Reflections On Early-Medieval Wales

T. M. Charles-Edwards

The six hundred and fifty-four years between the conventional end-date of Roman Britain, AD 410, and the killing of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn in 1064 saw the shaping of the territory of Wales more or less as we know it. The process was one of loss of territory, a loss to which the Welsh were never reconciled.[1] In 400, what we know as Wales was merely a projection of the land-mass of Britain into the Irish Sea, a projection far more mountainous than the open plains further east. Those encomia of the opulence of Britain composed by Roman and Post-Roman writers certainly did not apply to the highlands of Wales, even though those highlands were partially surrounded by more fertile country, as in Dyfed in the south-west, or Anglesey and Llŷn in the north-west; and even though the river valleys brought some good land far into the central mountains and moors.[2] In the early middle ages the Britons of Wales remembered that their forefathers cultivated all Britain, not just this western projection into the sea. They were the Britons, and even the preeminent English historian, Bede, acknowledged them as the original inhabitants of the island.[3] To understand this period in the history of Wales we need to examine it in a perspective suited to the period, not one just lifted unconsciously from the present. I shall pursue three themes through this long period: first, the relationship of the Britons of Wales with other Britons; secondly, differences between North and South Wales in the Post-Roman period, 400–600; and thirdly, differences between North and South Wales once the Vikings had come to dominate the sea-lanes between Ireland and Britain.

The first shift of perspective that we need, as people accustomed to think of Wales as a country of great antiquity, is to begin with Britain not Wales. In retrospect, we can see that, as the English progressively extended their power over more and more of the land of the Britons, the shape of Wales was gradually emerging; but what was left after the main English conquests, namely by *c*. AD 700, was not just Wales but a group of discontinuous territories from the Clyde basin in the north to the Loire in the south. Each one of these discontinous territories was called *Britannia*: Wales was one *Britannia*, and the remaining British land in the north was another *Britannia*.[4] Already in the sixth century, *Britannia* might refer, on the one hand, to the island of Britain, but on the other hand to Brittany; and Brittany is not even part of Britain.[5] Moreover, at the same period, a small territory in north-

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1   R. R. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100–1400: IV. Language and Historical Mythology', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, 7 (1997), 22–3.

2   W. Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1982), chap. 1.

3   Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, i. 1, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford Medieval Texts, 1969), 14–16; ed. M. Lapidge, *Beda: Storia degli Inglesi*, 2 vols. (n. pl., 2008), i. 22–6, and commentary, 287–9.

4   T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), 1–3.

5   Venantius Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica*, ed. F. Leo, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi, iv. 1 (Berlin, 1881), iii. 4 and Appendix 2.

west Spain was settled by Britons and called by their neighbours *Britonia*.[6] Not all the Britons were defeated remnants surviving in the western extremities of the Island of Britain; the Britons we call Bretons were not only settled in Gaul but, on occasion, were remarkably successful in war against the Franks—and the Franks were the premier military power of north-western Europe. Asser uses *Britannia* for Wales as well as for Britain, while the Scottish Chronicle, in its account of late ninth- and tenth-century North Britain, uses *Britannia* for Strathclyde, also known as Cumbria.[7] Cumbria, of course, is a Latin name for the land of the Cymry, only these Cymry were not in Wales but in the north. These different 'Britains' of the early middle ages were indeed separated from each other, if one thinks only of land and communications by land; but what is obvious as soon as one thinks of Brittany and the *Britonia* of north-west Spain is that the Britons were linked by sea rather than by land. Another shift of perspective is here essential, one advocated in his day by E. G. Bowen and more recently by Barry Cunliffe in his splendid book *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and its Peoples*.[8] An immediate implication, however, of the role of the sea in the history of the Britons is that their world had a very different aspect once the Vikings began to dominate the western seaways from the Orkneys, down through what they called 'The Southern Islands', namely the Hebrides, through the North Channel into the Irish Sea, and, from there across to Normandy and Brittany.

A corresponding shift of perspective is necessary when we turn from territories to languages. The usual term used by the Irish for the native language of the Britons was *Combreg*, an early form of the word known to us as Cymraeg. It was apparently interchangeable with *Bretnas*, the language of the Britons.[9] Cymraeg, therefore, then meant 'British' not just Welsh, as one would expect given that there were Cumbrians in the north alongside Cymry in Wales. Not until the twelfth century, it seems, did the Welsh think of their language as distinct from Breton, although closely related to it.[10] The philologists may indeed be correct in perceiving a divergence between the British spoken in the different 'Britains', Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, and the North, and may, not unreasonably, anticipate a later period by writing about Old Welsh, Old Cornish, and Old Breton, but for contemporaries these were varieties of a single language, British or Cymraeg.[11]

6   E. A. Thompson, 'Britonia', in M. W. Barley and R. P. C. Hanson (eds.), *Christianity in Britain, 300–700* (Leicester, 1968), 201–5.

7   Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, ed. W. H. Stevenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford, 1904; repr. with an article on recent work by D. Whitelock, 1959), trans. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, 1983), Prefatory Dedication (= Britain), chap. 80 (= Wales); Scottish Chronicle, ed. and trans. B. Hudson, 'The Scottish Chronicle', *Scottish Historical Review*, 77 (1998), p. 151; *Carta dirige gressus*, ed. M. Lapidge, 'Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of Athelstan', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 9 (1981), p. 90, stanza 5.

8   E. G. Bowen, *Britain and the Western Seaways* (London, 1972); B. Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and its Peoples, 8000 BC–AD 1500* (Oxford, 2001).

9   *Sanas Cormaic* (YBL), ed. K. Meyer (Halle a. S., 1912), nos. 124, 206, 239, 883.

10   Gerald of Wales, *Descriptio Kambriae*, i. 6, trans. T. Jones, *Gerallt Gymro: Hanes y Daith trwy Gymru, Disgrifiad o Gymru* (Caerdydd, 1938), 176.

11   K. H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), chap. 1.

A final shift of perspective has to do with the date 410. Conventionally, this is the end-date of Roman Britain. In that year, Britain ceased to be Roman.[12] This is one of those deeply-rooted beliefs that has just enough truth to keep the roots watered, but no more; and it is essential to see who, in what we call the Post-Roman period, roughly 400–600, took this view and who did not. The element of truth is that the Imperial government ceased to be able to control Britain: it could no longer choose who should head its administration, it could no longer control its military forces, and it could no longer exact taxes from its inhabitants. The reason was simple: it was fighting for its life in Italy, where it had been driven to the extreme measure of arming even slaves.[13] The structure of the old Empire, based on a civilian population that by its taxes paid for a professional army, was overturned. That the Britons were left to defend their *civitates* from the Anglo-Saxons was just one aspect of a crisis in which Alaric had taken a Gothic army into Italy and, in this very year, 410, sacked Rome. In this governmental sense, Britain passed out of the Roman Empire because of the military weakness of that empire, not because of any revolt by the Britons themselves.[14]

Rome, however, was more than just an Imperial government that taxed civilians to pay an army and a bureaucracy; it was also a civilization shared by fellow-citizens, *cives*. One example will be sufficient to make the point: Gregory of Tours, the historian of Post-Roman Gaul and its Frankish kings, was consecrated bishop in 573 and died in 594. He was thus a contemporary of St Columba of Iona and St David of Mynyw. For him, he and his family were Romans—and not just Romans, but of senatorial rank.[15] When he was writing his *Histories*, it was more than a century since an Imperial army had operated in northern Gaul. What is even more striking is that he clearly disapproved of the Emperor Justinian's attempt to recapture Spain, even though the Visigothic rulers of Spain were then Arian heretics.[16] The Emperor of New Rome was acknowledged as the political head of the Christian world, but there were plenty of Romans who had no desire to come under his direct authority. After 410 the Britons were in a similar situation to that of Gregory of Tours, but with one crucial difference: their native language was still British; they had not, like the Gauls, exchanged their language for the language of Rome, Latin; and, as a corollary, they had not exchanged their identity as Britons for an identity as Romans. In 400 some Britons in the east of the island were probably monolingual Latin-speakers, but more were bilingual in Latin and British, and yet others were monolingual British speakers. That the Britons who established Brittany, a new Britain across the sea, were predominantly speakers of British is clear from the history of the Breton language. On the other hand, the

12   Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, i. 11; v. 24 (in the latter, Bede's 409 is our 410).
13   J. F. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, A.D. 364–425* (Oxford, 1975), 276, on the Theodosian Code, VII. 13. 16–17 (April 406).
14   Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 38–44.
15   M. Heinzelmann, *Gregor von Tours (538–594): Zehn Bücher Geschichte: Historiographie und Gesellschaftskonzept im 6. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, 1994), 8–21.
16   Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, iv. 8, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *Libri Historiarum Decem*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum, i. 1 (Hanover, 1951), 140, trans. L. Thorpe, *Gregory of Tours: The History of the Franks*, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, 1974), 202.

part of Britain in which Latin was strongest was what became eastern England: if it had not been for the English, London might today have been a city in which the dominant language was something very like French, a British Romance, a *lingua Romana*.[17]

In the fifth century, however, the contrast between the Latin speakers of Gaul and the British speakers in the west of the Armorican peninsula was not enough to make people think of the Britons as non-Romans and therefore barbarians. In the 430s and thus well after 410, Prosper of Aquitaine contrasted the two great islands of North-Western Europe: Ireland was 'the barbarian island', Britain was 'the Roman island'.[18] Britons were still fellow-citizens of the other inhabitants of the Empire of the fourth century, even though they remained Britons. In the sixth century, the main point of tension, however, between Britons and Romans was in Gaul. On the River Vilaine, the eastern frontier of Brittany in the late-sixth century, Britons faced Romans.[19] This confrontation in Gaul was the principal impetus driving Britons out of the Romania of Gregory of Tours, the Romania of the West that was no longer ruled by the emperor but which spoke Latin. Gregory and his contemporaries were in two minds about the Britons: sometimes they were barbarians, non-Romans; but sometimes they were not.[20]

The great Anglo-Saxon historian, Bede, perceived the Britons in a way conditioned by this ambiguity but with a strongly hostile interpretation. For him, 410 was indeed the end of Roman Britain. One effect of the way he began his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, not with the Anglo-Saxon settlement but with Julius Caesar invading Britain, is that he could contrast Romans and Britons. The Britons, so he understood from Gildas, the writer he called 'their historian', namely the historian of the Britons, had only been superficially touched by the civilization and authority of Rome.[21] He could thus see 410 as the end of this superficial *Romanitas* of the Britons. Bede has dictated the standard English view of this period right down to our own time: the original Oxford History of England edited by Sir George Clark began, like Bede, with Roman Britain, not with the Anglo-Saxon settlement; and it ended with Ensor's *England, 1870–1914*, England before the First World War, the centre of an empire that rivalled that of Rome. By thus excising, with Gildas's help, the *Romanitas* of the Britons, Bede prepared the way for the adhesion of the English to a Christian Rome, an adhesion to be contrasted with the refusal of the Britons to accept the Easter reckoning accepted by the Church as a whole. His portrait of Edwin, the first Christian king of his native Northumbria, is of a ruler whose power was imperial and whose symbols of

17   P. Schrijver, 'The Rise and Fall of British Latin: The Evidence from English and Brittonic', in M. Fillpula, J. Klemola, and H. Pitkänen (eds.), *The Celtic Roots of English* (Joensuu, 2002), 87–110; D. N. Parsons, 'Sabrina in the Thorns: Place-Names as Evidence for British and Latin in Roman Britain', in S. Laker and P. Russell (eds.), 'Special Issue: Languages of Early Britain', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 109: 2 (2011), 113–37, and P. Russell, 'Latin and British in Roman and Post-Roman Britain', ibid., 138–57.

18   Prosper, *Contra Collatorem*, chapter 21 (ed. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, li. 271).

19   Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, x. 9, ed. Krusch and Levison, 491–4, trans. Thorpe, 556–8.

20   Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 231–4.

21   Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, chap. 5, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom, *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works* (London and Chichester, 1978), 17–18, 90–1.

rule deliberately echoed those of Rome.[22]

The three volumes of the *Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales* have offered rich material on which to base a very different view.[23] This is especially so when the Welsh stones are considered together with those of the other British lands, from the Forth to the Loire. First, we need to consider the letter-forms used. Here the seventh century marks a major break: previously the dominant letter-form for inscriptions was the roman capital; and Carlo Tedeschi has shown in detail how the Post-Roman British inscriptions exhibit habits inherited from Roman Britain.[24] The old theory that British epigraphy of the fifth and sixth centuries was re-imported from Gaul has been refuted; what we have is an epigraphic tradition common to the western provinces of the Empire, which continued into the fifth and sixth centuries, long after 410, a tradition in which there was provincial variation. Much was shared by British inscriptions and those of Gaul, but British epigraphy was already a distinct variant on this common tradition in the fourth century and this distinctness continued into the fifth and sixth. After the seventh century, however, the roman capital ceased to be the dominant form of letter being replaced by half-uncial, namely by the letter-forms used for grand books. The Roman division between one set of letter-forms for inscriptions and another for books collapsed, to the advantage of the book. This change was intimately linked with another: after the seventh century, inscriptions were predominantly associated with churches, and most of all with the greater churches of the south, such as, in Glamorgan, Llanilltud Fawr and Merthyr Mawr, or, in Dyfed, Nevern.[25] Before the seventh century inscriptions were much more widely distributed with the qualification that the epigraphic habit, by which I mean the habit of putting up inscriptions to commemorate–and, in the British case, to commemorate persons rather than events—was strongest in the north-west and, above all, in the south-west of Wales. Even in Glamorgan most inscriptions were in the west, where a fine selection has found a worthy home in the Margam Stones Museum (warmly recommended: just off the M4 at junction 39).[26] A second major change can be attributed to the seventh century: there are hardly any inscriptions

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22　Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ii. 16; the whole problem of Bede's account of the Britons has been well discussed by Clare Stancliffe, *Bede and the Britons*, Fourteenth Whithorn Lecture, 17th September 2005 (Whithorn, 2007).

23　M. Redknap and J. M. Lewis, *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales*, i, *South-East Wales and the English Border* (Cardiff, 2007); N. Edwards, *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales*, ii, *South-West Wales* (Cardiff, 2007); N. Edwards, *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales*, iii, *North Wales* (Cardiff, 2013), hereafter Redknap and Lewis, *Corpus*, i; Edwards, *Corpus*, ii, iii.

24　C. Tedeschi, 'Osservazioni sulla palaeografia delle iscrizioni britanniche palaeocristiane (V–VII sec.). Contributo allo studio dell'origine delle scritture insulari', *Scrittura e civiltà*, 19 (1995), 67–121; id., 'Some Observations on the Palaeography of Early Christian Inscriptions in Britain', in J. Higgitt *et al*. (eds.), *Roman, Runes and Ogham: Medieval Inscriptions in the Insular World and on the Continent* (Donington, 2001), 16–25; id., *Congeries Lapidum: Iscrizioni Britanniche dei secoli V–VII*, 2 vols. (Pisa, 2005).

25　Redknap and M. Lewis, *Corpus*, i, 369–96, 472–83; Edwards, *Corpus*, ii, 390–407.

26　See the map (Fig. 86) at Redknap and Lewis, *Corpus*, i, p. 260.

in North Wales after the seventh century.[27] The very few that occur are untypical, such as the Tywyn stone which is in Old Welsh rather than Latin.[28] And, finally, the seventh century seems likely to have been the time at which spoken British Latin died out and also the time at which the Irish settlers became assimilated to the Britons.[29]

This difference between North and South Wales is a useful reminder that Wales was far from having a uniform political culture in this period. In the Late Roman period, South Wales was divided between the territories of two *civitates*, largely self-governing peoples with a capital city: Caerwent for the Silures, Carmarthen for the Demetae. The peoples were those the Romans fought and conquered in the first century AD; they were already there; but their admission into the Roman political order with capital cities and aristocratic governing bodies, *ordines*, gave them a new life.[30] North Wales, however, appears to have remained under military government and did not have *civitates*. Caernarfon, the Roman Segontium, was a fort rather than a capital such as Venta Silurum, Caerwent, or Moridunum, Carmarthen.

What North and South Wales shared was western districts within which the Irish settled, but the effects of the settlement may have been different in the north. Irish settlement in the *civitas* of the Demetae, the later kingdom of Dyfed, was concentrated in the less fertile north of Pembrokeshire, around the Preseli Mountains.[31] Although the ruling family appears to have been Irish, the settlement as a whole did not entail a violent rupture with the past, a rupture which would have led to the mass displacement of a British elite. The kingdom, heir to the *civitas*, remained Dyfed, the ancient Demetae. Moreover, the ruling family associated itself with the Roman past. An inscription from Castell Dwyran, not far from the Roman road running west from the old *civitas* capital at Carmarthen, is bilingual, Latin in roman capitals, Irish in the ogham alphabet.[32] In the Latin inscription, Voteporix— probably a relation of Gildas's king of the Demetae, Vortipor—is styled *protector*, a title originally used for the household bodyguard of the emperor—hence 'protectors'—but later employed as an honorific title, like the gongs our top civil servants get on or near retirement.[33] In passing it is worth contrasting this Irish settlement in western Britain with the Anglo-Saxon settlement in the east, where we find no Latin inscriptions put up to commemorate, in good Roman fashion, eminent persons. Only in the late-sixth century does the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxons exhibit any desire to re-establish a link with Rome.[34] In their original aversion to Rome and turning towards Germania beyond the Rhine and especially

27   Edwards, *Corpus*, iii.
28   Ibid., Tywyn 2, 422–30.
29   P. Sims-Williams, 'The Five Languages of Wales in the Pre-Norman Inscriptions', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 44 (Winter 2002), 1–36: 30–1.
30   R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, i, *Inscriptions on Stone*, new edn. by R. S. O. Tomlin (Stroud, 1995), no. 311.
31   N. Edwards, *Corpus*, ii, Fig. 4. 3, p. 32.
32   Ibid. 202–6 (Castell Dwyran, **CM** 3).
33   Gildas, *De Excidio*, chap. 31; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 174–5.
34   H. Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England, c.600–c.850*, BAR Brit. Ser. 261 (Oxford, 1997).

Scandinavia, the Anglo-Saxons were the odd men out in western Europe: in their cultural attitudes, the ruling elite of their neighbours, the Franks, were much more like the Irish settled in western Britain. Both were proud that they were not Roman, and yet both emulated Roman aristocratic culture.

In north-west Wales the evidence of inscriptions and place-names gives a rather different impression from those of Dyfed. Inscriptions using the ogham alphabet and the Irish language are fewer, but the personal names on the inscriptions are still more often Irish than in what became Powys, apparently little affected by Irish settlement.[35] Moreover—and this is where the north-west begins to look different from the south-west—territorial names betray Irish influence. As John Lloyd-Jones argued in his *Enwau Lleoedd Sir Gaernarfon*, the name of the Llŷn peninsula is derived from the name of the Irish people of the south-eastern province of Ireland, Laigin, Leinstermen; and the second element of Dinllaen is derived from the genitive plural of the same name: Llŷn was a Leinster east of the sea and Dinllaen was 'the fortress of the Leinstermen'.[36] The name Gwynedd was linked by Lloyd-Jones with another Irish people, the Féni. Different opinions have, however, been expressed about the nature of the connection. For some, the two names are cognate, neither borrowed from the other but, instead, both inherited from the past. For others, the name Gwynedd is likely to be derived from Féni, but with a shift so as to refer to the land rather than the people.[37]

No final decision can be made between these two views: it is very much a matter of balancing probabilities. The issue is, however, an important one for the historian and not just for the student of Welsh place-names. In the south-west, as we saw, the preservation of the name of the *civitas*, the Demetae, in the medieval name of the kingdom, Dyfed, was of a piece with the evidence of epigraphy: both indicated a desire to link the Post-Roman kingdom with the Roman past. The same is true of Devon and Cornwall, the land of the Dumnonii with their *civitas* capital at Exeter: inscriptions in the Roman tradition are much more common there in the Post-Roman period than they were under Rome; and the name of the *civitas* survived to become the name of the kingdom. In north-west Wales there is no evidence of a *civitas* in the Roman period; and, yet, an inscription now in the church of Penmachno but earlier from Ffestiniog, a few miles over the hills to the south-west, gives a very different picture:[38]

> CANTIORI HIC IACIT / VENEDOTIS CIVE FVIT /
> [C]ONSOBRINO // MA[G]LI / MAGISTRATI
> Cantiori lies here; he was a citizen of Gwynedd,
> a cousin of Maglus the magistrate.

This is the first attestation of the name Gwynedd. It is also a good example of the way British Latin was developing in the same direction as the spoken Latin of

35   P. Sims-Williams, 'The Five Languages of Wales in the Pre-Norman Inscriptions', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 44 (Winter 2002), 1–36: 27–30.
36   J. Lloyd-Jones, *Enwau Lleoedd Sir Gaernarfon* (Cardiff, 1928), 6.
37   Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 178 (with references to earlier scholarship).
38   Edwards, *Corpus*, iii, 385–9 (Ffestiniog 1, **MR8**).

Gaul, Italy, and Spain: the inscription was addressed to literate readers who, if their linguistic ability matched the inscription itself, spoke Latin although they are very likely also to have spoken British. And, finally, it describes Cantiori not just as a citizen of Gwynedd but as a cousin of Maglus the magistrate: it is all as if Gwynedd were now as much a *civitas* with its *cives*, 'fellow-citizens', as the Demetae and the Silures had been in the fourth century.

What is crucial to understanding all this is to have an idea which British people inhabited north-west Wales in the Roman period. My belief is that this was a people called the Ordovices, a people familiar to readers of Tacitus's account of the Roman conquest of Britain. Sir John Rhys, for whom I have the deepest veneration, maintained that the Ordovices were the forerunners of Powys and that, like the Powys of Madog ap Maredudd in the twelfth century, their territory reached Cardigan Bay in the area around the Dyfi.[39] He also maintained that they were Brythons—Britons, that is—and that their expansion split a Goidelic North-West from a Goidelic South-West. His identification of the territory of the Ordovices, I should add, is the one faithfully followed in the latest edition of the Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain. For various reasons, I think that this is wrong and that the Ordovices were the people, not of Powys but of North-West Wales; and, therefore, that their territory became Gwynedd.[40] If this is correct, we can date the change, since there is another early inscription at Penbryn, in the south-west of Ceredigion, that attests the survival of the Ordovices until about AD 500. Nancy Edwards has given good reason why the present site of the inscription was the original site.[41]

CORBALENGI IACIT / ORDOVS
Corbaleng(us) lies (here), an Ordovician.

Patrick Sims-Williams has pointed out, first, that the name is Irish, and, secondly, that the likely reason why, unusually, Corbalengus was ascribed to a people named on the inscription was that Penbryn did not lie within the territory of the Ordovices: at Penbryn it was distinctive to be an Ordovician, whereas natives of the district in which Penbryn lay were likely to be distinguished as 'the son of so-and-so'.[42] If I am right that the Ordovices were the old people of north-western Wales – of what became Gwynedd – some change of political identity around 500 caused the adoption of a new name, a name related linguistically to that of an Irish people called the Féni.[43] If we then add another likelihood, that it was precisely around 500 that the Irish Féni expanded from their earlier home west of the Shannon by taking from Leinster the rich midland provinces of Ireland right up to the Irish Sea, that

39   J. Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, 1st edn. (London, 1882), 215–16.
40   Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 20–1, 176–80.
41   Edwards, *Corpus*, ii, 184–8, **CD**28. Penbryn 1. National Grid Reference: SN 2890 5137. Visitors to this inscription, for historians one of the most important monuments in Wales, are advised to check with the farmer before entering the field.
42   Sims-Williams, 'The Five Languages of Wales', 26–7, and the commentary in Edwards, *Corpus*, ii. 185–7.
43   Lloyd-Jones, *Enwau Lleoedd*, 5–6; for other discussions, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 176–80, especially 178 n. 23.

shifts the balance of probability towards interpreting Gwynedd as a loan from Irish. If this is true, some major territorial names of north-west Wales were created in this Post-Roman period; and they were created in two phases, first, a Leinster phase, represented by Llŷn and Dinllaen, and then a phase associated with the enemies of the Leinstermen, the Féni—the people, incidentally, among whom the greatest British saint of the fifth century, Patrick, was first a slave and later a missionary.

I now propose to take these two themes, of the difference between North and South Wales, and of the intimate relationship between Welsh history and that of the Irish Sea region as a whole, and look at a later period, the period within which the Vikings became the great power of the western seas.

Up to the ninth century, ever since the days of Gildas's contemporary, Maelgwn, the 'Island Dragon', Gwynedd was ruled by two dynasties that claimed to be related: one was the Maelgyning, namely the descendants of Maelgwn, the other was probably based to the east of the Conwy, in Rhos.[44] By the ninth century, and probably already by the eighth, both claimed to be descended from Cunedda, who was said to have come from Manaw Gododdin in the north, in the valley of the Forth, 146 years before the reign of Maelgwn and to have driven the Irish from the western lands of Wales.[45] I am in complete agreement with David Dumville in thinking that there is no chance that this story is literally true.[46] The inscriptions already discussed prove that this expulsion of the Irish did not then take place; however, the legend of Cunedda served to explain, among several other things, why two dynasties shared the kingship, and perhaps also why the lands to the west of the Conwy and those to the east of that river both belonged to Gwynedd.

The last king of these old royal kindreds of Gwynedd, died in 825. His successor was Merfyn ap Gwriad, after whom the main royal lineage of Gwynedd right down to the Edwardian conquest was called the Merfynion, the descendants of Merfyn.[47] It is very likely that the original home of Merfyn was the Isle of Man and quite likely that Merfyn's father, Gwriad, was the Gwriad commemorated on a surviving stone on the east coast of Man.[48] The Isle of Man was described by Bede as a British island, and its early inscriptions attest a similar mixture of Irish and British as is found in Gwynedd and in Dyfed.[49] We may infer that, by Bede's time, the rulers of the island were Britons. Bede also coupled together Man and Anglesey as two islands in the Irish Sea that Edwin of Northumbria subjected to his power. It

44   Gildas, *De Excidio*, chap. 31; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 328, 359.
45   *Historia Brittonum*, chap. 62, ed. E. Faral, *La Légende arthurienne*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1929), iii. 42. Faral's Harleian text is reprinted with a translation in *Nennius, British History, and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. J. Morris (London, 1980).
46   D. N. Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain', *History*, NS, 62 (1977), 181–3. For some suggestions as to why and when this legend was created, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 190, 328–9.
47   *Gwaith Meilyr Brydydd a'i Ddisgynyddion*, ed. J. E. Caerwyn Williams with P. I. Lynch (Cardiff, 1994), 7. 102n. (p. 168); the dynastic sense is primary, but it may also refer to the people ruled by the Merfynion.
48   P. Sims-Williams, 'Historical Need and Literary Narrative: A Caveat from Ninth-Century Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 17: 1 (1994–5), 11–20; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 467–8; P. M. C. Kermode, 'A Welsh Inscription on the Isle of Man', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 1 (1897), 48–51.
49   Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ii. 9; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 148–52.

was partly in reaction to this subjection that Cadwallon, king of Gwynedd, with the help of a Mercian prince, Penda, killed Edwin in battle in 633.

A glance at a map will enable one to see that these two islands, Man and Anglesey, straddle from north to south the widest part of the Irish Sea. Back in the days of Patrick, Irish slavers had come in their fleets and carried off thousands of Britons into slavery. In the Viking period, similarly, fleets ravaged the coastlands of the Irish Sea and carried off many Britons, men and especially women, to be sold as slaves. In the intervening period, in the seventh and eighth centuries, when these two islands, both British, had stood as guards over the Irish Sea, one to the north and the other to the south, peace had normally reigned in the waters between Ireland and Britain. And it was in those two centuries that the Insular culture shared between all the countries bordering the Irish Sea, including the Northumbrians, reached its height. What is not clear, however, is how long the Britons contested control of the Irish Sea with the new arrivals of the ninth century, the Vikings. Almost half way through that century, in 841, the Vikings established two settlements, two 'ship-ports' as the Irish annalists described them, one at Dublin and one at Lind Duachaill, the modern Annagassan in co. Louth.[50] One might well think that, by then, the Vikings must have conquered the Isle of Man. Yet the Viking archaeology of the Isle of Man only begins in the early tenth century.[51] What happened was that the Vikings of Dublin, ruled by a dynasty known as 'The Descendants of Ivar', Uí Ímair in Irish, were expelled in 902 and only returned in 917, but to a new site closer to the sea.[52] The earliest Viking archaeology of Man accords with that of the new settlement in its early days, when its rulers were still pagan, not with the old settlement before 902. A verse added to the Annals of Ulster, but probably contemporary with the events, commemorates the death of a group of kings in 878 and 879. One of them was Rhodri Mawr, the son of Merfyn ap Gwriad, and, like him, king of Gwynedd. The poet describes Rhodri as 'Rhodri of Man', as if the ancestral island still remained subject to his rule.[53] It is possible, therefore, that Man was only settled by Vikings after their expulsion from Dublin in 902.

That would bring the history of Man into even closer accord with the history of Anglesey. There, very probably in the east, a Viking leader called Ingimund settled in 902, and there also the excavations of Mark Redknap at Llanbedrgoch, which he described in a lecture to the Cymmrodorion a few years ago, revealed an important settlement; its material culture, in the tenth century, belonged to the axis stretching from Dublin in the west to York in the east, two major trading cities

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50   *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, ed. S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill, Part I, Text and Translation (Dublin, 1983), *s.a.* 841. 4.

51   J. Graham-Campbell, 'The Irish-Sea Vikings: Raiders and Settlers', in T. Scott and P. Starkey (eds.), *The Middle Ages in the North West* (Oxford, 1995), 75–8; idem, 'The Early Viking Age in the Irish Sea Area', in H. Clarke *et al.* (eds.), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), 116–18.

52   *The Annals of Ulster*, ed. Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *s.aa.* 902. 2; 917. 4. For the pre-902 site see E. O'Brien, 'The Location and Context of Viking Burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin', in Clarke *et al.* (eds.), *Ireland and Scandinavia*, 203–21.

53   *The Annals of Ulster*, ed. Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *s.a.* 878. 3. For the date of the verse, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 468 n. 10.

that the ruling dynasty of Dublin, Uí Ímair, sought to control.[54] The 902 expulsion from Dublin appears to have precipitated a series of Viking settlements round the Irish Sea, in Anglesey, in the Wirral, in Cumbria and in Dumfries; some of them we cannot date precisely, but those we can date seem to belong to the early years of the tenth century.

By 902 a further major change in the shape of Britain had occurred: the creation through the linking together of Wessex and English Mercia under King Alfred of what would become the kingdom of the English. Mercia had previously been the English kingdom that exercised most power in Wales; but Alfred and his heirs were the most successful opponents of Viking power; and Wales, therefore, lay between the two great dynasties of the British Isles in the late-ninth and early-tenth centuries, between the Men of Dublin and the West Saxons. Anglesey in Gwynedd lay opposite Dublin, while South Wales faced the kingdom of Wessex across the Bristol Channel. Asser of St Davids, in his Life of King Alfred, gives us a quick sketch of the Wales of the 880s which reveals how the internal politics of Wales were then intertwined with the Vikings on the one hand and Wessex on the other.[55] The context was the aftermath of two great victories, one in 878 and the other in 881. In 878 Alfred won the battle of Edington and so decisively defeated a Viking army that appeared to have overrun Wessex.[56] The Viking king Guthrum accepted baptism, with Alfred as his godfather, and promised to leave Wessex; he would eventually settle in East Anglia. The other crucial battle was in 881, when Anarawd and his brothers, sons of Rhodri Mawr, avenged the killing of their father by the Mercians, defeating Æthelred of Mercia in a great battle on the River Conwy, 'God's vengeance for Rhodri' as the Welsh annalist described the event in a rare departure from the unadorned facts.[57]

Asser's Wales, the Wales of the 880s, was one in which Alfred appeared as the protector of the southern Welsh kingdoms from two great threats, Anarawd and his brothers, on the one hand, and the Mercians on the other. Yet, only Gwent and Glywysing in the south-east were now threatened by Mercia, while Dyfed and Brycheiniog were threatened by the Merfynion of Gwynedd. Mercian power in Wales had thus collapsed since their defeat at the River Conwy; and that defeat was one event that weakened Mercia and so may have helped to bring about the submission of the Mercians to Alfred: the Mercians were no longer able to sustain an independent hegemony in Wales. The battle of the River Conwy thus played a significant, if indirect, part in creating a united kingdom of the English. The 880s are also likely to be the period when Gwynedd absorbed Powys; this is likely to have happened as an immediate consequence of the battle of the Conwy, since Powys was not mentioned by Asser as a kingdom threatened by Gwynedd, unlike Brycheiniog to the south. Asser finished off his sketch of contemporary Wales as follows:

54   *Annales Cambriae*, *s.a.* 902, ed. D. N. Dumville, *Annales Cambriae, A.D. 682–954: Texts A–C in Parallel* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 14; M. Redknap, 'Viking-Age Settlement in Wales: Some Recent Advances', *THSC 2005*, N. S. 12 (2006), 5–35.
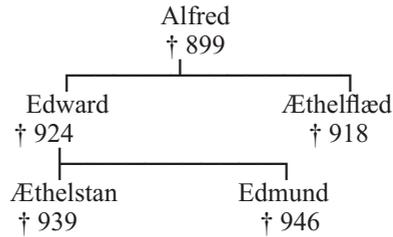55   Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, trans. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, chap. 80.
56   Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *s.a.* 878, in D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents, c. 500–1042*, 2nd edn. (London, 1979), No. 1; Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, chap. 56, Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 84–5.
57   *Annales Cambriae*, ed. Dumville, *s.a.* 881, pp. 12–13.

Finally Anarawd son of Rhodri, together with his brothers, abandoned his alliance with the Northumbrians, from which he had had nothing but harm, eagerly sought the king's alliance and came to his presence. When he had been honourably welcomed by the king and had been received by him at the hand of a bishop as his son in confirmation, and had been enriched with many exceedingly precious gifts, he submitted himself to the king's lordship with all his people, namely [promising] that he would in every way be obedient to the king's will on the very same conditions as Æthelred and the Mercians.[58]

Before this submission by Anarawd, Æthelred and the Mercians had already submitted to Alfred, as had the southern Welsh kings; but Gwynedd had been allied with the Vikings of York. Why Gwynedd would be more likely to ally with Vikings than were the southern Welsh kingdoms is obvious from the geographical position of Anglesey as well as the archaeology of Llanbedrgoch. After Anarawd's submission to Alfred, however, the whole of Wales was aligned with Wessex.

Another thing that Asser implies is that there were degrees of submission, some light, others heavy. Since Anarawd submitted on the same terms as the Mercians, Gwynedd was probably not subjected to the payment of tribute, but was obliged to align itself militarily with Wessex. This is in contrast with later subjections of the Welsh to kings of the English, in which tribute was demanded.[59] One difference between the submission of Gwynedd and that of the Mercians is not mentioned by Asser: Æthelred of the Mercians had to forego the title of king, but Anarawd did not.

The early Merfynion

Merfyn (from the Isle of Man)
king of Gwynedd
† 844

Rhodri Mawr
Gwynedd   † 878   Dyfed

Anarawd   Cadell
† 916   † 909

Idwal   Hywel (Dda)   Clydog
† 942   † 950   † 920

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58   Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, chap. 80; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 96.
59   e.g. Domesday Book, Herefordshire, 179b.

The Men of Dublin (Gwŷr Dulyn)   Kings of the English
Uí Ímair 'The Descendants of Ívarr'

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Ímar                                Alfred
† 873                               † 899
  |                          ┌──────────┴──────────┐
  ?                        Edward              Æthelflæd
  |                        † 924                 † 918
Guthfrith                Æthelstan             Edmund
† 934                      † 939                 † 946
  |
Olaf
† 940
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After Asser the history of Wales is exceedingly obscure until 918, when Alfred's daughter, Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, died, someone whom both Welsh and Irish sources concurred in styling queen, but who was not so regarded by the English. At her death she was succeeded by her daughter Ælfwyn, but shortly afterwards her brother, Edward, king of Wessex, staged a coup and Ælfwyn was deprived of the kingdom and her freedom.[60] As a consequence, the Welsh kings previously subject to Æthelflæd submitted to Edward. They are named as Hywel, Clydog, and Idwal.[61] Hywel is better known as Hywel Dda, son of one of Anarawd's brothers, Cadell. Clydog was also a son of Cadell, while Idwal was son of Anarawd and king of Gwynedd. Hywel appears to have succeeded his father as king of Dyfed; what kingdom was ruled by Clydog is unclear, but it is clear that Asser's Wales had now disappeared for ever. Whereas Alfred had defended the then king of Dyfed, Hyfaidd, from the Merfynion, Hywel Dda, from a branch of those same Merfynion, now ruled Dyfed. Moreover, in naming the Welsh kings who submitted to Edward, the English chronicler places Hywel, king of Dyfed, first, and Idwal, king of Gwynedd last. Hywel and Idwal would also appear as witnesses in some English royal charters, and in them also Hywel preceded Idwal.[62] From one point of view, this is strange, since Gwynedd was the base from which the Merfynion had expanded, the kingdom ruled by Rhodri Mawr and his father, Merfyn. From another point of view it is not strange at all: the adhesion of the southern Welsh to the English kings of the tenth century was much more secure than was the adhesion of Gwynedd, lying between Viking Dublin, Viking Man, and the Viking settlement in the Wirral.

The lifetime of Hywel Dda, who ruled for most of the first half of the tenth

60   Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, trans. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, *s.a.* 919 (Mercian Register).

61   Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, trans. Whitelock, *s.a.* 918.

62   S. Keynes, *An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Royal Charters, c. 670–1066*, rev. edn. (Cambridge, 2002), Table XXXVI; H. R. Loyn, 'Wales and England in the Tenth Century: The Context of the Athelstan Charters', *Welsh History Review*, 10 (1980–81), 283–301.

century, from 910 until 950, saw the climax of the conflict between the Men of Dublin and the heirs of Alfred during the reigns of Æthelstan and his brother Edmund.[63] It is easy for English historians to see it as a struggle between the English and the Vikings. Until the rulers of Dublin converted to Christianity some time in the second quarter of the century, it was also possible for contemporary English chroniclers to see it as a struggle between Christians and pagans.[64] Yet, the ability of the rulers of the Men of Dublin, Guthfrith and his son Olaf, to rally to their support most of the kingdoms of northern Britain, Cumbria, Scotland, and also Northumbria, suggests that the inhabitants of northern Britain feared the imperial ambitions of Æthelstan and Edmund more than they feared the Vikings of Dublin.

The most remarkable Old Welsh prophetic poem, *Armes Prydein Fawr*, is likely to belong to the reign of Hywel Dda.[65] If so, it was directly opposed to his policy of support for the West Saxon kings, Æthelstan and Edmund, for *Armes Prydein* advocated an alliance with the Men of Dublin. If we take the different British territories from north to south, Cumbria or Strathclyde, Gwynedd, the southern Welsh under Hywel Dda, king of Dyfed, and Morgan ab Owain, king of Gwent, the Cornishmen, and the Bretons, their political allegiance shifted from consistent opposition to Æthelstan and Edmund in the north to full support in the south. The Cumbrians were the most hostile to the English and thus the most firmly allied with the Men of Dublin; Gwynedd wavered; and the southern Welsh kingdoms supported the English. Cornwall had, since the previous century, been incorporated into the West Saxon kingdom; and Brittany was at this very time putting an end to Viking rule with Æthelstan's aid.[66] The position of Cumbria was an important element in the situation: by 926 it had expanded from its base in the valley of the Clyde as far as Penrith. If you are driving north on the M6, you will pass into what was once this land of the Cymry in the north as you cross the River Eamont, just before you reach the A66 turn-off to Penrith and Scotch Corner. Because it had expanded so far south, the population of Cumbria was extraordinarily mixed: Cumbrians, English, and Norse. The area around Carlisle saw the main Cumbrian settlement, but the coastal lands skirting the Lake District mountains contained

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63   For the Vikings of Dublin, see C. Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014* (Edinburgh, 2007), chaps. 1 and 2.

64   Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 522.

65   *Armes Prydein*, ed. I. Williams (Cardiff, 1955); English version with translation by R. Bromwich (Dublin, 1972); new text and translation by G. Isaac, '"Armes Prydain Fawr" and St David', in J. Wyn Evans and J. Wooding (eds.), *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation* (Woodbridge, 2007), 170–81. On the date, *Armes Prydein*, ed. Williams, xii–xx; D. N. Dumville, 'Brittany and "Armes Prydein Vawr"', *Études Celtiques*, 20 (1983), 145–59; A. Breeze, '*Armes Prydein*, Hywel Dda, and the Reign of Edmund of Wessex', *Études Celtiques*, 33 (1997), 209–22; C. Etchingham, 'Viking-Age Gwynedd and Ireland: Political Relations', in K. Jankulak and J. Wooding (eds.), *Ireland and Wales in the Middle Ages* (Dublin, 2007),164–6, suggests that a period in the eleventh century is also a possibility (a very remote one in my view); H. Fulton, 'Tenth-Century Wales and *Armes Prydein*', *THSC 2000*, n.s. 7 (2001), 5–18, argues that it was composed on the occasion of Hywel Dda's death in 950.

66   Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 519–20.

Norse settlements linked to Viking Ireland.[67] An alliance with Cumbria would help a king from Dublin to cross the Pennines into the Kingdom of York.[68]

There were two principal climaxes in the struggle between the Men of Dublin and the West-Saxon kings of the English. In both Olaf son of Guthfrith was the king of Dublin. In the first, in 937, Olaf was defeated at the battle of Brunanburh, recently identified with Bromborough in the Wirral and thus close to Gwynedd.[69] In the second, in 939–40 after Æthelstan's death, Olaf was much more successful: he and Edmund divided England between them leaving the lands north and east of Watling Street to Olaf.[70] Olaf, however, died shortly afterwards and Edmund was not only able to recover the lost English territory but also to punish the allies of the dead king. Among the latter were not only the Cumbrians but also Gwynedd. In 942 Idwal ab Anarawd and his son Elise were killed in battle by the English, and Hywel Dda took over Gwynedd.[71] This strongly suggests that Idwal had supported Olaf on his second attempt to take power in Britain.

My suspicion is that *Armes Prydein* was most likely to have been composed in Gwynedd before the campaign of 939–40 in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the southern Welsh to desert their alliance with the English.[72] Although a defeat for the English was only possible because of the alliance of Cumbria and Gwynedd with the Vikings, the poem is full of the ancestral grievances of the Britons and makes only passing references to the Men of Dublin, the leaders in the alliance.

The half-century after the death of Hywel Dda has a very different aspect from the first half of the century. One by-product of the struggle between the Men of Dublin and the English of Wessex and Mercia was that the Merfynion split between a northern and a southern branch. Moreover, it was not long before the Merfynion of Gwynedd and then those of the South started to fight among themselves. The English kings after 950 did not have the power, or, perhaps, the interest, to establish a peaceful order in Wales, such as had continued through most of the period from 900 to 950. The result was that Gwynedd especially became a prey to Viking attacks. The political condition of Wales is not a bad indicator of the power of the new 'emperors of Britain', heirs of Alfred; and by that standard the power of Edgar (959–975) was decidedly inferior to that of Æthelstan and Edmund (924–939 and 939–946).[73]

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67   The mixture of peoples is well shown by A. M. Armstrong, A. Mawer, F. M. Stenton, and
      B. Dickins, *The Place-Names of Cumberland*, 3 vols, English Place-Name Society, 20–2
      (Cambridge, 1950–2), and C. Phythian-Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians: A Study in British
      Provincial Origins, AD 400–1200* (Aldershot, 1996).
68   Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 521–2.
69   J. McN. Dodgson, 'The Background of *Brunanburh*', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 14
      (1957), 303–16, repr. in P. Cavill, S. E. Harding, and J. Jesch (eds.), *Wirral and its Viking
      Heritage* (Nottingham, 2002), 60–9; P. Cavill, S. E. Harding, and J. Jesch, 'Revisiting
      Dingesmere', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 36 (2003–4), 25–38.
70   C. Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014*
      (Edinburgh, 2007), 107–8.
71   *Annales Cambriae*, ed. Dumville, *s.a.* 942; the authority of Hywel in Gwynedd from 942 to his
      death in 950 is indicated by his sons' efforts to retain it in 950–4, and by his being the sole ruler
      from the Merfynion to attest English royal charters in the period.
72   *Armes Prydein Vawr*, line 99, is telling evidence.
73   Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 536–52.

Most of the evidence for the culture of Wales in the Viking era comes from the South. This is partly because West-Saxon kings and West-Saxon churches from Alfred onwards imported Welsh scholars and Welsh books; and these, for obvious geographical as well as political reasons, came from South Wales. What the few surviving Welsh and Cornish manuscripts show is, first, the close connections between learning in South Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany, and secondly, between the different British territories and Ireland. A manuscript of Juvencus's retelling of the Gospels in verse now in Cambridge was written by someone with an Irish name, Nuadu, who, in Old Welsh, asked his readers to pray for him.[74] It was glossed in Latin, in Old Welsh, in Old Irish, as well as by a Breton. A tenth-century Cornish manuscript in the Bodleian contains a considerable layer of Welsh.[75] A didactic text in the manuscript in the form of a conversation between teacher and pupil assumes that both of them are Britons in a British church, but it is also assumed that a scholar is mobile. For the purposes of the dialogue, the pupil is to imagine himself as a foreigner, a *peregrinus*, who begs for the help of the *princeps*, the head of the church to which he has come:

> The *princeps* replies, 'Where were you?' To this the pupil answers, 'Till now I was reared or fostered [he is made to use two words to extend the range of vocabulary covered] in Ireland or in Britannia or in Francia.'[76]

Scholars were mobile around the Irish Sea and across to Brittany. A later example was Sulien (died 1091), bishop of St Davids, who spent time in Scotland and Ireland.[77] It is worth noting that the passage just quoted presumes that the relationship between teacher and pupil is a form of fosterage, an institution of importance both among the Britons and among the Irish. As a royal boy should have more than one set of fosterparents, so someone seeking to become a scholar should have more than one teacher.

The great change between, say, 850 and 1200, in the position of Wales within north-west Europe was the progressive reduction in the number of British territories. The first was Cornwall: by the second half of the ninth century it had become a dependency of Wessex. The second was the Isle of Man, which became a Viking territory at the beginning of the tenth century. In the north, Cumbria first expanded greatly, as we have seen, but it was weakened between 1050 and 1150, by which time much of its south-western territory had been incorporated into a new political

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74   Cambridge University Library Ff. 4. 42 (the Cambridge Juvencus): *Juvencus: Codex Cantabrigiensis Ff.4.42*, ed. H. McKee (Aberystwyth, 2000); *Juvencus: Text and Commentary*, ed. H. McKee (Aberystwyth, 2000).

75   *De Raris Fabulis*, ed. W. H. Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies* (Oxford, 1929), 1–11; ed. and trans. S. Gwara, *De Raris Fabulis, 'On Uncommon Tales': A Glossed Latin Colloquy Text from a Tenth-Century Cornish Manuscript* (Cambridge, 2005).

76   *De Raris Fabulis*, ed. Stevenson, § 14, ed. Gwara, § 16.

77   Ieuan ap Sulien, *Carmen Iohannis de vita et familia Sulgeni*, ed. and trans. M. Lapidge, 'The Welsh-Latin Poetry of Sulien's Family', *Studia Celtica*, 8–9 (1973–4), 68–106, at 80–9.

entity, Galloway, and the whole had been brought under the kingdom of the Scots.[78] The Cumbrian language was on its last legs by 1150. In the south Brittany survived but was increasingly orientated towards the east: in the tenth century its rulers came to be based in Upper Brittany rather than the Breton-speaking Lower Brittany, and its culture looked more to Paris than to the British Isles. In addition to these changes, the eastern seaboard of Ireland had all passed under English control by 1200. Wales was far more isolated in 1200 than it had been in 850; and before long even Gwynedd would be subjected to English rule.[79]

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78   T. O. Clancy, 'The Gall-Ghàidheil and Galloway', *The Journal of Scottish Place-Name Studies*, 2 (2008), 19–50; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 570–9.
79   R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093–1343* (Oxford, 2000).

This is an integrated range of studies focusing on Wales by a long-established and internationally-recognised academic authority and member of the House of Lord... Most of the major literature, after all, focused either on early medieval Wales, prior to the English conquest in 1282, or else on the rule of the Tudors. Debates on the significance of the Act of Union loomed large. David Williams's pioneering studies of Welsh Chartism Notable kingdoms in early medieval Wales included Gwynedd which lay to the north, Powys which lay to the East and Deheubarth to the South. Other minor kingdoms existed as well but politically, Gwynedd remained one of the most significant while from a strategic viewpoint, Powys was immensely significant because it bordered on the Anglo-Saxon territory of the Kingdom of Mercia. Consolidation of Welsh Territories. By the late medieval period, Wales had effectively come under English rule and was incorporated as a part of the English territories. Although many laws and restrictions initially sought to restrict the social status of the Welsh, by the 15th century, Welsh were actively involved in the Wars of the Roses. Wales in the early Middle Ages covers the time between the Roman departure from Wales c. 383 and the rise of Merfyn Frych to the throne of Gwynedd c. 825. In that time there was a gradual consolidation of power into increasingly hierarchical kingdoms. The end of the early Middle Ages was the time that the Welsh language transitioned from the Primitive Welsh spoken throughout the era into Old Welsh, and the time when the modern England–Wales border would take its near-final form, a line broadly