 J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Barbarian West*, p. 26, for example, asserted that intermarriage between Visigoths and Gallo-Romans in Aquitaine was ‘bound to dilute not their blood only but also their language. For many Goths of the second and succeeding generations, Latin was the mother-tongue’.
73 *Supra.*, pp. 56-7.
alliances might have been contrived. Arguments for intermarriage between West Saxons and Britons have principally relied on the evidence of personal names.

The West Saxon dynasty contains a number of figures with names of possible British origin, the most of any of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Ceawlin (c.581-588) and Cædwalla (685/6-688) have been offered as British-derived names, the latter probably being an Anglicised version of the British name Cadwallon. Of particular note is the name of the putative founder of the dynasty, Cerdic (c.538-554), which is generally accepted to be an Anglicised version of the British name Caraticos/Ceretic. Further, British influence is hinted at in the name Cenwalh (642-673), which contains the element *wealh/walh*. As mentioned earlier, *wealh* is recorded as personal name element in all of the four main Old English dialects. The other element of the name Cenwalh, OE *cene*, translates as ‘bold’, thus giving an approximate meaning of the ‘bold Briton’.

It is usually proposed that names such as these indicate, at some point in the family tree, mixed Saxon/British parentage. The fact that the very founder of the West Saxon dynasty, Cerdic, probably had a British-derived name, has been taken to be representative of peaceful association between Britons and Saxons, even though this makes him a very unlikely leader of the Saxon invaders from the Continent. The figure of Cerdic is perplexing. It has already been noted that some of the names that occur early in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, such as Port and Wihtgar, were probably created out of pre-existing place-names. From this it could be reasonably asserted that the possibility of forgery or invention should be extended to other early names that are

---

76 Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 49. The precise origin of Ceawlin, and its ancestral form, is less certain. R. Coates, ‘On some controversy surrounding Gewissae/Gewissei, Cerdic and Ceawlin’, *Nomina* 13 (1989-90), p. 4, offers the hypothetical primitive Welsh name Cawlin as ancestor, but does so cautiously. He concludes, nevertheless, that Ceawlin is arguably British.


78 See note 18 (*supra.*, p. 67). A further example of *wealh* as a personal name in Wessex is the priest Welisc who attests a charter of King Cædwalla of c.688 (S235/BCS72, pp. 132-7). Ethelwealh of Sussex is another contemporary ‘royal’ case (*HE* IV.13; but rendered as Ethelwald in the *ASC* s.a. 661).

79 Given the prefix -cen- it is highly unlikely that *wealh* in this particular name could have meant slave (Faull, ‘Semantic development of Wealth’, p. 32). Contra. D. Jenkins, ‘gwalch: Welsh’, *CMCS* 19 (1990), p. 63, who regards the derivation of the *wali*-element in the name to have been from Brittonic *walch*, ‘hawk’. Thus, Cenwalh becomes the ‘bold hawk’.


81 See P. Sims-Williams, ‘The settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle’, *ASE* 12 (1983), pp. 30-1. It stretches credibility to accept that Cerdic would have arrived from the continent with a name of British origin.

82 *Supra.*, p. 46.
found only in the *Chronicle*. Cerdic also appears in the West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List and the so-called ‘Anglian Collection’ of genealogies and regnal lists as the founder of the West Saxon dynasty.\(^83\) Thus, as David Parsons asserts, ‘there is a temptation to accept that Cerdic … may have a basis in fact’.\(^84\) Various explanations have, therefore, been suggested for how a Saxon dynast could have possessed a British name, such as Cerdic being the son of a Saxon mercenary and a British wife, or Cerdic being a British chieftain who hired Saxon mercenaries and was thus adopted into West Saxon oral tradition.\(^85\) There is no surviving evidence, however, which would allow a favouring any of these competing explanations.

The existence of West Saxons bearing British names emerges as one manifestation of the paradox in the evidence for Anglo-Celtic relations in Britain. The borrowing of names from British to Old English suggests something of a climate of respect; personal names are often given in honour of a compatriot or other esteemed person.\(^86\) This clearly differs from the picture of antipathy to be gained from the *Chronicle*. While Ine’s Code also qualified this picture to allow for Britons being included in West Saxon society, their status was inferior to the Saxons such that the borrowing of names would otherwise be contra-indicated. The name Cenwalh, if given in full knowledge of its likely meaning, does suggest a measure of respect for the Britons. One would more usually have expected the borrowing of names in the other direction, from Old English to British, possibly as a British sign of respect or acknowledgment of West Saxon overlordship.\(^87\)

Perhaps part of the confusion comes from attempting to make too much out of personal-name evidence. As well as personal names often being a matter of fashion, Margaret Faull cautions that Celtic names were eventually adopted into Anglo-Saxon personal

---

\(^83\) Cerdic’s pedigree is further traced, through seven ancestors, back to Woden (D.N. Dumville, ‘The West Saxon genealogical regnal list and the chronology of early Wessex’, *Peritia* 4 (1985), p. 22). The West Saxon Regnal List survives in nine medieval manuscripts dating from the late ninth century to the early twelfth (Dumville, ‘The West Saxon genealogical regnal list’, p. 25). The Anglian Collection survives in four manuscripts, which derive from a late eighth-century Mercian example, though the West Saxon material is at the earliest contained only in a tenth-century manuscript (D.N. Dumville, ‘The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists’, *ASE* 5 (1976), p. 40; Parsons, ‘British *Caraticos, Old English Cerdic*, pp. 2, 6).

\(^84\) Parsons, ‘British *Caraticos, Old English Cerdic*, p. 2.

\(^85\) These are summarised by Parsons, ‘British *Caraticos, Old English Cerdic*, p. 2.


\(^87\) As Sims-Williams, ‘Celtomania and Celtoscepticism’, p. 19, states, ‘Foreign personal names can be adopted for reasons of prestige’.
name stock and used without thought for their original meaning. Thus, while the first instance of a British name in a Saxon context might be indicative of intermarriage, or at least amicable relations, later usages lose such a meaning. In this regard, there is no assurance that persons bearing British names were of British ethnicity. So, when the Chronicle or the West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List were being compiled, it is not certain that the authors knew the derivation of the names they were using; nor is it certain that the granting of British-derived names to West Saxon rulers—such as Ceawlin or Cædwalla—was done with an understanding of their ethnic origins. This does not necessarily invalidate the historicity of a British-derived name, even if there is no certainty that the figure bearing the name actually existed, but it encourages caution in over-interpreting the significance of the name. Given that genealogies were often manipulated for dynastic ends, a person with a British name might have been artificially placed at the head of a dynasty, or anywhere in a regnal list, or a British-derived name might have been given in memory of an ancestor, without thought for the inter-ethnic implications. Similar problems exist with wealth in personal-names. As this element was also used in Continental Germanic names, for example Wala- or Vala-, its interpretation as 'Briton' in any given instance of an Anglo-Saxon name is questionable.

The problem with interpreting personal names is underscored by the lack of certainty as to when British-derived names were actually transmitted into Old English. It has been maintained that the name Cerdic, for example, could only have been borrowed from British after certain linguistic developments occurred in the later sixth century, in other words, after the purported floruit of this chieftain. Most recently, however, David Parsons has explained that there are no sound linguistic arguments to support any such assertion, and that linguistic evidence cannot provide a date for the transmission of the name Cerdic into Old English. While this assertion does not necessarily apply to the borrowing of other British-derived names—further onomastic research might be revealing here—it nevertheless must be concluded that personal names can only be used

---

89 Coates, 'On some controversy', p. 10.
90 In a difficult passage, Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p. 95, seems to support this caveat.
91 Dumville, 'The West Saxon genealogical regnal list', p. 66.
93 For example, Coates, 'On some controversy', p. 5; K.H. Jackson, Language and History in Early Britain (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 614. This point has also been raised as evidence against the historicity of Cerdic as an early Saxon war-leader and dynast.
as very dim evidence about the nature of intermarriage or integration between West Saxons and Britons. The presumption of intermarriage is reasonable, but the extent and nature of intermarriage remains unassessable.  

If there was a substantial British component amongst the population of Wessex, as has been asserted, some evidence of their continued presence should perhaps be expected. The laws in Ine's Code concerning Britons provide the strongest documentary evidence for their residence within Wessex and for the continuation of their identity, at least in the late seventh century. It is likely that the specific laws were enacted so as to provide a mechanism for the accommodation of those Britons living in territory which had recently been incorporated into western Wessex. There was, therefore, a period during which Britons and West Saxons lived under the same rulership, as Bede himself seems to confirm. How long did these Britons who came to live under West Saxon control retain their distinct identity?

There is limited evidence outside the Code for the presence of Ine's Britons in western Wessex. Beyond the members of the West Saxon dynasty discussed above, there are documentary references to two persons bearing possible British names within Wessex. The earliest is an abbot called Catwali – a possible variation of Cadwallon – who ruled an unnamed monastery in Dorset in the final quarter of the seventh century. It would be tempting to presume that Catwali was abbot of a British community subsumed under West Saxon control in the territorial expansions of the late seventh century, but this would certainly be reading too much into the reference. The second person is an ealdorman called Cumbra, referred to in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the year 757, the same entry which contains the Cynewulf/Cyneheard episode. The Old English name *Cumbre/Cumbra* derives from the Britons' own word for themselves, and it is
interesting that the name appears in connection with the only reference to a British hostage held in Wessex. However, the significance of both these names remains ambiguous in light of the caveats already discussed regarding the assignation and meaning of personal names. It is worth noting that neither Catwali nor Cumbra were identified as Britons, in comparison with the British hostage who clearly was. Thus, their identity is by no means assured.

Place-name evidence can also be used to reveal the presence of Britons or at least British influence on Old English. It is generally supposed that the adoption of Celtic British place-names into Old English must have taken place in a context of co-existence, even if the speakers of British were in a position of social inferiority.102 There are several textual references relating to the pre-Viking period of places with ostensible British, or British-derived names. The names Peonnum, derived from British pen ‘hill/head’, and the less certain Beandun containing the –dun ‘(hill)fort’ element, have already been mentioned.103 The pen element can also be seen in names such as Pen Hill (outside Yeovil, Somerset), though this example – meaning ‘Hill Hill’ – reveals that West Saxons did not necessarily understand the meaning of a British place-name or toponym.104 A charter from King Æthelheard and Queen Frithugyth to Glastonbury, dated to 729, records a grant of a sixty hides at a place called Pouholt,105 which may derive from the British bo gwelt, ‘cattle pasture’.106 A further charter, insecurely dated to 677 or 692, records a donation by Bishop Hædde to Abbot Hæmgils of Glastonbury of ‘three cassati called Lantocal’, now Leigh-in-Street (Somerset), which contains the British lann element for a churchyard or enclosure.107

been *combrogos* (pl. *combrogi*), meaning ‘those with the same border’ or ‘fellow-countrymen’. The modern Welsh form appears as *Cymro* ‘Welshman’, and *Cymru* ‘Wales’.

102 M. Gelling, ‘Why aren’t we speaking Welsh?’, *ASSAH* 6 (1993), p. 51. Gelling also states that ‘The greater the number of people using a name, the better will be its chance of survival’ (p. 53).


105 S253/BCS147, pp. 40-1. In the lost charter S1680, p. 72; contained in the *Liber Terrarum*, no. 63, King Sigeberht is said to have granted 22 hides at Poholt in 754. See L. Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 33, 204-5, regarding this charter. Charter S248/BCS113, pp. 27-33, also records a grant of land at Pouelt from King Ine, c.706, which may be an earlier version of the same name.


107 S1249/(Glastonbury Cart. 639), pp. 18-19. The lann element is discussed below (see note 77, *infra.*, pp. 98-9). A further example of this element is in the *Lanprobi* charter, discussed in Chapter 5 (*infra.*, p. 117-23).
Of particular note is a charter dated to 682, recording a grant by King Centwine of three hides to Abbot Æmigils next to a hill 'which is called in the British language Cructan, but among us Crycheorh', that is Creechbarrow Hill, in western Somerset.\(^{108}\) Cructan contains the British word \textit{crug}, which means a 'natural hill ... often small and abrupt in shape'.\(^{109}\) This element can be found in the modern place-names Creech and Crooke(e), or compounded as in Evercreech, of which there are several examples in Dorset, Somerset and Devon.\(^{110}\) The example of the Cructan/Crycheorh charter provides a strong indication that there was a period of bilingualism in western Wessex, in which British and Old English name forms existed in parallel to one another. But it also reveals the process by which many British names must have been extinguished—probably fairly quickly if the 682 date of the charter is accurate—as Old English came to be the dominant language.\(^{111}\)

It is fair to say that the number of British-derived place-names generally increases the farther west one goes in Wessex.\(^{112}\) Kenneth Jackson's famous map of British river-names indicates a more dense concentration in western versus eastern Wessex.\(^{113}\) However, Devon does not conform to this picture as, to quote Margaret Gelling, the 'surviving Celtic element in the place-names is very slight'.\(^{114}\) This is somewhat surprising as Devon was the last of the regions, before Cornwall, to come under West Saxon control. There are certainly British place-names to be found, but the comparison with Cornwall is stark, where most of the names can be traced to a British antecedent. This again suggests the eventual dominance of Old English in the region for such a wholesale assignation of Old English names to have occurred.\(^{115}\)

\(^{108}\) S237/BCS62, pp. 15-17, 'qui dicitur Brectannica lingua Cructan, apud nos Crycheorh' (\textit{supra.}, p. 58). See also Abrams, \textit{Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury}, pp. 99-100, regarding this charter.

\(^{109}\) Gelling, \textit{Signposts to the Past}, p. 139. The OE -\textit{beorh} element also means 'a hill', providing a further example of a tautological name combination (M. Costen, \textit{The Origins of Somerset}, Manchester, 1992, p. 60).


\(^{113}\) Jackson, \textit{Language and History in Early Britain}, p. 220. Charters which attest to British river-names include: S238/(Glastonbury Cart. 979), pp. 23-5, of 693, containing the stream name Ternuc (surviving as Tamocic, near Brent Knoll, Somerset); S255/(Napier & Stevenson 1), pp. 255-8, of 739, containing the river name Cridie (now Crediton, near Exeter); and three consecutive entries in the contents of the \textit{Liber Terrarum}, nos. 24, 25, 26 (Abrams, \textit{Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury}, pp. 31-2), from about 750, referring to the river name Culum/Calum (now Culmstock; in Devon):

\(^{114}\) Gelling, 'Why aren't we speaking Welsh?', p. 55.

\(^{115}\) Yorke, \textit{Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England}, p. 142. The proviso should be added here that most modern place-names forms represent development over the course of centuries, and many earlier forms have certainly gone unrecorded. There may also have been later Celtic influence on place-names, for example, from Wales.
It is important to note that the persistence of British-derived names does not necessarily mean the survival, or continuity, of British settlements, and therefore the survival of a British identity. More revealing may be those place-names which denote the British ethnicity of the inhabitants, that is, those containing the element *wealh*. Given that place-names are chosen so as to distinguish between places, the use of *wealh* as a place-name element implies that there were communities which at least for a time were characterised by their British inhabitants who were most likely identified by their British speech. There are a small number of instances in the south-west, including Walford (Somerset), Wallower in Challacombe and Walleadden in Whitchurch (Devon), as well as some in eastern Wessex, including Walworth and Wallington (Hants), and Walton in Downton (Wilts.). Some level of British identity must have survived long enough for these names to have been given; however, uncertainty as to their date makes it difficult to determine exactly for how long. It has been suggested that, if the distinguishing feature of a settlement was its British inhabitants, such settlements must not have been common in the particular regions in which they occur. It may also be that the small number of these names in the south-west means that British-speakers were not a peculiarity, though this might be interpreting too much into the meaning of the *wealh*-names.

It is on the basis of place-name evidence that a British origin has been suggested for the shires of Dorset and Devon. The name of Dorset, *Dornsæte*, derives from a combination of the first element of the Roman name for Dorchester, *Durnovaria*, and the OE *-sæte* suffix. As Dorchester was the *civitas* capital of the Durotriges, it has been argued that the *Dornsæte* were a continuation of this administrative unit. The

---

118 A Middle-English rendering of a *wealh*-name containing the genitive plural -e- or -a- inflection is required for a secure identification. This gets around the problem of confusion with similar sounding words such as *wald* 'forest', *wall* 'wall', and *waella* 'well, stream'. See Cameron, 'The meaning and significance of Old English *walh*', pp. 5, 8; Faull, 'Semantic development of *Wealh*', p. 32.
119 Cameron, 'The meaning and significance of Old English *walh*', pp. 40-6. There is the further example of Cumberwell (Wilts.), which contains the OE *cumbre* element (supra., pp. 82-3). Not all of these examples are habitation names, so they do not all necessarily refer to British 'communities' as such.
120 Faull, 'Semantic development of *Wealh*', pp. 33-4. Cameron, 'The meaning and significance of Old English *walh*', p. 33, argues that these names were given in the late seventh or early eighth centuries, though most are only recorded after the Conquest.
122 The name *Dornsæte* is first attested in the *ASC* s.a. 837 (recte 840).
123 Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, p. 154; Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 83-6. Yorke argues that Somerset (*Sumorsæte*), may have continued a former British territorial unit, even though it does not contain a British name.
shire name Devon similarly derives from the British *civitas* and kingdom name Dumnonia.\textsuperscript{124} Though it is interesting that the West Saxons continued older Roman and British names in these instances, this does not show that either region was subsumed as a ‘working whole’ into Wessex. The possibility of British ‘administrative continuity’ is certainly attractive,\textsuperscript{125} but in the absence of other supporting evidence can never be more than conjecture.

**Summary**

Given the evidence of Ine’s Code, the presence of Britons living and owning land within Wessex is beyond reasonable doubt. Yet, these Britons were afforded a disadvantageous legal status which was likely to propel the abandonment of their identity and facilitate their assimilation within West Saxon society. It has been stated that differential scales of *wergild* were ‘a common method of reinforcing the balance of power between conquered and conquering peoples throughout medieval Europe’.\textsuperscript{126} In this context, it is not surprising that western Wessex became, in most respects, as Saxon as the east. Intermarriage between West Saxons and Britons probably took place, though the small number of British loan words in Old English, and the lower status of the Britons would suggest some reservation here.\textsuperscript{127} It is probable, however, that the language of the Britons was suppressed, either directly or indirectly; engulfed by the overall dominance of West Saxon political, economic and social culture. Hence, by the time King Alfred promulgated his Code, there was no apparent differentiation made between Britons and Saxons.\textsuperscript{128}

---

\textsuperscript{124} The shire name of Devon is recorded in the *ASC* s.aa. 823 (recte 825), 851 (recte 850), as Defna and Defenascire respectively.

\textsuperscript{125} Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 86.


\textsuperscript{128} In his will, Alfred talked of two properties he owned in Wealcynne. S. Keynes & M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser’s ‘Life of King Alfred’ and other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 175, translate this term explicitly as Cornwall, and not as meaning amongst Britons within Wessex proper.
Chapter 5

Ecclesiastical Interaction

In addition to intermarriage, a further mechanism for amalgamation between peoples is a common belief system. It has been argued, for example, that during the early years of the Roman conquest, the polytheism shared by the Celtic Britons and the Romans was an avenue by which these two peoples were able to engage with one another. In early medieval Britain, Christianity – specifically the right brand of Christianity – could have operated as a social lubricant between the Saxons and the Britons. Indeed, despite Charles Thomas’s assertion that the ecclesia Britanniourum failed to provide any of the foundations for the ecclesia Anglicana, that the depth of antagonism was too great, it is often claimed that the West Saxon church was endowed with a firm Romano-British legacy. Bede, of course, focussed on the primacy of the Roman church in the conversion of Wessex, with Birinus as the evangelising bishop sent by Pope Honorius I. However, the possible continuity of certain sub-Roman ecclesiastical sites into the Anglo-Saxon period, especially in the west of the kingdom, has meant that Bede’s account has been questioned and the likelihood of British influence considered more seriously. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the evidence for British ecclesiastical continuity in Wessex, focussing particularly on the monasteries of Glastonbury and Sherborne, as well as to consider evidence for interaction between the West Saxon Church and the church in independent Dumnonia. It is necessary to begin, however, by examining the evidence for Christianity in the British south-west prior to c.600.

1 A. Ross, Pagan Celtic Britain: Studies in Iconography and Tradition (London, 1967), p. 228, notes, for example, that the spring at Aquae Sulis (Bath) was dedicated to the Celtic goddess Sulis as a representation of the Roman goddess Minerva. The spring, originally presided over by Sulis alone, became that of Sulis-Minerva.
4 HE Ill.7. According to Bede, Birinus found the Gewisse to be ‘completely heathen’. Bede’s sources of information for West Saxon conversion were Bishop Daniel of Winchester, from whom he received a written account of the early history of the church in Wessex, and Pecthelm, who was a monk at Malmesbury in the time of Aldhelm and later Bishop of Whitcomb in the west of Northumbria (HE Preface, V.18, V.23).
British Christianity in the South-West

Christianity had come to Britain by the late third century, when St Alban was martyred, though doubtless there were Christians in Britain at an earlier date, possibly by A.D. 200. By 314, bishoprics appear to have been established: three British bishops, as well as a priest and a deacon, were recorded as signatories to the *acta* of the Church Council of Arles held that year. The bishops were from York, London, and Lincoln, the capitals of three of the Roman provinces. The priest and deacon were not located, but perhaps came from Cirencester, the capital of the fourth province, *Britannia Prima*, which included the later territory of Wessex. Despite this evidence, there is no clear agreement on the extent to which Britain, and more specifically the region of Wessex, had adopted Christianity by the end of the fourth century. Indeed, there is limited unambiguous archaeological evidence for early Christianity in the region; possible church sites such as at Silchester share features with pagan temples. Fourth-century Christian cemeteries have been located in Wessex, albeit few in number, though not in Devon. There is virtually no evidence of the conversion of Dumnonia in the Roman period, apart from a single *chi-rho* monogram found on a piece of pottery in Exeter.

---


6 S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain* (London, 1989), p. 47; N.J. Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1992), p. 64; Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, p. 133. Athanasius also records that there were British clerics at the councils of Nicaea in 325 and Serdica in 342-3; Sulpicius Severus notes that three British bishops were present at the Council of Ariminum (Rimini) in 359 (see H&S I, pp. 7-10). A c.396 letter by Vitricius of Rouen tells of his plans to travel to Britain at the invitation of 'the bishops, my brothers in the priesthood'. On these references, see Frend, *Ecclesia Britannica: prelude or dead end?*, pp. 130-1; Snyder, *Age of Tyrants*, p. 120.


8 Costen, *Origins of Somerset*, pp. 73-6; Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 47; S. Pearce, *The Kingdom of Dumnonia - Studies in History and Tradition in South Western Britain AD 350-1150* (Cornwall, 1978), pp. 60-4; Snyder, *Age of Tyrants*, pp. 202-5, 237; Yorke, *Wessex*, pp. 150-1. These include: Poundbury (Dorset), Cammington, Ilchester and Shepton Mallet (Somerset), and Victoria and Chester Road in Winchester (Hants). These cemeteries are primarily identified according to certain traits consistent with Christian belief, for example, inhumation with the head facing east; absence of grave goods; evidence for the protection of the body such as a coffin, cist or stone-lined grave. It is necessary to recognise that the lack of grave-goods by itself does not necessarily identify a Christian burial.
which has been tentatively dated to the fourth century. The earliest evidence for Christianity farther west in Cornwall does not occur until the fifth century. However, from the 380s, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, and especially from 391-2 when the public practice of paganism was banned, it can be presumed that Christianity met with burgeoning success, and it appears that after the Roman withdrawal from Britain, Christianity became a dominant, albeit difficult to discern from the evidence, feature of the British south-west.

The intrusion of pagan Anglo-Saxons and their occupation of much of erstwhile Britannia in the fifth and sixth centuries obviously disrupted the development of Christianity in Britain such that the Anglo-Saxon regions needed to be re-converted in the seventh century. However, Christianity continued in the British-dominated west.

Gildas assumed that the society in which he was writing was Christian, and his chastisement of the rulers of his day, including Constantine of Dumnonia, did not include paganism as one of their sins. If this had been an issue, Gildas would surely have mentioned it. For Gildas, his complaint was principally that the British kings did...
not measure up to Christian ideals and standards, and by his tacit assumption that they should have, the impression to be gained is that the church was a well-entrenched part of society.\textsuperscript{14} Gildas wrote of a hierarchy of bishops (episcopi), priests (presbyteri) and deacons (diaconi).\textsuperscript{15} This allows for the assumption that bishoprics had survived the end of Roman rule, although there is no indication of how many, nor where they may have been located.\textsuperscript{16} According to Gildas, the clergy ministered in churches (ecclesiae domus) in which the Eucharist was celebrated at the altar, but they were not independent of secular authority as kings appear to have been able to appoint priests.\textsuperscript{17} Gildas also allows for the presumption that monasticism had arrived in Britain, though the De excidio is less illuminating here, and there are no references to specific monasteries or to monastic churches.\textsuperscript{18}

Though Gildas is vague on geographical detail, it can be reasonably postulated that the British-controlled areas of the west and south-west were predominantly Christian by the time he was writing. Support for this deduction may be found in the Life of St Samson, where the saint is said to have visited the monastery of Lanow in St Kew parish in Cornwall in the early sixth century.\textsuperscript{19} Ann Preston-Jones notes that two of the earliest surviving inscribed stones in Cornwall which display both ogham and Latin inscriptions, use unambiguously Christian formulae, although the inscriptions are only

\textsuperscript{14} Costen, Origins of Somerset, p. 74; Dumville ‘The idea of government in sub-Roman Britain’, p. 195. Yorke, Wessex, p. 158, reasons that the British church must have been sufficiently well established for it to become as corrupt as Gildas complains (DEB 66-67).
\textsuperscript{15} DEB 65.1, 66.1, 67.1-4, 109.2. Gildas also refers to sacerdotes – a term which can embrace both presbyteri and episcopi (infra., p. 293) – as well as clerici, pastores, ecclesiastici, ministri and so forth. It is worth noting that St Patrick (Confessio 1, 26, 32; Epist. 1) was a bishop (episcopus) and one of his grandfathers a priest (presbyter). St Patrick is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9 (infra., pp. 293-4).
\textsuperscript{16} Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, pp. 195-215, mounts an argument for bishoprics continuing to be being centred on former civitas capitals. This might have been the case in the early fifth century, but is unlikely much beyond this time, when most civitas capitals were being depopulated. There is no evidence of a metropolitan bishop. On the location of sub-Roman bishoprics, see also Dark, Civitas to Kingdom, p. 67; Stancilfe, ‘The British church and the mission of Augustine’, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{17} DEB 66.1 (ecclesiae domus), 67.2. See also Snyder, Age of Tyrants, pp. 123-4, 239.
\textsuperscript{18} DEB 28.1-2, 34.1. In DEB 65.1-2, Gildas gave the impression that the ascetic monastic life was an ideal to which he aspired. On sub-Roman monasticism, see Dumville, ‘The origins and early history of Insular monasticism’, pp. 85-107; M. Herren, ‘Gildas and early British monasticism’, in A. Bammesberger & A. Wollmann, (eds.), Britain 400-600: Language and History (Heidelberg, 1990), pp. 71-76.
broadly datable to the late fifth to seventh centuries. They are some thirty-two of these so-called Category I inscribed stones in Cornwall which may date to the seventh century or earlier, but fewer in the more eastern parts of Dumnonia: fifteen in Devon, and one in Somerset, as well as a group of five stones at Wareham in eastern Dorset. It might be unwarranted to interpret all these inscribed stones as indicative of Christianity — the practice probably derives from Roman tradition independent of Christianity. Nonetheless, the stones can provide some hint of the spread of Christianity in British Dumnonia, and at the very least show the continuation of a literate tradition in the south-west that corroborates the Latinity of Gildas’s De excidio.

Continuity from British to West Saxon Christianity

The extent to which it can be argued that British ecclesiastical sites and Christian communities survived in Wessex after the Saxon invasion, and thus influenced the development of the West Saxon church, depends in large measure on when conquest of a particular area occurred. The West Saxon conquest and subsequent settlement were a drawn out affair that occurred over at least 200 years. Thus, the farther west the West Saxons moved, the stronger Christianity would have been amongst the native Britons. British Christianity would have been more likely to survive in the western areas of Wessex, such as Dorset and Somerset, where conquest probably did not occur until the final quarter of the seventh century, and Devon, where subjugation was even later.

20 Preston-Jones, 'Decoding Cornish churchyards', p. 122. The usual inscription is described by Snyder, Age of Tyrants, p. 238, as 'a brief Latin formula (hic iacet ...) and the deceased's name, sometimes followed by names of relatives or other identifiers ... often accompanied by the name inscribed along one edge in ogham script'. Snyder also states that Chi-Rho and Alpha and Omega are the most common Christian symbols used in epigraphy in the fourth and fifth centuries, with simple crosses becoming more frequent from the sixth century onwards. For the dating of ogham and Latin inscriptions see, respectively, K.R. Dark, 'Epigraphic, art historical and historical approaches to the chronology of Class I inscribed stones', in Edwards & Lane, The Early Church in Wales and the West, p. 53, and J.K. Knight, 'The early Christian Latin inscriptions of Britain and Gaul: chronology and context', in Edwards & Lane, The Early Church in Wales and the West, p. 50. E. Okasha, Corpus of Early Christian Inscribed Stones of South-West Britain (London, 1993), pp. 50-7, in her extensive and detailed analysis, has argued that the date range for some of these Category I stones may even extend to the eleventh century, and that they certainly cannot be dated any more precisely than to within a one- or two-century limit. If so, they are perhaps not as useful an indicator of early Christianity as once thought.

21 Costen, Origins of Somerset, pp. 76-7; Okasha, Corpus of Early Christian Inscribed Stones, pp. 11-13; Preston-Jones, 'Decoding Cornish churchyards', p. 107; Yorke, Wessex, pp. 16-17. Category or Class I memorial stones are defined as: 'inscribed, unshaped, or roughly shaped, pillar-stones' (Dark, 'Epigraphic, art historical and historical approaches to the chronology of Class I inscribed stones', p. 52). The Wareham group of stones are discussed below (infra., pp. 93-4).

22 Dark, Civitas to Kingdom, p. 183; Thomas, And Shall These Mute Stones Speak?, pp. 262-5, 271-2; Yorke, Wessex, p. 17. For discussion of the cultural influences on the inscribed stones from the southwest, see Okasha, Corpus of Early Christian Inscribed Stones, pp. 31-42.

23 Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 51.

24 Supra., pp. 57-9.
West Saxon conquest of the eastern half of Wessex, however, occurred before the West Saxons became officially Christian in 635,\textsuperscript{25} thus rendering the survival of churches and monastic communities unlikely, though isolated lay Christian enclaves which venerated at shrines to British saints may have endured.\textsuperscript{26} There is no serious argument made for the continuity of British Christianity in the east of Wessex, or for the survival of an ecclesiastical structure.\textsuperscript{27} By contrast, that the West Saxon take-over of territory in Dorset, Somerset and Devon occurred after their conversion means it is possible that the West Saxon Church could have subsumed a pre-existing British structure. Indeed, it has been declared that 'the Saxon church in the region ... must have been based almost entirely on a sub-Roman foundation',\textsuperscript{28} and that 'there seems little doubt that the structure of the church in western Wessex owed much to its British inheritance'.\textsuperscript{29} The argument for a supposed sub-Roman or British foundation for the Saxon church in western Wessex has been made on the basis of several types of evidence: archaeology, church dedications, and charters, each of which will now be examined.

**Archaeological Evidence for British Ecclesiastical Continuity**

Archaeology is the most rudimentary level of evidence that has been used to assess the continuity of Christian site-use, and it comes in a number of forms. To begin with, excavation of certain Roman and sub-Roman cemeteries has revealed evidence for continued use into the Saxon period, and some Saxon churches have been found built on older British cemeteries.\textsuperscript{30} Cannington (Somerset) is one of the clearest examples: it was one of the largest Roman Christian cemeteries in Britain and appears, on the basis of radiocarbon evidence, to have been used into the early eighth century.\textsuperscript{31} Radiocarbon dating of a Christian cemetery at Ulwell near Swanage (Isle of Purbeck, Dorset) has

\textsuperscript{25} The first Christian king of Wessex was Cynegils (ASC s.a. 635; HE III.7).
\textsuperscript{26} Stancilfe, 'The British church and the mission of Augustine', p. 121, talks of the survival of pockets of British Christianity in the south-east venerating saints such as St Sixtus or St Alban, the latter of whom is mentioned by both Bede (HE I.7) and Gildas (DEB 10.2).
\textsuperscript{27} Evidence for the survival of any sub-Roman ecclesiastical site in Hampshire or Wiltshire is currently non-existent. See Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 51; Yorke, Wessex, pp. 164-5.
\textsuperscript{28} Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 51.
\textsuperscript{29} Yorke, Wessex, p. 181. See also Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review', p. 265.
\textsuperscript{30} There are no church buildings surviving from the sub-Roman period, probably due to a preference for timber construction, though the remains of two possible stone churches have been identified in Somerset (Yorke, Wessex, p. 159). Bede (HE III.4), in discussing the church at Whithorn (Galloway), noted that it was unusual for the Britons to build in stone.
similarly indicated use of the site throughout the seventh century. Excavation at the church of St Mary Major in Exeter (Devon), which was probably founded by the West Saxons c.680-700, shows continued use; the immediately adjacent forum area was previously used as a late-Roman cemetery and possibly as a church from c.390. Excavation at Wells Cathedral (Somerset) has revealed, beside the first Saxon church, the foundations of a late- or sub-Roman building which has been tentatively identified as a mausoleum. Evidence from other early cemeteries is less definite. Cemeteries at Shepton Mallet, Portishead, Lamyatt Beacon, Camerton and Brean Down (Somerset) were originally used in the late fourth or early fifth centuries, but it is uncertain how long their associated (Christian?) communities survived, and how much of a hiatus there was before re-use in the seventh century. Similarly, the interpretation of the evidence from Dorchester (Dorset) and Ilchester (Somerset) is problematic; both were Roman Christian centres with cemeteries, and also later Saxon minsters, but there is no clear indication of what happened between these periods.

The church of St Mary at Wareham (Isle of Purbeck, Dorset) is a further example of a possible Saxon minster that seems to have been sited on an existing cemetery. Wareham is particularly interesting here given that it is the site of the only surviving inscribed memorial stones in Dorset. The five stones were found built into the piers of the south arcade of the nave of the minster, when a large part of it was demolished in 1840. Although the stones that the inscriptions were cut into seem to have originated from a nearby Roman villa – they are local limestone – they probably came more or

---

33 The dedication to St Mary is not recorded until the reign of Æthelstan, 925-939 (Orme, English Church Dedications, p. 20).
36 The cemeteries at Lamyatt Beacon and Brean Down developed around pagan shrines which were Christianised (Costen, Origins of Somerset, p. 75; Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 48).
37 Eagles, 'The archaeological evidence for settlement in the fifth to seventh centuries', p. 20; Snyder, Age of Tyrants, pp. 202-8; Yorke, Wessex, pp. 46, 155.
38 Yorke, Wessex, p. 179.
39 Pearce, 'Estates and church sites in Dorset and Gloucestershire', p. 135.
42 D. Hinton & R. Hodges, 'Excavations in Wareham, 1974-5', Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society 99 (1977), p. 81, indicate that the inscriptions are cut into Roman columns, brought from some other site.
less contemporaneously from the cemetery which preceded the minster. The memorial stones are generally taken to represent the presence of high status British Christians in Dorset after Saxon conquest. However, the dating of the stones is by no means definite, as Elisabeth Okasha’s recent reassessment of the dating evidence for the Category I stones indicates. Indeed, there exists a competing theory that they should be associated with Breton exiles in the late ninth century. On the basis of the epigraphy, they are typically dated to the seventh and eighth centuries. However, they could have been created even earlier, in the sixth century. If this is the case, then continuity becomes less likely, even though the survival of Britons in the area is consistent with the absence of early Saxon material from the Isle of Purbeck.

One of the most significant problems with dating is that each stone appears to have a different style of script, so it is even possible that some may be pre-Saxon and some Breton. This prospect highlights the difficulty of attempting to draw conclusions from the stones. The date of foundation of the Saxon minster is also uncertain; it must have been in existence by 802 when King Beorhtric was buried there, but for how long is unknown and there may have been a gap in use of the site. Further, the use of the stones as building material or rubble implies, at best, only a very attenuated type of continuity, and, at worst, none at all. It is highly unlikely that a British-based institution would have used memorial stones in such a way; any British tradition must have been redundant by that time. The context in which the stones were found could represent a complete break between British and West Saxon occupation; or West Saxon indifference to British Christianity; or they could be an expression of West Saxon dominance. Until dating of the inscribed stones can be made more definite, the evidence from Wareham is inconclusive.

---

43 Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 70.
44 See note 20 (supra., p. 91).
49 ASC 784 (recte 786), 800 (recte 802). It is possible that a West Saxon church was built at Wareham on the orders of Aldhelm; William of Malmesbury (*GP* V.217), states that Aldhelm built a church at Werham. Earlier in the work, he indicates that Aldhelm built a monastery ‘iuxta fluvium qui vocatur From’ (*GP* V.198). M. Lapidge and M. Herren (eds. & trans.), *Aldhelm: The Prose Works* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 183 n. 26, note that of the several Rivers Frome, one debouches at Wareham.
50 H. Williams, ‘Ancient landscapes and the dead: the re-use of prehistoric and Roman monuments as early Anglo-Saxon burial sites’, *Medieval Archaeology* 41 (1997), p. 3, discusses why an existing monument or Christian site may have been re-used, even those abandoned for centuries, even millennia.
There are also churches in Devon, associated with inscribed stones, which appear to have stayed in use from the sub-Roman to the Saxon periods. These include Buckland Monachorum, East Ogwell, Lustleigh, Stowford and Tavistock.\textsuperscript{51} There is no surviving evidence, however, of an early dedication for any of these churches which would support the survival of a British foundation.\textsuperscript{52} Many of the stones have been removed from their original locations. Thus the existence of an inscribed stone in a churchyard could indicate continuity, or the stone could have been brought to the site later on; or indeed, the stone may have been erected at a date after West Saxon take-over.\textsuperscript{53}

Evidence for continuity of site-use has also come from the close proximity of some major Saxon minsters to the sites of Roman villas.\textsuperscript{54} Examples here include Banwell, Keynsham and Cheddar (Somerset), and Halstock, Tarrant Crawford, Wimbourne Minster and Whitchurch Canonicorum (Dorset).\textsuperscript{55} The position of these minsters over or near villa sites might suggest pre-Saxon foundation. It is worth noting that in Wiltshire, where Saxon occupation occurred earlier, only West Dean and Cherhill are close to villa sites, and both were founded well into the Saxon period.\textsuperscript{56} The choice of a villa site for a church might, therefore, represent a British Christian practice which continued in western Wessex into the Anglo-Saxon era. Barbara Yorke has suggested that the evidence here implies some form of continuity between villa ownership and the foundation of local churches;\textsuperscript{57} but there is no indication of the nature of such an association, nor of what was passed on when the West Saxons took control.\textsuperscript{58}

Notwithstanding the possibility of ecclesiastical continuity at villa sites, there are significant limitations in what this type of evidence can reveal. As John Blair argues, ‘Although some minsters built on or in Roman buildings are apparently pre-English, the practice was too generalised to constitute in itself a means of distinguishing between

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} Orme, English Church Dedications, p. 21; Yorke, Wessex, p. 177.
\item \textsuperscript{52} The earliest record of a Celtic dedication at Tavistock, for example, is the dedication to St Rumon recorded c.1154 (Orme, English Church Dedications, p. 20).
\item \textsuperscript{53} Orme (pers. comm., 16 June, 1999); Yorke, Wessex, p. 154. This latter eventuality might tell us of the survival of a British tradition within western Wessex.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Blair, ‘Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review’, p. 240, comments on the English appropriation of Roman villas, including a ‘remarkable number in the south-west’.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Hase, ‘The church in the Wessex heartlands’, p. 50; Pearce, ‘Estates and church sites in Dorset and Gloucestershire’, p. 117. Wareham (Dorset) should probably be included here. Blair, ‘Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review’, p. 241, argues that as the walls of villas would have decayed relatively quickly, the large number of minsters in Dorset on these sites implies an early origin, perhaps even under sixth century British control.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Hase, ‘The church in the Wessex heartlands’, pp. 50, 74 n. 20. Saxon churches were more often built in closer proximity to burhs.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Yorke, Wessex, p. 160.
\end{itemize}
British and Anglo-Saxon origins'. Essentially, Blair maintains that any campaign of minster-building would have appropriated what Roman buildings remained. The use of villas might be an early practice — their walls would have degraded more quickly than, say, those of a Roman fort — but it is not diagnostically British.

As was argued in Chapter 1, part of the difficulty in using archaeological evidence of continued site-use to argue for British ecclesiastical continuity is assessing what 'continuity' in fact means in this context. The use of an older Roman or British site by the West Saxon Church might have multiple interpretations, and in many instances, it is impossible to distinguish between continued use, deliberate re-use or accidental re-occupation. To quote Blair again, 'we must be cautious: contemporaries, like ourselves, were capable of making deductions (right or wrong) from physical evidence; real shades into fictitious continuity, and both into deliberate imitation'. Therefore, while it is theoretically possible, within limits, to establish that a cemetery was in ongoing use or a Christian site was occupied from the fifth to seventh centuries, it is another matter to establish the character, intensity, and ethnic and religious affiliation of the occupants. It must also be pointed out that a number of West Saxon churches thought to have been founded on British Christian sites are not actually located at the same site. For example, Cannington and Lamyatt Beacon (Somerset) were originally hill-top sites, but the Saxon churches are located below the hill-tops. Glastonbury (Somerset) and Sherborne (Dorset) are also cases where the Saxon monasteries appear to be removed from the locations of the putative British communities.


59 Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review', p. 241. This phenomenon was common in Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries, and the courtyard villa has been claimed as the origin of the monastic cloister.

60 Supra., pp. 37-8.

61 Edwards, 'Identifying the archaeology of the early church in Wales and Cornwall', p. 51; Blair, 'Churches in the early English landscape', pp. 6-7; Williams, 'Ancient landscapes and the dead', p. 13.

62 Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review', p. 242. No-one would, for example, seriously argue that the re-use of a Bronze Age barrow as an Anglo-Saxon cemetery demonstrated 'continuity' from the British past. Such a practice is perhaps more revealing of the Anglo-Saxons' desire to appropriate significant places in the landscape as an expression of dominance. On this point, see R. Bradley, 'Time regained: the creation of continuity', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 140 (1987), pp. 3-4.

63 Snyder, *Age of Tyrants*, p. 220.

64 Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 54; Pearce, 'Estates and church sites in Dorset and Gloucestershire', p. 135; Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 160.

Archaeology involves, of course, the study of material culture. Designations of ethnicity, for example, typically derive from objects, and labels of Briton or Saxon – and even Christian or pagan – are often applied to artefacts as if they are synonymous with people. Archaeology can tell of people and settlements, but less clearly about the nature of the authority under which they lived. Therefore, the siting of a Saxon church on a British cemetery could represent a ‘handing-over’ of a flourishing British community; or the foundation of a Saxon establishment on a site that was recognised as having been sanctified at some point; or an expression of Saxon dominance in newly-acquired territory. In most cases, more extensive evidence – both archaeological and otherwise – is required to distinguish between these possibilities.

**Survival of Dedications to Celtic Saints**

Perhaps a more revealing representation of British ecclesiastical continuity can be determined by examining Celtic church dedications. It has been suggested that Celtic dedications in western Wessex might be indicative of the survival of British churches. Indeed, the perpetuation of a Celtic dedication from before the Saxon conquest would imply the continuation of the church institution, not just the consecutive use of the same site. In addition, the survival of a Celtic dedication in western Wessex might be commemorative of a Celtic role in the evangelisation of the region. The difficulty with this type of evidence, however, is that most church dedications in the south-west are only recorded at a late date. It was mentioned earlier that apart from a probable dedication to St Docco in Cornwall mentioned in the *Life of St Samson*, possibly written in the eighth century, Celtic dedications in Cornwall can only be traced back to c.900 at

---


68 Professor Orme has informed me that early church dedications in the south-west are best thought of as church ‘names’ rather than ‘dedications’, even though they were eventually understood in this sense (pers. comm., 16 June 1999). The names could be of patrons, but also of clergy or famous burials that in some cases were imposed on earlier churches. E.G. Bowen, *The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in Wales* (Cardiff, 1954), p. 2, maintained that in Wales, dedications tended to be ‘possessive’, in other words, to the founder or the monastic patron. More recent opinion, however, has it that this should not be taken to mean that the dedicated saint was always the actual founder. See Edwards, ‘Identifying the archaeology of the early church in Wales and Cornwall’, p. 49; N. Edwards & A. Lane, *The archaeology of the early church in Wales*, in Edwards & Lane, *The Early Church in Wales and the West*, pp. 2-3.

the earliest, and most until not before the Norman Conquest. The evidence for Devon is also sparse; only approximately eighteen dedications – both Celtic and non-Celtic – are known by 1086 from *Domesday Book* or other early documents. Susan Pearce has demonstrated that most dedications to Celtic saints in Devon and Somerset, especially the north and west, such as St Petroc, are the result of later English and Norman interest in saints and their relics. Many Welsh and Irish dedications, such as to St David and St Brigit, are likely to have resulted from the flowering of Welsh hagiographical activity in the late eleventh century, as well as social and commercial contact with other Celtic lands. Dedications to Breton saints, for example St Budoc and St Winwaloe, can be attributed either to commercial contact with Brittany during the reign of Æthelstan or to Norman interests, some of whom came from there. That said, there are some ostensibly early Celtic dedications in western Wessex.

Nicholas Orme has suggested three churches in Devon for which a pre-Saxon Celtic dedication may have endured: Braunton, Chittlehampton, and Hartland. These churches came to be dedicated to Celtic saints – St Brannoc, St Urith and St Nectan, respectively – who in the later middle ages were believed to have been buried in them, suggesting perhaps the continuity of their shrines, though less likely the actual buildings. It needs to be kept in mind, however, that, of these three, the earliest recorded dedication is in 854 for St Brannoc of Braunton, and it is likely that the dedication to St Nectan at Hartland was due to the interests of the family of Earl Godwine of Wessex in the eleventh century. A fourth Devon church at Landkey – 'churchyard of Cei (or Ke) – may reveal a lost dedication that did not endure; by

---

70 See note 19 (supra., p. 90). This point is also broadly true for many English church dedications.
71 Orme, *English Church Dedications*, p. 19. This number may be doubled if those churches whose existence is merely known about by this date are added.
72 Pearce, *Kingdom of Dumnonia*, pp. 124-8. See also Costen, *Origins of Somerset*, p. 77. It should be allowed here that the memory of these Celtic saints and the existence of their relics might tell us of eventual Celtic influence on the English.
74 Orme, *English Church Dedications*, pp. 20-1.
75 The dedication to St Nectan of Hartland is recorded first in *Domesday Book*, and for St Urith of Chittlehampton, not until the fifteenth century.
76 Pearce, 'The dating of some Celtic dedications', p. 116, notes that Earl Godwine's wife Gytha gave land at 'Hartaton' to the church, and Harold Godwinesson's foundation at Waltham Abbey is said to have possessed a relic of St Nectan.
77 *Lann* is a Celtic placename element which appears to have gone out of use at a relatively early date; it was certainly obsolete in Cornish by the fourteenth century. When it was first used in a Christian context in the south-west it probably meant 'enclosure', but later acquired the meanings of monastery, churchyard and cemetery; though not 'church building' as it did in Wales. Approximately fifty Cornish church sites (about twenty-five per cent of the total) have a name containing the *lann* element; there are also fifty
1346 Landkey was dedicated to St Paul. Somerset also has a 'churchyard of Cei' in the name Lantokay, now Leigh-in-Street near Glastonbury.\textsuperscript{78}

Other early dedications suggested for Somerset include St Decuman at Watchet, St Kew at Kewstoke, St Carantoc at Carhampton, and St Congar at Cadbury Congresbury.\textsuperscript{79} Patrick Hase maintains that, despite the fact that they are recorded at a late date, the names St Decuman, St Kew and St Carantoc are 'sufficiently obscure' to make it unlikely that they were chosen as patrons at a later medieval date.\textsuperscript{80} While this is conceivable, the reasoning is somewhat facile; the fact that these dedications all occur within a fairly limited area in northern Somerset makes it more likely that they were the result of later cult activity originating from Wales, or a resurgence of interest in Celtic saints at Glastonbury in the eleventh century.\textsuperscript{81} St Congar is more widely accepted as an early monastic founder, if not a patron as such.\textsuperscript{82} Though the twelfth-century \textit{Life of St Congar} is regarded as a fabrication, the placename Congresbury preserves his name, and an eleventh-century Old English list of saints' resting places records Congresbury as being in possession of his body.\textsuperscript{83} Congresbury was mentioned by Asser as one of the monasteries given to him by King Alfred (probably in December 886), and he implies that at the time it also had a British name, though he does not provide it.\textsuperscript{84} In the light of this evidence, it is plausible that Congresbury was the site of a pre-Saxon religious foundation.\textsuperscript{85}

Some form of continuity has been read into the placename Malmesbury in northern Wiltshire, which preserves the Irish name Maeldub, a saint who also is included in the

---

\textsuperscript{78} Costen, \textit{Origins of Somerset}, p. 77; Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 49. This name is recorded in the Glastonbury charter, S1249/(Glastonbury Cart. 639), pp. 18-19.

\textsuperscript{79} Pearce, 'The dating of some Celtic dedications', pp. 104-7.

\textsuperscript{80} Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 74 n. 19, further suggests that these saints might have founded the churches which bear their names. This is remotely possible, but ignores the research of Susan Pearce (\textit{supra.}, p. 98), as well as current thinking on the nature of dedications. See Edwards, 'Identifying the archaeology of the early church in Wales and Cornwall', p. 49; Orme, \textit{English Church Dedications}, p. 14.


\textsuperscript{82} Costen, \textit{Origins of Somerset}, p. 77; Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 74 n. 19, further suggests that these saints might have founded the churches which bear their names. This is remotely possible, but ignores the research of Susan Pearce (\textit{supra.}, p. 98), as well as current thinking on the nature of dedications. See Edwards, 'Identifying the archaeology of the early church in Wales and Cornwall', p. 49; Orme, \textit{English Church Dedications}, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{83} See D.W. Rollason, 'Lists of saints' resting-places in Anglo-Saxon England', \textit{ASE} 7 (1978), pp. 61, 64, 92, for a full discussion of this list and its manuscripts. The list declares, certainly erroneously, that St Patrick was buried at Glastonbury; thus it should be used with reservation.

\textsuperscript{84} Asser, ch. 81.

Old English list of saints' resting places. Bede renders Malmesbury as *Maeldubi Urbs*, ‘city/town of Maeldub’, and records Aldhelm as priest and abbot of the monastery. William of Malmesbury says that Aldhelm was educated by the saint, though this account has recently been questioned, along with the supposedly Irish nature of Aldhelm’s Latin. While an Irish foundation for Malmesbury is plausible – if by no means assured – the survival of the tradition of Maeldub does not necessarily say anything about the continuity of British Christianity. Irish monks were known to have been abroad throughout Britain in the seventh century, including in the south.

Overall, this is a fairly modest list of possible early Celtic dedications in western Wessex. It is, of course, impossible to know how many churches were established in western Wessex before Saxon conquest; so the proportion of survivals is not calculable. However, as Nicholas Orme states regarding Devon, ‘four plausibly ancient Celtic dedications in a county of 482 medieval churches is not many, considering that Devon passed to the Saxons at a relatively late date when they were Christians’. While it is conceivable that some sub-Roman churches might have had non-Celtic patrons – for example, the dedication at the church of St Mary Major in Exeter might be pre-Saxon – Orme goes on to say that a ‘great many other Devon churches must be of later Saxon origin, even if, in some cases, they were founded at (British) burial sites’. The same conclusions may be extended to the rest of western Wessex, where Saxon conquest occurred even earlier.

---

87 HE V.18.
88 GP V.189.
90 D.N. Dumville, ‘“Beowulf” and the Celtic world’, *Traditio* 37 (1981), p. 115, for example, states that there is no basis for the ‘academic romance’ that Maeldub founded the monastery.
93 Supra., p. 93.
In addition, the pattern of early church dedications in western Wessex does not differ from the rest of England in demonstrating a preference for universal – that is, Roman or apostolic – saints, versus local saints. Prior to c.800, English dedications commemorated a narrow range of patrons, with the only two ‘native’ dedications being to St Alban and jointly to St Cuthbert and St Oswald, neither of which is in Wessex. In Cornwall, however, where Saxon control was not fully achieved until well past the period under examination, the pattern of dedications is quite different. A wide range of ‘native’ Celtic saints is venerated; 133 ancient churches are dedicated to at least 107 local Celtic saints. If this preference for venerating local saints is representative of British ecclesiastical practice, it is noticeably absent in Devon, Somerset and Dorset. Thus, even if some Celtic dedications have been lost, the picture to be gained is of limited British influence on the West Saxon church, and of West Saxon supremacy over the Christianity of the Britons living in the region. The Roman Christianity of the West Saxons, as represented in church dedications, clearly became dominant.

**Monastic Charters and British Ecclesiastical Continuity**

The final category of evidence that has been used to argue for a British foundation to the West Saxon church in the west of the kingdom is that of charters. The earliest authentic charters in Wessex date from the third quarter of the seventh century. In the type of information contained in a charter – for example, the land granted, the name and title of the ruler making the grant, and the individuals attesting the grant – something of the state of early ecclesiastical organisation in Wessex may be unveiled. Indeed, charters may reveal the existence of pre-Saxon estates, thus testifying to a sub-Roman British foundation to certain monastic houses. However, there are limitations with this

---

95 Orme, *English Church Dedications*, p. 17. It should be recognised, therefore, that western Wessex also has a fairly small number of dedications to Anglo-Saxon saints. The ‘native’ category increased in England after c800.

96 Orme, *English Church Dedications*, p. 15. This number does not include saints who are apparently late inventions. Some sixty-five per cent of surviving dedications in Cornwall are to Celtic saints; see Preston-Jones, *Decoding Cornish churchyards*, p. 109.

97 Orme, *English Church Dedications*, pp. 19, 36-7, states that medieval dedications were not generally altered after adoption, thus it is significant that there appear to be examples of ‘lost’ Celtic dedications hidden in placenames. This implies that some fundamental change must have occurred in the organisation of the church after West Saxon take-over, irrespective of whether there was a ‘handing-over’ or a ‘clean-sweep’.

98 The possibility exists that Celtic dedications may have been replaced by universal apostolic dedications. However, Nicholas Orme cautions that ‘it would be hazardous to say that [dedications to] Mary, Peter, etc, represented an anti-Brittonic policy as opposed to a simply pro-apostolic one’ (pers. comm., 1 September, 1999).

99 Supra., p. 57.

category of evidence. The proportion of charters originally granted that have survived is likely to be small, and no charter exists as an original; copies collected in monastic cartularies or inventories of charters, which were often compiled after the Norman Conquest, must be relied upon. The scope for inaccuracy is obvious. Transcription errors are likely to have occurred, as was the truncating of charters, and of witness lists, not to mention there being the problem of ‘improved charters’: dedications could have been updated; additional information added to improve a claim; and anno domini dates incorrectly interpolated. Further, despite the fact that the antiquity of a monastery lent it prestige, the chance of survival of a charter from a British Dumnonian king to supposed pre-Saxon houses is small; it is uncertain whether any early West Saxon rulers would have recognised the validity of such a document. It is significant, therefore, that records of possible British charters and estates exist for the West Saxon monasteries of Glastonbury in Somerset and Sherborne in Dorset.

Glastonbury

Glastonbury Abbey – which became one of the wealthiest of the West Saxon houses – is arguably the most well-known example of a Saxon monastery which has been claimed to have begun as a British house. Glastonbury has long been associated with early, pre-Saxon Christianity in Britain, with connections made to Joseph of Arimathea, to saints such as Patrick and Gildas, and to secular figures such as Arthur and

---

101 For example, the ‘Great Cartulary’ of Glastonbury appears to have been completed in the fourteenth century, though William of Malmesbury’s *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie*, written in the late 1120’s, records some early charters. See Edwards, *Early West Saxon Charters*, pp. 3, 6; Pearce, *Kingdom of Dumnonia*, pp. 30-1.


104 A modified version of this section has been accepted for publication as, M. Grimmer, ‘The early history of Glastonbury Abbey: a hypothesis regarding the “British Charter”’, *Parergon* 20, no. 2 (July, 2003), forthcoming.


106 St. Patrick’s association with Glastonbury is complex. He was the subject of the well-known forged charter that was created sometime after the Glastonbury fire of 1184, included in Adam of Domerham’s *Historia de rebus gentis Glastoniensisbus* 1.19-22 (T. Hearne, ed., Oxford, 1727), written c.1290. See Carley, *Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, pp. xxxvi-ii, and Gransden, ‘Growth of the Glastonbury traditions and legends’, p. 340. The earliest recorded association of St. Patrick with Glastonbury is in the late tenth century *Life of St. Dunstan* by ‘B’, ch. 5, in which Patrick is ‘said to rest there happily with the
Most of the legends of a pre-Saxon foundation for Glastonbury are, however, without a documentary basis. The earliest documentary evidence that derives from the Glastonbury archives which can be used to argue for a pre-Saxon origin and for British continuity at the site is a charter which appears to date from the early seventh century.

The charter begins an account of grants to Glastonbury contained in William of Malmesbury's *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie*, commissioned by the abbey c.1129. William's task in writing the *De antiquitate Glastonie* was to produce a document which validated Glastonbury's antiquity, as well as to counter a claim made by Osbern of Canterbury that Glastonbury's foundation only occurred in the mid-tenth century. The *De antiquitate Glastonie* does not survive in the original; the earliest version (MS T) is from the mid-thirteenth century and incorporates a number of later interpolations. However, the charter in question was included, with some modification, in Version C of the *Gesta regum Anglorum*, completed by William after he had written the *De antiquitate Glastonie*, for presentation to Glastonbury. Thus, its place in the *De antiquitate Glastonie* can safely be ascribed to William.

The British charter, drawn up by a Bishop Mauuron, records a grant to the 'old church' made by an unnamed king of Dumnonia of five hides at *Ineswitrin*, at the request of Abbot Worgret. William records the grant as follows:

---

108 Gildas's association with Glastonbury was cemented by Caradog of Llanearfan in his *Life of Gildas*, written for Glastonbury c.1140 (see Carley, *Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, p. 273 n.14).
109 Accounts of the exhumation of Arthur and Guinevere can be found in Gerald of Wales's *De principis instructione* I.20 (c.1192) and his *Speculum ecclesie* II.8-10 (c.1217) (included in L. Thorpe, ed., *The Journey Through Wales/The Description of Wales*, Harmondsworth, 1978, pp. 281-8).
113 Foot, 'Glastonbury's early abbots', p. 167 n. 22.
114 Except within direct quotations, the form *Ineswitrin* will be used throughout this thesis.
On the estate of Ynswitrin, given to Glastonbury at the time the English were converted to the faith. In 601 AD the King of Dumnonia granted five cassates on the estate called Inesuuitrin to the old church on the petition of Abbot Worgret. I, Bishop Mauuron wrote this charter. I, Worget, abbot of that place, have subscribed. The age of the document prevents us knowing who the king was, yet it can be presumed that he was British because he referred to Glastonbury in his own tongue as Yneswitrin which, as we know, was the British name. But Abbot Worget, whose name smacks of British barbarism, was succeeded by Lademund and he by Bregored. The dates of their rule are obscure but their names and ranks can clearly be seen in a painting to be found near the altar in the greater church. Berthwald succeeded Bregored.

On the face of it, this charter is extremely significant in that it documents a donation by a British king to what became a Saxon house; William clearly states that Ineswitrin was the British name for Glastonbury. Given that William dated the charter to 601, this would proclaim a pre-Saxon foundation for Glastonbury, and indeed, the survival of the charter, if it is genuinely British, implies some level of continuity between British and Saxon communities; the record would probably not have endured if there was a break in monastic life. However, the interpretation of the charter is not so straightforward, and opinion on its value is divided. While it does not appear to contain any obviously


In AG 69, William summarises this grant as follows: ‘The King of Dumnonia gave 5 hides of land known as Yneswitherim’ (‘rex Domnonie dedit terram apellatam Yneswitherim v hidas’).

In GR I.27-8, Worget is rendered as Worgriz; Mauuron as Maworn; Inesuuitrin as Ineswitrin. Scott, Early History of Glastonbury, p. 197, n. 78, states that it is safe to assume that William himself made these changes.

118 Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, p. 65.

119 Edwards, in her detailed examination of the charters of early Wessex (Early West Saxon Charters), has assessed the charter as probably genuine; while some of the details are puzzling, she can see no motive for forgery: the persons are otherwise unknown and the transaction lends no support to any particular tradition of an ancient saint. Foot, ‘Glastonbury’s early abbots’, p. 167 n. 21, on the other hand, sees ‘no grounds for placing any reliance on this “document”’; she considers Glastonbury to have been a Saxon foundation of the late seventh century. Similarly, D.N. Dumville, personal communication cited in J. P. Carley, Glastonbury Abbey: The Holy House at the End of the Moors Adventurous (London, 1988), p. 2 n. 4, regards the charter as a ‘rank forgery’. Costen, Origins of Somerset, p. 78, appears to concur. L. Abrams, Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 124 n. 1, has most recently assessed the charter as ‘unconvincing’.


In AG 69, William summarises this grant as follows: ‘The King of Dumnonia gave 5 hides of land known as Yneswitherim’ (‘rex Domnonie dedit terram apellatam Yneswitherim v hidas’).

In GR I.27-8, Worget is rendered as Worgriz; Mauuron as Maworn; Inesuuitrin as Ineswitrin. Scott, Early History of Glastonbury, p. 197, n. 78, states that it is safe to assume that William himself made these changes.

118 Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, p. 65.

119 Edwards, in her detailed examination of the charters of early Wessex (Early West Saxon Charters), has assessed the charter as probably genuine; while some of the details are puzzling, she can see no motive for forgery: the persons are otherwise unknown and the transaction lends no support to any particular tradition of an ancient saint. Foot, ‘Glastonbury’s early abbots’, p. 167 n. 21, on the other hand, sees ‘no grounds for placing any reliance on this “document”’; she considers Glastonbury to have been a Saxon foundation of the late seventh century. Similarly, D.N. Dumville, personal communication cited in J. P. Carley, Glastonbury Abbey: The Holy House at the End of the Moors Adventurous (London, 1988), p. 2 n. 4, regards the charter as a ‘rank forgery’. Costen, Origins of Somerset, p. 78, appears to concur. L. Abrams, Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 124 n. 1, has most recently assessed the charter as ‘unconvincing’.
forged elements, it could certainly have been manufactured to lend weight to the claim for Glastonbury's antiquity.\textsuperscript{120} There is no doubt that many aspects of the charter are problematic and stand in the way of its \textit{automatically} being used as evidence for Glastonbury being a pre-Saxon foundation.\textsuperscript{121}

To begin with, the genuine date of the charter is difficult to determine. William provided the date of 601, which he probably transcribed from the document that he was working from – William's exactitude as an historian provides some reassurance here. But it is highly improbable that such a date would have been on the original; the \textit{anno domini} system did not enjoy widespread use in Britain till after the time of Bede, and there is little evidence that it was used in Anglo-Saxon charters before the eighth century.\textsuperscript{122} Rather, early Anglo-Saxon charters were typically dated by indictional year.\textsuperscript{123} So, if William was transcribing the date as he found it, it must be assumed that it was interpolated at some later time. William obviously believed the charter to be representative of Glastonbury's antiquity: in his account in the \textit{Gesta regum}, he thought it important to comment that Glastonbury must be an ancient foundation as 'even then [it] was called Old Church'.\textsuperscript{124} But this does not provide any precision in dating. In the \textit{De antiquitate Glastonie} account, William stated that the document was of an age such that the name of the king was not identifiable.\textsuperscript{125} This may be taken as evidence that the charter was very old – William was otherwise quite accomplished at deciphering documents – but not as a guide to its exact vintage. And indeed, it is well to remember William's task of establishing the antiquity of Glastonbury Abbey: he may have been moved to err on the side of great age. In any event, it can be concluded that there is no security in the 601 date.

\textsuperscript{121} There is no suggestion that the record in the \textit{De antiquitate Glastonie} represents the foundation charter of Glastonbury, even though it heads William's list of grants. The grant was to the 'old church', implying that some establishment must have already been there. See Abrams, \textit{Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury}, pp. 123-31.
\textsuperscript{122} Edwards, \textit{Early West Saxon Charters}, p. 11. K. Harrison, 'The \textit{Annus Domini} in some early charters', \textit{Journal of the Society of Archivists} 4 (1973), pp. 551-7, argues that Wilfrid of York may have introduced the use of \textit{anno domini} dating for charters after the Synod of Whitby in 664. Even though his examples are principally Mercian, his claim does not in any event help to substantiate the much earlier 601 date of the British charter.
\textsuperscript{124} GR I.28. The statement in the \textit{AG} 35 chapter heading that the grant was given 'at the time the English were converted to the faith' is also indicative of William's belief in the charter's antiquity.
\textsuperscript{125} It would be reasonable to presume by this that William meant that the poor condition of the document caused the king's name to be illegible. See Edwards, \textit{Early West Saxon Charters}, p. 64.
A further problem concerning the British charter is that some features do not appear to be British, but instead are Anglo-Saxon. A detail which would certainly not have appeared on a British original is the description of the amount of land granted as five cassates or hides. This is an Anglo-Saxon land unit that would obviously not have been used by the British prior to Saxon conquest. Thus, if the charter is British, this detail must have been altered. The character of the attestations also does not appear to be British. William records the attestations as follows: 'Ego Mauuron episcopus hanc cartam scripsi', and 'Ego Worget euisdem loci abbas subscripti'. It has been claimed that this format is not consistent with the 'British Celtic' convention of charter writing — as far as one can tell since the surviving evidence is somewhat later. But the point is sound that the attestations are not recognisably British; the form William records for Abbot Worget's attestation, for example, is in fact the usual seventh-century form for the attestation of a literate churchman in West Saxon charters. So again, if the charter was originally British, some alteration must be presumed, perhaps to make it more palatable within an Anglo-Saxon milieu.

These attestations, particularly Mauuron's, warrant closer examination. Its form — *Ego Mauuron episcopus hanc cartam scripsi* — is of particular relevance to the authenticity of the charter. This attestation format, called a scribal attestation, is consistent with a very small group of late seventh- and early eighth-century West Saxon charters: four out of approximately thirty-five which survive from pre-725. These charters, along with

126 In the Liber Landavensis (the so-called 'Llandaff Charters'), land was measured in terms of either unciae or modii. There were twelve modii to the uncia, the latter approximating 500 acres. See W. Davies, 'Unciae: land measurement in the Liber Landavensis', Agricultural History Review 21 (1973), pp. 112, 118; idem., An Early Welsh Microcosm: Studies in the Llandaff Charters (London, 1978), p. 33.

127 'Mauuron ... scrips?' is rendered 'Maworn ... conscripsi' in GR 1.27.

128 For instance, in the collection of charters in the Liber Landavensis the attestations appear in the form: 'testes sunt ...' followed by a list of names. See Davies, Early Welsh Microcosm, pp. 7-8; idem., 'The Latin charter-tradition in western Britain, Brittany and Ireland in the early mediaeval period', in Whitelock, McKitterick, & Dumville, *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, pp. 263-4, 266. Davies, 'Latin charter-tradition in western Britain', pp. 259-61, catalogues 203 complete Latin charters surviving from the Celtic areas of early medieval Europe, including 149 in the Liber Landavensis. The usefulness of the Llandaff Charters can, of course, be contested; they are a twelfth-century compilation which has been criticised as being too late to be representative of British practice before the ninth century. See, for example, Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, pp. 140-8; P. Sims-Williams, 'Review of W. Davies, “The Llandaff Charters”', *JEH* 33 (1982), pp. 124-9.

129 As Edwards herself points out, *Early West Saxon Charters*, p. 108. Throughout the De antiquitate Glastonie, the attestations William records are broadly consistent with Anglo-Saxon cartulary versions.

130 That William recorded the attestations in the first person suggests that he was transcribing the wording as he read it. The use of the first person is, in addition, a further indication that the charter is not characteristically British. Latin charters from Celtic areas were typically written in the third person, using a past tense, rather than in the first person (see Davies, 'Latin charter-tradition', p. 262).

131 The four principal charters are: S1164/BCS107, pp. 229-34 (c.670-675); S236/BCS61, pp. 11-15 (c.681); S237/BCS62, pp. 15-17 (c.682); S239/BCS100, pp. 172-4 (c.705-26). Edwards, *Early West...*
their scribal attestations and attestees, are shown in Table 2. The scribal attestation format appears to have been peculiarly Continental in origin. For instance, it was usual for the scribe of a sixth- or seventh-century Italian private deed to be identified (within a ‘completio’ clause) and to subscribe it as such, and this practice was continued amongst the Lombards, Vandals and Franks. It is probable, therefore, that the introduction of the scribal attestation format into Wessex was by one of the Frankish bishops of the West Saxons, with Leuthere (c.670-6) the likely candidate. His dates correspond with those of the relevant charters with scribal attestations and he appears as the second witness on the earliest.

If Leuthere did introduce the scribal attestation, it appears that he instructed a small circle of clergymen in its use. Three scribal names appear on the charters: Hædde, who was bishop of the West Saxons, c.676-705; Wimberht, a priest who may have become abbot of Nursling (Hants), and Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, c.673-705, and bishop of Sherborne, c.705-9. These three clergymen and Leuthere seem to have known each other well. Leuthere and Hædde witnessed one of the charters written by Wimberht (S1164); Aldhelm witnessed the charter by Hædde (S236), and Hædde witnessed the charter by Aldhelm (S237). In addition, there are another seven charters, admittedly not all of undoubted authenticity, which were attested by, or show as

---

Saxon Charters, pp. 314-15, rates S1164 as being almost entirely authentic in its appearance, and rates S236 and S237 as containing a preponderance of authentic elements. S239, on the other hand, is probably spurious as it stands, but the actual scribal attestation may have an authentic basis (see also Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, p. 231). S243/BCS103, pp. 105-7 (c.701), in the Malmesbury archive, contains an attestation that also indicates authorship, though not in the same format as the previous four, namely: Ego Winberhtus hanc donationem dictans subscripsi. S236 is also recorded by William with the scribal attestation (AG 38). William notes another scribal attestation, Ego Aldehelmus hanc scealulam subscripsi (AG 40), but the cartulary version only records the more common Ego ... subscripsi (S248/BCS113, pp. 27-33).


134 This particular Frankish connection is suggested by Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, p. 13.

135 For Hædde, see ASC 676, HE V.18. For Wimberht, see Lapidge & Herren, Aldhelm: Prose Works, p. 151. For Aldhelm, see Lapidge & Herren, Aldhelm: Prose Works, pp. 8-10, ASC 709, HE V.18.

136 P. Sims-Williams, ‘Continental influence at Bath monastery in the seventh century’, ASE 4 (1975), p. 5, suggests that Leuthere may even have dictated the wording of this earliest of scribal attestations.
Table 2. Early West Saxon Charters with Scribal Attestations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charter/ Monastery</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attestation</th>
<th>Scribal Attestee</th>
<th>Other Attestees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1164/BCS107</td>
<td>c.670-675</td>
<td>Ego <em>Uuimbertus</em> presbiter qui hanc cartulam rogante supra effato abbate scripsi et subscripsi</td>
<td><em>Uuimbertus</em></td>
<td>K. Cenred, <em>Leuthere</em>, Bectun, Cuniberht, <em>Hædde</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaftesbury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glastonbury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S237/BCS62</td>
<td>c.682</td>
<td>Ego <em>Aldhelm</em> hanc scedulam scripsi et subscripsi</td>
<td><em>Aldhelm</em></td>
<td><em>Hædde</em>, K. Centwine, Hæmgils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glastonbury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S239/BCS100</td>
<td>c.705-726</td>
<td>Ego <em>Winberctus</em> hanc cartam scripsi et subscripsi</td>
<td><em>Winberctus</em></td>
<td>K. Ine, K. Æthelred (Mercia), Æthelfrith, Daniel, Berhtwald, Hæha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abingdon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
beneficiaries, at least two of these clerics.\textsuperscript{138} The scribal attestation format ceased to be used after the early eighth century perhaps because the practice was not passed on after the deaths of Hædde, Aldhelm and Wimberht.

There are several points which follow from these observations. The use of the scribal attestation, if it is genuine, places the British charter within a fairly specific time period, namely c.670-725, with the terminus ante quem likely to be earlier. This is well beyond William’s date of 601 and underscores the point that this date must have been erroneously added at some later time. Also, the scribal attestation brings the date of the charter to within the period when Somerset was being subjugated by the West Saxons; Somerset was almost certainly within West Saxon control from the reign of King Centwine (676-685), who gave land to Glastonbury.\textsuperscript{139} This has an impact on the location of the estate of Ineswitrin, a point addressed below; a grant by a British king would not be of land now under West Saxon control.

A further implication of the scribal attestation is that its use corroborates the assertion that the format is not British. As stated, the scribal attestation was peculiar to a very specific group of West Saxon charters, and used by a very small group of churchmen. It is almost certain that the document which William was working from could not have been drafted by a British hand. In fact, if the character of the scribal attestations was to be the primary indicator of its origin, it could quite reasonably be concluded that it was West Saxon in origin. This would be the most expedient explanation, rather than positing alterations to a supposed British original, or suggesting forgery. There are, however, several features of the charter which, if this interpretation is accurate, merit further discussion. These are: the location and provenance of the estate of Ineswitrin; the identity of Mauuron and Worgret; and William’s assertion that the king making the grant was British.

\textsuperscript{138} Hædde, Aldhelm, Leuthere (S227/BCS25); Hædde, Aldhelm (S234/BCS70, S235/BCS72, S241/BCS101); Hædde, Aldhelm, Wimberht (S231/BCS63, S243/BCS103 ('dictated' by Wimberht), S1170/BCS71). Even if some of these were forged, the witness lists would almost certainly have been derived from genuine charters. See S. Keynes, An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters, c.670-1066 (Cambridge, 1998), p. 6. In this regard, it is worth adding the witness list of one of the so-called ‘Aldhelmian’ charters for a grant of land at Malmesbury: Leuthere, Hædde, Wynberht (Wimberht), with Aldhelm as beneficiary. See Lapidge & Herren, Aldhelm: Prose Works, pp. 173-5. It is also probable that Aldhelm’s letter to ‘Wynberht’ was in fact to his fellow scribal attestee (Aldhelm, Epist. XIII, p. 170). The letter concerns a donation by Baldred to Aldhelm, which could well have been the matter of charter S1170/BCS71, which also recorded a donation by Baldred to Aldhelm witnessed by Wimberht. The similarity here is striking.

\textsuperscript{139} Centwine was able to grant land in the region, indicating that it was securely in his hands (supra., p. 58).
To begin with the location of the estate and provenance of the name *Ineswitrin*, it has been assumed that *Ineswitrin* was the pre-Saxon name for Glastonbury, as William indicates. However, William offers the earliest documentary record to that effect, closely followed by Caradog of Llancarfan in his *Life of Gildas* (c.1140), and so the assertion is unassessable. Variations on the name Glastonbury, however, do survive from the Anglo-Saxon period: in charters from the reigns of the West Saxon kings Ine (c.704) and Cuthred (c.744), and in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Given the assertion that *Ineswitrin* was the British name for Glastonbury, what is perhaps most surprising is that the name appears only rarely in surviving Welsh documentary sources, and then only from as late as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The possibility has consequently been raised that the Welsh form may have been invented to explain the English name. Therefore, while it can be reasonably claimed that *Ineswitrin* looks like a British name, it cannot confidently be contended that it was the pre-Saxon name for Glastonbury.

The possibility exists, rather, that *Ineswitrin* was the name of an estate, as it is in fact called in the charter, that was later erroneously taken to be the early name for Glastonbury, perhaps because the original identification, and location, of the grant was forgotten. Indeed, there are at least two other charters for Glastonbury which indicate that British names could be used in Saxon charters, one of which was the charter that

---

140 See, for example, Carley, *Glastonbury Abbey: Holy House*, p. 163.
141 Carley, *Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, p. 273 n.14. For other references to *Ineswitrin* in William's work see: *AG* 1; *AG* 5; *AG* 9; *GR* 1.27-28. Caradog's *Life of Gildas* contains the first explication of the derivation *witryn* = glass, and therefore that *Ineswitrin* = Glastonbury. Finberg, *'Ynyswitrin*, p. 89, incidentally, refers to this reasoning as 'linguistic puerility'. It is possible that William discussed the issue with Caradog, though William does not include the derivation himself, as Caradog was probably at Glastonbury at the same time or soon after William (Scott, *Early History of Glastonbury*, p.179 n. 71). Caradog's explanation was adopted by Gerald of Wales in his *De principis instructione* I.20 (c.1193-99), and his *Speculum ecclesiae* II.8-10 (c.1216). See C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'From Ynys Wydrin to Glasynbri: Glastonbury and the Welsh vernacular tradition', in Abrams & Carley, *The Archaeology and History of Glastonbury Abbey*, pp. 306-7.
142 For Ine: S246/(Glastonbury Cart. 200), p. 26, *Glastingae*. For Cuthred: S257/(Glastonbury Cart. 201), pp. 45-8, *Glaestingae*. The Glastonbury Cartulary was, of course, not compiled till a much later date, c. 1338-40. For the ASC: 688 MS. A *Glaestinga byrig* (marginal entry made c.1001-12); 943 MS. F *Glaestingebirg*. Finberg's, *'Ynyswitrin*, pp. 91-2, assertion that the name Glastonbury derives from the British personal name *Glaesting*, has been discounted by D. E. Thornton, 'Glastonbury and the Glastening', in Abrams & Carley, *The Archaeology and History of Glastonbury Abbey*, pp. 191-203, who has demonstrated that the association is based on nothing more than a similarity in the names. The popularity of the other name for Glastonbury — *Ynys Afallach* — appears ultimately to be the responsibility of Geoffrey of Monmouth, but is fairly rare in Welsh vernacular sources (Lloyd-Morgan, *'Ynys Wydrin to Glasynibr*, pp. 302-3). William refers to *Avalloni* in *AG* 5.
143 Lloyd-Morgan, *'Ynys Wydrin to Glasynibr*, pp. 306-7, 313. None of the early Welsh triads contains any references to *Ineswitrin*. If, on the other hand, the name is authentic, its use can only have been revived in Wales, perhaps from a Glastonbury tradition that also informed William's work, as it does not appear to have enjoyed a continuous history amongst the Britons.
contained a scribal attestation by Aldhelm. Hence, the presence of a British name such as Ineswitrin in a charter is not unique, and it does not of itself have to represent an early name for Glastonbury. Nor for that matter does Ineswitrin even have to be an estate which is located within Somerset. This opens up the possibility of Ineswitrin being situated farther west in territory in Devon or Cornwall still under the control of a British king.

Turning to the identity of the attestees Mauuron and Worgret: in the first instance, purely on onomastic grounds, these personal names have been taken to represent a British connection, particularly given William's reference to their 'barbarous British' nature. Mauuron, the name of the bishop who makes the scribal attestation, is indeed credibly British. However, the name Worgret is ambiguous, and while a British Celtic derivation is possible, the linguistic origin remains a matter of debate. It is unfortunate that neither of these churchmen is to be found in any other source. Mauuron, as an identified Briton, could be linked with Dumnonia. However, the record of abbot Catwali – a possible British name – ruling an unnamed monastery in Dorset in

144 S237/BCS62, pp. 15-17, the Cructan/Crycebohr charter; S1249/(Glastonbury Cart. 639), pp. 18-19, the Lantocal charter. A third example might be the Pouholt charter (S253/BCS147, pp. 40-1). All of these charters were discussed in Chapter 4 (supra., pp. 83-4).

145 There is no reason why Glastonbury would not have accepted a grant of land in British Devon or Cornwall. Padel, 'Glastonbury's Cornish connections', p. 253, states that Glastonbury 'had no territorial interest in the county of Cornwall before the Norman Conquest, as far as our information goes (emphasis added)'. In saying this, Padel is principally referring to the state of the documentary evidence, rather than claiming that Glastonbury could not have owned land in Cornwall. Thus, the assertion that Ineswitrin may have been in British Devon or Cornwall, does not contradict Padel's statement. The Ineswitrin charter recording the grant may simply have lost its legal authority, and thus its significance, during the course of time, as various West Saxon kings warred with the kings of Dumnonia.

146 In addition to the chapter under examination, see GR I.28. Only the names Mauuron and Worgret are being considered here for illustrative purposes, though the names Lademund, Berthwald and Bregored have also attracted onomastic interest. See Carley, Glastonbury Abbey: Holy House, pp. 2-5; Thomson & Winterbottom, William of Malmesbury Vol. II, pp. 402, 405.


148 Carley, Glastonbury Abbey: Holy House, p. 2, is inclined to accept a Germanic derivation. There is, for instance, a Worgret place-name in Dorset, which E. Ekwall, DEPN, p. 534, derives from OE weargrod, meaning 'gallows', admittedly an unlikely name for an abbot! Thomson & Winterbottom, William of Malmesbury Vol. II, p. 405, however, state that Worgret could be Celtic; a Welsh subregulus called Wurgeat appears as a witness on two of King Æthelstan's charters dated to 928 and 932 (S400/BCS663; S417/BCS689). These attestations occurred during the reign of the Welsh king Hywel Dda (c. 905-50), who was in regular attendance at the court of various English kings including Æthelstan. Hywel himself witnessed several English charters, and even named one of his sons Edwin. See D.P. Kirby, 'Hywel Dda: anglophil?', WHR 8 (1976-7), pp. 1-13. Keynes, Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters, Table XXXVI, suggests that Wurgeat might have been an Anglicised form of the Welsh Gwriad. Finberg, 'Ynsywitrin', p. 85, also noted the similarity with Wurgeat, and added that the first element Wor- (later Guor-, or Gur-) was common in Old Welsh and Cornish names. The name Gorddur is found in Line 1244 of Text B^2 of Y Gododdin; see J. T. Koch & J. Carey, The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales (Massachusetts, 1995), p. 305. Another example might be the name Guruaret, which is found in the later Bodmin manumissions (EHD, no. 144, p. 562).
the final quarter of the seventh century does provide some grounds for uncertainty. Worgret’s abbacy ‘of that place [eiusdem loci abbas]’, taken by William to mean Glastonbury, is also not attested in any other source. If he was abbot of Glastonbury, it must have been prior to the abbacy of Hæmgils, for whom at least two charters survive from the 680’s, and who appears at the head of what looks to be an abbatial list for Glastonbury, contained in a mid-eleventh-century manuscript. The absence of Worgret from this list casts doubts on his historicity as abbot of Glastonbury. However, the list could be incomplete. In any event, if genuine, Worgret’s abbacy must have been prior to the 680’s.

The final enigmatic feature of the British charter is William’s assertion that the donor was the ‘king of Dumnonia [rex Domnonie]’, which he presumably made because that was what he found on the document from which he was working. This is a fairly explicit statement of the charter’s origin. It is noteworthy, however, that William apparently felt the need to elaborate on the extraction of the king, by stating he could be presumed to be British because ‘he referred to Glastonbury in his own tongue as Yneswitrin which, as we know, was the British name’. This statement suggests that William’s principal reason for assuming that the king was British was that the name Ineswitrin was used in the charter, not that William recognised Dumnonia as a British kingdom. Indeed, William seems to have instead thought that Dumnonia was the old name for English Devonshire. This is interesting in that it tells something of

149 S1164/BCS107, pp. 229-34 (supra., p. 82).
150 Charters: S236/BCS61, pp. 11-15, S237/BCS62, pp. 15-17; and possibly S1249/(Glastonbury Cart. 639), pp. 18-19. S238/(Glastonbury Cart. 979), pp. 23-25, records King Ine’s confirmation (c.693) of an earlier grant received by Hæmgils. The abbatial list is discussed by Foot, ‘Glastonbury’s early abbots’, p. 164. Both Foot (pp. 168-9, 186), and Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, p. 48, regard Hæmgils as Glastonbury’s founding abbot. Hæmgils seems to have been abbot till c.704, when Berhtwald attests as abbot of Glastonbury in a grant of privileges to the West Saxon churches from King Ine (S245, p. 107-14, from the Malmesbury archives). S248/BCS113, pp. 27-33, also records a grant of a total of 65 hides of land from King Ine to Abbot Berhtwald in 706. The Liber Terrarum, which lists numerous lost charters of grants to Glastonbury, also records grants made to Hæmgils and Berhtwald as abbots of Glastonbury (see Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, pp. 3-5, 63).
152 By way of comparison, Gildas (DEB 28.1) gives the genitive of Dumnonia as ‘Damnoniae’.
153 AG 35. He provides essentially the same explanation in the GR I.28 account.
154 GR I.100: ‘in Dumnonia, now called Devonshire (Deuenesire)’. See also William’s GP II.94, ‘Crediton is a small villa of Dumnonia, which is commonly called Devonshire’. William’s lack of knowledge of Dumnonia is curious, as it is probable that he read Gildas’s De excidio Britanniae, in which Dumnonia is included as one of the British kingdoms. See AG 7: ‘Gildas, neither an unlearned nor an inelegant historian, to whom the Britons are indebted for any fame they have amongst other peoples’; and AG 22: ‘Gildas the wise’. Also GR I.20.1: ‘Gildas ... a historian not without style and insight, whom the
William’s reasoning. However, there does not seem to be any rationale for why the name Dumnonia would have been interpolated into the charter; thus it is probably safe to assume that the king was indeed of that British kingdom.

It is regrettable that because William was unable to decipher the name of the king his floruit and his ethnicity cannot be corroborated. Suggestions made on the basis of the 601 date, in terms of the current examination, are no longer appropriate. H.P.R Finberg, in 1964, ventured the suggestion of the Geraint of Dumnonia who was the recipient of a letter from Aldhelm and who fought against Ine of Wessex in 710. He reasoned that, as this Geraint appears to have also granted land to Sherborne, he may have been attempting to ‘conciliate the principal churches of Wessex.’ Given the revised date for the charter, this suggestion bears serious reconsideration.

The letter from Aldhelm to Geraint – which may have been written soon after the Council of Hertford in September 672 – allows for the assumption that Geraint could have been ruling Dumnonia before the terminus ante quem suggested earlier for the purported abbacy of Worgret (c.680), albeit for a brief period. It also allows that he was ruling at a time when a British king could still have made a grant of land in Somerset.
(also before c.680), though this is a less crucial point. As has been shown, there is no contemporaneous evidence suggesting that *Ineswitrin* was the name for Glastonbury, rather than the name of an estate granted to Glastonbury. Finberg made the tentative suggestion that *Ineswitrin* was *Ince* in Cornwall, on the Tamar river.¹⁶⁰ This is a tempting possibility, as *Ince* is only four miles north-west of Maker, an estate which Geraint granted to Sherborne.¹⁶¹ Notwithstanding this possibility, the salient observation is that Geraint’s *floruit* corresponds with the dates indicated by the scribal attestation.

To speculate further on the origin of the charter: the letter from Aldhelm, and the later donation to Sherborne where Aldhelm became bishop, means that Geraint was in contact with the cleric; and indeed, there is evidence that Aldhelm travelled into Dumnonia on at least one occasion. In his *Carmen rhythmicum*, Aldhelm includes the statement: ‘When I had set out for nasty Dumnonia [*usque ... Domnoniam*] and was proceeding through Cornwall [*per ... Cornubiam*]’.¹⁶² What is most significant is that Aldhelm, as noted, was the scribe of one of the two Glastonbury charters that have a scribal attestation, and he was a witness to the other.¹⁶³ Further, as also noted, the charter for which Aldhelm was scribe records a British name for an estate.¹⁶⁴ Thus, Aldhelm was familiar with and used the scribal attestation format, and had himself recorded a British estate name in a charter. It is, therefore, offered here as a hypothesis that Aldhelm was the agent for the grant of *Ineswitrin*, having mediated a donation by Geraint to the Saxon monastery at Glastonbury. Aldhelm then either drafted the charter for Mauuron – probably one of Geraint’s bishops – to complete, or tutored him in a

¹⁶⁰ Finberg, ‘*Ynyswitrin*’, p. 93, asserted that *Ince* is cognate with *ynys*. He added (pp. 93-4, and in ‘Sherborne, Glastonbury and the expansion of Wessex’, in *idem., Lucerna*, pp. 95-115, at pp. 101-2) that *ynys* or *Ince* would have been rendered *ig* or *ieg* in Old English, and drew attention to the concordance with the name of an estate called *Lin-ig* (or *Liüig*), apparently near the Tamar (‘*iuxta Tamer*’), given to Glastonbury by King Ine. This identification derives from William (AG 69). Padel, ‘Glastonbury’s Cornish connections’, pp. 250-2, as well as considering the linguistic reasons why this identification is inappropriate, notes that the context of the *Linig* grant is better identified with a collection of grants from Ine listed in the charter S248/BCS113, pp. 27-33. In this charter, the location of the grants is given as ‘*iuxta flumen quod appellatur Tan*’, rather than ‘*iuxta Tamer*’; in other words, beside the River Tone in Somerset. As a location for *Linig*, this makes better historical sense. The river *Tamer* in William’s *De antiquitate Glastonie*, thus, seems to be an error for the river *Tan* (the editor, John Scott, actually translates the *Tamer* in the MS as Tone, assuming that this is what William meant, though he provides no explanation). Finberg was perhaps drawing an overly long bow here.

¹⁶¹ That is, S237/BCS62, and S236/BCS61, respectively.

¹⁶² M. Lapidge & J. Rosier, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 173, 177) translate ‘Domnonia’ as Devon. I have chosen to leave it in the original as it is less misleading, and more informative to do so.

format that would be acceptable for a Saxon house. This would account for the early West Saxon character of the charter as well as the British personal name Mauuron, and the British place-name *Ineswitrin*.

Clearly this hypothesis regarding the provenance of, and Aldhelm’s role in, the *Ineswitrin* grant would be more robust if he had also appeared as an attestee. However, Aldhelm’s name may not have appeared on the original if he had drafted the charter for Mauuron. Alternatively, William may not have included it in the *De antiquitate Glastonie*; he was known to have shortened witness lists. What the hypothesis does imply, if it is accurate, is that the so-called British charter does not require the presumption of a pre-Saxon foundation for Glastonbury and cannot be taken as evidence that a pre-Saxon British community metamorphosed into a Saxon one. This is corroborative of the archaeological evidence at the abbey site alluded to earlier.

According to Phillip Rahtz, there is no archaeological evidence to indicate that the Glastonbury abbey site was established before the late seventh or early eighth century, though excavation has only been on a very small scale. This is not to say that there was never a British community in the vicinity; the Tor, for example, shows ample evidence of sub-Roman occupation, albeit subject to uncertain interpretation as to whether it was a secular or a monastic community. However, there is no evidence to support the presumption that the Tor community ‘moved’ to the abbey site, as claimed by Patrick Hase.

Yet, the interpretation offered does suggest that there was some degree of amicable interaction between the Britons of Dumnonia and the West Saxon church. It may have been the case that Glastonbury was established near the then border with Dumnonia, and Geraint was moved by political wariness to recognise the Saxon community.

That Geraint was at war with Ine in 710, the year after Aldhelm’s death, suggests some

---

165 Compare, for example, S245/BCS108, pp. 107-14, with AG 40. The cartulary version contains the names of eleven clerical witnesses, in addition to lay witnesses, whereas William’s version of the witness list is rendered simply as ‘I, Aldhelm, have subscribed; et cetera’. On this point, see Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 55.
166 Supra., p. 96.
168 See Rahtz, ‘Glastonbury Tor’, pp. 139-153, and *idem.*, ‘Pagans and Christians’, pp. 32-3. A later monastic settlement on the Tor, and the nearby Beckery Chapel site, do not display any archaeological evidence earlier than the late Saxon period, and appear to represent daughter houses of the by then well-established Saxon abbey (Rahtz, ‘Glastonbury Abbey’, p. 207).
involvement by the West Saxon cleric in maintaining a peace between the two kingdoms. Alternatively, Geraint may have been impressed by the dynamism of the re-invigorated Roman church of the West Saxons under Bishop Leuthere, and ultimately Archbishop Theodore. In this vein, Aldhelm might have persuaded Geraint to make this donation, as well as the one to Sherborne.

The hypothesis offered here is that the so-called British charter in William of Malmesbury’s *De antiquitate Glastonie* is West Saxon in origin, and may represent an authentic record of a donation from Geraint of Dumnonia in the 670s to the Saxon monastery of Glastonbury. It is possible, of course, that the charters with scribal attestations in the Glastonbury archive (S236, S237) could have provided a model for a later forger, and this is what accounts for the existence of the scribal attestation contained in the *Ineswitrin grant*. However, the circumstances enumerated in this section at least allow that the hypothesis is worthy of consideration. Therefore, while the British charter cannot stand as evidence for a British community resident at Glastonbury before the Saxon foundation, it is nonetheless significant in terms of what it could imply about relations between the West Saxon church and the kingdom of Dumnonia. There may not have been any continuity between Romano-British and West Saxon Christian communities at Glastonbury, but there still appears to have been interaction across the frontier.

**Sherborne**

The history of the monastery of Sherborne differs from that of Glastonbury in that its monks did not obviously attempt to associate the site with a tradition of ancient Christianity. The circumstances surrounding its foundation and early history are shrouded in obscurity. According to Bede, the West Saxon diocese was divided into two on the death of Bishop Hædde in 705; Aldhelm became the bishop of the new western diocese, and Daniel bishop of the eastern diocese.

---

170 As Finberg implied (*supra.*, p. 113).
171 *Supra.*, pp. 59-60.
174 *HE* V.18. Lapidge & Herren, *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, p. 10, note that the division of the West Saxon diocese could have occurred early in 706; this date may have marked Aldhelm’s creation as bishop.
Selwood'. William of Malmesbury says that the seat of the new diocese was Sherborne, where Aldhelm built 'a magnificent cathedral', which was still standing in William's time. Apart from these references, however, there is little documentary evidence concerning the establishment of Sherborne, and William's statement is the earliest surviving reference to a cathedral church there. Few early charters have survived, due in part to the reorganisation and division of the Sherborne-based diocese in the early tenth century (c.909), and the removal of the see of Sherborne to Salisbury in the 1070s. No obvious foundation charter exists; the earliest authentic charter in the Sherborne cartulary dates only from the reign of King Cynewulf (757-786).

Despite this lack of early information, it has been claimed that Sherborne could well have had a pre-Saxon origin with some level of continuity existing between British and West Saxon communities.

The claim for a pre-Saxon community at Sherborne rests upon a single reference to a grant by King Cenwalh (642-72) in a later list of royal benefactors of Sherborne and the lands which they granted. This list survives in a late fourteenth-century manuscript, though it appears to have been copied from an earlier list probably compiled some time after 1035, the date of the latest grant mentioned. Cenwalh's donation heads the list, in which he is said to have granted 100 hides at a location called Lanprobi. The lann element in the name indicates a British churchyard or

175 ASC MS. A s.a. 709, 'Here Aldhelm passed away: he was bishop to the west of the wood'; MS. B '... to the west of Selwood'. The Chronicle of Æthelweard (A Campbell, ed., London, 1962, p. 21), states that Aldhelm's diocese was vulgarly called 'Selwoodshire'. According to Asser, ch. 55, Selwood was called Coit Maur in (Old) Welsh. Selwood was a possible locale for the battle at Peonnum, recorded in the ASC s.a. 658 (supra., p. 56), when Cenwalh drove the Britons to the Parrett.
176 GP V.223. See also Lapidge & Herren, Aldhelm: Prose Works, p. 10.
180 For example, K. Barker, 'The early history of Sherborne', in Pearce, Early Church in Western Britain and Ireland, p. 78; Costen, Origins of Somerset, p. 78; Faith, English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship, p. 19; and Hase, 'The church in the Wessex heartlands', p. 50, who asserts that 'there can be little doubt that Sherborne was a major ecclesiastical centre well before Aldhelm's date'.
182 British Library MS. Cotton Faustina A.ii. See the discussion in O'Donovan, Charters of Sherborne, pp. xx, xliii-xliv.
183 Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, pp. 243-9; H.P.R. Finberg, The Early Charters of Wessex (Leicester, 1964), p. 155. The list is not written in chronological order. It will henceforth be referred to as the 'Cottonian List'.
184 Cenwalh's grant is recorded 'Kenewalc rex dedit lanprobi de c hydis' (Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, p. 245; O'Donovan, Charters of Sherborne, p. 81). The 100 hides itself appears to be rather too round and too large a figure to be genuine.
enclosure,\textsuperscript{185} and, combined with the name of a putatively early saint, \textit{Lanprobi} translates as the ‘churchyard of Probus’. What is significant about this grant is that it is described with a British place-name. What this implies is the existence of a British Christian community venerating Saint Probus within the vicinity of Sherborne prior to the establishment of the West Saxon bishopric. Thus, it is not surprising that it used as evidence of British Christian continuity. Indeed, the British character of the name moved H.P.R. Finberg to suggest that \textit{Lanprobi} may have been ‘the older British name of the monastic property on which the town was afterwards built’.\textsuperscript{186} A number of difficulties emerge, however, if \textit{Lanprobi} is to be identified as the progenitor of the Saxon abbey.

To begin with, while the site of \textit{Lanprobi} as a possible pre-Saxon British community has been somewhat controversial, it is now generally accepted to be the hill about one kilometre away to the east of the Saxon abbey, where the Norman castle stands.\textsuperscript{187} The case for this location primarily rests on the evidence of later papal bulls. In a bull of Pope Eugenius III, dated 1145, a ‘\textit{Propeschirche}’ is mentioned among the possessions of Sherborne.\textsuperscript{188} As this reference occurs after the c.909 division of the diocese, it can be reasonably assumed that \textit{Propeschirche} was located within Dorset, though the bull provides no definitive geographical indicator.\textsuperscript{189} More illuminating is the bull of Alexander III, dated to 1163, which mentions the ‘The church of St Mary Magdalene situated next to Sherborne castle with the chapels of St Michael and St Probus [\textit{ecclesiam sanctae Mariae Magdalenae sitam iuxta castrum Sherborne cum capellis sancti Michaelis et sancti Probi}]’.\textsuperscript{190} This statement clearly tells of the existence of a dedication to Saint Probus, belonging to the church of Saint Mary Magdalene beside the castle. Finberg, in apparent contradiction of his earlier statement, regarded the

\textsuperscript{185} On the \textit{lann} element in place-names, see note 77 (supra., pp. 98-9).
\textsuperscript{188} Keen, ‘The towns of Dorset’, p. 211; O’Donovan, \textit{Charters of Sherborne}, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Propeschirche} is linked in the bull with an area of land called ‘\textit{Stocland cum silvis et pratis et cum duobus molendinis}’, that is, with woods and fields and two mills. A ‘\textit{Stockland}’ is mentioned in a charter of King Æthelred dated to 998, which sanctioned the refoundation of the minster at Sherborne (S895/KCD701), and the name appears in various other medieval and early modern references to the tenants and manor of Sherborne (see Keen, ‘The towns of Dorset’, pp. 211-12). By association, \textit{Propeschirche} could be located in the vicinity of the town. This eventuality is discussed by O’Donovan, \textit{Charters of Sherborne}, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{190} Barker, ‘Sherborne in Dorset’, p. 4; Keen, ‘The towns of Dorset’, p. 211.
identification of *Propeschirche* and *capella sancti Probi* with *Lanprobi* as 'almost certain', and his assertion appears to be supported by other historians.\textsuperscript{191} Further support for the castle location derives from the discovery of burials at the site, in levels earlier than that of the castle, perhaps as early as the seventh century.\textsuperscript{192} Thus, the castle hill, rather than the Saxon abbey, emerges as the most probable the site of *Lanprobi*.

Katherine Barker, using topographical evidence of a D-shaped enclosure (potentially a *lann*), had argued for a town site for *Lanprobi* which overlapped with the grounds of the Saxon abbey.\textsuperscript{193} However, her approach is generally not supported. David Hinton, for example, stated that the size of Barker's proposed enclosure was over three times that of analogous religious enclosures, and that its identification primarily rests on an estate map of 1733.\textsuperscript{194} In a more recent work, Barker allowed that 'the implication (is) that the castle mound itself is *Lanprobi*. There is no evidence to the contrary, merely that at present the topographical material from the town is more striking ...'.\textsuperscript{195} In any event, the castle site is consistent with the evidence of other British settlements that are found on hill-sites, such as Glastonbury Tor, Congresbury, Cannington and Lamyatt Beacon (Somerset).\textsuperscript{196}

Very little information exists about the figure of Probus which might be used to assist the identification of *Lanprobi* with *capella sancti Probi* or *Propeschirche*. The earliest reference to a British saint bearing this, or a similar, name is to a 'Propus', recorded in a tenth-century list of Cornish parochial saints.\textsuperscript{197} This saint next appears to be commemorated in a Cornish placename in *Domesday Book* — *Sanctus Probus*,


\textsuperscript{192} Keen, 'Topography of Sherborne, Dorset', pp. 133-4; *idem.*, 'The towns of Dorset', p. 212.


\textsuperscript{195} Barker, 'Sherborne in Dorset', p. 5.

\textsuperscript{196} Rahtz, 'Pagans and Christians', p. 33; Snyder, *Age of Tyrants*, pp. 178-9, 202-8.

\textsuperscript{197} This list is contained in the *Vatican codex Reginensis Latinus 191*. See Olson & Padel, 'Cornish parochial saints', pp. 33-71. The list contains forty-eight Brittonic or plausibly Brittonic names, of which twenty-one are certainly those of patron saints of Cornish churches, and a further twelve are known to be figures associated with the British Celtic world. Propus appears twenty-fourth on the list. The list was transcribed upon one of the three bifolia (fol. ii) used as the binding for a collection of ecclesiastical texts at the monastery of St Remi at Rheims, where the sheets appear to have been used without consideration for their contents. The list is in Insular minuscule, dated to c.900 at the earliest, though it may have been written later in the tenth century, possibly by a Breton scribe who had returned from a sojourn in Britain, or by a Cornish scribe living in Brittany.
vernacular Lanbrabois – now simply called Probus. There is no surviving Life or tradition concerning Probus which might shed more light on the origin of the saint, and the name is unknown in Wales and Brittany. It is even uncertain as to whether the name Probus, in this particular case, is Latin or Celtic. It is declined in Latin references as a Latin name; and indeed, there were non-Celtic saints called Probus. Alternatively, Probus may be a Latinised form of a lost Old Cornish name, such as Probus. Lanprobi itself is an odd combination of elements that almost looks as though the Cornish lann has been combined with the Latin genitive of Probus, and it is quite possible that an original form has been corrupted by the Cottonian scribe. Lanprobi, therefore, could be the same as capella sancti Probi and Propeschirche and represent a dedication to the Cornish Propus; however, this assertion can only be made on the basis of the similarity in the names.

Accordingly, the identification of Lanprobi as the name of a possible pre-Saxon British monastery rests almost entirely on the lann element. The use of this element to name British Christian sites can only have occurred in the south-west prior to the replacement of British speech by Old English, and only until such a time as there were indeed new sites to be named. Hence, while lann appears to be used in names in Cornwall until the end of the eleventh century, after which time there were few new public churches founded, its use east of the Tamar must have ceased at an earlier date concomitant with the West Saxon advance. Lanprobi could, therefore, have been named prior to the West Saxon take-over of Dorset in the second half of the seventh century, and thus prior

198 Barker, 'Early history of Sherborne', p. 78; DEPN, p. 374; Pearce, Kingdom of Dumnonia, p. 83. There are further references to Lanbrobes in 1302; Seynt Probus, 1466; Lambrobus, c.1500 and 1621. See Olson & Padel, 'Cornish parochial saints', pp. 51-2; O.J. Padel, 'Cornish names of Parish churches', Cornish Studies 4/5 (1976-77), p. 17.

199 The name Probus was included as 'Saint Mellanus Probus, Bishop and Confessor', in Nicholas Roscarrock's Lives of the Saints: Cornwall and Devon, written in the 1610's, as 'perhaps' being the patron of Probus Church in Cornwall. But no further information was included. See N. Orme (ed.), Nicholas Roscarrock's Lives of the Saints: Cornwall and Devon (Exeter, 1992), pp. 88, 152-3.

200 For example, two bishops of Ravenna were called Probus (the first in the third or fourth centuries; the second, fifth century), as was a monk of Agaune (early sixth century). See Bollandists (ed.), Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina, (2 vols.: Brussels, 1898-1901; Novum Supplementum, ed. H. Fros, 1986), nn. 6944-6. Note also Probus of Verona, Acta Sanctorum, I (1-15), p. 357.

201 Olson & Padel, 'Cornish parochial saints', p. 51, offer the name Probus as having hypothetically existed in Old Cornish, based on the vernacular forms in Domeday Book, though the name is not recorded anywhere.

202 It is curious that if Propus is indeed the saint being commemorated in all these names that the Cottonian scribe did not use a form similar to the Lanbrobois in Domeday Book. It is worth noting that Lanprobi is also not consistent in form with other lann-names that contain a non-Celtic saint – such as Llanhernin (St Iserninus), Llanfair (St Mary), and Llanfihangel (St Michael) – which do not decline the name. See Bowen, Settlements of the Celtic Saints in Wales, pp. 2-3; idem., Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands (Cardiff, 1969), p. 124.

203 Pearce, Kingdom of Dumnonia, p. 73.
to the end of Cenwalh’s reign (in 672). However, the presence of Britons in western Wessex, as indicated by the Law Code of King Ine, does mean that British place-names could have been given and passed on for a period of time after the West Saxons gained control of the region. Therefore, the use of the lann element in Lanprobi does not necessarily mean there was a pre-Saxon British community at Sherborne, though, if authentic, it does suggest that there was some British association with the site.

The authenticity of the Lanprobi charter itself is difficult to establish. Heather Edwards states that an eleventh-century list of charters, the majority of which have been lost in the original, might include a proportion of fabrications or interpolations.\(^{204}\) Mary O’Donovan similarly questions the authenticity of a reference that is not recorded until such a late date.\(^{205}\) Nonetheless, it can be argued that many of the early charters in the Cottonian List may be genuine. For instance, it is unlikely that there would have been any motivation in the eleventh century to fabricate charters for estates outside of Dorset, given that, after the division of the diocese c.909, Sherborne’s endowment was probably restricted to lands within Dorset.\(^{206}\) Thus, grants recorded in the Cottonian List of lands in Cornwall, Devon, Wiltshire and Somerset are not likely to have been fabricated as there would have been little reason for doing this. Other charters on the Cottonian List are associated with vague placenames or describe grants in vague terms often in relation to nearby rivers, such that estates cannot be matched with those recorded later. On general grounds, this feature is characteristic of authentic early West Saxon charters and not of forgeries. Further charters listed, such as the Lanprobi charter, can be assessed on their respective merits.

The fact that Lanprobi is a British place-name provides some indication that the grant may be genuine: it could be argued that this is more likely in an authentic charter than in a later forgery.\(^{207}\) A British name for an estate would carry less weight in an English charter, especially if it could not be matched with a contemporary estate name, and thus would have been a doubtful choice by a forger. However, this measure of authenticity is compromised to a certain extent by the fact that Cenwalh is the benefactor. Cenwalh’s name is attached to several forged charters, from Sherborne, Glastonbury

\(^{205}\) O’Donovan, *Charters of Sherborne*, p. 87. She also notes that there is no mention of Lanprobi in the version of the list of benefactors preserved in the Sherborne Missal of c.1396-1407 (pp. xxi, 84).
\(^{206}\) Barker, ‘Early history of Sherborne’, p. 78; Edwards, *Early West Saxon Charters*, pp. 250-52
and Winchester, and thus his reputation is, by association, somewhat tainted.\textsuperscript{208} It is conceivable, nevertheless, that his name was used in these forgeries because he was remembered as a monastic founder,\textsuperscript{209} though this point should not be pressed too far. Edwards considers the \textit{Lanprobi} charter to be the foundation charter of the Saxon monastery, the original of which was perhaps discarded at some later point possibly because the monks could no longer identify the estate.\textsuperscript{210} It might indeed be more than coincidence that Cenwalh is one of the West Saxon names that contains the \textit{wealh}-element. It is rather apt having a king called the ‘bold Briton’ donating an estate described with a British name.

But there is no escaping the problem that the record of the charter is very distant from the seventh century, and that it reveals nothing of what the name or putative monastery of \textit{Lanprobi} might have represented. If there was a British Celtic monastery near Sherborne, it is impossible to know of its condition at the time the Saxon monastery was established. \textit{Lanprobi} may have been a thriving brotherhood, or it may have been an abandoned hill-top site that was remembered as having been sanctified at some earlier time.\textsuperscript{211} The fact that a chapel dedicated to Saint Probus is documented in the twelfth century suggests that a tradition of \textit{Lanprobi} enjoyed some continuity by not having been entirely suppressed by the West Saxons.\textsuperscript{212} But it is also possible that the veneration of Probus was introduced into Dorset from Cornwall in the tenth century or later,\textsuperscript{213} though the lann-element in \textit{Lanprobi} suggests an earlier, rather than later, date.

If the presumption is accepted that Probus was venerated in some form in the vicinity of Sherborne, it must be with the understanding that the site of the putative British community of \textit{Lanprobi} was not that of the subsequent Saxon abbey. The extent of any

\textsuperscript{208} Sherborne: S228/BCS26, pp. 240-1; Glastonbury: S227/(Glastonbury Cart. 644), pp. 20-3; Winchester: S229/BCS27, pp. 131-2.
\textsuperscript{209} Pearce, \textit{Kingdom of Dumnonia}, p. 110. Indeed, Cenwalh was listed first in the \textit{Sherborne Missal} medallions as a patron of Sherborne. See O’Donovan, \textit{Charters of Sherborne}, p. xlv.
\textsuperscript{210} Edwards, \textit{Early West Saxon Charters}, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{211} Edwards, \textit{Early West Saxon Charters}, p. 253, states that the site may have consisted only of ‘derelict buildings’. See also Keen, ‘Topography of Sherborne, Dorset’, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{212} Hinton, ‘Topography of Sherborne’, p. 223. O’Donovan, \textit{Charters of Sherborne}, p. 88, raises the question of why someone bothered to forge the charter of privileges to Sherborne from Cenwalh (S228/BCS26; \textit{supra.}, p. 58), if there really was a genuine grant of land from the king as embodied in the \textit{Lanprobi} charter; ‘could the link between the British Lanprobi and the Saxon Sherborne foundation have been forgotten by the eleventh and twelfth centuries?’.
\textsuperscript{213} Kings such as Æthelstan, as well as many in the later Norman nobility, maintained an interest in saints and their relics, and monasteries dedicated to Cornish, Welsh and Breton saints were established from the tenth century in Devon, Somerset and Dorset. In c.933, for example, Æthelstan founded the monastery at Milton Abbas in Dorset, dedicated to the saints Michael, Mary, Branwalader and Samson. See Pearce, \textit{Kingdom of Dumnonia}, pp. 124-6.
‘continuity’ under such conditions is open to question. There is little doubt that, when Aldhelm assumed his see in 705/6, there was an existing foundation at Sherborne; otherwise, it is unlikely that it would have been considered a suitable location.\footnote{O’Donovan, \textit{Charters of Sherborne}, p. 87.}

Cenwalh’s push as far as the Parrett, recorded in the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle} for 658, meant that he probably came into possession of territory in western Dorset, which might have included land once controlled by a British house, and so chose to establish a minster there to minister to the region. But unless one is prepared to accept the possibility of a multi-focal ecclesiastical centre created out of some British progenitor, it appears that the Saxon monastery was a new foundation, built on a new site, and accordingly was described with the English stream-name Sherborne.\footnote{Sherborne translates as ‘bright stream’ (\textit{ASC} s.a. 860, \textit{Scireburnan}). See DEPN, p. 416.}

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the \textit{Lanprobi} charter, there is a basis for suggesting that Sherborne had some association with the British kingdom of Dumnonia, namely, the grant from Geraint.\footnote{See note 66, supra., p. 59.} Geraint’s grant also appears in the Cottonian List, in this case near the end, and in the version of the list contained in the \textit{Sherborne Missal}.\footnote{O’Donovan, \textit{Charters of Sherborne}, pp. xliii, xlviii-xlxi.}

Described as ‘Gerontius rex’, he is said to have given five hides of land at Macuir, now Maker, beside the Tamar in Cornwall.\footnote{The grant is recorded in the Cottonian List as: ‘Gerontuis rex dedit macuir de u hidis iuxta thamar’. In the \textit{Sherborne Missal}, \textit{Thamar} is rendered as \textit{Tamer}. See Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, p. 245; O’Donovan, \textit{Charters of Sherborne}, pp. xli, 81.}

The grant could well be authentic, for a number of reasons. To begin with, it is of land outside of Sherborne’s post-c.909 endowment and, as was outlined above, this makes it an improbable fabrication.\footnote{Supra., p. 121.}

Further, the description of the estate in relation to a nearby river is consistent with authentic early West Saxon charters. It could also be reasoned that a forger would not have employed the name of a Dunmonian king to give weight to an English claim, as his authority would have had little validity in Wessex.\footnote{To qualify this point: it may not have been known that ‘Gerontius’ was a British king, so the argument that his name would not have been used by a forger may not necessarily hold. As argued earlier, William of Malmesbury did not appear to know that the name Dumnonia described a British kingdom (supra., p. 112). Thus, it may follow that Geraint’s identity was forgotten by the eleventh century.}

Moreover, elsewhere in the Cottonian List, an estate of eighteen hides at \textit{Macor} is said to have been granted to Sherborne by King Ecgberht of Wessex (802-839).\footnote{Ecgberht’s grant is recorded ‘Egbertus rex dedit ... et kelk xii hidas Et Ros et macor de xuiii hidis’. See Edwards, Early West Saxon Charters, p. 245; O’Donovan, \textit{Charters of Sherborne}, pp. xlii, 81. Finberg, ‘Sherborne, Glastonbury and the expansion of Wessex’, p. 106, argued that as \textit{Kelk} (Kilkhampton) and \textit{Ros} (Roseland) were also estates in Cornwall, Maker is not out of place in this list of...} If it can be assumed that this is
the same, albeit enlarged, estate that was granted by Geraint, then the record of his original gift becomes redundant. This too is consistent with the presumption of authenticity as there would have been little motivation to fabricate the earlier, smaller, grant from Geraint.

There is no clear indication of the date of Geraint’s grant to Sherborne, but the context, such as can be elucidated, would imply an association with Aldhelm’s episcopate (c.705/6-9). Indeed, this grant is compatible with the hypothesis offered earlier concerning Geraint’s and Aldhelm’s involvement with the Ineswitrin grant to Glastonbury. Aldhelm’s visit to Cornwall and Dumnonia, and his correspondence with Geraint, provide evidence of contact between these two figures, and it is possible that Aldhelm personally negotiated the granting of land to Sherborne.

***

The Saxon houses of Sherborne and Glastonbury, though offering only ambiguous evidence for British ecclesiastical continuity, with the case for Sherborne being stronger than for Glastonbury, nevertheless appear to have participated in the evolution of the West Saxon-Dumnonian frontier. Both were probably established in border positions and thus may have had a role in the consolidation of Saxon control. Geraint’s grants could, therefore, have been an attempt at conciliation, as Finberg suggested. It is possible that the grants are representative of some accord, mediated by Aldhelm, between Dumnonia and Wessex: an attempt perhaps by Geraint to slow the westward advance of the West Saxons. They are an indication that Geraint may ultimately have approved of Roman orthodoxy, an issue to be discussed in the following section.

Aldhelm and the Letter to Geraint of Dumnonia

The role of Aldhelm is a pivotal one in trying to understand relations between the Britons of Dumnonia and the West Saxons, and particularly between their clergy. Indeed, the writings of Aldhelm provide a unique glimpse, absent from other sources, of...
the attitudes which may have existed between the two peoples. And his letter to Geraint represents the most detailed information which there is regarding the state of the church in Dumnonia at the end of the seventh century.

Very little is known about Aldhelm’s life. Though it is often asserted, based on a statement by William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, that Aldhelm was born c.640, his place and year of birth are uncertain, and there exists little direct information regarding his early education. His writing demonstrates familiarity with several Irish-Latin texts, and with Irish education, which might imply that he had an Irish teacher as was asserted by William. He was in contact with an Irish monk, Cellanus of Peronne, and wrote quite eloquently to Heahfrith, who was probably a former student returning from Ireland, about the benefits of an English education versus an Irish one. However, such a familiarity does not necessarily mean that Aldhelm’s literacy was Irish. Michael Winterbottom argues that his prose style has much closer associations with Continental writers. Indeed, it is reasonably certain that he studied in Canterbury on at least two occasions under Hadrian, an associate of the Greek Archbishop Theodore. What is clear is that Aldhelm was an extraordinarily learned cleric, as indicated by his often complicated Latin and by the number of works which he quoted within his writings. It is not surprising, therefore, that a man of such learning could have found his way into senior ecclesiastical office. Accordingly, though the

---

227 There exist two *Lives of Aldhelm*: by the Italian-born Faricius (written c.1080-1100), and by William of Malmesbury, as Book V of his *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* (written c.1125). See Lapidge & Herren, *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, pp. 5-6. William stated that Aldhelm was ‘not less than a septuagenarian when he died’ (in 709), hence the c.640 date for his birth (*GP* V.188). However, there is no independent basis for this date, and William himself implies that it is conjectural (*GP* V.231). Both of these Lives were written a considerable time after Aldhelm’s *floruit* and therefore need to be used with caution.
228 William stated that Aldhelm was trained by the Maeldub who supposedly gave his name to Malmesbury (*GP* V.189), as mentioned earlier (*supra.*, pp. 99-100). See also Pearce, *Kingdom of Dumnonia*, p. 111). In a letter from an anonymous student, Aldhelm is said to have been ‘nourished by a certain holy man of our race’ (*Aldhelm, Epist. VI*, pp. 146-7, 164). If the student was Irish, as is often taken to be the case, this would also support William’s claim. Lapidge & Herren, *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, p. 7, argue that Aldhelm had probably read the work of the Irishman Virgilius Maro Grammaticus; had made use of the *Liber numerorum*, a work that had at the least been transmitted from Ireland; and he may have known the Irish *Liber de ordine creaturarum*.
229 There survives a letter to Aldhelm from Cellanus (*Aldhelm, Epist. IX*, pp. 149, 167), and a letter from Aldhelm to Cellanus (*Aldhelm, Epist. X*, pp. 149, 167).
precise details of his career are obscure, he became abbot of Malmesbury (Wilts.) probably in the mid-670s, and was created bishop of Sherborne in 705/6, a position which he held until his death in 709. Thus, for much of his life, Aldhelm was in a situation such that he could have taken a leading role in treating with the king and clergy of the Britons of Dumnonia.

In contrast to Aldhelm, it is not possible to construct more than a vague idea of the floruit of Geraint of Dumnonia, let alone any details of his life. Geraint is only known through references which exist in West Saxon and later English records. Based on the letter from Aldhelm to Geraint it is probable that he was ruling in the 670s. In the letter, he is referred to as ‘Gerontius rex’ — identical to the record in the Macuir grant — and called ‘the lord who guides the sceptre of the western kingdom [occidentalis regni]’, further on named as ‘Domnonia’. The only other datable reference to Geraint’s kingship is the 710 entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, recording the battle with Ine and Nunna; here Geraint (‘Gerent’) is simply referred to as ‘king of the Britons [Walacyninge]’. The matching of the Geraint who received the letter from Aldhelm with the Geraint who fought Ine and Nunna is not altogether certain. This would require a regnum of up to thirty-five years, and it is possible that the name Geraint was given to more than one Dumnonian ruler. However, a regnum of such a length is not unknown, and the grant to Sherborne, which is likely to have occurred during Aldhelm’s episcopate (c.705/6-9), suggest that these two references were to the same

233 Lapidge & Herren, *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, p. 8, assert that his learning ‘rivalled, if it did not surpass, that of Bede’.

234 The date of the commencement of Aldhelm’s abbacy at Malmesbury is open to debate. William stated that Aldhelm died in his thirty-fourth year after being appointed abbot, which gives a date of 675/6 (GP V.231). Lapidge & Herren, *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, pp. 9, 14, 140-3, linked the beginning of his abbacy with the date of the letter to Geraint which, they argue, as will be seen, was sent soon after the Council of Hertford in September 672. M. Lapidge, ‘Aldhelm’, in *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE*, p. 25, has more recently observed that no charter which contains an attestation by Aldhelm as abbot exists before 680, though this does not necessarily preclude an earlier date. The earliest exemplars are S71/BCS59 (c.681), and the two scribal charters, S236/BCS61 (c.681), and S237/BCS62 (c.682). But a letter from Aldhelm to Bishop Wilfrid’s abbots, in which he writes with the authority of a senior churchman, seems to fit the events surrounding Wilfrid’s expulsion in 678 (Aldhelm, *Epist.* XII, pp. 150-1, 168-70; and for Wilfrid’s expulsion, see *HE* IV.12). It seems likely, therefore, that William was not far off in his date of 675. I would like to thank Duncan Probert for drawing this letter to my attention (pers. comm., 22 October, 2002).

235 ASC s.a.; *HE* V.18.


237 ASC s.a.

238 In the Dumnonian pedigree (*EWGT*, p. 45, §§ 10-11), there is listed a Geraint map Erbin, grandson of Custennin, the figure tentatively identified as Gildas’s Constantine of Dumnonia. This would place Geraint map Erbin’s floruit in the late sixth century. See also Pearce, *Kingdom of Dumnonia*, pp 140-1; Thomas, *Celtic Britain*, p. 67; Thomson & Winterbottom, *William of Malmesbury Vol. II*, p. 405.
person. It may, therefore, be assumed that Geraint was ruling Dumnonia c.675-710, but that is the extent of our information.

The principal document in Aldhelm’s corpus in terms of the current examination is his letter to Geraint.\(^{240}\) It is most likely that this letter was composed as an outcome of the Council of Hertford, convened by Archbishop Theodore in September 672.\(^{241}\) In the letter, Aldhelm stated that he had recently attended an episcopal council, ‘where, out of almost the entirety of Britain an innumerable company of the bishops [sacerdotum] of God came together.’\(^{242}\) More particularly, one of the canons of the Council was to extend the resolutions of Whitby to the rest of the Anglo-Saxon church, and it can be found within the letter that Aldhelm specifically raised matters discussed at Whitby, such as the calculation of Easter and Church unity.\(^{243}\) Thus, it is probable that Aldhelm was at Hertford, and was instructed to write to Geraint as king of Dumnonia. As he states, ‘the entire episcopal council compelled my insignificant self ... to direct epistolary letters to the presence of your Loyalty’.\(^{244}\) It may have been the case that this was a task Aldhelm was required to undertake as part of his new role as abbot of Malmesbury, an office he held by the time he wrote to Geraint, as is stated in the letter,\(^{245}\) though it is unknown whether he performed this duty immediately after the Council or lingered until a suitable occasion presented itself. One might also speculate as to whether the choice of a secular ruler as recipient consciously followed the example of King Oswiu of Northumbria and his adjudication at Whitby.\(^{246}\)

---

239 Lapidge & Herren, *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, p. 142, draw our attention to King Ine of Wessex, who ruled for thirty-seven years before retiring, possibly to Rome (*HE* V.7; *ASC* 688, 726/8).
240 Aldhelm, *Epist. IV*, pp. 140-3, 155-60. The letter survives only in the eighth-century *Codex Vindobonensis 751*. Bede referred to the letter (*HE* V.18), though appears to have misunderstood its origin and nature: he assumed that it was a book; seemed to think it was the result of a local synod, and did not mention that it was addressed specifically to Geraint (see note 242). Thus, Bede may not have seen the letter. *Contra.* Stancliffe, ‘The British Church and the mission of Augustine’, pp. 110, 141 n. 17, who argues rather that Bede had read the letter.
241 *HE* IV.5.
242 Aldhelm, *Epist. IV*, p. 155. This statement stands against Bede’s claim (*HE* V.18; see note 240) that Aldhelm had attended a local council.
243 Lapidge & Herren, *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, p. 141, note that the prologue of Aldhelm’s letter is close to the wording of the text of the Council, as provided by Bede. It should be allowed, however, that this would not have been the only synod in which Church unity was discussed, and so the identification of the synod in Aldhelm’s letter as Hertford is not completely certain.
244 Aldhelm, *Epist. IV*, p. 155.
245 ‘Aldhelm, performing the office of abbot [abbatis officio functus] without distinction’ (*Aldhelm, Epist. IV*, p. 155). Aldhelm was not necessarily an abbot when he attended the Council of Hertford.
246 *HE* III.25. Oswiu had set a precedent for secular leadership in ecclesiastical matters.
The main thrust of Aldhelm's letter was to exhort Geraint to instruct his bishops to follow Catholic practice. He declared this purpose early in the letter, where he expressed, on behalf of the Council, their desire:

To intimate their fatherly request and wholesome suggestion, that is, respecting the unity of the Catholic Church and the harmony of the Christian religion ... for what profits the emoluments of good works, if they are performed outside the Catholic Church (emphasis added).248

This theme was re-emphasised near the end of the letter, where he argued that 'Surely the Catholic Faith and the harmony of brotherly love walk inseparably'.249 In particular, Aldhelm voiced a concern for the two principal 'errors' of Celtic practice that also preoccupied Bede, namely, the style of the tonsure and the calculation of the date of Easter. To quote: 'a rumour hostile to the faith of the Church has bruited it about far and wide that there are in your province certain bishops and clerics [sacerdotes et clericci] who obstinately refuse the tonsure of St Peter';250 and, 'There is, however, another crueler bane to our souls, that in the most holy celebration of Easter they [i.e. Geraint's clergy] do not follow the rule of the three-hundred-eighteen Fathers ... at the Council of Nicea'.251

Aldhelm is assuredly an advocate of Roman Christianity here, and though he refrains from directing an outright accusation against the Dumnonian clergy, he certainly makes clear his conviction that a non-orthodox stand is heretical. For instance, he argues that the British tonsure originated with Simon, 'the founder of the magical art',252 i.e. Simon Magus. He also makes reference to 'heretics and schismatics, foreign to the society of the Church';253 argues that the bishops of Demetia (i.e. Dyfed) 'unfortunately imitate the heretics, who liked to call themselves cathari';254 and likens churchmen who use the incorrect Easter calculation with: 'a certain type of heretic among the Orientals ...

---

247 Aldhelm most frequently uses the term sacerdotes when talking of clergymen. Lapidge and Herren translate this as 'bishops', though the term can also mean 'priests', and its translation depends upon the specific context. See Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 267.
248 Aldhelm, Epist. IV, p. 155.
249 Aldhelm, Epist. IV, p. 160.
250 Aldhelm, Epist. IV, p. 156.
251 Aldhelm, Epist. IV, p. 157.
253 Aldhelm, Epist. IV, p. 156.
254 Aldhelm, Epist. IV, p. 158.
reckoned among the assemblies of the schismatics, whom I recall the blessed Augustine mentioned in a book written on ninety heresies'.

Thus, it certainly appears that Aldhelm laced his letter with enough references to heresy so as to extend a veiled threat that if the Dumnonian clergy did not come over to the Roman side, an outright accusation could have been forthcoming. This is noteworthy, as the overt tone of the letter is respectful; for example, Aldhelm refers to Geraint as 'the most glorious king [gloriosissimus dominus]', and entreats him 'with hopeful prayers and bended knees'. Yet, there is evidently a more ominous undercurrent. And indeed, while he may have been deferential towards Geraint, Aldhelm's low opinion of Geraint's bishops shows through. For example, he accuses the Dumnonian clergy of ignorance or falsehood regarding the origin of their tonsure. He similarly denounces them for 'employing tyrannous obstinacy' and for 'haughtily spurning' with 'swollen pride of heart' the traditions of the Roman church.

It also appears that Aldhelm did not hold the British form of (eremitic) monasticism in high regard, referring to it as 'a life of contemplative retirement away in some squalid wilderness'. For Aldhelm, correct belief was one thing, but he could not countenance keeping oneself apart in ascetic retirement; as he argued, 'faith without works is dead'. Thus, he assumed an attitude of superiority over the Dumnonian clergy, no doubt due to his belief in the orthodoxy of the West Saxon Church. Barbara Yorke asserts that such an attitude, if it is representative of the rest of the West Saxon clergy, may have helped them to justify the annexation of British territory and British church property.

---

256 I would argue here that Aldhelm's veiled accusation of heresy against British Celtic Christian practice is not merely a topos. If there was an author of such a topos it would surely have been Bede, and Aldhelm's letter was written too early to have been influenced by Bede's work. And even if Aldhelm was employing a topos, the complexity of his argument militates against such a device being used by him in an ill-considered manner. Rather, it seems more likely that Aldhelm was genuinely aroused against British Christianity.
263 Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 179.
For their part, as much as can be ascertained from Aldhelm’s words, it appears that the Dumnonian clergy were, if not completely antagonistic, at the very least resistant to pressure to conform to Roman practice. As Aldhelm explains:

We have heard and received report from the relation of diverse rumours that your bishops [sacerdotes] are not at all in harmony with the rule of the Catholic Faith according to the precepts of Scripture, and, on account of their animosities and verbal assaults, a grave schism and cruel scandal may arise in the Church of Christ (emphasis added).264

The implication here, if Aldhelm is to be taken literally, is that the bishops of Dumnonia were in fact preaching against Roman practice. For Aldhelm as abbot of a western abbey within Wessex, this would have been a doubly serious problem: apart from the doctrinal schism that was being promulgated, the actions of the Dumnonian clergy could have provided a basis for rebellion amongst any Britons living in newly-conquered territory in western Wessex.265 Aldhelm’s exhortation for Church unity may, therefore, have had an additional political impetus.

Despite the ‘animosities and verbal assaults’ of the Dumnonians, it does appear that they were not as antagonistic towards the Anglo-Saxons as were the bishops of Dyfed. Aldhelm seems to deliberately distinguish the Dumnonians from the Britons on ‘the other side of the strait of the River Severn’, and by doing so it might be deduced that they were considered different in their behaviour. In one of the most frequently-cited passages from the letter, Aldhelm explains that the bishops of Dyfed (Demetarum sacerdotes):

Detest our communion to such a great extent that they disdain equally to celebrate the divine offices in church with us and to take courses of food at table for the sake of charity. Rather, they cast the scraps of their dinners and the remains of their feasts to be devoured by the jaws of ravenous dogs and filthy pigs, and they order the vessels and flagons [i.e. those used in common with clergy of the Roman Church] to be purified and purged with grains of sandy gravel, and with the dusky cinders of ash. No greeting of peace is offered, no kiss of affectionate brotherhood is bestowed ... But indeed, should any of us, I mean Catholics, go to them for the purpose of habitation, they do not deign to admit us to the company of their brotherhood until we have been compelled to spend the space of forty days in penance.266

264 Aldhelm, Epist. IV, p. 156.
265 F.L. Attenborough, (ed. & trans.), The Laws of the Earliest English Kings (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 34-5, and Whitelock, EHD, pp. 364-72, argued that the potential for rebellion on the basis of religious difference may have informed Ine’s decision to include Britons in his Law Code.
266 Aldhelm, Epist. IV, p. 158.
If this account is at all accurate, the southern Welsh clergy must have regarded the Anglo-Saxon clergy with a notable degree of disdain. Much has been made of the 'ritual cleansing of ecclesiastical vessels' which the Anglo-Saxon churchmen touched.\(^{267}\) Even if the clergy of Dyfed disdained the Anglo-Saxons out of ascetic fanaticism rather than ethnic dislike, as has been claimed,\(^{268}\) the point of most significance is that Aldhelm clearly believed that they were antagonistic to the Roman church of the Anglo-Saxons. Certainly, Aldhelm's description is consistent with Bede's various references to the isolationist policy of the Britons.\(^{269}\) Further, the specific behaviour described by Aldhelm is supported by the letter from Bishop Laurence of Canterbury and his fellow-bishops to the bishops and abbots of the Irish (c.605-10), a fragment of which is preserved by Bede. Laurence complained that when they were visited by the Irish Bishop Dagan, he 'refused to take food, not only with us but even in the very house where we took our meals'.\(^{270}\) This account is admittedly of an Irish churchman; nonetheless, Dagan's snub of Laurence is presented as also being indicative of British attitudes.\(^{271}\) In providing a contrast between the Dumnonian clergy and the Welsh, it could almost be construed that Aldhelm was deliberately singling out the latter as a 'lost cause'; and the fact that they were so near to Dumnonia served to reinforce his warning that the threat to Church unity in the south-west was indeed a real one. In entreating Geraint, Aldhelm even appealed to the 'common destiny of our fatherland [communem caelestis patriae sortem]', probably an invocation of the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons unified by complete adherence to the correct Roman faith.\(^{272}\) If this interpretation of Aldhelm's letter is accurate, the implication is that he did not consider the Dumnonians to be 'beyond the Pale', despite their animosity; or at least not yet.

Aldhelm's letter reveals that there must have been interaction between the West Saxons and the Dumnonians, and that Aldhelm was in direct contact with Geraint. Aldhelm does give the impression that his information regarding the behaviour of the Dumnonian


\(^{268}\) See Stancliffe, 'The British Church and the mission of Augustine', p. 110, who argues that it was the Roman clerics' sinfulness as worldly clerics rather than their different Christian tradition or ethnicity which mattered to the British monks.

\(^{269}\) For example, *HE* II.2, V.23.

\(^{270}\) *HE* II.4.

\(^{271}\) It should be pointed out that Bede is by no means universally negative in his view of the Irish, as will be discussed in Chapter 9 (infra., pp. 352-60).

\(^{272}\) Aldhelm, *Epist. IV*, p. 159. Lapidge and Herren do not translate *caelestis*. If they did, the phrase might more accurately have referred to an appeal to the 'celestial fatherland' (Duncan Probert, pers. comm., 22 October, 2002).
clergy was gained second-hand. For instance, he talks of having ‘heard and received report from the relation of diverse rumours’, and that ‘a rumour hostile to the faith of the Church has bruited it about far and wide’.\footnote{273} This would suggest that he did not have direct dealings with the Dumnonian clergy at the time of writing. However, he may have been deliberately obtuse here, so as not offend Geraint, or this letter might be an early communiqué which established a continuing relationship with the Dumnonian king. Indeed, as indicated by the evidence of the \textit{Carmen rhythmicum},\footnote{274} it is likely that Aldhelm attended Geraint and had the opportunity to press the Roman cause in person.

The evidence from and about Aldhelm is to a certain extent corroborated by Bede. Despite his insistence on the separateness of the Britons, within the limited amount of information that Bede includes about Wessex, he provides some basis for allowing that there was interaction between Britons and West Saxons. Specifically, he records that c.665, Chad was consecrated by Bishop Wine of Wessex, ‘with the assistance of two bishops of the British, who … keep Easter Sunday, according to their rule’.\footnote{275} This obviously constitutes evidence of contact between British and West Saxon clergy. Further, a level of cordiality is suggested; they would hardly have shared in administering the rite of consecration if they were hostile to one another.\footnote{276} It is unfortunate that Bede is not more specific about where the British bishops came from:

\begin{quote}
273 Aldhelm, \textit{Epist.} IV, p. 156.
274 \textit{Supra.}, p. 114.
275 \textit{HE} III.28. According to Stephen of Ripon, incorrectly as it turns out (see A. Thacker, ‘Bede and the Irish’, in L.A.J.R. Houwen \& A.A. MacDonald (eds.), \textit{Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk \& Northumbrian}, Groningen, 1996, pp. 38-9), Chad had been consecrated by ‘Quartodecimans’ (\textit{VW} 15), that is those who celebrated Easter on the fourteenth of the Paschal month. It is noteworthy that in his account of the consecration, Bede implies that Wine was \textit{obliged} to seek assistance from those outside the Catholic fold because at the time, ‘there was not a single bishop in the whole of Britain except Wine who had been canonically ordained’ (\textit{HE} III.28). Thus, Bede appears to be rationalising Wine’s behaviour and suggesting that he sought help from the British only because he had no alternative. Whether or not this was the case is difficult to determine; even if Wine was the only Catholic bishop in the region, it does not necessarily follow that he must have viewed the British as a last resort. This rationale may only be a manifestation of Bede’s anti-British attitude. Even so, it is an interesting possibility that Wine encountered some difficulties in the administration of his role that could only be solved with British aid. He had gained his bishopric (c.660) in controversial circumstances (\textit{see HE} III.7). King Cenwalh desired a bishop who could speak the West Saxon tongue; so he created a new diocese based at Winchester for Wine, thereby offending the incumbent Frankish Bishop Agilbert, who subsequently departed for the Continent. A few years later, Wine himself was expelled to Mercia by Cenwalh, and Wessex was without a bishop until the arrival of Leuthere in 670 (\textit{see ASC} s.a. 670). Thus, Wine could have been isolated within Wessex and in a position of weakness, perhaps necessitating a course of action that he might not otherwise have considered. Bede may not have been far off the mark in his rationale for British involvement in Wine’s consecration of Chad.
276 There are any number of speculations which can be made regarding the motives of these British bishops who assisted Wine. Perhaps they saw their involvement as a possible avenue for influencing the West Saxon church. Alternatively, if they were indeed from Dumnonia, the Britons may have hoped to pacify the expansionist West Saxons by showing charity to their beleaguered bishop. Or it may even have been that the British bishops were pressed into service.
\end{quote}
whether they were from Dumnonia or perhaps southern Wales, or whether their association with Wine was a regular event or an informal visit, or indeed an aberration. If they were Dumnonians, this would be supportive of the implication in Aldhelm’s letter that the Dunmonian clergy were not as antagonistic to the Anglo-Saxons as were the Britons of Wales, though the material in the letter does not otherwise suggest that they would have shared in religious duties. In any event, it is apparent that there were British bishops abroad in Wessex, at least for a time. Thus, Aldhelm may have had the opportunity, early in his career, to observe or be directly apprised of British customs.

Given the evidence of Aldhelm’s letter, it is not surprising then that the conversion of Dumnonia to the Roman Easter is attributed to his efforts, though there is no unambiguous supporting evidence for this. Bede stated that by means of the ‘book’ Aldhelm wrote — that is, the letter to Geraint — he ‘led many of those Britons who were subject to the West Saxons to adopt the Catholic celebration of the Easter of the Lord’. This could mean that Dumnonia under Geraint was subject, or became subject, to the West Saxons; however, this begs the question why Aldhelm needed to write to Geraint to obtain his help when a better outcome might have been assured by an appeal to the West Saxon king. The Britons referred to might have been those who were incorporated into the West Saxon kingdom as it expanded to the west, rather than in independent Dumnonia. There is, unfortunately, no surviving reply from Geraint, nor any indication that one was sent. However, if Bede’s statement is reflective of some event in the south-west, it appears that there were some Britons who did eventually conform to Roman practice. And if Geraint’s grants to Sherborne can be taken as a sign of a favourable attitude on his part towards the West Saxon Church, then the assumption of his role in the capitulation of Dumnonia is probably reasonable.

Summary

Aldhelm’s letter to Geraint and his excursion into Dumnonia, along with Geraint’s grant to Sherborne and probably Glastonbury, all show that interaction did occur across the

---

277 O’Donovan, *Charters of Sherborne*, p. 87, suggests that it might have been in circumstances such as the consecration of Chad, that the West Saxons learned of certain British names for sites now incorporated into Wessex, such as *Lanprobi*.


279 *HE* V.18. It is possible that the Dumnonians were ‘some of the Britons in Britain’ who conformed to Roman practice following the lead of the ‘greater part of the Irish in Ireland’ in c.703 (*HE* V.15), though the northern Britons are probably better candidates here.
West Saxon-Dumnonian border. Aldhelm’s letter also provides an insight into the attitudes that may have existed between the peoples of these kingdoms. While Aldhelm adopted an attitude of superiority to the Dumnonian clergy, he appears to have treated Geraint with the respect that would have been due to a ruling king, even if a ‘foreigner’ (i.e. a *wealh*). Geraint in his turn paid due to the West Saxon Church by granting land to its houses. Aldhelm’s and Geraint’s relationship was apparently one of greater depth than might otherwise have been expected from the antagonistic picture of relations that is gained from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and indeed from Gildas and Bede. The relationship between Aldhelm and Geraint provides evidence of one instance, at least, where a Saxon and a Briton conferred with one another on a diplomatic basis.
Conclusion to Part 1: Wessex and the Britons of the South-West

Undoubtedly one of the difficulties to be faced in examining relations between the West Saxons and southern Britons is that the written sources are essentially all West Saxon. While it is possible to appreciate the West Saxon perspective, the position of the Britons can only be evaluated as it is reflected in West Saxon sources. For long periods in the seventh and eighth centuries, Dumnonia as a political entity is essentially invisible. Even though archaeological and place-name evidence can supplement the written material, much of what can be said regarding interrelations between these peoples is one-sided, and the attitudes of the Britons must by and large remain conjectural. Nevertheless, establishing the limitations of the evidence is itself a worthwhile exercise, and by acknowledging the need to engage in reasonable speculation, it is possible to draw some conclusions.

With regard to relations in the south of Britain, understanding has traditionally been heavily influenced by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and to a certain extent by Bede's unremittingly negative perception of the Britons in his Historia ecclesiastica. Within the Chronicle, the only type of interaction mentioned between Saxons and Britons is warfare, with the exception of the loyalty shown by the British hostage in the Cynewulf/Cyneheard episode. There does not appear to be any reason to doubt the fact that warfare did occur; the difficulty, of course, is in trying to establish the extent of conflict and the meaning of any particular engagement. Motives such as territorial expansion and land acquisition; raiding for slaves, booty, and warrior prestige; the imposition of overlordship and the enforcement of tribute, and retribution, are certainly all viable as general explanations, but the Chronicle does not always provide enough information to judge the significance of any specific entry recording warfare with the British. To gain some idea of territorial expansion and land tenure, it is necessary to rely on archaeology - which is mostly useful for the pagan period only - and more particularly on monastic charters, which show a shifting border over the course of the seventh and eighth centuries from the eastern borders of Dorset and Somerset into Devon.¹ Other motivations for warfare, such as warrior prestige, can be corroborated

¹ K.R. Dark, Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity 300-800 (Leicester, 1994), p. 234, speculates whether the border was actually 'defended' or simply recognised.
from later primary source literature, but caution is clearly called for in anachronistically extending such a memory of antagonism back to an earlier time.

In this sense, it is noteworthy that the *Chronicle* was produced in an era of conflict and this may have informed the compilers' understanding of foreign relations. Indeed, the 'West Walas' sided with the Vikings against the West Saxons on at least one occasion,² and Ecgberht was engaged in frequent warfare with them.³ Thus, there was near-contemporary evidence that the Britons should be seen as antagonists. It continues to be important to consider the evidence in the *Chronicle*, as it is part of the corpus for early medieval Britain and it indicates how early events were remembered in general terms. However, its usefulness is somewhat circumscribed in regard to assessing the meaning of many of the specific instances of warfare described.

It was stated in Chapter 1 that in examining Anglo-Celtic relations in early medieval Britain, the historian is confronted with a series of paradoxes.⁴ The principal paradox within the evidence for West Saxons and southern Britons comes when the traditional, exclusively bellicose characterisation of relationships is compared with other evidence, such as the Law Code of Ine. Ine's Code is in many respects a remarkable document, and one that is almost too good to be true when viewed in the context of the shadowy nature of much of the evidence for Anglo-Celtic relations. The code shows a West Saxon society which, in the latter part of the seventh century, clearly has Britons living within it, a proportion of whom have the free-person rights of being oath-worthy and being protected by a *wergild*. In addition, in terms of the meaning implied by the awarding of a particular *wergild*, it appears that Britons enjoyed some degree of social flexibility; the code indicates that Britons permeated several levels of society. This was principally determined by the amount of land owned, itself a notable right. With regard to social ranking, however, the lives of Britons were valued at half that of the West Saxons, as was the value of their oaths. Indeed, one of the salient conclusions here is that Ine's code entrenched the British in an inferior position. Although it has been argued that Ine's purpose was to mollify a numerically significant British sub-population, it must also be recognised that there is a limit to which they would have been placated by a half-*wergild* and a half-value oath status.

² *ASC* 853 (*recte* 838).
³ *ASC* 813, (*recte* 815), 823 (*recte* 825); charter S273/BCS389, pp. 150-3.
⁴ *Supra.*, pp. 1-2.
What Ine's Code shows is that it was possible for Britons to be differentiated from West Saxons in late seventh-century Wessex; there would have been no sense in Ine specifically legislating for British subjects if it was practically impossible to identify who was in fact British. Language, one of the most definitive markers of ethnic identity, is the likely means by which Britons would have been recognised. This probability, as well as the overall supposition that Ine's Wessex was divisible on ethnic grounds, militates against the proposal that the Britons in the Code were those descended from the original inhabitants in the territory of eastern Wessex. Rather, they were Britons living in newly-conquered areas in the west, such as Dorset, Somerset and perhaps parts of Devon, where there would have been less time for assimilation and integration to occur and therefore the British language was still spoken.

There does not, however, appear to be any decree or edict within Ine's code which would have explicitly prohibited assimilation – beyond the truism that people of different social strata do not tend to intermingle – and at some stage after the end of the seventh century, Ine's Britons disappear from the documentary record. The shire names *Dornseæte* (Dorset) and *Sumorsæte* (Somerset) imply that there were Saxon settlers in the west. Intermarriage between Saxons and Britons probably occurred – certain British-sounding names in the West Saxon royal house provide some evidence here – and this is a usual means by which language change occurs. But it is also possible that the British language was engulfed by the overall dominance of West Saxon political, economic and social culture. The Code made it disadvantageous to be identified as a Briton and thus may have given impetus to the disappearance of a British identity in Wessex. Ine's Code, therefore, provides a window on how Britons may have been incorporated within West Saxon society. While it cannot be assumed that the nature of relations in the time of Ine were necessarily indicative of any other generation, it is significant nevertheless that people identifiable as Britons, who could have passed on some British place-names before their identity was extinguished, were resident within western Wessex at the end of the seventh century.5

If there were Britons who had been included in a newly-expanded Wessex, the fate of their clergy is much harder to determine. While it is currently popular to assert that the

5 That Asser made use of some British names for places in Wessex does not necessarily mean there were Britons identified as such living there. The names are almost universally of towns or major rivers that could have been current in Wales. On this point, see D. Banham, 'Anglo-Saxon attitudes: in search of the origins of English racism', *European Review of History* 1 (1994), p. 152.
West Saxon Church, particularly in western shires, was founded on a firm British heritage, the positive evidence for this view is limited. There are certainly Christian sites in Wessex which reveal some level of continued usage from the Roman and sub-Roman periods into the Saxon period, but these are few in number. Other British Christian sites appear to have been re-used after an indeterminate interval, and some show Saxon occupation but at a location removed from the British site. Similarly, the number of surviving dedications to British saints who can reasonably be regarded as early is small, and principally in Devon. Only Sherborne contains a record of a charter – the *Lanprobi* charter – which might represent a pre-Saxon foundation. Glastonbury and Sherborne appear to have had a British connection – the grants from Geraint – as could have the unnamed monastery ruled by Abbot Catwali. However, even considering the one-sidedness of the evidence, the picture to be gained is one of complete Saxon dominance.

In considering the possibility of British Christian continuity, the central question is: what would have been passed on? This is an issue which is largely neglected by the continuity protagonists. By Aldhelm’s account, the British clergy practised what may appear to be superficially different customs regarding the tonsure and the calculation for Easter; however, these could have been grounds for heresy. They also appear to have been organised differently, with a greater number of dedications to local saints.6 Further, there was the likelihood of mutual distrust and disrespect.7 As far as can be determined on the evidence, there is no perceptible difference in church structure between the eastern and western shires of Wessex, as could be expected if there was British influence in the west; nor is there any difference in the pattern of church dedications. Apart from the possibility that British estate names may have been used in some West Saxon charters, and some Christian sites display coincident British and West Saxon usage, the British influence on the West Saxon church is difficult to discern.

This leaves the question of what happened to the British clergy in the west after West Saxon conquest. There is no firm indication of whether the British clergy were absorbed into West Saxon houses, or whether they fled into what remained of Dumnonia. If they stayed, their identity seems to have vanished; apart from Catwali,

---

6 C. Thomas, *Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings* (Wigtownshire, Scotland), 1992, pp. 17-18, also suggests that the Britons followed a model similar to that in North Africa, where nearly every village had its own separate bishop.
there are no British personal names on any surviving witness lists.\textsuperscript{8} Stephen of Ripon spoke of British clergy in the north fleeing the Northumbrian advance, and Bede recorded the Irish returning to Ireland after the decision at Whitby.\textsuperscript{9} But Bede also indicated that some Irish chose to remain in England, abandoning Irish practice. If these accounts are in any way representative of events in the south, it may be wise not to assume that all the British clergy behaved in the same manner. However, if some did stay, they abandoned their British identity, either by choice or by compulsion, and passed on little which has survived as evidence of British continuity. The likelihood is that the West Saxons built newly dedicated churches on new sites, and that in a very small number of cases, such as Sherborne, Congresbury, and a few sites in Devon, they continued the memory of an earlier British saint.\textsuperscript{10}

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} C. Thomas, \textit{Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500} (Berkeley, 1981), p. 353. See also the discussion concerning Mercia and the church of Wales (\textit{infra.}, pp. 451-66).
\item \textsuperscript{8} B. Yorke, \textit{Wessex in the Early Middle Ages} (London, 1995), pp. 179-80.
\item \textsuperscript{9} \textit{VW} 17; \textit{HE} III.26.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Nicholas Orme (pers. comm., 1 September, 1999).
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
Part 2

Northumbria and the Celts of the North
Chapter 6

Mapping the Territory of the Northumbrians and Northern Celts

Northumbrians

In his *De excidio Britanniae*, Gildas says that Saxons – as he called the Germanic invaders – first came to Britain as mercenaries, invited by a council of British leaders together with a ‘proud tyrant [*superbus tyrannus*]’ to protect against the assaults of ‘peoples of the north’, earlier identified as Picts and Scots.\(^1\) They arrived in three *keels*, establishing themselves on the ‘east side of the island’, and were subsequently joined by reinforcements who had learned of the prosperity of the initial cohort.\(^2\) Following dissatisfaction with their ‘monthly allowance’, the Saxons revolted and ‘devastated town and country’, thus initiating a long sequence of wars between themselves and the native Britons which ultimately resulted in the Britons losing control of much of the former Roman diocese.\(^3\) If Gildas’s narrative is in any way accurate – and certainly, much of his account is potentially apocryphal – logic would suggest that for the mercenaries to defend the sub-Roman Britons against incursions from the north, then they too must have been stationed in the north. Gildas, therefore, provides the first documentary description of Anglo-Saxon habitation in what became Northumbria and therefore of Anglo-Celtic interaction in the region.\(^4\)

Gildas’s representation of the circumstances surrounding the arrival of Anglo-Saxon peoples in Britain is assuredly plausible. The use of *foederati* barbarian troops was a common occurrence on the Continent, and the idea of such troops rising up in mutiny is by no means unprecedented.\(^5\) As David Dumville explains, Gildas thus provides ‘one partial framework for the beginnings of sub-Roman history in the north’.\(^6\) That said,

---

\(^1\) *DEB* 19.1, 23.1-4.
\(^2\) *DEB* 23.4.
\(^3\) *DEB* 23.5, 24-26.
Dumville also cautions that Gildas is a 'dangerous witness to whom to cede centrality in this matter', citing disputes over his credibility, his motivations, and the accuracy of his information.7 Indeed, there is little in the way of verifiable detail to be gleaned from Gildas that makes it possible to proceed beyond Dumville’s general ‘framework’. The chronology of the Anglo-Saxon arrival cannot be established with any certainty, outside of a vague calculation based around the British appeal to the Roman magister militum Aetius ‘thrice consul’, usually thought to have been sent between 446 and 454.8 Since the mercenaries were invited after the failure of this appeal, their arrival in the north of Britain should conceivably be placed in the second half of the fifth century.9 In addition, though the fact of the Germanic invaders need not be doubted, Gildas’s account provides no basis for assessing their numbers.10 And in any case, it is probably entirely inaccurate to reduce the Anglo-Saxon arrival to a single mercenary intervention.

Anglo-Saxon sources, and in particular Bede’s Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum completed in 731, provide little additional information regarding the early history of Anglo-Saxon involvement in the region of Northumbria. While a lack of information concerning the north might be expected of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the paucity of early northern material in Bede’s work is conspicuous considering that Bede’s locale, and indeed his concerns and interests, were of course Northumbrian.11 There is general agreement in the literature that Bede’s chapters on the fifth and sixth centuries relied substantially on Gildas’s account, and his narrative encompasses essentially the same events.12 It seems that Bede knew very little about the events surrounding the Anglo-

7 Dumville, ‘The origins of Northumbria’, p. 213.
8 DEB 20.1. N.J. Higham, The English Conquest: Gildas and Britain in the Fifth Century (Manchester, 1994), pp. 120-6, discusses some of the specific problems associated with placing the arrival of the Anglo-Saxon mercenaries in Britain after the appeal to Aetius. See also the recent discussion by A. Woolf, ‘The Britons: from Romans to barbarians’, in H. Goetz, J. Jarnut & W. Pohl (eds.), Regina and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World (Leiden, 2003), pp. 351-5.
10 Thompson, ‘Gildas and the history of Britain’, p. 217.
Saxon arrival outside of what he found in Gildas. Bede placed the adventus Saxonum within the seven-year reign of the Roman emperors Marcian and Valentinian, which he dates to between 449 and 456, but he seemed to rely here on his own deductions rather than any independent authority.

Aside from naming some of the 'usual suspects' of the Anglo-Saxon invasion story – Hengest, Horsa and Vortigern – Bede's principal contribution was to define the people of Northumbria, and indeed the majority of the peoples north of the Thames, as being Angles. In this matter, Bede was therefore aware that his people did not originate in Britain, but rather from 'the country ... between the provinces [provincias] of the Jutes and the Saxons, which is called Angulus', now identified as a reference to the East Holstein region of Germany, at the base of the Jutland Peninsula. There is difficulty in assessing the exact value of this passage. Bede's source is unknown; this does not necessarily negate what he records, but at the same time it does not assist in substantiating what he says. More particularly, Patrick Sims-Williams considers Bede's ethnography to be a simplification, or a schematisation, which is more indicative of eighth-century beliefs regarding dynastic origins than an accurate picture of what occurred in the fifth and sixth centuries. Thus, while it is reasonable to conclude that the people of Northumbria in Bede's day, and even in the previous century, thought of themselves as Angles, this should not be allowed to mask what was almost certainly a deeper ethnic complexity.

Nonetheless, there is archaeological support, broadly speaking, for certain aspects of Bede's brief testimony on the Anglo-Saxon arrival. To begin with, Anglo-Saxon

---

14 HE 1.15. Sims-Williams, 'The settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle', pp. 15-16, notes that the seven year reign of the emperors should more accurately be dated August 450 to January 457.
15 HE 1.15. This was part of Bede's passage on the Angles, Saxons and Jutes and the origins of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The passage appears to have been inserted into a narrative which he had already written, thus fueling speculation that he received the information in a letter, after he had begun drafting Book I. See Campbell, Anglo-Saxons, p. 29; J. Hines, 'Philology, archaeology and the adventus Saxonum vel Anglorum', in A. Bammesberger & A. Wollmann (eds.), Britain 400-600: Language and History (Heidelberg, 1990), p. 50.
material culture in Britain does correspond with archaeological evidence from the Continent, specifically, the Jutland Peninsula, the Danish islands, and northern coastal Germany — the very regions described by Bede. Continental cremation cemeteries, for instance, show similarities with Anglo-Saxon examples. There is, in addition, evidence that the North Sea coast was affected by rising sea levels in the fifth century, leading to the desertion of coastal villages. This provides some corroboration for Bede’s statement that ‘Angulus is said to have remained deserted from that day to this.’ Further, as far as can be established from the material evidence, the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms which Bede identified as Anglian, and Saxon and Jutish do show a preponderance of influence from the corresponding regions on the Continent, though there appears to be a more widespread distribution of ‘Saxon’ material than might otherwise be predicted from Bede. The possibility of other influences in the Anglo-Saxon invasion should not, however, be precluded: there is for example evidence of Scandinavian involvement along the eastern seaboard of Britain.

Another area in which archaeology can be said to corroborate Bede is with regard to his chronology for the Anglo-Saxon invasion. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, the

---

18 Campbell, Anglo-Saxons, p. 30; Hines, ‘The becoming of the English’, p. 50; D. Powlesland, ‘The Anglo-Saxon settlement at West Heslerton, North Yorkshire’, in Hawkes & Mills, Northumbria’s Golden Age, p. 61. Examples of sites showing Continental influence and material evidence include West Heslerton (North Yorks.) and Sancton (Humb.).

19 Campbell, Anglo-Saxons, p. 30; P. Sawyer, From Roman Britain to Saxon England (New York, 1978), p. 91

20 HE I.15.


22 Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 6. Bede stated (HE V.9) that ‘[Ecgbereht] knew that there were very many peoples in Germany from whom the Angles and Saxons, who now live in Britain, derive their origin ... these people are the Frisians, Rugians, Danes, Huns, Old Saxons, and Boructuari; there are also many other nations in the same land’. The provenance of this information is obscure, and its detail can be questioned. For instance, the possible presence of Frisians amongst the invaders has been roundly refuted by R.H. Bremmer, ‘The nature of the evidence for a Frisian participation in the Adventus Saxonom’, in Bamnesberger & Wollmann, Britain 400-600: Language and History, pp. 353-71. Nevertheless, Campbell, Anglo-Saxons, p. 31, reasonably concludes that whether or not it is correct to take Bede at face value here, it is most likely that the peoples who came to Britain did include more than just the customary Angles, Saxons and Jutes.
archaeological chronology now appears to be loosely consistent with Bede's date for the 
*adventus Saxonum*, c.449x456. Only a small number of sites is now considered to be 
earlier than c.450, and all of these are located between the Thames and the Humber.

Extending the *terminus ante quem* to c.475, there are a greater number of sites that are 
also more extensively distributed, including sites north of the Humber at York, West 
Heslerton, and at Sancton on the edge of the Wolds (East Riding Yorks.). When sites 
including those from the first quarter of the sixth century are considered, there is greater 
expansion still, with sites in the north extending around the Yorkshire Wolds and to 
between the Tees and the Tyne. Anglo-Saxon finds in some of the Hadrian's Wall 
forts – including Chesterholm, Housesteads, Corbridge and South Shields – could be 
associated with this period, and may even identify some of Gildas's *foederati*. There 
are isolated Anglo-Saxon weapon finds even farther north at Traprain Law (East 
Lothian), and far to the west at Castle Hill, Dalry (North Ayrs.), which might also be 
representative of mercenary activity, though these finds could simply be the spoils of 
war. There appears to be little expansion of Anglo-Saxon material culture, however, 
for the remainder of the sub-Roman period; rather, there is consolidation within the 
territorial limits already established.

Subsequent expansion beyond the sub-Roman period into the seventh century becomes 
more difficult to map archaeologically due to changes in burial custom away from 
furnished inhumations and cremations, most notably brought about by the advent of Christianity. This has been a typical explanation put forward for the comparatively 
smaller number of Anglo-Saxon burials found north as opposed to south of the Tees, in 

---

25 Lucy, 'Changing burial rites in Northumbria', pp. 16-18, and his distribution map (p. 17).
28 Hines, 'Philology, archaeology and the *adventus Saxonum vel Anglorum*', p. 28.
other words in Bernicia as distinct from Deira. Therefore, it is usually assumed that Deira came under Anglo-Saxon control before Bernicia. However, it should also be noted that there is a dearth of other types of burial evidence from these areas: Iron Age or early Christian. Thus, the interpretation of this information varies from arguments for a minimal Anglo-Saxon presence to suggestions that the Anglo-Saxons adopted indigenous burial practices. It is unwise to conclude too much from an absence of evidence. Furthermore, the discovery of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries is a continuing process, and new discoveries might lead to a shift in our understanding of early Anglo-Saxon involvement in Northumbria. For example, recent discoveries of further pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries north of the Tees at Norton and Easington (Durham), and north of the Tyne at Milfield (Northumberland), suggest that the Anglo-Saxon presence in Bernicia might have been greater than was once thought.

The kingdom of Northumbria was ultimately created by the unification of the two smaller Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira through the course of the seventh century. The boundary between these kingdoms is generally taken to have been the Tees Valley, with the evidence regarding burials, already discussed, suggesting that the

---

30 Campbell, Anglo-Saxons, p. 41; Cramp, ‘Northumbria: the archaeological evidence’, p. 72; Faull, ‘British survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria’, pp. 2-3, 10; Lucy, ‘Changing burial rites in Northumbria’, pp. 16-21, Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 86. Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 69, argues that the lack of cremations north of the Tees indicates a more complex ethnicity than indicated by Bede. If all the Northumbrians were Angles from Jutland, he suggests that cremation should have been more common.
33 See D. O’Sullivan, ‘A Group of Pagan Burials from Cumbria,’ ASSAH 9 (1996), p. 22, and discussion by L. Alcock, The Neighbours of the Picts: Angles, Britons and Scots at War and at Home (Rosemarkie, Scotland, 1993), p. 10 n. 16; Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 82. A full gazetteer of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in Northumbria from the fifth to eighth centuries is provided by Lucy, ‘Changing burial rites in Northumbria’, pp. 24-43, who also notes that as a result of recent excavations and publications there is now ‘quite extensive evidence for burials between the Tees and the Tyne’ (p. 16).
34 Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 74. Bede refers to the peoples as Deiri and Bernicii (e.g. HE II 1, II.14, III.1). There is no modern equivalent of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. The territory that the kingdom came to cover included, with some variation over time, the modern counties of North Yorkshire, East Riding of Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire (the old
whole valley should be included within the sphere of Deiran control. The terms ‘Bernicia’ and ‘Deira’ have both been considered to be Brythonic Celtic names, which has led to an assumption that they may have originally been under the control of British Celtic leaders. The *Historia Brittonum* certainly contains British versions of the names – Birneich and Deur – though this does not necessarily represent a continuous survival of their use in Wales; Old English forms may have been ‘re-Brythonised’ by the author. The boundaries of Bernicia and Deira, as far as they can be worked out from the early documentary evidence, do not obviously coincide with the presumed territories of the British Celtic tribes of Roman Britain, such as the Brigantes or the Parisii or indeed Votadini. It can, therefore, only be speculated that there were sub-Roman British polities in the region describing themselves using these names.

The term ‘Northumbrian’ appears to have been a later invention, often attributed to Bede, used to refine the former name of ‘Humbrians [Humbrenses]’ after territory south of the Humber; the name possibly derives from the Latin for Lincoln, *Lindum colonia*. See B. Eagles, ‘Lindsey’, in Bassett, *Origins*, p. 202.


37 *NB* 61.


39 Cramp, *Northumbria: the archaeological evidence*, p. 70; Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, p. 90. It could be allowed that Deira has a loose approximation with the tribal territory of the Parisii; however, this tribal name is not recorded later than the second century. On these issues, see also N.J. Higham, ‘Brigantia Revisited’, *NH* 22 (1986), pp. 1-19; *idem.*, *Kingdom of Northumbria*, p. 81; Woolf, ‘The Britons: from Romans to barbarians’, p. 367. This is excluding the evidence of late-surviving Welsh/British poetry. C. Cessford, ‘Northern England and the Gododdin Poem’, *NH* 33 (1997), p. 219, for example, canvasses the possibility that Deira (Deifr, Dewr, Deor), as referred to in *Y Gododdin*, was originally a native British sub-Roman kingdom. In an earlier piece, Cessford, ‘The death of Aethelfrith of Lloegr’, *NH*, 30 (1994), pp. 182-3, also argues that the evidence of the *Trioedd ynych Prydein* (‘The Triads of the Island of Britain’) implies that there may have been a native British dynasty still in existence for Bernicia (Bryneic) at the beginning of the seventh century.
of the Humber had been lost to Mercia. Evidence for the existence of the earlier term 'Humbrian' derives from two sources. The first is the record of the proceedings of the Council of Hatfield (c.680), quoted verbatim by Bede. In the preamble, Ecgfrith (670-685) is referred to as 'king of the Humbrians [rex Humbronensium]'. This implies that he held some authority south of the Humber, as well as north, probably over the province of Lindsey. The second source is the anonymous Life of Pope Gregory, written by a monk of Whitby, c.710. Here, King Edwin (616-633) is described as 'of the Humbrenses', and a similar meaning to Ecgfrith's appellation might be supposed.

The newness of the term 'Northumbrian' in Bede's day might be supposed by his apparent motivation to define it the first time he uses it in the Historia ecclesiastica: 'the Northumbrian race, that is those people who dwell north of the river Humber'. It has also been suggested that Bede was attempting to create an image of unity between the Bernicians and Deirans, representing them as a single gens so as to justify his promotion of the imperium of the Northumbrian Christian rulers. Bede points out elsewhere, for instance, when talking of King Oswiu (642-70), that Bernicia was the northern part of the Transhumbrana gens. However, Bede himself provided ample evidence for questioning the extent to which a sense of Transhumbrana gens necessarily advanced harmony between the people of the two sub-kingdoms.

---


42 HE IV.17. It is of course possible that Bede altered the record of the proceedings, though this possibility does not appear in the literature. See Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 64.

43 According to Bede (HE IV.12), Ecgfrith annexed Lindsey after defeating and driving out Wulfhere of Mercia, probably early in 678; it was later recovered (see also notes 41 & 49).


45 Vita Sancti Gregorii I Papae, ch. 12 (B. Colgrave, ed., The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby, Lawrence, 1968). 'Humbrian' is most likely to have been a geographical rather than a people name, as the Humber is a river name that is regarded to have been of British Celtic etymology. See Cramp, 'The Northumbrian identity', p. 2; Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 79.

46 HE I.15

47 Charles-Edwards, 'Bede, the Irish and the Britons', p. 49.

48 HE III.14. In his Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, ch.4 (Plummer, Bede, vol. I, pp. 367-8), Bede again uses the term Transhumbrana regio to refer to Ecgfrith's kingdom. Transhumbrana can be translated as 'across' the Humber, thus having the meaning of 'both sides'. However, it also translates as 'beyond' the Humber, and therefore is probably just another form of 'Northumbrian', as Plummer, Bede, vol. II, p. 29, suggested. Note also HE III.6, in which Bede states that through the diplomacy of King Oswald (634-42) Bernicia and Deira were 'peacefully united and became one people' (emphasis added).

49 For example, Bede's effort to specify a Transhumbrana gens, in HE III.14, underscores an older hostility between the Bernicians and Deirans. This is also evident when Bede talks of old prejudices held...
notion of a 'North-umbrian' people does exist outside of the work of Bede. In his Life of Wilfrid, originally drafted c.710-15, Stephen of Ripon refers to Ecgfrith as 'king of the Ultrahumbrenses', those 'on the far side' of the Humber, in other words, Northumbrians.50 Interestingly, Stephen elsewhere describes Ecgfrith as king of the Bernicians and Deirans, demonstrating that 'Northumbria' had not yet superseded the older designations and supporting the statement made above regarding the novelty of the term.51 Thus, Bede may not have been solely responsible for conceiving of a 'Northumbrian people' but rather made the first to attempt to popularise the notion.52 In any event, after the death of Ecgfrith in 685, the division between Deira and Bernicia does not appear to have been important in the politics of Northumbria.53

***

The Anglo-Saxon sources do not attempt in any detail to define the Celtic territories of the north. Indeed, for Bede – the principal Northumbrian if not Anglo-Saxon source for the period under study – the Britons, Picts and Scots were not so much incidental but rather subordinate to his purpose of detailing the history and the success of the English Church.54 The sources surviving from the Celtic regions of Britain for the seventh and eighth centuries are more limited than those of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. There are no native British or Pictish narrative sources which come from the pre-Viking north, only those which originate from Iona.55

---

51 VW 20.
52 This statement should be qualified by noting that the Life of Wilfrid appears to have been revised in the early 730s. Thus, Stephen could well have interpolated the notion of a 'Northumbria' into his original text after having read Bede's Historia ecclesiastica, which was completed in 731. See Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius and the Life of Wilfrid', pp. 106-9.
55 There are two British sources which belong to the centuries immediately following the pre-Viking period: the HB, once attributed to Nennius, and the AC. The earliest manuscript of both these sources is the Harleian collection of c.1100 (British Museum Harley MS. 3859). It is typically held that the HB was compiled in about 829/30 (based on a reference in HB 16 to the fourth year of King Merfyn of Gwynedd's reign). The AC was probably compiled in the mid-tenth century, though K. Hughes, 'The Welsh Latin chronicles: Annales Cambriae and related texts', Proceedings of the British Academy 59 (1973), pp. 234-5, argued that annals were probably begun at the monastery of St David in Dyfed some time after 768 (contra., W. Davies, Patterns of Power in Early Wales, Oxford, 1990, p. 5, who observes that there is very little Dyfed material recorded before the tenth century). Both sources made independent use of earlier material, in particular an Irish chronicle, and a now-lost 'northern British chronicle'; there is a so-called 'northern British section' in the HB cc. 57-65, and the AC contains a preponderance of northern entries through the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries to c.780 (see D.N. Dumville, 'On the northern British section of the Historia Brittonum', WHR 8 (1976-7), pp. 348-9; idem., 'The origins of Northumbria', p. 215). For the dating of, and general commentary on, these sources, see also D.N.
Northern Britons

The territory of Northumbria south of Hadrian's Wall fell within the late Roman British province of Britannia Secunda, administered from the provincial capital at York (Eboracum). As with the south-west of Britain, the fate of the former Romano-British civitates in the north after the end of Roman government is uncertain, as is the nature of any authority which subsequently developed. It is not possible to use Gildas's testimony as evidence for the identity of any sub-Roman British kingdoms in the north, as his diatribe is aimed only at southern kingdoms. Further, the general lack of Romanisation in the north has meant that tribal names even during the Roman period are infrequently mentioned, and the extent of territorial boundaries essentially unknowable. Britannia Secunda, especially closer to the Wall, was essentially a military buffer zone designed to protect the more prosperous Romanised regions of southern Britain, and it is consequently unlikely that there existed much in the way of an urbanised society in the northern province outside of York. Carlisle, Catterick, Aldborough and York all show signs of sub-Roman habitation, but that appears to be the extent of any continued urban occupation. Thus, it has been suggested that the less-Romanised Britons of the region were more able to resume or reinvent earlier 'tribal', or non-Roman, leadership and organisation in the fifth and sixth centuries. The fact that Carlisle (Luguvalium), the civitas capital of the Carvetii, shows evidence of building in the fifth century has been taken as an indication that the Carvetii...
themselves survived as a recognisable polity. Certainly, St Cuthbert visited Carlisle in the late seventh century, and much has been inferred, perhaps erroneously, regarding survival and continuity from his escorted tour of the walls and of the ‘marvellously constructed fountain of Roman workmanship’. It would be tempting to presume that the Carvetii were the progenitors of the kingdom of Rheged, remembered in the poetry attributed to Taliesin as being associated with the figure of King Urien. Urien is also mentioned in the *Historia Brittonum*, fighting the Anglian kings of Bernicia, and his son Rhun, ironically, as baptising Edwin of Deira. There does, therefore, appear to have been a dynasty which was later associated with the kingdom. The territories of the Carvetii and Rheged may have been roughly coterminous – principally encompassing Cumbria. However, no source provides sufficient information for Rheged to be located with any certainty, despite the regularity with which it is placed in this region on historical maps. It is often supposed that Rheged extended beyond Cumbria, north of the Solway into Dumfries and Galloway – and thus into the territory of the Selgovae and Novantae – as well as east into the territory of the Brigantes. However, the

---

62 *Bede* *V.Cuth* 27. In the anonymous *Life* (*Anon.V.Cuth* IV.8), Cuthbert’s tour was said to have included a Roman-built well, rather than a fountain. Both versions use of the British name Luel for Carlisle. The survival of British identity in Northumbria is discussed in Chapter 8 (*infra.*, pp. 276-86).
64 *HB* 63. The baptism of Edwin is discussed in Chapter 8 (*infra.*, pp. 271-5).
identification of Galloway as part of Rheged has been strongly rejected by John MacQueen.69 Indeed, the sources for Rheged survive only from the ninth century at the earliest, and David Dumville is not unjustified in his reference to 'mysterious Rheged'.70

A Brigantian origin has been suggested for the less mysterious British kingdom of Elmet, although not as a continuation of the former civitas, but rather as a re-emergence of a sub-group.71 Elmet appears to have covered much of the area of the modern counties of West and South Yorkshire, the south-eastern part of the old West Riding, with its core area being between the rivers Wharfe and Aire.72 The name ‘Elmet’ has been linked, not especially authoritatively, with Latin ulmo, ‘elm tree’, used in the sense of a forest.73 However, a link has also been drawn with Welsh Elfed, ‘elm-forest’, the name of a commote in south-west Wales, which might indicate a Brythonic rather than a British-Latin origin for the name.74 Andrew Breeze has most recently offered the very different meaning of ‘[those who] cut down many / the killers’, drawing on Welsh el-, ‘many’, and met-, ‘cut, harvest’.75 Bede refers to a monastery that lies in ‘Elmet Wood’, suggesting rather the validity of Elmet as being a forest name.76 Elmet’s existence as a kingdom is explicitly attested only in the Historia Brittonum, where one Ceretic/Ceredig is named as an early seventh-century king.77 Bede does supply some confirmation of Elmet’s status, however, when he refers to the ‘British king [rex Brettonum] Cerdic’, a name cognate with Ceretic, and thus probably one and the same.

69 J. MacQueen, St Nynia: With a Translation of the Miracula Nynie Episcopi and the Vita Niniani (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 60-7. He is also sceptical regarding the association of Carlisle with the putative kingdom. Carlisle is not remembered as having been the court of Urien of Rheged. Rather, in the poems of Taliesin, Urien is located at Llywenydd. This name may survive as the Lyvennet, a tributary stream of the Eden, which runs through Crosby Ravensworth south from Carlisle in Cumbria proper. See also Dark, Civitas to Kingdom, p. 72; Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 82; McCarthy, ‘Thomas, Chadwick and post-Roman Carlisle’, p. 252; Phythian-Adams, Land of the Cumbrians, p. 49.
76 HE II.14.
77 HB 63.
with the *Historia Brittonum* personage.\(^{78}\) Most significantly, Elmet is named in a fifth-to sixth-century Latin Christian stone inscription discovered near the parish church of Llanaelhaearn on the Lleyn peninsula in north-west Wales, providing contemporary verification of its existence as sub-Roman regional entity.\(^{79}\)

The reality of a sub-Roman British kingdom of Elmet has fuelled speculation regarding the existence of other British kingdoms around the Pennines, and it has been suggested that such a polity emerged in the region of Craven, encompassing the Yorkshire Dales.\(^{80}\) Other propositions for British polities include Catraeth and Leeds (*Loidis*), and the *Pecsaetan* included in the *Tribal Hidage*.\(^{81}\) It is certainly possible that a patchwork of small polities emerged within erstwhile Britannia, which may or may not have achieved the status of a kingdom, and which may subsequently have been forgotten.\(^{82}\) It would not be stretching credibility to suppose that one or more British ‘mountain strongholds’ may have emerged in the Pennines after the end of Roman rule.\(^{83}\) But no record has survived of other kingdoms descending from the old Roman province in the north. And

\(^{78}\) *HE* IV.23. The obit of a ‘Ceredig’ is included in the *AC* s.a. 616. This is likely to be a reference to the same person, though it should be acknowledged that Ceredig is a common name for this period. See Breeze, ‘The kingdom and name of Elmet’, p. 168. Breeze (pp. 166-71) also presents a detailed discussion of two poems attributed to Taliesin which concern Gwallog, possibly the father of Ceretic, who is remembered as a ruler in Elmet. One Gwallog also participated in the siege of Lindisfarne (*HB* 63; *infra.*, pp. 189-91).

\(^{79}\) The inscription reads: ALIORTVS ELMETIACO / HIC IACET, ‘Aliortus, a man from Elmet, lies here’ (*ECMW*, no. 87). See Gruffydd, ‘In search of Elmet’, p. 68; Jones, ‘Early territorial organisation in Gwynedd and Elmet’, pp. 3-4. It is curious that no memorial stones survive from Elmet itself, as they do from Wales, from the south-west and from southern Scotland.

\(^{80}\) Wood, ‘On the little British kingdom of Craven’, pp. 1-20. Craven, within the old West Riding would have abutted the north-west boundary of Elmet (M. Faull, ‘Place-names and the Kingdom of Elmet’, *Nomina* 4, 1980, p. 21; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 83). The earliest reference is in *Domesday Book*, where Cravescire is counted as a wapentake, and it appears to have survived as a distinct region until at least the mid-seventeenth century (Faull, ‘Place-names and the Kingdom of Elmet’, p. 21; Wood, ‘On the little British kingdom of Craven’, pp. 1, 3). Wood has argued for Craven being of sub-Roman British origin, largely by drawing comparison with other similarly sized British *regiones* such as Manaw Gododdin in Scotland and Brycheiniog, Ergyng and Gwent in Wales. The case for Craven being a British kingdom rests principally on the name, which according to Wood (p. 1) is ‘universally seen as British Celtic (i.e. no suitable Germanic derivation can be found)’. E. Ekwall, *DEPN*, p. 129, suggested an association with Welsh *craf*, ‘garlic’, but Wood prefers other words with *craf*- as the first element, such as *crafu*, ‘to scratch/to scrape’, giving a meaning for Craven something approximating ‘the scratched/scraped land’. No history nor dynastic information nor pre-*Domesday* place-name evidence survives, however, regarding the hypothetical kingdom of Craven. Its existence might, therefore, be compared with the purportedly British *Birneich* and *Deur*: possible but not to be found within historical record.


indeed, most of the time, the sources simply refer to the Brittones/Britanni and their kings in a generic sense, without locating them within a specific kingdom or region.  

Immediately north of Hadrian’s Wall, up to the Antonine Wall along the Forth-Clyde line, it could be reasoned that the British Celtic peoples would have maintained some social contact with the Romans to the south and thus been influenced by Roman culture. However, a form of ‘native governance’ which had its roots in Iron-Age chieftainship would more likely have survived through the Roman period – much more so than south of the Wall – and as Roman authority ceased in Britain, chieftains could well have evolved into kings.

The most widely-cited example of this eventuality is the re-emergence of the Roman-period tribe of the Votadini as the kingdom of the Gododdin. Votadini territory originally seems to have covered the Lothians, Scottish Borders and parts of Northumberland, stretching between the Forth and the Tyne. Yet the kingdom of the Gododdin, celebrated in the poem Y Gododdin, was based only in Lothian, specifically at Din Eidyn (Edinburgh). Events described in the poem, if authentic, have been taken to indicate that the kingdom should be dated to the second half of the sixth century. Thus, in the interim, British control in the region must have given way to Bernician northward expansion. Y Gododdin, surviving as it does only in a thirteenth-century manuscript, is a difficult source on which to posit the existence of a sub-Roman kingdom. It is of some comfort that the Historia Brittonum contains a reference to

---

84 This is true of both the Anglo-Saxon and Ionan Latin writers, such as Bede and Adomnán.
85 Evidence for contact comes from the Roman material found north of Hadrian’s Wall, such as coins and pottery found at Traprain Law in the territory of the Votadini. See Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 15.
88 Kirby, ‘Strathclyde and Cumbria’, p. 79; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 9.
Manaw Gododdin (Manau Guotodin), the homeland of Cunedda, the putative ancestor of the kings of the north Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd.\textsuperscript{92} Thus, the name does exist in a separate source. Manaw is generally taken to have been either a sub-kingdom, or at least a region, within the territory of the Gododdin, around the head of the Firth of Forth.\textsuperscript{93} Although the name Gododdin is barely attested, it would probably be churlish to insist that a sub-Roman polity of that name below the Firth of Forth never existed.\textsuperscript{94}

In terms of other tribes immediately north of Hadrian's Wall, it has already been canvassed that the territory of the Selgovae and Novantae may have been subsumed into the kingdom of Rheged.\textsuperscript{95} However, the uncertainties surrounding the territory of Rheged mean that caution is required regarding the nature of political organisation in the region of Galloway. Farther north again was the territory of the Damnonii, occupying the Clyde Valley and probably encompassing the modern region of Strathclyde.\textsuperscript{96} Though this tribe occupied land between the Roman Walls, the level of Romanisation was probably the least of all the tribes in the region, being the most inaccessible from the south. Due to their coincident location, it could be presumed that the Damnonii were the progenitors of the later kingdom of Strathclyde, with its base at Ail Cluaithe or Alcluith, 'rock of the Clyde' (Dumbarton Rock on the north bank of the Clyde estuary).\textsuperscript{97} Nicholas Higham links the names Dumbarton and Damnonii; Tim Clarkson, on the other hand, notes the more plausible suggestion of Dumbarton deriving

\textsuperscript{92} HB 62. The historicity of this migration is controversial. See Dark, \textit{Civitas to Kingdom}, pp. 75-6; Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain', pp. 181-2; R.G. Gruffydd, 'From Gododdin to Gwynedd: reflections on the story of Cunedda', \textit{SC} 24-25 (1989-90), pp. 1-14; Miller, 'The foundation legend of Gwynedd', pp. 515-32. Manaw Gododdin may have been specified so as not to create confusion with Manaw, as it is used to refer to the Isle of Man (see HB 8).

\textsuperscript{93} Gruffydd, 'From Gododdin to Gwynedd', p. 2; Kirby, \textit{Earliest English Kings}, p. 69. A battle at the 'Plain of Mono' is recorded in the \textit{AU} s.a. 711, and the name appears to have survived in Clackmannanshire, 'shire of the stone of Manaw' (R. Sharpe, \textit{Adomnan of Iona, Life of St Columba}, Harmondsworth, 1995, p. 269; Wood, 'On the little British kingdom of Craven', p. 11). The \textit{ASC} MS. E s.a., 710, refers to a battle in the same region, having been fought between the rivers Avon and Carron.

\textsuperscript{94} Dumville, 'The idea of government in sub-Roman Britain', p. 210, prefers to cite continuity at the Traprain Law site and the 'conspicuous consumption of Roman material', as well as at other sites within the territory of the Votadini, as evidence for a polity, versus the documentary sources.

\textsuperscript{95} Supra., p. 151.


\textsuperscript{97} Alcock, \textit{Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons}, pp. 12-13; A. Macquarrie, 'The kings of Strathclyde, c.400-1018', in A. Grant & K.J. Stringer (ed.), \textit{Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community; Essays Presented to G. W.S. Barrow} (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 2-3. Alcluith is the spelling which is found in Bede (e.g. HE 1.1, I.12), and also in the later \textit{Armes Prydein Vawr}, line 151 (from I. Williams, & R. Bromwich, eds. & trans., \textit{Armes Prydein: The Prophecy of Britain; from The Book of Taliesin}, Dublin, 1972).
from *Dun Breatann*, 'fortress of the Britons'.98 Indeed, in his description of Britain, Bede talks of a 'very strongly fortified British town called *Alcluith*'.99

The status of Strathclyde as an early kingdom – or probably more accurately *Alcluith*, as *Strathclyde* is a later development in the nomenclature100 – is one which may be deduced from later surviving sources. It has been suggested that the recipient of a letter from St. Patrick, 'milites Corotici', sent some time in the second half of the fifth century, was actually a king of Strathclyde.101 In the capitula to Muirchú's *Life* of the saint, contained in the *Book of Armagh* of c.800, Patrick's recipient is described as 'Coirthech [Coroticus] rex Aloo'.102 *Aloo* is the genitive singular of Old Irish *ail*, 'rock', which gives the first element of *Alcluith*. The later reference is problematic, and certainly Patrick did not specify Coroticus's kingdom. However, Patrick did denounce him for allying with Scots and Picts, which would place him in the north.103 Coroticus could be the same person as Ceredig Wledig, who appears in the Harleian pedigrees of Strathclyde, c.1100.104 If these identifications are correct, it could be deduced that a kingdom emerged in the fifth century. In any event, there certainly seems to have been such an entity in the second half of the sixth century, as St. Columba, then on Iona, received an embassy from Roderc son of Tothail, a king of *Petra Cloithe*, which in this case combines the Latin *petra* with an early form of *Cluaithe*.105 This is a respectable corpus of information to support the existence of an early medieval British kingdom.


99 *HE* I.1. See also *HE* I.12: '... the town of *Alcluith*, a name which in their language means *Petram Cluit* [Clyde Rock] because it stands near the river of that name'.

100 The earliest surviving reference to a form of 'Strathclyde' is in the *AU* s.a. 872, as *Sratha Cluade*. At a similar time the *ASC* MS. A s.a. 875 records *Straeclad Walas*; MS. E, *Straetlaed Wealas*. The name *Akluith* is not recorded after this time; see P.A. Wilson, 'On the use of the terms "Strathclyde" and "Cumbria"', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series 66 (1966), pp. 64, 70-6. I will continue to refer to the kingdom as 'Strathclyde' as this is what is most often used in the literature.


103 Patrick, *Epist.*, 2, 12.

104 *EWGT*, p. 10, § 5. See also Miller, 'Historicity and the pedigrees of the Northcountrymen', pp. 258-65. These genealogies occur in addition to the *HB* in *Harley MS. 3859*. They are simple lists of names in the 'X ap Y' form, and not king-lists.

105 *VC* I.15. Roderc son of Tothail is undoubtedly the Rhydderch Hael ap Tudwal of the Harleian pedigree (*EWGT*, p. 10, § 6). See Clarkson, Rhydderc Hael, pp. 1-2; Miller, 'Historicity and the
Picts

Beyond the Antonine Wall, and into the far north of Britain, lay the final British Celtic territory to discuss, namely that of the Picts. The Picts have traditionally been associated with an air of mystery, no doubt due to their apparent disappearance during the early medieval period. Yet, this very perception has long inspired interest in the Picts such that they are perhaps the most well-studied and, to quote Sally Foster, ‘well-flaunted’ people of the Celtic north. Modern assessments of the Picts tend to draw back from presenting them as being ‘enigmatic’, and favour, rather, Leslie Alcock’s position that the Picts were ‘a typical north-west European barbarian nation’. The Picts are now simply considered to be the British Celts who lived north of the Antonine Wall, though it is worth noting that Bede counted the Pictish language as being different from that of the Britons. The name Pict — from Latin *Picti* — first occurs at the end of the third century, in a Roman imperial panegyric. The meaning of the term is obscure. The traditional explanation is that *Picti* was a Roman nickname signifying ‘the painted ones’, presumably because the Picts dyed or tattooed their skin. However, its usage, in practice, probably meant nothing more than ‘the barbarians of north…'

Britain'. This usage could be equated with Tacitus's *Caledonia*, an umbrella term which he employed in the A.D. 90's to refer to the whole territory beyond the Forth-Clyde line. There is no surviving indication of the vernacular name, if any, that the Picts had for themselves, aside from references to the general name 'Priteni' for the inhabitants of the island of Britain.

Although Bede used the term *gens* to refer to the Picts, they were not a single homogeneous people, notwithstanding the possibility of regional confederacies. Roman-period authors referred to a number of different tribal groupings in the region. Ptolemy in the second century recorded as many as twelve tribal names for peoples living north of the Forth-Clyde line. According to Dio Cassius writing c.200, these tribes had merged into the two greatest: the *Caledonii* and the *Maeatae* (the latter not mentioned by Ptolemy). The *Maeatae* were said to live next to the (probably Antonine) Wall, and the *Caledonii* were located 'beyond' them. Dio Cassius may only have been describing those tribes immediately to the north of the Forth-Clyde line who raided into Roman territory.

Amniatus Marcellinus, in the second half of the fourth century, also recorded two groups of Picts, in this case the *Dicalydones* and *Verturiones*, and again his phrasing suggests that he was referring only to the tribes who

---


113 Tacitus, *Agricola* 10. See also Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, p. 120; Bruford, 'What happened to the Caledonians?', pp. 43-4. *Caledonia* derives from a native tribal name *Calidones*.

114 Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 80, 129-30; idem., 'Picts — the name and the people', p. 12; Bruford, 'What happened to the Caledonians?', pp. 44-5; Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, p. 59. Much confusion has occurred over an Irish name that was used for the Picts, namely, the *Cruithentuath* (e.g. *AU* 866). The similar name *Cruithin* was used for certain peoples in north-east Ireland (e.g. *AU* 807), and therefore it has often been assumed that there were Picts in Ireland. But, these Irish peoples were never called Picts in the sources; this is a fallacy which originated in the seventeenth century, no doubt due to the ambiguous nature of the Irish name.

115 *HE* I.1.

116 The information was probably collected around the time of Agricola's northern campaigns in the AD 80's, and most of the tribal names do not appear again. See Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, p. 120; Bruford, 'What happened to the Caledonians?', p. 44; Foster, *Picts, Gaels and Scots*, p. 11; Higham, *Kingdom of Northumbria*, p. 44.

117 Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, p. 124; idem., 'Picts — the name and the people', p. 7, notes a panegyric of 310: 'Calidones and other Picti'.

118 The *Maeatae* appear to have survived into the late sixth century as a grouping centred in the old Stirlingshire referred to by Adomnán as the *Miathi* (*VC* I.8, I.9). Two place-names are thought to preserve the name: Dumyat, north-east of Stirling, and Myot Hill, just south of the Forth but still north of the Antonine Wall (Bruford, 'What happened to the Caledonians?', p. 45; Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, p. 42; Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 268-9). As for the *Caledonii*, there is a grouping of place-names in Perthshire situated around the upper Tay and its tributaries, such as Dunkeld and Rohallion, which may locate the tribe. This would associate the *Caledonii* with the old region of Atholl (Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 120, 143). Note that Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, p. 42, prefers to think of the *Caledonii* as a tribal confederacy rather than a specific tribal name.
were actually engaged in raiding. It is of course as raiders that the Picts of the sub-Roman period are most frequently mentioned, for instance by Patrick, Gildas, Bede, and the author of the Historia Brittonum. These Latin sources continue to apply the name Picti in a generalised sense; though Bede does echo the earlier conception of the Picts being divided into two groups, referring to ‘the provinces of the northern Picts [provinciae septentrionalium Pictorum]’, which are separated from the ‘southern Picts [australes Picti]’ by a range of steep and rugged mountains.

Notwithstanding the existence of several versions of a Pictish king-list, probably deriving from a common source of the mid-eighth century, the first independently-sourced Pictish king is dated to the second half of the sixth century. This is Bridei (Bruide) son of Meilochon, who was visited by Columba at his fortress above the River Ness, and whose death is recorded in the Annals of Ulster for 584. The extent of dominion of the kings of the Picts is difficult to determine, specifically as to whether it was localised or expressed a larger overlordship. Bridei appears to have exercised some form of overlordship; Adomnan says that the regulus of Orkney was subject to him. Other kings are attached to more specific regions, such as Fortriu (between the Forth

---

119 Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, p. 126; Bruford, 'What happened to the Caledonians?', p. 45. Dicalydones is a variation on Caledonii, perhaps meaning ‘double Caledonians’, and thus implying two groupings. Verturiones is thought to have persisted in the regional name Fortriu (often rendered as the genitive Fortrenn), attested to in the AU s.a. 664, 693, 736, 768. See also Anderson, ‘Picts – the name and the people’, p. 7; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, pp. 43-4. A variation of the name Caledonii appears in the HB 56 as Coit Celidon, one of the battle-sites attributed to Arthur.

120 For example, DEB 19.1, 21.1-2; HE I.12, I.14; HB 31.

121 HE III.4. It is possible that Bede was merely making a geographical distinction here, with no implication regarding political organisation or political separateness (see Anderson, 'Picts – the name and the people', pp. 10). The range referred to could be the Grampians; K. Hughes, 'Early Christianity in Pictland', in idem., Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages (Woodbridge, 1980), p. 38, however, regards it to have been the Mounth, the range running roughly east-west south of Aberdeen and the Dee. Elsewhere Bede talks of the 'provinces of the Picts [Pictorum provincias]' (HE V.21), also indicating a belief in there being more than one grouping.

122 Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, pp. 77-102, discusses two groups of essentially independent Pictish king-lists which derive from a common source written down not long after c.724, after the reign of Nechtan son of Derile. The versions diverge after this point. The best exemplar of the king-list is contained in the Poppleton Manuscript, written in York c.1360 (now Paris Bib. Nat. MS. Latin 4126, fos. 27r34-28r.a29). See also Anderson, 'Picts – the name and the people', p. 9; Hughes, 'Where are the writings of early Scotland?', in idem., Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages, pp. 5-10; idem., 'Early Christianity in Pictland', pp. 41-5; M. Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', NH 14 (1978), p. 50.

123 VC II.33, II.35. Bridei’s fortress may be Craig Phàdrig, west of Inverness, which shows evidence of sub-Roman occupation. See Anderson, 'Picts – the name and the people', p. 9; Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 335 n. 294. It could be implied from Bede (HE III.4) that Bridei, whom he calls a rex potentissimus, was the first king of the Picts to convert to Christianity, though in the VC this is not explicitly stated (Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 31; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 103).

124 VC II.42. See also Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, pp. 32, 342 n. 324. Note AU 682, in which the Orkneys were ‘destroyed [delete sunt]’ by Bruide (Bridei), son of Derile. See also HE V.21, where Bede states that Nechtan ordered the adoption of the new Easter tables ‘throughout all provinces of the Picts [per universas Pictorum provincias]’, c.710.
and the Tay and identified with Forteviot) and Atholl (in Perth & Kinross), though this does not necessarily preclude overlordship of other areas. For most of the pre-Viking period, however, the *Annals of Ulster*, from which most of the information regarding Pictish affairs is derived, simply records variations on the non-specific *rex Pictorum*—at least when a title is used. It is erroneous, however, to take this appellation as representative of a stable Pictish political hegemony, despite the evidence of Pictish symbol stones perhaps indicating some level of cultural cohesion across the far north.

### Scots

To the west of the Picts was the territory of the last of the Celtic peoples of the north to be discussed, namely, the people of ‘Scottish’ *Dál Riata*, now usually written ‘Dalriada’. Dalriada was not a native British kingdom, but rather emerged through immigration from north-eastern Ireland, specifically from the small Irish territory of *Dál Riata* from which the kingdom in northern Britain was named. The Dalriadans were Gaelic Celts, who spoke a q-Celtic language which differed from that of their p-Celtic-speaking neighbours. Latin writers, such as Bede and Adomnán, referred to the people of Dalriada as *Scotti*, following Classical convention for naming the inhabitants

---

125 For example, Bruide (Bridei) son of Bile, king of *Fortriu* (AU 693), Talorgan son of Drost/Drostan, king of *Athfoitle* or Atholl (AU 739). Archaeological evidence does indicate that settlement in Pictland was most dense in these two regions, being concentrated in the modern counties of Fife, Angus and Perth & Kinross (Foster, *Picts, Gaels and Scots*, pp. 15-17). I have not here considered the evidence of the twelfth-century *De Situ Albanie*, which talks of Pictland being divided into seven regions named after the seven sons of the eponymous Cruithne. See Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 139-45; D. Broun, ‘The seven kingdoms in *De situ Albanie*: a record of Pictish political geography or imaginary map of ancient Alba?’, in Cowan & McDonald, *Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages*, pp. 24-42; Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, pp. 69-70.

126 For example, *AU* s.a.a. 580, 584, 629, 631, 653, 657, 713, 729, 736, 761, 775.


129 M.R. Nieke & H.B. Duncan, ‘Dalriada: the establishment and maintenance of an early historic kingdom in northern Britain’, in Driscoll & Nieke, *Power and Politics in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland*, p. 6. E. Campbell, ‘Were the Scots Irish?’, *Antiquity* 75 (2001), pp. 285-92, has recently argued for a reassessment of the origins Dalriada, hypothesising that this area of western Scotland may have been part of a Gaelic-speaking zone from as far back as the Iron-Age. Under this view, the ‘migration’ of a large body Gaelic-speakers becomes unnecessary and is reinterpreted as an elite origin myth.

130 Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 334, n. 286. Adomnán, for example, mentions on two occasions that St. Columba used an interpreter when talking with Picts (*VC* I.33, II.32). Note also Bede’s list (*HE* I.1) of the languages of Britain, which includes Irish (literally, the language of the *Scotti*).
of Ireland. Gradually through the middle ages the related term *Scotia*, which had sometimes described Ireland, came to be applied exclusively to northern Britain.

The genesis and extent of the kingdom of Dalriada is something of a matter of debate. From the principal documentary source for early Dalriada, the *Senchus fer nAlban*, it has traditionally been asserted that Dalriada was founded in Argyll by Fergus Mór mac Eirc. Certainly Fergus Mór is associated in other sources, such as the *Tripartite Life of Patrick* of c.900, with the beginning of Irish migration to Britain, and later surviving Scottish king-lists have him as the ‘*primus in Scotia regnavit*’. However, it is now more usually asserted that Irish involvement in the region began prior to the traditional date of c.500, and that the arrival of Fergus Mór represents the establishment of a ruling dynasty from northern Ireland: a genealogical statement rather than a description of a specific instance of a folk-migration. Indeed, for Gildas it was the *Picti* from the north and the *Scotti* from the north-west, ‘savage overseas (sic) nations’, who despoiled late-Roman and sub-Roman Britain. These raids no doubt led to permanent settlement which was independent of the leadership of the dynasty of Fergus Mór, and the possibility of even earlier intercourse across the Irish Sea is not out of the question; Northern Ireland and the Mull of Kintyre are only separated by approximately twenty kilometres of sea.

131 For example, *HE* I.1; *VC* II.46. Irish literary sources from the late eighth century onwards, which were written in Old Irish, use the word *Ériu* for Ireland and *Gaedheal* (or Gael) for the people. See M. Richter, *Medieval Ireland: The Enduring Tradition* (New York, 1988), pp. 7-9, 12.


133 Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, pp. 73-5; Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’, p. 5. The earliest exemplars are four eleventh-century Irish lists, and derivations from a twelfth-century Anglo-Norman Latin list.


135 *DEB* 14.1, 19.1. It is noteworthy that Gildas (*DEB* 21.1) also refers to ‘pirates/robbers living in Ireland [*grassatores Hiberni domos*]’. D.N. Dumville (pers. comm., cited in Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, p. 45) asserts that raiding *Scotti* were not a problem for Roman Britain until the late fourth century. Indeed, P. Bartholomew, ‘Fourth century Saxons’, *Britannia* 15 (1984), pp. 173-7, reassessed the earlier so-called ‘Barbarian Conspiracy’ of 367, and concluded that the *Scotti*, and Saxones, were not involved.

136 Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 134-5; Richter, *Medieval Ireland*, pp. 29-30. Irish settlement was also occurring at the same time in Wales, and probably Cornwall.
The nomenclature used for Fergus Mór's kingdom is not clear, and to quote Archibald Duncan, 'We are so accustomed to the name “Dalriada” cast across Argyll on historical maps of Scotland that the very slender basis for this attribution for early times scarcely registers'. Indeed, the two main narrative sources for Dalriada, Adomnán's *Life of Columba* and the *Senchus fer nAlban*, do not refer to the kingdom in this way.

Adomnán, as alluded to above, refers only to the 'Scotti of Britain'. The *Senchus*, while containing a reference to 'Irish' *Dál Riata*, includes the later accretion *Alba* or *Albania*. In the various collections of Irish annals there is certainly room for confusion as to when *Dál Riata* should refer to the 'Irish' or the 'Scottish' portion, and certain cases for the latter are infrequent. The earliest reference to one of Fergus Mór's descendants as 'king of Dalriada' is in the *Annals of Ulster* under the year 629; but here, the context — a notice of a battle in Ireland in which the king died — almost demands such an elaboration. Kings are more frequently identified by mention of the length of their reigns. By the time Bede was writing, however, it does appear that the region was known more widely as Dalriada; as he records, 'They are still called

---

137 Duncan, 'Bede, Iona and the Picts', p. 3. It is also worth noting that the evidence for Dunadd being the main stronghold of the Dalriadians is not as strong as is often supposed. See Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, p. 113; Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 291 n. 136.

138 *VCII*.46.


140 The earliest version of the various Irish chronicles, conventionally referred to as the 'Iona Chronicle', named for where it was begun; see, for example, Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, p. 9; Duncan, 'Bede, Iona and the Picts', p. 2; H. Moisl, 'The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish in the seventh century', *Peritia* 2 (1983), p. 106; D. Ó Cróinín, 'Early Irish annals from Easter-tables: a case restated', *Peritia* 2 (1983), p. 84; Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 7. This now-lost model appears to have been transported from Iona to Ireland some time after c.740, as the entries relating to Britain drop off dramatically at this point (Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, pp. 25-6). The Iona Chronicle subsequently formed the basis of the later chronicles — perhaps in conjunction with a northern Irish chronicle from Bangor — most fully represented in the *Annals of Ulster* (Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, pp. 25-6; Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 99, 116; Moisl, 'The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish', p. 106). The different Irish chronicles do not begin to diverge until the early tenth century, thus suggesting a common source up to that point (Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, p. 1; D.N. Dumville, 'On editing and translating medieval Irish chronicles: the *Annals of Ulster*, *CMCS* 10, 1985, p. 83). The most important MS. of the *Annals of Ulster* is Trinity College, Dublin, 1282 H.I.8 (from the fifteenth century), but there is agreement that the entries made on Iona can be regarded as contemporaneous from c.670 to 880, coinciding with the beginning of Adomnán's abbacy (Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, p. 138; Moisl, 'The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish', p. 108; J.M. Picard, 'Bede, Adomnán and the writing of history', *Peritia* 3, 1984, p. 54). Earlier records may have been kept, even if not as formal annals (Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 118).

141 *AU* s.a.

142 Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, p. 105 n. 5. Other references are *AU* s.aa. 673, 700, 778, 781, 792. Duncan, 'Bede, Iona and the Picts', p. 3, states that the first certain use in the *AU* of *Dál Riata* to refer to the 'Scottish' kingdom is a battle s.a. 704.

Dalreudini ... daal in their language signifying a part'. The ruling dynasty was known as the Cenél nGabrāín, within which there were further clans.

The amount of territory under the control of Dalriada no doubt expanded throughout the sixth century and beyond. The difficulty in distinguishing a distinctive and datable Dalriadan versus Pictish material culture means that archaeological evidence cannot be used to map the spread of Dalriadan control. Beyond the evidence of Pictish symbol stones, which are barely found in Argyll and much of the west, it is nearly impossible to identify whether any particular site was either Pictish or Dalriadan. Place-name evidence is complicated by Scandinavian involvement from the ninth century, but in any event only provides an indication that Pictish names occur broadly in the east, and early Gaelic names occur in Argyll and nearby islands. From the Senchus fer nAlban, which contains something of a 'civil survey', it is possible to gather that Dalriadan territory covered the mainland regions of Kintyre, Argyll, and Lorne, and some of the southern islands of the Inner Hebrides, such as Bute, Arran, Jura and Islay. Bede said that the Scotti established themselves as far as the northern shore of the Firth of Clyde, and the district of Cowal probably represented their easterly limit. From Adomnán's Life of Columba, it can be deduced that Dalriadans in Columba’s time resided in Ardnamurchan, Morvern, Iona and probably Mull, Coll and Tiree. The extent of control farther north, however, is harder to establish, and it is not clear the extent to which the north-west mainland, as well as Skye and the Outer Hebrides, came...

---

144 HE I.1. Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, p. 3, and Bannerman, Studies in the History of Dalriada, p. 123, credit this information as coming from an Irish source. Nieke & Duncan, ‘Dalriada’, p. 9, also take this statement to support their contention that Fergus Mór was indeed not the originator of Irish settlement in Dalriada.


146 I will continue to use ‘Dalriada’ and ‘Dalriadan’ as general terms for the people of this kingdom, as well as the term ‘Scot(s)’, so as to distinguish them from the people of Ireland. My use of the term Scot should, therefore, not be interpreted in its modern sense, but to refer solely to the inhabitants of Dalriada.

147 Foster, Picts, Gaels and Scots, pp. 25-9, raises questions over what distinctively Dalriadan versus Pictish evidence we should realistically expect to find, especially given current arguments that the Irish did not arrive in a large-scale migration. An influx of specifically Irish material, under this theory, should not even have occurred.

148 Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, p. 129, also notes that the absence of Pictish symbol stones in Dalriada need not indicate that they should only be dated to after c.500. The people in the west may never have been makers of symbol stones; so the lack of them in Dalriada may tell nothing of Dalriadan expansion.


151 HE I.1.
under Dalriadan control during the sixth century, if at all.\textsuperscript{153} Adomnán treated Drui\textit{m Alb\textsuperscript{n}}n, the Highland range, as the east-west boundary between the Dalriadans and Picts.\textsuperscript{154} However, territorial boundaries in the north-west remain vague to us.

Summary

It has been possible to identify at least six northern Celtic kingdoms that emerged during the centuries after Roman authority ceased in Britain. Nearly all of these abutted Northumbria at one time or another, as will be shown, and thus were to come into direct contact with the Anglo-Saxons. Dalriada is the exception, but the influence of this kingdom on Northumbria, and \textit{vice versa}, was to be felt in other ways. It should be noted that the Northumbrians also interacted with the British kingdoms of Wales, which will be examined in Chapter 11.

The existence of so many Celtic kingdoms, of course, adds a level of complexity when considering interactions with the Northumbrians, who themselves did not always necessarily share a single identity. There is evidence in the Dalriadan sources, such as Adomnán’s \textit{Life of Columba} and the \textit{Annals of Ulster}, that the different peoples of Anglo-Saxon England were considered to be of the same \textit{gens}, as is apparent in the pervasive use of the terms \textit{Saxones} and \textit{Saxonia}, versus more specific ethnic names.\textsuperscript{155} The Britons and Picts may have thought the same, though the lack of sources bedevils any certainty here.\textsuperscript{156} Nevertheless, the reality of multiple political entities opens up the possibility of specific alliances being formed between Anglo-Saxons and Celts against other Celts – or other Anglo-Saxons for that matter – something that was not encountered in the case of south-west of Britain, in which only Wessex and Dumnonia could be identified. Such an eventuality may reveal a more diverse range of attitudes and interactions.

\textsuperscript{152} VC I.41, I.46, II.20, II.22.
\textsuperscript{153} Certainly, in Adomnán’s time a church was established at Applecross, opposite Skye (\textit{AU} 671, 673).
\textsuperscript{154} VC II.46. See Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, pp. 17-22, p. 332 n. 283, p. 349 n. 347.
\textsuperscript{156} The term \textit{Lloegr} which is found in late-surviving poetry such as \textit{Y Gododdin}, and in the \textit{Trioedd Ynys Prydein}, has been taken to refer ‘England’. As the term seems to mean ‘having a nearby border’, however, there is a degree of ambiguity regarding how it should be interpreted in any given instance. The specific meaning as ‘England’ may only have been a later development. See Cessford, ‘The death of Æthelfrith of \textit{Lloegr}’, p. 181; \textit{idem.}, ‘Northern Britain and the Gododdin poem’, pp. 218-19; E.P. Hamp, ‘\textit{Lloegr}: the Welsh name for England’, \textit{CMCS} 4 (1982), pp. 83-5.
Chapter 7

Warfare, Conquest and Territorial Expansion

In examining relations between the Northumbrians and the Celtic-speaking peoples of northern Britain, it should come as no surprise that a regular mode of interaction appears to have been warfare. Leslie Alcock has noted that the written sources provide the impression that warfare was the major social activity of the peoples of the north, between themselves as well as with their neighbours. While there is no sequential ‘blow by blow’ account of warfare, as was provided by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the south of Britain, Anglo-Celtic hostility remains a continuing theme in the sources for the pre-Viking north. Indeed, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic annals and narrative sources contain many references to battles, as well as to general antipathy and expressions of subjugation and overlordship. Welsh heroic poetry such as Y Gododdin elegised warfare between Britons and Northumbrians, continuing the memory of fierce fighting between them. And such a bellicose state of affairs might be expected for a period during which the political and ethnic landscape was being regularly redefined.

There is no need to doubt, therefore, that warfare occurred between the Northumbrians and northern Celts. What is more pertinent, rather, is the nature of the warfare. Warfare, or the threat of it, might fulfil a number of purposes. In addition to the motivation of territorial expansion and land-taking, wars might be fought for functions such as the seizure of war-loot and hostages; to impose overlordship and enforce the payment of tribute; to maintain frontiers, and to exact retribution. To what extent did warfare between Northumbrians and northern Celts fulfil these different functions? And did this vary depending upon the specific Celtic people with which the Northumbrians were interacting? These questions will be examined for Northumbrian relations with, respectively, the Britons, the Picts and the Scots of Dalriada.

5 Supra., p. 33.
Northumbrians and Northern Britons

The Britons were in the forefront of Northumbrian expansion. The sub-Roman period witnessed the spread of Anglo-Saxon influence north of the Humber and west to the Pennines, and there was a steady loss of territory under British control.\(^6\) While the skeletal accounts of this period provided by Gildas, Bede and the *Historia Brittonum* can be questioned on matters of detail, they portray territorial expansion as having often been accompanied by violence.\(^7\) If the physical expression of power was necessary in the formation of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms,\(^8\) then expansion and land-taking from Britons may have occurred forcibly at this time. Successful kingship would certainly have been founded upon the wealth that was gained.\(^9\)

When considering the written evidence, territorial expansion and subjugation for tribute-gathering appear to have been early motivators for warfare between Northumbrians and Britons. The first Northumbrian king for whom any reliable detail survives, Æthelfrith (c.592-616), is portrayed as very much the war leader.\(^10\) It is in respect of Æthelfrith that Bede provides the first unambiguous evidence of Northumbrian aggression against the British. In the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede describes Æthelfrith's activities thus:

> He ravaged [*vastavit*] the Britons [*gentem Brettonum*] more extensively than any other English ruler. He might indeed be compared with Saul who was once King of Israel ... He overran a greater area than any other leader [*tribunus*] or king, exterminating or enslaving the inhabitants [*exterminatis vel subiugatis indigenis*], making their lands either tributary to the English [*tributarias genti Anglorum*] or ready for settlement [*habitabiles fecit*].\(^11\)

Æthelfrith is thus presented as a successful warrior-king — a *rex fortissimus* — who was responsible for substantial encroachments into British territory.\(^12\) To be sure, it is currently unfashionable to take Bede's reference to extermination literally; for a variety

\(^6\) Supra., pp. 144-6.
\(^8\) Supra., p. 32.
\(^11\) *HE* I.34 (in the second excerpt, I have taken a more literal translation than Colgrave and Mynors).
of reasons it is not considered likely that Æthelfrith would have wanted to completely kill off the native British population. And indeed, it has been pointed out that Æthelfrith’s nickname in the Historia Brittonum – Flesaur, ‘the Artful’ – does not suggest that he was remembered as a ‘butcher of Britons’. Nevertheless, this does not negate Bede’s account that Æthelfrith’s activities against the Britons were hostile.

There are a number of points of speculation which arise from Bede’s passage. To begin with, what can be deduced from the statement that Æthelfrith made British lands ready for Northumbrian settlement? At the very least, this could suggest that Æthelfrith had killed or expelled local British kings or chieftains and their warbands so as to be able to award ‘estates’ – in whatever form these existed – to favoured members of his own warrior aristocracy. Certainly, there is evidence in the seventh century for the transfer of estates with their inhabitants. Thus, Bede’s ‘making ready’ may only have meant the expulsion of the so-called warrior elite of the Britons. However, the statement could also mean that ‘peasant’ Britons were removed, possibly from more attractive land parcels, so that these could be occupied by ethnic Anglo-Saxon settlers. At least some settlers would have been necessary for the successful absorption of new territory under Anglo-Saxon control.

The work of Margaret Faull may shed some light here. In two studies, Faull examined the distribution of wealth place-names in Northumbria, for example, Walmire, Walden

---

12 M. Miller, ‘Eanfrith’s Pictish son’, NH 14 (1978), p. 57, stated that Æthelfrith’s activities appear to have been accomplished with ‘an unaided sufficiency of nastiness’.
17 For example, Wilfrid was given eighty-seven hides of land at Selsey in the 680s by King Æthelwalh of the South Saxons, which included ‘all the stock on it, along with fields and men’ (HE IV.13). See also VW 41, and the discussion by Faith, English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship, p. 18; M. Welch, ‘The kingdom of the South Saxons: the origins’, in Bassett, Origins, p. 79.
18 Supra., pp. 56-7.
or Walton. Faull was able to show that where wealh-names survive within Northumbria, they tend to lie either just off the best land for settlement (as occurs in the eastern half of North Yorkshire) or in more isolated upland regions (as occurs in the west of North Yorkshire and in West and South Yorkshire). This suggests, first of all, that the Britons were not completely exterminated, otherwise there would not have been any wealh-names, though their limited number does imply that British communities, identified as such, were not common. But Faull’s analysis shows that there must have been some level of Anglo-Saxon settlement within former British territory, otherwise the wealh-names would not have been ascribed in the first place and subsequently recorded. Most significantly, Faull’s findings demonstrate that, at least in some regions, the Northumbrians took their pick of the prime farming land, with identifiable British communities occupying the sites which were left over. Thus, it is entirely possible that Æthelfrith did move off more than just the British elite, so that Northumbrian settlers could take up the attractive land. The two eventualities are not mutually exclusive; some areas may have seen the expulsion only of the elite, other areas may have seen peasant farmers moved off as well.

A further point of speculation regarding Æthelfrith is Bede’s explicit differentiation between those regions that Æthelfrith made ready for English settlement and those that he made tributary. The former, presumably, came under direct Northumbrian rule with appointed subreguli or ealdormen. But the latter appear to have been part of a wider Northumbrian hegemony, some of which was still under native British leadership. Thus, although Æthelfrith is not included in Bede’s list of imperium-wielding kings, the

22 The existence of subreguli and other officials such as duces regii and praefecti in Northumbria is clearly attested (e.g. HE V.24; VW 19, 60). See T.M. Charles-Edwards, ‘Early medieval kingdoms in the British Isles’, in Bassett, Origins, p. 31; Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 111.
23 HE II.5. Æthelfrith’s exclusion from Bede’s list is somewhat curious. It is unlikely to have been due to his paganism – Ælle and Caewlin were pagan kings included in the list – but rather that Æthelfrith exercised his authority at the same time as Æthelberht of Kent, and therefore was ‘edged out’
implication here is that he did exercise a degree of overlordship over certain British territories. To some degree, this is implied by his description as rex fortissimus, a superlative title which was often attributed to those exercising imperium.\textsuperscript{24} And indeed, tribute-gathering is one of the basic characteristics of overlordship.\textsuperscript{25} In addition, Bede’s reference to Æthelfrith ‘enslaving’ Britons has connotations of overlordship, as well as the more direct interpretation of slaves being taken as war-booty.\textsuperscript{26} Subiungere in fact translates better as ‘to subordinate’ or ‘to subdue’, rather than ‘to enslave’, and subordination does appear in the sources to have been described as ‘enslavement’.\textsuperscript{27} This equation of subjugation with enslavement is understandable. Thomas Charles-Edwards suggests that the exacting of tribute could be seen as making conquered people servile to an alien king, and thus in an enslaved state.\textsuperscript{28} Charles-Edwards also argues that a servile status might be exacerbated by the fact that tribute paid to an external overlord probably consisted of livestock such as cattle brought to the overlord, as opposed to the normal food renders which were given to native kings when they were on circuit.\textsuperscript{29} The act of bringing tribute to the overlord doubtless entailed some element of humiliation, especially for a Celtic king given the place of cattle-raiding in both British and Gaelic Celtic society.\textsuperscript{30} In addition, it has been argued that the payment of tribute provided less benefit for those forced to pay it than the system of food renders,

\textsuperscript{24} This is discussed in detail by Fanning, ‘Bede, imperium, and the Bretwaldas’, pp. 13, 18-19.


\textsuperscript{27} Stephen of Ripon, for example, talked of the Picts having been ‘reduced to slavery [servitus]’ by Ecgfrith, where the context strongly suggests subjugation and overlordship (VW 19). This event is discussed in more detail below (infra., pp. 209-10).


\textsuperscript{29} Charles-Edwards, ‘Early medieval kingships in the British Isles’, pp. 29-30, argues that a royal circuit did not typically include tributary kingdoms. Alcock, The Neighbours of the Picts, pp. 45-6, also notes that livestock was considered the most convenient form of tribute.

the latter more readily allowing the individual to approach and petition the king.\textsuperscript{31} It is likely, therefore, that Æthelfrith’s overlordship was a further \textit{casus belli} between Northumbrians and Britons.\textsuperscript{32} Indeed, according to Bede, Æthelfrith’s activities alarmed Aedán, king of Dalriada; it is likely that both subjugated and independent Britons would have been similarly unsettled.\textsuperscript{33}

The primary difficulty with Bede’s information about Æthelfrith and the Britons is that he provides no specifics regarding the chronology, or the direction, of expansion. While there is no need to doubt that Æthelfrith wrested territory from some of the Britons and made others pay tribute, there is little indication of the exact British kingdoms which he overran or subjugated beyond the presumption they were those with which Æthelfrith’s kingdom shared a common border. There survives in the sources reliable reference to only one specific engagement between Æthelfrith and a British army, namely, the battle of Chester, usually dated to c.613-616.\textsuperscript{34} This was the battle which for Bede acted as fulfilment of Augustine’s prophecy that the Britons ‘would one day suffer the vengeance of death’ if they did not conform to Roman rule and preach to the English. The apparent slaughter during the melee of 1200 British monks from the monastery of Bangor-is-Coed affirmed the sharp edge to the prophecy.\textsuperscript{35} Beyond this prefigured \textit{raison d’être}, the purpose of the battle is not clear.

\textsuperscript{31} Evans, \textit{Lords of Battle}, p. 129. Charles-Edwards, ‘Early medieval kingships in the British Isles’, p. 31, adds that food renders ‘retained an honourable link with hospitality’, whereas tribute was pure tax.

\textsuperscript{32} Wormald, ‘Bede, the \textit{Bretwaldas} and the origins of the \textit{Gens Anglorum}’, p. 117, talks of overlords being resented and resisted, for example, Oswiu and Ecgfrith of Northumbria by the Mercians.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{HE} 1.34.

\textsuperscript{34} The battle is most fully recorded in \textit{HE} II.2, with further notices of its occurrence in \textit{ASC} MS. A s.a. 606, MS. E s.a. 605, \textit{AC} s.a. 613, and \textit{AU} s.a. 613, but curiously not in the \textit{HB}. Bede himself provides no specific date for the battle, only that it occurred some time after the Augustine’s Oak conference which he dates to 603. Elsewhere in the passage, Bede alludes to the battle having occurred long after Augustine’s death, which happened between 604 and 609. Kirby, \textit{Earliest English Kings}, p. 72, and Yorke, \textit{Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England}, p. 83, both propose a date close to 616, the year Æthelfrith died. They provide no reasoning, though their suggestion may have been based upon an addition to the \textit{AU} entry found in the \textit{Annals of Tigernach}, stating that ‘Etalfraidh (sic) was victor and died immediately afterwards’ (all entries in the \textit{Annals of Tigernach} cited in this chapter come from the \textit{AU} edition by Mac Airt & Mac Niocaill). N.K. Chadwick, ‘The battle of Chester: a study of sources’, in \textit{idem.} (ed.), \textit{Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border} (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 167-85, who provides a full, albeit dated, discussion of the sources for the battle, suggests 616 on the basis that the \textit{AU} and \textit{AC} display a three-year antedating on a number of more securely dated seventh-century events. Thus, 613 should be 616. Chadwick regards the dates in the \textit{ASC} as erroneous inferences from Bede’s narrative.

\textsuperscript{35} The \textit{ASC}, which relied on Bede’s account, records ‘200 priests’ killed. The \textit{AU}, which possibly used a different source such as a lost Northern British annal, states only that ‘holy men were slain’. The killing of monks probably occurred, therefore, though the actual number of dead remains unknown. See Chadwick, ‘The battle of Chester’, pp. 173-5; N.J. Higham, ‘King Cearl, the battle of Chester and the origins of the Mercian “overkingship”’, \textit{Midland History} 16 (1992), p. 6.
Bede provides no unambiguous information about the leader of the Britons, nor the kingdom(s) from which they came, only that the monks from Bangor were guarded by a certain Brocmail. 36 Both the Annales Cambriae and Annals of Ulster entries for the year 613, however, while not recording Æthelfrith’s name, note the death of Selyf son of Cynan, identified in the latter as a king of the Britons. 37 Selyf ap Cynan is recorded in the Harleian Genealogies of c. 1100 as a member of the Powysian dynasty; 38 thus it is reasonable to presume that he was Æthelfrith’s antagonist. This is given further weight when it is considered that Chester would probably have been within the control of Powys at the time, in addition to the monastery of Bangor-is-Coed approximately twenty kilometres farther south. 39 That said, Æthelfrith’s reason for advancing so far to the south-west of his Bernician home-territory, and engaging with a people with whom his kingdom is unlikely to have shared a border, is a matter of some dispute. David Kirby portrayed the battle as a ‘deep thrust into disputed territory’, perhaps to protect Northumbrian settlers in Lancashire, presumably from the threat of expulsion by the ruler of Powys. 40 It is doubtful, however, that Lancashire and other territory west of the Pennines would have come under direct Northumbrian control and settlement so early, with the still-independent kingdom of Elmet remaining in the way. 41 Barbara Yorke sensibly cautions against interpreting the battle of Chester as necessarily reflecting the permanent acquisition of territory west of the Pennines; for her it seems more probable

36 In the ASC, Brocmail is rendered as either Scrocmail (MS. A), Scrocmagil (MS. F Lat), or Scromail (MSS. D and E).

37 In the AU s.a. 613, the name is rendered ‘Solon son of Conaen’. Solon is a contraction of Solomon, of which Selyf was an Old Welsh version (Chadwick, ‘The battle of Chester’, p. 172). The Annals of Tigernach s.a. 613 add the death of a king Cetula. AC s.a. 613 adds the death of lago son of Beli (grandfather of Cadwallon), though the use of dormitatio (‘sleep’) in the obit implies a non-violent death; so this might be an unrelated event.

38 EWGT, p. 12, § 22. See note 104 (supra., p. 156). In the genealogy, a Brochfael Ysgithrog appears as grandfather to Selyf ap Cynan, leading Chadwick, ‘The battle of Chester’, p. 173, to speculate that this was Bede’s Brocmail: a former king who had retired to clerical orders, and hence his choice as protector of the Bangor monks. W. Davies, Wales in the early Middle Ages (Leicester, 1982), p. 94, appears to concur.


40 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 72. He appears to rely on early place-name evidence for this deduction.

41 K.H. Jackson, Language and History in Early Britain (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 215. Indeed, Russell’s study, ‘Place-name evidence for the survival of British settlements in the West Derby Hundred’, pp. 25-41, of Celtic place-names in the West Derby Hundred of Lancashire implies that Anglian settlement occurred at a later time, such that a comparatively large number of British place-names could be passed on in a semi-literate milieu. It should be kept in mind that post-Roman Lancashire is absent from the documentary record (T. Clarkson, ‘The Gododdin revisited’, The Heroic Age 1 (1999), http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/1/haft.html#gododdin, p. 4). A. Ozanne, ‘The Peak dwellers’, Medieval Archaeology 6-7 (1962-3), p. 33, argued that there were no Anglo-Saxons in Peak District until mid-seventh century.
that this was a case of Æthelfrith enforcing overlordship of the area.\textsuperscript{42} Whether the subsequent ruler of Powys, or any other \textit{regnum} that may have existed in the west, actually rendered tribute to Æthelfrith as a consequence of the battle is not, however, recorded beyond Bede's non-specific statement.

Æthelfrith's victory at Chester does not, therefore, necessarily mark the point at which the Britons of the north were separated from those of Wales, as has often been assumed.\textsuperscript{43} Bede is silent about the result of the battle. This may simply be because he only included the event in his narrative in order to demonstrate the fulfilment of Augustine's prophecy. However, it could just as well be that there were no direct \textit{sequelae}; that any subsequent arrangements for tribute, or for Northumbrian settlement, were disrupted due to Æthelfrith's death in 616.\textsuperscript{44} Be that as it may, Æthelfrith's expansionist activities remain ill-defined. To try to shed more light on the matter, the following sections will look in more depth at the evidence for Northumbrian expansion both westwards and northwards.

**Northumbrian Expansion Westward: Elmet and Rheged**

Examining the westward expansion of Northumbrian control requires consideration of the fate of the British kingdoms of Elmet and Rheged. Elmet retained its independence during the reign of Æthelfrith. Indeed, Hereric, a nephew of Æthelfrith's rival and eventual successor Edwin, was said by Bede to have been 'living in exile under the British king Cerdic [Ceretic]', while his daughter Hild (born c.614) was in her infancy.\textsuperscript{45} This suggests that, at the time of Hereric's banishment, Elmet was still strong enough to be thought of as a safe refuge.\textsuperscript{46} The existence of several dykes in the northeast of probable Elmet territory, such as the Aberford Dyke complex and the Rudgate Dyke, have been interpreted as seventh-century defensive works against Northumbrian


\textsuperscript{43} For example, Chadwick, 'The battle of Chester', pp. 179-80; Jackson, \textit{Language and History in Early Britain}, pp. 214-5. Contra. R. Cramp, \textit{Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards} (Whithorn, 1995), p. 10; Davies, \textit{Wales in the early Middle Ages}, p. 112; \textit{idem.}, \textit{Pattern of Power in Early Wales} (Oxford, 1990), p. 63, who caution against such a view. There is also no evidence for Higham's, 'King Cearl, the battle of Chester and the origins of the Mercian "overkingship"', p. 2, \textit{idem.}, \textit{Kingdom of Northumbria}, p. 110, claim that Æthelfrith conquered territory between Strathclyde and Rheged (i.e. in Dumfries & Galloway).

\textsuperscript{44} ASC MS. E s.a. 617, though usually dated to 616. See Yorke, \textit{Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England}, pp. 76-77.

\textsuperscript{45} HE IV.23.

\textsuperscript{46} Gruffydd, 'In search of Elmet', p. 65.
incursion, though such structures are notoriously difficult to date. There is a possibility, however, that Elmet did come under Æthelfrith’s *imperium*, at least towards the end of his reign, as Bede subsequently recorded that Hereric was poisoned while still in exile. Ceretic may have been impelled to do this by Æthelfrith, who was seeking to eliminate potential rivals for the Northumbrian throne (keeping in mind that Bede does not explicitly identify the poisoner or the motive). In addition, it would be most plausible that, on advancing to Chester, Æthelfrith marched through Elmet. If not, his route, avoiding Elmet, would have been somewhat torturous. A march through Elmet would imply support, or at least acquiescence, from Ceretic. Elmet may thus be one of the British regions that Æthelfrith made ‘tributary to the English’.

Nevertheless, it is not until the reign of the Northumbrian king Edwin (616-633) that Elmet appears to have lost its independence to the aggressor. Direct notice of this eventuality only occurs in the later Welsh sources. The *Historia Brittonum* states that Edwin ‘occupied Elmet and expelled Ceretic, king of that country [occupavit Elmet et expulit Certic, regem illius regionis]’. This is certainly plausible; Edwin was included in Bede’s list of *imperium*-wielding kings, and described as ‘ruling [praefuit] over all the inhabitants of Britain, both English and Britons alike, except for Kent only’. The *Historia Brittonum*, however, provides no date for the intervention. The *Annales Cambriae* records that Ceretic, presumably of Elmet, died in 616. However, this date is probably erroneous, especially considering that the *Annales* record the beginning of Edwin’s reign under the year 617. If the *Annales* contain some records which have


48 Higham, ‘King Cearl, the battle of Chester and the origins of the Mercian “overkingship”’, p. 3; Jones, ‘Early territorial organisation in Gwynedd and Elmet’, p. 26. I would hesitate to go as far as Evans, *Lords of Battle*, p. 64 n.13, who states that ‘(Hereric’s) death was sought by Æthelfrith, who through a combination of threats and promises attempted to persuade Ceretic (sic) to kill the young noble. No doubt fearing for his own rule, Ceretic decided not to alienate the powerful ruler, and Edwin’s nephew was found murdered’. This seems to be taking rather too much licence with the otherwise bare evidence.

49 J.D. Bu’Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire* 383-1066 (Chester, 1972), p. 28; Chadwick, ‘The battle of Chester’, p. 179. To avoid Elmet, Æthelfrith would have been required to travel either around the southern edge of the Pennines or via a northern route through Cumbria and down into Lancashire. See M. Ziegler, ‘The politics of exile in early Northumbria’, *The Heroic Age* 2 (1999), http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/2/ha2pen.htm, pp. 7-8, for more detail on northern and southern routes to Chester from Northumbria.

50 *HE* I.34.

51 *HB* 63.

52 *HE* II.5 (praefuit from preaesse ‘to be in charge of’). See also *HE* II.9, ‘[Edwin] like no other English king before him, held under his sway [sub dicione acciperet] the whole realm of Britain, not only English kingdoms but those ruled over by the Britons as well’.

53 *AC* s.a.

been antedated by three years, the corrected date would be 619 for Ceretic's death, which would be more chronologically pleasing. In any event, it seems clear that Edwin was the direct ruler of Elmet by the end of his reign. Bede records that he had built a basilica at the royal residence (villa regia) of Campodonum, possibly Doncaster on the southern borders of Elmet, which would require a royal circuit through Elmet. Bede further states that when the basilica was burnt by (Mercian?) pagans, probably c.633-4, the altar was preserved in the monastery in 'Elmet Wood', in his time ruled by the Northumbrian abbot Thrythwulf. Thus, by the 630s, Elmet was within Northumbrian control.

The point at which Elmet ceased to be an independent British entity is to a certain extent complicated by its apparent inclusion in the Tribal Hidage. The Tribal Hidage, which survives untitled in an eleventh-century manuscript, presents a list of thirty-five kingdoms and other groupings south of the Humber, along with their assessment in hides. Included fifth in the list and assessed at 600 hides, the Elmedsetna - taken to be equivalent to Elmet - are the most northerly. If the Hidage is a tribute list, as is typically assumed, then this implies that, at the time it was drawn up, Elmet was either tributary to some Anglo-Saxon kingdom or that the core of its territory had persisted as an identifiable unit after Anglo-Saxon conquest. But uncertainty as to whether it was of Mercian or Northumbrian origin, and as to when it was compiled, makes interpretation of Elmet's inclusion in the list problematic. Indeed, the extant list may be

---

55 See note 34 (supra., p. 170).
56 Dumville, 'The origins of Northumbria', p. 221, suggests c.620 as the date for Ceretic's death.
57 HE II.14. Campodonum has also been identified with Leeds (Loidis) by Faull, 'Place-names and the Kingdom of Elmet', p. 22, and Taylor, 'Elmet: boundaries and Celtic survival', p. 115. However, Bede explicitly differentiates between Campodonum and Loidis in this chapter, so they may have been different places. See also Breeze, 'The kingdom and name of Elmet', pp. 157, 161-5; Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 86.
58 It appears that by the time of king Ecgfrith (670-85) land in Elmet was being granted by Northumbrian kings, as Stephen of Ripon tells us that the king gave Wilfrid land at Yeadon (West Yorks.), just north of the river Aire, and thus within what would have been the territory of Elmet (VW 17).
59 British Library MS. Harley 3271, fo.6v, written in Old English. This is the only recension of the Anglo-Saxon period.
60 There are only thirty-four hidations listed, however, as Lindesfarona (Lindsey) and Haeth feldlanda (Hatfield) share an assessment. The Tribal Hidage is reprinted with textual commentary by D.N. Dumville, 'The Tribal Hidage: an introduction to its texts and their history', in Bassett, Origins, pp. 225-30.
61 Hidage assessment ranges between 100,000 for the West Saxons, and 300 for people such as the East Wixna, Swoerdora and Faerpenga. Including the Elmedsetna, there are eleven assessments of 600 hides.
62 For example, Bassett, 'In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms', p. 17; Campbell, Anglo-Saxons, pp. 59-61; Higham, An English Empire, p. 75; Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 10; idem., Wessex in the Early Middle Ages (London, 1995), p. 73. J. Blair, 'The Tribal Hidage', in Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE, p. 456, rightly cautions that as the list is untitled and otherwise unembellished we can never be exactly certain for what reason it was compiled.
a composite of several lists and thus not all of one date. In any event, the Tribal Hidage does not negate Edwin’s role in the suppression of Elmet.

It has been suggested that Edwin’s motivation for expelling Ceretic from Elmet could have been revenge for the poisoning of his nephew Hereric, though, as noted, Bede stated no such inference regarding Hereric’s death. If Ceretic had submitted to Æthelfrith’s overlordship, as seems possible, it could be surmised that he acted as a collaborator with Edwin’s rival dynasty. Alternatively, it has been suggested that Edwin may have been encouraged to suppress Elmet by Bishop Paulinus, who wished to see an extension of the Roman pallium and an end to British Christian practice. However, it remains possible that Edwin was simply uncomfortable about having a British-controlled kingdom existing so close to Deira, and thus acted out of a desire to extend his own direct territorial rulship.

Whatever can be supposed regarding Edwin’s motivation, Elmet clearly did succumb to Northumbrian expansion. The limited amount of identifiable Anglo-Saxon archaeological evidence discovered in Elmet has been taken to mean that there was little subsequent Northumbrian settlement. But as suppression of Elmet occurred concurrent with Northumbria’s adoption of Christianity, the lack of archaeological material should not be pressed too far; some level of settlement would have been necessary for the maintenance of Northumbrian control. Notwithstanding Edwin’s removal of Ceretic, Elmet does seem to have persisted as a regional identity. The survival of several ‘—in Elmet’ placenames between the Rivers Wharfe and Aire suggests that this area retained some identification with the former British kingdom, doubtless with the meaning of the names eventually being forgotten. The personal

---

63 Gruffydd, ‘In search of Elmet’, p. 67.
66 Higham, An English Empire, pp. 82-3.
67 For example, Faull, ‘British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria’, pp. 10-11; Gruffydd, ‘In search of Elmet’, p. 67; Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 86. The typical catalogue of finds by Margaret Faull, as quoted by Gruffydd, is ‘two brooches, three beads and four or five graves’.
68 Faull, ‘Place-names and the Kingdom of Elmet’, p. 21; Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 84; Jones, ‘Early territorial organisation in Gwynedd and Elmet’, pp. 14-16; Taylor, ‘Elmet: boundaries and Celtic
name affix 'de Elmet' also survives from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, borne by certain families living in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and the old North and East Ridings of Yorkshire. However, there is no indication whether any clear sense of 'Britishness' persisted; its continuation as a possible administrative unit may simply have been facilitated by its initial inclusion in the *Tribal Hidage*.

The extent to which Edwin was able to achieve control of further territory in the British west, as well as over supposed Pennine kingdoms such as Craven, can only be assessed from Bede's statements about the extent of his *imperium*. It has already been mentioned that Bede included Edwin in his list of overkings, specifying him as a ruler of *all the Britons* as well as the Angles. This is a difficult statement to evaluate as there is no direct independent evidence for Edwin's British dominion beyond Elmet. Certainly, it is likely to entail some exaggeration; there is no evidence that Edwin ever achieved *imperium* over the Britons of Dumnonia or Strathclyde. Yet, it does appear that Bede was using the term *imperium* deliberately, to mean rulership over multiple peoples, territories or kingdoms, and not just as a stylistic alternative to *regnum*; indeed, he used the term relatively sparingly. Bede was more explicit in his assertion that Edwin 'brought under English rule [*Anglorum subiecit imperio*] the British Mevanian Isles [*Mevanias Insulas*] which lie between Britain and Ireland and belong to the Britons'. The Mevanian Isles are usually assumed to be Anglesey and Man, though strictly speaking this identification is not secure. Bede's provision of what are clearly *hidage survival*, pp. 112-13; P.N. Wood, 'On the little British kingdom of Craven', *NH* 32 (1996), p. 9. There are two names which survive today: Barwick in Elmet (West Yorks.) and Sherburn in Elmet (North Yorks.), approximately ten kilometres from one another. There are at least another eight 'in Elmet' names that can be found in post-Conquest documentation.

69 Faull, 'Place-names and the Kingdom of Elmet', p. 21.

70 HE II.5, II.9 (supra., p. 173).


72 B. Yorke, 'The vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon overlordship', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in History and Archaeology* 2 (1981), p. 175, had argued against assertions, such as by Plummer, *Bede*, vol. II, p. 86, that Bede gave *imperium* a special significance over *regnum*. However, Fanning, 'Bede, *imperium*, and the Bretwaldas', pp. 1-26, esp. p. 7, has more recently presented a strong and careful case for Plummer's original view, as has Dumville, 'The terminology of overkingship in early Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 350-1.


74 HE II.5. See also HE II.9: Edwin 'even brought the Mevanian Isles under English rule [*imperio subjugavit Anglorum*]' (my translation).

75 For example, Cramp, *Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards*, p. 10; Higham, *An English Empire*, p. 22; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 10; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 84. Plummer's, *Bede*, vol. II, p. 94, analysis revealed more of a case for Anglesey than for Man; *Mevanias Insulas* is cognate with *Monae Insulae*, *Mona* being the Welsh name for Anglesey. See *HB* 75; *AC* s.a.a. 814, 816, 853, 876, 902. K.H. Jackson, 'On the Northern British section in
assessments for two Mevanian islands — 960 for the southern, larger and more fertile island; 300 for the other — has been interpreted as a reference to Anglesey and Man respectively, keeping in mind that the assessment was not in reference to total land area.\textsuperscript{76} Glanville Jones argued that Bede’s provision of hidage assessments for these islands was evidence of their subjugation by Edwin, that such assessments would have been made for the necessary calculation of tribute.\textsuperscript{77} David Kirby points out, however, that as Bede also knew the hidage assessments of the islands of Thanet, Wight, and Iona and the peninsula of Selsey, as well as some of the larger kingdoms, it is more likely that such assessments were general knowledge at the time.\textsuperscript{78} So, Bede’s inclusion of this detail concerning the Mevanian Isles should not be taken as evidence of tribute collection by Edwin, and can provide only indirect verification of their identity.

If, on the other hand, Bede’s account is relied upon, and the identity of the islands is assumed to be Anglesey and Man, there are a number of repercussions to consider. The subjugation of Anglesey would mean that the kingdom of Gwynedd had come under Edwin’s sway. Perhaps the besieging of Cadwallon on the island of Glannauc (Priestholm/Puffin Island off the eastern end of Anglesey), referred to in the Annales Cambriae under the year 629, was part of a campaign by Edwin to enforce the payment of tribute, though the lack of a stated antagonist makes this speculative.\textsuperscript{79} Bede certainly represented Cadwallon’s invasion of Northumbria and slaying of Edwin in 633 as a ‘rebellion’ against legitimate rulership, though this may have more of a moral than a literal meaning.\textsuperscript{80} The subjugation of Man could signify that Edwin had the ability to mount a sea-going force on the Irish Sea, and if so, his control must have reached the

\textsuperscript{76}HE II.9. Bede did not use the term ‘hide’ but rather referred to the land of each household according to ‘English reckoning’.


\textsuperscript{78}Kirby, \textit{Earliest English Kings}, p. 10.


\textsuperscript{80}HE II.20. See also W. Davies, \textit{Patterns of Power in Early Wales} (Oxford, 1990), p. 88.
west coast. However, if the Manx Britons were already clients of Gwynedd, it could also be the case that Edwin’s overlordship of Man was achieved by default.

The eventuality of Northumbrian control reaching the west coast of Britain requires consideration of the kingdom of Rheged. The manner and date at which Rheged succumbed to Northumbrian expansion remains as ill-defined as its existence, and the outer limits which have been proposed for when Northumbria gained control of Cumbria and Galloway are widely separated. At the earliest, it has been suggested that the region came under Northumbrian rulership during the reign of Æthelfrith (c.592-616). The line of Hadrian’s Wall through the Tyne Gap, well within Bernician control in the east by the time of Æthelfrith, would have acted as a pointer to the west coast. But the case for Æthelfrith can only be based on Bede’s inexact statement regarding Æthelfrith’s bellicose activities against the Britons.

At the other end of the dating range, it is safe to assume that the subjugation of the region of Cumbria was well under way, if not complete, by the end of Ecgfrith’s reign (670-85). Stephen of Ripon states in his *Life of Wilfrid* that Ecgfrith granted estates to the saint which had at some earlier time been held by British communities; some of

---


82 Tim Clarkson (pers. comm., 30 May, 2001). The *AC* s.a. 584, record a ‘Battle against the Isle of Man’, which might be corroborative of the feasibility of Bede’s claim about Edwin. However, as no antagonist is mentioned it is unclear whether this battle was with, for example, a Welsh kingdom, a northern British kingdom, or even with Dalriada. As this entry appears to have been ultimately derived from the Iona Chronicle, it is likely that the antagonists were from Dalriada or Ulster.


84 D.P. Kirby, ‘Strathclyde and Cumbria: a survey of historical developments to 1092’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series 62 (1962), p. 80, for example, stated that ‘the kingdom disintegrated before the onslaught of Æthelfrith’. An early date gained more recent support from Higham, ‘King Cearl, the battle of Chester and the origins of the Mercian “overkingship”’, p. 2, and Phythian-Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians*, pp. 102-4. Certainly, it is unlikely that the Northumbrians would have attempted to extend their control westward prior to this time; Urien, later recognised as a king of Rheged, is remembered in the *HB* 63 as having mounted a blockade against the Northumbrians at Lindisfarne, c.570-590 (infra., pp. 189-91). If this account is authentic, Rheged must, therefore, have been under British rulership at that point, and may even have extended east of the Pennines (though O.J. Padel, ‘A new study of the Gododdin’, *CMCS* 35, 1998, pp. 46-7, and T. Clarkson, ‘Richmond and Catraeth’, *CMCS* 26, 1993, p. 16, advise caution here). But after Urien’s death subsequent to the blockade, Rheged could have been victim to pressure from Æthelfrith.


86 *HE* 1.34. The possible siting of Degsastan, Æthelfrith’s battle with Aedán of Dalriada in 603, in Dumfries & Galloway (e.g. R. Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona, Life of St Columba*, Harmondsworth, 1995, p. 270 n. 84), might suggest control of British territory north of the Solway Firth (infra., pp. 219-21). However, the location of this battle is by no means certain and in any case battles could be fought outside of securely held territory.
these estates can be located west of the Pennines.\textsuperscript{87} Though Stephen may have exaggerated such land claims for the aggrandisement of his hero, it certainly does appear that Ecgfrith was in control of territory that would have been in or around Rheged.\textsuperscript{88} Indeed, both \textit{Lives of St. Cuthbert} record that the saint visited Carlisle in order to speak with the Northumbrian queen Eormenburh, who was there awaiting the outcome of Ecgfrith's war with the Picts in 685.\textsuperscript{89} Bede's \textit{Life} adds that, while there, Eormenburh was residing in her sister's monastery. These statements indicate that Rheged, or at the very least northern Cumbria, must have been securely under Northumbrian rulership at that time; the Northumbrian queen would hardly have withdrawn to an unsafe town. The existence of the Northumbrian monastery where Eormenburh was waiting also implies some degree of Northumbrian tenure in the town. In addition, communications between the eastern and the western sides of the Pennines must have been reliable enough for news of Ecgfrith's defeat to be able to travel there in, apparently, two days.\textsuperscript{90} Ecgfrith also sent a military expedition across the Irish Sea, in 684; given the evidence presented so far, it is likely that he would have done so from Carlisle and the Solway.\textsuperscript{91}

Cuthbert seems to have visited Carlisle on a number of occasions, as he was also there the following year to ordain priests and to 'confer upon the queen herself [i.e. Eormenburh] the garb of the consecrated life'.\textsuperscript{92} In these accounts there is certainly no visible sign of fear of a native British population, either in Carlisle or \textit{en route}, nor any direct mention of Britons.\textsuperscript{93} Further, during this later stay, Cuthbert was visited by the hermit Hereberht, who lived in retreat on an island in the Derwentwater, suggesting that Northumbrian clerics had already infiltrated Cumbria proper.\textsuperscript{94} This is supported by the later record of a grant from Ecgfrith to Cuthbert of land at Cartmel in southern Cumbria,
surviving in the eleventh-century Historia de Sancto Cuthberto.\textsuperscript{95} According to the Historia, Cuthbert's see at Lindisfarne also claimed land in an area of approximately twenty-five kilometres (fifteen miles) around Carlisle, adding weight to a tradition of his early involvement in the region.\textsuperscript{96}

Rheged south of the Solway, therefore, appears to have been fully absorbed within Northumbria by c.685, and it is difficult to see how a British king could still have been in place at this time. As Deirdre O'Sullivan states, 'in so far as we have a picture at all it is a wholly English one'.\textsuperscript{97} Territory north of the Solway, if indeed this was part of Rheged, may have been incorporated into Northumbria at the same time as, or slightly after, territory to the south. The earliest written reference is from Bede, who states that the see of Whithorn (Candida Casa) in Galloway had recently become a bishopric, with Pecthelm as the first bishop, because 'the number of believers has so increased'.\textsuperscript{98} For a Northumbrian episcopal see to be established at Whithorn c.730 suggests that the region had been under Northumbrian control long enough for such a circumstance to be warranted.\textsuperscript{99} However, the duration of Northumbrian control prior to 730 can only be guessed,\textsuperscript{100} and it would make most sense to see Northumbrian expansion into this region as spanning several decades. After 730, a Northumbrian presence in the region was continuous throughout the rest of the pre-Viking period, as the see at Whithorn was occupied until at least c.800, and quite possibly longer.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{95} Historia de Sancto Cuthberto, ch. 6 (T. Arnold, ed., Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, London, 1882-5, vol. I, p. 200). See also Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 100; Jackson, Language and History in Early Britain, p. 217; O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', p. 29.


\textsuperscript{97} O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', p. 30.

\textsuperscript{98} HE V.23. See also HE III.4, where it is said that Ninian's episcopal see 'is now held by the English [Anglorum gens obtinet] ... [and is] in the province [provincia] of Bernicia'.


\textsuperscript{101} The last certain bishop of Whithorn, Baldwulf, was consecrated in 791 (ASC s.a.; see also ASC 795), and held the post till at least 802. On the basis of a surviving episcopal list, a bishop Heathured may have followed Baldwulf and occupied the see until c.840. See Brooke, 'The early history of the diocese of Whithorn', pp. 41-3; D.N. Dumville, The Churches of North Britain in the First Viking-Age (Whithorn,
Between the reigns of Æthelfrith and Ecgfrith, it is difficult to gain further precision regarding when the Northumbrian take-over of Rheged occurred, though doubtless this would have brought solid material gains to a Northumbrian king. For Edwin to bring Man under his imperium he could have had control of some western territory, though this may simply have entailed overlordship of Gwynedd. In any event, in the year after Edwin’s death, when Cadwallon of Gwynedd was said to have ravaged Northumbria, any Northumbrian control of the British west could have been lost.

According to Bede, Oswald held ‘under his sway/authority [in dicione accepit]’ all the peoples of Britain including the British, which could mean that he gained, or even regained, dominion of Rheged. Elsewhere Bede states that Oswald merely ‘ruled within the same bounds [finibus regnum tenuit]’ as Edwin; perhaps implying that he held overlordship of Rheged, but not direct rule. Bede does not state that Oswiu, the final Northumbrian king before Ecgfrith, took any British territory himself, but rather ‘ruled almost the same territory [aequalibus pene terminis regnum]’ as Oswald.

Whether or not this was the case, his expansionist activities appear to have been directed northwards rather than to the west, though the possibility of his marriage to Rhiainnmellt of the line of Urien does suggest an interest in Rheged. The Annales Cambriae do record under the year 658 that ‘Oswiu came and took plunder’, but no location is provided. Thus, from the written evidence, there is little which would favour any of the rulers before Ecgfrith for the direct conquest of Rheged, though it might be allowed that an earlier king held overlordship.


102 Brooke, ‘The Northumbrian settlements in Galloway and Carrick’, p. 297, and Cramp, Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards, p. 8, note advantages such as the break up of confederations of western British kingdoms, as well as access to the western seaways, mineral resources, forests, salt pans, and some rich farmlands.

103 Kirby, ‘Strathclyde and Cumbria’, p. 80, argued that Edwin controlled Carlisle and the Solway. See also Phythian-Adams, Land of the Cumbrians, p. 56.

104 HE II.20. The fact Elmet is included in the Tribal Hidage, and no other British territory in the north is, should also make us look to a time after the end of Edwin’s reign for the suppression of Rheged.

105 HE III.6. Phythian-Adams, Land of the Cumbrians, p. 56, states that later conquest might have been ‘rebel suppression’.

106 HE II.5.

107 HE II.5.

108 It is uncertain whether Northumbria was strong enough in the seventh century to expand in more than one direction at any given time. Expansion on one front might suggest a lack of activity on others. I would like to thank Craig Cessford for alerting me to this possibility (pers. comm., 30 May, 2001).


110 AC s.a. Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 96, argues that as Oswiu was overlord of Mercia at the time, this was probably a foray into Wales.

Archaeology has been unable to answer the question of when the Northumbrians took control of territory in western Britain. In the first instance, there is an absence of coinage and of a ceramic tradition which is identifiable with the British west, and therefore there can be no demonstration of a break in British continuity, archaeologically speaking.\(^{112}\) In the second instance, it has been extremely difficult to find solid archaeological evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement west of the Pennines.\(^{113}\) Deirdre O'Sullivan has recently drawn attention to a group of six pagan burials from the Upper Eden Valley in the very east of Cumbria.\(^{114}\) The evidence of these burials only survives in reports of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, thus rendering it impossible to assess the now-lost objects and making it difficult to be absolutely certain of an Anglo-Saxon as opposed to a Viking date. Nevertheless, O'Sullivan regards it as 'beyond reasonable doubt' that one of the burials, from Crosby Garrett, was that of an Anglo-Saxon warrior of the seventh century, with two others, from Asby and Brigg Flatt, being potentially Anglo-Saxon.\(^{115}\) This manifestly small number of graves does not negate the argument that the take-over of Rheged probably occurred in the second half of the seventh century.\(^{116}\) However, if the Anglo-Saxon identity of the graves is authentic, they would show that a Northumbrian 'foothold' west of the Pennines may have been established before Christianity was adopted and the practice of burying grave goods was abandoned, c.625-35.\(^{117}\) In fact, the location of the graves adjacent to the western end of the Stainmore Gap – in addition to the Tyne Gap, a likely route into the west – supports this possibility.\(^{118}\) It is impossible to assess whether this small foothold was continuously or only temporarily occupied.


\(^{113}\) R. Cramp, 'Northumbria: the archaeological evidence', in S.T. Driscoll, & M.R. Nieke (eds.), Power and Politics in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 72; Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', pp. 7-9; Phythian-Adams, Land of the Cumbrians, p. 87; Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 86. It was this eventuality – the lack of Anglo-Saxon archaeology from the pagan period – which led Jackson, Language and History in Early Britain, pp. 215-17, to propose that the Northumbrian take-over of Rheged occurred in the second half of the seventh century, after the Northumbrians converted and ceased burying grave goods.


\(^{115}\) O'Sullivan, 'A group of pagan Anglian burials in Cumbria?', pp. 15, 20.

\(^{116}\) O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', p. 24.

\(^{117}\) Indeed, the fact of the furnished burial does suggest habitation, rather than a raid.

\(^{118}\) The discovery of an Anglo-Saxon sunken hut near Fremington (North Yorks.), to the east of Stainmore Gap, also suggests that there was Northumbrian expansion along this route. See Cramp, Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards, p. 8. As the Stainmore Gap is due west from the Tees, this putative foothold could have been established from either Deira or Bernicia. The kingdom of Elmet, as far as its borders can be worked out, did not stand in the way of Northumbrian – Deiran or Bernician – westward penetration via the Stainmore Gap, as O'Sullivan, 'A group of pagan Anglian burials in Cumbria?', p. 22, claims. Elmet was too far south for this to be an issue.
There are no identifiable pagan Anglo-Saxon burials north of the Solway, which is not surprising given what has been said of their absence in all but the very east of Cumbria. Anglo-Saxon archaeological evidence from this region consists in the main of coinage and metalwork/jewellery discovered at several so-called ‘high status settlement sites’, such as Tynron Doon, Dundrennan, the Mote of Mark, and as far west as Luce Bay (Dumfries & Galloway). These artefacts, where they can be dated, derive from the late seventh or early eighth century, and do not necessarily reflect Northumbrian occupation; their deposition could have occurred for reasons such as plunder by northern Britons, or trade, including from the Continent. Indeed, Anglo-Saxon goods are found at undisputably British sites in the north such as Alcluith (Dumbarton), Castle Hill at Dalry and Buiston Crannog (North Ayr.). That said, it is generally accepted that the Mote of Mark, at least, came into Northumbrian hands at some point during the seventh century, and the site does show signs of re-fortification and destruction by fire. More certain evidence of Northumbrian occupation comes from two ‘Anglian’ stone crosses found around the head of the Solway Firth: at Bewcastle (Cumbria), ten kilometres north of Hadrian’s Wall, and at Ruthwell (Dumfries and Galloway), approximately fifty kilometres farther west on the northern coast of the Firth. The Bewcastle cross may bear the name of Cyneburh, possibly the wife of Oswiu’s son Alhfrith. Alhfrith was champion of Roman Christianity, and so it has been argued that the cross would have been raised some time after the Synod of Whitby in 664. This identification is not certain, however, and Rosemary Cramp has favoured

125 Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 27.
Aldfrith's reign (685-705) as the most likely for both crosses. It is during this time, she suggests, that a Northumbrian monastery was established at St. Kentigern's purported ancient centre at Hoddom, approximately eight kilometres from Ruthwell. A similar dating might be argued for Northumbrian expansion as far as Whithorn, albeit with the archaeological evidence in both these cases being open to a range of dating interpretations.

The weight of the evidence does suggest that Rheged, in whatever form it existed, fell to Northumbria definitely after the end of the pagan period, and the material that survives from Ecgfrith's reign and beyond indicates the final third of the seventh century. The extension of Northumbrian control north of the Solway continued into the eighth century. Though Bede states that after Ecgfrith was killed in 685 'some part of the British nation recovered their independence', the evidence discussed strongly suggests that the territorial gains west of the Pennines endured for the remainder of the pre-Viking period, and these 'newly-freed' Britons need to be looked for elsewhere.

It is difficult to assess the extent of Northumbrian settlement in former Rheged. Most of the evidence comes from place-names, and is confounded by later Scandinavian and Irish settlement, as well as settlement into northern Cumbria by Strathclyde Britons in the tenth century. There are, however, early English place-names – such as those

126 Cramp, Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards, p. 13 & n. 3. Cramp had previously favoured the reign of Eadberht (737-58) as the most likely context. See also R.N. Bailey, 'Bewcastle', in Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE, p. 64, who suggests c.725-50 for the Bewcastle Cross, and E. Ó Carragáin, 'Ruthwell Cross', in Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE, p. 403, who suggests c.730-50 for the Ruthwell Cross.

127 The site of Hoddom has been examined in detail by C.E. Lowe, 'New light on the Anglian “minster” at Hoddom: recent excavations at Hallguards Quarry, Hoddom, Annandale and Eskdale District, Dumfries and Galloway Region', Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society 3rd Series 77 (1991), pp. 11-35. He concurs with this dating period, but also suggests Oswiu's and Ecgfrith's reigns, simply because of the extent of their power (p. 11).


130 Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 85. The aftermath of Ecgfrith's defeat will be discussed more fully below (infra., pp. 198, 212-13).

131 Higham, 'Continuity studies in the first millennium A.D. in north Cumbria', pp. 10-11; O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', pp. 26-9; Phythian-Adams, Land of the Cumbrians, p. 77; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 29.
ending in -ham or -ingaham — to be found throughout Cumbria, albeit not in great abundance. But the incorporation of Cumbria into Northumbria was not an insignificant event; at the very least, it gave the region its language and its religion. It has been argued that, as there are few identifiable early English place-names north of the Solway in Dumfries and Galloway, there was minimal Northumbrian settlement, and piecemeal involvement in the region. However, Daphne Brooke, in a recent assessment of Anglo-Saxon place-name and Christian archaeological evidence in Galloway and Carrick, has argued for a significant Anglo-Saxon presence, particularly in strategic locations along the north Solway coast around the estuaries of the Urr, the Dee and the Fleet, the east coast of the Machars around Whithorn, as well as inland along Glenken. Control of coastal regions and river estuaries might imply a reliance upon the sea, and indeed, until later Scandinavian domination, it might be supposed that the Northumbrians would have been keen to make use of the western sea-lanes — as Ecgfrith did in 684 — and may have benefited, at least for a time, from Continental goods being imported via the west of Britain. In addition, Bede states in his letter of 734 to Bishop Ecgberht that, since Aldfrith’s death in 705 there had been a growing decline in estates in Northumbria with which to endow veterans or sons of nobles. The annexation of British land in Dumfries and Galloway in the early eighth century, and subsequent Northumbrian settlement, may have relieved the problem. And indeed, at this time Northumbria would have had few other options for territorial

135 Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 29.
136 Brooke, ‘The Northumbrian settlements in Galloway and Carrick’, pp. 301-14; idem., Wild Men and Holy Places, pp. 51-5. See also Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, p. 17. Settlement farther west in the Rhins of Galloway is less secure, though there was Northumbrian involvement near Kirkmadrine by some date in the eighth century.
138 Bede, Epist. Ecgl. 11. Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 88, notes that after Ecgfrith’s death in 685, when the fortunes of Northumbria began to wane, the Northumbrian kings were less able to find land to endow monasteries.
expansion. The establishment of a Northumbrian bishopric further indicates that the region was considered important by the Northumbrian hierarchy, and such a foundation may have acted as an expression of Northumbrian control and power. The impression to be gained is of a region that was not marginal to the Northumbrian hegemony.

***

In terms of Northumbrian expansion westward, therefore, it is argued that, while Æthelfrith probably enjoyed suzerainty of Elmet, it was Edwin who responsible for the suppression of the kingdom’s independence and the removal of its king, Ceretic. Beyond that, it is possible that Edwin exercised overlordship of Gwynedd and Man and some western coastal territory; however, there is no independent corroboration for Bede’s statements in that regard and the extent of Edwin’s imperium is uncertain; Bede certainly had a vested interest in amplifying the authority of this first Christian king of Northumbria. It is quite possible that any gains which Edwin made west of the Pennines were lost in the years immediately after his death in 633, at the hands of Cadwallon of Gwynedd and Penda of Mercia. The evidence for Oswald campaigning against Britons west of the Pennines is not strong – even less so for Oswiu – and consists only of Bede’s statements regarding their imperium. Oswiu seems to have fought at least one battle against a Welsh kingdom c.658, but this was most probably to do with his direct rulership of Mercia after the death of Penda in 655. The bulk of the evidence points to the reign of Ecgfrith (670-685) as the period during which British territory west of the Pennines was finally subsumed by the Northumbrians. His sponsorship of an attack on the Irish mainland, for which there is both Anglo-Saxon and Irish documentary evidence, shows that he was able to operate in the Irish Sea, and the Solway was the most probable launching point, near to Carlisle where his second queen Eormenburh eventually retired to an ecclesiastical life. Northumbrian control of territory immediately north of the Solway then continued during the reigns of Ecgfrith’s successors, such that a Northumbrian bishopric was established in the western locale of Whithorn, c.730, and was occupied for the rest of the pre-Viking era.

139 Brooke, ‘The Northumbrian settlements in Galloway and Carrick’, p. 314, estimates that Anglo-Saxon settlements may have accounted for up to half of the useable land in Galloway.
Northumbrian Expansion Northward: Gododdin and Strathclyde

The prospect of Northumbrian expansion to the north brings into consideration two further northern British polities: the kingdom of Gododdin and the kingdom of Strathclyde or Aceluith. Interaction and warfare between Northumbria and Strathclyde was probably a function of Northumbrian involvement in the territory of Gododdin, up to and along the Firth of Forth, and not due to the take-over of Rheged and the northern shore of the Solway Firth. Aceluith (Dumbarton) is only about fifty kilometres from the head of the Firth of Forth and accessible along the line of the Antonine Wall, and thus the conquest of Gododdin would have brought the Northumbrians into direct contact with the Strathclyde Britons. Galloway, on the other hand, was separated from the north by a spine of rough hill country and dense forests and is more likely to have been a secondary line of advance.

The kingdom of Gododdin probably evolved out of the ancient Votadini, who occupied territory north of Hadrian's Wall, up to the Firth of Forth. As Northumbrian encroachment extended north of the Wall, it can be supposed that it was the Votadini/Gododdin who were in the front line of any ensuing warfare. There is, unfortunately, a very limited amount of reliable written evidence which can be used to track Northumbrian expansion into British territory in this region. The paucity of information in the Anglo-Saxon sources is no doubt due to the fact that expansion had begun prior to c.600, and thus before any kind of documentation was available within any of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Ethelfrith is the first king for whose reign there survives any reliable information. References to the British north-east do survive in later Welsh sources, demonstrating that the territory of the Gododdin was remembered amongst other Britons. However, since these records originate in the ninth century at the earliest, the events described are unverifiable. A direct consequence of this lack of contemporaneity is that the evidence for early Northumbrian expansion northwards is difficult to work with and does not lend itself to the development of anything like a continuous narrative.

The ostensibly earliest evidence which provides any information regarding Northumbrian activity north of Hadrian's Wall concerns the fortress of Bamburgh in

---

141 Supra., pp. 154-5.
142 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 70.
143 Sims-Williams, 'The death of Urien', p. 25.
144 Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 77.
Northumberland. In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year 547, Æthelfrith’s grandfather Ida, ‘from whom the royal family of the Northumbrians first originated’, is said to have ‘built Bamburgh [Bebbanburh] which was first enclosed with a stockade and thereafter by a wall’.\(^{145}\) A corresponding notice occurs in the *Historia Brittonum* where it is stated that Ida ‘joined Bamburgh [Dinguayrdi] to Bernicia’.\(^{146}\) If these accounts are authentic, Ida’s activities at Bamburgh would attest to his involvement beyond that Wall and the taking of territory from the Gododdin.\(^ {147}\) This may have been the case, but the difficulty is that there is no security in either the *Chronicle* or the *Historia Brittonum* entries.\(^ {148}\) Indeed, while Ida is generally considered to have been a real person, his *floruit* could have been later.\(^ {149}\) Accordingly, not too much should be read into these references.

Be that as it may, Bamburgh does appear in the sources to have been associated with early Northumbrian rulership in the north. In the *Historia Brittonum*, Æthelfrith is also linked with Bamburgh. Here he is said to have given Dinguoaroy to his wife Bebba from whom it was named Bebbanburh.\(^ {150}\) If this account is authentic it may reveal something of the territory under Æthelfrith’s control, as well as help to illuminate Bede’s...

---

\(^{145}\) *ASC* MS. E 547.

\(^{146}\) *HB* 61. The precise meaning of this statement is problematic. Jackson, ‘On the Northern British section in Nennius’, pp. 28-9, thought that the author was trying to say, anachronistically, that Ida joined Deira and Bernicia, and thus had incorrectly inserted *Dinguayrdi* instead of Deira. This is certainly possible, but it seems more expedient to interpret the entry in terms of Ida, in the process of advancing northwards, adding Bamburgh to his territory of Bernicia. Jackson’s interpretation was founded on the old view, derived from F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943), p. 74, that Bernicia began as a ‘pirate settlement’ at Bamburgh, surrounded by hostile Britons; Ida could not then have ‘added’ Bamburgh to Bernicia. There is no longer any support for this notion. See Dumville, ‘The origins of Northumbria’, p. 218; Higham, *Northern Counties*, pp. 257-8; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 70.\(^ {147}\)

\(^{147}\) L. Alcock, *Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons* (Jarrow, 1988), p. 6, argues that there appears to have been a belief amongst historians that Ida ‘took some decisive action at Bamburgh’, though he does express suspicion over the precise description of the fortifications. He thought that the structural sequence of the fortifications described in the *ASC* appeared rather too similar to that of some late-Saxon burhs, and thus might have been informed by later events. Higham, *Northern Counties*, p. 259; *idem.*, *Kingdom of Northumbria*, p. 82, rather more emphatically, declared that Ida was a powerful warlord or overking whose reign represented a critical step towards Anglo-Saxon domination in the north. Recent excavations of the site have revealed no certain Anglo-Saxon material dating to the mid-fifth century. See M. Ziegler, ‘The Anglo-British cemetery at Bamburgh: An E-Interview with Graeme Young of the Bamburgh Castle Research Project’, *The Heroic Age* 4 (2001), http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/4/Bamburgh.html, p. 3.


\(^{149}\) Higham, *Kingdom of Northumbria*, p. 79; M. Miller, ‘The dates of Deira’, *ASE* 8 (1979), p. 49; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 75-77. The first part of the *ASC* entry regarding Ida’s reign derives from Bede’s *recapitulatio* in the final chapter of the *HE* V.24. Bede used a version of a regnal list, surviving in the *Moore Memoranda* (in *Cambridge University Library MS. Kk. 5.16* of c. 740), to calculate the date of 547 for the beginning of Ida’s reign, based in the assumption that each king mentioned ruled successively. However, other sources imply that some may have ruled concurrently. Thus, working backwards from his own time, Bede probably placed Ida’s reign too early.\(^ {150}\)

\(^{150}\) *HB* 63.
imprecise statement, already discussed, regarding the extent of Æthelfrith's dominion over the Britons.\textsuperscript{151} It would be entirely reasonable to suppose that Æthelfrith was responsible for the taking of British territory beyond the Wall when he was 'making their lands either tributary to the English or ready for English settlement'. If Aedán of Dalriada was genuinely 'alarmed at [Æthelfrith's] advance', as Bede states, then it would make most sense that Æthelfrith was advancing northwards towards the Forth. Bede also records a tradition that Bamburgh – which he refers to as a 'royal city/town [urbs regia]' – was named after a former queen Bebba.\textsuperscript{152} However, he does not say to whom the queen was married, and elsewhere the inference can be drawn that Æthelfrith's queen was rather Acha, sister to Edwin.\textsuperscript{153} This does not necessarily negate the account in the Historia Brittonum – Æthelfrith may have had more than one queen – but it does serve to illuminate the inexact nature of the evidence.\textsuperscript{154}

Just north of Bamburgh is the stronghold of Lindisfarne on Holy Island, a further site associated with early Northumbrian expansion and warfare with the Britons. It is here that Urien, the leader of a coalition of British leaders, is said to have besieged a force of Northumbrians.\textsuperscript{155} This event is part of a broader, somewhat confusing, description of warfare between the northern Britons and Northumbrians contained in the Historia Brittonum and placed in the text after a concatenation of Ida of Bernicia’s immediate successors: Æthelric, Theoderic, Frithuwald and Hussa. Patrick Sims-Williams, in a recent attempt to eliminate some of the ambiguities, has translated the relevant passage:

\begin{quote}
Against them [i.e. Hussa and his predecessors] four kings fought: Urien, and Rhydderch the Old, and Gwallog, and Morgan. Theoderic used to fight bravely against that Urien with his sons, yet at that time sometimes the enemies, sometimes the citizens used to be vanquished. And he [Urien] shut them [the enemies] up for three days and three nights in the island of Lindisfarne [Metcaud] and while he was on [this?] campaign, he was slain at the instigation of Morgan out of jealousy, because beyond all the other kings he [Urien] had the greatest skill in renewing war.\textsuperscript{156}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{151} HE I.34.
\textsuperscript{152} HE III.6, III.16.
\textsuperscript{153} HE III.6.
\textsuperscript{154} Alcock, Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons, p. 6, stated that archaeological excavation had been on too small a scale to add any precision to the date by which Anglo-Saxon control occurred. But see note 147 above, and infra., p. 242, regarding the recent series of excavations conducted under the leadership of Graeme Young.
\textsuperscript{156} Sims-Williams, 'The death of Urien', p. 33. Metcaud is identified as Lindisfarne from the record in HB 65 of St Cuthbert's death, which is said to have occurred in insula Medcaud (the orthography is
What this entry appears to describe is a protracted war between Urien and several Northumbrian kings — with Theoderic being singled out — in which three other British kings participated: Rhydderch the Old, Gwallog, and Morgan. Rhydderch the Old can be safely identified as the king of Strathclyde who sent an embassy to St Columba in the second half of the sixth century.\textsuperscript{157} The remaining two kings are harder to identify. Gwallog has been tenuously linked with Elmet.\textsuperscript{158} Similarly, Morgan has been connected with Gododdin.\textsuperscript{159} The war culminates in Urien blockading the Northumbrians at Lindisfarne — potentially led by Theoderic, Frithuwald or Hussa\textsuperscript{160} — and Urien’s murder at the behest of his fellow king, Morgan.

The Northumbrian kings mentioned in the passage indicate that the events described occurred between c.570-590, in other words just prior to Æthelfrith’s reign.\textsuperscript{161} It would not be unreasonable to suppose that during this time Northumbrian control had extended to Lindisfarne, which is only ten kilometres north of Bamburgh. In addition, the implication that there was an alliance between the northern British kingdoms, though not explicitly stated in the account, has its attractions. There is no doubt that some British rulers would have been alarmed at the expansion of territory under the control of inconsistent). Lindisfarne is apparently meant here, where Cuthbert was buried; he actually died on Farne Island. See also Jackson, ‘On the Northern British section in Nennius’, pp. 31-2.\textsuperscript{157} VC 1.15 (\textit{supra.}, p. 156). T. Clarkson, ‘Rhydderc Hael’, \textit{The Heroic Age} 2 (1999), \url{http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/2/ha2rh.htm}, p. 4, notes that, in the \textit{HB} account, Rhydderch’s usual epithet \textit{Hael} ‘Generous’ has been replaced with \textit{Hen} ‘Old’.

\textsuperscript{158} Higham, \textit{Northern Counties}, p. 259; J.T. Koch, \textit{The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark Age North Britain} (Cardiff, 1997), p. xxix; and Lovecy, ‘The end of Celtic Britain’, p. 38, to name a few, consider Gwallog to have been a king of Elmet. This association can only be made on the basis of later Welsh poetry. A poem in the fourteenth-century \textit{Book of Taliesin} has a Gwallog as \textit{ynad} — ‘judge’, or possibly overlord — in Elmet. A triad in the fourteenth-century \textit{White Book of Rhydderch} has Ceretic as ‘son of Gwallog’; a Ceretic has already been discussed as a king of Elmet (\textit{supra.}, p. 152). Needless to say, the interpretation of this triad is problematic. Jackson, ‘On the Northern British section in Nennius’, p. 31 n. 3, regarded the claim that Gwallog was a ruler of Elmet as ‘a doubtful interpretation of a doubtful line in a difficult poem’. Breeze, ‘The kingdom and name of Elmet’, p. 168, and Clarkson, ‘The \textit{Gododdin} revisited’, p. 3, note that Ceretic/Ceredig is a common name in the sources, but Breeze seems prepared to accept the identification.

\textsuperscript{159} For example, Gruffydd, ‘In search of Elmet’, p. 69; Higham, \textit{Northern Counties}, p. 259; Miller, ‘Historicity and the pedigrees of the Northcountrymen’, p. 265; \textit{idem.}, ‘Eanfrith’s Pictish son’, p. 62. This hypothesis relies on the inclusion of a Morgan Bulc, as well as his grandson Morgan, in the \textit{Harleian Genealogies} (\textit{EWGT}, p. 10, § 10). Neither of the Morgans is located, except vaguely in the north.

\textsuperscript{160} There is a common assumption that it was definitely Theoderic who was besieged at Lindisfarne (e.g. D.P. Kirby, ‘Bede and the Northumbrian chronology’, \textit{EHR} 78, 1963, p. 525; Stenton, \textit{Anglo-Saxon England}, p. 76; Yorke, \textit{Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England}, p. 77). However, this has been based on a mistake in Mommensen’s edition of the \textit{HB}, in which he misreported \textit{contra illum} ‘against him’ instead of \textit{contra illos} ‘against them’. Thus, even though Theoderic is specifically mentioned as fighting Urien, the rest of the passage does not necessitate the interpretation of a single specific king having been besieged at Lindisfarne. See Sims-Williams, ‘The death of Urien’, pp. 31-4.

\textsuperscript{161} Lovecy, ‘The end of Celtic Britain’, pp. 39-41; Sims-Williams, ‘The death of Urien’, p. 34.
the Northumbrian kings.\textsuperscript{162} There are problems, however, with the extent to which the passage can be used as evidence. For a start, its origin is unclear. Sims-Williams argues that it is too detailed to have been transmitted via an annalistic source, for instance the putative ‘northern British chronicle’, but rather belongs to an oral tradition.\textsuperscript{163} More importantly, Sims-Williams has construed the account as an example of an emerging \textit{topos} in Welsh literature: one of a potential British victory over the Anglo-Saxons being ruined by their own self-destructiveness.\textsuperscript{164} Indeed, there are clear parallels with Gildas’s narrative of the career of Ambrosius Aurelianus and the aftermath of the battle of Badon.\textsuperscript{165} Urien’s death at the instigation of Morgan, during or soon after the siege of Lindisfarne, echoes the British civil wars bemoaned by Gildas after the victory at Badon.\textsuperscript{166} There are also similarities between the siege of Lindisfarne and the \textit{Annales Cambriae} record of the battle of Badon, both being said to have occurred over three days and three nights.\textsuperscript{167} The \textit{Historia Brittonum} passage thus appears to have a homiletic dimension, a lesson to Welsh leaders who might want to unite against the English.\textsuperscript{168} Strictly speaking, this does not render the events unhistorical; a \textit{topos} may have an historical foundation and there may be an authentic nucleus to this account. However, as it stands all the passage shows is how the Welsh looked back on this time in the history of Britain.

There are related problems with the controversial heroic epic \textit{Y Gododdin}, attributed to the allegedly contemporary poet Aneirin.\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Y Gododdin} survives, in two versions, in a single thirteenth-century manuscript commonly called the \textit{Book of Aneirin}.\textsuperscript{170}
poem has been interpreted as a grand elegy to the warriors, principally of Gododdin, who died at *Catraeth* (usually identified to be Catterick in North Yorkshire) in a disastrous campaign against the Angles of Northumbria, a campaign which saw the end of this north-eastern British kingdom.\(^{171}\) The events are usually dated to c.600, which is during the reign of Æthelfrith,\(^{172}\) though John Koch in his recent edition of the poem argues for the earlier date of c.570, before the siege of Lindisfarne.\(^{173}\) The traditional interpretation is compromised, however, by the serious uncertainties which surround the poem. These include: the date of composition;\(^{174}\) the identification of the enemies of Gododdin as being Angles of Northumbria, as opposed to Picts, Scots or other Britons;\(^{175}\) the location of *Catraeth* and whether it is even a specific place-name;\(^{176}\) the explanation of the battle of *Catraeth* as an invasion rather than a raid;\(^{177}\) and the process by which the poem was transmitted until its transcription into written form.\(^{178}\) Oliver Padel rather pointedly states that 'most readers will conclude that if the contents of this poetry can be turned so completely inside out, then historians and archaeologists should refrain from using any deductions drawn from it'.\(^{179}\) This is not to say that *Y Gododdin* has no use for historians; it can be argued, for instance, that a general picture is provided of the 'heroic' way of life of the Britons of the north.\(^{180}\) However, in terms of the present interest in the expansion of Northumbria into the territory of the Gododdin, the problems of interpretation mean that there is little to be gained beyond the level of conjecture.


\(^{175}\) Cessford, 'Where are the Anglo-Saxons in the Gododdin Poem?', p. 95-7; Cessford, 'Northern England and the Gododdin Poem', pp. 218-19; Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin*.

\(^{176}\) Alcock, `Gwyr y Gogledd: an archaeological appraisal', pp. 14-17; Cessford, 'Where are the Anglo-Saxons in the Gododdin Poem?', p. 95; Cessford, 'Northern England and the Gododdin Poem', p. 218; Clarkson, 'Richmond and Catraeth', pp. 15-20; Clarkson, 'The Gododdin revisited', p. 3; Padel, 'A new study of the Gododdin', p. 48; Rowland, 'Warfare and horses in the Gododdin and the problem of Catraeth', pp. 34-5. *Catraeth* might be a conflation of *cad* 'battle' and *traeth* 'shore', and thus a generic term not linked to a specific location.

\(^{177}\) Rowland, 'Warfare and horses in the Gododdin and the problem of Catraeth', pp. 32-8.


Beyond these remembrances of the shadowy world of the sub-Roman period, the demise of the kingdom of Gododdin is not explicitly attested in the sources. It is generally accepted that the polity survived well into the seventh century, even if in a reduced form in the Lothians beyond the Lammermuirs, hugging the southern coast of the Firth of Forth. It is certain that, by Edwin's reign (616-633), Northumbria had expanded to near this frontier. Bede says that, c.627, Edwin and his queen Æthelburh were in residence at the villa regia at Ad-Gefrin, identified as Yeavering in the Cheviots of Northumberland, about sixty-five kilometres north of Hadrian's Wall. The location of a Northumbrian royal villa here attests to a strong presence in the region, which may have stretched back to Æthelfrith's time. And indeed, the use of this particular site for a royal centre, which at the very least appears to have been a prehistoric burial ground and ritual centre, has been interpreted as a statement of Anglo-Saxon domination and control over the surrounding area. Archaeological dating of the Anglo-Saxon presence at Yeavering has been difficult, with the only two datable objects recovered offering a broad range of c. 570-650, but it is not inconsistent with Bede's record of Edwin's occupation of the site, or with a presumption that he may have been reaping gains made by Æthelfrith. Bede also states that later kings abandoned this villa and built another at Maelmin, now Milfield, three and a half kilometres farther north. Excavations at Milfield show evidence of Anglo-Saxon occupation concurrent with, and even earlier than, Yeavering, attesting to its foundation as a Northumbrian settlement before it was used as a royal site. As with Yeavering, the pagan Anglo-Saxon burials at Milfield occur over an ancient site - a henge - and so

---

180 Rowland, 'Warfare and horses in the Gododdin and the problem of Catraeth', pp. 13, 39.
182 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 85.
184 Alcock, Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons, p. 7; Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon pagan shrines and their prototypes', pp. 16-17; Snyder, Sub-Roman Britain, p. 51. These objects are a silver-inlaid iron buckle of Frankish origin (c.570-80 to c.630-40), and a gold-washed copper alloy copy of a Merovingian gold tires (c.630-50). The dating of Yeavering has principally been in terms of the excavator Brian Hope-Taylor's development, Yeavering: An Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria (London, 1977), of a structural sequence of building based on correlating the archaeological evidence of two major burning episodes with documentary references from Bede. His analysis and conclusions are, therefore, open to multiple interpretations. These sites are discussed further in Chapter 8 (infra., pp. 276-80).
185 Alcock, Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons, pp. 8-9. As has already been stated, Milfield is one of the recently excavated pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries north of the Tyne (supra., p. 146).
too may have represented a statement of control. This evidence suggests that the region around Milfield and Yeavering was in Anglo-Saxon hands before Christianity was adopted, Æthelfrith probably being the aggressor.

Northumbrian control in the north was certainly consolidated during the reign of Oswald (634-642), who took up the kingship of Northumbria after his victory over Cadwallon at Heavenfield (Denisesburn), near Hexham, and during the reign of his successor Oswiu (642-670). Monasteries were established in the north including Lindisfarne on Holy Island; Melrose on the Tweed, and Coldingham in the vicinity of St. Abb’s Head about twenty kilometres north of Berwick-upon-Tweed. Lindisfarne and Melrose — Mailros according to Bede — were closely linked and founded during the early years of Aidán’s Northumbrian episcopate (635-651). St. Cuthbert (born c.635) spent his early years in the vicinity of Melrose: the Anonymous Life records his work as a shepherd in the hills near the River Leader, which runs into the Tweed about three kilometres downstream from Melrose. The double monastery at Coldingham — Bede’s Coludi urbs; Stephen of Ripon’s Colodaesburg — also had Columban links, and was ruled by Æbbe (d.683), sister of Oswald and Oswiu. There is no doubt, therefore, that territory south of the Lammermuirs was very much under Northumbrian hegemony by the mid-seventh century.

The annexation of the remaining territory of the Gododdin along the Forth is often attributed to Oswald. This is a presumption, however, based solely on an entry in the Annals of Ulster for 638, recording a siege at Edinburgh, that is ‘obsesio Etin’. The entry does not state who was besieging whom, yet it has been commonplace to assert that it represents the capture of Edinburgh by the forces of Oswald, perhaps accompanied by his brother Oswiu. David Dumville wryly comments on the

---

188 HE III.1, III.2.
189 Thomas, Early Christian Archaeology of North Britain, p. 35; Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 84. Norham (Northumberland) may also have been founded around this time, though there is no direct contemporary evidence. See I. Smith, ‘Brito-Roman and Anglo-Saxon: the unification of the Border’, in P. Clack & J. Ivy (eds.), The Borders (Durham, 1983), p. 13.
190 HE III.3; III.6.
191 Anon. V Cuth I.5.
192 HE IV.19, IV.25; VW 39.
194 AU s.a.
195 For example, Alcock, ‘Gwyrr y Gogledd: an archaeological appraisal’, p. 6; idem., Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons, p. 5; G.D.R. Cruickshank, ‘The battle of Dunnichen and the Aberlemno
'enthusiasm and historical mileage' generated by so enigmatic a record. Admittedly, the suggestion is not implausible; Bede says that Oswald 'held under his sway [in dicione accepit] all the peoples and provinces of Britain, divided among the speakers of the four different languages, British, Pictish, Irish, and English'. But, this statement is difficult to verify and could be an exaggeration informed by Oswald's knowledge of languages. Bede elsewhere states that Oswald only 'ruled within the same bounds [finibus regnum tenuit]' as Edwin, suggesting that he did not expand direct Northumbrian rule. However, Dumville's comment about 'historical mileage' is apposite here. In any event, it could be argued that Oswald's foreign policy was more directed towards the south and the aggressive Mercian kingdom under Penda, rather than to the taking of territory from the Gododdin.

The alternative suggestion, that it was Oswiu who finally captured Edinburgh and the remaining territory of the Gododdin in Lothian, is based on an account in the Historia Brittonum, in which Oswiu is said to have retreated to a location called Iudeu prior to his battle with Penda at Gaius' Field, otherwise recognised as Winwaed, in 655. Iudeu is usually identified with Bede's urbs Giudi, which was 'in the middle/midst [in medio] of the eastern [estuary]', i.e. the Firth of Forth. The whereabouts of Giudi is uncertain. However, Castle Hill at Stirling, located near the head of the estuary and

---


Dumville, 'The origins of Northumbria', p. 216. Dumville is supported here by C. Cessford, 'Relations between the Britons of southern Scotland and Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', in Hawkes & Mills, Northumbria's Golden Age, p. 152, who comments that this 'unproven hypothesis [is] symptomatic of a desire to create a grand tale of Northumbrian expansion'.

In addition, there is no evidence that Oswald made the Picts and Scots/Irish tributary. See Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 84.

HE III.6.

In addition, there is no evidence that Oswald made the Picts and Scots/Irish tributary. See Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 84.

HE 11.5.

HB 64, 65; HE III.24. See Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 90.


Bede's statement that it was 'in the middle' of the Forth estuary might be taken to imply an island, possibly Inchkeith (Jackson, 'Varia: I. Bede's Urbs Giudi: Stirling of Cramond?', p. 2; Plummer, Bede, vol. II, p. 24). Alternately, this could mean a location 'half-way along' the estuary, such as Cramond or
thus in Manaw Gododdin, has recently gained more support.\textsuperscript{203} The authenticity of the \textit{Historia Brittonum} account is not certain. Some of the surrounding narrative — namely, Osuw’s payment to Penda of tribute — is corroborated by Bede, but he does not mention a retreat by Oswiu to \textit{Giudi}.\textsuperscript{204} If the entry \textit{is} authentic, and if Stirling \textit{is} the correct identification, then this would suggest that Oswiu had already annexed the rest of the territory on the south bank of the Firth, and therefore the rest of Gododdin.\textsuperscript{205} But even if another site on the Firth of Forth is found, the account would still attest to Oswiu being able to retreat this far, and therefore the conclusion to be drawn is that the Lothians were no longer in British control. The only possible corroboration of a northern campaign by Oswiu comes from the \textit{Annals of Ulster} for the year 642, in which is recorded the ‘Battle of Oswiu against the Britons’.\textsuperscript{206} The lack of a specified antagonist, however, renders the corroboration tentative.\textsuperscript{207} Nevertheless, if Oswiu did make the Picts tributary in the years after his victory over Penda, as Bede states, then he would surely have also removed any opposition from the Gododdin, even though Bede does not state that Oswiu took any British territory.\textsuperscript{208}

Certainty regarding Northumbrian expansion to the Forth does not come until the reign of Oswiu’s son and successor Ecgfrith (670-85). In the first instance, Stephen of Ripon says that Wilfrid was imprisoned at Ecgfrith’s town of \textit{Dynbaer}, that is Dunbar (East Lothian), in c.680.\textsuperscript{209} This shows that Northumbrian control had extended north of the Lammermuirs by this time. More significantly, in 681 a Northumbrian bishopric for the Picts was established under Bishop Trumwine at Abercorn, approximately twenty kilometres west of Edinburgh’s Castle Hill on the south bank of the Firth of Forth.\textsuperscript{210} Bede states that Abercorn ‘was in English territory, but close to the firth which divides

---


\textsuperscript{204} HE III.24.

\textsuperscript{205} All else being equal, he is not likely to have retreated to an insecure locale.

\textsuperscript{206} \textit{AUs.a.}

\textsuperscript{207} There are also difficulties with the year 642. Oswiu only gained the kingship in 642 after his brother Oswald was killed in battle by Penda of Mercia (HE III.9); so it could be argued that Oswiu would have been otherwise occupied. In addition, dates given in the Irish chronicles do not always correspond with Anglo-Saxon sources, for example, Oswald’s battle with Penda, which in the former is dated to 639, as opposed to 642. It is possible, therefore, that Oswiu’s battle with the Britons occurred at a later date.

\textsuperscript{208} HE II.15, III.24, IV.3 (\textit{supra.}, p. 181).

\textsuperscript{209} \textit{VW} 38.

\textsuperscript{210} HE I.12 (\textit{Aebercurnig}), IV.12, IV.26 (\textit{Abercornig}). \textit{Aebercurnig} is a British name meaning ‘(place at the) horned confluence’. See Smyth, \textit{Warlords and Holy Men}, p. 34; Thomas, ‘Abercorn and the \textit{provincia Pictorum}’, p. 331.
the lands of the English from that of the Picts’ (emphasis added). 211 For Abercorn and western Lothian to be within English territory, there cannot have been a British king ruling at Edinburgh, and if there is any notice which marks the downfall of the kingdom of Gododdin this must surely be it. 212

The kingdom of Gododdin ended, therefore, as obscurely as it emerged. The weight of the evidence does not come from explicit references to warfare and territorial take-over – which in any case only survive in later Welsh sources – but rather from circumstantial deductions based on the location of monasteries and other settlements. While useful, this type of evidence can only provide a terminus ante quem for Northumbrian encroachment into former British territory rather than a specific chronology. Thus, for the final conquest of Gododdin, there can only be a vague pronouncement that it probably occurred in the reign of Oswiu, and was consolidated by his son and successor Ecgfrith. The extent of Northumbrian settlement north of Hadrian’s Wall is, as always, difficult to establish in the absence of identifiable Anglo-Saxon grave-goods. However, the existence of several royal centres such as Bamburgh, Yeavering, and Milfield attests to the importance of the region for the Northumbrian hierarchy, as does the founding of monasteries which were patronised by Northumbrian rulers, such as Lindisfarne, Melrose and Coldingham. Early English place-names – the evidence of which is confounded by later Scandinavian and Scottish settlement – are also found between the Wall and the Forth, with names ending in -ingaham and -ingtun demonstrating Northumbrian occupation along the coastal strip as far as and including eastern Lothian, and the main river valleys of Northumberland and the Scottish Borders. 213

The establishment of a Northumbrian bishopric for the Picts at Abercorn on the Forth also attests to strong Northumbrian interests in the north. The bishopric appears, however, to have been vacated in the aftermath of Ecgfrith’s death in Pictland in 685,

211 HE IV 26.
212 It is not clear whether Trumwine’s bishopric at Abercorn was founded at an existing religious community and, if so, for how long such a community may have been in existence. For Abercorn to become a see, one might expect that a religious house already stood there, perhaps founded to serve the needs of Northumbrian settlers in the vicinity. Indeed, Bede referred to Abercorn as a monastery (HE I 12), which might imply an established community. But as Thomas, ‘Abercorn and the provincia Pictorum’, pp. 331-7, points out, this might just mean that Trumwine formed a small community of attendant clerics when he was installed at Abercorn. Excavation at the site has only been exploratory and cannot offer any greater precision about when the site was first used by the Northumbrians, beyond a general seventh-century date. Proudfoot & Aliaga-Kelly, ‘Towards an interpretation of anomalous finds and place-names of Anglo-Saxon origin in Scotland’, p. 9, present evidence that the Lothians west of Edinburgh had witnessed a settled Anglo-Saxon presence for several decades prior to the founding of the bishopric in 681, and conclude that it should not be seen as an outpost.
when Bede says that Trumwine withdrew with his people from Abercom, and that 'some part of the British nation recovered their independence [libertas], which they have now enjoyed for about forty-six years'. There is no evidence that Trumwine, or anyone else, was ever restored to the see and this would make sense, as the loss of suzerainty over the Picts that also resulted from Ecgfrith’s death undoubtedly meant that they similarly ceased to be under the ecclesiastical authority of Northumbria. However, the monastery of Abercom itself seems to have endured. In his earlier description of the Antonine Wall, Bede states in the present tense that it begins just west of the monastery of Abercom, thus implying that the establishment was still a going concern. The flight of the inmates of Abercom may only have been temporary, while the anger of the Picts was still high. The northern border of Northumbria is, therefore, likely to have remained along the Forth. The Britons who ‘recovered their independence’, if located in the north, may have been those in the subsidiary region of Manaw Gododdin, which itself lay just beyond the boundary of the Antonine Wall, and thus beyond Abercom. Bede says that Pictish lands had been occupied by Northumbrians, but were recovered after 685; Manaw Gododdin may similarly have been restored after Northumbrian occupation. The fact that this region attained an unique identity does suggest that it ran its own peculiar course for a time, and this may have been as an independent political unit. However, the possibility also exists that Manaw Gododdin gained its identity from being a disputed region between the Northumbrians, Picts, Scots and Britons of Gododdin and Strathclyde, and had in fact been under the control of Strathclyde at an earlier point in the seventh century.

214 HE IV.26.
216 HE I.12. Thomas, ‘Abercom and the provincia Pictorum’, p. 331, also thought, on the basis of various fragments of sculptured crosses, that Abercom was ecclesiastically re-occupied. He offered the later eighth century as the time of re-occupation, but did not provide any particular reasoning. There is no evidence which would preclude the contention that Abercom had been re-occupied by Bede’s time. Abercom became the site of a medieval parish church.
217 One is reminded of Christian communities forced to flee during Viking raids, even decamping for the summer, such as occurred at Noirmoutier. Plummer, Bede, vol. II, p. 262, also noted later incursions from the Scots which forced the canons of Hexham to frequently seek refuge in houses farther south.
219 HE IV.26 (infra., pp. 212).
220 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 90, for example, refers to the region as a crossroads where the people of the north ‘intermingled’. Jackson, ‘Varia: I. Bede’s Urbs Giudi: Stirling of Cramond?’, p. 4, similarly talks of Stirling in Manaw Gododdin as ‘the most vital strategic point in all central Scotland, controlling as it did all access by land from south-eastern Scotland to the north, or in Dark Age terms from the country of the Britons of Gododdin (and later of the Northumbrians) to that of the Picts and Gaels’.
The conquest of the kingdom of Gododdin would have brought the Northumbrians into direct contact with the Strathclyde Britons. Gododdin had provided a buffer between Strathclyde and the expanding Northumbria, and had borne the brunt of Northumbrian aggression in the north. However, with this buffer removed, Strathclyde and Northumbria would have come to face each other across a contiguous border, however this was identified.\(^{221}\) If it is assumed that it was Oswiu who finally eliminated Gododdin, then the eventuality of a shared border would most likely have occurred around the middle of the seventh century, and it might thus be posited that the potential for interaction between the kingdoms would have been strong from this time on.

Surviving evidence concerning Strathclyde in the seventh century is, however, somewhat scattered and does not include any reliable direct references to interaction with Northumbria.\(^{222}\) Indeed, the Britons of Strathclyde are the least known of all the peoples of early medieval Scotland,\(^{223}\) and the record of affairs for Strathclyde during this crucial century is sketchy.

Prior to the final Northumbrian conquest of Gododdin, it could be presumed that the Britons of Strathclyde were watchful of events to their south-east.\(^{224}\) There is no doubt that the c.603 battle between Æthelfrith and Aedán of Dalriada at Degsastan would have had potential consequences for the Strathclyde Britons.\(^{225}\) Though there is no evidence that Britons were involved in the battle, Aedán’s defeat would have had implications for the political stability of northern Britain and, if nothing else had already done so, would have alerted Strathclyde to the clear threat posed by aggressive Northumbrian kings. Æthelfrith’s successors, Edwin and then Oswald, were said by

---

\(^{221}\) Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 90.

\(^{222}\) Miller, 'Eanfrith’s Pictish son', p. 48.


\(^{224}\) There is a slim possibility that the two British kingdoms shared some manner of alliance, with the Harleian pedigree including one Clydno Eidyn (i.e. Clydno of Edinburgh) as an apparent uncle to Rhydderch Hael ap Tudwal, the king who sent an emissary to St.Columba (*EWGT*, p. 10, §§ 5-7). See Macquarrie, 'The kings of Strathclyde, c.400-1018', p. 5; Miller, 'Historicity and the pedigrees of the Northcountrymen', pp. 259-61, 265-6. If this link is authentic, then we might expect especial interest to have been paid by the Strathclyde Britons to the fate of Gododdin, and perhaps even direct involvement in the kingdom’s defence. Rhyderch himself has already been introduced as one of the British kings who was said in *HB* 63 to have fought against the successors of Ida of Bernicia (*supra.*, pp. 189-90). Though the account has been evaluated as a *topos*, at the very least we can say that there survived a memory of the Britons of Strathclyde fighting against the Northumbrians around the end of the sixth century.

\(^{225}\) *HE* 1.34; *ASC* s.a. 603; *AU* s.a. 600 (*infra.*, pp. 219-21).
Bede to have ruled over the Britons; he may have meant those of Strathclyde. However, the only compelling evidence for British conquests during their reigns is of territory directly north of Hadrian’s Wall, as well as the territory of Elmet, and perhaps the imposition of overlordship over Gwynedd and the Isle of Man.

The conquest of the Gododdin, however, does raise the possibility that Oswiu, or Ecgfrith, also took territory from Strathclyde. It is a common assumption in the literature that the Britons who regained their independence after 685, discussed above, were those of Strathclyde. For this to have been the case, some of the territory of Strathclyde must, in some manner, have come under Northumbrian control or at least been tributary to Northumbrian overlordship. The most likely way in which this would have occurred is through dominance of the region of Manaw Gododdin. It has already been suggested that Manaw gained an identity as a disputed march. Though it is named in terms of being a region of the kingdom of Gododdin, by the 640s Manaw appears to have passed into the hands of Strathclyde. In the *Annals of Ulster* under the year 642, it is said that ‘Hoan [Owain or Ywair], king of the Britons’ killed Domnall Brecc of Dalriada at the battle of ‘Strathcarron’.

Strathcarron refers to the river Carron which runs into the Firth of Forth about fifteen kilometres south-east of Stirling, and therefore the battle must have occurred within Manaw. Even though battles can be fought at a distance from home-territory, the proximity of Manaw to Dumbarton would suggest that Strathclyde had expanded to encompass the region, perhaps taking advantage of the weakness of Gododdin. But if the account in the *Historia Brittonum* of Oswiu’s retreat to *urbs Giudi* and its identification with Stirling in Manaw are valid, then the region must soon have been lost to Northumbria. When Ecgfrith invaded Pictland in 685, it is likely that he crossed the Forth at Stirling, the

---

226 *Kirby, Earliest English Kings*, p. 84.
227 For what it is worth, the Strathclyde Britons were not included in the *Tribal Hidage*.
229 Supra., pp. 198-9.
230 *AU* s.a. Owain is included in the Harleian pedigree of Strathclyde, as Eugein ap Beli ap Neithon (*EWGT*, p. 10, § 5). A stanza relating to the battle of Strathcarron was also interpolated into the *Y Gododdin* elegies (J.T. Koch & J. Carey, eds., *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales*, Massachusetts, 1995, p. 307).
232 *Miller, ‘Eanfrith’s Pictish son’*, p. 62. If there had been an alliance between the kingdoms, as suggested above, then we would have to assume that it had dissolved by the 640s.
233 The ‘Battle of Oswiu against the Britons’ recorded in the *AU* s.a. 642 mentioned earlier, may even refer to the Britons of Strathclyde and the taking of Manaw (*supra.*, p. 196, and note 207). *Bannerman,*
lowest fordable point, and this may also suggest control of the region, or at least overlordship. If this line of reasoning bears up, it seems as though Manaw had been under the control of Strathclyde in the 640s, was then lost to Northumbria during Oswiu’s reign, and was subsequently regained after Ecgfrith’s death in 685.

There does not appear to have been any further attempt by the Northumbrians in the seventh century to re-occupy Manaw. The fortunes of Northumbria waned after Ecgfrith’s death, and there followed a period of more settled foreign relations in the north of Britain. With the exception of continued Northumbrian settlement in Dumfries and Galloway, not until the reign of Eadberht (737-758) was there a revival of the expansionism of the seventh century. David Kirby described Eadberht as ‘a warrior king who reversed the quiescent policies of his immediate predecessors and extended the bounds of his kingdom’, and it is under his kingship that warfare was rekindled with the Britons of Strathclyde. The Continuatio Baedae records under the year 750 that ‘Eadberht added the plain of Kyle together with other districts to his kingdom [campum Cyil cum aliis regionibus suo regno addidit].’ As Kyle is in Ayrshire, this act was at the expense of Strathclyde, with Dumbarton itself only about fifty kilometres farther north. Tewdwr ap Beli, the king of Strathclyde, died around this date, and it is possible that the timing of Eadberht’s annexation was motivated by the change of succession. According to the Historia regum Anglorum, Eadberht in conjunction with the Pictish king Oengus son of Forgus, assailed Dumbarton itself in 756, and

---

*Studies in the History of Dalriada*, pp. 24-5, noted that of the seventh- and early eighth-century British entries in the AU, the kingdom of Strathclyde is the one referred to most frequently (5 of 10).


235 And as Bede stated in 731, ‘they have now preserved [their independence] for about 46 years’ (HE IV.26). This statement also referred to the Picts and the Scots.


238 CB s.a. This entry also refers to Cuthred of Wessex rising up against Æthelbald of Mercia, an event which in the ASC is recorded s.a. 752. The Continuatio Baedae represents a ‘continuation’ up to 766 of Bede’s chronological summary in HE V.24, found in several MSS. of the HE, the earliest being the annals for 731-4 which are in the Moore Memoranda (see note 149, supra., p. 188). See M. Lapidge, ‘Annals’, in *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE*, p. 40; Plummer, *Bede*, vol. II, p. 345; D. Rollason, ‘Northern annals’, in *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE*, p. 333.


240 AC 750.

241 HR 756. The eighth-century annals in the HR preserve a version of the so-called ‘First Set of Northern Annals’ for 732-802, probably written at York; this early section of the HR was compiled by Byrhtferth of Ramsey in the late-tenth or early-eleventh century. See C. Hart, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle at Ramsey’, in J. Roberts & J.L. Nelson (eds.), *Alfred the Wise: Studies in Honour of Janet Bately on the Occasion of her Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 73-5; M. Lapidge, ‘Byrhtferth of Ramsey...
forced the Britons, who would have been led by Dyfnwal ap Tewdwr, to accept terms. These accounts are significant in that they constitute the first, and indeed only, explicit evidence of Northumbrian aggression against the Britons of Strathclyde, beyond the circumstantial accounts of the seventh century, and show a Northumbrian king not only concerned with consolidating his north-western border but also with expanding it.

What may have occurred as a consequence of the siege of Dumbarton, however, is difficult to determine. Under the 756 entry in the Historia regum it is also recorded that nine days after the Britons accepted terms from Eadberht and Oengus, Eadberht’s army perished as he was leading it from Ovania to Niwanbirig. Ovania may refer to the River Avon in western Lothian, which would have been on Eadberht’s homeward route if he followed the old Roman road along the Antonine Wall; however, a strong case has been made for Govan in Lanarkshire. Niwanbirig, probably meaning ‘Newburgh’, is an Anglo-Saxon name and Newbrough on Tyne, just south of Hadrian’s Wall, has been suggested as the likely identification. The reason for the destruction of Eadberht’s army is not stated, yet Eadberht’s return route which probably took him near the Pictish border might suggest that it was Oengus who ambushed his erstwhile ally. It does not appear that Eadberht was able to recover from this incident, as a little over a year

242 See Kirby, ‘Strathclyde and Cumbria’, p. 84; idem., Earliest English Kings, p. 150; Macquarrie, ‘The kings of Strathclyde, c.400-1018’, p. 11; Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 94. It is noteworthy that in the AU s.a. 750, there is recorded a battle between the Britons and the Picts in which Talorgan, the brother of Oengus, was killed. Under the same year is recorded the ‘ebbing of the power of Oengus [aithbe flatho Oengussa]’. The attack on Dumbarton in 756 might then have been carried out with an element of retribution, and the alliance with Eadberht entered into by Oengus due to a period of relative weakness on the part of the Pictish king. I have followed M.O. Anderson’s, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland (Edinburgh, 1973), p. 186, and T.M. Charles-Edwards’, “The Continuation of Bede”, s.a. 750: high-kings, kings of Tara and “bretwaldas”’, in A.P. Smyth (ed.), Sanchas: Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology, History and Literature in Honour of Francis J. Byrne (Dublin, 2000), p. 139, translation of aithbe as ‘ebbing’, versus ‘end’ as it appears in the MacAirt & MacNiocaill edition. Oengus’s obit – in which he is referred to as rex Pictorum – does not appear until 761 (AU s.a.; CB s.a.); the use of ‘end’ might thus be somewhat presumptuous.
244 Breeze, ‘Simeon of Durham’s Annal for 756’, p. 134; Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 150.
245 Clancy, ‘Govan, the name, again’, p. 11; Macquarrie, ‘The kings of Strathclyde, c.400-1018’, p. 11, points out that it is unlikely the ‘recently cowed’ Britons would have been able to manage an attack on Eadberht’s army. It might be significant that in Oengus’s obit in the CB s.a. 761, he is referred to as a ‘tyrannical slaughterer’. It is of course possible that this description is merely a topos; however, he is not described in this way in his obit in the HR s.a. 759.
later he abdicated in favour of his son Oswulf and entered a monastery. Oswulf himself was killed by his household in the same year, and Northumbria subsequently entered a period of dynastic rivalry which doubtless interrupted any further interest in subduing the Strathclyde Britons.

How long recently-acquired territory in Kyle remained under Northumbrian control after Eadberht's abdication is difficult to determine. There is a cluster of Anglo-Saxon place-names in northern Carrick immediately to the south of Kyle, as well as at the head of the Glenken pass from Galloway, which is potentially datable to the Northumbrian period. The assignation and survival of these names implies some level of tenure by Northumbrian settlers in the region, perhaps as an 'overflow' movement from Galloway to the south. It is possible that Eadberht's annexation of the plain of Kyle was to provide estates and grazing land for these settlers. There is no surviving evidence as to whether the Strathclyde Britons, before the Viking era, ever attempted to retake Kyle. After the death of Dyfnwal ap Tewdwr c.760, the only record of the eighth century relating to Strathclyde tells of Dumbarton being burned in 780 by an unnamed aggressor. It may therefore be that Strathclyde did not immediately recover after the siege of Dumbarton, and that Northumbria retained control of Kyle, or at the very least Carrick, for the remainder of the pre-Viking era. However, the kingdom of Strathclyde endured and indeed flourished until its amalgamation with the kingdom of Scotland in the eleventh century.

In terms of Northumbrian expansion northward, it has been argued that British territory north of Hadrian's Wall began to come under Northumbrian control during the sub-Roman period. Later accounts about that time which survive in the Historia ecclesiastica, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Historia Brittonum, and the poem Y Gododdin, while informative of how relations between Northumbrians and Britons were

246 ASC s.a. 757; CB s.a. 758.
248 Brooke, 'The Northumbrian settlements in Galloway and Carrick', pp. 301, 310-14, argues that four out of the nine medieval parishes in Carrick contained Northumbrian settlements.
249 Expansion from this direction would have been a secondary threat to the sovereignty of Strathclyde, after that from the direction of Edinburgh and Lothian, which offered a more accessible route.
250 AC s.a. 760.
251 AU s.a. 780.
252 Miller, 'Historicity and the pedigrees of the Northcountrymen', p. 264, presumes that Strathclyde 'recovered immediately' after Eadberht's army perished, but the record of 780 may suggest otherwise.
253 Dumville, The Churches of North Britain in the First Viking-Age, pp. 31-2; Macquarrie, 'The kings of Strathclyde, c.400-1018', p. 19.
later viewed, provide little certainty regarding the extent of Northumbrian control in the north. Indeed, while it is likely that Æthelfrith took territory from the Britons of Gododdin, it is not until the reign of Edwin (616-633) that there is certainty that the region south of the Lammermuirs was in Northumbrian hands, with the location of several royal centres at this time attesting to a strong Northumbrian presence. This presence was consolidated under Oswald (634-642) and Oswiu (642-670), with the establishment of several Columban monasteries. The annexation of the remaining territory of Gododdin along the Forth, though commonly attributed to Oswald, is as likely to have been at the instigation of Oswiu, who must have held the south bank of the Forth for him to extend overlordship over the Picts. However, it is not until Ecgfrith’s reign (670-685) that there is a documented notice which implies the downfall of the kingdom of Gododdin, namely, the founding of the bishopric at Abercorn in 681. While the annexation of the kingdom of Gododdin would have put the Northumbrians into direct contact with the Britons of Strathclyde, no explicit references to interaction survive from the seventh century. It may be presumed that the region of Manaw Gododdin passed between the Northumbrians and the Strathclyde Britons in this century, but there is no other evidence that Strathclyde ever paid tribute to Northumbria. In the eighth century, Strathclyde came under attack from Eadberht (737-758), and Oengus of the Picts, losing the plain of Kyle in Ayrshire. This area may have stayed in Northumbrian hands for the remainder of the pre-Viking period.

The Northumbrian kings were, therefore, able to achieve permanent gains in the seventh century over the British kingdoms of Elmet, Rheged and Gododdin. It may also be presumed that other supposed Pennine kingdoms such as Craven or Catraeth would have been subsumed by Northumbrian expansion. In the eighth century, continued expansion occurred in Dumfries and Galloway, and farther north in Ayrshire at the expense of Strathclyde. However, the kingdom of Strathclyde itself, alone of the British kingdoms of the north, escaped elimination by Northumbria. Warfare between Britons and Northumbrians could be said to have fulfilled a primary function of territorial expansion, though other motivations were also present, such as the imposition of overlordship, tribute collection, and the seizure of war-loot, as well as the possibility of Edwin expelling Ceretic from Elmet out of retribution. Not without reason did

Dumville conclude that Northumbria was founded ‘on the wreckage of British politics’.256

Northumbrians and Picts

Aggression between Anglo-Saxons and Picts is one of the earliest narratives in early medieval British history. Gildas says that the ‘Saxons’ who were first invited to Britain as mercenaries were to protect the Romano-Britons against incursions from the Picts, as well as the Scots, of the north.257 From the outset, Picts and Anglo-Saxons were being cast in opposition to one another; although Bede recorded that they may also have allied.258 The Picts were therefore cast in a different light from the other natives peoples of Britain in that they were seen as aggressors rather than passive victims of a cataclysmic time, and as a people keen for bloodshed and plunder.259 This portrayal of the Picts undoubtedly led to the development of what has been referred to as the ‘Foul Hordes Paradigm’ in Pictish studies, namely, of the Picts as being especially savage and bestial.260 While this view has more recently been questioned, it is nonetheless certain that the Picts, by dint of their location, were not in any sense forced into a defensive position against the early Anglo-Saxon invaders.261 Thus, in a similar manner to the Strathclyde Britons, the Picts would not have been subject to direct Northumbrian aggression until the buffer kingdom of Gododdin had been removed, around the middle of the seventh century during the reign of Oswiu (642-670). The Picts could easily have raided into territory to their south, taking advantage of the turmoil created by Anglo-Saxon expansion into British territory.262

256 Dumville, ‘The origins of Northumbria’, p. 221.
258 HE I.15, ‘Then suddenly [the Angles] made a temporary treaty with the Picts whom they had already driven far away, and began to turn their weapons against their allies’; and HE I.20, ‘Meanwhile the Saxons and Picts had joined forces and were making war upon the Britons’. See Dumville, ‘The origins of Northumbria’, pp. 214-5; E.A. Thompson, Saint Germanus of Auxerre and the End of Roman Britain (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 44-5; and also P. Bartholomew, ‘Fourth century Saxons’, Britanni 15 (1984), pp. 173-7, regarding the ‘Barbarian Conspiracy’ of 367.
262 Thomas, ‘Abercorn and the provincia Pictorum’, p. 326, raised the possibility that some of these Pictish raiders never returned to Pictland, but settled between the Walls. There are three Pit- names – from pett ‘parcel of land’, ‘land-holding’ – in the Lothians, the presence of which is usually linked to the historical Picts. How these names were ascribed, however, remains unclear. On the Pit- names, see W.F.H. Nicolaisen, ‘Celtic and pre-Celtic place-name elements in Scotland’, in B.T. Hudson & V. Ziegler
Prior to the reign of Oswiu, therefore, the Picts were likely to have been wholly independent of the Northumbrian hegemony that was developing in the north of Britain. Despite Bede's statements about the imperium of the Northumbrian kings, it is unlikely that Oswiu's predecessors, Edwin or Oswald, ever exercised power over the Picts.\footnote{HE II.5.} Though Edwin was said to have ruled all the peoples of Britain, Bede only specified overlordship of the Anglo-Saxons (excepting Kent) and the Britons, and the fact that the sons of Æthelfrith were able to find refuge away from Edwin amongst the Picts and Scots implies that Edwin had no control over these peoples.\footnote{HE III.1.} Oswald was also said by Bede to have been a powerful overlord and to have ruled all the peoples speaking the four languages, including the Picts, but this claim may have been inflated, informed by Oswald's knowledge of languages.\footnote{HE III.6.} Oswald's alliances and overlordship seem to have been directed rather towards the south and towards stemming the power of Penda of Mercia.\footnote{P. Holdsworth, 'Oswald', in Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE, p. 347.} In any event, Bede is contradictory in his statements about the extent of overlordship achieved by Oswald in the north.\footnote{HE II.5.}

It is with Oswiu that Bede is most consistent regarding the subjugation of the Picts. In his account of the imperium-wielding kings he says that Oswiu 'for a time held almost the same territory [as Oswald] ... [and] overwhelmed/conquered [perdomuit] and made tributary [tributarias fecit] even the tribes of the Picts and Scots who inhabit the northern parts of Britain'.\footnote{Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 84; H. Moisl, 'The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish in the seventh century', Peritia 2 (1983), p. 118; Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 83.} Elsewhere he qualifies this by stating that Oswiu, in the three years after 655 when he had defeated Penda at the battle of Winwaed, 'subjected the greater part [maxima ex parte] of the Pictish people to the dominion of the English [regno Anglorum subiecit]'.\footnote{HE II.5.} These statements provide the first evidence of aggression by Northumbria against the Picts that is likely to be authentic. The wording of the passages suggests that Oswiu gained overlordship of at least some of the Picts.
such that he was able to collect tribute, perhaps enforced by the taking of hostages.\textsuperscript{270} Bede provides a manner of verification for this assertion when he records elsewhere that Wilfrid, who had been restored to the bishopric of York in 669, the year before Oswiu's death, enjoyed ecclesiastical rule over 'all the Northumbrians \textit{and Picts}, as far as Oswiu's power extended \textit{[imperium protendere poterat]}' (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{271} The dates provided by Bede also make sense; the years after \textit{Winwaed} were when Oswiu was at the height of his power and thus most able to extend his rulership.\textsuperscript{272} And by this time, the kingdom of the Gododdin would have been subsumed, bringing the northern border of Northumbria up to the Firth of Forth and the disputed region of Manaw Gododdin. Thus, Northumbrians and Picts would have faced each other across the Forth for the first time, and Oswiu may have looked to further northward expansion.\textsuperscript{273}

Neither Bede nor any other source reveals specifically which of the Pictish regions were subjugated by Oswiu. Bede only states that it was the greater part, which could be an exaggeration intended to glorify Oswiu's military accomplishment. David Kirby has suggested the region of Fortriu between the head of the Firth of Forth and the Tay, and certainly this would have been the most directly accessible to invasion from the south.\textsuperscript{274} Indeed, the Pictish king Bridei son of Beli, who appears to have been Ecgfrith's antagonist in 685,\textsuperscript{275} is described in his obit in the \textit{Annals of Ulster} under the year 693 as 'king of Fortriu'.\textsuperscript{276} The region to the east of Fortriu, later called Fib (Fife), may also have been subdued.\textsuperscript{277} According to both \textit{Lives of St. Cuthbert}, the saint travelled from the monastery of Melrose when he was prior, c.664-78, to the \textit{Niuduera regio} in the land of the Picts.\textsuperscript{278} This region is thought to have been in Fife; \textit{Niuduera} may have survived in the medieval place-name \textit{Nithbren}, now Newburn on Largo.

\textsuperscript{270} In \textit{HB 57}, it is recorded that after Ecgfrith's defeat and death in 685, the Northumbrians were \textit{no longer able} to exact tribute from the Picts. This implies that it had once been done.

\textsuperscript{271} \textit{HE} IV.3. Stephen of Ripon (\textit{FW 21}) also tells us that Wilfrid was bishop over the Picts in the north, as well as the Britons and Scots.


\textsuperscript{273} According to Bede (\textit{HE I.12}), the Firth of Forth had originally been the boundary between the Picts and the Britons. See also Thomas, 'Abercorn and the \textit{province Pictorum}', p. 326.

\textsuperscript{274} Kirby, \textit{Earliest English Kings}, p. 99. This region was also suggested by K. Hughes, 'Early Christianity in Pictland', in idem., \textit{Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages} (Woodbridge, 1980), p. 47.

\textsuperscript{275} \textit{HB 57}.

\textsuperscript{276} \textit{AU} s.a. 693. Bridei is the first to be styled as 'king of Fortriu \textit{[rex Fortrend]}' in the \textit{AU}.


\textsuperscript{278} Anon. \textit{VCuth II.4}; Bede, \textit{VCuth} 11.
Bay. It certainly appears that Cuthbert intended to visit Picts who were either on friendly terms or subject to Northumbrian rule. Whether any other Pictish region north of the Tay came under Northumbrian control is unknown; overlordship may have only been restricted to Bede's 'southern Picts'.

Northumbrian overlordship in Pictland seems to have involved more than just tribute-gathering. Bede records that after Ecgfrith's death in 685, the Picts retook lands which had been 'occupied by the English [tenuerunt Angli]', and that many of the English 'were either slain by the sword or enslaved or escaped by flight from Pictish territory [de terra Pictorum fuga lapsos]' (emphasis added). Thus, there were Northumbrians who were actually living in Pictland, and so there must have been some manner of settlement and perhaps the granting of estates to Northumbrian nobles. This might suggest the placement of a subregulus or praefectus by Oswiu to rule over this newly acquired territory, who came with a household and perhaps tenants.

Modern scholars have attempted to elucidate Oswiu's motivation for intervening in Pictish territory beyond that of simple expansionism, and focussed on his nephew Talorcan, a king of the Picts. It has been suggested that Oswiu assisted in the installation of Talorcan as king in 658, and that Oswiu's overlordship of the Picts was formalised via his role as patrilinear head of the family. It has also been argued that Talorcan would have been subordinate to his uncle, perhaps Oswiu's 'puppet king'. These arguments founder, however, on closer examination of the dates for Talorcan's kingship. It has been assumed, on the basis of the Pictish king-list in the fourteenth-


280 HE III.4.


282 HE IV.26. These statements are separated in the passage from the description of the battle, and so are not intended to simply refer to the remnants of Ecgfrith's army.

283 There is, unfortunately, no archaeological evidence attesting to an Anglo-Saxon presence north of the Forth during the seventh century. It may have been that the settlements were too short-lived to leave much of an impression archaeologically. See Proudfoot & Aliaga-Kelly, 'Towards an interpretation of anomalous finds and place-names of Anglo-Saxon origin in Scotland', pp. 11-12.

284 HE III.24. The family of the subregulus Beornhæth could be candidates here (infra., p. 213-14).

285 Talorcan was the son of Oswiu's brother Eanfrith. The circumstances surrounding Eanfrith's Pictish son will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8 (infra., pp. 250-2).

286 Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', p. 63.

287 Cruickshank, 'The battle of Dunnichen and the Aberlemno battle-scene', pp. 70-1; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, pp. 61-2; Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, pp. 84-5.
century Poppleton Manuscript, that Talorcan ruled from 658 to 662. However, the evidence of the Annals of Ulster records Talorcan’s death under the year 657. Marjorie Anderson has noted that a less selective use of the sources would date Talorcan’s accession to 653, two years before Winwaed and thus before the most likely period when Oswiu would have been free to intervene in Pictish affairs. Hence, while the notion of Oswiu’s overlordship of the Picts via his relationship with Talorcan is attractive, it does not seem that the chronology supports it. It could equally be the case that Oswiu’s intervention in Pictland was motivated by Talorcan’s death in 657; this occurred in the years following Oswiu’s victory at Winwaed, and Oswiu shared no close blood-tie with Talorcan’s successor, Gartnait son of Donuel, such as may have previously restrained him. Alternatively, Oswiu might have been motivated to invade Pictland by the presence of Talorcan, ruling as a potential dynastic rival.

Overlordship of the Picts continued into the reign of Oswiu’s son and successor Ecgfrith (670-685). There appears to have been an attempt by the Picts soon after Ecgfrith’s accession to throw off the Northumbrian yoke, which is reported in Stephen of Ripon’s Life of Wilfrid. He recounts that in the early years of Ecgfrith’s reign ‘while the kingdom was still weak’ (presumably a reference to the instability brought about by the succession), various tribes of Picts began to stir up revolt because they ‘had a fierce contempt for subjection to the Saxons [subiectionum Saxonum (sic)]’. Ecgfrith, with his subregulus Beornhxth, mustered an army to meet this revolt, and in the ensuing battle filled ‘two rivers with corpses, so that, marvellous to relate, the slayers, passing over the rivers dry foot, pursued and slew the crowd of fugitives’. The Picts were said to have been ‘reduced to slavery [servitus]’, or in other words were subordinated, and remained

288 Miller, ‘Eanfrith’s Pictish son’, p. 50. See note 122 (supra., p. 159).  
289 AU s.a.  
290 Anderson, ‘Picts – the name and the people’, p. 10. The same point is made by A. Woolf, ‘Pictish matriliny reconsidered’, The Innes Review 49 (1998), p. 159, who hypothesises that it might have been the ascension of Talorcan, a kinsman, to the Pictish throne that enabled Oswiu to finally mount a successful campaign against Penda. Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 94, also suggests that Oswiu had Pictish help. Both Smyth and Yorke (see note 287 above) accept a date of 653 for Talorcan’s accession, but do not appear to have thought through the implications of such a date for their presumption of Talorcan’s subordination to Oswiu.  
292 Woolf, ‘Pictish matriliny reconsidered’, p. 159. Talorcan had apparently defeated the Scots of Dalriada in 654 (a detail which is added to the AU account of the battle of Raith Ethairt in the later Annals of Tigernach). He may therefore have been exercising some power in the north.  
so until Ecgfrith's death. This is the first notice of a battle between Northumbrians and Picts. An attempt by the Picts to end Northumbrian rule after the accession of a new king is quite plausible. Oswiu's death would certainly have signalled a golden opportunity for the Picts to re-establish supremacy over their lands and to revise the previous relationship in their favour. However, the Picts were unsuccessful in their endeavour. Ecgfrith continued the Northumbrian overlordship over Pictish territory, and his authority was no doubt consolidated by the creation of the Northumbrian bishopric at Abercorn in 681 under Bishop Trumwine, to 'the province of the Picts [provincia Pictorum] which at the time was subject to the dominion of the English [Anglorum erat imperio subiecta]'. The fact that the bishopric was established at Abercorn in Northumbrian territory, and not north of the Forth in Pictish territory, does suggest some reserve on the part of the Northumbrians regarding the security of their hold over the Picts.

A perceived desire for greater control, or indeed overlordship, in the north may have been part of the motivation underlying Ecgfrith's invasion of Pictland in 685 which ended in his death. According to Bede, Ecgfrith ignored the advice of his friends – particularly St Cuthbert – and 'rashly took an army to ravage the province of the Picts'. The Picts feigned a retreat and lured Ecgfrith into 'narrow passes in the midst of inaccessible mountains; there he was killed, with the greater part of the forces he had taken with him, on 20 May'. The site of the battle is not named by Bede but is remembered in the Historia regum as Nechtan's Mere, and in the Annals of Ulster as Dūn Nechtain, now Dunnichen Moss near Forfar (Angus), approximately sixty-five kilometres north of the Forth, and even north of the Tay. Ecgfrith, therefore, appears

294 The filling of 'two rivers with the corpses' bears some similarity with the AU entry s.a. 676, which records that 'Many Picts were drowned at Lann Abae' (site unlocated). The date, if it is authentic, may be too late to refer to the same battle as in the VW, but the possible correspondence is noteworthy.

295 See the earlier discussion on enslavement and subordination (supra., pp. 168-70).

296 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 100; Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', pp. 58-9.

297 This lack of success may have been the cause of the expulsion from the kingship of Drest son of Donuel, recorded in the AU s.a. 672. See Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, p. 172.

298 HE IV.12. See also ASC MS. E 681, 'Trumwine [was consecrated] for the Picts, because they were then subject to here [i.e. Northumbria]'. Trumwine's see at Abercorn was also discussed in the context of Northumbrian control over the former territory of the Gododdin (supra., pp. 196-8).

299 Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, p. 173 n. 203. Thomas, 'Abercorn and the provincia Pictorum', p. 330, suggested that Abercorn was at the centre of a regio Anglorum – perhaps a diocese – which encompassed modern day Lothian and Fife, and hence its choice as the site of the bishopric. This is certainly possible, though it must be kept in mind that Bede deliberately stated that Abercorn was within English territory, and that the territory north of the Forth was Pictish (HE IV.26).

300 HE IV.26, 'cum temere exercitum ad vastandum Pictorum provinciam ductisset'.

301 HR s.a. 685; AU s.a. 686. Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, p. 173 n. 202, says the Mire of Dunnichen was completely drained after 1833. In HB 57, the battle is called Gueith Lin Garan,
to have been drawn northwards beyond the relative security of the subject region of Fortriu, and met his end, possibly in an ambush, after having traversed Strathmore. No specific Pictish antagonist is named by Bede; however, the account of the battle in the Historia Brittonum states that Ecgfrith fought against his cousin — 'fratruel suum' — Bridei. This is almost certainly authentic. Bridei (or Bruide) son of Bile was the Pictish king who succeeded Drest son of Donuel after the latter's expulsion in 672, and who is described as a 'king of Fortriu' in his obit in the Annals of Ulster. It is possible that Bridei was also a king concerned with trying to extend his sovereignty in the north; the Annals of Ulster, for instance, record under the year 682 that he destroyed the Orkneys. Ecgfrith may thus have been provoked into invasion by a declaration of independence by Bridei or a refusal to render tribute to the Northumbrians.

For Bede, Ecgfrith's death in 685 represented the end of a personal road to self-destruction. In the previous year, against the warnings of St Ecgberht, Ecgfrith had sent an army into Ireland under the command of Berht, which according to Bede 'wretchedly devastated a harmless race ... [sparing] neither churches nor monasteries'. This same event was recorded in the Annals of Ulster, where it is stated that 'The Saxons (sic) laid waste Mag Breg, and many churches, in the month of June.' Thus, Bede was able to represent Ecgfrith's death as divine punishment against one who was 'justly cursed for their wickedness [and] quickly suffered the penalty of their guilt at the avenging hand of God.'
Notwithstanding this providential explanation of events, Bede is certainly accurate in presenting Ecgfrith’s death as a turning point in Northumbrian history.\textsuperscript{310} The immediate consequences were that the Picts who had been under Northumbrian overlordship recovered their territory and their independence.\textsuperscript{311} The Northumbrians who had occupied Pictish land were either killed, enslaved or forced to flee.\textsuperscript{312} Trumwine withdrew his people from Abercorn, and he himself spent the rest of his days at \textit{Streanaeshalch} (Whitby), with his short-lived bishopric over the Picts never being restored.\textsuperscript{313} However, it is likely that Abercorn continued as a Northumbrian house, with the northern border of Northumbria remaining along the Forth. For the Picts, the battle of Dunnichen was of great significance and may have led to a period of political and military resurgence. It has been suggested that the Class II cross-slab at Aberlemno churchyard, about ten kilometres from the site of the battle, was raised to commemorate their victory.\textsuperscript{314} The reverse side of the slab depicts a battle scene which has been interpreted as the battle of Dunnichen, with the helmeted warrior in the bottom right corner of the lower register possibly symbolising Ecgfrith.\textsuperscript{315}

In the longer term, it appears that Northumbria never re-achieved any stable military supremacy in the north of Britain.\textsuperscript{316} Bede says that after 685 the ‘hopes and strength’ of Northumbria wavered, and though Ecgfrith’s successor Aldfrith (685-705) was able to ‘restore the shattered state of the kingdom’, this was over a reduced amount of territory.\textsuperscript{317} The \textit{Historia Brittonum} also states that the \textit{Saxones} ‘never grew [strong enough] from the time of that battle to exact tribute from the Picts’.\textsuperscript{318} The same observation probably applied to the exacting of tribute from the Scots of Dalriada and

\textit{Middle Ages} (Oxford, 1981), p. 14. D.A. Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts and their heritage (to c.800)’, in H. Löwe (ed.), \textit{Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter} (Stuttgart, 1982), p. 92 n. 38, notes with irony the later account of Symeon of Durham, in his twelfth-century \textit{History of the Church of Durham} (\textit{Historia Dunelmensis ecclesie} I.9), that Ecgfrith was buried on Iona. He offers that Ecgfrith’s body may have been brought there by the victorious Picts, or by his half-brother Aldfrith, who was known on Iona.

\textsuperscript{310} Even if Dunnichen merely signalled the end of a deterioration in Northumbria’s power that had already begun, the event is still representative of a shift in the political hegemony of northern Britain. See Anderson, ‘Picts — the name and the people’, p. 8; Cruickshank, ‘The battle of Dunnichen and the Aberlemno battle-scene’, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{311} \textit{Supra.}, p. 198.

\textsuperscript{312} \textit{HE} IV.26.

\textsuperscript{313} Cowan, ‘Early ecclesiastical foundation’, p. 18; Kirby, \textit{Earliest English Kings}, pp. 100, 142.


\textsuperscript{315} A full, if occasionally speculative, discussion of the Aberlemno stone is provided by Cruickshank, ‘The battle of Dunnichen and the Aberlemno battle-scene’, pp. 69-87.

\textsuperscript{316} Anderson, ‘Picts — the name and the people’, p. 8; Kirby, \textit{Earliest English Kings}, p. 142.

\textsuperscript{317} \textit{HE} IV.26.

\textsuperscript{318} \textit{HB} 57.
the Britons of Strathclyde, though the latter did eventually suffer the attention of Eadberht. The loss of tribute from these northern Celtic kingdoms would have been a financial blow to the Northumbrian kings.\textsuperscript{319} This was undoubtedly a factor in the growing shortage in estates to grant to veterans and sons of nobles, described by Bede in his letter to Bishop Ecgberht.\textsuperscript{320} While it is not necessarily the case that the kings who succeeded Ecgfrith were any less aggressive per se, the nature of their activities would have been curtailed by their comparative lack of wealth.

Though during Aldfrith’s reign (685-705) relations with the Picts seem to have been more quiescent, there is evidence that hostility still occurred. Bede states that in 698 a Northumbrian \textit{dux regius} called Berhtred, probably one and the same commander who led Ecgfrith’s army to Ireland, was killed by the Picts.\textsuperscript{321} The same event was recorded in the \textit{Annals of Ulster}, as ‘A battle between the Saxons and the Picts, in which fell Bernith’s son, called Brectrid’\textsuperscript{322} It has been suggested that the Bernith mentioned here was the \textit{subregulus} Beornhaeth who joined Ecgfrith in the battle against the Picts early in his reign,\textsuperscript{323} and therefore that Berhtred inherited a major military command in the north from his father.\textsuperscript{324} It could have been that this family was granted lands in Pictish territory prior to the defeat in 685, perhaps as a form of marcher lordship, and Berhtred was killed in an unsuccessful attempted to regain them. The fact that Berhtred’s patronymic was recorded in the \textit{Annals of Ulster}, and not by Bede, does suggest that he was known in the north.

This northern command could also have passed to one Berhtfrith \textit{praefectus}, who, Bede says, fought against the Picts in 711 during the reign of Aldfrith’s son Osred (705-716).\textsuperscript{325} By dint of his name, it might be hypothesised that Berhtfrith was a close relative of Berhtred and Beornhaeth.\textsuperscript{326} He is almost certainly the same person whom Stephen of Ripon referred to as ‘next/second in rank to the king’ [\textit{secundus a rege}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{320}] Bede, \textit{Epist. Ecg.} 11 (\textit{supra.}, pp. 185).
\item[\textsuperscript{321}] \textit{HE} V.24. In the \textit{ASC} MS. E s.a. 699 it is recorded that, ‘Here the Picts killed ealdorman Beorht’.
\item[\textsuperscript{322}] \textit{AU} s.a. 698.
\item[\textsuperscript{323}] \textit{VW} 19.
\item[\textsuperscript{325}] \textit{HE} V.24.
\item[\textsuperscript{326}] Yorke, \textit{Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England}, p. 92.
\end{itemize}
princeps]" (i.e. Osred) when discussing the Synod near the Nidd of c.706. In the Annals of Ulster, Berhtfrith's battle in 711 is remembered as a Pictish defeat: 'A slaughter of the Picts by the Saxons in Mag Manonn'. The location of the battle at Mag Manonn, 'the plain of Mano', places it within the disputed region of Manaw Gododdin, and this is confirmed by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which records that Berhtfrith fought against the Picts between the Avon and the Carron (south-east of Stirling). Thus, the battle occurred on the south side of the Firth of Forth, not far from Abercorn, and may have been an attempt by the Picts to take advantage of Osred's minority kingship. There is no surviving evidence, however, of what the effect of this Northumbrian victory might have been. If Berhtfrith was indeed related to Berhtred and Beornhæth and was interested in reviving some form of lordship over the Picts, no record exists that this ambition was ever realised. It may have been that the rivalries within Northumbrian politics at the time were too all-consuming for any sustained campaign north of the Forth to be seriously considered. Alternatively, the Northumbrians may not have had the financial resources to do so.

Whatever may have been expected, the years following the battle of 711 witnessed a more peaceful period in relations across the Forth. This is evidenced by the request, c.710-15, from the Pictish king Nechtan son of Derilei to Abbot Ceolfrith of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow for guidance regarding Roman ecclesiastical practice, and by Bede's statement in the Historia ecclesiastica that 'the Picts now [i.e. in 731] have a treaty of peace [foedus pacis] with the English'. The treaty, at that time, would almost certainly have been between the Northumbrian king Ceolwulf (729-737), and the Pictish king Oengus son of Forgus (c.729-761), the ruler who joined Eadberht in

---

327 VW 60. Berhtfrith fought on the side of the forces loyal to Osred at the siege of Bamburgh. This siege probably occurred soon after Aldfrith's death in 705, when the otherwise unknown Eadwulf briefly held the throne.
328 AU s.a. 711.
329 ASC MS E s.a. 710, 'Ealdorman Beorhtfrith fought between the Avon (Haefe) and the Carron (Caere) against the Picts'.
330 Osred (706-716) acceded to the throne when he was about eight years of age (HE V.18) and is the only certain minority king recorded in Anglo-Saxon England pre-900. See Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, pp. 86-7. Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 147, suggested that Osred's eventual death 'south of the border' (ASC MS. E 716) was a reference to the boundary with the Picts. However, a reference to the border with Mercia is more probable.
331 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 147. Ethelwulf's De Abbatibus, §ii (A. Campbell, ed., Oxford, 1967, pp. 4-7), written c.803x821, gives the impression that Osred was an impulsive youth who slew many of his nobles and forced others to seek a monastic life.
332 HE V.21. This letter is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9 (infra., pp. 346-7).
333 HE V.23.
the siege of Dumbarton. There is no surviving evidence as to whether this treaty was peculiar to these rulers, or a more generalised arrangement dating from Nechtan's reign, though the personal nature of social bonds in early medieval Germanic and Celtic societies would probably indicate the former. In any event, this is the only certain evidence of a peace treaty recorded between an Anglo-Saxon and a Celtic kingdom in pre-Viking Britain. The existence of a peace treaty implies 'regular and institutionalised foreign relations' between Northumbria and at least one of the Pictish polities. In addition, the fact that certain Northumbrian kings found refuge in exile amongst the Picts in the eighth century not only attests to the on-going contact between these kingdoms but also that Northumbria did not again achieve a dominant status over the Picts. Pictland would, otherwise, hardly have been a safe destination for a deposed king.

Despite this period of peace, Bede in his letter to Bishop Ecgberht expressed concern over the ability of Northumbria to defend itself against invasion by 'barbarians'. In the Historia ecclesiastica he also talked of two comets in 729 portending some great calamity, of king Ceolwulf's reign being 'threatened by calamities both by day and by night', and displayed unease over the number of men in Northumbria laying aside their weapons and taking monastic vows. It has been presumed that Bede's barbarians were the Picts, and it is difficult to fathom whom else he may have been referring to, unless he had no one people specifically in mind. Bede may, thus, have had some lingering anxiety about the nature of the threat posed by the Picts.

There is only one further direct reference to warfare between Northumbrians and Picts recorded for the pre-Viking era. This occurred during the reign of the expansionist king Eadberht (737-758), who was said in the Continuatio Bedae under the year 740 to have

---

334 Supra., pp. 201-2.
335 Miller, ‘Eanfrith’s Pictish son’, p. 61, ponders whether this was a written statement, and, if so, in what language.
337 An issue to be discussed in Chapter 8 (infra., pp. 243-7).
338 Bede, Epist. Ecg. 11.
339 HE V.23. Bede's direct comment on this latter eventuality was: 'What the result will be, a later generation will discover'.
340 Plummer, Bede, vol. II, p. 385; Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 94. It is certainly too early in the eighth century for Bede to have been talking of Vikings.
341 P. Wormald, 'The age of Bede and Aethelbald', in J. Campbell (ed.), The Anglo-Saxons (London, 1991), p. 78. Bede may have had in mind the lessons of Gildas's De Excidio Britanniae, in which the sins of the Britons were said to have resulted in the divine punishment of the Anglo-Saxon invasions. The failings of the Northumbrian church, and the proliferation of 'monasteries only in name', could have presaged an analogous fate for Northumbria.
been 'occupied with his army against the Picts'.

It is not clear who the aggressor was in this encounter – Eadberht or possibly the Pictish king Oengus. Perhaps Oengus, now freed from his earlier treaty with Ceolwulf, was seeking further gain from Northumbria, as Bede presaged. The timing of the encounter is certainly interesting; in the same year the Continuatio Bedae records that Æthelbald, king of the Mercians, 'through wicked deceit, devastated part of Northumbria'. The impression to be gained from the annal is that Æthelbald was taking advantage of Eadberht's engagement in the north. It has been hypothesised that the Mercians and Picts conspired against Northumbria in this year. This is an attractive possibility, though there is nothing explicitly revealed in the entry which would compel such a conclusion.

Whatever the reason for the engagement in 740, it does not appear to have precluded further alliances between Eadberht and the Picts. Eadberht and Oengus operated in unison when they besieged Dumbarton in 756. Thus, some manner of pact must have been re-forged between the two kings, though the possibility has been raised that Oengus reneged on this alliance and ambushed Eadberht, destroying his army.

Oengus had certainly exercised some authority in the north of Britain, which may have included other engagements with the Northumbrians, thus earning him an obit in the Continuatio Bedae in which he was described as a 'tyrant and slaughterer [tyrannus ... carnifex]'. Thomas Charles-Edwards has recently raised the prospect that Oengus was a widely recognised overlord of Britain north of the Humber, in conjunction with Æthelbald of Mercia who was overlord of the south. If this was the case, Eadberht may have found it necessary to seek Oengus's assistance in subduing the Britons of Strathclyde. But Oengus had also been brought low in about 750 and so might too.

---

342 CB s.a., 'occupatus cum suo exercitu contra Pictos'.
343 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 150, assumed, with no particular explanation, that Eadberht was the aggressor.
344 Charles-Edwards, "The Continuation of Bede", s.a. 750', pp. 139-40; Dumville, 'The origins of Northumbria', p. 220.
345 HR s.a. 756 (supra., p. 202).
346 See note 245 (supra., p. 202).
347 Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland , pp. 182-8, provides a discussion of Oengus's kingship.
348 CB s.a. 761.
349 Charles-Edwards, "The Continuation of Bede", s.a. 750', pp. 137-45. The principal source for his argument is the CB s.a. 750, the same entry which records Eadberht taking the plain of Kyle. It is also written that 'Cuthred, king of the West Saxons rose against King Æthelbald and Oengus' (emphasis added). If one is prepared to accept this as genuine, versus a textual corruption, then the two kings might have effected a division of Britain into two zones of imperium.
350 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 148; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 73.
have benefited from an alliance with the Northumbrian king.\textsuperscript{351} In this regard, it is possible to imagine a network of alliances in the north of Britain which shifted according to circumstance and political expediency. Notwithstanding the events of the 750s, Northumbria’s relations with the Picts, as far as the sources reveal, were quiescent for the remainder of the pre-Viking period.

***

Northumbrians and Picts, while undoubtedly engaging in some manner of conflict in the sub-Roman period, would not have come into direct contact until the removal of the kingdom of Gododdin in the middle of the seventh century. It is almost certain that Oswiu was the first Northumbrian king to exercise overlordship of the Picts, in the years following the battle of \textit{Winwaed} in 655. Oswiu’s overlordship was continued by Ecgfrith and appears to have involved more than just the gathering of tribute. Indeed, it is probable that Northumbrian nobles, such as Beornhæth, were granted estates in southern Pictland and so acted as the Northumbrian king’s officials in the region. The battle of Dunnichen in 685, however, saw the end of the relatively brief Northumbrian rule in Pictland and the expulsion of Northumbrians from Pictish territory. Northumbria does not appear to have ever regained territory in Pictland or collected tribute, even though this could have been attempted in at least one of the engagements of 698, 711 and 740. The likelihood is that Northumbria and the Picts continued, for the remainder of the pre-Viking period, on an equal military footing. The formalisation of a peace treaty c.730, and the later alliance between Eadberht and Oengus, may be as representative of an interest in keeping a close watch on an inconstant neighbour as of a genuine desire to co-operate.

\textbf{Northumbrians and Scots}

Of all the Celtic peoples of northern Britain, only the Scots of Dalriada never came to share a border with Northumbria during the pre-Viking era. The Britons of Elmet, Rheged and Gododdin had been at the forefront of Northumbrian territorial expansion, and the Britons of Strathclyde and the Picts were subject to Northumbrian aggression after the removal of the kingdom of Gododdin. However, Dalriada at no time abutted Northumbria, and therefore, as far as the sources reveal, the Dalriadans were never in the position of having to go to battle to defend their territory from direct Northumbrian

\textsuperscript{351} See note 242 (\textit{supra}, p. 202).
incursion. As the Scots of Dalriada and the Northumbrians were both immigrants into Britain, they could both be cast as aggressors against the native inhabitants.

Given that the territories of Dalriada and Northumbria were never contiguous, it is not surprising that there is limited record of warfare between them, and what there is occurs only during the reigns of Æthelfrith (c.592-616) and Aedán mac Gabráin of Dalriada (c.574-606). Aedán is the first king of Dalriada for whom some detail is known, and even so it is not extensive. Like Æthelfrith, Aedán is remembered as an ambitious king who sought to extend his realm. According to the Annals of Ulster, he led an expedition in 580 against Orkney. Three years later the Annals of Ulster refer to ‘The battle of Manu [bellum Manand] won by Aedán’; it is tempting to identify this as Manaw Gododdin, though the Isle of Man has also been suggested. Aedán was also the victor in the unlocated battle of Lethreid recorded in the Annals of Ulster under the year 590, and in the battle against the Miathi reported in Adomnán’s Life of Columba, though this latter victory cost the lives of two of his sons. The Miathi have been linked with the Maeatae, the Pictish tribe recorded by Dio Cassius to be living next to the Antonine Wall. This battle may, therefore, be representative of Aedán’s interests in southern Pictish territory. It was probably Aedán’s own expansionist ambitions in

---

352 The possibility should be allowed that Dalriada became involved in similar conflicts between Northumbria and the other Celtic kingdoms


354 Aedán’s dates are based on deductions from entries in the AU s.aa. 574, 606, and accretions in later versions of these annals. Bannerman, Studies in the History of Dalriada, p. 80 n. 7, argues that the dating of events in the AU for the last decade of the sixth century and the first decade of the seventh seems to be about two to three years behind, when it is possible to cross-check with other sources. Thus, Aedán’s obit s.a. 606 may be too early. See also Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, pp. 145-9; Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 270 n. 84.


356 AU s.a. 580, 581. This entry is in Irish, and so may be a later accretion. See A. Macquarrie, The Saints of Scotland: Essays in Scottish Church History AD 450-1093 (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 89 n. 49.

357 AU s.a. 583. Bannerman, Studies in the History of Dalriada, pp. 83-4, favoured the Isle of Man, pointing to the AC entry s.a. 584, which records a battle against Eubonia, i.e. Man, and AU entries s.a.a. 577 and 578, recording an expedition from Ireland apparently against Man (called Eufania and Eumania respectively). Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, pp. 13, 31 n. 128; 31, 31 n. 128; favoured Manaw Gododdin, but allowed for the possibility of Man (for the Welsh name for the Man, supra, pp. 176-7).

358 AU s.a. 590; VC 1.8-9. The date of the battle against the Miathi is uncertain, but it must have occurred before Columba’s death in 597. The sons of Aedán who were killed were Artair and Eochaid Find.

359 Supra., p. 158. For the link between the Miathi and the Maeatae, see Bannerman, Studies in the History of Dalriada, p. 84; Hunter Blair, ‘The Bernicians and their northern frontier’, p. 155. Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, pp. 268-9 n. 81, has more recently expressed reserve over this association though he does not entirely dismiss it. Sharpe does suggest that any link between this battle and the battle of Manu in the AU s.a. 583 is a weak one.

360 Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, p. 146.
this direction which drew his attention to the activities of Æthelfrith, who by c.600 had almost certainly extended Northumbrian control north of Hadrian’s Wall. It is around this time that the Annals of Ulster record the death of Aedán’s sons Bran and Domangart;\footnote{\textit{AU} s.a. 596, possibly to be emended to 598/9 (see note 34, supra., p. 170).} Adomnán relates that Domangart was ‘slaughtered in battle in England \cite{VC I.9. See also Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 71.}.\footnote{\textit{HE} I.34. The entry in the \textit{AU} s.a. 600, reads ‘The battle of the Saxons in which Aedán was vanquished \cite{HC 170.1}. This appears to correspond with the battle of Degrastan, and does confirm that Aedán was vanquished, but does not mention Theodbald. In the \textit{Annals of Tigernach}, there is an accretion which states that Æthelfrith’s brother Eanfrith fell ‘by Maeluma mac Baetán’. Bannerman, \textit{Studies in the History of Dalriada}, p. 87 n. 8, notes that there may have been some confusion here with Æthelfrith’s eldest son Eanfrith, who did not die until 634 (\textit{HE} III.1).} It could be hypothesised that Domangart was killed in some otherwise unknown encounter with the Northumbrians, and it may have been this concatenation of events which ultimately drew Aedán into the battle of Degrastan in 603.

The fullest account of this battle comes from Bede, in the same chapter of the \textit{Historia ecclesiastica} which contains the passage about Æthelfrith’s ravaging of the Britons. Bede tells as that Aedán, alarmed at the advance of Æthelfrith:

\begin{quote}
... marched against him with an immensely strong army; but he was defeated and fled with few survivors. Indeed, almost his entire army was cut to pieces at a very famous place called Degrastan, that is the stone of Deega. In this fight Theodbald, Æthelfrith’s brother, was killed together with all his army. Æthelfrith brought this war to an end ... From that time no king of the Scots in Britain \cite{HC 170.2.} has dared to make war on the English to this day.\footnote{Several locations have been suggested for the site of the battle of Degrastan. One of the most frequently-mentioned has been Dawston near Saughtree Fell in Liddesdale (Scottish Borders), an identification which appears to have relied upon the – superficial – similarity in the names. Hunter Blair, ‘The Bernicians and their northern frontier’, p. 157 n. 2, however, provided a very persuasive denouncement of the validity of this identification, stating that it had no basis beyond ‘the repeated assertions of successive generations of historians’. Smith, ‘Brito-Roman and Anglo-Saxon’, p. 9, more recently suggested Addinston at the head of Lauderdale (Scottish Borders), a place-name representing a corruption of \textit{Ad Aednes stan}, i.e. Aedán’s Stone. This location, which lies on a major northern route, is certainly pleasing strategically, though we would probably have to deduce that Æthelfrith also advanced further into Northumbrian territory.\footnote{\textit{HC} 170.2.} However, some degree of support may be drawn from the} \end{quote}

From this account, it appears that Aedán led an expeditionary force against Æthelfrith in an attempt to stem any further, presumably northward, expansion on Æthelfrith’s part. This is plausible, particularly if Aedán was active in southern Pictland at the time, and not incompatible with Aedán also seeking vengeance for the death of his son. It is unfortunate that the location of Degrastan is unclear, as the historicity of Aedán advancing on Æthelfrith would certainly be supported if the site was found to be within Northumbrian territory.\footnote{\textit{HC} 170.2.} However, some degree of support may be drawn from the...
heading that Bede gave to the relevant chapter, namely, that Æthelfrith ‘vanquished the Scots … and drove them from English territories [ab Anglorum finibus expulerit]’.365 For the Scots to be driven ‘out of England’ certainly suggests, if the reading is to be taken literally, that Deganstane was within the limits of Northumbria.366

Of particular relevance to the current examination is the account of the battle found in manuscripts D and E of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the so-called ‘northern recension’, under the year 603. Most of the account is a paraphrase derived from Bede. However, there is an addition stating that ‘Hering, son of Hussa, led the raiding-army there [lædde bone here ðider]’.367 It has been argued that this entry should be interpreted as Hering having led Aedán’s army;368 and indeed, in the rest of the 603 account, the word here clearly refers to Aedán’s army.369 John Bannerman argued that if the battle occurred within Northumbria, then Aedán’s force would have been the one in most need of being guided to its destination, if that is indeed what is meant by lædde.370 He also suggested that Hering may have been a Northumbrian Ætheling attempting to regain the kingship to meet Aedán, and we would have to discount Bede’s place-name. Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 270 n. 84, suggests a location near Lochmaben (Dumfries & Galloway), though he provides no reasoning. Of these locations, only Addinston is a candidate for being within Northumbrian control, and even then it would have been on the periphery.

365 HE 1.34. 366 Bannerman, Studies in the History of Dalriada, p. 86. Note also Domangart’s death ‘in Saxonia’ (VC I.9) mentioned above. If we presume that the battle took place within Northumbrian territory, Aedán would have had to pass through some British territory en route. On this basis it has been supposed that Aedán acted in alliance with the Britons, of either Gododdin or Strathclyde (e.g. Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 270 n. 84; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 30). While there is no evidence to support such a supposition, some level of acquiescence to Aedán’s presence on the part of the British might be implied. Hunter Blair, ‘The Bernicians and their northern frontier’, p. 157 n.1, regarded the silence of both the HB and the AC concerning the battle as an indication that Britons were not involved. While an argumentum ex silentio will always be precarious, he was probably correct in his conclusion. Hunter Blair also noted Plummer’s, Bede, vol. II, p. 66, error in reporting that John of Fordun in his c. 1385 Chronica gentis Scotorum III.30 (R.F. Skene, ed., Edinburgh, vol I, p. 116; vol IV, pp. 107-8) recorded a Welsh king ‘Malgo’ as being involved in the battle, allied with Aedán, when this is not in fact mentioned by Fordun. In any event, Fordun’s account is very late, regarded as being wholly fictitious, and in addition gives the impression that the Britons did not in the end participate in the battle. See Anderson, Kings and Kingdoms in Early Scotland, pp. 212-15; MoisI, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish’, p. 116; K. Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’, in idem., Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages, pp. 6-7, regarding Fordun. See also Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, pp. 276-7 n. 97, for a discussion of the relations between the Scots of Dalriada and the Britons of Strathclyde. It has also been suggested that Aedán’s force was supported with a contingent of warriors from Ireland, but again this is conjectural (Bannerman, Studies in the History of Dalriada, pp. 87-8; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 30). ASC MSS. D & E s.a. 603. Both these names are of Anglo-Saxon origin. Hering is otherwise unknown in the sources, but Hussa is quite probably meant to be the same person who appears before Æthelfrith in the Northumbrian regnal list contained in the Moore Memoranda (see note 149, supra., p. 188), and in HB 63 relating the siege of Lindisfarne.

via a mutually beneficial alliance with Aedán. There is no doubt, however, that the account in the Chronicle is difficult to work with. If it is derived from the so-called ‘First Set of Northern Annals’, it is unfortunate that there is no mention in the Historia regum which also relied on these annals, or in any other source for that matter. This would suggest the need for caution in drawing too much from the entry, as would the late date of the surviving manuscripts. Nonetheless, the account does present an interesting possibility which is certainly plausible.

The battle of Degsastan is the last datable event of Aedán’s career, and thus it is not known whether he continued with his territorial aspirations in the north, or whether, as Bede suggests, he was so thoroughly vanquished that he never recovered. Ethelfrith continued to pursue his own ambitions, adding Deira to his rulership and defeating the Britons at the battle of Chester. Whether Æthelfrith ever exacted tribute from the Scots is unknown — and Bede certainly does not say so — though given that his sons fled to the Scots after his death in 616, some continued contact with Dalriada may be conjectured. Whatever the short-term consequences of the battle of Degsastan may have been, for the remainder of the pre-Viking period there are no further direct references of warfare between the Scots of Dalriada and the Northumbrians. Indeed, Bede says that until his own time (i.e. 731) no king of Dalriada ‘dared to make war on the English’. While Bede is clearly Anglocentric in this assessment, it does not appear that he knew of any other engagement with the Scots.

---

371 Both Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 7, and Moisl, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish’, pp. 112-15, followed a similar line of reasoning, with Moisl noting other examples of Northumbrian æthelings fleeing to Dalriada, such as the sons of Æthelfrith in 616, to be discussed in detail in Chapter 8 (infra., pp. 230-43).
372 The ‘northern recension’ of the ASC is said to have drawn on the ‘First Set of Northern Annals’, and contains seventh-century material not found in Bede or in any of the southern ASC recensions. See Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, p. 15; Rollason, ‘Northern annals’, p. 333; M. Swanton (ed. & trans.), The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles (London, 2000), pp. xxv-xxvi.
373 ASC MSS. D and E date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries respectively (Swanton, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, pp. xxv-xxvii).
374 Bannerman, Studies in the History of Dalriada, p. 86.
375 Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, p. 77. Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, pp. 16-18, made an attempt at revising Degsastan as a battle, like Chester, waged by Æthelfrith against the Britons c.611x614. However, his reasoning requires us to completely dismiss the word of Bede, and as such is not especially persuasive.
376 Richter, Ireland and Her Neighbours, p. 91, suggests that the flight of Æthelfrith’s sons to Dalriada was made possible because he exercised a form of suzerainty over the Dalriadans. If so, the bond created between Æthelfrith and the Cenél nGabráin must have been a strong one for it to stretch beyond the grave.
377 HE 1.34.
Notwithstanding this lack of any specific evidence for warfare between Northumbrians and Scots after Degsastan, there is a need to consider Bede’s imprecise claims regarding the *imperium* of subsequent Northumbrian kings. Edwin’s apparent rulership of ‘all the peoples of Britain’ must contain some exaggeration; the seventeen-year exile of Æthelfrith’s sons amongst the Scots and Picts strongly suggests that these peoples were not subject to Northumbrian rule during Edwin’s reign. Bede’s presentation of Oswald ruling all the peoples of Britain speaking the four languages, including the Scots, probably represents something of an aspiration rather than a reality. In his listing of the seven *imperium*-wielding kings, Bede only says that Oswald maintained the same frontiers as Edwin, and that it was Oswiu who ‘overwhelmed and made tributary even the tribes of the Picts and Scots in the northern parts of Britain’. From this entry it may be inferred that it was Oswiu who was the first Northumbrian king to extend his rulership over Dalriada. However, Bede is subsequently inconsistent in his information regarding Oswiu. If Oswiu had become overlord of Dalriada, then he would probably only have been able to do so after he defeated Penda at the battle of Winwaed in 655. But when actually discussing Oswiu’s gains after Winwaed, Bede fails to mention the Scots, and only states that the Picts became subject to Northumbrian rule. Similarly, when talking of the jurisdiction of Bishop Wilfrid during Oswiu’s final years, Bede only talks of ‘all the Northumbrians and Picts, as far as Oswiu’s power extended. Again, the Scots are not included. Yet Bede does say that in the aftermath of the death and defeat of Oswiu’s successor Ecgfrith at Dunnichen in 685, the Scots regained their independence. There is a possibility, therefore, that Northumbrian overlordship of the Scots only occurred in the reign of Ecgfrith, perhaps as an extension of his early victory over the Picts. And it could be argued that both Oswald and Oswiu, who had found refuge amongst the Scots, would have been reluctant to oppress their erstwhile protectors. Ecgfrith, on the other hand, would not

378 *HE* II.5; III.1.
379 *HE* III.6.
380 *HE* II.5. Stancliffe, ‘Oswald, “most holy and most victorious king of the Northumbrians”’, p. 59, rightly notes that ‘the evidence is teasing and can be read in support of either claim’.
382 Supra., pp. 206-7.
383 *HE* III.24.
384 *HE* IV.3.
385 *HE* IV.26.
386 This is Kirby’s, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 84 conclusion. It is worth noting Stephen of Ripon’s undoubtedly inflated claim that Ecgfrith’s conquests early in his reign extended the jurisdiction of Wilfrid so that his ‘ecclesiastical kingdom ... increased to the south among the Saxons and to the north among the British, the Picts and the Scots’ (*FW* 21).
have been restrained by any a priori goodwill; he did, after all, send an army into mainland Ireland in 684.\textsuperscript{387}

Clearly, the nature of any Northumbrian overlordship of Dalriada is problematic. Bede says that the Scots were made tributary by Oswiu, but he provides no further information. Moreover, the argument for Northumbrian overlordship is difficult to substantiate, arising as it does only in the work of Bede. The only possible near-contemporary corroboration comes from two references contained in Adomnán’s \textit{Life of Columba}, written soon after 697.\textsuperscript{388} The first is a statement by Adomnán that, after defeating Cadwallon in 634, Oswald was ordained by God as ‘emperor of all Britain [totius Britanniae imperator]’.\textsuperscript{389} While it can be argued that Adomnán’s description suggests that he saw Oswald as more than just the king of Northumbria,\textsuperscript{390} it does not seem that this assessment is to be taken literally but rather represents an attempt by Adomnán to articulate a biblical view of kings being chosen by God, with Oswald, the first Northumbrian royal patron of Iona, being awarded an inflated domain.\textsuperscript{391} The second reference comes from the fragment of Abbot Cumméne’s (657-669) \textit{Liber de virtutibus Sancti Columbae} inserted into Adomnán’s text.\textsuperscript{392} Cumméne says that as a consequence of Aedán’s grandson Domnall Brecce’s actions at the battle of Mag Roth in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{387} Campbell, ‘The debt of the early English church to Ireland’, pp. 335-6, inferred that Ecgfrith’s apparent burial on Iona was due to his overlordship of Dalriada (see note 309, supra., pp. 211-12). Bannerman, \textit{Studies in the History of Dalriada}, pp. 155-6, posed that the \textit{Senchus fer nAlban} might have been a tribute list that had its origins in Northumbrian overlordship.

\textsuperscript{388} J.M. Picard, ‘The purpose of Adomnán’s \textit{Vita Columbae}, \textit{Peritia} 1 (1982), pp. 167-9; Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, p. 55. The earliest MS., conventionally referred to as MS. A, is a copy by Dorbenne of the Iona community (d. 713), and may actually have been seen by the author himself. See Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, pp. 235-8, for the full textual history of the \textit{VC}.

\textsuperscript{389} VC I.1.

\textsuperscript{390} Stancliffe, ‘Oswald, “most holy and most victorious king of the Northumbrians”’, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{391} Dumville, ‘The terminology of overkingship in early Anglo-Saxon England’, pp. 354-5; \textit{idem}., ‘Anglo-Saxon and Celtic overkingships: a discussion of some shared historical problems’, \textit{Bulletin of the Institute of Oriental and Occidental Studies, Kansai University} 31 (1998), pp. 89-91; Higham, \textit{Kingdom of Northumbria}, p. 128; Stancliffe, ‘Oswald, “most holy and most victorious king of the Northumbrians”’, p. 50; Wormald, ‘Bede, the \textit{Bretwaldas} and the origins of the \textit{Gens Anglorum}’, p. 108. Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, pp. 61-2, states that there is no narrow political message in this phrase; rather it is a statement of the rewards that could be gained by calling upon St Columba as intercessor with God. Moisl, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish’, p. 119, also notes that a similar formulation – ‘by God’s will … king of all Ireland’ (\textit{VC} I.36) – was used by Adomnán to inflate the as yet unrealised political ambitions of the Uí Néill dynasty (though he was not necessarily the author of these ambitions). For other examples of kingship being ordained by God see \textit{VC} I.14, III.5. For a contrary view, see Charles-Edwards, ‘“The Continuation of Bede”, s.a. 750’, pp. 144-5, who would prefer to see some literal truth in the reference.

\textsuperscript{392} \textit{VC} III.5. The fragment principally concerns a prophecy of St. Columba regarding Aedán mac Gabráin and his descendants, that they should never show hostility to Columba or his successors or his kin in Ireland, else they will be punished by God. See Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, pp. 357-9 n. 360, for a full discussion of Abbot Cumméne’s book.
\end{footnotesize}
637, 639. ‘From that day to this the family of Aedán in proclivo sunt ab extraneis’.

Richard Sharpe translates the last phrase as ‘is held in subjection by strangers’, though a stricter interpretation would be ‘are in a state of decline [caused] by strangers’. Thus, this is not a clear reference to subjugation and overlordship, but rather a comment on being brought low. It has been suggested that the extranei referred to were the Northumbrians. However, there are other arguments. Furthermore, there is no certainty as to when Cumméne wrote his book; he died in 669, but he may have written it at a much earlier time. Thus, the interval ‘from that day to this’ cannot be defined more precisely than 637-669.

Overall, the unsatisfying conclusion to be reached is that there is simply not enough surviving evidence to resolve the contradictions inherent in the various accounts regarding overlordship. Clare Stancliffe offers the possibility that Oswald achieved a ‘theoretical recognition’ as overlords of the Scots of the type found in Irish sources only requiring limited hospitality and military service, and that it was his successors, Oswiu and Ecgfrith, who re-established overlordship in more exploitative terms such that the rendering of tribute became required. Oswiu was the king who almost certainly gained the tribute of the Picts; his power in the north may have been extended over the Scots. Ecgfrith’s influence was also felt in the north, and across the Irish Sea. Notwithstanding these proposals of overlordship, relations between the Northumbrians

---

393 AU s.a. 637. *Mag Rath*, as it is usually called, is now Moira south-east of Lough Neagh in Ulster. Cumméne states that the prophecy had come to pass at the battle when Domnall Brecc ‘laid waste the territory of the saint’s kinsman Domnall Ua (sic) Ainnirech’.


395 Domnall Brecc is remembered as a warlike king, but not a particularly successful one; so it is quite plausible that the extranei were either Picts or Britons (Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 152-4; Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, pp. 99-103; Moisl, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish’, p. 119). Indeed, as we have seen he was killed by Britons at the battle of Strathcarron in 642 (supra., p. 200). Being in proclivo clearly did not affect Domnall Brecc’s capacity to raise an army (Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 152-3). Alternatively, the extranei could have been a rival line not descended from Aedán; Domnall Brecc does appear to have had to share the rulership of Dalriada after 637 with one Ferchar mac Connaid Cerr, who did not descend from Aedán (Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, p. 153; Sharpe, *Adomnan of Iona*, p. 358).

396 Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 99, presumed that ‘this day’ referred to Adomnan’s time of writing, c.697, but he stands alone in this interpretation. It seems more likely that the extract from Cumméne’s book was recorded extant. See Sharpe, *Adomnan of Iona*, pp. 357-9 n. 360.


and the Scots of Dalriada do not appear to have been characterised by a great deal of hostility, as far as the sources show, and, even so, what did occur was in the seventh century. There are no references to any aggression between the two kingdoms in the eighth century, nor to anything which might even be construed as overlordship. The kingdoms only met in war when both were successfully extending their dominions c.600. A similar concatenation of events did not occur again, and the distance between the kingdoms continued to act as an impediment to further aggression.

Summary

It was stated at the beginning of this chapter that hostility between Northumbrians and Celts remains a continuing theme in the sources for pre-Viking northern Britain, and thus an examination of the nature of Anglo-Celtic hostility in the north was carried out for the Northern Britons, Picts and Scots respectively. With regard to hostility between Northumbrians and Britons, a prime motivation was identified as territorial expansion. As Northumbria grew in the sixth and seventh centuries, it was the Britons who bore the brunt of Northumbrian expansionism. Three identifiable British polities – Elmet, Rheged and Gododdin – were subsumed by Northumbria and were extinguished as independent entities by the end of the seventh century, with British land probably being granted as estates to Northumbrian nobles, as well as smaller land-holdings to peasants. Strathclyde was the sole identifiable British kingdom which survived in the north beyond the pre-Viking period. It can also be argued that certain of the British polities were made subject to Northumbrian overlordship prior to complete integration within Northumbria; Elmet at the very least looks to have been subject to Æthelfrith, and it is likely that Edwin also exercised suzerainty over northern Wales and perhaps Man. Strathclyde, Rheged and Gododdin may have paid tribute, but there is no direct evidence of it. The collection of tribute was undoubtedly an attractive incentive for Northumbrian kings seeking to exercise overlordship, and their power in the seventh century was probably due to the proceeds to be gained, as well as to war-booty and to the other resources that were made available by the appropriation of British territory.\[399\]

Warfare between Northumbrians and Picts was also motivated by a desire to extend overlordship, though this occurred within a much narrower chronological window, c.655-685, once the ‘buffer kingdom’ of Gododdin was removed. Overlordship in this

\[399\] Maddicott, 'Two frontier states: Northumbria and Wessex', pp. 31-5.
case involved more than the collection of tribute, with the likelihood of southern Pictish land being given to at least one noble family, perhaps with some Northumbrian peasant farmers also moving north of the Forth. After 685, the subsequent engagements recorded may represent attempts by the Northumbrians to regain territory, or to reimpose overlordship. Equally, the Northumbrians may have been fighting to maintain their northern frontier from Pictish incursion. The eighth century, in any event, saw Northumbria and Pictland on a comparable military footing, as embodied in the peace treaty of c.730, the sole surviving record of such an arrangement between a Celtic and an Anglo-Saxon kingdom in pre-Viking Britain. There also exists a possibility that Oengus of the Picts acted as overlord in northern Britain in the mid-eighth century, including over Northumbria.  

Evidence for aggression between the Northumbrians and the Scots of Dalriada is significantly more limited than that between the Northumbrians and other Celts of the north. Beyond the reigns of Æthelfrith and Aedán, there is no direct evidence of hostility in the sources. It is possible that the warfare between Aedán and Æthelfrith only occurred when both were simultaneously attempting to expand their political control in a similar direction, a sequence of events which was not repeated under subsequent rulers. Never sharing a border with Northumbria, it does not appear that the Scots were ever subject to the threat of direct Northumbrian expansion and thus were not required to go to war in order to defend their territory. While it remains possible that some form of overlordship existed during the reigns of Æthelfrith's immediate descendants, there is no surviving evidence as to how this might have been accomplished. The two kingdoms were undoubtedly too far apart for direct interaction on the battlefield to have been called for in all but the most exceptional of circumstances.

---

400 That he was known in Northumbria is also suggested by his inclusion in the Liber Vitae of Lindisfarne/Durham (infra., p. 244).
Chapter 8
Exile, Intermarriage and Assimilation

The previous chapter examined warfare between the Northumbrians and the Celts of the north. There exists, however, evidence of more amicable interaction and political contact: of Northumbrians finding refuge within Celtic kingdoms, of intermarriage, and of alliance. In Chapter 1, it was argued that this type of evidence should not be unexpected, that Anglo-Saxon and Celtic societies shared some similar features of social organisation, and that hostile relations between peoples does not necessarily mean mutual cultural or linguistic ignorance. Overlordship and the collection of tribute would have required some level of mutual intelligibility; the acceptance of exiles from Anglo-Saxon to Celtic kingdoms would also have necessitated bi- or even multi-lingualism, albeit largely restricted to members of the aristocracy. It is noteworthy that evidence of amicable interaction has survived within the more pervasive context of hostility between Northumbrians and Northern Celts found in the primary sources. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine this evidence, specifically with regard to Northumbrian aethelings going into exile within Celtic kingdoms; intermarriage between Northumbrians and Celts, and other matters of Anglo-Celtic social exchange in the north, including a possible British involvement in the baptism of Edwin, and the survival of British identity in Northumbria.

Exiles and Travellers: Northumbrians Abroad in Celtic Lands

Northumbria is the only Anglo-Saxon kingdom in pre-Viking Britain for which unequivocal evidence survives of members of the ruling aristocracy finding refuge in exile within a Celtic kingdom. Exile was common enough between Anglo-Saxon kingdoms at the time, and between Celtic kingdoms for that matter, particularly for persons eligible to claim the kingship, such as Anglo-Saxon aethelings, Irish rigdannai, and Welsh edlings. Yet the occasion of an Anglo-Saxon aetheling seeking exile in a

---

1 Supra., p. 35.
Celtic domain is not clearly evidenced outside of Northumbria. In addition, there survives no documentation of a Celtic noble in exile within Northumbria, though if Northumbrian overlordship had been extended over British territory, the taking of hostages would probably have occurred. This may just be a function of the Anglocentric sources for the history of northern Britain; but is it, nevertheless, a point of some significance.

**Exile into British Lands**

The earliest surviving instance of a Northumbrian in exile within a Celtic domain is that of Edwin’s nephew Hereric, in the British kingdom of Elmet in the later years of Æthelfrith’s reign (c.592-616). Hereric, as nephew of Edwin and grandson of Ælle of Deira, and therefore an aetheling, would have been a potential rival to Æthelfrith’s rulership of the southern Northumbrian sub-kingdom. The proximity of Elmet to Deira might indicate that Hereric was indeed a contender for the Deiran throne: it may have been a deliberate strategy for Hereric to remain close at hand in the event that an appropriate opportunity arose. His exile from Æthelfrith’s domain is, therefore, quite explicable. It is not clear how long Hereric lived amongst the Britons of Elmet, though a logical deduction would be that he fled or was driven away soon after Æthelfrith’s conquest of Deira, c.604. The fact that Hereric was said to be under Ceretic’s protection does suggest that Elmet was a strong enough kingdom at the time to withstand attack from Æthelfrith, though the fact that Hereric was poisoned could imply that Elmet eventually came under Æthelfrith’s imperium, and that Hereric was deliberately eliminated by Æthelfrith. In any event, Hereric’s exile provides evidence of formal contact between Northumbrians and the Britons of Elmet, and the possibility

---

3 The possibility that St Guthlac, a member of the Mercian royal dynasty, spent time in exile amongst the Britons of Wales should be acknowledged here as a possible exception. His case will be discussed in Chapter 12 (infra., pp. 425-6).

4 Evans, Lords of Battle, pp. 117-18. This appears to have occurred in the case of the British hostage described in the Cynwulf/Cyneheard episode in the ASC s.a. 755 (recte 757) (supra., pp. 60-2).

5 Hereric was said by Bede to have been ‘living in exile under the British king Cerdic [Ceretic]’, while his daughter Hild (born c.614) was in her infancy (HE IV.23). The exile of Hereric was also discussed in the context of Northumbrian expansion into Elmet (supra., pp. 172-3).

6 Ziegler, ‘The politics of exile in early Northumbria’, p. 6. Hereric was clearly a dynast of some importance: his daughter Hereswith married Æthelric of the East Angles, and was described by Bede as ‘mother of Ealdwulf, king of the East Angles (663-713)’ (HE IV.23). This suggests that Elmet was a refuge of choice for Hereric, as he obviously could have found shelter in East Anglia, as his uncle Edwin had done (HE II.12).

7 B. Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England (London, 1990), p. 77. Hereric does not appear to have had his wife and children with him while in Elmet, or at least not when he died. It is unlikely that they would have remained in Deira, where they could have been used as hostages by Æthelfrith. They may have been living in East Anglia while Hereric stayed closer at hand in Elmet.
exists that some form of alliance between British Elmet and Deira could have been mooted if Hereric had managed to gain the throne.

It should be emphasised, however, that the exile of Hereric in Elmet represents the only reliable instance of a Northumbrian ætheling fleeing to a British kingdom. There are some late accounts of Hereric’s uncle Edwin finding refuge at the court of Cadfan in the northern Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd, variously reckoned to have occurred either before or after the battle of Chester of c.613-16. It is known that during Æthelfrith’s kingship, Edwin did spend time in other kingdoms, including the courts of Cearl of Mercia and Rædwald of East Anglia. It has also been argued that Edwin’s presence in Gwynedd was the casus belli for Æthelfrith’s advance towards Wales and the subsequent battle at Chester. But these accounts are very late, surviving at the earliest in twelfth-century texts, and they contain numerous factual inaccuracies. It is unlikely that Edwin would have spent a significant amount of time at the court of Cadfan and yet remained a pagan, though the alliance of the pagan Penda with the Christian Cadwallon should be acknowledged.

8 Supra., pp. 172-3.
9 As stated above, Northumbria is the only Anglo-Saxon kingdom in pre-Viking Britain for which evidence survives of nobles fleeing to Celtic kingdoms, and therefore, Hereric’s exile in British Elmet is also the only certain case of flight to a British kingdom for all of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. In addition, Bede’s record of Hereric’s exile in Elmet is only mentioned incidentally in his account of the life of Hilda, and serves no particular thematic purpose. Thus, it does not have the appearance of a falsified accretion. There is no clear evidence for Northumbrians serving in British warbands. See N.J. Higham, The Kingdom of Northumbria AD 350-1100 (Gloucestershire, 1993), p. 97. On the warband of St Guthlac, see also Chapter 12 (infra., p. 425-6).
10 The sources for Edwin’s presence in Gwynedd include a Welsh triad stating that Edwin was one of the ‘Three oppressors of Anglesey, nurtured therein’ (contained in the fourteenth-century White Book of Rhydderch), Geoffrey of Monmouth’s c.1136 Historia regum Britanniae XII.1-2 (A. Griscom, ed., London, 1929, pp. 511-15), perhaps drawn from the same tradition as the triad, and Reginald of Durham’s Life of St. Oswald of c.1165. See N.K. Chadwick, ‘The conversion of Northumbria: a comparison of sources’, in idem. (ed.), Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 147-56, for a discussion of these sources. She regarded Reginald’s version of the story to be sufficiently different to Geoffrey’s to preclude the possibility that he relied on Geoffrey as his source.
11 HE II.12; II.14. Bede relates that Edwin ‘wandered secretly as a fugitive for many years through many places and kingdoms’ (HE II.12).
13 A. Breeze, ‘Seventh-century Northumbria and a poem to Cadwallon’, NH 38 (2001), p. 146; Chadwick, ‘The conversion of Northumbria’, pp. 155-6; W. Davies, Wales in the Early Middle Ages (Leicester, 1982), p. 113; Higham, Northern Counties, p. 280. C. Cessford, ‘The death of Aethelfrith of Lloegr’, NH 30 (1994), pp. 179-83, discusses the evidence of two Welsh triads which attest to a tradition of British involvement in the death of Æthelfrith: triads ten and thirty-two in the Trioedd ynys Prydein (‘The Triads of the Island of Britain’), which survive at the earliest in a thirteenth-century manuscript. In both triads, Æthelfrith is said to have been killed by a Briton, Sgafonn/Ysgafonn, in what can be interpreted as revenge for the battle of Chester. According to Bede, Æthelfrith died when he was defeated in battle by Rædwald of East Anglia at the River Idle near the Mercian border (HE II.12). If there were Britons at
Northumbrians going into exile in British kingdoms appears, therefore, to have been very rare, restricted only to one Deiran ætheling. It may have been that the various British kingdoms ceased to be viable destinations for a Northumbrian exile after the early seventh century by dint of the political geography of northern Britain. Elmet, while it was still independent, was close to Deira and therefore accessible (though Hereric's poisoning suggests that Elmet might have been a little too accessible). But as the century progressed, the northern British kingdoms, with the exception of Strathclyde, were subsumed under Northumbrian control, and thus could no longer act as safe refuges. At the same time, the British kingdoms of Wales gradually became separated from the north by the expanding Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia, a kingdom that was hostile to Northumbria for much of the pre-Viking period. Additionally, exile into British lands may have been hampered by mutual distrust or antipathy between Britons and Anglo-Saxons, as suggested by Bede. The Britons of Strathclyde, in this regard, might simply have spurned any petition by a Northumbrian exile, having seen what Northumbria had done to the other British polities of the north.

**Exile into Scottish Lands**

When the sons of Æthelfrith were forced to flee into exile after their father's death in 616, they found refuge not in a British kingdom, nor an Anglo-Saxon one, but amongst the kingdoms of the Scots and the Picts. The exile of Æthelfrith's offspring is the most celebrated instance of Northumbrians pursuing asylum within the Celtic world. According to Bede, 'During the whole of Edwin's reign [i.e. 616-633] the sons of King Æthelfrith his predecessor, together with many young nobles, were living in exile among the Scots and the Picts'. Both the *Historia Brittonum* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* include a list of Æthelfrith's sons - Eanfrith, Oswald, Oswiu, Osguid (ASC Oslac), Osgudu (ASC Oswudu), Oslaph (ASC Oslaf) and Offa - with the *Chronicle* stating that they had been driven out by Edwin. Bede only mentioned the first three by name, that is, those sons who subsequently became kings of Northumbria, and he...
additionally stated that Oswald and Oswiu, at least, had spent their exile amongst the Scots of Dalriada.\textsuperscript{18} Adomnán affirms the exile of Oswald amongst the Scots in his \textit{Life of Columba}, stating that he was accompanied by twelve companions.\textsuperscript{19} It is generally held that Eanfrith, however, spent at least part of his exile amongst the Picts.\textsuperscript{20} Though Bede makes no explicit statement to that effect, Eanfrith is credited with fathering a son, Talorcan, who subsequently became king of the Picts, and perhaps a daughter.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, he was in Pictland at some stage, and this represents the first account, outside of references to the sub-Roman period, of contact between the Northumbrians and Picts.\textsuperscript{22}

The fate of the remaining four sons, if indeed they existed, is unknown. Nor is it known if other members of Æthelfrith's family were similarly expelled. Bede alludes to a daughter of Æthelfrith, Æbbe, who was abbess of the monastery of Coldingham in 672, but does not say whether she joined her brothers.\textsuperscript{23} Æthelfrith's wife Acha is also not counted amongst the exiles; this may just be a quirk of Bede's focus on kings rather than queens, or it may be that Acha, Edwin's sister, felt no threat from her brother and remained within Northumbria.\textsuperscript{24} In any event, it is certain that at least three of Æthelfrith's children, as well as their retainers, fled northwards in 616.\textsuperscript{25}

There were doubtless a number of factors which influenced the choice of a northern Celtic destination for exile. To begin with, there was unlikely to be any safety in the

\textsuperscript{18} HE III.3, III.25.
\textsuperscript{19} VC I.1. This number is rather too Biblical to be taken literally.
\textsuperscript{21} Infra., pp. 250-2.
\textsuperscript{23} HE IV.19. There is mention in the early sixteenth-century \textit{Breviary of Aberdeen} vol. II, 3, 87-8 (printed by William, bishop of Aberdeen, Edinburgh 1509-10; reprinted, London, 1854) that Æbbe 'was sent with her seven brothers to exile in the land of the Scots' (\textit{ESSH} I, p. 142 n. 2). For what it is worth, Coldingham was a double monastery which did have Irish inmates. According to the Anonymous \textit{Life of St Cuthbert} (Anon.\textit{VCuth} II.3), Æbbe was a widow before she entered a monastery. Regardless of her age at Æthelfrith's death, she would have achieved her marriageable years during the seventeen year exile. Therefore, it is possible, if she fled with her brothers, that her husband had been Dalriadan or perhaps Pictish. The evidence for this marriage is further outlined in the following section (infra., p. 253-4).
\textsuperscript{24} HE III.6. We have no knowledge of the circumstances of Acha's marriage to Æthelfrith. If the marriage was a means for Æthelfrith to secure his rulership over Deira, Acha may not have felt any loyalty to her recently-deceased husband and, therefore, may have elected to remain in Northumbria. See R. Hill, 'Marriage in seventh-century England', in M.H. King & W.M. Stevens (eds.), \textit{Saints, Scholars and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones} (Minnesota, 1979), vol. I, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{25} T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Anglo-Saxon kinship revisited', in Hines, \textit{Anglo-Saxons}, p. 186. Evans, \textit{Lords of Battle}, p. 63, argues that one of the duties of a 'Dark-Age warrior' was to follow his lord into exile.
Anglo-Saxon south. Edwin, while in exile, had associated himself with both Mercia and East Anglia, two of the largest Anglo-Saxon kingdoms near Northumbria's southern border. Indeed, he had married Cwenburh, daughter of the Mercian king Cearl, and had two children by her, Osfrith and Eadfrith.\(^{26}\) He was also given refuge by Rædwald, king of East Anglia, who raised the army on his behalf which defeated and killed Æthelfrith in 616.\(^{27}\) Hence, the nearest Anglo-Saxon kingdoms would most probably have been 'no-go' areas for the sons of Edwin's erstwhile enemy.\(^{28}\) As Edwin would have returned to Northumbria from the south, flight by Æthelfrith's family in the opposite direction may have been a safer option.

Moreover, Æthelfrith's hostile activities towards the northern Britons probably would not have inclined them to look favourably at the plight of his children. Even if Æthelfrith had enjoyed imperium over any of these kingdoms, as is likely to have been the case at least for Elmet, this does not mean that they would have welcomed his fugitive sons. Indeed, Æthelfrith's death could have been viewed as an opportunity for any subject British polities to liberate themselves from Northumbrian domination, and in this vein they may have refused to harbour the sons of the new king's predecessor, so as not to attract unwanted attention.\(^{29}\)

There are, therefore, several probable reasons why the sons of Æthelfrith avoided the Anglo-Saxon south, and avoided a British kingdom, when forced to flee in 616. However, their exile in the north may not simply have been a matter of pursuing the only available option, but could have been a deliberate choice.\(^{30}\) It appears that Northumbrians had been travelling to Dalriada from the late sixth century.\(^{31}\) The possibility that Hering, son of Hussa, was a Northumbrian ætheling in exile in Dalriada

\(^{26}\) *HE* II.14.
\(^{27}\) *HE* II.12.
\(^{28}\) N.J. Higham, 'King Cearl, the battle of Chester and the origins of the Mercian “overkingship”', *Midland History* 16 (1992), p. 9, and Ziegler, 'The politics of exile in early Northumbria', p. 8, argue that before his death, Æthelfrith deposed Cearl of Mercia and replaced him with a king from a rival dynasty, either Pybba or Eowa (respectively, the father and brother of Penda). If so, in 616, Mercia should have been inclined to accept Æthelfrith's sons. However, there is no evidence whatsoever to support this claim; the origins of the Mercian kingship are completely obscure, and the fate of Cearl, as well as his relation to the house of Penda, remains unknown. See Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 101-2.
\(^{29}\) It was mentioned earlier that Elmet may have suffered Edwin's attention for having allowed the poisoning of his nephew Hereric (*supra.*, p. 175).
\(^{30}\) Indeed, the argument that the northern British kingdoms may have used the opportunity of Æthelfrith's death to free themselves of Northumbrian overlordship and repudiate his sons, could also be suggested of Dalriada. That this did not occur means that there may have been forces actively pulling them to the north.
has already been mentioned in the context of the battle of Degsastan.\textsuperscript{32} Corroboration comes from Adomnán's *Life of Columba*, in which two 'Saxons' are said to have been living on Iona during the lifetime of the Saint (d.597).\textsuperscript{33} One was Genereus Saxo (i.e. the Englishman), who was described as the baker and a very devout brother.\textsuperscript{34} The other was Pilu Saxo, who was at Iona four years before Columba died.\textsuperscript{35} Both these 'Saxons' are mentioned incidentally in the *Life*, and neither serves any hagiographic function that would suggest their presence to be the result of an invented interpolation,\textsuperscript{36} so there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of Adomnán's account.

The presence of Genereus and Pilu as monks on Iona in the last decade of the sixth century is extremely noteworthy, especially considering that the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms at the time were still pagan. What their presence indicates is that Anglo-Saxons did travel abroad at the time into Celtic, or more specifically Irish/Scottish regions and, more specifically, that some Anglo-Saxons settled in Celtic areas and adopted aspects of the local culture, in this case Christianity.\textsuperscript{37} It is probable that Genereus and Pilu came from Northumbria (perhaps even as exiles with Hering); this was, after all, the nearest Anglo-Saxon kingdom to Iona and Dalriada.\textsuperscript{38} If so, it would constitute evidence that discourse had occurred between Northumbria and Dalriada for at least two decades prior to 616, and that the sons of Æthelfrith had not necessarily fled to the unknown.

The Northumbrian *æthelings* probably chose exile into the north because the kingdoms of the Picts and the Scots offered the best protection from Edwin. These far-northern realms were, at the time, still buffered by the British kingdoms of Gododdin, Rheged and Strathclyde. Direct pressure from Northumbria, while not impossible,\textsuperscript{39} would have been unlikely. Additionally, while little is known about the rulers of the Picts and the

\textsuperscript{32} Supra., pp. 220-1.
\textsuperscript{33} According to Moisl, 'The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish', p. 114, 'Saxon' was Adomnán’s term for any Anglo-Saxon.
\textsuperscript{34} *VC* III.10.
\textsuperscript{35} *VC* III.22.
\textsuperscript{36} Moisl, 'The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish', p. 114, argues also that their names are too 'genuinely Germanic to have been taken out of thin air' by a hagiographer. He suggests that *Pil-* is a well-attested Anglo-Saxon name element, and that Genereus represents *Genhere*, of the same pattern as *Wulfhere*.
\textsuperscript{37} Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 364 n. 373.
\textsuperscript{38} Moisl, 'The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish', p. 114. Michelle Ziegler (pers. comm., 7 February 2001) has suggested to me that Genereus and Pilu may have been slaves, perhaps captured during a battle against the Northumbrians, who had been bought and freed by the church on Iona.
\textsuperscript{39} It has already been shown, after all, that in 603 Aedán probably advanced through British, or at least Pictish, territory into Northumbria (supra., pp. 219-21).
Scots c.616, there is a slim possibility that the Dalriadan ruler, Eochaid Buide mac Aedán (c.606-629), exercised overlordship in the far north. In the *Annals of Ulster* under the year 629, he is called ‘king of the Picts [*rex Pictorum]*’. If this is not just a gloss informed by his father Aedán’s better evidenced interests in Pictland, Eochaid Buide was thus a king who possessed some military power. In any event, there is no direct evidence that Edwin ever assailed the Picts or the Scots. Thus, the sons of Æthelfrith appear to have been safe in their northern exile.

Eochaid Buide’s acceptance of the Northumbrian exiles also implies that Northumbria and Dalriada had come to terms after the battle of *Degsastan* in 603. The Northumbrians and Scots of Dalriada had met in battle during the reigns of Æthelfrith and Aedán. At first blush, it is somewhat surprising then that Æthelfrith’s sons were able to find refuge in the kingdom of a former adversary. Any enmity must, therefore, have been forgotten or else Dalriada would not have been considered as a destination for the exiles, even assuming the probable precedent set by Hering and the ‘Saxons’ on Iona. It seems probable that Æthelfrith and Aedán ultimately established some form of truce – perhaps even secured by a marriage-alliance – continued by Eochaid Buide.

---

40 According to Adomnán, Eochaid Buide was prophesised by St. Columba to succeed his father Aedán, over his three elder brothers (*VC* 1.9). See J. Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada* (Edinburgh, 1974), pp. 95-6, for a summary of the evidence for Eochaid Buide. If the *AU* dates for the first decade of the seventh century are about two to three years behind, as seems possible, Eochaid Buide may not have succeeded his father until c.608 (see note 34, *supra.*, p. 170).

41 *AU* s.a. 629. Eochaid Buide is not included in any of the Pictish king lists (M.O. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1973, p. 151). One Nechtan son (or grandson) of Irb (or Uerb), may have been a Pictish king c.616, but little is known about him. In the *Poppleton Manuscript* of c.1360 he is described as ‘king of all the provinces of the Picts’, and as the founder of the monastery of Abernethy (Perth & Kinross). See Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 92-3, 116.

42 Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 142, 151-2, also discusses a gloss on a genealogy of the Dalriadan kings in the *Senchus Fer nAlban*, which apparently calls the descendants of Eochaid Buide the ‘men of Fife [*fir Ibe*]’. This gloss, however, only belongs to fourteenth-century MSS. of the *Senchus*, and even if it is authentic, it is impossible to judge whether it was meant to be interpreted that the *fir Ibe* had settled in Fife during the Pictish period, or later.


45 It is interesting, in this regard, to note that one of the sons of Aedán, namely Conaing, had a name of Anglo-Saxon origin (Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, pp. 53, 87, 94). Conaing is a borrowing from Anglo-Saxon *cyning* (i.e. ‘king’, or even originally ‘royal prince’). See Charles-Edwards, ‘Anglo-Saxon kinship revisited’, pp. 190-2; E. O’Brien, ‘Contacts between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century’, *ASSAH* 6 (1993), pp. 95-6. F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (New York, 1973), pp. 111-12, and O’Brien (pp. 95-6), also note Conaing as a name used in seventh-century Ireland. The borrowing of names suggests of a climate of respect, personal names often being bestowed in honour of some esteemed person. The giving of the name Conaing is especially noteworthy given its connotations with ‘kinship’, and D.N. Dumville, ‘Cath Fedo Euin’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 17 (1996), p. 125, hazarded that it might be representative of links between Dalriada and Northumbrian exiles which predated *Degsastan* in 603.
The exile of Æthelfrith’s sons lasted seventeen years, during which they would have been exposed to the culture, beliefs and lifestyle of their hosts. While Eanfrith’s age is unknown, in 616 Oswald was twelve years old and Oswiu four. The children, and Oswiu in particular, grew up for the most part while in exile, and this would have had an enduring influence on them. Apart from the single reference by Bede that the exiles had been with the Irish and the Picts, and the presumption of Eanfrith’s association with Pictland, there is no direct evidence regarding any possible Pictish influence. More information is available, however, concerning the exiles’ activities while in Dalriada.

Firstly, Bede says that both Oswald and Oswiu learned fluency in the Irish/Scottish tongue: indeed, Oswald ‘had gained a perfect knowledge of Irish during the long period of his exile’, and that Oswiu was ‘well versed in their language’. It could be safely presumed that the other exiles similarly became Irish speakers. While there is no surviving information to this effect, linguistic fluency may have been a requirement specified by the Dalriadan king, or even the abbot of Iona.

Second, it is known that the sons of Æthelfrith were converted from paganism to Scottish Columban Christianity while abroad. As Bede states, they were ‘instructed in the teachings of the Irish [Scottish] Church and received the grace of Baptism’. Adomnán similarly noted how Oswald and his twelve companions had been baptised while in exile amongst the Scots. Conversion was not something the exiles would have entered into on a whim. Admittedly, Eanfrith apostatised when he returned to the kingship of Bernicia in 633. However, Molly Miller has suggested that Eanfrith’s apostasy was, in a ‘foreign relations’ sense, just a declaration of independence from any obligation to his former Pictish or Scottish hosts. It was the conversion of the exiles which ultimately brought Irish/Scottish Christianity to Northumbria in 634, when

---

46 Bede says that when Oswald died in 642 he was thirty-eight years old (HE III.9), and when Oswiu died in 670 he was fifty-eight years (HE IV.5).
48 For Eanfrith and his son Talorcan, see below (infra., pp. 250-2).
49 HE III.3, III.25.
51 HE III.1. Note also HE III.3, in which Oswald was said to have sent for assistance to the Ionan elders ‘among whom he and his thegns had received the sacrament of Baptism when he was in exile’, and HE III.25, in which Oswiu was said to have been ‘instructed and baptised by the Irish [Scots]’.
52 VC I.1.
53 HE III.1, III.9.
Oswald gained the kingship and invited a mission under Bishop Aidán. Having been educated by the Columban Church on Iona, Oswald clearly favoured this tradition for his kingdom and remained an advocate of this style of Christianity throughout his reign, even acting as Aidán’s interpreter. Oswald too was said by Bede to have ‘considered that nothing was better than what they [i.e. the Columbans] had taught’. Though he ruled in favour of the Roman side at Whitby in 664, Oswiu had spent most of his life as a Columban Christian. Thus, their early education had a lasting effect on Oswald and Oswiu, and acted as a force for cultural change in Northumbria itself.

Third, there is some evidence that Anglo-Saxon æthelings, if not the sons of Æthelfrith specifically, fought for Dalriada in Ireland. This should not be surprising. Exile, particularly of youths, could be viewed as a form of fosterage. Part of the expectation of fostered boys was that they would be taught the arts of warfare until they reached the age of fourteen or fifteen, when they would be given whatever arms were suitable to their status and accordingly enter military service with their foster-lord. The giving of arms by the foster-lord was also, in Irish lands, an important ceremony for cementing a kinship bond. Not knowing Eanfrith’s age it is difficult to speculate on whether he gained his arms in Dalriada. If he did not, this may help explain his apostasy. Oswiu, however, at age twelve, though having received several years training in Northumbria prior to 616, would have continued to learn with the Dalriadan warband, and would have received his arms from King Eochaid Buide. Oswiu would have gained all his military training, and similarly his arms, while in exile. Thus, it should be expected that

---

54 Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', p. 57. Higham, Northern Counties, p. 281, concurs and suggests that Eanfrith's apostasy may also have been to reinforce the self-identity of the region of Bernicia, and free it from the 'smear' of Roman Christianity imposed by his former enemy Edwin of Deira.
55 HE III.3. Irish influence on the Northumbrian Church is a matter to be discussed in further detail in Chapter 9 (infra., pp. 314-34).
56 HE III.3: 'It was indeed a beautiful sight ... to see the king acting as interpreter of the heavenly word for his ealdormen and thegns'. C.A. Ireland, 'Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish genealogies', Celitca 22 (1991), p. 65, states that Oswald gained the greatest reputation for piety amongst the Anglo-Saxon kings of his era.
57 HE III.25.
58 On the Synod of Whitby, see Chapter 9 (infra., pp. 323-34).
60 Fosterage appears to have occurred around the age of seven, when weapons training would begin. This age threshold is consistent across much of north-west Europe. See H. Härke, 'Early Anglo-Saxon social structure', Hines, Anglo-Saxons, pp. 126, 163.
61 Härke, 'Early Anglo-Saxon social structure', pp. 126-7. Evans, Lords of Battle, pp. 118-9, provides both Anglo-Saxon, British and Irish examples of military training during fosterage.
63 Eochaid Buide's obit is recorded in the AU s.a. 629.
Oswald and Oswiu took up military service and fought for Dalriada, and the same might be expected of their purported brothers, and others in their retinue.

Hermann Moisl presents a range of evidence for Anglo-Saxon _æthelings_ fighting in Ireland. Probably the most reliable of the accounts relates to the battle of _Fid Eóin_ on the Irish mainland. As recorded in the _Annals of Ulster_ under the year 629, Dalriada was defeated in the battle and the king Connad Cerr, son of Eochaid Buide, was killed. Of particular significance is the fact that several other recensions of Irish chronicles add to the _Annals of Ulster_ account that an Anglo-Saxon _ætheling_ fought and died on the side of Dalriada, namely, one ‘Oisiric mac Albruit, rigdomna Saxan’. Oisiric appears to be the Anglo-Saxon name Osric; Albruit might represent Ælfred, and rigdomna is a close equivalent of _ætheling_; and so the account appears to record the death of the Anglo-Saxon _ætheling_ Osric son of Ælfred while fighting for Dalriada in Ireland. Late and erroneous interpolation is possible, but the account is not out of place amongst the significant number of Anglo-Saxon-orientated entries to be found in the Irish chronicles for the period between c.580 and 750. This information may therefore have been contained in the original ‘Iona Chronicle’ source. Osric is not explicitly stated to have been in exile in Dalriada with Æthelfrith’s sons, and there is no other genealogical information surviving which links him with Æthelfrith’s family. However, the context would favour the explanation that he was one of the young nobles who lived in Dalriada with Æthelfrith’s sons, particularly given that the battle occurred during their exile. If

---

65 _AU_ s.a. 629, ‘The battle of _Fid Eóin_ in which Mael Caich son of Scannal, king of the Cruithin, was victor. The Dal Riata fell. Connid Cerr, king of Dal Riata, fell’. This battle has been examined in detail by Dumville, _Cath Fedo Euin_, pp. 114-27.
67 Moisl, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish’, pp. 105-6. The possibility that _Albruit_ is meant to have been the name Ælfric was considered but discounted by Moisl on linguistic grounds (p. 109). An Osrin son of Ælfric, ruled Deira for a year after Edwin’s death, at the same time that Eanfrith ruled Bernicia, before also being slain by Cadwallon in 634 (_HE_ III.1). This Deiran Osrin cannot, therefore, have been the one who died at _Fid Eóin_. And in any case, he was a cousin of Edwin, and unlikely to have been exiled to, or fight for, Dalriada. See also Dumville, _Cath Fedo Euin_, pp. 122-3.
68 Moisl, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish’, pp. 107-8. The different chronicles do not begin to diverge substantially until the early tenth century, thus suggesting a common source up to that point. The common source for pre-c.740 entries was the now-lost ‘Iona Chronicle’ (see note 140; _supra_., p. 162).
69 Bannerman, _Studies in the History of Dalriada_, pp. 98-9. For what it is worth, Banermer also observed that the name Osric is consistent with the ‘o’ alliteration of the names of the sons of Æthelfrith included in the _HB_ and the _ASC_ MS. E (_supra_., p. 230) and that in one instance in the _HB_ 57, Æthelfrith
one Anglo-Saxon *ætheling* was present at *Fid Éoin*, it would be reasonable to deduce that others were as well. Oswald (twenty-five years old at the time), Oswiu (seventeen years old), and even Eanfrith, may have fought for Dalriada along with Osric.

Further evidence presented by Moisl for Anglo-Saxon involvement in Ireland derives from various Irish vernacular prose works collected in the so-called ‘King Cycle’. Much of this material is legendary or mythological in nature, and so was subject to distortion for purposes of dynastic propaganda. Nevertheless, what is most significant about the ‘King Cycle’ tales is their demonstration of how the Anglo-Saxon had become a literary *topos* in Ireland. Specifically, all the relevant works contain some account of how an Irish king had brought Anglo-Saxons to Ireland as mercenaries in order to fight other Irishmen on his behalf. Moisl provides seven examples of tales from the Cycle which have Anglo-Saxons fighting in Ireland. In one of them — *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* — three Anglo-Saxon *rigdomnai* are named among the retinue of Conaire, a mythical king of Tara. They are *Osalt* (Oswald), *Osbrit* (Osfrith or Osbert) and *Lindas* (possibly Lindaesc). These names do not appear in the *Fid Éoin* entries in the various Irish chronicles, and thus seem to derive from an independent tradition of Anglo-Saxon involvement in Ireland. The significance of the name Oswald being used for one of the *æthelings* is obvious. These tales support the tradition that Anglo-Saxon *æthelings* fought in Ireland.

Additional evidence of secular Anglo-Saxon involvement in Ireland derives from the identification of possible Anglo-Saxon burials in Ireland. Elizabeth O’Brien has recently drawn attention to a number of ‘intrusive’ male and female burials broadly
datable to the sixth and seventh centuries that do not conform to normal mortuary practice within early medieval Ireland.74 These burials contain features which are consistent with pagan or very early Christian Anglo-Saxon practice.75 The distribution of the burials shows a grouping in the region of Brega, Co. Meath,76 and in the ‘general area’ around monasteries where the presence of Anglo-Saxon clerics is historically attested.77 O’Brien argues, however, that the burials were probably not of clerics for, apart from the presence of grave-goods, they are all found in cemeteries which are outside of the known ecclesiastical centres. Nor do they appear to have been of nobles; the grave goods are relatively poor. Rather, they are more likely to have been retainers who accompanied early Anglo-Saxon clerics or eathedings who had come to Ireland. O’Brien also makes the point that contact between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England should not be unexpected in a period when travel by water was probably easier, and safer, than travel overland.78 Thus, the Irish Sea was not so much of barrier to interaction as might otherwise be supposed.

While there is no direct evidence that actually places Eanfrith, Oswald or Oswiu in Ireland, there is enough circumstantial evidence for Anglo-Saxon involvement to render it quite probable that they did fight there for the king of Dalriada, whose domain included territory in the north of the country. The three sons would all have been of appropriate age to participate in the Dalriadan warband during their exile, and they would have been expected to do so by their foster-lord.79 In this regard, it is also not out of the question that they gained military aid from Dalriada after Edwin was killed by Cadwallon and Penda, and the way was thus opened for them to take control of Northumbria, first under Eanfrith in 633 and then Oswald in 634.

74 O’Brien, ‘Contacts between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century’, pp. 93-102. O’Brien states that burial rites in Ireland are characterised by a fair degree of uniformity. From about the fourth century up to almost the present day, burial is represented by an ‘extended supine inhumation, oriented west-east, with no grave goods, either in an unprotected dug grave, or in a grave outlined with stones, or lined with slabs, with or without covering stones’ (p. 96). She also states that there is seldom evidence for the use of coffins.

75 For example: burial with grave goods, a knife or shears or burnt grain; with the body placed in a crouched position; with the presence of stones used to support the skull, or within a penannular enclosure.

76 This was the territory raided by Ecgfrith’s army in 684 (supra., p. 211).

77 The cemeteries identified by O’Brien are as follows: Colp (Co. Meath), Betaghstown (Co. Meath), Westreave (Co. Dublin), Kilshane (Co. Dublin), Carbury Hill (Co. Kildare), Green Hills Kilcullen (Co. Kildare), Levistown (Co. Kildare), Killaree (Co. Kilkenny), Sheastown (Co. Kilkenny), Raheenamadra (Co. Limerick), Aghalaha (near Cong, Co. Mayo), and Doeey (Co. Donegal).

78 O’Brien, ‘Contacts between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century’, p. 93. Taking to the Irish Sea in a curragh, however, would not have been without its perils!

79 Ziegler, ‘The politics of exile in early Northumbria’, p. 10, states that this was a likely means by which these subsequent kings of Northumbria gained battle experience prior to their return.
Bede relates that on Edwin’s death, the exiles ‘were allowed to return to their own land [patriam sunt redire permessi].

Molly Miller has argued that *permessi* in this context means permission from their Dalriadan and Pictish hosts and has connotations of authorisation and support; indeed, the host-lords could technically have refused to release the exiles from service. The circumstances are such that Dalriadan aid was probable. Donnall Brecc, while not always successful, was certainly a warlike king, and so does not appear to have been a character who would have shied away from battle. There is also a possibility that Domnall’s aid had been given so that Northumbria could then be brought under his *imperium*. Eanfrith only managed to achieve the kingship of Bernicia before he too was killed by Cadwallon in 634. Oswald was more successful, defeating and killing Cadwallon at Heavenfield (Denisesburn), near Hexham (Northumberland), and then ruling for a further eight years over all of Northumbria. Oswald’s patronage of the church on Iona, while doubtless influenced by his desire for their assistance in the conversion of Northumbria, could also have served as payment for Dalriadan assistance at Heavenfield, Iona being the ‘national’ church of Dalriada. It has even been suggested that Oswald’s success, as compared to Eanfrith’s failure, can be attributed to his unwavering Christianity giving him access to allies who would have repudiated his pagan brother.

There is some prospect that Oswald travelled to Iona at least one more time after he became king. Adomnán says that his predecessor, Abbot Fáilbe, heard Oswald himself...
give an account to the then Abbot Ségène of a vision of St Columba which he experienced prior to the battle of Heavenfield.\textsuperscript{89} It is of course feasible that Ségène visited Oswald in Northumbria, rather than the converse, with a retinue that included Failbe.\textsuperscript{90} But it would not be unreasonable to suppose that Oswald visited Iona, perhaps during the process of negotiating for a bishop to come to Northumbria.\textsuperscript{91} Indeed, Oswald may have also wished to, or was required to, attend his former lord Domnall Brecc, even if just to gain permission to request ecclesiastical aid from Iona.\textsuperscript{92}

When Oswiu assumed the kingship after his brother in 642, there is no indication as to whether he asked for, or gained, aid from his former hosts.\textsuperscript{93} Northumbria was certainly in an imperilled state at the time, being under continued threat from Penda of Mercia until his defeat and death at \textit{Winwaed} in 655.\textsuperscript{94} It would not be unreasonable to suppose that Oswiu entertained thoughts of assistance; he did after all have marriage ties with the northern Irish \textit{Cenél nEogain} and would probably have had continued links with Dalriada.\textsuperscript{95} Whether aid occurred at all is a moot point. The Dalriadan king Domnall Brecc was killed in the battle of Strathcarron in 642,\textsuperscript{96} and the kingship appears to have passed solely to his joint-king Ferchar mac Connaid Cerr, who was not of the line of Aedán mac Gabrán.\textsuperscript{97} Dalriada was, thus, in the throes of a new succession and would have had its own concerns.\textsuperscript{98} Assistance early in Oswiu's reign, therefore, is doubtful. There is also no evidence that Oswiu ever returned to Dalriada after he became king, though if the claims of overlordship are valid, some measure of formal contact between

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{VC} I.1.
\textsuperscript{90} Visits by abbots of Iona to Ireland and Northumbria are clearly attested in the sources: Columba visited his foundation at Durrow, as well as Clonmacnoise, from Iona, possibly 585-99 (\textit{VC} I.3); Adomnán travelled to the Council of Birr in 697, where his \textit{Cáin Adomnán} was promulgated (\textit{AU} s.a. 697, \textit{VC} II.45; \textit{infra.}, pp. 345-6), and to Northumbria after 685 (\textit{VC} II.46; \textit{infra.}, pp. 262-3). It is logical to assume that Ségène may also have travelled abroad. See D.N. Dumville, 'Derry, Iona, England, and the governance of the Columban Church', in G. O'Brien & W. Nolan (eds.), \textit{Derry and Londonderry: History and Society, Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of and Irish County} (Dublin, 1999), pp. 98-100.
\textsuperscript{92} Kirby, \textit{Earliest English Kings}, p. 89, postulates that Oswald's overtures to Iona may also reflect a dependence on Dalriadan military support in the early years of his reign.
\textsuperscript{93} Whether Oswiu returned from exile with his brothers in 633-4, or remained amongst the Scots of Dalriada until he became king on Oswald's death, is a question which will be explored in the subsequent section on intermarriage (\textit{infra.}, pp. 260-1).
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{HE} III.24.
\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Infra.}, pp. 254-61.
\textsuperscript{96} \textit{AU} s.a.
\textsuperscript{98} Anderson, \textit{Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland}, p. 154, talks of a rivalry between the two lines.
the two kingdoms must have continued at least until the Synod of Whitby in 664, and perhaps into the reign of Ecgfrith.

The current series of excavations being conducted at the rediscovered cemetery at Bamburgh (Northumberland) has produced evidence supportive of the contention that Dalriadans did join the *aethelings* when they returned to Northumbria.\(^{99}\) One of the burials was of a male aged over forty, interred with a knife and buckle, and carbon-dated to between 560 and 670 AD (two standard deviations). The knife has been stylistically placed as mid to late seventh century, which would suggest that the burial occurred in the latter half of the carbon-date range. What is significant about this male is that oxygen and strontium isotope analysis of his remains locates his childhood in the area of Scotland centred on Iona or in a small pocket of Northern Ireland. As the presence of the knife suggests that he was not a cleric, the burial is thus consistent with an interpretation that he was a Dalriadan who accompanied the exiles on their return or, less probably, a Northumbrian born in exile.\(^{100}\)

***

In terms of the long exile of the sons of Æthelfrith, several issues concerning their activities while in Dalriada have been considered: their acquisition of fluency in Irish; their conversion to Irish/Scottish Christianity; their participation in the Dalriadan warband, and their consequent involvement in battles on the Irish mainland.\(^{101}\) The possibility of Dalriadan assistance on their return to Northumbria after Edwin's death in 633 and continued contact between the two kingdoms has also been canvassed. Intermarriage is a further issue which can be examined regarding their activities in exile, and this will be discussed in a subsequent section. The only other certain instance of a Northumbrian *aetheling* travelling to Dalriada, and Ireland, during the pre-Viking period is that of Oswiu's son Aldfrith, who will be discussed in more detail below.\(^{102}\) There is a slim possibility that King Ceolwulf of Northumbria (729-737), Bede's royal patron, had travelled to, or was known in, Dalriada. In the *Annals of Ulster* he seems to

---

\(^{99}\) Reported by Ziegler, 'The Anglo-British cemetery at Bamburgh'.

\(^{100}\) Graeme Young, the chief excavator, favours the interpretation that the man was a native Dalriadan Scot. If he was born amongst the exiles after 616, then his age of over 40 years would place his death at the very late end of the carbon-date range, and this is of reduced probability.

\(^{101}\) M. Miller, 'The dates of Deira', *ASE 8* (1979), p. 60, notes that the exiles must also have had an 'Anglian' training, about their homeland.

\(^{102}\) *Infra.*, pp. 254-63.
have been known by the Irish name Eochaid, which implies some level of familiarity. And he did retire to the formerly Columban house of Lindisfarne when he abdicated in 737. Aside from this possible instance, Northumbrian exile to Dalriada appears to have been restricted to events which had their origins in the first half of the seventh century, and more specifically to the family of Æthelfrith. Northumbrian exiles after this time appear to have chosen different destinations in which to seek refuge.

**Exile into Pictish Lands**

The other Celtic region that received exiles from Northumbria was Pictland. Bede says that the sons of Æthelfrith found refuge amongst the Picts as well as the Scots, and it has been supposed that the eldest son, Eanfrith, spent at least part of his exile in Pictland. Bede’s is the first account of any contact between Northumbrians and Picts beyond the sub-Roman period. It is, in addition, the only evidence for the whole of the seventh century of a Northumbrian **cetheling** travelling to Pictland. It seems that relations during this century between these peoples were more characterised by aggression and hostility. It is unknown whether Eanfrith received any Pictish aid in 633 when he returned to gain the kingship of Bernicia. Some level of Pictish goodwill towards the new Northumbrian rulers may have at least been likely at this time, else the kingdom would have been extinguished if the Picts had decided to invade in addition to the forces of Cadwallon and Penda. In any event, Eanfrith’s death would probably have ended any formal claim which the Picts had to tribute or obedience from Northumbria.

The next time Northumbrians are found seeking refuge in Pictland is not until the late eighth century. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the early eighth century witnessed the beginning of a period of more peaceful relations between Northumbrians and the Picts.
The Pictish king Nechtan son of Derilei wrote to Abbot Ceolfrith of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow c.710-15 for guidance regarding Roman ecclesiastical practice, and in 717 expelled the Columban community to Dalriada. Bede says that the Picts had a peace treaty (foedus pacis) with the Northumbrians when he was writing in 731, probably between king Ceolwulf (729-737) and the Pictish king Oengus son of Forgus (729-761). The Pictish king Oengus also allied with the Northumbrian king Eadberht in 756 to assail Dumbarton in British Strathclyde. In addition, three Pictish kings feature in the Lindisfarne Liber Vitae — Oengus (d.761), Constantine (d.820), and Eoganán (d.839) — attesting to a continuing interest in Northumbria with Pictish affairs. Thus, while warfare between Northumbrians and Picts did occur in the eighth century, it was a century of closer contact, and as such, it may be expected that Pictland again became a destination for Northumbrians fleeing into exile.

The first of these exiles was Alhred, who had been king of Northumbria since 765. In 774, the Historia regum records that Alhred, who was in York at the time:

Exchanged the majesty of empire for exile. He departed with a few companions in his flight, first into Bamburgh, afterwards to the king of the Picts, by name Kenneth [Cinaed/Ciniod son of Uuredech].

Alhred had written to archbishop Lul of Mainz in 773 and referred to disturbances in the Northumbrian Church and amongst the Northumbrian people, and it is possible that he was alluding to threats to his rulership. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 774 similarly records that the ‘Northumbrians drove out their king Alhred from York at Eastertide',

---

110 HE V.23.
112 For example, CB s.a. 740, Eadberht was 'occupied with his army against the Picts'.
113 In addition, Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England, pp. 88-9, characterises eighth-century Northumbria as a century during which the throne was regularly disputed, and she talks of recurrent abdications, deposeations, exiles and murders.
114 ASC MS. E s.a.
115 HR s.a.
and raised Æthelred son of Æthelwald Moll as their king. Alhred was, therefore, deposed by a rival dynasty and forced to flee, probably by ship, from Bamburgh to Cinaed (c.763-775). Alhred is not personally heard of again, though his son Osred II (788-90) did return to claim the kingship. It might be presumed that Osred had accompanied his father into Pictland in 774, as the boy could not have been more than six years old at the time. It might also be expected that Alhred’s wife Osgifu fled, as she too was of a rival dynasty to the new king Æthelred.

No evidence survives regarding Alhred’s or Osgifu’s fate in Pictland. Their son Osred’s ability to return to the kingship of Northumbria implies that they had been received well by Cinaed, and that this goodwill continued after Cinaed’s death in 775. It does not seem likely, however, that Osred would have required Pictish help to regain the kingship; he succeeded his uncle Ælfwald, Osgifu’s brother, as king, and so was of the same dynasty. True to the turbulent nature of eighth-century Northumbrian politics, Osred was in his turn tonsured, in York, and also forced into exile, possibly to the Isle of Man. If this was indeed Osred’s destination, then it is the only known instance in pre-Viking Britain. The possibility that Edwin had achieved overlordship of Man was discussed in Chapter 7; some contact with the island may have continued, particularly after the Northumbrians gained control of Cumbria and Galloway from the later seventh century. Presumably, if Osred did find refuge on Man, he would have found a ship in one of these western regions. The fact that he was tonsured might imply that he was pressed into early retirement in a monastery on Man, though he did attempt an ultimately unsuccessful return to the kingship in 792.

117 ASC MS. E s.a. Æthelred would not have been more than eleven at the time (Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 152).
118 Cinaed was referred to in the AU s.a. 775 as ‘king of the Picts [rex Pictorum]’.
119 ASC MSS. E & F s.a. 788, 790; HR s.a. 788, 790.
120 According to the HR s.a. 768, Alhred married Osgifu, daughter of Oswulf (758) and grand daughter of Eadbert (737-758). Osred was the product of their union.
121 AU s.a. 775; HR s.a. 775.
122 The ASC MSS. E & F s.a. 788, records that Ælfwald was killed (MS. E by Sicga). Osred might thus have been the author of a coup, especially considering that Ælfwald’s sons had to take refuge in the Church of St. Peter in York. That being said, it does not change the presumption that Osred’s succession was a Northumbrian affair, free from Pictish intervention.
123 HR s.a. 790, ‘King Osred [II], deceived by the guile of his nobles, taken prisoner and deprived of the kingdom, was tonsured in the city of York, and afterwards, forced by necessity, went into exile’. Symeon of Durham in his History of the Church of Durham (Historia Dunelmensis ecclesie IV.2), states that Osred fled to the Isle of Man. The ASC MSS. E & F s.a. 790, records only that Osred was betrayed and made to flee from the kingdom. Osred was replaced by Æthelred son of Æthelwald Moll, the king who had also succeeded Alhtred.
124 Supra., pp. 176-8.
125 According to the ASC MS. E s.a. 792, Osred, returning from exile, was seized and killed on 14 September. See also the HR s.a. 792.
The second Northumbrian exile to Pictland in this period was the *patricius* Osbald.\textsuperscript{126}

According to the *Historia regum* under the year 796:

King Æthelred was killed near the Cover on 18 April, in the seventh year of his reign. The *patricius* Osbald was appointed to the kingdom by some nobles of the nation, and after twenty-seven days was deserted by the whole company of the royal household and the nobles, put to flight and banished from the kingdom, and retired with a few followers to the island of Lindisfarne, and from there he went by ship to the king of the Picts with certain of the brothers. Eardwulf . . . was recalled from exile and raised to the crown.\textsuperscript{127}

Osbald appears to have suffered a similar fate to Alhred's. Chosen presumably by those responsible for Æthelred's death, he was almost immediately forced to flee when a candidate from a rival dynasty, Eardwulf, gained greater favour. Osbald's choice of refuge might have been influenced by Alhred's earlier flight. Indeed, he followed a similar route, travelling to the North Sea coast and then taking ship to Pictland, where he would have been received by, or at least petitioned, the Pictish king Constantine son of Fergus (c.789-820).\textsuperscript{128} The brothers from Lindisfarne who went with Osbald may have been familiar with southern Pictland, and even known to the king, and so could have accompanied him in order to speak on his behalf.\textsuperscript{129} As stated above, Constantine was included in the Lindisfarne *Liber Vitae*, so it might be expected that there was some amicable contact between the Pictish king and the members of the Lindisfarne monastery.\textsuperscript{130} In contrast to Alhred, Osbald is heard of again. He is almost certainly the recipient of a letter from Alcuin, sent soon after Osbald had been exiled in 796.\textsuperscript{131} The date can be presumed because in the letter Alcuin alludes to 'the people [*gens*] among whom you are exiled'. The letter was, therefore, received by Osbald while he was in Pictland. Alcuin specifically sought to deter Osbald from further intervention in

\textsuperscript{126} *Patricius* (patrician) is a term used in the *HR* in an equivalent way to the *ASC*'s *ealdorman*. It appears to have been a normal title for royal deputies used in Northumbrian sources for the eighth century. See A. Thacker, 'Some terms for noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England, c.650-900', *ASSAH* 2 (1981), pp. 213-7; D. Whitelock, *EHD*, p. 269 n. 6; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 92-4.

\textsuperscript{127} *HR* s.a. The account in the *ASC* s.a. 796, merely states that 'Æthelred, king of Northumbria, was killed by his own nation'. Osbald is not mentioned, nor in any subsequent entry.

\textsuperscript{128} Constantine is called in the *AU* s.a. 820 a 'king of Fortriu [*rex Fortreinn*]'.

\textsuperscript{129} Nechtan established ecclesiastical contact with Northumbria (infra., pp. 346-7).

\textsuperscript{130} *Supra*., p. 244.

\textsuperscript{131} *MGH Epist.* IV, no 109, p. 156; *EHD*, no. 200, pp. 852-3. Whitelock, *EHD*, p. 852, dated the letter to 796, immediately after Osbald had fled. Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 156, on the other hand, suggests 798. In the letter, Alcuin refers to advice he gave Osbald 'two years ago' to abandon the lay life and enter a monastery. Kirby identifies the original plea as having occurred in 796, when Osbald intervened in Northumbrian politics with such spectacular lack of success. In any event, the significance
Northumbrian affairs, advice evidently taken as the *Historia regum* records that Osbald was an abbot when he died in 799.\textsuperscript{132} The fact also that Osbald was buried at York would suggest that he had returned from Pictland before his death, and perhaps his assumption of an abbacy could have been a condition of his return.

Alcuin’s letter to Osbald also indicates that interchange occurred between the Continent, Northumbria and Pictland in the late eighth century, even if only due to Alcuin’s international connections. If Alcuin was correct in presuming that Osbald had a desire to re-establish himself, then Osbald must have been able to keep in touch with Northumbrian affairs while in Pictland. That Alcuin was motivated to dissuade Osbald from pursuing the kingship also implies that Osbald was allowed the freedom by the Pictish king Constantine to return to Northumbria if he so desired. Alfrith’s and Osbald’s flight to Pictland, in addition, reveals that Pictish territory was secure enough as a refuge in the late eighth century, and that Pictish kings were not overly concerned with offending the Northumbrian hierarchy by receiving its fleeing nobles. While the evidence for Cinaed and his immediate successors is limited, Constantine emerges as the first person to simultaneously hold the kingship of Pictland (or at least Forthriu) and of Dalriada by hereditary right, the latter from 811.\textsuperscript{133} Thus, this was a period in which power north of the Forth began to be consolidated, and so Pictland would have offered a secure retreat from its unstable southern neighbour.

***

It has been shown that at various times the Celtic kingdoms surrounding Northumbria acted as destinations for exiled *æthelings* and deposed kings. Molly Miller argued that the acceptance of exiles required some form of order or ceremony, that it must have occurred within an institutionalised context rather than be dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis.\textsuperscript{134} In this sense, she suggested that the reception of exiles represents evidence of regularised foreign relations between the Northumbrian and Celtic polities of the north. This is certainly one interpretation, though a caveat should be added that the instances of Northumbrian exiles travelling to Celtic lands fall only within specific windows of time and circumstance. As far as the evidence shows, exile amongst the Britons only

\textsuperscript{132} *HR* s.a.

occurred prior to Edwin's reign; amongst the Dalriadan Scots, only prior to c.600 and
during Edwin's reign; and amongst the Picts, also during Edwin's reign and then in the
last quarter of the eighth century. It may of course be that the record is far from
complete. The reception of Northumbrian exiles does not, therefore, necessarily
represent a continuous or formal policy on the part of the Celtic kingdoms. What can be
supposed, however, is that the exiled *ætheling* and his host would have had certain
expectations of one another – for example, service in return for protection\(^\text{135}\) – and in
this regard the relationship between Northumbrian exile and Celtic host *would* have
been characterised by a level of formalisation. Another expectation on the part of the
exiled *ætheling* might have been to take a wife from within his host's kin so as to secure
his refuge.

**Interramriage between Northumbrians and Northern Celts**

Interramriage is a common means offered for integration between peoples.\(^\text{136}\) If the
assumption that some Anglo-Saxon settlers would have been necessary to ensure the
absorption of newly-conquered territory is continued, it might be expected that
interramriage occurred between settlers and the native inhabitants, in this case
Northumbrians and Britons. Rosemary Cramp also argues that intermarriage between
Celtic and Northumbrian nobility might have acted as a means of cementing alliances
and peace.\(^\text{137}\) Indeed, strategic marriages might have been used to back up military
conquest and to facilitate the imposition of overlordship by the Northumbrian kings.\(^\text{138}\)
The fact that there were Northumbrian exiles to be found in Celtic countries – unique
amongst the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of pre-Viking Britain – increases the likelihood of
exogamous marriages between Northumbrians and Celts.

There is, however, no evidence for exogamous marriage between Northumbrians and
Celts to be found in Anglo-Saxon sources, or only very indirectly. While it is true that
marriage in general, even amongst the nobility, is not well recorded in the pre-Viking

\(^{134}\) Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', p. 60.
\(^{136}\) Supra., p. 78.
\(^{137}\) R. Cramp, *Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards* (Whithorn, 1995), p. 2. See also D.
Banham, 'Anglo-Saxon attitudes: in search of the origins of English racism', *European Review of History*
\(^{138}\) Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 85. Æthelfrith, for example, married
Acha, the sister of his adversary Edwin, and thereby stabilised his rule over Deira (*HE* III.6).
Anglo-Saxon sources, it is nonetheless significant that there survives no documentary reference to intermarriage between Northumbrians and Celts. It could be argued that intermarriage was not relevant to the interests of the Northumbrian chroniclers, in particular Bede, and so they gave it little attention. Bede was concerned with elucidating an Anglo-Saxon patrimony for his people and his church, and so it should not be surprising that even if he knew of any instances of dynastic intermarriage he would have failed to record them, or at least been deliberately obtuse. Material was specifically included by Bede inasmuch as it was relevant to his ecclesiastical history, not for its own sake. If marriage occurred at lower levels of the social hierarchy – which are not well-represented in the documentary sources anyway – it would also have failed to attract the attention of the chroniclers. The evidence for intermarriage between Northumbrians and Celts, then, rests on a combination of material from Celtic texts, genealogies, and deductions based on circumstance, largely concerning the exiled sons of Æthelfrith. Archaeological and linguistic evidence has also been used, though this is more conjectural.

The Sons of Æthelfrith

The strongest documentary evidence for exogamous marriage between Northumbrians and Celts centres on the exiled sons of Æthelfrith, and as such primarily concerns the Picts and the Scots of Dalriada. All the known sons of Æthelfrith would have approached marriageable age during their long exile; Oswiu, the youngest, would have been about twenty-one years old in 633, Oswald twenty-nine, and Eanfrith older again. Their sister Æbbe, if she too fled to Dalriada, would have matured in exile no matter what her age in 616. Hence, it should be expected that marriage and the creation of heirs would have become an issue for the exiles while abroad, and the possibility of

141 Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', p. 47.
142 Cessford, 'Exogamous marriages between Anglo-Saxons and Britons', p. 49; Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', pp. 5-6.
143 Härke, 'Early Anglo-Saxon social structure', pp. 126-30, presents a variety of evidence for an age threshold of about twelve years in pagan Anglo-Saxon graves, with burials from this age being characterised by an increase in the number and variety of objects: full dress kit for girls, swords and
marriage with their hosts' kin must have been mooted. Intermarriage may also have secured the athelings' position in their host kingdom(s), in the event that they never returned home.\textsuperscript{144} Marriage would have created a kinship link between the exile and the host, with all its attendant obligations, and would have represented a formal statement of alliance.\textsuperscript{145} Intermarriage could, thus, have had advantages for both parties.

The possibility that Æthelfrith's oldest son Eanfrith married while in Pictland has already been raised.\textsuperscript{146} This is a deduction based on the obit of the Pictish king Talorcan (c.653-657) included in the \textit{Annals of Ulster} under the year 657, in which he is referred to as 'mac Anfrith'.\textsuperscript{147} The identification of Anfrith (Anfrait, Enfret in other recensions) with Eanfrith, first made by W.F. Skene in 1876, is now generally accepted in the secondary literature.\textsuperscript{148} Talorcan's Pictish name indicates that his mother's kin were almost certainly Pictish, and therefore that Eanfrith had married a Pictish woman, doubtless while he was in exile.\textsuperscript{149} It has been argued that Eanfrith's wife was a daughter of the otherwise obscure figure Uuid (or Wid), who had apparently fathered the three kings included before Talorcan in the Pictish king-list: Gartnait V, Bridei II, and Talorc IV.\textsuperscript{150} According to Molly Miller, Talorcan is a diminutive of Talorc, and so may have been given to denote a connection with Talorc IV.\textsuperscript{151} While this identity for Eanfrith's wife remains hypothetical, she would, nonetheless, have had to have been of the right 'blood' for her son to be eligible for kingship. Thus, it is reasonably sure that

shields for boys. About fourteen to fifteen years is the age of adulthood for boys suggested in documentary sources, with the giving of arms for a noble.

\textsuperscript{144} Richter, \textit{Ireland and Her Neighbours}, p. 92; Ziegler, 'The politics of exile in early Northumbria', p. 14. Indeed, the exiles may never have expected to return home.


\textsuperscript{146} Supra., p. 231.

\textsuperscript{147} AU s.a. Talorcan is also described as ‘filius Enfret' in the Pictish king-list in the fourteenth-century \textit{Poppleton Manuscript}. See note 122 (supra., p. 159).


\textsuperscript{149} Ziegler, 'The politics of exile in early Northumbria', p. 3, suggested that Æthelfrith had arranged the marriage for his eldest son, but there is no evidence to support such a notion.

\textsuperscript{150} Anderson, \textit{Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland}, p. 169; Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', pp. 55-6. In the \textit{AU}, all of these king are called 'sons of Foth'; s.aa. 635, 641 and 653 respectively. Woolf, 'Pictish matriliny reconsidered', p. 161, suggested that Talorcan's mother may have been a granddaughter of Uuid, but this is less chronologically pleasing.
Eanfrith married into a Pictish royal dynasty. This marriage would have been quite prestigious and would have acted as a statement of unfriendliness by the Picts against the incumbent Northumbrian king Edwin.\textsuperscript{152} It might also support the possibility, raised earlier, of Pictish assistance when Eanfrith returned to Northumbria in 633.\textsuperscript{153} If Eanfrith did marry a daughter of Uuid, then the king of the Picts at the time, Gartnait V, would have been his brother-in-law.\textsuperscript{154} It would certainly have been advantageous for Gartnait to have Eanfrith obligated to him. Northumbria, or at least Bernicia, under tribute to the Picts would have been something of a coup, particularly after the reigns of the two expansionists, Æthelfrith and Edwin. Eanfrith’s apostasy and death, however, closed this small window of potential collaboration between the two kingdoms.

Knowledge regarding Talorcan is limited. He must have been born before or soon after Eanfrith died in 634. That he assumed the kingship approximately twenty years after his father’s death makes it likely that he was brought up in Pictland amongst his mother’s kin.\textsuperscript{155} Amongst the Irish, the mother’s extended family was expected to bear responsibility for the fosterage of the son of an Irish woman and a foreigner.\textsuperscript{156} If the Picts were in any way similar, it could be expected that Talorcan was fostered amongst his Pictish family, perhaps even with Talorc, hence the diminutive. It would have been his right to his mother’s patrilineage which allowed Talorcan to become king, but fosterage would have created a close kinship link, and accordingly he might have become the recognised heir of Talorc, whom he followed in the kingship.\textsuperscript{157}

A marriage link between the rulers of Pictland and Northumbria is also implied in the evidence regarding Bridei son of Bile (672-693), the Pictish king who defeated Ecgfrith in the battle of Dunnichen in 685, and whose father was remembered as a king of Strathclyde.\textsuperscript{158} In the account of the battle in the \textit{Historia Brittonum}, Bridei is referred

\begin{footnotes}
\item[151] Miller, 'Eanfrith’s Pictish son', p. 51. She interprets Talorcan as meaning ‘young Talorc’.
\item[152] Miller, 'Eanfrith’s Pictish son', p. 57.
\item[153] \textit{Supra.}, p. 243.
\item[154] Gartnait’s \textit{obit} is recorded in the \textit{AU} \textit{s.a.} 635. Gartnait’s reaction to Eanfrith’s apostasy may not have been favourable, however, this does not preclude the initial granting of military aid.
\item[155] Woolf, 'Pictish matriliney reconsidered', p. 159.
\item[158] A. Macquarrie, 'The kings of Strathclyde, c.400-1018', in A. Grant & K.J. Stringer (ed.), \textit{Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community; Essays Presented to G.W.S. Barrow} (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 9. Bile (or Beli) is included in the Harleian pedigrees of Strathclyde (\textit{EWGT}, p. 10, § 5), and Bridei is referred to as ‘son of the king of Alcuith’ in a poem attributed to Adomnán, preserved in the tenth-
\end{footnotes}
to as Ecgfrith's cousin, specifically, 'fratruelem suum'. The most usual explanation is that the two adversaries were related through Talorcan and Eanfrith. It has been supposed that as well as Talorcan, Eanfrith fathered a Pictish daughter who married Bile, thus making Bridei Talorcan's nephew and Eanfrith's grandson. This would certainly make Ecgfrith, who was the son of Eanfrith's brother Oswiu and Edwin's daughter Eanflæd, a first cousin once removed of Bridei. Alex Woolf has more recently argued, however, that the kinship link between Ecgfrith and Bridei lies elsewhere. He has emphasised that the term fratruelis had two specific meanings. Originally it meant the sons of two brothers, but by the time Isidore was writing it was also used to refer to the sons of two sisters. If this meaning was intended in the Historia Brittonum then the relationship via a sister of Talorcan does not quite work. Woolf proposed, rather, that Bile married an otherwise unknown daughter of Edwin, making both Ecgfrith and Bridei his grandsons through his daughters, and therefore first cousins. This requires an assumption that a marriage alliance had occurred between Northumbria and Strathclyde, during the reign of either Edwin or perhaps Oswald, and although it does not appear that Edwin or Oswald ever exercised any authority over the Strathclyde Britons, an alliance may have been seen as attractive for both parties. However, an exact reading of the term fratruelis in the Historia Brittonum may be over-interpreting what could have been an accidental usage. In any event, there does seem to be scholarly agreement that Ecgfrith and Bridei were related, even though the exact nature of the relationship is open to debate, in part due to the unresolved nature of Pictish succession. Eanfrith's is, therefore, the only known marriage link between the Northumbrians and Picts in the pre-Viking period, and it almost certainly occurred as a direct result of his exile.

century Betha Adamnain (ESSH I, p. 145). Bile was also the father of Owain/Ywain, who defeated Domnall Brecc of Dalriada at the battle of Strathcarron in 642 (AU s.a.).

Hunter Blair, 'The Bernicians and their northern frontier', p. 160; Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', pp. 55-6. Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland, pp. 170-1, proposed that it was Eanfrith's daughter's daughter who married Bile.


Macquarrie, 'The kings of Strathclyde, c.400-1018', p. 9, and Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 63, also suggested a kinship link via marriage between the Northumbrian and Strathclyde ruling houses, though they did not elucidate such a specific scenario.

Bile's obit is not recorded, but he must have been dead by 642, when his son Owain/Ywain won the battle of Strathcarron (see note 158 above).

Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish son', p. 55, certainly did not think that the term fratruelis was used in any precise manner in the HB.
The other exiled children of Æthelfrith are more closely connected with Dalriada, and so it is in this direction that further evidence of intermarriage should be looked for. Oswald would have been about twenty-nine years old in 633 when the exiles were able to return to Northumbria; it is quite possible that he had married and fathered children by that time. It is accepted that Oswald married an unnamed daughter of Cynegils of Wessex in 635 (at the earliest),¹⁶⁵ and that his only known progeny was a son Oethelwald, who later became sub-king of Deira, c.651-5.¹⁶⁶ If Oethelwald was the child of Oswald and his West Saxon wife, then he could not have been older than sixteen when he began to rule Deira. Michelle Ziegler has argued that a youth of that age would not have been placed in so delicate a role – that is, as sub-king of the realm bordering Mercia. Therefore, she proposes that Oethelwald was in fact some years older and so was born of a Dalriadan mother.¹⁶⁷ It is not clear, however, whether Oethelwald was installed by Oswiu, or against him; certainly Bede states that they were antagonists, and that Oethelwald sided with Penda in 655.¹⁶⁸ It could simply be that the youthful Oethelwald was elected as a rival candidate to Oswiu and was supported in this position by Penda.¹⁶⁹ Hence, there is no compulsion to suppose that Oethelwald had to have been born before Oswald married his West Saxon bride in 635. And indeed, there is no evidence whatsoever linking Oswald with an Irish wife.

There is a late source which claims that had Æbbe not been dedicated to Christ, Oswald would have given her in marriage to the Dalriadan king Donnall Brecc.¹⁷⁰ The Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert, on the other hand, refers to Æbbe as a widow, indicating that she did marry.¹⁷¹ As a result, the possibility of a marriage to Donnall Brecc can at least be entertained. According to the sixteenth-century Breviary of

¹⁶⁵ HE III.7.
¹⁶⁷ Ziegler, 'The politics of exile in early Northumbria', p. 10; idem., 'Oswald and the Irish', p. 4. Ziegler acknowledges that there were minority kingships in pre-Viking Northumbria: Ælfwine, son of Oswiu, appears to have become sub-king of Deira c.670 at the age of nine, and Osred, son of Aldfrith, became king of Northumbria in 705 at the age of eight. She argues, however, that both these instances occurred during periods of relative security – a point which can be debated.
¹⁶⁸ HE III.14, III.24. Bede does state that Oswiu had executed Oswine, a previous king of Deira in 651, which implies that he had control of the sub-kingdom at the time. However, this control was not necessarily stable. Nor did Oethelwald necessarily become sub-king in 651; he may have assumed the role closer to 655.
¹⁷⁰ This is the unprinted Life of Æbbe, later attributed to Reginald of Durham, the author of the c.1165 Life of St. Oswald, and contained in a fourteenth-century manuscript (Bodleian Fairfax 6). It is possible that, in affirming Æbbe's virginity, the author was merely adopting a hagiographical convention in order to inflate the sanctity of his subject.
¹⁷¹ Anon. VCuth II.3. This point is omitted in Bede's version, but it was by no means uncommon for a widowed noblewoman to enter a monastery or to become an abbess, as Æbbe did of Coldingham.
Aberdeen, Æbbe received her veil from Bishop Finán of Lindisfame (651-61);\textsuperscript{172} if this very late record is authentic, it is chronologically plausible that she was the widow of Domnall, who died in 642.\textsuperscript{173} If nothing else, the existence of the tradition reveals the later palatability of exogamous marriages between Northumbrians and Celts.

There exists more certainty regarding intermarriage with the other known offspring of Æthelfrith in exile, Oswiu. Oswiu’s is the best-known instance of exogamous marriage between an Anglo-Saxon and a Celt in early medieval Britain. The evidence that Oswiu married, or had some form of relationship with, an Irish woman principally revolves around his son Aldfrith, who became king of Northumbria after Ecgfrith was defeated and killed at Dunnichen in 685. It is generally accepted in the secondary literature that Aldfrith was the son of an Irish woman of the Cenél nEogain branch of the Northern Ui Néill, and was raised and educated amongst the Irish, who knew him by the name Flann Fina.\textsuperscript{174} These conclusions derive from a combination of evidence provided in a number of different sources.

To begin with, it can be established that while Aldfrith was certainly Oswiu’s son, he was not the offspring of Oswiu’s Anglo-Saxon wife Eanflæd, who was the mother of Ecgfrith. There are several strands of evidence here. In the \textit{Annals of Ulster}, Aldfrith is clearly identified as the son of Oswiu.\textsuperscript{175} This is echoed in the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle}, where Aldfrith is referred to as Ecgfrith’s brother.\textsuperscript{176} Both \textit{Lives of St Cuthbert} also refer to Aldfrith’s relationship with Ecgfrith, in the context of reporting a meeting in

\textsuperscript{172} ESSH I, p. 142. On the \textit{Breviary of Aberdeen}, see note 23 (supra., p. 231) and the discussion in A. Macquarrie, \textit{The Saints of Scotland: Essays in Scottish Church History AD 450-1093} (Edinburgh, 1997), pp. 6-10.

\textsuperscript{173} AU s.a.


\textsuperscript{175} AU s.a. 704, ‘Aldfrith m. Ossu sapiens, rex Saxonum, moritur’. Ossu is the Irish form of Oswiu, as can be verified by a comparison of relevant events in the \textit{AU} and the \textit{HE} (Ireland, ‘Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish genealogies’, p. 69; Moisl, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish’, p. 122). Variations on \textit{mac Ossu} are also found in later recensions of the Irish Annals where Aldfrith is referred to under his Irish name, as will be seen.

\textsuperscript{176} ASC MS. E s.a. 685.
684 between the saint and Abbess Ælfflæd of Whitby, Ecgfrith’s sister. In the Anonymous Life, Cuthbert assures Ælfflæd, who is concerned over the succession, that she will find Ecgfrith’s successor ‘to be a brother no less than the other one’. Cuthbert then tells the puzzled Ælfflæd that this brother is ‘on some island beyond this sea’, at which point she realises that he is talking of Aldfrith ‘who was then on the island which is called Iona’. This indicates that Aldfrith was certainly a brother to Ecgfrith and Ælfflæd, but the implication is that he was an unlooked-for successor, and thus there is some implied question as to his legitimacy.

In Bede’s slightly later prose Life, the question of Aldfrith’s legitimacy and the sense of astonishment at his succession is stronger. In this account of the meeting, Cuthbert also tells Ælfflæd of ‘a successor whom you will embrace with as much sisterly affection as if he were Ecgfrith himself’, who she eventually realises is Aldfrith. However, it is then stated that Aldfrith ‘was said to be the son of Ecgfrith’s father, and was then in exile among the islands of the Irish [Scots], for the study of letters’ (emphasis added). Bede used an almost identical description of Aldfrith in the Historia Ecclesiastica, stating that he was ‘a man most learned in the Scriptures, who was said to be the brother of Ecgfrith and son of King Oswiu’ (emphasis added). Thus, more explicit doubt is introduced as to Aldfrith’s legitimacy, which is then amplified later in the same chapter of the Life, where Bede describes Aldfrith as Ecgfrith’s ‘frater nothus’, ‘his bastard brother … who for some considerable time before this had been pursuing his studies in the regions of the Irish [Scots], suffering a self-imposed exile to gratify his love of wisdom’. Therefore, Bede was less restrained in his comments on Aldfrith’s legitimacy than the anonymous author of the earlier Life, who was almost certainly writing during Aldfrith’s lifetime. Bede was probably writing after the troubled reign

177 Richter, Ireland and Her Neighbours, p. 95.
178 Anon. VCuth III.6, ‘illum autem non minus tibi esse fratrem usurpaueris quam alterum’.
179 Anon. VCuth III.6, ‘in aliquis insula super hoc mare … tunc erat in insula quam li nominant’.
180 Bede. VCuth 24, ‘successorem quem germana ut ipsum Egfridum dilectione complectaris’.
181 Bede. VCuth 24, ‘qui ferebatur filius fuisse patris illius, et tunc in insulis Scotorum ob studium litterarum exulabat’.
182 HE IV.26, ‘vir in scripturis doctissimus, qui frater eius et filius Oswiu regis esse dicebatur’.
183 Bede. VCuth 24, ‘frater eius nothus … qui non paucis ante temporibus in regionibus Scotorum lectioni operam dabat, ibi ob amorem sapientiae spontaneum passus exilium’. In Æthelwulf’s De abbatis, §i (A. Campbell, ed., Oxford, 1967, pp. 4-5), of the early ninth century, Aldfrith is also termed nothus.
184 The anonymous Life was written by a monk of Lindisfarne between 698 and 705; see A. Thacker, ‘Cuthbert, St’, in Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE, p. 132.
of Aldfrith's son Osred; in the years when doubt as to Aldfrith's right to rule may have been in favour.\textsuperscript{185}

The evidence presented in the\textit{Lives of St Cuthbert}, therefore, testifies to a near contemporary tradition that Aldfrith was an illegitimate son of Oswiu, who prior to his reign resided in either Ireland or Dalriada, or both. According to Margaret Clunies Ross, the term used by Bede, \textit{nothus}, has a specific meaning as 'born out of wedlock, but of a known father', as compared to \textit{spurius}, 'born of an unknown father'.\textsuperscript{186} Clunies Ross also notes a number of instances where the term \textit{nothus}, as a description of Aldfrith, was glossed with Old English words denoting illegitimacy. In two tenth-century manuscripts of Bede's metrical \textit{Life of St Cuthbert}, written between the other two \textit{Lives}, \textit{nothus} is glossed, respectively, with \textit{hornungbrothor}, 'illegitimate brother', and the less common \textit{docinel}, 'son of a concubine'.\textsuperscript{187} The late tenth-century homilist Ælfric also used the term \textit{cyfesborena brothor}, 'brother born of a concubine', when talking of Aldfrith.\textsuperscript{188} These glosses, thus, attest to a later tradition that Aldfrith was not only illegitimate but also the son of a concubine, adding further weight to the conclusion that he was not born of Oswiu's Anglo-Saxon wife Eanflæd.\textsuperscript{189} The lateness of these references necessitate that their accuracy remains in question. However, this is an interesting possibility as it does imply that Aldfrith was in some sense an acknowledged son, which would have assisted in his ability to inherit the kingship, even if he was not uppermost in the minds of the Northumbrian nobility.\textsuperscript{190}

To attempt to identify Aldfrith's mother, the relevant Irish evidence must be considered, as well as the equation of Aldfrith with the name Flann Fina. In all of the contemporary

\textsuperscript{185} Charles-Edwards, 'Anglo-Saxon kinship revisited', p. 183; Richter, \textit{Ireland and Her Neighbours}, p. 95. Bede's prose \textit{Life} was written c.720; see Thacker, 'Cuthbert, St', p. 132.


\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Hornungbrothor} is found in \textit{Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS. 183}. \textit{Docinel}, diminutive of \textit{doc}, is found in \textit{British Library Harley MS. 526}, fo. 15\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{188} Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', p. 18.

\textsuperscript{189} Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 13-18, discusses the prevalence of concubinage in early medieval Germanic and Irish societies, concluding that it was relatively widespread, specifically amongst the upper classes, until condemnation from the church resulted in its eventual abandonment around the time of the Norman Conquest.

\textsuperscript{190} Charles-Edwards, 'Anglo-Saxon kinship revisited', p. 183, suggests that Oswiu may not have formerly acknowledged paternity of Aldfrith to the Northumbrian nobility. However, it is equally as likely that the later questioning of Aldfrith's right to rule was due to his not being born of a legal wife, rather then Oswiu's lack of acknowledgment. In fact, it seems highly unlikely that Aldfrith would have been able to succeed without Oswiu having acknowledged him. See Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 15-16, where she presents evidence for the necessity of paternal recognition in the ability of an illegitimate child to gain an inheritance.
or near-contemporary sources, Aldfrith is referred to by his Anglo-Saxon name.\textsuperscript{191} Bede calls him Aldfrith,\textsuperscript{192} Adomnán, in his \textit{Life of Columba} uses \textquote{Aldfridum ... amicum'';}\textsuperscript{193} the \textit{Annals of Ulster} record \textquote{Aldfrith ... sapiens'}.\textsuperscript{194} In the later \textit{Annals of Tigernach}, however, which derive at the earliest from a late tenth-century recension,\textsuperscript{195} Aldfrith's \textit{obit} reads: 'Aldfrith mac Ossa i. Fland Fina la Gaedhelu, ecnaidh, rex Saxonum'.\textsuperscript{196} Here, Aldfrith is given the additional Gaelic name Flann Fina.\textsuperscript{197} In even later versions of Irish chronicles, the Anglo-Saxon name is dropped entirely. So, in the \textit{Annals of Inisfallen} and \textit{Fragmentary Annals of Ireland}, both of which derive from the eleventh century,\textsuperscript{198} Aldfrith is referred to respectively as, \textquote{Flann Fine mc. Gossa, rex Saxorum},\textsuperscript{199} and \textquote{Flainn Fiona mc. Ossa, ri Saxan, an t-eagniad amhra dalta Ad[a]mnain'}.\textsuperscript{200} It appears likely, then, that Aldfrith was given an Irish name, Flann Fina, and it is under this appellation that various Old Irish literary tracts are ascribed to him.\textsuperscript{201} Indeed, it is doubtful that Oswiu would have had yet another son who became a king of the \textquote{Saxons}, and who at the same time had a reputation for learning.\textsuperscript{202} The lateness of the references to Aldfrith by this name may suggest that it was applied

\begin{footnotes}
\item 191 D.N. Dumville, `Two troublesome abbots', \textit{Celtica} 21 (1990), pp. 151-2; Ireland, `Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish genealogies', p. 68.
\item 192 \textit{HE} IV.26.
\item 193 \textit{VC} II.46.
\item 194 \textit{AU} s.a. 704.
\item 195 Dumville, `Two troublesome abbots', p. 152; Hughes, \textit{Early Christian Ireland}, p. 105. Entries from the various Irish chronicles reported here, apart from the \textit{AU}, have been derived from Dumville's article.
\item 196 \textit{Annals of Tigernach} s.a. 704. The epithet \textit{ecnaidh} mirrors the \textit{sapiens} of the \textit{AU}.
\item 197 Ireland, `Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish genealogies', pp. 70-74, presents an in-depth examination of the derivation of the name Flann Fina. He states that the name Flann is the colour-word \textquote{red'}, in particular \textquote{blood-red}, and was commonly used as an Irish personal name. The second element of the name -- Fina -- presents more difficulty. It is often assumed to be derived from his mother's name (discussed below), but it may also mean \textquote{wine'} or even \textquote{vine'}. A literal translation of the whole name might then be \textquote{Blood of Wine}, an epithet which may signify virtue or nobility. Fina as a proper name is not otherwise attested until after the Middle Irish period.
\item 198 Dumville, `Two troublesome abbots', p. 152.
\item 199 \textit{Annals of Inisfallen} s.a. 704. According to Ireland, `Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish genealogies', p. 68 n. 19, the use of \textquote{Gossa} instead of \textquote{Ossu'} for Oswiu is a common development in later Irish sources.
\item 200 \textit{Fragmentary Annals of Ireland} §165. The adjectival phrase translates as `the wondrous sage, Adomnán's pupil', another variation on \textit{sapiens}, with additional information.
\item 201 For example, the Old Irish list of social maxims \textit{Briathra} (or \textit{Roscada}) \textit{Flainn Fina maic Ossu}. This has recently been published by C.A. Ireland (ed. \& trans.), \textit{Old Irish Wisdom Attributed to Aldfrith of Northumbria: An Edition of Briathra Flainn Fhina maic Ossu} (Tempe, 1999).
\item 202 As has already been reported, Aldfrith is often described with the epithet \textit{sapiens}, \textquote{wise'}, or some variation. Indeed, Bede referred to his learning several times, calling him \textquote{a man most learned in the Scriptures [vir in scripturis doctissimus']} (\textit{HE} IV.26), and \textquote{a most learned man in all respects [vir undecumque doctissimus']} (\textit{HE} V.12). Bede also says, in his \textit{Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow}, ch. 15 (Plummer, \textit{Bede}, vol. I, pp. 379-80) that Aldfrith exchanged eight hides of land for a `magnificently worked copy' of a manuscript on cosmography brought by Benedict Bishop from Rome. Adomnán also presented a manuscript of his work on the Holy Places, \textit{De Locis Sanctis}, to Aldfrith when he visited Northumbria, which the king had copied and distributed (\textit{HE} V.15). Even Stephen of Ripon,
The fact that Aldfrith was given an Irish name shows that he was well-known in Ireland, or at least Dalriada. This should, in addition to his tenure in the ‘regions of the Scots’ and Iona specifically, favour a priori the conclusion that his parents were Oswiu and an Irish/Scottish woman, and that he was conceived while Oswiu was in exile. It is a matter of some significance, then, that Aldfrith actually appears in an Irish genealogy, under the name Flann Fina. In the genealogies collected in the early twelfth-century _Corpus genealogarum Hiberniae_, Aldfrith’s pedigree is reported as, ‘Colman Rimid athair Fina, mathair iside Flaind Fina meic Ossu regis Saxonum’. According to this account, Aldfrith was fathered by Oswiu and Fina, the daughter of Colman Rimid, who was king of Tara through the _Cenél nEogain_ branch of the Northern Ui Neill and whose obit is recorded in the _Annals of Ulster_ under the year 604. This a clear indication that Oswiu became associated, in later sources, with an Irish woman, and of Aldfrith’s parentage.

There are, however, problems with the use of this genealogical record. It has become almost axiomatic to assert that genealogies recorded in late manuscripts may have been manipulated for political ends or to enhance the lineage of a ruling dynasty. The centuries after Aldfrith’s reign saw the rise to power and domination of the Ulster kingship by the _Cenél nEogain_. The prestige of this branch of the Ui Neill could conceivably have been inflated by an invented marriage link to an Anglo-Saxon king. On the other hand, it could be argued that as political interaction between the Irish/Scots and the Northumbrians appears to have ceased with Aldfrith’s death, Irish genealogists working after this time would have had no reason to invent a connection between the

who was not not generally favourable to Aldfrith (Richter, _Ireland and Her Neighbours_, p. 96), referred to him as a ‘most wise king [rex sapientissimus]’ (_VW_ 44).  
202 Ireland, ‘Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish genealogies’, pp. 69-70. Dumville, ‘“Beowulf” and the Celtic world’, p. 114 n. 30; _idem_., ‘Two troublesome abbots’, pp. 151-2, is the only author I am aware of who maintains some reserve about the equation of Aldfrith with Flann Fina. The fact that Aldfrith was referred to solely by his Anglo-Saxon name in the _VC_ and the _AU_, which were begun on Iona, suggests that he was not known as Flann Fina in Dalriada.

203 As reported in Ireland, ‘Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish genealogies’, p. 68.  
two regions. Thus, Aldfrith's pedigree probably derives from a genealogical record made in the seventh or early eighth century. Though it must be allowed that even a contemporary or near contemporary record may have been invented, the information otherwise known about Aldfrith and Oswiu is consistent with what is found in the genealogy.

Oswiu grew up in Dalriada, and probably fought in their warband on mainland Ireland. There is, in addition, at least one instance of an alliance between Dalriada and the *Cenél nEogain*, recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* under the year 637, and this may be representative of other associations. Aldfrith also spent time in the 'regions/islands of the Scots', and Iona. If it is accepted that Aldfrith was the author of several works in Old Irish, it would be most likely that he had spent a considerable time studying with Irish speakers in order to become accomplished in the language. The writings of Aldhelm also attest to Aldfrith's Irish provenance. In Aldhelm's grammatical treatise *Epistola ad Acircium*, Aldfrith is referred to with the phrase: 'Acircio Aquilonaris imperii sceptra gubernanti'. Neil Wright has recently translated this as, 'the man from the north-western wind who rules the kingdom of the north-eastern', and argues that a vernacular rendering would be, 'the man from Ireland [or Dalriada], wielding the sceptre of the Northumbrian kingdom'. Wright maintains that Aldhelm was alluding to Aldfrith's Irish/Scottish education and upbringing. Further, Irish customary practice, as revealed in surviving law tracts thought to have first been written in the eighth century, dictates that the children of an Irish woman and a foreigner were to be fostered amongst the mother's kin. These children, referred to as *glasfine*, that is

---


210 *AU* s.a. 637, 'Conal Cael son of Mael Cobo of the *Cenél nEogain*, an adherent of Domnall [Brecc], was victor in the battle of *Sailtir*. This is usually taken to have occurred in Kintyre or at sea near Kintyre (Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, p. 152). This battle was said to have been fought in the same day as the battle of *Mag Rath*.


213 Wright, 'Aldhelm, Gildas and Acircius', pp. 19-24. The name *Acircius* is conventionally identified as Aldfrith, with Wright offering the more exact translation of 'man from the north-western wind', as compared with Lapidge & Herren's, *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, p. 188 n. 1, 'man from the north'.

214 As was discussed in Chapter 5, Aldhelm was familiar with Irish education (supra., p. 125).


‘grey kin’, became the responsibility of the mother’s family and may also have been entitled to the rights of their mother’s patrilineage. Oswiu would certainly have qualified as a foreigner – a *cú glas*, ‘grey dog’ – in Irish society, and if he did father Aldfrith with an Irish woman, Aldfrith would, therefore, have been raised and educated amongst the Irish. Given Oswiu’s upbringing, it is likely that he would have acceded to Irish custom in this matter. Whatever weight is placed upon the Irish genealogy, the evidence does support the conclusion that Aldfrith’s mother was Irish.

The other problem which needs to be addressed regarding Aldfrith’s Irish genealogy is a chronological one. Bede indicates that Oswiu was born c. 612. However, if Colmán Rimid died c. 604, as is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster*, then his daughter Fina must have been born by c. 605 at the latest. If this date for Colmán Rimid’s *obit* is authentic, and this is by no means certain, Fina was, therefore, at least seven to eight years older than Oswiu. This age difference does not make a liaison between Oswiu and Fina impossible, particularly when it is considered that Irish society at the time recognised a range of different sexual relationships and marriage types – including concubinage – which were not necessarily permanent. Nevertheless, the question arises as to when this relationship would have occurred.

It has already been suggested that a likely context for a relationship between Oswiu and an Irish woman would have been during his exile, which ended in 633. However, the relationship could have occurred after this. Though it is often assumed that Oswiu returned to Northumbria with his brothers after Edwin’s death, there is no direct evidence attesting to this. He gained the kingship in 642, and within the next few years married Eanflæd, a daughter of Edwin; but his exact whereabouts before this time are unknown. Thus, Oswiu may have remained in Dalriada or Ireland, or at least continued to travel there, until he became king. Aldfrith may then have been born at

---

217 Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 311–12. This would help explain Aldfrith’s place in the Irish genealogy as a son of Fina.


219 See note 46 (supra., p. 235).

220 *AU* s.a. It was stated earlier that the seventh-century *AU* entries may be antedated by up to three years, so Colmán Rimid’s death might have occurred up to c. 607. See note 34 (supra., p. 170).


222 For example, Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 143; Miller, ‘Eanfrith’s Pictish son’, p. 61; Richter, *Ireland and Her Neighbours*, p. 96.
any time up to 642, when Oswiu would have been about thirty and Fina in her late thirties. The possibility that Aldfrith was born of a concubine might allow an even later date, though this would reduce the likelihood that Fina was the mother.\textsuperscript{224} Unfortunately, there is no clear evidence as to when Aldfrith was born. He died in 705, and had fathered a son, Osred, who was born c.697.\textsuperscript{225} If Aldfrith was born in the 630s, he would have been approximately sixty years of age when Osred was born, which would have been uncommon, though not out of the question. There is some evidence that Aldhelm regarded Aldfrith to be a contemporary, referring in his \textit{Epistola ad Acircium} to ‘the era of our young manhood \[tempore pubertatis nostrae\]’.\textsuperscript{226} It is often asserted that Aldhelm was born c.640, but his year of birth is uncertain.\textsuperscript{227} In all probability, the chronological context for Oswiu’s relationship with an Irish woman and the date of Aldfrith’s birth are issues which will never be resolved. But these problems do not negate the weight of evidence which suggests that Oswiu had a relationship with an Irish woman, possibly of the \textit{Cenél nEogain}, and that Aldfrith was the result of this union. There is little reason to doubt that Aldfrith was raised and educated amongst the Irish or the Scots of Dalriada and had spent quite some time on Iona.

What is perhaps most remarkable about Aldfrith is that he became king of Northumbria at all. To all intents and purposes, Aldfrith’s career prior to 685, such as it is known, points to him being trained as a clerical scholar.\textsuperscript{228} Bede clearly states that Aldfrith was in ‘self-imposed’ exile for the purposes of study, and this is a common \textit{motif} used by Bede to describe English \textit{peregrini} in Ireland.\textsuperscript{229} In addition, it has been shown that Aldfrith was regarded as an unlooked-for successor to Ecgfrith, and indeed, if he was born in the 630s, a fifty year old heir would have been most unexpected. The fact that he became king reveals something of the prestige of his dynasty, which, apart from the

\textsuperscript{223} \textit{HE} III.15. Miller, ‘The dates of Deira’, p. 43 n.4, reckoned that Oswiu married Eanflaed between 643 and 645. We also have to allow time for his marriage to Rhiannell which was probably in the 630s (\textit{infra.}, pp. 264-5).

\textsuperscript{224} Ireland, ‘Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish genealogies’, p. 77 n. 74, raised the possibility that Fina was in fact Aldfrith’s foster-mother, which would ameliorate some of the chronological difficulties here. Kirby, \textit{Earliest English Kings}, p. 143, on the other hand, suggested that Fina may have been Colmán Rimíd’s granddaughter rather than daughter, which would also reduce some of the incompatibility in the dates. While these are interesting hypotheses, there is no way of assessing their validity.

\textsuperscript{225} \textit{HE} V.18.

\textsuperscript{226} Lapidge & Herren, \textit{Aldhelm: Prose Works}, p. 34. It is on the basis of this letter that it is often presumed that Aldfrith had studied with Aldhelm, though this can only ever be a tentative conclusion. See Richter, \textit{Ireland and Her Neighbours}, p. 97; Sharpe, \textit{Adomnín of Iona}, p. 350.

\textsuperscript{227} The date of c.640 for Aldhelm’s birth is based on a statement by William of Malmesbury in his \textit{GP} V.188 (\textit{supra.}, p. 125).

\textsuperscript{228} Richter, \textit{Ireland and Her Neighbours}, p. 96.
reign of Edwin, had ruled in Northumbria for most of the seventh century. However, the evidence presented regarding Aldfrith’s origins and upbringing militates against any conclusion that he was in exile for political reasons or as a result of the displeasure of his brother Ecgfrith. There is no evidence that Ecgfrith regarded Aldfrith as a threat or, as William of Malmesbury stated, that Aldfrith went into exile because he was passed over in the succession after Oswiu’s death in 670. In this regard, there is unlikely to be much validity in Hermann Moisl’s argument that the raid sponsored by Ecgfrith on the Irish mainland in 684 was a ‘pre-emptive strike’ against the Ui Neill for harbouring Aldfrith. It is more likely that Ecgfrith was either concerned about securing his western seaboard or acting out of the same expansionist pretensions that saw him at war in Pictland or even seeking to extend the reach of Roman episcopal control. Hence, there is no clear indication of the role of the Ui Neill or the Scots of Dalriada in Aldfrith’s assumption of the Northumbrian kingship, though it can be argued that they would have been supportive.

It might also be presumed that Aldfrith maintained friendly relations with the Irish and the Dalriadan Scots once he became king. He would certainly have been more Irish/Gaelic than Northumbrian in his identity and in his language, and thus more comfortable within an Irish cultural milieu. It is interesting that Bede makes no comment regarding Aldfrith’s style of Christianity; if the new king had been educated on Iona, he would probably have followed the Columban Easter observance, which was not changed until 716. Whether Aldfrith adopted Roman practice when he became king is not known, but it does seem likely. There is evidence that Adomnán, abbot of

---

230 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 144.
231 GR 52.1. See also Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 350.
234 Moisl, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish’, pp. 120-24, also posited a Picto-Scottish alliance at Dunnichen in 685 in order to remove Ecgfrith and reinstate Aldfrith. However, as was discussed earlier, it is most likely that Ecgfrith was drawn into Pictland by a desire to suppress the growing power of Bridei son of Bile (supra., pp. 210-11).
235 HE V.22, V.24. Richter, Ireland and Her Neighbours, pp. 96-7, comments on how ‘tight-lipped’ Bede remained regarding Aldfrith, particularly given his reputation for scholarship. Richter puts this down to Bede’s disapproval of Aldfrith’s Ionan education. See also Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 48, about Aldfrith’s Easter observance.
Iona 679-704, visited Aldfrith at least twice after he gained the kingship in 685. In his *Life of Columba*, Adomnán says, 'I visited my friend King Aldfrith ... my first visit after Ecgrfrith’s battle [i.e. Dunnichen in 685] ... my second two years later'. The fact that he called Aldfrith a friend (*amicus*) reinforces Aldfrith’s previous acquaintance with the abbot of Iona and demonstrates that, at least early in his reign, Aldfrith remained in contact with his former colleagues. Adomnán does not reveal the purpose of either visit. Bede, who talks of one of Adomnán’s sojourns, suggests that he was on a fact-finding mission from his ‘nation’ regarding canonical practice and the Easter question, and that during his stay he attended the monastery of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow. The *Annals of Ulster* provide a more secular motivation, at least for one of the visits: that Adomnán came to secure the release of sixty Irish hostages, who were probably taken in the raid on Brega in 684. Adomnán, therefore, appears to have acted in a diplomatic fashion, and the release of the hostages reveals something of Aldfrith’s new style of rulership and his willingness to treat with his Gaelic neighbours. After Aldfrith’s death, there is no certain evidence of political contact between Northumbria and Dalriada, although it might be allowed that King Ceolwulf (729-737) was known in Dalriada.

Oswiu’s relationship with an Irish woman and Aldfrith’s Irish upbringing and education are, therefore, well-supported by the available evidence. What also needs to be considered alongside this evidence is the possibility that Oswiu may, in addition to his Irish paramour and his Anglo-Saxon wife, have had a British wife. This prospect is principally based on a statement to be found in the *Historia Brittonum*, namely, that ‘Oswiu had two wives, one of whom was called Rhianmellt, daughter of Royth, son of Rhun, and the other was called Eanfeld [i.e. Eanfeld], daughter of Edwin, son of Ælle’.

---

236 *VC* II.46.
237 As Adomnán was a member of the Northern Úi Néill through *Cenél Conaill* branch, he may also have been related to Aldfrith, albeit distantly. See Picard, *Bede, Adomnán and the writing of history*, p. 61. Note also the Fragmentary *Annals of Ireland* referred to earlier (*supra.*, p. 257), which have Aldfrith as Adomnán’s pupil, ‘*dalta Ad[a]jmnaín*’.
238 *HE* V.15, V.21. As this was Bede’s monastery, he may even have met Adomnán.
240 Warfare did occur between the Northumbrians and the Picts during Aldfrith’s reign, but there is no evidence of enmity between the Northumbrians and the Dalriadans.
241 *Supra.*, pp. 242-3.
242 *HB* 57, ‘Osquid autem habuit duas uxores, quarum una vacabutur Rieinmelth, filia Royth, filii Rum, et altera vocabatur Eanfeld, filia Eadgiun, filii Alli’.
it is generally argued that Rhianmellt belonged to the line of Rheged and that this record attests to a marriage alliance between the kingdoms.\textsuperscript{244} There is no explicit verification of a marriage between Oswiu and Rhianmellt in any other source; however, some measure of corroboration can be found in the Durham Liber Vitae.\textsuperscript{245} In this document, a lady called ‘Raegnmaeld’ is listed, next to Oswiu’s Anglo-Saxon wife Eanflæd, with other ‘queens and abbesses’ of Northumbria. It seems likely that this name is meant to be an Anglo-Saxon rendering of Rhianmellt, and if so it constitutes an independent record of an association between Rhianmellt and Northumbria that supports what is found in the Historia Brittonum. Assuming that Rhianmellt’s lineage is correctly stated, it appears that Oswiu did indeed marry into the dynasty later associated with Rheged.\textsuperscript{246}

Oswiu’s marriage to Rhianmellt must have taken place before his marriage to the Anglo-Saxon Eanflæd, c.642-5; Eanflæd was alive long after Oswiu’s death in 670, so he could not have been widowed.\textsuperscript{247} The implication is, therefore, that he married before he became king. In addition, Oswiu’s exile lasted until at least 633, and while it is possible that the marriage was brokered directly from Dalriada or Ireland, it is more likely that it occurred after his brother Oswald became king in 634.\textsuperscript{248} The chronological context for the marriage, therefore, appears to be c.634-42/5, and the fact that he subsequently married Eanflæd suggests that Rhianmellt had died by that time.

\textsuperscript{243} HB Preface, 63.

\textsuperscript{245} Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis: Rhianmellt (Raegnmaeld), p. 3, fol. 13. Hers is the first name in the ‘nomina reginarum et abbatissarum’. The original part of the Liber Vitae was written at Lindisfarne in the ninth century, and was continued into the twelfth century and beyond at Durham. See also Jackson, ‘On the Northern British section in Nennius’, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{246} Dumville, ‘The origins of Northumbria’, p. 220, recommends this caveat as to Rhianmellt’s lineage. If she was the great granddaughter of Urien, who probably died c.570-90 (supra., p. 190), then her age would not be incompatible with Oswiu’s (Jackson, ‘On the Northern British section in Nennius’, p. 42).

\textsuperscript{247} HE III.15, IV.26.

Time must also be allowed for Oswiu's liaison with Fina,\footnote{Assuming that this is the correct identification of Aldfrith's mother.} which is also usually placed in the 630s, though again the possibility that she was a concubine means that these relationships could have overlapped. It is now commonly suggested that at least two of Oswiu's children were the result of his marriage with Rhianmellt.\footnote{For example, R. Abels, 'The Council of Whitby: a study in early Anglo-Saxon politics', \textit{The Journal of British Studies} 23, no. 1 (1983), p. 7 n. 32; Corning, 'The baptism of Edwin, king of Northumbria', p. 13; M. Faull, 'British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', in L. Laing (ed.), \textit{Studies in Celtic Survival} (Oxford, 1977), p. 22; Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 18; Kirby, \textit{Earliest English Kings}, p. 90; Phythian-Adams, \textit{Land of the Cumbrians}, p. 60.} According to Bede, both his son Alhfrith and his daughter Alhflaed were old enough to be married in the early 650s, which renders it improbable that their mother was Eanflæd.\footnote{\textit{HE} III.21. Alhfrith married Peada, son of Penda and king of the Middle Angles in 653, and Alhfrith married Cyneburh, daughter of Penda of Mercia, at some point before this. See also \textit{ASC} MS. A 653, MS E. 652, which records the conversion of Peada, which was a condition of his marriage to Alhflæd.} There is no evidence that either of these offspring were illegitimate, as there is for Aldfrith, nor anything which associates them with Ireland or Dalriada; so they are not likely to have been born of an Irish mother. It is interesting, in this regard, that the Bewcastle Cross in Cumbria has been associated with Alhfrith.\footnote{Corning, 'The baptism of Edwin, king of Northumbria', p. 12. J. Rowland, \textit{Early Welsh Saga Poetry: A Study and Edition of the Englynion} (Cambridge, 1990), p. 131 n. 56, made a similar suggestion regarding the importance of Rhegedian neutrality in the face of the Welsh alliances of Penda.} If it does indeed bear his name, perhaps this represents some recognition of his Cumbrian or Rhegedian maternal lineage.

If it is accepted that Oswiu did marry Rhianmellt of Rheged, then the political implications of such a relationship should be considered. Caitlin Corning has recently suggested that a marriage alliance between Rheged and Northumbria would have been beneficial in the 630s; that it was an unsettled time during which the assistance or at least neutrality of Rheged would have been welcome.\footnote{Ziegler, 'Oswald and the Irish', p. 6.} It has also been argued that the marriage may have been arranged by Oswald to secure his initially vulnerable rulership in Northumbria.\footnote{Chadwick, 'The conversion of Northumbria', p. 158; Jackson, 'On the Northern British section in Nennius', p. 42.} If this is the case, then it is the only known instance of such a strategy being used with a British Celtic neighbour in pre-Viking Britain. In addition, if this motivation for the marriage has any validity, it must be concluded that Rheged was not a spent force at the time, that it was an important kingdom as yet unconquered.\footnote{Chadwick, 'The conversion of Northumbria', p. 158; Jackson, 'On the Northern British section in Nennius', p. 42.} Indeed, it does not follow that the marriage reveals Rheged as a broken kingdom, as is
often assumed. As David Dumville cautions, it is a very great leap to assume that the marriage between Oswiu and Rhianmellt allowed Northumbria to ‘absorb’ Rheged. All that the evidence of this marriage indicates is some form of alliance between the kingdoms. Alfred Smyth goes as far as to argue that the marriage may not even represent friendship; he states that in Ireland, intermarriage could occur between traditional enemies as a matter of kingly protocol. While Smyth’s parallel might not strictly be authoritative, it is worth remembering that Alhfrith fought against Penda, alongside his father Oswiu, at the battle of Winwaed in 655, even though he had married Penda’s daughter Cyneburh. Clearly, dynastic intermarriage did not preclude fighting one another. Therefore, the probability of a marriage between Oswiu and Rhianmellt of Rheged does not conflict with the earlier conclusion that the conquest of Rheged did not occur until the final third of the seventh century.

**Intermarriage amongst the Lower Classes**

Looking beyond the sons of Æthelfrith, there is no other clear documentary evidence for exogamous marriage between Northumbrians and Northern Celts in pre-Viking Britain. There are not even any names in the lists of Northumbrian kings which can be interpreted as having a Celtic derivation, as there was for the West Saxon dynasty. This is a particularly noteworthy gap in the evidence, given the frequency with which it is stated that Anglo-Saxon Northumbria was founded over a more numerous pre-existing British population. The nearest possibility is in the pedigree of the kingdom of Lindsey, contained in the ‘Anglian Collection’ of royal genealogies, which lists the

---

258 Dumville, ‘The origins of Northumbria’, p. 220. It is also a leap to suggest, as does Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 18, that Oswiu was attempting to create a regional fiefdom for himself by marrying into a once-princely, still-wealthy family.
260 *HE* III.24.
261 Supra., p. 186.
Brittonic Celtic name Caedbaed. That said, given that there does exist evidence for intermarriage between the Northumbrian and Celtic aristocracies of the north, it can be reasonably speculated that some amongst the lower classes would have followed their example. Evidence of intermarriage at lower levels of the social hierarchy, however, can only be dimly reflected in archaeology and onomastics.

It is difficult to find unequivocal archaeological evidence for intermarriage between Northumbrians and Celts. The discovery of Anglo-Saxon goods in British settings, and vice versa, need not reflect intermarriage; such artefacts may occur as a result of trade, war-booty or even slave-taking. If such goods are the result of trade, this is of itself interesting in regard to implications for regional commerce, irrespective of the repercussions regarding intermarriage. Evidence of Germanic buildings in an otherwise British context is only a little more promising. In this regard, the discovery of a Grubenhaus, a Germanic sunken structure, at Dunbar (East Lothian) which is dated to the late sixth century may suggest the presence of a Northumbrian in Gododdin. The interpretation of this find, however, is by no means certain and there is nothing in the excavation which demonstrates that a female was even present.

The evidence from burials may be more revealing, as it is often possible to ascertain gender, and finds of graves identifying a certain ethnicity in an otherwise incompatible context may represent intermarriage. British burials from this period are not easily identified; after access to Roman industrial products ceased, the British did not then

264 Cessford, 'Exogamous marriages between Anglo-Saxons and Britons', p. 49; Faull, 'British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', p. 22.
265 Cessford, 'Exogamous marriages between Anglo-Saxons and Britons', p. 49; *idem.*, 'Relations between the Britons of southern Scotland and Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', pp. 156-9, for a list of relevant sites. Germanic glass is a common item found in British contexts, and this was most likely the result of long-distance trade that did not involve Northumbria.
266 Cessford, 'Relations between the Britons of southern Scotland and Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', p. 156, states that the northern Britons seem to have been interested only in a limited range of Germanic items, notably glass vessels, which arrived as a result of long-distance trade that did not involve Northumbria. These items were probably obtained in connection with imported wine and arrived via Irish Sea trade routes. See also E. Campbell & A. Lane, 'Celtic and Germanic interaction in Dalriada: the seventh-century metalworking site at Dunadd', in R.M. Spearman & J. Higgitt (eds.), *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 52-63, and R. White's survey, *Roman and Celtic Objects from Anglo-Saxon Graves: A Catalogue and an Interpretation of their Use* (Oxford, 1988), of Celtic objects found in Anglo-Saxon graves.
take up large-scale use of any other culturally-diagnostic artefacts. Pagan Anglo-Saxon graves are, however, more distinguishable. Elizabeth O'Brien's examination of intrusive Anglo-Saxon graves from sixth- and seventh-century Ireland revealed that those buried might have been 'retainers' who accompanied Anglo-Saxon aethelings and clerics; it might be expected that they married into the native Irish population and eventually assimilated. Cessford has similarly considered the evidence of several intrusive pagan Anglo-Saxon burials found in the region of Gododdin, specifically in the Lothians and the northern part of the Scottish Borders. He particularly highlights two burials — at Blackness and at Hound Point, Dalmeny (City of Edinburgh) — which contain features inconsistent with others from the region, for instance, occurring in isolation in commanding natural locations rather than in cemeteries, and with grave goods such as jewellery. Both burials were female, with the grave-goods indicating a sixth- or seventh-century date. In addition, both women were buried in the more usual stone-lined cists, from which Cessford deduces they were Anglo-Saxon, probably Northumbrian, women who married and were buried by Britons from Gododdin. If so, this would reveal a more complex picture of relations between Gododdin and Northumbria than the resolute antagonism of the textual sources. Needless to say, such archaeological evidence for intermarriage is not abundant.

(supra., pp. 194-6), the Northumbrian conquest of the Lothians probably occurred, at the earliest, during the reign of Oswald (634-642), if not that of his successor Oswiu (642-670).


269 Supra., pp. 238-9. O'Brien, 'Contacts between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century', p. 100, argued that the fact that these burials occur only for a short chronological period suggests that they were of a 'first generation' of newcomers who quickly assimilated. However, the change in burial style that came with Christianity may also have had an influence on the archaeological record.

270 Cessford, 'Exogamous marriages between Anglo-Saxons and Britons', pp. 49-52.

271 According to Cessford, 'Exogamous marriages between Anglo-Saxons and Britons', p. 50, the majority of burials in the region of Gododdin were east-west inhumations in stone-lined cists in large cemeteries without grave-goods. He notes several other anomalous burials occurring within cemeteries, at Lasswade (Midlothian) and Hallowhill (Fife), but regards this evidence to be not as compelling. A burial at Castle Hill, Dalry (North Ayrs.) might also be of an Anglo-Saxon man, possibly part of a cohort of late sixth- or seventh-century mercenaries. See also C. Cessford, 'A possible Anglo-Saxon burial at Castle Hill, Ayrshire', *ASSAH* 11 (2000), pp. 187-9.

272 Cessford, 'Exogamous marriages between Anglo-Saxons and Britons', p. 51, indicates a seventh-century date for the grave-goods of the Blackness woman, whereas E. Proudfoot & C. Aliaga-Kelly, 'Towards an interpretation of anomalous finds and place-names of Anglo-Saxon origin in Scotland', *ASSAH* 9 (1996), pp. 3-4, suggest a sixth-century date. The grave-goods of the Hound Point woman are not distinctive enough for precise dating, but seem to have also been deposited in the sixth or seventh centuries.
Similarly, onomastic evidence for intermarriage between Northumbrians and Northern Celts is not abundant, consisting principally of a few Anglo-Saxon place-names which contain the element ‘wealh/walh’ as a personal name. Margaret Faull has argued that the use of wealth in these place-names represents people who were born of mixed parentage, but does not explain why the people named could not have been ‘full-blooded’ Britons. Some British Celtic association might be supposed for the Whitby monk-poet bearing the Celtic name Caedmon, referred to in the Historia ecclesiastica. The same might be said for the Lindisfarne monk Wealhstod, usually translated as ‘interpreter’, mentioned in Bede’s Life of St Cuthbert. Faull suggests that Wealhstod would have been a most appropriate name for the child of a mixed marriage, though this is purely conjectural, and she does caution that personal names could have been a matter of fashion and that many were eventually used without consideration for their meaning. In any event, it does not necessarily follow that Caedmon was a child of mixed parentage; he may have been purely British, which of itself is interesting for what this might say regarding Britons in an Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical context, but not as evidence for intermarriage. Therefore, while exogamous marriage at lower levels of the social hierarchy probably did occur, onomastic and archaeological support is limited.

***

The evidence discussed in this section reveals that exogamous marriage did occur between Northumbrians and Celts in the north, specifically in the first half of the seventh century. One of the conclusions which can be made regarding dynastic intermarriage is that it only seems to have happened amongst the family of Æthelfrith

---


275 HE IV.24. Caedmon was alive c.680. See also R. Coates, ‘On some controversy surrounding Gewissa/Gewisseti, Cerdic and Ceawlin’, Nomina 13 (1989-90), p. 4, for other variations of this name.


277 Bede, VCuth 38. Wealhstod was alive c.685. See also W.G. Searle, Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum (Cambridge, 1897), p. 481.

and was a direct result of their long exile and eventual return to Northumbria. It would be tempting to see the web of alliances created – between Northumbria and the Picts, the Scots of Dalriada, and the Britons of Rheged – as part of a deliberate strategy on the part of the exiles to consolidate their position in the north, both before and after their return. However, it must also be allowed that the marriages of the exiles to Pictish and Irish noblewomen may have been more a matter of their making the most of a poor situation. There was no guarantee that the sons of Æthelfrith would have been able to return to Northumbria; the successful assault of Cadwallon and Penda in 633 could not have been predicted. These marriages, therefore, may have been a necessary part of exile arrangements made with the host kings in order to absorb the refugees more fully into the political and cultural life of their new homes. The marriage between Oswiu and Rhianmellt, therefore, is the only one which is likely to have been truly strategic in the sense that it occurred between dynasties which were currently ruling their respective kingdoms. Thus, while the notion that strategic intermarriage may have been used as an alternative to military conquest is attractive, the marriage of Oswiu to Rhianmellt is the only known case where this may have occurred, and even then it should not be assumed that the marriage allowed the absorption of Rheged into Northumbria. That said, intermarriage at lower levels of the social hierarchy would not have been as influenced by dynastic intrigue, and it should be allowed that such marriages may have occurred, particularly during the early stages of Northumbrian territorial expansion.

**Other Instances of Social Exchange between Northumbrians and Northern Celts**

Having discussed the issues of exile and intermarriage, there remains evidence still to be examined concerning possible alliances and social exchange in the north. In the first instance this concerns Edwin and his association with the Britons of Rheged. In the second, there exists a small number of references to Britons living within Northumbrian territory, or at least territory newly-conquered by the Northumbrians. In this regard, the question of the survival of British identity in Northumbria will also be considered.

---

279 As is suggested by Cessford, 'Exogamous marriages between Anglo-Saxons and Britons', p. 23.
283 There are several instances of affiliation centring on the Picts that have already been discussed – such as the *foedus pacis* between the Northumbrians and Picts of c.730, and the alliance between Eadberht and Oengus of the Picts of 756. These will not be presented again.
Edwin and Rheged

Edwin's putative association with Rheged is based on a passage in the Historia Brittonum concerning his and his daughter Eanflæd's baptism. In the earliest recension of the text, the c.1100 Harleian collection, it is recorded that:

[Edwin's] daughter, Eanfeld, received baptism [baptismum accepit] on the twelfth day after Whitsun [Pentecost], and all his people, men and women, with her [de viris et mulieribus, cum eo]. Edwin received baptism [baptismum suscepit] at the Easter following, and twelve thousand men were baptised with him [duodecim milia hominum baptizati sunt cum eo]. If anyone wants to know who baptised them, Rhun son of Urien baptised them [Rum map Urbgen baptizavit eos], and for forty days on end he went on baptising the whole nation of the Thugs [baptizare omne gentis ambronum], and through his teaching many of them believed in Christ.

The Annales Cambriae, which appears to have been independently sourced from the same material, similarly records under the year 626 that, 'Edwin is baptised, and Rhun son of Urien baptised him'. As Rhun is identified as a son of Urien, it is typically argued that this account points to a British tradition that Edwin and Eanflæd were baptised by a member of the royal dynasty of Rheged. If so, this has significant implications for Edwin's relationship with this British kingdom and adds another level of complexity to the picture of Anglo-British relations at the time.

Anglo-Saxon sources, however, present a different version of the baptism, namely, that Edwin and Eanflæd were baptised by the Roman bishop Paulinus, who came to Northumbria in 625 with Edwin's new queen, Æthelburh of Kent. According to Bede:

[In 626, Edwin] gave his infant daughter [Eanflæd] to Bishop Paulinus to be consecrated to Christ. She was baptised on the holy day of Pentecost, the first of the Northumbrians to receive baptism, together with eleven others of his household.

---

284 The issue of Edwin's baptism is being considered here as it has particular significance regarding secular 'foreign relations'.
285 See note 55; supra., pp 149-50.
286 HB 63.
287 AC 626, 'Etguin baptisavit est, et Rum filius Urbgen baptisavit eum'.
288 For example, J.T. Koch, 'When was Welsh literature first written down?', SC 20-21 (1985-6), p. 64; Jackson, 'On the Northern British section in Nennius', pp. 32-3; Phythian-Adams, Land of the Cumbrians, pp. 56-7; M. Richter, 'Practical aspects of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', in Ni Chatháin & Richter, Irländ und die Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission, pp. 365-6; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 22.
289 HE 11.9.
So King Edwin, with all the nobles of his race and a vast number of the common people, received the faith ... [in] the year of our Lord 627 ... He was baptised at York on Easter day, 12 April ... So great is said to have been the fervour of the faith of the Northumbrians and their longing for the washing of salvation, that once when Paulinus came to the king and queen in their royal vill at Ad-Gefrin [Yeavering], he spent thirty-six days there occupied in the task of catechising and baptising ... in the River Glen.  

On the one hand, it can be argued that as Bede’s account is earlier than that of the Historia Brittonum, in its surviving form, it probably has a greater claim to authenticity. And one can certainly see echoes of Bede in the later account that suggests extrapolation from the Historia ecclesiastica. The ‘Nennian’ recension of the Historia Brittonum of c.1164 even reveals what Kenneth Jackson calls a ‘clumsy attempt’ at reconciling the two accounts by adding, after the mention of Rhun, a gloss which states, ‘that is Paulinus, archbishop of York’, baptised them. On the other hand, it can also be argued that Bede would have deliberately omitted any information regarding British involvement in the baptism of this first Christian king of Northumbria, concerned as he was with promoting the primacy of the Augustinian mission. Is there any validity to the British tradition of Rhun’s involvement in these baptisms of Eanflæd and Edwin?

This question has been addressed recently by Caitlin Corning. Coming first considered whether it might at least have been logically possible for Rhun to have participated in the baptisms. She identified two theories that have been put forward to explain how two potentially authentic yet disparate traditions might have evolved. The first proposes that there were two separate baptism ceremonies, first by Rhun when Edwin was in exile, and second by Paulinus after Edwin became king, the latter for the

---

290 HE II.14. See also the ASC s.a. 627.
291 For example, the timing of the baptisms is identical; Rhun’s baptism of twelve thousand men and his forty-day mission in the ‘nation of the thugs’, mirrors Paulinus’s mass-baptisms at the River Glen, and the apparent fervour for baptism in Northumbria. See also Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 18; Kirby, Earliest English Kings, pp. 78-9.
293 HB 63, ‘id est Paulinus Eboracensis archiepiscopus’. This recension also contains a passage explaining where the information regarding Rhun’s involvement came from, namely, ‘bishop Renchidus and Elvodug, the holiest of bishops, told me [Renchidus episcopus et Elbobdus episcoporum sanctissimus tradiderunt]’. Elvodug/Elfoddw is associated with the adoption of the Roman Easter in Wales in 768 (AC s.a.); his death is recorded in 809 (AC s.a.). For the date of the ‘Nennian’ recension of the Historia Brittonum, see D.N. Dumville, ‘Nennius and the Historia Brittonum’, SC 10-11 (1975-6), pp. 78-9.
294 Jackson, ‘On the Northern British section in Nennius’, p. 33.
sake of correctness according to the Roman tradition. The second theory proposes that Edwin was only baptised once, but that both Rhun and Paulinus officiated, and that the separate Anglo-Saxon and British traditions came about due to their respective focuses. Both theories, however, have their problems.

The theory that Edwin was baptised by Rhun while in exile founders on a number of counts. The most serious is that if it is accepted that he was baptised after Eanfled, which is stated in both versions, then his baptism during exile becomes chronologically impossible. Further, Corning draws attention to letters from Pope Boniface to Edwin and his queen Æthelburh, written after his assumption of power, indicating that he was not Christian at the time. The letters make no mention of non-orthodox practice or of apostasy and the resultant need to return to the faith. There also exists some question as to the orthodoxy of re-baptism. Various synodical decrees and papal letters throughout the early medieval period declared such a practice heretical, even if an original ceremony had been botched, though the fact that the issue was regularly commented upon shows that the re-baptism was occurring. In any event, there appears little to support the theory that Edwin was baptised by Rhun while in exile.

The second theory, that Rhun and Paulinus both officiated at the baptisms, also has its difficulties, the most serious being whether they would have agreed to be co-baptisers. There were likely to have been differences between the British and Roman baptism ceremonies, which does not rule out cooperation but does militate against it. According to Bede, bishop Wine of Wessex was assisted by two British bishops in c.665 in the consecration of Chad; so cooperation certainly does seem to have occurred between Roman and British clerics. Yet it is equally significant that Bede included the information about British help in Chad’s consecration but failed to allude to Rhun’s

297 Jackson, ‘On the Northern British section in Nennius’, pp. 32-3, was the main proponent of this theory.
298 Eanfleed was born c.626, and Edwin’s exile ended when he became king c.616.
300 HE II.10, II.11. Bede also indicates that the British rite of baptism was deviant from the Roman (HE II.2).
302 See Corning, ‘The baptism of Edwin, king of Northumbria’, p. 8 n. 17, for references regarding baptismal liturgies and baptism.
303 HE III.28 (supra., pp. 132-3).
involvement in Edwin’s. One might, in addition, wonder why two clerics, one British and one Roman, would even have been present at the baptism. Why would such a circumstance have occurred? To accept either theory, it also has to be accepted that Rhun was a cleric.\textsuperscript{304} And he probably would not have once been king of Rheged; kings usually retired to monasteries or went on pilgrimage, rather than engaging in active pastoral and evangelical work.\textsuperscript{305}

Due to dissatisfaction with both of these theories, Corning has offered the third possibility that Rhun was not Edwin’s baptiser but rather his godfather or sponsor.\textsuperscript{306} Certainly, sponsorship was quite usual in the seventh century, and Bede notes several instances where one Anglo-Saxon king acted as godfather to another.\textsuperscript{307} If Rhun was a sponsor rather than baptiser, this would circumvent the problem posed by two clerics of differing traditions officiating at the same ceremony and provide a more satisfactory explanation for Rhun’s involvement. The silence of the Anglo-Saxon sources regarding Rhun’s involvement could be explained by their interest in the success of the Roman church in Anglo-Saxon England. Corning argues that the reason for the British tradition of Rhun baptising rather than sponsoring Edwin lies in the ambiguous terminology used before the eighth century for spiritual kinship.\textsuperscript{308} She suggests, amongst other things, that the author of the \textit{Historia Brittonum} may have misunderstood the meaning implied in material he was working from and misinterpreted ‘godfather’ as ‘baptiser’.

Rhun’s sponsorship of Edwin would imply that a form of kinship was created between the ruling dynasties of the two kingdoms.\textsuperscript{309} Further, it would even suggest that Edwin

\textsuperscript{304} This possibility is certainly not precluded by the eventuality that he had children. In \textit{HB 57}, Rhun is credited as the father of Royth and the grandfather of Rhianmellt.

\textsuperscript{306} Corning, ‘The baptism of Edwin, king of Northumbria’, p. 8; C. Stancilffe, ‘Kings who opted out’, in P. Wormald, D. Bullough & R. Collins (eds.), \textit{Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society} (Oxford, 1983), pp. 154-76. Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 19, has recently raised the possibility that Rhun was a British leader who was at the same time a priest; British landowners as priests are attested, for example, in Patrick’s \textit{Confessio} (e.g. \textit{Confessio} 1).

\textsuperscript{307} For instance, Oswald for Cynegils of Wessex (\textit{HE} 111.7), and Æthelwald of East Anglia for Swithhelm of Essex (\textit{HE} III.22).

\textsuperscript{308} For example, the term ‘\textit{pater spiritualis}’ could identify either a godfather or a baptiser, and interpretation depended on the context. Corning, ‘The baptism of Edwin, king of Northumbria’, p. 13, also notes that the anonymous \textit{Life of Pope Gregory} is ambiguous on this matter. It states that ‘\textit{Eduin paten in baptismo venerandus fuit Paulinus antistes}’. B. Colgrave (ed.), \textit{The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby} (Lawrence, 1968), p. 96, translates this passage as ‘Edwin’s godfather at his baptism was the revered bishop Paulinus’. However, there is nothing in the phrase ‘\textit{pater in baptismo}’ which demands that Paulinus was godfather rather than just baptiser, and certainly Bede makes no such statement (\textit{HE} II.14).

was in some manner subservient to Rhun, a matter that Corning dismisses rather too summarily. Sponsorship at baptism was often a way of demonstrating overlordship in Anglo-Saxon England, and at the least suggested that the godparent had an authoritative role in the relationship. If Rhun was godparent, Edwin must have been willing to accept such a relationship with a British king, and this is the main drawback to Corning's argument. Edwin is remembered by Bede as a conqueror of Britons. In addition, it does not appear that sponsorship was even necessary in the baptismal rite, and Corning herself notes that sponsors are not often mentioned in the sources. There is no compulsion to accept that Edwin would have needed sponsorship. If the hypothesis is valid, it would also have to be accepted that Rheged formed one alliance with Edwin in the mid-620s, and then another with Edwin's rivals and successors in the early 630s as evidenced by the marriage of Oswiu and Rhianmellt.

In the end, the supposed involvement of Rhun in the baptism of Edwin can never be authenticated. As far as the sources can reveal, it appears unlikely that Rhun could have performed the baptism himself when Edwin was in exile; if nothing else, the timing of Edwin's baptism after Eanflæd's precludes this eventuality. The joint officiation at the baptism by two clerics from differing traditions is similarly unlikely, though not impossible. It is remotely possible that Edwin and Eanflæd were baptised by Rhun in 626, as suggested by the Annales Cambriae, and then re-baptised soon after by Paulinus, but again, the unacceptability of re-baptism must be considered. The hypothesis of Rhun as sponsor or godfather rather than baptiser certainly has its attractions, and it does resolve some of the problems with the previous proposals. A treaty of sorts with Northumbria would certainly have had advantages for the Britons of Rheged, who would have recently witnessed the demise of independent Elmet. But, there is no clear reason as to why Edwin himself would have decided to enter into such an arrangement. The requirement for a baptismal sponsor is plausible, but it is not certain that he would have needed one. Thus, it remains questionable what weight can be placed on the British tradition of Rhun's involvement in the baptism of Edwin.

311 HE II.5, II.9.
312 See HE II.3, II.15, III. 21, III.22, for instances of royal conversion in which the influence of another king is recorded, yet sponsorship is not mentioned.
313 Higham, Convert Kings, p. 149; Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 79. Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 18, also postulates that the story of Rhun's baptism of Edwin might represent 'a later Welsh vision of British involvement ... which sought to postulate a Welsh “takeover” of the traditionally “Roman” Edwin'.
The Survival of British Identity

The second issue to be discussed concerns the survival of British identity within territory under Northumbrian control. It is generally held in the secondary literature that, as Northumbria expanded, the proportion of British to Anglo-Saxon inhabitants must have increased; and northern and western Northumbria are routinely seen as areas where there was a high rate of ethnic British survival. It has been suggested that Northumbrian expansion northwards in the late sixth and seventh centuries resulted in the emergence of an ‘Anglo-British’ society which represented a hybrid of the two cultures. A similar phenomenon has been supposed for westward expansion into Cumbria, and into the Peak District. Indeed, the very names of the two Northumbrian kingdoms – Bernicia and Deira – have been taken to imply a British origin. However, the extent to which it might be said that those Britons who remained within lands subsumed by Northumbria retained their identity, and for how long, is a matter which is ever difficult to establish, largely due to the fragmentary nature of the evidence, as well as its Anglocentric bias.

At the most basic level, the question of the survival of British identity and culture has been addressed by the examination of so-called ‘transition sites’: sites where incoming

---


Anglo-Saxons may have taken over existing British settlements. Much of the evidence relies upon place-names containing Celtic elements in the contemporary accounts of authors Bede and Stephen of Ripon, or by later Celtic sources such as the *Historia Brittonum*. It is argued that such sites must have been previously occupied by Britons who passed on the names to the Anglo-Saxons. Leslie Alcock has considered a number of such locations, several of which have already been mentioned. Yeavering, for instance, was named by Bede *Ad-Gefrin*, which appears to be from the British *gevr-vrinn* 'hill of the goats'. Bede’s name for Milfield – *Maelmin* – may also have a British origin in the prefix *mailo*, descriptive of a bare-topped hill. Similarly, Bede’s *urbs Giudi* appears to describe a fort or settlement of British origin, though not necessarily one used by the Northumbrians if it is to be identified with Castle Hill, Stirling. Bede also records a Romano-British name for Carlisle, *Lugubalia*, with variants such as *Luel* recorded elsewhere, as well as a British name for Abercorn, *Aebbercurnig*, which translates as ‘(place at the) horned confluence’. Stephen of Ripon refers to the royal *urbs* of *Dynbaer* (Dunbar), which comes from the British *din-barr* meaning ‘summit- or crest-fort’, and also mentions the royal *urbs Broninis*, possibly British for ‘the breast of the island’, a site which is less certainly identified as Lindisfarne. Bamburgh is also given a British name in the *Historia Brittonum*, *Dinguoaroy*, and a story is told of how it was renamed *Bebbanburh* after Bebba, a purported wife of Æthelfrith.

The survival of British names for these sites is, however, not so easy to interpret. The survival of a British name does not mean that a site was recently occupied, rather than a prehistoric or Roman settlement which simply had remained a distinctive feature of the

321 Cessford, ‘Relations between the Britons of southern Scotland and Anglo-Saxon Northumbria’, p. 159.
324 *HE* IV.29; *Bede. VCuth* 27; *Anon. VCuth* IV.8. The Roman name for Carlisle was *Luguvalium*.
326 *VW* 38.
327 *VW* 36. In the *HB*, Lindisfarne is identified as *Metcaud* (*HB* 63) or *Medcaut* (*HB* 65), and in *AU* s.a. 632 as *Med Goet*, which possibly attested to a British transmission of the name.
328 *HB* 61, 63. Bede records a similar story, but does not provide the British name or identify Bebba’s husband (*HE* III.6, III.16).
landscape.\textsuperscript{330} Though the transmission of a British name implies that there must have been some British-speakers in the vicinity to pass it on,\textsuperscript{331} it does not mean that the Anglo-Saxons were continuing a post-Roman British centre or a tradition of occupation. It is often overlooked that Bede recorded the British name *Alcluith* for Dumbarton, for which there is no suggestion of Anglo-Saxon occupation, thus demonstrating that he had access to some level of information about Celtic Britain independent of Anglo-Saxon settlement.\textsuperscript{332}

Archaeological investigation has also been brought to bear on the identification of so-called ‘transition sites’. As well as being used to support arguments for the sub-Roman British occupation of some sites already mentioned such as Yeavering, Milfield and Bamburgh, archaeological work has added further possible ‘transition sites’ such as the Mote of Mark, Sprouston (Scottish Borders), and Doon Hill and Dunbar (East Lothian). These sites show evidence of Anglo-Saxon material culture and building — such as *Grubenhäuser* — in otherwise British contexts. Archaeology is, however, also prone to multiple interpretations and to reinterpretation, and so its use in the identification of ‘transition sites’ by no means resolves the uncertainty of some of the onomastic evidence. Indeed, the theory that the supposed British precursor to Bernicia passed seamlessly into the hands of a small English group who occupied significant places in the landscape rests on the theory that the British elites had themselves used such places, which is not always substantiated.\textsuperscript{333}

A good example of the fluidity of archaeological interpretation in this arena is the recent reassessment of the Yeavering site. As a result of his excavations, Brian Hope-Taylor concluded that Yeavering represented a post-Roman British fortress that had been taken over by the Northumbrian Angles and was thus a ‘meeting point’ for the two cultural groups.\textsuperscript{334} His conclusions have been taken to suggest that Northumbria, and especially Bernicia, owed much to a British heritage.\textsuperscript{335} More recent work, however, has brought Hope-Taylor’s interpretations into question, and has shown in particular that the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{330} Cessford, ‘Relations between the Britons of southern Scotland and Anglo-Saxon Northumbria’, p. 159.
  \item\textsuperscript{332} \textit{HE} 1.1, I.12.
  \item\textsuperscript{333} Tim Clarkson (pers. comm., 1 January 2001).
  \item\textsuperscript{334} Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, passim, and specifically pp. 266-7.
  \item\textsuperscript{335} For example, Campbell, *Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 56-7; Higham, \textit{Northern Counties}, p. 266; Yorke, \textit{Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England}, p. 86. Higham, \textit{Kingdom of Northumbria}, p. 70, appears to have changed his mind on this point, allowing that the Northumbrian use of Yeavering was not necessarily due to recent British lordship.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
evidence for post-Roman British occupation immediately prior to the Anglo-Saxon occupation is much thinner than was once thought. What were thought to be fifth-century British burials have now been associated with the late sixth- and seventh-century Anglo-Saxon phase of occupation. Hope-Taylor’s assessment of the double-palisaded enclosure on the site as post-Roman British has also been questioned; the ethnic labelling of such structures has been seen as problematic and too often based on insecure historical frameworks. Audrey Meaney has stated that Hope-Taylor was, therefore, probably wrong in suggesting that Yeavering represented a case of British to Anglo-Saxon continuity. The site of Yeavering is now thought to be a case of an ancient monument being reused by an emergent Anglo-Saxon elite in order to legitimise their rule. In this sense, Yeavering is seen as an example of the ‘created continuity’ referred to in Chapter 1, in which an imagined non-immediate past is invoked in order to provide legitimacy to a new regime. Howard Williams has even suggested that ancient monuments like Yeavering might have been re-used because they evoked memories of the ancestral homelands of the Anglo-Saxons in northern Germany and southern Scandinavia. Under our present state of knowledge, therefore, Yeavering cannot be used as an example of a ‘transition site’.

That said, it is quite likely certain defensive locations which had seen post-Roman British occupation were re-used by the incoming Anglo-Saxons. Current excavations at Bamburgh, for instance, have revealed ostensibly British burials which have been dated

338 Cessford, ‘Relations between the Britons of southern Scotland and Anglo-Saxon Northumbria’, pp. 159-60.
342 Bradley, ‘Time regained: the creation of continuity’, pp. 3-4. This process may have also occurred at Carlisle. The fact that St Cuthbert was shown Roman ruins on one of his visits in 685 (Bede. V Cuth 27; Anon. V Cuth IV.8) does not demonstrate continuous occupation of the town from the Roman period through to the seventh century (Higham, Northern Counties, p. 264). The site of Whithorn is discussed in Chapter 9 (infra., pp. 305-13). W. Pohl, ‘Ethnic names and identities in the British Isles: a comparative perspective’, in Hines, Anglo-Saxons, p. 9, notes that the construction of continuity can also be discerned in narrative sources such as genealogies.
to the fifth and early sixth centuries. However, the Anglo-Saxon burials which have been found do not appear to overlap with the British occupation. As a consequence, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation at Bamburgh represents the survival of a British cultural tradition, a political statement by the new rulers of the region who appropriated a British site in order to confer an aura of legitimacy to their rule, or just a decision to make use of an existing defensible site with no conscious thought as to the original inhabitants. This is one of the main problems in trying to use archaeology to assess continuity: it rarely reveals the nature of the social relations under which the continued use of a site occurred. There are limitations in what it can reveal of self-conscious identity and ethnicity.

The survival of British identity in Northumbria has also been examined using the evidence of place-names which denote the British ethnicity of the inhabitants. The existence of wealh-names in Northumbria referring to British settlements has already been raised in the context of Anglo-Saxon expansion, and intermarriage. It was noted that as place-names are typically chosen so as to distinguish between places, the use of OE wealh as a place-name element implies that there were communities which were characterised by their British inhabitants who in turn were probably identified by their British speech. Margaret Faull has also suggested that for the distinguishing feature of a settlement to be its British inhabitants, such settlements must not have been common in the particular regions in which they occur. While such names are found in Northumbria, and are scattered throughout the region, there are areas in which there are no identified wealh-names, for instance, in the old East Riding of Yorkshire and along the northern borders.

---

345 Only two carbon dates have been established at present, which give a range of 560-670 and 640-730, at ninety-five per cent probability. Further analyses and excavation may yet reveal earlier dates.
346 Higham’s, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 11, recent assertion of Bamburgh as a site of continuing occupation, and thus a transition site, relies on the older work of Hope-Taylor, Yeavering. He has not considered the recent excavations.
348 Supra., p. 269.
350 Cameron, ‘The meaning and significance of Old English walh’, p. 28; Faull, ‘British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria’, p. 20; Higham, Northern Counties, p. 273. Faull (p. 44), lists ten examples of wealh-names in North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, and others are known from Durham and Lancashire. There are also some place-names which use OE Brettas, four of which can be found in West Yorkshire (e.g. Birkby Hill), but these may not have been formed until the time of Scandinavian settlement in the ninth century (Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p. 96).
Some level of British identity must have survived long enough for these names to be given; however, uncertainty as to the date of most *wealh*-names makes it difficult to determine exactly for how long.\textsuperscript{351} It is also interesting that there are no certain examples of *wealh*-names to be found in Cumbria, and few in Elmet, perhaps because British communities were not a curiosity in those areas.\textsuperscript{352} On the other hand, there are examples in Cumbria of place-names formed from OE *Cumbre/Cumbra*, derived from the Britons' own word for themselves.\textsuperscript{353} This is most obvious in the region name itself, noted for the first time in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the year 945.\textsuperscript{354} The use of this place-name element suggests the survival of an identifiable British element in the region, though the tenth-century occupation of northern Cumbria by Strathclyde Britons would have had an effect on the ascription of British place-names; after all, this was the century in which the region name was first recorded.\textsuperscript{355}

The analysis of *wealh/Cumbra* place-names within Northumbrian territory is an obvious addition to the archaeological evidence and does tell more of the survival of British identity. Such evidence is also more revealing than that focusing just on the survival of Celtic British place-names which increase in density concentration in western versus eastern Britain.\textsuperscript{356} If a settlement was distinguished by its British character, there must have been some level of self-conscious 'Britishness', the more so for those places named with the genitive plural element *Cumbra*. The fact that these latter name-forms are mostly associated with Cumbria indicates that this region may have remained

\textsuperscript{351} Faull, 'The semantic development of Old English *Wealh*', pp. 33-4. Most *wealh*-names are only recorded after the Norman Conquest, though Cameron, 'The meaning and significance of Old English *walh*', p. 33, argued that they were given in the late seventh or eighth centuries.

\textsuperscript{352} Faull, 'British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', p. 12; O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', p. 29; C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500* (Berkeley, 1981), p. 260. There is a Walton – i.e. *weald-*tun – place-name near Wetherby in West Yorkshire, that would have been within the region of Elmet.

\textsuperscript{353} Cameron, 'The meaning and significance of Old English *walh*', p. 11; Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, p. 257. See also note 101 (supra., pp. 82-3).

\textsuperscript{354} ASC s.a. 945, 'Cumbra land'. There are at least eight *Cumbra*-names in Cumbria, such as Cummersdale, and one in West Yorkshire, that is Cumberworth. See also Faull, 'The semantic development of Old English *Wealh*', p. 34; Phythian-Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians*, p. 83; O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', p. 29.

\textsuperscript{355} Higham, *Northern Counties*, p. 318. Jackson, 'Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria', p. 74, argued that as most British place-names in Cumbria (approximately eighty-five per cent), occur in the northern half of the county, they were given no earlier than the tenth century. Contra. Phythian-Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians*, pp. 77-87, who argues that the British names in Cumbria represent a long-surviving British presence, admittedly in the peripheral parts of northern Cumbria, rather than a process of later re-colonisation from Strathclyde.

\textsuperscript{356} K.H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 220. A. Breeze, for example, 'The Celtic names of Blencow and Blenkinsopp', *NH 39* (2002), pp. 291-2, continues to uncover examples of such place-names.
identifiably British for longer, doubtless due to its late conquest. Elmet by way of comparison, a kingdom which was conquered earlier, contains little positive evidence of a surviving British identity, except perhaps in the persistence of several '-in Elmet' placenames. Place-name evidence does, however, have its limitations, being 'more mobile and less permanent than we might imagine'. In this regard, the only accurate way to gauge the position of Britons within Northumbria is from documentary evidence.

There survive only two documentary references which securely identify Britons living within pre-Viking Northumbrian territory, both of which pertain to the reign of King Ecgfrith (670-685). The first of these comes from the Life of Wilfrid by Stephen of Ripon. Stephen describes an incident in which Bishop Wilfrid miraculously resurrects a boy while performing his pastoral duties at an unlocated villa (probably meaning an estate), called *On Tiddanufri*, 'On Tyne bank'. Wilfrid instructs that the boy is to be given to him when he reaches the age of seven so as to enter the service of God. However, when the time comes, the boy's mother avoids handing him over by fleeing from 'her land [*terra sua*]'. Ultimately, Wilfrid's reeve Hocca searches out and retrieves the boy who was said to be living 'among others of the British race [*sub aliis Bryttonum*]' (emphasis added). The implication, therefore, is that the boy and his parents were also Britons.

What this account suggests is that there were Britons, identified as such, living in some part of Northumbria during Wilfrid's first period as bishop of York (669-678), and the position of the incident in the *Life* indicates the early 670s. The location of the estate *On Tiddanufri* is unknown, but it is conceivable that it should be associated with estates granted to Wilfrid by Ecgfrith in the early 670s which had previously been held by British Christian communities; these were referred to in the chapter of the *Life* immediately preceding the one under discussion. If so, *On Tiddanufri* should be

---

357 Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 24, has also pointed to emerging linguistic research showing the potential influence of the British language on English 'subject-verb agreement patterns' in the north of England, and to place-name research that might show a continued phonological development of the British language west of the Pennines.

358 Supra., pp. 175-6.


361 *VW* 18.

362 This is a consistent age threshold across much of north-west Europe. See note 60 (supra., p. 236).

363 *VW* 17. The estates mentioned by name include Yeadon (West Yorks.), Dent and Catlow (Cumbria), and land around the river Ribble (Lancs. or Cumbria).
placed in either West Yorkshire, western Northumberland or along the eastern boundaries of Cumbria or Lancashire. Stephen’s wording, if it is to be taken at face value, implies that these estates had not long been in Northumbrian hands; and it has already been argued that it was not until the time of Ecgfrith that there is any secure evidence for a Northumbrian presence in Cumbria. This may, therefore, explain the presence of the Britons in Stephen’s account, who are identified at what is a relatively late date in terms of Northumbrian expansion. The account reveals that it was still possible for Britons to be distinguished from Anglo-Saxon Northumbrians in the 670s. It would be most expedient to argue that the incident occurred in newly-acquired territory where there had been less time for acculturation and assimilation to occur, such that a distinction could still be made on ethnic grounds. It has been proposed that the Britons referred to in the Life of Wilfrid were probably tenants on the On Tiddanufri estate, which appears to have belonged to Wilfrid. This would explain the compulsion to hand over their boy to Wilfrid, as well as the flight of the mother from ‘her land’ and the actions of the reeve in retrieving the boy. These Britons may have been among the poor vicani or peasantry of pre-Viking Northumbria who were subject to the authority of the landowner of the estate on which they lived.

This interpretation gains circumstantial support from the second and later documentary reference to Britons within territory under Northumbrian control. According to the tenth-century Historia de Sancto Cuthberto, probably in or just prior to 685 Ecgfrith gave to the see of St Cuthbert a grant of land at Cartmel in southern Cumbria, ‘and with all its Britons [et omnes Britannos cum eo]’. In this instance, it appears that the resident farming population of identified Britons was transferred along with the estate. Taken together, these two references indicate that in the later seventh century there were Britons, identified as such, living under Northumbrian control on estates west of the Pennines. It might be speculated as to whether these cases are

364 Higham, An English Empire, pp. 232-3. The South Tyne, from which the estate could be named, passes through Northumberland into Cumbria.
365 Jackson, Language and History in Early Britain, p. 217 n. 2.
367 Similar issues were raised regarding the Britons in the Law Code of King Æthelwald (supra., pp. 72-3). The monk-poet Caedmon also belongs to this period (HE IV.23-24).
368 Higham, An English Empire, p. 233.
370 In general terms this is a practice for which there were precedents within Anglo-Saxon England. As discussed earlier, Wilfrid was given land at Selsey in the 680s by Æthelwald of the South Saxons, which included its inhabitants (HE IV.13). See note 17 (supra., p. 167).
representative of a broader phenomenon of Britons fulfilling a role at the base of Northumbrian society as peasant farmers.\textsuperscript{371} This would accord with what was discussed earlier regarding the location of \textit{wealth/walh} place-names in Northumbria which tend to lie either on less attractive land for settlement or in more isolated upland regions; in other words, in areas which suggest a lower social status.\textsuperscript{372} Daphne Brooke similarly reports on place-name and archaeological evidence showing the continued existence of British enclaves, as distinct from Northumbrian enclaves, in Galloway and Carrick on higher, poorer land.\textsuperscript{373}

Unlike Wessex, there are no pre-Viking law codes that survive for Northumbria which might reveal more about this presumed British substratum. There is late code called \textit{Norðleoda laga} contained in an early eleventh-century compilation by Archbishop Wulfstan II of York (1002-1023).\textsuperscript{374} As with other Anglo-Saxon codes, the \textit{Norðleoda laga} provides \textit{wergilds} for people of various ranks in society, but what is of interest is that it contains clauses dealing with people who are referred to as \textit{wealas}. The relevant clauses are:

\begin{quote}
7. And if a \textit{wealth} [variously \textit{Wealiscmon, Waliscus}] prospers so that he has a hide of land and can produce the king's tribute, then his \textit{wergild} is 120 [variously 220] shillings.

7.1. And if he does not prosper beyond half a hide, then his \textit{wergild} is to be 80 shillings.

8. And if he has no land and nevertheless is free, one is to pay for him with 70 shillings.\textsuperscript{375}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{371} As suggested by Higham, \textit{An English Empire}, p. 232; \textit{idem.}, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', pp. 24-5.

\textsuperscript{372} \textit{Supra.}, pp. 167-8.

\textsuperscript{373} Brooke, 'The Northumbrian settlements in Galloway and Carrick', pp. 314-16; \textit{idem.}, 'The early history of the diocese of Whithorn from its foundations to 1100', in R. McCluskey (ed.), \textit{The See of Ninian: A History of the Medieval Diocese of Whithorn and the Diocese of Galloway in Modern Times} (Ayr, 1997), pp. 43-4. See also P. Hill, \textit{Whithorn and St. Ninian: The Excavation of a Monastic Town, 1984-91} (Stroud, 1997), p. 48, who concludes from his archaeological work at the Whithorn site that there was little evidence of contact with the neighbouring Britons during the 'Anglian period', c.730-854.


\textsuperscript{375} As reported in Faull, 'The semantic development of Old English \textit{Wealth}', p. 25. Elsewhere, 'British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', p. 21, she states that the '220 shillings' under clause 7 in some manuscripts is a scribal error.
It is clear from the wording that these *wealas* are free persons; so the meaning cannot be 'slaves', but rather appears to be 'Britons'. The *wergilds* listed are identical to those for Britons in the Laws of Ine, with the exception of a Briton with no land being granted seventy instead of sixty shillings.\textsuperscript{376} Similarly, the Britons in the *Norðleoda laga* are valued at about half that of their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, with a free Anglo-Saxon *ceorl* who owns a hide of land being awarded a *wergild* of 200 shillings.\textsuperscript{377}

The value of the *Norðleoda laga* for the present inquiry is dependent upon the extent to which it represents pre-Viking Northumbria. It is generally thought that Wulfstan was assembling material from earlier sources,\textsuperscript{378} though arguments have been made for his 'outright authorship'.\textsuperscript{379} A reasonable conclusion would be to see the *wealas* clauses as having been copied from the Laws of Ine,\textsuperscript{380} possible transmitted via a Mercian code.\textsuperscript{381} Yet, it is worth noting that Wulfstan's compilation did not include equivalents for the Britons in Ine's code who were *horswealas* for the West Saxon king or who owned five hides of land. The implication is that Wulfstan was looking for some guidance regarding the administration of society in the north which still had an identifiable British ingredient.\textsuperscript{382} It is significant that immediately prior to the time of Wulfstan, the once-again British region of Cumbria suffered invasion and annexation by English kings, for example, Edmund and Æthelred II.\textsuperscript{383} This no doubt resulted in the very problem that Ine had faced in seventh-century Wessex: of Britons newly living under Anglo-Saxon control, at least for a time. The *Norðleoda laga* may, therefore, have emerged due to circumstances dictated during a much later time period that the one under investigation.

***

\textsuperscript{377} For example, *Norðleoda laga* 6, 'A *ceorl*'s *wergild* is 266 *thrymsas*, which is 200 shillings according to the law of the Mercians'.
\textsuperscript{378} Faull, 'British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', p. 21, suggested that Wulfstan may have thought the references to *wealas* were to Welshmen.
\textsuperscript{380} Banham, 'Anglo-Saxon attitudes', p. 150; D. Whitelock (pers. comm., cited in Faull, 'British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria', p. 21). Whitelock argued that Wulfstan was interested in the possibility that land ownership might lead to upward social mobility and that the Laws of Ine provided him with 'ammunition' for his beliefs.
\textsuperscript{381} Alex Woolf (pers. comm., 2 February 2003) has suggested to me that the three *wealas* clauses appear to be a parenthetic insertion into the *Norðleoda laga*. In these clauses, the *wergilds* are stated in shillings, whereas in the rest of the clauses the currency used is *thrymsas*. The former was Mercian, but the latter was typically Northumbrian at this date.
\textsuperscript{382} Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 394.
\textsuperscript{383} ASC s.aa. 945 & MS. E 1000, respectively.
From the evidence that has been discussed, it has been possible to show that British identity survived in the west of Northumbria at least until the end of the seventh century, most probably due to the later conquest of the region. If the same occurred in the east of Northumbria, evidence of British identity must have been written out of the sources. For Britons to be distinguishable from Anglo-Saxons at this time demonstrates that complete integration had not yet occurred between the two peoples. The impression also gained from the evidence is that the Britons occupied an inferior social position to the Anglo-Saxon Northumbrians, living on less attractive land, though it does appear that possession of land was possible if the Britons on the *On Tiddanufri* estate were indeed tenants. The two documentary references show that Britons identified as such did persist for a time as part of Northumbrian society. However, they ultimately lost their separate identity, doubtless as a result of the overall dominance of Anglo-Saxon economic and social culture, in much the same way as the Britons of the south-west referred to in the Code of Ine were subsumed by the West Saxons. In this manner, a unitarist ‘Anglian/Englisc’ identity was created in Northumbria. After the two references pertaining to Britons during reign of Ecgfrith, ‘they disappear from the [documentary] record as anonymously as any in Berkshire or East Anglia’. And certainly during the eighth century, any sense of ‘Britishness’ appears to have been eclipsed. That said, the later resurgence of British power in Cumbria under the auspices of Strathclyde may suggest that British ethnic origins, in that region at least, were not completely forgotten.

Summary

It was the purpose of this chapter to consider the evidence for exile and intermarriage amongst the Northumbrians and Northern Celts, for political contact, and for social exchange. Despite the broader context of aggression and antagonism between Northumbrians and Northern Celts, it has been possible to show that personal and

---

384 As proposed by Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 25.
386 O’Sullivan, ‘Cumbria before the Vikings’, p. 29.
387 Banham, ‘Anglo-Saxon attitudes’, p. 150; Higham, *Northern Counties*, p. 267. In his summary of the present state of the English nation in 731, and of the island of Britain, Bede states that the Britons had been brought ‘partly under the rule of the English’ (*HE* V.23). It is uncertain whether this can be taken to mean that there were identifiable Britons in Northumbria at the time, or just that Anglo-Saxon expansion in general had subsumed former British territory. Contrary to Higham’s, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 24, claim, there does not appear to be any immediacy in Bede’s summary which would suggest that these Britons were close at hand rather than in far-off Wales or Strathclyde or Dumnonia.
political advantage could be gained by alliance across ethnic lines.\textsuperscript{389} And indeed, the facts that Northumbrians did go into exile in Celtic lands, and that Northumbrians and Celts did intermarry, indicate that cultural interaction must have occurred and kinship bonds must have been created. What is perhaps most surprising is that, when one considers the proximity of the Britons rather than the Scots and the Picts to the Northumbrian heartland, as well as the scale of the British border with Northumbria during the seventh and eighth centuries, the majority of the sources for social intercourse points to the Scots and Picts. The evidence for exile and intermarriage suggests that Pictland or Dalriada was more likely to be a destination than a British kingdom; whether this is a true representation of relations on the ground, or a result of gaps in the documentary record, is difficult to determine. It may have been that the British kingdoms ceased to be suitable destinations for Northumbrian exiles after the early seventh century, when Hereric was found in Elmet. Alternatively, exile into British lands may have been hampered by an attitude of mutual distrust or antipathy between Britons and Anglo-Saxons. Nevertheless, for a kingdom where there was meant to have been such a large British under-class, the evidence for their influence is very difficult to find. This is an issue which will be pursued further in the following chapter on ecclesiastical interaction.

\textsuperscript{388} Brooke, ‘The Northumbrian settlements in Galloway and Carrick’, p. 300.
\textsuperscript{389} Dumville, ‘The origins of Northumbria’, p. 220.
Chapter 9

Ecclesiastical Interaction

The issue of ecclesiastical interaction between the Northumbrians and the northern Celts is complex. There is no doubt that a common belief system is capable of acting as a means by which different peoples can mingle and ultimately assimilate.\(^1\) Religion can operate as a means for creating and cementing a shared social identity, and, once the Angles of Northumbria converted, the potential for cultural intercourse and influence with the Christian Celts would have been greatly increased.\(^2\) This most obviously occurred during the reigns of the Northumbrian kings Oswald and Oswiu, when missionaries from Iona and Ireland played a primary role in the conversion of Northumbria and in the foundation of the Northumbrian church.\(^3\) But Christianity, at various times in pre-Viking Britain, could in fact have operated as a means by which the Northumbrians and the northern Celtic peoples differentiated themselves from one another. Christian Britons and Dalriadan Scots would have used their Christianity to distinguish themselves from the paganism of the Northumbrians prior to the latter's conversion;\(^4\) Irish Christians in Dalriada and Pictland would have distinguished themselves from the Roman Christians of Northumbria, and *vice versa*, especially after the synod of Whitby in 664. And according to Bede, British and Roman Christians continued to proclaim their differences well into the eighth century.\(^5\) Religion as an indicator of identity would have had considerable meaning to the people of the day.\(^6\)

Another layer of complexity is added to the question of ecclesiastical contact in the north, given the potential interaction of the Northumbrian church with the churches of the Britons, the Scots, and of the Picts. This chapter will examine the evidence for

---

\(^1\) *Supra.*, p. 87.
\(^3\) D.N. Dumville, ""Beowulf" and the Celtic world", *Traditio* 37 (1981), pp. 109-10, also talks of the potential for literary contact.
\(^4\) Indeed, B. Ward-Perkins, 'Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?', *EHR* 115 (2000), p. 515 n. 1, argues that the presence of Anglo-Saxon paganism in Britain may have hastened the Christianisation of the Britons.
\(^5\) *HE* V.23.
ecclesiastical interaction between the Northumbrians and, respectively, the Britons, the Scots of Dalriada, and the Picts. The issue of Anglo-Celtic attitudes in the pre-Viking north will also be considered, as the evidence regarding attitudes derives exclusively from ecclesiastical sources, in particular Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*.

**The Northumbrian and Northern British Churches**

The expansion of pagan Anglo-Saxon control in the north would have disrupted the progress of Christianity in the subsumed regions. Bede indicates that the pagan Anglo-Saxons of Northumbria needed to be converted in the seventh century, with the Roman bishop Paulinus (c.627) and, more successfully, the Columban bishop Aidán (c.635) fulfilling the primary evangelising roles. Bede is quite clear in his account that the Britons played no role in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, that they 'would not proclaim to the English the knowledge of the Christian faith'. As Peter Brown puts it, the Anglo-Saxon conversion story gives pride of place to the arrival of 'parties of impressive strangers ... from across the sea', who took up the missionary mantle. Yet it has been suggested that Bede's narrative dominated and therefore silenced an alternative conversion tale that existing British Christian communities in the north played a more significant role. According to this view, Christianity is seen as a mechanism which may have facilitated the survival of British communities after the Anglo-Saxon invasion and may have served as a foundation for the eventual transformation of these communities into Anglo-Saxon ones. Nicholas Higham also posits that 'some British cult sites may eventually have metamorphosed into ... “Anglo-Saxon” monasteries or churches'. In order to explore these arguments, it is necessary first of all to examine the evidence for Christianity in the British north.

---

7 This discussion does not include direct consideration of relations between the churches of the Celtic-speaking regions, or of the remnants of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon paganism.
8 *HE* II.9, II.14, III.3. Bede states that Paulinus found the Northumbrian nation to be heathen *pagani* (*HE* II.9), and that Aidán found heathens (literally, *infideles*) on his travels through Northumbria (*HE* III.5).
9 *HE* V.22, and also I.22, II.2.
British Christianity in the North

The evidence for Christianity in the late Roman northern province of Britannia Secunda is sparse, in part a consequence of the general lack of Romanisation in this frontier zone. Christianity had certainly reached the province by the time of the Church Council at Arles in 314, as one of the British bishops who attended was identified as belonging to the provincial capital of York.14 Charles Thomas has proposed that Carlisle, as a civitas capital, may also have boasted its own bishop.15 Although there is no evidence to support his contention, if it was not for the acta of the Arles Council, the location of any fourth-century British episcopal see would not be known, and even those listed have not been substantiated by archaeological work.16 That said, the destruction of pagan symbols, such as Mithraea along the length of Hadrian’s Wall, in the early fourth century might suggest that Christianity had been adopted in the Roman north by that time.17 Further physical evidence includes late fourth-century grave-slabs of presumed Christian provenance found at Carlisle and Brougham,18 as well as a Chi-Rho monogram on a now-lost tombstone at Maryport.19 Given that the Roman north was a predominantly military region and that most of the fourth century emperors encouraged Christianity amongst the army, it can reasonably be argued that Christianity would have spread through the northern province during the course of the fourth century to become an established religion, even before Emperor Theodosius’s ban on the public practice of

---

15 Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 279. D. O’Sullivan, ‘Cumbria before the Vikings: a review of some Dark-Age problems in north-west England’, in J.R. Baldwin & I.D. Whyte (eds.), The Scandinavians in Cumbria (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 22, supports Thomas on this point but cautions against assuming that the diocese would have continued into the sub-Roman period.
16 ——. Civitas to Kingdom, p. 65.
The continued occupation of several towns in the Roman north into the fifth century, including York, Corbridge, Carlisle, Catterick, and Aldborough, implies the survival of Christian communities into the sub-Roman period. However, evidence of Christian practice in the former province is scant, and again confined to Cumbria and the west.

Ironically, it does not appear that Christianity spread north of Hadrian's Wall until after the end of Roman control in Britain, c.410. Certainly, the peoples to the north of the Wall were not isolated from influence from the south, and the removal of the garrisons from the Wall would have allowed for more contact to occur. Evidence for Christianity amongst the Britons north of Hadrian's Wall comes both from archaeological and written sources. In the main, archaeological evidence of Christianity consists of inscribed, predominantly memorial, stones displaying Latin inscriptions with either Christian formula and content, or Christian symbols such as the Chi-Rho monogram. The earliest inscribed stones come from Galloway, and include the so-called 'Latinus stone' at Whithorn (mid-fifth century), and four others farther west in the vicinity of Kirkmadrine in the Rhinns of Galloway (early sixth to seventh centuries). The earliest of these at Kirkmadrine commemorates the sacerdotes.

---

20 Frend, 'The Christianisation of Roman Britain', p. 40; Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, p. 19.
21 Dark, Civitas to Kingdom, pp. 71-4; Higham, Northern Counties, p. 264; O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', p. 22; C.A. Snyder, Sub-Roman Britain (AD 400-600): A Gazetteer of Sites (Oxford, 1996), pp. 45-6, 51.
22 McCarthy, 'Thomas, Chadwick and post-Roman Carlisle', pp. 244-5, and Snyder, Age of Tyrants, p. 175, note for example that the evidence for Carlisle consists only of one tombstone and a gold-ring with an incised palm. Thomas, 'The evidence from North Britain', p. 100, lists several late sixth- to seventh-century uninscribed cross-marked stones in the region around the Solway that may attest to Irish Christian influence. These are mostly north of the Wall; however there is one to the south at Addingham in Cumbria. O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', pp. 22-3, lists only two certain post-Roman Christian cemeteries in Cumbria – at Eaglesfield and Heversham – with other possible sites at Backfoot, Ravenglass, Kirkby Stephen and Roosebeck.
23 Dark, Civitas to Kingdom, p. 64; Thomas, 'The evidence from North Britain', p. 111; idem., Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 276.
24 N.J. Higham, The Kingdom of Northumbria AD 350-1100 (Gloucestershire, 1993), p. 58; Smith, 'The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland', p. 20. Higham, Northern Counties, p. 275, has suggested that the rise of Christianity amongst the Britons north of the Wall may even have been facilitated by the demise of Roman Britain, with the British rulers choosing the Christianitas of Christianity to differentiate themselves from the paganism of their Pictish, Scottish, and eventually Anglo-Saxon enemies. On this point, see also Smith, 'Brito-Roman and Anglo-Saxon', p. 24.
26 See Thomas, Whithorn's Christian Beginnings, pp. 7-9, and especially, idem., 'The early Christian inscriptions of southern Scotland', pp. 2-4, 7, for commentary on, the dates, and a listing of the stones.
Viventius and Mavorius, and another now-lost stone from Curghie in Kirkmaiden to the south recorded a *subdiaconus* called Ventidius. Whithorn is closely associated with the career of St Nynia or Ninian, who was said by Bede to have been a British bishop occupying a church dedicated to St Martin, called in the vernacular *Ad Candidam Casam*, ‘At the White House’, after a stone church which he had built there.\(^{27}\) While there is no earlier account than Bede’s linking Ninian to Whithorn, the most recent series of excavations has nonetheless shown that the site was occupied from the later fifth century, the likely interpretation being that the site was a ‘de novo’ settlement of monks who do indeed appear to have constructed a stone and mortar – even lime-washed – church.\(^{28}\) Thus, there may be some basis for the argument that Galloway was the ‘cradle of Christianity’ north of the Wall, and contemporary foundations by Ninian have been supposed for Christian sites in Strathclyde and Manaw Gododdin.\(^{29}\)

Outside of Galloway, there are only a further half-dozen inscribed memorial stones, which run south to north from Chesterholm on Hadrian’s Wall to Kirkliston near Edinburgh.\(^{30}\) These are broadly datable to the late fifth to seventh centuries and show the gradual northward expansion of Christian funerary practice, as well as revealing a possible ecclesiastical centre in the region of Peebles (Scottish Borders), from where

---


\(^{28}\) These excavations have been reported in full by Hill, *Whithorn and St. Ninian, passim*, and see esp. pp. 27-8, 38-9. Hill found no certain evidence of late Roman or even early fifth-century activity at Whithorn. The Continental parallels apparent in the epigraphy of the inscribed stones at Kirkcolm have also led Thomas, *Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings, passim*, to argue that a group of *émigré* Gaulish monks introduced the cult of St Martin into the Rhins of Galloway, which later became conflated with the *monasterium* of Whithorn.

\(^{29}\) D. Brooke, *Wild Men and Holy Places: St Ninian, Whithorn and the Medieval Realm of Galloway* (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 24-5; *idem.*, ‘The early history of the diocese of Whithorn’, pp. 28-9, 31-2; Macquarrie, *Saints of Scotland*, pp. 56-7; Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 20. Ninian is claimed to have consecrated a burial site at Cadder in Strathclyde (the site of an old Roman fort on the Antonine Wall), and founded a church at Eccles, the medieval name for Kirkton at Stirling in Manaw Gododdin.

\(^{30}\) These stones include: the Brigomaglos stone at Chesterholm (Northumberland); the Carantus stone in Liddesdale (Scottish Borders); the Coninia stone at Manor Water near Peebles (Scottish Borders); the Yarrowkirk stone also near Peebles, commemorating Nudus and Damnogenus, two sons of Liberalis; the Neitano *sacerdos* stone at Peebles, and the Catstane at Kirkliston (near Edinburgh), commemorating Vetta son of Victor. For the complete inscriptions, see Thomas, ‘The early Christian inscriptions of southern Scotland’, pp. 3-4. There is a further now-lost stone of possible sixth- or seventh-century date from Peebles which was discovered in 1261. This was said to have borne the inscription LOCVS SANCTI NICHOLAI EPISCOPI. A. Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, in R.H.C. Davis & J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1981), p. 32, proposed that the name ‘Nicholai’, which is certainly a misreading, should have been read ‘Niniai’, and Thomas, *Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings*, p. 20, has since suggested that, if this interpretation is correct, the stone could indicate the acquisition of a Ninianic relic.
three of the stones originate. Christian funerary practice may also be evidenced around the Forth, mostly on the southern side, by the numerous orientated long-cist cemeteries which date from the sixth century. The extent to which the inscribed stones north of the Wall are indicative of an organised sub-Roman British church is a matter of some debate. Evidence for continuing Christian practice is not necessarily the same as that for a structured church hierarchy. Charles Thomas argues that the Latinity of the stones at the very minimum demonstrates a sub-Roman church whose texts were in Latin, and whose members continued to speak, read and write Latin. And indeed, the Rhinns stones in Galloway, with their inscriptions referring to sacerdotes – a term embracing both presbyteri and episcopi – and a subdiaconus, indicate the presence at least of a nominally ranked clerical hierarchy.

The only credibly northern written evidence for sub-Roman Christianity are St Patrick’s Confessio and Epistola, or Letter, against Coroticus, which were probably written some time before the end of the fifth century. From these it can be inferred that some form of church government had continued in the sub-Roman north and perhaps was introduced beyond the Wall. In corroboration of the inscriptions on the Rhinns stones,

31 Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, pp. 32-3; Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 21; Thomas, ‘The evidence from North Britain’, pp. 104-5; idem., Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings, p. 3. The fifth-century Traprain Law hoard (East Lothian), with its silver objects chased with Christian devices, has also been taken as evidence of Christianity north of the Wall (e.g. Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, pp. 21-2). But as the hoard has the appearance of plunder, it is questionable whether it reveals anything regarding the Christianisation of the region in which it was found. See Higham, Northern Counties, p. 275; Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 279.


34 Thomas, Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings, p. 3; idem., ‘The early Christian inscriptions of southern Scotland’, p. 6. These are reiterations of Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 266.

35 Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 267; idem., Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings, pp. 7-8. Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, p. 12, notes that the presence of two potential episcopal centres in sub-Roman Galloway – i.e. Kirkmadrine and Whithorn – ‘bedevils’ Thomas’s attempts to locate sub-Roman dioceses in the north modelled on the large sees of late Roman Britain. Smith, ‘Brito-Roman and Anglo-Saxon’, p. 25, similarly argues that the term paruchia should be used rather than diocese in this region, the latter implying perhaps a greater degree of administration than was present.

36 A.B.E. Hood (ed. & trans.), St. Patrick: His Writings and Muirchú’s “Life” (London, 1978), pp. 17-19; Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, pp. 32, 43. The earliest surviving MS. is the Book of Armagh of c.800. Patrick’s mission to the Irish is now generally placed c.450-60 and his obit in the late fifth century. See Bradley, Celtic Christianity, p. 12; Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, pp. 43-4; Thomas, Christianity in
Patrick says that his father was a deacon (diaconus) — though this may have been a secular role — and one of his grandfathers a priest (presbyter), and that he himself attained the rank of bishop (episcopus). He talks of a synod of seniores (senior bishops?), and of dominicati rhetorici, the latter translated by A.B.E. Hood as ‘clerical intellectuals’. Patrick was also able to gain some Latin education, and he implies that better instruction would have been available to him if he had not been captured by Irish raiders. Additionally, Patrick’s Epistola reveals a British society that was Christian, at least nominally; Coroticus and his men were clearly Christian, and Patrick’s denunciation of his actions as not befitting a Christian leader is not dissimilar in sentiment to Gildas’s complaint regarding the British kings of Wales and Dumnonia. If Coroticus is to be identified with Ceredig Wledig, a king of Strathclyde, then it might be supposed that Christianity had also reached this kingdom in the fifth century. A sixth-century Christian advent is also glimpsed in this region in the later, albeit unreliable, accounts of figures such as St Kentigern of Glasgow and St Modwenna. And although of questionable value, the poem Y Gododdin suggests that the men of Gododdin similarly considered themselves Christian.

---

Roman Britain, p. 343. Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, p. 35, also states that his creation as bishop probably occurred not long after he reached the age of thirty, which was the minimum age for consecration. If so, this would suggest a birth year in the 420s. It should be acknowledged that a northern location for Patrick’s birthplace, Bannavem Taburniae (Confessio 1), often identified as Birdoswald (near Brampton on Hadrians Wall), is not certain. There have been suggestions that he was a native of Wales or of the West Country (e.g. Hood, St. Patrick, p. 2). However, the milieu in which he was writing was credibly northern — for instance, in his Epistola (Epist. 12) he complains of the Briton Coroticus allying with Picts — and there is nothing in the evidence for Patrick, such as it is, that would preclude his being a native of the erstwhile Roman north, or even of Galloway or Strathclyde. On Patrick’s birthplace, see McCarthy, ‘Thomas, Chadwick and post-Roman Carlisle’, p. 245; Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, pp. 37-9; Thomas, ‘The evidence from North Britain’, pp. 108-9. 38 Patrick, Confessio 1, 26, 32; Patrick, Epist. 1. 39 Patrick, Confessio 13 (dominicii rhetorici), 26 (seniores). 40 Patrick, Confessio 9-12. See also J. Campbell, The Anglo-Saxons (London, 1991), p. 13; Hood, St. Patrick, p. 18. 41 Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, pp. 38, 45-6; Snyder, Age of Tyrants, pp. 121, 236; Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, pp. 330-1. 42 Supra., p. 156. 43 Cramp, Whitburn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards, p. 13; C.E. Lowe, ‘New light on the Anglo-Saxon “minster” at Hoddom: recent excavations at Hallguards Quarry, Hoddom, Annandale and Eskdale District, Dumfries and Galloway Region’, Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society 3rd Series 77 (1991), pp. 11-12; A. Macquarrie, ‘The career of Saint Kentigern of Glasgow: vitae, lectiones and glimpses of fact’, The Innes Review, 37 (1986), pp. 3-24; idem., Saints of Scotland, pp. 117-44; Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, pp. 23-4; Thomas, ‘The evidence from North Britain’, p. 108. An obit for Kentigern appears in AC s.a. 612, with the name rendered as Conthigirn(i). Tradition has it that he founded a church at Hoddom (Dumfries). Modwenna allegedly founded churches at Dumfries and Galloway, but not in any contemporary or near-contemporary source. 44 Brown, Rise of Western Christendom, pp. 80-1; K. Hughes, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, in idem., Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 49-50.
Continuity from British to Northumbrian Christianity

The most serious claims regarding the continuity of British Christian communities and church institutions pertain to the west and north of Northumbria, where control was not achieved until after the Northumbrians converted in the second quarter of the seventh century. Widespread survival of British Christian monasteries and churches in the east of Northumbria is unlikely. Although some Christian enclaves doubtless survived – York, for instance, which became a major Northumbrian ecclesiastical centre, could have had a continuous Christian population\(^{45}\) – physical evidence is practically non-existent, doubtless a consequence of the disruption caused by the spread of pagan Anglo-Saxon political and social influence.\(^{46}\) Beyond the eastern Northumbrian territories, however, the later that conquest occurred, the more entrenched Christianity would have been amongst the native British population. British Christianity would, therefore, have been more likely to survive and to influence the Northumbrian church west of the Pennines, in territory which was not under direct Northumbrian control until the reign of Ecgfrith (670-685); perhaps in Elmet, which saw an end to its independence only a few years before the conversion of Edwin in 627, and north of Hadrian’s Wall in Gododdin, not finally conquered until the time of Oswiu (642-670).\(^{47}\) It is in these areas where a pre-existing structure may have been sequestered by the Anglo-Saxon church. Indeed, it has been claimed that ‘the transmission from the British to the English periods of the religious and secular organisation of western Northumbria displays signs of an impressive degree of continuity’.\(^{48}\)

Despite these claims, the argument for British Christian continuity and influence in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria is difficult to substantiate in any amount of detail.\(^{49}\) Assertions for continuity are bedevilled by severe limitations in the surviving evidence and thus rely largely on deductions based on archaeological and place-name evidence. Some textual evidence can be brought to bear, specifically Stephen of Ripon’s Life of Wilfrid, as well as a suite of sources concerning the site of Whithorn.

\(^{45}\) Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 13; Snyder, Age of Tyrants, pp. 218, 238; Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 344. According to Bede (HE II.14) the Northumbrian church of St Peter the Apostle at York was ‘hastily built of wood’ in 627.

\(^{46}\) N. Orme, English Church Dedications: With a Survey of Cornwall and Devon (Exeter, 1996), p. 11.

\(^{47}\) Northumbrian expansion into these territories was discussed in Chapter 7. Strathclyde is not mentioned here as it was never wholly conquered by the Northumbrians.

\(^{48}\) Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 101.

\(^{49}\) A point which Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 10, himself acknowledges.
Archaeological Evidence for British Ecclesiastical Continuity

In the first instance, deficiencies in the archaeological evidence are a result of the relative lack of Romanisation in the north. In discussing British Christian continuity in Wessex it was pointed out that a significant part of the argument relies on deductions based on the allegedly continued use or re-use of Romano-British structures, villas, monuments and burial sites into the Anglo-Saxon period, what Lucas Quensel-von Kalben refers to as 'locational continuity'. However, as these sites are fewer in number in the north, their re-use by the Northumbrian church a priori is going to be less frequent. Hence, there is only a small number of ecclesiastical sites which might, on the basis of archaeological work, be indicative of continuity.

Most of these sites are associated with old forts, the preponderant Roman structure in the region, and include the minsters of All Saints at Ilkley (West Yorks.) and St Martin’s at Brampton Old Church (Cumbria). The re-use of Roman forts, however, does not show a bias towards the west, which would perhaps be expected if continuous Christian practice is hypothesised. The minster at Chester-le-Street (Durham), for example, is sited over an old fort, and there are documentary references to other foundations which imply the existence of pre-existing forts in the east, as at Ebchester (Durham), Kaelcacaestir, probably Tadcaster (North Yorks.), and possibly the unlocated Tunnacaestir. Roman structures in the east were also used by pagan Anglo-Saxons as burial sites, including the fort at Bchester (Durham), as well as the amphitheatre at Catterick (North Yorks.) and the shrine at Benwell on Hadrian’s Wall (Northumberland). The point to be made from these observations is that the use of

\[50\] Supra., pp. 92-7.
\[53\] S. Bassett, 'Churches in Worcester before and after the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', The Antiquaries Journal 69 (1989), p. 229; Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review', pp. 236, 239. The see of Hexham was also less than five kilometres from Roman Corbridge.
\[54\] HE IV.22, IV.23. OE caester and its derivations such as -chester derive from Latin castrum, meaning a fort. Early Anglo-Saxon place-names using OE burh 'enclosed place', which seems to have acquired a secondary meaning of 'minster', might also reveal the presence of an Anglo-Saxon church on an old Roman fort or some other pre-existing enclosure. Northern examples of burh-names include in the west, Brough, Burgh by Sands and Brougham (Cumbria), and in the east, Dewsbury (West Yorks.) – a Candidate for Bede's Campodonum (HE II.14) – and Bamburgh (Northumberland). See Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review', p. 234; Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 11. Coludesbyrg, Coldingham (Scottish Borders), is an example of a northern burh-name used for a monastery which was definitely not sited on a Roman fort (HE IV.19).
\[55\] Snyder, Age of Tyrants, p. 175; H. Williams, 'Ancient landscapes and the dead: the re-use of prehistoric and Roman monuments as early Anglo-Saxon burial sites', Medieval Archaeology (1997), p. 9.
Roman structures by Anglo-Saxons in no way constitutes a certain diagnosis of continuous Christian practice. Roman architecture would have stood out in the landscape, and, as John Blair states, any campaign of minster-building would have appropriated what Roman buildings remained. Roman structures were not only visible statements of power in the landscape, but also were 'Romanising': their re-use could have affirmed a 'civilised orthodoxy' for the new Northumbrian church. In this regard, the re-use of a Roman fort for the construction of an Anglo-Saxon minster in Northumbria reflects standard practice in the Christian West from the fourth century onwards whereby the church pressed into service whatever domestic, public and military buildings were available. Therefore, any 'continuity' from a Christian British past, as suggested by the re-use of Roman structures in Northumbria, could have been created rather than been genuinely representative of uninterrupted practice.

The existence of so-called 'curvilinear churchyards' in Cumbria may also be used to argue for the existence of early British Christian communities and for ecclesiastical continuity. There are some thirty-nine such sites in Cumbria, approximately twelve per cent of all churches with burial grounds. Deirdre O’Sullivan has suggested, however, that only thirty per cent of the curvilinear churchyards have a claim to a pre-Conquest origin and, more particularly, that there is no evidence to indicate that any of these were established prior to when Cumbria came within the scope of the Northumbrian Church. She also highlights the example of Dacre, an Anglo-Saxon monastery described by Bede as being under construction in his own day, yet also possessing a curvilinear boundary. There is some question, therefore, regarding the extent to which the identification of curvilinear churchyards in Cumbria can be used to substantiate arguments of British Christian continuity.

58 Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review', p. 245.
59 The related issue of 'created continuity' in the Anglo-Saxon re-use of British hill-forts such as at Yeavering was discussed in Chapter 8 (supra., pp. 276-9).
61 O’Sullivan, 'Curvilinear churchyards in Cumbria', p. 4.
62 HE IV 32.
63 See also O’Sullivan, 'Cumbria before the Vikings', pp. 31-2.
64 The evidence of curvilinear churchyards is discussed in more detail in Chapter 13, in the context of ecclesiastical continuity in the West Midlands (infra., pp. 440-2).
Place-names and the Evidence of Dedications

Beyond the archaeological evidence, British Christian continuity in Northumbria has been examined through the study of place-names. While most monasteries and churches founded in pre-Viking Northumbria have Old English names, there are a few which stand out as possessing names of British Celtic origin. It has been suggested that the survival of a British place-name may imply some continuing ecclesiastical significance. Thus, British-named monasteries in Northumbria might be another form of 'transition site', where the Northumbrian church took over an existing British community, some examples of which were mentioned previously. Carlisle, which was the location of a double monastery headed by the sister of Ecgfrith's queen Eormenburh, was given by Bede the British name *Lugubalia* (also recorded as *Luel*). Trumwine's see and monastery at Abercorn were named from the British *Aebercurnig*. The Columban monastery at Old Melrose is a further example, the name rendered by Bede as *Mailros*, British for 'bare promontory'. As suggested foci of British Christian continuity, these three monasteries are certainly advantageously located. Carlisle is in the vicinity of a number of sub-Roman Christian sites already mentioned such as Addingham, Chesterholm and more distantly Whithorn. Abercorn is located only seven kilometres from the long-cist cemetery and inscribed memorial stone at Kirkliston. Melrose, in the Tweed Valley, is downstream from Peebles, suggested as a possible sub-Roman ecclesiastical centre.

The difficulty with all of these instances is in trying to substantiate the existence of a pre-Northumbrian foundation. There is nothing yet discovered at Carlisle which clearly

---

65 Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, p. 291.
67 *Supra.*, pp. 276-7.
68 *HE* IV.29; *Bede.VCuth* 27; *Anon.VCuth* IV.8.
69 *HE* I.12, IV.12, IV.26.
70 *HE* III.26, IV.27, V.9, V.12. See also Smith, 'Brito-Roman and Anglo-Saxon', p. 25; Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, p. 292.
72 Thomas, 'Abercorn and the provincia Pictorum', p. 332.
attests to continuous habitation in the town after the fifth century.\textsuperscript{74} While much is often made of St Cuthbert's escorted tour of the walls and of the Roman fountain in 685,\textsuperscript{75} these structures do not stand as evidence for the survival of a British Christian centre.\textsuperscript{76} The limited excavations at Abercorn have also not produced any evidence of a pre-Northumbrian Christian community, with Charles Thomas preferring to associate the remains that have been uncovered with the Northumbrian occupation of the region.\textsuperscript{77} A British foundation for Melrose also remains uncorroborated.\textsuperscript{78} Thus, it is difficult to know what to make of the British names attached to these monasteries. Conceivably, they just tell of continued British settlement in the surrounding areas at the time each of the Northumbrian monasteries was founded, the inhabitants of which passed on existing descriptions.\textsuperscript{79} This is hinted at by the topographical nature of the names – \textit{Mailros} 'bare promontory'; \textit{Aebbercurnig} 'horned (river) confluence' – which do not explicitly denote occupancy but rather some particular geographical feature.\textsuperscript{80}

Potentially of more use in assessing British Christian continuity are the so-called \textit{eccles} place-names. \textit{Eccles} is a place-name element which appears either by itself or as a compound.\textsuperscript{81} Its original source is the Latin \textit{ecclesia}, but it is generally accepted to have been adopted into Anglo-Saxon usage via the British \textit{egles}, and not directly from the Latin.\textsuperscript{82} The meaning of the term, as it was used in post-Roman Britain, is a matter of some debate. Kenneth Cameron, following the lead of Eilert Ekwall, stated that the name 'no doubt denoted a British church'.\textsuperscript{83} This interpretation has gained wide, though not necessarily critical, patronage.\textsuperscript{84} Charles Thomas, acknowledging Kenneth

\textsuperscript{74} McCarthy, 'Thomas, Chadwick and post-Roman Carlisle', pp. 246, 249-50; Snyder, \textit{Sub-Roman Britain}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{75} Bede, \textit{VCuth} 27; Anon, \textit{VCuth} IV.8. See for example Snyder, \textit{Age of Tyrants}, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{76} Higham, \textit{Northern Counties}, pp. 264, 276. See note 342 (\textit{supra.}, p. 279).
\textsuperscript{78} Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 14.
\textsuperscript{79} Melrose was founded in the second quarter of the seventh century, with Carlisle and Abercorn founded later in the second half of the seventh (\textit{supra.}, p. 194).
\textsuperscript{80} Thomas, \textit{Christianity in Roman Britain}, p. 292. \textit{Contra.} M. Gelling, 'Why aren't we speaking Welsh?', \textit{ASSAH} 6 (1993), p. 53, who states that the Romano-Britons did not use place-names that specified habitation, and that toponyms could have served this purpose.
\textsuperscript{81} For example, Eccleshill, Eccleshall, Ecclesfield, Eaglesfield, Egglecliffe, and Exley.
\textsuperscript{83} Cameron, 'Eccles in English place-names', 89.
\textsuperscript{84} For example, Foster, \textit{Picts, Gaels and Scots}, p. 79; Higham, \textit{Kingdom of Northumbria}, p. 100; G.R.J. Jones, 'Early territorial organisation in Gwynedd and Elmet', \textit{NH} 10 (1975), p. 22; Smith, 'The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland', p. 27; C.M. Taylor, 'Elmet:
Jackson’s interpretation, favoured the less specific meaning of ‘a British population centre with organised Christian worship’, or even ‘a place where Christians live’. In other words, an eccles-name does not necessarily refer to the location of an actual church building. This might more accurately reflect the fourth-century meaning of the Latin ecclesia ‘a body of Christians; a Christian group/society’. Thus, an eccles-name appears to signify a British community defined by its practice of Christianity. It is not surprising, therefore, that these names have been taken to signify the survival of British Christianity where they occur.

Apart from a single example, Egglescliffe (Durham), eccles-names are entirely absent from the Northumbrian heartland in the east. This is supportive of what was said earlier regarding the general lack of eastern evidence for sub-Roman Christianity, and might indicate the strength of Anglo-Saxon paganism in early Northumbria. Between the Walls, there are some ten eccles-names which can be shown to have a British origin; as opposed to being possible later introductions of the q-Celtic eclais (modern Gaelic eaglais). These are spread in an arc from Eccles in the Tweed Valley (Scottish Borders) to Eaglesham south of Glasgow, as well as three instances in Dumfries and Galloway – Eccles in Penpont, Ecclefechan near Hoddam, and Terregles near Kirkcudbright. There is a further example in Cumbria, Eaglesfield; however, the biggest concentration of eccles-names is in West Yorkshire and Lancashire. There are some fifteen from this region, nine of which are located within the putative boundaries of British Elmet. This strongly suggests that Elmet evolved as a Christian British kingdom in the sub-Roman period; the survival of British rule here, and farther west in boundaries and Celtic survival’, Medieval History 2 (1992), p. 116. Many of these authors would point out that modern Welsh eglwys means ‘a church’.

85 K.H. Jackson, Language and History in Early Britain (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 227; Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, pp. 262-3; idem., Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings, p. 6.
86 Snyder, Age of Tyrants, p. 238; Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 263. Barrow, ‘The childhood of Scottish Christianity’, p. 3, points out that the more normal British place-name element denoting a ‘church’ was ilan, rather than eccles.
87 For example, Gelling, Signposts to the Past, pp. 82, 96-8; Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 101; Stancliffe, ‘Oswald, “most holy and most victorious king of the Northumbrians”’, pp. 78-9; Taylor, ‘Elmet: boundaries and Celtic survival’, p. 116.
88 Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, pp. 100-1.
89 Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 264. A distribution map is given by Thomas (p. 269), and by Barrow, ‘The childhood of Scottish Christianity’, p. 4, for all the eccles-names in Scotland. There are about twenty-six eccles-names in Scotland, eleven of which are obsolete.
90 For what it is worth, Eaglesfield is the site of one of only two certain post-Roman Christian cemeteries in Cumbria. See note 22 (supra., p. 291).
Lancashire until the time of Edwin, probably resulted in the protection of British Christianity until a relatively late date.92

The interpretation of this particular concentration of eccles-names, however, carries an important caveat: there is no certainty as to when they were given or whether they all necessarily belong to the same period. None of the northern examples is recorded prior to the Norman Conquest, and some are recorded much later.93 It is thus not clear how the eccles-names were given and subsequently remembered. While some authors have suggested that they were so named by pagan Anglo-Saxons taking over pre-existing Christian communities,94 there is a strong possibility that the names were given rather earlier by other Romano- or sub-Roman Britons who were not themselves Christian.95 There is no indication that the eccles-label ever found its way into colloquial use in Old English or that the Anglo-Saxons would have understood the etymology of the term as it appeared in a place-name.96 The Anglo-Saxons themselves did not use a derivation of the Latin ecclesia to name a church, but rather adopted cirice, a word derived from Greek.97 Thus, eccles as a place-name element may have already been archaic by the time the Anglo-Saxons in the north encountered these British communities,98 and many of the eccles-names might therefore belong to the corpus of Celtic place-names which passed into Old English with no particular thought as to their meaning. In this regard, the eccles place-names differ from the wealh place-names by not necessarily denoting ethnicity.

That said, there is some hint of continuity in the observation that a number of the eccles locations, mostly in Lancashire but also north of the Wall in the territory of the Gododdin, were known in late Anglo-Saxon England to have had churches with the

92 Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 265.
93 Cameron, 'Eccles in English place-names', pp. 87-92.
94 Gelling, Signposts to the Past, p. 82; Smith, 'Brito-Roman and Anglo-Saxon', p. 25; Snyder, Age of Tyrants, p. 239.
95 Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 263. Quensel-von Kalben, 'The British Church and the emergence of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms', p. 95, notes that the eccles-names only make sense if the majority of settlements around them were non-Christian.
96 Barrow, 'The childhood of Scottish Christianity', p. 3; Cameron, 'Eccles in English place-names', p. 89; Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, pp. 263-4.
97 Cirice, of course, is the origin of our words 'church' and 'kirk', and seems to have been borrowed from Greek by the Anglo-Saxons' Continental ancestors. See Barrow, 'The childhood of Scottish Christianity', p. 3; Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 264.
98 Barrow, 'The childhood of Scottish Christianity', p. 6; Brooke, Wild Men and Holy Places, pp. 23-4.
status of a *matrix ecclesia*, a ‘mother church’. The five hundreds of southern Lancashire – Amounderness, Blackburnshire, Leyland, Salford and West Derby – each possess a single example of an *eccles*-name which later became the location of a mother church. This could suggest that the late Anglo-Saxon hundreds in this region were based on earlier territorial boundaries that originated in the Roman or sub-Roman periods. As was mentioned earlier, the study of British Celtic place-names in the West Derby hundred suggests that Anglo-Saxon settlement did not occur until a relatively late date, thus increasing the likelihood of British names and perhaps institutions being passed on within an increasingly Christian milieu.

Four of the *eccles*-places north of the Wall – Eccles, Ecclesmachan, Falkirk (formerly Egglesbrech) and St Ninians (formerly Eccles) by Stirling – also became *matrices ecclesiae*, though not all were located in a region of significant Northumbrian tenure. While the evidence here is admittedly circumstantial, this is the strongest indication regarding some form of British Christian continuity in western Northumbria.

The extent to which the same conclusion can be extended to other areas of western Northumbria is, however, a matter of debate. Cumbria, for instance, stands in stark contrast to Lancashire by having a relative deficiency of *eccles*-names. In the light of the probability that this region was not directly ruled by Northumbria until the time of Ecgfrith (670-685), this deficiency is somewhat curious. If British Christianity, as revealed by the *eccles*-names, survived into the seventh century in Elmet and Lancashire, why then is there only one identified *eccles*-name in Cumbria? For a region which did not pass under direct Northumbrian control until a relatively late date, and where there probably survived a large British Celtic population even after conquest, Cumbria shows scant surviving evidence of continuous British Christian practice.

Deirdre O'Sullivan therefore argues that there is no indication that the Northumbrian church ‘was in any sense absorbing a pre-existing ecclesiastical structure in

---


100 See notes 20 and 41 (supra., pp. 168 & 171), regarding P.B. Russell’s research, ‘Place-name evidence for the survival of British settlements in the West Derby Hundred (Lancashire) after the Anglian invasions’, *NH* 28 (1992), pp. 25-41.

Cumbria', rather, she maintains that ecclesiastical organisation was wholly Northumbrian in origin. O'Sullivan's conclusions are corroborated by an examination of medieval church dedications in Cumbria. Leaving aside for the moment a pair of allegedly contemporaneous dedications to Ninian, the pattern of commemorations in Cumbria demonstrates a strong preference for international – Roman and apostolic – and English saints, rather than Celtic ones. To be sure, there are some Celtic dedications – to figures such as SS Brigit, Kentigern, Patrick and Columba – more than are to be found east of the Pennines in Northumberland or Durham. But these are to be associated with a twelfth-century revival of Celtic saints in the north-west, and not to be considered as early survivals. In Carlisle, apart from the late seventh-century Northumbrian monastery discussed earlier, there is no documentary or literary or archaeological evidence of a church before 1092. In this regard, Cumbria resembles the case of Devon, discussed in Chapter 5, where the surviving dedications mimic the rest of Anglo-Saxon England and not, for example, Celtic Cornwall. Even if pre-existing British dedications and other evidence of British Christian communities have been lost in Cumbria, the picture is one of fundamental change in the organisation of the church after the Northumbrian take-over and of the dominance of the saints' cults of England and the Continent.

---

102 O'Sullivan, ‘Cumbria before the Vikings’, p. 30.
103 O'Sullivan, ‘Cumbria before the Vikings’, pp. 30-1, shows that almost all of the earliest English place-names in Cumbria now possess the status of a parish or a township, a point of particular note given the later influx of Scandinavian and British names which might otherwise have clouded the picture. Later place-names, by contrast, are less frequently associated with parishes and townships. Thus, there is a ‘marked connection between early place-names and settlement loci which achieved the status of parishes and townships’. From this she contends that these names reflect some kind of ‘proto-parochial’ structure introduced by the Northumbrians from the later seventh century.
104 Orme, English Church Dedications, pp. 40-1. See below for the dedications to Ninian (infra., p. 312).
106 Phythian-Adams, Land of the Cumbrians, p. 72; Rose, ‘Cumbrian society and the Anglo-Norman church’, p. 131. Orme, English Church Dedications, p. 41, points out that these saints should more correctly be thought of as ‘intrusive’ rather than local. Gardner, ‘Kentigern, Columbia, and Oswald’, pp. 13-16, has recently argued that some of the dedications to Kentigern in Cumbria might be earlier but admits they are hard to date. He also notes that supposedly early dedications to Kentigern near Ripon are unlikely, as the examples here derive from the later ‘Mungo’ form that was adopted for Kentigern (p. 8).
108 Supra., pp. 100-1. There is no comprehensive survey of dedications in Strathclyde, which might give a more regional point of comparison. There is certainly a number of putatively early local British saints who were venerated in Strathclyde and Galloway: St Cadog of Cambuslang and St Constantine of Govan (Lanarkshire) already mentioned (see note 43, supra., p. 294), as well as SS Brioc, Cainer/Kenere, Medan, and Winnen. See Brooke, ‘The early history of the diocese of Whithorn’, pp. 32-6.
109 Orme, English Church Dedications, p. 41; O'Sullivan, ‘Cumbria before the Vikings’, p. 30.
The Evidence of the *Life of Wilfrid*

The evidence that has been discussed up to this point has shown that the presumption of British Christian continuity in western Northumbria is generally lacking in support, be that in the form of physical remains or place-names or dedications to Celtic saints. British Christian monastic and cult sites in the west must have existed — it would be very surprising if there were none — and some of these could have 'metamorphosed' into Anglo-Saxon houses. A caveat is introduced, however, by the testimony of Stephen of Ripon. Stephen's account in his *Life of Wilfrid* of the dedicatory ceremony at Ripon in the 670s, attended by King Ecgfrith, was alluded to earlier. Stephen reports that during the ceremony Wilfrid enumerated:

A list of the consecrated places in various parts [*diversis regionibus*] which the British clergy [*clerus Bryttannus*] had deserted when fleeing from the hostile sword wielded by the warriors of our own nation [*aciem gladii hostilis manu gentis*].

In this context, Stephen subsequently mentions Yeadon (West Yorks.), Dent and Catlow (Cumbria), and around the river Ribble (Lancs. or Cumbria) as having been newly granted by Ecgfrith. Assuredly, Stephen may have been exaggerating such claims in order to glorify his hero and benefit his community. But the report is consistent with a scenario whereby British Church lands were confiscated and given as endowments to the Northumbrian church in order to secure newly-conquered territory in the west. What Stephen's account does is, first of all, affirm the existence of British Christian communities to the west of Northumbria, as was presumed above. But additionally, it attests to the abandonment of some of these communities during Ecgfrith's conquests in the 670s. Perhaps the British clergy feared ill-treatment by the new Northumbrian

---

110 Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 11, hazards that the inclusion of northern British material in the *Historia Brittonum* may attest to the existence of northern British monasteries which produced now-lost written accounts.

111 Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 12, as stated earlier, is the most recent author to argue — rather valiantly, it should be allowed — for continuity. It has also been suggested that some of the parishes of eastern Dumfriesshire, such as at Hoddom which is associated with Kentigern, might have continued a British institution (Smith, 'The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland', p. 31). However, Lowe's recent report, 'New light on the Anglian “minster” at Hoddom', pp. 11-35, of the excavations at Hoddom revealed nothing of a specifically British nature.

112 *VW* 17 (supra., pp. 178-9, 282-3).

regime. Alternatively, their flight may have been related to the Synod of Whitby in 664 and the conflict between Roman and 'Celtic' practice; Bede does state that some of the Irish as well as Anglo-Saxon monks left for Ireland after the decision. In any event, the flight of British clergy does not indicate an environment, at least during the reign of Ecgfrith, within which continuity would have been promoted. The sites may have been respected as being sanctified, but, with British ecclesiastical personnel fleeing, there can be little question of institutional survival. Certainly, Stephen's account needs to be considered in its hagiographical context; but to suggest some form of ecclesiastical 'metamorphosis' from British to Northumbrian periods, is indicative of a certain naïveté regarding the exercise of authority and power. When all the evidence is considered, the possibility that British Christianity in any form was continued by or influenced the Northumbrian church can only be substantiated for one location, Whithorn.

The Case of Whithorn

Whithorn is unique in pre-Viking Britain in being a site where an indisputably British community associated with a British saint, Ninian, not only became the location of an Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical centre but, more significantly, seems to have continued the tradition of the British saint. Indeed, the Whithorn excavator Peter Hill has stated that in its adaptation and use of the cult of Ninian, the Northumbrian church appears to have shown an 'unaccustomed regard for the sensibilities of the Britons'. No other British figure attracted such obvious veneration by the early Anglo-Saxon church.

Bede's Historia ecclesiastica is only written source for the acquisition of Whithorn by the Northumbrian church. Bede describes Ninian as 'that most reverend and holy man ... a Briton [viro de natione Brettonum] who had received orthodox instruction at Rome in the faith and the mysteries of the truth’. In particular, he states that:

[Ninian's] episcopal see is celebrated for its church, dedicated to St Martin where his body rests, together with those of many other saints. The see is now under English rule. This place which is in the kingdom of Bernicia is

---

114 Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 100; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, pp. 24-5.
115 HE III.26. In this regard, Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, p. 121, suggested that the 'hostile sword' may have been an allegorical reference to the 'sword of St Peter', or in other words, Roman orthodoxy.
116 Stancliffe, 'Oswald, “most holy and most victorious king of the Nordumbrians”', p. 78.
117 Supra., p. 289.
118 Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, p. 18.
commonly called Candida Casa, because Ninian built a church of stone there.¹¹⁹

In Bede’s summary of the present state of Britain in 731, he recounts the recent establishment of the Northumbrian episcopal see at Whithorn because ‘the number of believers has so increased’, and of Pecthelm’s appointment as the first bishop.¹²⁰ From Bede’s account it appears that the overthrow of Cumbria, and the consequent expansion of Northumbrian political control north of the Solway around the end of the seventh century, resulted in the take-over of the Whithorn site. Subsequent settlement in the region led to a significant Northumbrian population, one that needed a local episcopal presence.¹²¹ While this information is instructive as far as it goes, several questions are left unanswered regarding the condition of the British community when the Northumbrians took-over the site; why the site was chosen as the centre for the Northumbrian church in the region, and indeed what was passed on by the British community to the incoming regime. In order to answer these questions, two related threads of evidence need to be considered. These pertain first of all to the site of Whithorn itself and the British and Northumbrian communities, and secondly to the cult of Ninian and its use by the Northumbrian church.

The state of the British community at Whithorn immediately prior to the Northumbrian acquisition is not particularly clear. Very little is known about the church and community prior to the Northumbrian period.¹²² Late-surviving Irish evidence suggests a sixth-century monastery in south-west Scotland ruled by a bishop ‘Nennio’ was known about in Ireland, and was remembered as a place of instruction and study.¹²³ We are, however, totally reliant on archaeological evidence for any level of detail. What the most recent excavations have revealed is that the monastery could have been

---
¹¹⁹ HE III.4. In the passage, ‘held by the English’ might be a better translation of ‘Anglorum gens obtineit’ than Colgrave and Mynors’ ‘under English rule’. The context for this passage is Bede’s account of the conversion of the Picts. Candida Casa subsequently became OE Hwit-aern, i.e. Whithorn. See Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 279.
¹²¹ Supra., p. 180.
¹²³ See Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, pp. 3-4. This evidence includes an eleventh-century Irish compilation of liturgical verse known as the Liber Hymnorum, the pertinent text of which is provided by J. MacQueen, St Nynia: With a Translation of the Miracula Nynie Episcopi and the Vita Niniani (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 42-3. The lateness of this evidence necessitates that it be treated with caution, as suggested by Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, p. 65.
experiencing a period of decline, or at least stagnation, during the seventh century. Apart from the possibility that Whithorn may have come under the influence of an Irish/Dalriadan monastery c.600, the site shows no major development after the mid-sixth century until the Northumbrians took control. Peter Hill consequently hypothesised that a 'twinge of conservatism' may have characterised the British community, perhaps because it was 'no longer at the forefront of ecclesiastical affairs'.

What is nevertheless apparent is that the Whithorn site was comprehensively renovated and re-developed at a time consistent with the Northumbrian takeover and the establishment of the new bishopric. The boundary of the pre-existing community appears to have continued to define the site, at least initially, and the new Northumbrian church was constructed around what looks to have been the earlier church and shrine. However, the Northumbrians undertook what Hill refers to as a 'radical transformation' of the Whithorn site; a major administrative and architectural undertaking involving the construction of further buildings, and intensive modification. Although aspects of the existing plan were re-used, the evidence from the site looks very much like the imposition of a new management.

This interpretation is supported by the evidence of the so-called 'Petrus stone', found about one kilometre south of Whithorn, which may have acted as a boundary or cemetery marker, perhaps beside the old road from the landing at the Isle of Whithorn. It shows on one side a damaged, dressed face where an earlier inscription has been removed. On another occurs the inscription '(L)OCI PETRI APVSTOLI', '[the stone/marker] of the locus of Peter the Apostle', as well as a symmetrically-placed 'cross-of-arcs' within which can be discerned a stylised Chi-Rho. What the stone appears to show is that an earlier statement, potentially British, ceased to be regarded as

---

124 Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, pp. 30, 39. The most recent excavations were carried out in 1984-91 and are reported fully by Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian. Brooke, Wild Men and Holy Places, p. 44, and idem., 'The early history of the diocese of Whithorn', p. 38, following Hill's interim excavation reports, has also suggested decay and decline for the British monastery.
125 Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, p. 37, 40. Irish influence is suggested by a change in burial rites consistent with Irish practice. On this point, see also Cramp, Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards, p. 15; Thomas, Whithorn's Christian Beginnings, p. 20.
127 Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, pp. 18, 40-8.
129 Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, p. 38. Contra. Thomas, Whithorn's Christian Beginnings, p. 10, who suggests that it was removed from a central location at Whithorn.
appropriate and was consequently destroyed. This was then replaced by the ‘cross-of-arcs’, and the Petrus inscription, which (Charles Thomas states) ‘more or less announces the acquisition of a Petrine relic’. The inscription thus proclaims a Northumbrian origin – the cult of St Peter was of course triumphant at Whitby in 664 – and shows that Roman orthodoxy at Whithorn was not compromised by the Northumbrian take-over of the monastery. Hill has suggested that the stone ‘was used by successive masters of Whithorn to proclaim their authority’, and its placement near the road from the Isle might have meant that it served a declarative function to incoming pilgrims and visitors. This may therefore be evidence of conscious revisionism at Whithorn whereby successive regimes altered the ideological landscape in order to suit their own doctrines.

The evidence ‘on the ground’ suggests, then, that the Northumbrians did make use of existing structures at Whithorn, and this may imply some understanding of what was already in place at the site. However, archaeology also reveals a significant degree of discontinuity between the successive British and Northumbrian communities. Indeed, the practice of monument re-use is by no means unusual in early Anglo-Saxon England and does not necessarily reveal continuity from the immediate British past. Excavation shows that the Northumbrians thoroughly redeveloped the site, and this may also have served to make a fresh statement regarding the prevailing power and political authority in the region.

The fate of the British monks at Whithorn is not known. There is no evidence indicating whether they were absorbed into the Northumbrian community, or if they left to find refuge in British Strathclyde or Wales, or within an Irish/Dalriadan community. If the testimony of Stephen of Ripon can be extended to Whithorn, it might be supposed that some fled before the Northumbrian advance, or perhaps after the appropriation of their lands. However, Bede says that, c.703, ‘the greater part of the Irish in Ireland and

130 For what it is worth, the Chi-Rho monogram in the ‘cross-of-arcs’ on the Petrus stone is stylistically different from the ones on the Kirkmadrine stones (supra., pp. 291-2), and so suggests a different cultural influence. Parallels to the ‘cross-of-arcs’ are found at the Whithorn site as well as in Ireland. See Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, p. 38; Thomas, Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings, pp. 8-11.
131 Thomas, Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings, p. 19.
133 Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, p. 38.
134 Thomas, Whithorn’s Christian Beginnings, p. 20, talks of Whithorn being ‘revived’ under the Northumbrians.
135 Supra., pp. 95-6, 278-9.
some of the Britons in Britain adopted the reasonable and canonical date for keeping Easter.\textsuperscript{136} If these 'Britons in Britain' were located in Dumfries and Galloway, as is quite possible given the chronology proposed for the Northumbrian takeover, then some of the British monks in the Whithorn community may have stayed and conformed to Roman practice. If they did stay, however, their identity disappeared. Whithorn in the eighth century is entirely Northumbrian; no British personal names are recorded, while Anglo-Saxon examples are.\textsuperscript{137} Changes in animal husbandry practices between the seventh and eighth to ninth centuries also suggest a transformation in the nature of the community.\textsuperscript{138} Further, there was a contraction in Whithorn's Irish sea contacts in the eighth century, and this may similarly be indicative of transformation,\textsuperscript{139} in addition to the related monumental and place-name evidence which suggests that Whithorn came to be within an 'Anglian enclave' in Galloway, with little evidence of intercourse with the surrounding Britons.\textsuperscript{140}

Whatever the state of the British community at Whithorn at the time of its annexation, some memories of Ninian must nevertheless have survived to be passed on to the incoming Northumbrian hierarchy.\textsuperscript{141} This leads to another thread of evidence regarding Whithorn: the cult of Ninian and its use by the Northumbrian church. For the Northumbrians to consider Whithorn as suitable for an episcopal see, there must have been something to recommend it to them. The sanctity of the site would doubtless have had its appeal; the Anglo-Saxons were disposed to recognising pre-existing ritual loci.\textsuperscript{142} Perhaps the location of the monastery was seen as advantageous. Its position on the western seaboard was ideally sited for the Northumbrian church to use it as a model of their spiritual leadership over the northern 'Celtic' churches after the Synod of

\textsuperscript{136} HE V.15.  
\textsuperscript{137} The \textit{Miracula Nynie Episcopi}, 'The Miracles of Bishop Ninian', written in the late eighth century, describes several miracle stories which are probably contemporaneous, the beneficiaries of which possess Anglo-Saxon names (MacQueen, \textit{St Nynia}, pp. 88-101). See also Clancy, 'The real St Ninian', pp. 4-5; Hill, \textit{Whithorn and St. Ninian}, pp. 1, 19. The eighth-century bishops of Whithorn all had Anglo-Saxon names.  
\textsuperscript{138} Hill, \textit{Whithorn and St. Ninian}, p. 18. Cattle bones dominate the seventh-century faunal remains, a finding consistent with British, Pictish and Dalriadic sites in Scotland. But in the eighth century there is an increase in the proportion of sheep and the introduction of domestic fowl and geese.  
\textsuperscript{139} Hill, \textit{Whithorn and St. Ninian}, p. 48. There is no eighth-century evidence, for example, for commerce with Ireland; no Northumbrian coins are known from Irish sites, even though there are such coins at Whithorn. The seventh century, by way of contrast, saw evidence of commerce around the Irish Sea.  
\textsuperscript{140} This matter was raised earlier in the context of the survival of British identity (\textit{supra.}, pp. 283-4).  
\textsuperscript{142} Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review', p. 242; Williams, 'Ancient landscapes and the dead', 1-32.
Whitby,\textsuperscript{143} serving to proclaim Roman orthodoxy and intellectual calibre in what had been a region dominated by the influence of Iona to the north.\textsuperscript{144}

But apart from its location, the choice of Whithorn must have been influenced by the existence of a tradition that could be harnessed to Northumbrian needs, namely, that of Ninian. As stated earlier, what makes the case of Whithorn unique in pre-Viking Britain is that it is the only known example of the promulgation of a British saint by the Anglo-Saxon church, without which the tradition of Ninian may have been lost to history.\textsuperscript{145} As portrayed by the Northumbrians, the cult of Ninian offered a number of advantages. Bede presented Ninian as a bishop who ‘had received orthodox instruction at Rome in the faith’.\textsuperscript{146} Ninian could thus be used to proclaim, accurately or otherwise, an ancient orthodoxy for Whithorn. In this sense, Bede’s account legitimises the Northumbrian acquisition of the monastery and its estates, with the Northumbrian church as the ‘rightful’ inheritor of the Ninianic legacy.\textsuperscript{147} Political dominance in the region may also have been facilitated by this exercise in propaganda, and territorial control may have been achieved by endowments of confiscated land to the new Northumbrian bishop.\textsuperscript{148}

The Northumbrian church could also benefit economically from the promotion of Ninian’s shrine and healing cult. Bede surely engaged in a little deliberate advertising when he reported that Ninian’s ‘body rests, together with those of many other saints’ at Whithorn.\textsuperscript{149} The \textit{Miracula Nynie Episcopi}, ‘Miracles of Bishop Nynia’, an eighth-century verse \textit{Life} of Ninian, similarly promoted Whithorn as a centre of healing.\textsuperscript{150} This tract was probably composed at Whithorn, and contains a number of ‘ancient’ as well as contemporary miracles associated with the Northumbrian period.\textsuperscript{151} The \textit{Miracula}, and its associated eighth-century Latin verse tract – the \textit{Hymnus Sancti Nynie}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{143} Brooke, \textit{Wild Men and Holy Places}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{144} The apparent isolation of Northumbrian Whithorn in the eighth to ninth centuries from its Celtic neighbours should, however, make us question the efficacy of such a motive.
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{HE} III.4.
\textsuperscript{147} Bradley, \textit{Celtic Christianity}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{HE} III.4.
\textsuperscript{151} Hill, \textit{Whithorn and St. Ninian}, p. 19; Macquarrie, \textit{Saints of Scotland}, p. 53. Composition of the \textit{Miracula} at Whithorn in the eighth century may indicate the presence of a scriptorium (see Brooke, ‘The early history of the diocese of Whithorn’, pp. 39-40; Clancy, ‘The real St Ninian’, p. 4).
\end{flushright}
Episcopi, ‘Hymn of St Ninian the Bishop’ — gained wide circulation. Both were sent to Alcuin when he was resident at Aachen. With his reply, sent c.790, in which he referred to the ‘many virtues’ of Ninian’s church, he bestowed a silk veil for Ninian’s shrine. Northumbrian coins found at the Whithorn site can be interpreted as payments for healing or offerings to the shrine, or perhaps as burial dues. Anglian inscriptions on the stones of the nearby St Ninian’s Cave demonstrate that this site was also used as a place of pilgrimage during the Northumbrian period.

It is possible to show, therefore, that the Northumbrian church was quite willing to exploit the tradition of a saint, identified by Bede as British. For this tradition to have been passed on, some British institutional continuity at Whithorn should be expected. However, a degree of caution should be exercised over the extent of institutional survival at Whithorn, as the strength of Ninian’s cult prior to the Northumbrian takeover can only be a matter of conjecture. As Charles Thomas observes, ‘nobody known to be writing earlier than Bede mentions any monastery in connection with Ninian … at Whithorn’. Thus, the Ninian seen in the earliest sources is an entirely Northumbrian representation. John MacQueen has hypothesised the existence of a lost British prose Life which provided information for Bede, as well as for the early material in the Miracula and for the twelfth-century Life of Ninian attributed to Ailred of Rievaulx.

If this is true, it could be that a manuscript of this prose Life was handed over by the British community at Whithorn to the new Northumbrian hierarchy, thus affirming the standing of the tradition at Whithorn. Notwithstanding the existence of such a Life, Bede’s terminology when introducing his Ninianic material — ‘so it is said [ut perhibet]’


154 Alcuin’s letter to the Monks at Whithorn is contained in MGH Epist. IV, no. 273, p. 431.

155 Hill, Whithorn and St. Ninian, p. 47.


158 MacQueen, St Nynia, pp. 2-6. He suggests that the British Life was used by Ailred, via a later, also lost, Anglo-Saxon redaction; though Clancy, ‘The real St Ninian’, p. 5, has recently assessed this link as unnecessary. MacQueen dated this hypothetical British Life to c.550-650; however, as stated by Broun, ‘The literary record of St Nynia’, p. 146, the reason why these dates were advanced is unclear, and in any event, they are probably a little early. Ailred’s Life is translated by MacQueen, St Nynia, pp. 102-24.
— rather suggests that he gained his information from a source, perhaps oral, that he was less confident about.\textsuperscript{159}

There is little information regarding the prevalence of Ninian's cult beyond Whithorn before the Northumbrian period, and thus whether any other sites associated with the saint can be said to demonstrate continuity. There are numerous dedications to Ninian.\textsuperscript{160} However, as his cult was popularised by the Northumbrian church, and by the church from the twelfth century onwards, it is unsound to assume that any given dedication to Ninian is pre-Northumbrian without corroboration.\textsuperscript{161} Supposedly early dedications suggested on the evidence of place-names, such as Ninewells (Brampton Old Church, Cumbria, and near Abercrom on the Forth), and Ninekirks (Brougham, Cumbria), are more accurately associated with later Northumbrian and Scandinavian periods.\textsuperscript{162} The medieval dedication to Ninian at Kirkton (formerly Eccles) in Stirling has been called 'ancient'.\textsuperscript{163} However, as this site was in Manaw Gododdin, a region which was arguably held by the Northumbrians for a maximum of only forty years in the mid-seventh century, it is questionable whether this should stand as an example of continuity. In fact, the only supposedly early commemoration of Ninian in Northumbrian territory beyond Whithorn is the now-lost stone from Peebles (apparently inscribed 'LOCVS SANCTI NICHOLAI EPISCOPI'), and this connection can only be made if Duncan's emendation of 'Nicholai' to Niniaui' is accepted.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{159} Hill, \textit{Whithorn and St. Ninian}, p. 2. Duncan, 'Bede, Iona and the Picts', pp. 20-31, argued that Bede's source for the information about Ninian, which is contained in a chapter on the conversion of the Picts (infra., pp. 346-8), came from the Anglo-Saxon cleric Egberht via messengers sent to Abbot Ceolfrith of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow from the court of the Pictish king Nechtan, c.710-15. Thomas, \textit{Whithorn's Christian Beginnings}, p. 14, pointed out that this does not rule out Bede's learning further information from his colleague, contemporary and correspondent Pecthelm, after he became bishop of Whithorn, or even from Trumwine, who was bishop to the Picts at Abercorn in the early 680s. On the recording of oral tradition see H. Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies and Germanic oral tradition', \textit{Journal of Medieval History} 7 (1981), p. 224.

\textsuperscript{160} Curiously, there is only one dedication to Ninian in Galloway, apart from Whithorn, at Penninghame. Brooke, 'The early history of the diocese of Whithorn', p. 44 n.52, states that this is 'probably eighth century', without providing any clear rationale. The nearest eccles-name is Terregles near Kirkcudbright.


\textsuperscript{162} Brooke, 'The early history of the diocese of Whithorn', pp. 46-7; Phythyian-Adams, \textit{Land of the Cumbrians}, p. 72; Thomas, 'The evidence from North Britain', pp. 99-100. Ninewells contains the OE element \textit{wel}, 'well', and \textit{Ninekirks}, the Scandinavian \textit{kirka}, 'church'. There is also a St Ninian's Well at Brisco near Carlisle (Cumbria), as well as two further examples at Holystone and Whittingham (Northumberland). The earliest surviving record for one of the Cumbrian names is from the sixteenth century, and the Ninewells near Abercorn as preserved only as a field-name in an eighteenth-century map.


\textsuperscript{164} See note 30 (\textit{supra.}, p. 292).
It can only be speculated, therefore, how much of the Ninianic tradition was passed on by the British community, and how much was invented, or at least extemporised, by Northumbrian propagandists. The miracles reported in the eighth-century *Miracula* which relate to Ninian’s own life-time may have been part of a corpus of existing house-tradition at Whithorn. But much of the rest of the surviving information about Ninian has come under increasing criticism as to its antiquity as well as its historicity. However, even if much of the record of Ninian is unreliable and concocted, the Northumbrian church did, nevertheless, venerate Ninian at Whithorn. And even Bede, who could not be accused of being favourably disposed towards the Britons, did not recoil from identifying Ninian as a Briton. Ninian thus occupies a unique position in regard to ecclesiastical interaction between the Northumbrians and northern Britons.

***

In this section, the evidence for association and influence between the churches of the northern Britons and the Northumbrians has been examined. One of the main problems encountered is that the written sources are exclusively Northumbrian, and for pre-Viking Britain this means that Bede’s infrequent references to British Christianity are all that can be used. As a result, much of the argument for British Christian influence and ecclesiastical continuity has turned on an examination of archaeological sites and place-names. While it has been claimed that there was a substratum of existing British Christianity on which the Roman and Columban clergy founded their respective missions, the present examination has shown that this is almost impossible to substantiate in any detailed manner. Beyond the case of Whithorn, the only glimmer of continuity to be found is in the *eccles* place-names in West Yorkshire and Lancashire, which became the sites for later *matrices ecclesiae*. The re-use of Roman structures may suggest an appreciation for Roman architecture and its reflected glory; however, this need not indicate anything of British continuity, ecclesiastical or political. When all the evidence is considered, such as it is, it appears that British Christianity in the north was of little importance in the development of Northumbrian Christianity.

---

The Columban Church in Northumbria\textsuperscript{171}

In contrast to the evidence for ecclesiastical contact between the Northumbrians and Northern Britons, the evidence for Irish – and more specifically Columban – influence on the development of Christianity in Northumbria is both abundant and undisputed.\textsuperscript{172} As explained by David Dumville, the nominal Christianisation of at least half of Anglo-Saxon England through the seventh century was brought about by Irish clerics and their Anglo-Saxon trainees.\textsuperscript{173} Granted, Northumbria had seen the introduction of Christianity under Edwin in the late 620s, spear-headed by the Roman bishop Paulinus, and after Paulinus fled on the death of Edwin in 633 his ministry in York was continued by James the Deacon.\textsuperscript{174} However, it was under the bishops from Iona that Christianity ultimately triumphed.\textsuperscript{175} To this end, the nature of ecclesiastical interaction and contact between the Northumbrians and the Columban Christians of Dalriada differs from what was earlier discussed regarding the Northumbrians' supposed association with the Britons. Here the concern is not with attempting to uncover evidence for the transmission of Christianity from a conquered native population, nor even from neighbours sharing a contiguous border. Rather, the interest is with examining the process by which Christianity was fostered in Northumbria under the instruction of non-native Celtic clergy who came from a distant location. Much of the evidence for ‘Anglo-Irish' ecclesiastical contact in Anglo-Saxon England has been well-rehearsed in the secondary literature,\textsuperscript{176} and it is not the aim here to offer a radically new

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{171}] The term ‘Columban' is used to refer to the Christianity and clergy of Iona, so as to provide a differentiation from the church and clerics of mainland Ireland.
  \item[\textsuperscript{173}] Dumville, “Beowulf” and the Celtic world', p. 110.
  \item[\textsuperscript{174}] \textit{HE} II.20.
  \item[\textsuperscript{175}] I. Wood, ‘Conversion', in \textit{Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE}, p. 121, notes that Columban and Irish clergy in Northumbria may have been assisted in their work because they were evangelising in an area that had already been exposed to Christianity.
interpretation. Instead, it is intended that, by bringing together the relevant material, some understanding might be communicated of the mechanics of ecclesiastical interaction between the Columban clergy and the Anglo-Saxon Northumbrians.

The Columban Mission to Northumbria

The introduction of Columban Christianity into Northumbria occurred as a result of the exile of the sons of Æthelfrith to Dalriada, c.616-633. The exiles were converted from paganism during their long stay in Dalriada, with Bede stating that they were ‘instructed in the faith as the Irish [Scottish] taught it and were regenerated by the grace of baptism’. Æthelfrith’s sons were, therefore, inculcated into a Christian tradition, which differed from that which was being promulgated at the time in Northumbria by the Roman Paulinus, under the sponsorship of Æthelfrith’s enemy Edwin. Iona was founded in or soon after 563 by St Columba, who according to Adomnan had ‘set sail from Ireland to be a pilgrim’. While it is likely that Christianity had reached Dalriada before Columba’s arrival, it is with the saint that the Christian record in the west of Scotland begins. And indeed, although the process of its growth is not well documented, Iona soon came to head a network of churches and monasteries not only in Dalriada but also in mainland Ireland and in Pictland.

When Oswald eventually returned to Northumbria on the death of his elder brother Eanfrith in 634, and was victorious over Cadwallon and Penda at Heavenfield.
(Denisesburn), Bede says that he ‘was anxious that the people under his rule should be filled with the grace of the Christian faith’. In the context of Oswald’s own conversion, it is not surprising that it was to Iona that he sent for a bishop to teach and minister to his new subjects. Oswald’s choice of Iona as the source for a mission to Northumbria may have been influenced by its high status at the time and by the existence of Columban daughter-houses in the north amongst the Scots of Dalriada and perhaps the Picts, which might have been able to assist in the process of conversion. In addition, a request to Iona may have had the added benefit of differentiating Oswald’s Christian rulership from that of Edwin, who was allied with the Roman south and who clearly had not benefited from his recent conversion to Christianity. Barbara Yorke has speculated whether the choice of the Columban monks, as Celts, assisted in the integration of the resident British substratum within an expanding Northumbria. While one should be chary of expecting any necessary ecclesiastical unity between the Britons and the Dalriadans, it is nevertheless probable that at the time their clergy had more in common with one another than with the Roman clergy in the south. Bede says that Aidan was dispatched from Iona forthwith, and was granted the island of Lindisfarne as his see ‘in accordance with his wishes’. His choice of Lindisfarne was probably influenced by its physical similarity to Iona – as close as was likely to be found within the territory of Northumbria – and arguably by its proximity to the royal residence at Bamburgh. Together with other Columban clergy who also travelled

---

182 Richter, Ireland and Her Neighbours, p. 49; Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 25.
183 HE III.3.
184 Higham, Convert Kings, p. 209.
186 B. Yorke, Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England (London, 1990), p. 86. See also Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 14, who gamely suggests that the Columban missionaries in Northumbria would have ‘grafted themselves on a raft of existing Christianity, even as far as using the same cult sites and employing and validating their staff’. The difficulty in finding positive evidence of British ecclesiastical continuity was discussed in the previous section.
187 The notion that there was any such thing as a ‘Celtic Church’ has been thoroughly discounted by W. Davies, ‘The Celtic Church’, Journal of Religious History 8 (1974-75), pp. 406-11; idem., ‘The myth of the Celtic Church’, pp. 12-21, and Hughes, ‘The Celtic Church: is this a valid concept?’, pp. 1-20.
188 See Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 283 n. 122, for a discussion of Dalriadan/Irish and British ecclesiastical contact. Ireland had of course been subject to the evangelisation of British missionaries such as Patrick. There is also evidence from Adomnán’s Life of Columba of British and Dalriadan contact. Adomnán mentions a Briton who died on Iona (VC III.6), and an Irishman who was sent by Columba to spend twelve years in penance among the British (VC I.22).
189 HE III.3.
south, Aidan proceeded to extend the Christian faith throughout Northumbria, preaching the gospel, teaching, and building churches, and Oswald for his part supported Aidan by not only endowing land for monasteries but also acting as interpreter for the Irish-speaking bishop.\textsuperscript{191}

This is a reasonable summary of the conversion as presented by Bede, though it scarcely reveals the significant effort that would have been required to mount a mission which, at least initially, would have been organised from Iona.\textsuperscript{192} The marshalling of a mission\textsuperscript{193} from Iona would have required consideration of a number of practical administrative matters. To begin with the issue of language: the mission will have meant, over time, a substantial infiltration of Irish-speaking clerics into Northumbria.\textsuperscript{194} To be effective, missionaries would have needed to able to communicate their Christian message to the Northumbrians, that is if they intended to teach by more than just their personal examples of holiness.\textsuperscript{195} This in turn would have necessitated some consideration of how to cope with an initial language barrier. Bede says that Aidan himself ‘was not completely at home in the English tongue’ and required the king to translate to his ealdormen and thegns.\textsuperscript{196} Clearly, this was one way in which the linguistic divide could be overcome, and it might be expected that the king’s example was followed by the other Northumbrian exiles who had similarly learned Irish while abroad.\textsuperscript{197} However, reliance on the former exiles would have become less practicable as the number of Irish clerics increased and as they travelled farther afield.\textsuperscript{198}

---


\textsuperscript{191} M. Richter, ‘Practical aspects of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons’, in Ni Chatháin & Richter, Irland und die Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission, p. 363, has suggested the more neutral term of ‘agents of conversion’ in place of ‘missions’ or ‘missionaries’; he argues that ‘professional’ clerics were only part of the conversion equation.


\textsuperscript{193} Richter, ‘Practical aspects of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons’, p. 375. Bede, for example, comments on Aidan’s pious model (\textit{HE} III.5).

\textsuperscript{194} ‘HE’ III.3.

\textsuperscript{195} We know, for example, that Oswiu was also fluent in Irish (\textit{HE} III.25).

Moreover, though the evidence that Iona conducted evangelical work amongst non-Irish speakers is limited only to Bede’s story of Columba converting the Picts, it should not be expected that the Columban mission would have been so haphazard and unsophisticated as to rely solely on the services and goodwill of what was probably a relatively small cohort of nobles and their retainers. The existence of dedicated interpreters attached to the mission is, therefore, a distinct possibility, as is the training of the Columban missionaries themselves in Old English, either before or after they departed from Iona, as well as the formulation of a Christian vocabulary in this new vernacular. Bi- or even multi-lingualism would not have been unknown in a northern sociopolitical milieu which was characterised by overlordship, tribute collection and hostage-taking. In this regard, the two ‘Saxons’ who were resident amongst the Iona community in the time of Columba were probably not unusual; others like them might have either returned to Northumbria as interpreters or helped to familiarise the Columban missionaries with Old English. Some of the captives/slaves whom Aidan ransomed while in Northumbria may also have served in this capacity. The success of the Columban missionaries is a testament to their eventual ability to deal with the language problem, and there is enough evidence to suggest that Aidan himself became conversant with Old English.

Beyond the matter of language, was there any advance discussion of what David Dumville refers to as a ‘mission-theology’, the approach by which Christianity was to be promulgated amongst the Northumbrians? The fact that the mission was not a

201 Bullough, p. 35.  
202 Supra., p. 233.  
203 Dumville, ‘‘Beowulf’ and the Celtic world’, pp. 111-12, notes the preparations that were made for the Roman mission of 596-7 to Kent. Bede states that Pope Gregory arranged for Frankish interpreters to accompany St Augustine and his companions (HE I.25). Gregory also educated captured Anglo-Saxon boys to serve as interpreters (H&S III, p. 5). See also O’Neill, ‘Irish cultural influence on Northumbria’, pp. 13-14.  
204 HE III.5.  
205 Higham, Northern Counties, p. 281.  
206 In Bede’s account of Oswald acting as an interpreter for Aidan (HE III.3), we are told that the bishop had ‘not acquired a perfect knowledge of the English language [Anglorum linguam perfecte non nouerat]’ (emphasis added, and not following Colgrave and Mynors). This implies that Aidan had some knowledge of the language. Bede subsequently relates an account of Aidan conversing with Oswine of Deira (HE III.14), during which an Irish priest asks the bishop a question ‘in his native tongue [suus lingua patria]’ so not to be understood by the rest of the company. The implication is that, up to that point, Aidan had been conversing in Old English. See O’Neill, ‘Irish cultural influence on Northumbria’, p. 13.  
207 Dumville, ‘‘Beowulf’ and the Celtic world’, pp. 116-18. Richter, ‘Practical aspects of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons’, p. 371, notes that little evidence survives of how people were actually persuaded, on the ground, to convert to Christianity in the seventh century.
Columban initiative, but rather was founded as a result of Oswald's request for a bishop, means that the amount of forethought may not have been comparable, say, to the earlier Roman mission to Kent. Nevertheless, a strong sign that some consideration was given to how to preach to the Northumbrians is provided in Bede's account of the life of Aidan. Bede says that Aidan was not in fact the first missionary sent from Iona to preach to Oswald's people, a point often overlooked in discussions of the Columban mission. The first unnamed cleric was said to be a man of 'harsh/austere disposition [austerioris animi]' who, after some time preaching to the Northumbrians, met with no success because they 'were unwilling to listen to him'. He consequently returned to Iona and reported that he had failed in his task because the Northumbrians were 'intractable, obstinate and of barbarous temperament [indomabiles et durae ac barbarae mentis]'. A council was subsequently held to discuss how best to bring the Christian message to the Anglo-Saxons, and at this meeting Aidan made known his views that a more gentle and measured approach to Christianisation was to be recommended. Aidan's notions were adopted, and he was chosen as the man to lead the renewed mission. What this testimony reveals is that there was discussion on Iona of what amounts to a mission-theology: a rule of temperance and moderation that was intended to characterise the Columban approach to conversion. To this end, the unnamed cleric's efforts might be regarded as an unintended 'fact-finding mission' to measure the temperament of the Northumbrians when at home. Though he was not himself effective, this cleric's initial foray provided a point of departure for the subsequent mission under Aidan.

The Columban missionaries, therefore, would have made some effort to accommodate their mission strategy to the language and sensibilities of the Anglo-Saxon Northumbrians. But they themselves would have had a strong influence on the Northumbrians. The mission brought the kingdom of Northumbria within the familia of the community of Iona. The secular rulership of the realm under Oswald and then Oswiu was ethnically Anglo-Saxon, with a probable Irish/Scottish flavour. But its

208 Dumville, "Beowulf" and the Celtic world", p. 113; Higham, Convert Kings, pp. 209-10. Sharpe, Adomnan of Iona, p. 253 n. 43, suggests that it was during the process of negotiating for a bishop that Oswald visited Iona, perhaps accompanying this first cleric when he returned.

209 HE III.5.

210 Dumville, "Beowulf" and the Celtic world", p. 117; Richter, Ireland and Her Neighbours, p. 103; Ziegler, 'Oswald and the Irish', p. 13. This policy was not dissimilar in essence to Pope Gregory's advice to Augustine in Kent (HE I.27).

211 Kirby, Earliest English Kings, p. 89. Adomnán speaks of Columba's church as a matrix ecclesia, a 'mother church' (VC I.5), which might be taken to imply leadership over a hierarchy of other churches.
ecclesiastical governance was, as a result of the mission, obedient to Ionan authority. There does not appear to have been any attempt to revive Paulinus's bishopric at York, even though a Roman presence remained. Aidán, who was bishop of Lindisfarne c.634-651, and his successors Finán (651-661) and Colmán (661-664), were all appointed from Iona, and at least initially, many of their acolytes would have come from Dalriada or Ireland. It is unknown exactly how many Columban and other Irish clergy, over time, travelled to Northumbria, but it may be surmised that their presence was vigorous. Bede says that, after Aidán's arrival, 'many came from the country of the Irish [Scots] into Britain'. The Columban clergy proceeded to instruct, train and eventually ordain Northumbrian students. Such training would have served as an additional means for cultural transmission, and in this way the kingdom was further supplied with a cohort of native Anglo-Saxon clergy who were indoctrinated in the Columban tradition. Dumville's description of the situation is apt:

Monasteries were founded by Irishmen, and the English continued to be pupils. They learned to read and write from the Irishmen: they were taught to read, write, and speak Latin; they were instructed in all aspects of Christian faith and learning by Irishmen; under the eye of Irish masters, they became scribes and illuminators of manuscripts, metalworkers, stonemasons, and so on. All aspects of Northumbrian (and Mercian) Christianity in the first generation will have been Irish, making due allowance of course for the non-Irish circumstances in which the missions operated.

---

212 Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, p. 89. The continued tenure of James the Deacon at York has already been mentioned (supra., p. 314), but Dumville, "Beowulf" and the Celtic world', p. 111, does not think that Paulinus left behind any substantial body of Roman clergy.

213 *HE* III.17, III.25; *AU* s.a. 660.

214 *HE* III.25, III.26, IV.4; *AU* s.a. 668.


217 The most frequently-cited example is of the twelve Anglo-Saxon boys trained by Aidán (*HE* III.26). See also *HE* III.5, regarding Aidán ransoming captives/slaves, many of whom became his students.

218 Irish-trained Anglo-Saxon clergy named by Bede include: Utta, abbot of Gateshead, and his brother Adda, priest to the Middle Angles (*HE* III.15, III.21); Betti, another priest to the Middle Angles (*HE* III.21); Trumhere, bishop of the Mercians, the Middle Angles and the people of Lindsey (*HE* III.21, III.24); Cedd, bishop of the East Saxons and also the first native Anglo-Saxon bishop, consecrated in the mid-650s (*HE* III.21, III.22); Eata, abbot of Melrose, and of Lindisfarne after 664 (*HE* III.26); Cudda, who is recorded as living at Lindisfarne (he was Wilfrid's master there), and who appears to have become abbot at some point after 664 (*VW* 2; *Bede. Vcuth* 37). There are also others whom Bede specifically mentions as having spent time in monasteries in Ireland, such as Chad, bishop of York and then bishop of the Mercians and the people of Lindsey (*HE* III.28, IV.3), and Tuda, who briefly became bishop of the Northumbrians at Lindisfarne after Colmán (*HE* III.26).

219 Dumville, "Beowulf" and the Celtic world', p. 115. This is not to discount other influences; see Campbell, 'The debt of the early English Church to Ireland', pp. 340-2.
The education of the new Northumbrian clergy would have also involved the
transmission of Irish Latin texts: bibles, prayer books, penitentials, martyrlogies and
saints' Lives; works of exegesis and commentary, grammar and computistics.\(^{221}\)
Indeed, during the seventh century, Ireland's literary output was relatively strong, and
many works probably found their way into Anglo-Saxon England via the activities of
the Columban missionaries and other pilgrims.\(^{222}\) Specific studies have considered Irish
influence on aspects of early Anglo-Saxon private prayer,\(^{223}\) and on the writings of
Bede himself.\(^{224}\) Part of the success of the Columbans in Northumbria may have been
because, like the Anglo-Saxons, they came to Christianity as 'barbarians' and Latin was
for them also a foreign language.\(^{225}\) Their pedagogical methods were probably more
specifically attuned to the 'barbarian' mind, and they may have had a greater
appreciation for the norms of a tribal society than the Roman missionaries.

The influence of the mission from Iona extended beyond Northumbria, into Middle
Anglia, Essex and Lindsey and also into Mercia after Penda's defeat at the battle of
*Winwaed* in 655.\(^{226}\) This was the period during which Oswiu was at the height of his
authority, and thus most able to extend his control.\(^{227}\) The placement of clergy
subordinate to Lindisfarne in these kingdoms was no doubt part of his political
strategy.\(^{228}\) In the 650s, Irish clergy were consecrated as bishops by Finán of
Lindisfarne, including Diuma, who became bishop of the Middle Angles, Mercians and

---

\(^{221}\) Bieler, 'Ireland's contribution to the culture of Northumbria', pp. 215-26; G. Bonner, 'Ireland and Rome: the double inheritance of Christian Northumbria', in M.H. King & W.M. Stevens (eds.), *Saints, Scholars and Heroes: Studied in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones* (Minnesota, 1979), pp. 101-116; Bullough, 'The missions to the English and the Picts', pp. 87-8, 95-6; Dumville, "Beowulf" and the Celtic world", p. 118. Hughes, 'Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English', pp. 59-64, provides examples of particular texts. O'Neill, 'Irish cultural influence on Northumbria', pp. 14-19, argues that the aim at this stage would have been to educate the native Northumbrian clergy as missionaries rather than scholars.


\(^{226}\) *HE* III.24; *HB* 64, 65.

\(^{227}\) *Supra.*, p. 207.

\(^{228}\) Higham, *Convert Kings*, pp. 231-50; *idem.*, 'Dynasty and cult: the utility of Christian mission to Northumbrian kings between 642 and 654', in J. Hawkes & S. Mills (eds.), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 95-104. Richter, 'Practical aspects of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', pp. 366-7, thus argues that the aristocracy was 'an agent of Christianisation of paramount importance'.

the people of Lindsey, and his successor Ceollach,\textsuperscript{229} as were Irish-trained Anglo-Saxons such as Cedd, who became bishop of the East Saxons.\textsuperscript{230} Finán also baptised Peada, king of the Middle Angles,\textsuperscript{231} and Sigeberht II "the Saint", king of the East Saxons.\textsuperscript{232} Perhaps, twenty years earlier, Oswald took Irish or Columban clergymen with him when he attended the baptism of Cynegils, king of the West Saxons.\textsuperscript{233}

The Irish Christian presence in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms was not the exclusive province of the Columban missionaries.\textsuperscript{234} There were Irish clergy abroad in Anglo-Saxon England, prior to the kingship of Oswald and the arrival of Aidán in 634, who do not appear to have been associated with Iona. Bede speaks of an Irish bishop named Dagán travelling in southern Britain at the beginning of the seventh century.\textsuperscript{235} Dagán refused to eat with Bishop Laurence of Canterbury and his fellow-bishops Mellitus and Iustus.\textsuperscript{236} It is quite likely that the Irish monk Fursa, who founded a monastery at Cnobheresburg (Burgh Castle, Norfolk) in East Anglia, also came to Britain independently of the Columban mission.\textsuperscript{237} He is said by Bede to have left his native Ireland on pilgrimage with a few companions,\textsuperscript{238} arriving directly in East Anglia during the brief reign of Sigeberht, who came to the throne c.630-1.\textsuperscript{239} Though contact may have been established at some stage with the Columban see at Lindisfarne, Fursa and his community at Cnobheresburg seem to have had more direct ties with Irish

\begin{footnotes}
\item[229] HE III.21, III.24. Wulfhere, king of the Mercians c.658-75, may also have granted land at Hanbury (Staffs.) to an Irish abbot called Colmán (see H.P.R. Finberg, \textit{The Early Charters of the West Midlands}, Leicester, 1972, p. 86, no. 195). It should be noted that the Roman bishop Paulinus had also been active in Lindsey (HE II.16).
\item[230] HE III.22.
\item[231] HE III.21.
\item[232] HE III.22.
\item[233] HE III.7. Bede does not mention any Irish clergy as being present at this event (in 635), giving prime place to the Roman bishop Birinus. The possibility that Malmesbury was founded by the Irish Maeldub was discussed in Chapter 5 (supra., pp. 99-100).
\item[235] HE II.4. The incident is dated to c.605-10.
\item[236] Supra., p. 131.
\item[237] Campbell, 'The debt of the early English Church to Ireland', pp. 334-5, has raised the possibility that there were pre-existing secular Irish settlements in East Anglia, which might have provided a context for Fursa's mission. He refers to several place-names which might indicate an Irish presence: Shotesham (Norfolk), 'Scot's ham'; Shotley (Suffolk), 'wood of the Scots'.
\item[238] These companions may have included the Irish clerics whom Bede describes as being resident at Cnobheresburg - Fursa's brother Foillán, who became abbot after Fursa resigned, and the priests Gobban and Dicuill - as well as the hermit Últán, another brother of Fursa, who was also in East Anglia (HE III.19).
\item[239] HE III.19. The length of Sigeberht's reign is unknown. He shared part of the kingdom of East Anglia with one Ecgric, and at some point retired to an unnamed monastery which he had founded (HE III.18). He and Ecgric were later killed by Penda of Mercia, possibly in the early 640s. The monastery at Cnobheresburg represents another example of re-use of a Roman structure, in this case a camp. See O'Brien, 'Contacts between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century', p. 93.
\end{footnotes}
communities on the Continent.\textsuperscript{240} The Irish cleric Rónán, who disputed with Bishop Finán in the 650s over the dating of Easter, is a further example: he had trained independently in Francia and Italy.\textsuperscript{241} Thus, the Irish in Anglo-Saxon England did not all come under the jurisdiction of Aidán and his successors at Lindisfarne, and there were doubtless other Irish communities too.

Nevertheless, the main point to be emphasised is that the Columban clergy from Iona possessed significant control over the \textit{formative} period of the Christian church in Northumbria, and beyond. As Dumville states, ‘formative influences are not such as are easily suppressed or allowed to disappear’.\textsuperscript{242} Thus, even though Northumbria was later exposed to other Christian conventions, particularly from the Roman south, the fundamental nature of Northumbrian Christianity will have been laid down during this Columban period. It is in this light that the Synod of Whitby is now considered.

\textbf{The Synod of Whitby and its Aftermath}

The Synod of Whitby,\textsuperscript{243} of 664, has traditionally been regarded as the great ‘set-piece’ debate between the so-called ‘Celtic’ and Roman churches in Britain, and as the turning-point for Columban ecclesiastical domination in Northumbria (and beyond).\textsuperscript{244} The most expansive and frequently-cited account is in Bede’s \textit{Historia ecclesiastica},\textsuperscript{245} though the shorter version in Stephen of Ripon’s \textit{Life of Wilfrid}, written c.710-15, predates and was used by Bede.\textsuperscript{246} For Bede, the Synod of Whitby represented the climax of a long-standing dispute in the north of Britain – ‘patiently tolerated’ while Bishop Aidán was alive – between Columban/Irish and Roman religious observances. These were primarily over the dating of Easter, but also over ‘other ecclesiastical matters’ such as the correct form of tonsure.\textsuperscript{247} Bede’s account has on one side of the

\textsuperscript{240} Ziegler, ‘Oswald and the Irish’, p. 17. Fursa left East Anglia for Merovingian Francia in the early 640s and founded the monastery of Lagny near Paris, c. 644, before dying in 649. Higham, \textit{Convert Kings}, pp. 214-5, tries to fit Fursa into his thesis of a ‘religious colonialism’ promulgated under the \textit{imperium} of Oswald, but he is drawing a rather long bow here and his argument is very conjectural.

\textsuperscript{241} HE III.25.

\textsuperscript{242} Dumville, "‘Beowulf’ and the Celtic world’, p. 116. See also Bradley, \textit{Celtic Christianity}, p. 26; Cramp, ‘Northumbria and Ireland’, p. 185; Richter, \textit{Ireland and Her Neighbours}, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{243} ‘Whitby’ is the later Scandinavian name for the monastery called \textit{Streanaeshalch}, established c. 657 under Abbess Hild (HE III.24). The name Whitby is now used by convention to label the Synod, though the OE \textit{Streanaeshalch} would be more accurate.


\textsuperscript{245} HE III.25.

\textsuperscript{246} \textit{VW} 10.

debate Bishop Colmán and his Columban/Irish clergy, supported by Abbess Hild of Whitby and Bishop Cedd of the East Saxons, and on the other, Bishop Agilbert, lately of the West Saxons, supported by his priest Agatho, James the Deacon, Queen Eanflæd's priest Romanus, Oswiu's son Alhfrith, sub-king of Deira, and Wilfrid, then abbot of Ripon, who spoke for Agilbert. Oswiu acted as adjudicator. Both cases were presented, and, on the strength of the Petrine argument put forward by the Romanists, Oswiu decided in their favour. Bede was thus able to proclaim triumphantly that all there, 'both high and low, signified their assent, gave up their imperfect rules, and readily accepted in their place those which they recognised to be better'.

The Synod of Whitby has been the subject of much modern discussion, which will not be recounted here at any length. There are numerous works which have examined the calendrical arguments, the matter of the correct tonsure, as well as the secular and ecclesiastical political dimensions of the debate. Most recent authors conclude that Bede exaggerated the importance of the Easter controversy in his presentation of the dispute, that as a 'master computist' he inflated this issue over others that were perhaps of less interest to him and less germane to his purposes. In this regard, the Synod tends no longer to be viewed as an 'ecclesiastical end-game' revolving solely around matters of correct Christian practice, but rather as a more complicated event that was as likely to have been convened for secular political as much as for religious reasons.

---

248 HE III.25.
252 For example, Abels, 'The Council of Whitby', pp. 11-12; Bradley, Celtic Christianity, p. 5; Cowdrey, 'Bede and the "English people"', p. 511; Duncan, 'Bede, Iona and the Picts', pp. 36-9; Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, p. 162; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 121.
253 Abels, 'The Council of Whitby', p. 19; Foster, Picts, Gaels and Scots, p. 90; Higham, Convert Kings, pp. 255-6; Kirby, Earliest English Kings, pp. 102-3. Both Abels (pp. 4-5, 12-13) and Higham (p. 256) have argued that the Synod of Whitby is unlikely to have been called due to any immediate crisis over the date of Easter in 664, but rather was precipitated by political developments, including a growing antagonism between Alhfrith and his father Oswiu, and perhaps more importantly, Oswiu's desire to play a role in deciding the new archbishop of Canterbury after Deusdedit's untimely death in 664 due to plague (HE IV.1).
This is not to say that the Easter question, and the tonsure, were of no importance in seventh-century Britain; it would be wrong to conclude that these issues did not matter to people such as Colmán, Agilbert, Wilfrid and to the other clergy of the day. The resurrection of Christ was (and is) the central tenet of the Christian religion. The Easter commemoration was, therefore, the most important feast of the Christian calendar, as well as being the date from which other significant holy days were calculated, such as Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday. While the Roman see itself vacillated on the most accurate method of calculating Easter until the first half of the seventh century, during the second half of that century and into the eighth, the issue increasingly attracted accusations of schism. Aldhelm strongly implied as much regarding the bishops of Dumnonia in the 670s. Stephen of Ripon similarly accused the Irish and British clerics of being schismatics, and the Irish-trained clergy in Northumbria as belonging to the unorthodox ‘Quartodeciman party’. Irrespective of whether or not these particular labels were accurate, the fact still remains that such claims were made. As Kenneth Harrison states, irregular practices attracted an ‘odour of heresy’. The nature of the tonsure itself was not likely to have been sufficient grounds for schism – Ceolfrith, in his letter of c.710 to king Nechtan of the Picts, regarded it as irrelevant to personal salvation – but rather came to be seen as the way one’s ecclesiastical allegiance was communicated.

It remains debatable, however, whether Oswiu, in making his decision at Whitby, was moved by the subtleties of the computistics that were presented to him, or was graced by a sudden and hitherto unlooked-for revelation concerning the errors of his own Columban upbringing. He may, rather, have realised that he could not afford being labelled a schismatic by Rome if he wished to continue his imperium over an Anglo-Scandian

257 VW 5.
258 VW 14, and also VW 12.
259 For instance, Bede himself indicated that the Irish/Scots, in their calculation of Easter, were not Quartodecimans; that is, they did not celebrate the Resurrection on the actual day of the Jewish Passover (HE III.4, III.17). See also Bieler, ‘Ireland’s contribution to the culture of Northumbria’, p. 214; Thacker, ‘Bede and the Irish’, pp. 38-9.
261 HE V.21.
Saxon south that was otherwise conforming to Roman practice. Also not to be ignored is the earlier dispute that Bede records having occurred between Bishop Finán and the itinerant cleric Rónán, both Irishmen, nor the concurrent disagreement over Easter that was being played out across the Irish Sea, between southern and northern Irish churches. The Easter controversy was not one which merely engaged Roman against Celt.

Notwithstanding the reasons for which the Synod of Whitby was convoked, what is germane for the current examination is what resulted with regard to the Columban presence in Northumbria. The Synod has often been presented as the turning-point of Columban influence in Northumbria. Implicit in Oswiu’s decision in favour of the Roman party was his rejection of Iona’s jurisdiction in Northumbria and his acceptance of the hierarchy of the Roman Church. This means that any Columban clergy resident in Northumbria and its tributary regions would have been required to relinquish allegiance to the community of Iona and submit to papal authority, or leave. Thus, Bede says that when Bishop Colmán, Iona’s representative in Northumbria, ‘saw that his teachings were rejected and his principles despised’, he left his see. Together with ‘all the Irish he had gathered together on Lindisfarne ... [and] about thirty English’, he travelled first to Iona and subsequently to Ireland, where he established a monastery on Inishbofin (Co. Mayo), later relocating the English contingent to the new site of Mag Eo on the Irish mainland, which became known as Mag Eo na Saxan ‘Mayo of the “Saxons”’. Colmán was the last bishop in Northumbria to hail from Iona and it

264 HE III.25.
267 Supra., p. 323.
269 HE III.26. In this chapter, Bede appears to contradict his previous statement that all present at Whitby abandoned the older ways and adopted Roman practice (HE III.25). In HE III.28, he further tells that the ‘Irish [Scots]’ living among the Anglo-Saxons either conformed to Roman usages or returned home.
270 HE IV.4; AU s.a. 668, 732. Higham, Convert Kings, p. 259, has proposed that the clergy who left with Colmán were likely to have been senior men, as well as Colmán’s personal following of monks from Lindisfarne (keeping in mind that some of this community elected to remain). For a full, if slightly dated, account of the Anglo-Saxon monastery at Mayo, see N.K. Chadwick, ‘Bede, St Colmán and the Irish Abbey of Mayo’, in idem. (ed.), Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 186-205. On Colmán’s initial foundation on Inishbofin, see Dumville, ‘Derry, Iona, England, and the governance of the Columban Church’, p. 104.
is with him that Iona’s formal authority in Northumbria can be said to have ended; subsequent bishops and senior ecclesiastics were all Anglo-Saxons appointed from within an increasingly self-aware Anglo-Saxon church. Colmán’s immediate replacement was the Anglo-Saxon Tuda who, as Bede makes clear, had trained and been consecrated in southern (but not northern) Ireland, and specifically followed Roman custom. Bede also talked of other Columban-trained Anglo-Saxon clerics who elected to remain in Northumbria. These clerics included: Chad, who followed Tuda as bishop to the Northumbrians (c.665-9) when the see was temporarily relocated to York, and who subsequently became bishop to the Mercians; Cedd, who returned to his see amongst the East Saxons; Eata, formerly of Melrose, who became abbot of the reduced community of Lindisfarne in 664; Cuthbert, who followed Eata to become his prior at Lindisfarne, and Hild, who continued as abess of Whitby until her death in 680.

Further, potentially more significant, changes to the ecclesiastical organisation of the erstwhile Columban north came with the arrival of Theodore as archbishop of Canterbury in 669. In church councils starting with the Synod of Hertford in 672, Theodore insisted on adherence to a reorganised diocesan structure, with bishops being required to keep to their own dioceses and clergy and monks being forbidden from wandering about without the permission of their superiors. This gives rise to speculation as to whether this last directive was targeted at Columban/Irish and Columban/Irish-trained peregrini. In addition, Theodore required that all clergy ordained by Columban or British bishops be re-ordained by a Catholic bishop. Similarly, churches consecrated by Columban/Irish clergy had to be re-consecrated. Arguably the most symbolic of these was Theodore’s rededication of the church on

---

271 HE III.26.
272 HE III.28, IV.3.
274 HE IV.26.
275 HE IV.27.
276 HE IV.23.
277 HE IV.1, IV.2. Bede refers to Theodore as ‘the first of the archbishops whom the whole English Church consented to obey’ (HE IV.2). He might thus be the first to be accurately labelled archbishop.
278 See HE IV.5. Hughes, ‘Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English’, p. 52, notes that the councils of the southern Irish Romani that were held at roughly the same period attest to similar concerns.
Lindisfarne in honour of St Peter, the very saint in whose name the Columban case at Whitby was defeated.280 Lindisfarne had been the centre of the Columban church in Northumbria, and still possessed some of Aidan’s relics even after Colman’s departure, and indeed was ruled by an abbot, Eata, who was appointed according to Colman’s specific request.281 This rededication, perhaps more than any other, would have broadcast the new order that was being imposed in Northumbria.

Yet despite the obvious changes to ecclesiastical governance that occurred in Northumbria after the Synod of Whitby, Columban influence would not have been completely eradicated. After 664 the Northumbrian Church was still substantially staffed by Columban-trained clergy.282 These clergy would have formed a significant post-Whitby Columban faction.283 Their acceptance of Roman authority and canonical practice would not automatically have extinguished their previous years of training.284 The continuation of existing practice can be glimpsed in Bede’s account, for example, when he reports Chad’s habit after becoming bishop of the Northumbrians of travelling on foot because he ‘sought to instruct his hearers in the ways and customs of his master [Aidan] and of his brother Cedd’.285 Admittedly, Archbishop Theodore later sought to amend Chad’s ways — encouraging him, for example, to travel on horseback as befitting a bishop286 — but this only serves to demonstrate the tenacity of the customs at the time. As Roman influence grew in Northumbria under Theodore and his successors, and under the resolutely partisan Romanist bishop Wilfrid,287 it might be supposed that the Columban flavour was gradually watered down. But subsequent kings such as Aldfrith

---

280 HE III.25.
281 HE III.26. Thacker, ‘Bede and the Irish’, p. 46, argues that Bede’s ‘careful’ mention of this piece of information attests to his continued respect for the Columbans and their contribution.
282 Bieler, ‘Ireland’s contribution to the culture of Northumbria’, pp. 213-14; Dumville, “‘Beowulf’ and the Celtic world”, p. 115; Higham, Convert Kings, p. 256; Thacker, ‘Bede and the Irish’, pp. 46-8. Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, pp. 96-7, also points out that the Roman party at Whitby was hardly immune from Irish influence. Bishop Agilbert, for instance, had completed some of his training in Ireland (HE IV.7), and Wilfrid had spent some of his early years being educated at Lindisfarne (HE V.19; VW 2).
283 Abels, ‘The Council of Whitby’, p. 16, coined the phrase ‘post-Whitby “Irish” faction’; I have chosen to be more specific in my usage. A subsequent cohort of Columban-influenced bishops was appointed after the diocesan restructure of Northumbria and Lindsey in 678: Eadhned, who had been a companion of Chad, became bishop of the people of Lindsey, and later bishop of Ripon (HE III.28, IV.12); Bosa, who had trained at Whitby where Abbess Hild presided, became bishop of Deira at York (HE IV.12); Eata, then abbot of Lindisfarne, became bishop of Bernicia probably at Hexham (HE IV.12). There was a further restructuring in the 680s. See Kirby, Earliest English Kings, pp. 105-6, for a discussion of late seventh-century diocesan arrangements.
284 Richter, Ireland and Her Neighbours, p. 94.
286 HE IV.3.
287 Wilfrid’s career is quite complicated; suffice it to say that he enjoyed several stints as a bishop in Northumbria: c.669-678, 685-692, 706-709. For a brief summary, see A. Thacker, ‘Wilfrid, St’, in Blackwell Encyclopaedia of ASE, pp. 474-6.
(685-705) maintained Dalriadan/Irish sympathies. Many of the essentials of Christian practice, the Easter calculation and the tonsure notwithstanding, may have continued without substantial alteration until the reforms of the tenth century.

It should also not be presumed that external communications between Northumbria and Dalriada and Ireland were irrevocably disrupted after Whitby. Granted, it is likely that Oswiu's decision engendered some ill-will amongst the community of Iona, and amongst the cohort of ecclesiastics who accompanied Colmán to Inishbofin and Mag Eo. This might have resulted in the Columbans feeling the need to assert the authority of their own traditions and could have led to the development of a certain self-conscious 'Columbanism', especially within Colmán's following who had chosen exile so as to maintain their independence. Indeed, it has been suggested that Abbot Cumméne's (657-669) Liber de virtutibus Sancti Columbae was written soon after 664 as a reaction to the Columban defeat. This is the earliest known piece of hagiography about the Saint. Thus, it is possible that there was a hiatus in contact with Iona, although this was not long-lasting. As has been shown, Adomnán visited Northumbria at least twice during Aldfrith's kingship, first after Ecgfrith's defeat in 685 at Dunnichen and then two years later. Apart from releasing the hostages captured during the raid on Brega in 684, it is possible that Adomnán travelled to Northumbria in the hope that links between Iona and Lindisfarne could be re-established. It had only been twenty years since the Synod of Whitby, so many of the monks who had lived there under Colmán would still have been alive, and indeed, Adomnán might have expected some support on this matter from his amicus Aldfrith. Adomnán's presentation of his tract De Locis Sanctis, 'The Holy Places', to Aldfrith, with its laudatory preface in honour of the king, would certainly have been flattering, and Bede

---

288 Ceolwulf (729-737) may also have had Dalriadan connections (supra., pp. 242-3).
289 Dumville, "Beowulf" and the Celtic world", p. 116. We might also wonder if the Anglo-Saxon Cuthbert's anchoritic tendencies were at all informed by his exposure to Columban training earlier in his career. On this issue, see Bullough, 'The missions to the English and the Picts', pp 94-5, who adds that 'familiar thought-worlds and their forms of expression are only slowly and reluctantly abandoned for new ones'.
290 Bradley, Celtic Christianity, p. 5.
291 This passage is found inserted into Adomnán's Life of Columba (supra., pp. 223-4).
292 Higham, Convert Kings, p. 259; Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men, p. 121. J.M. Picard, 'The purpose of Adomnán's Vita Columbae', Peritia 1 (1982), pp. 173-5, also argued that Adomnán's Vita Columbae was written (c. 700) in part as a reaction to Northumbrian attacks on St Columba.
293 Supra., pp. 262-3.
294 As argued by Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 48.
indicated that Aldfrith was well pleased with the book. In any event, re-association does not appear to have occurred.

According to Bede, Adomnán’s visit (he only knew of one) was of a different nature, more geared towards him observing ‘the canonical rites of the church’. In Bede’s rather partisan account, Adomnán was exhorted to abandon his incorrect observance of Easter by people more learned than himself, including Bede’s own abbot Ceolfrith, and was persuaded to adopt Roman custom. Bede goes on to say that Adomnán was unsuccessful in converting his own community on Iona to orthodox practice, but that he did manage to persuade most of the northern Irish churches to come into line. The final conversion of Iona was brought about in 716, several years after Adomnán’s death, by the Northumbrian cleric-in-exile Ecgberht. Adomnán’s involvement in the Easter dispute continues to be a matter of debate, but most scholarly opinion has it that Bede’s account of Adomnán’s conversion and his subsequent actions, and his account of Ecgberht’s sojourn on Iona, was deliberately arranged and edited so as to demonstrate to his readers the primacy of the Anglo-Saxon Church over the Columbans. Bede was concerned with showing how Northumbria’s debt to Iona and to Ireland for promulgating the Christian faith was repaid in full by Adomnán’s change of heart while in Northumbria, and by Iona’s final conversion to Roman practice at the hands of Ecgberht. While there is no reason that Adomnán’s adoption of Roman practice should be seen as solely due to the efforts of Ceolfrith and the other Anglo-Saxon clerics he met, Bede’s account does reveal that some level of contact, however indirectly, must have persisted between Northumbria and Iona. And indeed, Bede’s

295 HE V.15. Bede provided an edited version of the tract in his Ecclesiastical History (HE V.16, V.17), and was quite laudatory himself about Adomnán’s wisdom, learning and holiness. On the De Locis Sanctis, see Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, p. 163, and especially Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, pp. 47, 53-5. 296 HE V.15. 297 HE V.15. From the account in HE V.21, it appears that Adomnán did not abandon his form of tonsure. 298 HE III.4, V.22; AU 716. 299 Adomnán mentions the Easter dispute only once, and briefly (VC 1.3), and then only regarding the churches of the Irish. See Bradley, Celtic Christianity, p. 19; Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts’, p. 92; Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, pp. 13-14, 35; Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, pp. 14-15; Picard, ‘The purpose of Adomnán’s Vita Columbae’, pp. 164-5; Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 49. 300 For example, Picard, ‘The purpose of Adomnán’s Vita Columbae’, pp. 163-6; Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, pp. 163-4; Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, pp. 48-53. 301 T.M. Charles-Edwards, ‘Bede, the Irish and the Britons’, Cellicia 15 (1983), p. 42; Cowdrey, ‘Bede and the “English people”’, p. 512; Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, p. 42; Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 76. 302 Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, pp. 51-3, 76. Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, p. 163, also states that ‘It would be wrong to interpret Adomnán’s “conversion” as bowing to English cultural imperialism. Iona and its abbot were too self-confident for that, and it must be remembered that the Gaels and Picts had broken free of English political domination only three years before’.
report of Ecgberht’s death on Iona in 729 shows that he continued to have access to information from the island.303

Adomnan was not the only abbot of Iona to travel to Northumbria after 664. According to the Chartres manuscript of the Historia Brittonum, Abbot Sleibine (752-767) visited the monastery of Ripon at some point during his abbacy.304 While the precise reasons for his visit are unknown, it is said that during his stay he obtained information regarding the date of the Anglo-Saxon adventus.305 Sleibine therefore appears to have had an interest in chronological and historical matters; Kathleen Hughes postulated that he might have also travelled to York, because at the time the school there was quite famous, with Alcuin becoming its master in 766.306 Alcuin’s correspondence reveals that other Irishmen came to York, including a teacher named Colcu and a student named Joseph, and Alcuin frequently met Irishmen when he was in Northumbria.307 That Sleibine travelled to more places than Ripon while in Northumbria is possible.

There is further evidence of Irish clerics resident within Northumbria after 664. An Irish penitent named Adomnan was said by Bede to have been living in the double monastery of Coldingham in the early 680s; it was he who foretold its destruction by fire.308 According to Æthelwulf’s De abbatibus, composed in the early ninth century, an Irish scribe and illuminator called Ultán came to live at an unnamed monastery in the vicinity of Lindisfarne in the early eighth century; he may have been recruited to be master of the scriptorium there.309 Beyond Northumbria, an Irish monk named Dicuill was mentioned by Bede as heading a very small monastery of five or six brothers at

303 HE V.22.
304 Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, p. 39; Gardner, ‘Kentigern, Columba, and Oswald’, p. 20; D. Ó Cróinin, ‘Early Irish annals from Easter-tables: a case restated’, Peritia 2 (1983), p. 85. The manuscript was destroyed during World War II; the relevant section is reprinted by Ó Cróinin. Ó Cróinin suggested that the visit occurred early in Sleibine’s abbacy.
305 According to Gardner, ‘Kentigern, Columba, and Oswald’, pp. 1-7, 20, Jocelin’s twelfth-century Life states that St Kentigern had deposited St Columba’s crozier at Ripon. Gardner mentions the possibility that Sleibine intended to visit Ripon in order to view this heirloom of his monastery’s patron, but this might be placing too much trust in this very late source.
306 Hughes, ‘Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English’, p. 55.
307 MGH Epist. IV, no. 7, pp. 31-3. Hughes, ‘Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English’, p. 56. Colcu appears to have been in York in 790.
308 HE IV.25.
Bosham in Sussex, c.680. At a similar time, Aldhelm remarks in his letter to Heahfrith that Archbishop Theodore was ‘hemmed in by a mass of Irish students’; doubtless they came to study with this master from Greece and with his colleague Hadrian, probably at the school in Canterbury. Kathleen Hughes also makes mention of Irish clerics apparently living in Mercia in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

Anglo-Saxon clerics continued to travel to Ireland after 664. Bede’s statement that Anglo-Saxon students journeyed to Ireland is supported by Aldhelm’s letter to Heahfrith and by another to Wihlfrith. Aldhelm’s letters show that the practice persisted into the last quarter of the seventh century, in spite of his strong disapproval. This retreat to Ireland for learning was by no means unusual in the seventh and eighth centuries: Ireland was a destination for students from the Continent as well. Anglo-Saxons not only sought education in Ireland, but also established monasteries there, at Mayo for example. According to Bede, Mayo was explicitly established as an Anglo-Saxon house, with Colmán moving his Anglo-Saxon brethren there from Inishbofin after a dispute with his Irish monks. Mayo continued to be staffed by Anglo-Saxons ‘gathered there from the English provinciae’ into the eighth century, when it was said by Bede to have ‘adopted a better Rule’.

———

310 HE IV.13. One might speculate as to his relationship, if any, with the Dicuill who was with Fursa in East Anglia (supra., pp. 322-3). For more information on Bosham, see Campbell, ‘The debt of the early English Church to Ireland’, p. 338.
313 HE III.27. In this chapter, Bede tells us that there were ‘many English [de gente Anglorum], both nobles and commons, who, in the days of Bishops Finán and Colmán, had left their own country and retired to Ireland’. It is unlikely that they would have felt any need to rush home after they had heard of the verdict of the Synod of Whitby.
314 Aldhelm, Epist. III, pp. 154-5.
317 Supra., p. 326. Bede states that some of the Anglo-Saxons in Ireland ‘devoted themselves faithfully to the monastic life, while others preferred to travel around the cells of various teachers and apply themselves to study’ (HE III.27).
318 HE IV.4.
319 Bede tells us that Mayo was still occupied by Anglo-Saxon monks in his time (HE IV.4). Indeed, the AU s.a. 732, records the death of its bishop, Gerald, who was English.
eventually conformed to Roman observance. Mayo grew in status to become an episcopal see, which by 786 was subject to York.\textsuperscript{320} In that year, Ealdwulf was consecrated bishop of the church of Mayo by Archbishop Eanbald of York at Corbridge (Northumberland).\textsuperscript{321} Clearly, Mayo did not long remain some isolated cell of Northumbrian exiles, but came to participate fully in the ecclesiastical order of Anglo-Saxon England, evidence again of continuing contact between Britain and Ireland.

Alcuin, who wrote to Ealdwulf's predecessor Leudfrith c. 773-786, and to the \textit{peregrini} of the Church of Mayo c.793-804, regarded Mayo as a flourishing Anglo-Saxon community, and the monastery only drops out of the written record in the Viking period.\textsuperscript{322} Other communities in Ireland contained Anglo-Saxon monks, such as \textit{Rath Melsigi} (Clonmelsh, Co. Carlow) where Ecgberht studied,\textsuperscript{323} and \textit{Tulach Leis na Saxan} (Tullylease, Co. Cork);\textsuperscript{324} further locations are likely in Munster and at Armagh.\textsuperscript{325}

***

It can be shown that Northumbria and the Irish Christian world, including Columban Iona, were not cut off from one another after the Synod of Whitby. The changes to ecclesiastical organisation in Anglo-Saxon England brought about in the years after the Synod, especially by Archbishop Theodore, would have helped promote Roman orthodoxy. But this should not be taken to mean that there was an Irish or Columban ban in Anglo-Saxon England after 664.\textsuperscript{326} Northumbria and the other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms remained attractive to Irish monks, as did Ireland to the Anglo-Saxons. Irish and Columban influences continued to reach Northumbria in the late seventh and eighth centuries, if less directly, and Northumbrian literate culture would still have been characterised by its substantial Irish/Columban flavour developed prior to the events at

\textsuperscript{320} Campbell, 'The debt of the early English Church to Ireland', p. 332; Dumville, "Beowulf" and the Celtic world", p. 116; Hughes, 'Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English', p. 51; Richter, Ireland and Her Neighbours, pp. 152-3.

\textsuperscript{321} HR s.a. 786. Eadwulf was also present at a provincial church council at York later in the same year, where he subscribed to decrees put forward by the papal legate George, bishop of Ostia, and his assistant, Wigbod (H&S III, p. 460). See Charles-Edwards, 'Language and society among the Insular Celts', p. 706; Hughes, 'Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English', p. 51.

\textsuperscript{322} See MGH Epist. IV, no. 2, p. 19, for letter the to Leudfrith, and MGH Epist. IV, no. 287, p. 445-6, for the letter to Mayo. See also Chadwick, 'Bede, St Colmán and the Irish Abbey of Mayo', p. 191; Hughes, 'Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English', pp. 51-2. In the second letter, Alcuin talks of the regular contact which he had with the community via the monks who visited him.

\textsuperscript{323} HE III.27. For the identification of Rath Melsigi as Clonmelsh, see D. Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the earliest Echternach manuscripts', Peritia 3 (1984), pp. 17-42.

\textsuperscript{324} Charles-Edwards, 'Language and society among the Insular Celts', p. 706 n. 18.

\textsuperscript{325} See Hughes, 'Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English', p. 53; Richter, Ireland and Her Neighbours, pp. 147-8. Grave-sites that have been found to have Anglo-Saxon artefacts were discussed in Chapter 8 (supra., pp. 238-9). In Bede's time there was also an Anglo-Saxon monk named Hæmgiils 'living in solitude in Ireland' (HE V.12).
Whitby.\textsuperscript{327} Kathleen Hughes concluded that the seventh and eighth centuries were ‘the time of greatest mutual influence’ between the Irish and Anglo-Saxon churches.\textsuperscript{328} In the north, this influence was largely the result of the efforts of the Columban missionaries from Iona and the foundations laid down during the Columban period, c.634-664. Even Bede, a Romanist who sought edification in the rule of orthodoxy, could not fail to comment on the debt owed by the Northumbrian church to the community of Iona and the Irish nation, who had ‘willingly and ungrudgingly taken pains to communicate its own knowledge and understanding of God to the English nation’.\textsuperscript{329}

The Northumbrian and Pictish Churches

In considering ecclesiastical interaction between the Northumbrians and Picts, a useful starting point is to begin by briefly examining the evidence for Christianity in Pictland. The nature of Pictish Christianity, as well as the manner by which the faith was introduced into Pictland, will have influenced the eventual ecclesiastical contact which occurred between the two peoples. In particular, the extent to which Christianity in Pictland was introduced via influence from British Christians or from Columbans will have had a bearing on how the emergent Northumbrian church regarded its Pictish counterpart when contact was eventually made.

Pictish Christianity

Knowledge about the conversion of the Picts to Christianity is bedevilled by the lack of an early native tradition and, excluding the king-lists, by the lack of any surviving Pictish texts.\textsuperscript{330} All extant information regarding Pictish Christianity is either found only in ‘foreign’ or late sources, or derives from place-names and archaeological excavation. The ‘received view’ of the evangelisation of the Picts derives from Bede, who recorded two traditions regarding early Pictish Christianity.\textsuperscript{331} Specifically, he

\textsuperscript{326} Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, pp. 96-7.
\textsuperscript{328} Hughes, ‘Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English’, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{329} \textit{HE} V.22.
\textsuperscript{331} Hughes, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, p. 39.
stated that the southern Picts had been converted through the preaching of St Ninian. He also remarked that this had occurred 'long ago [mulo ante tempore]', before St Columba came from Ireland to preach and bring the Faith to the northern Picts. Columba was said to have been subsequently given the island of Iona by the Picts. Bede was probably accurate in reporting that not all of the people in Pictland necessarily converted at the same time or received baptism from Christians of the same persuasion. However, both of these accounts have been questioned within an increasingly sceptical secondary literature. There is, for instance, no certainty as to the antiquity of the surviving evidence about Ninian, and much if not all of the Ninianic tradition probably derives from the Northumbrian period at Whithorn. Hence, doubt has been cast on the authenticity of Ninian's alleged mission to the Picts. Some scholars refer to the mission as nothing more than 'ambitious pretence' on the part of Bede and the Northumbrian bishops of Whithorn who were attempting to give legitimacy to the aspirations of the Northumbrian Church in Pictland, and perhaps trying to create Ninian as a 'contra-Columba'.

This is not to say, however, that southern Pictland was never exposed to British Christian influence, or that British clerics never found their way north. As Charles Thomas cogently notes, the Antonine Wall should not be thought of as an absolute cultural boundary between the Britons and the Picts: cultural interaction would certainly have occurred between the peoples on either side of the frontier. Once Christianity had been established amongst the Britons of Gododdin and Strathclyde, knowledge of...
the religion would almost certainly have travelled farther north.\textsuperscript{339} The period during which this occurred is somewhat harder to determine. There exists a late account of a saint called Servanus (or St Serf), who was said to have possessed a monastery at Culross (Fife) on the Forth and in some sources was associated with the sixth-century St Kentigern.\textsuperscript{340} However, his chronology is very imprecise, and if any date can be assigned on the basis of the hagiography, c.700 is most likely.\textsuperscript{341} Patrick, whose \textit{floruit} was during the second half of the fifth century,\textsuperscript{342} appears to have regarded the Picts as pagans, or at least those who were in contact with his nominally Christian correspondent Coroticus. In his Letter about Coroticus, written before the end of the fifth century, Patrick alluded to the Picts as a ‘a foreign people [that] does not know God [\textit{gens extera ignorans Deum}]’\textsuperscript{343} Elsewhere he referred to them as \textit{apostatae},\textsuperscript{344} on the basis of which it has been argued that the Picts had at one time converted to Christianity, but had apostatised.\textsuperscript{345} However, this is probably a misconceived assumption; it seems more likely in this context that \textit{apostatae} has the broader Vulgate meaning of ‘evil-doer’ or ‘renegade’ or ‘immoral/unrighteous’, without an implication of relapse into paganism.\textsuperscript{346} Thus, during Patrick’s time, Christianity does not seem to have taken hold in southern Pictland. Moreover, there is no other written evidence suggesting a fifth-century date for the introduction of Christianity to the Picts.

Establishing a horizon for British Christian influence in Pictland has therefore had to rest on archaeology and place-names. The archaeological evidence comprises principally the so-called long-cist burials.\textsuperscript{347} The fact that these long-cist burials are found not only in British territory south of the Forth, but also farther north around the coast of Fife and across to the northern shore of the Tay, has been taken as evidence of

\textsuperscript{339} Barrow, ‘The childhood of Scottish Christianity’, p. 2; Hughes, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, p. 50. This not to suggest any Christian inevitability; exposure to Christianity does not necessarily betoken conversion.
\textsuperscript{340} The earliest MS. which contains a \textit{Vita Sancti Servani} – Marsh’s Library, Dublin MS. Z 4.5.5 (D) – dates from the thirteenth century. This and later MSS. may have been based on an exemplar that was composed in the twelfth century. See Macquarrie, \textit{Saints of Scotland}, pp. 145-59; Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, pp. 26-7.
\textsuperscript{341} Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, p. 16; Macquarrie, \textit{Saints of Scotland}, pp. 155-7.
\textsuperscript{342} Supra., pp. 293-4.
\textsuperscript{343} Patrick, \textit{Epist.} 14.
\textsuperscript{344} Patrick, \textit{Epist.} 15.
\textsuperscript{345} For example, Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 21; Thomas, \textit{Christianity in Roman Britain}, p. 291.
\textsuperscript{347} Supra., p. 293.
the progress of Christianity from the south. If these burials are indicative of Christianity, which is not necessarily established, and if the practice is accurately dated as beginning in the sixth century, then they may provide the earliest tangible evidence of Christianity in southern Pictland.

More certain evidence of British influence in southern Pictland can be demonstrated by the distribution north of the Forth of place-names containing the eccles element. Goeffrey Barrow uncovered some fifteen eccles-names occurring in southern Pictland, in Fife, Perth and Kinross, Angus and in the eastern valleys and coastal plain up to mid-Aberdeenshire. Their existence affirms the spread of Christianity from the British south, even though it does not provide evidence for the work of any specific evangelist. Given that the Britons and Picts were both speakers of p-Celtic, and so probably shared some linguistic familiarity, it should not be unexpected that the Picts consequently adopted the British term for a Christian community. Barrow suggested a dating range for the assignation of the eccles-names in Pictland of c. 450-800, although Ian Smith has recently narrowed the range to c. 530-700. This corresponds with the dates offered for the long-cist burials, and it is interesting to note that the

348 For example, Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, p. 56; Thomas, ‘The evidence from North Britain’, pp. 107-8; Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain, p. 292.


350 Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 28. This interpretation is potentially compromised by the discovery of long-cist burials in the far north and west. See Close-Brooks, ‘Pictish and other burials’, p. 96.

351 Broun, ‘The literary record of St Nynia’, p. 148. Eccles was shown earlier to represent the British or p-Celtic borrowing egles, from Latin ecclesia, denoting a British Christian community (supra., pp. 299-300).

352 See for example Barrow, ‘The childhood of Scottish Christianity’, pp. 1-15, and especially the distribution map on p. 4. Not all of these names are still in use; some are obsolete or lost. Barrow (p. 8) has assessed two outlying examples in the vicinity of Inverness as representing later examples of the Gaelic eaglais, rather than the British egles. Thus, the British-inspired names seem confined south of the Grampians.

353 MacQueen, St Nynia, p. 29, regarded the eccles-names in Pictland as prima facie evidence for the work of Ninian. The place-name evidence cannot, however, be used in this way. While the distribution of eccles-names does indicate the spread of Christianity from the British south, it does not tell us whether it was a result of the activities of Ninian or any other specific British cleric. Though the dedication to Ninian at Kirkton (formerly Eccles) in Stirling has been claimed to be ‘ancient’ (supra., p. 312), this remains nothing more than speculation. See Broun, ‘The literary record of St Nynia’, p. 148; Clancy, ‘The real St Ninian’, pp. 10-11; Hughes, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, p. 49; Macquarrie, Saints of Scotland, p. 57.

354 Barrow, ‘The childhood of Scottish Christianity’, p. 5.

355 Barrow, ‘The childhood of Scottish Christianity’, p. 6; Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 27. A date of 530 seems rather too precise for this period.
distribution of eccles-names and of long-cist burials is broadly coterminous with Bede’s southern Picts, who he said received their Christianity from Ninian of the Britons.\textsuperscript{356}

It may also be significant that the region in which the eccles-names predominate is where the non-Christian Class I Pictish symbol-stones are most thinly scattered in the east of Pictland.\textsuperscript{357} This could support the conclusion that conversion to Christianity began earlier in southern than in northern Pictland.\textsuperscript{358} Though all the evidence for early Christianity in southern Pictland is both indirect and limited, it might reasonably be deduced that the religion found its way north of the Forth from the late fifth century at the very earliest, with the sixth century being a more probable terminus ad quem. The extent of its influence on Pictish society at the time, however, is unassessable.

Bede’s account of the conversion of the northern Picts at the hands of St Columba has also been questioned. It is often pointed out, for example, that it is Bede rather than Adomnán, Columba’s hagiographer, who presents Columba as evangelist to the northern Picts.\textsuperscript{359} Indeed, Adomnán says very little of Columba’s activities in Pictland, and at no stage does he speak of any large-scale evangelisation of the Picts by the saint.\textsuperscript{360} It is similarly questionable whether Columba received Iona from the Picts, or from Conall mac Comgaill, king of Dalriada, as stated in the \textit{Annals of Ulster}.\textsuperscript{361}

\textsuperscript{356} Barrow, ‘The childhood of Scottish Christianity’, p. 9; Macquarrie, \textit{Saints of Scotland}, p. 57.


\textsuperscript{358} Hughes, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, pp. 46-7. Christian Class II symbol-stones, in comparison to Class I, are concentrated south of the Grampians in southern Pictland, though not in Fife or the old Fortriu. Henderson, ‘The monuments of the Picts’, p. 10, defines Class II stones as ‘properly dressed slabs with an interlaced cross carved in relief on one side and the symbols and other iconography, also in relief, on the other’. It is generally agreed that Class II stones post-date Class I stones, and follow the adoption of Christianity by the Picts. See Forsyth, ‘Literacy in Pictland’, p. 58; Henderson, ‘The monuments of the Picts’, p. 10; Hughes, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, p. 46; Thomas, ‘The Pictish Class I symbol stones’, p. 184.


\textsuperscript{360} Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts’, p. 84; Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, p. 12; Macquarrie, \textit{Saints of Scotland}, p. 81

\textsuperscript{361} \textit{AU} s.a. 574. Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, p. 16, suggests that Adomnán also gives the impression that the donor was Conall (see \textit{VC} 1.7). See also J. Bannerman, \textit{Studies in the Early History of Dalriada} (Edinburgh, 1974), p. 79; Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts’, p. 83; Dumville, ‘Derry, Iona, England, and the governance of the Columban Church’, pp. 92-3; Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, p. 9.
Adomnan does report that Columba travelled across *Drùim Alban* and into Pictland, where he visited the fort of the Pictish king Bridei son of Meilochon situated above the River Ness, and on two occasions converted individual Pictish households. However, there is no suggestion that Columba’s journeys were intended as missionary rather than diplomatic ventures, or that he succeeded in making widespread conversions amongst the Picts: Bridei, for instance, is never said to have been baptised. Therefore, it is uncertain as to whether conversion of the northern Picts at the hands of monks from Iona began during Columba’s lifetime.

Nevertheless, Columban Christianity did spread into Pictland during the seventh century. While not naming them, Adomnan states that in his day there were monasteries amongst the Scots of Dalriada and the Picts where Columba was held in honour. The obvious inference is that Columban monasteries had been established in Pictland. Adomnan further speaks of a priest ‘of Pictish origin’ named Eogenan, who had travelled to Ireland and possessed a hymn-book written by Columba. It is probable that he was from a Columban monastery, perhaps even Iona; if so, Eogenan is the only Pictish Columban cleric from the pre-Viking period known by name. An interest in Pictish affairs is also evident in the *Annals of Ulster*, and this may suggest the

---

362 *VC* I.34, II 31.
363 *VC* I.37; II.33, II.35. Bridei’s fort may be identified with Craig Phadrig, west of Inverness. See Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 335 n. 294, and the earlier discussion of Bridei ([supra.](#)), p. 159.
364 *VC* II.32, III.14. Columba also converted an old man, who may have been a Pict, on Skye (*VC* I.33).
366 Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 31. The Irish panegyric *Amrae Coluimb Chille*, thought to have been composed soon after Columba’s death, contains a line stating that the saint ‘preached to the tribes of Toi’. A later glossator interpreted this as meaning the tribes of the River Tay, and therefore the Picts. While this interpretation is tempting, it obviously remains conjectural. See Hughes, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, p. 50.
367 *VC* II. 46. The *AU* is also silent regarding Columban monastic foundations in both Dalriada and Pictland. The one recorded foundation – that of Applecross, opposite Skye (*AU* s.a. 673) – is attributed to Mael-Ruba, who had sailed to Britain two years previously (*AU* s.a. 671). On this point, see Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts’, p. 90; Dumville, ‘Derry, Iona, England, and the governance of the Columban Church’, pp. 100-1; Hughes, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, p. 51.
368 Hughes, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, p. 49. As stated earlier (see note 211, [supra.](#)), p. 319), Adomnán referred to Columba’s church on Iona as a *matrix ecclesia* (*VC* I.5), which certainly implies the existence of subordinate churches. Bede also spoke of Iona having been the principal monastery of ‘all the monasteries of the northern Irish and the Picts’ (emphasis added) (*HE* III.3), and that it was long venerated by the Scots and the Picts (*HE* V.9).
369 *VC* II.9.
370 Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 21, 33. Sharpe (p. 322 n. 232), also points out that Eogenán is an Irish name that was not recorded in Pictland until the ninth century. Perhaps he adopted an Irish name, or was given one by Adomnán in the account.
existence of Columban houses within Pictish territory, though the lack of any surviving seventh- or eighth-century monastic text from Pictland is an anomaly.

There is little to be gained from archaeological and place-name evidence, since it is impossible to distinguish any early Columban legacy from influences introduced in the ninth century.

While it need not be doubted that Columban Christianity existed in Pictland from the seventh century, it continues to be difficult to assess the strength of belief and to assess how rapidly conversion proceeded. Furthermore, there is no certainty as to how far Columban Christianity spread throughout Pictland, and the extent to which it influenced Bede's southern Picts. Columban influence may not have been felt in southern Pictland until after the defeat of Ecgfrith at Dunnichen in 685, a period when the Picts were likely to have been consciously anti-Northumbrian. In any event, it can reasonably be argued that by the time Nechtan son of Derilei, who is traditionally associated with the region of Atholl south of the Grampians, wrote to Abbot Ceolfrith of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow c.710-15, the Columban Church had achieved a significant enough place in Pictish society to become a challenge to at least one Pictish king.

---


372 Hughes, 'Early Christianity in Pictland', pp. 40-1, contrasts the situation in Pictland with the concurrent literary output from Iona as well other monasteries on the Irish mainland. Forsyth, 'Literacy in Pictland', pp. 39-42; Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish church', p. 12 n. 31, and P. Sims-Williams, 'The uses of writing in early medieval Wales', in Pryce, Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies, pp. 18-19, caution against reading too much into the absence of Pictish ecclesiastical writings from the seventh and eighth centuries. There is a similar lack of ecclesiastical documentation from the region from the ninth century until after the Norman Conquest, yet there is little doubt that there was a functioning church hierarchy during that period.

373 Foster, Picts, Gaels and Scots, pp. 89; Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish church', pp. 17, 24. In this regard, it is hazardous to attempt a reconstruction of Columban missionary activity in Pictland using allegedly early dedications to saints with Gaelic names. See also Bullough, 'The missions to the English and the Picts', pp. 90-1; I.B. Cowan, 'Early ecclesiastical foundation', in McNeill & Nicholson, An Historical Atlas of Scotland c.400-1600, pp. 17-20, 119-122; Smith, 'The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland', pp. 27-8.

374 Smith, 'The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland', p. 27.

375 In the AU s.a. 713, Nechtan is described as 'brother' (frater) to a Talorc son of Drostan. In a later entry s.a. 739, a Talorgan son of Drostan is referred to as 'king of Athfoitle' or Atholl, a region between the Spey and the Tay. The association of Nechtan with Atholl is, therefore, based on the assumption that Talorc and Talorgan are the same person. Even if this link between Nechtan and Atholl is valid, it does not preclude Nechtan from having had dominion over other areas of Pictland. See M.O. Anderson, Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 175-6; Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish church', pp. 23-4.

376 Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish church', p. 12 n. 31; Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, pp. 33-4; Smith, 'The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland', p. 32. Infra., pp. 346-7.
Ecclesiastical Interaction and Northumbrian Overlordship

The extent and penetration of Christianity in Pictland by the time Northumbrian control reached the southern bank of the Forth, around the middle of the seventh century, can only be loosely reconstructed. It is probable that exposure to Christianity from the northern Britons in the sixth century resulted in a gradual spread of the religion through southern Pictland, perhaps indicated by the distribution of eccles-names, and this foundation was reinforced by the end of the seventh century with the presence of the Columban church. The likelihood is, therefore, that the Northumbrians were faced with Pictish neighbours across the Forth who were fellow Christians, if not yet necessarily fellow Columbans.\(^{377}\) Given the ascendancy of Columban Christianity in Northumbria at the time, and the probable presence of Columban houses amongst the northern Picts, the potential was strong for ecclesiastical contact between the two peoples prior to the Synod of Whitby in 664. Indeed, Wilfrid was said to have asserted at the Synod that the Columban Scots were supported by ‘their accomplices in obstinacy ... the Picts and the Britons’.\(^{378}\)

Whether this potential for contact materialised in practice remains unknown. The earliest evidence of ecclesiastical interaction between Northumbrians and Picts occurs, rather, within the context of Northumbrian aggression and secular conquest.\(^{379}\) Bede says that in the three years after 655 when Oswiu defeated Penda at Winwaed, he subjugated ‘the greater part of the Picts [Pictorum maxima ex parte]’ to Northumbrian rule.\(^{380}\) While the extent of Oswiu’s imperium may have been exaggerated by Bede, it appears that at least part of Pictland became subject to overlordship as well as occupation by Northumbrians, since many were said to have been forced to flee from Pictish territory after Dunnichen in 685.\(^{381}\) Though it is nowhere made clear how much of Pictland was occupied, or even made tributary, it has been suggested that the area described was most likely that nearest the Forth, thus suggesting Forthriu and possibly Fife.\(^{382}\) The significance of Oswiu’s conquest in the present context is that Wilfrid, who was restored to the bishopric of York in 669, was said by Bede to have exercised ecclesiastical rule over ‘all the Northumbrians and Picts, as far as Oswiu’s power

---

377 This does not preclude the possibility that the Columban mission to the Northumbrians at some time may have gained assistance from Columban houses in Pictland.
378 HE III.25. See also HE III.3.
380 HE III.24 (supra., pp. 206-7).
381 HE IV.26.
extended'. If this passage means that Wilfrid had authority over all the people within Oswiu's northern imperium, and not just the Anglo-Saxon Northumbrians, then here is the earliest recorded instance of the Picts coming into contact with a Northumbrian cleric.

Wilfrid's episcopal policy in relation to the Picts is unknown. Stephen of Ripon stated that he was 'beloved and dear to all people', and 'diligently accomplished his ecclesiastical duties'. As Wilfrid's hagiographer, Stephen could hardly have said less. It is not known whether Wilfrid ever visited Pictland. Neither is it known how he dealt with any language problems: whether he employed interpreters, or only communicated in Latin with other clerics, Pictish or otherwise. Perhaps he would have insisted on conformity with Roman practice, particularly amongst any Columban communities which he found within his Pictish flock. David Kirby archly commented that 'it cannot have been particularly desirable that the first experience the Picts had of an Anglo-Saxon bishop was Wilfrid', and he cited Wilfrid's reputation for being uncompromising. While this may be a little unjustified, the socio-political climate of the north under Ecgfrith in the early 670s could have fostered a climate of ecclesiastical as well as secular antagonism.

Yet it is also around this time that Cuthbert, when he was still prior of Melrose c.664-78, travelled to the Niuduera regio of the Picts possibly located in Fife. Kirby has argued that it was Cuthbert's intention to spend the Feast of Epiphany (6 January) in Pictland, and the fact that he set out from Melrose after Christmas, a difficult time of year to travel, implies that his trip was of some importance. Whether there were any language problems that Cuthbert needed to overcome is unknown; it may be that some of his companions were either Pictish or were able to be understood in Pictish. Perhaps Melrose, located as it was at the southern end of Lauderdale, a major northern route, provided a base for Northumbrian clerics who were active across the Forth. The fact that Melrose, along with other monasteries such as Lindisfarne and Coldingham, had been a Columban foundation may also have had some collateral benefit for those Northumbrian clerics working amongst the Picts. It is significant that Cuthbert was one

---

382 Supra., pp. 207-8.
383 HE IV.3. See also _VW_ 21, that Wilfrid's 'ecclesiastical kingdom ... increased to the south among the Saxons and to the north among the British, the Picts and the Scots'.
384 _VW_ 21.
385 Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish church', p. 9.
386 Anon._VCuth_ II.4; _Bede_ _VCuth_ 11.
of the advisers who sought to dissuade Ecgfrith from attacking the Picts in 685.\footnote{Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish church', pp. 10-11.} Cuthbert’s attitude, and Bede’s, appear in stark contrast to the jubilation expressed by Stephen of Ripon in his account of Ecgfrith’s slaughter of a Pictish enemy early in his reign, and therefore may reveal some sympathy towards the Picts.\footnote{Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish church', p. 11 (supra., pp. 209-10).}

The Northumbrian Pictish \emph{provincia} was obviously important to the Northumbrian church. This point is most clearly demonstrated by Archbishop Theodore’s decision to create the Northumbrian bishopric based at Abercorn in 681, under bishop Trumwine, to minister to ‘the province of the Picts which at the time was subject to the dominion of the English’.\footnote{HE IV.12. As was explained earlier (supra., pp. 327-8), one of the reforms of Archbishop Theodore involved, in 678, a reorganisation of the diocesan structure of Northumbria, resulting in the foundation of a series of smaller bishoprics. Three years after this initial reorganisation, Theodore consecrated two new bishops: Tunberht at Hexham and Trumwine at Abercorn.} The formalisation of such a specific see for Trumwine reveals a clear assumption on the part of the Northumbrian church that they would have continued spiritual rulership over those Picts who were then subordinate to the Northumbrian king. The consecration of a bishop was no trivial matter, and doubtless the decision was also influenced by a desire on Ecgfrith’s part to consolidate his control over his Pictish dominion. Little is known about Trumwine himself. It is perhaps of note that he was one of the ‘religious and powerful men’ who accompanied Ecgfrith on his trip to Farne Island to persuade Cuthbert to accept the see of Lindisfarne.\footnote{HE IV.28; Anon. VCuth IV.1. See also Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, p. 11; Thomas, ‘Abercorn and the \emph{provincia Pictorum}’, p. 329.} He was thus a contemporary and possibly a colleague of Cuthbert,\footnote{In the anonymous \textit{Life of St Cuthbert}, Trumwine is referred to by the familiar ‘Tumma’ (\textit{Anon. VCuth IV.1}); this may imply that he was well known to the saint.} and a cleric of some standing. Trumwine may, therefore, have had some experience with the southern Picts and have been regarded as the man most qualified to be their bishop.

Charles Thomas asserted that Abercorn on the southern bank of the Forth was at the centre of a northern diocese – what he thought of as a \emph{regio Anglorum} – which encompassed both banks of the Forth.\footnote{HE IV.26; Anon. VCuth IV.1. See also Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, p. 11; Thomas, ‘Abercorn and the \emph{provincia Pictorum}’, p. 329.} Thomas essentially argued that Trumwine was first and foremost responsible for the Anglo-Saxon Northumbrians in the region, including those who had settled in Pictish territory, with the Picts themselves and any resident Britons being a secondary responsibility.\footnote{See also Chapter 7 regarding Abercorn (supra., pp. 198, 210).} Thomas came to this hypothesis
due to discomfort with the notion of a bishop sited on the south bank of the Forth, ministering to a diocese located on the north bank. While Thomas is probably correct in suggesting that Abercorn exercised some pastoral responsibility within the Lothians, it is pertinent that Bede explicitly stated Trumwine was bishop to the *province of the Picts* under Northumbrian rule, and that Abercorn, on the south of the Forth, was within *English* and not Pictish territory. This is as clear a statement as is likely to be found that Trumwine was appointed to administer a diocese which was indeed situated north of the Forth. While the extent of Trumwine's diocese continues to be a matter of debate, it was intended to encompass at least part of the territory of the southern Picts.

Irrespective of the long-term objectives for Trumwine's appointment, the Pictish episcopate proved to be short-lived. In 685, Trumwine was forced to withdraw with his people, in the aftermath of Ecgfrith's defeat at Dunnichen. There is no evidence that Trumwine's bishopric was ever revived; he lived out his days at *Streanaeshalch* (Whitby), and his brethren were found places amongst various, presumably Northumbrian, monasteries. Given that Dunnichen effectively meant the end of Northumbrian control in Pictland, it is not so very surprising that the Northumbrian bishopric over the Picts was never re-occupied, even if the monastery of Abercorn eventually was. As Bede says, the Pictish lands that had been occupied by Northumbrians were recovered after 685; the Northumbrian church, therefore, ceased to have any ecclesiastical authority within Pictish territory. What was the fate of Northumbrian churches in Pictland, given that the building of churches and even monasteries during the period 681-5, or even earlier, is by no means improbable? Were these abandoned, like Abercorn, or appropriated by an emergent Pictish church? The question is unanswerable: there are no discernible material remains associated with a Northumbrian presence in Pictland during the seventh century, probably a result of the short existence of Trumwine's and Wilfrid's episcopates.

---

395 *HE* IV.12.
396 *HE* IV.26.
397 Thomas, 'Abercorn and the *provincia Pictorum*', p. 331.
398 *HE* IV.26.
399 Thomas, 'Abercorn and the *provincia Pictorum*', p. 330, offered several tentative suggestions regarding possible Northumbrian churches in the region, including Kirkton (formerly Eccles) in Stirling and Kilremont (St Andrew's, Fife). Smith, 'The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland', pp. 32-3, more recently associated Kilremont with the later Roman influence in Pictland that began in the eighth century.
400 Proudfoot & Aliaga-Kelly, 'Towards an interpretation of anomalous finds and place-names of Anglo-Saxon origin in Scotland', pp. 11-12.
It could also be asked how the imposition of a Northumbrian bishop was received by those Picts under Northumbrian rule. The flight of Trumwine and his community from Abercorn in 685 is heavy with implications regarding the matter. His running away is not indicative of friendliness between the bishop and his Pictish faithful and suggests that Trumwine was not confident of his safety amongst the newly-independent Picts. It is quite likely that Trumwine was viewed as an agent of a foreign power by the victorious Pictish king Bridei son of Bile. Trumwine would probably have been expelled in any event, if he was not taken a hostage. This is not to say that Northumbrian clergymen ceased in 685 to claim hegemony over the parochia of the Picts. During Pope John’s council at Rome in 704, for instance, Wilfrid was said to have ‘confessed the true and Catholic faith for all the northern part of Britain and Ireland and the islands, which are inhabited by the races of Angles and Britons as well as Scots and Picts’. Such a confession was surely nothing more than an aspiration on the part of Wilfrid, as well as his hagiographer, yet it reveals the continuing ambitions regarding the Celtic north of at least one Northumbrian churchman.

It is entirely probable that the period immediately after the defeat of Ecgfrith at Dunnichen was one of resurgent Pictish pride. Ian Smith hypothesised a ‘Celtic revival’ in southern Pictland following the battle: a consciously anti-Northumbrian reawakening during which the way could have been made clear for Columban missionaries. This is by no means out of the question, though evidence for it is hard to come by. A politically-resurgent Pictland was not likely to have opted for the religious practices which had only recently been adopted by their Northumbrian adversaries. Columban Christianity was, therefore, a conspicuous alternative to Roman practice and one that at the time may have been embraced by the southern Picts. A Pictish king, Bridei (or Bruide) son of Derilei, may have attended the Council of Birr (Co. Offaly) in Ireland in 697. He was one of the guarantors of Cán Adomnán — earlier known as Adomnán’s Lex Innocentium, ‘Law of the Innocents’ — which was

---

401 Concerns over the security of Trumwine’s see might also have informed the decision to establish it at Abercorn, rather than a location on the northern bank of the Forth, or even near Stirling.
402 Wilfrid was said to have ‘confessed the true and Catholic faith for all the northern part of Britain and Ireland and the islands, which are inhabited by the races of Angles and Britons as well as Scots and Picts’.
404 The Class II cross-slab at Aberlemno churchyard was mentioned earlier as possibly having been erected to commemorate the Pictish victory at Dunnichen (supra., p. 212).
405 Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 27.
407 AU s.a. 697.
promulgated at Birr. Bridei is not associated with a specific region of Pictland. Given that in the Pictish King Lists he is recorded second in succession after Ecgfrith’s adversary Bridei son of Bile, it would be reasonable to place his authority in southern Pictland, though he may have expanded the domain controlled by his predecessors.

**King Nechtan and the Introduction of Roman Christianity**

The Columban influence that had probably spread into southern Pictland was to suffer a reversal during the reign of Bridei son of Derilei’s successor, Nechtan son of Derilei, c.706-24. In an account which is found only in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede says that, around the year 710, Nechtan became convinced after ‘assiduous study of ecclesiastical writings’ that his nation’s method of calculating Easter was incorrect. Accordingly, he sent messengers (legatarios) to Abbot Ceolfrith of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, appealing for guidance regarding Roman ecclesiastical practice. Nechtan specifically asked that Ceolfrith write him a letter containing instructions on how to refute those who would adhere to the old 84-year Easter calculation, and containing information regarding the correct form of tonsure. Nechtan also requested that architects (‘architectos’) be sent so that a stone church could be built amongst his people in the Roman style (‘morem Romanorum’), which he would dedicate to the ‘Prince of the Apostles’, St Peter. Bede says that Ceolfrith acceded to Nechtan’s requests, sending him architects together with a long letter. Bede further recounted that Nechtan had Ceolfrith’s letter read before him and ‘many learned men’, and carefully translated into his own language. Thanking God ‘for having made him worthy that he was to receive such a gift from England [de terra Anglorum]’, Nechtan then

---


409 Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 175-6, 232. Bridei son of Derile’s obit appears in the *AU* s.a. 706, without any particular title being ascribed to him. Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, pp. 136-7, presents some apparently early dedications to Adomnán in Pictland, including some south of the Grampians, which he takes as evidence of Adomnán visiting Pictland, and perhaps even Bridei himself. The use of dedications to track the activity of early Gaelic saints in Pictland has, however, come under increasing criticism.

410 On the relationship between these two kings, see Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 175-6.

411 *HE* V.21.

412 One might wonder whether Nechtan’s appeal to Ceolfrith occurred before or after 711, when the Northumbrian praefectus Berhtfrith was reported by Bede to have fought against the Picts (*HE* V.24). See Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, p. 22.

413 This letter from Ceolfrith to Nechtan is preserved, one presumes in full, in this very chapter (i.e. *HE* V.21). Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts’, p. 93 and Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish
proclaimed that he and his people would henceforth observe the Roman Easter, and he decreed that all the clergy of his kingdom were to adopt the Roman tonsure. Bede, thus, triumphantly declared that throughout 'all the provinces of the Picts [per universas Pictorum provincias]' the old 84-year-cycle Easter tables were 'everywhere obliterated'; that copies were made and distributed of the new 19-year one, and that 'the reformed nation rejoiced to submit to the newly-found guidance of [St] Peter'.

The appeal by Nechtan was clearly a turning point not only in relations between the Pictish and Northumbrian churches but also in the history of Christianity in Pictland itself. It is somewhat unfortunate that Bede is the only source for the appeal: a writer whose obvious interest in the Easter controversy and Roman orthodoxy would have affected his objectivity. However, Bede was a monk of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow and was resident when Nechtan's messengers would have appeared before Ceolfrith, c.710-15. Thus, Bede may even have been an eyewitness. While some embroidering of detail might be expected in his account, there is no reason to doubt the historicity of Nechtan's call for guidance. And indeed, some measure of corroboration is found in the *Annals of Ulster*, which records under the year 717, 'The expulsion of the community of Í [i.e. Iona] beyond Dorsum Brittaniae by king Nechtan'. This act is consistent with the Pictish king having embraced Roman orthodoxy, thereby divesting his kingdom of a source of Christian influence contrary to his agenda of reform.

By this evidence, it appears that Nechtan saw himself as the head of the Pictish church, at least as it was constructed within his domain. It also appears that Nechtan was cognisant of the broader ecclesiastical politics of northern Britain, and the schism between Roman and 'Celtic' observances. While Bede emphasised that Nechtan came to his understanding and decision in favour of Rome through 'assiduous study of Church writings', it is generally accepted that he must have had some particular stimulus to act when he did. Several authors have argued that the Northumbrian cleric-in-exile Ecgberht may have played a role in persuading the Pictish king to approach...
Abbot Ceolfrith. He was also listed as one of the guarantors of *Cáin Adomnán*; thus he was probably present at Birr in 697 where he may have met Nechtan's predecessor Bridei. Ecgberht's involvement in the conversion of the community of Iona to Roman observance in 716 certainly implies that part of his time with the Picts may have been taken up with similar efforts. Given Bede states that Ecgberht remained on Iona after 716, a mission to the Picts immediately prior to this date is plausible.

Accepting the possibility of a religious impetus for Nechtan's introduction of Roman observance and organisation into Pictland, several commentators also propose more secular political motivations. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that a king moved purely by a concern for orthodoxy would have waited until the year after Iona converted to the Roman method before expelling the Columban clergy from his kingdom. It may have been an act of political expediency at the time for Nechtan to approach Ceolfrith and thereby establish a quiescent southern border, particularly given the existence of rival factions within Pictland. Alternatively, Nechtan may have become concerned over the potential political influence of the Columbans in Pictland: a group which owed its allegiance to an authority outside his domain. His Roman reforms could thus represent the outcome of a struggle by the king for jurisdiction over the church, whose

---

417 For example, Duncan, 'Bede, Iona and the Picts', pp. 21-1; Foster, *Picts, Gaels and Scots*, p. 90; Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish church', pp. 18-19; D. Mac Lean, 'The Northumbrian perspective'. In S.M. Foster (ed.), *The St Andrews Sarcophagus: A Pictish Masterpiece and its International Connections* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 183-4; Picard, 'Bede, Adomnán and the writing of history', p. 59; Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, p. 138. Duncan suggested that Ecgberht drafted a letter to Ceolfrith on Nechtan’s behalf that was carried with the messengers he sent and was the source of Bede’s information about the conversion of the Picts. He even attempted a reconstruction of the letter (pp. 33-4).

418 A*HE III 27.*

419 Kirby, y ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, p. 18; Ni Dhonnchadha, 'The guarantor list of *Cáin Adomnán*’, pp. 193-4; Picard, 'Bede, Adomnán and the writing of history’, p. 59.

420 A*HE III 4, V.22; AU s.a. 716.*

421 If Ecgberht did indeed assist in persuading Nechtan of the correctness of Roman orthodoxy, Bede’s silence on the matter is rather curious. This is a subject which Duncan, ‘Bede, Iona and the Picts’, pp. 1-42, side-stepped in his detailed effort to place Ecgberht at the centre of the affair (see note 417 above). Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, p. 19, argued that Bede may not have known of Ecgberht’s activities in Pictland in sufficient detail to place him at Nechtan’s court, or he may have been more interested in elevating the role of his own monastery in the conversion of the Pictish king. Whatever the case, the limited source material for the early Christian history of the Picts must again be confronted.

422 Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 76. As recorded in the *AU*, Iona converted to Roman observance in 716, and Nechtan expelled the ‘community of Iona’ from his kingdom in 717.

423 Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 32; Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, pp. 138-9. There were clearly dynastic factions within Pictland. Nechtan himself, by way of example, is said to have been imprisoned in 726 (*AU* s.a.), by his successor King Druist (or Drest). In 729 (*AU* s.a.) Nechtan was again in conflict, fighting Oengus son of Forgus (c.729-761), the king who joined Eadberht in the siege of Dumbarton in 756.
hierarchy he could then employ for the political aims of consolidating and/or extending his authority.425

The tangible outcomes of Nechtan’s reforms are difficult to reconstruct. If he literally expelled all of the Columban clergy from his kingdom, a corresponding recruitment of Roman, probably Northumbrian, clerics to fill the vacuum might be supposed.426 Yet Bede makes no mention of such an outcome. Perhaps the ‘expulsion of the community of Iona’ in the *Annals of Ulster* referred instead to the termination of the authority of Iona over the Pictish church, rather than the removal of all the clergy.427 Bede’s statement that architects were sent to Nechtan in order to build a stone church ‘in the Roman style’ to be dedicated to St Peter is less ambiguous. The building of this structure would clearly have been intended as a symbolic gesture advertising the renovation of the Pictish church,428 much in the same manner as Archbishop Theodore’s earlier rededication of Lindisfarne, also in St Peter’s name.429 It might be expected that the church was built near a recognised centre of power. It has been argued by Geoffrey Barrow that the site of Nechtan’s new church was the now-lost *Egglespether*, ‘church of [St] Peter’, which is likely to have been in close proximity to Restenneth, near Forfar (Angus).430 The lack of any Christian fragments or architectural remains in the vicinity of Restenneth does, however, suggest some caution.431 Abernethy (Perth & Kinross) is another possible site for Nechtan’s church, located as it is only five kilometres from the fortified stronghold of Clatchard Craig, though its foundation is also clouded in obscurity and cannot be dated more specifically than c.725-1100.432 A further

---

424 Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, p. 176; Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 76-7. Nechtan may not have perceived the more distant allegiance of the Romans to Canterbury and ultimately the Pope to be as significant a concern.
425 Foster, *Picts, Gaels and Scots*, p. 90.
426 Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’, p. 10.
428 Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 32.
429 *Supra.*, pp. 327-8.
430 Barrow, ‘The childhood of Scottish Christianity’, p. 8. During the reign of Malcolm IV (1153-65), the church at Restenneth was given to the Augustinian priory of Jedburgh, along with the property called *Egglespether*. It is unlikely that a church dedicated to St Peter still existed at *Egglespether* in Malcolm’s day, however, as in the charter it is listed separately from Restenneth where it is clearly stated that ‘the church is built’. It is noteworthy that Restenneth is only four kilometres from Dunnichen, the site of Egfrith’s defeat in 685, and six kilometres from Aberlemno churchyard which contains the cross-slab thought to commemorate the battle. Thus, the locale may have been a regional centre in southern Pictland. See also Mac Lean, ‘The Northumbrian perspective’, p. 185.
431 Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 32.
432 Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*, pp. 92-6; Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 32. The most impressive evidence at Abernethy is the round tower, usually dated to the late eleventh or early twelfth century. An earlier structural phase has been identified, but this is unlikely to date from before the tenth century.
supposedly early church at Kilremont, the early name for St. Andrew’s, is more attributable to Nechtan’s successor Oengus son of Forgus.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland}, p. 98; D. Broun, ‘Pictish kings 761-839: integration with Dál Riat or separate development’, in Foster, \textit{The St Andrews Sarcophagus}, pp. 80-1. The AU s.a. 747 records the death of an abbot of Kilremont, ‘Tuathalan, abbot of Cinrigh Mona’. The Old Irish form of the name equates with ‘royal hill’. } Sculptural remains at the site dating from the second half of the eighth century are said to reveal strong Northumbrian influence.\footnote{Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’, p. 11; Smith, ‘The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Scotland’, p. 33.} 

Notwithstanding the presence of eighth-century churches in Pictland, the extent of Romanisation is hard to evaluate. It has been suggested that the Christian Class II symbol-stones\footnote{See note 358 (supra., p. 338).} should be associated with Nechtan’s reforms, and if so this indicates a concentration of his Romanising efforts south of the Grampians, yet not in Fife or Fortriu.\footnote{Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’, p. 9; \textit{idem.}, ‘Early Christianity in Pictland’, p. 51; Foster, \textit{Picts, Gaels and Scots}, pp. 92-3. The greatest concentration of Class II stones is north of the Tay along Strathmore and in Angus, the same region as Restenneth, Dunnichen and Aberlemno.} In 721, a Pictish ‘bishop of the Scots’ named Fergusitus or Fergusius, along with a Scottish bishop from Britain named Sedulius, attended a council in Rome.\footnote{Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, p. 20.} This implies the existence of at least one Pictish Roman bishop. However, there is no other evidence which reveals the organisation of a Roman hierarchy or diocesan structure in Pictland in the eighth century.\footnote{Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’, p. 9; Forsyth, ‘Literacy in Pictland’, pp. 39-44; Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts’, p. 89; Forsyth, ‘Literacy in Pictland’, pp. 39-44; Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’, p. 11.} The existence of any Pictish Christian texts is unknown.\footnote{Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts’, p. 89; Forsyth, ‘Literacy in Pictland’, pp. 39-44; Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’; p. 11.} Evidence of scriptoria in eighth-century Pictland is lacking beyond the Pictish king-lists, though it may be of some significance that the king-lists appear to derive from a common source compiled in the 720s, that is during the latter part of Nechtan’s reign.\footnote{Hughes, ‘Where are the writings of early Scotland?’, p. 10.} Still, a level of literacy is clearly evident from the thirty-seven inscribed stones in Pictland which display either Roman or ogham epigraphy.\footnote{Forsyth, ‘Literacy in Pictland’, pp. 44-58; see especially p. 45, which contains a distribution map.}

It can reasonably be deduced that ecclesiastical contact continued between Northumbria and Pictland for the remainder of the pre-Viking period. The \textit{foedus pacis} between the Northumbrians and Picts referred to by Bede in 731,\footnote{HE V.23.} the later military alliance between Eadberht and Oengus in 756, and the flight of at least two Northumbrian rulers...
into exile in Pictland all indicate a political environment during the eighth century in which there was regular interaction between the two peoples. More specifically, the community of Lindisfarne had some association with southern Pictland.\textsuperscript{443} The fact that one of the Northumbrian exiles, Osbald in 796, was accompanied to Pictland by several of the Lindisfarne brothers, as well as the inclusion of the three Pictish kings in the Lindisfarne \textit{Liber Vitae}, is strong evidence for a special association between that monastery and the Pictish realms.

***

Ecclesiastical interaction between the Northumbrians and Picts could be said to have followed a convoluted course during the pre-Viking period. Despite the potential for amicable contact during the Columban period in Northumbria, the surviving evidence indicates that relations began in the seventh century under conditions of antagonism, namely Oswiu's and Ecgfrith's subjugation of at least part of southern Pictland. Northumbrian episcopal control was imposed upon the Picts, first under bishop Wilfrid and then Trumwine, whose see at Abercorn was specifically created to minister to the provincia Pictorum. It is probable that there was an anti-Northumbrian resurgence in Pictland after the defeat of Ecgfrith in 685, and it may have been during this period that the Christianity of the southern Picts was reinforced by the introduction of the Columbans. Yet, there existed a capacity for sympathetic ecclesiastical interaction between Northumbrians and Picts, which was first evidenced by Cuthbert's visit to the Niuduera Picts c.664-78, and which came to fruition during the reign of the Pictish king Nechtan, c.706-24. The ultimate Romanisation of the Pictish church would have cleared the way for influence from the Anglo-Saxon south during the eighth century, which no doubt affected, and was itself affected by, concomitant secular contacts. Anglo-Saxon authors appear to have known little detail regarding the Christianity of the Picts: Bede, for instance, mentions not one Pictish monk or priest while clearly talking of Irish and even British examples.\textsuperscript{444} However, enough evidence has survived to illuminate some important linkages between the Northumbrian and Pictish churches in the seventh and eighth centuries.\textsuperscript{445}

\textsuperscript{443} Supra., p. 246.
\textsuperscript{444} Hughes, 'Early Christianity in Pictland', p. 41; Thacker, 'Bede and the Irish', p. 33.
\textsuperscript{445} Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish church', pp. 24-5.
Attitudes between Northumbrians and Northern Celts

In this final section concerning ecclesiastical interaction and influence amongst the Northumbrians and Celts of the north, the aim is to consider the issue of Anglo-Celtic attitudes. This is discussed here because the evidence regarding attitudes derives exclusively from sources written by clergymen. Anglo-Celtic attitudes, therefore, need to be considered not only within the broader milieu of secular ethnic and 'foreign' relations, but also in the context of ecclesiastical politics and opinion in the pre-Viking north. The nature of the written sources also means that there is access only to a very specific window on Anglo-Celtic feeling of the period. Thus, although we are on comparatively secure ground exploring the viewpoints adopted by the clerical authors of the surviving works, the motives of the much of the rest of the population remain largely conjectural.\textsuperscript{446} It may be possible to infer the attitudes and motivations of certain kings and noted clergy on the basis of their reported behaviour and deeds, but the inter-ethnic beliefs and behaviour of women and people lower down the social hierarchy are seriously under-represented.\textsuperscript{447} In this regard, knowledge of Anglo-Celtic attitudes is restricted to the opinions of the small cadre of literate clergymen whose narrative histories and hagiography have survived.

In assessing the nature of Anglo-Celtic attitudes in the pre-Viking north, the principle clerical author is Bede. That the 'grand narrative' of northern Britain, and of early Anglo-Saxon England in general, is Bede's \textit{Historia ecclesiastica}, means that this work requires the most careful consideration.\textsuperscript{448}

Bede and the Northumbrian Sources

It is has been concluded by some scholars that Bede's general attitude to the Celtic peoples was unfavourable.\textsuperscript{449} While this may be true as a generalisation, such a conclusion obscures, and trivialises, a deeper complexity in Bede's thinking about the Britons, Scots and Picts. Indeed, Bede regarded different Celts differently, best

\textsuperscript{446} Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 5.
\textsuperscript{447} Cessford, ‘Exogamous marriages between Anglo-Saxons and Britons’, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{448} Social attitudes are rarely expressed in the bare statements which characterise the early entries of the various annals, such as the ASC and AU. Charters, as a rule, also provide little information regarding inter-ethnic feeling, and in any event there are no extant survivals from Northumbria in the seventh and eighth centuries.
illustrated by his treatment of the Britons compared to the Scots. For Bede, the Britons were a cowardly (ignavus) and lazy (segnis) people, who ‘for the most part ... oppose the English through their inbred hatred [quamius et maxima ex parte domestico sibi odio gentem Anglorum]’. The Scots, on the other hand, were regarded by Bede quite differently: as a people who showed charity (caritas), who were inoffensive (inoxia, innocens) and who had ‘always been most friendly to the English [nationi Anglorum semper amicissimam]’.

Thomas Charles-Edwards noted in his seminal article on ‘Bede, the Irish and the Britons’ that this contrast ‘runs deep through the Historia ecclesiastica’. Charles-Edwards argued that the foundation of the difference in Bede’s attitude to the two peoples, and his representation of their corresponding attitudes to the gens Anglorum, lay in the disparity between their respective efforts to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons. Bede clearly stated that the Britons played no role in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons. Quite early in the Historia ecclesiastica Bede says that:

To the other unspeakable crimes [innenarrabilium scelerum facta], which Gildas their own historian describes in doleful words, was added this crime, that they [i.e. the Britons] never preached the faith to the Saxons or Angles who inhabited Britain with them.

Bede made the same point when discussing the conference at ‘Augustine’s Oak’, and when describing the capitulation of the community of Iona to Roman practice. He also complained in his statement of the present state of Britain (c.731) that the Britons

450 HE I.12, I.15. See also HE II.2, in which Bede described the flight of Brocmail at the battle of Chester. Brocmail and his men, who were charged with protecting the 1200 monks from Bangor, ‘took to their heels at the first assault, leaving those whom they should have protected unarmed and exposed to the sword-strokes of the enemy’.
451 HE V.23.
452 HE III.4.
453 HE IV.26.
454 Charles-Edwards, ‘Bede, the Irish and the Britons’, pp. 42-52. This work is still the best examination of Bede’s attitude to these two Celtic peoples.
456 Supra., p. 289.
457 HE II.22.
459 HE V.22.
still refused to accept the Roman Easter.\textsuperscript{460} By contrast, Bede’s account of the
Columban and Irish place in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons is quite the reverse.
The Columbans are accorded a primary role by Bede, and it is only through him that the
extent of their involvement is even known.\textsuperscript{461} Bede explicitly acknowledged this debt
to Iona.\textsuperscript{462} His observations about the Scots were noticeably warmer than those which
he made about the Britons.\textsuperscript{463}

The distinction between Bede’s regard for the Britons versus the Irish is most starkly
drawn in his respective accounts of Cadwallon and Aidán. Cadwallon, king of the
British kingdom of Gwynedd, is presented as the archetypical barbarian.\textsuperscript{464} Having
rebelled (\textit{rebellavit}) against Edwin’s \textit{imperium}, with the support of Penda the pagan
king of Mercia, Cadwallon is described as ‘a barbarian who was even more cruel than
the heathen \textit{[barbarus erat pagano saevior]}; a person who professed to be a Christian
but was a ‘barbarian in heart and profession \textit{[erat animo ac moribus barbarus]’, and who:

\begin{quote}
Spared neither women nor innocent children. With bestial cruelty he put all
to death by torture, and for a long time raged through all their land \textit{[ne sexui quidem
muliebri, vel innocuae parvolorum parceret aetati, quin universos atrocitate ferina morti per
 tormenta contraderet, multo tempore totas eorum provincias debachando pervagatus]},
meaning to wipe out all the English from the land of Britain \textit{[totum genus Anglorum
Britanniae finibus erarurum se esse delibera]}.\textsuperscript{465}
\end{quote}

In Cadwallon’s year-long rulership of the Northumbrian kingdoms after his and Penda’s
defeat of Edwin in 633, Bede in similar vein characterised him ‘not ruling them like a
victorious king but ravaging them like a savage tyrant, tearing them to pieces with
fearful bloodshed \textit{[non ut rex victor possideret, sed quasi tyrannus saeviens disperderet}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{460} \textit{HE} V.23. See also \textit{HE} II.20.
\textsuperscript{461} Bradley, \textit{Celtic Christianity}, p. 25; Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, p. 14; Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of
Iona}, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{462} \textit{HE} V.22. Bede refers to the Scots as ‘the nation which had willingly and ungrudgingly laboured to
communicate its own knowledge of God to the English nation’. As was discussed earlier, Bede was
concerned with showing how Northumbria’s debt to Iona and to Ireland for promulgating the Christian
faith was repaid by Iona’s final conversion to Roman practice at the hands of the Anglo-Saxon Ecgberht.
Irrespective of Bede’s motivations in making this statement about the Scots, it is still of significance that
this positive attitude towards them was being promulgated.
\textsuperscript{464} Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 21; Stancliffe, ‘The British church
\textsuperscript{465} \textit{HE} II.20. Bede elsewhere refers to Cadwallon’s ‘callous impiety \textit{[feralis impietas]’ (\textit{HE} III.9).
\end{footnotes}
Thus, Cadwallon was for Bede almost worse than a pagan: whereas the pagan Penda could not be expected to know or act any better, Cadwallon, as a professed Christian, had sinned deeply by not only allying with a pagan but also attacking a nation of fellow-Christians. Bede’s representation of Cadwallon’s actions as rebellion against the legitimate imperium of Edwin also has Gildasian overtones, mirroring the usurper Maximus’s rebellion against Rome.

Aidán, the first Columban bishop of Lindisfarne, by way of contrast, was described by Bede with great admiration. He was accounted ‘a man of outstanding gentleness, devotion and moderation [summae mansuetudinis pietatis, ac moderaminis virum], a cleric who was:

Deservedly loved by all, including those who had other views about Easter. Not only was he respected by the ordinary people but also by bishops, such as Honorius of Kent and Felix of the East Angles [Unde ab omnibus, etiam his, qui de pascha aliter sentiebant, merito diligebatur; nec solum a mediocribus, verum ab ipsis quoque episcopis, Honorio Cantuariorum, et Felice Orientalium Anglorum, venerationi habitus est].

Bede also held Aidán in high esteem as an inspiring example of a cleric who practised what he preached, stating that, ‘the best recommendation of his teaching to all was that he taught them no other way of life than that which he himself practised among his fellows [cuius doctrinam id maxime commendabat omnibus, quod non alter, quam vivebat cum suis ipse docebat].’ Aidán was also praised for his lack of interest in worldly possessions, his application to the rules of the apostles, as well as his humility and generosity; and his community at Lindisfarne was held in high regard due to their simple desire for an ascetic life serving God. In some respects Aidán is almost too

---

466 HE III.1. In the same chapter Bede again refers to the ‘savage tyranny of the British king [vesanam Brettonici regis tyrannidem]’, calling him an ‘infamous British leader [infandus Brettonum dux]’.


468 Bierle, ‘Ireland’s contribution to the culture of Northumbria’, p. 212; Bradley, Celtic Christianity, p. 26; Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts’, p. 86; Higham, Northern Counties, p. 281; Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, pp. 10, 14; Richter, Ireland and Her Neighbours, pp. 104-5; Thacker, ‘Bede and the Irish’, p. 43. It is something of a ‘happy coincidence’ that Bede’s account of the life of Aidán (HE III.3, III.5) follows closely after his diatribe against Cadwallon (HE II.20, III.1). The contrast between the two Celts is thus made more obvious and immediate.

469 HE III.3.

470 HE III.25.

471 HE III.5.

472 HE III.5, III.17.

473 HE III.26. Bede says similar of the community of Iona (HE III.4).
good to be true, with Bede’s description of him having a hagiographical flavour that probably reveals more of what Bede wanted Aidan to be than what he necessarily was.\textsuperscript{474} However, this does not invalidate Bede’s overwhelmingly positive attitude to the Columban cleric. Bede’s favour towards the Columbans and Irish in Britain can also be seen in his descriptions of Columba,\textsuperscript{475} Fursa,\textsuperscript{476} Colmán,\textsuperscript{477} Dicuil,\textsuperscript{478} and especially Adomnán.\textsuperscript{479}

Bede’s descriptions of Cadwallan and Aidan can, therefore, be used to exemplify the different manner in which he constructed his representations of the Britons and Irish. Cadwallon the British king was presented by Bede as a barbarian, whereas Aidan the Irish cleric was sanctified.\textsuperscript{480} Both these images cohere well with Bede’s view of the two peoples.\textsuperscript{481} However, this contrast in Bede’s attitudes should not be overplayed, for his ethnic views are not always so easy to categorise. For instance, he held at least one Briton in esteem, Ninian, whom he regarded as ‘a most reverend and holy man of British race [reverentissimo et santissimo viro de natione Brettonum]’,\textsuperscript{482} and praised for bringing Christianity to the southern Picts.\textsuperscript{483} He also referred to scholars from the British monastery of Bangor-is-y-Coed as ‘most learned [doctissimi]’, and the monastery as ‘most noble [nobilissimo]’.\textsuperscript{484} Similarly, Bede shows some inconsistency in his views of the Irish.\textsuperscript{485} Bede’s description of Bishop Finán, who succeeded Aidan at Lindisfarne, is noticeably cool. He called him a ‘man of fierce temper [homo ferocis animi]’, who was an ‘open adversary [apertum adversarium]’ to the Roman Easter.\textsuperscript{486} Bede also accounted the first unnamed Columban cleric sent to minister to the Northumbrians a man of ‘harsh/austere disposition [austerioris amini]’, who himself

\textsuperscript{474} Bullough, ‘The missions to the English and the Picts’, p. 85 n. 18. Thacker, ‘Bede and the Irish’, p. 43, argues that Bede was not here expressing support for ‘Celtic’ practice, as such, but rather vindicating the antecedents of Northumbrian Christianity.
\textsuperscript{475} HE III.4, V.9.
\textsuperscript{476} HE III.19.
\textsuperscript{477} HE III.26, IV.4.
\textsuperscript{478} HE IV.13.
\textsuperscript{479} HE V.15, V.21.
\textsuperscript{480} Higham, ‘Britons in northern England in the early middle ages’, p. 7. It could be argued that a comparison between the saintly Aidan and the warlike Cadwallon is not strictly a fair one. However, both figures are presented as archetypical of their respective gentes, and, as implied earlier (see note 468), they are juxtaposed in the HE itself.
\textsuperscript{481} Charles-Edwards, ‘Bede, the Irish and the Britons’, pp. 51-2.
\textsuperscript{482} HE III.4.
\textsuperscript{483} Supra., pp. 310-13.
\textsuperscript{484} HE II.2. Yet in the same chapter he also called the Britons a ‘faithless people [gens perfida]’.
\textsuperscript{485} Sharpe, Adomnán of Iona, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{486} HE III.25. Note also Bede’s inclusion of the letter from Bishop Laurentius of Canterbury and his fellow-bishops Mellitus and Iustus to the Irish, in which they complain that the Irish bishop Dagán refused to eat with them (HE II.4).
regarded the Anglo-Saxons as 'intractable, obstinate and of barbarous temperament \[indomabiles et durae ac barbarae mentis\]. Bede also spoke against the non-orthodoxy of the Columbans and Irish. In his description of the Synod of Whitby, for example, he has Wilfrid declare them 'accomplices in obstinacy [with] the Picts and the Britons \[obstinationis ... conplices, Pictos ... et Brettones\]', for 'foolishly attempting to fight against the whole world \[contra totum orbem stulto labore pugnant\]' over Easter.  

Yet, returning to the contrast between Bede’s view of the Britons and the Irish, instead of condemning the Irish for blind pig-headedness, as he did the Britons, he presented their non-orthodoxy as being a function of ignorance. So, in discussing Bishop Aidán, Bede stated that he 'had a zeal for God, though not entirely according to knowledge \[habentem zelum Dei, quamuis non plene secundum scientiam\]' (emphasis added). Bede attributed the Columbans’ ignorance to the isolation of Iona:  

Since they were so far away at the ends of the earth ... there was none to bring them the decrees of the synods concerning the observance of Easter \[utpote quibus longe ultra orbem positis nemo synodalia paschalis observantiae decreta porrexerat\].

Certainly, the Columbans were said by Bede to be ‘barbarians and simple \[ut barbari et rustici\]’, but their barbarity was not rooted in evil, rapine and slaughter as was the Britons’. In this light, the Columbans could be pardoned for their error as they did not know any better; but having heard the correct teachings of the Roman church they were now expected to conform, or fall into sin. The fact that Iona had capitulated to Roman practice by the time Bede was writing the Historia ecclesiastica meant that they were not a lost cause for him and were ultimately able to gain salvation in his eyes. He was thus able to write more favourably of the Scots than of the Britons, who themselves had not yet abandoned their ‘improper’ practice and had remained obdurate long after

487 HE III.5.
488 HE III.25. See also Bede. VCuth 39, in which he has St Cuthbert on his death-bed ask his monks not to mix with adherents of the non-orthodox Easter. The version in the earlier anonymous Life of the saint’s death contains no such instruction \(Anon. VCuth\) IV.13.
490 HE III.3. See also HE III.17, in which Bede refers to Aidán ‘not observing Easter at the proper time’, of which he ‘neither praises nor approves’ yet still commends Aidán’s ‘love of peace and charity, temperance and humility’. And see HE V.22, where similar is said of the Columbans of Iona in general.
492 HE III.4.
exposure to Roman teachings. Bede may have condescended to the Scots, but he was not hostile.494

It could be said, therefore, that Bede reserved his favour for those Celts who conformed to his specific Christian agenda. The Columbans had brought Christianity to the Northumbrians and had been ‘rewarded’ by their conversion to Roman practice.495 Those who were treated less positively – Finán and the unnamed Columban missionary – had either shown a wilful disregard for orthodoxy, or had failed to contribute to the success story of the English Church. Ninian, who was the only British saint apart from St Alban to even be named by Bede, brought Christianity to the southern Picts and, significantly, was said to have ‘received orthodox instruction at Rome in the faith and the mysteries of the truth [qui erat Romae regulariter fidem et mysteria veritatis edoctus]’ (emphasis added).496 In other words, Ninian could act as a model of Roman orthodoxy, in addition to providing some level of legitimacy to Northumbrian ecclesiastical aspirations in southern Pictland and Galloway.497 Britons as a whole, however, were disdained.

The same principle of positive regard in exchange for service to the greater good of Christianity might also be applied to Bede’s view of the Picts.498 While Bede, undoubtedly following Gildas’s precedent, referred to the Picts and the Scots as ‘extremely fierce peoples [gentibus vehementer saevis]’;499 he is otherwise respectful of them. Bridei son of Meilochn, for example, under whom (Bede said) Columba had been allowed to convert the Picts, was described as a ‘most powerful king [rex potentissimus]’.500 Nechtan son of Derilei, who introduced Roman orthodoxy to Pictland, was similarly respected. In the letter to him from Abbot Ceolfrith, he is addressed as ‘the most excellent and illustrious lord [domino excellentissimo et gloriosissimo]’, and address him as a ‘God-fearing king [rex Deo devote]’.501 The general tone of the letter is respectful, as is Bede’s treatment of Nechtan in the

494 Thacker, ‘Bede and the Irish’, p. 41, even refers to Bede as ‘defending’ Iona.
496 HE III.4. There may have been other British saints’ cults in existence in early Anglo-Saxon England which were not mentioned by Bede, for example to St Sixtus in Kent. See Stancliffe, ‘The British church and the mission of Augustine’, p. 121.
497 Bradley, Celtic Christianity, p. 27.
498 Bede is less informative about the Picts than about the Scots. See Thacker, ‘Bede and the Irish’, p. 33.
499 HE I.12. By way of comparison see DEB 14.1, in which the Picts and Scots are described as ‘exceedingly savage’.
500 HE III.4.
501 HE V.21.
remainder of his account. For Bede, both these rulers played an important role in the promulgation of Christianity within their realms. And more particularly in Nechtan’s case, he was a champion of Roman orthodoxy. Bede could not have treated him with anything other than affection. In this regard, it is instructive that Bede in no way condemned the Picts for killing the Northumbrian king Ecgfrith in 685:502 if anything, his sympathy appears to have been with the enemy.503 This attitude stands in contrast to Stephen of Ripon’s remarks in his Life of Wilfrid about ‘the bestial tribes of the Picts [populi bestiales Pictorum]’,504 and to the later evidence of the Continuatio Bedae in which the Pictish king Oengus son of Forgus was said ‘from the beginning of his reign right to the end [to have] behaved with bloody crime as a tyrannical slaughterer [qui regni sui principium usque ad finem facinore cruento tyrannus perduxit carnifex]’.505 Stephen and the author of the Continuatio entry were perhaps not impelled by the same agenda as Bede and may thus be representative of a more general stereotype regarding the Picts that was current in eighth-century Northumbria.506

It is possible to show, therefore, that Bede adopted an eclectic attitude to the different Celtic-speaking peoples residing in Britain, which was informed by what he perceived as their respective contributions to the success story of the Christian church of the Anglo-Saxons. Bede wrote with due attention to the different roles played by the Britons, the Scots and the Picts, lambasting the first and praising the others. The extent to which Bede’s attitudes were also motivated by a broader awareness of Anglo-Celtic ethnic relations has been a matter of some debate within the literature. Thomas Charles-Edwards was of the opinion that Bede’s attitudes to the Celts were solely religious in origin.507 He argued that Bede’s view of the Britons, for instance, was in essence a Gildasian-inspired literary construction based on their refusal to accept Roman patrimony and shows ‘no evidence for national antipathy’.508 Nicholas Higham argues along similar lines, stating that Bede was attempting to barbarise the Britons so as to

---

502 HE IV.26.
504 VW 19.
505 CB s.a. 761.
506 L. Alcock, ‘A survey of Pictish settlement archaeology’, in Friell & Watson, Pictish Studies: Settlement, Burial and Art in Dark Age Northern Britain, p. 7. By the time Bede was writing there also existed a peace-treaty between the Picts and the Northumbrians (HE V.23). This too may have influenced his portrayal (Kirby, ‘Bede and the Pictish church’, pp. 7-8). It should be noted that Bede in his letter to Bishop Egbert later expressed concern over the ability of Northumbria to defend itself against invasion by ‘barbarians’ (Bede, Epist. Ecg. 11). If he was here referring to the Picts, which is not at all certain, then he too may have subscribed to the more generalised anxiety (supra., p. 215).
prove', within the context of his providential history, the triumph of the Anglo-Saxons as God's chosen people.\textsuperscript{509} Bryan Ward-Perkins, on the other hand, asserts in regard to Anglo-British relations that the perception of difference between the two peoples 'was no mere literary construct' but was indeed felt in society.\textsuperscript{510} David Dumville has also cautioned against the view that Bede 'overdramatised' Anglo-Celtic sentiment.\textsuperscript{511}

To be sure, Roman orthodoxy and divine providence were themes of great importance to Bede; after all he was writing an ecclesiastical history. However, this does not necessarily mean that he would have been unmindful of matters of ethnicity and the broader socio-political context. Bede was self-consciously English and was clearly cognisant of the distinct identities of the various peoples of Britain.\textsuperscript{512} While his interpretation of Anglo-Celtic relations was shaped by a particular ecclesiastical agenda, there is no reason to suppose that he did not overlay this agenda onto an existing framework of ethnic prejudice.\textsuperscript{513} Disagreement amongst scholars as to the source of Bede's attitudes to the Celtic-speaking peoples of Britain does not alter the fact of their promulgation within Bede's work. Whatever the reason, Bede nevertheless appears to have disliked Britons, and favoured Scots and Picts.

**Adomnan and the Northern Celtic Sources**

The only unambiguously pre-Viking Celtic narrative sources are those which originate from the monastery of St Columba on Iona.\textsuperscript{514} No other contemporary sources have survived to give voice to the British perspective. The *Historia Brittonum* does contain material which appears to derive from the British north, and poetry such as *Y Gododdin* is credibly northern. Other Welsh poetry provides a different view from Bede's narrative, for example, presenting Cadwallon as a successful warrior king rather than a

\textsuperscript{509} N.J. Higham, *An English Empire: Bede and the Early Anglo-Saxon Kings* (Manchester, 1995), esp. pp. 16-18; idem., 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', pp. 7, 12. See also S. Bassett, 'Church and diocese in the West Midlands: the transition from British to Anglo-Saxon control', in Blair & Sharpe, *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, p. 39. Stancliffe, 'The British church and the mission of Augustine', pp. 108-9, further claims, rather too smoothly, that Bede's view of the British was based entirely on a misinterpretation of Pope Gregory's letter to the Frankish kings Theuderic and Theudebert in which he said that the 'sacerdotes e vicino ... refrain from kindling by their exhortation the desires of the English' (*MGH Epist.* I, no. VI.49, pp. 423-4; *EHD*, no. 162, pp. 790-1). The 'nearby sacerdotes' referred to were most likely Frankish, but Stancliffe maintains that Bede thought they were British and therefore made the 'error' that the British failed to convert the Anglo-Saxons.

\textsuperscript{510} Ward-Perkins, 'Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?', pp. 516-17.


\textsuperscript{512} Banham, 'Anglo-Saxon attitudes', p. 148; Charles-Edwards, 'Bede, the Irish and the Britons', p. 43; Ward-Perkins, 'Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?', pp. 513-14, 516.

\textsuperscript{513} Banham, 'Anglo-Saxon attitudes', pp. 147-8; Snyder, 'Celtic continuity in the middle ages', pp. 170-1.
barbarous tyrant,\textsuperscript{515} or involving Britons in significant events such as the death of Æthelfrith in 616.\textsuperscript{516} However, the fact of their vernacular transmission and late survival creates serious problems with regard to their usefulness in the present context.\textsuperscript{517} While some of the events described may well be authentic, the expressed attitudes cannot be divided into those which are contemporary and those which are interpolations more representative of non-contemporary concerns. The problem of anachronism is quite severe, with much of the Welsh literature being heavily influenced by later periods of Welsh, and English, nationalism.\textsuperscript{518}

To gain a Celtic perspective we are restricted to the single extant narrative from Iona, Adomnán's \textit{Life of Columba}. The \textit{Life}, which seems to have been written some time between 697 and Adomnán's death in 704,\textsuperscript{519} was intended as a statement of Columba's sanctity, as well as an account which could provide a model of piety for the edification of its Christian audience.\textsuperscript{520} Hence, Adomnán's purpose differed from that of Bede in the sense that it was predominantly hagiographical. Certainly, Bede's \textit{Historia ecclesiastica} contains elements of hagiography, and it should not be assumed that early medieval authors necessarily perceived a clear distinction between the two genres.\textsuperscript{521} Nevertheless, Adomnán's work was not explicitly aimed at a subject, as was Bede's, that required the consideration of Anglo-Celtic relations. That said, there are glimpses within the \textit{Life} of how Adomnán may have viewed his Anglo-Saxon neighbours.

In general terms, the polemic regarding the Easter controversy that is to be found in the work of Bede is absent from the \textit{Life}.\textsuperscript{522} The feast of Easter is mentioned four times, but only once is the controversy surrounding the date alluded to, and even then it is in

\textsuperscript{514} Supra., p. 149.
\textsuperscript{515} For example, \textit{Moliant Cadwallon}: see A. Breeze, 'Seventh-century Northumbria and a poem to Cadwallon', \textit{NH} 38 (2001), pp. 145-52; Higham, 'Britons in northern England in the early middle ages', p. 21.
\textsuperscript{516} For example, the \textit{Trioedd ynys Prydein}. See C. Cessford, 'The death of Æthelfrith of Lloegr', \textit{NH} 30 (1994), p. 179.
\textsuperscript{519} Picard, 'The purpose of Adomnán's \textit{Vita Columbae}', pp. 167-9; Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{520} Picard, 'The purpose of Adomnán's \textit{Vita Columbae}', p. 177; Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{521} Picard, 'Bede, Adomnán and the writing of history', p. 52.
\textsuperscript{522} Picard, 'The purpose of Adomnán's \textit{Vita Columbae}', p. 175; Sharpe, \textit{Adomnán of Iona}, p. 49; Smyth, \textit{Warlords and Holy Men}, p. 132.
reference to the churches of the Irish and not the Northumbrians. While it is likely that Adomnán was fully aware of the dispute, he did not make any issue of the difference in practice between his community and the Anglo-Saxon Northumbrians. Nor did he reveal what his own convictions were, which might have been expected given Bede’s report of his attempt to bring Iona to the Roman Easter. It seems that Adomnán was unconcerned or at least neutral about the dispute which so influenced Bede’s attitudes to the Celts. This point should be emphasised, as it is quite likely that the Life was composed for a larger audience than just the community of Iona, an audience which may have included the Anglo-Saxons. In this regard, Adomnán’s comparative silence about the Easter controversy appears almost conciliatory; that is, by not discussing the matter he was encouraging tolerance rather than division.

In addition to this general impression, in the few specific instances where Northumbrians are mentioned, Adomnán is quite respectful. As has been discussed, he refers to King Aldfrith as amicus and talks of his two visits to Northumbria after what he diplomatically calls ‘Ecgfrith’s battle’. Moreover he called Aldfrith’s kinsman Oswald an ‘emperor of all Britain [totius Brittaniae imperator]’, ordained by God. This is high praise indeed, even if interpreted in a less than literal manner, as suggested earlier. To a certain extent, the passage regarding Oswald also reads like a gentle reminder to the reader of the role of Iona in the conversion of Northumbria. Adomnán tells of Oswald’s prophetic vision of St Columba the night before his victory over Cadwallon, and how:

His whole people promised that after their return from battle they would accept the faith and receive baptism. For up to that time, the whole of England was darkened by the shadow of heathendom and ignorance, except

for King Oswald himself and twelve men who had been baptised with him in exile among the Irish.\textsuperscript{533}

Thus, the debt of Northumbria to the community of St Columba is reinforced by Adomnán, though in a discreet and judicious manner.\textsuperscript{534} As far as can be determined from Adomnán’s brief comments, it appears that he was well-disposed towards the Northumbrians. Given that the kingdom had been ruled for most of the seventh century by a family with close links to Iona, and at the time Adomnán was writing by a personal friend (i.e. Aldfrith), the placatory tone of Adomnán’s \emph{Life of Columba} should perhaps not be too surprising.

\textbf{Summary}

The extent to which the attitudes of these literate clergyman are representative of the population at large is difficult to judge. The lives of the majority of the population in Northumbria and beyond are severely under-represented in the sources, and in the main attitudes can only be extrapolated from the deeds reported. Yet, there is some reinforcement for what these clerical authors report. Bede’s ‘picture of lovelessness in Anglo-British relations’\textsuperscript{535} is supported by the dearth of evidence for social exchange between Anglo-Saxons and Britons.\textsuperscript{536} Mutual dislike and antipathy would help to explain the lack of cultural exchange in terms of religion and language and may explain why British Christians did not appear inclined to preach the faith to the Anglo-Saxons.\textsuperscript{537} The only certain instances of sympathetic interaction between Northumbrians and Britons is the exile of Hereric to the British kingdom of Elmet and the less certain marriage of Oswiu and Rhiamnellt. On the other hand, there is quite satisfactory evidence of amicable interaction between the Northumbrians and the Scots and the Picts. The exile of Northumbrian \textit{ethelings} to Dalriada and Pictland; the mission of Aidan and his successors to Northumbria, and the spread of Roman Christianity in Pictland in the eighth century were all opportunities for cultural

\textsuperscript{533} VC I.1. This account differs slightly from Bede’s, in which Oswald’s army is said to have accepted baptism and become Christian before the battle with Cadwallon (\textit{HE} III.2).

\textsuperscript{534} Picard, ‘The purpose of Adomnán’s \textit{Vita Columbae}’, p. 175.


\textsuperscript{536} Ward-Perkins, ‘Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?’, p. 517. The exception here is, of course, Penda of Mercia’s alliances with the Britons of Wales, to be discussed in Chapter 11 (infra., pp. 394-400).

\textsuperscript{537} Cramp, ‘Northumbria and Ireland’, p. 186; Morris, \textit{Churches in the Landscape}, p. 10; Ward-Perkins, ‘Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?’, p. 522 n. 3. This matter will be discussed in more detail in the context of the Augustine’s Oak conferences (infra., pp. 452-62).
exchange and the promotion of mutual understanding. This is not to say that hostility was not also apparent in Northumbrian views of the Scots and Picts, and vice versa, but the evidence points to a greater complexity in relations which would certainly have affected the resulting attitudes. This is mirrored in Bede’s generally favourable attitude to the Scots and the Picts, and Adomnán’s towards the Northumbrians, tempered by what is to be found in the Life of Wilfrid and the Continuatio Bedae regarding the Picts.

The representativeness of the clerical authors might also be considered from the viewpoint of textuality. Bede’s work certainly reached a wide audience, as indicated by the number of early manuscripts which have survived, and, while Adomnán’s work was probably less well-known, it did find its way to the Continent. The popularity of the Historia ecclesiastica, in particular, can be taken as an indication of its acceptability to its readers. To be sure, the audience would have been predominantly clergymen. However, it is unlikely that the aristocracy remained ignorant of the contents and the attitudes expressed in the work – it was after all dedicated to King Ceolwulf of Northumbria, who appears to have read it. It might presume too much to conclude that Bede’s text reflected mainstream Northumbrian thought in the seventh and eighth centuries, or that Adomnán was representative of all the Scots. But these works would have influenced how people thought about Anglo-Celtic relations, as well as their attitudes towards their Celtic or Anglo-Saxon neighbours.

538 Four eighth-century manuscripts survive, the earliest being Cambridge University Library MS. Kk. 5.16, which was probably produced in the late 730s. This MS. also contains the Moore Memoranda. See D.N. Dumville, ‘On the northern British section of the Historia Brittonum’, WHR 8 (1977), p. 350; Plummer, Bede, vol. I, p. lxxxvi; R.W. Hanning, The Vision of History in Early Britain (New York, 1966), p. 67.
541 HE Preface. See Kirby, ‘King Ceolwulf of Northumbria and the Historia Ecclesiastica’, pp. 168-73.
Conclusion to Part 2: Northumbria and the Celts of the North

David Dumville has written that one of the central questions for the early history of Northumbria concerns the nature of relations between the ‘English’ and the Britons.\(^1\) To this might be added relations between the ‘English’ and the Scots and the Picts. The degree of understanding that can be achieved regarding the political and social developments in the north relies in some measure on what can be discerned of the contacts between the different northern peoples.\(^2\) The kingdom of Northumbria, alone of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms examined in this thesis, interacted broadly with the Britons, Scots and Picts. Northumbria was, therefore, potentially open to a greater range of Celtic influences and at the same time had greater physical and economic resources available to it for exploitation by warfare and territorial expansion.

The amount of territory under Northumbrian control grew rapidly in the seventh century, in terms of both that which was absorbed under the direct rule of the kings of Northumbria and that which became tributary. It was the Britons who were most affected by Northumbrian expansion, and permanent gains were achieved over the kingdoms of Elmet, Rheged and Gododdin; Strathclyde was the only known British kingdom in the north to have survived the pre-Viking period. The appropriation of British land, the loot to be gained from warfare, and the collection of tribute doubtless contributed to the growing power of Northumbria during this century.\(^3\) Northumbrian overlordship also extended into Pictland, and arguably Dalriada, though in the latter case the two kingdoms were too far apart for direct confrontation to occur except in rare circumstances. It is likely that southern Pictish land was also appropriated during Oswiu’s and Ecgfrith’s reigns, c.655-685, once the northern frontier had been extended as far as the Forth.

Ecgfrith’s defeat at the battle of Dunnichen in 685, however, placed a check on further Northumbrian expansion, and from that time ‘foreign relations’ in the north appear to

---

have become more settled. Warfare still occurred between Northumbrians and Picts and Britons, and at least one Northumbrian king, Eadberht (737-758), revived the expansionism of the seventh century to achieve territorial gains over Strathclyde. Nevertheless, there is not the evidence for expansion and overlordship in the eighth century that there is for the seventh. With a strong Pictish kingdom to the north, Northumbria would have had few options for growth, apart from the regions of Galloway and Strathclyde, and was unable to rely on the wealth that could be gained from further large-scale land-taking. The peace treaty between the Northumbrians and Picts of c.730, and the later alliances of Eadberht and Oengus, reveal two kingdoms which must have appreciated each other’s military capability.

Given the gains made by Northumbria over British territory, as well as the proximity of Britons to the Northumbrian heartland, what is perhaps most paradoxical on the face of it is that most of the evidence for social exchange concerns the Scots and Picts. As far as can be ascertained, Britons occupied a social position subordinate to the Anglo-Saxon Northumbrians, and the amount of borrowing may have been limited by the perceived inferiority of the Britons. Evidence for the survival of British identity in the west of Northumbria, at least until the end of the seventh century, can be found. However, any sense of ‘Britishness’ appears to have been extinguished by the dominant culture. Certainly, Hereric’s exile to British Elmet, and Oswiu’s marriage to Rhianmellt, were instances of amicable interaction between Britons and Northumbrians. Yet the evidence is more apparent for cultural exchange between Northumbria and the Scots and Picts, encompassing exile and intermarriage, the extension of Roman Christianity to Pictland and the alliances mentioned, and most importantly, the spread of Columban influence in Northumbria.

In the end, Bede may not have been far off the mark when he claimed that the Britons did not preach the faith to the Anglo-Saxons. Peter Brown has stated that this should not have been surprising in post-Roman Britain, because ‘most old-fashioned Romani [and indeed Romano-Britons] still felt that Christianity was too precious a thing to waste on mere barbarians’. Thus, the Britons should not have been greatly concerned

---

6 For example, HE I.22.
that the Anglo-Saxons remained pagan, nor been particularly interested in converting them. Giorgio Ausenda has also stated that conversion missions, and related activities, require some basic urban or village life in order to be successful. While this argument should not be pressed too strongly – the conversion of Ireland was achieved in a non-urban milieu – it is an interesting point of convergence that urbanisation and Christianisation in Anglo-Saxon England seem to have occurred contemporaneously in the seventh century. The building of minster churches in old Roman structures probably acted as a focus for subsequent urban development. Thus, even if the sub-Roman Britons were disposed to proselytise, the absence of urban Anglo-Saxon population centres may have impeded their efforts in any event. It might also be questioned whether the pagan Anglo-Saxons would have been open to conversion by their wealas neighbours, whether their success culture would have accommodated any such attempts. The social climate in early Anglo-Saxon Northumbria does not appear to have facilitated a significant degree of ecclesiastical interaction between the Northumbrians and northern Britons. And indeed, the divide between the Christianity of the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons as portrayed by Bede might have been exacerbated by tensions between the two peoples. If the Irish/Columbans breached the divide between the Northumbrians and the Britons and ‘grafted themselves onto a raft of existing British Christianity’, as has recently been suggested, it is impossible to demonstrate where this may have occurred on the ground. The only known instance of where the Northumbrian church continued a pre-existing British cult site, Whithorn, appears to all intents and purposes to have been more a case of the Northumbrians ‘converting’ the British foundation to orthodoxy, rather than vice versa.

Continued in Volume II