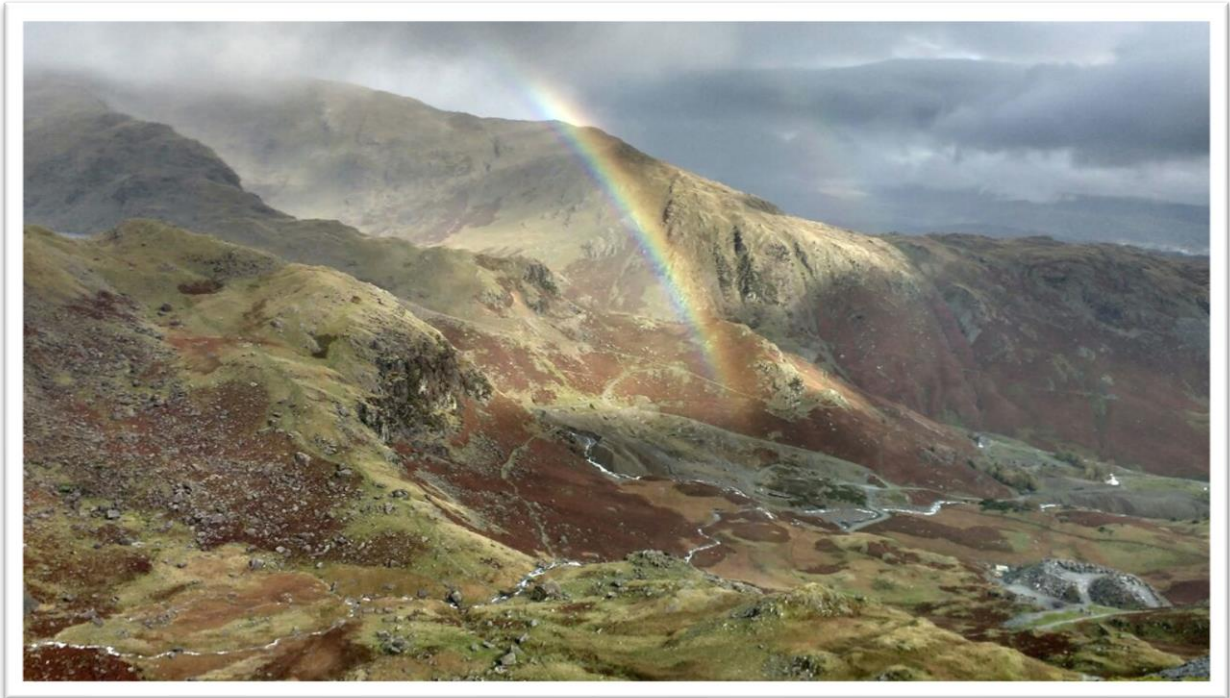# SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE ENGLISH COUNTY OF CUMBRIA: 400-700
BY

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to consolidate and examine the evidence for social and political change in the English county of Cumbria between 400 and 700. This date range covers the period between the end of direct Roman governance of what had long been the north-west frontier of the western Roman Empire and the end of the greatest period of expansion of the kingdom of Northumbria.

The two key questions which currently tend to be asked in studies of the post-Roman period are, firstly, the extent to which the social and political structures of the fifth century and beyond represent continuity or change from what had gone before and, secondly, how power and identity were negotiated at a regional and supra-regional level between incursive groups and the Romano-British indigenes.

This study seeks to answer those questions at a regional level through a synthesis of the archaeological, place-name and historical evidence. Contrary to established current thinking, it will be argued that a close and targeted study of the evidence calls into doubt the notion that a culturally British Cumbria was ever conquered by a culturally Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. Instead, it will be argued that Cumbria remained a politically distinct area, notwithstanding one that, from the mid-seventh century, may often have been allied to, or a client of, the Northumbrian kings.

It is proposed that, notwithstanding the relative paucity of material evidence for Cumbria when compared to other parts of Britain, there is just sufficient when taken in conjunction with other evidence types to identify the cores of a relatively significant number of previously overlooked post-Roman polities across the county. These polities – or *regiones*, to use the terminology favoured by early medieval writers such as Bede – were resilient and formed the building blocks of the far less resilient hegemonies of the post-Roman centuries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINED TERMS

AC	the *Annales Cambriae* (Welsh Annals) (edited by John Morris);
ASC	the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (edited by Anne Savage);
AVSC	the Anonymous *Life* of St Cuthbert (edited by Bernard Colgrave);
BLITON	*Brittonic Language in the Old North,* (2007) (Alan James);
Brittonic	the various P-Celtic languages spoken throughout the Early Medieval period, largely in western Britain;
Confessio	Patrick's *Confessio* (edited by A. B. E Hood);
CVEP	*Celtic Voices, English Places* (edited by Richard Coates and Andrew Breeze);
Cumbria	carries the extended meaning as set out in Chapter 1.3;
Cumbric	the northern variant of Brittonic spoken in Cumbria (and elsewhere) during the Early Medieval period;
DEB	Gildas' *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* (edited by Michael Winterbottom);
early medieval	carries the extended meaning as set out in Chapter 1.3;
EHEP	Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (edited by Leo Sherley-Price);
Epistola	Patrick's *Letter to the Soldiers of King Corocticus* (edited by A. B. E Hood);
HB	the *Historia Brittonum* (History of the Britons) (edited by John Morris);
HSC	the *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto: A History of Saint Cuthbert and a Record of his Patrimony* (edited by Ted Johnson-South);
JVSK	Jocelin of Furness' *Life* of St Kentigern (edited by Alexander Penrose Forbes);
LSC	Adomnan's *Life* of St Columba (edited by Richard Sharpe);

Northumbria	the early medieval Anglo-Saxon hegemony based on the north-eastern polities of Deira and Bernicia;
PNC	*The Place Names of Cumberland* (edited by A. M. Armstrong);
PNL	*The Place Names of Lancashire* (edited by Eilert Ekwall);
PNW	*The Place Names of Westmorland* (edited by A. H. Smith);
Post-Roman	carries the extended meaning as set out in Chapter 1.3;
PT	the *Poems of Taliesin* (edited by Ifor Williams);
TCWAAS	the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society (Third Series, unless otherwise stated);
VEPN	David N. Parsons and Tania Styles, eds, *The Vocabulary of English Place-Names*, Brace-Caester (Nottingham, 2000);
VSC	Bede's *Life* of St Cuthbert (edited by Bertram Colgrave);
VSW	Eddius Stephanus' *Life* of St Wilfrid (edited by Bertram Colgrave).

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND INTRODUCTION

1.1   GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This thesis will examine the evidence for socio-political change in the English county of Cumbria from the fifth to the seventh century AD. At the start of this period, Cumbria was the north-western frontier of the Roman Empire but by the end, following the contraction of imperial power, smaller polities were emerging which, in turn, were increasingly subject to the growing influence of English Northumbria.

These three centuries in the history of northern England are sometimes known as the 'Celtic Heroic Age', a romantic term which is loaded with connotations that risk obfuscating serious study of the post-Roman centuries.[1] Comprehensive historical narratives have been built by previous generations on the problematic documentary sources that purport to deal with this period. The vanishingly small possibility that new documentary sources will be discovered, coupled with the difficulties of assigning any absolute dates for potentially early place-names means that the small but steadily growing corpus of archaeological data must be placed front and centre in any study of post-Roman Cumbria.

The thesis is divided into three substantive chapters, dealing with the archaeological, place-name and historical evidence respectively. Each chapter has a short introductory section which is intended to complement the material set out in this historiography and introduction.

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[1] The terms 'Northern Heroic Age' or the 'Old North' are also used on occasion. All refer to the same thing – a period of independent British rule across much of what is now northern England and southern Scotland.

There is then a short concluding chapter which draws together the various arguments and proposes an alternative way of understanding socio-political developments in post-Roman Cumbria.

1.2 AIMS

This thesis seeks to examine the formation of new identities and the evolution of political structures in post-Roman Cumbria through a synthesis of archaeological, place-name and historical evidence. Such synthetic approaches have proved extremely useful when used in targeted studies with a regional focus.[2] There has, however, to date only been one such regional study focussed solely on Cumbria, namely Charles Phythian-Adams' 1996 work, *Land of the Cumbrians*.[3] Whilst undoubtedly an important work, *Land of the Cumbrians* covers a significantly longer time period than the current thesis, with the material concerning the fifth to seventh centuries largely condensed into two chapters. This relative lack of detail, combined with a) the new evidence which has come to light since *Land of the Cumbrians* was first written and b) the present writer's view that Phythian-Adams fell into a number of the traps which are outlined in more detail below, justifies the reconsideration of Cumbria's post-Roman history.

A number of excellent, albeit unpublished, PhD theses have focussed on early medieval Cumbria's archaeology and history. Those by Deirdre O' Sullivan and Tim Clarkson are especially noteworthy.[4] Important histories of early Northumbria by Nick Higham and David

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[2] A particularly fine example of a regional study (although by no means the only one) is Caitlin Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*: *Lincolnshire AD 400-650* (Lincoln, 2012).
[3] Charles Phythian-Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians: A Study in British Provincial Origins, AD 400-1120* (Aldershot, 1996).
[4] Deirdre M. O'Sullivan, *A reassessment of the early Christian archaeology of Cumbria*, unpub, PHD thesis (1980), accessed via http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/7869/1/7869_4866.PDF. Tim Clarkson, *Warfare in Early Historic Northern Britain*, unpub, PHD thesis (2003). See also Tim Clarkson, *The Solway Region AD 400-650 and the Kingdom of Rheged*, unpub MPhil Research Thesis.

Rollason both contain insightful material about Cumbria.[5] However, notwithstanding that

Higham in particular has written extensively about Cumbria, both of these key works have a

focus east of the Pennines, where the English kingdom of Northumbria had its genesis in the

polities of Bernicia and Deira (broadly modern Northumberland and East Yorkshire

respectively).[6] This focus is understandable given that the North East has produced

significantly more archaeological and documentary evidence than the North West. Indeed, it

was the dearth of evidence (and archaeological evidence in particular) that until recently

made any study of post-Roman Cumbria an exercise in guesswork on a grand scale, even if

the well-known excavations at Birdoswald and Carlisle at the end of the twentieth century

ensured that the county was not entirely overlooked.[7] Less well-known (but no less

important) research at the early Anglian monastery of Dacre and, most recently, at Maryport

have added significantly to our understanding of the early medieval period.[8] When the

evidence from these 'headline' excavations is synthesised with the more fragmentary

evidence from sites such as Stanwix, Brougham, Papcastle and Workington, the place-name

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[5] N. J. Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria* (Stroud, 1993). David Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2003). See also the final chapter in M. R. McCarthy, *Roman Carlisle and the Lands of the Solway* (Stroud, 2002).

[6] See, for example, the final chapter in Nicholas Higham & Barri Jones, *The Carvetii* (Stroud, 1991), N.J. Higham, 'Britons in Northern England in the Early Middle Ages: Through a Thick Glass Darkly', *Northern History*, 38 (2001) pp. 5-25, N. J Higham, 'Continuity studies in the first millennium A.D. in North Cumbria', *Northern History*, 14 (1978), pp. 1-18.

[7] For Birdoswald, see Tony Wilmott, ed. *Hadrian's Wall: Archaeological Research by English Heritage 1976-2000* (Swindon, 2009), Tony Wilmott and Pete Wilson, eds. *The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference*, Durham 1999 (BAR British Series 299, 2000). For Carlisle see John Zant, *The Carlisle Millennium Project: Excavations in Carlisle, 1998-2001. Volume 1: The Stratigraphy* (Lancaster, 2009), Mike McCarthy, 'Carlisle: Function and Change between the First and Seventh Centuries AD', *Archaeological Journal*, 17.5:2 (2018), pp. 292-314, Graham Keevil, 'Excavations at Carlisle Cathedral in 1985', *TCWAAS* (2008), pp. 37-61, M. R. McCarthy, T. G. Padley and M. Henig, 'Excavations and Finds from the Lanes, Carlisle, *Britannia* (1982), pp. 79-89, G. D. Keevil, D. C. A Shotter and M. R. McCarthy, 'A Solidus of Valentinian II from Scotch Street, Carlisle', *Britannia* (1989), pp. 254-255, Mike McCarthy et al, 'A Post-Roman Sequence at Carlisle Cathedral, *Archaeological Journal*, 17.5:1 (2014), pp. 185-287.

[8] Rachel Newman et al, eds. *The Early Medieval Period Resource Assessment* (2004) accessed via liverpoolmuseums.org.uk, 20th March 2016. For Dacre, see R. H. Leech and R. Newman, 'Excavations at Dacre, 1982-4: An Interim Report', *TCWAAS* (1985), pp. 87-94. For a full report, see R Newman and R. Leech, forthcoming. For a broad overview of Maryport, see Ian Haynes and Tony Wilmott, 'The Maryport altars: an archaeological myth dispelled', *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Historia*, 57 (2012), pp. 25-37. See also the extremely informative video that can be viewed at the Senhouse Museum, Maryport.

evidence and the evidence derived from the written sources, it begins to become possible to construct tentative narratives for the period which, twenty years ago, were impossible.

These narratives touch not only on the perennial questions of continuity and change, but also on the vexed question of identity. Specifically, how did Cumbria cease to be Roman and what form did Anglo-British interaction take? One of the key propositions of this thesis is that the prevalence of militaristic narratives has overstated the importance of violence as an agent of change. For example, when examining the putative English conquest of Cumbria, the question is nearly always *when* it happened, rather than *if* it happened.[9] Challenging the prevalence of militaristic narratives does not imply that violence was *not* a feature of post-Roman Cumbrian society and neither does it mean that we should seek to bowdlerise the past. It does, however, hopefully open up other ways of interrogating socio-political change in these obscure centuries.

As more evidence comes to light and as historical thinking continues to evolve, it seems inevitable that many (if not all) of the theories presented in this thesis will fall away. Nonetheless, if this thesis is able to consolidate in one place the evidence for socio-political change in post-Roman Cumbria as it currently stands and prompt even a little debate on the issue, it will have achieved its purposes.

1.3   DEFINITIONS

Not the least problematic of the terms that will be used in this thesis is the word 'Cumbria'

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[9] Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, pp. 49-50. Phythian-Adams notes how the supposed date of the Northumbrian invasion has got steadily later over time, moving from the early to the late seventh century.

itself. The name now appertains to an English county,[10] but was originally an eleventh-century term which W. F Skene, writing in 1874, argued to be a single, Brittonic-speaking polity which stretched from the "Derwent to the Clyde".[11] Much of what is now the English county of Cumbria was therefore once outside England.[12] Despite Skene's confidence (which has remained the orthodoxy), we do not know that all of those described by early medieval writers as Cumbrians belonged to a single political unit, still less the territorial extent of the lands under their control. Leaving aside the problems of automatically assuming a correlation between language and political control (a theme that will be returned to in this thesis), in broad terms one might have left England and entered the land – or lands – of the Cumbrians at the boundary stone known as the Rey Cross (on the modern A66),[13] at Dunmail Raise (between Grasmere and Keswick) and at Eamont Bridge (just south of

Figure 1: The site of the Rey Cross.

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[10] Although it will cease to do so in 2023, when the county is abolished for the purposes of governance and is replaced by two new unitary authorities.

[11] W. F. Skene, 'Notes on Cumbria' in Alexander Penrose Forbes, ed. *The Historians of Scotland Vol V: Lives of St Ninian and St Kentigern* (New Delhi, 2019), 330-335.

[12] A fact not entirely lost today. The unofficial flag of what was once Cumberland is a Saltire tilted to look like a St George's Cross.

[13] The name of the monument is likely to derive from Old Norse *hreyrr*, meaning 'boundary'.

Penrith).[14] It may be no coincidence that the Rey Cross is still the border between Cumbria

and County Durham and that both Dunmail Raise and Eamont Bridge marked the old

boundary between the pre-1974 counties of Cumberland and Westmorland.

For the purposes of this thesis, 'Cumbria' means the administrative county of Cumbria,

which comprises the ceremonial counties of Cumberland and Westmorland together with

Lancashire North-of-the-Sands and part of the old West Riding of Yorkshire around

Sedbergh and Dent.[15] All of it bar a triangle of land between Hadrian's Wall and the modern

Scottish border) was within the Roman Diocese of Britannia. During the Roman period it was

a heavily militarised zone, with a line of forts studding the western end of Hadrian's Wall and

further defensive systems running down the Cumbrian coast at least as far as Ravenglass

and along the cross-Pennine route from Brougham to York.

The terms 'Briton' and 'Anglo-Saxon' are, if anything, even more problematic than 'Cumbria'.

The term 'Celtic' is primarily a linguistic and a cultural signifier rather than an ethnic or

genetic one. As the Britons of post-Roman Cumbria can be regarded as Celts in that they

spoke Cumbric (a Brittonic language related to Welsh), it seems permissible to use 'Briton' in

the same sense. References to 'indigenes' may also be taken as reference to individuals

displaying a British culture and/or speaking a Brittonic language.

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[14] The question of the extent to which Cumbria was, if at all, ever part of a greater Strathclyde will be returned to, especially in Chapter 3. At this stage to suffices to say that identifying the northern border of England does not necessarily mean that one has also identified the southern boundary of Strathclyde.

[15] Lancashire North of the Sands is an old regional term for that part of Lancashire that was linked to the rest of the county by the sands of Morecambe Bay, but not by any dry land route. It consists of the Cartmel and Furness peninsulas whence it tapered northwards up to Little Langdale to meet Cumberland and Westmorland at the Three Shires Stone.
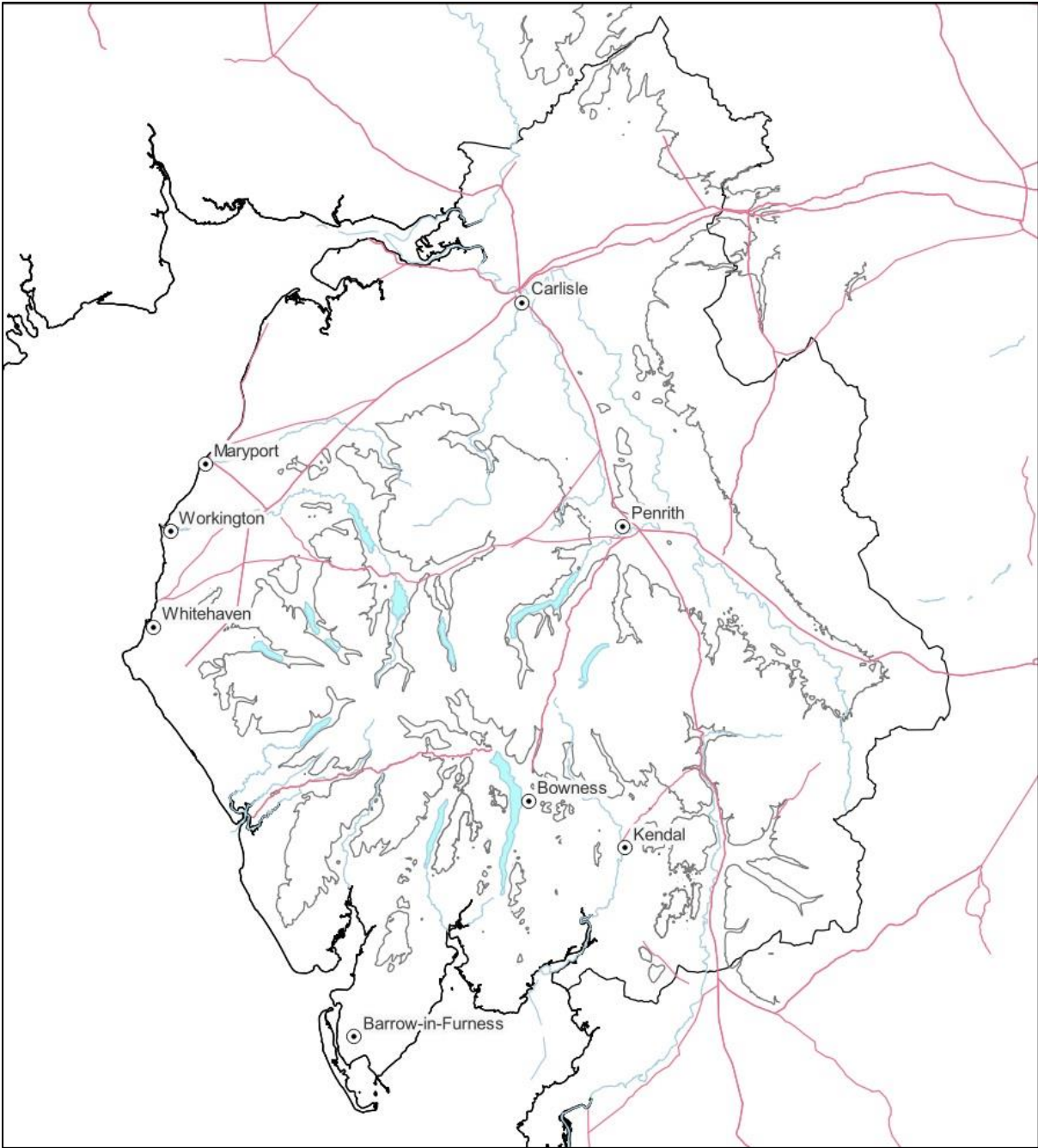
Map 1: The county of Cumbria, showing modern settlements and known Roman roads.

What is sauce for the goose should also be sauce for the gander, yet the term 'Anglo-Saxon' has never escaped connotations of ethnicity and biology in the way that 'Celt' has. The term has been misappropriated and misused on occasion by those who would seek to advance extreme political agendas and, more recently, has been heavily criticised as an inherently

racist descriptor which is inappropriate for use as a historical signifier.[16] This has led some scholars to advocate the adoption of new interpretative frameworks, partly to better conceptualise the post-Roman period but partly to avoid this misappropriation.[17] Leaving aside the rights or wrongs of this debate, it seems reasonable to ask whether our current term 'Anglo-Saxon' (or whatever term may eventually come to replace it in academic discourse), should also more properly be applied as a linguistic or cultural signifier?

There are certainly grounds to think this. The dividing line between those areas where supposedly 'Anglo-Saxon' furnished burials in the post-Roman centuries occur and those areas where they do not follows a line drawn from roughly from the mouth of the river Tees at Middlesbrough to the mouth of the river Exe in Devon.[18] This same line divides Britain's arable lowlands from its pastoral uplands.[19] What has received less recognition is that the same line also demarcated other cultural divisions in the Roman and early medieval periods. These include the divide between the areas in which coinage and Latin were or were not utilised in the pre-Roman Iron Age, the boundary between the Roman-era 'villa' and 'military' zones of *Britannia* and of those areas where use of ceramics was more common in the Roman period.[20] The subsequent emergence of furnished inhumation and cremation cemeteries to the east of this line from the fifth century onwards may not have much

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[16] https://www.varsity.co.uk/opinion/18597 accessed 27th October 2020. For a thoughtful response, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdPK_3J2Ppc accessed 27th October 2020. See also Rory Naismith, *Early Medieval Britain c.500-1000* (Cambridge, 2021), 13.

[17] James Harland and Matthias Freidrich, 'Introduction: The 'Germanic and its Discontents' in Matthias Friedrich and James M. Harland, eds. *Interrogating the 'Germanic': A Category and its Use in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Berlin, 2021), 1-18.

[18] Tom Williamson, *Environment, Society and Landscape in Early Medieval England: Time and Topography* (Woodbridge, 2012), 36. Nicholas J. Higham, 'The Origins of England' in M. J. Ryan and Nicholas J. Higham*, eds, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (London, 2013), pp. 70-125, p. 80.

[19] Helen M Jewell*, The North-South Divide: The origins of northern consciousness in England* (Manchester, 1994), 8-9.

[20] For coins, see John Creighton, *Coins and Power in Late Iron Age Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), 223. For Latin, see Jonathan Williams, 'New Light on Latin in Pre-Conquest Britain', *Britannia*, 38 (2007): 1–11. For the divide between villas and military installations see Andrew Sargent, 'The North-South Divide Revisited: Thoughts on the Character of Roman Britain,' *Britannia*, 33 (2002): 219–26. For the distribution of ceramics, see Keith J. Fitzpatrick-Matthews and Robin Fleming, 'The Perils of Periodization: Roman Ceramics in Britain after 400 CE', *Fragments*, 5 (2016), pp. 1-33, pp. 12-19 and the map on p. 4.

relationship to the supposed steady westward advance of bellicose Anglo-Saxon warbands from North Sea beachheads, as envisaged by previous generations. The old approach equated observable material phenomena in the archaeological record with ethnicity, an equation which is still all too commonplace outside academia. Although the density of these supposedly Anglo-Saxon cemeteries increases over time, their westward boundary only moves about fifty miles between the fifth and seventh centuries.[21] It is beyond the scope of the present work to discuss these phenomena in more detail, but it may be best to see 'Anglo-Saxon' as term indicative of an insular, hybridised, expression of a new identity (or group of identities) which owed something to the Romano-British past, something to the Germanic-speaking migrants who came to Britain in the post-Roman period and rather more to the dominance of Germanic-speaking groups on the near Continent.[22] Throughout this thesis, the term 'Anglo-Saxon' should therefore be taken as a cultural or linguistic signifier, rather than as a term denoting intrusive ethnic Germanic groups or their descendants. It is also recognised that use of the term 'Anglo-Saxon' is increasingly problematic due to its misuse, but it is also felt that refusing to surrender to nationalists or racists a term which has long had – and continues to have – a useful (if evolving) role in sober academic study is the right way to proceed. 'English' will be used as a synonym for 'Anglo-Saxon' and should also therefore be understood as a linguistic and cultural signifier, rather than a biological one.

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[21] Guy Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur; Facts and Fictions of the Dark Ages* (Oxford, 2013), 232. See also Nick Higham, 'From sub-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Debating the Insular Dark Ages', History Compass, 2 (2004), pp. 1-29, pp. 12-13.

[22] Steven Bassett, 'In Search of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms' in Steven Bassett, ed. *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), pp. 3-4, 21-22. Howard Williams, 'Mortuary Practices in Early Anglo-Saxon England' in David A. Hinton, Sally Crawford and Helena Hamerow, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), 240-241. For the growing Frankish influence on early Anglo-Saxon society, see Nicholas J. Higham, 'From Tribal Chieftains to Christian Kings' in M. J. Ryan and Nicholas J. Higham*,* eds. *The Anglo-Saxon World* (London, 2013), 130-132. See also Steve Walker, 'A Farewell to Arms: Germanic Identity in Fifth-Century Britain' in Matthias Friedrich and James Harland, eds. *Interrogating the 'Germanic': A Category and its Use in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Berlin, 2021) 189-210. The fact that the majority of artefact types which are associated with British, rather than Anglo-Saxon culture are also focussed to the east of the line (rather than to the west of it, as one might expect) may be though to support such an interpretation. The reasons why those living to the west of the line did not appear to use as much archaeologically visible material are far from clear, but would not appear to be the result of any correlation between ethnicity and the use of durable materials. For hybridisation in the evolution of post-Roman pottery styles see Fitzpatrick-Matthews and Fleming, 'Periodization', 2.

Other terms hopefully have less potential to confuse. 'Post-Roman' will be taken to mean the period of time covered by this thesis (broadly 410 – 700 AD), whereas 'early medieval' carries its current broadly accepted meaning of the period 400 – 1066 AD. 'Late Roman' means 'of the late third through to the very early fifth century'. The terms 'sub-Roman' and 'Dark Ages' are increasingly falling out of fashion and will not be used at all.

1.4 CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

The post-Roman period was one of significant change, during which the Roman provinces of *Britannia* evolved into the ancestors of modern England and Wales. *How* that change came about is one of the great unsettled questions for historians and archaeologists. Until the 1970s, British scholars argued that the end of the Roman period was a violent and chaotic, characterised by a swift and sudden collapse of governance, economic complexity and even population.[23] According to an entry for the year 441/2 in the Chronicle of 452 (a text probably written in southern Gaul), Britain had experienced a series of disasters and was now under Saxon rule.[24] Two other fifth-century writers imply a rather more settled situation. We still have two texts written by Patrick, the evangelist of Ireland.[25] Patrick has little to say about Britain directly, but it is possible to catch glimpses of a society which was still recognisably Roman in character. He was brought up on a small country estate and his father, who had

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[23] For a good summary of the evolution of the scholarship over the course of the twentieth century, see Christopher Loveluck and Lloyd Laing, 'Britons and Anglo-Saxons' in David A. Hinton, Sally Crawford and Helena Hamerow, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 534-555, pp. 534-536.

[24] Alex Woolf, 'The Britons: From Romans to Barbarians', in Hans-Werner Goetz, Jörg Jarnut, and Walter 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), pp. 345-380, pp. 346-348.

[25] *Confessio* and *Epistola*. See also the collection of essays in David Dumville, ed. *Saint Patrick: AD 409-1993* (Woodbridge, 1993).

the Roman name Calpornius, owned slaves and had been a deacon.[26] Notwithstanding

uncertainty over the date of Patrick's *floruit*,[27] this picture of a reasonably settled society is

echoed in Constantius' *Life* of St Germanus, whose honorand was sent to Britain to combat

heresy in about 425 AD. Germanus visited St Albans and met a man of "tribunician" rank

whose daughter he cured, thereby showing divine favour for Germanus' mission. Although

the picture painted of Britain in the text may have been intended more to serve the didactic

purposes of the hagiographer than to present an historically accurate picture of fifth-century

life, the fact that Germanus was sent at all suggests that the political situation in Britain was

sufficiently well-ordered to make the enterprise worthwhile.

By about 450, things were changing. The traditional models see Germanic raiders beginning

to take control of large chunks of the old Roman diocese. Gildas, a British cleric probably

writing in the 540s, gave an account of how Saxons had been settled in Kent as federates by

a ruling council who wanted to use them to beat off attacks from Picts and Scots.[28] Gildas

says that the Saxons were initially compliant, but eventually rebelled and embarked on a

coast-to-coast orgy of destruction which saw the end of Britain's cities and left the invaders

as masters of part of the island. Later documentary sources, including Bede's eighth-century

Ecclesiastical History of the English People (which, insofar as the fifth century was

concerned, was lifted largely from Gildas) and the late ninth-century *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

further support this narrative of violent change.[29] The archaeological data, which primarily

takes the form of inhumation and cremation cemeteries in which the remains of the

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[26] *Confessio*, ch. 1.
[27] The first half of the fifth century is most likely, with Michael Kulikowski favouring a date in the 440s. Michael Kulikowski, pers comm. Daibhi Ó'Cróinin notes two references to one Mochta as a disciple of Patrick (one in the *LSC* as the founder of an Irish monastery close by a later foundation by Columba and the second in the Irish Annals that records his death for 535) to suggest a similar dating schema. Daibhi Ó'Cróinin, *Early Medieval Ireland, 400-1200* (London, 1995), pp. 26-27.
[28] *DEB*, ch. 22-24, pp. 25-27. For Gildas and his dates, see the collection of essays in Michael Lapidge and David N. Dumville, eds. *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984) and especially David N. Dumville, 'The Chronology of *De Excidio Britanniae, Book I*', pp. 61-84. For a rather earlier date, see also Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 53-57. For a good summary of the current proposed dating schema (which run from c. 479 to 550, see Christopher A. Snyder, *The Britons* (Oxford, 2003), p. 123.
[29] *EHEP. ASC.*

deceased had been interred with grave goods, appeared to earlier generations of scholars to provide sound supporting evidence of parvenu Germanic communities springing up across lowland southern and eastern England from the mid-fifth century.

This idea that the end of Roman Britain (and the Roman West more generally) was characterised by sudden change still remains academically respectable, notwithstanding that we have moved on from the reverse D-Day narrative of an unstoppable Anglo-Saxon conquest as being the driver for that change.[30] In all fairness, these newer 'catastrophic change' models are persuasive, even if they now focus more on catastrophic economic change rather than a violent invasion.[31] They explain why artefacts such as pottery and coinage, which were common even on relatively low status Roman-period sites, are much rarer in fifth-century contexts. They explain the thick layers of so-called 'dark earth' which covers the latest Roman layers in so many towns and cities and which seem to speak of widespread abandonment early in the medieval period. They explain the 'squatter occupation' of Britain's villas, in which once-magnificent formal rooms were turned over to small-scale metalworking or corn-drying. They explain the discontinuity between the latest Roman cemeteries and the new, furnished cemeteries, as new groups of invaders or migrants moved onto land once worked by their Romano-British predecessors.

More recently, models of catastrophic or sudden change have been questioned. The reassessment has been helped by two significant developments in the way in which we conceive the end of Roman Britain. Firstly, the old cliff edge of 410, with its strict

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[30] See for example, A. S. Esmonde-Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain* (London, 2002). For the western Roman Empire more widely, see for example Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford, 2005), Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 2005), Barbara Yorke, Anglo-Saxon *Gentes* and *Regna*' in Hans-Werner Goetz, Jörg Jarnut, and Walter 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). pp. 380-407, p. 381. For similar comments, see also Helena Hamerow, 'The Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms' in Paul Fouracre, ed. *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 264-288, p. 263.
[31] Simon Esmonde-Cleary, *The Roman West: AD 200-500* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 335-337, 395-396.

demarcation between the Roman and medieval worlds, is much less prominent than once it was. Instead, it has become more common in insular history to think in terms of Late Antiquity, a timeframe which straddles the late Roman and early medieval periods.[32] Many of the drivers for the changes in post-Roman Britain are now increasingly sought in the fourth or the third centuries rather than the fifth.

Secondly, there has been a shift away from insularity. Whereas once we tended to regard British history as discrete, post-Roman Britain is now recognised as having been an integrated part of the wider Roman west. This allows for comparisons to be drawn with other areas (such as Gaul or Spain) in order to understand developments within *Britannia*. As a result of these comparisons, the situation in Britain no longer seems quite so singular. So, rather than being abandoned as a result of fifth-century raiding, the towns of Roman Britain appear to have been on the same path of decline observable elsewhere in the wider Gallic Praefecture.[33] Rather than being occupied by penurious squatters, the re-use of British villas or urban buildings may have been a response to changed economic circumstances which pertained across much of the western Empire.[34] Rather than indicating the resting places of Germanic invaders and their families, the new funereal rites observable across fifth-century lowland England may represent a cultural response to political uncertainty which was as innovative in the homelands of the Anglo-Saxons as it was in Britain or Northern Gaul.[35] Rather than collapsing suddenly in the early years of the fifth century, the distribution

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[32] Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity; from Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London, 1971). See also Peter Brown, 'SO Debate*: The world of Late Antiquity revisited', *Symbolae Osloenses*, 72:1 (1997), pp. 5-30. The notion that the period from 200 to 500 is a recognisably distinct one is the central theory of Simon Esmonde-Cleary's, *Roman West*.
[33] See, for example, Esmonde-Cleary, *Ending*, K. R. Dark, *Civitas to kingdom: British political continuity, 300-800* (London, 1994), Christopher Snyder, *An Age of Tyrants: Britain and the Britons A.D. 400-600* (Stroud, 1998), Robin Fleming, *Britain After Rome: The Fall and Rise* (London, 2010).
[34] Tamara Lewit, ''Vanishing villas': what happened to elite rural habitation in the West in the 5th-6th c?', *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 16 (2003), pp. 260-274, Adam Rogers*, Late Roman Towns in Britain: Rethinking Change and Decline* (Cambridge, 2011), Roland Prien, 'Germanic settlers in Roman villas – on the idea of changing ownership of late antique estates in the northwestern Provinces', unpub. conference presentation given at Interrogating the 'Germanic': a category and its use in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, University of York, 13th-15th May 2016.
[35] Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 228-234.

networks which had allowed cheap and mass produced goods to be traded across the Empire may already have been subject to greater regionalisation in the second half of the fourth century, as evidenced in Britain by the ubiquity of British-made wares, which for Cumbria meant the output of Yorkshire pottery kilns.[36] Even the apparent collapse of the monetary economy in the first decades of the fifth century may have been the consequence of a much longer period of retrenchment of coin use in the towns and rural lowlands.[37]

It may even be that a functioning monetary economy survived in Britain rather longer than the archaeology suggests. Patrick, writing about events of the middle of the fifth century, not only mentions giving money to leading families in Ireland to support his evangelical activities, but also talks about selling his 'good birth', which has been interpreted as meaning the land he would otherwise have inherited.[38] Gildas, writing about a century later, also talks about money.[39] He berates the clergy of his day for failing to give even an obol by way of alms and for mourning the loss of a single denarius and lambasts the practice of buying ecclesiastical offices for "almost any price".[40] The hagiography of John the Almsgiver (which was broadly contemporaneous with its honorand) purportedly records a sea voyage from Alexandria to Britain in the second decade of the seventh century in which a cargo of grain was exchanged for a mix of tin and coins.[41] A smattering of early medieval coins, including a

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[36] Esmonde-Cleary, *Ending*, p. 135. D. Shotter, *Roman North-West England* (Lancaster, 1984), p. 68. Jeremy Evans, 'The End of Roman Pottery in the North' in Tony Wilmott and Pete Wilson, eds. *The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham, 1999* (BAR British Series, 2000, Oxford), pp. 39-46. For a good discussion of the economic drivers that led to a breakdown of the Empire-wide system of redistribution, see Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, pp. 303 to 337 and esp. pp. 335-337.

[37] Sam Moorhead and Philippa Walton, 'Coinage at the End of Roman Britain', in Fiona Haarer et al, eds. *410: The History and Archaeology of Late and Post-Roman Britain* (London, 2014), pp. 99-116.

[38] *Confessio*, ch, 50, 51 and 52, p. 52.and ed. Hood, *Epistola*, 10, p. 57. Nicholas J. Higham, 'Britain in and out of the Roman Empire', in M. J. Ryan and Nicholas J. Higham, eds. *The Anglo-Saxon World* (London, 2013), pp. 20-69, p. 43. It is, of course, possible that the sale of Patrick's birth is metaphorical.

[39] Higham, 'Debating', p. 3.

[40] *DEB*, ch. 66, pp. 52-53.

[41] Maria Duggan is not alone in doubting the historical veracity of this story. Maria Duggan, *Links to Late Antiquity: Ceramic exchange and contacts on the Atlantic Seaboard in the 5th to 7th centuries AD*, (BAR British Series 639, 2018, Oxford), pp. 13-14. That Britain, a major exporter of grain in the Roman period, would need to import grain seems surprising, but this at least can be squared by the

Merovingian gold tremissis found at Burton-in-Kendal, provides at least some evidence of coins in post-Roman Cumbria although, in the absence of any supporting contextual evidence, it would be going too far to argue that these finds represent a fully functioning monetary economy.

In an important recent study which drew together many of the points discussed above, James Gerrard questioned not only the traditional models of collapse, but also the primacy afforded to material culture when discussing social change.[42] To Gerrard, the tendency to regard artefacts (such as metalwork or glassware) that would only ever have been in the hands of a relatively small and privileged sector of late Roman society as a useful barometer for measuring the speed and scale of change has led to a serious overstatement of the case for collapse. Although Gerrard's arguments are often provocative, his central contention that we should be prepared to entertain much longer chronologies for the loss of economic complexity deserves serious consideration.

Either way, it is hard to dispute that effective imperial governance receded in the early fifth century. The possibility of the British provinces returning to the imperial fold evaporated following the deaths of the generals Constantius and Aetius in the first half of the century. There was also undeniably a loss of economic complexity, which the modest trade between parts of post-Roman western Britain and the Roman world barely leavens.[43] In other areas, however (notably law, religion and language), we have much better evidence for continuity of Roman practices. Roman law appeared to (just about) still exist in Gildas' day.[44] Christianity had enjoyed imperial patronage and increasing dominance from the reign of the emperor Constantine (306-337) onwards and had eventually become the formal state religion of the

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assertion of the text that Britain was not the captain's destination and that Britain was experiencing a famine when the ship landed.

[42] James Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain: An Archaeological Perspective* (Cambridge, 2013).

[43] Ewan Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean imports to Atlantic Britain and Ireland. AD 400-800* (York, 2007).

[44] Higham, 'Debating', p. 7.

Roman Empire in 380. Its spread appears to have been the result of imperial and aristocratic patronage rather than grass roots evangelism. Roman Christianity was organised from the urban centres which administered the *civitates* and the presence of British bishops from London and York at the Council of Arles in 314 attests to the metropolitan character of ecclesiastical sees. Although positive archaeological evidence for Christianity in the post-Roman period is slight, the writings of Patrick and Constantius (in the fifth century) and Gildas (in the sixth) make it clear that an organised and vibrant Christian church was still operating in Britain and was engaged in the theological issues of the day.[45] That this British church, with its apparatus of bishops and religious houses, still existed in the early seventh century is attested by Bede, who, *inter alia*, sets out the text of a letter supposedly written by Pope Gregory to Augustine a couple of years after the latter's mission to Kent had commenced.[46] In an answer to a question about the extent of Augustine's authority, Gregory expressly made the British bishops subject to him.[47] The bishops in question can only have been part of a pre-existing Church.[48]

Although Patrick's evangelical zeal cannot be denied, the longstanding separation of the insular and Roman churches may well have meant that missionary activity was not something practised by the former, even when it became popular with the latter.[49] This might explain why Patrick's family, who themselves had held both religious and secular office, tried

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[45] *Confessio*, ch 1, 41, ch. 26 – 37, 46-48, *DEB*, ch. 66, 52-43. See also Constant J. Mews and Stephen J. Joyce, 'The Preface of Gildas, the Book of David and the British Church in the Sixth Century', *Peritia*, 29 (2018), pp. 81-100.

[46] *EHEP*, I, 27, pp. 77-89.

[47] ibid., I, 27, pp. 81-82. No-one appears to have told the British bishops about this change in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Although Bede spins the story to make the Britons the wrongdoers, it appears that Augustine was somewhat high-handed to those he was supposed to be bringing in to the new Roman church, which perhaps didn't endear him to them. *EHEP*, II, 2, pp. 105-106.

[48] The extent of the late sixth-century British church is not at all clear from Bede's writing, but the passing mention to a Canterbury having an old Roman church dedicated to St Martin where the king's Frankish wife was accustomed to pray hints at some form of Christian survival even in the far east of England. *EHEP*, I. 26, p. 76.

[49] A. B. E. Hood, St Patrick: His Writings and Muirchu's Life (Chichester, 1978), ch. 5-7, pp. 84-85.

to dissuade Patrick from returning to Ireland to preach.[50] Patrick may not have been alone in his desire to evangelise. The spread of Christianity into Galloway and the Borders in the post-Roman period has plausibly been seen as the result of influence by leading families in Cumbria.[51]

The extent to which Latin was a spoken language in late and post-Roman Britain remains a matter of dispute. It may, at least in the south and east of the country, have replaced Brittonic largely or even entirely by the end of the Roman period.[52] In the north and west, the linguistic picture is less clear. Positive evidence for the use of Latin in post-Roman Cumbria comes from the small corpus of likely fifth-century carved stones found at or near one-time Roman forts. These stones were presumably intended to be both read and understood.[53] Much the same may be said for our surviving texts. Patrick's apology for his Latin may have been an intentionally self-effacing admission made in order to demonstrate his Christian humility, but his reference to Latin being a foreign language ("linguam alienam")[54] suggests that, wherever he was based, Latin was not his first language, albeit it was one which he expected his readers to understand.[55] Gildas was still able to speak of Latin as "our language" in the first half of the sixth century. If the handful of elegiac poems attributed to Aneirin and Taliesin really are contemporaneous with the northern events they purport to

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[50] *Confessio*, ch. 23, pp. 45-46. It might also explain why the British clergy took little action to try and convert their heathen Anglo-Saxon neighbours, a phenomenon noted by Bede which has often been regarded instead as symptomatic of British hatred of Anglo-Saxons. *EHEP*, I, 22, p. 72.

[51] A. C. Thomas, 'The Early Christian Inscriptions of Southern Scotland', *Glasgow Archaeological Journal*, 17 (1991-1992), pp. 1-10. It remains possible, of course, that this was the result of elite imitation rather than evangelism as such. It has been argued that the north-western British church influenced early Anglo-Saxon Christianity, although the evidence for the proposition is nugatory. Higham, 'Tribal Chieftains', p. 156.

[52] Peter Schrijver, 'The Rise and Fall of British Latin,' in Markku Filppula, Juhana Klemola and Heli Pitkänen, eds. *The Celtic Roots of English* (Joensuu, 2002), pp. 87–110. See also Alex Woolf, 'British Ethnogenesis: A Late Antique Story' in Francesca Kaminski-Jones and Rhys Kaminski-Jones, eds. *Celts, Romans, Britons: Classical and Celtic Influence in the Construction of British Identities* (Oxford, 2020), 27. For the opposing view, see Richard Coates, 'Invisible Britons: the view from linguistics', in N. J. Higham, ed. *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 172-191.

[53] See Chapter 2.3 for a full discussion of these texts.

[54] *Confessio*, ch. 9, p. 42.

[55] Patrick's oft-stated Cumbrian connections are clearly of *prima facie* relevance to this thesis and are discussed in more detail subsequently.

describe, the switch to Brittonic as the language of high-status discourse had taken place (north of the Tees-Exe line, at least) by the end of that century.[56]

There may also have been continuity of some territorial divisions in the post-Roman period. The appearance of polities such as Dumnonia (which preserves its pre-Roman Iron Age tribal names) or of early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms whose cores overlay Iron Age tribal areas (such as Kent and Deira, which seem to have occupied much the same areas as the *Cantiaci* and *Parisi* respectively), are certainly suggestive in this regard.[57] This preservation of pre-Roman boundaries in the early medieval period should be seen as the survival of territorial units which had previously been subsumed into the Roman bureaucracy rather than a return to Iron Age tribalism (of which more below). Further evidence for such survival comes from ongoing occupation at a number of Cumbria's Roman forts, which is attested into the fifth century – and perhaps even slightly beyond it. It has been proposed that the last 'official' Roman garrisons remained *in situ* and continued to exploit their dominant position in local society, slowly morphing into the polities which begin to become visible in the documentary record from the late sixth century.[58] That this process was one of steady, rather than dramatic, change is suggested by the artefacts from fort sites, which seem to speak of a slow evolution from late Roman styles.[59]

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[56] Woolf, 'Romans to Barbarians,' 20. Higham, 'Origins', pp. 96-97. The poems themselves are considered in detail in Chapters 4.1 to 4.3.

[57] Kent even preserves the name of the *Cantiaci*, albeit in Anglicised form. We see the same with Lindsey, an early Anglo-Saxon polity which retained the British post-Roman *Lindes*, which in turn derived from Latin *Lindum* (now Lincoln). Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons,* pp. 56-86. Higham gives the example of Essex as a territory which appeared to have been broadly the same in terms of size circa 600 as it was when it was the homeland of the Trinovantes in the pre-Roman Iron Age. Higham, 'Debating', p. 8.

[58] Rob Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire* (Abingdon, 2012). Rachel Newman and Mark Brennand, 'The Early Medieval Period Research Agenda', *Archaeology North West*, 9 (2007), pp. 77-78.

[59] H. E. M. Cool, 'The parts left over: material culture into the fifth century' in Tony Wilmott and Pete Wilson, eds. *The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham, 1999* (BAR British Series, 2000, Oxford), pp. 47-66, p. 54.

1.5 IDENTITY

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the prominence of the formation of personal identity in modern social discourse, identity is currently a key theme in the study of the early medieval period.[60] Nationalism has steadily assumed a dominant position as one of the key indicators of identity and this might help to explain why identity in post-Roman Britain has long been seen in binary terms.[61] People were either Anglo-Saxons or Britons and membership of these homogeneous groups was biologically determined. Violence and kinship were motivated by ethnic considerations.[62] David Dumville could assert that Anglo-British relations were "of course, characterised by hostility" without noting that our documentary sources indicate as much intra-ethnic conflict as inter-ethnic conflict.[63] Similarly, in her recreation of the geo-political backdrop to the problematic sixth-century battle of Catraeth, Jenny Rowland could assume an affinity between geographically divided British groups. Ambushed British belligerents might have attempted to "break out to British lands to the west", without any question of whether or not they would have been welcome there.[64] Kenneth Jackson could regard the same battle as a "British crusade".[65] Although allowing for *some* local accord between different ethnic groups, John Morris' recreation of the mid-fifth century depicted a world in which "recent memories united the British in fear and hatred of the Saxons, and

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[60] See, for example, Catherine Hills, 'Overview: Anglo-Saxon identity' in David A. Hinton, Sally Crawford and Helena Hamerow, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 1-12, p. 4.

[61] Sinisa Malesevic, 'Future Identities: Changing identities in the UK – the next 10 years' (Government Office for Science, 2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275760/13-509-how-will-ideology-affect-identity.pdf, accessed 31st January 2017.

[62] For a good summary of the early scholarship, see Birte Brugmann, 'Migration and Endogenous Change' in David A. Hinton, Sally Crawford and Helena Hamerow, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 30-45, pp. 31-40.

[63] David N. Dumville, 'The Origins of Northumbria: Some aspects of the British background' in S. Bassett, ed. *The Origins of Anglo Saxon-Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), pp. 1-14. For a more recent recognition of the fluidity of post-Roman alliances between different ethnic groups see Naismith, *Early Medieval Britain*, 165.

[64] Jenny Rowland, Warfare and Horses in the Gododdin and the Problem of Catreath', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 30 (1991), pp. 13-40.

[65] Kenneth Jackson, *The Gododdin: The Earliest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh, 1969), p. 11.

obliged the Saxons to stand together against the superior numbers of a nation whose

government and state they had destroyed, but whose will to resist was not yet crushed."[66]

The reassessment of the evidence from the 1970s led to a steady weakening of this stark

depiction of Anglo-British interaction, especially in Northumbria. As Francis Byrne put it,

there is no evidence that either Irish or Welsh groups "ever showed any awareness of a

common Celtic origin."[67] In 1977, Margaret Faull argued that the archaeological evidence for

the formation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Bernicia suggested that significant numbers of

Britons remained *in situ*, rather than being killed, driven off or enslaved as had previously

been assumed.[68] Brian Hope-Taylor, whose excavation of the royal palace of Yeavering

revealed the apparent repurposing of a British site by the early Bernician aristocracy, still

saw ethnic divisions, but concluded that the use of an undefended site suggested good

relations between the local Britons and their Anglo-Saxon overlords.[69] Rather than being

just the next in a wave of invaders as so memorably satirised by *1066 And All That*, Anglo-

Saxon migration began to be seen in term of a relatively small warrior elite assuming control

over a much larger population of Britons.[70] Attempts were made to identify members of each

group in the funerary record, largely through analysis of grave goods (with weapons

signifying Germanic warriors and a lack of grave goods indicating Britons) and even an

analysis of the physical characteristics of the skeletons themselves.[71] Although this new

'minimalist' model undoubtedly represented a leap forwards from the monolithic 'cowboys

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[66] John Morris, *The Age of Arthur: A History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* (London, 1999), p. 93.
[67] Francis John Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (London, 1973), p. 10.
[68] Margaret Lindsay Faull, *British Survival in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria (*BAR, 1977).
[69] Brian Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering: An Anglo-British centre of early Northumbria* (Swindon, 1977), pp. 276-282. For the alternative view that the scale and/or monumentality of a site such as Yeavering may have been prompted by insecurity and a desire to impress Brittonic-speaking neighbours, see John Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England* (Princeton, 2018), pp. 114-115. For a summary of the arguments as to which of the periods in Yeavering's evolution belong to a culturally British context, see Martin Carver, *Formative Britain: An Archaeology of Britain, Fifth to Eleventh Century AD* (London, 2019), pp. 155-163.
[70] Nicholas Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons* (Guildford, 1992). Higham, 'Origins', pp. 106-107. Higham, 'Debating', pp. 6, 16. For a variant on this argument, see Rollason, *Northumbria*.
[71] Heinrich Härke, 'Anglo-Saxon Immigration and Ethnogenesis', *Medieval Archaeology*, 55 (2011), pp. 1-28, pp. 12-14.

and Indians' model which preceded it, it still conceived of Anglo-Saxons and Britons as two distinct ethnic groups who maintained their ethnic distinctiveness for generations. Although it is still occasionally postulated that the two groups did not generally mix with one another, it has become increasingly accepted that Britons *were* able to acculturate – to become Anglo - Saxons – as a means of retaining status in a new, Germanic world.[72] This has often been argued for Northumbria, the dominant Anglo-Saxon kingdom in what is now northern England, where a period of conflict involving Anglo-Saxon and British belligerents (who appeared to have little sense of 'us' and 'them' and who fought alongside each other as often as they fought against each other) led to the emergence of an ostensibly culturally Anglo-Saxon polity with a strong, albeit acculturated, British element.[73] That said, allowing for this social mobility did not take away from the fact that British and Anglo-Saxon groups were at heart regarded as entirely homogeneous, one incursive and the other indigenous.

More recently, the question of Anglo-Saxon identity as something incursive and something Germanic has also been challenged, although one still does not have to look far to see the language of the old certainties, even in recent scholarly works.[74] Phenomena which were previously assumed to be diagnostic of Anglo-Saxon identity (including furnished burial, the use of certain styles of dress ornament and building styles) are increasingly being reassessed. Rather than representing the perpetuation of social or cultural *mores* from the Anglo-Saxon homelands of the North Sea littoral, such phenomena are increasingly

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[72] Alex Woolf, 'Apartheid and Economics in Anglo-Saxon England' in N. J. Higham, ed. *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 115-129. See also Higham, 'Tribal Chieftains', p. 128.

[73] For example, Loveluck and Laing, 'Britons and Anglo-Saxons', pp. 539, 543. Although her work focusses on the Welsh borderlands rather than the North West, Lindy Brady's well-constructed model of mutual co-operation between culturally British and Anglo-Saxon groups may well have wider applicability. Lindy Brady, *Writing the Welsh Borderlands in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 2017), pp 3-7, 23-43. On this same point, Martin Carver regards Northumbria (with the exception of Deira) as being culturally British throughout the post-Roman period. Carver, *Formative Britain*, p. 26.

[74] James M. Harland, Rethinking Ethnicity and 'Otherness' in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Medieval Worlds*, 5 (2017), pp. 113-142. For an example of a recent work which still (unconsciously or otherwise) uses the language of monolithic invasion, see Carver, *Formative Britain*, pp. 13, 193, 608. The Anglo-Saxons are specifically referred to as "Britain's invaders" whose "intrusions" into Northumbria began in the sixth century as part of a "logical extension of their campaign to possess all of the best arable land."

regarded as being part of the deliberate creation of new forms of social expression in the post-Roman period.[75] The study of DNA from modern populations has led to some newsworthy assertions about the genetic make-up of the population of the British Isles, but many of those assertions rely on accepting the old certainties of a large scale Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain and downplay the role of subsequent population movements.[76] In reality, we know very little about how many people migrated to Britain in the post-Roman period and what those numbers meant as a percentage of the population as a whole.[77] More useful genetic data will come from the examination of early medieval skeletal remains but even though there is as yet precious little such data, what we do have seems to support the notion that 'Anglo-Saxon', like 'Celtic', should properly be regarded as a cultural or linguistic description rather than an ethnic or biological one.[78] Put simply, the ancient DNA and isotope evidence that we have suggests that many post-Roman Anglo-Saxon graves contain the remains of people born somewhere other than the Anglo-Saxon homelands.[79] As Chris Wickham argued, we cannot assume that occupation at an 'Anglo-Saxon' site tells us anything about the ethnic identity of the people who lived in them, or even what language(s) they spoke.[80] They arguably speak instead of communities developing new ways to express

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[75] Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 228-234.

[76] See in particular Cristian Capelli et al., 'A Y Chromosome Census of the British Isles,' *Current Biology* 13 (2003): pp. 979–84, Stephen Leslie et al., 'The Fine-Scale Genetic Structure of the British Population,' *Nature* 519 (2015): pp. 309–14 and Stephan Schiffels et al., 'Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Genomes from East England Reveal British Migration History' *Nature Communications* 7 (2016): pp.1–9 and the more recent People of the British Isles Project https://peopleofthebritishisles.web.ox.ac.uk/population-genetics accessed 20th November 2019.

[77] Heinrich Härke proposes a figure of between 100,000 and 200,000 migrants into the south and east of England over the course of about one hundred years starting in the mid fifth-century. He also proposes a conservative figure for the indigenous population of this same area of roughly 1,000,000. These figures are necessarily estimates, but may provide a reasonable benchmark. Heinrich Härke 'Anglo-Saxon Immigration and Ethnogenesis,' *Medieval Archaeology* 55 (2011): 7–9.

[78] Higham, 'Origins', p. 76.

[79] Paul Budd et al., 'Investigating Population Movement by Stable Isotope Analysis: A Report from Britain,' *Antiquity*, 78. 299 (2004): pp. 127-141. Janet Montgomery et al., 'Continuity or Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England? Isotope Evidence for Mobility, Subsistence Practice, and Status at West Heslerton,' *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 126 (2005), pp. 123-138. Hella Eckardt et al., 'Oxygen and Strontium Isotope Evidence for Mobility in Roman Winchester,' *Journal of Archaeological Science* 36 (2009), pp. 2816–25.and Jane Evans et al., 'A Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Assessment of a Possible Fourth Century Immigrant Population in a Hampshire Cemetery, Southern England,' *Journal of Archaeological Science* 33 (2006), pp. 265–72.

[80] Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005), p. 311. Higham makes much the same point. Higham, 'Debating', p. 12. Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, p. 479.

status.[81]

If we should consider the inhabitants east of the Tees-Exe line as being part of a cultural zone which also included the northern Gaul and the North Sea littoral, what of western and northern Britain? It is often stated that culturally British groups are archaeologically 'invisible' in the post-Roman record by reason of their tendency not to have buried their dead with grave goods or to have used durable material artefacts.[82] Nonetheless, there is evidence of Irish influence, particularly in south-west Wales, the Westcountry and western Scotland. The appearance on carved stones written both in Latin and the Irish ogam alphabet of Irish names, British names, Roman-period tribal names and Roman civic titles strongly suggests the emergence of hybridised identities in the west and north to compare to the new identities emerging across the lowlands of England.[83]

Irish influence is far less visible across a wide swathe of the North West from the Mersey to the Solway Firth, a large area which includes Cumbria. Here, the archaeological 'invisibility' of the Britons is at its most pronounced.[84] Until the 1980s, Cumbria's corpus of post-Roman archaeology comprised little more than a handful of possible graves, four or five Class I inscribed stones, the Addingham cross slab and two potentially post-Roman carved stones recovered from farms just outside Carlisle.[85] A smattering of antiquarian finds which defy

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[81] Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, p. 469.

[82] Higham, 'Thick Glass Darkly', pp. 7-8.

[83] Nancy Edwards, 'Early-Medieval Inscribed Stone Sculpture in Wales: Context and Function', *Medieval Archaeology*, 45 (1) (2001), pp. 15-39 and esp. pp. 17-29. See also Edwin R. Hustwit, *The Britons in Late Antiquity*, unpub. PHD thesis, accessed via https://research.bangor.ac.uk/portal/cy/theses/the-britons-in-late-antiquity--power-identity-and-ethnicity.html on 30th June 2016.

[84] This 'invisibility' has been frequently commented upon and essentially derives from the paucity of durable material artefacts (notably pottery) and the ephemeral nature of building traditions across much of the post-Roman West. See, for example, Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 156. It is worth noting that, if one disregards grave goods, 'Anglo-Saxon' sites show a similar paucity of material finds to British ones. Helena Hamerow, 'Overview: Rural Settlement', in David A Hinton, Sally Crawford and Helena Hamerow, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 119-127, p. 120. Similarly, British finds are as commonly found in the 'Anglo-Saxon' areas east of the Tees/Exe line than they are in the 'British' areas to the west of it. Higham, 'Origins', p. 79.

[85] For the graves see Chapter 2.5.   For the Class I stones, see Chapter 2.3.1. For the sculpture see Chapter 2.5.2.

further investigation by reason of having been lost or having little or no context pretty much completed the picture.[86] Since then, close examination of a small number of Cumbrian sites has, to quote Rachel Newman, "revolutionised" our thinking about the early medieval period.[87] Good evidence of immediate post-Roman activity has been identified at Carlisle, Birdoswald, Stanwix, Maryport and Papcastle. Evidence of sixth or seventh-century life comes from Carlisle, Brougham, Kentmere, Shoulthwaite and from unstratified finds as reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme.[88]

The ongoing activity at one-time Roman sites in Cumbria may provide some insight into both continuity and identity, not least as regards what 'being Roman' actually meant. It was long argued that Roman identity in northern and western *Britannia* was little more than a veneer.[89] The Britons of Cumbria simply reverted to the Iron Age after the "Roman Interlude" was over.[90] This proposition directly equates *Romanitas* with evidence of Roman material culture. Those who were fully integrated into the Roman way of life lived in towns or villas, used mass-produced, durable artefacts and had a penchant for baths and public buildings. Accordingly, areas like Cumbria which had few towns and villas and little evidence of Roman material culture could not possibly have been as Roman as those areas which did. This is a trite summary, perhaps, but nonetheless one which captures the dangers of privileging durable material remains.

There are alternative theories. David Mattingly conceives of Roman Britain in terms of a number of separate communities, of which the urban community with their baths and

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[86] Castle Head near Grange over Sands is one source of this material. Castle Head is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.5 and, in the writer's view at least, has some claim to being a largely unrecognised early Christian site. A small number of possible early Anglo-Saxon graves from the Eden valley were also discovered by antiquarians.
[87] Newman et al, *Resource Assessment*, p. 2. This material is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.
[88] See Chapter 2.6.
[89] Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 120. See also Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 306, 331-2
[90] David Shotter, *Romans and Britons in North-West England* (Lancaster, 1993), p. 96.

monumental architecture was just one.[91] The other two were, respectively, the military and

rural communities, both of which are well represented in Roman Cumbria. The latter two had

close links and there is good reason to suspect that each fort commander represented

Roman authority over both the military and civilian communities in his area. He was able to

draw on resources from a local *territorium* which might have stretched a few miles beyond

the fort walls, although the links between fort and hinterland probably went much deeper

than that.[92] It is likely for example, that many of Cumbria's late Roman *limitanei* (auxiliary

troops) were local men. Officers may have been outsiders who were stationed in the North

West for a few years as they made their way up the military career ladder, but the lower

ranks were probably recruited locally, irrespective of where their unit had originally been

raised.[93] Compulsory hereditary recruitment from the early fourth century is also likely to

have seen sons following fathers into the same unit.[94]

At the end of their military career, veterans were given a 'discharge bounty', typically a mix of

land, seed corn and/or cash. Many probably settled near their former stations, which is

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[91] David Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire, 54 BC - AD 409* (London 2006).

[92] David J. Breeze and Brian Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall* (London, 2000), p. 206. See also B. J. N. Edwards, 'Who Ran Hadrian's Wall?' *TCWAAS* (2009), pp. 221-225 and Rob Collins and David Breeze, '*Limitanei* and *Comitatenses*: Military Failure at the End of Roman Britain?', in Fiona Haarer et al, eds. *AD 410: The History and Archaeology of Late and Post-Roman Britain* (London, 2014), pp. 61-72, p. 62. For *territoria*, see Higham, 'Continuity Studies', pp. 6-7. See also Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, pp. 107-109 and Higham, 'In and out', p. 23. The partial word 'errito' on an inscription at Chester-le-Street in County Durham probably denotes the word 'territorio'. David J. Breeze, 'Civil Government in the North: the Carvetii, Brigantes and Rome' *TCWAAS* (2008), pp. 63-72, p. 70.

[93] For the career path for officers, see Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, 207-209 and Hugh Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe, AD 350 – 425* (Oxford, 1996), p. 149. The unit command was the second rung on the ladder. For the varied ethnicity of the officers, see Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, pp. 180-181. For the longevity of some troop dispositions, see David J. Breeze, 'The Roman Military Occupation of Northern England', *TCWAAS* (2011), pp. 113-136, pp. 114-116. Cumbria's garrisons as listed in the Notitia Dignitatum comprise two types – up to seven 'old style' infantry and cavalry units and five later formations, which were probably raised at various times from the late third to the late fourth centuries.

[94] Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, 181, pp. 206, 211-212. The relevant legal provisions insofar as hereditary recruitment is concerned can be found in Book 7, Chapter 22 of the *Codex Theodosianus*, a compilation of laws passed by the western Roman Emperors after 312. Accessed via http://ancientrome.ru/ius/library/codex/theod/liber07.htm#22 on 26th November 2019. For associated discussion, see Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, pp. 128-129 and B. Dobson and J. C. Mann, 'The Roman army in Britain and Britons in the Roman Army'*, Britannia*, 4 (1973), pp. 191-205. For a more cautious assessment, see Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, pp. 168-169, 222-223.

hardly surprising if their families were close at hand.[95] Soldiers had been allowed to marry

since the third century and this, coupled with hereditary recruitment and reduced unit

mobility meant that the *limitanei* often became rooted in their stations.[96] Whilst accepting that

the late Roman army was a highly complex and multicultural institution, we might therefore

consider Cumbria's late Roman military community as comprising a mix of serving soldiers,

wives, children and discharged veterans living in a number of distinct communities, each

with a strong intra-group identity.[97]

These military communities must have played a very significant demographic and economic

role in a relatively sparsely populated area such as Cumbria. Even allowing for reduced

fourth-century unit numbers (which may have meant that some units were functioning at

about a quarter of their paper strength or even less)[98] the twelve garrisons listed for Cumbria

in the late fourth-century *Notitia Dignitatum* would still have amounted to at least 2,000

enlisted men.[99] With families, veterans, servants, slaves and hangers-on, the aggregate

population of Cumbria's military community could easily have been five times that number.

The political landscape of late Roman Cumbria seems to have comprised a patchwork of

military and civilian administration, with the forts (and their dependent *territoria*) existing

alongside the *civitates* run from Carlisle and perhaps Corbridge.[100] What this meant for the

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[95] J. C. Mann, 'The Settlement of Veterans Discharged from Auxiliary Units Stationed in Britain, *Britannia*, 33 (2002), 183-188. See also Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, pp. 173, 192-193, Elton, *Warfare*, pp. 122-123 and Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, pp. 194, 202-203.
[96] Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, pp. 122-123. For a detailed discussion of troop dispositions in Cumbria, see B. J. Edwards, 'Roman Garrisons in North-West England, *TCWAAS* (2010), pp. 119-135.
[97] The paucity of attestations for units raised in Britannia elsewhere in the Roman Empire may support the notion that the army's requirements for recruits were largely met locally.
[98] Higham, 'In and out', pp. 36-37.
[99] Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, p. 116. See also Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, pp. 33, 238-239, Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, pp. 209-211 and Collins and Breeze, 'Military Failure', pp. 62, 64. This number assumes that the double strength cavalry unit at Stanwix maintained its proportionally larger size and also assumes that the *Notitia* is broadly accurate as to the total number of units, wherever they might have actually been posted. See Chapter 2.2 for a fuller discussion of the clash between the archaeological and documentary evidence in this regard.
[100] Breeze, 'Civil Government', pp. 67-71.

military community as a proportion of the total population of late Roman Cumbria is hard to tell, principally because it is very hard to estimate the total Roman-era population of the region. We might accept two to four million for the population of Roman Britain as a whole.[101] The population of modern Cumbria represents just under 1% of the total population of England & Wales.[102] If we apply that same percentage to Roman *Britannia*, we get a population for Roman Cumbria of between 18,000 and 36,000. Although this is inevitably a very rough estimate, it is nevertheless plausible that the military community comprised a quarter to a half of the total population.[103] It is hardly then plausible to argue that the people of Cumbria were *less* Roman than the people of the lowlands. There was no single standard measure of 'being Roman' that they (or indeed anyone else) could be calibrated against.[104] They were simply Roman in a different way. In that context the oft-stated notion that the "least romanized areas of the empire" (including western Britain) found it easier to "re-establish tribal structures and effective military resistance" against the "invaders" is not a credible one.[105]

If we can accept that *Romanitas* in late Roman Cumbria was not just a thin veneer, we might reasonably rethink post-Roman Cumbria. Kenneth Jackson and Alfred Smyth could conceive of "semi-barbarous hillmen" or "impoverished warbands" in the Cumbrian mountains, but such a view is no longer sustainable.[106] Cumbria's Latin inscriptions, the continuation of Christianity and the ongoing use of Roman artefacts do not represent the pitiful attempts of elites to cling on to the dying vestiges of a lustrous Roman past. Instead,

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[101] Heinrich Härke, 'Ethnogenesis', p. 8. Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, p. 356.
[102] https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest accessed 30th November 2019. Scotland is excluded as it was outside the Roman diocese.
[103] Industrialisation had a major impact on the rural populations of Britain which might mean that this calculation gives an unreasonably low figure for Cumbria's Late Roman population. That said, Cumbria's south-west and west coast were themselves industrialised, with the focus on coal, iron ore and steel.
[104] Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, pp. 520-521.
[105] Ward-Perkins, *Fall of Rome*, p. 49.
[106] Jackson, *Language and History*, p. 120. Alfred Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men; Scotland 80-1000* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 4.

they represent the continuation of established cultural practices by people who had no reason to change them, notwithstanding that in other areas of their lives they *were* increasingly obliged to adapt to new socio-economic and political circumstances of a world now sundered from Roman governance and the imperial economy.

1.6 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOGRAPHY

Cumbria is an upland region. The mountainous core of the Lake District National Park contains forty-four of England's fifty highest mountains and forms a rough circle in the south and centre of the county.[107] The rocks of the Lake District consist of three main groups, all of which lie above a layer of granite. The Skiddaw and Windermere groups to the north west and the south east respectively are made up of sedimentary rocks. The centre is dominated by the igneous rocks of the Borrowdale Volcanic Group.[108] It is this volcanic rock which gives the central peaks their jagged, Alpine character. The valleys radiate out like the spokes of a wheel from the hub at Sca Fell Pike, England's highest mountain. Although the valley bottoms support little patchworks of enclosed pasture, the uplands are marginal land, suitable only for the seasonal grazing of sheep.

To the south and west, the mountains of the Lake District lie close to the sea. It is only about thirteen miles in a direct line from the top of Sca Fell Pike to the coast at Seascale and roughly the same from the head of the Kentmere valley to the sands of Morecambe Bay. The lakes and rivers of the southern fells drain into Morecambe Bay and divide the Cartmel,

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[107] Five of the other six are in the North Pennines and are either in, or on the border of, Cumbria.
[108] Lake District National Park Authority Education Service Geology Factsheet, accessed at https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/171188/factsheet_geology.pdf
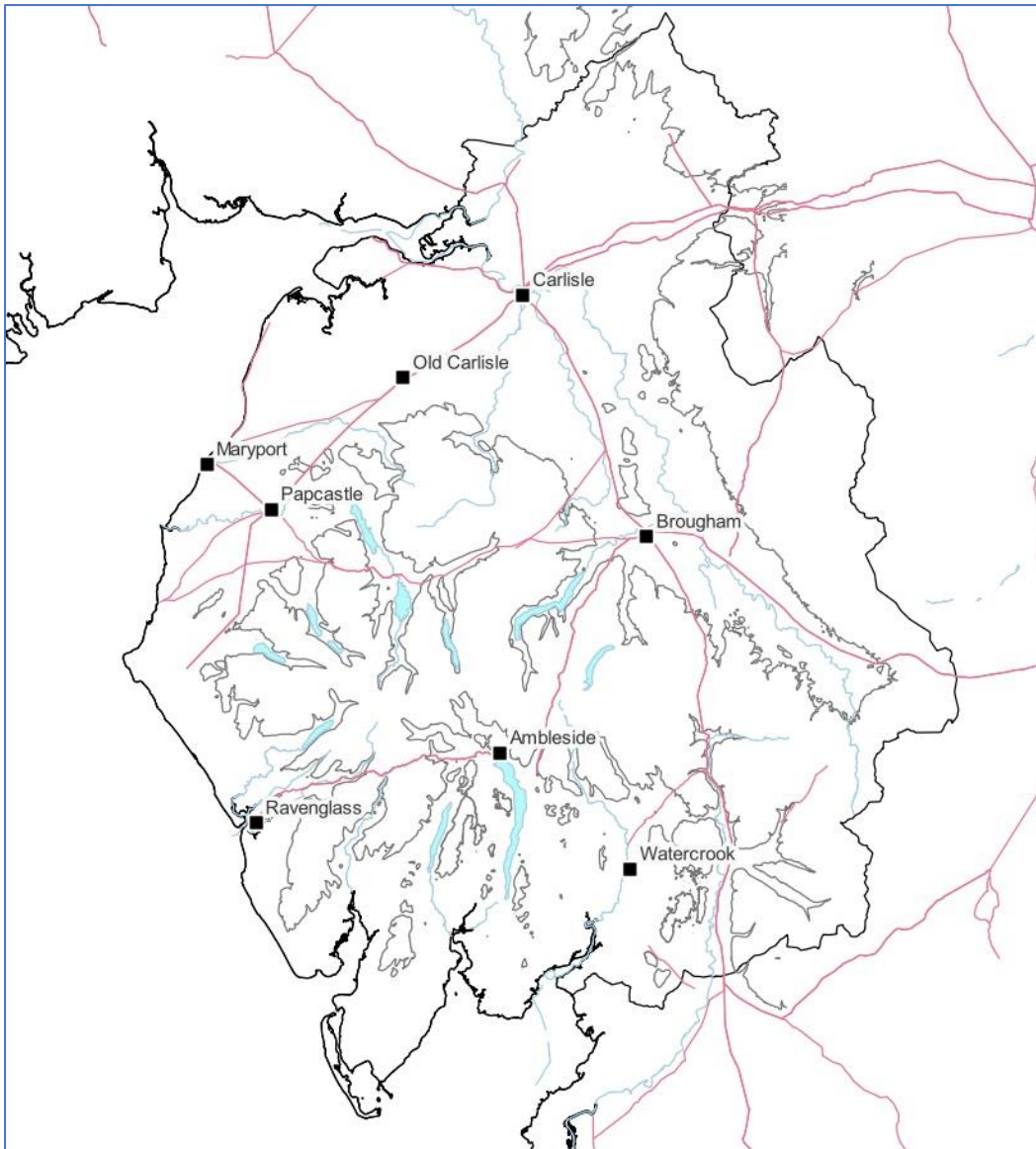
Map 2: Cumbria's topography showing land above 200 metres elevation. The known Roman roads and major Roman settlements are also marked

Furness and Copeland peninsulas. Until the early modern period, the main route from

Lancaster to Furness Abbey and on to the west Cumbrian coast involved crossing the sands

of these estuaries at low tide.

The place-name evidence suggests strongly that the upper parts of the Cartmel and Furness

peninsulas were heavily wooded in the early medieval period. There are large numbers of

place-names incorporating either Old English and Old Norse elements which denote

woodland or which refer to particular types of tree or to activities carried out in woodland (such as the running of pigs).[109] This suggests that before these names were coined (which can be no earlier than the ninth century in the case of those settlements containing the common Norse element *thwaite*, denoting a woodland clearing) the lower parts of Cartmel and Furness were islands of cultivable land, surrounded to the south west and east by the sands of Morecambe Bay and to the north by a wide belt of woodland which ran up to the southernmost fells of the Lake District.

To the east, the Lune and Eden valleys divide the uplands of the Lake District from the North Pennines. The corridor formed by these valleys is the natural routeway north through Cumbria. At Brougham, just south of Penrith, the Roman road from London via Chester meets the route across the Pennines from York via Catterick.[110] Both routes then follow the Eden valley north to Carlisle. In contrast to the relatively inaccessible peninsulas of south Cumbria, the Lune and Eden valleys were heavily settled in the Roman period. Indeed, the middle Eden valley around Penrith still has Cumbria's best agricultural land, in places good enough even for cereal cultivation.[111]

North of the Lake District is a large crescent of lower lying land which covers the top third of the county. The arms of this crescent taper down the Cumbrian coast to the west and the Eden valley to the east. Carlisle is the hub of this region, sitting at a topographic pinch-point. To the north of the city is the Solway estuary and its mosses, a wide expanse of low, boggy ground where the Esk and Eden river systems meet before flowing into the sea. South of Carlisle, the Roman road system fanned out to link the town to the major settlements of east and west Cumbria, including the road junction at Brougham, the large *vicus* at Papcastle and

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[109] Angus Winchester and Alan Crosby, *England's landscape, 8: the North West* (London, 2006), pp. 28-29.
[110] The modern place-name of Penrith (chief ford) probably refers to a ford which carried the Roman road over the river Eamont. Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, 2000), p. 91.
[111] Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, pp. 1-3, 69-70, 80-93.

the fleet base at Maryport. To the east of Carlisle are the uplands of the North Pennines.

Traffic naturally converged on Carlisle which, so far as we know, had the only bridge over

the Eden during the Roman period.[112]

1.7 EVIDENCE AND THE PERILS OF CYNICISM

As discussed above, consideration of the socio-political situation in post-Roman Cumbria

has traditionally been conceptualised in terms of violence. For earlier generations, the

historical sources (which, by their nature, are concerned with conquest and conflict) stood as

the primary evidence. History was very much the 'senior service'. Archaeological and other

evidence was usually interpreted via the framework established by the documentary

sources. Unfortunately, that framework was unsound, largely because almost any medieval

source which touched on the post-Roman centuries was considered fair game for writing

history. Annals, hagiographies, genealogies, king-lists and poems were synthesised with

longer prose sources such as Gildas and Bede to construct ostensibly coherent histories of

the post-Roman centuries. Writing the history of this period was rather like solving an

academic jigsaw puzzle. The clues were there – it was just a question of combing the

sources to find them and then hanging it all together.[113]

The reaction against this synthetic approach started in earnest in the late 1970s. It was

argued that the written sources were unreliable friends.[114] Most were written long after the

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[112] There were undoubtedly fords across the Eden, as place-names including the Norse element for ford (which now appears as -*wath*) testify. The high-status Viking graves discovered on Rand Law, near Cumwhitton overlook a lane which runs down to a one-time crossing at Brocklewath. There was presumably a further ford at Langwathby, between Carlisle and Penrith. When the Eden was in spate, these fords would have been impassable.

[113] This synthetic approach reached its zenith in John Morris' *Age of Arthur* although the foundations were laid much earlier. See, for example, F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1971). This approach still dominates non-specialist thinking about the post-Roman period.

[114] David Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain; history and legend', *History* (1977), pp. 173-192, David N. Dumville, 'Early Welsh Poetry: Problems of Historicity' in Brynley Roberts, ed. *Early Welsh Poetry;*

post-Roman events they purported to describe and, in many cases, there was no way of knowing how the material had been transmitted or whether it was just a later confection. Aggrandising divine or secular patrons or conveying a message appeared to have been the primary motivations for many early medieval writers.[115] Even when potentially genuine historical information *was* incorporated into a text, the medieval writer had no issue in manipulating it to suit their overriding objectives. The purpose of history – which purpose was equally understood by the early medieval audience – was not to provide a sober account of what happened but was instead to support the central message of a work.[116] It was therefore perfectly proper to say things that one's audience might know were not true. 'Telling the truth' (again, as we understand the term today) was rarely, so far as we can tell, what the early medieval writer was primarily setting out to achieve.[117] Author's may have intended their works to convey more than one message. The hagiographies of Cuthbert and Wilfrid, two figures who were prominent in the seventh-century Northumbrian church, appear to have been as much concerned with the disputes that arise from the granting of land and the (re-)organisation of early bishoprics as they were with the supposed deeds of their honorands.[118] This is especially notable in the *VSW*, which, to the eyes of a lawyer at least, has a whiff of desperation about it. The text looks very much like an extended legal argument about property rights made by Wilfrid's adherents against a backdrop of them

Studies in the Book of Aneirin (Aberystwyth, 1988), pp. 1-16, David Dumville, 'Origins', 1-14, David N. Dumville, 'The Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*, *Arthurian Literature* (1986), pp. 1-26.

[115] This final category is best exemplified by *VSW*, which leavens the usual unctuous piety of medieval hagiography by taking every opportunity to underline Wilfrid's (and by extension, his communities') claims over offices and vast tracts of land across northern England. Wilfrid may have had God on his side, but he appears to have derived greater benefit from his mortal allies.

[116] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Some functions of origin stories in early medieval Wales', in Patrick Sims-Williams, *Britain and Early Christian Europe: Studies in Early Medieval History and Culture* (Aldershot, 1995), pp. 97-106.

[117] Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 51-53.

[118] See, for example, Ian Wood, 'Monasteries and the Geography of Power in the Age of Bede', *Northern History* (2008), pp. 11-25, Walter Goffart, 'Bede's History in a Harsher Climate' in Scott DeGregorio, ed. *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, 2011), pp. 203-226, pp. 203 - 226 and esp. pp. 212-218, Clare Stancliffe, 'Disputed episcopacy: Bede, Acca, and the relationship between Stephen's *Life of St Wilfrid* and the early prose Lives of St Cuthbert, Anglo-Saxon England, 41 (2012), pp. 7-39 and A. Joseph McMullen, 'Rewriting the ecclesiastical landscape of early medieval Northumbria in the Lives of Cuthbert', *Anglo-Saxon England* (2014), p. 64.

having lost – or fearing that they were about to lose – many of the lands which they believed properly belonged to their community.

The immediate consequence of the dismantling of the old certainties was the realisation that we actually knew far less about the post-Roman centuries than we thought we did.[119] Although this had a number of positive consequences (notably giving archaeology the spur to break away from the historical frameworks which had conditioned debate for so long), other consequences have been less welcome. One can now note a certain trepidation about advancing alternative theories to replace those that have not stood the test of time. On occasion, it can sometimes appear that commentators are so keen to 'problematise' every aspect of the post-Roman period that not believing anything almost becomes a virtue in and of itself. [120]

Such a view risks privileging cynicism as the appropriate default position in academic debate. This is unfortunate, as it fundamentally misunderstands the nature of evidence and how it should be used. The burden of proof should not be conflated with the standard of proof. Although the burden of proof always rests with the individual who would advance a proposition, no *a priori* presumptions *against* that proposition may properly be raised. To form a view *before* the evidence for a proposition has been advanced is to stray away from the neutrality which the we should always be observed.

Furthermore, the raising of *a priori* presumptions against a hypothesis impliedly obliges the individual making the argument to satisfy a higher standard of proof than might otherwise be required. This is also unsound. The oft-quoted maxim that extraordinary claims require

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[119] Barbara Yorke, 'Britain and Ireland, c.500' in Pauline Stafford, ed. *A Companion to the Early Middle Ages: Britain and Ireland, c.500-c.1100* (Chichester, 2009), pp. 39-56, p. 42.
[120] For example, when summarising his concerns over the antiquity of the earliest stratum of Welsh poetry, David Dumville concluded that the only respectable way to proceed was by "assuming the defendants guilty of lateness until (painstakingly) proved innocent." Dumville, 'Early Welsh Poetry', p. 8.

extraordinary proof *sounds* good, but is fundamentally flawed. It is undoubtedly the case that the more leftfield a hypothesis the harder it will be for that hypothesis to satisfy the standard of proof, but that doesn't change the fact that the standard of proof remains the same, no matter how outlandish the claim advanced.

So what is the standard of proof which *should* be employed when writing histories of the post-Roman period? Realistically, the evidence is often so sparse and/or so ambiguous that most theories can never actually be proved at all, even on the balance of probabilities. That a hypothesis is a) reasonably supported by the evidence without recourse to the old tricks such as unwarranted emendment or distracting attention from a weak/missing link and b) that a hypothesis is no less plausible than any alternative theory is probably as far as anyone could reasonably be expected to go.[121] Given the paucity and ambiguity of our documentary sources for the post-Roman centuries in Britain, even that might be asking too much. If a hypothesis, viewed objectively, is at least no worse than a previous hypothesis which it seeks to replace, then that hypothesis has some claim to be taken seriously.

It is also important to resist the temptation to disaggregate. Disaggregation is the process by which a body of evidence is deconstructed into its constituent parts, usually so that each such part can then be knocked down on a discrete basis. By way of an example, Tim Clarkson and Philip Dunshea independently used disaggregation to challenge the notion that the putative early medieval kingdom of Rheged was based in Cumbria.[122] Many of the arguments raised by Clarkson and Dunshea may well be valid, but disaggregation itself is

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[121] Unwarranted emendment is the process by which a commentator argues - without any supporting evidence - that a word or phrase in a text was recorded incorrectly and should be read as something else. Of course, that 'something else' always supports the theory being advanced. Distracting attention from a weak or missing link in an evidential chain is very often done through the use of the word 'surely'. Essentially, it is an appeal to common sense which masks the fact that the link being made is not actually supported by any evidence. In fairness, it usually seems to be done unconsciously.

[122] Tim Clarkson, *The Men of the North* (Edinburgh, 2010), pp. 68-78. Philip Dunshea*, The Brittonic Kingdoms of the 'Old North'*, unpub. PHD thesis, 2012.

not. This is because a body of evidence exists as a whole and is not simply a group of unconnected propositions that can be picked off one by one. As such, for *Land of the Cumbrians* to be criticised in the *Scottish Historical Review* for relying on quantity, rather than quality, of evidence is to miss the point of how a case is (and should be) built.[123] Quantity of evidence and quality of evidence are not necessarily mutually exclusive concepts.

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[123] See the review by Henry Summerson in *Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 78 (1999), pp. 111-113.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ARCHAEOLOGY

2.1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The uncoupling of archaeology from the constraints of narratives derived from the documentary sources coincided with the development of new approaches in archaeology which finally made the ephemeral British post-Roman period a little more visible. Before these developments, the archaeological evidence was meagre, with a significant part of what little there was comprising unstratified material, much of it garnered by antiquarians in circumstances which fell well short of the rigourous standards of modern methodologies.[1] For example, pretty much all we know of the potential early medieval site at Castle Head on the Cartmel peninsula derives from a chance written reference to a number of now-lost Roman and post-Roman artefacts which were found at the site and then sold to a private dealer in the nineteenth century.[2] Without better data, further interpretation was all but impossible.

In 2001, Nick Higham noted how the Britons of the north retained an "opacity… which is barely penetrable".[3] Archaeological evidence for post-Roman Britons is undoubtedly hard to find, largely because of the shift towards the use of perishable materials from the fifth century and the concomitant lack of dateable coins and pottery which could otherwise be fitted into our existing typologies. To this, we must also add the wider problems associated with establishing chronologies for post-Roman artefacts. Late Roman coins – such as the gold *solidus* of Valentinian found under a fifth-century floor surface at Scotch Street, Carlisle – only give us a secure *terminus post quem*, being the date of the original striking of the

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[1] Newman et al, *Resource Assessment*, p. 2.
[2] See Chapter 2.5.
[3] Higham, 'Thick Glass Darkly', p. 5.

coin. In the absence of any other corroborating evidence that might help date an artefact, 'short chronologies' which assume the date of deposition of a coin as being close to the date of its striking invite us to take a cautious view of the evidence for occupation at a given site. This remains the case even when (as with the Scotch Street example) the worn nature of the coin suggests a long period of circulation and therefore a date of deposition many years after the date of striking. The downside of short chronologies is that material which belongs to the post-Roman period is too readily reassigned to the fourth century, thereby contributing to the apparent invisibility of the post-Roman centuries in the British north.[4]

There are also questions around typologies. Penannular brooches were popular in Britain from the Iron Age through to the early medieval period, but their number and variety is such that classification is often a matter of (educated) guesswork, especially where they occur in assemblages where there is a dearth of more easily dateable artefacts such as pottery or coins. Even where they *are* discovered with dateable artefacts, the use of short chronologies can still pull such artefacts back into a Roman context.

Similar problems emerge when considering settlement archaeology. There are a large number of unexcavated sites across Cumbria which, from aerial surveys of cropmarks, typically consist of an undefended roundhouse or two within an enclosure. These sites have plausibly been interpreted as farms, but dating them is difficult. This is partly because rural building styles did not change massively from the Iron Age to the post-Roman period, but is also partly because of the assumptions made about assemblages recovered from each site. There has been a tendency for commentators to assign sites to the pre-Roman period if no artefacts are recovered and to the Roman period if they throw up small amounts of Roman-

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[4] Fitzpatrick-Matthews and Fleming, 'Periodization', pp. 1-33. Fitzpatrick-Matthews and Fleming also argue that there is a tendency to assign post-Roman British pottery, it to the 'Anglo-Saxon' period on the strength of the similarity of some forms to those used in early Anglo-Saxon England.

era pottery sherds.[5] Either way, an early medieval provenance for these sites is rarely proposed, notwithstanding that "it seems that wherever and whenever radiocarbon dating has been undertaken, early medieval dates have been returned, even in the most unexpected places".[6]

Improvements in archaeological techniques have come at a time of increased opportunity for those wishing to delve into Cumbria's rain-soaked soils. Yet despite there being room for cautious optimism, the number of fully investigated sites in Cumbria remains small.[7] Models for post-Roman continuity of occupation at forts in Cumbria are based almost entirely on the excavations at Birdoswald and Carlisle, although the conclusions drawn from these are supported by findings from outside the county (most notably at South Shields and Vindolanda) and now from Maryport. The general picture receives support from so far unpublished excavations at other sites within the county.[8]

Our knowledge of early Christian institutions in the county is similarly limited in terms of known and excavated sites. We are heavily reliant on the work carried out at Dacre in the 1980s, where the Anglo-Saxon monastery mentioned by Bede was discovered.[9] There are hints of early Christian activity at a handful of other sites including Carlisle, Brougham and Workington, but beyond that, we move increasingly into the realms of speculation. For town life, we are entirely reliant on the excavations at Carlisle, the only 'proper' Roman town in the county.[10] What we know of day-to-day civilian life outside Carlisle is highly fragmentary and

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[5] Rachel Newman, 'Who Was Here in the Dark Ages?' in *People and the Land: Settlement in the Eden Valley Prehistoric until the Present Day. Papers presented at a one day conference held on 6 October 2007, at Appleby Grammar School, Appleby-in-Westmorland* (Appleby, 2007), p. 26.
[6] Newman et al, *Resource Assessment*, p. 20.
[7] Newman, 'Who Was Here?', pp. 23-24.
[8] Jane Laskey, Senhouse Museum, Maryport, pers comm.
[9] *EHEP*, IV, 32, 264-265. Leech and Newman, 'Dacre' 87-94. Newman and Leech, forthcoming.
[10] Cumbria's other nucleated civilian sites are all *vici* attached to Roman forts. Notwithstanding that some were large (notably Papcastle, which may well have been the biggest 'town' in the county outside Carlisle), these settlements should be regarded as part of the military rather than the civilian, community.

often relies on chance discoveries made during construction projects such as at those at Brougham or Shap.

2.1.2 A NOTE ON RADIOCARBON DATING

Throughout this thesis, a number of references will be made to the likely dates of a timber structure or a piece of organic material. Such dates derive from measuring the amount of atmospheric radiocarbon in the sample and assuming a) that the concentration of atmospheric radiocarbon has not changed since 1950 and b) that radiocarbon has a half-life of 5,568 years (now adjusted to 5,730 years). Radiocarbon dates are calibrated by comparing concentrations to those found in tree rings. As every schoolchild knows, provided one knows the date of felling of a tree, each successive ring represents one year of growth. The data obtained from a sample is then evaluated against a calibration curve using one of two methods – the 'intercept' method and the 'probability' method. The latter involves a more complicated process and gives a date range with 95% accuracy. The radiocarbon dates given in this thesis are all dates given by reference to this 'probability' method.[11] All are drawn from the published materials in respect of each site and no recalibration has been carried out by the present writer.

2.1.3 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

Even though the number of excavated sites in Cumbria remains small, it is at least becoming easier to identify post-Roman assemblages at those sites which *have* been subject to

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[11] The data in this subsection derives from the summary provided by the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit of Oxford University via https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/calibration.html, accessed 13th August 2021.

detailed investigation. As we rethink some of our chronologies, the old adage that the post-Roman Britons were archaeologically invisible is no longer the truism it once appeared to be. In very broad terms, it is recognised that the fifth century was a period of object retention. Retained objects were typically Roman period artefacts.[12] Retention, repair and recycling became more important in the post-Roman period, presumably because of economic pressures which led to reduced availability of new goods rather than because of a sentimental affinity to the past. As the organised trade in commodities and the related money economy slowed and eventually broke down over the course of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the accessibility of mass produced and new items would have been seriously curtailed. An inability to replace broken or unfashionable items meant that it became increasingly necessary to preserve existing objects for as long as possible.

This steady reduction in choice and availability of material culture from the late fourth century is exemplified by the trade in pottery. By the end of the Roman period, pretty much all the pottery coming in to Cumbria was the Crambeck Ware and Huntcliff-style Wares from the East Yorkshire kilns. Both types may have been distributed pursuant to supply contracts with the army.[13] Crambeck Ware took a number of forms, including jars for tableware and mortaria for grinding. It appeared in a number of styles including the very late Parchment Ware, which appears to only have come into production after about 360 and which has been found at a number of Cumbrian sites.[14]

Huntcliff-style Ware typically comprises of jars, which were made for the first time in the late fourth century.[15] Both styles may well both have remained in production until about the mid-fifth century, meaning that they are as potentially diagnostic of post-Roman activity as they

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[12] Collins, *End of Empire*, p. 6.
[13] Evans, 'End', p. 40.
[14] Paul Bidwell, The dating of Crambeck Parchment Ware, *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies*, 12 (2005), pp. 15-21.
[15] Evans, 'End', p. 40.

are of late Roman activity.[16] Indeed, the discovery of Huntcliff-style wares alongside much later, but stylistically similar, Anglo-Saxon pottery at Blackfriars Street, Carlisle, suggests very strongly that such materials not only remained in use in the post-Roman period, but also influenced subsequent pottery styles.[17]

That said, the continuation of formal supply arrangements between the Yorkshire pottery factories and the Cumbrian garrisons in the post-Roman decade would have required a functioning monetary economy. Such an economy is something for which the North West shows markedly less evidence than other parts of *Britannia*. The Roman cash economy in the North was based on a 'double conversion' principle. At least part of a soldier's pay was settled in gold and silver. These coins were high denomination currency and had to be converted into bronze or copper coins for everyday use. These base metal coins were then converted back to gold and silver for the purposes of rendering up taxation, which could not be paid in anything other than precious metals.[18] The latest issues of gold and silver coinage to come to Britain in any numbers were the issues of the Emperors Theodosius (402-408) and of Arcadius and Honorius (397-402) respectively. The latest bronze issues date to about 395.[19] Although there is good evidence of some late Roman coin use at Cumbrian sites (notably at Carlisle and Birdoswald), there is very little evidence of post-Roman coin use. Consideration of the distribution maps of the find spots of post-Roman coin hoards and coin losses show a very clear bias to the south and east of the Tees-Exe line.[20] There are very few finds in the north and west. The absolute numbers of late Roman or early post-Roman

[16] M Whyman 2001, unpub. PhD thesis, quoted by M. McCarthy, 'Sequence', p. 231 and also in James Gerrard, 'Roman Pottery in the Fifth Century: a Review of the Evidence and its Significance' in Fiona Haarer et al, eds, *AD 410: The History and Archaeology of Late and Post-Roman Britain* (London, 2014), pp. 90-98, p. 93.
[17] Collins, *End of Empire*, p. 121.
[18] R. J. Brickstock, 'Coin Supply in the North in the late Roman period', in Tony Wilmott and Pete Wilson, eds. *The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham, 1999* (BAR British Series, 2000, Oxford), pp. 33-38.
[19] Moorhead and Walton, 'Coinage', pp. 101-103.
[20] ibid., pp. 105-111. Once again, the invisible cultural dividing line which runs between the Tees and the Exe appears to demarcate the areas in which coins are found and those where they are not.

Cumbrian coins or coin hoards are relatively low even when compared to the North East.[21] If the very late Roman period did indeed see a retrenchment of coin use to the towns strung along the north eastern road network,[22] one might question whether the people of Cumbria had access to sufficient cash to continue to source East Yorkshire pottery after the army supply contracts came to an end?[23] If they did not, then one of two scenarios presumably applies. Either the pottery was paid for in something other than cash or the finds of Crambeck and Huntcliff-style Wares in Cumbria represent residual use of late Roman vessels by post-Roman populations who were unable to source new ones.

Artefacts could still be used even after they had broken. Glass fragments were re-used for a number of purposes (including as cutting tools). Recovered pieces of samian pottery could be reworked as spindle whorls for use in weaving.[24] Notwithstanding an increasing lack of access to new items, it has been possible to identify changes in taste in styles of personal adornment through the late fourth century and into the fifth century. Although much of the material in our extant assemblages is Roman-era material, the composition of those assemblages shows a steady evolution in taste. Certain items such as black finger rings, light copper-alloy bracelets or bone bracelets became more popular from the late fourth century, increasing in number as the incidence of other artefacts common in earlier assemblages decreased.[25]

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[21] Rob Collins, Pleading the fifth (century): patterns of coin use at the end of empire', in Rob Collins and Mathew Symonds, eds. *Breaking Down Boundaries: Hadrian's Wall in the 21st Century* (Rhode Island, 2013), pp. 123-137.

[22] ibid., p. 135.

[23] The latest date for the termination of these contracts would be 409, when Zosimus records how Roman officials (presumably those appointed by the usurper Constantine III) were expelled. From that point, it is difficult to imagine the survival of the machinery necessary to ensure the large-scale distribution of (and payment for) pottery at provincial, let alone Diocesan, level.

[24] Ellen Swift, 'Reuse of Glass, Pottery and Copper-Alloy Objects in the Late to Post-Roman Transition Period in Britain', in Fiona Haarer et al, eds, *AD 410: The History and Archaeology of Late and Post-Roman Britain* (London, 2014), pp. 130-152, pp. 138-147. Birdoswald shows evidence of late- or post-Roman glass reuse and both Carlisle and Birdoswald show evidence of the reuse of samian pottery as spindle whorls.

[25] Cool, 'The parts left over', pp. 51-56.

Other items remained popular in the post-Roman period. Perhaps the best example of this is the penannular brooch. These brooches, which functioned like a large safety pin for fastening clothes, had been common both before and during the Roman period. They appear to have been associated with both military or civilian status and, although other types of brooch went out of fashion by the end of the Roman period, the penannular style continued to evolve.[26] Creating robust typologies for penannular brooches has been a major undertaking, although in very broad terms it suffices to say that type D and E penannular brooches appear to be associated with late fourth- or early fifth-century activity, whereas type F brooches are plausibly argued to be mid- to late-fifth century at the earliest.[27] Although it is tempting to see the evolution in the form as representing a conscious shift of identity from a Roman culture to a British one, these evolutions in fashion across various artefact types look to be more a "natural cycle of development, dominance and renewal".[28]

2.1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This Chapter will summarise the archaeological evidence for fifth- to seventh-century activity at Carlisle, erstwhile Roman forts, early Christian sites and rural sites. We know more about the evolution of Roman forts than we do about other categories of evidence and this material will be appraised first, in Chapter 2.2. The evidence from the civilian settlement at Carlisle will be considered in Chapter 2.4 and the evidence for early Christianity will be looked at in Chapter 2.5. The wider rural situation is the focus of Chapter 2.6.

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[26] Rob Collins, 'Brooch use in the 4th- to 5th-century', in R. Collins and L. Allason-Jones, eds. *Finds from the Frontier: Material Culture in the Fourth-Fifth Centuries AD* (York, 2010), pp. 64-77, pp. 64-8.
[27] ibid. pp. 71-73. These are *terminus post quem* dates and many styles remained in use for a long time. For detailed work on the classification and typology of penannular brooches, see the pioneering work of Elizabeth Fowler and the more recent work which builds on it, including Donald Mackreth, *Brooches in Late Iron Age and Roman Britain* (Oxford, 2011) and Anna Booth, *Reassessing the long chronology of the penannular brooch in Britain: exploring changing styles, use and meaning across a millennium*, unpub. PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2014.
[28] Cool, 'The parts left over', p. 54.

Chapter 2.3 will seek to offer an explanation as to why Cumbria is one of the few regions of the western British Isles which did not appear to partake in the widespread trade in consumable goods and pottery with the eastern Mediterranean and Atlantic Gaul. Chapter 2.3 also sets out the case for believing that it may have been the Justinianic Plague of the mid-sixth century which led to the cessation of imports from the eastern Mediterranean. The absence of this material in a coastal area with no shortage of harbours or landing sites has rarely (if ever) been discussed, but it will be proposed that the luxury items which comprised western Britain's early medieval imports were used in a deliberately ostentatious way by new elites who had been heavily influenced by migration from Ireland. Just as new cultural identities were being formed in the south and east of Britain by indigenes and migrants, both of whom were profoundly influenced by the rise of new forms of material culture across the English Channel, so too was there a fusion of British and Irish culture in western Britain. The apparent absence of these cultural influences in Cumbria *may* point at a settled social situation throughout the fifth century, in which the parvenu elites of what had recently been a highly militarised Roman frontier zone had been able to resist Irish influence, physically and/or culturally.[29]

The artefactual and settlement evidence discussed throughout this chapter will also be plotted onto distribution maps. At the end of this thesis, those maps will be consolidated with the place-name and documentary evidence in the hope that it becomes possible to identify clusters of activity which may point to post-Roman political centres. Although a small number of such centres have already been postulated there has never, to the current writer's

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[29] The whole question of Irish influence brings us inevitably to the origins of St Patrick. Although Patrick is often assumed to be from Cumbria (which would therefore make him and his works central to this thesis), those claims are not sufficiently well-founded to bring Patrick centre stage. The reasons for doubting Patrick's Cumbrian origins are set out at Chapter 2.5.

knowledge, been any specific attempt to carry out a comprehensive survey of post-Roman

secular and ecclesiastical *foci* in Cumbria.[30]

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[30] Notably in Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, pp. 47-106.

2.2   POST-ROMAN MILITARY ARCHAEOLOGY

In the last twenty years or so, our understanding of the late and post-Roman situation at the forts along Hadrian's Wall and in its hinterland has changed radically. At a number of sites, persuasive evidence for post-Roman site use has been identified. Far from the last garrisons being disbanded after centralised Roman administration collapsed in the first decade of the fifth century, it is now proposed that, at a number of sites, the last garrisons of Roman frontier troops remained *in situ*.[1] It is proposed that the last official garrisons slowly morphed into the British warbands which are dimly discernible in the historical (and pseudo-historical) records purporting to deal with the sixth century.[2]

The evidence for the first stage of this 'mutation model' (as it is known) is good.[3] Functional and structural changes to military installations, which first become observable in the fourth century, continue into the fifth century. The changes appear to have resulted in forts becoming more defensible but less well-ordered – or at least, less traditionally - ordered – as the spaces within them were repurposed. Gateways were blocked, ageing stone walls and buildings were replaced in earth and timber and the longstanding distinction between spaces previously reserved respectively for accommodation, governance and small - scale industrial processes became increasingly blurred.[4] Larger buildings such as granaries, which may no longer have been needed for their original functions, were repurposed entirely. This suggests either shrinking populations (and a corresponding reduced need for the goods once stored in those buildings) and/or the breakdown of supply arrangements to individual forts.[5]

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[1] S. S Frere, *Britannia: A History of Roman Britain* (London, 1987), p. 417.
[2] Wilmott, *Hadrian's Wall*, pp. 203-395. The best exposition of the case can be found in Rob Collins' exceptional *End of Empire*. For a full discussion of the sixth-century warbands attested in the written sources, see Chapters 4.2 and 4.3.
[3] The phrase 'mutation model' is the one used by Collins to describe this phenomenon.
[4] In many ways, these developments mirror similar developments observable in the administrative centres of late Roman towns from the third century onwards. Rogers, *Late Roman Towns*, pp. 49-175.
[5] Collins, *End of Empire*, pp. 75-81 provides a sound overview of the evidence.

These phenomena are seen as diagnostic of a slow, but increasing, trend towards the regionalisation of fort garrisons who, by reason of being an 'occupational community' (a group of people bound together by a shared life) were able to maintain something of their distinctiveness, notwithstanding wider socio-political change.[6] These occupational communities did not simply comprise men of fighting age. Although the units posted to Cumbria were originally raised from elsewhere in the Roman Empire, it seems likely that, for the rank and file at least, numbers were maintained largely through local recruitment.[7] Two pieces of legislation would have further ensured that each unit would eventually become embedded in their respective regions. In 197, the ban on soldiers marrying was lifted, notwithstanding that many soldiers doubtless already had unofficial wives.[8] In 326, compulsory hereditary recruitment was introduced.[9] If we can reasonably assume that retiring soldiers who had married local women are likely to have remained with their wives and children rather than setting off on foot to return to a home they may not have seen for a quarter of a century, we might suppose that many of those living in the *vici* or farming in the *territorium* around the fort were veterans or otherwise part of wider military families.[10] Notwithstanding that some units appear to have retained a superficial distinctiveness in terms of equipment and dress which belied the ethnic origins of the men who first served in them, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the British-born sons of British mothers would have followed their fathers into their father's unit.[11] Over time, that unit would develop a

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[6] Rob Collins, 'Late Roman Frontier Communities in Northern Britain: a Theoretical Context for the 'End' of Hadrian's Wall', in B. Croxford et al, eds. *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 1-11, pp. 4-7.

[7] *Codex Theodosianus*, Liber VII, 22.8. Accessed at http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/theodosius/theod07.shtml on 289th November 2018. See also Dobson and Mann, '*Britons in the Roman Army*', 193-196 and 200-202 and Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, pp. 181, 212.

[8] Sarah Phang, *The Marriage of Roman Soldiers (13 BC – AD 235)* (Boston, 2001), p. 2.

[9] Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, p. 211. Elton, *Warfare*, p. 129.

[10] Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, pp. 181, 202-206. Although settlement evidence based on the diplomas given to retiring soldiers is slender and somewhat ambiguous (see, for example, Mann, 'The Settlement of Veterans', pp. 183-188), there was no process for returning men to their places of birth. After twenty years or more or serving in the army, one is tempted to wonder what many of them felt they had left to go back to. See, for example, Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, p. 194 and Dobson and Mann, *The Roman Army in Britain*, p. 196.

[11] Edwards, 'Who Ran Hadrian's Wall?', p. 223.

distinctly local flavour, with different generations of the same family all broadly dependent on their fort for work, trade and probably even their social lives.

These occupational communities of the northern frontier were subject to significant pressures in the early years of the fifth century. Britain had been seized by the usurper Constantine III in 407. Shortly thereafter, Constantine left for Gaul in order to mount his ultimately doomed attempt to become emperor. By 409 the usurpation was in its death throes and it must have been clear that Constantine's cause was dead. Officials in Britain were expelled and the Britons took up arms in their own defence.[12] It is quite possible that Constantine's failure to steady a worsening situation in Gaul (which had not been helped by the crossing of the Rhine by large barbarian forces from beyond the Rhine *limes*) had led to the rejection of his regime by those still in Britain. Either way, the expulsion of officials was not followed by a reassertion of control by Honorius, the legitimate emperor. The army supply chain had probably broken down by no later than the end of the first decade of the fifth century and was not rebuilt. From then, the garrisons of Cumbria were sundered from both logistical support and central authority. This would have inevitably led to an increasing reliance on local supply. Each fort commander had long been able to draw supplies from their *territorium* and it also seems likely that soldiers were increasingly paid in kind as the supply of coinage stuttered and dwindled.[13] Genetic traits shared by the cattle that were consumed at Carlisle and Birdoswald in the late Roman period certainly suggests a common, local supply for beef and/or dairy cows consumed at two forts seventeen miles apart.[14]

The garrisons also experienced demographic pressures. The contraction of the military

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[12] Zosimus, *New History*, Book VI (Milton Keynes, 2020), p. 115.
[13] Collins, *Soldiers,* p. 37. Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, pp. 107-109.
[14] S Stallibrass, 'The way to a Roman soldier's heart: Did cattle droving supply the Hadrian; Wall area? In J. Hendriks, ed. *TRAC 2008, Proceedings of the eighteenth annual theoretical Roman archaeology conference, Amsterdam, 2008* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 101-112.

community is noticeable from the late third century. Most of the undefended civilian *vici* outside the forts were abandoned at about this time.[15] There is no evidence of sudden destruction and it is likely that economic pressures, rather than violence, led to their demise. As *de facto* markets serving their garrisons, the *vicani* were dependent on the soldiers being paid and also on there being enough soldiers to provide a viable customer base. Increasingly, they had neither. The slow decline in garrison sizes from the end of the third century may have seen unit numbers in Cumbria and elsewhere in Britain drop to 25% or less of paper strength by the fourth century.[16] The units of *limitanei* along the northern frontier *may* eventually have consisted of no more than one hundred or so fighting men.[17] Such a drop in the military population would have depressed business for the traders in the *vici* even when the coinage *was* still getting through. It would also have encouraged the repurposing of the forts themselves. Structures built to accommodate and provision five hundred or more men were no longer fit for purpose. The *vicani* who had familial (rather than simply economic) reasons for living near a particular fort may simply have moved in to the fort itself as more and more space within the defences became available.

2.2.1 THE SURVIVORS: CUMBRIAN FORTS IN THE POST-ROMAN PERIOD

A number of forts in Cumbria show evidence of post-Roman occupation (Map 3, below). These 'survivors' represent only a small proportion of the total number of forts (Map 4, below). Others have produced Anglo-Saxon artefacts of the fifth to eighth century. Such finds indicate site usage at some level, but need not imply permanent occupation, whether by Anglo-Saxon or British groups.

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[15] Collins, *End of Empire*, p. 120.
[16] Breeze, 'Roman Military Occupation', pp. 116-117.
[17] Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, pp. 209-210.
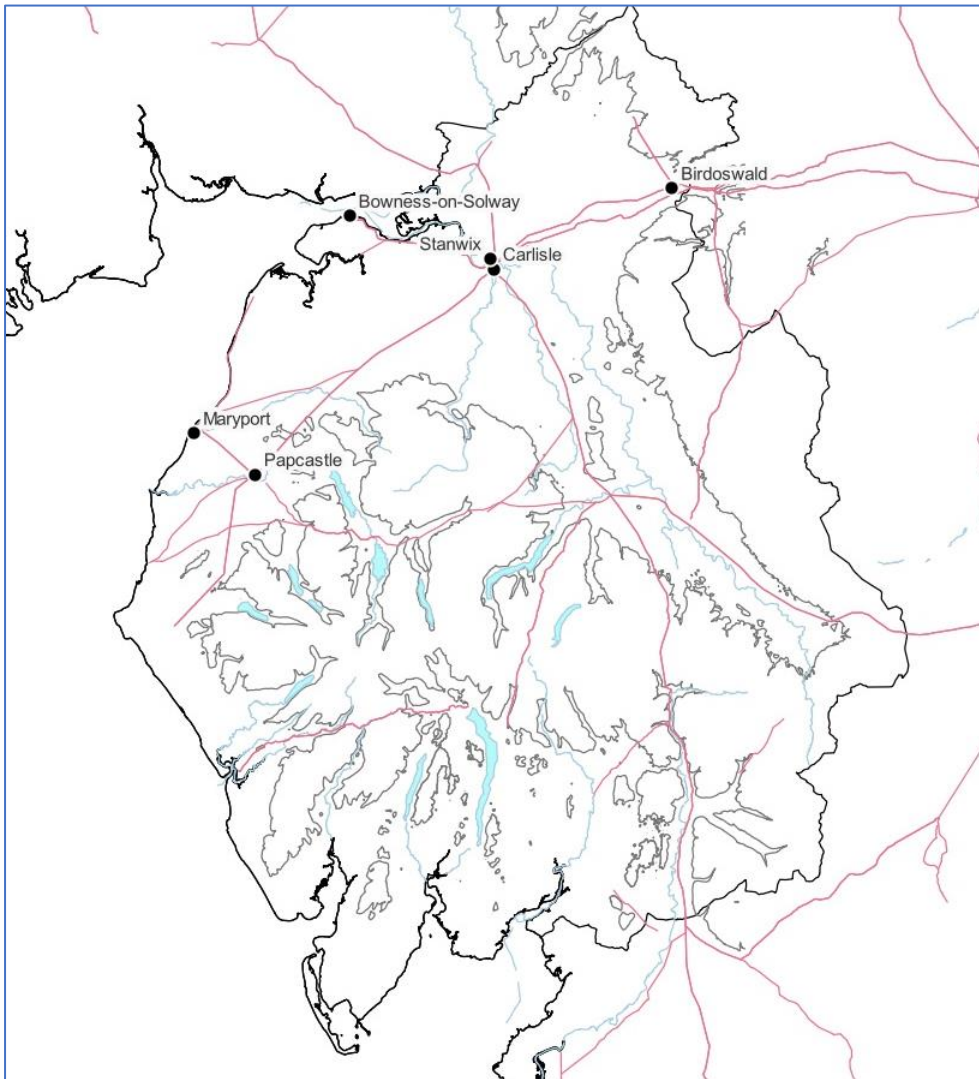
Map 3: Post Roman Occupation at Cumbrian forts.

Bewcastle is a good example. The Roman fort had a highly unusual hexagonal shape and is thought to have served as a cult centre for the local pagan god, Cocidius. Presumably, it was already serving this purpose before the Roman fort was built. By the seventh century, the same site was chosen for the Bewcastle Cross, a rare and fine example of early Christian Anglo-Saxon sculpture. Bewcastle's status as a religious centre in both the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods would be quite a coincidence if it had been completely abandoned in between times. It is therefore possible – albeit unprovable – that there had been continuity of religious activity at the site between the attested usage of the Roman and later Anglo-Saxon

periods.
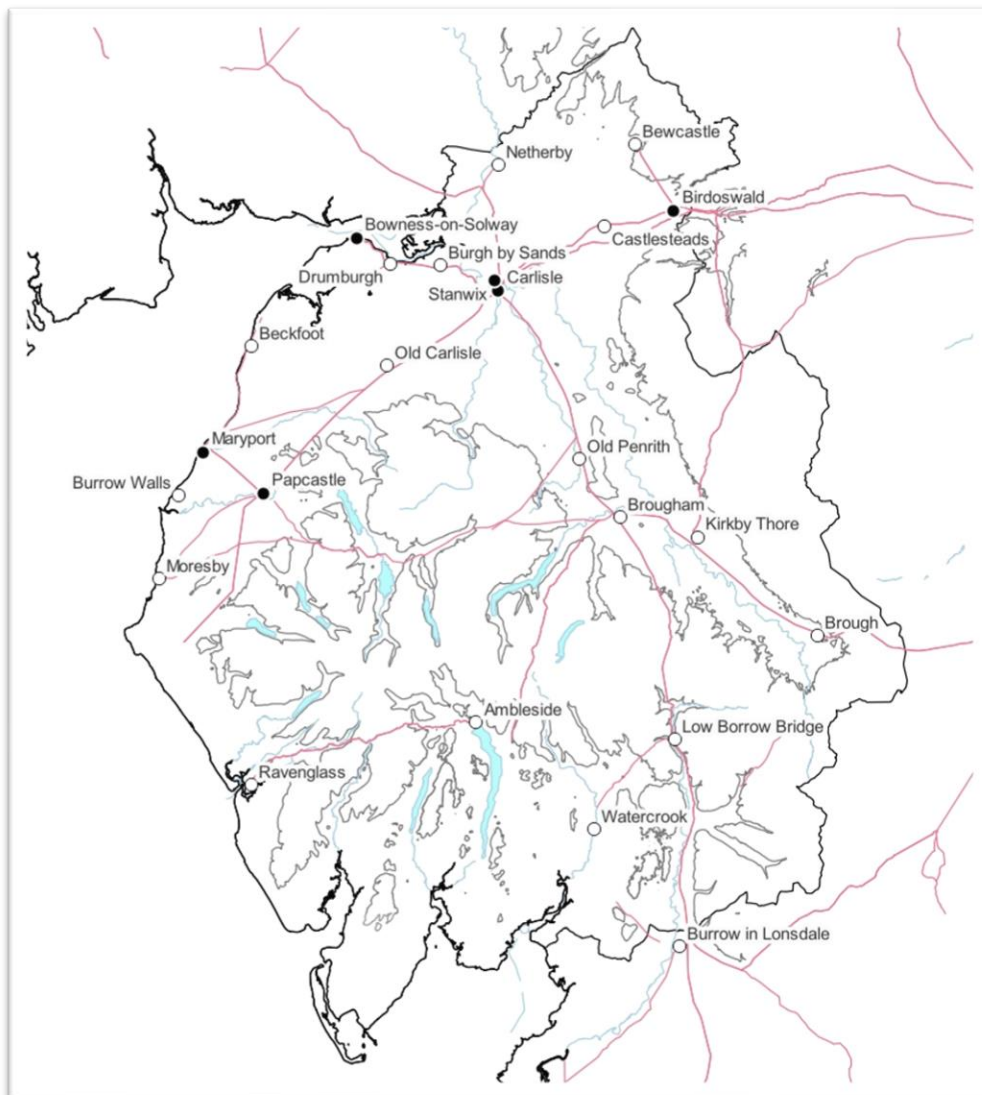
Map 4: Late and post-Roman occupation at major Roman forts in Cumbria. Black circles denote forts with evidence for post-Roman occupation. White circles note late Roman forts with no current evidence for post-Roman occupation.

The new archaeological data has, however, raised some interesting questions. Previous generations of historians were largely reliant on chance finds and, especially, the Notitia Dignitatum ('*Notitia*'), a document which survives in fifteenth-century and later copies, all of which derive from a now lost ninth or tenth-century text. The *Notitia* appears to be an official government document produced in the late fourth-century which showed the distribution of

civilian offices and army units across the Empire.[18] The surviving versions of the text are clearly at a number of removes from any late-Roman original and this has led to debate about how and when it was compiled and how accurate it is as a record of late Roman dispositions.[19]

The *Notitia* lists a number of units in garrison in Cumbria. Many of those units are 'old style' *cohortes* and *equitates* (infantry and mixed infantry/cavalry units respectively) who had been at their forts since at least the third century. A number of newer units had subsequently been stationed in Cumbria. These were termed *numeri* or *cunei* ('group' or 'band'), terms which might suggest the wholesale transfer of fighting units from beyond the Roman frontiers into regular army units. These apparently new units were garrisoned at Old Carlisle, Burrow Walls[20] and Burgh by Sands to the west of Carlisle and also along the main York to Carlisle route.[21] These dispositions suggest an intention to stiffen defences on the coastal plain and the main route through the region. As the roads all met at Carlisle, all told this seems to confirm the town's status as the hub of late Roman military administration in the north west frontier.

A comparison of where troops were supposed to be (according to the *Notitia*), and where the archaeology suggests that they actually were, is instructive in assessing not only the evidential weight to be given to the *Notitia* but also how the archaeology has significantly advanced our understanding of the late and post-Roman periods.

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[18] See for example, Breeze, *Roman Military Occupation*, pp. 114-116.

[19] For a trenchant view on the likelihood that early fifth-century Roman bureaucrats would mix obsolete and current material in an official working document, see John Hester Ward, 'The British Sections of the 'Notitia Dignitatum': An Alternative Interpretation, *Britannia*, 4 (1973), pp. 253-263, p. 255 and especially fn, 21.

[20] This presumes that Burrow Walls is to be identified with Magis, which is not certain.

[21] Breeze, *Roman Military Occupation* p. 122. The units were stationed at Bowes, just outside Cumbria, Brough and Kirkby Thore. These three forts divided up the fifty-five miles from Catterick (the junction with the north/south road from York to the frontier) to Brougham (the junction with the north/south route from Chester to Carlisle).

Of the twelve Cumbrian forts stated by the *Notitia* to be occupied, only five (Stanwix, Ambleside, Moresby, Burrow Walls and Ravenglass) have produced positive archaeological evidence of occupation. One more (Old Carlisle) is a possible. Seven forts *not* mentioned in the *Notitia* have produced archaeological evidence suggestive of late-Roman occupation (Carlisle, Birdoswald, Watercrook, Beckfoot, Maryport, Papcastle and Bowness) with three others (Brougham, Low Borrow Bridge and Old Penrith) possible.   Of these ten, six (Carlisle, Birdoswald, Maryport, Papcastle, Brougham and Old Penrith) also have evidence of post-Roman activity.

Figure 2: Glannoventa? The rivers Rothay and Brathay meet and flow into Windermere. The picture is taken from the corner of the Roman fort at Waterhead, Ambleside.

There is therefore a very clear disparity between the *Notitia* and the archaeology. This *may* be down to the fact that many of the forts named in the *Notitia* have not been subject to detailed investigation of the sort carried out at Carlisle or Birdoswald. As or when such investigations take place, it might be that we will then see a greater correlation. However, even if this were the case, it would not explain why so many sites *not* mentioned in the

Fort	Latin name	Attested in Notitia	Arch. evidence for late Roman activity	Arch. evidence for post-Roman activity	Notes
Carlisle	Luguvalium	N	Y	Y	
Stanwix	Uxellodunum	Y	Y	Y	
Birdoswald	Banna	N	Y	Y	
Castlesteads	Camboglanna	Y	N	?	Possible Class I Stone. See Chapter 2.3.1
Brougham	Brocavum	N	?	Y	
Brough	Verteris	Y	N	N	AS artefacts
Kirkby Thore	Braboniacum	Y	N	Y	
Ambleside	Glannoventa?	Y	Y	N	See Appendix 1
Watercrook	Mediobogbo	N	Y	N	See Appendix 1
Burrow in Lonsdale	Calacum	N	Y	N	See Appendix 1
Ravenglass	Tunnocelum	Y	Y	N	See Appendix 1
Burrow Walls	Magis	Y	Y	N	
Beckfoot	Bibra	N	Y	N	
Moresby	Gabrosentum	Y	Y	N	
Maryport	Alauna	N	Y	Y	
Papcastle	Derventio	N	Y	Y	
Old Carlisle	Maglone	Y	?	Y	
Drumburgh	Concavata	Y	N	N	
Bowness on Solway	Maia	N	Y	N	
Burgh by Sands	Aballava	Y	N	N	
Low Borrow Bridge	Not known	N	?	N	See Appendix 1
Old Penrith	Voreda	N	?	Y	AS artefacts
Netherby	Castra Exploratum	?	N	N	Identification insecure – possible doublet for Stanwix
Bewcastle	Fanum Cocidium	N	N	Y	AS artefacts and Bewcastle Cross

Table 1: Cumbrian forts in the documentary and archaeological record. Information taken from Collins *End of Empire* and Breeze, *Roman Military Occupation*. For a brief discussion of the location of those forts whose current identifications may be incorrect, see Appendix 1.

Notitia were still occupied c. 400. One could attempt to argue that detachments from fort A

were seconded to fort B (a practice which is well-attested elsewhere during the Roman

period). Alternatively, one could postulate a period of abandonment followed by reoccupation

by groups with no link to the last garrisons of the fort in question. Without any supporting evidence, however, any such explanations look like special pleading designed to square two clearly inconsistent sources of evidence. It is perhaps safest to conclude that the *Notitia* cannot be used as primary evidence for the state of troop dispositions in Cumbria at the end of the Roman period.

2.2.2 CONTINUITY (1): CARLISLE AND BIRDOSWALD

As part of the Carlisle Millennium Project, the approach from the city centre to the Castle was remodelled. This area overlay the southern end of the Roman fort and was subject to a detailed archaeological excavation which provided valuable information about the last phases of Roman occupation. The late Roman and sub-Roman phases commenced in the second part of the fourth century and took occupation at the fort through into the fifth century.[22] The foci of activity were the *principia* and the south-western quadrant of the fort. Ninety late Roman coins of various dates up to 378 were discovered in the last layer of Roman deposits, mostly near an open area east of the *principia*. The discovery in the same area of pottery and a large assemblage of animal bones suggests that this part of the fort complex may have hosted a fourth-century market.[23] A cobbled area to the east of the *principia* contained a coin of Valentinian II dated between 388-392. The cobbles had been laid between 388 (the earliest date for the striking of the coin) and 440 (the latest likely radiocarbon date for a cow bone found in the same assemblage).[24] This area had subsequently been cleared and resurfaced, possibly as part of a remodelling of the fort complex. Later still, a number of pits and possible post-holes had been cut through the new

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[22] John Zant, *The Carlisle Millennium Project; Excavations in Carlisle, 1998-2001* (Oxford, 2009), pp. xvii, 357-361.
[23] ibid., pp. 329-331.
[24] ibid., p. 351.

surfacing.[25] A third area near two fourth-century barrack blocks produced a concentration of very late Roman pottery, including fragments of mortaria which have no parallels in any other known fourth-century assemblages and which may be locally produced wares of fifth century date.[26]

At some point, most likely during the fifth century, the fort fell out of use.[27] It eventually became covered with a thick layer of the dark earth which is such a common feature of Roman towns.[28] However, unlike at many other former Roman towns, the dark earth at Carlisle's fort is *not* full of rubble and debris from collapsed buildings. To the contrary, it appears that many of the fort buildings were deliberately dismantled and the debris taken away, a project which would have taken a significant amount of organisation and manpower.[29] Thereafter, the site may have been used for rubbish disposal or animal penning.[30] All of this suggests ongoing occupation close by the fort and the obvious focus of such occupation is the civilian settlement at Carlisle, which spread south from the fort gates.[31]

Birdoswald is undeniably Cumbria's best known post-Roman site. The fort sits in the fertile

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[25] ibid., pp. 352, 337-361.

[26] ibid., pp. 360-361. See also V. Swan, 'Mortaria' in C. Howard-Davis, ed. *The Carlisle Millennium Project Excavations in Carlisle, 1998-2001* (Lancaster, 2009), p. 586.

[27] John Zant does not seem to allow occupation at the fort beyond the fifth century. However, Mike McCarthy allows for the later, mid sixth-century date. Mike McCarthy, 'The Roman Town of *Luguvalium* and the Post-Roman Settlement' in McCarthy and Weston, eds. *Carlisle and Cumbria: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology* (Leeds, 2004), pp. 93-103, p. 100. The discrepancy appears to be an issue of how long each excavation phase is supposed to have lasted. The limited data does not assist either way in determining that question. The site was not permanently reoccupied until the eleventh century.

[28] Zant, *Carlisle*, p. xvii.

[29] Higham argues that the ability to organise the workforce necessary for such large projects is indicative of the institution of kingship. Higham, 'Tribal Chieftains', 136. The example Higham gives relates to the high-status site at Yeavering. It is not currently known where the stone from Carlisle's dismantled Roman buildings went. It would most likely have been sandstone and so it remains possible that at least some of it ultimately found its way into later large sandstone structures in the same area, including both the Castle and the Cathedral, both of which are adjacent to the old Roman fort.

[30] Zant, *Carlisle*, pp. 367-9.

[31] See Chapter 2.4.

Irthing valley, on the line of Hadrian's Wall. The post-Roman buildings unearthed at

Birdoswald were far more substantial than the more ephemeral structures identified at

Carlisle. Two large timber-framed buildings which may have been the halls of a local leader

were built over the ruins of the Roman granaries near the west gate.[32] The rubble from the

collapse of the granaries had been cleared and the timber superstructure of the first hall had

been built off the bottom few stone courses of the granary wall. At some point thereafter, this

hall had been removed and replaced with a second hall. The second hall partially overlay the

footprint of the first hall, but was built slightly to one side, encroaching on what had once

been the main roadway into the fort. This second hall might have been deliberately sited so

as to present an imposing façade when viewed from inside the fort (with the west gate rising

up behind it), but it might equally be that the compacted roadway was an integral part of the

structure of the second hall. Rather than being raised off surviving Roman stonework, the

second hall had been built off horizontal cill beams which had been placed at the bottom of a

shallow trench. This may have been intended to deal with the major weakness in any timber

framed structure, which is the rapid and repeated wetting and drying of the wood at the point

where the timber abuts the surrounding earth. These repeated cycles of wetting and drying

hasten rotting.[33] The use of stone footings for the first hall and cill beams for the second hall

may well have been done deliberately so as to keep the timber superstructure off the

ground, removing direct contact with the earth and thereby reducing rotting. This would have

prolonged the potential lifespan of the buildings although in the case of the second hall, the

cill beam trenches would need to have been left open and kept clear of debris. A cut into a

hard-packed road may have produced a 'clean' trench which was easier to keep clear.

The lifespan of Birdoswald's halls is unknown. It was estimated that each one may have

stood for fifty years, which (assuming a date of about 420 for the first hall) would take post-

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[32] Tony Wilmott, 'The late Roman transition at Birdoswald and on Hadrian's Wall' in Tony Wilmott and Pete Wilson, eds. *The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham, 1999* (BAR British Series, 2000, Oxford), pp. 13-24, pp. 14-15.
[33] R. W. Brunskill, *Timber Buildings in Britain* (London, 1994), p. 21.

Roman occupation through to about 520.[34] For the reasons as set out above, the halls *could* have lasted much longer (as demonstrated by the timber church of St Andrew's in Greensted-juxta-Ongar in Essex, the walls of which still contain half-logs which may date back to the seventh century).[35] However, an analysis of the last artefactual assemblages at Birdoswald does not really allow for the second hall to have remained in use much beyond

Figure 3: Birdoswald. The timber posts mark the post-Roman hall, encroaching partly onto what was once the main east/west road through the fort.

the end of the fifth century.[36] A coin – a copper alloy half-follis of either Justin or Justinian struck in Constantinople – is a rare post-Roman find in Cumbria and belongs to the period 512-537, which at least suggests *some* activity at the site in the early sixth century.[37] That said, it seems that occupation of the post-Roman halls at Birdoswald ended at much the

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[34] Wilmott, 'Late Roman transition', pp. 13-14.
[35] Cecil A. Hewett, *English Historic Carpentry* (Fresno, 1997), pp. 5-20. I am very grateful to Joanna Hynes (Heritage Consultant) and William Froggatt (North West Regional Heritage Officer for the Canals and Rivers Trust) for providing information about the techniques of building timber-framed structures.
[36] Cool, 'The parts left over', pp. 47-66.
[37] Accessed via the Portable Antiquities Scheme website https://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/q/LVPL+ADFDB6 28th November 2020.

same time as it did at Carlisle. This eventual abandonment may reflect changes in elite display or may point at a settled social situation in which the ostentatious display of power expressed through the building of a large hall was no longer necessary. John Blair argues that the building of such timber halls across the fringes of what he perceives to be the culturally stronger Anglian areas of eastern England may point at elite expression (and perhaps even imitation) during a period of political uncertainty or cultural nervousness.[38] Blair sees hall-building as a specifically seventh-century phenomenon.[39] If that analysis is correct, it is perhaps the case that, amongst Cumbria's post-Roman British communities, similar uncertainties characterised the immediate post-Roman period.

2.2.3 CONTINUITY (2): STANWIX, PAPCASTLE, MARYPORT AND BOWNESS

A number of other Roman forts have produced evidence for large post-Roman timber buildings, either within the walls or just outside them, although none have been subject to the same detailed examination as Birdoswald. Stanwix guarded the main road north into *Caledonia*. It had long housed the *alae Petrianae*, a double sized cavalry unit, and was the largest garrison on the Wall. Suggestions that it was the headquarters for the whole system are probably misplaced, but it was nonetheless an important link in the Roman defensive chain.[40] A number of post-holes within the curtilage of the old fort were identified during investigative works at Stanwix Primary School in 1997.[41] The holes were each around one metre in diameter and were packed with stones to help anchor the load-bearing timber uprights of one or more late and/or post-Roman timber buildings.[42] This sequence of

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[38] Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 37-39, 114-116,123, 130.
[39] ibid., p. 130.
[40] Edwards, 'Who Ran Hadrian's Wall?' pp. 221-225. K. R. Dark, 'A Sub-Roman Re-Defence of Hadrian's Wall?, *Britannia*, 23 (1992), pp. 112-13.
[41]Stanwix Primary School: Archaeological Watching Brief, Oxford Archaeology North (2010), p. 8 https://library.thehumanjourney.net/1500/1/StanwixPrimarySchoolFullReport.pdf accessed 14th November 2018.
[42] B.C. Burnham, 'Roman Britain in 1999', *Britannia,* 31 (2000), p. 392.

buildings lay above a deposition of late fourth-century Huntcliff Ware, which supports a very late and/or post-Roman date.[43]

Fifth century activity is also observable at Papcastle, which was another key link in the Roman era communications network. Papcastle controlled the crossing of the river Derwent where a spur from the main road running south-west from Carlisle linked the harbour at Maryport to the wider network. The early English place-name Brigham ('bridge village/estate') suggests the survival of a Roman bridge at this junction.[44] Papcastle had been a significant Roman site with an especially large civilian *vicus* that may have survived for much longer than most of Britain's *vici* , most of which appear to have been abandoned during the third century.[45] Although the evidence is slim, it seems that within the fort complex at Papcastle, a late fourth-century stone barrack block had been partially demolished and rebuilt in timber, with large stones used as pads for post-holes.[46]

The most recent addition to the corpus is Maryport, which was part of the coastal extension of Hadrian's Wall and may well have been the base for a detachment of the Roman navy.[47] The Roman Temples Project, which ran from 2010 to 2015, identified twelve or so cist graves, which are believed to represent a post-Roman, Christian community.[48] The graves lie a very short distance outside the Roman fort, close to what appears to be a large timber-framed building which had been constructed on a prominent rise of land.[49] The building was of post-hole construction and, as at Stanwix, stones had been used as packing materials in

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[43] Paul Bidwell, ed. *Hadrian's Wall 1989-1999* (Kendal, 1999), pp. 163, 166.
[44] Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, 67. For Brigham specifically and Cumbria's early English place-names more generally, see Chapter 3.3.
[45] Higham, 'In and out', pp. 35-36.
[46] Vix Hughes and John Zant, 'Derwent Lodge Cottage and Sibby Brows Field, Papcastle, Cumbria' (unpub. archaeological report, 2008), 9. Accessed via http;//librarythehuman journey.net/2347/1/final reportsmaller.pdf 7th November 2018. See also 'Discovering Derventio – Recent Excavations at Papcastle, Lancashire Archaeological Society blog post (23rd December 2014), accessed at https://lancsarchaeologicalsociety.wordpress.com on 18th November 2018.
[47] S. S Frere, 'M. Maenius Agrippa, the 'Expeditio Britannica' and Maryport', *Britannia*, 31 (2000), pp. 23-28.
[48] Jane Laskey (Director, Senhouse Museum, Maryport) pers. comm.
[49] It is also possible that the post holes represent more than one building.

the post-hole pits. In the case of Maryport, the stones used were old pagan altar-stones

which had been raised by the fort's garrison in earlier centuries. They were presumably no

longer regarded as sacred or worthy of respect and had simply been repurposed as building

materials. This, in turn, suggests that those who had repurposed them were adherents of a

different religion, presumably Christianity.

Nine of the pits contained entire altar-stones and another seven contained partial or broken

ones.[50] Although certainty is impossible, the building at Maryport may have been

contemporaneous with a curvilinear ditch which appeared to surround it. On the strength of a

single piece of Crambeck Parchment Ware pottery found within it, the ditch cannot have

been cut earlier than the late fourth century.[51] As such, the hall is likely to have been in use

in the fifth century. A post-Roman date receives further support from two inscribed stones

found a few hundred metres away.[52] We may therefore have a large post-Roman building

with a cemetery and inscribed stones, erected on open ground *outside* the protective walls of

a Roman fort.

The final candidate is Bowness on Solway, which lay about fifteen miles west of Carlisle and

marked the western terminus of the Wall curtain. Like Stanwix and Papcastle, the fort was

one of the largest on Hadrian's Wall and, like Stanwix and Papcastle, it controlled a major

crossing point (in Bowness' case the fords across the Solway estuary). [53] Although positive

evidence for post-Roman occupation at Bowness is nugatory, the modern street layout of the

village suggests that the *principia* was upstanding well beyond the end of the fourth century

and this, coupled with the apparent ongoing use of the old fort ditches, has led to the

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[50] There is a short video available at the Senhouse Museum, Maryport, in which Tony Wilmott, the lead archaeologist on the project, summarises his initial conclusions. Video viewed 10th March 2017.
[51] Haynes and Wilmott, 'The Maryport altars', pp. 29, 31-32. For the dating of Crambeck Parchment Ware, see the preceding section.
[52] These stones are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.3.1.
[53] It is interesting how the forts with best evidence for post-Roman structural activity are those which were the largest during the Roman period and/or which were at nodal points in the system.

suggestion that the fort remained in occupation.[54] In addition, during the last stages of

Roman occupation, a massive timber building measuring up to 57m x 10m was erected. This

building was described by the excavation team as "atypical" and "most unlikely to have been

a barrack-block", but no alternative was proposed.[55] The structure is not, however, totally

without precedent. Lavish rebuilding of commander's quarters was a feature of the fourth-

century changes noted at forts along Hadrian's Wall.[56] A large courtyard building at the fort

at Binchester in County Durham appeared to have built for the fort commander as his new

praetorium.[57] Although it cannot be proven, we might ask whether the Bowness building is

something similar – an imposing hall built to project the power of the fort commander, whose

position may have become further elevated as the wider Roman administrative infrastructure

slowly broke down?

2.2.4 THE MUTATION MODEL REVISITED

The sites discussed above all share something in common, which is that none of them seem

to have remained in occupation long into the post-Roman period. The sequences at Carlisle,

Birdoswald and Stanwix allow for one or more   post-Roman phases, but at none of them

can occupation safely be pushed much beyond the end of the fifth century, if even so far.

This presents something of a conundrum when applying the mutation model. The essence of

that model is that the last Roman garrisons of the late fourth century evolved into the mid to

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[54] Paul Austen, 'Excavations at the Hadrian's Wall fort of Bowness-on-Solway (*Maia*), Cumbria: 1988', in Tony Wilmott, ed. *Hadrian's Wall: Archaeological Research by English Heritage, 1976-2000* (London, 2009), 397-409*, pp. 397-409.
[55] T.W. Potter, *Romans in North-West England: Excavations at the Roman forts of Ravenglass, Watercrook and Bowness on Solway* (Kendal, 1979), pp. 330-335.
[56] Simon Esmonde-Cleary, 'Summing-Up', in Tony Wilmott and Pete Wilson, eds*. The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham, 1999* (BAR British Series, 2000, Oxford), pp. 89-94, pp. 89-90.
[57] Iain Ferris and Rick Jones*, '*Transforming an Elite: Reinterpreting Late Roman Binchester,' in Tony Wilmott and Pete Wilson, eds, *The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham, 1999* (BAR British Series, 2000, Oxford, pp. 1-12.

late sixth-century warbands attested in the earliest strata of Welsh poetry. The problem is bridging the temporal gap between Roman forts finally falling out of use in the fifth century and the first documentary hints of the warbands in the late sixth century. The precise length of this gap is extremely hard to measure, but if we cannot stretch chronologies for the sequences at Roman forts beyond the end of the fifth century, we have a gap of at the very least two generations to bridge before we get to the Celtic Heroic Age. This raises a number of questions about the political situation in the first half of the sixth century. Why did the elites abandon their fortified redoubts? Were erstwhile Roman sites replaced by other defensible sites? Insofar as this last question is concerned, for the most part it seems that they were not. Or, if they were, then with single exception of Shoulthwaite (which will be discussed in more detail below), we have yet to find them.

The abandonment of the forts at Carlisle and Stanwix, taken alongside the continuity of life in undefended Carlisle might suggest that, for whatever reason, there was no perceived need for fortified strongpoints.[58] This might suggest one of three things. There may have been a relatively settled and peaceful social situation in the early sixth century. Or, if there was not, it may have been that the polities of Cumbria were locally or regionally dominant, meaning that they had little to fear from external aggressors. Or perhaps we are looking at a people who had given up seeking to defend themselves? This latter explanation, at least, seems inherently unlikely. We might have expected the people of Carlisle, for example, to have abandoned the open, flat lands and to have made for better protected sites in Cumbria's plentiful uplands.

These options are not easy to choose between. If there *was* still a need for defensible sites in post-Roman Cumbria, one *could* argue that the abandonment of Roman forts was, at root, a demographic issue. The numbers of people living at them may eventually have become

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[58] For Carlisle, see Chapter 2.4.

too small to effectively maintain or defend them. Roman forts had been designed for occupation by hundreds of well-organised men operating as part of an integrated frontier defence system and supported for their material needs by the Roman infrastructure. If an early medieval warband was smaller than a Roman army unit, it may be that the forts were just no longer fit for purpose. But that still leaves the question "where did they go?" Not, apparently, to hill forts of the sort that have been identified across the Solway in Dumfries & Galloway.[59] Sites such as the Mote of Mark,[60] Trusty's Hill[61] or Ward Law[62] look to have been the homes of early medieval warrior elites, yet for whatever reason, Cumbria's elites did not build themselves similar structures. To date, there is only one definite post-Roman hill fort, at Shoulthwaite, at the head of Thirlmere.[63] Little is known about Shoulthwaite, but the old Iron Age date for the site was rethought following the discovery of a single piece of post-Roman pottery in the primary ditch cut around the site. Shoulthwaite now appears to have been a *de novo* foundation of the late sixth century.[64] It is extremely small – a few metres in diameter and perched on the side of a slope – and it has produced none of the high-status pottery, jewellery and metalwork which are so common at Scottish sites such as Trusty's Hill or Mote of Mark.[65]

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[59] And, indeed, further afield. Esmonde-Cleary notes the emergence of fortified (and re-fortified) hilltop sites across much of Spain and Gaul in the post-Roman period. Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, pp. 447-450.

[60] L. Laing and D. Longley, *The Mote of Mark: a Dark Age Hillfort in South-West Scotland* (Oxford, 2006). See also Leslie Alcock, 'Gwyr Y Gogledd: An Archaeological Appraisal', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Volume CXXXII (1983), pp. 1-18, pp. 4-6.

[61] Ronan Toolis and Christopher Bowles. *The lost Dark Age kingdom of Rheged: the discovery of a royal stronghold at Trusty's Hill, Galloway (*Oxford, 2017).

[62] McCarthy, *Lands of the Solway*, p. 140.

[63] The site can be found at grid reference NY300188. It overlooks (at some distance and from the other side of Thirlmere, which was originally two smaller lakes) the Roman road from Ambleside to Keswick as it drops down from the pass at Dunmail Raise. The Roman road ran just to the east of the modern A591.

[64] Rachel Newman, 'Shedding Light on the Dark Ages' in Cumbria: Through a Glass Darkly' in Keith Stringer, ed. *North-West England from the Romans to the Tudors* (Kendal, 2014), pp. 29-60, p. 33.

[65] It is also on the opposite side of Thirlmere to the Roman road that ran over the pass at Dunmail Raise (broadly along the line of the modern road). Although Thirlmere as we now see it is a Victorian reservoir built to supply Manchester, it was originally a smaller and shallower lake crossed by a bridge or ford at its narrowest point (at low water, it essentially became two lakes). Shoulthwaite overlooks what would have been the northern end of the original lake.

For completeness, it should be noted that there *might* be a second post-Roman hill fort at Liddel Strength, close to the Roman fort at Netherby. Netherby was one of a small number of forts built north of the curtain of Hadrian's Wall. It lay on or close to the highest navigable point of the river Esk, about eleven miles north of Stanwix. Liddel Strength was fortified at some point after the late eleventh century, but it has been advanced as a candidate for an early medieval site on the strength of two pieces of evidence. The first is the toponymic link between nearby Carwinley and the semi-historical sixth-century warlord, Gwenddoleu, which will be considered in more detail in Chapter 4.[66] The second is the unusual layout of the fort, in which the Norman motte and bailey appears to have been built within a much larger (and much earlier) rampart.[67]

Yet even if Liddel Strength and Shoulthwaite are admissible as *late* sixth-century structures, we still have no replacements for the forts which were abandoned during the fifth century. Neither do we have any clear evidence for any unfortified elite residences, although it must be recognised that such structures have proved equally elusive in other areas. For example, in Merovingian Gaul, there are unambiguous textual references to early medieval palaces at a number of identifiable locations, yet the structures themselves have yet to be discovered in the ground.[68]

Although this might all lead us to conclude that the early sixth century was a period of peace in Cumbria, we should be careful. There may be as yet undiscovered or misdated hillforts in Cumbria that belong to the post-Roman period. With the exception of Shoulthwaite, none of Cumbria's hillforts have been excavated in recent years and a re-evaluation of those sites *might* produce evidence of post-Roman occupation. Alternatively, it may be that the situation

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[66] Henry Barnes, 'On the Battle of Arddderyd', *TCWAAS*, 2nd Series (1908), pp. 236-248, pp. 244-245.
[67] T. T. Taylor, 'Liddel Strength', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire & Galloway Natural History & Antiquarian Society*, 19 (1931), pp. 112-119. Clarkson, *The Men of the North*, pp. 90-95. William F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* (London, 2007), pp. 39-40.
[68] Christopher Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 105-106.

between Cumbria on the one hand and Dumfries & Galloway on the other evolved to
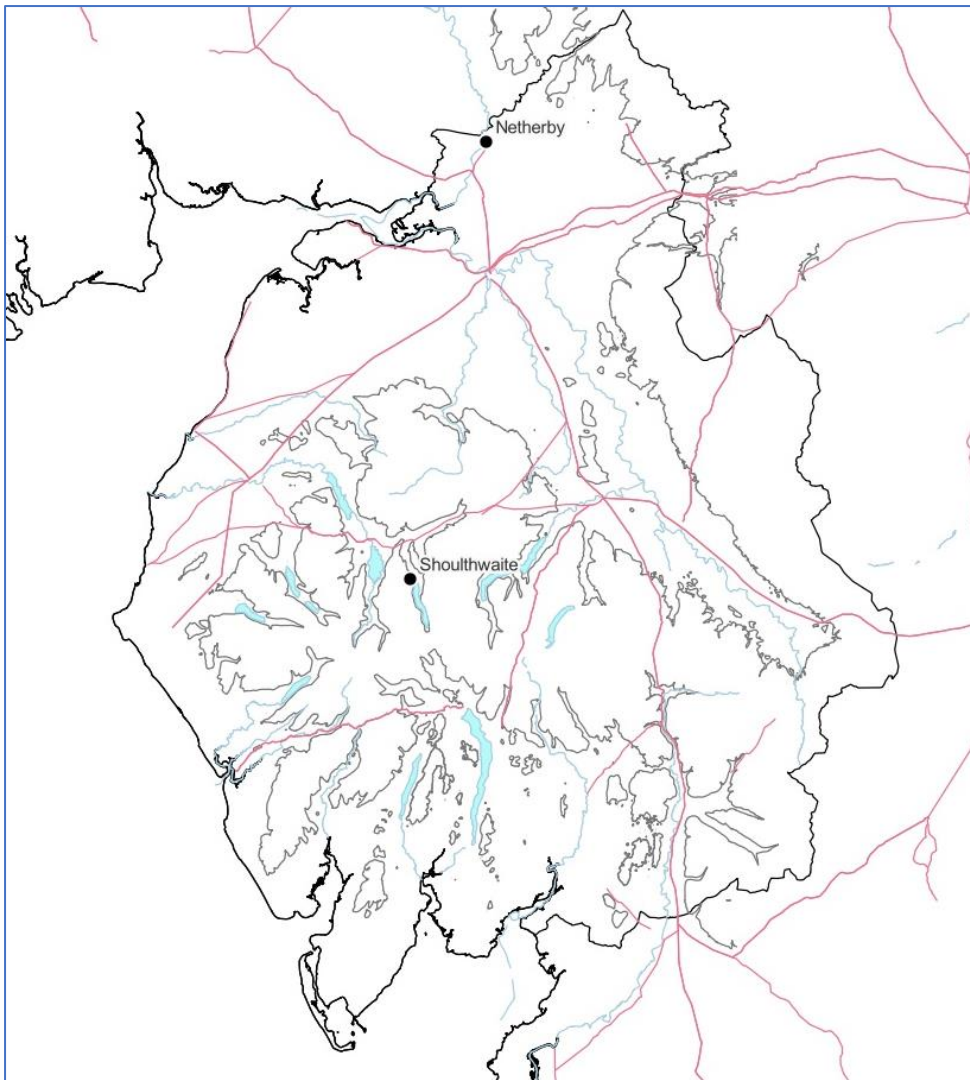
Map 5: Possible post-Roman hill forts.

become much the same in the post-Roman period as it had been in the pre-Roman Iron Age.

In the Iron Age, a multiplicity of large hill forts on the north shore of the Solway was not

generally matched on the south side of the estuary.[69] Yet we know from archaeology that the

pre-Roman tribes of Cumbria worshipped gods such as Belatucadros and Cocidius, both of

whom were equated with Mars, the Roman god of war. It does not seem credible to propose

that Iron Age Cumbria had been a peaceful, egalitarian society. As such, the absence in

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[69] McCarthy, *Post-Roman Carlisle*, pp. 45-47.

post-Roman Cumbria of any replacements for the forts which had remained is use throughout the fifth century should not necessarily lead us to conclude that the area experienced little or no violence. Neither should we conclude that the sixth century saw a reversion to an Iron Age 'status quo'. Three and a half centuries during which military power and the Roman army were indivisible and during which hereditary recruitment had ensured that the experience of fighting men in Cumbria was dominated by their involvement in the Roman world would have made any reversion to the Iron Age unlikely in the extreme.

Plausible answers to these issues might be found through a consideration of wider issues of identity and the nature of early medieval warfare. The former is discussed in some detail in Chapter 2.3, but insofar as the latter is concerned, very visible symbols of power might hint at nervousness and uncertainty rather than confidence. Recent work by Erik Grigg might well prove instructive on this point.[70] Grigg argues that much early medieval warfare in Britain was low-level raiding, in which the acquisition of plunder and tribute rather than the permanent settlement of land was the primary objective. This certainly appears to be borne out by the earliest Welsh poetry and Cumbria can also point to a comparative example from better-recorded times. Until the Union of Crowns in 1603, the border counties of England and Scotland had degenerated into a lawless frontier zone in which many people lived by feud, raiding and blackmail. Many of the factors that allowed this reiving culture to flourish – weak central authority, porous frontiers and the highly localised concentration of real power in the hands of leading families (most of whom were raiders themselves) – were also present in post-Roman Cumbria. Although some of the leading families of the seventeenth century lived in fortified houses or towers, most of the population lived in very modest dwellings which were quick and easy to build. Building homes which could readily be rebuilt in the event that they were destroyed in a raid would undoubtedly have been a cheaper option

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[70] Erik Grigg, *Warfare, raiding and defence in Early Medieval Britain* (Marlborough, 2018).

than building homes designed to withstand raids.[71] Power was projected not through architectural statements, but through the number of men that an individual could call upon. Wealth was principally measured in terms of livestock and it may be no coincidence that cattle-raiding is a common motif in early medieval poems.[72] Maintaining the crumbling fabric of Roman forts may not therefore have been the only – or even the preferred – way of expressing power for groups who could exploit an economy based on cattle to produce an economic surplus.[73]

Early medieval Ireland provides another comparative example. Ireland's principal settlement type was the ringfort – basically, a roundhouse surrounded by one or more enclosures constructed from earth or stone. The enclosures were of extremely limited use in the face of a determined attack, but they appear to have been a very visible means by which their inhabitants displayed wealth and status.[74] The bigger the enclosure, the greater the status of its owner. The enclosures were most likely use for animal penning, so big enclosures meant big herds. There therefore appears to be a direct link between status and the ownership of livestock. Might it therefore be the case that sixth-century Cumbrian elites, finding that they no longer had either the need or inclination to maintain the fabric of ageing forts, moved to new, open country sites? Their status was expressed not through the construction of grand buildings or even in personal adornment, but through ownership of livestock and the concomitant ability to call on men to defend one's livestock and to raid the flocks and herds of others. If this is right, we would then have to ask *why* status was expressed so differently in Cumbria than in other areas of western Britain, where (for example) more ostentatious

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[71] For example, John Armstrong was a senior member of a leading border family in 1569, but his home was described by a contemporaneous witness as "a cottage not to be compared to any dog kennel in England". George MacDonald Fraser, *The Steel Bonnets* (London, 1989), p. 302.

[72] The best-known example is the Irish poem *Táin Bó Cúailgne* ('the Cattle Raid of Cooley'), but the earliest Welsh poetry provides a further – and potentially Cumbrian – example which is discussed in Chapter 4.2.

[73] Carver, *Formative Britain*, p. 145.

[74] Nancy Edwards, 'The archaeology of early medieval Ireland, c.400-1169: settlement and economy', in ed. Daibhi Ó Cróinin, *A New History of Ireland, Volume I* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 238-245, 296-297. See also Aidan O'Sullivan, Finbar McCormick, Thomas R Kerr & Lorcan Harney, eds. *Early Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 74-77.

personal display *does* appear to have been commonplace. This will be explored in more detail in the next section, but it perhaps suffices to say at this stage that Cumbria was, for some reason, different to other culturally British areas of the post-Roman north and west.

The comparison with Ireland might be taken a little further. Perhaps as a result of plague, the sixth century saw the rise of new Irish dynastic groups.[75] These new dynasties were based in the kin group rather than the 'tribe' and this new focus led to the emergence of smaller social groups linked by kinship.[76] Something similar may well have been happening in Cumbria. The genealogies of men who supposedly flourished in sixth-century Cumbria will be considered in Chapter 4.2.3, but it suffices to say at this stage that those pedigrees *might* support the notion that a familial link to a founder figure was the route by which political legitimacy was established.[77] If these genealogies capture genuine information about post-Roman Cumbria, then the abandonment of the institutions that were necessary for effective Roman governance may reflect a similar shift of focus away from regional structures and towards the kin group as the building block of society.[78]

2.3   THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF IDENTITY

2.3.1 CLASS I STONES

The evidence for the growing status of post-Roman leaders in the North West is not limited to their timber halls or their remodelled forts. A small number of them may also be

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[75] O'Sullivan et al, *Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 75.
[76] ibid., pp. 80-81, 322.
[77] As will be discussed in Chapter 4.2.7, the genealogies pertaining to post-Roman Cumbria are complicated documents. Nonetheless, at least one of them has some claim to genuine antiquity.
[78] The principal difference between Ireland and Cumbria in this scenario would be that the emergence of the ringfort at about the same time as the rise of the new dynasties has been seen as suggestive of a time of violence. For the reasons as set out above, there is currently a noticeable lack of defensible structures dating to the sixth century. This might suggest that, notwithstanding the reservations expressed about the 'mutation model', those who came to dominate Cumbrian affairs may not have been from incursive groups (as were the Uí Neíll). For further discussion, see below.

commemorated in Cumbria's modest corpus of early medieval inscribed stones. Over two hundred of these monuments (termed Class I stones) were raised between the fifth to the late seventh centuries across Britain.[1] The stones commemorate individuals with a mix of Roman, Irish or British names. The language of the inscriptions is mostly Latin, although there is a sizeable minority which are written in the Irish ogam script or in both Latin and ogam. Notwithstanding that may of the names recorded on the stones are Brittonic, none of the inscriptions are written in Brittonic, which strongly suggests that Brittonic was not regarded as a high-status language in the post-Roman period.[2]

The epigraphic habit evidenced by the Class I stones does not appear to be a continuation (or a revival) of late Roman forms. They are concentrated in different areas of the country to those areas which saw the most prolific Roman-era epigraphy. They also look different, often being carved on irregularly shaped and/or undressed stones. In some cases, they were carved on re-used Roman stones with no apparent regard for their earlier use.[3] It is probably therefore best to see Britain's Class I stones as an early fifth-century insular innovation, perhaps influenced by evolving epigraphic practices in Gaul.[4]

The biggest concentrations of Class I stones are in Wales and the Westcountry.[5] There are a few scattered examples in Scotland, but virtually none in between.[6] The only definite candidates from a huge swathe of land stretching from North Wales to Hadrian's Wall are two stones from Vindolanda, which commemorate individuals called Brigomaglos and

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[1] The first comprehensive study of the Welsh examples was Victor Nash-Williams, *The early Christian monuments of Wales* (Cardiff, 1950).
[2] Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons* (Oxford, 2013), p. 114.
[3] David Petts, 'The Reuse of Prehistoric Standing Stones in Western Britain? A Critical Consideration of an Aspect of Early Medieval Monument Reuse', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 21 (2) (2002), pp. 197-198.
[4] Jeremy K. Knight, 'An Inscription from Bavai and the Fifth-Century Christian Epigraphy of Britain', *Britannia*, 2010, pp. 283-292, p. 290. See also Mark A. Handley, 'The origins of Christian commemoration in late antique Britain,' *Early Medieval Europe*, 10 (2) (2001), pp. 177-199.
[5] Edwards, 'Early-Medieval Inscribed Stones', pp. 15–16.
[6] Thomas, 'Christian Inscriptions', p. 6.

Riacus.[7] There are, however, four or perhaps five other stones from Cumbria which may be Class I stones, notwithstanding that they have traditionally been misdiagnosed as Roman period monuments.[8] A now-lost stone marked with a Christian chi-ro symbol from Maryport may also be of post-Roman date but is not included in this group.[9]

Of these stones, the Brougham example has aspects which set it apart from the others. Not only is the text substantially longer, but the use of the common commemorative formula 'titulum posuit' (basically, the late Roman version of *'here lies…'*) echoes the formulae of stones from the Danube and Rhineland which *are* earlier than the fifth century.[10] Against this, however, it should be noted that the Brougham stone uses a very small letter 'O', a feature found elsewhere in post-Roman epigraphy.[11]

This caveat aside, the stones have a number of features indicative of Class I stones. Firstly, the Brougham example aside, they do not include the formula *titulum posuit* formula which characterises known late Roman stones in Cumbria.[12] Secondly, they commemorate individuals, a practice which had steadily been dying out in late Roman Britain but which enjoyed a resurgence on the post-Roman period.[13] Thirdly, they are carved on largely unworked and irregular chunks of stone. Fourthly, whereas Roman period inscriptions generally show a level of skill suggestive that they were produced by skilled artisans (carefully laid-out lettering, a good command of epigraphic skills and flourishes such as the

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[7] The Brigomaglos stone is numbered RIB1722A and further details can be found at romaninscriptionsofbritain.org accessed 02/06/2016. For Riacus, see *Excavation News 2008* accessed at www.vindolanda.com/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=41542 13th December 2018
[8] K.R. Dark and S.P. Dark, 'New Archaeological and Palynological Evidence for a Sub-Roman Reoccupation of Hadrian's Wall', *Archaeologica Aeliana*, 5, XXIV 1996, pp. 57-72, pp. 60-63. David Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain: An Archaeology* (Stroud, 2003), pp. 150-154.
[9] https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/856 accessed 09/02/19. The stone has no Roman-era parallels north of southern France. Petts noted a second chi-ro from Cornwall which he felt was post-Roman in date. Petts, *Christianity*, p. 154.
[10] Knight, 'Bavai', p. 288.
[11] Dark, 'Sub-Roman Reoccupation', p. 62.
[12] Knight, 'Bavai', p. 288.
[13] Handley, 'Origins', pp. 179-182.

use of serifs), the writing on the Cumbrian stones is far less well-executed.[14]

RIB Number	Find Spot	Lines of text	Inscription	Translation
786[15]	Brougham, about 800 m from the fort on the road to Appleby	6	PLUM LUNARIS TITULO POS CONIUGI CARISI M	To Pluma Beloved wife, Lunaris set up this memorial
908[16]	Old Carlisle: On road to E of fort	4	TANCORIX MULIER VIGSIT ANNOS SEGSAGINTA	Tancorix woman/wife lived sixty years
862[17]	Maryport: At crossing of River Ellen on road E of fort	2	RIANORIX VIXIT ANNOS …..	Rianorix lived ? years
863[18]	Maryport: In Barney Gill, to NE of fort	1	(S)PURCIO VIXXIT ANNOS LXI	Spurcio lived sixty one years
2331[19]	Castlesteads: Inside the fort	1	BEDALTOEDBOS?	Unknown

Table 2: Cumbria's Class I Stones

The names on the stones from Cumbria and Vindolanda suggest honorands with well-developed notions of their own importance. Brigomaglos means something like 'high and great one', whilst both Tancorix and Rianorix contain the common Celtic personal name element *riks*, meaning 'king'.[20] Both names are British.[21] Such names look suggestive of local leaders or their families, but it is worth bearing in mind that another lost Roman stone from Maryport commemorated an individual called 'Moriregis'. This name also contains the element *riks*, but presumably should *not* be read as implying a native petty king in residence

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[14] Thomas Charles-Edwards argues that the job of carving an inscription on a Roman period stone might have involved three different tradesmen. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 117-118.

[15] https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/786 accessed 13/12/18.

[16] https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/908 accessed 02/06/16.

[17] https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/862 accessed 02/06/16.

[18] https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/863 accessed 02/06/16.

[19] https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/2331 accessed 02/06/16.

[20] Patrick Sims-Williams, *The Celtic Inscriptions of Britain: Phonology and Chronology, c. 400-1200* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 24-25. The *ks* sound was believed by Kenneth Jackson to derive from British phonology and to be distinct from Latin 'x'. Jackson, *Language and History*, p. 536.

[21] Petts, *Christianity*, p. 167.

at Maryport when the Roman administration was still functioning.
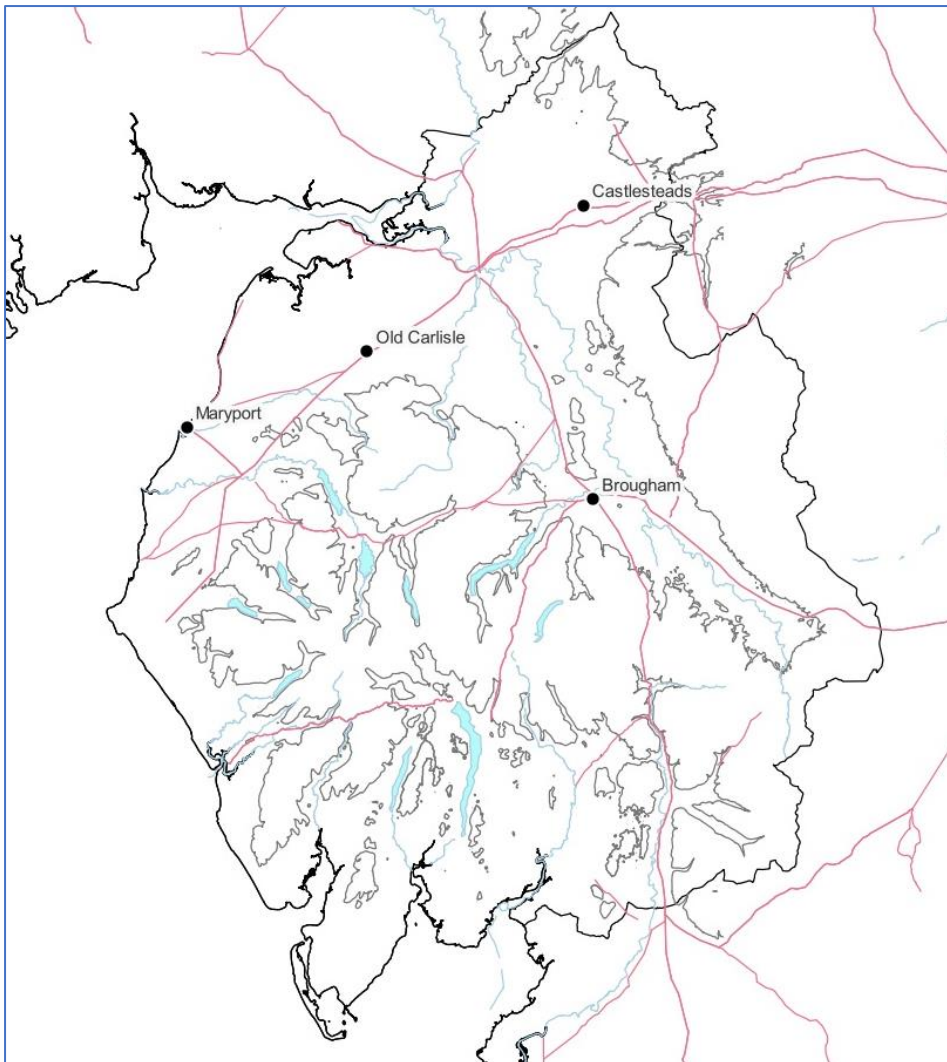
Map 6: Class I Stones.

Establishing absolute dates for the Cumbrian stones is difficult. Although the lack of any

accepted dating scheme necessarily makes any attempt at chronological sequencing

somewhat speculative,[22] the stones nevertheless display certain characteristics which imply

a reasonably early post-Roman date.[23] Many of these characteristics are shared with the

earliest group of around thirty five inscribed Welsh stones that are believed to date to the

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[22] Handley 'Origins', pp. 196-7.
[23] Although he assumed them to be late Roman, David Petts nevertheless noted how the stones from Brougham, Maryport an Old Carlisle were very similar to other "clearly Christian" early to mid- fifth-century examples. Petts, *Christianity*, p. 152.

post-Roman period.[24] In addition, the Cumbrian stones show signs of being written in a spoken language. RIB 863 has the spelling *vixxit* for *vixit* ('lived') and RIB 908 spells the same word *vigsit*. These look like phonetic spellings of British Latin, which suggests they are earlier than the mid-sixth century, by which time Latin had given way to Brittonic as the language of elite discourse.[25] Although the group is too small to draw firm conclusions, the use of numbers and the use of a word such as *mulier* speaks of a much greater vocabulary than that displayed on later Class I stones from elsewhere in Britain, whose inscriptions suggest that Latin was no longer a widely understood or used language.[26] Secondly, the texts are all written in late Roman capitals, which was a form used from roughly 400 – 600 AD.[27] Thirdly, three use the formula '*X lived X years'*. Whilst British stones rarely include the age of the honorand, ages are commonly found on late Roman and early medieval stones from Gaul, Spain, North Africa and Rome itself.[28] Fourthly, the pronunciation of the final position 'x' in the names Tancorix and Rianorix softened over time, either to a 's' or (as may be more likely) to a 'ch' sound before finally being lost altogether in the early medieval period.[29] Finally, all of the stones are sited at or on the roads out of Roman forts. There is therefore a clear relationship between the forts and the stones. It seems reasonable to conclude that the honorands of the stones enjoyed positions of authority within communities still *in situ* at those sites. Accordingly, if we cannot push occupation at any Cumbrian fort much beyond the end of the fifth century on the basis of the (lack of) archaeological evidence, it would follow that the stones should also belong to the fifth century.

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[24] Mark Redknap and John Lewis*, A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales, Volume 1* (Cardiff, 2007), pp. 60-62 and the individual descriptions of the monuments from p. 159 onwards.
[25] See Chapter 4.1.
[26] Thomas, 'Christian Inscriptions', p. 6.
[27] Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 119.
[28] Handley, 'Origins', p. 192.
[29] For the former, see Jackson, *Language and History*, pp. 535, 627 and 637. Jackson put the change and the ultimate loss of the final 's' in the fifth century. For the latter, see Sims-Williams, *Celtic Inscriptions*, pp. 23-34 and esp. pp. 26-29.
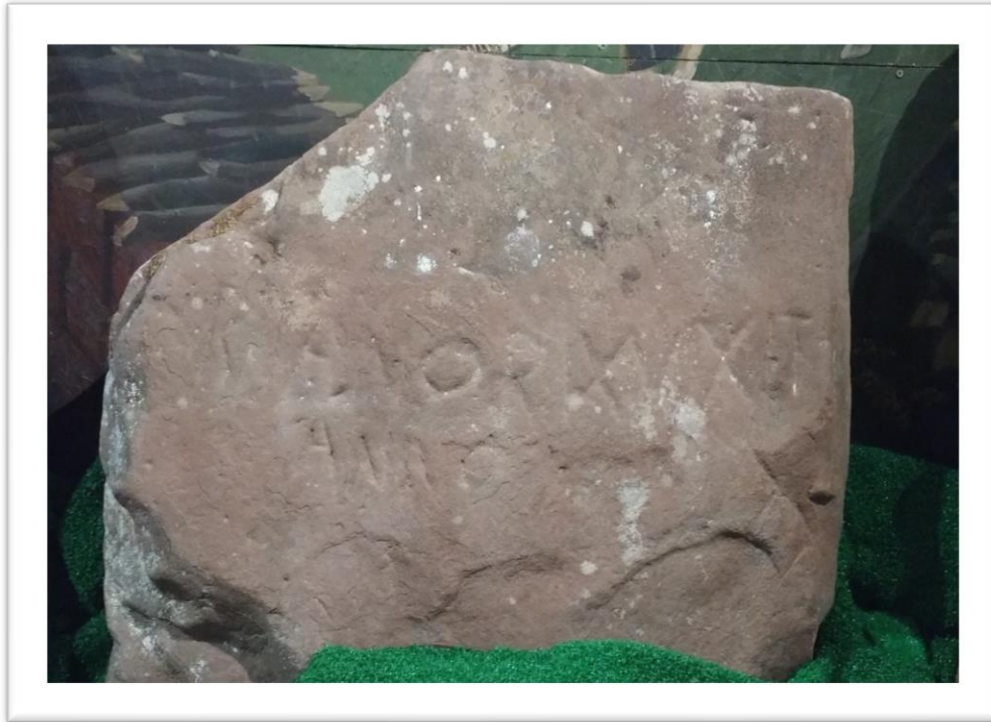
Figure 4: The Rianorix Stone, Senhouse Museum, Maryport.

Even if these monuments are Class I stones, they represent a thin haul when compared to other parts of Britain. One could make a half-hearted plea to geology to explain this. Cumbria's geology is complex, but it suffices to say that only the Permian and Triassic sandstones of the Eden Valley and the west coast can be readily worked. The Cumbrian inscriptions (plus the now-lost chi-ro from Maryport) are carved on sandstone. Unfortunately, sandstone is soft, meaning that the inscriptions tend to weather away quickly.[30] Perhaps there were once more stones whose legends have long ago been worn away? Possibly, but this is undoubtedly special pleading and would not help explain the absence of Class I stones from other parts of northern England which have a different geology to Cumbria.

The uneven distribution of Class I stones across Britain creates an interpretative problem

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[30] R. W. Brunskill, *Vernacular Architecture of the Lake Counties* (London, 1974), pp. 110-2, 119.

which has rarely been addressed. [31] Most commentators have regarded Class I stones as

being diagnostic of socially stratified British Christian kingdoms and have assumed that

similar socio-political arrangements existed in those areas where the stones are *not* found as

in those areas where the stones *are* found. Although modern notions of ethnicity might

beguile us into thinking that fifth-century Britons in one part of the country shared a single

culture with Britons elsewhere, but there is no evidence (and no reason) to make this

assumption.[32] This question will be returned to below.

2.3.2 MEDITERRANEAN AND ATLANTIC TRADE

It is next necessary to consider other archaeological evidence indicative of post-Roman

British elites. Despite being sundered from Roman political networks, there was still

commercial activity between western Britain and the Roman world in the post-Roman period.

High quality tableware from modern-day Turkey and Tunisia (known as Late Roman C (LRC)

and African Red Slipware (ARS) respectively) was landed at a number of coastal sites

around the Irish Sea littoral both during and after the fifth century.[33] So too were eastern

Mediterranean amphorae (known as 'B ware') and people.[34] The trade is likely to have been

mediated via trading emporia on the Iberian seaboard (notably Vigo in Galicia).[35] The

importation of this tableware can be fairly closely dated, with LRC belonging to the half

century from 475 to 525 and ARS from 525 to 550.[36] The amphorae are harder to date, but

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[31] For example, R. Gruffydd, 'In search of Elmet' *Studia Celtica*, Vol 28 (1994), p. 68. Gruffydd describes the absence of Class I stones in the British polity of Elmet as 'baffling', but offers no explanation as to why this might be the case.
[32] Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 24-25. Barbara Yorke 'Britain and Ireland', p. 42.
[33] Edwards, 'Archaeology', pp. 293-295.
[34] K.A. Hemer et al, 'Evidence of Early Medieval Trade and Migration between Wales and the Mediterranean Sea Region', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 40 (2013), pp. 2352-2359, p. 2354. Duggan, Links, pp. 151-152.
[35] Duggan, *Links,* pp. 125, 154-156.
[36] Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, pp. 25-26.

B-ware was a long lasting form in use from 475 to 550.[37]

From the middle of the sixth century, the nature of this trade changed and gave way to a trade in tableware with Atlantic Gaul.[38] This second phase of trade was principally comprised of grey wares from Bordeaux and the Loire together with much larger quantities of rougher E ware, probably from western coastal France. Evidence of this trade has been discovered at numerous sites from Cornwall to western Scotland, as well as in Ireland.[39] In addition to pottery, glassware displaying a variety of decorative traditions (late Roman, Germanic, Continental and perhaps even some insular material) is comparatively common at settlement sites across western Britain and Ireland.[40]

There is a debate about the extent to which the two phases of trade are genuinely separate.[41] Nonetheless certain sites in western Britain were clearly part of wider networks of exchange around the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. This early medieval trade is usually seen as evidence for British elites deliberately projecting their status – and perhaps also expressing identity and/or displaying cultural allegiances – through the importation and redistribution of exotic goods.[42] The especially high volume of finds from Tintagel have now been bolstered by the recent discovery of early medieval structures at the same site, which supports this argument. [43]

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[37] ibid., pp. 18-19.
[38] Charles Thomas, 'Gallici Nautae de Galliarum Provinciis: A Sixth/Seventh Century Trade with Gaul, Reconsidered', *Medieval Archaeology*, 34 (1990), pp 1-26 and especially p. 11.
[39] Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, pp. 28-31, 46-49.
[40] ibid., pp. 54-73. Some of the glassware may have come via contact with England south and east of the Tees/Exe line, although most seems to have come via the same communications networks with Gaul.
[41] Duggan, *Links*, pp. 157-160 and the maps on pp. 204-205.
[42] See, for example, Carver, *Formative Britain*, pp. 7-9. It is worth pointing out that whilst the pottery and glass are the most common materials discovered by archaeology, other goods such as foodstuffs, dyestuffs and beads also formed part of the cargoes.
[43] http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/tintagel-castle/history-and-legend/tintagel-dark-ages/ accessed 24/09/16 and http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/archaeology/king-arthur-castle-cornwall-tintagel-dark-ages-palace-camelot-a7168761.html accessed 24/09/16.

As with the Class I stones, one feature of the post-Roman trade which has received comparatively little attention is the reason for its uneven distribution across western Britain. The first phase of trade was focussed on the Westcountry and South Wales, with a smattering of pieces further north and in Ireland.[44] There are, however, no finds of any of this material in a wide swathe of western Britain from the Dee to the Solway. This same uneven distribution repeats with the second phase. Ireland and Scotland have more evidence of Atlantic trade than the earlier Mediterranean trade, but it is generally found in the same areas (and often at the same specific sites) that received the earlier imports.
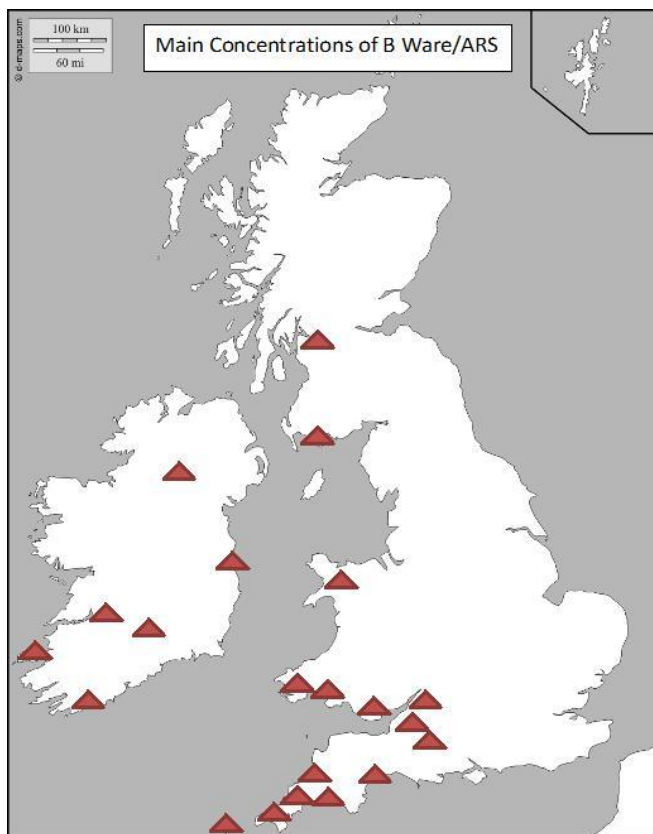
Map 7: The principal distribution fifth-century eastern Mediterranean trade.

It may well be that the outbreak of the Justinianic Plague in the eastern Mediterranean in the mid-sixth century disrupted the initial trade and led to the switch to importation from Atlantic

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[44] For more details, see the distribution maps in Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, pp. 16, 18, 22, 46 and 55.

Gaul.[45] Yet great swathes of western Britain, including Cumbria, had no more interest in Gaulish tableware than they had had in Mediterranean slipware.[46]

What is noteworthy is that the distribution of Class I stones across western Britain corresponds closely to the distribution of the Continental imports.

Map 8: The principal distribution of sixth-century Gaulish trade.

As with the building of timber halls that was discussed above, it is likely that the use of fine tablewares or the consumption of the wine and oil contained in the Mediterranean amphorae

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[45] See Chapter 2.6.4 for a fuller discussion of the Justinianic Plague.
[46] This high-status material is also not referenced in the earliest post-Roman insular poetry. The poetry is considered in more detail in Chapter Four, but at this stage we might note that the use of glass drinking vessels appears to be attested both in Irish texts and in the compendium of battle poems, *Y Gododdin*, in areas where archaeological evidence for such material has indeed been found. By contrast, the poetic material which is often taken as touching on Cumbria (where no such archaeological evidence has ever been found) talks instead of vessels of horn.

was indicative of the deliberate and ostentatious display of wealth and power.[47] Class I stones may have served the same purpose. In eastern England, the emergence in the fifth century of new burial rites which involved the interment of the dead with lavish grave goods has plausibly been interpreted as another manifestation of the visible display of power in a politically unstable world.[48] We might view the consumption of Continental imports in much the same way. If so, the paucity of such material in areas such as Cumbria may well mean that the social or political situation in those areas was comparatively settled, a hypothesis which receives additional support from the abandonment of Cumbria's fortified sites by the end of the fifth century, the relatively brief period in which large timber halls were erected and the likely early date of its small corpus of Class I stones.

It has been proposed by Thomas that two groups of Class I stones found in the Scottish border counties and in Dumfries & Galloway represent the slow northward dissemination in the post-Roman period of Christianity from a late Roman ecclesiastical centre at Carlisle.[49] If such a reading is correct, these Scottish stones would represent the extension of the 'soft power' of Cumbria's post-Roman elites as far north as Edinburgh and as far west as Whithorn. That would not necessarily mean that those elites were also able to enforce their will north of Hadrian's Wall through the exercise of military or 'hard' power (although neither does it rule it out either), but it *does* hint that they had a certain confidence in their position.

An alternative explanation (which is by no means inconsistent with the concept of relatively strong or relatively settled Cumbrian elites) is to reject the implicit notion that the

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[47] Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, pp. 98-105.
[48] Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 340-341. See also Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 260-265.
[49] Thomas, 'Christian Inscriptions', pp. 7-8. See also Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 141-142. See also Naismith, *Early Medieval Britain*, p. 184. For the argument that Roman sites and population centres were popular locations for the establishment of "mission stations" in early Anglo-Saxon monasticism, see Sarah Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England c. 600-900* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 77-78. For completeness, it should be noted that although nowhere explicitly stated, Charles-Edwards seems to believe that the Cumbrian stones discussed above are late, rather than post-Roman examples.

consumption of Continental imports speaks of the expression of a specifically *British* cultural identity and, instead, consider whether the use of this material could suggest influence from across the Irish Sea. There is undoubtedly Irish influence on the epigraphy of the Class I stones, with roughly ten per cent of them written either in ogam or in both ogam and Latin. Although the complexities of ogam are well beyond the scope of this thesis, it suffices to say that ogam is most likely a fourth-century Irish writing system inspired by the Latin alphabet.[50] Ogam characters were carved vertically as a series of incised dashes, generally on the corners of stones. Early ogam inscriptions are most common in south east Wales, but the use of vertical Latin script on many stones outside Dyfed echoes the layout of ogam.[51] Irish personal names also appear on a number of other stones whose Latin inscriptions are laid out in the usual horizontal fashion.

Those parts of Britain which witnessed the most visible post-Roman Irish immigration (south Wales and the Westcountry) are also those areas in respect of which no record of late Roman troop dispositions are known from the *Notitia Dignitatum*.[52] Alex Woolf has proposed that power in those areas may have been ceded to local British elites in the late Roman period.[53] It has also been proposed that in south-east Wales, Irish groups were deliberately settled as federates in the second half of the fourth century.[54] As such, the particular concentration in south-east Wales of Class I stones with Irish features may represent the descendants of those Roman-era Irish military elites, who were still able to exercise power even after the system which first installed them had ceased to function.[55]

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[50] M Dillon and N Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms* (London, 1973), p. 258. Petts, 'Reuse', p. 196.

[51] Those areas are identified in Edwards, 'Archaeology', p. 292.

[52] The *Notitia Dignitatum* is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.2.

[53] Woolf, 'British Ethnogenesis', pp. 22-24.

[54] Philip Rance, 'Attacotti, Deisi and Magnus Maximus; The Case for Irish federates in Late Roman Britain' *Britannia*, 32 (2001), pp. 243-270.

[55] Woolf's argument is intriguing, but perhaps does not draw enough attention to the unique circumstances pertaining in other parts of the Roman Empire which he uses as comparative examples.   Charles-Edwards' view that the "early Roman Empire did not readily tolerate kings within its borders" still seems sound for the late Roman period too. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 314.

Whether or not there was ever a formal plantation of Irish federates in Wales, we can be confident that there was movement both ways across the Irish Sea in the post-Roman period. British warbands operating in Ireland from the fifth to the seventh centuries are attested in texts such as Patrick's *Epistola* and the *Annals of Ulster*.[56] Irish king-lists name the *Gailioin* and the *Domnaninn* as ancient kings of Leinster and there may be a connection between these groups and the Dumnonii of the Roman and post-Roman Westcountry.[57] Penannular brooches, arguably the most distinctive form of post-Roman British metalwork, were introduced to Ireland from Britain in the fifth century.[58] In terms of traffic the other way, the activities of Irish ecclesiasts in the early conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms is well known, as is the involvement of Irish groups in the seventh-century dynastic struggles of secular north Britain.[59]

Against this backdrop of longstanding contacts across the Irish Sea, the melding of Irish and Romano-British writing styles and nomenclature on many of western Britain's Class I stones may speak of an emergent, Hiberno-British identity which mirrored the emergent Anglo-Saxon identities in the south and east. If this assessment is valid, then the correlation between the principal distributions of Class I stones and the distribution of Mediterranean and Gaulish imports could be regarded as part of the same phenomenon. Rather than representing a string of confident British polities from Cornwall to Galloway, these imports may instead speak of a nervous new Hiberno-British identity. The ostentatious display of wealth and status evidenced by both the inscriptions and the Continental imports may signify immigrants from what had been *barbaricum* seeking to adopt what they perceived to be elite Roman culture and/or feeling the need to express their power in a very visible way in a time of political uncertainty. The lack of evidence for similar cultural choices being made in large

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[56] Smyth, *Warlords*, pp. 25-6.
[57] ibid, p. 187.
[58] , 'Archaeology', p. 293.
[59] Daibhi Ó'Cróinin, 'Ireland, 400-800' in Daibhi Ó'Cróinin, ed. *A New History of Ireland, Volume I* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 216-218.

swathes of the post-Roman British North West (including Cumbria) may therefore indicate areas where these new Irish elites had significantly less impact.[60]

The wider distribution of ARS and LRC is potentially significant in this regard as these artefacts were especially favoured by groups from outside the Roman Empire. Although ARS had been in circulation from about the second century, production increased in the late fifth century *after* the western Empire's bureaucratic infrastructure had collapsed. The biggest markets for ARS from the fifth to the seventh century were *not* those which were still under the control of the Empire but rather were those areas under the control of Vandal and Arabian groups.[61] A similar pattern can be observed in the distribution of LRC, which also saw a surge of popularity in the fifth century in parts of the western Empire which were no longer under effective imperial control.[62] That post-Roman Cumbrian elites did not appear to need to express power through ostentatious display may suggest that their transition from Roman citizens to independent polities was not one which necessarily involved sudden or fracturing change.[63]

2.3.3 ANGLO-BRITISH INTERACTION AND THE 'EAGLESFIELD QUESTION'

The other major cultural influence on fifth- and sixth-century British society is that of the Anglo-Saxons. *Some* early Anglo-Saxon material has been found west of the Tees/Exe line,

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[60] This theory may deal with Martin Carver's observations that Irish influence in Cumbria was "remarkably slight" and that the lack of carved stones in Cumbria and Lancashire required "further elucidation". Carver, *Formative Britain*, pp. 500, 510, 589.

[61] Tamara Lewit, 'Dynamics of fineware production and trade: the puzzle of supra-regional exporters', *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 24 (2011), p. 327.

[62] ibid, p. 331.

[63] It is, of course, possible that they wanted to access such material but were unable to do so as they had nothing to trade in return. The availability in Cumbria of various ores and minerals which had been extensively exploited in the Roman period would make such a proposition a little unlikely.

including in Cumbria, but there is not a great deal of it.[64] At Birdoswald, early Anglo-Saxon artefacts are currently limited to two known pieces – a sixth-century 'small long' brooch which may or may not have been found at the fort,[65] and a bronze pin dated to the eighth century.[66] A spearhead found at Carvoran, just outside Cumbria's eastern boundary, might also be of fifth-century Anglo-Saxon manufacture.[67] It is possible that the earliest recovered Anglo-Saxon pottery from a house at Blackfriars Street in Carlisle was influenced by late Roman forms, but otherwise, archaeological evidence for British and Anglo-Saxon interaction remains elusive.

For clearer examples of Anglo-British interaction, we have to look beyond Cumbria's boundaries. Vindolanda and Housesteads (both in Northumberland) have produced British and Anglo-Saxon material of fifth and sixth-century date which has been explained as the result of the possible settlement of Germanic federates by British authorities.[68] Whilst this might be right, there is no reason why those using this material could not have belonged to more than one cultural group. Indeed, there is clear evidence that Britons *did* use Anglo-Saxon material culture and vice versa. The jewellery makers at the tiny hillfort at the Mote of Mark in Dumfries & Galloway were manufacturing both culturally British and culturally Anglo-Saxon objects, notwithstanding that they lived at some remove from the closest attested Anglo-Saxon settlements.[69] A gilt bronze mount of possible seventh-century date found at an unknown site in Cumberland appears to be an Anglo-Saxon inspired piece of a type also made at the Mote of Mark.[70] This suggests that the hybridised tastes catered for by the

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[64] For a useful summary, see Collins, *End of Empire*, pp. 101-106 and esp. the table at p. 102. See also Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 383. As Kenneth Dark argued, the problems with early medieval archaeology are such that even "slight evidence of use may represent extensive occupation". Dark, 'Re-Defence', p. 113.

[65] Tony Wilmott*, Birdoswald: Excavations of a Roman fort on Hadrian's Wall and its successor settlements. 1987-1992* (London, 2001), p. 216.

[66] Deirdre O'Sullivan, 'Sub-Roman and Anglo-Saxon Finds from Cumbria', *TCWAAS* (1993), pp. 25-42, p. 27. See also Snyder, *Age of Tyrants*, p. 169.

[67] Dark, 'Re-Defence', p. 119. Flint F. Johnson, *Evidence of Arthur: Fixing the Legendary King in Factual Place and Time* (Jefferson, 2014), p. 171.

[68] Snyder, *Tyrants*, p. 169. Dark 'Re-Defence', p. 115.

[69] Alcock, 'Gwyr Y Gogledd', pp. 5-6.

[70] O'Sullivan, 'Finds', pp. 27-28, 39.

Dumfriesshire jewellery makers had an audience in Cumbria too. Stray finds of fifth- or sixth-century Anglo-Saxon artefactual material may therefore tell us less about Germanic encroachment and rather more about fashion, political affiliations and/or the development of new, identities, hybridised or otherwise.

If we are prepared to entertain the possibility that Anglo-British relations in the north were the result of complex social and cultural interactions rather than just the steady process of conquest and the debasement of British elites, we might reasonably question the implicit correlation between Anglo-Saxon cultural and political penetration into Cumbria. The form that any penetration took is far from clear. With the possible exception of a small number of inhumation graves in and around the upper Eden basin, we do not have any early 'Anglo-Saxon' cemeteries.[71] Given that inhumation with grave goods remained the dominant burial form in England south and east of the Tees/Exe line into the seventh century, we might therefore conclude that there were no Anglo-Saxons in Cumbria prior to that time.

Such a conclusion does not, however, explain the earliest stratum of English place-name evidence. These names include a number of potential early sites incorporating the English place-name element *hām* ('village'/'estate centre') and, in particular, a small number of names containing the element *ecles* ('church', notably in the context of a pre-existing British church).[72] The two best candidates for *ecles* names in Cumbria are Eaglesfield (Cockermouth) and the lost *Eglisfylde* (Ulverston). The etymology of these names will be considered in more detail in the next chapter, but at this stage it suffices to say that both are old names which most likely belong to the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon period.[73]

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[71] These graves are considered further in Chapter 2.5.1.
[72] Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past* (Chichester, 2010), p. 84.
[73] It is widely accepted that the first element, which derives from Latin *ecclesia* via Welsh *eglws* ('church'), was given to the then still unfamiliar Christian places of worship which incoming Anglo-Saxon groups encountered. Post-conversion, the English word *cirice* (the root of modern 'church') was used instead. The pre-Christian period ended in 627, when Edwin of Deira became the first Christian king of Northumbria.

On the strength of these names, we therefore have fair evidence of pagan-era Anglo-Saxon penetration into at least two parts of western Cumbria. The best way to square the existence of early place-name forms and the lack of early funerary archaeology is to suppose that the Old English-speaking people who died in Cumbria prior to the conversion period were buried in the same, far less archaeologically visible way, as their culturally British neighbours. Notwithstanding that Anglo-Saxon culture was strong enough to leave a mark in place-names, it was not sufficiently strong to displace local cultural attitudes to the disposal of the dead. Just as Cumbria's evolved post-Roman identity was sufficiently robust to render it distinct from the emergent Hiberno-British identities of (inter alia) lowland western Scotland and South Wales, so too was it robust enough to ensure the cultural, if not the linguistic, assimilation of its earliest Anglo-Saxon incomers.

2.4   CARLISLE: EVOLUTION OF A ROMAN TOWN

Carlisle was the most north-westerly city in the Roman Empire and the only true urban centre in Roman Cumbria. The earliest town appears to have been largely an adjunct to the fort, although it grew significantly during the third century, probably after it had become a *civitas* – a civilian administrative centre.[1] The exact date at which Carlisle became a *civitas* remains unclear, but a milestone found at Langwathby was raised in the second year of the reign of the emperor Severus Alexander by the *civitas Carvetiorum*.[2] This dates the stone to 223 AD and provides a *terminus ante quem* for Carlisle's elevation to *civitas* centre[3]This appears to have represented the highpoint of the fortunes of the city. Although it has been argued that Carlisle went on to become the provincial capital of a fifth province, Valentia, after 369, there is no evidence to support the identification or to suggest any fourth-century flourishing of the city.[4]

The geographical extent of the wider *civitas* remains a matter of guesswork, but is worth examining as there is some suggestion that some post-Roman polities may overlay earlier *civitas* boundaries. In the terminology of Roman civil administration, the *civitas* referred to both the governing city and its wider rural hinterland. If we accept the proposition that milestones were often erected at the boundary of a *civitas*, Carlisle's hinterland may have stretched twenty-four miles or so east of the city to the boundary of a likely neighbouring

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[1] McCarthy, 'Function and Change', pp. 293-294, 301-302.

[2] Ben Edwards and David Shotter, 'A Newly-Discovered Roman Milestone from Langwathby, Cumbria', *Contrebis*, 29 (2004), pp. 6-8.

[3] In 2021, part of a Roman bath house was excavated at Stanwix Cricket Club. The site produced a significant number of tiles made in the imperial workshop during the reign of Septimius Severus (193-211 AD). This suggests the direct involvement of the emperor in the construction of the bath house which, in turn, takes us to 209 AD, when Severus launched an invasion of Caledonia. It seems entirely plausible that Carlisle's elevation to civitas centre was part of the same expression of imperial patronage that gave the city its bath house.

[4] The existence of a fifth British province is far from agreed, still less its location. Indeed, there is still no consensus as to the boundaries or location of the four known late Roman provinces.

civitas based at Corbridge and about fifty miles south, to Middleton in the Lune Valley.[5] If

these boundaries are accurate, the authorities of the *civitas Carvetiorum* controlled an area

very similar in size to the modern county of Cumbria.[6]

Figure 5. The Middleton milestone, Middleton-in-Lonsdale. After being damaged by tractors, the stone was relocated from its original position and moved a short distance further up the old Roman road to its present location in Middleton churchyard.

The extent of the urban area of the *civitas* is equally uncertain, but it seems to have been

broadly similar to the extent of medieval Carlisle, with outlying 'suburbs' running along the

line of what is now Botchergate, the main road south. Then, as now, Carlisle's core was

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[5] Breeze, 'Civil Government'., pp. 67-70.
[6] Cumbria's eastern boundary with Northumberland lies just beyond Gilsland, about twenty-five miles east of Carlisle on the main road which runs parallel to the Stanegate, the Roman road between Carlisle and Corbridge. Cumbria's south-easterly corner is at Kirkby Lonsdale, about five miles south of Middleton.

determined by topography. The city sits at the confluence of three rivers (the Eden, Petteril
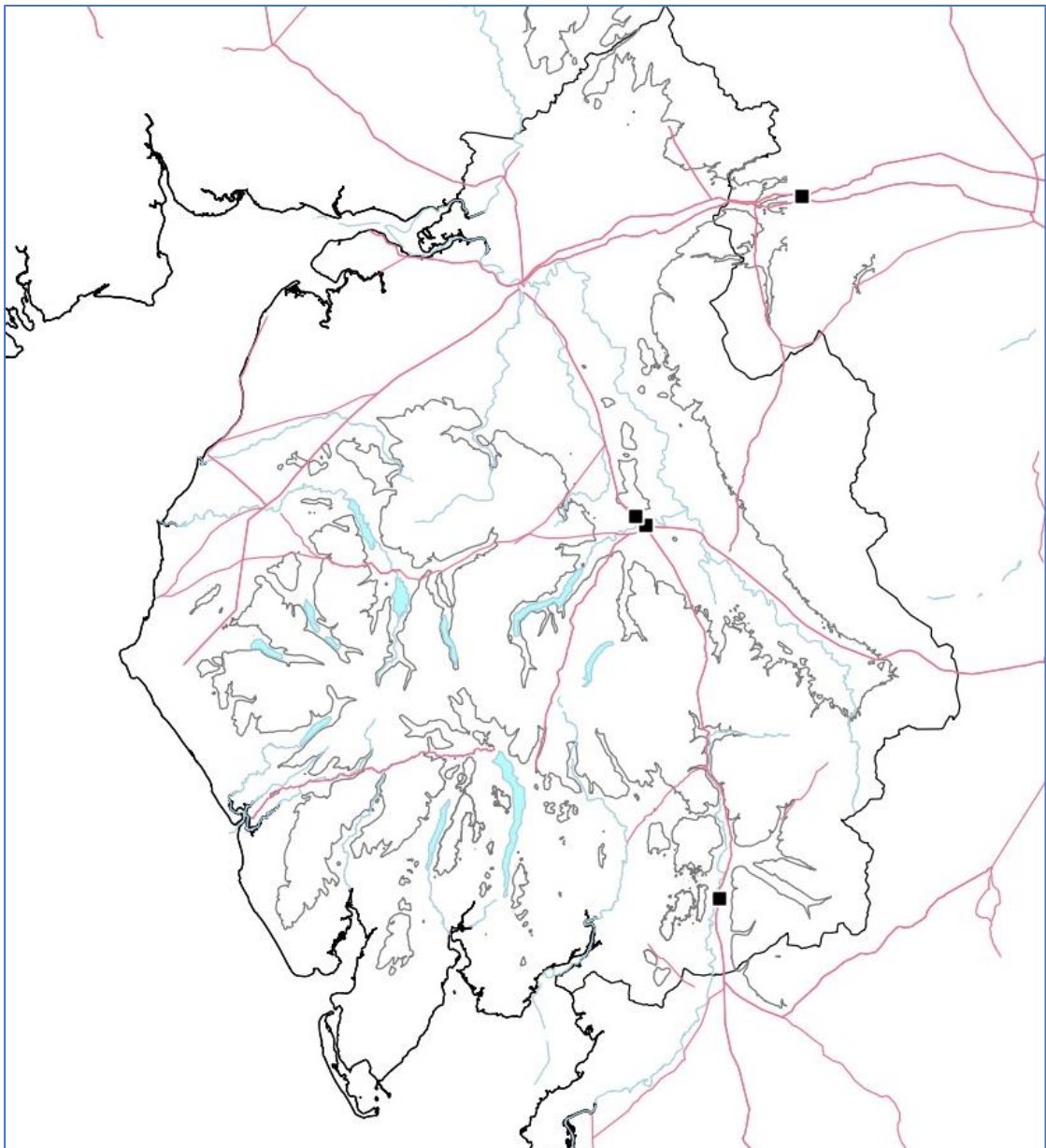
Map 9: Cumbria's Roman Milestones.

and Caldew). A narrow spur of land running east-south-east to west-north-west rises gently

above the flood plain where the three rivers meet. It was on this spur that the Roman fort

was built. On the opposite side of the Eden, Stanwix Bank rises sharply from the flood plain.

Hadrian's Wall ran along the bank, with the fort at Stanwix controlling the crossing-point into

Caledonia.

The river Caldew delineated the western edge of the Roman city. To the east, the land drops gradually for about a mile to Carlisle's third river, the Petteril, which runs roughly parallel to the Caldew. The civilian settlement lay just to the south of the fort, on the raised ground above the Caldew and Petteril. The main road from Chester and York entered the city via modern Botchergate. It then forked like the two arms of the letter 'Y'. The left arm ran to the fort along the line of modern Blackfriars Street. The right arm ran down to the bridge over the Eden along the line of modern English Street, Scotch Street and Rickergate.

Figure 6. Looking up to the Cathedral Close from Town Dyke and the Caldew. The wall is about four to five metres high from this side, but only about a metre high on the Cathedral side. The Blackfriars Street strip houses ran back to this edge just to the right of the picture.

The approaches to Carlisle are dictated by topography. The city lies at something of a natural choke point, which doubtless helps explain both its historic and modern importance. A few miles to the north of the city are the Solway Mosses, a low-lying area of boggy ground at the head of the Solway estuary, where the Eden and the Esk drain into the sea. To the

east of the city, the Eden and the North Pennine hills present natural obstacles to movement, channelling the principal route north from Chester and York up the Eden valley. To the north west, the Solway estuary steadily widens to the Irish Sea. There were three known medieval fording-points across the estuary, two of which left dry land at or near the Roman forts of Drumburgh and Bowness-on-Solway, but the main road avoided these crossings in favour of the Carlisle route.
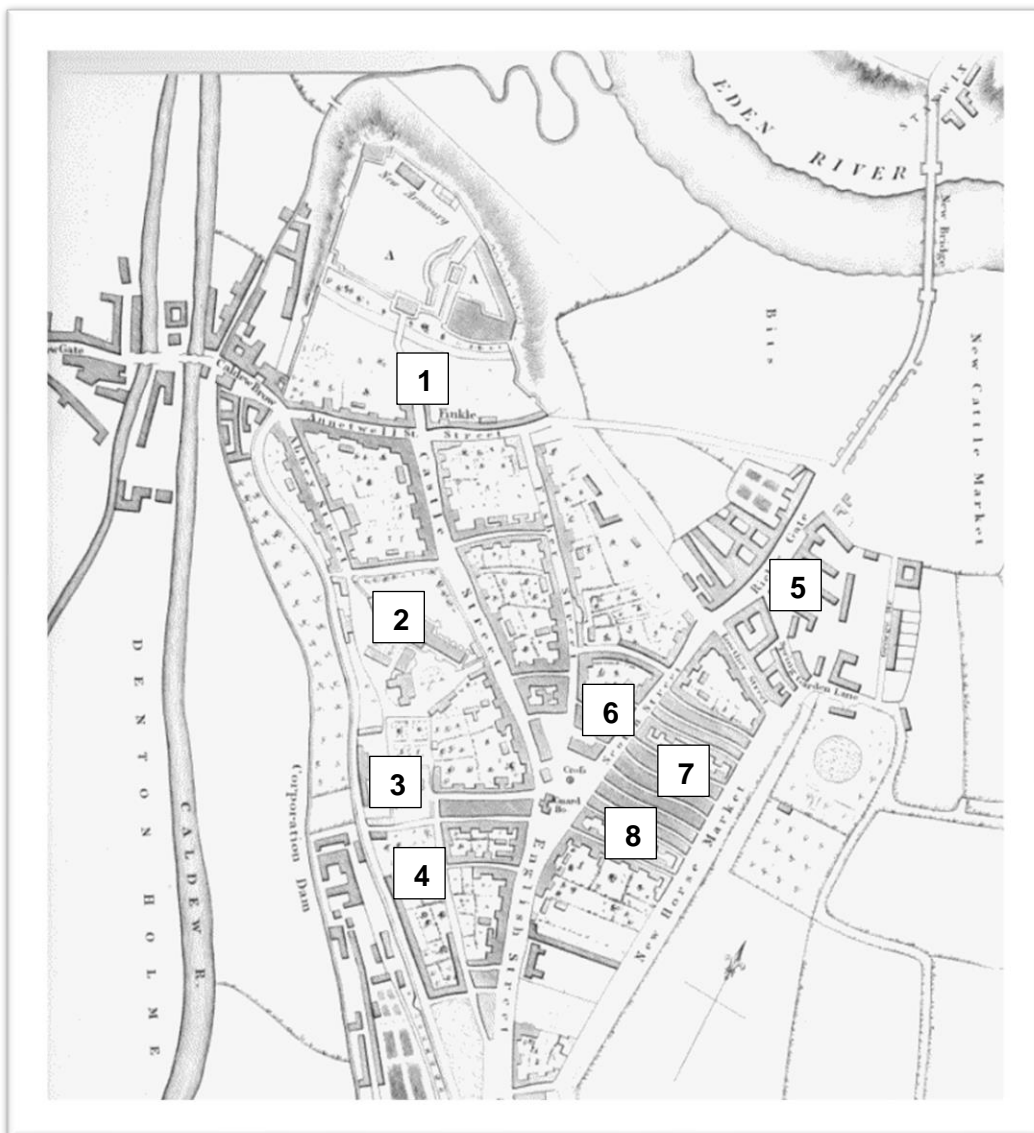
Map 10: Roman Carlisle. 1 = Castle, = Cathedral, 3 = St Cuthbert's, 4 = Blackfriars Street, 5 = Rickergate, 6 = Scotch Street, 7 = Keays Lane, 8 = Old Grapes Lane.

Evidence for post-Roman occupation at Carlisle comes from a number of sites in a relatively small area in the middle of the modern city centre. The best evidence for high status occupation comes from 66-68 Scotch Street. A large, aisled town house was constructed with two ranges built around a central courtyard.[7] The building had been fitted with a hypocaust system in the late fourth century and may be an example of the late Roman shift in aristocratic focus from investing in public to investing in private buildings.[8] A gold solidus of Valentinian II, struck between 388 and 392, was found under the broken hypocaust floor.[9] Subsequent to the loss of the coin, a layer of *opus signinum* (a screed made out of pulverised tiles mixed with mortar) had sealed the damaged hypocaust floor slabs. Two further floor levels had later been constructed over the *opus signinum*. The coin was very worn and had been in circulation for quite some time when it was lost. It seems unlikely that it got into the hypocaust much, if at all, before the fifth century. This means that a post-Roman date for both the *opus signinum* floor and the two subsequent floor levels seems certain, although how long each floor remained in use cannot be ascertained.

A number of other sites along the English Street/Scotch Street corridor *may* have remained in use into the post-Roman period. A large house on the opposite side of Scotch Street may also have continued in use into the post-Roman period, although the evidence is less clear.[10] A rectilinear timber building on Rickergate was built no earlier than the last phase of Roman-period building activity in Carlisle. The gullies associated with the property contained fragments of Crambeck and Huntcliff-style pottery, which suggests a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the building of roughly 360.[11] This undoubtedly allows for the final phase of that building to still have been upstanding in the fifth century. It is also worth bearing in mind that 'residual' late Roman pottery found in the archaeological layers between the

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[7] Collins, *End of Empire*, p. 122.
[8] For this shift more generally, see Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, pp. 136-140.
[9] Keevil et al, 'Solidus', pp. 254-5.
[10] McCarthy, *Lands of the Solway*, pp. 87-88.
[11] Marion McClintock, ed. *Carlisle: Excavations at Rickergate 1998-9 and 53-55 Botchergate, 2001* (Bowness on Windermere, 2011), pp. 13-14.

unambiguously late Roman levels and the unambiguously ninth and tenth-century layers at

Rickergate may also be indicative of post-Roman activity.[12]

Figure 7: A sherd of Crambeck Parchment Ware. The piece was discovered in an unstratified context in a pit during the excavations at Stanwix Cricket Club.

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[12] Sue Stallibrass, 'How little we know, and how much there is to learn: what can animal and human bones tell us about the late Roman transition in northern England?' in Tony Wilmott and Pete Wilson, eds. *The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham, 1999* (BAR British Series, 2000, Oxford), pp. 73-80, p. 78.

A third property, a timber house at Keays Lane on the eastern side of Scotch Street produced a coin of the emperor, Valentinian I (364-375) from its final occupation level. Although there is no other evidence, this suggests that the Keays Lane building could also have remained in occupation in the immediate post-Roman period.

Finally, there is a long sequence of timber buildings at Old Grapes Lane, just to the south of Keays Lane. The site had been inhabited in the first century but, judging from the find of a coin of Trajan (dated to between 114 and to 117) had been abandoned in the early second century before subsequently being reoccupied. A series of timber buildings with differing construction styles are likely to have extended well into the fourth century, although there is no certainty as to the date of final abandonment.[13]

Further – and better – evidence of fifth-century (and later) activity comes from a rather lowlier house at Blackfriars Street. The area consisted of tightly packed strip houses built on each side of the road, each with a narrow street frontage. The two excavated properties were on the south side of the street and ran back from the road front to the edge of the bluff where the land drops sharply down to the Caldew (see Figure 8). The strip houses had had a long life and had been extensively remodelled during the Roman period. One of them, known as Building 2, provided strong evidence for a number of phases of post-Roman occupation.[14] In Period 10 (the late Roman/early post-Roman period), earth-fast timber posts had replaced the usual Roman construction technique of raising a timber frame off a hard surface of clay and cobble.[15] This technique was also used in neighbouring Building 1. The road itself had also been re-laid and later re-patched.[16] During Period 11 (post-Roman period), an oven or kiln was subsequently built along the rear wall of Building 2 on slabs of sandstone. At an unspecified later date in Period 12 (also post-Roman), a number of post-

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[13] For both Keays Lane and Old Grapes Lane, see McCarthy et al, 'The Lanes, Carlisle', pp. 81-82.
[14] McCarthy, *Lands of the Solway*, pp. 137-138.
[15] McCarthy, 'Luguvalium', pp. 6-7.
[16] M. R. McCarthy, *A Roman, Anglian and Medieval Site at Blackfriars Street* (Kendal, 1990), p. 65.

holes for a timber building were cut through the old clay and cobble surface (including over the adjacent road surface, suggesting encroachment onto Blackfriars Street), with sandstone blocks and old building materials used as packing. The Period 12 building appeared to be of a similar overall size to its Period 10 predecessor.[17] Fourth-century coins and a number of late Roman pottery sherds (including Crambeck and Huntcliff-style wares) were recovered from the site and its immediate environs, especially between Buildings 1 and 2.[18] Other finds were pretty much limited to a single belt fitting from an unstratified context which was dated to the late fourth or early fifth century.[19] Interestingly, in the context of the arguments advanced in the previous section, the lack of "distinctive post-Roman imports" from Gaul and the eastern Mediterranean was noted by the archaeologists.[20]

At some point in the seventh century or later (Period 13), the building was remodelled again, but this time on a different alignment, angled east by south east rather than the north east.[21] An unstratified silver pin of seventh to tenth-century date together with a timber post from a well from Period 14 which was felled between 633 and 655 gives clues as to the date of the earliest 'Anglian' activity.[22] The pottery recovered from the Period 13 and 14 layers was the same type of calcite-gritted Huntcliff ware as was found in the Period 10 to 12 layers.[23]

Although absolute dating evidence is lacking, Building 2 appeared to remain in use in one form or another through the whole post-Roman period. The realignment of the building in Period 13 *might* suggest a possible break in occupation, but this need not be the case.[24] An alternative explanation is that the whole area was remodelled in the seventh century,

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[17] ibid., pp. 61-67.
[18] ibid., pp. 297-298.
[19] ibid., pp. 183.
[20] ibid., pp. 302-303. Reasons as to why this might not be so surprising were advanced in Chapter 2.3.
[21] ibid., p. 72.
[22] ibid., pp. 181, 371.
[23] ibid., p. 302.
[24] McCarthy, 'Function and Change', p. 305. See also Collins, *End of Empire*, pp. 121-122 for the suggestion that here was no break in occupation between the latest 'Roman' and earliest 'Anglian' periods at the site.

possibly for reasons relating to the development of the schools and religious houses stated to have been founded by Cuthbert.[25]

An ecclesiastical site may have lain immediately to the west of the Blackfriars Street sequence. Most Christian churches are aligned to the east, but St Cuthbert's Church, no more than fifty metres further up Blackfriars Street from the two buildings discussed above, faces north-east. This might suggest that the modern church stands on the footprint of a much early ecclesiastical structure.[26] It may even have been contemporaneous with the Period 10-12 buildings. Ground radar surveys have identified another possible early building just to the north, under what is now the Crown and Mitre Hotel. Although the site has never been excavated, it has been proposed that this building may have been part of an early medieval monastic complex.[27] The same broad area has also produced a relatively high proportion of (later) medieval goose and chicken bones, which has been seen as indicative of a monastic diet.[28] A fragment of a cross arm of eighth-century date discovered on St Cuthbert's Lane (which runs at right angles to Blackfriars Street along the boundary of the Crown and Mitre complex) also hints at early religious activity in the area.[29] So too do the potentially pre-Anglian sculptural fragments recovered from nearby Dalston and Falstead, which may speak of early Christian buildings in the wider region.[30]

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[25] See Chapter 4.4. Cuthbert was also shown the walls of the town, which is intriguing, as no evidence of any Roman walls around the civilian settlement have ever been found. It is therefore often assumed that the walls in question belonged to the fort, which by that time had fallen out of use.
[26] McCarthy, *Blackfriars Street*, p. 372.
[27] ibid., pp. 242-243. See also McCarthy, 'Luguvalium', pp. 5-6.
[28] Newman et al, *Resource Assessment*, p. 13.
[29] Richard N. Bailey and Rosemary Cramp, *The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture. Volume II, Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands* (Oxford, 1988), p. 85.
[30] Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, p. 48.

The Cathedral Close has produced further evidence of post-Roman activity. In 1988, a large trench was opened at the west end of the cathedral, close to the likely southern boundary of the fort. A roadway was discovered in the trench which appeared to be a continuation of

Figure 8: St Cuthbert's Church, Blackfriars Street. Carlisle Cathedral is in the background. The difference in alignment of the two churches is (hopefully) apparent. The cathedral is oriented east-west.

Blackfriars Street. The road had been cut by a number of post-holes which appeared to delineate the corner of a timber framed building.[31] A fifth-century date for this building has been proposed, partially on the basis of the pottery fragments of Crambeck and Huntcliff-style wares discovered in the same trench.[32] The site also produced a Type G penannular brooch of sixth- to seventh-century date.[33]

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[31] Mike McCarthy et al, 'Sequence', pp. 191-192, 240.
[32] ibid., pp. 230-231.
[33] Colleen Batey, 'Pennanular Brooch' in McCarthy et al, 'A Post-Roman Sequence at Carlisle Cathedral', *Archaeological Journal*, 17.5:1 (2014), pp. 210-211. See also Zant, *Carlisle*, pp. 12-13, 368-9. Batey dated the brooch to the fifth- to seventh-centuries, but a shorter timespan seems possible if we follow Collins' proposed dates for the type. Collins, 'Brooch Use', p. 72.

Figure 9: Blackfriars Street looking east from St Cuthbert's. Building 2 is on the right under the retail outlet, behind the white pub.

The Cathedral Close was also the site of a cemetery. Excavations in 1985 and 1988 immediately to the south and west of the cathedral uncovered a large number of inhumation graves. The graves were oriented east west but had no grave goods.[34] Most of the graves comprised simple vertical cuts into the earth and most had been disturbed by the late medieval remodelling of the cathedral. Radiocarbon dating on a sample of eighteen skeletons from the 1988 trench at the west end of the cathedral suggested that many of the graves belong to the late ninth or tenth centuries.[35] However, skeleton 25, of which only partial remains were recovered at the very northern edge of the trench, returned a

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[34] There were some clothes' fittings in the graves, but these presumably derive from the clothing worn by the body.
[35] McCarthy et al, 'Sequence', p. 222.

radiocarbon date of 420 to 570.[36] This grave is a rare survival, as Cumbria's acid soils

generally lead to poor bone preservation.[37] It was cut into dark earth deposits which sealed

the earlier Roman layers and was believed to be in its original position.[38] The lack of late

Roman coins at the cathedral site (when compared to coin finds from Carlisle as a whole)

led to the conclusion that, whatever was happening in this part of the city, it did not involve

coin use.[39]

Five graves from the earlier investigations in 1985 were assigned pre-Norman dates, with

one returning a radiocarbon date of 750 (with a margin of 70 years either way).[40] A further

grave of possible seventh- or early eighth-century date was found partially cut through a

post-Roman well at Castle Street, a few metres to the north-west of the cathedral close.[41]

As with the grave at the cathedral, the skeletons had been inhumed in simple grave cuts

without grave goods. It therefore seems that at some point in the post-Roman period, this

part of the old Roman city which lay between the fort and the town itself started to be used

as a cemetery, a role it maintained until the twelfth century.

2.4.1 DARK EARTH AND DECLINE

As at other Roman sites, the extent of late and post-Roman occupation in Carlisle remains

unclear. The last Roman levels of many towns in Britain are covered in a thick layer of 'dark

earth'. Dark earth typically provides a break in the stratigraphy between Roman and

[36] Catherine Batt, 'Radiocarbon Dates' in McCarthy et al, 'A Post-Roman Sequence at Carlisle Cathedral', *Archaeological Journal*, 17.5:1 (2014), pp. 236-237. See also Janet Montgomery and Jacqueline Towers, 'The Isotopes', in McCarthy et al, 'A Post-Roman Sequence at Carlisle Cathedral', *Archaeological Journal*, 17.5:1 (2014), pp. 233-234. Earlier excavations in the same part of Carlisle produced two radiocarbon dates of the seventh to ninth century.
[37] Stallibrass, 'How little we know', 75.
[38] ibid., pp. 241.
[39] McCarthy et al, 'Sequence', pp. 203-204.
[40] Graham Keevil, 'Excavations', pp. 38-50.
[41] M. R. McCarthy, *Roman Waterlogged Remains at Castle Street 1981-2* (Kendal, 1991), pp. 48-50.

medieval activity and the deposits can, in some cases, be very thick (up to a metre of more

in depth). The presence of dark earth is usually taken as evidence of site disuse or re-use;

agricultural or horticultural purposes and even the dumping of rubbish have all been

proposed.[42]

Dark earth has been found across Carlisle, including at the fort.[43] The lack of rubble in the

dark earth supports the notion of deliberate site re-use (perhaps for agricultural purposes)

rather than simple site abandonment. In the former Roman city, dark earth overlay the

Rickergate site, the west end of the cathedral, the northern part of the Lanes and possibly

also a repaired Roman cobble road at Long Lane, which linked the two main Roman routes

through the city.[44] At other sites in the city, including Blackfriars Street and the Old Grapes

Lane, there is no evidence for dark earth. This allows for the possibility of continued

occupation at these sites, even allowing for the dearth of post-Roman artefacts at the latter

site. [45]

The dark earth issue is further complicated by the fact that not all of it is of post-Roman date

(as might be expected by analogy with other Roman towns in Britain which experienced

decline in the post-Roman period). The inhumation at the west end of the cathedral which

returned the earliest date of 420-570 had been cut *through* the dark earth that had

accumulated in that area, meaning that the dark earth had to predate the burial, potentially

making the dark earth late-, not post-Roman.[46]

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[42] Collins, *End of Empire*, pp. 120-121. See also Martin Henig, 'The Fate of Late Roman Towns', in David A. Hinton, Sally Crawford and Helena Hamerow, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 515-533, p. 516. Higham sees dark earth as a positive indicator of human (and animal) activity, which was allowed to accumulate due to a breakdown of civic control. Higham, 'origins', p. 47.
[43] See Chapter 2.2.
[44] McClintock, *Excavations*, pp. 15-16. P. Flynn and M. R. McCarthy, 'Excavations and a ground-based radar survey at Long Lane, Carlisle, 1990', *TWCAAS* (1991), pp. 31-38, p. 35.
[45] John Zant, *The Southern Lanes, Carlisle. Publication of unpublished Fascicules, Fascicule 1*, p. 14, accessed at http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-979-1/dissemination/pdf/Complete_Fascicule_1.pdf 1st January 2019
[46] McCarthy, 'Sequence', p. 241.

Other deposits of dark earth at Castle Street (which lies alongside the old line of Blackfriars Street to the Roman fort) contained pottery of the twelfth century and later. This suggests a much later date for the dark earth than might normally have been assumed – it might well have accumulated after the cemetery discussed above finally fell out of use.[47] If this is correct and significant deposits of Carlisle's dark earth are *not* of post-Roman date (some of it being earlier and some later), that allows for the possibility of ongoing occupation of rather more of the city than might at first have appeared to be the case.

Although the lack of any evidence for reforestation also suggests that land in the city remained in agricultural production, it has been proposed by Mike McCarthy that between the fifth and the seventh century, Carlisle's townscape was characterised by decaying buildings with only a small farming population eking out a living amongst the ruins.[48]

. This evocative language of decay and abandonment will be familiar to those studying the fates of other Roman towns.[49] However, although it cannot reasonably be disputed that Carlisle was much smaller than it had been in its third-century heyday, it is not necessarily safe to conclude that the city was largely abandoned in the fifth century.[50] If it had been, then irrespective of the accumulation of dark earth, it would very quickly have 're-wilded'. As Oliver Rackham put it in his seminal work on the English countryside: -

> Almost all land by nature turns to woodland. Let a field be abandoned – as many
>
> fields have been down the centuries – and within a year it will be invaded by oaks…
>
> or by birches… In ten years it will be difficult to reclaim; in thirty years it will have

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[47] ibid.
[48] McCarthy, 'Function and Change', pp. 304-306, 311.
[49] The decline in importance of towns is sometimes thought to have been caused by the result of local elites retrenching their power on their rural estates. Higham, 'In and out', p. 39.
[50] For a more positive argument about continuity of life in Roman towns (including Carlisle), see Henig, 'Late Roman Towns', and especially pp. 516, 526 and 529.

'tumbled down into woodland'.[51]

Figure 10: Gairo Vecchio, Sardinia, Italy

Comparative examples are not hard to find. The community of Gairo Vecchio in Sardinia,

Italy, was abandoned over the course of the 1950s and 1960s and over the course of half a

century, has quickly become overgrown with trees and other foliage.[52]

Reforestation has been even more vigourous in Houtouwan, China, where a fishing village

which was all but abandoned in the 1990s has, in a quarter of a century, been reclaimed by

forest.

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[51] Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London, 1995), pp. 67-68.
[52] The site has not, as yet at least, been covered in soil or 'dark earth', which might be thought to render it a poor example. However, given its situation on a steep, rocky slope with limited soil cover, it is difficult to see where sufficient earth to bury the site naturally would come from.

Figure 11: Houtouwan, Shengshan Island, China

The village of Goussainville-Vieux Pays, thirteen miles from central Paris, was largely

abandoned in the 1970s when it found itself under the flight path of Charles De Gaulle

Airport. Gossainville-Vieux Pays still has a small population, but despite being located so

close to one of Europe's largest capital cities, it is already well on its way to "tumbling down

to woodland".

If this is what can happen to largely (albeit not totally) abandoned communities in fifty years

or less, what would Carlisle have looked like by the seventh century if the narratives of ruin

and decay are correct? Assuming significant abandonment at or near to the start of the fifth

century and assuming that the rejuvenated settlement described by the two *Lives* of St

Cuthbert was a relatively recent phenomenon when Cuthbert visited in 685, Carlisle would

have been mostly derelict for well over two centuries. One might imagine it being

Figure 12: Goussainville-Vieux Pays, Val D'Oise, France

subsumed into Inglewood forest, which throughout the Roman and early medieval period

was a large expanse of woodland immediately south of Carlisle. A small population of

subsistence farmers could hardly have kept an area the size of Roman Carlisle in good

agricultural condition, not least because ruinous buildings do not readily lend themselves to

either arable or pastoral use. Carlisle's renewal in the seventh century would have involved a

huge amount of work; felling trees, grubbing up the stumps and root balls (an extremely

difficult task, as anyone who has tried it without the benefit of modern machinery will know),

removing the rubble and unstable remains of decayed Roman buildings and carting away all

of the accumulated material so that the new town could rise again on the footings of the old

one.[53] Even with huge reserves of manpower and resources, why would anyone bother

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[53] I am indebted to my examiners, Andrew Reynolds and Kate Sykes, for querying what happened to the stone from disused Roman buildings and asking why anyone would wish to remove it and where they might take it. The answer can only be guessed at but two potential solutions might be offered. If one lived in those parts of Cumbria where limestone is the local stone, then building rubble would be an excellent resource for making quicklime. Cumbria's soils are generally thin and acidic. The

when, as at Gairo Vecchio, it would doubtless have been easier simply to build 'new Carlisle' next to 'old Carlisle' rather than on top of it?

Yet new Carlisle *was* built on old Carlisle. The main road of the Roman town (the English Street/Scotch Street corridor) is still modern Carlisle's high street.[54] The site of Roman Carlisle's fort became the site of the medieval castle. The oddly-angled St Cuthbert's is still in use as a church. This might all be just coincidence, but taken with the evidence from Blackfriars Street and Scotch Street, it might equally point at rather larger population in post-Roman Carlisle than is usually supposed. Put simply, there must have been a fair number of people around *and* someone to organise them. The lack of building rubble in the dark earth deposits at the fort has led to the suggestion that many of the buildings were deliberately dismantled and the rubble carted away during the fifth century.[55] That would certainly explain why the huge amounts of stone which we could reasonably associate with a derelict Roman fort are absent. Leaving aside the question of *why* anyone wished to dismantle the fort, the fact that someone *did* presupposes both a high level of organisation and the availability of a fair amount of manpower.[56] *Something* kept people in the town when they could as easily have decamped to land which was much easier to farm than Carlisle's brownfield sites and

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spreading of quicklime on the fields reduce acidity and increases productivity. Old Victorian lime kilns still dot Cumbria's fields. Carlisle is sandstone, though. It may be that some of Carlisle's Roman stone is now in its two most prominent surviving medieval buildings, the Cathedral and the Castle, both of which are on the site of the fort and the vicus that spread out to the south of it, but that would not answer the question of where it was after the fort and the stone buildings of Roman Carlisle fell out of use but before the Cathedral and Castle were built. 'Nearby' is perhaps the best, if unhelpful, answer.
[54] In some towns, including Lincoln, York and Chester, it seems likely that the continued use of principal Roman streets in the medieval period was borne out of pragmatism. The line between two opposing gates in a planned town represented the most direct route through the settlement, especially one where upstanding walls required incoming traffic to use the gates in the first place. Martin Biddle, 'Towns' in David M. Wilson, ed. *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), p. 107. Such an explanation does not work so well for Carlisle for two reasons. Firstly, the town was not laid out on the usual rectangular pattern, due to the topography of the site. Secondly, despite numerous attempts to find them, to date no walls around the civilian settlement have ever been discovered. That said, Wilson's observation may provide further support to the arguments raised in respect of the modern street layout of Bowness on Solway as discussed in Chapter 2.2.3.
[55] Zant, *Carlisle*, p. 369.
[56] See Chapter 2.2 for a fuller discussion of the post-Roman archaeology of Carlisle's fort. It is worth noting that the deliberate dismantling of buildings in Roman cities has been noted across the late Roman west. Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, pp. 432-433.

someone had the authority and the resources to oversee them.

For so long as there was traffic in and out of what is now Scotland, the Roman bridge at Stanwix was most likely the only all-weather crossing point of the Eden.[57] This might have been one reason why Carlisle remained occupied. The bridge and the natural topography channelled people into Carlisle. The city had a reason to exist. That existence may have been in a highly attenuated form when compared its Roman heyday, but it may still have been enough to ensure that it remained a regional focus.[58] One might envisage late fifth or sixth-century Carlisle as akin to twenty-first century Detroit, where the collapse of the motor industry led to economic decline and depopulation but also the deliberate clearing and repurposing of some sites to provide extra space for those who remained. Carlisle may have been a shadow of its former self in terms of population and economic activity, but it was arguably a lot more than an evocative ruin.[59]

When Carlisle re-emerges into the historical record in the late seventh century, it does so in a manner which is observable elsewhere across the old Roman west – as a Christian centre.[60] Carlisle was a vibrant Northumbrian ecclesiastical centre with religious houses, schools, a leading official and quite probably a working Roman water system.[61] This Northumbrian centre should perhaps not be seen as a *de novo* establishment on the newly cleared wasteland that had once been the site of Roman Carlisle, but as the next stage in

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[57] The only other old bridges over the northern stretches of the Eden are five miles east of Carlisle at Warwick Bridge, where the road to Newcastle crosses the river and ten miles southeast at Armathwaite. I know of no evidence for either of those bridges having a Roman pedigree. At certain times of year and in certain conditions the Eden is undoubtedly fordable at a number of points, but it is a wide river and after periods of heavy rain would be impassable other than by bridge.

[58] Esmonde-Cleary argues that processes that increased regionalisation across the Empire were a product of the collapse of the central infrastructure and that these processes saw cities reinvented in different ways depending on the needs of the local population. Esmonde-Cleary, Roman West, pp. 143, 149.

[59] Whether it could properly still be termed a town depends largely on one considers a town to be. Martin Biddle proposed a number of useful criteria that related to various economic, governmental and demographic factors. Biddle, 'Towns', p. 100. It is, however, difficult to say with any certainty how many of these criteria applied to post-Roman Carlisle.

[60] Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, pp. 431-435.

[61] See Chapter 4.4 for a fuller discussion of the documentary sources.

the evolution of the city. If this argument looks too much like wishful thinking, it is perhaps worth pointing out that, although archaeology undoubtedly has the greatest potential to illuminate the gloom of post-Roman Cumbria, but for the survival of two *Lives* of St Cuthbert and the later *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto*, there would be nothing in the archaeological record to hint at the major early medieval ecclesiastical centre which we know existed at Carlisle at the time of Cuthbert's visit in 685.

Carlisle's trajectory was in line with other erstwhile Roman towns. Many evolved into ecclesiastical and monastic centres in the early medieval period. [62] If Carlisle had this ecclesiastical function in the seventh century, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that it may have had a similar function during the fifth and/or sixth century. It would have been well-suited for such a role. Late Roman Christianity was predominantly urban and elite in character, with towns acting as the seats of bishops and the bases for wider ecclesiastical administration.[63] *Civitas* centres may well have survived as ecclesiastical centres long after any other administrative functions had died away.[64] Charles Thomas argued long ago that Carlisle was a late Roman Christian centre and that the spread of early Christianity into south-west Scotland was driven from the city.[65] Given that Carlisle was the *only* true Roman city in the region, Thomas' argument is not without merit, despite the current paucity of archaeological evidence with which to test the theory.[66]

The evidence presented in this section supports the notion of Carlisle as an ecclesiastical centre much better than it does Carlisle as the seat of a king or warlord. John Blair has

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[62] K. R. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, p. 65.
[63] Roger H. White, 'A Brave New World? The Archaeology of Western Britain in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries' in Fiona Haarer et al, eds *AD 410: The History and Archaeology of Late and Post-Roman Britain* (London, 2014), pp. 155-164, p. 162. Accessed via http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/browse/issue.xhtml?recordId=1161453, 24th November 2018
[64] Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, p. 67.
[65] Charles Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500* (London, 1981), pp. 190-191, 195, 275-294.
[66] The nearest urban centres to Carlisle were at Lancaster, over 75 miles to the south and Corbridge, 32 miles to the east.

commented on the "documentary elusiveness of royal or residential assembly sites within Roman walls between 650 and 850" and envisages a pattern of erstwhile Roman towns re-emerging specifically as ecclesiastical centres in the late post-Roman period.[67] Carlisle may be another example of this phenomenon. It may even be that the military character of Carlisle's fort had already diminished before the end of the Roman period, with the site evolving into a market.[68]. A change of use of the fort in the fourth century might also explain why no garrison for Carlisle is attested in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.

The slender evidence that we have suggests that it was Stanwix, just over the bridge from Carlisle, which may have retained a role as a high-status secular centre in the post-Roman period, at least for a while. Given Stanwix's importance in the Roman era, this is perhaps unsurprising. The fort blocked access to Carlisle from the north and guarded the Eden crossing. The relatively small size of early medieval warbands when compared to Roman army regiments means there can have been little need for two fortified sites within a mile of one another.

The notion that Carlisle was predominantly an ecclesiastical centre has serious implications for the theory that Carlisle was the *caput* of the shadowy sixth-century kingdom of Rheged.[69] For balance, it is only fair to point out that large-scale excavations of the sort carried out at Birdoswald are rendered impossible at Stanwix by the school and other buildings which now occupy the fort site. It is also true that no major excavation has taken place within the grounds of Carlisle castle itself, which occupies the most strategic part of the old fort site at the very edge of the bluff overlooking the Eden.[70] Until such a time as positive evidence of

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[67] Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 113-114.

[68] On the strength of a number of Northumbrian coins found to the west of the Cathedral, it has been proposed that there was a periodic market in the same part of the city from the seventh to the ninth centuries too. McCarthy et al, 'Function and Change', pp. 204-207, 242-243.

[69] Rheged - and the significant problems associated with identifying both what it was and where it was - is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.3.

[70] The Millennium excavation was focussed on the grassed area immediately in front of the medieval Castle gates.

sixth-century secular elites *is* unearthed at either site, the most plausible conclusion that can currently be drawn is that Carlisle fits Blair's model and that the military presence in the wider Carlisle area died away at some point in the fifth century, to be replaced by the ecclesiastical settlement which ultimately becomes visible in our seventh-century documentary sources.[71]

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[71] *Contra* Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, pp. 71-72. Dark argues that the "obvious interpretation" of the Blackfriars Street site and a site at the 'Abbey' (there is no longer any abbey) is of urban origins for the post-Roman governance in the area.

2.5 EARLY CHRISTIAN CUMBRIA

Carlisle's status as a post-Roman ecclesiastical centre may derive ultimately from its status as a *civitas* capital. Other potentially early Christian sites can make no such claims to Roman origins. The archaeological evidence for these sites falls into four broad categories. Burials, sculpture and structures all provide possible evidence for Christian communities. There is also a reasonably sizeable corpus of indirect or circumstantial evidence which includes (but is not limited to) curvilinear churchyards, church dedications to early British saints and holy wells.

In order to assess the weight than can be afforded to the evidence, it is necessary to ask what a post-Roman Christian site in an area such as Cumbria might have looked like? In terms of site morphology, Charles Thomas' model of increasing complexity (burials, perhaps focussed on a locally significant figure and with or without an enclosure, followed by timber buildings followed by stone buildings) is a useful one, notwithstanding that we should not expect every site – or even most sites – to conform to it.[1] The danger with applying the model too rigidly is to set up a false assumption that there is a trajectory of increasing complexity for early Christian sites, with individual sites either 'succeeding' or 'failing' to make the end point of a fully-blown ecclesiastical centre. There is also a second false assumption, which is to see ecclesiastical sites as discrete from secular ones. The early medieval monastery at Whithorn, for example, appears to have evolved out of a coastal trading site.[2] There is evidence for Christian practice in the earliest phases of Whithorn, but

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[1] It is also worth noting that Irish ecclesiastical sites have recently been shown not to generally conform to Thomas' model. O'Sullivan et al, *Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 324.

[2] Adrián Maldonado, 'Death and the formation of early Christian Scotland' in Tomás Ó' Carragáin and Sam Turner, eds. *Making Christian Landscapes in Atlantic Europe: Conversion and Consolidation in the Early Middle Ages* (Cork, 2016), pp. 229-230. For more on the nature of the trade, see also

that does not make early Whithorn a specifically ecclesiastical settlement.[3] Much the same

may be the case at Tintagel and also perhaps at Carlisle, where that part of the city which

later became the ecclesiastical 'quarter' appears to have operated as a market in the late

and early post-Roman periods. That said, Thomas' model of increasing complexity is still a

useful means of understanding – and perhaps also dating – the evolution of Christian sites in

the post-Roman period and can be examined by reference to two sites just outside Cumbria.
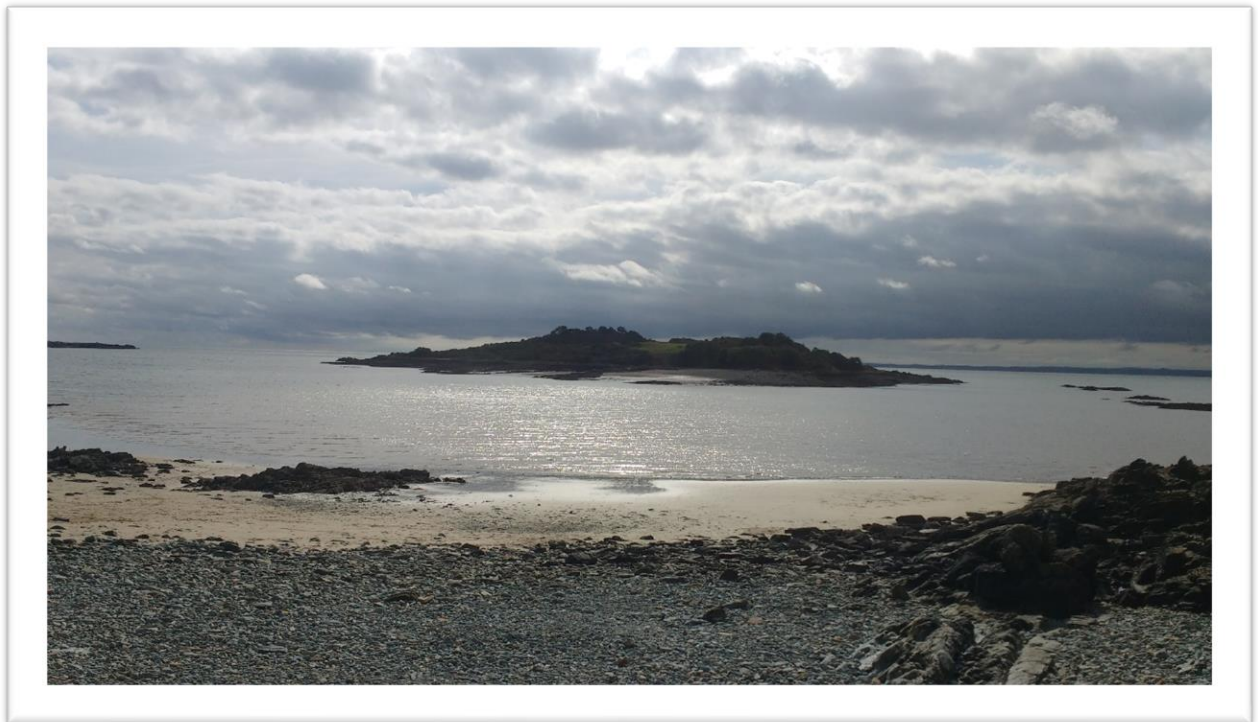
Figure 13: Ardwall Island from Knockbrex beach, Dumfries & Galloway.

Ardwall Isle is the largest of the Fleet Islands and lies just off the coast near Gatehouse of

Fleet, Dumfries & Galloway. The island was a focus for Christian activity from the sixth to the

twelfth century and the earliest activity consisted of a number of burials, perhaps laid out

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Chapter 2.3 and Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*. For a good summary of the evolution of Whithorn from estate centre to monastic community to trading settlement, see Carver, *Formative Britain*, pp. 215-218. Seven of the nine foci argued for post-Roman Cumbria in this thesis have both secular and ecclesiastical characteristics.

[3] Peter Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninian: the Excavation of a Monastic Town*, 1984-91 (Stroud, 1997).

within an enclosure.[4] An altar or shrine may have been erected at the end of this phase of activity. A little later – possibly in the seventh century – a small timber oratory was built. It measured no more than eleven by seven and a half feet and, by the end of the century, had given way to a small stone chapel.[5]

Figure 14: The rock cut graves at St Patrick's Chapel, Heysham.

At St Patrick's Chapel in Heysham, Lancashire, a number of stone cist graves were cut into the granite on a bluff overlooking Morecambe Bay. The graves had slots at the head ends which may have been intended to hold crosses. Burials at the site continued and the site grew in complexity, with a small timber building of likely sixth or seventh-century date being replaced by a larger stone church or chapel (itself constructed in two phases), the standing ruins of which contain some eighth-century Anglo-Saxon masonry.[6] There is no dating

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[4] Charles Thomas, An Early Christian Cemetery and Chapel on Ardwall Isle, Kirkcudbright', *Medieval Archaeology*, 11 (1967), pp. 127-188, pp. 141-143.

[5] ibid., pp. 138-140. See also Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, pp. 151-152.

[6] George Nash, *Death and Memory in an Early Medieval Landscape in North-West England: An Appraisal of St Patrick's Chapel and St Peter's Church, Heysham, Lancashire* (accessed via

evidence for the rock-cut graves, but although they are often taken to be tenth or eleventh-century in date, the foundations of the second stone chapel appeared to cut an earlier slot which may have been another cross socket. As such, it remains possible that the graves belong to the earliest stratum of post-Roman Christianity at the site.

Stone buildings do not appear at either of these sites until the late seventh century at the earliest. This is in line with what we know of the morphology of post-Roman churches more generally. Bede refers to stone churches at both York and Lincoln which were built as part of a programme commissioned by Bishop Paulinus in the wake of the conversion of Edwin of Deira in 627. The new stone church at York is also expressly stated to have replaced a small timber oratory that had specifically been built for Edwin's baptism, confirming Thomas' broad model of site evolution.[7] Yet stone churches were rarities in the post-Roman period – the wider lack of oratories or baptisteries meant that Paulinus' mass conversion of Edwin's subjects at Catterick had to take place in the river Swale.[8] Even the basilica at the royal residence at *Campodunum* appears to have been constructed from wood, given Bede's account of its destruction by fire following Edwin's death in battle.[9] The only other known early stone church in the north was at Whithorn, the singularity of which was specifically commented upon by Bede.[10]

2.5.1 BURIALS

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https://www.researchgate.net/profile/George_Nash2/publication/242574023_Death_and_Memorial_in_an_Early_Medieval_Ecclesiastical_Landscape_in_North-West_England_An/links/551325f50cf23203199ba08b.pdf on 9th May 2020), p. 302.

[7] *EHEP*, II, 14 and 16, 131 and 134. For a fuller discussion of the church at Lincoln, linking it to the sequences discovered in the old Roman forum at St Paul in the Bail, see Peter Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1998), pp. 226-230.

[8] *EHEP*, II, 14, p. 132.

[9] ibid.

[10] ibid., III, 4, p. 148. A similar comment about the British not generally building churches in stone is made in passing in *JVSK*, although whether this is a separate piece of evidence rather than just the re-use of Bede's phrase is unclear. *JVSK*, p. 77.

Even though there are few known post-Roman churches, there are a number of burial sites

which have been plausibly interpreted as possible early Christian cemeteries by reason of a

general (although not total) lack of grave goods, the orientation of the head to the west and

the use of either simple dug graves or cist graves (thin stone slabs placed around a burial to

form a rudimentary coffin).[11] Cist graves sub-divide into long cists (to accommodate a body

laid flat) or short cists (to accommodate a body buried in a crouched position). Unfortunately,

Cumbria's acid soils mean that bone preservation is extremely poor, which deprives us of

skeletal material which could otherwise have been used to date the graves.

The best and most recent burial evidence comes from just outside the Roman fort at

Maryport, where seven long cist graves were discovered about twenty metres or so from the

post-built buildings which were discussed in Chapter 2.2. Six of the graves were relatively

rudimentary and had been dug around a central grave, the *terminus ante quem* for which

was provided by the discovery in the upper grave fill of a coin of the reign of Valentinian,

which cannot have been struck before 364.[12] The graves may have been contemporaneous

with the late Roman or early post-Roman curvilinear ditch which surrounded the site.[13]

Although very little skeletal material was discovered, the grave group appeared to span three

generations. Finds included two white quartz pebbles in the central grave. These have

parallels at other early Christian sites and may recall a Biblical passage from the Book of

Revelation (2:17) in which the victorious can expect to receive a white pebble on which God

will write their new name, which only they will see.[14] Adomnan's seventh-century *Life* of the

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[11] Dave C. Cowley, 'Early Christian Cemeteries in south-west Scotland, in Jane Murray, ed. *St Ninian and the Earliest Christianity in Scotland*, BAR British Series 483 (2009), pp. 43-56, p. 43.
[12] https://www.archaeology.co.uk/articles/features/maryports-mystery-monuments.htm, accessed 5th March 2019.
[13] ibid.
[14] ibid.

sixth-century St Columba also includes an account of the saint giving a white pebble with healing properties to the household of the Pictish king, Bridei.[15]

Maryport is a complex site, but the relationship between the buildings, the ditch, the two Class I stones (as discussed in Chapter 2.3.1) and the graves have plausibly led to the working theory that the site was home to an early Christian community in the fifth or sixth century.[16]

We are lucky with the relative wealth of data at Maryport. The same cannot be said for other sites, where the usual picture is one of a lack of data and/or the loss or artefacts, often as a result of poorly recorded antiquarian excavations of the nineteenth century. Eaglesfield, near Cockermouth, is a case in point. A grave interpreted as that of a Viking warrior was discovered in 1814 at Tendley Hill, just north of the modern village. Further unpublished excavations were carried out in 1841 the hope of finding more Viking burials, but what was discovered instead was an unspecified number of skeletons without grave goods or coffins, buried in simple dug graves.[17] A chance reference in the notes of the excavation makes it clear that the burials were oriented with heads to the west in the traditional Christian manner.[18] An early date for the Tendley Hill cemetery receives support from Eaglesfield's name, which is one of a very small number of place-names in Cumbria which include the element *ecles*, a word borrowed into Old English by pagan Anglo-Saxons to describe an

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[15] *LSC*, p. 182.

[16] Charles Thomas' hypothesis that Christianity in Galloway originated in Cumbria certainly receives a boost from the work at Maryport. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain,* pp. 279, 283. That said, the significance of the intervisibility of Maryport and Whithorn in Galloway (on clear days at least), which has previously been noted, should perhaps not be pushed too far. Whithorn is roughly thirty-four miles due west of Maryport. That is more than half as far again as Dover is from Calais. Even on a clear day, it is not possible to stand on the White Cliffs and make out individual buildings on the French coast. One can stand on the coast near Whithorn and see the Cumbrian mountains quite clearly, but not anything at Maryport itself. From Maryport, one undoubtedly has a long vista of the Galloway coast, but the Wigtown peninsula is relatively low lying and it is not possible to make out any detail.

[17] It is possible that there were six graves in total, including the warrior. J. D. Cowen, 'Viking Burials in Cumbria', *TCWAAS* (1948), p. 74.

[18] J. D. Cowen, 'Viking Burials in Cumbria: a Supplement', *TCWAAS* (1967), pp. 33-34.

unfamiliar Christian site.[19] Unfortunately, further investigation of the cemetery using modern

archaeological techniques is rendered impossible as Tendley Hill is now a limestone quarry.

Comparisons with known Christian sites led to the conclusion that the Viking burial at

Eaglesfield had been deliberately intruded into a pre-existing early Christian cemetery.[20]

Something similar may well have taken place at Ormside in the Eden Valley, where another

richly-appointed and ostensibly 'Viking' grave was found in the churchyard.[21] At Rampside,

near Barrow, two possible Viking-era swords were found in the churchyard by gravediggers

in 1854 and 1909.[22]

Further evidence of post-Roman burials comes from Carlisle, Birdoswald and Workington. A

grave close to the Carlisle Cathedral returned a fifth or sixth- century date. At Birdoswald,

three graves were discovered, although only one is referred to in published works. This was

an empty long cist found in 1956 to the east of the fort. The area has not otherwise been

fully excavated, so it is not known whether this grave is a one-off. The other two graves were

discovered in 2011 in an enclosure which originally formed part of the Roman-era cemetery

of Birdoswald's civilian *vicus*, which lay to the west of the fort.[23] One grave appears to have

been a double grave (with a pillow stone at the head end for one of the occupants), whereas

the other was a pebble-lined long cist grave. No skeletal material remained in either grave.

The graves blocked the entrance to the enclosure and cut the fill of the enclosure ditch,

making them later than the enclosure. The ditch itself contained fragments of Crambeck

Parchment ware. As this particular pottery style belongs to the late fourth century and as the

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[19] See Chapter 3.2 for a fuller discussion of this place-name element.
[20] P. A. Wilson, 'Eaglesfield: the place, the name, the burials', *TCWAAS* (1978), pp. 47-54, pp. 50-52.
[21] The circumstances of the discovery of the grave and the Ormside Bowl (as it is known) are not clear and it is not absolutely certain that the two are linked. The earliest surviving fabric of Ormside church dates to the eleventh century, which is very early by Cumbrian standards. Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cumberland and Westmorland* (London, 2002), pp. 281-282.
[22] https://furnesshiddenheritage.blogspot.com/2016/11/buried-swords-and-hoards-vikings-in.html, accessed 13th December 2020.
[23] https://mistshadows.blogspot.com/2016/07/the-arthur-of-history-appendix-ii.html, accessed 29th April 2020.

graves must post-date the infilled ditch, a fifth-century date for the graves is most likely. This would make them contemporaneous with Birdoswald's post-Roman timber halls, which were discussed in Chapter 2.2.

St Michael's Church, Workington, overlooks the mouth of the river Derwent and is notable for the large quantity of Anglo-Saxon and Hiberno-Norse sculpture of the ninth to the eleventh centuries that has been found there.[24] St Michael's was seriously damaged in an arson attack in 1994 and during subsequent archaeological investigations, a number of phases of activity were identified. The earliest structure was a ditch of indeterminate date which *might* have been connected to an early monastic site.[25] Better evidence of early activity came from an early medieval cemetery which was discovered under the floors of the church.[26] There were four layers of burials, stacked one on top of the other. One skeleton returned a radiocarbon date of 605 to 670 AD. A second skeleton, which was recovered from the lowest layer, returned a date of 670-770 AD, strongly suggesting that the site was extant in the seventh century.[27]

Persuasive evidence for other possible post-Roman burials is difficult to find. Such as there is was helpfully drawn together by Deirdre O'Sullivan and what follows below is essentially a whistle-stop summary of her painstaking work.[28]

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[24] Mike McCarthy and Caroline Paterson, 'Viking-Age Site at Workington, Cumbria: Interim Statement' in Stephen E. Harding, David Griffiths and Elizabeth Royles, eds. *In Search of Vikings: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Scandinavian Heritage of North-West England (*Boca Ratton, 2015), pp. 127-136, p. 128.
[25] ibid., pp. 129 and 134.
[26] P. Flynn, 'Excavations at St Michael's, Workington', *Church Archaeology*, I (1997), pp. 43-45.
[27] Rachel Newman, *Dacre, Cumbria, the early medieval monastery described by the Venerable Bede, talk given to the Royal Archaeological Institute on 14th December 2016*, https://www.royalarchinst.org/rai-lectures-online/14-December-2016, esp.42 minutes in. Accessed 14th December 2020.
[28] Potter, 'Romans in North-west England', pp. 47-48. O'Sullivan, *Reassessment*, p. 390. Deirdre O'Sullivan, 'Cumbria Before the Vikings: Dark Age Problems in North-West England' in John R. Baldwin and Ian D. Whyte, eds. *The Scandinavians in Cumbria* (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 17-35, pp. 22-23.

Single long cists were found at or near the Roman era forts at Ravenglass and Beckfoot and a small cist cemetery was found at the fort at Moresby. All three of these sites are on the
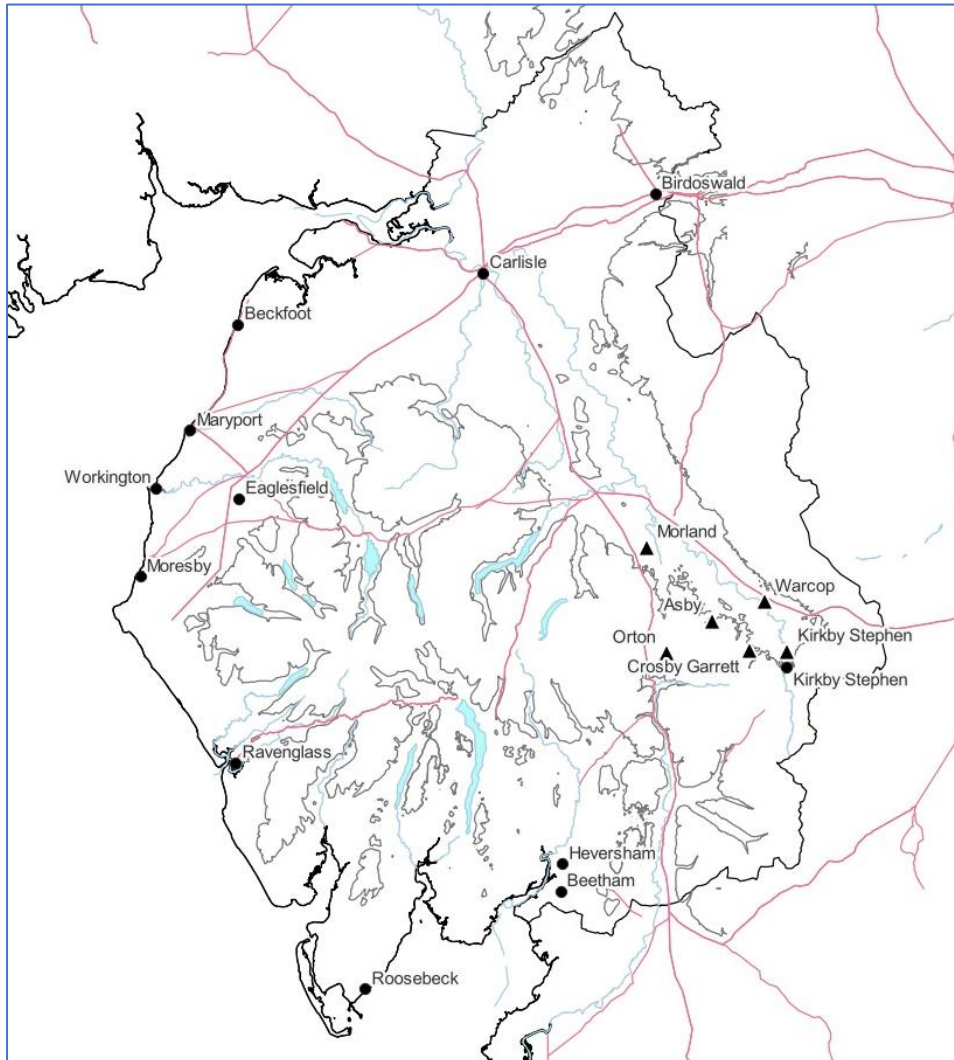
Map 11: Early Burials.

West Cumbrian coast. At Ravenglass, a one-time fleet base for the Roman navy whose garrison was still *in situ* in the late Roman period (at least according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*), a cist was cut through the latest Roman levels, making a post-Roman date likely.[29] At Beckfoot, a small coastal station in the Roman period, a single cist was cut

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[29] For Ravenglass' Roman name, see Appendix 1.

through the Roman levels but not through the levels above them, suggesting a late Roman or post-Roman date.[30]

An unspecified number of skeletons, each enclosed by four stones or slates, were discovered during renovation works at Moresby Hall in 1842.[31] There is no artefactual or stratigraphic dating evidence and no record of the orientation of the skeletons, but the proximity of the site to the local parish church, which itself was built in the corner of the Roman fort, allows for the possibility that the burials were early Christian cist graves. Modest further support for post-Roman occupation at Moresby comes from three other chance finds. A very worn late Roman *nummus* (a low value, base metal coin) dating to 370 or after is late- rather than post-Roman, but its worn state allows it to have been in circulation for some considerable time before it was deposited.[32] The exact find spots of a copper alloy hand pin of 'Celtic' style and a glass spindle whorl are unknown, and neither can be dated with any real precision.[33]

At Roosebeck, near Barrow, two rows of burials oriented west/east have tentatively been identified as early Christian. Roosebeck is close to Rampside, whose cemetery has shifted over time (a phenomenon sometimes argued to indicate significant antiquity for a site) and where Viking material (including the swords referenced above) and burials of uncertain date were discovered.[34]

A single, empty long cist found at Kirkby Stephen Church and a row of burials (also oriented west/east) at Heversham pretty much complete the picture, but in both of these cases the burials may post-date the seventh century. Long cist and earth-cut burials continued to be

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[30] O'Sullivan, *Reassessment*, pp. 388-9.
[31] ibid., p. 387.
[32] Accessed via the Portable Antiquities Scheme at
https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/619052 on 28th November 2020.
[33] O'Sullivan, 'Finds', pp. 34, 35, 39.
[34] O'Sullivan, *Reassessment,* p. 388.

used long after the post-Roman period. On the strength of eighth or ninth-century Anglo-Saxon sculpture found at both sites, Kirkby Stephen and Heversham have good claims to have been Christian Anglo-Saxon foci, albeit at a slightly later date than the period covered in this thesis. Whether their graves belong to this later period or hint at an earlier period of use at either site cannot currently be ascertained.[35]

There are also six burial sites which have been interpreted as possible pagan Anglo-Saxon burials of the pre-Conversion period. This would make them post-Roman, although firm dating evidence is not available for any of them. The sites in question are clustered in a small area in the upper Eden Valley.[36] All were discovered by nineteenth-century antiquarians and we do not have sufficient data to date the graves nor ascertain their religious affiliation. The identification of these graves as pagan Anglo-Saxon was made by those who found them, who were working on the basis that as Christians were not buried with grave goods. the burials were passive indicators of the westward incursion of Anglo-Saxon invaders. The possibility that some or many of these graves have been wrongly attributed as belonging to the Anglo-Saxon period cannot therefore be ruled out. Even if a post-Roman date is sound, the numbers of burials contained within them are very small. With the exception of Warcop, where the body had been cremated, all of the burials are inhumations. Five of the six sites (Asby, Crosby Garrett, Kirkby Stephen, Morland and Warcop) contained just one burial, which in the case of Crosby Garrett appeared to be that of a child of roughly 12 to 14 years of age. There was an additional empty grave cut at Kirkby Stephen. Only Orton, with three inhumations, contained multiple bodies. As at Eaglesfield, Ormside and Rampside, the burials at all of these sites had been intruded into pre-existing graves as secondary burials. However, unlike Eaglesfield *et al*, the primary

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[35] That said, as will be shown in Chapter 3.3.2, Heversham's name belongs to the very earliest stratum of English place-names. This certainly raises the possibility that there was activity there (whether or not that activity was religious in nature) prior to the development of the site into an Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical centre.
[36] O'Sullivan, *Reassessment*, pp. 169-193, 373-376.

burials appear to have been prehistoric. The intention behind the siting of the burials may have been the same as at Eaglesfield or Ormside - a deliberate choice, intended to signify dominance or (as is perhaps more likely) to assert a link between previous and current populations.

Orton produced no grave goods at all. At Asby there was only an iron knife. At Kirkby Stephen, there was a bronze bowl and a glass bead. Morland produced an iron spearhead and animal bones and Crosby Garrett a mix of iron gear (including a knife and a bridle bit). Only at Warcop did the grave goods unequivocally suggest an individual of standing. An iron sword, a spearhead and the remains of a shield boss, helmet and a second spearhead were found with the cremation, suggesting that the occupant of the grave had been regarded as a fighting man – or that those who interred his remains wished him to be viewed in that way. Warcop aside, this relative lack of grave goods when compared to early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries elsewhere may suggest that the occupants of the graves were not especially wealthy. Alternatively, if the ostentatious use of grave goods elsewhere in Britain has been correctly interpreted as signifying social unrest and/or to establish claims over territory, we may simply be looking at further evidence for a relatively settled local situation in this part of Cumbria.[37]

Even if all of these examples have correctly been identified as sixth or early seventh-century graves (and it is worth bearing in mind that there is nothing inherently pagan about furnished inhumation), they can hardly be said to indicate a large migration of pagan Anglo-Saxons into early medieval Cumbria. This leaves two possible explanations. Either very few culturally Germanic groups settled in Cumbria before the conversion of the Northumbrian Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, or those that came were acculturated to at least some local practices, including funerary rites.[38] These explanations are not mutually exclusive, given

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[37] Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 260-265. Williams, 'Mortuary Practices', pp. 255-256.
[38] This is the 'Eaglesfield Question' which was discussed in Chapter 2.3.5.

that the smaller the number of incomers, the more likely that local customs would not have been displaced. Acculturation cuts both ways and it might be the case that some of Cumbria's supposed Anglo-Saxon burials are those of Britons who simply adopted Germanic material culture.[39] It is perhaps notable in this regard that the grave sites all cluster around a relatively small part of the upper Eden Valley, on the principal route through Cumbria from Anglo-Saxon York and the south and east more generally. This may well have been the principal route by which ideas – and people – entered this part of eastern Cumbria. Either way the notion of a large-scale, Northumbrian invasion of the pre-Conversion period which displaced or debased British elites is not supported by the funerary evidence.

2.5.2 STONE SCULPTURE

Cumbria's sculptural evidence is in two broad groups – sculpture with overt Christian affiliations and the small number of potential Class I stones, which suggest the existence of literate elites in the post -Roman period. The Class I stones were discussed in some detail in Chapter 2.3.1.

Insofar as other stone sculpture is concerned, Cumbria has a relatively large corpus of the eighth century and later, but relatively little that can be securely dated to the period covered by this thesis. One important possible exception to this general rule is the Bewcastle Cross which, with its sister cross at Ruthwell in Dumfries & Galloway, is considered to be one of the finest pieces of early Anglo-Saxon sculpture in Europe.

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[39] The theory that the timber hall and sunken huts at nearby Fremington represent a British farmstead where certain Germanic styles had been adopted also speaks of acculturation See Chapter 2.6 for a fuller discussion of Fremington.
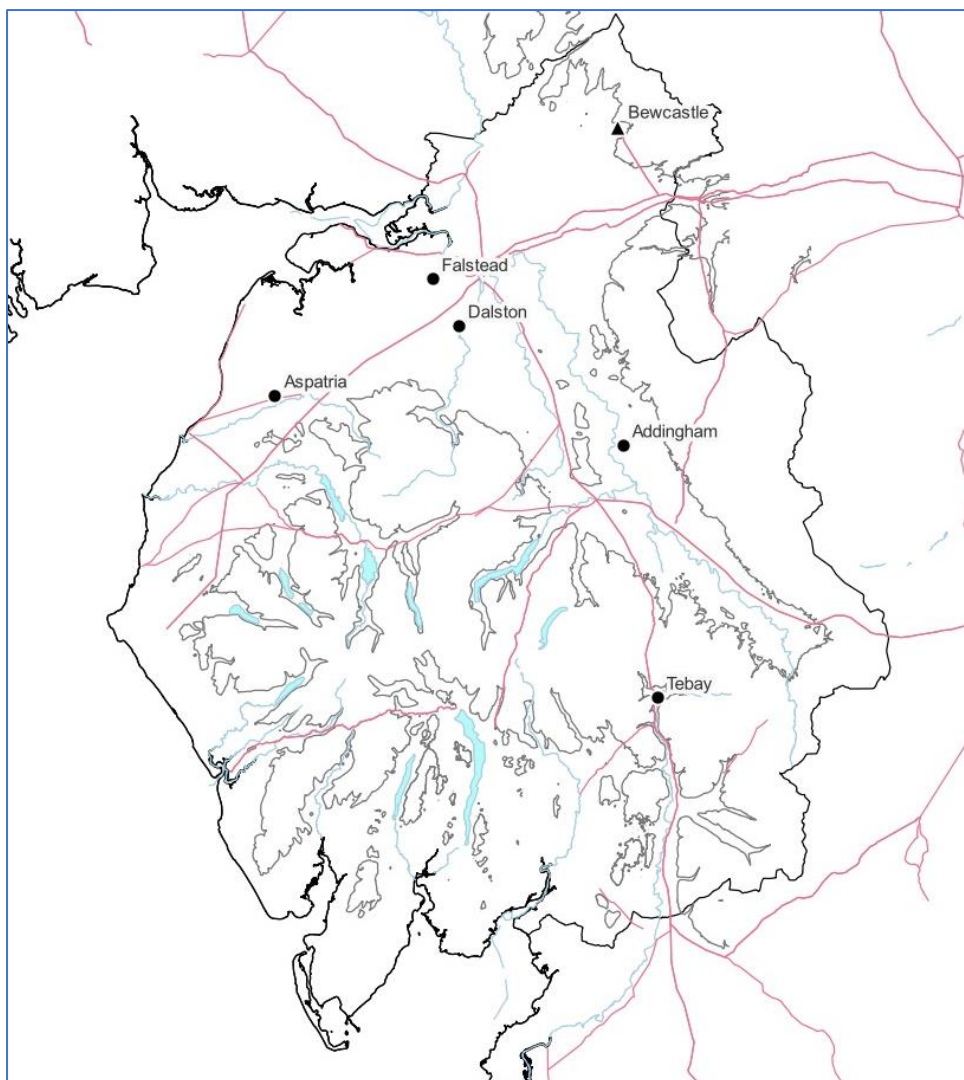
Map 12: Post-Roman Christian Sculpture.

The artwork on the Bewcastle Cross speaks of a mix of influences from the Eastern

Mediterranean, from the Roman styles of Late Antiquity and perhaps also from 'Celtic'

styles.[40] The date of the cross has never been firmly established, and perhaps can never be,

at least on art historical grounds. A date between the 680s (when stonemasons were first

brought to the monasteries of Northumbria, as attested by Bede), or the middle part of the

eighth century is most likely.[41] Pevsner, originally writing in 1967, championed a late

seventh-century date on the basis of the translation of the now worn runic inscriptions on the

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[40] Pevsner, *Cumberland and Westmorland*, pp. 15-16, 68-69.
[41] R. J. Cramp, 'The Bewcastle Cross and its Context' in Bailey and Cramp, *Corpus*, http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk/vol2/bewcastle.php, accessed 29th March 2019.

cross, especially those on the north face of the monument. These appear to refer to Cyneburh and to one Alcfrith, the latter of whom is named as a king and son of Oswiu.

Oswiu of Bernicia (who reigned 642-670) had two sons with similar names. It is important to keep this distinction clear, as some commentators who have discussed the inscriptions on the Bewcastle Cross conflate the two men. Ahlfrith was sub-king of Deira in the 660s and was a great champion of Bishop Wilfrid and the Roman church. He seems to have fallen out

Figure 15: The Bewcastle Cross

with his father.[42] Ahlfrith's half-brother, Aldfrith, was king of Northumbria from 685 to 704/5. Cyneburh was Ahlfrith's wife, which certainly supports his claim to be the individual named on the monument. Although Ahlfrith ruled in what is now Yorkshire, it is very likely that his

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[42] See Chapter 4.4 for a fuller discussion of the perils of being related to Oswiu.

mother was a member of a British dynasty based to the west of the Pennines.[43] If so – and if Ahlfrith *is* the man commemorated on the monument – one might speculate that the cross was raised in memory of Ahlfrith in the homelands of (and perhaps even at the direction of) his mother at some point after Oswiu's death in 670. As ever, though, caution is warranted. The name on the cross may not be that of Ahlfrith. This part of the inscription has partially worn away and may have been deliberately modified over the centuries, either by nineteenth-century antiquarians or by practical jokers.[44] Comparisons with the runic inscriptions on the Ruthwell Cross and on a third monument at Great Urswick on the Furness peninsula suggests a date of 750-850 for the Bewcastle monument.[45] If this is right, we are at a remove of at least one century from the time Ahlfrith. That said, that an individual called Cyneburh *is* named on the Bewcastle Cross has been accepted since the first known translation of the runes in 1685.[46] Although the name was not uncommon in early medieval England, Cyneburh was the first abbess of Whitby and a daughter of Penda of Mercia. She was later sanctified. As such, she has as good a claim as anyone of that name to be commemorated on a monument with overt Christian affiliations.[47]

A second monument from Bewcastle (a grave marker which is covered in a distinctive 'pecking' pattern of little dimples), *could* be as early as the sixth century, although a date of anywhere up to the eleventh is also possible.[48]

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[43] See Chapter 4.4.

[44] R. I Page, 'The Bewcastle Cross', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* (1960), pp. 36-57 and esp. pp. 38-39, 50-54.

[45] ibid., esp. pp. 56-57.

[46] That translation was carried out by William Nicolson, a cleric and member of the Royal Society. Notwithstanding that he might has misread one of the runes, the corrected form still gives us an acceptable form of the name Cyneburh. R. I. Page, 'William Nicolson F.R.S., and the runes of the Bewcastle Cross', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* (1960), pp. 185-186.

[47] The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England website identified three people who bore the name between the seventh and tenth centuries. https://pase.ac.uk/jsp/pdb?dosp=VIEW_RECORDS&st=PERSON_NAME&value=1600&level=1&lbl=Cyneburg accessed 13th April 2022. For completeness a twelfth century source also suggests that Oswald's wife wad called 'Kyneburga', although the provenance of this claim is not known.

[48] Bailey and Cramp, *Corpus*, p. 73.

There are five other possible early examples of Christian sculpture. Two stone slabs of roughly the same size were found at separate sites outside Carlisle. The first is the Falstead (or Bow) Stone, first recorded in 1879 and found about three miles to the west of Carlisle, where it was being used as a gatepost.[49] The Bow Stone may have been the lintel of a Christian building.[50] The two broad faces of the stone are carved with a crossing scrollwork which was probably intended to represent a figurative vine tree and a rough, long-stemmed cross respectively.[51] The work is rougher than other examples of Roman-period scrollwork known from Cumbria, but is unlike any known Anglo-Saxon sculpture. It should therefore be regarded as late or post-Roman, or at least in the Roman style.

The Bow Stone has similarities with a second sculpture found at Dalston, five miles to the south west of Carlisle.[52] These similarities have led to the conclusion that the two pieces may once have been in the same building, with the Dalston stone possibly serving as a baptismal font.[53] This is certainly an attractive argument, although it should be noted that both stones are pretty sizeable and if they did ultimately come from the same building, the fact that they were first recorded over five miles apart as the crow flies (and rather longer as the Roman road ran) requires an explanation which is not immediately apparent.

A cross-incised slab is displayed in the porch of Addingham church. The slab was recovered from the bed of the Eden in 1913. It had been in the river since at least the eighteenth century, when the Eden changed course and flooded the old village.[54] The stone is about a metre and a half tall and the only decoration is a rough, offset cross inscribed on one of the

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[49] The dimensions of the Bow Stone are roughly 75 cm long, 45 cm wide and 35 cm deep. It is now in Tullie House Museum.
[50] Bailey and Cramp, *Corpus*., p. 98.
[51] ibid., pp. 97-98.
[52] The dimensions of the Dalston Stone are roughly 137 cm long, 45 cm wide and 45 cm deep. It is also now in Tullie House.
[53] Bailey and Cramp, *Corpus*, pp. 93-94, 98. The point is also made that it is equally possible that the stone was hollowed later to make a trough.
[54] The new church is about half a mile away from the site of the original village.

broad faces. On the basis of stylistic similarities to seventh-century Welsh examples, the

Addingham slab is considered to have a 'Celtic' pedigree.[55]

Figure 16: The Addingham Cross Slab.

The singularity of the Addingham slab has frequently been commented upon. [56] It may be

that the survival of the monument is more singular than the carving itself. As with other

Roman and early medieval sculptures from the Eden valley, the medium chosen for the slab

was the local sandstone, which is particularly susceptible to weathering.[57] The cross on the

Addingham stone may only have survived because it was face down in the mud and silt of

the Eden. Any carving on the other three faces of the stone which were exposed to the water

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[55] Bailey and Cramp, *Corpus*, pp. 47-48.
[56] ibid., p. 47.
[57] Sandstone dominates the geological layers in much of north Cumbria and gives towns like Carlisle, Appleby and Penrith their distinctive red hue.

would have worn away quickly. Eden valley sandstone naturally breaks into squared chunks which are extremely well suited to walling and building. Both the Falstead and Dalston stones had been repurposed for agricultural use and one is tempted to wonder how many other examples of early medieval sculpture remain hidden in houses or field walls?

The final monuments are two stones decorated with small crosses which, by analogy with other monuments in the Isle of Man and Western Britain, may be of post-Roman date. The first is a slab from Aspatria, which had been re-used as part of a stone cist coffin for a Viking-period inhumation.[58] It was covered with different carvings of various dates, including a number of small ring crosses which have their closest parallels with monuments of the seventh to ninth-centuries.[59] The second is (or was) the Brandreth Stone, which was recorded in the 1936 Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Westmorland as a granite boulder, roughly 45 centimetres by 30 centimetres set against a field wall a few hundred yards north of Tebay church.[60] Camden's *Britannia*, as updated in 1789, recorded: -

> a field called Gallaber, where stands Brandreth stone, a red stone about an ell high with two crosses cut deep on one side. The tradition of the inhabitants makes it the mere stone between the English and the Scots, and it is worthy observation, that it is about the same distance from Scotland as Rere cross on Stanemore, of which see before in Richmondshire. It may be the stone of which Leland VII. 63. says, "There is in Westmorland as it is said a famous stone as a limes of old time, inscribed."

Despite Camden's assertion that there were two crosses, the *Inventory* records just one small, rough cross.[61] Although David Petts considers that the Brandreth Stone had early Christian

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[58] David Petts, 'Beacon Hill, Aspatria: an early Christian carved stone rehabilitated', *TCWAAS* (2002), pp. 103- 110, pp. 103-104.
[59] ibid., pp. 106, 108. A ring cross is simply a circle with a cross inside. Each arm of the cross touches the outer circle.
[60] https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/westm/pp225-226 accessed 16th March 2019.
[61] http://www.lakesguides.co.uk/html/lgaz/lk15223.htm accessed 12th November 2020.

origins, it is impossible to test the theory – or count the crosses – as further fieldwork in the 1960s failed to locate the Brandreth Stone.[62] Its location as recorded in the *Inventory* almost certainly places it under what is now junction 38 of the M6 motorway.[63]

2.5.3 STRUCTURES

Although, for the reasons stated above, we would not expect to find *de novo* timber churches much before the seventh century or stone buildings much before the very end of the post-Roman period, a number of other sites deserve comment and may hint at early Christian activity in the post-Roman Cumbria.

Good evidence for early medieval (although not explicitly post-Roman) activity comes from Dacre, near Penrith. Bede talks of a monastery under construction at Dacre in or about 728.[64] This is often taken to be a reference to a new foundation. Bede never expressly says this and there are a number of reasons to question whether this is the case.

Firstly, Dacre is a British name which suggests British antecedents for the site.[65] Secondly, the monastery already appears to have had a resident population of monks when Bede was

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[62] Petts, 'Beacon Hill', p. 108. Barbara Holt, 'The Brandreth Stone, Old Tebay (NY 616049), *TCWAAS* (1972), pp. 331-332

[63] The stone would have been very close to Castle Howe, an earthwork which guards the north end of the Lune Gap and the ford over the river Lune. Although Castle Howe was assumed by Collingwood to be a Norman motte and bailey (an assumption which has been repeated since), no finds or remains are reported and it has, to my knowledge, never been excavated. Whether it replaced anything earlier is therefore an open question. Castle Howe is clearly visible on the left-hand side of the M6 as one travels north, immediately after the slip road from junction 38 joins the motorway.

[64] *EHEP*, IV, 32, p. 264.

[65] *PNC*, pp. xix,10-11. The derivation is uncertain – 'trickling stream' from a cognate Breton *dacr* or Welsh *deigr* (in each case meaning 'tear') is proposed. BLITON, p. 103. The etymology may be sound enough, but (save for times of no rain) is not an especially apposite description of Dacre beck (especially in the village of Dacre itself), which runs with some force. Perhaps 'the crying one' would be more appropriate?

writing, as he recounts how one of the brothers at Dacre was healed by a relic of St

Cuthbert.[66] Unless the monks were responsible for personally building their own monastery,
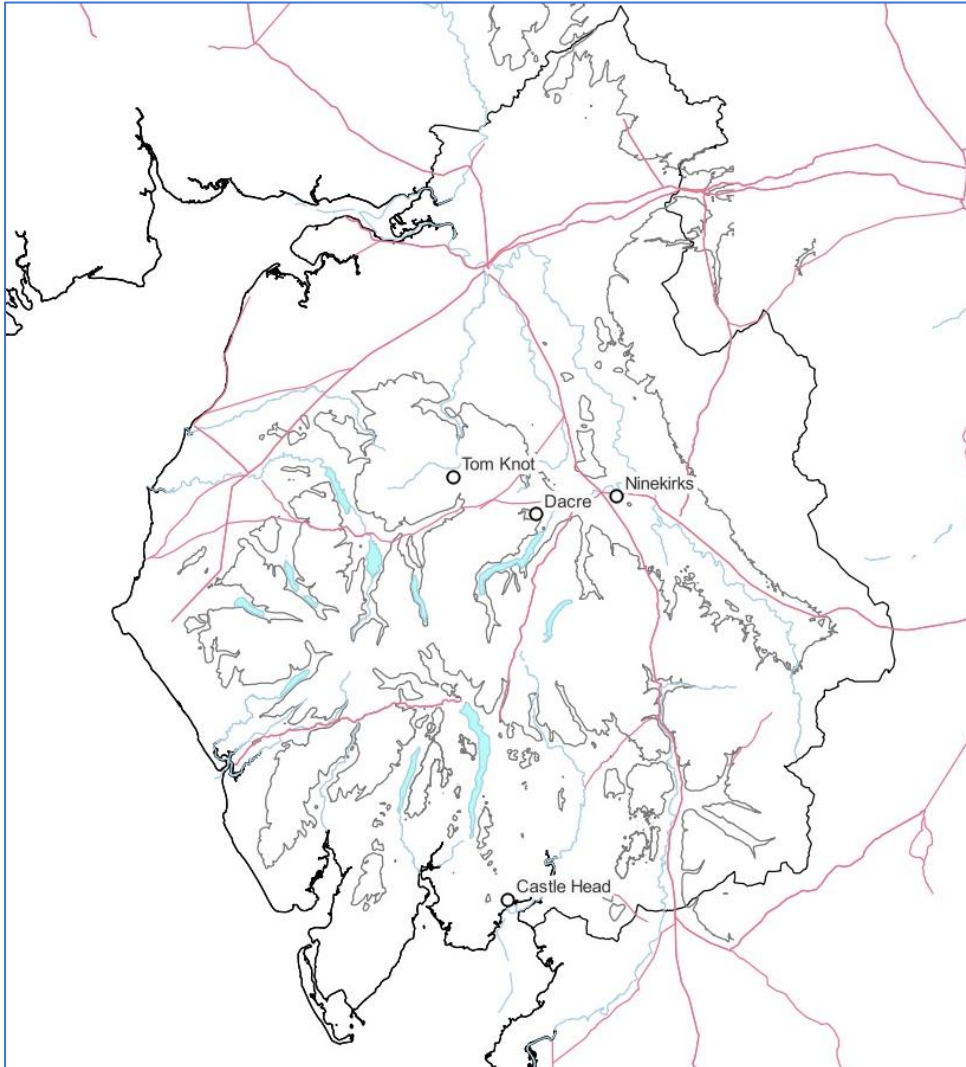
Map 13: Possible post-Roman Christian sites.

this *might* suggest that the monastery under construction in 728 replaced an extant

foundation.[67] It is therefore at least possible that Dacre was a pre-existing British monastic

site which was remodelled in the eighth century.[68]

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[66] *EHEP*, IV, 32, pp. 264-265.

[67] There is a suggestion in the *Life* of St Columba that the monks of Durrow, in Ireland, were responsible for building their own monastery. *LSC*, p. 133.

[68] Leech and Newman, 'Dacre', p. 85. It is possible that some of these questions will be explored further when the full excavation reports are published. Newman and Leech, forthcoming. Around

The earliest post-Roman layers include a late or post-Roman building which is marked by a circle of post holes, the function of which is unknown.[69] The Anglian monastery also had a drain made from badly reworked Roman stone, which presumably came from an otherwise unknown earlier building close by.[70] The earliest of nineteen pieces of early medieval metalwork found during excavations in 1982-4 was probably of late sixth or seventh-century date.[71]

The name of the now redundant church at Ninekirks, Brougham, recalls St Ninian, who was supposed to have evangelised the 'southern Picts' and established the monastic site at Whithorn in Dumfries & Galloway.[72] During rebuilding works in 1846, a number of graves were discovered under the chancel of the medieval church. Most of the dateable material recovered from the excavation was thirteenth century, but one artefact (a now-lost cup mount) was most likely eighth century.[73] An aerial photography survey conducted in 1968 identified the outline of a large elliptical enclosure roughly 75 metres in diameter, adjacent to the church. Within this enclosure were a number of rectangular buildings measuring roughly twenty by seven metres, together with pits and possible post holes.[74] Ninekirks has similarities to early Irish monastic sites and to the early medieval British and Anglo-Saxon monastic site at Hoddom in Dumfries & Galloway. Accordingly, it has been interpreted as a

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twenty British monasteries are attested before 650 and although none of them are in Cumbria, British monasticism pre-dated the explosion of Anglo-Saxon monastic sites in the late seventh century. For the sites see John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), p. 14.

[69] Leech and Newman, 'Dacre', pp. 88, 90.

[70] ibid., at 27.30 minutes.

[71] Newman, *Dacre, Cumbria* at 23.20 minutes.

[72] *EHEP*, III, 4, p. 148.

[73] Richard N. Bailey, 'A Cup-Mount from Brougham, Cumbria', *Medieval Archaeology*, 21 (1977), pp. 176-180.

[74] J. K. St Joseph, 'Aerial reconnaissance: recent results', *Antiquity*, 52 (1978), pp. 236-238.

possible early monastic site.[75] The recurring importance of Brougham in the post-Roman

period makes Ninekirks a prime candidate for further investigation.[76]

Figure 17: Castle Head, Lindale. The low-lying land around the mound was reclaimed from the sea
and is now protected from inundation by the embankment of a railway line which is situated beyond
the right-hand side of the photograph.

Another site which may be worthy of further investigation is Castle Head, a prominent hillock

which once jutted out into the sea at the point where the river Winster meets Morecambe

Bay.[77] The landward side of the hill slopes more gently than the seaward side and is cut by

a ditch of indeterminate date. It has plausibly been argued that Castle Head may have been

the original site of Cartmel, an estate which was gifted to Cuthbert late in the seventh

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[75] O'Sullivan et al, *Early Medieval Ireland*, pp. 167-168. St Joseph, 'Reconnaissance', p. 238. See
also Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, 130-131 and Carver, *Formative Britain*, pp. 214-215.
[76] If Simon Draper is right to conclude that the Old English place-name element *burh* denotes an
enclosed site (an argument he only made for his area of study, which was Wiltshire), Ninekirks might
even be the *burh* to which Brougham's name refers. Simon Draper, 'Language and the Anglo-Saxon
Landscape: Towards an Archaeological Interpretation of Place-Names in Wiltshire', in Nicholas
Higham and Martin J. Ryan, eds. *Place-Names, Language and the English Landscape* (Woodbridge,
2011), pp. 85-104, p. 100.
[77] Construction of the embankment for the railway line from Lancaster to Barrow has led to the
reclamation of the land immediately to the south of Castle Head, as the photograph shows.

century.[78] The name 'Cartmel' derives from an Old English name meaning 'rocky ground by the sandbank'.[79] This is a poor description of the topography of the modern village of Cartmel, which lies about three miles inland of Castle Head and which is in neither a rocky nor a sandy (or gravelly) location.[80] It does, though, match the various stony hillocks (including Castle Head) that protrude into the mud and sands of Morecambe Bay.[81]

Although there has been no excavation at Castle Head, building work in the eighteenth century turned up a variety of animal bones, rings and beads, together with ninety-five Anglo-Saxon coins, seventy-five Roman coins and a number of egg-shaped pieces of white limestone. This last find is potentially significant. White pebbles have been discovered in early Christian graves in the Isle of Man, Dumfries & Galloway and North Wales (as well as at Maryport) and, as discussed above, are plausibly associated with Christian funerary activity. The topography of the site also shares many similarities with other early monastic sites, cut off as it is by water on three sides and a ditch to the landward side.[82]

The final candidate is Tom Knot, a small, steep sided promontory in Mungrisdale. On top of the hillock is an oval enclosure measuring around fifty by thirty metres which is marked by a line of low boulders. Three small trenches were dug in 2018 which revealed a setting at the western end of the enclosure which may have been intended for either a stone or a wooden cross.[83] The initial conclusion is that the boulders mark an enclosure which may have been an early medieval Christian site. Although this theory remains very tentative, it is just

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[78] See Chapter 4.4 for a full discussion of the documentary sources touching on Cartmel.
[79] *PNL*, pp. 195-196. 'Melur' might also refer to a gravel bank (Chris Callow, pers comm).
[80] C. J. Crowe, 'Cartmel, The Earliest Christian Community', *TCWAAS* (1984), pp. 61-66, pp. 61-63.
[81] Crowe also proposed Kirkhead, near Allithwaite, as a second candidate for the original Cartmel. Crowe, 'Cartmel', p. 63.
[82] For a useful discussion on the physical character of early monastic sites, see Foot, *Monastic Life*, pp. 96-100.
[83] John Hinchcliffe, 'An Enigmatic Enclosure at Tom Knot, Berrier,' *TCWAAS Newsletter*, 91, Summer 2019, p. 10.

possible that Tom Knot might represent a very rare example of an early Christian site which never developed beyond an open-air enclosure.

2.5.4 THE INDIRECT EVIDENCE

The final class of evidence for early post-Roman Christianity is something of a 'wash-up' of hints and clues which are, at best, inferential rather than determinative. This indirect evidence includes wells named after St Helen, church dedications to local or early saints, curvilinear churchyards, the siting of churches in Roman forts, the siting of churches near prehistoric sites and place-name evidence indicating an early church site. This list of evidence types is based on the recent work of Edith Evans, who sought to synthesise the various strands of evidence for early Welsh churches by grading it into three categories according to its perceived strength.[84] The best evidence (Grade A) included direct archaeological evidence of Christianity such as burials and the siting of churches in Roman forts. Grade B included other early medieval archaeological evidence, stone sculpture and proximity to prehistoric sites. Grade C included much of the indirect evidence summarised above. A similar approach will be adopted here. Firstly, however, it is necessary to consider some of the indirect evidence a little further.

2.5.4.1 ST HELEN'S WELLS

It has long been argued that wells dedicated to St Helen may recall the deliberate appropriation by Christian groups of pre-existing pagan sites dedicated to a Celtic water

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[84] Edith Evans, 'Continuity and Renewal of Monastic landholding in Wales before and after the Anglo-Norman Conquest', in Nancy Edwards, ed. *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Church*, Volume 29 (Abingdon, 2017), pp. 85-104.

deity known as Alauna.[85] The St Helen in question was the mother of Constantine the Great

(reigned 306-337). Constantine was declared Emperor at York and who was an important

figure in the acceptance of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Helen's evolution into

a Christian saint did not gather pace until after the Reformation. Before that time, she was a

relatively unimportant figure in religious calendars.[86]

Britain has a particular concentration of dedications to St Helen and these do indeed appear

to be associated with watercourses and springs, which we know were frequently venerated

in Roman Britain.[87] Two of the three Roman sites in the north of England called Alauna were

in or near Cumbria – Maryport, which sits on the river Ellen and Lancaster, which sits on

the river Lune.[88] An inscription found by a spring just outside Lancaster commemorates a

deity called *Iolanus Contrebis*.[89] The middle element of *Iolanus* is *Ion*, which is likely to be

the root of the Lune's name. [90] The same element is also found in the name of the river

Ellen, after which Roman Maryport is presumably named. *Lon* is a pre-Celtic element which

translates as something like 'bright', 'clear' or perhaps 'flowing' or even 'whole'.[91] The

Lancaster dedication therefore suggests that the Lune was personified as a pre-Christian

water deity.

In Cumbria, a spring at Newbiggin which is believed to be the source of the river Lune is

dedicated to St Helen. According to local folklore, the stonework around a second St Helen's

Well at Asby, seven miles north of the source of the Lune, must be maintained in order to

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[85] Eline and Elen are alternative spellings. It should be pointed out that some scholars feel that the root word behind *Alauna* in British place-names is not fully understood. *CVEP*, 271.

[86] Graham Jones, 'Holy Wells and the Cult of St Helen', *Landscape History*, 8 (1986), pp. 59-75, p. 67.

[87] Green, *Britons*, p. 106.

[88] See Appendix 1.

[89] https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/600, accessed 3rd March 2019.

[90] David Shotter, *Roman Britain* (Abingdon, 2004), p. 85.

[91] ibid., p. 70. See also *PNW*, I, pp. 9-10 and Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Placenames* (Oxford, 1960), p. 285.

prevent the water spirits from escaping, an interesting story when one considers Alauna's pedigree as a water goddess.[92]

2.5.4.2   DEDICATIONS TO LOCAL SAINTS

Six post-Roman saints have links to Cumbria and appear in numerous church dedications across the county).[93] Cuthbert and Wilfrid were important figures in the seventh-century Northumbrian church and we know a fair amount about their lives from surviving hagiographies written very soon after their deaths.[94]

Bridget is an Irish saint about whom virtually nothing is known. She may represent a Christianisation of an earlier Irish pagan goddess and is probably cognate with Brigantia, a British goddess whose veneration is attested at a number of Roman military sites across northern England.[95]

A Cumbrian provenance for Patrick would be a great catch but, unfortunately, Patrick's supposed Cumbrian origins are based on arguments which are nowhere near as sound as they might first appear. The story of Patrick's capture is well known – he was taken from his father's estate and sold into slavery in Ireland at some point in the first part of the fifth century.[96] Patrick's references to his family members holding Roman civilian offices and his

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[92] One of St Columba's many miracles was the blessing of a well which the local Picts treated as a god, thereby turning it from a poisonous into a healing well. *LSC*, pp. 162-3.

[93] The six are Cuthbert, Wilfrid, Bridget, Patrick, Ninian and Kentigern (a.k.a Mungo). An exhaustive and extremely helpful list of all of the dedications to each of them can be found in O'Sullivan, *Reassessment*.

[94] *VSC, AVSC, VSW*.

[95] Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain: Studies in Iconography and Tradition* (Chicago, 1996), pp. 452, 456.

[96] *Confessio*, pp. 1, 23, 41. Patrick's dates are a matter of ongoing debate. The relatively settled world in which his father operated as a civic official and a priest has been seen as intrinsically at odds with the evidence for a near complete collapse of urban life by the 420s (meaning that Patrick must belong in the immediate post-Roman period), but others argue for a much later date, placing Patrick's *floruit* as late as the 440s (Michael Kulikowsi, pers comm.).

abduction to Ireland have led to the conclusion that he must have been from western Roman

Britain. Patrick states that his father's estate was at *Bannavem Taberniae*, although the

spacing of the text in the original manuscript is such that an alternative reading of *Banna

Venta Berniae* is possible.[97] Muirchu, an Irish monk who wrote a *Life* of Patrick in the

seventh century, states that this same place was now called *Ventre* and that it was not far

from 'our sea' (presumably the Irish Sea).[98] Notwithstanding this clarification, the location of

Patrick's home has eluded satisfactory identification, although the similarity of that name to

the fort of Banna (the Roman fort of Birdoswald) has led to a cautious identification of

Patrick's birthplace with Birdoswald.[99]

This conclusion *may* be correct, but three caveats must be borne in mind. Firstly, 'banna'

has a prosaic meaning when used as a place-name. It derives from Brittonic 'bannau'

(meaning 'the peaks').[100] It would therefore fit pretty much anywhere where there was more

than one visible hill. There was a Roman station in Northamptonshire called *Bannaventa*.

Roman Horncastle (Lincolnshire) was *Bannovallum*. Bannau – or even *Bannaventa* – is not

therefore so singular a name that the link with Birdoswald must go beyond the coincidental.

Secondly, Birdoswald is in the uplands of the North Pennines, over thirty-five miles east of

the sea. Even if Muirchu's hagiography could be trusted when it comes to providing accurate

geographical information about Patrick's birthplace, 'not far from our sea' is hardly an apt

description of Birdoswald's geographical location. Thirdly, despite frequent assumptions to

the contrary, Patrick never actually states that he was captured by Irish raiders. What he

says is "…Hibernione in captivitate adductus sum…". ('I was taken into captivity in

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[97] Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, pp. 127-8. The meaning of this alternative name has never really been considered. 'Berniae' is either the locative or the genitive case, whereas 'Banna' and 'venta' agree with one another. 'Hill market of Bernia' would be the present writer's guess. The similarity between Berniae and Bernicia (British *Bryneich*) may be no coincidence.
[98] ibid, pp. 62, 83.
[99] Henig, 'Late Roman Towns', pp. 526, 528.
[100] Seamus De Napier, *Place Name of Roman Britain and Ireland*, Trinity College, Dublin, unpublished thesis, pp. 82, 109.

Ireland').[101] This is important, as if his captors are nowhere expressly stated to be Irish, Patrick need not have lived near the Irish Sea or been taken by Irish slavers. In Patrick's *Epistola*, he berates king Corocticus for seizing and selling Patrick's newly converted Irish Christians to the pagan Irish and/or Picts.[102] Corocticus is often associated with the British kingdom of Strathclyde on the strength of the later Welsh genealogies, in which a Ceretic is said to be a descendant of the Rhydderch Hael whose historicity is attested in Adomnan's *Life* of St Columba.[103] If this identification is correct, Corocticus was a British slaver operating on both sides of the Irish Sea. Wherever Patrick lived, the raiders who carried him away could just as easily have been his fellow Britons.

Even if we have the benefit of some contemporaneous evidence for Patrick, Wilfrid and Cuthbert, much of what we think we know about them derives from later sources. The later medieval period, when the cults of these saints became important, may well be the temporal context in which their names usually became attached to a specific church. That said, there may be one possible exception. We are told by the tenth or eleventh century *HSC* that Cuthbert was gifted Carlisle and founded schools and religious institutions there.[104] The three hundred year gap between the text and Cuthbert's *floruit* might quite properly make us suspicious of such a claim, but we also know from his two *Lives*, one of which was written very shortly after his death in 687, that Cuthbert really *did* have a connection with Carlisle.[105] Although no express statement is made as to his ownership of the town, it is clear that he went there often and was regarded as an important visitor.[106] Against this backdrop, it is just

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[101] *Confessio*, 1, pp. 23,41.
[102] *Epistola*, pp. 35, 57
[103] *LSC*.
[104] See Chapter 4.4 for a more detailed analysis of this material.
[105] The *Life* in question is the *AVSC*. This states that king Aldfrith was ruling peacefully, which means it must predate 705. References to miracles that happened after the translation of Cuthbert's body in 698 give a seven-year window in which the *AVSC* must have been composed.
[106] *VSC*, pp. 243-251.

possible that the dedication to Cuthbert of the postulated early church at Blackfriars Street may genuinely capture a link between the man and the site.[107]

Ninian fares even worse than Patrick, given that even his historicity is doubtful. Bede reported that Ninian was a British evangelist who converted the Picts and founded the early Christian centre at Whithorn.[108] Historians were traditionally reasonably relaxed about leaving the door open to the idea that stories of Ninian recalled an evangelical mission across the Solway from the Carlisle region and although Bede gives no information about Ninian's provenance, it is clear that Ninian was associated with Whithorn by the time Bede was writing in the eighth century.[109] At present, though, we have no contemporaneous evidence to support such a claim.

The final saint is Kentigern, who was the founder of the see of Glasgow. According to one strand of later medieval hagiography, was born following the rape of his mother by Owain, a figure who we will return to in Chapter 4. Kentigern's death is given for the year 612 by the *AC*,[110] although the sixth and seventh-century events recorded in the *AC* cannot have been slotted in to the text any earlier than the late eighth century, when the *AC* was first compiled.[111] Also, we do not know the processes or the line of transmission by which the date got into the *AC*, which makes the historicity of the event uncertain. Hagiography and history are uneasy bedfellows at the best of times and, even though early medieval saints often *were* from the same social level as early medieval warlords, it would be unwise in the absence of any other evidence to place too much faith in the Owain story. Even if we were to allow for both the historicity of, and a Cumbrian provenance for, Ninian and Kentigern, the

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[107] See Chapter 2.4 for a fuller discussion of this building.
[108] *EHEP*, III, 4, pp. 148-149.
[109] Neither of the two surviving lives of Ninian give much of his provenance either. Forbes, *Ninian and Kentigern*.
[110] *AC*, p. 46.
[111] Kathleen Hughes, 'The Welsh Latin chronicles: *Annales Cambriae and related texts'*, in David Dumville, ed. *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Scottish and Welsh sources by the late Kathleen Hughes* (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 67-85, pp. 68-69, 72-73.

fundamental problem remains that nearly everything we think we know about them is the product of twelfth-century hagiography.

Accepting this reality does not automatically render the documentary sources totally worthless. It is expressly stated in Jocelin's twelfth-century *Life* of St Kentigern that the saint's church at Crosthwaite (Keswick) was a new foundation. It belonged to Jocelin's time, not Kentigern's. The text also states that the church at Crosthwaite was built at a place where Kentigern had raised a cross for the benefit of his new converts (a practice which is frequently attested for him).[112] The lateness of the church at Crosthwaite does not give much hope for sixth-century origins for any of the eight Cumbrian churches dedicated to him, but the place-name does at least support the notion that the new church was built at a pre-existing Christian site.

2.5.4.3   CURVILINEAR CHURCHYARDS

In general terms, early Christian sites – and especially sixth to ninth-century sites in western Britain and Ireland – were often oval and/or circular in shape.[113] Cumbria has a total of thirteen churchyards which are curvilinear in plan and another nineteen which are partially curvilinear.[114] 'Curvilinear' covers a wide variety of morphological types, from Pennington (near Ulverston), which is an almost perfect circle to Dufton (near Appleby) which is only vaguely oval. However, although a curvilinear churchyard *may* be diagnostic of an early Christian site, it is not the case that every such churchyard *must* be so early.[115] Natural

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[112] *JVSK*, pp. 74, 109-110.
[113] Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 143. See also CADW, *Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Sites Assessment (*2001-2), *http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/churches/pdfs/GGAT%2073%20Early%20Medieval%20Ecclesistical%20 Sites%20Yr1.pdf* accessed 14th December 2020. Each region of Wales area is accessible separately.
[114] O'Sullivan, *Reassessment*, pp. 391-393.
[115] For comparative examples of curvilinear enclosures around early monastic sites, see Foot, *Monastic Life*, pp. 104-106.

topography clearly plays a part in the morphology of settlements and it is worth noting that four Cumbrian churches with curvilinear churchyards (Ireby, Loweswater, Pennington and Warwick) have no other features to suggest an early date of foundation. That said, a string of curvilinear churchyards along the Eden valley (including Ormside, which has been discussed above) are located on headlands jutting into the river with water on three sides, the sort of liminal location that appears to have been so characteristic of early medieval ecclesiastical foundations.[116]

Figure 18: The title plan of Crosthwaite churchyard in 1861. The original, curvilinear shape of the enclosure can be discerned as a thin grey band around the church itself, to the left of the land coloured red, which represents the land sold for the extension of the churchyard).[117]

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[116] David Stocker, 'The Early Church in Lincolnshire', in Alan Vince, ed. *Pre-Viking Lindsey* (Lincoln, 1993), pp. 105-106. Many of the early inland monastic foundations of Lindsey were similarly arranged along the river Witham, often on natural islands on low lying land. See also Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 77.
[117] http://www.graveyards.crosthwaiteandlyth.co.uk/graves.html, accessed 4th March 2019.

Partially curvilinear churchyards are one remove from fully curvilinear ones, although in one or two cases, there is clear evidence that a site originally had a fully curvilinear churchyard. Crosthwaite (Kendal) is a good example. A nineteenth-century title plan survives which shows both the land purchased for the extension of the churchyard and also the extent of the original curvilinear enclosure.

Kendal's Crosthwaite has its curvilinear churchyard whereas Keswick's Crosthwaite has its mention in the hagiography of St Kentigern. One might ask if the place-name itself has significance? The name is a Norse form (making it ninth century or later) which simply means 'clearing with a cross'. It is possible that the cross in question was raised by Norse speakers after they converted to Christianity, but it is equally possible that the name was given to something which already existed. Insofar as Keswick's Crosthwaite is concerned, it might indicate something earlier still. In Jocelin's *Life* of St Kentigern, Crosthwaite is called *Crosfeld*, which uses the early Old English element *feld* in place of the Norse *thwaite*.[118] Both *feld* and *thwaite* mean much the same thing – open land. A reference to a clearing with a cross – rather than a clearing with a church building (which would now survive as something like Kirkthwaite) *might* suggest that Cumbria's two Crosthwaites were, by the ninth century, already open-air Christian sites.

2.5.4.4   SUMMARY

The evidence discussed in this subsection can now be consolidated, using a refined version of Evans' methodology as a base. Certain types of evidence considered in Evans' study of Welsh sites do not readily lend themselves to a study of northern England. These include the pairing of the place-name element *llan* with the name of a local saint, a practice which is not

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[118] *JVSK*, p. 74.

observable outside Wales and Cornwall. However, other factors with less relevance to Wales but greater relevance to northern England need to be considered instead. These include dedications to early saints (which will be classified as Grade C), survival of Brittonic or part-Brittonic place-names (Grade C) and the reuse in the later Anglo-Saxon period of Roman period sites, which may suggest continuity of throughout the post-Roman period (Grade C).

Three further changes to Evans' methodology are to split the corpus of stone sculpture into post-Roman (Grade A) and other early medieval (Grade B) and to divorce Cumbria's two certain (or near-certain) place-names including the element *ecles from the place-name evidence more widely.[119] The significance of the *ecles element is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.2.2, but at this stage it suffices to say that the form is potentially good evidence for a pre-Anglian British Christian site. As such, it is regarded as being Grade A evidence. Finally, the siting of a church in a Roman fort has been relegated from Grade A to Grade B on the grounds that it represents indirect evidence and is not therefore of the same quality as the direct evidence.

Due to the nugatory nature of the indirect evidence, no site is included in the following table if it *only* has Grade C evidence. This means that sites such as Kentmere, which has both a curvilinear churchyard and a dedication to St Cuthbert, fall away. In all other cases, the aggregated 'score' for early Christian characteristics is arrived at by awarding three points for each piece of Grade A evidence, two points for each piece of Grade B evidence and one point of reach piece of Grade C evidence. What follows is necessarily somewhat rough and ready, but it is hoped that it will at least draw together the different classes of evidence and provide a springboard for further debate.

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[119] The corpus of eighth-century and later Anglo-Saxon sculpture is not further considered here. Sites are taken from eds. Bailey and Cramp, *Corpus*, whose work provides and accessible and exhaustive survey of the material.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
Addingham				3				1			1			**5**
Beckermet St Bridget							2		1	1	1			**5**
Bewcastle		3					2			1				**6**
Birdoswald	3	3			2								1	**9**
Brampton Old Church					2					1				**3**
Brigham	3		3				2	2		1		1		**12**
Brougham		3				2		2		1	1		1	**10**
Carlisle	3	3		3		2	2	2		1	1		1	**18**
Crosthwaite (Kendal)								2	1					**3**
Crosthwaite (Keswick)		3						2	1	1	1			**8**
Dacre	3	3				2	2						1	**11**
Heversham	3						2	2						**7**
Low Furness*	3		3					2		1		1		**10**
Kirkby Stephen	3						2							**5**
Maryport	3	3		3										**9**
Moresby	3				2					1				**6**
Ormside						2			1			1		**4**
Tom Knot		3												**3**
Workington	3					2	2							**7**

Table 3: Early Christian evidence

* For the purposes of this table, Low Furness means the southern tip of the Furness peninsula.

Key:

Grade A
1: Burial evidence
2: Structural evidence
3: *ecles name nearby
4: British sculpture (400-700)

Grade B
5: Church located in or at Roman fort
6. Other early medieval archaeological evidence
7: Anglo-Saxon sculpture (post 700 – only recorded if there is additional evidence of earlier Christian activity)
8. Place-name indicative of early activity or religious activity (-ham, cros- or use of Roman name)

Grade C
9:   Curvilinear churchyard
10: Dedication to local British or Anglo-Saxon Saint
11: Holy well
12: Later grave interpolated (into churchyard or earlier burials)
13. British or part-British place-name

Determining what score constitutes a genuinely strong candidate is inevitably a largely subjective judgment, but the start point might be to look at the overall score of eleven assigned to Dacre. Dacre is undeniably an early Christian site; signposted by Bede and with clear archaeological evidence of having been an early medieval ecclesiastical centre.[120] Any site in the list with the same or higher aggregate score than Dacre arguably has good claim to be advanced as a post-Roman Christian centre. There are two such sites – Brigham and Carlisle.

Thereafter, the lower the score, the more tentative the claims for any particular site become. For the purposes of the map below, a site is only plotted if it scores six or more points. Six points has been selected as the cut-off, as to achieve that score requires the site to have at least one Grade A feature. There are a total of eight further sites, although one of them (Heversham) falls out of contention if the burial evidence proves not to belong to the post-Roman period. The eight sites are Brougham and Low Furness (with ten points each), Birdoswald and Maryport (nine points each), Crosthwaite (Keswick) (eight points), Workington and Heversham (seven points each) and Bewcastle (six points).

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[120] Newman and Leech, forthcoming.
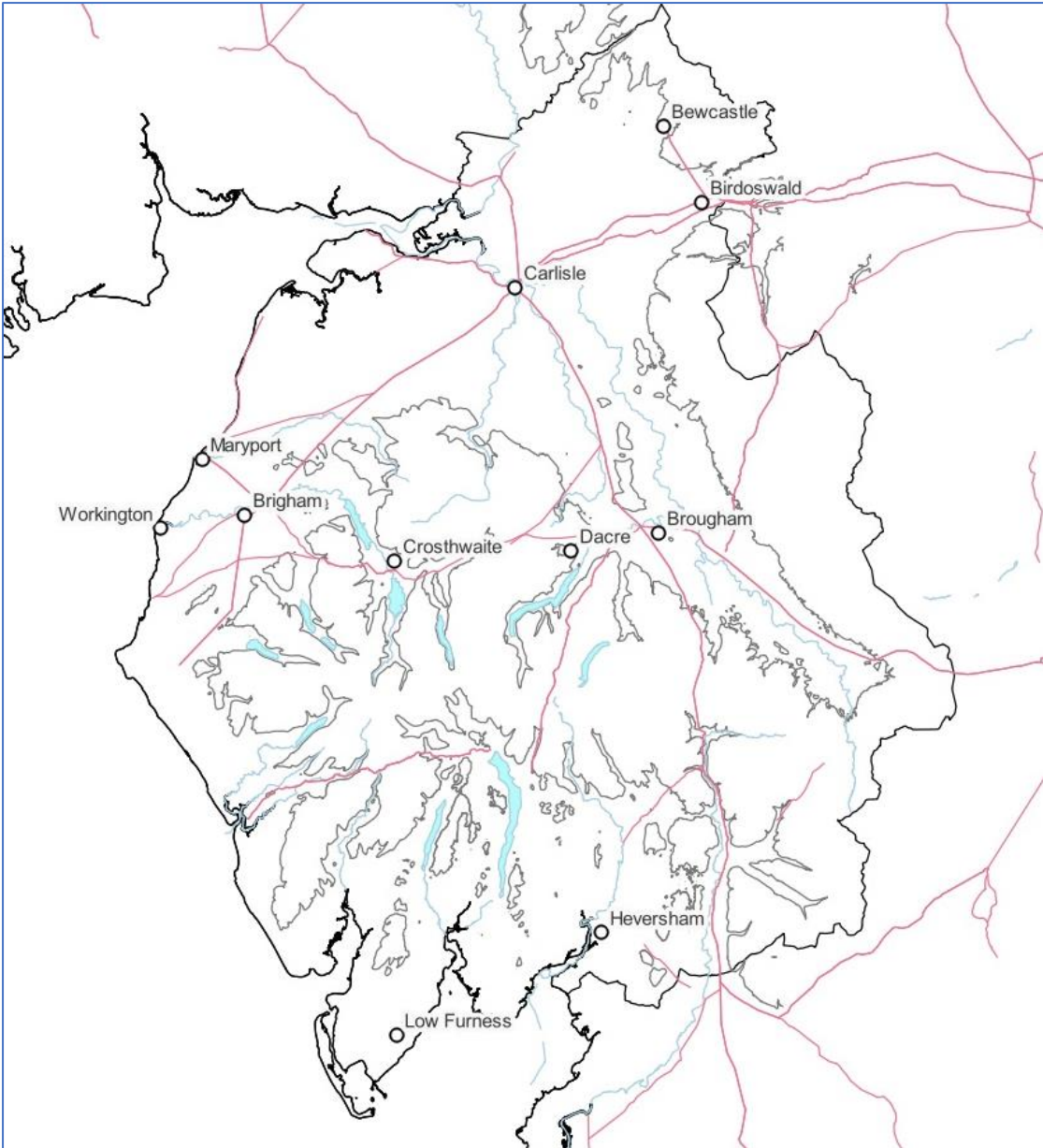
Map 14: Putative post-Roman Christian centres.

2.6 RURAL SITES

With the exception of the villas of the south and east, rural sites are generally under-represented in the archaeological record for the post-Roman period. As such, they also tend to be under-represented in discussions of the early medieval period, notwithstanding that they must have been home to around to 90% of the population.[1]

Throughout the western Roman empire, villas went through major changes in the late fourth century. Corn driers were smashed through mosaic floors, frescoed formal rooms were used for small scale ironworking, the dead were buried in bath-houses and timber lean-tos were erected against crumbling stone walls. To many commentators, these changes represent impoverishment, with the collapse of the villa system and the concomitant shift from arable farming to pastoralism being symptomatic of wider societal collapse.[2] To others, the same changes are seen in more neutral terms not everything that happened from the third century onwards must be seen as a decline from the norm of the Roman West's second century heyday.[3] Rather than evidencing collapse, observable changes are argued to represent the dynamic re-use of space in a changing social environment.[4] In real terms, that might have included extending access to what had once been the family home to armed retainers who, in the absence of a functioning legal system, provided the muscle which ensured that fifth-century landowners were able to maintain their status.[5]

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[1] Jeremy Taylor, 'Encountering Romanitas: Characterising the Role of Agricultural Communities in Roman Britain', *Britannia* (2013), pp. 171-190, p. 173.
[2] Ward-Perkins, *Fall of Rome*, pp. 108-109. Esmonde-Cleary, *Ending*, pp. 134-135. See also Fredric L. Cheyette, 'The disappearance of the ancient landscape and the climatic anomaly of the early Middle Ages: a question to be pursued,' *Early Medieval Europe*, 16 (2008), pp. 127-165, pp.138-139 and Rosamond Faith, 'Forces and Relations of Production in Early Medieval England', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 9 (2009), pp. 23-41, pp. 23-24.
[3] Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, pp. 463-464.
[4] Prien, *Germanic Settlers*. Lewit, 'Vanishing Villas'.
[5] Gerrard, *Ruin*, pp. 251-255.

2.6.1 THE SITES

With the possible exception of Hawkhirst, there is nothing in Cumbria to compare with the archaeologically rich villa sites of the lowland zone. For the most part, such sites as there are comprise small farmsteads with a boundary enclosing roundhouses or occasional rectilinear buildings. The lack of dateable artefacts means that it is impossible to date occupation at any of these sites with any precision.[6] It may well be that as more dating evidence becomes available, sites once thought of as Iron Age or Romano-British will be reclassified as early medieval, but at present there are only a handful of Cumbrian sites which have fair claim to have been occupied in the post-Roman period.[7]

To this corpus of little farmsteads we *might* add the circular fields which are dotted around the county and which seem to indicate early land divisions or perhaps the enclosures of now-lost farmsteads. These are not usually discernible on Ordnance Survey maps by reason of being overlain with later field boundaries. There are, though, good examples of circular

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[6] Collins, *End of Empire*, p. 114.
[7] Newman et al, *Resource Assessment*, p. 5
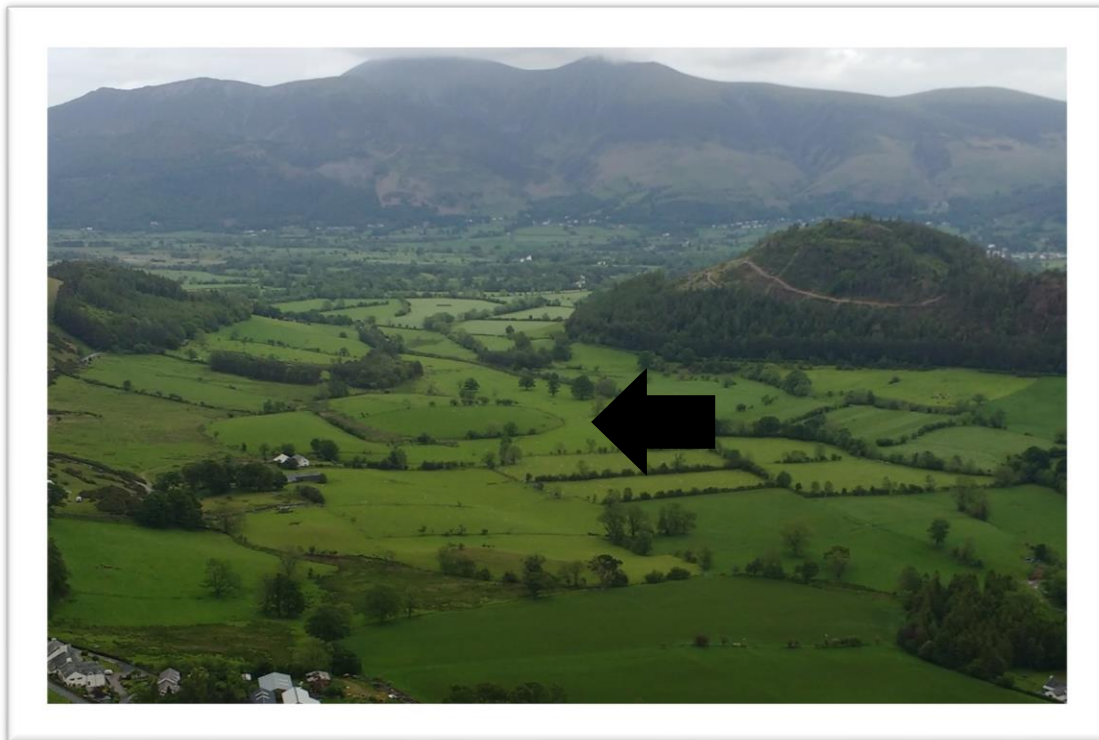
Figures 19 and 20: Circular fields at Bannerigg, Windermere and Braithwaite, Keswick. In both cases, the fields appear to have originally been delineated by a hedge rather than a stone wall. The hedge boundaries are not recorded on the relevant OS maps. On the first picture, the field appears elliptical on the picture due to the angle of the shot (which was taken from the top of School Knott). The right-hand curve is visible next to the black arrow. The trees and bushes mark the continuation of the curve.

fields at Bannerigg near Windermere and at Braithwaite near Keswick, neither of which are apparent unless one climbs the nearby hills from where they are visible. Tempting as it might be to assume that such fields represent Celtic relics, in reality little more can safely be said about them other than that they must predate the current rectilinear field boundaries.

Even where firm dating evidence *is* available, extending chronologies into the post-Roman period is typically only possible by reasonable inference rather than because the evidence requires it. At Hawkhirst, near Brampton, a rectilinear building of late fourth-century date was built over an earlier Romano-British structure on a site particularly rich in Roman

artefacts.[8] Hawkhirst lies less than half a kilometre from Brampton Old Church, where the

church in question was built in the corner of a Roman fort.[9] Hawkhirst is so unusual in terms

of the volume of material finds that it has been proposed as the home of a senior official of

the *civitas* centred on Carlisle.[10] We do not know how long this late Roman building at

Hawkhirst lasted, but by analogy with the estimated fifty year lifespan of the timber halls at

Birdoswald, it is reasonable to assume that it would have been habitable well into the fifth

century.[11]

At Fremington, a little way south of the Roman fort at Brougham, four sunken featured

buildings (known as 'grubenhāuser') were discovered, along with the corner of what

appeared to be a modest timber building. The site also produced a large number of

fragments of early medieval hand-made pottery.[12] In the absence of clear stratigraphy, the

pottery would probably have been considered prehistoric but, as it was, there appeared to be

a clear relationship between the pottery and the buildings.[13] The buildings themselves were

typical of the *Grubenhaus* form – small and timber-framed, measuring around 2 x 1.5

metres. The method of construction was not unlike a ridge tent, with a simple timber frame

erected over a sunken floor supporting pitched roofs which extended down to ground level.[14]

Although *grubenhāuser* have traditionally been regarded as diagnostically Anglo-Saxon and

have parallels in Continental Europe, in reality they appear to be a hybrid architectural form

which emerges across a wide swathe of Britain and Continental Europe and which display

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[8] Collins, *End of Empire*, p. 115.

[9] The existence of a church in the corner of a Roman fort has plausibly been seen as good evidence for continuity of site use. Biddle, 'Towns', 111. It has also been seen as evidence of the transformation of one-time secular sites into post-Roman ecclesiastical sites. Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 133. Moresby's church is also built in one corner of its Roman fort – see Chapter 2.5.1.

[10] Collins, *End of Empire,* p. 115.

[11] Wilmott, 'The late Roman transition' pp. 13-14. See also Wilmott, *Hadrian's Wall*, p. 395.

[12] Tove Oliver, Christine Howard-Davis and Rachel Newman, 'A Post-Roman Settlement at Fremington, near Brougham', in Jane Lambert et al, eds. *Transect through Time: The Archaeological Landscape of the Shell North Western Ethylene Pipeline,* Vol 1 (Lancaster, 1996).

[13] Newman, 'Who Was Here?', pp. 25-26.

[14] Some *grubenhāuser* have additional post holes and are somewhat larger than this. For a useful general discussion, see Hamerow, 'Anglo-Saxon Timber Buildings', pp. 146-147. The Fremington examples are at the smaller and simpler end of the scale.

various cultural influences, including Roman styles.[15] They tend to appear alongside the

remains of timber halls, which are different in style from the aisled longhouses with which
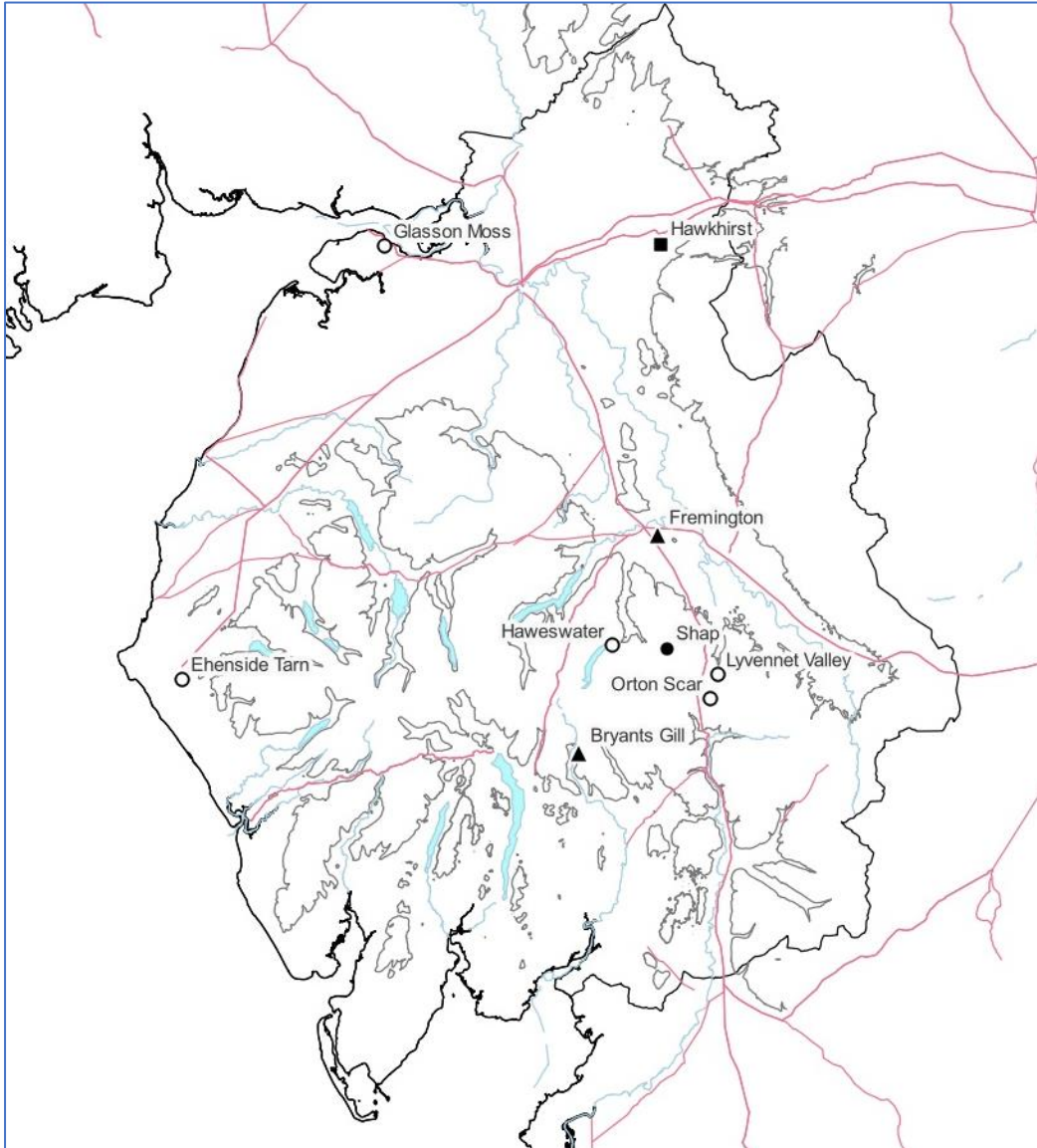
Map 15: Rural Sites.

grubenhāuser are associated on the Continent. These halls did *not* exist in the so-called

'Anglo-Saxon homelands' of the North Sea littoral prior to the fifth century and only begin to

appear there at the same time as they start to appear across a wide swathe of Gaul and

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[15] Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 225-6, 295-6 and Hamerow, 'The Earliest Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*'*, pp. 266-7. See also Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, p. 452.

Britain (including parts of Gaul where Anglo-Saxon groups never settled).[16]

The Fremington structures had been repaired and refloored and presumably had remained in use for a long time. They contained large quantities of Roman pottery together with a small number of later artefacts (primarily loomweights) which hinted at a *terminus ante quem* of the seventh to eighth-century for the occupation of the site.[17] The timber building was conceived of as an "arguably more vernacular…post-built structure*",* although little more can be said as only a very small part of it was uncovered. The early medieval pottery was regarded as "native" pottery on the basis of similarities to material found in the British, post-Roman levels at Yeavering in Northumberland. Fremington therefore may indicate a coming together of Romano-British and Anglian influences in the creation of new, hybridised forms of cultural expression in the post-Roman centuries.[18]

A cluster of small settlements lies at the head of the Lyvennet Valley. Three of them show changes in settlement morphology suggestive of occupation in the later Roman period, with roundhouses giving way to rectilinear structures. The largest of the three, Ewe Close, was clearly a place of some importance, as the Roman road from the Lune valley at Low Borrow Bridge to the Eden Valley at Kirkby Thore had been deliberately diverted around the settlement.[19] It has sometimes been proposed that Ewe Close was also an important site in the sixth century. The lack of post-Roman artefacts has made many commentators wary of accepting this identification.[20] At nearby Ewe Locks, two rectilinear buildings with internal

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[16] That said, the extent to which the halls reflect indigenous influence on Anglo-Saxon building styles is a question which has never been answered. It may simply have been that the collective human resources required to build a longhouse were not available in the post-Roman period. Hamerow, 'Anglo-Saxon Timber Buildings', pp. 128-129.

[17] The dating sequences are, however, fairly subjective and an earlier date is possible – the abandonment levels of one of the grubenhaus suggested deposition of material in the seventh century, which arguably takes that one building further back in time

[18] Oliver et al, *Fremington*, pp. 130, 144.

[19] R.G. Collingwood, 'Prehistoric Settlements near Crosby Ravensworth', *TCWAAS*, 2nd Series (1933), 204-206.

[20] Similar claims are rejected for Cow Green and the nearby enclosure known as the Park Pale. Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, 133. That said, in early medieval Ireland, the house of a king was

dimensions of about 20 x 15 feet were built with re-used stone taken from elsewhere on the site. At Cow Green, a 30 x 16 feet single-roomed stone building with an apsidal 'porch' of what the original excavator termed "early Scandinavian or Teutonic" style was built just outside the original settlement site.[21] This structure has similarities to other remains in northern England and southern Scotland that have been interpreted as rectangular, apsidal-ended buildings. These buildings have been likened in style to the early Christian church at Icklingham in Suffolk.[22] If any or all of these sites are of the post-Roman period, it does not appear that cultural change (of the sort implied by the porch at Cow Green) was the result of violent invasion. The sites all remained undefended during their lifetimes and there is no evidence of destruction. As at Fremington, cultural hybridisation might best explain the evolution of the Lyvennet valley farmsteads.

A further possible example of the melding of British and Anglo-Saxon cultural styles comes from Shap. A rectilinear building measuring 4.8 by 9.5 metres was assigned a seventh or eighth century date largely on the strength of the discovery of three loomweights which match mid-Saxon examples.[23] However, the building itself appeared to owe more to the Romano-British building tradition than the Anglo-Saxon one, a point supported by the discovery in one of its post-holes of a ceramic fragment of possible Romano-British date.[24]

Bryant's Gill lies at the head of Kentdale, about nine miles north-west of Kendal. Although the site is usually described as a Viking-era farmstead, two shale spindle whorls and a broken whetstone returned uncalibrated radiocarbon dates centred on 700 A.D.[25] Three

not normally so grandiose as to be readily distinguishable from those of his followers. Ó'Cróinin, Early Medieval Ireland, pp. 71-72. Edwards, 'Archaeology', 297
[21] Higham and Jones, The Carvetii, p. 209 (Ewe Locks), 211 (Cow Green).
[22] Carver, Formative Britain, pp. 193-194.
[23] Richard Heawood and Christine Howard-Davis, 'Two early medieval settlement sites in eastern Cumbria?', TCWAAS, p. 155.
[24] ibid, p. 158.
[25] Steve Dickinson, 'Bryant's Gill, Kentmere: Another 'Viking-Period' Ribblehead?' in Baldwin and Whyte, eds, pp. 86-88.

subsequent radiocarbon dates were obtained which have reinforced the possibility of seventh-century origins for this site.[26] A further, as yet unexcavated, site with morphological similarities to Bryant's Gill was identified on Orton Scar during an aerial survey in the late 1970s.[27] Just outside the county in North Yorkshire, a number of likely farmsteads have been identified in the valleys around the prominent hill of Ingleborough, some of which were in use from the seventh century.[28]

Three further Cumbrian sites show evidence of one type of post-Roman and early medieval agricultural practice of hemp retting; a particularly noxious process in which hemp is left to rot in shallow freshwater pools until the fibres can be extracted in order to make rope. At Ehenside Tarn, near Beckermet, hemp retting appears to have taken place from the eighth century BC to the start of the tenth century.[29] Similar activity was taking place near Haweswater between 533 and 687 A.D.[30] At Glasson Moss, a raised peat bog to the west of Carlisle, pollen analysis and radiocarbon dating suggests that a pool was created for hemp retting in the first half of the seventh century.[31] Given the need to ensure that retting took place away from sources of drinking water and given also that the peat of Glasson Moss was likely to have been a shared resource, it seems likely that the hemp retting at Glasson was also part of the collective exploitation of resources.

The lack of evidence for any physical division of the Lake District uplands also hints at collective exploitation in the post-Roman period. Although Cumbria's mountainous core is

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[26] Newman et al, *Resource Assessment*, p. 6.
[27] N. J. Higham, 'An aerial survey of the Upper Lune Valley', in N. J. Higham, ed. *The changing past: some recent work on the archaeology of northern England* (Manchester, 1979), pp. 31-38.
[28] Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 159-161. See also the publications on possible post-Roman farmsteads sites at Clapham, Austwick and Horton-in-Ribblesdale as published by the Ingleborough Archaeology Group and available via their website at http://www.ingleborougharchaeologygroup.org.uk/pdfs/UP11web.pdf
[29] D. Walker, 'The dates of human impacts on the environment at Ehenside Tarn, Cumbria', *TCWAAS* (2003), pp. 1-20, p. 16.
[30] Newman, *Resource Assessment*, p. 15.
[31] Margaret Cox et al, 'Early Medieval hemp retting at Glasson Moss, Cumbria, in the context of the use of Cannabis Sativa during the historic period,' *TCWAAS* (2000), pp. 131-150, p. 141.

now criss-crossed with miles of drystone walls, the lack of any such demarcation in the early medieval period may well suggest that the uncultivated central fells were used for the summering of large herds of livestock, a practice which is observable elsewhere in Britain throughout the prehistoric and Roman periods.[32]

2.6.2 CHANCE FINDS

One of Cumbria's more intriguing archaeological sites is the Dog Hole, a cave and shaft in the limestone edge at Haverbrack near Milnthorpe. Human and animal bones were discovered here in the early twentieth century. In 1957 further investigations were carried out. The top of the shaft was partially excavated and revealed a thick accumulation of human and animal bones beneath a large number of deer antlers.[33] A total of eighteen skeletons were recovered, together with a number of small finds which included some jet beads believed to be of sixth to tenth-century date.[34] Subsequent radiocarbon dating on some of the material which has survived showed that the human remains are late Roman and the deer antlers are Late Saxon/early medieval.[35] The site was clearly is use over many centuries, although whether the skeletal remains and the finds got into the Dog Hole as a result of deliberate placing, flooding or scavenging by the eponymous canine residents who used the cave in the post-Roman period remains a mystery.

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[32] Susan Oosthuizen, 'Archaeology, common rights and the origins of Anglo-Saxon identity', *Early Medieval Europe,* 19 (2011), pp. 153-181, pp. 177-179. See also the consolidated maps in Appendix 2, which show that Cumbria's post-Roman foci were generally located on the edges of the uplands, forming a broad ring around the mountains.

[33] Don Benson and Keith Bland, 'The Dog Hole, Haverbrack', *TCWAAS* (1963), pp. 61-76. To their great credit, the authors were two of the scouts who had been involved in the 1957 excavation.

[34] ibid., 74. The remaining finds were mid to late Roman in date. See also Sullivan, 'Finds', for the suggestion that the beads may have been misdated and maty also be Roman-era artefacts.

[35] Hannah O'Regan, 'Doghole Cave, Haverbrack', unpublished research update Liverpool John Moore's University (2009), accessed via https://web.archive.org/web/20111028172238/http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/RCEAP/81121.htm Some of the material collected in 1957 has gone missing. The shaft has been much disturbed since, although cavers have kindly left drinks bottles and other rubbish in the cave, presumably for the edification of later generations of archaeologists.

Artefact	Find spot	Cultural affiliation	Date	Reference*
Copper alloy pin	Cliburn	Anglo-Saxon	6th - 7th	PAS LANCUM AFDA7A
Clipped siliqua	Kendal	Roman	395-402	PAS LANCUM 6D5EC3
Copper alloy disc brooch	Arnside	Anglo-Saxon	5th - 6th	PAS LANCUM 8E2BB6
Copper alloy brooch/buckle	Ulverston	British?	6th – 7th	PAS LANCUM 1767DA
Fowler Type G penannular brooch	Dalton	British	5th - 7th	PAS LANCUM 0AF673
Die stamp	Barrow	British?	6th - 7th	PAS LANCUM 52E1C3
Gilt-bronze head	Furness	British	6th - 9th	Finds, 30-31
Buckle (Marzinzik Type II)	Cockermouth	Anglo-Saxon	6th – 8th	PAS LANCUM 75FE5B
Penannular bronze brooch	Mealsgate	British	4th - 6th	Finds, 32
Strap end	Keswick	Anglo-Saxon?	5th – 9th	PAS LANCUM A11230
Glass bead	Burgh by Sands	Anglo-Saxon	7th -8th	PAS LANCUM A961OE
Sword handle	Cumberland	Anglo-Saxon?	5th - 7th	Finds, 28-30
Enamelled bronze escutcheon	Unknown	British	6th - 7th	Finds, 28
Escutcheon	Unknown	British	Late 4th – 5th	PAS LANCUM 7COD48
Gilt bronze mount	Unknown	Anglo-Saxon	7th	Finds, 27-28

* References are to the catalogue numbers on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website (https://finds.org.uk) or to Sullivan, 'Finds'.

Table 4. Chance finds

There is a scattering of other post-Roman artefacts across the county which lack a clear stratigraphic context and, in some cases, a clear find spot. These derive from two main sources – antiquarian discoveries (often of the nineteenth century) and more recent discoveries reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, usually by metal detectorists. These finds are tabulated above.
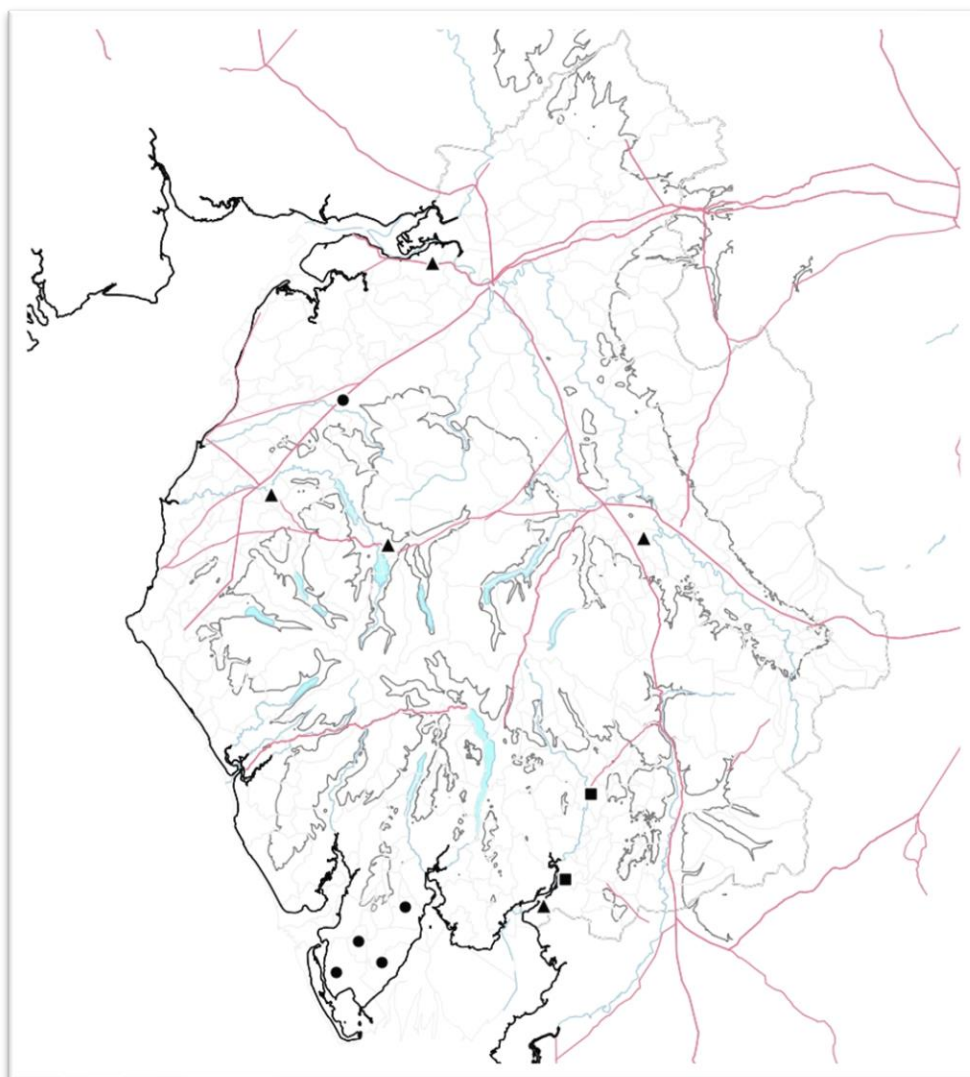
 Map 16: Chance Finds.

For the most part, little more can be said about these objects. We know too little of their context, including where they were made and when and by whom they were deposited, to do

more than flag up their existence. A note of caution may also be sounded insofar as the cultural affiliations are concerned. Although a number of the British objects (including the Furness head and the Mealsgate brooch) were, on comparative grounds, previously thought to have shown evidence of Irish influence, O'Sullivan rightly warns against making such assumptions when so little is known of the indigenous post-Roman cultural preferences of post-Roman Cumbria.[36] Some of the Anglo-Saxon material (notably the gilt bronze mount) may well have been produced locally to cater for changes in fashion which do not necessarily imply the movement of people or changes in political control.[37] That said, wherever they came from and however they got there, prestige objects such as the Furness head and the sword handle undoubtedly suggest individuals with a measure of wealth and/or influence in post-Roman Cumbria.

2.6.3 INTERPRETING THE EVIDENCE: ECONOMICS

The villas of lowland Roman Britain are the most visible witnesses to the large-scale exploitation of the arable surplus of the Diocese for the benefit of the wider Imperial supply chain. The sundering of Britain from the western Roman Empire interrupted the comprehensive and integrated trade networks which provided the villa owners with buyers and the means to get their product to market. However, the number of people who owned villas would only ever have been a tiny proportion of the population as a whole. We should be slow to assume that the fate of the villas was representative of the fate of the Romano-British population more widely.[38] The end of the 'big farm' model of the villa system does not require or imply a crisis amongst the rest of the agricultural population, who are likely to have been long integrated into far more localised systems of exchange and taxation to dispose of

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[36] O'Sullivan, 'Finds', pp. 39-40.
[37] ibid., p. 39.
[38] Gerrard, *Ruin*, pp. 100-114.

their modest surpluses.

This is important for our understanding of post-Roman Cumbria. The region had no villas. The poor quality of most of the land meant that agriculture was biased towards pastoralism. Furthermore, aside from very modest amounts of pottery, Cumbria's rural Romano-British settlements rarely turn up much, if any, Roman material culture, even at farms within sight of Carlisle itself.[39] The move away from villas, intensive arable production and the use of coinage and mass-produced material artefacts may have meant that other parts of post-Roman Britain became more like Cumbria had always been. We therefore have no *a priori* reason on economic grounds, at least, to assume that the post-Roman period was necessarily a time of great change for the majority of people in Cumbria. To the contrary, the focus of trade and exchange may have continued largely unchanged, especially if the link between many farming settlements and their local fort meant that the delivering up of livestock and other produce had long satisfied at least part of the taxation burden imposed by the Roman state.[40]

This Roman system of local supply is likely to have continued into the fifth century and beyond. Roman soldiers – and, in all likelihood, their post-Roman equivalents – were largely or totally inactive insofar as agricultural production was concerned. This meant they had to be fed by someone and that meant obtaining food locally. The granaries at Birdoswald could only be converted to halls in the late fourth century if they were no longer needed as storage sheds. That might have been because numbers at the forts were declining and demand was declining with it, but it is as least as likely to be because the distribution network which

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[39] One such example is a small Romano-British farmstead at the Cumberland Infirmary, which could easily have passed as an Iron Age site, despite being less than a mile from the markets of the *civitas* capital.

[40] Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, pp. 107-109. Shotter, *Romans and Britons*, pp. 65, 70, 80-81. The unusual genetic defect which is observable in the cattle bones found at both Carlisle and Birdoswald certainly suggests such a system of local supply.

ensured that grain grown elsewhere could be got to the northern frontier was no longer functioning. When the army supply system failed in the early years of the fifth century, it became correspondingly more important to source cereal crops locally.

In any event, the distinction between arabalism and pastoralism may have been applied too rigidly. It was never likely to have been just one or the other. [41] Farmers are likely to have practiced mixed farming whenever they could, not least because the dung from livestock would have been the fertiliser which kept arable land in good condition. It can be no coincidence that the greatest concentration of farmsteads in Cumbria was in the Eden Valley, which has the best quality arable land in Cumbria.[42] Even if it was only the Eden Valley which could produce wheat in any quantity, lowland Cumbria can support barley and oats and this might explain the clustering of sites on the relatively productive land to the west of Carlisle and along the Lune Valley.[43] The benefits offered by sites which were suitable for mixed arable and pastoral farming could only have been enhanced in the post-Roman period, when arable crops could no longer be sourced by the Roman logistics chain.

We might therefore imagine Cumbria's post-Roman population practising mixed farming utilising an 'infield/outfield' model. The core of the farm was contained within a single banked enclosure (which may or may not have been palisaded), with small fields spreading out from the settlement.[44] This was the infield – the managed area immediately around each farmstead. The outfield was a slice of Cumbria's vast expanses of uncultivated land. These include the mountains of the Lake District and the hills of the North Pennines, but also the woodlands of Inglewood Forest and the estuaries of south Cumbria.[45]

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[41] Naismith, *Early Medieval Britain*, pp. 356-357.
[42] The relative density of forts in the Eden Valley may well have been deliberate in order to most effectively exploit the resources and potential of the valley. Higham and Jones, *Carvetii*, pp. 108-109.
[43] Shotter, *Romans and Britons*, pp. 80-1. See also the map in Higham and Jones, *Carvetii*, p. 69.
[44] Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, pp. 90-92. Rectilinear structures started to replace round houses from the third century, but the basic picture remained otherwise unchanged.
[45] *Pais Dinogad*, which has some claim to be the earliest known poem set in Cumbria (and which is discussed in in Chapter 4.1.2) specifically mentions hunting and fishing in Borrowdale.

Cattle clearly had a value in the early medieval period which went well beyond a straight equation between the cost of rearing them and the calorific benefit derived from eating them. Early medieval literature is full of stories of cattle raiding and Cumbria is no exception.[46] Given the apparent lack of interest in ostentatious Mediterranean imports which was discussed in Chapter 2.3.2, it seems reasonable to view post-Roman Cumbria as a region where wealth was measured in terms of the cattle that one possessed and the numbers of followers that one could call upon.[47]

Notwithstanding that cattle may have been the ultimate prize for the warlords, the situation is likely to have been very different for most farmers. Cattle need relatively large amounts of good quality pasture and for those working with Cumbria's vast expanses of marginal land, sheep are likely to have been the stock animal of choice. A number of sites including Fremington and Bryant's Gill have produced evidence of small-scale textile production in the form of spindle whorls, suggesting that sheep were kept at these sites. Many of Cumbria's post-Roman farmers may not have had access to good enough pasture to afford them the luxury of keeping any more than the odd cow. Those with large numbers of cattle may have stood out very visibly as the wealthy in local society.

2.6.4 INTERPRETING THE EVIDENCE: ENVIRONMENTAL COLLAPSE?

Even if Cumbria's farmers were well-placed to survive the changes of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, they are unlikely to have been so well shielded from the environmental changes of the fifth century and beyond.

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[46] See Chapter 4.2.
[47] For some interesting observations about cattle raiding being a proxy for effective land exploitation by early medieval warlords, see Faith, 'Forces and Relations', pp. 37-39.

In broad terms, the evidence suggests that the climate became rather more unpredictable during the late and post-Roman periods. A period of relative warmth and stability persisted until the start of the third century but was followed by a period of cooling. There was then a respite, followed by a further period of cooling from about the middle of the fifth century.[48] Although there was local variety within Cumbria, the general trend was towards colder and wetter conditions.[49] The slow deterioration of the climate is likely to have led to the abandonment of farming sites at higher altitudes as wetter conditions washed much of the usable topsoil down to lower levels.[50]

It is often proposed that there was significant reforestation in the post-Roman period, notwithstanding that the underlying methodology for such propositions has been challenged.[51] Collins argues that the extent of worked land in the frontier zone of northern England remained broadly the same from the fourth to the late fifth centuries, which is broadly in line with the emerging picture from elsewhere in the country.[52] The mountains of the Lake District also show no significant evidence for woodland regrowth in the post-Roman period.[53] Given that sheep are the only animals which can live off the poor soils of Cumbria's upland core in numbers, this lack of reforestation strongly suggests that there were sizeable

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[48] Michael McCormick et al, 'Climate change during and after the Roman Empire: Reconstructing the Past from Scientific and Historical Evidence, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 32, 2 (2012), pp. 169-220.

[49] Michael J. Decker, 'Approaches to the environmental history of Late Antiquity, part II: Climate Change and the End of the Roman Empire', *History Compass* (2017), pp. 1-8. Keith Barber et al, 'Comparing and cross-validating lake and bog paleoclimatic records: a review and a new 5,000 year chironomid-inferred temperature record from northern England', *Journal of Paleolimnology*, 49 (2013), pp. 497-512.

[50] Although Higham and Jones argue that the abandonment of higher ground may have had as much to do with over-exploitation of resources than with climate change. Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, pp. 88-89.

[51] The challenge is made on the grounds that the reforestation argument tends to rely on soil cores taken from bogs and mires in which the cereal pollens indicative of arable farming are notoriously under-represented Jacqueline P Huntley, 'Late Roman Transition in the North: the Palynological Evidence' in Tony Wilmott and Pete Wilson, eds. *The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham, 1999* (BAR British Series, 2000, Oxford), pp. 67-72, p. 68.

[52] Collins, *End of Empire*, pp. 134-137.

[53] Rackham, *History of the Countryside*, pp. 68-72, 75.

flocks grazing the fells throughout the post-Roman period.[54] Sediment cores taken from

Talkin Tarn near Brampton point at an *increase* in both pastoral and arable farming during

the fourth and fifth centuries.[55] Such reforestation as there was appears to have taken place

mainly in the sixth century.[56]

All that said, the post-Roman period undoubtedly saw *some* localised woodland

regeneration. In the north of the county at sites such as Walton Moss and nearby Bolton Fell

Moss (both close to the forts of Hadrian's Wall), cultivated land fell out of use in the fifth

century and was not worked again until the tenth century.[57] Glasson Moss (on the Solway),

Fellend Moss (just beyond Cumbria's eastern border with Northumberland) and Burnfoothill

Moss (near Dumfries) all saw reforestation at various dates from the fourth to the seventh

century.[58] Across the lowlands of the central Lake District, it was also not until the tenth

century that a reversal of a period of post-Roman woodland regeneration becomes visible.[59]

In south Cumbria, reforestation occurred much earlier. The Duddon valley re-wooded

relatively early in the Roman period. Reforestation is also observable before the end of the

Roman period in the Lyth valley and at Rusland Moss.[60] The palaeobotanical evidence

accords well with place-name evidence, in particular with the density of names including the

elements *thwaite* and *lēah*. These Norse and English place-name elements are most

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[54] There is a passing reference to seasonal sheep grazing in the uplands in the *Lives* of St Cuthbert. *AVSC*, V, p. 117.
[55] P. G. Langdon, K. E. Barber and S. H. Lomas-Clarke, 'Reconstructing climate and environmental change in northern England through chironomid and pollen analyses: evidence from Talkin Tarn, Cumbria', *Journal of Paleolimnology*, 32 (2004), pp. 1997-213 and esp.208.
[56] Newman et al, *Resource Assessment*, p. 3
[57] Lisa Dunmayne-Peaty and Keith Barber, 'Late Holocene vegetation history, human impact and pollen representativity variations in northern Cumbria, UK', *Journal of Quaternary Science*, 13 (1998), pp. 147-164, pp. 155-156.
[58] Dark and Dark, 'Archaeological and Palynological Evidence', pp. 65-68.
[59] R. C. Chiverell, 'Past and future perspectives upon landscape instability in Cumbria, northwest England', *Regional Environmental Change*, 6 (2006), pp. 101-114, p. 111.
[60] Guy Wimble, Colin E. Wells and David Hodgkinson, 'Human impact on mid- and late- Holocene vegetation in south Cumbria, UK', *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*, 9 (2000), pp. 17-30, p. 29. W. Dickinson, 'Recurrence Surfaces at Rusland Moss, Cumbria (formerly North Lancashire)', *Journal of Ecology*, 63 (1975), pp. 913-935.

common in a wide band from the southern foothills of the Lake District down the Kent and

Leven estuaries, which define the eastern boundaries of the Cartmel and Furness

peninsulas respectively.[61] In the post-Roman period, these two peninsulas were little islands

of cultivable land wedged between the forests to the north, wide estuaries to the east and

west and the sea to the south.

Figure 21. Looking over the Duddon sands from Roan Head (Barrow in Furness) to Black Coombe at the tip of the Copeland peninsula.

Changes to sea levels from the Late Roman period also impacted on the agricultural

potential of some areas. The low-lying Lyth valley in particular may have suffered from the

same rises in levels which are observable on the other side of Morecambe Bay.[62] Even a

modest rise in sea levels is likely to have led to it becoming at least seasonally inundated. If

true, this would explain the cessation of cultivation observed in the late Roman period at

Foulshaw Moss, close to where the valley opens out into the sea.[63]

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[61] The area remains relatively well-wooded to this day.

[62] Gerrard, *Ruin*, pp. 101-102.

[63] Wimble et al, 'Impact', p. 29. As the photograph below shows, notwithstanding that it has long benefitted from irrigation schemes, the Lyth valley still floods regularly. A recent decision no longer to fund some of the pumping stations in the valley has been unpopular with the farming community, although is welcomed by ecologists who argue that the valley should be allowed to revert to a natural wetland habitat,

In addition to the rise in sea levels, environmental explanations may be found in the 'dark sun' event of 536 AD, when a period of sudden cooling led to a year or more during which the sun was obscured. This event may have kick-started

Figure 22: The Lyth Valley after heavy rain. The modern irrigation dykes are clearly visible.

(or been part of) a longer period of global cooling, sometimes referred to as the Late Antique Little Ice Age which was characterised by drought and arid conditions and which persisted until about 660.[64] The most likely causes of the dark sun event itself are either a succession of volcanic eruptions between 536 and 547 or a comet strike, although for the purposes of this study, the cause is very much secondary to the effect.[65] The phenomenon was attested by a number of eye witnesses around the Mediterranean.[66] Procopius wrote how "the sun

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[64] Ulf Buntgen, Vladimir Myglan, Fredrik Ljungqvist et al, 'Cooling and societal change during the Late Antique Little Ice Age from 536 to around 660 AD,' *Nature Geoscience*, 2016, pp. 231-236. B. Lee Drake, 'Changes in North Atlantic Oscillation drove Population Migrations and the Collapse of the Western Roman Empire', *Scientific Reports*, 7.1 (2017), pp. 1-7, pp. 2, 4. Drake notes a correlation between four periods of cooling (each caused by shifts in the North Atlantic Oscillation) and migration events in the Roman and post-Roman periods.

[65] Buntgen et al, 'Cooling', 231-6. Emma Rigby, Melissa Symonds and Derek Ward-Thompson, 'A comet impact in AD 536?', *Astronomy & Geophysics*, 45 (2004), pp. 1.23-1.26.

[66] These accounts include John of Ephesus (writing in modern day Turkey), Cassiodorus (in Italy), Procopius (who witnessed the event in both North Africa and Italy), John of Lydos (in Constantinople)

gave forth its light without brightness like the moon for the whole year".[67] In Italy,

Cassiodorus spoke of how a blue-coloured sun cast no midday shadow and asked "what will

give fertility, if the soil does not grow warm in summer?"[68] An account derived from the

writings of John of Ephesus recorded how the sun shone feebly for as little as four hours a

day, with the result that the "fruits did not ripen, and the wine tasted like sour grapes".[69]

The written evidence receives support from analysis of tree rings and ice cores which

suggest that 536 was one of the coldest years in the last two millennia.[70] The years between

540 and 550 also witnessed a particularly slow period of tree growth across Europe, the

United States, Siberia, Australasia and South America.[71] The worst years appear to have

been 536 and between 540-542, when the evidence suggests a summer temperature drop

of 3-4 degrees centigrade.[72] This period of cooling led to crop failures and famine around the

Mediterranean and as far afield as China, Japan and Korea.[73] The *Liber Pontificalis*, a

compendium of Papal lives whose earliest known recension dates to the 530s, recorded a

devastating famine across "the whole world" in 537 and a letter in Cassiodorus' collection

records the distribution of grain to famine-hit regions of northern Italy.[74] Hunger caused by

cold summers and a series of destroyed harvests may had led to a halving in the population

of Scandinavia.[75]

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and an anonymous Syrian chronicler. For a good summary of the various contemporary accounts, see Antti Arjava, 'The Mystery Cloud of 536 CE in the Mediterranean Sources', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 59 (2005), pp. 73-94.

[67] Buntgen et al, 'Cooling'., p. 235.

[68] The full quote can be found in Bailey K Young, Climate and Crisis in Sixth-Century Italy and Gaul, in Joel Gunn, ed. *The Years without Summer: Tracing A.D. 536 and its aftermath* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 35-36.

[69] Arjava, 'Mystery Cloud', pp. 78-79.

[70] Rigby et al, *Comet impact?* P. 1.24.

[71] Arjava, 'Mystery Cloud', 77-78. See also David Keys, *Catastrophe: An Investigation into the Origins of the Modern World* (London, 2000), p. 1-6.

[72] Bo Graslund & Neil Price, Twilight of the gods? The 'dust veil event' of AD 536 in critical perspective', *Antiquity*, 86 (2012) pp. 438-443, p. 430.

[73] See, for example, Keys, *Catastrophe*, pp. 3-5.

[74] Arjava, 'Mystery Cloud', p. 80.

[75] Graslund & Price, 'Twilight', p. 433.

The problems of famine were compounded when the Justinianic Plague broke out in the port city of Pelusium in Egypt in 540. This was most likely bubonic plague, caused by the bacillus *yersinia pestis*.[76] It is estimated that anything up to a third of the population of the eastern Roman Empire may have died during the first outbreak of the plague, including up to half of those living in the imperial capital at Constantinople.[77] A number of contemporary chroniclers give detailed (and often lurid) accounts of both the spread and consequence of the plague, including the opening up of massive new cemeteries, the debasement of gold coinage and wage inflation caused by a sudden shift in the balance of supply and demand for services.[78]

From Egypt, the plague spread quickly around the Mediterranean and then north into Gaul. Gregory of Tours wrote of victims suffering from "great swellings in the groin" in the years between 527 and 551.[79] Gregory's account is also now supported by the identification of the *yersinia pestis* bacillus in fifth- to sixth-century skeletal remains discovered in Sens in France and from Munich in Germany.[80] The spread of the plague to Britain is now confirmed by the discovery of *yersinia pestis* in four bodies at the fifth- to early seventh-century Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Edix Hill, Cambridgeshire.[81]

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[76] William Rosen, *Justinian's Flea* (London, 2007), pp. 174-188.

[77] Keys, *Catastrophe*, p. 10.

[78] Procopius, *De Bello Persico*, II, pp. 9-10. Mischa Meier, 'The 'Justinianic Plague': The economic consequences of the pandemic in the eastern Roman empire and its cultural and religious effects.' Early Medieval Europe, 24.3 (2016), pp. 267-292, p. 281. Peter Sarris, The Justinianic Plague: origins and effects, *Continuity and Change*, 17 (2002), pp. 169-182, pp. 177-8.

[79] Lewis Thorpe, ed. *Gregory of Tours: The History of the Franks* (London, 1974), Book IV. 5, pp. 199-200.There is a particularly useful map showing the possible spread of the plague in its various waves throughout the sixth and seventh centuries in Rosen, *Justinian's Flea*, p. 220.

[80] For Sens, see Michel Drancourt et al, Genotyping, Orientalis-like *Yersinia pestis*, and Plague Pandemics', Emerging Infectious Diseases, Sep 10 (9) (2004), pp. 1585-1592, accessed via https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3320270/ on 14/10/2018. For the two sites near Munich, see Michal Feldman et al, 'A High-Coverage Yersinia pestis Genome from a Sixth-Century Justinianic Plague Victim', *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, Vol 33 (11) (2016), pp. 2911-2923 and esp. pp. 2911-2913.

[81] Marcel Keller et al, 'Ancient *Yersinia pestis* genomes from across Western Europe reveal early diversification during the First Pandemic (541-750)', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2019), 201820447. This latest evidence will hopefully put to bed once and for all the frequently-cited notion that the Anglo-Saxons of the south and east were somehow spared the plague as a result of their limited contact with the Britons to the north and west.

The events of 536 and the subsequent plague are recorded in laconic form in the Irish annals and the principal Welsh collection, the *AC*.[82] The Irish material dates a "failure of bread" to both 536 and 539 and records three outbreaks of disease during the following two decades, of which the "first mortality called blefed" (dated to 545) is most likely to be the Justinianic plague.[83] Although not exactly contemporaneous with the sixth-century events they describe, the Irish material derives from a single lost ancestor (termed 'the Chronicle of Ireland'), which was kept at Iona from about 563.[84] The rather more scant *AC* refer to "death in Britain and Ireland" in 537 and a "mortalitas magna" ('great mortality') in 547 – the same phrase as used in the Irish entries, underlining the links between the *AC* and the Irish material.[85]

The archaeological evidence may support the notion of a fracturing event in Britain in or about the middle of the sixth century. As was noted in Chapter 2.3.2, post-Roman trade in was in two distinct phases. The first period of trade saw the importation of goods from the same parts of the eastern Mediterranean, which we know from our documentary sources were so badly affected by the Justinianic Plague. This trade came to a fairly abrupt end in the middle part of the sixth century, to be replaced with a new trade involving products derived from Atlantic Gaul.[86] That it was the plague which ended the first period of trade seems reasonable.

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[82] Specifically, the *Annals of Ulster*, the *Annals of Tigernach*, the *Chronicum Scotorum* and the *Annals of Roscrea*.

[83] The twin entries may be a doublet referring to one event. Thomas Charles-Edwards, *The Chronicle of Ireland*, Volume 1 (Liverpool, 2006), pp. 94 (fn 6) and 95. William P MacArthur, The Identification of Some Pestilences Recorded in the Irish Annals, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol 6 (1949), pp. 169-178, pp. 171-2.

[84] Charles-Edwards, *The Chronicle of Ireland*, pp. 7-9. See also Kathleen Hughes, 'The A-text of *Annales Cambriae'* in David Dumville, ed. *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 856-100, p. 89 and Roy Flechner, 'The Chronicle of Ireland; then and now', *Early Medieval Europe*, 21 (2013), pp. 425-6 for a useful and brief overview of the scholarly consensus on this matter.

[85] *AC*, p. 45. The Maelgwyn of the *AC* and Gildas' Maglocunus are most likely one and the same. On dating of the Chronicle of Ireland see Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons* (Oxford, 2012), p. 352. The Chronicle of Ireland tends to date events two to three years too early, which explains the slight differential between the Chronicle's dates and those in the *AC.* Kathleen Hughes, 'The Welsh Latin Chronicles', pp. 68-70.

[86] Lewit, 'Dynamics', p. 326.

2.6.5 SUMMARY

There is little reason to believe that the fifth century was a time of great unrest or even change for Cumbria's agricultural communities. The collapse of the 'big farm' villa economy and the shift towards pastoralism led to a model for farming which already had a long pedigree in Cumbria. The general paucity of material finds at Cumbria's rural sites suggests a society in which status was, and perhaps always had been, expressed through less archaeologically visible media such as cattle on the hoof. For so long as the successors of the last Roman garrisons continued to live in their forts it seems likely that pre-existing arrangements of local supply would have continued and perhaps even increased as the need for locally sourced arable produce (and especially farinaceous crops) increased.

The extent to which the lifting of the wider imperial tax burden left more of the agricultural surplus in the hands of the producers can only be guessed at, but it seems likely that the successors of the last Roman garrisons at places such as Birdoswald and Maryport would have enjoyed a similar level of control over their rural hinterlands as had their predecessors.[87] Occupation of those erstwhile Roman sites, however, generally appears to have come to an end by the close of the fifth century at the latest. Sixth-century elites do not appear to have lived where their predecessors had lived in the fifth century, but there is little reason to think that the relocation of local would have reduced the obligations of the farming community to deliver up their surplus in the form of food renders.

Notwithstanding the general picture of continuity proposed above, the evidence from

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[87] It is worth bearing in mind Peter Heather's observations that, for the most part, the Roman State was reasonably careful not to alienate the big landowners through punitive taxation. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, p. 140.

Cumbria's peat mosses does suggest there was a contraction in land use, although the date at which that began to happen need not have been the same across the whole region. Climate instability seems to have led to reforestation in south Cumbria before the end of the Roman period. By the fifth century, we should perhaps think of the south of the county as a sparsely populated area, with denser populations on the Cartmel and Furness peninsulas. The south was largely sundered from the north of the county by forest and the mountains of the Lake District, with routes north limited to the Roman road that ran through the Lune valley in the east or the longer route around the south and west Cumbrian coasts via the crossings of Morecambe Bay.

In north Cumbria, the evidence for reforestation suggests that land under cultivation remained more or less constant until the sixth century. This, in turn, raises the possibility that the driver for the contraction of farming was not the removal of the Roman garrisons and the Roman administration but was instead depopulation caused by the dark sun event and the subsequent outbreak of bubonic plague.

CHAPTER THREE

PLACE-NAMES

3.1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers place-name evidence and the use that can be made of that evidence when seeking to reconstruct the social and/or political geography of post-Roman Cumbria. Late Roman, British and Old English name forms all have something to say about the movement of people, ideas and power across a landscape and have a particular importance when considering a period of time in respect of which the archaeological evidence is often patchy and the documentary evidence is always problematic.

For previous generations of commentators, the paucity of Brittonic loan words in Old English, the paucity of British toponyms throughout most of England and the apparently speedy collapse of the Brittonic language across much of Britain appeared to support narratives of invasion, violence and endemic hostility between Britons and Anglo-Saxons. In this scenario, the spread of early English place-name forms denoted the steady acquisition of land from defeated British groups who, even though perhaps not slaughtered *en masse*, were nonetheless dispossessed, enslaved or, at best, survived in little out-of-the way pockets, some of which remain visible to this day.[1]

One of the key arguments of this thesis is that the intermingling between British and Anglo-Saxon culture often took the form of hybridisation (which does not presuppose political

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[1] See for example Coates, *Invisible Britons.* Also D. Gary Miller, *External Influences on English: From its Beginnings to the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 15-40.

dominance by the earliest post-Roman Germanic or Irish migrants) rather than acculturation, which does, by implication, presuppose entrenched inequality between different ethnic groups. If this theory is valid, then what we think of as post-Roman Anglo-Saxon culture was a new, hybrid culture, heavily influenced by contacts with mainland Europe and adopted by native and migrant alike.

An objection to this argument is the ultimate success of Old English against the Brittonic languages of early medieval Britain. This may have led to a lower social status for Britons in Anglophone polities, an argument which receives some support from the evolved meanings of words such as *wealas* ('Welshman/foreigner/slave') and *wiln* ('female Welsh slave').[2] How could Brittonic vanish so completely across most of the country and have had so little influence on Old English if the Britons really were equal partners in the creation of the new identities forged in post-Roman Britain?

This objection is a valid one. Although a full consideration of early medieval language change in Cumbria would warrant a thesis of itself, some comments may still be made. Models of language change often appear to envisage late Roman Britain as   a largely monolingual society in which Latin was only ever an elite language. Latin speakers were more concentrated in the Romanised lowlands than the less Romanised uplands. This leaves us with a fifth-century population comprised overwhelmingly of monolingual Brittonic speakers whose language then came into contact with the various forms of Old English brought by incursive migrant groups from the North Sea littoral.

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[2] Angelika Lutz, 'Celtic Influence on Old English and West Germanic', *English Language and Linguistics*, Vol 13 (2009), pp. 227-249, pp. 239-244. The law code of Ine of Wessex which provides for lower compensation payments for crimes committed against Welsh people than English people is often quoted in this context. The wisdom of using one reference in one law code and assuming that it has wider geographic and temporal applicability has always seemed rather questionable and, in the case of the Welsh borders at least, has been effectively debunked. Brady, *Welsh borderlands*, pp. 4-5. See also Higham, 'Origins', p. 90.

Although superficially attractive, such assumptions do not adequately take into account a number of factors, including a) the dominance of written Latin, which was a suitable medium not only for governance, but also graffiti and curse tablets, b) the need for Latin (albeit low Latin rather than the florid, classical variety of the poets and orators) as a unifying language across the Empire, c) the dominance of the Latin-speaking army across much of the uplands and d) the conceptual problem with the whole notion of the upland areas of Britannia being in some objective sense 'less Roman' than the lowland areas.

We should also consider the status of Brittonic during the Roman period. As with so many other 'native' languages across the Empire, Brittonic was in a substrate relationship to Latin. It was low status whereas Latin was high status. It was not therefore an inherently desirable language for discourse amongst those who represented – or who wished to represent – the elites in society. With the collapse of the Roman system of governance, the need for speaking Latin will have been much reduced. The Germanic languages of fifth century migrants to lowland Britain *may* have provided a useful proxy, representing as they did a symbol of the increasing irrelevance of Roman forms of expressing status and the wider transfer of Roman power to Germanic groups across the western Empire.[3] North and west of the Tees/Exe line, much of upland Britain had access to another high-status proxy for Latin in the form of Irish. It is Irish, not Brittonic, that was considered a suitable language to use alongside Latin on the Class I stones. In areas such as Cumbria, which were outside the zones of both Anglo-Saxon and Irish influence, Brittonic was presumably the only language of discourse outside the Church, but even then it is not until the second half of the sixth century that we see the earliest written texts using Brittonic. Such a hypothesis may better explain post-Roman language contact than the blood and fire narratives of old. The *wealas* referenced in the seventh century and later sources may not have been the Britons *en masse*, but instead recently conquered groups from culturally British polities and/or a still-

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[3] Higham, 'Origins', p. 98. Esmonde-Cleary, *Roman West*, pp. 438-439, 450.

recognisable underclass which, for whatever reason, had not been able to partake in the creation of lowland Britain's new culture.[4]

3.1.2 CURRENT APPROACHES

Compared to other English counties, Cumbria has a relatively large number of place-names and hydronyms which are wholly or partly Brittonic in origin. It has far fewer potentially early Old English name forms.[5] 'Brittonic' or 'British' in this context means the P-Celtic language spoken across a wide swathe of western Britain and parts of western Gaul and includes Cumbric, a northern variant of Brittonic which eventually died out in the twelfth century.[6]

An analysis of the Brittonic names that relate to territorial or ecclesiastical administration provides valuable evidence which may be used in a reconstruction of the political and social settlements of the region in the post-Roman period. So too can a consideration of earliest stratum of English place-names. The use of Cumbria's corpus of Brittonic or part-Brittonic place-names has, however, often been problematic. One common methodology involves plotting the distribution of such names in order to spot culturally or ethnically distinct British enclaves in a landscape otherwise controlled by Old English speakers.[7] This methodology has its roots in the days when evidence for an Anglo-Saxon presence, whether in the form of place-names or archaeological finds, was seen as the passive indicator of the westward advance of incursive Germanic groups.

Were it possible to demonstrate that the sixth- or seventh-century toponymic landscape of

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[4] Woolf posits that *wealas* may originally have denoted a Roman (in the sense of Latin-speaking) individual, as opposed to a Brittonic-speaking one. Woolf, 'British Ethnogenesis', p. 25.
[5] See, for example, the Gazetteer and related distribution maps in *CVEP* and esp. pp. 281-288, 338-339, 372-374, 390.
[6] Jackson, *Language and History*, pp. 1-8. *CVEP*, 65.
[7] For example, Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, pp. 77-83.

what is now England was comprised of small numbers of Brittonic place-names surrounded

by a much larger number of English toponyms, British enclaves would receive a boost. As it

is, the absolute numbers of English place-names which can be demonstrated to be as early

as the post-Roman period is also very modest. From what little we can tell, there is reason to

believe that during the three centuries of the post-Roman period, Brittonic place-names

formed a much larger proportion of the total corpus of place-names than they do now.

The Brittonic contribution to the place-names of post-Roman Britain is apparent from the

earliest written English records. Barrie Cox drew together a list of 224 names (plus river

names) which can be found in documents compiled over a fifty-year period from about 672

to 731.[8] The material which specifically relates to Northumbria derives from five surviving

prose works, four of which are referenced extensively in this thesis.[9] Although Cox's study

has been criticised for the inherent bias of the source materials, which focus on high-status

secular and monastic sites and which also focus on the east of the country,[10] the corpus

nevertheless represents an extremely valuable snapshot of the toponymic landscape of

some of Britain across roughly two generations. [11] Of the 224 names recorded from across

the country, 26% are either Brittonic or part-Brittonic. In Northumbria, 29 out of 56 names

(not including simplex river names) are wholly or partly Brittonic. Even if we discount those

names which are Anglicisations of pre-existing British names (such as Kaelcacaestir)[12] or

which include a pre-English river name compounded with an English element, British or part-

British names account for nearly half of the entire corpus of northern names. If one *does* add

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[8] Barrie Cox, 'The Place-Names of the Earliest English Records', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 8 (1976), pp. 12-66.

[9] The five works are *EHEP* and Bede's *Life* of St Cuthbert, Eddius Stephanus' *Life* of St Wilfrid, the anonymous *Life* of St Cuthbert and the anonymous *Life* of Abbot Ceolfrith.

[10] Margaret Gelling, 'Towards a Chronology For English Place-Names,' in Della Hooke, ed. *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 59-76, p. 69. Ann Cole '*Burna* and *brōc* Problems involved in retrieving the Old English usage of these place-name elements', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 23 (1991), pp. 26-48. John T. Baker, 'Topographical place-names and the distribution of Tun and Ham in the Chilterns and Essex region, *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 13 (2006), pp. 50-62, p.50.

[11] John T. Baker, *Cultural Transition in the Chilterns and Essex Region*, *350 AD to 650 AD* (Hatfield 2006), pp. 188-189.

[12] Cox, 'Place Names', p. 36. Kaelcacaestir is now Tadcaster.

in the river names the total corpus of Northumbrian names is 75, of which two thirds are Brittonic or part-Brittonic. The vast majority of those names refer to places east of the Pennines, meaning that Brittonic place-names were still common in those parts of Northumbria which are usually reckoned to have seen the earliest and the greatest English settlement.[13]

The post-Roman toponymy west of the Pennines is even more slanted in favour of Brittonic names, although the corpus of names is much smaller. There are five Cumbrian places named in the early English sources, being *Lugubalia* (Carlisle), *Dacor* (Dacre), *Tina* (Tyne), *Dunutinga* (possibly Dent) and *Deruuentionis* (Derwent). All of these are British forms, although in the case of Carlisle it is clear from an incidental comment by Bede that there was also a corrupt Anglicised form *Luel*.[14] This small group is boosted by three other groups of toponyms, being a) other names drawn from later sources but by implication in use during the post-Roman period (such as *Cartmel* or *Suthgedling*),[15] b) names in early texts which *might* relate to sites in Cumbria, but equally might not (such as *Bannavem Taberniae*[16] and *Kintis*[17]) and c) names garnered from the corpus of praise poetry which survives in Middle Welsh texts but which deals with, and which might have its origins in, the sixth century, including *reget* (Rheged – a now lost polity name), *llwyfenyd* (probably Lyvennet) and *rayadyr derwennyd* (Derwent Falls).[18]

With the exception of Cartmel and Suthgedling, all of these names are Brittonic. We can, then, argue for a widespread and very significant Brittonic contribution to the toponymy of

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[13] Higham argues that many surviving modern place-names were first given in (and specifically towards the end of) the period 800-1100, when there was widespread settlement shift across England. Higham, 'Origins', p. 100.

[14] *VSC*, XXVII, 243.

[15] These names first appear in the possibly tenth-century *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* as places gifted to Cuthbert by Ecgfrith of Northumbria in the late seventh century).

[16] *Bannavem Taberniae* is Patrick's birthplace. The Cumbrian links are nowhere near as strong as is sometimes argued – see Chapter 2.5.4.2

[17] *AVSC*, III, p. 115. See also Chapter 4.4 for a fuller discussion of this name.

[18] This material is considered more fully below.

post-Roman and early Anglo-Saxon Northumbria, which contribution was still observable nearly three hundred years after Germanic migrants first entered the eastern parts of the region.[19]

A further problem is that place-names with Brittonic elements could have been coined at any time until the final death of Cumbric in the twelfth century. Brittonic place-names are sometimes argued to have been given either in the period prior to the assumed Anglo-Saxon conquest of the late sixth/early seventh-century or in the period following the defeat of Strathclyde in the late ninth-century, when Cumbria was supposedly occupied by Brittonic-speaking refugee elites.[20] It is, however, difficult to see why Brittonic would have died out completely in the intervening period. This is especially the case if another central plank of this thesis – that there never was a Northumbrian invasion and Cumbria remained culturally British throughout the period covered by this thesis – is accepted.[21] There is no good reason to think that British names could not have been given *between* these two periods as well as *during* them.

The second problem is that the density of Brittonic names is, in any event, a relative concept. No part of Cumbria has a majority of Brittonic place-names and even where Brittonic names are most common, they are still hugely outnumbered by both English and Norse names. Cumbria's north-east corner area around Brampton and the north Pennine foothills is instructive. This area has the largest concentration of British name forms in the North West. Consideration of distribution maps might lead one to conclude that this was indeed a one-time British enclave.[22] Yet large dots on small-scale maps can easily beguile us into seeing a toponymic dominance which never really existed. Demonstrating the

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[19] Gelling and Cole believe that the high number of lost names in Cox's list in indicative of a steady process of name replacement. Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. xx.

[20] Jackson, *Language and History*, pp. 6-8. Although this argument is not explicitly made in more recent scholarship, it is implied in key works such as BLITON.

[21] See in particular the following section which deals with the evidence for this proposition.

[22] *CVEP*, pp. 372-374.

continued existence of the Cumbric language does not mean that one has demonstrated British cultural dominance, still less the existence of autonomous or semi-autonomous British statelets. The safest conclusion that can realistically be drawn is that in some areas, Brittonic name forms represent a slightly larger minority of the overall corpus of current place-names than they do elsewhere.

Another approach to place-name evidence involves working through late medieval records in order to spot earlier polities lurking amidst the later tangle of medieval hundreds, honours, baronies and wapentakes.[23] Early place-names are plotted by reference to later administrative boundaries as a means of demonstrating that those political units have remained constant since the post-Roman period. Good examples of this approach include Bruce Eagles' reconstruction of early Anglo-Saxon political units in Hampshire, which involves peeling back "layers of the historic landscape, from the present county through the hundreds, the *parochiae* of the minsters… to the 'small shires' and regiones of Middle and Early Anglo-Saxon date".[24]

Barrow's plotting of *ecles* names in Lancashire, of which there appeared to be one for each of the later medieval shires of the south and middle part of the county is a further example of how place names have been used to reconstruct the early medieval political landscape.[25] Another common approach has been to search for multiple estates, a supposedly 'Celtic' pattern of land management in which the territorial possessions of estate centres are spread out, rather than forming a single contiguous unit.[26] The argument runs that similarities

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[23] G.W.S. Barrow, 'The pattern of lordship and feudal settlement in Cumbria', *Journal of Medieval History* (1975), pp. 117-124. For a specific example, see Phythian-Adams' conclusions about Morland parish in the Eden Valley. Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, pp. 93-100.
[24] Bruce Eagles and Rosamond Faith, ''Small shires' and *regiones* in Hampshire and the formation of the shires of eastern Wessex' in Bruce Eagles, ed. *From Roman Civitas to Anglo-Saxon Shire* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 157-184 and esp. pp. 164-166.
[25] G.W.S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the eleventh to the fourteenth century* (London, 1973), pp. 62-64.
[26] G. R. J Jones, 'Early Territorial Organization in Gwynedd and Elmet', *Northern History*, X (1975), pp. 14-18 and especially the map on p 15.

between thirteenth-century territorial organisation in England and Wales implies an earlier model of land holding which both areas shared and which must have had British antecedents (as otherwise it would not be visible in Wales, where land management had been largely unaffected by Anglo-Saxon political settlements).[27] Examples in or near Cumbria supposedly include the Craven region of North Yorkshire and the Cumbrian practice of landowners in the low-lying coastal areas holding swathes of upland at some remove from estate centres.[28]

The concept of small, long-lasting political units within much more fragile hegemonies is a sound one and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, but the known dislocation of modes of land ownership and estate structure in the eleventh century should make us slow to telescope medieval administrative units back as far as the post-Roman period.[29] This is especially problematic for the multiple estate model, given the lack of evidence to take it back much before the eleventh century.[30] The model also perhaps wrongly assumes the longevity of somewhat inflexible models for social exchange and land tenure that are not visible in the post-Conquest period and which may be the product of later generations of commentators.[31] In short, multiple estates are not visible in our (admittedly sparse records) of the post-Roman period and accepting their existence relies heavily on accepting as proven earlier theories about early medieval economics that are not evidenced either.

Although some putative post-Roman Cumbrian centres do indeed appear to have a relationship to known later political units (for example, the baronies of Allerdale with

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[27] ibid, 8. A commote is the subdivision of a hundred – usually two to the hundred.
[28] P. N. Wood, 'On the Little British Kingdom of Craven', *Northern History*, 32 (1996), pp. 1–20. Angus Winchester, 'Early Estate Structures in Cumberland and Lancashire', *Medieval Settlement Research*, 23 (2008), pp. 15-17.
[29] Wendy Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm: Studies in the Llandaff Charters* (London, 1978), p. 25.
[30] Rhiannon Comeau, *Land, People and Power in Early Medieval Wales*, BAR British Series 659 (Oxford, 2020), pp. 12-13.
[31] For a good discussion of the scholarship on multiple estates and the concerns that have been raised about them, see Comeau, *Early Medieval Wales*, pp. 11-16.

Papcastle and Wigton with Old Carlisle),[32] Cumbria generally suffers from a lack of evidence that precludes the application of Eagles' 'reverse engineering' methodology. That methodology relies largely on being able to spot early units – often termed *regiones* – underlying land grants in later charters and Domesday hundreds. Unfortunately, only one Cumbrian charter pre-dates the Norman Conquest and even that does not give any details as to estate boundaries. The greater part of the county was also excluded from the Domesday survey of 1086 by reason of being in Scotland at the time. The area that *was* surveyed comprises a thin straggle of settlements running up the Kent valley and a handful of place-names on the Cartmel, Furness and Copeland peninsulas. All of these places were stated to be in the Yorkshire Hundred of Amounderness, a huge area that also included much of north Lancashire between the rivers Lune and Ribble. Compared to the southern counties of England, the survey of Amounderness is patchy and lacking in detail. We have a group of place-names and the names of their owners, but little else. One might even query whether the Cumbrian settlements even were in Amounderness, given that in a grant of land to the Archbishop of York in 934, Amounderness' northern boundary is stated to be twenty miles south of Cumbria, beyond Lancaster.

The ecclesiastical evidence is no more helpful. The argument runs that the earliest stratum of ecclesiastical organisation in the newly-Christian Anglo-Saxon kingdoms was the minster church. Each had an associated territory and there was often a dovetailing of the boundaries of royal and ecclesiastical power.[33] This system is not evidenced in Cumbria, although given that Christianity was already well-established before the minster system arose, that is hardly surprising. Only Dacre and Carlisle are mentioned in the context of ecclesiastical organisation and, aside from a (later) reference to the estate of Carlisle being eighteen square miles, no early source gives any details of the *parochiae* of Cumbrian ecclesiastical

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[32] In addition to these Norman baronies, Brougham seems likely to have been the site of the tenth-century meeting at *Eomotum* when Athelstan received the submission of his northern enemies whilst the Court Thorn, site of the Inglewood Forest court, is very close to Castel Hewen.
[33] Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 108.

centres. This single reference to Carlisle, brief as it is, undermines any attempt to reconstruct the territorial extent of a post-Roman polity based on Carlisle by considering the extent of the later diocese of Carlisle, which was not created until 1133. The Diocese grew over the centuries to encompass an area broadly coterminous with the ceremonial county, but even at its smallest (and earliest) known extent, it still covered the northern parts of both Cumberland and Westmorland – an area very significantly larger than eighteen square miles. This aggregated lack of documentary evidence makes the exercise of working back from Cumbria's known later structures to postulate early medieval ones virtually impossible.[34]

This chapter will therefore seek to address the issues identified above without reference to the extent of later political units and without the aim of identifying post-Roman British enclaves in an Anglophone landscape. Instead, British and English name forms which suggest the earliest post-Roman layers of political or social organisation will be plotted on distribution maps.[35] This evidence can then be layered over the archaeological evidence discussed in the preceding section to assess whether there is any correlation between the archaeology and toponymy. It will perhaps come as no surprise to learn that there are indeed several correlations, which serve to strengthen the picture of a surprisingly large number of potential post-Roman foci in Cumbria.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Chapter 3.2 will deal with the toponymic evidence for possible post Roman high-status secular and ecclesiastical sites. Chapter 3.3 will deal with early English name forms and Chapter 3.4 will examine the concept of Brittonic enclaves through consideration of a cluster of Brittonic names in north-east Cumbria.

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[34] For examples of how this approach can work for England generally, see John Baker and Stuart Brookes, 'Identifying outdoor assembly sites in early medieval England', *Journal of Field Archaeology* (2015), pp. 3-21.
[35] As proposed in Winchester, *Early Estate Structures*, pp. 17-18.

3.2   PLACE-NAMES AND POWER

This chapter has two purposes. Firstly, it will deal with those place-names which might suggest high-status secular or ecclesiastical sites in post-Roman Cumbria. The place-names include the Brittonic elements *caer* ('fortified place'), *llys* ('court') and **ecles* ('church') and the Old English elements *cæster* ('castle', typically denoting a Roman fortified site) and *burh* ('fortified place'). The specific meaning of these place-name elements may be subject to regional variation. In the case of *cæster* especially, the link between the element and still-functioning institutions of the post-Roman period (as opposed to once-functioning institutions of the Roman period) has never been satisfactorily established. It is further recognised that even those place-name elements which are demonstrably early may well have continued in use long after the period under consideration in this thesis, potentially limiting the usefulness of such elements (notably *caer* or *burh*) when reconstructing Cumbria's post-Roman political geography.

Secondly, the chapter will seek to assess whether there is any meaningful correlation between the distribution of those place-names and the distribution of the post-Roman archaeological evidence as considered in the preceding chapter.

3.2.1 CAER

Cumbria's largest group of Brittonic place-names potentially denoting an important site are those incorporating the element *caer*. The element means variously 'defended farmstead',

'fortified site' or 'castle' and so may be a Brittonic term for an early medieval estate centre.[1]
Cumbria's thirteen definite or possible *caer* names are set out in tabular form below.

Some of these names are problematic. Carnetly was traditionally assumed not to contain
caer at all but to mean 'Teilio's cairn', at least until the discovery of a number of earlier forms
in the fourteenth-century Lanercost Cartulary (best represented by the variant

NAME	MEANING	EARLIEST FORM(S)	DATE(S) OF EARLIEST FORMS	REFERENCE
Carlisle	Caer of Luel	*Cair Ligualid, Carleol*	c. 828, c. 1104	PNC, 41
Carwinley	Gwenddoleu's caer	*Karwindelhou, Kaerwyndlo*	1202, 1281	PNC, 52-53[2]
Carnetly?	Hill of the lord's caer?	*Caruthelaue*	14th C	PNC, 84. Andrew Breeze, 'Britons in the Barony of Gilsland, Cumbria', *Northern History* (2006), 328.
Cardunneth*	Dunaut's caer	*Cardinogh*	1603	PNC, 77
Castle Carrock	Little fort	*Castelcairoc*	1165	PNC, 74-75
Caer Thannock	Danoc's caer	*Carthanacke, Carthonock*	1589**	PNC, 255-256
Carhullan***	Holand's caer	*Carholand, Carehullend*	1420, 1540	PNW, 2, 189
Caermote	Caer of the wethers	*Carmalt*	1777	PNC, 326
Cardew	Black caer	*Carðeu, Karthew*	c. 1050, 1259	PNC, 131-132
Carmallt	Caer of the wethers	*Carmalt, Kirmalt*	13th C	*CVEP*, 282 PNC, 455
Caernarvon	Caer at the river	*Caernarvon-Castle*	1683	PNC, 341
Cardunnock	Caer (made of) pebbles	*Cardrunnock, Kardrunoc*	13th C, 13th C	PNC, 123
Cargo?	Rock hill?	*Cargaou*	1178	PNC, 95

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[1] A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements, Volume I* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 76. Oliver Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements* (Nottingham, 1985), pp. 50-53. See also Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, 85 and Barrow, *Kingdom of the Scots*, pp. 65-69.
[2] See also Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, pp. 39-40.

Table 5: Cumbria's *caers*. The names are ordered clockwise from Carlisle. Names in italics are no longer in use. Names with a question mark are uncertain.

* The name refers to a hill (Cardunneth Pike) rather than a settlement.
** The earliest name recorded is Maiden Castle (*Maydencastel*) in 1285.
*** The name defies a definitive translation, but may be either a British personal name[3] or the English personal name 'Holand', in each case combined with *caer* as its first element.[4] The *caer* might originally have been the nearby site of Towtop Kirk, which is proposed as either a prehistoric henge or an early Christian site.[5]

'Caruthelaue') led to a re-evaluation of the name as meaning 'hill of the lord's caer', with

English *hlāw* as the final element.[6] Caernarvon Castle (near Workington) might be an

antiquarian coining inspired by the more famous Welsh equivalent, although there was a

small thirteenth-century castle and possibly also an Iron Age promontory fort at the site.[7]

The existence of a multivallate hill fort and a possible Romano British rectilinear enclosure at

Cargo suggests that too may be a *caer* name.[8]

A fourteenth name, the now-lost Caraverick has been optimistically translated as 'Efrog's

castle'[9] but as there are no remains of any building that might ever have been regarded as a

defended site, the alternative translation of 'cow parsley field' as given by the EPNS

Volumes for Cumberland seems more plausible.[10] Caraverick is not therefore included in the

group.

The meaning of the generic element *caer* in the context of post-Roman Cumbria is not clear.

Although it translates as 'castle' in modern Welsh, in medieval Cornwall and Brittany it came

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[3] Diana Whaley, *A Dictionary of Lake District Place Names* (Nottingham, 2006), p. 66.
[4] *PNW*, 2, pp. 189-190
[5] This interpretation is reported in a number of online gazetteers and appears to derive from English Heritage, although the English Heritage website itself is silent on the matter.
[6] Breeze actually translates the *caer* element as 'defended farm', but for the reasons set out below this translation is disputed. Breeze's proposed new etymology may also be mistaken. John Baker points to the common confusion of <u> and <n> in medieval spellings, but queries why the modern form preserves <n> if that was only ever a misreading of <u>? He asks if the /u/ in those new forms set out by Breeze are errors for /n/? John Baker, pers. comm.
[7] http://www.gatehouse-gazetteer.info/English%20sites/361.html accessed 10th October 2017.
[8] McCarthy, *Lands of the Solway*, pp. 45-46. The earliest forms (Cargaou. Karghho and Cargou) would work with either meaning.
[9] Molly Miller, 'The Commanders at Arthuret', *TWCAAS* (1975), pp. 96-118, p. 114.
[10] *PNC*, p. 202

to signify something rather more prosaic – a stockaded farm.[11] It has been proposed that a

Cumbrian *caer* was much the same thing and this argument has been further developed by

Alan James, who argued that Cumbrian *caers* were named by expatriate cattle barons from

British Strathclyde who came to dominate political affairs in the Solway area in the tenth

century.[12]
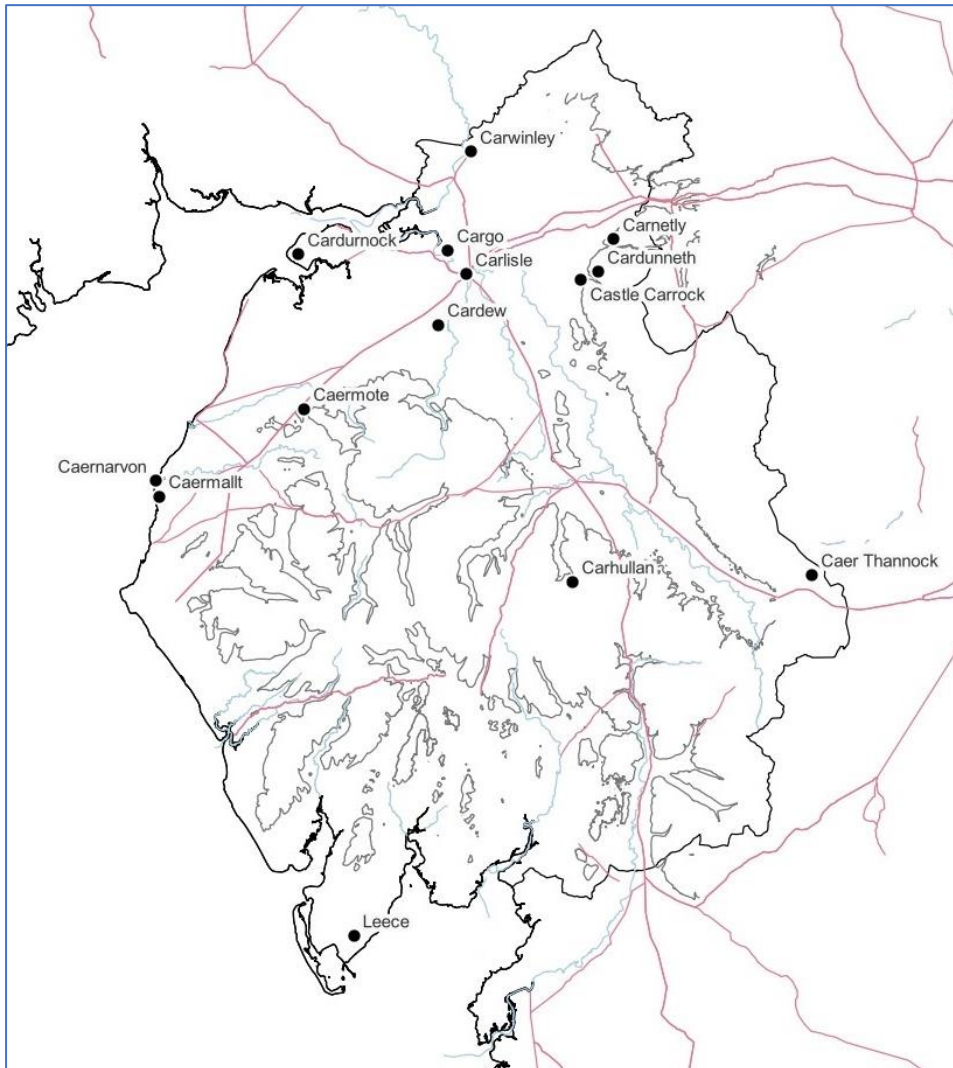
Map 17: The distribution of Cumbria's caers. Leece is also shown.

[11] Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, pp. 50-51. Also Carole Hough, 'P-Celtic Tref in Scottish Place-Names', *Notes and Queries*, 2001, pp. 213–15.
[12] See Alan G. James, *A Cumbric diaspora?* in Oliver Padel and David Parsons, eds. *A Commodity of Good Names* (Donington, 2008), pp. 187, 193-195 for a summary of the argument.

Whilst initially attractive, this argument is problematic. Firstly, the frequency of *caer* as a place-name element in Cumbria is at odds with its occurrence in those areas such as Cornwall where its cognate refers to a farmstead. Oliver Padel catalogued a total of about 130 compound Cornish names in which *ker* (the Cornish cognate of *caer*) is the generic element.[13] Cornwall covers an area of 3,563 square kilometres, meaning that in very broad terms, there is one *caer* name for every 27.5 square kilometres. By contrast, Cumbria has only thirteen such names in an area nearly twice the size (6,768 square kilometres), meaning there is only one *caer* for every 520 square kilometres.[14] The relative density of the name element is therefore nearly nineteen times greater in Cornwall than it is in Cumbria. Even if we limit the comparison to the pre-1974 county of Cumberland (which has the bulk of Cumbria's *caer* names and which covers an area slightly larger than Cornwall at 3,938 square kilometres), the density of *caer* names in Cornwall is still twelve times greater. It must be pointed out, however, that if some of Cornwall's names were formed after Cumbric names stopped being coined in the north, we are not necessarily comparing like with like.

Secondly, this relatively low density of *caer* names is mirrored in Strathclyde itself, the supposed source of Cumbria's *caer* place-names. Although it is difficult to obtain precise numbers of *caer* names in what would have been the core of the British polity of Strathclyde,[15] there appear to be relatively few of them. There is certainly no reason to believe that *caer* names have anything like the same frequency in the north as they do in Cornwall.

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[13] Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, p. 52 and the map on 353.
[14] In the absence of any detailed survey of minor Breton place-names of the sort that exist for Cumberland, Westmorland and Cornwall, it is difficult to carry out a similar comparison between Cumbria and Brittany.
[15] Largely because the surveys have not explored the toponymy of the Scottish lowland counties with the same detail as has been the case for both Cumberland and Westmorland.

We have rather better evidence for *caer* names in North-East England and South-East Scotland, the core of early Northumbria. As with Cumbria and Strathclyde, the element is infrequent, with only ten to fifteen names spread across the 14,474 square kilometres encompassing the pre-1974 counties of Northumberland, Durham, Selkirkshire, Roxburghshire, Berwickshire, Peeblesshire and the three Lothians.[16] The frequency of the element is one *caer* name or every 950-1447 square kilometres, meaning that *caer* names were at least twice as frequent in Cumbria and at least thirty-five times more frequent in Cornwall. The *caer* names are concentrated in the northern part of this region (which is likely to have once been part of the British kingdom of Gododdin), and seem to mirror the area of distribution of a number of early medieval heavy silver chains, which supposedly were artefacts used by British elites.[17] There also appears to be a relationship between *caer* names and places including the Brittonic element *tref* (farmstead). At its simplest, the argument runs that each valley had one of each type of name, which may hint at some sort of organised defensive system involving elite foci and dependent farms.[18]

Such a link is harder to spot in Cumbria, which only has two *tref* names (of which only one, Triermain, two miles east of Birdoswald, now survives). Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that *caer* carried the same meaning west of the Pennines as it did east of them. In addition, given that no-one doubts that the eastern *caer* names are early (they are supposed to predate Anglian incursion into Gododdin lands, which may have been completed at the siege of *Etin* (probably Edinburgh) recorded in the Annals of Ulster for the year 638), the

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[16] Bethany Fox, 'The P-Celtic Names of North-East England and South-East Scotland', *The Heroic Age* (2007), 2.
[17] ibid., p. 7.
[18] Alaric Hall, '*The P-Celtic Place names of North-East England and South-East* Scotland', accessed via https://alarichall.org.uk/placenames/fox.htm 30th September 2017. Hall appears to have worked with Bethany Fox's arguments as set out in Fox, 'P-Celtic Names', in order to produce the exceptional map which can be accessed via this link.

argument that *caer* names in Cumbria could *not* derive from the same period and instead must be a later introduction from Strathclyde loses much of its force.[19]

Thirdly, an examination of the Cumbrian *caers* shows a relationship with defensible military sites, a situation which is not paralleled in Cornwall.[20] A total of six of the thirteen Cumbrian *caers* (Carlisle, Cardurnock, both Caermotes, Carwinley and Cardew) were one-time Roman forts, although (so far, at least) none of them other than Carlisle appears in the list of Roman forts in respect of which there is clear archaeological evidence for post-Roman occupation.[21] All of the others are close to prehistoric sites such as hill forts. This clear association between *caers* and fortified sites is also a feature of Welsh *caers*.[22] The Welsh group is larger than the Cumbrian group, comprising a total of thirty-three names (although it should be pointed out that the authors of the Welsh survey appear to have used the larger scale 1:250 000 Ordnance Survey map, which might mean some minor names have been lost).[23] With that caveat in mind and given that Wales is roughly three times the size of Cumbria, the relative density of *caer* names is very similar.[24] Of the thirty-three Welsh examples, twenty-two have a close relationship to Roman forts. Four more relate to Iron Age hill forts, two relate to Bronze Age sites and the remaining five are not linked to any currently known Roman or prehistoric site.

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[19] A great deal of narrative history concerning the collapse of Gododdin has been built on the two-word reference to the siege of 638. In reality, we have no idea what the outcome of the siege was, nor what it meant for the Brittonic polities of the Forth region.

[20] Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, pp. 83-84.

[21] Cardurnock was a milecastle on Hadrian's Wall. Late fourth-century pottery has been found at the site, suggesting it remained in use in the late Roman period, at least. Shotter, *Romans and Britons*, 67. See below for a discussion on the antiquity of *caer* in the context of Carlisle.

[22] Welsh sites including Caerleon, Caernarfon, Caer Gybi (Holyhead) and Caerhun have all produced evidence suggestive of very late Roman and/or early post-Roman occupation. Collins and Breeze, 'Military Failure', p. 67.

[23] The list is taken from Hywel Wyn Owen and Richard Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales* (Llandysul, 2008).

[24] By way of a caveat, it should be borne in mind that Owen and Morgan's Dictionary of Welsh place-names is nothing like as detailed as the EPNS volumes.

Taken together, it therefore seems likely that a Cumbrian *caer* was far more than simply a defended farmstead, although there is little reason to believe that Cumbrian *caers* were permanently occupied strongpoints. Old hillforts were sometimes used as refuges in Wales and open-air public assemblies were a feature of governance across early medieval Europe prior to the emergence of permanently occupied elite sites from the end of the seventh century. Such sites are expressly mentioned in the earliest Anglo-Saxon law code of circa 600.[25] We should perhaps therefore think of Cumbrian *caers* as something similar; defensible and/or prominent sites which were used for assemblies and/or as refuges. Such assemblies need not have been exclusively martial in character. Carlisle's fort appears to have had a role as a local market in the late or post-Roman period and it may well be that in an area comprised of scattered agricultural communities, the local *caer* was the venue for the delivering up of renders, for the administration of justice and for commercial activity.[26] If this theory can be allowed (and it cannot, unfortunately, be proved), the two Caermote names would perhaps take on a new significance. The meaning behind 'castle of the wethers' would be less 'an old fortified site now used for penning sheep' and more 'a fortified place where sheep are taken'.

Ascertaining the date of Cumbria's *caer* names is not easy. *Caer* is a word common to all of the main Brittonic languages, which means that it was already in use before about 650, which is when the earliest forms of Welsh, Breton, Cornish and Cumbric diverged.[27] All of the Cumbrian *caer* names are formed with the generic element '*caer*' first and the qualifying element second. This method of forming place-names is not common in Brittonic place-names until the sixth century. Before then, Brittonic names were formed like English ones, with the generic element second (although there are some Roman period names in which

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[25] Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, p. 83. Baker and Brooks, 'Identifying outdoor assembly sites', 4. Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 111, 113.

[26] For Carlisle, see Chapter 2.4. Leading the warband and presiding over the assembly were the two key responsibilities of kings in Ireland. Byrne, *Kings*, pp. 23 and 30-31. The *caers* may well have been where the latter duty was discharged.

[27] John Baker, pers comm.

the generic comes first).[28] This means that Cumbria's *caer* names were likely coined between the start of the sixth century and the latter part of the eleventh century, when Cumbria became part of England and there was a deliberate introduction of English settlers.[29] Although Cumbric lingered for a while longer, it is highly unlikely that it was being used in the formation of names for high status sites after that time. This may well explain why those forts that were occupied in the fifth century were not called *caers,* despite being in roughly the same area as the bulk of *caer* place-names. By the time that *caer* began to be used to denote a defensible site, occupation at Roman forts had already come to an end.

Unfortunately, the lack of early recorded forms for all bar one of Cumbria's *caers* means that it is not easy to narrow this date range any further. Only Carlisle is attested in any documentary source which predates the end of the eleventh century. It appears with *caer* as the first element twice, but on both occasions in sources of dubious reliability. The ninth-century Welsh-Latin text, the *HB*, lists the names of twenty-eight cities of Britain and gives each of them a *caer* prefix. Carlisle features in the list as *Caer Ligualid*.[30] On the face of it, this would seem to suggest that Carlisle has had its *caer* element for 1,200 years. However, many of the other towns named in the *HB's* list, such as Lincoln and York are not otherwise known to have been called *caer*, despite being given that appellation in the *HB's* list. It seems that by the time the *HB* was written in the ninth-century, *caer* had, in Wales at least, taken on the sense of a major settlement rather than simply a fortified site. So, Lincoln and York were called *caers* in that text not because that was what they were ever actually called, but because they were important places, which made them *caers* regardless. Carlisle's ninth-century appearance as *Caer Ligualid* might just be a further example of the same thing.

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[28] Hough, 'P Celtic Tref', p. 214.
[29] Jackson, *Language and History*, p. 9.
[30] *HB*, ch. 66A, p. 40.

The need for circumspection is further underlined by the earliest definite references to Carlisle's name, which derive from Bede. *Caer* names clearly existed in Bede's time – he specifically states that Chester was known as *Legacestir* to the English but *Carlegion* to the Britons.[31] Yet when speaking of Carlisle, Bede refers to the English name, *Luel*.[32] He tells us that this is a corruption of the proper (Roman) name, *Lugubalia*.[33] Bede makes no mention of a *caer* prefix. This does not mean that Carlisle was not known by a *caer* name by Brittonic speakers, but it is not until the eleventh century that this can be proven. Symeon of Durham, writing in the twelfth century, gives alternate names for the town, calling it "Brittanice Cairleil, Latine Lugubalia" ("in British Cairleil, in Latin Lugubalia").[34] By Symeon's time, the generic *caer* had therefore been added to the corrupt English form *Luel*, which cannot have happened before Anglian influence penetrated into north Cumbria, probably in the seventh century.[35]

The second potentially early reference to Carlisle's c*aer* prefix is the *Book of Taliesin*. The text contains a poem, *Marwnad Cunedda* in which Carlisle appears as *chaer liwelyd*.[36] Although the *Book of Taliesin* as we have it today is a Middle Welsh text of the fourteenth-century, *Marwnad Cunedda* is one of a small number of poems for which a much earlier date of composition is proposed. It may even be contemporary with its honorand which, if true, takes it back to the first half of the fifth century.[37]

Irrespective of the antiquity of Carlisle's *caer* generic and notwithstanding that most of Cumbria's *caer* names are entirely Brittonic forms, it nevertheless seems clear that *caer* was

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[31] *EHEP*, II, 2, pp. 104-107.
[32] *VSC*, XXVII.
[33] *EHEP*, IV, 29, p. 260 and *VSC*, XXVII.
[34] *PNC*, p. 41.
[35] See *PNC*, p. 41. Other Examples include Cardeol (1092), Karlioli (c.1100), Cairleil (c. 1129), Carlol (1125) and Chaerleolium (1130).
[36] *PT*, p. xlvi.
[37] John Koch, *Why Was Welsh Literature First Written Down?* in H Fulton, ed. *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 15-31, pp. 16-17. See also R.G. Gruffydd, 'From Gododdin to Gwynedd: reflections on the story of Cunedda', *Studia Celtica*, 24 (1989), pp. 1-14, p. 11 for the argument that the poem as we have it today is an original reworked at some later time.

being used in the formation of place-names at a time when languages other than Brittonic were being spoken in Cumbria. Carnetly, Cargo and Cardew combine *caer* with English, Norse and Norse-Gaelic qualifiers respectively and Carhullan may include an English personal name. This suggests that they are later formations, although others may be earlier. Names such as Carwinley and Cardunneth do not sit well as names potentially given by late ninth- century incomers from Strathclyde. The former may incorporate the personal name Gwenddoleu, the name of a figure who, according to some versions of *AC*, was killed at the battle of Armterid in 573.[38] The name of Arthuret, a small village a couple of miles from Carwinley, seems to derives from Armterid via Cumbric *Arfderydd*.[39] The battle features heavily in later Welsh literature, as does Gwenddoleu himself, who is stated by the genealogies to be a cousin of the men who killed him at Armterid.[40]

Cardunneth may mean 'Dinoot's *caer*'.[41] Dinoot is the same name typically rendered as Dunaut. A king Dunaut is mentioned in a brief notice in the *AC,* which records his death in 595.[42] Dunaut also appears in the later Welsh poetic material, including the ninth-century saga *englynion*, the Welsh Triads and in the Welsh genealogical collections, where he belongs to the same world as Gwenddoleu, Urien, Gwallawg and the other supposed descendants of the apical founder figure Coel Hen.[43] It is at least possible that the place-name recalls the man recorded in the *AC* and in the subsequent Welsh material. The same name also appears in the place-name Powdonnet ('Dunaut's Well'), twenty five miles to the south of Cardunneth Pike.

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[38] *AC*, p. 45.
[39] *PNC*, 1, pp. xvii-xviii, 3, pp 51-52.
[40] The 'sons of Eliffer' are Gwrgi and Peredur, who crop up with reasonable frequency in poetry and the Triads and always appear together, not unlike an early medieval version of Ant and Dec.
[41] *PNC*, pp. 77.
[42] *AC*, p. 45.
[43] This material is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.3.

Two other Cumbrian place-names may also preserve the names of warlords who were later believed to have flourished in the second half of the sixth century. Papcastle is an English form which will be discussed in more detail below but the name may include the name of Pabo, who is stated in the Welsh genealogical collections to be Dunaut's father.[44] Castle Hewen contains the personal name Owain and, for the reasons which will be explored more fully in the next section, may recall a son of Urien, who eventually morphed into a hero of the Arthurian story cycles.

It would be too easy to take this evidence uncritically and argue that the names of Carwinley, Cardunneth, Papcastle and Castle Hewen usher Gwenddoleu, Dunaut, Pabo and Owain from the world of heroic poetry into the world of history.[45] However, Welsh poetic material is not well suited for the writing of narrative history and, if these place-names really do contain personal names, they need not commemorate individuals who have anything to do with figures of Welsh legend. Dunaut, at least, appears to have been reasonably common early medieval name, although the name Gwenddoleu only ever appears in relation to one man. A second possible explanation is that conscious antiquarianism played a part in the coining of these names. Owain's evolution from northern cattle raider to Arthurian knight would make him a prime candidate to give his name to landscape features such as Castle Hewen. In addition, although there is cautious reason to believe that Carwinley and Papcastle *might* have been home to post-Roman fortified sites, neither Cardunneth nor Castle Hewen have produced positive evidence of post-Roman high-status activity. The names *could* then be later coinings, perhaps given out of whimsy or even to an abandoned site as a means of underlining the transience of secular power (as compared to divine power), as appears to have happened from time to time in Ireland and Wales.[46]

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[44] Miller, 'Commanders at Arthuret'.

[45] The names of two more northern heroes of Welsh medieval poetry – Owain and Pabo Post Prydein – *might* also be captured in surviving Cumbrian place-names (Castle Hewen and Papcastle respectively). The comments which follow apply equally to these two individuals as well.

[46] Alex Woolf, 'Fire from Heaven: Divine Providence and Iron Age Hillforts in Early Medieval Britain' in Paul Rainbird, ed. *Monuments in the Landscape* (Stroud, 2008), pp. 136-143.

However, this argument may create as many problems as it might be thought to solve. The literary material concerning Gwenddoleu, Dunaut *et al* derives largely from ninth-century and later Wales, although for the reasons which will be set out in the next section, it seems likely that a small core of genuinely early northern material lies at the root of the later cycles of stories. So, if the names *are* the product of antiquarianism we may need to accept one of two scenarios. The first scenario is that a core of unworked, 'original' northern material was transmitted to Wales, was shaped over centuries into the form in which we have it today and then exported *back* to Cumbria where it subsequently became attached to a handful of landscape features. The second scenario is that there never was an original northern 'core' and the material was created entirely in Wales to amuse and aggrandise Welsh kings who believed (or wished to believe) that they were descended from heroes of the Old North. It was then later exported to Cumbria where, for some reason, it became so popular that the locals eagerly seized on a few names and worked them into local place-names.

In addition, if antiquarianism is to blame, we would also have to ask 'antiquarianism on the part of whom?' Strathclyde settlers of the late ninth-century would be regarded by many as the prime suspects.[47] At first sight, this would appear to provide a neat answer, especially if we accept that a form such as *casteleweyne* for Castle Hewen (attested in 1272)[48] appears to be a pristine Brittonic form, untainted by mediation from English speakers.[49] Yet if Brittonic remained a spoken language in Cumbria, there is no reason to believe that Brittonic names would necessarily be Anglicised in the pre-Strathclyde period. Furthermore, the figures commemorated in place-names such as Carwinley or Castle Hewen are only ever named as

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[47] James, *Diaspora*, pp. 193 and fn 36. James considers that Carwinley, Cardunneth and Caer Thannock are all the product of tenth-century antiquarianism.
[48] *PNC*, p. 202.
[49] Fiona Edmonds, 'The Expansion of the Kingdom of Strathclyde, *Early Medieval Europe*, 23 (2015), pp. 43-66, pp. 56-57. 'Kenneth Jackson, Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria', in *Angles and Britons* (Cardiff, 1963), pp. 60-84, p. 81. Jackson argues that English mediation would have led to the name being recorded as **kestlen.*

descendants of Coel Hen in the Welsh genealogical collections. The Strathclyde kings did not trace their ancestry back to Coel Hen and instead regarded themselves as the descendants of Dumngual Hen. That tenth-century Strathclyde immigrants to Cumbria should suddenly want to celebrate the long-gone sixth-century descendants of Coel Hen seems about as credible as Manchester United fans starting to cheer for Manchester City. Alternatively, one could argue that the Strathclyde *adventus* allowed the locals in Cumbria to reconnect with their British heritage after nearly three centuries of Anglian domination, but that perpetuates an unsupportable connection between ethnicity and culture. It also presupposes that the indigenes had forgotten about their British heritage in the first place. And if they *had* forgotten their British roots by the tenth century, one might reasonably assume that any resurgence of interest in 'being Celtic' would promote the line of Dumngual Hen rather than that of Coel Hen. Finally, active antiquarianism would have been unlikely to have omitted to name at least one place after the most popular of all early medieval northern figures, Urien Rheged. As such, although other explanations *could* plausibly be offered to explain the names such as Carwinley and Cardunneth, the hypothesis that at least some of Cumbria's *caer* names originate in the sixth century and/or indicate post-Roman British power centres (or, at least, places where important events were believed to have once occurred) is no worse an explanation than any of the alternatives.[50]

There is one other Cumbrian place-name which may point at a British political centre. This is Leece, a village on the Furness peninsula, just outside Barrow. There are two plausible etymologies for Leece. Ekwall argued for a derivation from a nominative plural form of Old English word for pasture, which explanation was subsequently followed by Watts.[51] Richard

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[50] In this context, one might draw comparisons with Anglo-Saxon Wessex, where the naming of assembly places after distinguished ancestors seems to have been a useful means of establishing legitimacy for later rulers through the appropriation of their real or desired forebears. John Baker, 'Meeting in the shadow of heroes? Personal names and the socio-political background of assembly places', in J. Carroll, A. Reynolds, and B. Yorke, eds. *Power and Place in Europe in the Early Middle Ages* (London: British Academy, 2019), pp. 37–63.
[51] *PNL*, p. 209. V. Watts, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of English place-names* (Cambridge, 2004).

Coates also makes no mention of Leece in his study of Brittonic place-names. Kenneth

Jackson, however, preferred a Brittonic derivation from *lisso* (which became Welsh *llys*),

meaning 'court' (in the sense of 'palace'). This derivation received cautious support from

Mills.[52] If Jackson is right, Leece is a rarity. Names with *lisso* are not common in northern

England, although there is at least one other example at Treales in Lancashire.[53] That said,

Ekwall's solution would be equally rare, given that simplex plural names including *laes* are

also uncommon.

3.2.2 BORROWED ELEMENTS

The next group of names to be considered are those which incorporate place-name

elements which were borrowed from Latin and/or Brittonic into Old English as a result of

contact between Old English and Brittonic speaking groups.[54] Insofar as the toponymy of

Cumbria is concerned, there are two such elements, being *ecles* ('(pre-existing British)

church') and *cæster* ('Roman town/fortified place').[55]

In most instances, *ecles* was borrowed into Old English from the otherwise unattested

Brittonic *egles,* which derives from Latin *ecclesia*.[56] *Ecles* in British place-names is thought

to have been a name given by incoming pagan Anglo-Saxons who did not have an existing

name for the pre-existing Christian churches which they found in the lands they settled.[57]

The element is therefore of considerable importance when seeking to identify post-Roman

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[52] A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of British Place Names* (Oxford, 2003), p. 294
[53] Angus Winchester, *Early Estate Structures*, p. 18. For Welsh examples, see Llys-Wen (Brecon),
the 'gorgeous palace of the Princes of South Wales' and Llyswyrny (Glamorgan). Owen and Morgan,
Dictionary, p. 301.
[54] Gelling, *Signposts*, pp. 65-88.
[55] Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, I, p. 85. *CVEP*, 272-3.
[56] Jackson, *Language and History*, p. 412.
[57] ibid., 84.

British religious sites.[58] It is also important in understanding the nature of Anglo-British interaction.[59] In this latter context *ecles* presents something of a conundrum. If we leave aside three *ecles* names in Norfolk and Kent for which a very early and direct borrowing of the element from Latin is proposed,[60] half of the remaining twenty or more *ecles* names in Britain lie to the west of the cultural divide of the Tees-Exe line and all bar one of the rest lie either on the line or just to the east of it.[61] This means that a significant proportion of these names are found in areas where there are no pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. This is odd, as if *ecles* names were given by incoming pagan Anglo-Saxon groups who had no other word to describe the British Christian churches which they encountered (the Old English word *cirice*, from which modern English 'church' derives, being a product of the conversion period), where and how were those people eventually buried? Unless we wish to argue that the people who coined the *ecles* names returned east to be buried in furnished graves only once they had carefully made their contribution to the toponomy of western Britain, it may be that, despite the resilience of their language, these people were buried in a similar fashion to their British neighbours, which is to say largely without grave goods. This, if true, would be an important additional piece of evidence for a far more nuanced interpretation of Anglo-British interaction than is usually allowed for.

Many standard works credit Cumbria with only having one *ecles* name, being Eaglesfield, near Cockermouth. Eaglesfield itself appears as *Eglesfeld*, circa 1170. The qualifying element is compounded with the generic element *feld*, which denotes open land rather than a field in the sense we understand the word today.[62] *Feld* is also considered to be an early

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[58] Margaret Gelling, 'Latin loan-words in Old English place-names', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 6 (1977), pp. 1-13, pp. 11-12. Also, *CVEP*, p. 273.
[59] Kenneth Cameron, *English Place Names* (London, 1996), p. 33.
[60] Gelling, *Signposts*, pp. 68, 84-85.
[61] The distribution of the element is taken from Kenneth Cameron's map as reproduced in Gelling, *Signposts*, 106 to which the two strongest Cumbrian candidates (Eaglesfield and *Eglisfylde*) have been added.
[62] The term may be quasi-habitative and be intended to reference a settlement in that particular type of landscape, rather than simply the characteristics of the landscape itself. Draper, 'Wiltshire', p. 97.

element in place-name formation and appears ten times in Cox's survey of the earliest English place-name elements.[63] *PNC* proposes that the name means *Ecgel's feld*, with *Ecgel* being an otherwise unattested personal name.[64] However, Wilson proposed that the first element was instead **ecles* and this etymology is significantly strengthened by the discovery at Eaglesfield of a small early Christian cemetery.[65] Wilson's etymology has generally been followed since.[66]

Dan Elsworth has identified a total of nine other Cumbrian place-names which *might* contain the element, although he was rightly circumspect about many of them.[67] The strongest candidate after Eaglesfield is a second, now lost, 'church field' name. This is *Eglisfylde* on the Furness peninsula, which is first mentioned in a 1547 grant of property at Conishead Priory. The otherwise unattested name *Eclysconflate* is mentioned in the same grant. This may refer to the same name, although in the absence of any specialist assessment of the etymology of the name, certainty is currently impossible.[68]

Cumbria's other eight **ecles* names as proposed by Elsworth are far less certain. There are Ecclerigg names at Troutbeck (*Ecclerigg*, 1787) and Killington (earliest attestation undated), together with a cluster of Eccle Riggs names (earliest attestations undated) near Broughton-in-Furness.[69] The lack of a medial letter 's' in the Ecclerigg names is a major objection to them deriving from **ecles*. We would expect a spelling of Ecclesrigg.[70]

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[63] Cox, 'Place-Names', p. 58.
[64] *PNC,* p. 378.
[65] Wilson 'Eaglesfield', p. 48. See Chapter 2.5.1 for a fuller discussion of the burials.
[66] Mills, *Dictionary*, p. 169.
[67] Daniel Elsworth, 'Eccles Place-Names in Cumbria', *TCWAAS* (2011), pp. 234-238.
[68] Elsworth, 'Eccles', p. 236. Interestingly, Conishead has a long pedigree as a religious centre. The Priory was dissolved in the Reformation, but the site still retains its religious significance and is now a major Buddhist centre.
[69] For Troutbeck and Killington, see *PNW*, I, pp. 40, 189-190. Unfortunately, Eccle Riggs is not mentioned in *PNL*, although the name survives in a quarry, country house and lane just outside Broughton.
[70] Whaley, *Dictionary*, p. 106
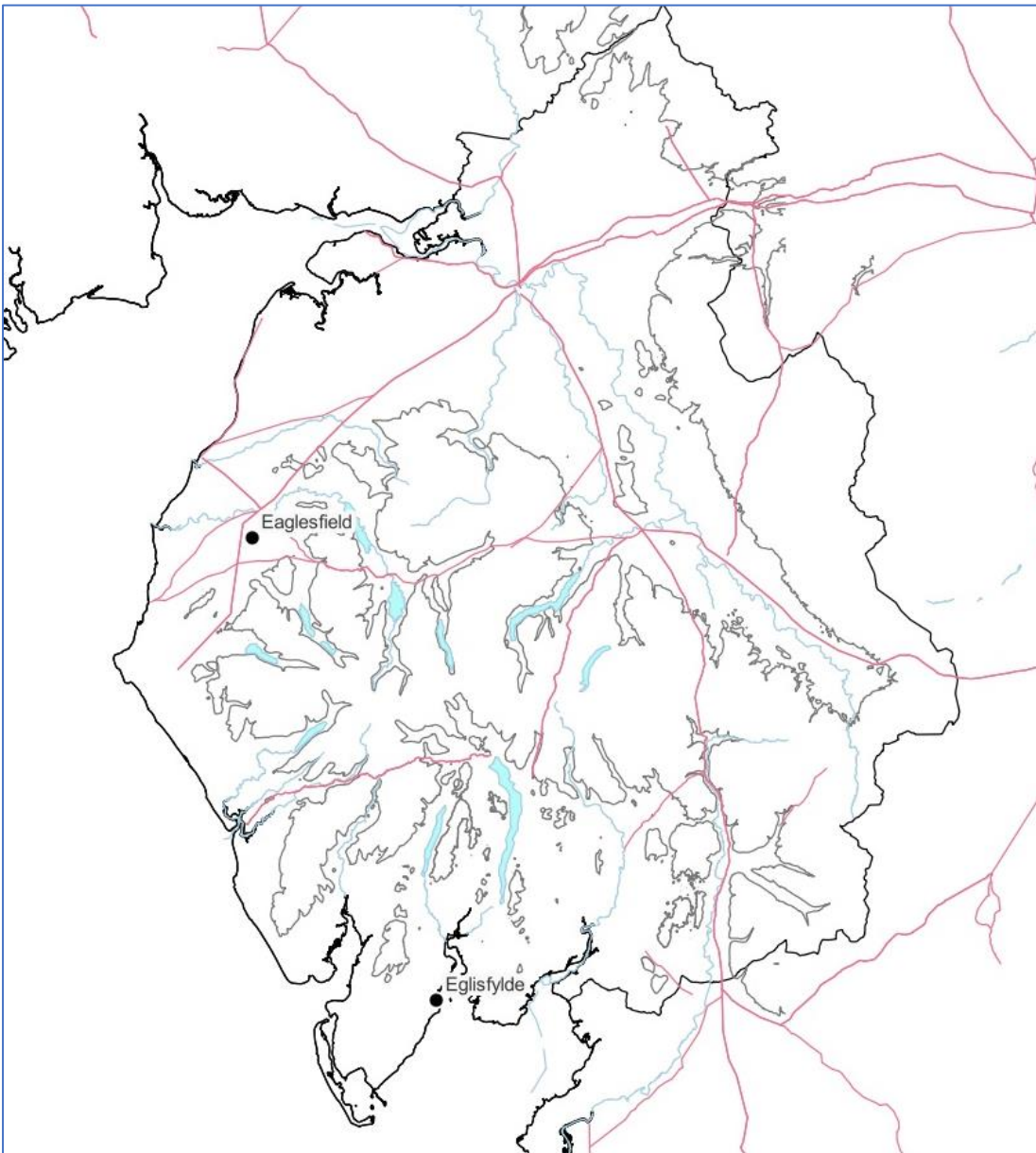
Map 18: Cumbria's *ecles names. Only the two strongest candidates are shown.

The now-lost name of *Eclishous* near Millom may include the surname 'Eccles', which would suggest it meant 'house belonging to someone called Eccles' rather than 'church house'. A family name may also lie behind Moss Eccles Tarn near Hawkshead and the now-lost *Eccles Taiths*, north of Sedbergh. The former does not appear in either *PNL* or *PNW*, but

Whaley argues that it is named for a local family called Eccles.[71] So little is known of the latter name that nothing can usefully be said about it, save that a separate reference to 'Eccle's Lands' in respect of the same site may also suggest a derivation from a personal name. This would not be surprising, given that Eccles remains a reasonably common surname in Lancashire and southern Cumbria.

Another place-name element borrowed by Old English from Latin is *cæster* (city/walled town/fortification), which in Cumbrian place-names invariably appears in its Northumbrian variant form which gives modern -*caster*.[72] Cumbria has eight *cæster* names which are set out in tabular form below.

The element generally refers to Roman sites, usually towns.[73] The form is undoubtedly early, appearing fifteen times in Cox's survey.[74]   Of these, seven sites are known Roman towns. Another three compound *cæster* with an Old English personal name or group name. Such compounds do not appear to have been very long-lived. Two of the three names in Cox's survey are no longer used (*Tiouulfingacaestir* became Littleborough and *Tunnacaestir* is lost) and the third (also no longer used) is one of two alternative names given for St Albans.

Although Gelling felt that the distribution of the place-name element was such that it was not possible to make a link with surviving Roman institutions, she was open to the possibility that *cæster* may have indicated something rather more precise than simply an abandoned Roman town.[75] Biddle queries whether the element derives from the use of the term castrum to denote a late Roman defensible town.[76] Other scholars have been prepared to go further. Charles Phythian-Adams argued that in Cumbria, *cæster* referred to a site which maintained

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[71] Whaley, *Dictionary*, p. 243.
[72] *VEPN*, p. 160.
[73] Cameron, *English Place-Names*, p. 34. See also *VEPN*, pp. 158-162.
[74] Cox, 'Place-Names', p. 62.
[75] Gelling, *Signposts*, pp. 81, 152-154.
[76] Biddle, 'Towns', p. 104.

some importance in the post-Roman period.[77] Gordon Copley allowed that many *cæster*

settlements may have had a "relict British population" and Simon Draper has argued that, in

Wiltshire at least, a *cæster* was used by Old English speakers of a Roman settlement that

continued to be occupied in the post-Roman period.[78] In this context, the compounding of

the element with a personal name may be significant, possibly suggesting a statement of

NAME	MEANING	EARLIEST FORM(S)	DATE(S) OF EARLIEST FORMS	POST-ROMAN EVIDENCE?	REFERENCE
Carlisle	Cæster of Luel	*Luercestre*	c. 1000-1100	Y	PNC, 41, HSC X
Bluecaster	First el. uncertain	N/A	N/A	N	N/A
Casterton	Farm by the cæster	*Castretun*	1086	N	PNW, 1, 27
Hincaster	Cæster occupied by hens?	*Hennecastre, Henkastre*	1086, 1210	N	PNW, 1 89
Papcastle	Hermit's cæster? Pabo's ceasetr?	*Pabecastr', Papecastre*	1260, 1266	Y	PNC, 308-309. Miller, *Commanders at Arthuret.*
Muncaster		*Molecastre*	c. 1185	N	PNC, 423-4
Old Carlisle	Cæster + personal name[79]	*Palmecastel*	1272	Y	PNC, 330
Bewcastle	Cæster of the booths	*Buchastre, Buthecastra*	1177, c.1178	Y	PNC, 60-61

Table 6: Cumbria's *cæsters*. The names are ordered clockwise from Carlisle. Etymologies marked with a question mark are discussed below.

ownership. Further, in *AVSC*, the author recounts how Cuthbert could find no supplies in

Kuncacester (Chester-le-Street) as it was winter and the town was only used in the spring

and summer.[80] This suggests seasonal or transient use for at least one *cæster* of the sort

[77] Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, pp. 53-56.
[78] Copley, 'Archaeology and Place-Names', p. 6. Draper, 'Wiltshire', pp. 92-93.
[79] The personal name in question might be Old English Mula or Old Norse Muli, *PNC*, p. 423.
[80] *AVSC*, VI, p. 71.

that was argued above for Cumbria's *caers*. This, in turn, also supports John Blair's vision of seventh-century power being exercised by overlords who focussed on ostentatious display and gift-giving rather than on the construction and maintenance of permanent royal buildings.[81]

Four of the five *cæsters* in the north of the county (Carlisle, Papcastle, Old Carlisle and Bewcastle) were Roman stations and all have produced archaeological evidence of occupation in the post-Roman period, as more particularly discussed in the preceding section. Both Carlisle and Bewcastle served as ecclesiastical foci (a role which Bewcastle may always have held, given its Roman-era status as a cult site of the god Cocidius) whereas the discovery of a Class I stone at Old Carlisle speaks of occupation at least into the fifth century. Papcastle has its late or post-Roman timber structures and, in addition, was the first seat of the lords of Allerdale, before the seat moved to Cockermouth, supposedly using the stone from Papcastle for the new castle there.[82] The association of *Palmcastre* with Old Carlisle derives ultimately from a marginal note in the version of the *HB* featured in manuscript CCC139 at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. This states that Vortigern's putative stronghold of Caer Guorthegirn was "iuxta Lugubaliam idi… urbem que anglice Palmecastre dicitur" ("across Carlisle, in a city which the English call Palmecastre").[83]

Bewcastle's name in an oddity. The qualifying element is Norse. The usual translation of 'booth' suggests the existence of temporary structures at the site, although the same element was used of semi-permanent structures at Iceland's great legal and trading assembly of the Alþing.[84] However, the imposing Bewcastle Cross, sited within the old

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[81] Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England,* pp. 103-104.

[82] Joseph Nicolson and Richard Burn, *The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland,* Vol II (Wakefield, 1976, orig, London, 1777), pp. 69-70, 75, 78, 129 and esp. 104.

[83] http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/staff/haywardp/hist424/seminars/Corpus139.htm, accessed 6th September 2017. Translation mine. See also R. G. Collingwood, 'Old Carlisle', *TCWAAS*, 2nd Series (1928), pp. 103-119, pp. 110-112.

[84] Chris Callow, pers. comm.

Roman fort, would already have been old when Norse speaking settlers first arrived in this part of Cumbria and, as such, one is justified in asking why was it the existence of temporary or semi-permanent huts, rather than one of the finest pieces of early Anglo-Saxon sculpture, which had the greatest impact on the Norse speaker who named Bewcastle? Was it therefore perhaps the case that Bewcastle was another local meeting site, deliberately placed within the curtilage of a Roman fort for visual impact, which was still in operation when it was first encountered by those who gave it its current name?[85]

The fifth north Cumbrian *cæster* is Muncaster. Like the other four northern *cæsters*, Muncaster is connected to a Roman site – in this case, the port of *Tunnocelum* at Ravenglass. The fourteenth-century Muncaster Castle is a mile or so away from the fort and may have been built on a wall which was once part of a small Roman fortlet. This might be thought to be the *cæster* in question, but the earliest forms of the place-name pre-date the current castle and may well originally have referred to the fort at Ravenglass itself, where the remains of the old Roman bathhouse (now known as Walls Castle) were apparently in good enough condition to be habitable by the first Norman owners of the Muncaster estate as late as the twelfth century.[86] Neither the fort at Ravenglass nor the later medieval castle have been subject to recent archaeological investigation, but if the *cæster* in question *was* Ravenglass, the existence of a late Roman garrison at the fort and the single cist grave discussed in Chapter 2.5 hint at post-Roman activity at this site too.

The three south Cumbrian *cæsters* (Bluecaster, Casterton and Hincaster) are far more problematic, principally because no Roman fortifications have been found at any of them. Bluecaster is a fell and a farmhouse a few miles north of Sedbergh.[87] It has not proven

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[85] For the re-use of ancient monuments in the post-Roman period for assembles and ritual activity see, for example, Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 108-111, 113-114.

[86] W. G. Collingwood, 'Who Was King Eveling of Ravenglass?', *TCWAAS*, 2nd Series (1924), pp. 256-259.

[87] Bluecaster Side is at 370072 496315.

possible to locate any early forms for the name. No Roman site is known, but it lies on the

alignment of a suspected Roman road from Sedbergh to Kirkby Stephen which would have
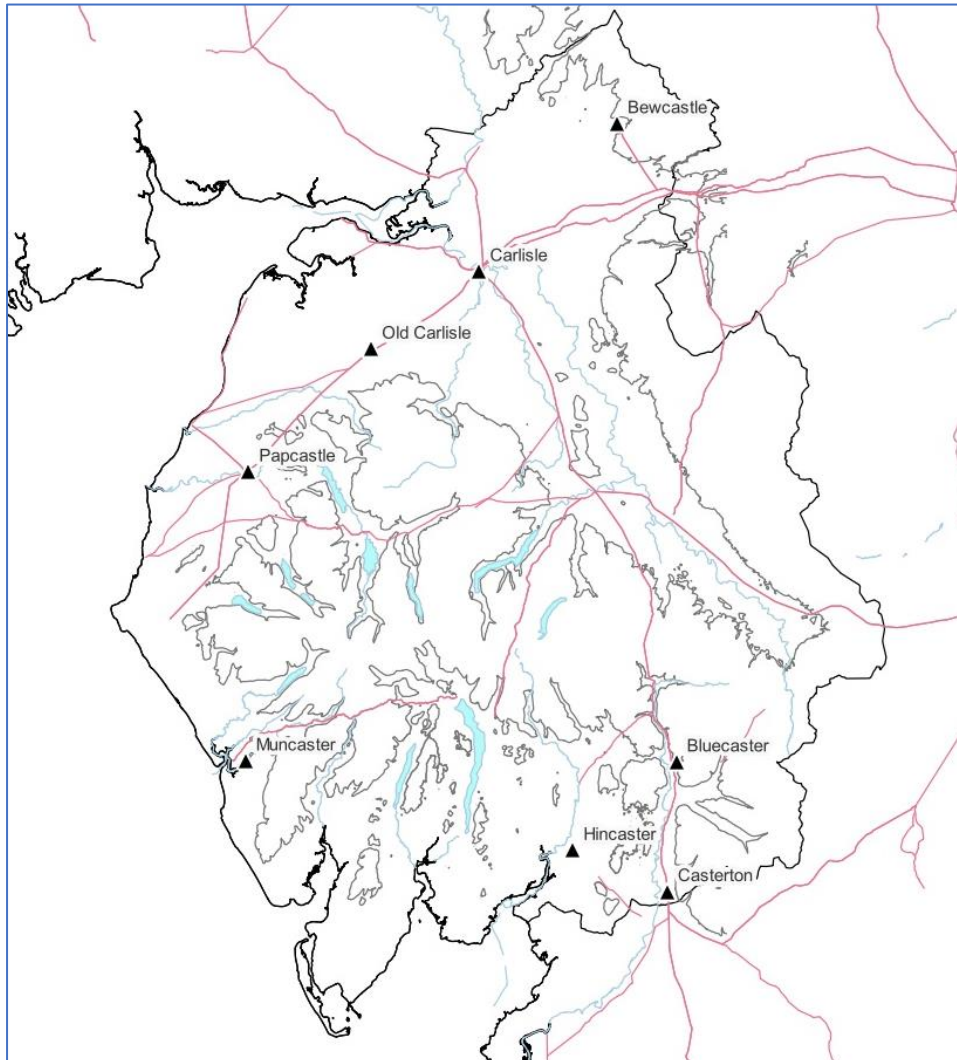
Map 19: Cumbria's cæster place-names.

linked the Lune and Eden valleys.[88] A relatively recent amateur survey using LIDAR appears

to substantiate the existence of this route, although the *cæster* itself remains undiscovered.[89]

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[88] Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Limited, *Roman Road, Bluecaster Side, near Sedbergh, Cumbria: Archaeological Survey and Watching Brief*, unpublished (2010). Accessed at http://www.outofoblivion.org.uk%2Fpdfs%2Freports%2FSYD13448-bluecaster-roman-road.pdf accessed 9th September 2017.
[89] http://www.romanroads.org/gazetteer/cumbria/M731-files/lidar-hobdale-rawtheybridge.jpg, accessed 20th January 2018.

Casterton lies in the Lune Valley, a little to the north of Kirkby Lonsdale and on the line of the old Roman road from Ribchester to Carlisle. The nearest known Roman fort is at Burrow (*Calacum*), about three miles south of modern Casterton village, perhaps making Casterton the estate/settlement associated with the fort. As such, it is not inconceivable that it is this fort which Casterton's name refers to. A Roman milestone recording the distance to Carlisle still stands in the churchyard at Middleton, about four miles north of the modern village.[90]

Hincaster is in Kentdale, around four and a half miles south of the known Roman station at Watercrook and close to the modern A6, which broadly overlies the line of an assumed Roman road from the Lune Valley to Kendal and Lancaster.[91] Although no Roman fort is known in the immediate vicinity of Hincaster, Roman pottery was found to the north of the village during construction of the A591. This pottery was considered to be military rather than civilian and the archaeologist who discovered it seemed prepared to accept that any Roman remains that may once have existed had been destroyed by medieval agriculture.[92] Like Bewcastle, Hincaster's name is an oddity. *PNW* suggests 'fortification haunted by wild hens', but Nicolson and Burn saw the first element as deriving from Brittonic *hen* ('old').[93] If *PNW*'s etymology is to be preferred (and assuming the hens in question to be domestic poultry rather than water hens), we *might* just see Hincaster as a place-name with a similar sense as was argued for Caermote – a place where hens were taken to be sold or offered up as tribute.

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[90] The milestone was discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.4.
[91] *PNW*, 1, pp. 19-20.
[92] T. W. Potter, 'A Roman Site at Hincaster, Westmorland', *TCWAAS* (1975), pp. 376-8.
[93] Nicolson and Burn, *History and Antiquities*, p. 202.

3.2.3 SUMMARY

The relative paucity of documentary sources for Cumbria and the difficulties of establishing absolute chronologies for individual place-name elements undoubtedly makes identifying post-Roman centres of power by reference to toponymic evidence alone difficult. Of the place-names considered in this section, the two names which might compound *ecles* with *feld* and possibly even the three which compound *ecles* with *rigg* have good claims to post-Roman origins, although only at Eaglesfield is there currently any archaeological evidence to support the theory. *Ecles* names seem to be the product of a reasonably specific period of time between the late sixth and early seventh-centuries, when Old English-speaking groups began to spread into the north Midlands and beyond but before the conversion of those same groups to Christianity. There are no such names in the north or the east of Cumbria and this may well be because by the time those areas came under Anglian influence, Northumbria was already Christian and had created a vernacular vocabulary for the structures of the church. As such, it no longer needed to borrow a word to describe the Christian churches of the Britons. If this is right, then Anglian influence may have come earlier to the south of the county than the north and was perhaps disseminated around the coastal fringes of the county.

Cumbria's *caer* and *cæster* names are harder to fix into a temporal context. Although *cæster* is demonstrably an early form, it had a long life and place-names which include the element could be much later. The former element is often assumed to belong to one of two temporal periods – either before the mid-seventh century when Brittonic in Cumbria was displaced by Old English or from about the start of the tenth century, when Brittonic was supposedly reintroduced by settlers from Strathclyde. Yet this argument is based on making a simple correlation between political authority and language change, which is likely to be unsound. Put simply, there is no reason to believe that Brittonic had died out in Cumbria during the

period in which the area was within the orbit of the Northumbrian kings. If we cannot use political history to date Cumbria's *caer* names, we can perhaps use archaeology. A *caer* in early medieval Cumbria appeared to be something more than the stockaded farmsteads of Cornwall or Brittany and an examination of the names shows a strong link to Roman sites and to sites associated with the sixth century northern heroes celebrated in later medieval Welsh poetry.[94]

Cæsters appear to have been much the same thing as *caers*. It is perhaps noteworthy in this context that Carlisle was a *caer* to Brittonic speakers (*Caer Ligualid*) and a *cæster* to English speakers (*Luercestre*). So too were other important Roman towns, including Gloucester (*Caer Glow*) and Chester (*Carlegion*). All of Cumbria's five northern *cæsters* are linked to Roman sites known to have been in use in the post-Roman period and, even if the same cannot currently be said for the three southern examples, Casterton at least was on a major Roman road and very close to the putative southern boundary of the administrative region that, in Roman times, had been governed from Carlisle.[95] Unlike in Northumberland and south-east Scotland, where Brittonic *caer* names and early Old English names appear to have separate distributions, Cumbria's *caers* and *cæsters* are jumbled up together, notably on the west coast and in the north of the county.[96] The presence of early English names denoting fortified sites may well denote estates under the control of English-speaking landlords, but that does not mean that all of Cumbria was under the control of English-speaking groups and neither does it mean that English place-names necessarily represent the inexorable spread of centralised Northumbrian power. Cumbria's English landlords *might* have been colonists acting under the orders of (or with the blessing of) the Bernician kings, but equally they might have been settlers who owed no more loyalty to the Bernicians than their British neighbours. The notion of post-Roman Cumbria as a multilingual patchwork of

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[94] Much the same is argued for Northumbria east of the Pennines. See Fox, 'P-Celtic', p. 16.
[95] The relevant evidence comes from the Middleton milestone, for which see Chapter 2.4.
[96] For east of the Pennines, see Fox, 'P-Celtic', pp. 16-22.

little polities may seem like a strange one for those used to thinking in terms of Anglo-British interaction as being characterised by a steady but wholesale transition from one language to another, but it is one which may warrant further consideration. In this context, the man who gave his name to Muncaster may be of interest. His name, Mūl, means 'Mule'. A late seventh-century king of Kent had the same name and it has been suggested that the name referred to his mixed Anglo-British parentage (a mule being the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse).[97] If the Mūl whose name lies behind Muncaster was named for the same reasons, the place-name might capture positive evidence of Anglo-British intermingling in the post-Roman period.

Cumbria's *caers* and *cæsters* are also located at sites that satisfy many of the criteria that so often appertain to known early medieval assembly sites elsewhere, such as accessibility and distinctiveness in the landscape.[98] Many of them are also found in the same areas where other evidence for post-Roman activity is most concentrated. Notwithstanding that fluidity in naming practices led to some *caer* names in particular being later compounded with Norse or Gaelic elements, we may nevertheless be justified in regarding many of Cumbria's *caers* and *cæsters* as indicating the sites of post-Roman refuges and/or assembly sites, where trade, taxation and the administration of justice for dispersed agrarian communities could be arranged and overseen on a periodic basis.

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[97] https://pase.ac.uk/jsp/pdb?dosp=VIEW_RECORDS&st=PERSON_NAME&value=3028&level=1&lbl=Mul. Mūl's father had an English name, Coenberht, but his brother had the Anglicised British name, Caedwalla.
[98] Baker and Brooks, Identifying outdoor assembly sites', pp. 11-18.

3.3 EARLY ENGLISH PLACE-NAMES

3.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Dating the earliest Old English place-names and individual place-name elements is hampered by many of the same issues which were outlined in the preceding sections. The lack of charter evidence coupled with the omission of the greater part of Cumbria from the late eleventh-century Domesday survey means that the earliest attestations for many place-names are comparatively late. The lack of an absolute chronology for the earliest English place-name elements and issues even with relative chronologies make it difficult to assert with any confidence that a particular name must belong to a fixed time period. Many common place-name elements remained in use for hundreds of years and no single element is especially indicative of an early date of coining.[1] As will be argued below, meanings evolved over time and this, coupled with the unsuitability of the modern English vocabulary to capture many of the subtleties of meaning which some early place-names seem to have been intended to convey, often make it difficult to assign a precise translation to an individual place-name, still less to assign it to a specific date.[2]

Early attempts to order Old English place-name elements into a relative chronology have not stood the test of time. Gordon Copley's 1986 survey of the place-names surrounding what he termed early 'Saxon' and 'Jutish' cemeteries led him to conclude that none of the chronologies for early place-name elements were convincing.[3] This might cause the non-

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[1] Gelling, 'Towards a Chronology', p. 74.
[2] Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. xiii.
[3] Gordon Copley, *Archaeology and Place-Names in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, BAR British Series 147 (Oxford, 1986), p. 20.

specialist to abandon entirely any attempt to use place-name evidence as a means of understanding post-Roman settlement patterns. However, although he undoubtedly identified real issues about the problems with constructing chronologies of place-names, Copley's methodology (which was shared by other scholars of the 1970s) appeared to be based on drawing correlations between ethnicity, biology and material culture which would not find favour with archaeologists or historians today.[4] If a cemetery cannot any longer be said to be 'Saxon', or 'Jutish' insofar as such cemeteries were not exclusively used for Germanic migrants or their direct descendants, the distribution of Old English place-name elements around those cemeteries cannot be expected to tell us much about the spread of either Old English or a putative 'Anglo-Saxon' settlement.[5] The weaknesses in attempting to establish a relative chronology for place-names by reference to the post-Roman cemeteries of the south and east is further underlined by a study of Essex and the Chilterns which noted a lack of correlation between early *hām* names and those areas where the cemeteries are found.[6]

Names including the generic *tūn* provide a good example of some of the issues of dating. The element is attested in Cox's survey of the earliest English names (albeit not with the frequency with which it is later encountered) but it remained in use as a naming element for centuries thereafter.[7] A *tūn* appears to have been capable of describing a range of sites from a simple enclosure through farms and villages up to manors or estates.[8] It is possible that

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[4] For another example of the assumed link between cemeteries and early place-names, see Barrie Cox, 'The significance of the distribution of English place-names in -*hām* in the Midlands and East Anglia', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 6 (1973), pp. 16-19.

[5] Baker, 'Topographical Place-Names', p. 60.

[6] Baker, 'Topographical Place-Names', p. 54. The same lack of correlation was noted in passing by Cox in his study of place-names of the east of England. Cox, 'Significance', p. 19. The exercise is still undertaken. Simon Draper argued for the existence of a culturally Brittonic area in Wiltshire by reference to the distribution of cemeteries and organic tempered pottery believed to be of Anglo-Saxon provenance. Draper, 'Wiltshire', pp. 89 and 90. Consideration of the map at p. 90 perhaps underlines the problems of large dots on small scale maps. It is not easy to see from the map how Draper's central contention is made out.

[7] Cox, 'Place Names', p. 65. For the alternative view (that such names were more common at an earlier date than is often supposed) see Copley, Archaeology and Place-names', pp. 5-6.

[8] Mills, *Dictionary*, p. 527. A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements, Part II* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 191.

the meaning of *tūn* evolved over time as the element was used to describe increasingly more complex or significant settlements,[9] but whether it evolved consistently across different areas or even in a linear fashion is extremely hard to determine.[10] Cumbria has a relatively high proportion of *tūns*, notably on the coastal fringes of south and west Cumbria, where Old English name forms are most concentrated. It would be tempting to see the distribution of *tūn* names as indicative of those areas where early English linguistic influence was strongest, especially where there is other evidence for early settlement by Anglophone groups. This evidence might take the form of archaeological evidence or concentrations of other English place-names which are also regarded as early. This latter class of evidence include names which are topographic rather than habitative, containing elements such as *feld* (open space), *ford* or *ēg* (island), although it is important to point out that such elements are not exclusively early.[11] At the tip of the Furness peninsula, *Eglisfylde* (lost), *Fordbottle* (lost), Foulney, Walney, Roa and possibly Barrow itself all contain such elements. The same area has a relatively large number of *tūn* names, including *Crivelton* (lost), Dalton, Newton, Bolton, Waltoncote and Gleaston.[12] It *may* be the case that these *tūns* are early and capture the earliest sense of *tūn* as a place-name (an enclosure, perhaps with a single dwelling).[13] Unfortunately, in the absence of any early recorded attestations for individual *tūns*, such theories remain conjecture only.[14] What *can* perhaps be said is that a *tūn* referred to an open country site and distinguished such sites from settlements in woodland, which tended to be

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[9] Smith, *Elements*, pp. 188-191.

[10] Margaret Gelling argues that the meaning of individual place-name elements was remarkably consistent across what is now England ad gives a number of examples which seem to show that what was understood by a particular element in Northumbria was understood in exactly the same way in the south east. Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. xiv.

[11] Copley, 'Archaeology and Place-Names', pp. 7, 8. Gelling, 'Towards a Chronology', p. 71. Baker, 'Topographical Place-Names', pp. 50, 54. Gelling also queries whether *feld* as a settlement name (as opposed to the name of a piece of land without a settlement) may have been a feature of the sixth and seventh century. Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. 272.

[12] For all of these names see *PNL*, pp. 200-209.

[13] Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, II, 189-190. It is possible that *tūn* was cognate with Brittonic *dūno-*, an element meaning 'fortified place'. Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. 164.

[14] The earliest attestation is for Crivelton, which appears as Cliuerton in Domesday Book. It should also be borne in mind that *tūn* names may be underrepresented in the earliest records by reason of not being names attached at that time to major secular or ecclesiastical settlements. Conversely, it is also possible that many *tūn* names are later, coined at a later date and reflective of changes to later Anglo-Saxon society. Gelling, 'Towards a Chronology', p. 70.

termed a *lēah.*[15] This further supports the notion that the southern part of the Furness

peninsula was not extensively wooded during the early medieval period.

3.3.2 Hām and Ingahām

We are perhaps on slightly safer ground with names including the element *hām*, which was

in use from the mid fifth century to the seventh century.[16] Unlike other place-name elements,

hām appears to have been more commonly used in the early part of early medieval period.

That it is an early form is supported by a number of considerations, including its distribution

(very common in those parts of the south and east which saw the earliest or most significant

Anglo-Saxon migration but much less common in the north and west), its appearance in

compound place-names with other elements that are deemed to be early and that, unlike

tūn, it is never paired with personal names dating to the post-Conquest period.[17] Barrie Cox

also noted how *hām* names across the east of England appeared to have a relationship to

the Roman road network and to pre-existing Romano-British sites.[18]

A *ham* appeared to have a similar range of meanings to *tūn.* The Old English version of

Bede translates Latin *villa* (an individual farm or estate) as *tūn* but *civitas* (a unit of local

government) as *hām*. This may mean that a *hām was* something larger than a *tūn*. It should

probably be seen as denoting a local centre, perhaps with an administrative function.[19] The

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[15] Margaret Gelling, 'The Chronology of English Place-Names' in Trevor Rowley, ed. *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape*, BAR 6 (Oxford, 1973), pp. 96-97. See also Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, 220 and Baker, 'Topographical Place-Names', p. 57.
[16] For useful discussions on the dating of *hām* names, see Martin Ryan, 'Place-Names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape: An Introduction' in Nicholas Higham and Martin J Ryan, eds. *Place-Names, Language and the English Landscape* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 5-10. See also Gelling, *Signposts*, p. 112, Cameron, *English Place Names*, pp. 69-71 and Baker, 'Topographical Place-Names', 59. For an opposing view, see Copley, *Archaeology and Place-Names*, pp. 2-3,19.
[17] Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, II, p. 227. Cox, 'Significance', pp. 15, 45.
[18] Cox, 'Significance', pp. 15, 18, 21.
[19] Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, pp. 189-190, 227. For the detailed argument on this point, see John McNeal Dodgson, 'The Significance of the Distribution of the English Place-Name in *-ingas*, *-inga* in South-east England', *Medieval Archaeology* (1966), pp. 1-29.

related suffix -*ingahām* ('*hām* of the people of X') is seen as being a little later, perhaps dating from the sixth century onwards.[20] This date range is based partly on the physical location of -*ingahām* names, which tend to be reasonably close to Roman roads but at one remove from the *hām* sites which supposedly precede them.

NAME	MEANING	EARLIEST FORM(S)	DATE(S) OF EARLIEST FORMS	REFERENCE
Brougham	*Hām* by the fortification	*Bruham, Broha,*	1130, 1176	PNW, 2, 127-128
(Holme) Cultram	*hām* by the narrow land	*Culterham*	854	PNC, 288-9
Sebergham	*Hām* by the seat shaped hill?	*Setburg'ham*	1204	PNC, 150-1
Brigham	*hām* by the bridge	*Briggham*	1175	PNC, 355
Dearham	Deer *hām*	*Derham*	1160	PNC, 283
Farlam	*hām* by a fern clearing	*Farlam*	1166	PNC, 83-4
Addingham	*hām* of the followers of Adda	*Adyngham*	1278	PNC, 193
Aldingham	*hām* of the followers of Alda	*Aldingham*	1086	PNL, 208
Whicham	*hām* of the followers of Hwita	*Witingham*	1086	PNC, 443-4
Heversham	*hām* of the followers of Hēahfrið	*Hefresham*	1050	PNW, 87-88
Beetham	*hām* by the (river) Bela	*Biedun, Bethum*	1086, 1090	PNW, 66-67
Hensingham	*hām* of the followers of *Hynsige?[21]	*Hensingham*	1170	PNC, 400-1

Table 7: Cumbria's *hāms and ingahāms*.

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[20] ibid, p. 9. For the opposing view, see Copley, *Archaeology and Place-Names*, pp. 3-4.
[21] The etymology of Hensingham is obscure and the editors of PNC allowed for the possibility that "it is one of the archaic names of *provinciae* or *regiones* recorded in early sources relating to northern England".

There are eight likely *hām* names in Cumbria and four *-ingahām* names.
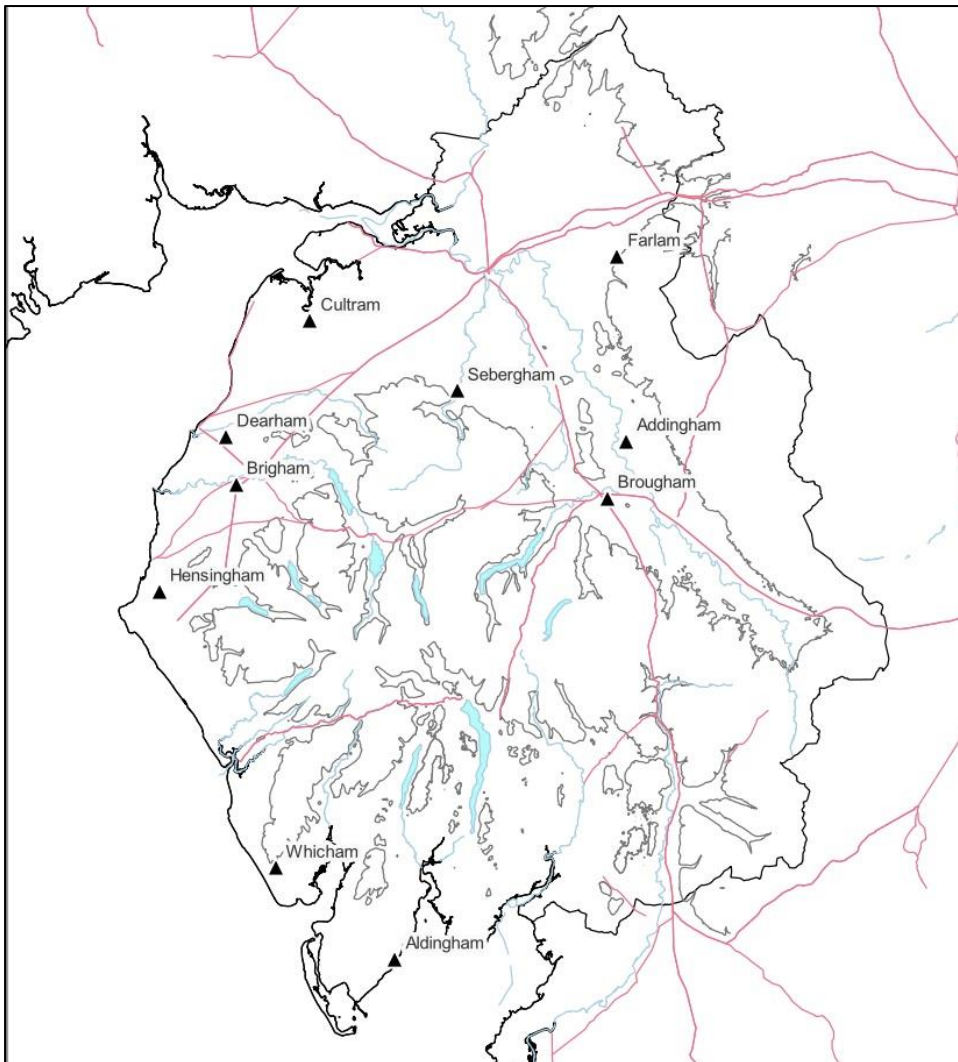
Map 20: Cumbria's hām and -ingahām names.

Both *hām* and *ingahām* are much more common elsewhere in England than they are in
Cumbria. Notwithstanding that the Cumbrian corpus is relatively small, their distribution
corresponds closely to sites which have already been discussed and which show
archaeological and toponymic evidence for both British and Anglo-Saxon post-Roman
activity. For example, Brigham is very close to Papcastle and Eaglesfield. Aldingham is very
close to *Eglisfylde* and also to a small concentration of Brittonic place-names on the Furness
peninsula, including Leece and Roose (from Brittonic *rhos* – a moor). Addingham is the

home of the Addingham cross-slab. Brougham has its *grubenhāuser* and a likely Class I stone. Dearham is very close to Maryport.

Either way, as with the *caer* and *cæster* names discussed in the preceding section, the early English and Brittonic evidence is once again jumbled up together, rather than delineating distinct cultural and (by implication) political areas. One might argue that this can be explained by assuming a takeover of important British sites by new Anglo-Saxon masters. This is possible, but brings us back to the Eaglesfield question as raised in Chapter 2.3.3. If incursive Anglo-Saxon groups assumed control of British centres and imposed their culture wholesale, where are the furnished graves or other finds which are supposedly so indicative of Anglo-Saxon socio-political dominance? Rather than conceiving of two mutually antagonistic ethnic groups jockeying for local dominance, we might instead consider rather more nuanced interpretations which do not deny migration, but which allow for the absorption of the incomers into local power structures and/or which allow for the emergence of hybridised identities which drew inspiration from both Anglo-Saxon and British cultures.

3.3.3 BOÐL

Another habitative place-name element which might have lost some of its original significance in modern translations is *boðl*. The element is often translated as 'building', but it also carries the specific sense of 'superior hall' or 'mansion'.[22] This second sense is probably to be preferred, as unless buildings were so scarce as to render them a useful signifier when coining place-names, we might assume that there would have been something noteworthy about the building in question.[23] The element does not appear Cox's

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[22] Smith, *English Place Name Elements*, I pp. 43-44. Mills, *Dictionary*, p. 522.
[23] Despite the reservations expressed about using later administrative boundaries to say something about post-Roman ones, it should be noted in the context of how important a boðl was that some of them became later medieval manors – for example both Boltons and Bootle are attested as such in

survey, although in the context of Scottish place-names it has been argued that *boðl* names were being coined in the seventh or eighth century.[24] Bede, writing in 731, references a Northumbrian royal vill which he renders in Latin as *Ad Murum* ('at the Wall'), and which may (although Bede does not state it) be Walbottle.[25] A likely tenth-century manuscript of the Old English version of *EHEP* translates *villa regia* ('royal estate') as *kyninges bold*, suggesting that, by the tenth century at the latest, *boðl* was an element considered suitable to denote an early medieval royal palace.[26] Five of Cumbria's *boðl* names survive as modern parish names, which also suggests that a *boðl* was a building (or buildings) of some significance.[27]

There are ten separate *boðl* names in Cumbria and these are set out in tabular form below. The age of the corpus of *boðl* names is hard to ascertain. Most of the Cumbrian corpus show the form *bōðl*, which is considered to be the oldest rendering of the name (later forms include *-botl* and *-bold*), notwithstanding that an absolute chronology eludes us.[28] Of this group, Bothel and Bootle are both simplex names and presumably indicate the site of the *boðl* in question. The location of the *boðl* in the five Bolton names is less certain. In each of these names, *boðl* is compounded with *tūn.* The compounded name can mean either 'an enclosure with buildings' or 'settlement belonging to the *boðl*'.[29] If the latter applies, it is noteworthy that in all five Cumbrian cases there are no other surviving names to indicate where the *boðl* itself stood. In two cases (the Wigton and Furness examples), there are

the thirteenth century – see https://www.cumbriacountyhistory.org.uk/township/boltons and https://www.cumbriacountyhistory.org.uk/township/bootle accessed 21st April 2022).

[24] G. W. S. Barrow, 'The Uses of Placenames and Scottish History - Pointers and Pitfalls', in S. Taylor*,* ed. *The Uses of Place Names* (Edinburgh: 1998), pp. 54-74, pp. 67-69. Barrow also allows for a *boðl* to be a significant structure.

[25] *EHEP*, III, 21, p. 177.

[26] Corpus Christi College MS 41. For the dating and provenance of the manuscript, see Sharon M. Rowley, *The Old English Version of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 23-24. *EHEP* was originally translated into Old English at the command of Alfred the Great https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/qd527zm3425 accessed 3rd February 2018.

[27] John Blair notes that early medieval halls may have been refashioned, rebuilt, abandoned and even deliberately destroyed for purposes of public display. As such, the site of the boðl may have shifted over time. Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 123-125.

[28] Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, I, p. 44.

[29] ibid., p. 45.

NAME	MEANING	EARLIEST FORM(S)	DATE(S) OF EARLIEST FORMS	REFERENCE
Boltonfellend	End of Bolton hill	*Bolton Fell*	1384	PNC, 91
Boltons	See below	*Boulton*	1200	PNC, 268
Boltongate	Bolton + street	*Bolton yate*	1578	PNC, 269
Blindbothel[30]	Hidden boðl?	*Blendebothel*	1278	PNC, 345
Bolton	See below	*Bodeltun*	1086	PNL, 210
Bothel	See below	*Bothle*	1125	PNC, 271
Bolton Hall	Bolton + hall	*Boutonam/Bouelton*	1170/1230	PNC, 394
Bootle	See below	*Bodele/Botele*	1086/1251	PNC, 345
Bothelford	Ford of the boðl	*Bodelforde*	1086	PNW, 1, 113
Fordbottle	Ditto	*Fordbodele*	1086	PNL, 202

Table 8: Cumbria's *boðl* names. Lost names are shown in italics.

clusters of place-names in which it is the *tūn* – rather than *boðl* – which appears as the signifier. In the case of Wigton, for example, we have Bolton Low Houses, Bolton New Houses, a number of minor names including Bolton Wood, Boltongate and Bolton Hall. All of these sites lie on or to the east of the Roman road from Carlisle to Papcastle and Maryport and all are within Boltons parish, immediately to the south of Old Carlisle. The prevalence of Bolton names in this area therefore suggests that it was a single *boðl tūn*, rather than a *boðl* unrelated to the *boðl tūn* which was the important structure. This, in turn, would indicate that the former etymology of Bolton ('an enclosure with buildings') may well be the correct one.

The lost names of *Bothelford* and *Fordbottle* both mean '*boðl* by the ford'. As mentioned above, *ford* is well-represented in the earliest stratum of Old English habitative place-name

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[30] Angus Winchester queries whether the name refers to the imposition of the duty of seawake on a settlement from which one could not actually see the sea. Seawake was an obligation levied on coastal settlements to watch for raiders. Angus Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria* (Edinburgh, 1987), p. 16.

elements, which, whilst not necessarily obliging the names to be early, at least makes an

early date plausible. The place-name *Fordbottle* has the generic element followed by the
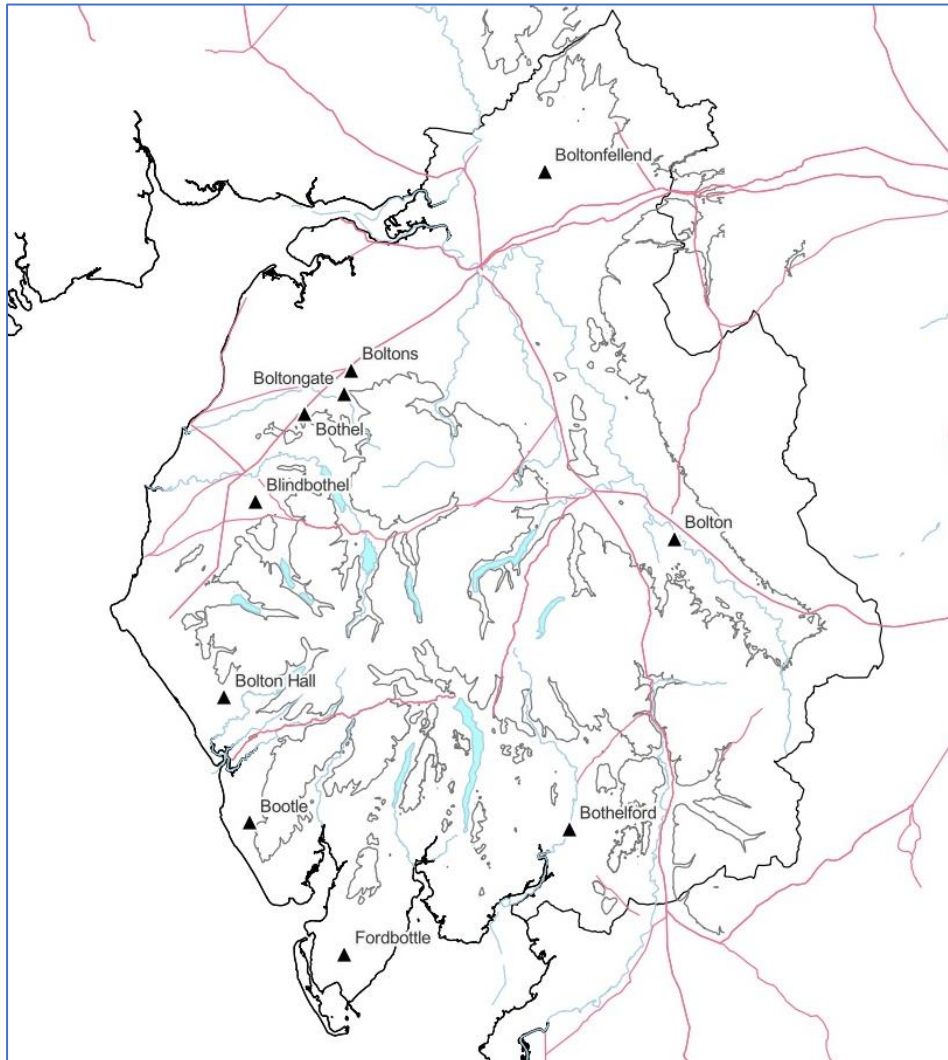
Map 21: Cumbria's boðl names.

qualifying element, which strongly suggests that the name was mediated by Brittonic naming

conventions. Although post-Roman Anglo-Saxon influence does seem to have been stronger

in the south of Cumbria than in the north, names such as Brettargh ('sheiling of the Britons',

in which the generic is Norse-Gaelic) or Birkby ('farm of the Britons', which includes the

common Norse element *by*)[31] demonstrate that at least some speakers of Brittonic still lived in south Cumbria long after the post-Roman period.

Although lost, both *Fordbottle* and *Bothelford* can be located with some confidence. *Fordbottle* was in Dalton parish and is mentioned in a list of sites which were excluded from a later grant of land to Furness Abbey. The only notable watercourse in the parish is Mill Beck, which runs past Furness Abbey, entering the sea just south of Roose. *Fordbottle* was presumably somewhere along the two mile stretch of Mill Beck, perhaps near Bow Bridge, a later packhorse bridge built to serve the Abbey.
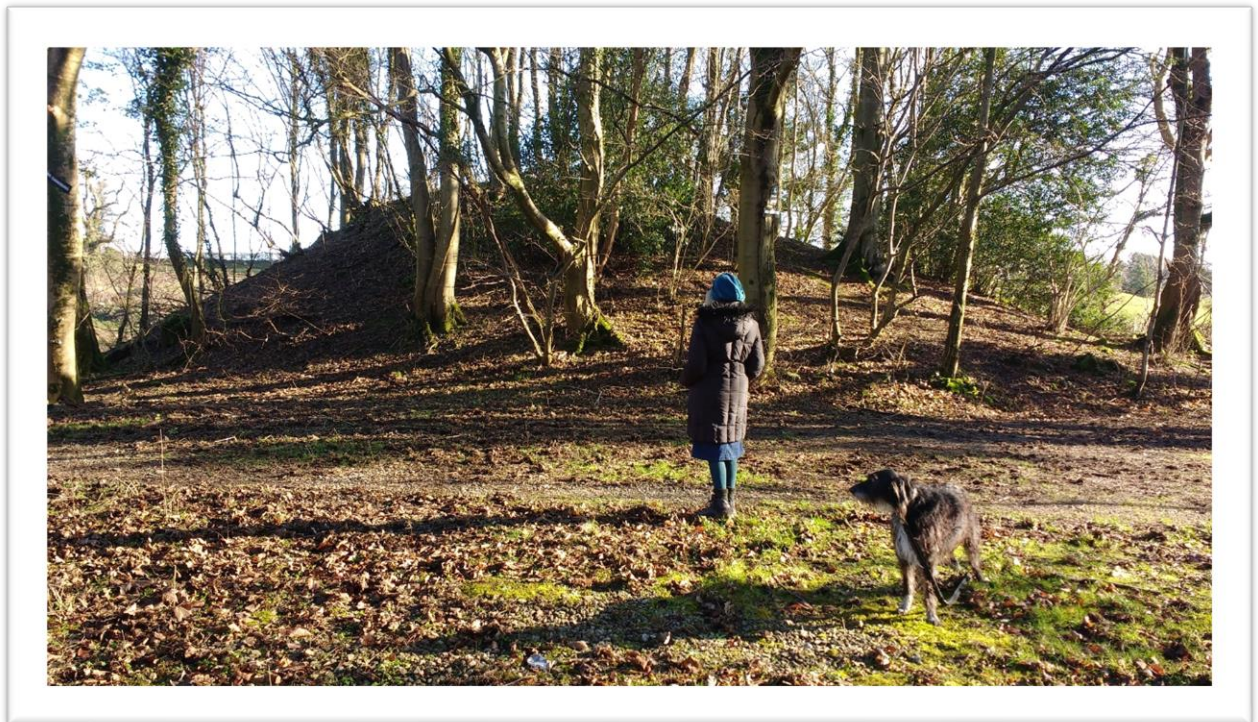
Figure 23: Early medieval earthwork or Victorian canal spoil? The mound at Hawes Bridge, Natland.

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[31] *PNL*, p. 196.

Bothelford is first attested in the Domesday Book as one of a group of names lying to the

south of Kendal.[32] The name does not appear again after the end of the twelfth century.

Smith considered that the name might be preserved in 'Bolefoot', a place-name recorded in

Natland parish in the 1836 Kendal Corn Returns.[33] However, this cannot be right. Bolefoot is

in the village of Oxenholme, where it still survives as a street name. Oxenholme is strung out

alongside the lower slopes of the Helm, a hill on the southern fringe of modern Kendal. It is

well over a mile from the river Kent and there are no other watercourses near Bolefoot (or,

indeed, near Oxenholme) which were substantial enough to require a ford.

It has also been proposed that *Bothelford* was next to Hawes Bridge on the Kent

(SD512892), where a conspicuous earthwork has been variously interpreted as a medieval

site or as spoil from the construction of the Lancaster canal, which at this point runs close to

the river.[34]

This identification is also unsatisfactory. Whether or not the earthwork is medieval, the Kent

is not fordable at Hawes Bridge. The river here is pushed through a series of narrow, steep-

sided channels, beloved by kayakers but entirely unsuitable as a fording point. There is only

one fording point along this stretch of the Kent, a mile or so south of Hawes Bridge. The

crossing is still marked as a bridleway on modern Ordnance Survey maps and was explicitly

marked as a ford as late as the 1857 Ordnance Survey map of Westmorland. This seems

the most satisfactory location for *Bothelford*.

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[32] https://opendomesday.org/place/SD5189/bothelford/ accessed 5th February 2018.
[33] *PNW*, 1, p. 113.
[34] http://www.gatehouse-gazetteer.info/English%20sites/501.html accessed 6th September 2017.
The 'spoil heap' argument is not persuasive. It is quite possible that any spoil not used in the
construction of the canal at this point was transported to be used in the embankment works at
Stainton. William Froggatt, North-West Regional Heritage Officer, Canals and Rivers Trust, pers.
comm.
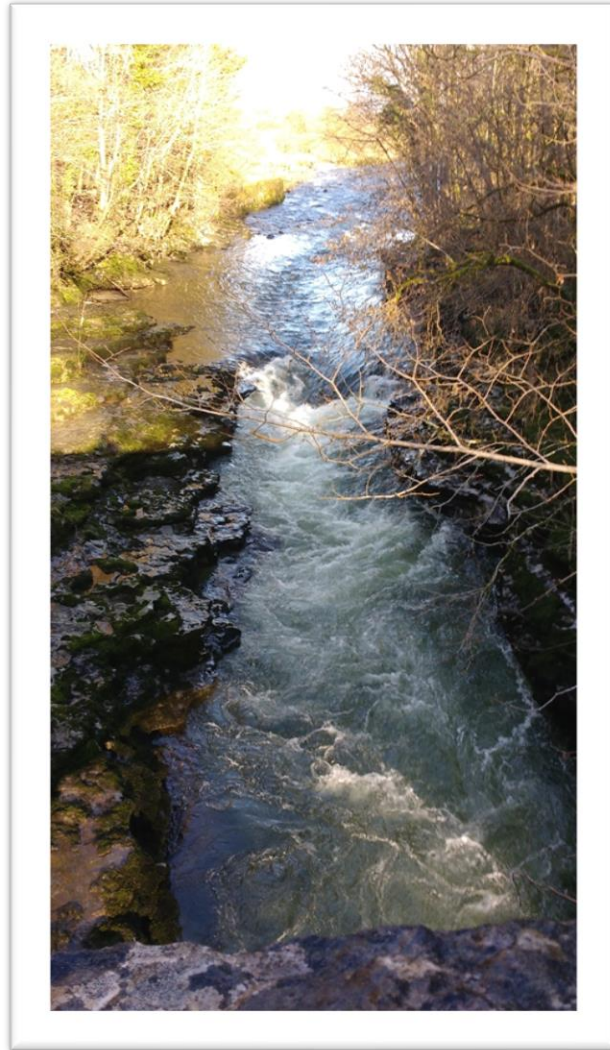
Figure 24: The River Kent at Hawes Bridge, Natland.

The Bolton commemorated in Boltonfellend is also lost. As the name suggests, the modern

hamlet takes its name from Bolton Fell, a boggy area of raised land once used for

commercial peat-cutting. The hill presumably takes its name from the original *boðl tūn* and

the modern settlement presumably takes its name from the hill. It is supposition only, but it

might be that the peat resources of the moss were once the property of the *boðl tūn* itself,

although where the original site lay cannot now be determined.
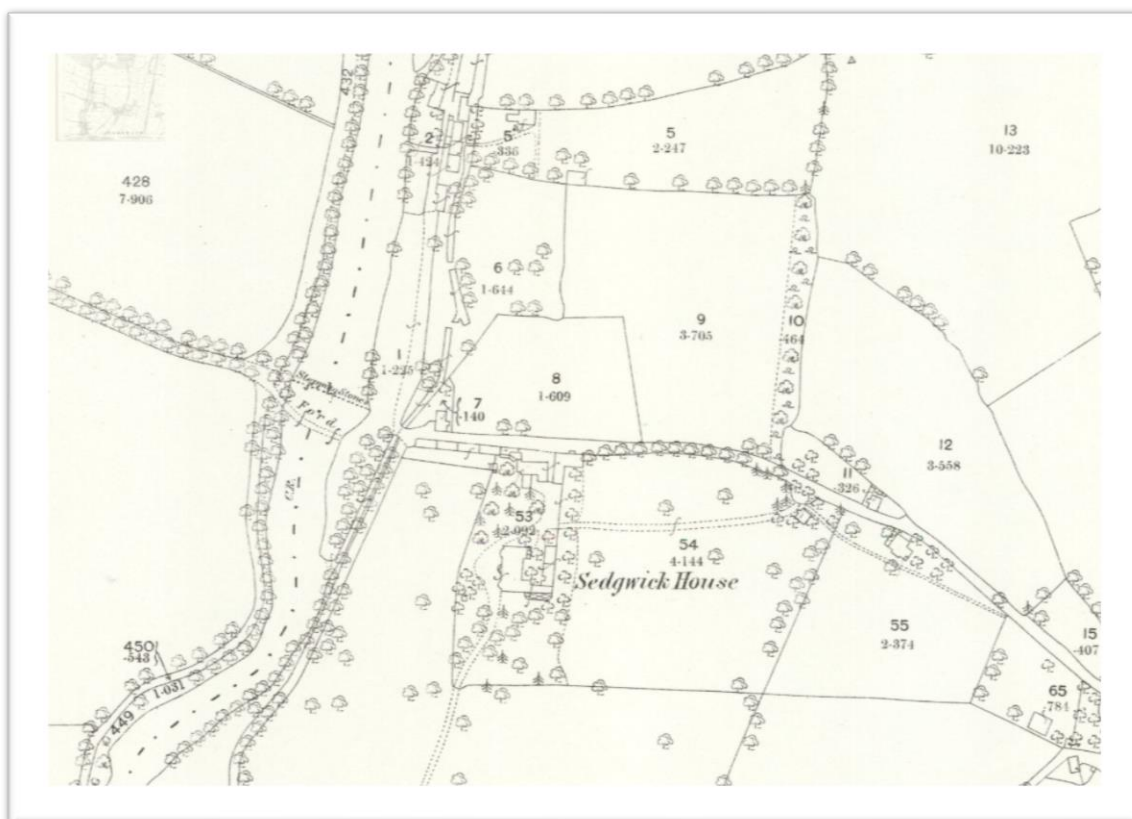
Map 22: Bothelford. The ford (and an adjoining set of stepping stones) is visible at the centre of the left-hand side of the map.

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3.3.4 BURH

The final group of names which will be considered are those incorporating the element *burh*. The element occurs nine times in Cox's survey and denotes a fortified place, or, at least, one surrounded by an enclosure of some sort.[35] Like *tūn*, *burh* remained in use throughout the early medieval period and beyond and, like *tūn*, its meaning slowly evolved. Its pre-Conquest uses denoted anything from prehistoric hill-forts through Roman forts and Anglo-Saxon

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[35] Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, I, pp. 58-62. *VEPN*, pp. 74-82. Draper, 'Wiltshire', p. 99-100.

strongholds. The single common factor appears to have been the existence of an external wall or fence.[36]

In addition to a number of minor names such as Brough Hill Farm near the group of Bolton place-names discussed above, Cumbria has seven *burh* names. These are shown in tabular form below. An eighth, Burton in Lonsdale, is a mile over the border in North Yorkshire, but is included here due to its proximity to other sites in the Lune valley which have been discussed elsewhere in this study.

NAME	MEANING	EARLIEST FORM(S)	DATE(S) OF EARLIEST FORMS	REFERENCE
Brougham	*Hām* by the fortification	*Bruham, Burgham*	1130, 1292	PNW 2, 127-128
Brough	Fortification	*Burc, Burgus, Burg*	1174, 1198, 1197	PNW 2, 63-64
Burton/Brough Hill (Warcop)	See below	*Burton*	1265/1777	PNW 2, 83-84
Burton in Kendal	See below	*Bortun*	1086	PNW 1, 57-58
Burton in Lonsdale	See below	*Botun*	1086	See note [37]
Flookburgh	Flóki's stronghold/ Fluke stronghold	*Flokeburg*	1246	PNL, 197
Tilberthwaite	Clearing of Tilli's stronghold	*Tillesburc,* *Tildesburgthwait*	1157-63, 1196	See note[38] PNL, 216
Ellenborough	Fortification by the river Ellen/ fortification of *Alauna*	*Alneburg*	1160	PNC, 284-5
Burgh by Sands	Fortification by the sands	*Burgo/Burch*	1160/1180	PNC 126-7

Table 9: Cumbria's *burh* names. The names are ordered clockwise from Carlisle.

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[36] *VEPN*, p. 74.
[37] https://opendomesday.org/place/SD6572/burton-in-lonsdale/ accessed 13th July 2020.
[38] The Editors, 'Tillesburc', *TCWAAS*, 2nd Series (1923), pp. 138-141.

In the cases of Brougham (Roman *Brocavum*), Brough (*Verteris*), Ellenborough and Burgh-by-Sands (*Aballava*), the *burh* in question was almost certainly the Roman fort. The loss of the original names might suggest that the forts were abandoned before being renamed at a later date. However, the existence *within* the bounds of the old Roman fort of medieval castles at both Brougham and Brough, together with the post-Roman site just over the river from Brougham at Fremington and the strategic location of all three sites (Brougham's at the junction of the York and Chester roads, Brough's at the point where the road from York drops into the fertile Eden Valley and Burgh's at the Solway fords) at least allows for the possibility of continuous use of the sites during the post-Roman period.

Ellenborough, now a suburb on the edge of Maryport, appears to be named after the river Ellen which joins the sea a short distance to the west. Maryport itself was called Ellenfoot until it was developed as a port in the mid-eighteenth century by Humphrey Senhouse, who renamed the town after his wife. The river name also features in Maryport's Roman name, *Alauna*.[39] It is possible, therefore, that Ellenborough means '*burh* at a place called *Alauna*' rather than '*burh* on the river Ellen' which would suggest that Maryport's Roman name survived well into the post-Roman period.

Three of the names are compounds of *burh* and *tūn*. Burton is a common English place-name, but, as with Bolton, may refer either to a dependent farm or village of a *burh* or might in many cases refer to the *burh* itself, with the *tūn* denoting an enclosure around the *burh*.[40] In this second case, such names might have some claim to being early coinings, given that this sense of *tūn* is generally regarded as being early. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to determine where – or what – the *burh* was. The twelfth-century motte and bailey castle in Burton in Lonsdale post-dated the earliest reference to a *burh* at the site, which might well

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[39] The meaning of this name was discussed in Chapter 2.5.
[40] *VEPN*, p. 87. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, I, p. 62.
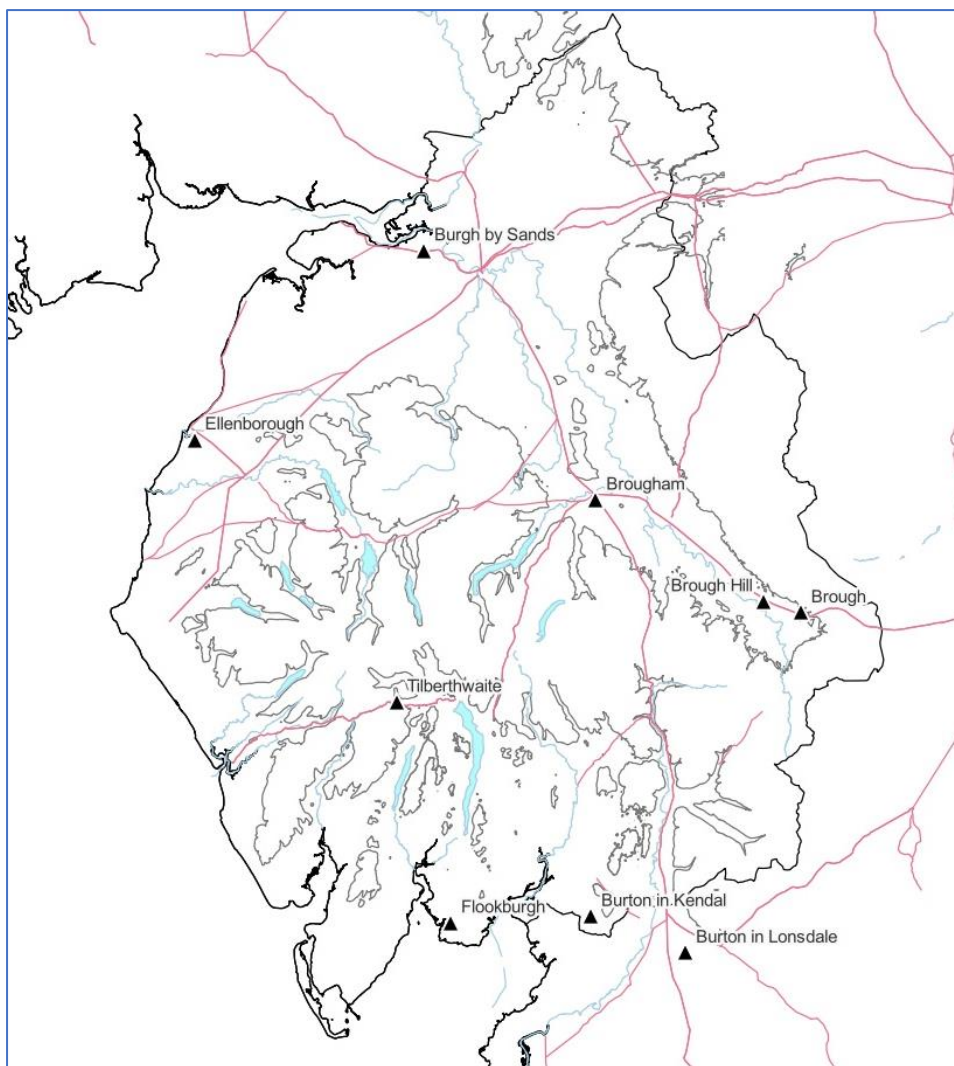
Map 23: Cumbria's *burh* names.

imply that there was an earlier structure on the castle site, although currently we have no evidence for one. Neither Burton in Kendal nor Brough (Warcop) have any obvious surviving structure that might have once been the *burh*.[41] This might support Simon Draper's argument (made in relation to the *burh* place-names of Wiltshire), that a *burh tūn* was not necessarily a military site and may instead have been the central site of a dispersed settlement.[42] Burton in Kendal may not have an obvious fortified site, but it *does* have an important post-Roman artefact in the shape of a Merovingian *tremissis* – a gold coin struck

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[41] It has been proposed that Howgill Fold, an enclosed Romano-British farmstead on Roman Fell above the village, might be the site of the *burh*. *PNW*, 2, p. 83.
[42] Draper, 'Wiltshire', pp. 102-103.

in the northern part of Merovingian *Francia* between 620 and 640.[43] The coin was in good condition. It was hardly worn and, unlike other examples from elsewhere in Britain, shows no signs of having been converted into a piece of jewellery. It is impossible to know how such a high-value coin came to be in seventh-century Cumbria, but its existence suggests that someone with a measure of wealth was doing *something* at Burton in the post-Roman period.

Flookburgh and Tilberthwaite compound *burh* with a personal name, although it has also been suggested that Flookburgh was named after the fluke, a flatfish which has been fished in Morecambe Bay for centuries. The putative personal names are Norse (Flóki) and Old English (Tilli) respectively. Flookburgh's earliest attestation occurs thirty years before the town was granted its first charter by Edward I in 1278 (an event which is still celebrated each year in the village). The *burh* element therefore pre-dates the granting of charter status and cannot therefore simply mark the elevation of Flookburgh to borough status, as is sometimes the case with other *burh* names.[44] Flookburgh is the principal settlement on the east-west road that crosses the Cartmel peninsula and which links the old cross-sands routes across the Leven and Kent estuaries. The cross-sands routes were the principal routes into and across south Cumbria's peninsulas before the modern period and many of the settlements that lay on those routes once had more importance than they do now. In 1759, the Methodist preacher John Wesley recorded a journey across the Morecambe Bay Sands from Lancaster to Whitehaven via a *burh* (Flookburgh), a *boðl* (Bootle) and a *cæster* (Muncaster).[45]

Tilberthwaite's modern name includes the common final Norse element which denotes a clearing. High and Low Tilberthwaite are a short distance apart in a narrow valley which runs

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[43] Accessed via the Portable Antiquities Scheme website https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/659822 28th November 2020.

[44] *VEPN*, pp. 78-79.

[45] T. H Bainbridge, 'John Wesley's Travels in Cumberland', *TCWAAS* (1947), pp. 184-185.

north to Little Langdale and which divides the Furness Fells from the Tilberthwaite Fells. The

area remains well-wooded to this day, despite extensive slate mining activity in the

immediate area. One possible candidate for the original *burh* is the naturally defensible ridge

at Low Coppice, immediately above Low Tilberthwaite (map reference: NW30810105),

where possible, but undatable, hut floors were found in some of the hollows of the ridge.[46]

Figure 25: Castle How, Little Langdale.

A better candidate, however, might be Castle How, a hill fort of indeterminate (but probably

pre-Roman) date built on a volcanic plug at the entrance to Little Langdale and divided from

Low Tilberthwaite by Great Intake, the last spur of the Tilberthwaite Fells.[47] Castle How

overlooks both the Roman road from Ambleside to Ravenglass and also the Ting Mound, an

open-air meeting site which, by comparison with other similar sites, has been proposed as

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[46] 'Tillesburc', pp. 140-141. See also W. G. Collingwood, 'An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments of Westmorland and Lancashire-North-of-the-Sands, 2nd Series, *TCWAAS*, 2nd Series (1926), p. 42.
[47] https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1019747, accessed 26th July 2020.

an early medieval foundation of seventh- to ninth-century date.[48] Post-Roman usage of either Castle How or the Ting Mound cannot be proven, but whatever Tilli's *burh* (or Flóki's *burh*) was, both were on ancient routeways and both were presumably of sufficient importance or prominence to warrant a direct claim of ownership.

Figure 26: The Ting Mound, Little Langdale. The picture is taken from Castle How. The Mound is in the field in the centre of the picture, surrounded on two sides by the farm buildings.

3.3.5 SUMMARY

The place-names discussed in this section are not without their problems. For the most part, they cannot definitively be fixed to a specific time. The relative chronology for the earliest

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[48] https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1011354/, accessed 26th July 2020. See also H. Swainson Cowper, 'Law Ting at Fell Foot, Little Langdale, Westmorland,' *TCWAAS*, 1st Series (1891), pp. 1-6. Cowper preferred a slightly later date but noted that, unlike other Thing mounds, the Ting Mound was rectilinear rather than round.

English place-name elements makes it likely, albeit not certain, that Cumbria's small corpus of *hām* and *-ingahām* names belong to the early part of the early medieval period. Other elements – such as *burh* and especially *boðl*, which is not directly in the earliest written English sources – could easily have been coined at any point in the early medieval period.[49]

Even if some of the *burh* and *boðl* names do belong to the first centuries of the early medieval period, understanding what they refer to is not easy. Whilst we can undoubtedly agree that many early English place-name elements had far more specific meanings than our modern translations of those elements might at first sight suggest, understanding how a *burh* differed from a *cæster* or from a *boðl* is not entirely unproblematic. A *boðl*, at least, appears to have been a permanently occupied structure rather than an ad hoc meeting-place (as was argued for *cæsters* and *caers* in the last section). Perhaps a *burh* was something similar, but denoting use of a pre-existing structure rather than a *de novo* one? If so, this might also explain why it is the case that, in a region with so many old Roman forts which one might have expected would have been referred to as *burhs* (as such sites so often are elsewhere in the country), in reality so few of Cumbria's Roman remains *are* so named. A site that was never permanently occupied may never have been a *burh*. To the extent that Cumbria's Bolton and Burton names capture the putative earliest sense of a *tūn* as an enclosure, we may have a further hint of at least some *burhs* and *boðls* as permanently occupied – and presumably defensible – strongpoints.

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[49] The existence of *boðl* as an attested early form depends on Bede's *Ad Murum* being a translation of Walbottle.

3.3.6 CONSOLIDATED MAPS

Whatever the reality of the specific meaning of the place-names discussed in this section, the distribution of the early English names at least supports the argument advanced in the last section, which was that there does not appear to be any geographical division between British and Anglo-Saxon sites. The place-name and archaeological evidence can now be consolidated.
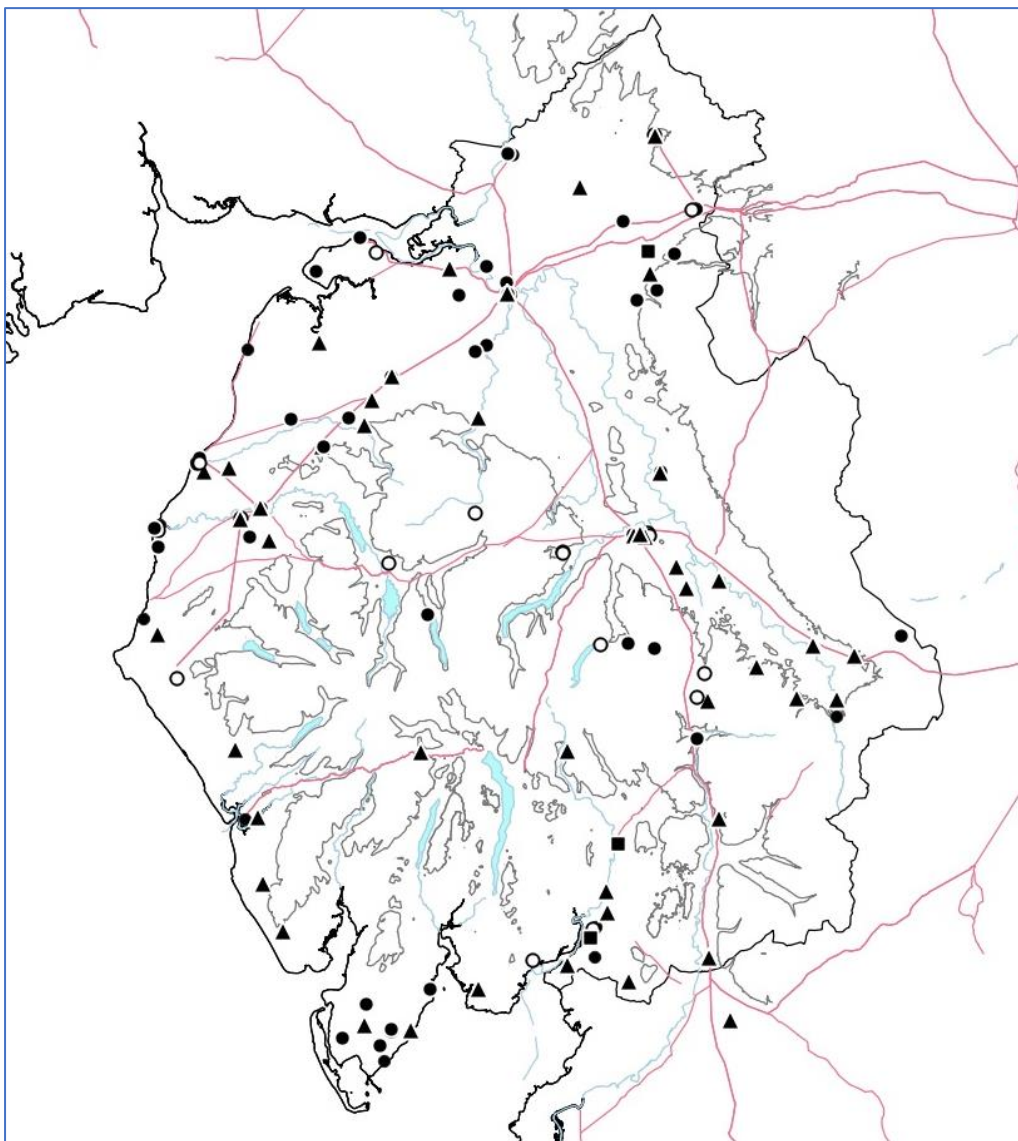
Map 24: Consolidated map showing all post-Roman archaeological finds and post-Roman place names. Black circles denote culturally Brittonic evidence, black triangles Germanic and open circles culturally non-specific evidence.

The distribution of the evidence does not suggest cultural segregation. To the contrary,

British and Anglo-Saxon evidence types are mixed up together and both appear across the

county.
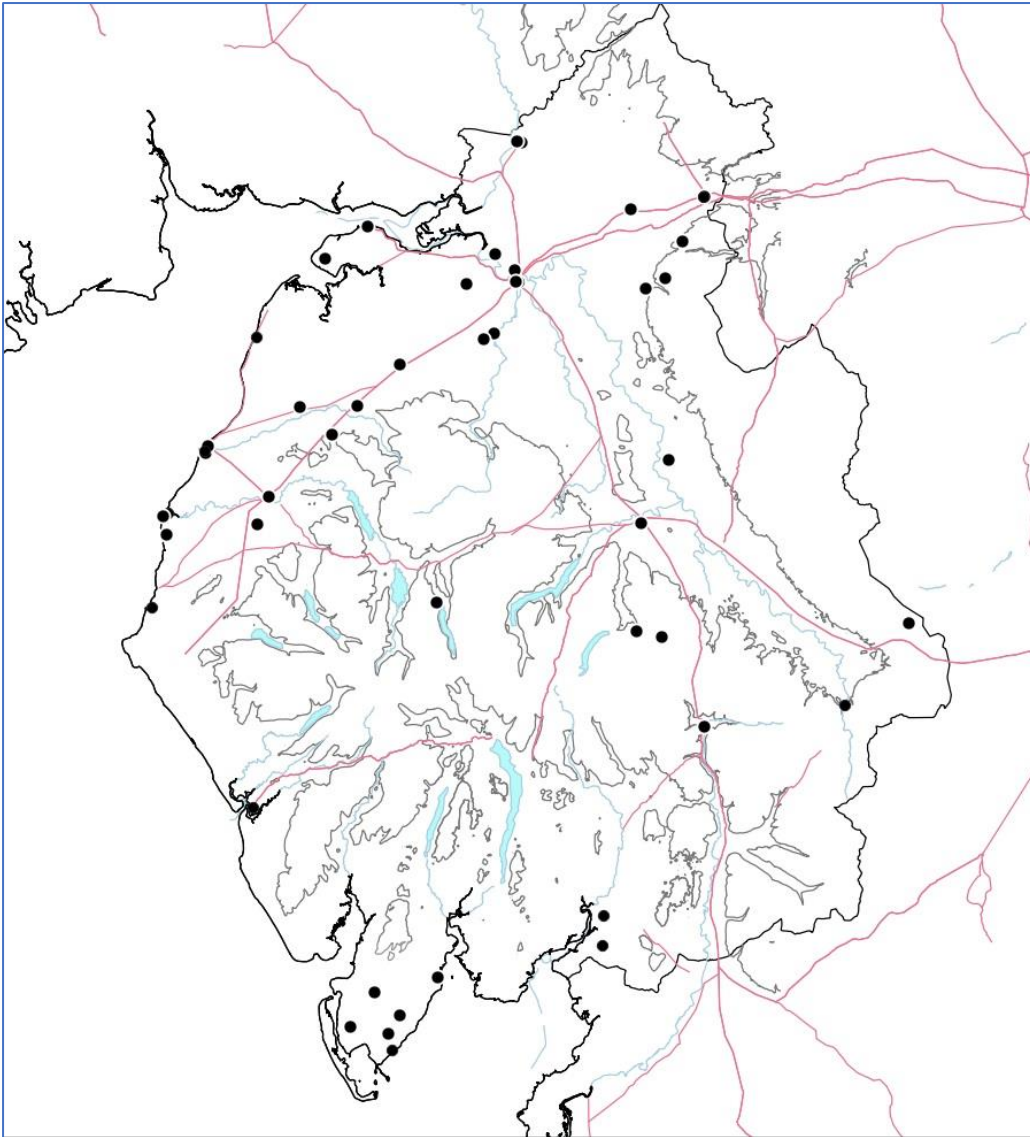
Map 25: Consolidated map of British archaeological and place-name evidence. Archaeological
evidence in respect of which there are no obvious cultural affiliations are not plotted.
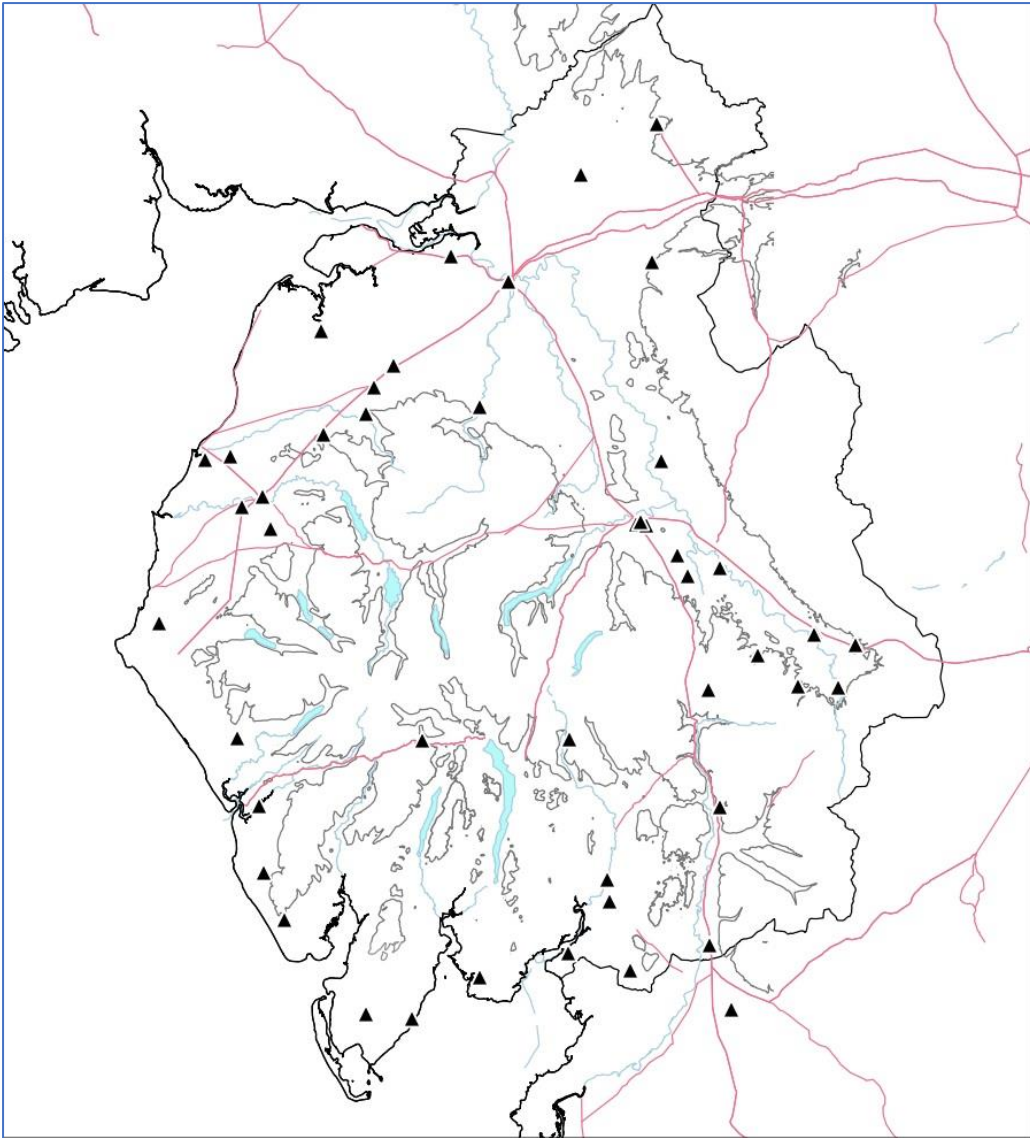
Map 26: Consolidated map of Anglo-Saxon archaeological and place-name evidence. Archaeological evidence in respect of which there are no obvious cultural affiliations are not plotted.

In general, As can be seen from consideration of the distribution maps, a number of foci (of which Carlisle, Brougham, Low Furness and Maryport/Papcastle are most prominent) crop up time and again. These foci can be seen on the map below.
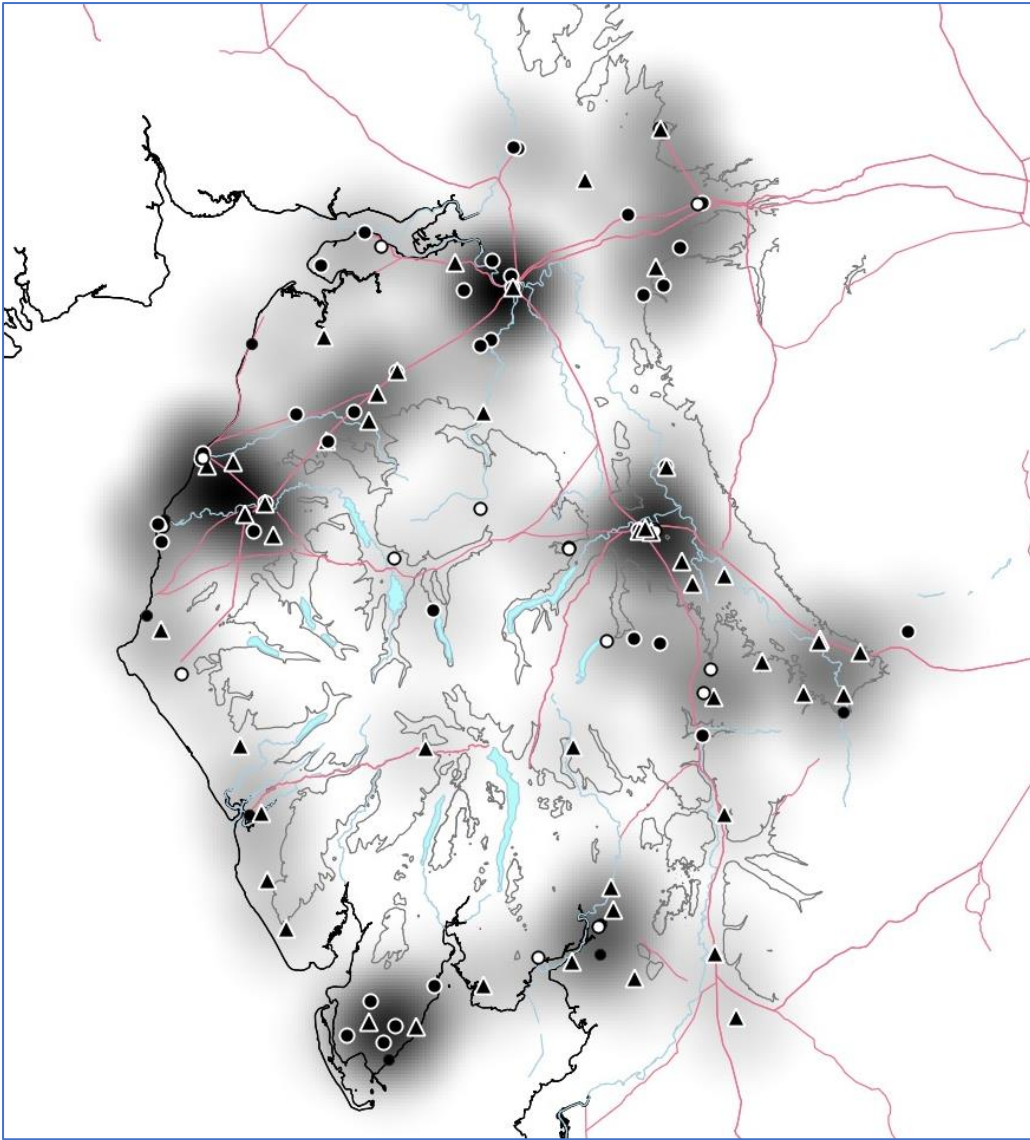
Map 27: Heatmap showing concentrations of evidence. Smaller scale maps for each of the 'hotspots' are set out in Appendix 2.

The question then arises as to whether continuity of site-use is simply due to convenience and/or easy access to resources or whether it represents something more; the evolution of social and political structures during the post-Roman period. This is not an easy question to answer, but what we can say is that Cumbria appears to have had a not insignificant number of early medieval sites which were potentially focal in some way and which, in some cases, have not previously been recognised.

If it is reasonable to accept at least some of these foci as secular or ecclesiastical power centres of the post-Roman period, two further points can be made. Firstly, there was significant continuity of site use between Brittonic-speaking and English-speaking groups. The settlement shift observed in British Cumbria at the end of the fifth century, where occupation at many of the Roman forts finally came to an end, does not appear to have been repeated in the sixth or seventh century, when English-speaking groups began to move into Cumbria. The apparent disconnect between the presence of early English name-forms and the lack of early English archaeological evidence (the 'Eaglesfield question') has already been commented upon. To this, we might also note how the earliest English place-name forms are so much thinner on the ground in Cumbria than they are in the south and east of England. The English place-names considered in this section imply that those coining them may have exercised authority from *hām* or *boðl*, but even so, there do not appear to have been very many such sites. This immediately calls into question the traditional 'invasion' model of Anglo-British interaction. It leaves open the possibility of a piecemeal handover of power - perhaps an unwilling one, achieved through clientship and/or the fear of reprisals from the growing power of Northumbria – but also allows for more nuanced interpretations based on cultural fusion or acculturation, in which relatively small numbers of English-speaking migrants allowed the Brittonic polities west of the Pennines to emulate by imitation the cultural and perhaps also the linguistic mores of the Bernician kings.

3.4   A BRITTONIC ENCLAVE IN NORTH-EAST CUMBRIA?

Certain parts of England have localised concentrations of Brittonic place-names. Outside Cornwall (which undoubtedly is a unique case insofar as the number of Brittonic place-names and the survival of the Cornish language are concerned), these concentrations are often taken as being indicative of early medieval ethnic enclaves. In the context of the north, it is often argued that such names indicate groups of Brittonic speakers who migrated from Strathclyde from the late ninth century onwards (here termed the 'Strathclyde Theory').[1] Alternatively, by reason of their isolation and/or the poor quality of the land, it is proposed that little pockets of indigenous Britons were able to maintain an impoverished semi-independence in a wider Anglo-Saxon world (here termed the 'Pocket Theory').[2] For the avoidance of any doubt, these two terms are not in any way intended to sound dismissive. The theories which they represent have highly respectable academic pedigrees and the usage herein of the terms 'Strathclyde Theory' and 'Pocket Theory' is simply for ease of reference.

Cumbria has at least three such enclaves. One of them, which lies to the east of Brampton, has the highest concentration of Brittonic and part-Brittonic place-names in the North West of England. The Strathclyde Theory and the Pocket Theory are both used to interpret that place-names of the Brampton enclave, although, at present, the Strathclyde Theory is undoubtedly in the ascendancy. This 'Brampton enclave' therefore provides a good case

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[1] The Strathclyde Theory has a long pedigree. In recent times, it has been further refined by a number of scholars, notably Alan James. See BLITON, pp. 40-41, James, 'Diaspora', Edmonds, 'Expansion', Fiona Edmonds, 'The Emergence and Transformation of Medieval Cumbria', *The Scottish Historical Review*, XCIII, 237 (2014), pp. 195-216 and Clarkson, *Men of the North*, p. 172.
[2] Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, pp. 77-87, 105-106. O. J. Padel, 'Brittonic place-names in England' in Jane Carroll and David Parsons, eds. *Perceptions of Place: Twenty-first century interpretations of English place-name studies* (Nottingham, 2013), pp. 1-40, pp. 8-12. John M. Todd, 'British (Cumbric) Place-Names in the Barony of Gilsland, Cumbria,' *TCWAAS* (2005), pp. 89-102, pp. 95-97.

study for asking wider questions about precisely what British enclaves are and whether the common perception of them as linguistically, politically and/or culturally distinct British polities has any merit.

3.4.1 THE BRAMPTON ENCLAVE

The Brampton enclave covers a wide swathe of the north-eastern corner of Cumbria, capturing all of the land east of Brampton up to the border with Northumberland (which, for the reasons as discussed in Chapter 2.4, may follow the old *civitas* boundary of the Carvetii).

Map 28: Location of the Brampton enclave.

The enclave lies at the western edge of the north Pennines. It includes the valleys of the rivers Lyne, Kingwater and Irthing, which drain into the Esk and the Eden. Most of the land is between 200 and 600 feet in elevation, although at the eastern edges this rises in places to over 1000 feet. East of Gilsland, a low-lying pass known as the Tyne Gap gives easy access from Carlisle to Newcastle. The area comprises the sixteen adjoining civil parishes of Askerton, Bewcastle, Brampton, Burtholme, Castle Carrock, Cumrew, Farlam, Hayton, Irthington, Kingwater, Kirkandrews, Nether Denton, Upper Denton, Stapleton, Walton and Waterhead.

The Brampton enclave has forty-three place-names which are Brittonic or part-Brittonic in origin. The corpus comprises a mix of topographic and habitative names. Twenty of the names are no longer in use. The names tabulated below are drawn from a) the extremely useful gazetteer in Coates and Breeze, b) *PNC*, c) John Todd's study of the rediscovered original manuscript of the mid twelfth-century cartulary of Lanercost Priory[3] and d) supplemental information from BLITON.

This list does not include hydronyms. Hydronyms enjoy a certain permanence and were borrowed into Old English reasonably frequently, albeit often with their lexical meaning lost (leading to tautological compounds such as 'River Avon'). As such, they do not add a great deal to consideration of whether or not a particular area could be described as a cultural enclave. For completeness, there are a number of Brittonic hydronyms in the Brampton enclave, of which five are now lost. Burtholme parish takes its name from a lost river name *buarth*.[4] Castle Beck near Naworth was, until at least the late fourteenth century, called *Polterternan*.[5] Carling Gill was *Polthledich,* Peglands Beck was *Polterkened* and Banks Burn

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[3] *CVEP*, pp. 281-286 and map on p. 372. *PNC*, Part 1. All fourteen parishes are in Eskdale Ward, which is covered at pp. 51-117. See also the useful pull-out map. Todd, 'British Place-Names', pp. 89-102.
[4] *CVEP*, p. 285
[5] *PNC*, p. 8

was *Poltross.* The rivers Irthing and Lyne, together with Poltross Burn, Cam Beck and Powterneth Beck, complete the group.[6]

Name	Wholly/ partly Brittonic	Meaning	Earliest Attestation	Date	Reference
Birdoswald	Partly	Oswald's stable/ cow yard	*Bordoswald*	1200	PNC, 115 Breeze, 328
Brydonhill*	Partly	Hill hill	*Brydonhill*	1169	Todd, 98
Cammock Rigg	Partly	Crooked hill	*Cammock-hill*	1601	PNC, 57
Cardunneth Pike	Partly	Dunaut's caer	*Cardinogh*	1603	PNC, 77
Carnetley	Wholly	Teilo's cairn/ caer of the lord's valley	*Carthutelan*	1200	PNC, 84 Breeze, 328
Castle Carrock	Partly	Castle little castle	*Castelcairoc*	1165	PNC, 74-75
Clesketts?	Wholly	Grey wood?	*Claschet*	1245	PNC, 84
Couwhencatte	Wholly	Guengat's valley	*Cumquencath*	1169	PNC, 71
Crecchoc*	Wholly	Rocky (place)	*Crechoc*	1169	Todd, 94
Cumcatch?	Wholly	? valley	*Cumcache*	1292	PNC, 66
Cumcrook	Wholly	Hill of the valley	*Cumcrouk*	1279	PNC, 59
Cumheueruin*	Wholly	Valley of the wild stream	*Cumheueruin*	1169	Breeze, 328
Cumrech*	Wholly	? valley	*Cumrech*	1169	Todd, 97
Cumrenton?	Partly	? valley	*Cumrintinge*	1589	PNC, 92
Cumrew	Wholly	Valley slope	*Cumreu*	1200	PNC, 77
Desoglin?	Partly	? swamp	*Desoglinge*	1589	PNC, 96
Dollerline	Wholly	River meadow	*Dallerlyne*	1598	PNC, 55
Glascaith*	Wholly	Grey wood	*Glascaith*	1169	Todd, 93
Glen Dhu?	Wholly	Black valley	*Glendeu*	1339	PNC, 61, CVEP, 283

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[6] Todd, 'British Place-Names', pp. 97-98.

Kirkcambeck	Partly	(Church by a) beck called Cam/ crooked beck	*Kirkecamboc*	1280	PNC, 56
Knorren	Wholly	Nut hill	*Knavren*	1195	PNC, 19
Krughill*	Partly	Hill hill	*Krughill*	1169	Todd, 100
Lanercost?	Wholly	Pers. name? grove	*Lanrecost*	1169	PNC, 71, CVEP, 283
Lanerton	Partly	Grove farm	*Lanerton*	1235	PNC, 115
Lanrecorinsan*	Wholly	Clearing of the small river meadow	*Lanrecorinsan*	1169	Breeze, 329
Lanrekaythin?	Wholly	Furze grove?	*Lanrekcathin*	1170	PNC, 72
Lanrekereini*	Wholly	Clearing of the lambs	*Lanrekereini*	1169	Breeze, 329
Lanrequeitheil*	Wholly	Ithel's clearing	*Lanrequeitheil*	1169	Breeze, 329
Pendraven?	Wholly	Little village	*Pendrauen*	1169	Breeze, 330
Poltragon?	Wholly	Dragon? pool	*Poltraghaue, Polcragane*	1485 1538	PNC, 62
Quinquaythil*	Partly	Guencat's hill	*Quinquaythil*	1169	Todd, 92
Rinnion Hills	Partly	Long ridges	*Runeon hills*	1589	PNC, 96
Raswraget	Wholly	Moor of the women	*Roswrageth*	1169	PNC, 103
Sechenent?	Wholly	? stream			CVEP, 284
Spadeadam	Wholly	Hawthorn	*Spathe Adam*	1295	PNC, 96-97
Tarnmonath Fell	Partly	Knoll/crag			Breeze, 330
Temon*	Wholly				
Tercrosset?	Wholly	Cross hill/ Slanting hill?	*Torcrossoc*	1193	PNC, 97, Breeze, 330
Talkin?	Wholly	White brow?	*Talcan*	1195	PNC, 88-89
Triermain	Wholly	Village of the rock	*Treverman*	1169	PNC, 116
Vethcoch	Wholly		*Vethioch*		CVEP, 284
Wlweren?*	Wholly	Snout/ headland	*Wlwen*	1169	Breeze, 331

Table 10: Brittonic and part-Brittonic names in the Brampton enclave. Names in italics are now lost. Names marked with a question mark are of uncertain derivation. Names marked with an asterisk appear only in the Lanercost Cartulary. References to Breeze are to Andrew Breeze, 'Britons in the Barony of Gilsland, Cumbria', *Northern History*, XLIII (2006), 327-332. References to Todd are to Todd, 'British Place-Names'.

3.4.2 RE-THINKING THE POCKET THEORY

A number of observations may be made from a consideration of this group of names. Firstly, the effect on our knowledge of a single document cannot be underestimated. The rediscovery of the original manuscript of the Lanercost cartulary led to the identification of twelve previously lost Brittonic names (plus four hydronyms) which were in use circa 1169. Had we similar detailed documents for other parts of Cumbria, it seems quite likely that the corpus of known Brittonic names might swell considerably. This serves to underline quite how patchy our knowledge of minor names in medieval toponymy remains, as well as demonstrating the fluidity of place-name formation and loss – twenty of the Brittonic names of the Brampton enclave have fallen out of use since the latter part of the early medieval period.

Secondly, that clusters of Brittonic names are limited to poor quality land and/or to isolated areas is not supported by consideration of the Brampton enclave. Although the land is not of the same quality as the Eden valley, it nevertheless includes a significant proportion of good pasture, especially around the river valleys. Neither is it isolated. To the contrary, it is extremely well connected to the early medieval road network, sitting as it does at the western end of the Tyne Gap, the route also followed by Hadrian's Wall.[7]

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[7] Cuthbert supposedly used this route when he travelled from Hexham to Carlisle in the late seventh century. *AVSC*, V, pp. 117-118.

Thirdly, the total number of place-names in *all* languages listed in *PNC* for the sixteen parishes of the Brampton enclave is over four hundred.[8] Notwithstanding the prominent dots on distribution maps, the corpus of Brittonic and part-Brittonic names accounts for just over 7% of the total (or about 10% if we add in the lost minor names from the Lanercost cartulary). This raises a major question about how we interpret place-name evidence. Does 10% represent a large one-time Brittonic population or a small one?[9] In virtually every part of England (except perhaps Cornwall and the Anglo-Welsh border), the period of time in which English names could have been coined is far longer than the period of time in which Brittonic names could have been coined. A 10% contribution to the modern toponymy of a given area might therefore be far more significant than it appears, given that there has been much more time for English names to have been coined over the intervening centuries. Identifying a genuine British enclave would require us to demonstrate that an area had an unusually high proportion of Brittonic names in the early medieval period, irrespective of the situation thereafter. This is virtually impossible for many areas of the country, mainly due to the lack of early attestations for place-names in any language.

Fourthly, if a group of Brittonic place-names are to be taken as indicating a British enclave, we would need to show that those names are temporally linked; they should all have been in use at the same time. Unfortunately, the survival of Cumbric into the twelfth century means that there was nearly an eight-hundred year period in which Brittonic names could have been coined in Cumbria, either by monolingual Brittonic speakers or, as perhaps was increasingly the case, by people who were bilingual. We know from the corpus of twelfth- and thirteenth-century documents how many Brittonic names existed by the end of that period. What we have much less clarity on is when each name was first coined.

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[8] The precise number is skewed by the fact that some names refer to the same feature such as an Abbey and are not, as such, entirely distinct names in terms of their derivation.
[9] Oliver Padel seems to favour the latter interpretation. Padel, 'Brittonic place-names', pp. 10-11.

Establishing temporal links between the Brittonic names of the Brampton enclave is not easy, largely because few of them can be dated with much certainty. The existence of a number of place-names in which the generic element precedes the qualifying element (for example, Cumcrook and Cumrew) hint at coinings of the sixth century and later, but that still leaves six hundred years or more during which such names could have been formed.[10] Even when narrower date ranges can be proposed, that narrower range typically remains very wide. For example, some names compound a Brittonic element with an Old English one (such as Birdoswald, *Brydon Hill*, Castle Carrock, *Krughill* and Rinnion Hills). Others compound a Brittonic element with a Norse one (Cammock Rigg, Cardunneth Pike, Kirkcambeck and Tarnmonath Fell). This at least provides a *terminus post quem* for these names. After all, Old English elements are unlikely to pre-date the late sixth or seventh century and Norse elements are unlikely to have been used in place-name formation before the ninth century. However, identifying the *latest* date when such place-names could have been coined is far less clear. Many of these names could have been formed much later by the addition of an Old English or Norse element to an extant place-name which had already lost lexical significance. So, rather than meaning 'hills by the long ridges', Rinnion Hills is more likely to mean 'hills at (a place called) Rinnion'.[11] The survival of the Brittonic element of the name does not require anyone to have understood what that element meant – or even that it *was* Brittonic – when the name as we now have it was first formed. The existence of a number of tautological compounds including *Krughill* ('hill hill'), and Castle Carrock ('castle little castle) are suggestive in this regard.

There may be other indirect ways of establishing a date range for a particular name. Westmorland shows as little archaeological or historical evidence for early Anglo-Saxon activity as north Cumberland, yet has far fewer Brittonic place-names.[12] If the Pocket Theory

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[10] See Chapter 3.2. A number of non-Brittonic names in the Brampton enclave are also formed as inversion compounds, for example, Burntippet in Farlam parish.
[11] *PNC*, p. 96.
[12] See the table below.

is correct and Brittonic place-names represent survivals from the post-Roman period, there is no reason why Westmorland should have fewer such names. That it does have fewer names suggests that the Brittonic names of the Brampton enclave may be later; formed during a time when other linguistic influences (which, for Westmorland, would include the very heavy Norse influence) were making their mark.

Topographical names are generally considered to represent the earliest stratum of Brittonic and Old English name forms.[13] Surviving topographic names *may* therefore be early, but in the context of the Brampton enclave, the two most common topographical elements that appear in the corpus of place-names (*cumbo* and *lanerc*) could both be later coinings. Six names contain the generic element *cumbo*, which is cognate with Welsh *cwm* ('valley').[14] Although none of them can be dated with any confidence, similar names just outside the Brampton enclave are easier to date. Cumwhitton looks to have been formed by the addition of *cumbo* to a pre-existing **Whittington* ('Hwita's farm'), whereas Cumwhinton includes the Norman French personal name Quintan, which can hardly make the name earlier than the late eleventh century.[15]

The element *lanerc*, appears in another six names. It is cognate with Welsh *llannerch* ('grove, clearing') although in Cumbric it may have carried the meaning of 'small enclosure'.[16] The appearance of the grapheme 'k' for 'c' in the early orthography of the *lanerc* names is supposedly a late development in Cumbric. James has argued that the names may be contemporaneous with the foundation of the Augustinian priory of Lanercost, with Lanercost's name commemorating Augustine himself.[17] Alternatively, the name may

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[13] Gelling, *Signposts*, pp. 40-44, 126. Of the Brittonic names preserved in the corpus of known place-names in Roman Britain, 34 out of the 67 names are topographical.
[14] BLITON, p. 101.
[15] It is possible, however, that the name might commemorate St Quentin. Either way, the form is argued to be late. BLITON, p. 102.
[16] Todd, 'British Place-Names', p. 93. James, 'Diaspora', p. 200. BLITON, pp. 168-169.
[17] James, 'Diaspora', p. 200.

contain the Brittonic personal name *Aust* or Augustus.[18] A late date is further supported by the appearance of the definite article *ir* (Welsh *yr*) in a number of the names, including *Lanrecorsinan* (which would be rendered as 'llannerch yr ynysan' in Welsh). We see the same in other Brittonic place-names, such as Triermain ('tref yr maen'). The formation of place-names with noun, definite article and then another noun is regarded as indicative of lateness in Welsh place-names and the same may well be true for Cumbric.[19]

Fifthly, place-names indicating an association of an individual with a piece of land are not limited to forms in just one language. Names such as Cardunneth, *Couwhencatte*, *Quinquaythil* and *Lanrequeitheil* contain Brittonic personal names, which might suggest British ownership of notable features in the landscape (although when and what that meant for the wider political situation cannot be discerned). Yet one of Cumbria's very few *hām* names, Farlam, is also within the Brampton enclave, suggesting that the area was also the seat of an Anglophone estate centre.[20] Birdoswald combines a Brittonic generic with the English personal name 'Oswald'. If the Oswald in question was a local man who was using the old fort as a convenient cattle pen (rather than being a memory of the seventh-century king of Northumbria), we would have further evidence of interaction between speakers of two languages. *Quinquaythil*, in which Old English 'hill' is compounded with the Brittonic personal name Guencat,[21] stands as a further example.

3.3.3 RE-THINKING THE STRATHCLYDE THEORY

The preceding discussion is intended to interrogate certain aspects of the Pocket Theory. Questions may also be asked of the Strathclyde Theory. Ultimately, the theory is predicated

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[18] Breeze, 'Britons', pp. 327-328. Mills, *Dictionary*, p. 288.
[19] Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, pp. 6-7. James, 'Diaspora', p. 198.
[20] For Farlam, see Chapter 3.3.2.
[21] Todd, 'British Place-Names', p. 92.

on the assumption that Brittonic was a victim of Northumbrian incursions and had largely (although perhaps not entirely) died out in the late post-Roman period everywhere across the Old North, save for Strathclyde itself.[22] The argument runs that if a northern Brittonic name form is late, then it was most likely coined as a result of influence from Strathclyde.

The impetus for this expansion of Strathclyde was the incursion into western Britain of Hiberno-Norse raiders from the kingdom of Dublin.[23] Strathclyde's successes in Cumbria were supposedly made possible by the steady weakening of Northumbrian power from the late seventh century. This had been ongoing for some time. By 731, long before Norse raiding had started, Bede was already bemoaning a forty-six year long reassertion of British political independence in unspecified areas that had once been under Northumbrian hegemony. [24] This had happened after Ecgfrith's death at the hands of the Picts in 685. Thereafter, Bede says, the Northumbrian kingdom existed within smaller boundaries.[25] Notwithstanding some subsequent successes, the position steadily worsened until the fall of York to the Vikings in 866-7 finally broke English Northumbria as a major political player south of the Tees and west of Dere Street (roughly the line of the modern A1).[26]

York was not the only victim of Viking attacks. In 870, Dumbarton Rock, the original seat of power of the Strathclyde kings, also fell. For Alan James, this event and its brutal aftermath, which saw destruction and slave raiding on a massive scale, provided the impetus for migrants from the Clyde region to flee south. Their arrival in Cumbria shifted the centre of Brittonic power in the north from the Clyde valley to the Solway basin.[27] A riff on this theory,

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[22] BLITON, 40. In some ways, this is an amalgamation of both theories.
[23] Breeze, 'Britons', pp. 327-328. Strathclyde was the new name for the polity that had previously been called Alt Clut. See also Edmonds, 'Emergence'.
[24] *EHEP*, IV, 26, pp. 254-255.
[25] ibid.
[26] James, 'Diaspora', p. 202.
[27] James, 'Diaspora', pp. 201-203.

as proposed by Tim Clarkson, sees a '*reconquista*' of Dumfriesshire and Cumbria by newly-confident Strathclyde elites in the late ninth- or early tenth-century.[28]

Whilst possible, neither theory is supported by persuasive evidence. There are no documentary references to a southward expansion of Strathclyde power, notwithstanding that antagonism between the Strathclyde Britons, the Hiberno-Norse and the Scots *is* attested. Neither does it appear to be argued that the Cumbric of Strathclyde was in some way distinctive from the Cumbric of Cumbria, thereby allowing names in Cumbria to be positively identified as deriving from Strathclyde.

The historical context of the Strathclyde Theory is also problematic. If a southward migration was prompted by a desire to flee the Hiberno-Norse, why would the Strathclyde refugees come to Cumbria, which was also subject to incursions by the Hiberno-Norse? If the defeat of Northumbria had allowed one-time clients or subjects in Cumbria to reassert their autonomy, why would those Cumbrian groups not also be strong enough to resist migrants fleeing the fall of Dumbarton Rock? And if the reintroduction of Brittonic was a phenomenon of the late ninth century, would we not also expect to see within the Brampton enclave place-names including the ethnic signifiers *cumbre* or *brettas*, denoting where the first newcomers had settled?[29]

Even if these objections can be brushed aside or dismissed as self-serving statements, the distribution of Brittonic names across southern Scotland is harder to explain. In very broad

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[28] Clarkson, *Men of the North*, p. 171. Note also how the language used - a *reconquista* - implies some sort of natural pan-Celtic affinity between the peoples of north Cumbria and the Clyde valley, notwithstanding that the latter are never previously known to have exercised any authority over the former.

[29] The closest such name is Cummersdale (*Cumbredal*, 1227), just to the south of Carlisle. The greatest concentration of such names (although it is still hardly significant) is in the south-east of the county, where Birkby (near Cartmel) and Brettargh Holt (in the lower Kent valley, a few miles to the east of Cartmel) both speak of Britons living amongst Scandinavian groups in the early medieval period.

terms, the Strathclyde Theory relies on the bulk of Brittonic place-names in Cumbria being late forms – no earlier than the late ninth century. Such forms can only have come from Strathclyde because, the argument runs, Strathclyde was the only Brittonic-speaking polity of the north by the ninth century. If this hypothesis is correct, we should not therefore expect to find many Brittonic names in areas outside the control of Strathclyde. Strathclyde (as the donor) and Cumbria (as the recipient) should have a notably higher concentrations of Brittonic names than the other ninth-century polities of the region.[30]

Strathclyde itself was focussed on Dunbartonshire, Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire. The tables below detail the distribution and density of Brittonic place-names across the Scottish counties of the 'Old North'. The 'regions' column refers to which of the likely early medieval hegemonies of Northumbria, Strathclyde and Galloway each modern county once belonged.

Although it is important to accept that the place-name coverage of Scotland is patchier and less detailed than it is for the northern English counties,[31] the data nevertheless suggests that Brittonic names are actually *less* common in Strathclyde than they are in the northern part of Anglophone Northumbria and in Hiberno-Norse Galloway. British political control of both of those areas was a distant memory by the late ninth century.[32] This raises three questions. Firstly, where did the rich crop of Brittonic names in these regions – many of them apparently late forms – come from if these areas a) had ceased to be controlled by Brittonic elites by the seventh century and b) were not occupied by Brittonic elites from Strathclyde

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[30] Northumbria remained in control of the ceremonial Scottish counties of West, Mid- and East Lothian, Roxburghshire and Berwickshire. Hiberno-Norse groups controlled Galloway, which comprises the ceremonial counties of Wigtownshire and Kirkcudbrightshire. Galloway's name recalls the Gall Gaidheal, the Goidelic name for the Hiberno-Norse settlers of the region. Strathclyde itself was focussed on Dunbartonshire, Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire.

[31] BLITON, p. 32.

[32] Northern Northumbria is broadly coterminous with the Brittonic polity of Gododdin, which may have fell to expansionist Northumbria in the early to mid-seventh century. The Chronicle of Ireland records a two-word entry for the year 638 – 'the siege of Edinburgh'. This might be thought slim grounds on which to write narrative history of the collapse of Gododdin, but it seems pretty clear that by the middle of the century, Northumbria was in control of the lands up to the Forth. The history of Galloway is less clear, but Whithorn had an English bishop by 731 and presumably was part of Northumbria when it was at its greatest extent in 685.

from the late ninth century? Secondly, why are Brittonic names even less common in Dumfriesshire? This is, after all, the area which putative Strathclyde migrants would had to have crossed in order to reach Cumbria in the first place.[33] Finally, why are some of the more common place-name elements distributed so unevenly? Cumberland has

County	Region	Area (sq. mi)	No. Names	Density	Rank
Midlothian	N/bria	136	90	1.5	1
West Lothian	Nb/ria	165	53	3.1	2
Renfrewshire	S/clyde	101	31	3.2	3
East Lothian	N/bria	262	48	5.4	4
Wigtownshire	Gall	487	89	5.5	5
Kirkcudbrightshire	Gall	899	99	9	6
Dunbartonshire	S/clyde	241	25	9.6	7
Dumfriesshire	?	1063	95	11.1	8
Roxburghshire	N/bria	666	53	12.6	9
Lanarkshire	S/clyde	879	69	12.7	10
Berwickshire	N/bria	457	22	20.8	11
Cumberland	*?*	*1520*	*197*	*7.7*	*-*
Westmorland	*?*	*789*	*82*	*9.6*	*-*

Table 11: Brittonic and part-Brittonic names in lowland Scotland by modern ceremonial county. The information is taken from BLITON, Volume 3. No. Names refers to the total number of Brittonic names per county. Density refers to the area of each county divided by the total number of Brittonic names. Cumberland and Westmorland are shown for comparative purposes only. The numbers in the table represent a high-water mark on the basis of the currently available data – some of the names may be Goidelic rather than Brittonic or may not even be Celtic at all. BLITON, pp. 34-35.

eight of the twenty forms incorporating *blajn* ('summit'). The three modern counties comprising Strathclyde have just two. Cumbria has twelve of the nineteen names incorporating the generic element *cum* whereas Strathclyde has just one. For *lanerc* the split is six in Cumbria against two in Strathclyde (out of a total corpus of eleven northern names including the element). *Tref* ('village') is very uncommon in both Cumberland and Strathclyde (at most three and one instances respectively out of a total corpus of ninety-one names), but with large numbers in Ayrshire (at least twenty-two examples) and Kirkcudbrightshire

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[33] Edmonds, 'Expansion', pp. 45-46.

(thirteen examples). The answer to these three questions may be that Strathclyde is *not* the source of the Brittonic names of the Brampton Enclave. We *only* require the Strathclyde Theory to explain Brittonic names in Cumbria if it can first be shown that Brittonic had already died out everywhere apart from Strathclyde by the ninth century. It seems clear that it had not – even Alan James, the leading proponent of the Strathclyde Theory, appears to allow for widespread survival of Brittonic.[34]

County	Region	Aggregate Area (sq. mi)	Aggregate No. Names	Density	Rank
Berwickshire	N/bria				
East Lothian	"				
Midlothian	"	1686	265	6.4	1
Roxburghshire	"				
West Lothian	"				
Kirkcudbrightshire	Gall	1386	188	7.4	2
Wigtownshire	"				
Dunbartonshire	S/clyde				
Lanarkshire	"	1221	125	9.8	3
Renfrewshire	"				
Dumfriesshire	?	1063	95	11.1	
Cumberland	"	*1520*	*197*	*7.7*	-
Westmorland	"	*789*	*82*	*9.6*	-

Table 12: Brittonic and part Brittonic names in lowland Scotland by postulated early medieval region.

Given that there is no historical, archaeological or other linguistic evidence to support the notion of a southward expansion of Strathclyde in the late ninth century, the most plausible conclusion is that Brittonic was one of a number of languages which continued to be widely spoken during the early medieval period across the north, both in areas where Brittonic elites

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[34] BLITON, p. 40.

continued to exercise control and areas where they did not. As such, Brittonic never died out in Cumbria prior to the period of Strathclyde influence. This meant that Brittonic names could have been coined in the area for about eight hundred years from the end of the Roman period to the final death of Cumbric in the twelfth century, irrespective of the language spoken by those who exercised political control over the area. The Brampton enclave (and Cumbria more generally) is not therefore an area which either a) had somehow survived as a cultural enclave following a post-Roman Northumbrian invasion or b) had been subject to a later invasion from Strathclyde. Or, if it had, then at the least it is not the Brittonic place-names of the region which proves it.

CHAPTER FOUR

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

4.1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the documentary evidence for post-Roman Cumbria. The evidence

falls into two types – indirect and direct. The indirect material is that which material *might*

have a bearing on our understanding of the situation in post-Roman Cumbia,

notwithstanding that Cumbrian places or people are not specifically mentioned. This corpus

includes the writings of Gildas (a cleric based somewhere in the west of Britain, whose sixth-

century work of religious polemic, *De Excidio Brittaniae* is one of our few insular sources for

the post-Roman period) and Patrick, a fifth-century figure whose Cumbrian connections are

perhaps more apparent than real.[1] We also have the writings of a number of chroniclers who

speak of two mid sixth-century environmental catastrophes (a global cooling event from 536

and the Justinianic Plague from 541) which events are likely to have impacted Cumbria as

heavily as they affected other, better recorded areas.

The direct evidence is of very variable quality. The English material (which is considered in

Chapter 4.4) is easier to deal with than the Welsh material, but generally relates only to the

very end of the post-Roman period. There are references to Cumbrian places and people in

contemporaneous and near-contemporaneous English sources (such as Bede's eighth-

century *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and a smattering of early Northumbrian

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[1] Patrick's two works – his *Confessio* and his *Epistola* – are important sources for the fifth century but notwithstanding attempts to link Patrick's birthplace, Bannavem Taberniae, to Birdoswald, Patrick himself nowhere unequivocally mentions any Cumbrian place or person.

hagiographies), but there is not nearly enough of it to construct a narrative or to get any

more than the occasional fleeting glimpse of the social and political arrangements of the day.

We learn, for example, that the hermit Herebert lived on one of the islands in Derwent

Water.[2] We read that a new monastery was under construction at Dacre in the first third of

the eighth century.[3] It might be that a British church in *regio Dunatinga* (possibly Dentdale)

was forcibly seized and given to St Wilfrid.[4] We see that in 685, Carlisle was a functioning

Northumbrian town under the patronage of the Northumbrian royal family and the control of a

British reeve.[5] We learn of estates and *regiones* within Cumbria at Carlisle, Cartmel and

(possibly) the Kent Valley and just outside the county at Great Chesters.[6] This evidence is

not extensive, but it is at least relatively easy to deal with, in that its context, date and

provenance is generally understood and the use that can be made of it reasonably

uncontentious. That said, it is limited to the doings and interests of a very narrow slice of

post-Roman society in Britain; the (male) kings and the (male) churchmen. We hear little

about women (save for the odd reference to queens or abbesses) and virtually nothing about

anyone else. The overwhelming majority of the population have no voice in our surviving

written sources.

The much larger corpus of later Welsh material which purports to deal with events and

figures of the *Hen Ogledd*, or 'Old North' is much harder to deal with. This is a shame, as the

material is relatively plentiful. Genealogies, poems, annals and our earliest British history

(the *HB*) show a certain unity of purpose and content. These texts have been used to

reconstruct a martial 'Celtic Heroic Age'[7] in which sixth-century northern British kings were

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[2] *VSC*, XXVIII, p. 249.
[3] *EHEP*, IV, 32, pp. 264-5.
[4] *VSW*, XVII, p. 37. The event happened during the reign of Ecgfrith, so between 670 and 685. See Chapter 4.1.1 for a fuller discussion.
[5] *VSC*, XXVII, pp. 243-4. *AVSC*, IV, ch. VIII, p. 123.
[6] *HSC,* ch. 5, p. 47 (for the estate at Carlisle), *HSC*, ch. 6, p. 49 (for Cartmel), *AVSC*, IV, ch. III, p. 115 (for – possibly – the Kent Valley), *AVSC*, IV, ch. V, pp. 117-8 (for Great Chesters)
[7] This phrase, together with its cognate 'Northern Heroic Age' and the more generic 'Old North' are frequently used when discussing the mid to late sixth-century British north. The label is not terribly helpful and may not be especially appropriate, but at least it has the benefit of being widely understood.

able, for a while at least, to resist the westward encroachment of the Northumbrian English. Cumbria features prominently in this material by reason of its longstanding association with Rheged, the elusive kingdom of the equally elusive Urien, the greatest heroes of the British north. Although Rheged has been claimed for Wales and various places in Scotland,[8] many commentators still prefer to see it as a large polity based on Carlisle and straddling both sides of the Solway Firth.[9] Cumbrian provenance has also been argued for a number of Urien's supposed collaterals who are also celebrated in the Welsh material. These include Gwenddoleu, Gwallawg, Pabo the 'Pillar of Britain', Dunaut and Urien's son, Owain.

This is all heady stuff and at first sight, the various sources do indeed appear to be remarkably consistent. The pedigrees of the northern kings preserved in the three major genealogical Welsh collections peter out with the same heroes whose deeds are celebrated in the poems.[10] The same figures also appear in later Welsh manuscripts such as the late fourteenth-century *Red Book of Hergest* and the slightly earlier *White Book of Rhydderch*. Certain themes and story arcs, including the betrayal of Urien at the point of his victory against the Northumbrians and the death of Gwenddoleu recur time and again. The underlying message of these stories is simple. The eventual collapse of the Old North was the result of British internecine conflict rather than the strength of Anglian arms. Indeed, it was a family dispute writ large. All three of the major genealogical collections tell us that the warrior kings of the Old North were directly related to one another by reason of shared

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[8] Clarkson, *Men of the North*, pp. 74-75., Mike McCarthy, 'Rheged: an Early Historic Kingdom near the Solway', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland*, 132 (2002), pp. 357-381   Toolis and Bowles, *Trusty's Hill*, pp. 146-149.

[9] For example, Kenneth Jackson, 'The Britons in Southern Scotland', Antiquity, 29 (1955), pp. 77-88. p. 82, Ifor Williams, *The Poems of Taliesin* (Dublin, 1968), pp. xxxvi-xlvii, Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, pp. 132-134, Thomas Owen Clancy, *The Triumph Tree: Scotland's Earliest Poetry AD 550-1350 (*Edinburgh, 1998), p. 79, Morris, *Age of Arthur*, pp. 214-215. For a more southerly focus of Rheged in the Lake District, see Andrew Breeze, 'The Names of Rheged', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire & Galloway Natural History & Antiquarian Society*, vol.86 (2012), pp. 51-62.

[10] They are Harleian MS 3859 (a.k.a Harley 3859, a twelfth-century manuscript containing material of the tenth-century or earlier in the British Library), Peniarth MS 45 (a thirteenth-century manuscript in the National Library of Wales which includes the *Bonedd Gwyr Y Gogledd* or 'Lineages of the Men of the North') and Jesus College MS 20 (a fourteenth-century manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford).

descent from the apical founder figure, Coel Hen, who (on the basis of a rough calculation of twenty-five years per generation) would have lived in the first half of the fifth century. A number of grandiose claims have been made for Coel Hen, including that he may have been the last man to hold the Roman military command of the *Dux Brittaniorum*.[11] He is supposed by some to have seized control of the north of the province after the collapse of Roman rule, but following the partition of his lands as between his sons and further partition thereafter as between *their* sons, his command was steadily broken up into ever smaller units which formed the power bases of his squabbling late sixth-century great-great-grandchildren. Unfortunately, is at least equally likely that he was a figure of legend who provided a useful foundation stone for the manipulation of genealogies in later medieval Wales. Welsh dynasties liked to give themselves northern pedigrees, seeing themselves as descendants of the great heroes such as Urien or of Cunedda, who was supposed to have travelled south from the lands of the Gododdin around Edinburgh in order to expel the Irish from Wales and found the dynasty of Gwynedd.[12]

Notwithstanding that literature cannot readily be used to write history, it has all too often been used for this very purpose. Given that the one thing that most non-specialists believe they know about post-Roman Cumbria is that it was once called Rheged, it is necessary to spend some considerable time dealing with this material, at least insofar as to relates to places and people generally believed to have been in Cumbria.[13] The biggest issue is that, with the possible exception of a small group of praise poems which will be considered in more detail below, all of the Welsh material relating to post-Roman Cumbria is much later than the events which it purports to describe. The earliest work containing material about the Celtic Heroic Age which can be securely dated is the *HB*, which was compiled some two

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[11] Morris, *Age of Arthur*, p. 213. The continued influence of Dr. Morris' work amongst non-specialists cannot be underestimated.
[12] *HB*, ch. 62, p. 37. See Chapters 4.2 and 4.3 for a fuller discussion of the manipulation of genealogies.
[13] The existence of the Rheged Centre near Penrith is perhaps symptomatic of this view.

hundred and fifty years after the supposed glory days of the Old North.[14] Even if there really is a body of original and authentic northern material lying behind this and other surviving texts, there has been ample opportunity for accretion and manipulation of that material before it was preserved in the manuscripts we have today.
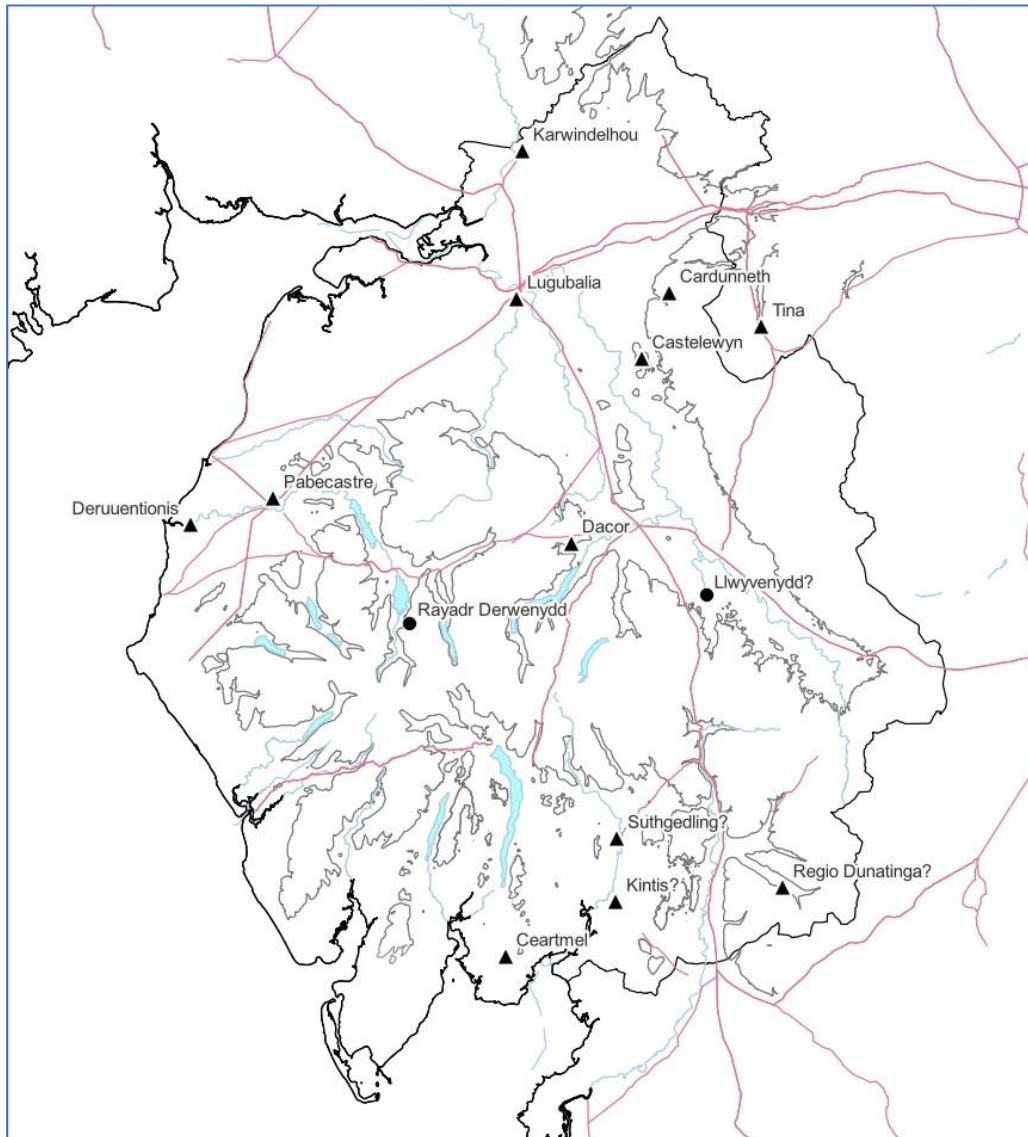
Map 29: Places mentioned in the documentary sources. Circles denote Brittonic sources, triangles Old English sources.

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[14] The usually accepted date range is 816 to 830. Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), p. 12. See also D. N. Dumville, 'Some aspects of the chronology of the *Historia Brittonum'*, Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, 25 (1972-4), pp. 439-445.

Dating issues aside, the image of Urien and his collaterals as captured in these later texts is extremely problematic. Heroic ages (Celtic, northern or otherwise) are constructs which seek to imagine a golden age which can be compared (usually favourably) to current times. They are the *product* of literature, rather than the *inspiration* for literature.[15] As such, ninth-century and later stories about Urien *et al* arguably tell us much more about ninth-century preoccupations than sixth-century politics. Reasons why the heroic tales of the Old North were popular in ninth-century Wales are not hard to guess at. Both Gwynedd and Powys were suffering from attacks by Wessex and Mercia. A sense of Anglophobia was growing, which found its earliest surviving expression in the tenth-century poem *Armes Prydain*. The poem calls for an alliance between the Britons, Norse and pretty much anyone else with a few minutes to spare to sweep the perfidious English out of Britain. Against this backdrop, it is easy to see how tales of a heroic past which not only underlined the consequences of Welsh disunity but also showed how the forebears of the Welsh dynasties were quite capable of achieving great victories over the English would have played well to Welsh audiences.

None of this *necessarily* means that the people and places of the Old North *must* be fictional, but it does mean that without external supporting evidence, we should be slow to use this evidence to write our histories. Such supporting evidence is extremely hard to come by. We have seen earlier in this thesis how the name of Carwinley near Longtown may preserve the personal name of Gwenddoleu and we have seen that the one-time existence of an early medieval polity based in that area is plausible. Other figures of the Old North such as Owain, Pabo, Llywarch and Dunaut *might* also be linked to specific places on the strength of toponymic evidence, although in most cases the evidence is rather less compelling than it is

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[15] G R Isaac, 'Gweith Gwen Ystrat and the Northern Heroic Age of the Sixth Century', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 36 (1998), pp. 69-70. For the opposing view that legends often have a kernel of truth at their core, see for example Byrne, *Kings*, 48.

for Gwenddoleu. But there are still a few hints. For example, the Welsh tradition captured in the *HB* that Urien's great grand-daughter, Riemmelth, married Oswiu prior to the latter succeeding his brother as the king of Northumbria receives support from an unrelated source, the *Durham Liber Vitae,* where Riemmelth's name (admittedly in a mangled, Anglicised form) appears at the head of the list of queens and abbesses of Northumbria.[16]

4.1.2 THE EARLIEST WELSH SOURCES: PROBLEMS AND METHODOLOGIES

Notwithstanding the caveats outlined above, there are three works which now exist only in later documents, but in respect of which sixth- or early seventh-century dates are argued.[17]

The three are: -

1.   *The Book of Taliesin.* The text survives in one manuscript in the National Library of Wales known as Peniarth 2. The manuscript dates to between 1275 and 1350[18] and is likely to have been composed in south Wales, possibly Glamorgan.[19] It contains a mix of sixty-one legendary, heroic, prophetic and religious poems but was more or less unknown until the end of the eighteenth century, when a flowering of interest in all things Celtic led to a resurgence of interest in ancient Welsh texts.[20] It was

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[16] Elizabeth Briggs, 'Nothing But Names: The Original Core of the Durham Liber Vitae' in David Rollason, ed. *The Durham Liber Vitae and its context* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 63-86. Although most commentators seem happy to assume that the Rhun, son of Urien attested in chapter 63 of the *Historia* as the person who baptised Edwin of Deira is the same man as Rhun, father of Riemmelth, the connection is never made explicitly in the *Historia* and there is room for doubt. As to whether the same Rhun is intended. See, for example, Thomas Owen Clancy, 'The Kingdoms of the North: Poetry, Places, Politics' in Alex Woolf, ed. *Beyond the Gododdin: Dark Age Scotland in Medieval Wales* (St Andrews, 2013), pp. 153-177, p. 158.

[17] Similar claims for antiquity are made for the material which now survives in chapters 57 to 65 of the *Historia* and the sixth-century entries in the *AC*. These claims are considered in more detail in the following section.

[18] Stephen S. Evans, *The Heroic Poetry of Dark-Age Britain: An Introduction to Its Dating, Composition, and Use as a Historical Source (*Lanham, 1996), p. 90.

[19] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 2.

[20] Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, p. 3-4.

originally supposed that the entirety of the manuscript was the work of a genuine sixth-century Taliesin, a man whose existence appeared to be validated by a passage in the *HB* which named him as one of a number of poets who were "famed in British verse".[21] However, in 1849, Thomas Stephens argued in his *Literature of the Kymri* that the bulk of the material in the *Book of Taliesin* was likely to be contemporaneous with the date of Peniarth 2 and had nothing to do with Taliesin, although he did allow that a block of twelve panegyric poems had their roots in the sixth century.

The twelve poems in question are concerned with the martial deeds of four named individuals. Three of the four – Urien (the honorand of eight poems, numbered PT II to PT IX inclusive),[22] Owain (the honorand of PT X) and Gwallawg (the honorand of PT XI and XII) are all expressly linked to the north. Indeed, in one poem, Urien is even called the "golden king of the north".[23] Two of the poems (PT II and PT VI), describe single battles fought and won by Urien at Gwen Ystrad (which means 'white valley') and Argoed Llwyfein (which means either 'by the elm wood' or 'by the wood of (a place called) Llwyfein') respectively, whilst a third (PT V) recounts the return of Urien's war-band from a successful cattle raid against Manau (probably to be associated with the region around the head of the Forth). PT X is a death-song for Owain. The remaining poems are far more generic, focussing not on individual events but listing large numbers of battles as a means of glorifying the far-reaching power and martial prowess of their honorands.

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[21] *HB*, ch. 62, p. 37.
[22] Ifor Williams first adopted this numbering system in his English language translation of the twelve poems, *Poems of Taliesin* (Dublin, 1968), which remains an important work on the subject.
[23] PT III. For a good modern translation see, for example, Clancy, *The Triumph Tree*, p. 81.

2. *Y Gododdin. Y Gododdin* is a lengthy, elegiac poem or, as seems far more likely, a series of poems or a composite of originally unrelated poems,[24] which celebrates the martial deeds of a group of British warriors from the Edinburgh region. The poem is traditionally supposed to recount how a band of warriors were feasted for a year in the hall of the Gododdin king before being sent to attack the Northumbrian Anglians at *Catraeth*, a place usually associated with Catterick in North Yorkshire.[25] The attack was a disaster which resulted in the almost total annihilation of the Gododdin warband. However, the Gododdin warriors all performed admirably, destroying the enemy in vast numbers before succumbing.

The extant text survives in one thirteenth-century manuscript in the National Library of Wales known as the *Book of Aneirin* (named after the supposed author who is also named in the *HB*).[26] The *Book of Aneirin* contains two versions of *Y Gododdin* (known as A and B), together with four shorter poems (the *gorchanau*), each one of which focusses on one of the heroes named in the main work. A is longer than B (eighty-eight stanzas to B's forty-two), although it is likely that B is incomplete, as ten leaves are missing from the manuscript.[27] A and B were written by different scribes and are largely written in thirteenth-century Welsh. However, they contain traces of

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[24] Brendan O'Hehir, 'What Is the Gododdin?' in Brynley Roberts, ed. *Early Welsh Poetry; Studies in the Book of Aneirin* (Aberystwyth, 1988), pp. 57-95, pp. 66-67. The present writer believes that the poem as we have it today is an aggregate of at least three different poems concerning the Gododdin, one of which deals with a battle at *Catraeth*, the second of which deals with a battle at the Gododdin border and the third of which deals with a siege of Edinburgh itself. For reasons of space and because *Y Gododdin* is somewhat tangential to the aims of this thesis, it is not possible to present the full case herein. Philip Dunshea is one of a number of commentators who have questioned the centrality of *Catraeth* to the poem. Philip M. Dunshea, 'The Meaning of *Catraeth*; a revised early context for Y Gododdin' in Alex Woolf, ed. *Beyond the Gododdin*, pp. 81 -114 and esp. pp. 100 – 104.
[25] A.O.H. Jarman, *Y Gododdin: Britain's oldest heroic poem* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1988), pp. xx-xxi. Jackson, *The Gododdin*, pp. 1-67. This traditional view has come under increasing criticism. The dating schema for the battle, the notion of monolithic ethnic conflict between attacking Britons and defending Anglians, the location of *Catraeth* and even the outcome of the battle have all been subject to detailed scrutiny and revision. For good examples of more modern scholarly views on *Y Gododdin* see especially the collection of essays in Alex Woolf, ed. *Beyond the Gododdin* and John Koch's rather more positive reconstruction of the historical context of the poem. John T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Aberystwyth, 1997).
[26] *HB*, ch. 62, p. 37.
[27] Koch, *The Gododdin*, p. lxxxv.

earlier orthography which are most noticeable in the first half of the B text.[28] The reasons for this sudden stylistic change *within* the text of B are unclear. The compiler of B might have just given up on modernising the language of the text half way through,[29] possibly because he was using a source which he could not read properly or which he didn't fully understand.[30]

Despite its northern setting, *Y Gododdin* has virtually nothing to say about Cumbria. Although the doomed warriors of the Gododdin warband were drawn from across Wales, Yorkshire and Scotland, none of them are stated to have come from what is now North West England. At first sight this seems odd, but this may be because the Britons of the North West were the *enemies* of the Gododdin at *Catraeth*. Although it has traditionally been assumed that *Catraeth* was an Anglo-British conflict, if one considers only those stanzas which specifically mention a battle at *Catraeth*,[31] only one (stanza 15 of the A text) actually identifies the enemy. The stanza reads as follows: -

> Diedryn amygyn dir
>
> A meibyon Godebawc, gwerin enwir
>
> It was not as immortals that they fought for territory
>
> Against the sons of Godebawg, a wicked folk/the rightful
>
> faction[32]

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[28] ibid. p. xi.

[29] Evans, *Heroic Poetry*, p. 66. This is the generally accepted explanation.

[30] O'Hehir, 'What Is the Gododdin?', p. 79. John T. Koch, *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales* (Celtic Studies Publications, U.S) 2003, p. 297.

[31] Stanzas B20, B22, B26, B39 and B40.

[32] The former translation derives from Jackson, *Scotland's Oldest Poem*, p. 121. The latter derives from Koch, *The Gododdin*, p. 67.

The 'sons of Godebawg' are clearly the enemy. 'Godebawg' means 'Protector', a Roman-era rank on the military career ladder. [33] The title was used as an epithet in the later Welsh genealogies for Coel Hen, the ancestor of Urien, Owain and Gwallawg.[34] On the basis of this stanza and other scattered references which link *Catraeth* with both Urien and Gwallawg, Koch argues that *Catraeth* represents a battle between Urien and/or Gwallawg on the one side and the Gododdin on the other.[35] He also argues that Urien's victory at *Gweith Gwen Ystrad* celebrated in PT II refers to the same battle but from the perspective of the victors.[36]

3.   *Pais Dinogad*. Pais Dinogad (or 'Dinogad's Coat') is a short poem which survives as an interpolated verse in the A text of *Y Gododdin*. It has traditionally been regarded as being of seventh-century date, although the general uncertainties about the antiquity of *Y Gododdin* apply equally to *Pais Dinogad*. [37] The poem is a refreshing oddity, in that it is not about fighting. Instead, it reads as a lullaby; a mother singing to her child about the child's father.[38] Throughout the poem, Dinogad's father is referred to in the imperfect tense, which tends to be used early Welsh poetry when speaking of someone who has died.[39] Dinogad is told how his father used to go hunting in the

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[33] ibid., p. xxiii
[34] Rance, 'Attacotti', pp. 243–70.
[35] Koch, *The Gododdin*. p. xxix.
[36] Koch further argues that both the Coeling and the Gododdin were accompanied at the battle by their respective Anglo-Saxon allies. A strict reading of the stanzas which specifically mention *Catraeth* does not require any Anglo-Saxons to be present at the battle at all, although it is worth pointing out that stanza A47, which appears to relate to fighting at the Gododdin border, strongly implies that the Britons of Gododdin and the Anglians of Bernicia were on the same side. Earlier commentators including Ifor Williams were clearly not prepared to countenance the possibility of Anglo-British cooperation, so assumed textual corruption and emended the line so as to replace the word 'Gododdin' with 'Deira', thereby neatly putting all the English on one side and all the Britons on the other.   See, for example, Jarman, *Y Gododdin*, pp. 113 and Clancy, *The Triumph Tree*, pp. 58-59.
[37] Ifor Williams, *Canu Aneirin* (Cardiff, 1938). 'Dinogad' is an early, unsyncopated form of the Welsh name 'Dingad', which also suggests some antiquity, as does the rhyme form of the poem. Marged Haycock, 'The North in Medieval Welsh Poetry', Conference lecture at *Cymry in the North: The North Britons from the sixth century to the tenth*, University of Cumbria, 28th April 2018.
[38] Clancy, *The Triumph Tree*, p. 94. For an interesting reimagining of the text into the form of a more modern lullaby, see Carver, *Formative Britain*, p. 611.
[39] Haycock, 'The North in Medieval Welsh Poetry'.

mountains and how he might return with a fish from the Derwent Falls ('rayadyr derwenydd'). It is this reference which potentially gives the poem a Cumbrian pedigree – and also a hint about the centrality of hunting in elite display in the post-Roman period.[40] Dinogad is a Celtic personal name and, if we are looking for a waterfall which relates to a body of water called Derwent in a mountainous region where people might have Brittonic names, the obvious candidate is the Lodore Falls in Borrowdale, which drains via Watendlath Beck into Derwent Water (NY265188).[41]

These three sources of evidence are, however, extremely problematic, not least as regards their antiquity. Are they really as old as the events they purport to describe? That question has not yet been settled, but this does not mean that we cannot employ alternative methodologies to interrogate the texts. One approach which does not so far appear to have been given much consideration is whether it is possible to move away from the historical or linguistic frameworks which have dominated the debate and instead arrange the surviving material into a coherent chronological framework through analysis of the evolution of the story arcs of the principal characters. Such an approach does not seem possible with *Y Gododdin*. Notwithstanding that most stanzas celebrate the deeds of one honorand and the aggregate number of honorands is surprisingly large (seventy-seven in the A text and twenty-eight in the B text)[42], virtually none of the individuals commemorated are mentioned in any other text. The exercise can, however, be undertaken in respect of the material concerning Urien, his son Owain and, to a lesser extent, Gwallawg, as each of these characters appears across a number of different works. Whilst we must allow for the

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[40] Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 105.

[41] See, for example, C. Cessford, 'Dinogad's Smock', *TCWAAS* (1994), pp. 297-299 and Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 369. To this we can also speculate that Dinogad may have been a man of power and authority, given that hunting was the aristocratic pastime *par excellence* in the late Roman and early medieval periods. Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 104-105.

[42] A number of names occur more than once. Cynon receives most references, being the subject of seven stanzas in the A text and two in the B text. Five other names recur (not including the putative ruler of the Gododdin , Mynyddog, who may well be a personification of Castle Rock, Edinburgh, rather than a real person). John T. Koch, 'Thoughts on the Ur-Gododdin: Rethinking Aneirin and Mynydawc Mwynvawr', *Language Sciences*, 15 (1993), pp. 81–89.

possibility that different traditions about individual characters could exist contemporaneously and whilst it has to be accepted that story arcs do not necessarily develop in a neat, linear fashion, consideration of the entire corpus of material dealing with these three figures does indeed suggest that, at any given time, there was broad consensus as to who these individuals were and what they were supposed to have done.

This exercise is carried out in some detail in the next section. It will be argued that the image of Urien as portrayed in the eight poems of the *Book Of Taliesin* most plausibly belong at the very start of his story arc, which in turn means that at least parts of those poems cannot be later than the early part of the ninth century and might well be earlier than the late seventh century.[43]

Chapter 4.3 considers the related issue of historical accuracy. Antiquity and veracity are not the same thing.[44] Material could be early, yet remain worthless for the purposes of writing history. Yet although it is very difficult to write a narrative history from this material, there are a small number of hints which may be of use to the historian.

Chapter 4.4 considers the English material mentioned at the head of this chapter.

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[43] The late seventh century is the likely date of composition of the northern material now preserved in the *HB*.

[44] See for example D. N. Dumville, 'Early Welsh Poetry', p. 4. Dumville exhorted historians to avoid '…the foolish old game of trying to write narrative history…with the aid of unhistorical and non-contemporary sources…"

4.2   A CHRONOLOGY FOR URIEN RHEGED

In popular imagination, Urien was the king of Rheged, a sixth-century British polity which was supposedly the pre-eminent kingdom of the Old North. A raft of genealogies, poems, annals and our earliest British history paint a picture of a martial 'heroic age' in which British kings were able, for a while, to resist the westward encroachment of the Northumbrian English. Of these kings, Urien was the most successful, although Cumbrian provenance has also been argued for a number of his contemporaries. These include Gwenddoleu, who (according to the Welsh Annals) was killed in 573 at the battle of Armterid,[1] Gwallawg (who has tentatively been associated with Staynlenok near Millom, although he is more frequently associated with the British kingdom of Elmet in West Yorkshire),[2] Pabo, the 'Pillar of Britain' (who may have given his name to Papcastle near Cockermouth) [3] and Dunaut, who is said to have died in 595[4] and whose power base is sometimes supposed to have been in Dentdale, in the south-east of Cumbria.[5]

There are, however, problems with this popular vision of Urien. It derives from documentary sources of the ninth century and later, meaning that there is a gap of nearly three centuries between the composition of these texts and Urien's mid-sixth century *floruit*. In texts such as the *HB*, historical accuracy was very much secondary to the message which the author of the text wished to convey. Accordingly, legendary characters could be made historical, historical characters legendary and the deeds of person A reassigned to person B. Rhetorical plausibility (the idea that someone would not claim as true something which the

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[1] *AC*, p. 45.
[2] Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a study and edition of the "Englynion"* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 100-101.
[3] Molly Miller, 'Commanders', p. 107.
[4] *AC*, p. 45.
[5] Miller, 'Commanders', pp. 108-109. For a vigorous rebuttal of this identification, see BLITON, p.112.

audience would know was not true) was irrelevant.[6]

The only possible contemporaneous evidence for Urien's historicity comes in the form of the eight prose poems in the *Book of Taliesin*.[7] As outlined in the preceding section, the poems are martial in character. They present Urien as a great northern warlord and reiver. Some are concerned with a single theme or event. PT V deals with a cattle raid against *Manau* and the disaster which would ensue if Urien did not return alive. PT II is concerned with a victorious battle (possibly against the Picts) at the unknown *Gwen Ystrad*.[8] PT VI celebrates a victory over Fflamddwyn ('the flame bearer') at the equally unidentifiable *Argoed Llwyfein*.[9] The other poems are more wide-ranging in content, dealing with fire-raising, raiding and fighting but with little detail as to context, opponents or consequences. PT VII is a good example. It credits Urien with victories at a number of sites including Powys, *Altclud* (Dumbarton rock), *cellawr Brewyn* (High Rochester in Northumberland),[10] *Aeron* (Ayr or the Aire valley),[11] *Pencoet* ('the head of the wood') and *Cadleu*. Two of the poems (PT VII and PT VIII) are so garbled that they are probably composites of a number of originally separate poems.[12]

The poems are highly problematic. Academic opinion as to the antiquity of the poems divides into two camps. The 'positivist' position is championed by John Koch, who argues that the poems are contemporaneous or near-contemporaneous with the sixth-century events they

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[6] Patrick Sims-Williams, *Britain and Early Christian Europe*, pp. 97-102. On rhetorical plausibility see Halsall's comments about stories of rulers such as Charlemagne. Guy Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, pp. 51-52.

[7] Evans, *Heroic Poetry*, p. 90.

[8] The River Winster in south east Cumbria is sometimes proposed (see, for example, Andrew Breeze, 'Urien Rheged and Battle at Gwen Ystrad', *Northern History*, LII (2015), pp. 9-19, but anyone who looking at the Winster would find it hard to square the mighty torrent of the poem with the modest beck in front of them.

[9] Argoed Llwyfein means 'by the Elm Wood' or 'by the wood of Leven'.

[10] K H Jackson, 'Arthur's Battle of Breguoin', *Antiquity*, 23 (1949), pp. 48–49.

[11] *PT*, pp. xlv-xlvii.

[12] *PT*, pp. li-liii. Marged Haycock, pers. comm.

describe.[13] Developments in our understanding of the evolution of Brittonic into Old Welsh allowed Koch to identify linguistic anomalies which hinted at an early date of composition.[14] These anomalies include a small number of apparently inadvertent mistranslations which suggest that the poems had originally been composed in Brittonic.[15]

The sceptical, or 'negativist' position, championed by Graham Isaac and Oliver Padel, has gained traction in recent years. In broad terms, the negativists seek to place the date of composition of the poems to the ninth century or later, largely on the basis of linguistic features which would be more at home at a much later time or missing features which one might expect to see if the poems really were as old as the positivists claim.[16] If the negativists are correct, the Urien poems would belong to the same period as the earliest material which *can* be securely dated, meaning that we would have nothing about him which pre-dates the ninth century.

It is difficult to know what to make of all of this. The study of sixth-century Brittonic is, to us non-specialists, something of a dark art, involving as it does the reconstruction of an entire language with the aid of little more than a few scraps of textual material of uncertain date and comparisons with the modern-day successors of the language.[17] For most of us, it is perhaps safest to agree with Patrick Sims-Williams who, although he felt able to successfully challenge many of the negativist arguments about the dating of the poetry, was unable to positively assert an early date of composition. His answer to the question as to whether any of this material is sixth or seventh century in date was simply "I don't know."[18]

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[13] Koch, *The Gododdin*. See also *PT*, pp. xxviii and xix. Williams felt that poems on a particular theme or in a particular style were grouped together in blocks within the text.
[14] Koch, 'Why?', pp. 15–31.
[15] Koch, 'Why?' p. 19.
[16] O. J. Padel, 'Aneirin and Taliesin: Sceptical Speculations' in Alex Woolf, ed., *Beyond the Gododdin*: *Dark Age Scotland in Medieval Wales* (St Andrews, 2013), pp. 115 – 119.
[17] Davies, *Microcosm*.
[18] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Dating the poems of Aneirin and Taliesin', *Zeitshcrift fur celtische Philologie*, 63 (2016), pp. 163-234.

4.2.1 THE HISTORIA BRITTONUM

The first step towards establishing a chronology without reference to the linguistic arguments is to understand how Urien is portrayed in works which *are* securely dateable. His best-known incarnation is the one offered up by the *HB*, a text which, *inter alia*, sets out a partisan view of northern British history up to the late seventh century.[19] The *HB* survives in a number of versions, the earliest of which is manuscript Harley 3859, which dates to about 1100.[20] The *HB* was most likely compiled in Gwynedd between 816 and 830.[21] Its patron was Mervyn Frych, the parvenu first ruler of the second dynasty of Gwynedd.[22] Unfortunately, the text is, to say the least, an unreliable friend when it comes to reconstructing the history of the sixth-century north. Far from being a history as we would understand the term (and far from being an unedited jumble of material as the text claims for itself),[23] the *HB* is a confection; a carefully constructed synthetic history intended to promote a specific agenda for a specific group.[24]

The text is sympathetic towards Urien and his family. Urien's son, Rhun, is credited with baptising Edwin of Deira and twelve thousand of his men over the course of a suitably biblical forty days.[25] Urien's great grand-daughter, Riemmelth, is stated to have married Oswiu, king of Northumbria from 642 to 670.[26] But centre stage goes to Urien himself, who is

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[19] Dumville, 'Historical Value', p. 5.
[20] Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain', p. 176.
[21] Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 12. See also Dumville, 'Aspects', pp. 439-435.
[22] David Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies and Genealogies: Studies in the Political History of Early Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Oxford, 2003), p. 95.
[23] *HB*, p. 9. The claim is made in the prologue which attributes authorship to one Nennius. The prologue is, however a later accretion to the text and its claims can be disregarded.
[24] Caitlin Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 15-19.
[25] *HB*, ch. 63, p. 38. Brady regards this entry as being the product of a tradition of a mixed Anglo-Welsh culture on the Welsh borders. Brady, *Welsh borderlands*, pp. 27-29.
[26] *HB*, ch. 57, p. 36.

portrayed as a great warrior king who nearly destroyed the Northumbrians of Bernicia. The relevant passage reads as follows: -

> Adda, son of Ida, reigned 8 years; Aethelric, son of Ida, reigned 4 years. Theodoric, son of Ida, reigned 7 years. Freodwald reigned 6 years and in his time, the kingdom of the Kentishmen received baptism, from the mission of Gregory. Hussa reigned 7 years. Four kings fought against them, Urien, and Rhydderch Hen, and Gwallawg and Morcant. Theodoric fought vigorously against Urien and his sons. During that time, sometimes the enemy sometimes the Cymry were victorious, and Urien blockaded them for three days and three nights in the island of Lindisfarne. But, during this campaign, Urien was assassinated on the instigation of Morcant, from jealousy, because his military skill and generalship surpassed that of all the other kings.[27]

Rhydderch Hen is probably to be identified with the Rhydderch who ruled the Clyde polity of *Alt Clut* in the sixth century.[28] Gwallawg is usually associated with the British polity of Elmet in Yorkshire. The usual conclusion drawn from this passage is that Urien was the leader of a north British coalition who fought the English, notwithstanding that the text does *not* actually state that the four kings fought together. All it says is that all of them fought the Bernicians.[29] Theodoric's enemies are expressly stated to be Urien and his sons, not Urien and the other three named kings.

The provenance of this passage is uncertain. It has been argued that there was a now-lost written account dealing with northern events of the sixth and seventh centuries and that this

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[27] *HB*, ch. 63, pp. 37-38. John Morris argued that Morcant's animosity towards Urien was prompted by Urien ceding Morcant's territory to Irish allies. Morris, *Age of Arthur*, pp. 234-235.
[28] Rhydderch is referenced in Adomnan's *Life* of St Columba, written about 700. *LSC*.
[29] The Bernician kings may have ruled contemporaneously rather than successively. Alex Woolf, 'Caedualla *Rex Brettonum* and the Passing of the Old North', *Northern History*, XLI (2004), pp. 22-23.

text was used in both the *HB* and also the *AC*.[30] If true, this would take the core account of Urien's life back to nearly Urien's time. Kenneth Jackson proposed that the core of this 'Northern History' (as it is now usually termed) may even have been composed by Rhun, son of Urien, and that it was subsequently added to by other British commentators.[31] In support of his theory, Jackson pointed to three potentially archaic word forms in chapters 62 and 65 of the *HB* which he believed predated the Old Welsh period (which started in about 750) and also to a number of stylistic and textual points, including the use of Welsh nicknames for seventh-century figures, the focus on Urien and his family and the claim in the now-lost Chartres recension of the *HB* that the text had perhaps been drawn together by Rhun himself.[32] Jackson further proposed that the northern material had been synchronised with a number of English regnal genealogies to provide a narrative of northern events up to the deaths of king Ecgfrith and St. Cuthbert in the 680s. The resulting composite text had been used by the compiler of the *HB* to give us chapters 57 to 65 as we have them today.[33] If this is correct, the material about Urien could have been compiled by his son who was writing within living memory of the events he recorded.[34]

John Koch revisited the Northern History in 1997. Although he felt that two of the three potentially archaic names identified by Jackson were doubtful, he drew attention to the names of both Urien and Riemmelth and suggested that the latter in particular showed signs of being a Cumbric form.[35] He concluded that the Northern History had been compiled shortly after Ecgfrith's death in battle against the Picts in 685, one result of which had been the loosening of Northumbrian hegemony west of the Pennines and the concomitant

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[30] Hughes, 'Welsh Latin chronicles', pp. 70-71.
[31] Kenneth Jackson, 'On the Northern British Section in Nennius', in K. H. Jackson and N. K. Chadwick, eds. *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the early British border* (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 20-62.
[32] ibid., pp. 48-53.
[33] For a critique of Jackson's theory, see David Dumville, 'On the North British Section of the Historia Brittonum', *Welsh History Review*, 8 (1976), pp. 345-354.
[34] For an enthusiastic recent restatement of Jackson's original argument, see Flint Johnson, 'The Sources and Contributors of the Northern Memorandum and its Heirs', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 91.1 (2019), pp. 111-130.
[35] Koch, *Gododdin*, pp. cxii-cxiii.

reasertion of British identity by those partisan to Urien's line.[36] Like Jackson, Koch was

open to the possibility that that earliest material in the Northern History *might* have been

near-contemporary with Urien's death, although (like Jackson) he did not positively assert

such a conclusion.

This circumspection seems warranted. The existence of an early northern text underlying the

northern material of the *HB* is not without its problems. It has rightly been pointed out that

the two texts supposedly derived from it (the *HB* and a number of sixth- and seventh-century

entries in *AC*) are not as closely linked as is sometimes supposed. The northern focus of the

former is on the dynasty of Rheged whereas the focus of the latter is the dynasty of

Strathclyde.[37] We might also note how clumsy the synthesis of the British and English

material is. The northern section of the *HB* starts with descent of the kings of Bernicia down

to Ecgfrith (670-685). Two notes are appended to this bare genealogy. The first records that

Ecgfrith died fighting the Picts. That this comment derives from a British source is suggested

by the ill-concealed glee that since Ecgfrith's death, the "English thugs" were never again

strong enough to take tribute from the Picts. There is then a second comment about how

Oswiu had two wives, the first being Riemmelth.[38]

Chapters 58 to 60 gives the pedigrees of the kings of Kent, East Anglia and Mercia. Chapter

61 starts with a list of the kings of Deira and a note as to how Edwin's line came to an end

following the death of his two sons at the hands of the British king, Cadwallon. It then lists

the pedigrees of the otherwise unknown Bernician king, Oslaf and the English bishop Egbert

for six generations back to Oswiu and Ida respectively. That this part of chapter 61 derives

from a British source seems clear from the description of Egbert as "the first (bishop) of *their*

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[36] ibid., pp. cxiv-cxx. For the reference to the British reasserting partial mastery over their own affairs see *EHEP*, IV, 26, p. 255.
[37] Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons,* 353-358. For reasons that will be advanced in the next section, we should probably say 'the dynasty of Urien' rather than 'the dynasty of Rheged'.
[38] *HB*, ch. 57, p. 36.

nation" (emphasis mine). There is then a third shift of focus as the text jumps back to Ida and

his joining of Deira and Bernicia.[39] Thereafter, chapters 62 to 65 comprise a contiguous and

linear account of the late sixth and seventh centuries, with details of the deeds of British

figures (including Urien) inserted after relatively laconic statements about the length of the

reigns of successive Bernician kings.

If all of the British material in chapters 57 to 65 derives from a single source, we might ask

why, until towards the end of chapter 61, the text is so disjointed?[40] Why, for example, is the

note on Oswiu's wives appended to the genealogy at chapter 57 which ends with his sons,

rather than being included in chapter 64 or 65, which specifically deals with the events of his

reign? Why is the comment about Edwin's line slotted in at chapter 61 rather than being

included in chapter 63, which deals with the events of *his* reign? Is it possible that the

compiler of the *HB* had at least two texts of British provenance in front of him? The first

contained the pedigrees of the English kings now at chapters 57 to 61 of the *HB,* which had

already been endorsed with the comments about Oswiu, Edwin *et al*. The second was a

linear account of the sixth and seventh century which we now see at chapters 61 to 65. If the

compiler of the *HB* had simply arranged his text so that the linear history ran on from the

annotated genealogies, the somewhat confused nature of the ordering becomes explicable.

Dating these underlying sources is not easy. The inclusion of non-northern genealogies in a

section of the text which is concerned with northern affairs suggests that all of the pedigrees

were originally contained within a single source which was imported wholesale into the *HB*.[41]

If this is right, then that source could not have been put together before the accession of the

last king mentioned in it (Ecgfrith of Mercia), which makes the document no earlier than 787,

which is only forty years or so before the *HB* itself was compiled. If Oslaf's reign post-dated

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[39] The names of both kingdoms are given in their Welsh, not English forms.
[40] Dumville felt that this source was that a set of annals. Jackson favoured a composite document.
[41] See, for example, Dumville, 'North British Section', p. 352.

that of Ecgfrith, it would be later still.[42]

If this dating scheme is correct, then the reference to Riemmelth and her descent from Rhun as set out in chapter 57 cannot be presumed to be as early as the sixth century. It *might* go that far back and have been transposed into the Bernician king list from a now-lost source, but there is nothing in the genealogies section which *requires* it to have done so. It might equally have been appended to the text at the end of the eighth century, when the pedigrees of Oslaf or Ecgfrith were drawn up.[43] The Cumbric spelling of Riemmelth's name only dates the passage if we knew when Cumbric ceased to be spoken in the North West, which we do not.[44]

A late seventh-century date *can* be proposed for the continuous history which runs from chapters 61 to 65, largely for the reasons as outlined by Koch. Even so, that account still post-dates the *floruit* of any historic Urien by at least one hundred years. The idea that the Urien material was first recorded during the lifetime of his son, Rhun, is undeniably an attractive one, but it is difficult to bridge the temporal gap. The linguistic clues identified by Jackson and Koch (including archaic orthography and the use of Welsh name and nicknames for English place and people) would fit a seventh-century date as readily as a sixth-century one. More worryingly, there is little in the Urien material that rings of sober history. To the contrary, it is very formulaic. The three days and three nights of Urien's blockade is a recurring theme in early medieval literature. The statement that sometimes one side and sometimes the other were victorious seems to be a direct lift from Gildas.[45] It has

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[42] Although we don't know who Oslaf was, his inclusion in material which, if not wholly of British provenance, had at least been mediated by British hands, lends some support to the notion that he may have been a regional sub-king ruling west of the Pennines.Jackson, 'Northern British Section', 56-57. See also Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, pp. 59-60.

[43] Jackson, 'Northern British Section', p. 25. Jackson makes the point that it is reasonable to consider a date of composition of a collection of genealogies during the floruit of the person whose name is the latest in the collection.

[44] See Chapter 3.4, in which the traditional arguments for the fall and rise of Cumbric are challenged in more detail.

[45] *DEB*, ch. 26, p. 28.

even been proposed that the story is a deliberate attempt to provide a northern parallel to the story of Vortigern and Vortimer's resistance to the Saxons in the south, an argument with some force.[46] Vortigern and Vortimer also fight vigorously against their English opponents, also shut their opponents up on an island (in their case, a feat which they repeat three times) and also suffer mixed fortunes of victory and defeat.[47]

The Rhun material in chapter 63 is equally suspect. The baptism of twelve thousand people over forty days has echoes of the New Testament stories of John the Baptist and Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. Rhun and Urien's stories have, then, all the hallmarks of being apocryphal tales that were probably reduced to writing long after the events they describe and which cannot therefore be taken as sober accounts of sixth and early seventh-century events.[48] There *might* be some historical truth in them, but that is not what the stories were for. They were there to promote the reputation of Urien's line and show how his seventh-century descendants were important figures in northern affairs. In this context, the apparent delight in Ecgfrith's defeat (which has typically been seen as evidence of anti-English sentiment) must be considered alongside the more positive use of the reputations of both Edwin and Oswiu to enhance in turn the reputations of the text's British honorands. Whilst the argument that chapters 57 to 65 of the *HB* derive from earlier sources can therefore be sustained, there is little or no reason to push the date of those sources back beyond the end of the seventh century.

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[46] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Death of Urien', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 32 (1996), pp. 25–26.
[47] *HB*, ch. 43, p. 31.
[48] Accordingly, the somewhat elaborate arguments that have been advanced about Rhun's status as Edwin's godfather or of Edwin being baptized twice (once by Rhun as attested in the HB and once by Paulinus as attested by Bede) are probably unnecessary.

4.2.2 THE ENGLYNION

The circumstances of Urien's death are amplified in the *englynion*.[49] The *englynion* appear in their fullest form in the *Red Book of Hergest*, which may have originated in Brycheniog.[50] The *Red Book* contains one hundred and sixty-eight stanzas in the three-line repeating metre of the *englyn* form.[51] Much of the material deals with the trials and tribulations of Llywarch Hen, who is given as Urien's cousin in the Welsh genealogies. The material relating to Urien himself consists of eleven separate poems or scraps of poems. The longest, *Pen Urien*, is a clever composition of nineteen stanzas in which the narrator carries Urien's severed head and laments the passing of the great warlord.[52] The circumstances of Urien's death are not spelled out, but it is reasonable to conclude that he died in battle and that his head was removed to save it from being subjected to gruesomely inventive indignities by his enemies.[53]

Four other poems deal with Urien's death. Of these, *Celain Urien* uses repetition to build a picture of the narrator's grief at Urien's burial ceremony. *Efrddyl* speaks of the sadness of Urien's sister and gives Urien's place of death as Aber Lleu, probably the river Low, opposite Lindisfarne.[54] *Aelwyd Rheged* presents an image of the deserted, overgrown hearth of what had once been the great hall of Urien's realm.

One of the remaining poems includes a reference to Llofan Llaw Ddifro and links him to

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[49] An *englyn* is a three-line stanza which has been used in Welsh poetry since at least the eighth century. Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 1.
[50] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Provenance of the Llywarch Hen Poems: A Case for Llan-Gors, Brycheiniog' *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 26 (1993), pp. 27–63.
[51] Patrick Ford, *The Poetry of Llywarch Hen* (London, 1974), pp. 11-25.
[52] Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, 477-482. The layers of meaning that may well have been apparent to contemporary Welsh audiences even if not to modern Anglophone ones are touched upon by Patrick Ford. Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, pp. 43-45.
[53] The articulation of heads is a reasonably common theme. Oswald of Bernicia's head was impaled on a stake after his death in battle. *EHEP*, III, 13, p. 163. Edwin of Deira's head was interred at York. *EHEP*, II, 20, p. 140.
[54] Morris, *Age of Arthur*, p. 236.

Urien's death, albeit without any detail. *Dwy Blaid* shares some *dramatis personae* with the *HB*, reporting attacks on Urien's sons by four British enemies including both Gwallawg and Morcant. *Marwnad Rhun* commemorates the martial achievements of Urien's son, Rhun, whom we have already met in the *HB*.[55]

The core themes of the *englynion* are loss and death. Urien's death is intrinsically linked with the failure of his wider realm. With Urien alive, his land and people prosper. With Urien dead, even his warrior sons are unable to stem the collapse of his hegemony. *Aelwyd Rheged* represents the inevitable end point – a tangle of bramble and nettles growing in the ruins of the feasting-hall.

The *englynion* probably derive from a number of different sources but likely to be of a similar date to the *HB* itself.[56] The *englynion* and the *HB* therefore present the same, carefully constructed morality tale. The story may have been designed to warn Welsh audiences of the consequences of disunity and/or to explain why the ninth-century descendants of the heroes of the Old North were having such a hard time of it at the hands of the English.[57] Either way, stories of Urien's death clearly had wide currency by the ninth century and were evolving consistently across disparate Welsh kingdoms, suggesting that the story was widely known and that the key elements of it were largely agreed.

4.2.3 THE WELSH GENEALOGIES

Urien's pedigree is given in the three major Welsh genealogical collections (Harley 3859, Jesus College MS 20 and the *Bonedd Gwyr Y Gogledd* ('Lineages of the Men of the North')

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[55] This vision of Rhun is somewhat different from the ecclesiastical figure of the *HB*.
[56] Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry,* 76, pp. 387 - 389. The one exception is *Aelwyd Rheged*, which Rowland would date to the tenth century. Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, p. 13
[57] Woolf, 'Caedualla', pp. 18-19.

of Peniarth MS 45). The earliest is the collection in Harley 3859, which may have been compiled to aggrandise Owain, son of Hywel Dda, who ruled Deheubarth from 954 until 988.[58] Urien's pedigree sits at the head of a group of five genealogies which trace descent back to Coel Hen.[59] The other four give the pedigrees of Gwallawg, Morcant, Dunaut and the brothers Gwrgi and Peredur.[60] It seems clear that these men were regarded as being broadly contemporaneous and that they were thought to have lived in the second part of the sixth century.

Urien's pedigree in Jesus College MS 20 is longer and ends with his putative grandson.[61] The surviving text is fourteenth century but may represent an earlier and deliberate attempt by genealogists to sweep up failed or historic dynasties into the pedigrees of more successful lines.[62] Ben Guy argues that the similarities in layout as between Harley 3859 and Jesus College MS 20 suggests that they share a common ancestor and that the ancestor text was deliberately intended to provide some background to the northern events involving Urien and his collaterals as set out in the *HB*.[63] Urien and his fellow 'Coelings' also feature in six genealogies in the *Bonedd Gwyr Y Gogledd*, the exemplar for which is unlikely to be any earlier than 1150.[64]

On the face of it, these pedigrees seem to provide independent corroboration of both Urien's historicity and his lineage. Genealogies are often composed in the time of the most recent name in the list.[65] Short genealogies of the sort we see for Urien and his collaterals can be the product of a pre-literate milieu, their brevity suggesting that they may contain genuinely

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[58] Thornton, *Kings*, pp. 94-95. John Morris, ed., *Arthurian Sources Vol. 5: Genealogies and Texts* (Chichester, 1995), pp. 41-55. For the argument that the collection is dates to the third quarter of the ninth century and was intended to aggrandise Rhodri Mawr (fl. 844-878), see Ben Guy, 'The Textual History of the Harleian Genealogies', *Welsh History Review* (2016) pp. 1-25.
[59] Morris, *Genealogies*, p. 45-47.
[60] *AC,* 45.
[61] Morris, *Genealogies*, p. 62.
[62] Thornton, *Kings*, pp. 114-115.
[63] Guy, 'Textual History', p. 11.
[64] Clarkson, *Men of the North*, pp. 30-31.
[65] Guy, 'Textual History', p. 4.

historic material or, at any rate, were not subject to the subsequent augmentation that makes

many written genealogies so lengthy.[66] However, antiquity and/or brevity does not equate to

veracity. We know that the manipulation of genealogies in order to give later rulers political

legitimacy or illustrious ancestors was commonplace in medieval Wales and Ireland.[67] The

second dynasty of Gwynedd is a good example. The descendants of its first ruler, Mervyn

Frych (who included Owain, the honorand of the Harley 3859 genealogies) came to rule

large parts of Wales. In order to provide his dynasty with political legitimacy, the genealogists

needed to fix Mervyn into an acceptable framework. They did this in two ways. Firstly,

Mervyn's links to the defunct first dynasty of Gwynedd were established through his mother,

who was the daughter of the last ruler of that dynasty.[68] Secondly, Mervyn was made to

descend via his father from Llywarch Hen and thence from Coel Hen.[69] Coel's status as the

progenitor of a large number of the heroes of the Old North and Llywarch's status as Urien's

first cousin therefore linked Mervyn's dynasty directly to all of these figures. This might be

the real reason why the pedigrees of Urien and his collaterals are so short. They only had to

be long enough to capture Urien *et al*, thereby linking the second dynasty to the heroes of

the Old North. If this is right, the short 'Coeling' pedigrees may have been confections which

cannot be relied upon as an accurate record of familial connections, either down the

generations or as between them.

4.2.4 THE WELSH TRIADS

Urien appears in a number of the *Triads of the Island of Britain*, a collection of nearly one

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[66] David E. Thornton, 'Orality, literacy, genealogy in early medieval Ireland and Wales', *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature*, 33 (1998), pp. 83-98. Ben Guy, 'The earliest Welsh genealogies: textual layering and the phenomenon of 'pedigree growth', *Early Medieval Europe*, 26 (2018), pp. 462-485, pp. 464, 473.
[67] For Ireland, see Byrne, *Kings*, 11.
[68] Morris, *Genealogies*, pp. 41-42.
[69] Morris, *Genealogies*, p. 60.

hundred mnemonics which were designed to assist singers in remembering material for performance. Each Triad has a theme and listed three individuals deemed worthy of the title of the Triad in question. So, the Three Fair Princes are presumably a list of those characters who, like Ganymede or Adonis in Greek mythology, could be presented as especially attractive. The Three Pillars of Battle would be notorious warriors. And so on.

No case has been made for seeing the Triads as a homogenous group or as the product of one particular time or place. Some of them appear in the mid-thirteenth century *Black Book of Carmarthen* and in manuscript Peniarth 16, which dates from the third quarter of the thirteenth century.[70] The full set appears both in the late thirteenth-century *Red Book of Hergest* and the slightly earlier *White Book of Rhydderch*. The Triads of Peniarth 16 derive from a different source to the *White* and *Red* books and contains linguistic features suggestive of an original, *written* exemplar of no later than the end of the twelfth century. Given that the Triads were originally intended to assist *oral* performance, they are likely to be much older than their first written incarnation.[71]

Urien is celebrated in the Triads as one of the three Bull-Protectors,[72] Battle Leaders,[73] fair Womb Burdens[74] and the victim of one of the three Unfortunate Assassinations.[75] He also appears as one of the Pillars of Battle (in place of Gwallawg) in the version of the Triads contained in the *White Book*.[76] Urien's bard, Tristfardd, is named as one of the Red Speared Bards.[77] Owain is one of the Fair Princes[78] and another of the fair Womb Burdens. His horse

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[70] Rachel Bromwich, ed., *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain* (Cardiff, 1961), p. xviii.
[71] Bromwich, *Triads*, pp. xxxvi, cx. Eric P. Hamp, 'On the Justification of Ordering in TYP', *Studia Celtica*, 16 (1981), pp. 104-109. But, see also Morfydd E. Owen, 'Welsh Triads: An Overview', *Celtica* (2007), pp. 225-250, p. 234.
[72] Bromwich, *Triads*., p. 11. Triad 6.
[73] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 44. Triad 25.
[74] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 185. Triad 70.
[75] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 70. Triad 33.
[76] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 10. Triad 5.
[77] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 19. Triad 11. We might have expected Taliesin to be named as Urien's bard.
[78] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 7. Triad 3.

is one of the three Plundered Horses[79] and his bard, Dygynnelw, is given equal bragging rights to Tristfardd. His wife, Penarwan, is one of the Faithless Wives.[80]

Urien's northern links are less apparent in the Triads. Although he sometimes appears alongside (or in place of) other northern characters,[81] he is generally presented without any specific geographic context. Unlike the earlier texts, his death is not the key theme. The only reference to his end is in Triad 33, where Llofan Llaw Dido is named as Urien's assassin. Although no single source expressly links Urien's place of death, the circumstances of death and the identity of his killer, a synthesis of that Triad, the *HB* and the *englynion* has led to a conclusion which is especially prevalent amongst non-specialists that Llofan was Morcant's chosen assassin and that Aber Lleu was the place of Urien's death. Whilst that might indeed be the correct conclusion, nothing in the texts requires such a synthesis.

The Triads are the earliest surviving source in which Urien and Owain appear alongside that other great hero of medieval Welsh legend, Arthur. Notwithstanding Urien's pre-eminence in the *HB* and the *englynion*, it is Owain who is most closely associated with Arthur. The list of the Thirteen Treasures includes the stone and ring of Eluned, which were given to Owain in his contest with the Black Knight of the Fountain. This is a reference to the full-length Arthurian tale *Owain, Knight of the Fountain*, in which Owain stars as one of Arthur's knights.[82] In the Twenty-Four Knights of Arthurs Court, Owain is expressly given the patronymic 'son of Urien Rheged' and is named as one of Arthur's three Knights of Battle.[83] The close relationship between Owain and Arthur is a recurring theme of subsequent texts and the growing popularity of Arthur appears to have ensured that the old favourite of the bards, Urien, slowly lost his one-time importance.

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[79] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 101. Triad 40.
[80] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 200. Triad 80.
[81] Gwenddoleu is also a Bull Protector and Taliesin's son is named as a Battle-leader.
[82] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 242.
[83] Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 252.

4.2.5 ARTHURIANA

Owain's relationship with Arthur is strengthened further in the various cycles of later medieval Arthurian stories. He features prominently in the *Mabinogion*, a collection of eleven Welsh prose stories which may have been committed to writing as early as the middle part of the eleventh century.[84] In each of his appearances in the *Mabinogion*, Owain's patrimony is given, notwithstanding that Urien does not appear as a character in his own right. Owain is the eponymous hero of *Owein, Knight of the Fountain*, a story which is firmly rooted in the late medieval period, with Owain undertaking a supernatural quest in which he meets damsels in varying degrees of distress. At the end, after enjoying a lengthy period at Arthur's right hand, Owain leaves for his homelands with his flight of ravens.[85] Owain's ravens also feature in the *Dream of Rhonabwy*, in which they battle with Arthur's knights whilst Owain and Arthur play a board game. A 'Gwras of Rheged' is also named as Owain's standard bearer in *Rhonabwy*, although no explicit link is made between Rheged and Owain himself.[86] Owain also appears as a minor character in *Peredur Son of Evrawg*, the Welsh prototype of the later *Parceval* cycle.

Owain also features in Continental Arthurian romance. He appears as 'son of Urien' in Chretien's De Troyes' *Yvain, Knight of the Lion*, which dates to the final quarter of the twelfth century. The core story is the same as the Mabinogion's *Owein*. Some aspects of this story (notably Owain's abandonment of his wife) also appear in the story of the birth of St Kentigern, which appears in two twelfth-century hagiographies, one of which was written by

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[84] Jeffrey Gantz, ed., *The Mabinogion* (London, 1976), p. 21.
[85] Gantz, *Mabinogion,* p. 216.
[86] Gantz, *Mabinogion*, p. 189.

a monk of Furness Abbey in Cumbria.[87] Owain appears as a knight of Arthur's court in later works such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. Throughout, Owain is consistently referred to as Urien's son, although not with any specifically northern geographical context.

It is perhaps therefore ironic that, given his northern origins, Owain is not the hero in the slew of insular Arthurian stories which are set in and around Carlisle. This suggests that to later medieval audiences, Owain's northern origins had been largely forgotten. [88]

4.2.6 ESTABLISHING THE CHRONOLOGY

Consideration of all of the texts discussed above allows us to chart the evolution of Urien's story as he moved from northern hero to Arthurian knight. We can also see how, in or about the mid-eleventh century, he begins to cede precedence to Owain. Urien had already morphed into a national hero by the time our first securely dateable text, the *HB*, was composed in the first third of the ninth century. The northern material of the *HB* may, in part at least, go back to the end of the seventh century, meaning that stories of Urien were in circulation 140 years or so before the *HB* was first compiled. Either way, Urien's role in the *HB* was to serve as an inspiration and a warning. He embodied contemporary Welsh political preoccupations, which were showing an increasingly anti-English character. The notion of Britain as a single political unit which was once under the sole control of the Welsh and should be again is a common theme in medieval Welsh texts. It is expressed in the *HB* itself,

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[87] John MacQueen, 'Yvain, Ewen and Owein ap Urien', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History & Antiquarian Society*, XXXIII (1954-55), pp. 121-128 and esp. pp. 127-128. See also Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 480.

[88] The stories can be found in the seventeenth century Percy Folio (British Library, Additional MS 27879), which includes both *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine* and the *Carle off Carlile* and the fourteenth century Ireland Blackburne MS, which contains *The Avowyng of Arthur* and *The Awyntyrs off Arthurs at the Tern Wathelyne*.

in the Triads and in the tenth-century prophetic poem, *Armes Prydain Vawr*, where the non-English peoples of Britain are urged to come together to expel the common enemy. [89] Interestingly, an English gloss on a twelfth-century copy of William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum anglorum* (now Oxford All Souls College, MS 33) repeats the prophecy of *Armes Prydain Vawr*, but uses Owain as the personification of the Welsh contingent in the proposed grand alliance.[90] Urien and his family therefore underline the importance of Welsh unity.

Against this backdrop of political uncertainty, defeat and notions of Welsh primacy, it is easy to see how tales of a great ancestor who almost destroyed the English would have inspired ninth-century audiences. It is also easy to see how Urien's death at the hands of one of his fellow Britons was a warning about the consequences of disunity; Urien's death was the point where everything went wrong. The Urien of the *Triads* largely retains this earlier mantle of national hero, although his northern context is far less explicit and his death is a less central theme. For the first time, we also begin to see express links being made between Owain (a marginal figure up to that point) and Arthur. These links are then strengthened in the corpus of later medieval Arthurian tales.

There is no natural place in this developing narrative for the cattle reiver of the *Book of Taliesin*. Aside from sharing a northern setting, the Urien of those poems and the Urien of the *HB* onwards have very little in common. The Lindisfarne story and the death of Urien are the foci of both the *HB* and the *englynion*, but are entirely absent from the eight poems. Equally, the cattle-raiding warlord of the *Book of Taliesin* who despoils his British neighbours as readily as his English ones is entirely absent from the *HB* onwards. If there is little overlap between the poems and the works of the ninth century, there is even less overlap between

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[89] *HB*, ch. 9, pp. 18-19. Bromwich, *Triads*, p. 229. 'No-one has a right of Island except only the nation of the Cymry, the remnants of the Britons, who came here in former days from Troy.'
[90] Victoria Flood, 'An English *Owain* Prophecy: The Influence of Welsh Prophetic Material in Oxford, All Souls College, MS 33', *Journal of the Early Book Society for the Study of Manuscripts and Printing History*, Vol 17 (2014), pp. 283-292.

the poems and the later material. Urien's northern origins fade in the Triads and he is little more than a footnote in the Arthurian canon. Owain, very much the secondary figure of the poems, is, by the eleventh century, the primary character. Yet although there are hints that Owain is linked to somewhere called Rheged, he is never presented in a specifically northern context.

This may help us date those poems of the *Book of Taliesin*. If the poems of *were* of a similar date to other works dealing with Urien (as the negativists claim), we might reasonably expect at least *some* cross-pollination in terms of theme and character. But we have none. *Contra* Oliver Padel, these entirely discrete visons of Urien militate *against* the suggestion that the poems in the *Book of Taliesin* are of the same date as the *HB* (or the earlier northern materials which informed it).[91] Unless we have two distinct, but possibly contemporaneous, traditions, we are obliged to conclude that we are looking at a gradual evolution of a single tradition in which characters are slowly taken out of their original context and fitted into a new one. The 'two tradition' model is possible, but as the material about Urien derives from a number of different geographical locations across Wales yet retains consistency in terms of character and story evolution, the latter is the more likely proposition. As such, we can conclude that Urien was already a well-known figure by the time the *HB* was composed in the ninth century and his presentation in that text as a national hero is simply an evolution of his pre-existing status as a successful northern warlord. The eight poems fit most naturally at the very start of that tradition.

4.2.7 THE GHOST OF CENEU

Although this section has steered clear of dabbling in the linguistic arguments as to the

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[91] Padel, *Aneirin and Taliesin*, p. 136.

antiquity of the eight Urien poems, there is one interesting linguistic anomaly in the texts which might support the notion that one of our surviving genealogies of Urien could belong to the period before about 750.

Urien's pedigree in Harley 3859 is given thus – 'Urien son of Cynfarch son of Merchiaun son of Gurgust son of Coel the Old.'

The Jesus College and *Bonedd* genealogies give Urien the same line of descent, save that between Coel and Gurgust the name 'Ceneu' appears. Ceneu also appears as a son of Coel in *all* of the other 'Coeling' genealogies across all three collections (including Harley 3859).

Ceneu, however, is a 'ghost'.[92] His appearance in the genealogies arises from a scribal misunderstanding of the text of PT VI, which deals with Urien's victory at the battle of *Argoed Llwyfein*.[93] Shortly before hostilities commence, Urien and Owain refuse to give hostages. Owain is made to declare 'a cheneu vab coel bydei kymwyawc lew kyn as talei o wystyl nbawt' ('and Ceneu son of Coel would be a hard-pressed warrior before he gave a single hostage').

This translation is awkward. What, after all, did it matter what Owain's three times great-grandfather would have done in his shoes? Williams' solution was that the word 'ceneu' had been mistaken for a proper noun when it was simply a common noun meaning 'whelp'. As a result, 'vab' ('son of') had subsequently been added to the text by the transcriber of PT VI, who had assumed that they were looking at a patronymic and needed to emend the text accordingly.[94] The proper reading of the line was therefore 'and a whelp of Coel would be a hard-pressed warrior before he gave a single hostage', which makes far more sense within

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[92] Clarkson, *Men of the North*, pp. 75-76.
[93] It is usually assumed that Fflamddwyn is Theodoric, although this is nowhere stated in PT VI.
[94] *PT*, p. 75.

the context of the poem.

If the idea that Ceneu was Coel's son arose from a misreading of a poem specifically composed to honour Urien, why is Ceneu missing from Urien's pedigree in Harley 3859? We don't know for sure, but it is possible that this particular pedigree was composed at a time when no-one conceived of someone called Ceneu as being a son of Coel. If PT VI is the ultimate source for Ceneu, it would therefore predate the mid-tenth-century date of composition of the Harley 3859 genealogies. If it did not, there is no route by which the misunderstanding in PT VI could have affected the construction of the Coeling pedigrees (other than Urien's). It also suggests that Urien's pedigree in Harley 3859 (the only one which does *not* mention Ceneu) may be earlier than PT VI, as if it were not, it is likely that it would also have named Ceneu as Urien's ancestor.[95]

So far so good. We may now have the following relative chronology for PT VI and the genealogies: -

1. Urien's genealogy in Harley 3859; then
2. PT VI; then
3. the remaining Coeling genealogies.

The next step is to try and fix this chronology into an absolute framework. This means understanding how the mistake in interpreting PT VI arose in the first place. There are a number of possibilities, but if we accept John Koch's argument that they represent 'best guesses' by scribes updating material written in a language they did not properly understand, it becomes possible to push PT VI back to at least 750. This is because the

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[95] It is also possible that the pedigree of Dunaut in Harley 3859 derives from a different source to the others and was slotted in to the collection at a later date to provide some context for a number of Welsh saints who were believed to have been descendants of Dunaut. Guy, 'Textual History', p. 22.

language of composition of the Harley genealogies was Old Welsh, which was spoken from roughly the middle of the eighth century until roughly the early twelfth century.[96] If an Old Welsh-speaking scribe made a mistake in translating PT VI because they were unfamiliar with the language in which PT VI was written, then what they had in front of them was written in Brittonic, the language which predated Old Welsh. If Urien's pedigree in Harley 3859 has to be earlier than PT VI, then it must date to the period between the mid-sixth-century (Urien's supposed *floruit*) and the mid-eighth-century, when Old Welsh replaced Brittonic.

We can perhaps push the argument a little further. If we accept that the genealogists manipulated raw material about the heroes of the Old North in order to aggrandise the claims of Mervyn Frych's dynasty, that material may have included the genealogy of Urien which now survives in Harley 3859. This pedigree could have been the foundation stone on which the other 'Coeling' pedigrees were built, thereby allowing Mervyn's descendants to claim descent from all of the heroes of the Old North. Accurate genealogical material *can* survive manipulation when it is incidental to the primary purposes of the manipulator.[97] So, notwithstanding that Coel's status as ancestor to many of the supposed dynasties of the Old North may be an artifice created by genealogists working many hundreds of years after the sixth century, we may have in Urien's Harley genealogy some genuine information about his pedigree.

4.2.8 SUMMARY

This section has sought to set out reasons for concluding that the eight poems of the *Book of*

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[96] The earliest texts in Old Welsh (the Surexit Memorandum and the Towyn Stone) are not easy to date, but 800 seems about right. Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Emergence of Old Welsh, Cornish and Breton Orthography, 600-800: The Evidence of Archaic Old Welsh', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 38 (1991), pp. 20-86, pp. 21-24.

[97] Thornton, *Kings*, p. 64.

Taliesin which concern Urien represent the oldest stratum of surviving material we have about him. Although we cannot argue that the poems as they exist today are sixth-century originals *in toto*, they may well *in part* be sixth-century compositions. They formed the bedrock on which the subsequent (and better known) incarnations of Urien as pan-northern nationalist hero were built. Urien's story evolved consistently across both time and place and, if the poems do not have their roots at the start of this process, it is extremely difficult to see where else they fit. The personification of Ceneu in PT VI is a useful piece of supporting evidence for this proposition, suggesting as it does both an earlier exemplar of that poem and an even earlier genealogy of Urien.

These conclusions undoubtedly sit on the 'positivist' side of the debate surrounding the antiquity of the eight Urien poems in the *Book of Taliesin*. The negativist position may be in the ascendancy, but is not without problems.[98] Firstly, we would have to explain why the faking of the poems was regarded as necessary in the first place. To give the false impression of veracity in order to persuade audiences to willingly suspend their disbelief? That would mean accepting that the distinction between myth and history was as clear in the early medieval period as it is today – and we can be reasonably sure that it was not. So was it done to underline the cleverness of the composers' command of antiquated language? That would only work if the audiences knew enough about the evolution of their own language to understand that they *were* listening to something clever. It also fails to explain why many of the archaisms identified in the poems appear to be inadvertent rather than deliberate.[99]

And what of the content of the poems? Why would elaborate fakes composed long after the

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[98] Not the least of these is the notion that assigning a late date to the poems should be the default start point. Dumville, for example, felt that the poems should be assumed to be 'guilty of lateness until (painstakingly) proved innocent.' Dumville, 'Early Welsh Poetry', p. 8. This fundamentally misunderstands the nature of evidence. A late date is a hypothesis which requires proving in the same way and to the same standard as an early date.
[99] Koch, *Why?*

sixth century so carefully avoid any reference to any part of the Urien stories already in circulation? If, by the ninth century, Urien was widely considered to have been a national hero assassinated at Lindisfarne, why is there no mention of that in any of the poems? And why do some of the poems read so badly if they are carefully constructed fakes? PT II (*Gweith Gwen Ystrat*) jumps around from the battle to the aftermath and it is not at all clear who is attacking, who is defending and how the action unfolds. Two of the other poems (PT VII and PT VIII) are probably composites of a number of separate poems.[100] If ninth-century or later poets had indeed created these poems from scratch, they made a pretty poor job of it.

The above conclusions are necessarily hedged about with caveats. Not least of these is where establishing antiquity takes us. Arguing that the eight poems of the *Book of Taliesin* represent the earliest stratum of material about Urien does not automatically make them contemporaneous with a sixth-century Urien. Neither does it mean that they have not been reshaped and manipulated before reaching the form in which we have them today. All that can be said to have been demonstrated is that the eight poems predate the earliest securely dated works which refer to Urien, namely the *HB* and the *englynion*. Although that is a useful start point, seeking to ascertain whether the poems contain any material which might be of use when attempting to reconstruct the history of sixth-century Cumbria is a separate exercise which will be considered in the next section.

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[100] *PT*, pp. li-liii. Marged Haycock, forthcoming.

4.3   RECYCLING THE CELTIC HEROIC AGE

Much of what we now think we know about Urien is down to the work of later generations of Welsh poets who catapulted him into the Celtic Heroic Age – a compelling, simplistic and ultimately fantastical reinvention of the fragmented post-Roman north. If we cannot use the later literary material as a potential source of historical information about Urien, we are entirely reliant on the early poems discussed in the previous section for information about the sixth-century north. Unfortunately, the poems have tended to be used for this purpose somewhat uncritically. They are works of literature, and as such are rooted in an oral tradition, prone to reshaping for performance.[1]

At first sight, the poems appear to tell us a fair amount about elite society in the early medieval north. We hear of great halls including Urien's 'lofty Llwyvenydd' (PT IV); of mead and ale (PT IV and V); of rich clothes (PT IV and X); of horses (PT VII and X) and of precious metals (PT IX). It is noteworthy that if these poems capture a flavour of elite life as it was genuinely lived, Urien and his collaterals did not appear to enjoy quite the same standard of living as their peers. The warriors of the collection of battle elegies known as *Y Gododdin* fight with swords, wear chainmail and drink wine from glass goblets.[2] By contrast, Urien's warriors use spears, not swords (PT III, V, VI, VII and VIII); shields, not armour (PT II, VII and VIII)[3] and drink mead out of cow horns rather than wine out of glasses (PT IX).[4] If nothing else, there is a certain prosaic verisimilitude in this material.

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[1] Ruth Finegan, *Oral Poetry* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 54.
[2] Evans, *Dark Age Poetry*, pp. 118-121.
[3] Armour is not explicitly mentioned in any of the earliest poems.
[4] There is one passing reference to wine in PT V, but no mention of how it was consumed.

4.3.1 Urien's Territories

As well as these hints about 'court life', the poems also contain a number of names, both of battles fought by Urien and of places said to be under his authority. They name seven places said to be under Urien's political control. Urien is linked to Rheged seven times in five poems (PT II, III, IV, VI and VII), with *Llwyvenydd* four times in four poems (PT IV, VII, VIII and IX), with *Erechwydd* four times in two poems (PT III and VI), with *Catraeth* twice in two poems (PT II and VIII), with *Goddeu* twice in two poems (PT VI and VII), with *Aeron* twice in two poems (PT VII and VIII) and once with *Eirch* (PT IV). This store of territorial names associated with Urien reduces over time. The ninth-century *englynion* mention only two places in connection with Urien (Rheged and *Erechwydd*) and by the time of the later Arthurian material, he is associated with Rheged only.

Scholars who have relied on this material when constructing histories of the sixth century have tended to take the longstanding association of Urien with Rheged as indicative of primacy and have therefore worked on the basis that of all of the places associated with him, Rheged must have been pre-eminent and/or the name of his hegemony or overkingdom. However, the confidence implicit in maps of early medieval Britain which show Rheged straddling the Solway or stretching from Ayr to the Yorkshire Ouse may be misplaced.[5] There is nothing in the poems which suggests that Rheged *was* ever considered to be more important than any of the other named territories. If it is just one of a number of territories associated with him, it may not actually necessary to locate Rheged in order to identify Urien's homeland.

This is probably just as well, as locating fifth- and sixth-century kings, battles and territories is a subject best tackled by irrepressible optimists. By way of a sobering example, there is a

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[5] Breeze, 'Gwen Ystrad', p. 16.

large body of scholarship which seeks to locate the sites of the twelve battles attributed to Arthur in chapter 56 of the *HB*, notwithstanding that it was noted seventy years ago that the names are vague enough to be 'discovered' pretty much anywhere.[6]

Rheged, unfortunately, falls into the same category. The name is probably an adjectival phrase, meaning something like 'bountiful' (although whether that refers to gift giving or the fertility of the land is unclear).[7] The name does not survive in any modern place-name and attempts to spot it in Rochdale (Greater Manchester) or Dunragit (Dumfries & Galloway) are unconvincing.[8] Rochdale's name is difficult, but might either mean 'by the wood' or be a back formation from the river Roch.[9] Nonetheless, the association with Rheged still refuses to die.[10] Dunragit's claims have not survived critical scrutiny either. Leaving aside that a name formation such as 'fort of Rheged' would be entirely singular in post-Roman nomenclature, an alternative derivation via Gallic *reichet* seems far more convincing.[11] Ongoing archaeological investigations at Dunragit have identified a number of interesting prehistoric features but, no far at least, nothing suggestive of post-Roman occupation.[12]

In a twelfth-century poem, Hywel ap Owain implied that Carlisle was in Rheged. John Koch sees this as the best piece of evidence for identifying Rheged with Cumbria,[13] although one might query the usefulness of a single literary reference when seeking a kingdom which flourished half a millennium before Hywel's time.[14] In addition, if medieval Welshmen knew

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[6] K H Jackson, 'Once Again Arthur's Battles', *Modern Philology*, 43 (1945), pp. 44–57.

[7] Mike McCarthy, 'The Kingdom of Rheged: A Landscape Perspective', *Northern History*, XLVIII (2011), pp. 9-22, pp. 14-15. BLITON, p. 249.

[8] See, for example, Mike McCarthy, 'Early Historic Kingdom near the Solway', p. 372.

[9] BLITON, p. 247.

[10] For example, J.E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh: 2007), p. 130. In fairness, to Fraser, his assertion that Rochdale lay in Rheged is qualified by his acceptance of the fact that the poems may not be historically accurate. For doubts on Dunragit, see Clarkson, *Men of the North*, pp. 70-71.

[11] BLITON, p. 247. See also Clarkson, *Men of the North*, p. 71.

[12] https://web.archive.org/web/20130926113223fw_ /http://orgs.man.ac.uk/research/dunragit/dunragit_2002b.html, accessed 19th December 2020.

[13] John Koch, *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, Volume IV (Santa Barbara, 2006), pp. 1498-9.

[14] Clarkson. *Men of the North*, pp. 69-70.

little about northern geography other than a list of evocative names, this evidence is slim

pickings indeed.[15] Ultimately, Hywel's poem tells us only that seven hundred years after

Rheged supposedly flourished, there was a Welsh tradition that it included Carlisle.

A second reference can be found in a possible tenth-century poem in the *Book of Taliesin*

which makes reference to *tra merin reget*.[16] This phrase means either 'the sea of Rheged' or

'across the sea to Rheged'.[17] Most commentators have preferred the former translation and

have tended to assume that the Sea of Rheged is a reference to the Solway Firth, although

Wigtown Bay on the north Solway coast has also been proposed.[18] This is about as far as

the written evidence for Rheged's location goes. It might have been in Cumbria, but equally

it might not have been. It might have been in Galloway, but equally it might not have been.

The most we can say is that it was considered to be a place rather than an epithet, it was

probably somewhere in the north and that it was thought to have a coastline.[19]

Goddeu, which is paired with Rheged in PT VI and which is often taken to refer to a sister

kingdom, fares little better. The name just means 'the trees' (in the sense of 'a forest') and,

as such, could have been anywhere which was wooded in the early medieval period.[20]

Various candidates for *Goddeu* have been proposed. Hamilton in Lanarkshire used to be

called Cadzow, which name *might* preserve the earlier form 'Goddeu'.[21] Another potentially

early poem from the *Book of Taliesin*, *Cad Goddau* ('the battle of the trees'), mentions a

Kaer Nefenhir, which might be the evolved form of the name of the Novantae, the Iron Age

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[15] M. Haycock, '*Early Welsh Poets Look North*' in A. Woolf (ed.) *Beyond the Gododdin* (St Andrews: 2013), pp. 7-39, p. 18.

[16] Gruffydd, 'Elmet', p. 76

[17] Clarkson, *Men of the North*, pp. 71-72.

[18] See, for example, Nora K. Chadwick, 'The Conversion of Northumbria: A Comparison of Sources', in K. H. Jackson and N. C. Chadwick, eds. *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border* (Cambridge, 1963), pp.138–66. For the Wigtown Bay case, see McCarthy, 'Early Historic Kingdom', p. 373

[19] *PT*, pp. 4, 50. The key is the word *rychedwys*, which Williams emended to Rhegedwys – 'the men of Rheged'. 'wys' is a Welsh version of Latin 'ensis' (British 'uis'), which carries the same sense of '*the people of…*'

[20] *PT*, p. xliv.

[21] Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, p. 114. See also Clarkson, *Men of the North*, pp. 35-36.

people who lived in Galloway.[22] However, although the title of *Cad Goddau* may be a deliberate pun on a genuine polity called *Goddeu*, there is nothing in the poem which requires it to be so and even if the former was influenced by the latter, that does not mean that the poem need be set in Galloway. The Ettrick Forest in Selkirkshire has also been proposed as a candidate for *Goddeu*,[23] although there appears to be nothing to support the identification other than that the Ettrick Forest was wooded in the early medieval period.[24]

Erechwydd is similarly vague. The name probably means 'by the fresh water'.[25] It has been attributed with varying degrees of confidence to, *inter alia*, the Lake District,[26] Swaledale[27] and the once seasonally flooded lowlands of the Humber basin.[28] The name is not in any way specific and identifying *Erechwydd* is made harder when one considers that neither northern England nor southern Scotland suffer from a shortage of water. Although the Lake District instinctively looks like the best fit (it means broadly the same thing as *Erechwydd* and it is the only place in England which is notable for having a very large number of freshwater lakes in a relatively small area), instinct is not enough. Without any corroborating evidence, identifying a definitive location for *Erechwydd* is simply impossible.

Eirch appears once in PT IV where the poet links '*all Eirch*' with *Llwyvenydd* when describing

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[22] Haycock, *Early Welsh Poets Look North*, pp. 13-14.
[23] M Miller, 'Commanders', p. 102.
[24] Two other potential sites – *Argoed* and *Arfynydd* (meaning 'by the wood' and 'by the mountain' respectively) – are mentioned in PT VI as being places from where Urien's troops were mustered before the battle of Argoed Llwyfein. Many commentators have chosen to see this as a poetic device (essentially, 'the troops were summoned from all over') but it is worth noting that Marged Haycock's forthcoming translation of the historic poems of the Book of Taliesin appears to allow them to be polities, in which case, like *Goddeu* and *Erechwydd* they bear topographic names. Marged Haycock, forthcoming. I am extremely grateful to Professor Haycock for so freely giving of both her new translations and her time. Thomas Clancy's translation of the poem also appears to allow for the same conclusion, although he does not state it in as many words. Thomas Clancy*, The Triumph Tree*, p. 85.
[25] Andrew Breeze, 'Communications: Yrechwydd and the River Ribble', *Northern History*, XLVII (2010), pp. 319-328, p. 320.
[26] Koch, *The Celtic Heroic Age*, p. 339.
[27] *PT*, p. xliii
[28] Breeze, *Yrechwydd*, pp. 322-323

areas which sing the praises of Urien.[29] *Eirch might* have survived in the place-name

element *ark*, which appears in Arkengarthdale (where the river Ark joins the Swale near

Catterick) and Arkendale, a little way from the old Brigantian *civitas* capital at Boroughbridge,

twenty-five miles south of Catterick.[30] However, neither of these identifications are secure on

toponymic grounds. Arkengarthdale might actually derive from the Norse personal name

Arkil,[31] whereas Arkendale might derive from either the Old English personal name *Eorcna*,

or a Middle English word meaning 'chest' or 'enclosure'.[32] These etymologies preclude a

derivation from *Eirch* and so, in the absence of any other evidence, *Eirch* is also

unidentifiable.

If we can get nowhere with Rheged, *Goddeu*, *Erechwydd* or *Eirch*, we are at least on

stronger ground with *Catraeth*, which can reasonably be associated with Catterick in North

Yorkshire. Although there is no record of Catterick ever being called *Catraeth*, the

identification of the one with the other is sound on philological grounds.[33] We should also

note both Catterick's early medieval archaeology,[34] its strategic location at the junction of two

major Roman roads and its seventh-century status as a *villa regia* of Edwin.[35]

Notwithstanding this evidence, the link between *Catraeth* and Catterick has come under

increasing attack. It is proposed that *Catraeth* may be little more than an evocative stock

name and need not necessarily be an identifiable place at all.[36] Alternatively, it is suggested

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[29] *PT*, p. xlv.
[30] ibid, p. 58.
[31] http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/map/place/Yorkshire%20NR/Arkengarthdale, accessed 13th October 2014
[32] http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/map/place/Yorkshire%20WR/Arkendale, accessed 13th October 2014
[33] *PT*, xxxvii.
[34] P. R. Wilson et al, 'Early Anglian Catterick and *Catraeth*,' *Medieval Archaeology*, 40(1) (1996), pp. 1-61.
[35] *EHEP*, II, 14, p. 132. The eastern road running north from London (now the A1) meets the east-west road (now the A66), which ultimately links to the western road running north from Chester to Carlisle (now the A6) at Catterick, although the junction is better known nowadays as Scotch Corner. The route into Scotland via Carlisle is actually shorter than heading north on the A1, due to the tilt of the country. It has also sometimes been proposed that the River Tees, a few miles north of Catterick, was the border between Deira and Bernicia, which (if true) further adds to its early medieval strategic value. Dumville, 'Origins of Northumbria', pp. 7-8. Smyth, *Warlords*, p. 20.
[36] Dunshea, 'The Meaning of *Catraeth*,' pp. 100-102.

that the identification with Catterick is at odds with the internal evidence of *Y Gododdin*, which supposedly deals with the battle of *Catraeth*.[37] Conclusions about the state of sixth-century Anglo-British relations are drawn from the text and then used to imagine a zone of military operations which has no place for a battle as far south as Catterick. This allows Catterick to be uncoupled from *Catraeth* and frees *Catraeth* up to be a now-lost place-name for somewhere within the acceptable zone of military activity.

The circular nature of this argument should be obvious. Using parts of a text to create narratives that can then be used to challenge narratives drawn from other parts of the same text is ultimately an exercise in self-cancellation. There is no consensus over what *Y Gododdin* is, how we should read it and how it has been shaped over time. Until we have such a consensus (which does not seem imminent), we have to be extremely careful about how we use the literary evidence of the poem for writing historical narrative. And, of course, whilst scepticism is perfectly valid, it is equally valid to point out that being able to conceive of hypothesis B does not, in the absence of any evidence to support it, give hypothesis B equal weight to hypothesis A, at least when hypothesis A is at least supported by *some* evidence whereas hypothesis B is not. Put another way, although there *might* conceivably have been other places called *Catraeth* in the early medieval period, there is no evidence that there ever *was* any such place. Equally, whilst *Catraeth might* have been an evocative but ultimately rootless stock name, the fact remains that Catterick's modern name *is* a regular development from *Catraeth*. Catterick is not just the only place-name in the country which could have derived from *Catraeth*, but is also one of few places which has both

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[37] Clarkson, *Men of the North*, pp. 100-109. In a detailed rebuttal of the traditional orthodoxies, Clarkson tentatively places *Catraeth* in the Scottish borders, which he argues is a better fit with the text of *Y Gododdin*, which talks about the men of Gododdin advancing over their border to redeem territory. He objects to *Catraeth*/Catterick partly because he argues that North Yorkshire is too far from the Gododdin border to count as a border expedition but also because he perceives that Bernicia would have been a greater threat to Gododdin than Deira (where Catterick is). To get to Catterick, the Gododdin warband would have to cross Bernician territory. Clarkson's assessment is both elegant and typically well argued, but relies entirely on *Y Gododdin* being one broadly cogent work about one battle, a conclusion which is far from safe. Furthermore, the theory also ignores the explicit reference in the poem to Gododdin and Bernicia being on the same side, which (if true) deals with many of his objections at a single stroke.

documentary and archaeological evidence for post-Roman activity.

All that said, accepting the identification of *Catraeth* with Catterick does not prove that Urien exercised control in this part of North Yorkshire. Certain names recur with disconcerting frequency in early Welsh poems and one is forced to entertain the possibility that *Catraeth* could have been sundered from its true geographical context and used as a stock name even if it really had once referred to Catterick. If everyone knew that *Catraeth* was a name synonymous with heroic martial deeds, then great warriors could naturally be linked to it. This might be why, in addition to being repeatedly mentioned in *Y Gododdin*, *Catraeth* also features in other poems. These include PT II, PT VI and also the potentially early praise poem *Moliant Cadwallon*.[38] This poem states that Gwallawg (the honorand of two other potentially early poems from the *Book of Taliesin*) was responsible for the '*great mortality*' of the battle of *Catraeth*. So, notwithstanding that there is only one oblique reference in *Y Gododdin* itself linking the supposed descendants of Coel Hen to *Catraeth*, the same place is explicitly linked to both Urien and Gwallawg in other works. Attempts have been made to synthesise these various references via elaborate theories in which *Catraeth* is held by Urien, lost to the Anglians after his death at Lindisfarne and then unsuccessfully attacked by Urien's fellow Britons from Gododdin.[39] It is, however, much simpler to conclude that the name had great resonance. Because it was a real place where there had once been a real battle, it could readily be used to call to mind the glory days of the Old North.

Much the same could be said of *Aeron*, a name which also appears in *Y Gododdin* as the

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[38] John Koch, 'Why?', pp. 15–16.

[39] Smyth, *Warlords*, p. 21. See also Morris, *Age of Arthur*, pp. 234-237. Morris also argues that Urien was pushed to centre stage after the death of the British kings of York. See also John Koch, 'The Place of 'Y Gododdin' in the History of Scotland', accessed at https://www.academia.edu/7732411/The_Place_of_Y_Gododdin_in_the_History_of_Scotland, 14th August 2018. Koch synthesises the various mentions of *Catraeth* to support a scenario in which an Anglo-British alliance south of Hadrian's Wall led by Urien and Gwallawg defeat an Anglo-British alliance from north of the Wall led by Yrfai of Eidyn, son of the English Wolfstan. Koch's view that we should not project modern notions of nationalism onto the politics of the sixth century has much to commend it, but on this particular point, his argument rests on our being able to accept all of the various disparate references to *Catraeth* as representing a preserved record of actual events.

home of one of the doomed British warriors. Like *Catraeth*, the name is associated with both Urien, who "comes to Aeron" in PT VII and is "protector of Aeron" in PT VIII and also to Gwallawg, who attacks *Aeron* in PT XI. *Aeron* is usually assumed to be Ayrshire and there has been little dispute about this identification, although Williams also noted that it might correspond to the river Aire in Yorkshire. [40] If *Aeron* is the Aire, a number of scenarios become possible. Gwallawg is associated with the Yorkshire polity of Elmet on the strength of two pieces of evidence – his title *ygnat ac elvet* ('judge over Elmet') in PT XII and his identification in the Triads as father of Cerdic.[41] Given that the Aire was either within, or at least on, the border of, Elmet, we might conclude that PT VIII and PT XI capture different sides of a conflict between Urien and Gwallawg for control of the Aire Gap, a major cross-Pennine route. Alternatively, we might conclude that the two men – who are stated to be allies in chapter 62 of the *HB* and cousins in the genealogies by reason of a common descent from the apical Coel Hen – fought together and were able to push their authority as far as Ayrshire (or Airedale) following victory at *Catraeth*.[42] This, in turn, might mean that Urien really was in charge of the sprawling realm often assigned to him on the strength of the discredited etymologies of Dunragit and Rochdale. This is all heady stuff, but is highly speculative and underlines the dangers of getting over-excited and using the old synthetic approach to documentary sources in order to create narratives. A more sober explanation might be that *Aeron* was simply another stock place-name that later Welsh writers knew little about save that it was suitable to be used when recounting the exploits of the great northern heroes.

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[40] *PT,* p. xlvii. The English Place Name Society hedges its bets on the question, simply stating that the derivation of Aire is unknown. http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/map/place/Yorkshire%20WR/Airton, accessed 11th October 2014.

[41] Cerdic is a common enough name, but there was a Cerdic of Elmet who, according to the *HB*, was expelled from his kingdom by Edwin. A Cerdic is also recorded in the *AC* as dying at about the same time.

[42] John Koch, 'The Place of 'Y Gododdin' in the History of Scotland' in *Celtic Connections: Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Celtic Studies* (East Linton, 1999), pp. 202-203.

4.3.2 LLWYVENYDD

This leaves us with *Llwyvenydd*. This name only ever appears in connection with Urien and

his son, Owain, suggesting, at least, that it was not a stock name. *Llwyvenydd* contains the

Old Welsh word *llwyfen* ('elm tree'), a relatively common toponymic element which occurs as

leven in modern English place-names. It may be no more than coincidence, but *Argoed*

Llwyfein (the battle commemorated in PT VI) also contains the *llwyfen* element.

Llwyvenydd's suffix *ydd* carries the meaning 'the land of…' and in surviving Welsh names at

least, often attaches to a personal name.[43] Although *llwyfen* is not a personal name, the

British tendency to name settlements after topographical features *without* habitative

signifiers (such as the Old English *hām* or *tūn*)[44] means that *Llwyvenydd* might translate as

'elm land'. Alternatively, *Llwyvenydd* may have taken on a territorial meaning distinct from its

original topographic meaning, in which case it meant the 'people of (a place called)

Llwyfen'.[45] Whatever the etymology of the name, its use in the Urien poems supports the

notion that *Llwyvenydd* was regarded as a territory. In PT IV, we hear of *Llwyfenyd van* ('the

people of *Llwyvenydd*').[46] In PT VII, Urien is *teithiawc llwyfenyd* ('the rightful king of

Llwyvenydd').[47] In PT IX, the poet boasts that *lloyfeyd tired ys meu eu reufed* ('mine are the

riches of lofty *Llwyvenydd*).[48]

On toponymic grounds, *Llwyvenydd* is usually identified with either Leeming Lane in North

Yorkshire or the Lyvennet Valley in Cumbria. Leeming Lane is a stretch of the main

north/south Roman Road known as Dere Street, seven or eight miles south of Catterick.[49]

Mills, however, favours the name of Leeming as deriving ultimately from an Old English

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[43] Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary*, p. lxxvi.
[44] Cameron, *English Place Names*, p. 36.
[45] By extension, if *Argoed Llwyfein* does relate to the same place, it would mean 'battle of Llwyfen Wood'.
[46] *PT*, p. 4.
[47] ibid, p. 10.
[48] ibid, p. 11.
[49] BLITON, p. 173.

hydronym meaning 'bright stream'.[50]

The Cumbrian case was first advanced seventy years ago.[51] Lyvennet Beck is an eight mile long tributary of the River Eden and its valley is part of the fertile middle Eden basin.[52] The head of the Lyvennet Valley is dotted with Romano-British farmsteads, the largest of which, Ewe Close, was proposed as Urien's seat by W. G. Collingwood, who excavated it in 1908.[53] Collingwood found the remains of large circular and rectilinear buildings on the site and noted that the Roman road that runs through the valley had been diverted around Ewe Close, suggesting that settlement was both extant and important during the Roman period. The dearth of material finds casts doubt on the notion that Ewe Close was a royal residence in the post-Roman period, although none of the sites in the valley have ever been excavated using modern techniques.[54] It is also worth pointing out that during a particularly dry summer, the outline of a building similar to the one excavated at Bryant's Gill was observed on nearby Orton Scar.[55] Be that as it may, as yet we have no archaeological evidence for high status post-Roman activity in the Lyvennet Valley.

Accordingly, just as the toponymic similarity between Cadzow and Goddeu is not enough to confidently link Goddeu with Hamilton, so the toponymic similarity between *Llwyvenydd* and Lyvennet is not sufficient to prove that they are one and the same. However, there are two sources of additional support for the Cumbrian case. The archaeological and toponymic evidence considered in this thesis for a middle Eden polity based on Brougham, a little under seven miles to the west of where the Lyvennet meets the Eden, looks promising. The Lyvennet valley is easily close enough to Brougham to have formed part of any such polity.

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[50] Mills, *Dictionary*, p. 294.
[51] A.H.A Hogg, 'Llwyfenydd', *Antiquity*, 20 (1946), pp. 210–11.
[52] McCarthy, *Landscape Perspective*, p. 17.
[53] W.G. Collingwood, 'Report on an Exploration of the Romano-British Settlement at Ewe Close, Crosby Ravensworth.', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, CW2, viii (1908), pp. 355-368, p. 355.
[54] Higham and Jones, *The Carvetii*, p. 133.
[55] For Bryant's Gill, see Chapter 2.6.

Secondly, folklore links a great hero called Owain to the Eden Valley. One tradition concerns

Figure 27: The Lyvennet Valley at Crosby Ravensworth.

the giant Owain Caesarius, whom local legend asserts is buried in the Giant's Grave in

Penrith churchyard, two miles north of Brougham. This Owain was said to have lived in the

late Roman period. William Camden reported that '*Ewaine Caesarius'* was a knight of '*great*

strength and stature' who used to hunt boars in Inglewood Forest.[56]

A giant is also linked to Castle Hewen, the one-time name of a low hill overlooking the

Roman road between Brougham and Carlisle, just west of the Eden.[57] The foundations of a

building 233 feet by 147 feet were stated to be visible when the antiquarian William

Hutchinson catalogued the site it in 1794, although it seems likely that these were simply

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[56] For more on the early antiquarian interest in this legend, see 'Ewanian' (William Furness), *History of Penrith* (Carlisle, 1894), pp. 40-44. For an easier to find summary, see F. J. Carruthers, *People Called Cumbri* (London, 1979), pp. 122-124. Inglewood Forest lay just to the north of Penrith and included Castle Hewen.
[57] Castle Hewen is about twelve miles north of Brougham.

part of the natural geology.[58] More positively, Castle Hewen threw up Romano-British finds when it was excavated in the 1970s and there are slim hints of a later, possibly early medieval phase of occupation which take the form of ovens cut into an earlier ditch. [59]

Although the giant of Castle Hewen is un-named, *Hewen* itself preserves the name *Owain.* The area had some importance in better recorded times. The Inglewood Forest Court long met at the Court Thorn at the foot of the hill and the local tenants were obliged to pay a tithe

Figure 28: The Giant's Grave, St Andrews Church, Penrith.

known as 'Castle Hewen rent'. Also at the foot of the hill (although long since drained) was a

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[58] Hutchinson, *History of the County of Cumberland*, Volume 1 (London, 1974), p. 492.
[59] T. Clare, *Interim Report on Excavations at Castle Hewen 1978-79 and the Question of Arthur* (Kendal, 1979). Tom Clare, 'Excavations at Castle Hewen 1978-1981', *TCWAAS* (2019), pp. 59-78.

large shallow lake called Tarn Wadling. The Tarn was a renowned carp fishery and was

sufficiently important to be the only Cumbrian body of water apart from Windermere

(England's largest natural lake) to feature on the fourteenth-century Gough's map.[60] Tarn

Wadling and Castle Hewen both have Arthurian connections, featuring as the backdrop for

the Arthurian stories *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine* and the *Awentyrs off Arthure at the Terne*

Wathelyne. [61]

Figure 29: Castle Hewen and Tarn Wadling (1)

The question that follows from all of this is '*who was the Owain commemorated in the name*

of Castle Hewen?' The name was not an uncommon one amongst Brittonic and Welsh

speakers of the early medieval period, appearing in a number of genealogies including that

of the kings of Strathclyde. The river Eamont, a tributary of the Eden which lies about five

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[60] https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/47213/4726-tarn-wadling.pdf, accessed 20th December 2020. Paul Hindle, *Roads and Tracks of the Lake District* (Milnthorpe, 1998), 54-55.
[61] http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hahn-sir-gawain-awntyrs-off-arthur, accessed 26th October 2014.

miles south of Castle Hewen, has long been believed to have been the medieval boundary between Strathclyde and England.[62] It is therefore understandable that Hutchinson

Figure 30: Castle Hewen and Tarn Wadling (2). The fields in the foreground were once covered by the tarn. Castle Hewen is the hill in the background, to the right.

assumed that Owain Caesarius and the Giant of Tarn Wadling recalled Owain, a king of Strathclyde who flourished in the tenth century. This identification has been followed subsequently, but is problematic.[63] Firstly, although there is reasonable evidence for a Romano-British structure on the hill and slight evidence for a later phase of post-Roman occupation, there are no tenth-century structures. This begs the question why a non-descript hill would be called 'Castle Owain' if Owain of Strathclyde didn't actually have a castle on it? Furthermore, it is a little unusual that a king of Strathclyde should be remembered in one tiny pocket in the furthest corner of his putative kingdom but nowhere else, including in his heartlands around the Rock of Dumbarton one hundred and thirty miles to the north.

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[62] See Chapter 3.4 for a fuller discussion of the boundaries of Strathclyde.
[63] Clarkson, *Men of the North*, p. 199.

To summarise, we have in the literary material references to a great warrior called Owain who is linked to a place called *Llwyvenydd*. We have, in the Lyvennet valley, a place-name which on toponymic grounds is a match for *Llwyvenydd*. In that same area, we have evidence for an early medieval polity in what is (by Cumbrian standards) unusually good farming land. We also have a local corpus of legends about a giant who is either called Owain or who lives in a place which translates as Castle Owain. None of this is determinative, but taken together it represents a reasonable body of evidence linking the middle Eden to *Llwyvenydd* and thence to Urien and his family.

4.3.3 BROTHERS IN ARMS? THE BATTLES OF URIEN AND GWALLAWG

The early poems refer to large numbers of battles, although with the exceptions of the fighting celebrated in *Argoed Llwyfein* and *Gweith Gwen Ystrad* (each of which is the focus of a whole poem), very little detail is given other than the name or location of the encounter. It is nonetheless notable that the two principal honorands of the earliest poems, Urien and Gwallawg, share victories. We have already seen how *Catraeth* and *Aeron* are linked to both men. But these are not the only battles they share. The two men are also credited with fighting on the Clyde (PT VII in respect of Urien and PT XII in respect of Gwallawg) and in *Manau* (PT V for Urien and PT XI for Gwallawg). It may also be that Urien's victory at *Gwen Ystrad* (PT II) is the same encounter as Gwallawg's victory at *Gwensteri* (PT XI), a site tentatively (and with little good reason) is associated with the Winster Valley in south east Cumbria.[64]

Other encounters are not just shared by Urien and Gwallawg. PT VII attributes the battle of

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[64] Breeze, *Gwen Ystrad*, p. 9. The association was first made by Thomas Stephens in the mid-nineteenth century. The argument runs that Gwen Ystrad should be emended to Gwensteri, which in turn is identified as the River Winster between Windermere and Kendal. However, the emendation seems entirely unnecessary – Gwen Ystrad is a perfectly valid name simply meaning 'white valley'.

Pencoed (*gweith pencoet*) to Urien. *Pencoet* means 'head of the wood' and a battle with the

Figure 31: The River Winster at Roper Ford, Winster.

same name (*cat pencon*) is attested in the *AC* as a victory for the 'south Britons' in 722, a century and a half after any historic Urien would have lived.[65] Gwallawg also gets in on the action – '*Pen Coet of the long knives*' is given as one of his battles in PT XI.[66] PT VII credits Urien with a battle at the cells of Berwyn (*gellawr Brewyn*). The name appears to be a rendering of Bremenium, the Roman fort of High Rochester in Northumberland.[67] The same name appears as *Bregouin* in the list of Arthur's victories in some versions of the *HB*. The same name may be commemorated in the battle of *bretrewyn* credited to Gwallawg in PT XI.[68]

It is difficult to know what to make of this material. Was Pencoed an eighth-century battle

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[65] The 'south Britons' are probably the men of the Westcountry.
[66] The name is far from uncommon. There are a total of seven places in Britain ranging from Devon to Lancashire that were known to have been called Pencoed. Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. 211.
[67] Jackson, 'Breguoin', pp. 48–49.
[68] Andrew Breeze, 'The Kingdom and Name of Elmet', *Northern History*, 39 (2002), p. 169.

wrongly attributed to Urien (and/or Gwallawg), or was it one of Urien's (and/or Gwallawg's) battles wrongly dated in the *AC*? Or were there three different battles, all of which just happened to have the same name? Or was there one battle that was just reused when poetic licence demanded it? And, if Andrew Breeze is right with his translation of *bretrewyn*, do we have evidence of Gwallawg and Urien as allies at a battle in Northumberland, or are we just looking at one battle attributed to different heroes as occasion demanded? [69]

The problem with the first explanation is that battles are not the only thing that Urien and Gwallawg appear to share. Peter Bartrum noted how in the variant texts of the Welsh Triads, Urien and Gwallawg are virtually interchangeable, with each replacing the other as Pillars of Battle, Bull-Protectors and Battle Leaders in three of the Triads.[70]

The problems are not just limited to Gwallawg. PT VIII refers to Urien fighting in Powys, a theme replicated in a later poem, *Anrheg Urien*, which mentions Urien's capture of Selyf of Powys. It may be that Selyf was the British commander killed by Aethelfrith at the battle of Chester in or about 613.[71] So, do PT VIII and *Anrheg Urien* recall a period of genuine territorial expansion of Urien's hegemony at the expense of Powys, or have the poets simply borrowed the well-known battle of Chester and loaned it to Urien? Or could it be that Urien really *was* at Chester, fighting alongside Aethelfrith as either an ally or a client? And what of the various mentions throughout the early Urien poems of conflict with the English? Although it is entirely likely that sixth-century western British warlords raided and fought their Anglian neighbours, we cannot forget that later Welsh poets had a clear vision of a unified Britain (under Welsh control) as representing the proper state of affairs.[72] This, combined with an

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[69] Williams noted the possible link between *bretrwyn* and *brewyn*, but preferred to associate the former at least with Troon in Ayrshire. Williams, *Poems of Taliesin*, pp. 123-124.

[70] Peter C. Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary* (Aberystwyth, 1994), p. 726. The Triads in question are numbers 5, 6 and 25, see Bromwich, *TYP*, pp. 10, 11 and 44.

[71] The *ASC* gives a date of 605/6 for the battle, but the *AC* and the Annals of Ulster both have it as 613.

[72] Sims-Williams, *Britain and early Christian Europe*, pp. 110, 119.

entirely understandable Cambrian antipathy to her endemically belligerent eastern neighbours, means that we must treat with caution any material in later medieval Welsh texts which suggests monolithic Anglo-Welsh conflict stretching back into the sixth century. As such, poems like PT VI *may* remember genuine sixth-century British conflict against the rising power of Bernicia,[73] but could equally represent a conscious remoulding of an extant poem to fit the tastes of ninth-century (and later) Welsh audiences, for whom Urien was the anti-English hero *par excellence*.

If there were only one or two examples of the sharing of battles, it might still be excusable to seek to synthesise the poetic material in order to draw conclusions about sixth-century politics. But there are simply too many examples of sharing to be explained away. Although each example can be explained in terms which look broadly credible, a body of evidence also exists as a whole. Taken together, the most likely conclusion is that, irrespective of their antiquity, the Urien and Gwallawg poems are confections. Our understanding of how (if at all) these poems can be used to write history has been dominated by debates about antiquity, as though demonstrating them to be early implies veracity or that demonstrating them to be late shows their worthlessness as historical sources. This is not the right way to consider the material. We can accept genuine antiquity for the poems whilst still challenging their usefulness as tools for reconstructing sixth-century events. So if, as argued here, there is clear evidence that events associated with Urien can also be shown to have been associated with other figures, then in the absence of any persuasive evidence to allow us to conclude that the attribution to Urien is the correct one, we have to discount that material from our histories. In terms of territories, this means that we cannot set any store by references to Urien being lord over either *Aeron* or Catraeth. He *may* have been in authority over one or both of those places, but the evidence of the poems alone is insufficient to prove it. In terms of battles, we should be slow to conclude that the encounters at places such as

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[73] Assuming, of course, that Urien's opponent, the unidentified Fflamdwyn, really is an Anglian king.

gellawr Brewyn or *pencoet* capture any genuine material about Urien's victories. The best we can say from the use of these shared motifs is that Urien was regarded as a successful warrior. For the most part, who he fought, why he fought them and where he fought them is lost to us.

What, then, of the other territories and battles which do not appear to be shared by other characters? It would be too easy to assert that names which are *only* associated with Urien must preserve some genuine material. It might be the case that they do, but if the source material has shown itself to be an unreliable, such an assertion is unwarranted in the absence of any external evidence. Only in *Llwyvenydd* do we have any such evidence. A synthesis of the evidence supports the identification of *Llwyvenydd* with Lyvennet and allows us to cautiously place Urien's *Llwyvenydd* on our maps of the sixth-century north. We should, perhaps, seek to place the focus of *Llwyvenydd* at Brougham, where the archaeological evidence as discussed in previous sections is strongest.[74] The watercourse in the Lyvennet valley preserves the name of *Llwyvenydd*, but the name is most likely a back formation. Although some modern maps call the watercourse the 'River Lyvennet', it is known locally as Lyvennet beck – so, '*the beck of somewhere called Llwyvenydd*' rather than '*a watercourse called Llwyvenydd*'. That the fertile Lyvennet valley should be within the bounds of a polity based on Brougham is hardly surprising given the proximity of one to the other.

If the middle Eden valley can cautiously be assigned to Urien, it would be tempting to conclude that Rheged, *Erechwydd et al* must have been close by. However, we simply do not know the scale of Urien's hegemony. Arguing that one of his polities can possibly be identified in the Eden valley does not allow us to conclude that he must also have exercised hegemony over Carlisle, the Lune Valley or the Cumbrian mountains, let alone great

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[74] See also the consolidated table in Appendix 2.

swathes of southern Scotland, Yorkshire or Lancashire.

Figure 32: The Lyvennet Beck at Maulds Meaburn.

Neither does there appear to be any reason to regard Rheged as being in any sense pre-eminent or the name of some greater polity or hegemony. It was just one of a number of places associated with Urien, notwithstanding that in the somewhat limited data set drawn from the early poems, it gets mentioned slightly more often than anywhere else. That is not enough to believe it to be bigger, or more important, than *Llwyvenydd*, *Erechwydd et al.* In reality, the poems give us no reason to regard Rheged as being anything more than just another territory controlled by Urien. Rheged simply got lucky, in that its association with Urien persisted through the centuries as the legends about Urien developed. The longevity of that association has been enough to fool us into thinking that there must have been something singular about Rheged. There is no good reason to believe that to be the case.

Notwithstanding these caveats, we should not fall into the (currently fashionable) trap of

seeking to believe as little as possible, as though a negativist view is somehow the correct default position. We cannot say where Rheged was or even say for sure that it was a real place, but we can surmise that it was evidently thought of as being a real place in the minds of Welsh poets and their audiences. The person whose name attached to it *does* appear to have been a genuinely historical figure who lived in the sixth-century and controlled land in Cumbria, notwithstanding that Urien was far more the violent cattle thief than the noble hero of Arthurian tradition. As such, the idea that Rheged was a) a real place, and b) that it was somewhere in the north is a respectable one, even if that 'somewhere' cannot not be pinpointed on a map.

4.4   THE ENGLISH SOURCES

At some point in the seventh century, Cumbria came into increasing contact with an

expanding Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. Perhaps predictably, the dominant model for

Northumbrian/ Cumbrian interaction is a military one – the Anglian kings of Bernicia

annexed the British lands west of the Pennines in a war of conquest and imposed their own

governance over their new possessions.[1] It is, however, testament to the ambiguity and

paucity of the documentary evidence that there is little or no consensus as to when this

conquest is supposed to have happened, with dates from the beginning to the end of the

seventh century being advanced by different commentators.[2]

Neither is there any consensus as to *how* it happened. In a detailed treatment of the growth

of Northumbria, David Rollason proposed three models to explain how Northumbria became

an English polity, being a) the cession of Roman governance to English federates, b) the

cession of power by a post-Roman British polity to the English kings of Northumbria or c)

violent conquest of the British by Anglo-Saxons.[3] Each model assumes binary ethnic

identities and the perpetuation of ethnic tension. Either ethnic group A was replaced by

ethnic group B or power was transferred in an orderly fashion from ethnic group A to ethnic

group B.[4]

This section will explore an alternative possibility. It will be argued that there was no

significant loss of territory to the Bernician kings, who dominated Northumbrian affairs

throughout the seventh century. Although it cannot reasonably be denied that by the end of

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[1] See, for example, Dumville, 'Aspects', pp. 11-14. This ethnocentric view of Anglo-British relations remains deep-rooted, despite the best efforts of a generation or more of scholars to seek more nuanced interpretations. See also Smyth, *Warlords*, pp. 20, 24-26, 30-32.
[2] For a good summary of the scholarship – including the steady shift to ever later dates for the supposed Anglo-Saxon conquest of Cumbria, see Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, p. 49. See also Smyth, *Warlords*, pp. 24 and 31.
[3] Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 65-66.
[4] ibid., p. 108.

the seventh century, 'Greater Northumbria' was the dominant regional power, the primacy of

the kings of Bernicia was most likely achieved through alliance and/or overlordship rather

than through conquest. As Christopher Loveluck and Lloyd Laing have noted, the

assumption that there was a slow but unstoppable spread of Anglo-Saxon hegemony over

western Britain is not appropriate.[5] Bernician political hegemony may have fuelled the

ongoing 'Anglicisation' of Cumbria, but did not involve the displacement of Cumbria's pre-

existing elites. This is not necessarily to say that the transfer of overarching authority was

entirely peaceful or seamless, but it does offer a new model in which Cumbria's absorption

into Northumbria was not characterised by violent change. This theory will be tested by

reference to three case studies, each one of which touches on a piece of documentary

evidence which is usually used to support traditional narratives of conquest. The section will

then go on to consider what else the earliest English sources may be able to tell us about

political arrangements and territorial organisation in the region.

4.4.1 ANGLO-BRITISH INTERACTION

CASE STUDY 1 – CARTMEL AND ITS BRITONS

The supposedly inferior status of the Britons in seventh-century Northumbria appears to be

confirmed by the *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto*, a tenth- or eleventh-century work which

gives details about Cuthbert's life and (perhaps equally as importantly) the grants of land

gifted to him and his community.[6] Although early medieval monks occasionally forgot the Ten

Commandments and happily bore false witness by manipulating documents for their own

ends, it is nevertheless likely that much of the information in *HSC* is accurate and was

collated from marginal notes made in the books which Cuthbert's community had in their

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[5] Loveluck and Laing, 'Britons and Anglo-Saxons', p. 544.
[6] For a discussion of the dates of composition, see *HSC*, pp. 25-36.

possession.[7] The *HSC* confirms two grants of Cumbrian territory made to Cuthbert in his lifetime, the first Carlisle and the second Cartmel.[8]

It has been observed that the circumstances of the gift of Carlisle may say something about the ongoing ecclesiastical power struggle between Lindisfarne and Hexham (who traditionally favoured Wilfrid).[9] The estate of Carlisle is stated to have had a circumference of fifteen miles. A circle with a circumference of fifteen miles has a diameter of just under five miles and encloses an area of roughly eighteen square miles. If we assume that Carlisle Cathedral lay at the centre of the circle, the hinterland of Cuthbert's new territory stretched for no more than two and a half miles in any direction, making it roughly equivalent in size to an early medieval *villa regia* ('royal estate') and significantly smaller than a typical early medieval *regio* (on both of which, see below).

The small size of this estate may have ramifications for the traditional picture of Carlisle as the post-Roman capital of a sprawling cross-Solway polity.[10] Had Carlisle really been a major secular centre, one might reasonably have expected it to have controlled a much larger hinterland. Even allowing for post-Roman polities to have been relatively small, the estate of Carlisle was only about twenty per cent of the size of a *regio* such as *Loidis* and at the lower end of the size proposed for early Anglo-Saxon polities.[11] Postulating that Cuthbert's gift was carved out of a much larger area does not seem inherently likely, given that the estate centre and its rural hinterland were closely linked in the early medieval period. The former was the focus which the latter supported through food renders. Cutting the estate centre off from its source of revenue would very much be a case of giving with one hand

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[7] ibid., pp. 5-7.
[8] It is not clear if the gifts comprised the land itself or simply the right to the tribute rendered up by those who lived on that land. For a discussion on the nature of land alienation within the context of the earliest charters, see Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 315-328.
[9] Stancliffe, Disputed episcopacy', p. 32.
[10] See also Chapter 2.4, where reasons for doubting Carlisle's status as an early medieval secular centre by reference to the archaeological evidence was discussed.
[11] See Chapter 4.4.3.

whilst taking away with the other. Yet however it was supported and whoever had previously owned it, late seventh-century Carlisle was a bustling religious centre. It had a monastery overseen by the Northumbrian king's sister-in-law.[12] Cuthbert himself founded schools and ordained priests there, as well as enjoying regular meetings with the ascetic monk, Herbert.[13]

The second grant of land recorded in the *HSC* was the gift of Cartmel and the vill of "Suthgedling".[14] The text states: -

   …dedit ei rex Ecgfrith terram quae vocatur Cartmel et omnes Brittanni cum eo

The usual translation of this line is: -

   …King Ecgfrith gave him the territory of Cartmel with all of its Britons.

Traditionally, this passage has been taken as proof that, although there were still Britons in Northumbria, they were little (if any), better than slaves.[15] However, in the most recent comprehensive work on the text, the same line is translated as: -

   …King Ecgfrith and all the Britons with him gave him the territory of Cartmel.[16]

This translation puts an entirely different perspective on the grant. If accurate, it implies very

[12] *VSC*, XXVII, pp. 243, 245.
[13] *AVSC*, VIII, p. 123 and *AVSC*, V, p. 117. For Herbert's visits, see *AVSC*, IX, p. 125 and especially *VSC*, XXVIII, p. 249.
[14] *HSC*, ch. 5 and 6, pp. 47-49.
[15] See, for example, Higham, *Northumbria*, p. 100 and Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 58. For an interesting alternative argument – that the Britons in question were monks who were being offered up to Cuthbert to be reformed into the Roman tradition following the Synod of Whitby, see Crowe, 'Cartmel', p. 65.
[16] *HSC*, ch. 6, p. 49.

strongly that the consent of the Britons was required before the land could be gifted to Cuthbert. Far from being possessions, the 'Britons' referred to by the text (whoever they were) had an interest in Cartmel and occupied a position of influence at Ecgfrith's court.[17] The Latin is sufficiently ambiguous to support either translation,[18] but the longstanding preference for the former translation has perhaps been motivated more by traditional assumptions about Anglo-British relations than by any requirement of the text itself. Yet if we consider the geographical distribution of the lands granted to the great churchmen such as Wilfrid and Cuthbert and/or by the seventh-century Northumbrian kings, the latter translation looks the more credible.[19] We are lucky that works such as the *HSC* and the *VSW* seem to regard the enumeration of the territories of their honorands as being every bit as important as lauding their spiritual achievements.[20] What does not appear to have often been picked up on is that virtually all of the land gifted to churchmen lies to the east of the Pennines.[21] Huge swathes of what is now Yorkshire and the North East were given away, yet in our texts we have only three references to grants of land in Cumbria and only one further reference to a place within Cumbria (being Carlisle, Cartmel/Suthgedling and just possibly Dentdale).[22]

This is intriguing. For both spiritual and secular leaders, wealth meant land. Kings were expected to endow their followers and the Church with land.[23] Church and State were closely linked. Both Wilfrid and Cuthbert came from wealthy backgrounds. Wilfrid's father was a

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[17] The requirement that under kings obtained the consent of their overking to certain actions such as the gifting of land may be relevant in this context. Higham, 'Tribal Chieftains', p. 142.

[18] They key words are "cum eo", which can mean either "with him" or "with it".

[19] If this interpretation is correct, then we may have in Northumbria a further example of the same Anglo-Welsh unity which Lindy Brady argues existed as between the early Mercian kings and their Welsh neighbours and which was often set in opposition to Northumbria, especially during the seventh century. Brady, 'Welsh borderlands', pp. 33-42.

[20] This is especially the case in the *Life* of Wilfrid. After a good start, Wilfrid fell foul of Ecgfrith and lost his lands. As such, his *Life* is far less formulaic than other hagiographies and contains a great deal of detail about his ongoing efforts to win back his lands.

[21] Smyth, *Warlords*, p. 25. Carver, *Formative Britain*, pp. 218-219.

[22] This further reference is to Dacre, near Penrith, where Bede states that a monastery was under construction. No details about the grant (if there ever was a grant) of Dacre are given. *EHEP*, IV, 32, p. 264.

[23] Higham, 'Tribal Chieftains', pp. 144, 159. Land grants to secular followers may, in part at least, only have been granted for the life of the grantee. Grants to the Church were generally in perpetuity.

landowner accustomed to welcoming the king's companions and when Wilfrid set off to begin his ecclesiastical career, he did so with a retinue of armed and mounted retainers.[24] When Cuthbert arrived at Melrose to enter the spiritual life, he was on horseback, armed and with a servant in tow.[25] Many members of the Northumbrian royal family held high office in the early church. Hild, the first abbess of Whitby, was the daughter of Edwin of Deira's nephew. Aefflaed, who was also in charge at Whitby, was the daughter of Oswiu of Bernicia. Trumhere, the third bishop of Mercia (and previously the abbot of Gilling), was a "near relative" of Oswiu.[26] Eanflaed, who married both Edwin and Oswiu, appears to have shared the duties of abbess of Whitby with Aefflaed. Ecgfrith's sister-in-law ran a monastery in Carlisle.[27]

If Cumbria had lost its independence to the Northumbrian kings, it is odd that we have no record of grants to Northumbria's secular and spiritual aristocracy of the newly acquired western possessions. The fact that so few such grants are recorded in texts which have a wealth of information about grants to the east of the Pennines suggests that it was not generally open to the Northumbrian kings to gift land west of the Pennines. The polities of Cumbria may have ultimately been in a subservient relationship to Northumbrian overlords, but if so, they appear to have retained a significant degree of self-governance and independence. Put simply, the Northumbrian kings could not give away land in Cumbria because it was never theirs to give. If this is right, the involvement of the Britons in the gifting of Cartmel to Cuthbert is an important piece of evidence in our understanding of seventh-century Anglo-British relations.

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[24] *VSW*, I, p. 7. The misogyny of the early hagiographers is also notable in the text. In true pantomime style, Wilfrid leaves home because of his evil stepmother and his subsequent rift with Ecgfrith is blamed on Ecgfrith's wife, Iurminburg. *VSW*, XXIV, p. 49.
[25] *VSC*, II, 159, VI, p. 173.
[26] *EHEP*, III, 24, p. 185. See also Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 84.
[27] *VSC*, XXVII, p. 243. The close link between secular and spiritual elites has long been recognised. See, for example, Higham, 'Tribal Chieftains', p. 158.

The other territory gifted with Cartmel was Suthgedling ('South Gilling'). This unknown estate

has previously been assumed to have been in North Yorkshire, either at East Gilling (near

Helmsley) or West Gilling (near Catterick), where a monastery was founded at the instigation

of Oswiu in the mid seventh-century.[28] Johnson-South has challenged the West Gilling

identification, noting that there is no geographical relationship between Cartmel and West

Gilling and noting also that the monastery at West Gilling was never associated with

Cuthbert.[29] He does not propose an alternative location. However, if 'Gilling' is, as appears

to be generally accepted, an acceptable modern rendition of 'Gedling', there *is* a possible

candidate. Gillinggate ('Gilling road'), is a street at the south end of Kendal which runs off

the town's main road at the boundary between the medieval ecclesiastical and secular

quarters. No modern settlement called Gilling survives.[30] However, Kendal's name is a

Norse suffix attached to a British (or pre-British) river name and therefore cannot be any

earlier than the ninth century in its current form.[31] We do not know what the area was called

before then, but if Gillinggate *did* once lead from or to a place called Gilling, it is just possible

that Suthgedling was an estate somewhere in the Kendal area.[32] If so it may have been

Cartmel's eastern neighbour, separated from the Cartmel peninsula by the Lyth Valley and

the Kent sands.

CASE STUDY 2 – WILFRID'S WESTERN ACQUISITIONS

At some point in the 670s, Wilfrid's hagiographer tells us that Wilfrid invited the king of

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[28] Thomas Pickles, 'Locating Ingetlingum and Suthgedling: Gilling West and Gilling East', *Northern History*, 46 (2009), pp. 313-325.
[29] *HSC*, p. 81.
[30] A second Gilling name in Kendal, Gilling Reane, is associated with a surname. *PNW*, I, p. 123. The use of 'gate' in Gillinggate suggest some antiquity, with three of the town's four major medieval streets (Highgate, Stricklandgate and Stramongate) incorporating the element.
[31] *PNW*, I, pp 8-9, 114-115. The town's full name - Kirby Kendal (to distinguish it from Kirkby Lonsdale) further belies its Norse origins.
[32] Ninth-century Anglian sculpture attests to the presence of a much earlier church on the site of Kendal's existing parish church.

Northumbria and the sub-king of Deira to the dedication ceremony for his new church at Ripon. The kings were accompanied by a coterie of "praefectisque et sub-regulis" ("reeves and sub-kings").[33] In his typical self-effacing way, Wilfrid is said to have addressed the assembly by reading out two lists of land grants made to him on that day and previously.[34] His first list was a list of *regiones* which the Northumbrian kings had given him. The second was a list of the "the consecrated places in various parts which the British clergy had deserted when fleeing from the hostile sword wielded by the warriors of our own nation". The text goes on to record the names of specific *regiones* gifted to Wilfrid – "iuxta Rippel et Ingaedyne et in regione Dunatinga et Incaetlevum."[35] It is unclear whether this list refers to four separate *regiones* (one at each of the named places) or whether it refers to just two – one between ('iuxta') two places called Rippel and Ingaedyne and another comprising Dunatinga and Incaetlevum.[36]

These named places cannot be identified with certainty, but some general points can usefully be made. *Regio Dunatinga* is often taken to be Dentdale in south eastern Cumbria. *Incaetlevum* is usually taken to mean Catlow,[37] but there are at least two places which still bear that name (one near Burnley and one near Clitheroe). *Rippel* is the river Ribble,[38] but it is not easy to ascertain which part of Ribblesdale is meant.[39] *Ingaedyne*, at least, is less contentious and can be identified with Yeadon, to the north west of the modern conurbation

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[33] *VSW*, XVII, p. 37.
[34] Wilfrid was presumably using the occasion to remind the new leaders of Northumbria how their predecessors had rewarded him and how it might be nice for them to do likewise.
[35] *VSW*, XVII, pp. 36, 37.
[36] The former is generally assumed but I am indebted to Chris Callow for pointing out that the text appears to be suggesting the latter. Early medieval Latin does not always appear to have followed the conventions of classical written Latin, but at first sight 'regione' does appear to be a singular, rather than a plural, form.
[37] There have, however, been challenges. Cox, 'Place-Names', p. 18.
[38] Andrew Breeze, 'Yrechwydd', pp. 324-328.
[39] Settlements such as Ribchester include the river name, but there is nothing in the text which indicates that a specific place (as opposed to an area) is meant. For completeness, Sarah Foot queries whether *Rippel* might actually be a reference to a Worcestershire foundation that was overseen by an appointee of either Wynfrith or Wilfrid, whose names appear to have been capable of easy confusion. Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 260.

of Leeds.[40] There is cautious reason to believe that Yeadon may once have been the name of a large British secular and ecclesiastical estate based on modern Otley which, if true, certainly supports the identification.[41]

If we allow these identifications, all four sites are in or close to the Aire Gap, a natural routeway through the Pennines which takes advantage of the relatively low-lying watershed between the Ribble and the Aire.[42] The western end of this route lies in Craven, which may well have been an early medieval British kingdom.[43] The eastern end was in the one-time British kingdom of Elmet.[44]

The nature of the passage in *VSW* has not unreasonably led to the conclusion that the text recalls the mid-seventh-century conquest of a British area by the Northumbrians.[45] As ever, things are rarely as simple as they first appear. The gifting of the four named *regiones* is not specifically linked to the statement regarding the expulsion of the British clergy.[46] The text refers to Wilfrid reading out two lists. The first list comprised *regiones* granted to Wilfrid and the second was the list of consecrated places which had been seized from the British clergy. The next sentence goes on to name the four territories discussed above, but nowhere is it stated that these territories are from the second list rather than the first one. Indeed, the text implies the contrary, given that the consecrated places are *not* stated to be *regiones*,

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[40] Cox, 'Place Names', p. 29.
[41] G.R.J. Jones, 'Some Donations to Bishop Wilfrid in Northern England', *Northern History*, XXXI (1995), pp. 22-38, pp. 30-36. As late as the fourteenth-century, the estate of Chevin within this putative Yeadon *regio* was subject to tenurial custom believed to be of British derivation. See Jones, 'Early Territorial Organization' p. 22 and fn. 65. Chevin (or 'the Chevin') is still the name of the steep escarpment that drops off the high ground towards the river Wharfe. The name is of British in origin, deriving from *cefn* 'ridge'.
[42] The route is now followed by the modern A65.
[43] Wood, 'Craven', pp. 1-20.
[44] For a good summary of the scholarship on Elmet, see Andrew Breeze, 'Elmet', pp. 157-171 and esp. 157-166. See also Gruffydd, 'Elmet', pp. 63-64.
[45] Higham, *Northumbria*, pp. 99-100. See also Dumville, 'The Origins of Northumbria', p. 11 and Smyth, *Warlords*, p. 24 for the argument that the gift of these lands was part of the "dismemberment" of Rheged.
[46] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'St Wilfrid and two charters dated AD 676 and 680', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*. 39, No. 2 (1988), pp. 163-183, pp. 180-181.

whereas the four named places are.[47]

Even if the traditional interpretation is right and the named territories *were* those taken from the British, nowhere does it state that this was achieved through invasion. All that is stated is that the British clergy were expelled by force and their possessions given to Wilfrid. It is therefore at least equally possible that the expulsion of clergy was not part of a wider war of conquest and was instead simply part of Wilfrid's ongoing efforts to expand his personal territorial reach.[48] We know from *VSW* that Wilfrid maintained an armed force of retainers and we also know he was a man of no small ambition.[49] He successfully consolidated all of Northumbria into a single diocese under his control, maintained close relations with the Pope and, in the early part of his career at least, enjoyed the patronage of the Northumbrian kings. He was also instrumental in deciding the Easter question, the importance of which to seventh-century ecclesiastical affairs cannot be underestimated. At the heart of the issue was whether the date of Easter should be calculated in accordance with the teachings of the Celtic church or the Roman church.[50] The question was finally decided at the Synod of Whitby in 664, when king Oswiu ruled in favour of the Roman case, which was presented by Wilfrid.[51] The result was not universally accepted. Colman, the bishop of Lindisfarne, felt compelled to leave for Ireland as a result of the decision and as late as 731, Bede was still berating the Britons for continuing to follow the Celtic dating scheme. From Wilfrid's perspective, however, the decision at Whitby gave him a golden opportunity to extend his power. It may well be the case that the expulsion of the British clergy celebrated at the Ripon dedication ceremony represented a purge; the forcible seizure of ecclesiastical centres by Wilfrid's men from communities who were flouting the Whitby decision. If so, this purge may

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[47] *VSW*, XVII, p. 37.
[48] An endeavour in which Wilfrid was, periodically at least, highly successful. For a brief but good summary of Wilfrid's ups and downs, see McMullen, 'Rewriting', pp. 90-92.
[49] *VSW*, XXIV, p. 49.
[50] There was also a second question regarding the correct tonsure for monks.
[51] *VSW*, X, pp. 21-23. A similar meeting for similar purposes took place in Munster in Ireland around 630. Ó'Cróinin, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 58.

well have taken place with the express or tacit approval of the Northumbrian elites who at that time were still close to Wilfrid.[52] It perhaps allowed a westward extension of Northumbrian soft power through Wilfrid's control of his new possessions.

CASE STUDY 3 – THE MARRIAGE OF RIEMMELTH

At some point in the 640s, Oswiu married Riemmelth, who was supposedly Urien's great-granddaughter.[53] The match is attested by the *HB*, which states:

> Osguid autem habuit duas uxores, quarum una vocabatur Rieinmelth, filia Royth, filii Run, et altera vocabatur Eanfled, filia Eadguin, filii Alii

> Oswiu also had two wives, the first of them was called Riemmelth, the daughter of Royth, the son of Rhun and the other was called Eanfled, daughter of Edwin, son of Aelle.[54]

The *HB* is, to say the least, an unreliable friend, but corroboration of Riemmelth's historicity comes from the *Durham Liber Vitae*, a list of about three thousand Northumbrian movers and shakers which probably originated late in the seventh century.[55] Riemmelth appears in the *Liber Vitae* in Anglicised form as Raegnmaeld at the head of a list of Northumbrian queens and abbesses. Her pre-eminence in the list may stem from the fact that at the time of compilation, she was the mother of a senior surviving member of the Northumbrian royal

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[52] Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 406-7.
[53] Riemmelth's name is variously spelled Rhiainfellt and Rienmelth by different commentators. These may well be more accurate renditions of the name (which means something like 'lightning queen'), but Riemmelth is how the name appears in the translated version of the *HB* and is therefore the version used here.
[54] *HB*, ch. 57, p. 36.
[55] Briggs, 'Nothing But Names', pp. 63–85.

house.[56]

This marriage is sometimes seen as the means by which whatever was left of Urien's territories finally passed under direct Northumbrian control.[57] In this model, those lands became a dowry. Such an assumption is neat, but highly unsafe, not least because the gifting of an early medieval kingdom as part of a marriage settlement would be without parallel.[58]

If we accept that Riemmelth's marriage to Oswiu was a dynastic one, it had to postdate 634. This is when Oswiu's brother, Oswald, assumed power in Bernicia following the death of his predecessor, Edwin. Both Oswald and Oswiu had been living in exile in Iona during Edwin's reign and there is reason to think that Oswiu had an Irish wife prior to Oswald's accession.[59] We can therefore reasonably conclude that Oswiu's first wife was replaced for political reasons by Riemmelth once things started looking up for Oswald's line. It follows that if Urien's great granddaughter was considered a suitable match for the new king of Northumbria's younger brother, the dynasty she represented must have been a potent force in mid seventh-century northern politics. We might therefore conclude that the British polities of Cumbria were already part of a wider Bernician world, their interests inextricably linked to those of their Anglian allies or overlords. Some queens maintained their own households and it has been proposed that Riemmelth may have provided a useful focus of loyalty for the Britons of Cumbria.[60] Such an alliance was cemented through various means, including dynastic marriage. Either way, the situation did not last. Riemmelth, in her turn was replaced

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[56] Jan Gerchow, 'The Origins of the Liber Vitae', in David Rollason, ed. *The Durham Liber Vitae,* pp. 45–61.
[57] One explanation is that Riemmelth's family lands came to Oswiu as a dowry. Another is that the match may have been a forced marriage to underline the subjugation of Riemmelth's family to Oswiu's. Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 88.
[58] Dumville, 'The Origins of Northumbria', p. 12. Smyth, *Warlords*, p. 23.
[59] Martin Grimmer, 'The Exogamous Marriages of Oswiu of Northumbria', *The Heroic Age*, 2006. Accessed online at http://www.heroicage.org/issues/9/grimmer.html 17th January 2015.
[60] Bassett, 'Origins', p. 32.

by Eanflaed of Deira (Edwin's daughter) once Oswiu assumed power after Oswald's death in battle in 642. This will also have been a dynastic match. Although it is possible that Riemmelth had died or entered a nunnery in the interim, it is hard to escape the conclusion that, given that Deira was the most important of Bernicia's allies and clients, Oswiu was once again 'trading up' or, at least, was taking pragmatic steps to ensure his acceptability to the Deiran nobility.[61]

Oswiu needed to be acceptable to the Deiran elites if he was to maintain Oswald's hegemony. Although we might be tempted to see Deira and Bernicia as firm allies, it was not until Oswald's time that "the provinces of Deira and Bernicia, formally hostile to each other, were peacefully united and became one people."[62] Even allowing for the happier times brought about by Oswald's diplomacy, being sub-king of Deira was not a task for the faint-hearted. If we can trust the written sources, one of Oswiu's first jobs on taking power a few years later was to arrange for the murder of Oswin, a descendant of Edwin who was Oswiu's co-ruler in Deira.[63] Aethelwald, the next sub-king of Deira and Oswiu's nephew, was duly replaced by Oswiu's son, Ahlfrith, in the 650s.[64] Ahlfrith's mother was quite possibly Riemmelth herself, given that any child Oswiu had had with Eanflaed would have been too young to be a sub king at that date. Ahlfrith did no better than his predecessors and after holding his throne for less than ten years, vanished from the historical record.

4.4.2 NAMES AND TITLES

The English sources also provide us with a scattering of names of those who held positions of authority in seventh-century Northumbria. Insofar as the exercise of secular power is

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[61] Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo Saxon England* (London, 1997), p. 79.
[62] *EHEP*, III, 6, p. 152.
[63] ibid, Book III, chapter 14
[64] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 84-85.

concerned, the most important men after the king appear were the *praefecti* and the sub-kings. 'Prefect' is a literal translation of *praefectus*, a Roman-era title the meaning of which appears to have evolved in the post-Roman period. In modern translations it is typically rendered as 'reeve'.[65] It appears on a number of occasions in the English sources and had a strong pedigree in the Roman north, being one of the two titles used for the leaders of late Roman army units stationed along Hadrian's Wall (the other being *tribunus*). Osfrith and Tydlin,[66] who controlled the fortified royal centres of *Broninis* and Dunbar respectively, were both *praefecti*, suggesting that a *praefectus* had delegated authority over a particular place, presumably with its agricultural hinterland.[67] Bede appears to use the same title in a similar sense. Wilfrid had at least one *praefectus* of his own, who was responsible for hunting down a British boy who had been promised to the religious life but who had gone AWOL.[68] It is not clear whether the *praefectus* in question was in charge of one of Wilfrid's monasteries, but it is clear that law enforcement was part of his role. The *praefecti* present at Wilfrid's dedication ceremony at Ripon are mentioned *after* the abbots but *before* the sub-kings, which might well indicate that as a trusted and senior deputy of the king, a *praefectus* ranked higher than a sub-king.[69]

It is not clear whether early English usage of *praefectus* represents a revival of a defunct Roman title by Latinate monks or if it was a deliberate continuation of late Roman usage by local, post-Roman commanders who may well have held increasing personal power as the

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[65] *VSC*, p. 205.

[66] Tydlin's name looks to be British, suggesting that ethnicity was no bar to high office. Welsh sources contain similar examples the other way round, including the 'Golistan' presented as a leader of the Gododdin in *Y Gododdin* whose name may be English Wulfstan. The Ulph mentioned in connection with Urien in the Taliesin poems also bears an English name. Of course, these names may simply represent fashions in naming practices rather than saying anything about the ethnicity of those who bore them, a phenomenon noted for the post-Roman Frankish kingdoms. Bassett, 'Origins', p. 48.

[67] *VSW*, XXXV, p. 73 and XXXVIII, p. 77. Dunbar still exists, but the location of *Broninis* is not known. It looks to be a Brittonic name meaning 'island hill'. Breeze suggests Durham. *CVEP*, pp. 147-149.

[68] *VSW*, XVIII, pp. 39-40. The boy in question was almost certainly British. The text explicitly states that he was found with his mother, hiding amongst "others of the British race". However, when he was baptised prior to entering the religious life, he was given a new name, Eodwald. The name is unquestionably English and underlines the care that is required when dealing with questions of ethnicity and identity.

[69] *VSW*, XVII, p. 37. Bassett noted the same thing. Bassett, 'Origins', p. 31.

central administration shrank.[70] In a Roman context, the title had a long pedigree and was used for both military and civil offices, where it denoted an officer who fulfilled important administrative and imperial functions.[71] The commanders of many of the new, fourth-century Roman army units posted to Hadrian's Wall were termed *praefecti* and, if the 'mutation model' as advanced by Collins is valid, there is little reason to doubt that such a title could have been perpetuated in the post-Roman period.[72] The usual modern translation of 'reeve', conveying as it does a title of an administrative office, may not quite capture the importance of the role or the men who filled it. Seventh-century *praefecti* might be better thought of as local notables, perhaps drawn from the elites in their given areas.[73] It seems likely that they held power by royal appointment, whereas the sub-kings were autonomous or semi-autonomous clients.

Waga, the man who gave Cuthbert his tour of Carlisle in 685 (and who therefore has the honour of being Cumbria's first attested tourist guide) was termed *praepositus*,[74] another term often translated as 'reeve'. The Roman *praepositi* of the fourth- to sixth- centuries were civilian officials with responsibility for various aspects of public service, sometimes holding their rank on an ad hoc or temporary basis.[75] Waga may well have had very similar responsibilities to a *praefectus*, but either way, the use of this alternative title to denote civil office in relation to a man apparently in charge of the only one-time Roman city in the region is interesting in the context of the evolution of post-Roman Carlisle.

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[70] McCarthy, *Lands of the Solway*, p. 57.
[71] Sara Phang, 'Praefectus', in Sara Phang et al, eds. '*Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome: the Definitive Political, Social and Military Encyclopaedia*' (Santa Barbara, 2016), pp. 1128-1129.
[72] See Chapter 2.2.
[73] Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 185.
[74] *AVSC*, VIII, p. 123.
[75] Franz Tinnefeld, 'Praepositus', in BrillOnline Reference Works via https://referenceworks-brillonline.com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/*-e1007280 accessed 31st October 2018. Also B. J. N Edwards, 'Roman Garrisons in North-West England', *TCWAAS*, 10 (2010), pp. 119-135, p. 121.

It is unclear whether Waga's name is British or English. In a note on the name of Wagen, the PASE website makes passing reference to Waga being an Old English form, but the name is not further examined.[76] This is at odds with the view more commonly expressed, which is that Waga is a British name.[77] Whichever, the name is one of very few personal names in the English sources which we can positively associate with post-Roman Cumbria. The only other definite case is the Old English Herebert, the name of a monk who lived as a recluse on an island in Derwent Water and who was on good terms with Cuthbert.[78]

Two other individuals with English names may be linked to seventh-century Cumbria. Hemma (whose wife Cuthbert healed), came from a *regio* called *Kintis*, which was under the control of one Aldfrith.[79] *Kintis* might be a reference to Kentdale in south east Cumbria, but the evidence for this identification is far from satisfactory.[80]

4.4.3 Territorial Organisation

Our earliest English sources also hint at territorial organisation, although the terms used for administrative units may be the self-conscious products of a newly-literate class within Northumbrian society rather than descriptive terms which were actually in use on the ground.[81] Nonetheless, some useful comments can still be made. The *villa regia* (or 'royal town') was a unit of land owned directly by the king and governed on his behalf by an official (often a *praefectus*). The size of a *villa regia* is unclear. In reality, they are unlikely to have been of a fixed size, although it has been proposed that each one consisted of an

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[76] http://domesday.pase.ac.uk/Domesday?op=5&nameinfo_id=3619 accessed 1st November 2018.
[77] See, for example, Zant, *Carlisle*, p. 15 and Newman, 'Who Was Here?', p. 24
[78] *VSC*, XXVIII, p. 249.
[79] *AVSC*, III, p. 115.
[80] See below for a fuller discussion.
[81] Robert Briggs, 'Regnum, Provincia, Regio, Pagus: Reassessing the Territorial Nomenclature of the Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon Periods', *Surreymedieval.blog@gmail.com*.

eponymous estate centre and an agricultural hinterland of up to 12,000 acres, which would give a *villa regia* a total area of roughly nineteen square miles.[82] Four *villa reguli* are named in the sources (Yeavering,[83] Bamburgh,[84] Catterick[85] and Walbottle). It is likely that three other named sites (Coldingham,[86] *Broninis*[87] and Dunbar[88]) were also *villa reguli*, although they are not explicitly named as such. In the context of Anglo-British relations in Northumbria, it is notable that five of these seven had British names. Of the other two, Bamburgh had an alternative British name attested by the *HB*,[89] whereas Walbottle's earliest attested name is *Ad Murum* ('at the Wall').[90] It therefore seems plausible to conclude that many (if not all) of these *villa reguli* were a pre-existing British estate centres which continued to be used by the Bernician kings.[91]

No *villa reguli* are named as such in Cumbria, although Carlisle *might* be a candidate. As discussed above, the former Roman city was under the control of a *praepositus* and, at eighteen square miles (assuming the record of the size of Carlisle when it was gifted to Cuthbert is correct), was of comparable size to the Northumbrian examples. There are no

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[82] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 8.
[83] *EHEP*, II, 14, p. 132.
[84] *EHEP*, III, 6, p. 152.
[85] *EHEP*, II, 14, p. 132 and II, 20, p. 141. Catterick is not specifically referred to as a royal village, but Bede links the town to Paulinus, who baptised converts in the River Swale and to James, Paulinus' deacon, who lived nearby and was tasked to care for the church at York.
[86] Despite how it looks at first sight, the name derives from Urbs Coludi, the second element of which appears to be a British personal name
[87] Inbronis might just be Durham. Andrew Breeze, 'Was Durham the *Inbronis* of Eddius' Life of St Wilfrid? in *CVEP,* pp. 147-150.
[88] *VSW*, XXXVI and XXXVIII, pp. 73, 77.
[89] *HB*, ch. 61, p. 37. We should, however, be alive to the fact that the name, Din Guaire, may conceivably have been a later confection created by the scribes of the *HB*. Alternatively, it may have been influenced by the Irish name for Bamburgh, Dun Guaire, which appears in the entry for 623 in the Annals of Ulster. Ó'Cróinin, 'Ireland, 400-800', p. 218.
[90] *EHEP*, III, 21 and 22, pp. 177-180. Walbottle's claim to be *Ad Murum* is just a guess. Heddon-on-the-Wall has also been proposed (not least by people in Heddon-on-the Wall). http://heddonhistory.weebly.com/ad-murum.html accessed 12th January 2019. Both Heddon and Walbottle are arguably slightly too far east, given that Bede states *Ad Murum* was twelve (Roman) miles from the sea. Walbottle and Heddon are 14 and 16 modern miles respectively from Tynemouth. A Roman mile is just under 10% shorter than a modern mile, meaning that twelve Roma miles is just under eleven modern miles.
[91] Yeavering is the best candidate. Excavations in the 1970s revealed a pre-existing British complex or cult centre. Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*. Hope-Taylor's dating scheme has been revised and it is now proposed that Yeavering remained a British site until the seventh century. Carver, *Formative Britain*, pp. 155-163.

other candidates. If, as argued above, the Northumbrian kings did not own much land in

Cumbria and were not, as a rule, able to gift it directly without the consent of their British

clients or allies, the lack of *villa reguli* west of the Pennines may not be surprising.

The *regio* is the other name for a territorial unit which is commonly encountered in the

sources. A *regio* was larger than a *villa regia* and appears to have been the mainstay of land

organisation at a local level, with blocks of such units forming the larger Anglo-Saxon

kingdoms.[92] Each *regio* probably comprised an estate centre with a hinterland of dependent

vills (basically, individual agricultural holdings).[93] The size of a *regio* must have varied

considerably, but overall they appear to have been fairly small.[94] By way of example, we

might consider *regio Loidis* (now Leeds).[95] Two further place-names containing the same

root place-name element as appears in Leeds (Ledsham, fifteen miles to the east of Leeds

and Ledston, two miles south-west of Ledsham) may indicate the eastern extent of the *regio*,

assuming that it was contiguous. Yeadon, which was discussed in the context of Wilfrid's

territories, lies nine miles or so to the north-west of central Leeds. It was presumably have

been *Loidis*' western neighbour. This allows us to estimate that *Loidis* was fifteen to twenty

miles from end to end, but was reasonably narrow, measuring only a few miles across. This

would give an area for the *regio* of roughly one hundred square miles.

Jones' estimate of eighty square miles for *regio Dunatinga* (assuming the identification with

Dent to be correct) would make that territory of the same order of size as *Loidis*.[96]

Dunatinga's boundaries would have been largely dictated by topography. Dentdale is a long,

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[92] Bassett, 'Origins', 17. Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 104. Blair implies that the *regio* is an Anglo-Saxon concept. The term is used here for convenience for the analogous units identifiable outside the areas of early Anglo-Saxon settlement.
[93] Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 405-6.
[94] Higham, *Northumbria*, p. 90. Bassett reconstructs the *regio* of the *Stoppingas*. The putative territory amounts to only about forty square miles, making it less than half the size of the northern examples proposed above. Bassett, *Origins*, 18-19.
[95] *EHEP*, II, 14, p. 132.
[96] Jones, *Donations*, p. 30.

narrow valley, hemmed in by high hills on both sides. The dale runs south east from

Sedbergh to the high ground around Whernside, which divides the Lune and Ribble

watersheds.[97] Like *Loidis* and Yeadon, Dent's name is Brittonic, giving us a third example of

a seventh-century northern *regio* with a British pedigree.[98]

Cumbria's only other candidate for a named seventh-century *regio*, *Kintis*, may also have a

Brittonic name.[99] Although neither the location of, nor the size of, *Kintis* can be identified

with any certainty, it may share its first element with the river name Kent,[100] which may

ultimately derive from Brittonic or pre-Brittonic *cunetju*.[101] The second element of *Kintis* looks

to be British Latin *is/es* (which became Brittonic *wys* or *uis*), a common suffix meaning

'*people of..*', which in turn would strongly suggest that *Kintis* is a territorial appellation.[102]

Although it is just outside Cumbria, a fifth northern *regio* was *Aechse*, where Cuthbert is

supposed to have preached *en route* from Hexham to Carlisle.[103] The name is likely to be a

development of *Aesica*, the name of a fort on Hadrian's Wall now known as Great

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[97] Whernside is one of the Three Peaks of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Interestingly, the other two peaks – Ingleborough and Pen Y Ghent, both have British or part-British names, meaning 'burning hill' and 'windy peak' (or perhaps 'border peak') respectively.

[98] The hill in question is likely to be Whernside, which is the highest point in North Yorkshire. One alternative derivation for Dent's name ('valley of the river Dee') seems unlikely given both the earliest attested forms and the fact that Whernside is such a prominent landscape feature. The other possibility ('land of Dunaut's people') has a parallel with Dunoding in Wales, which means the same thing, albeit referring to a different Dunaut. Melville Richards, Early Welsh Territorial Suffixes, *The Journal of the Royal Society of the Antiquaries of Ireland*, 95 (1965), pp. 205-212, pp. 208-209. It might also be noted that the size of these *regiones* is somewhat larger than the thirty to one hundred and twenty square miles postulated by Chris Wickham for the earliest Anglo-Saxon polities Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 325, 342.

[99] *AVSC*, III, p. 115.

[100] Donald Bullough, 'A Neglected Early-Ninth-Century Manuscript of the Lindisfarne Vita S. Cuthberti', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 27 (1998), pp. 105-137, p. 119, esp fn 52.

[101] Breeze translates the river name as 'hound river'. *CVEP*, pp. 126-128. An alternative possibility would be 'border river', although we probably have to accept that the true meaning may always elude satisfactory identification. For a more traditional view, see *PNW,* I, pp. 8-9.

[102] See, for example, Jackson, 'Arthur's Battles', p. 48, Williams, *Poems of Taliesin*, p. 50 and Caitlin Green, 'The British Kingdom of Lindsey', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 56 (2008), pp. 1-43, pp. 2-3.

[103] *AVSC*, V, p. 117. References to Cuthbert's evangelical activities may have been deliberately intended to set him as an ascetic and preacher in the mould of St Martin. McMullen, 'Rewriting', p. 61. Be that as it may, there seems little reason to dispute the existence of *Aechse*.

Chesters.[104] The *Life* states that the people of the area came down from their scattered shielings to hear the great man speak. This short passage is instructive and allows us to catch a glimpse of a *regio* in action, with a central place (presumably the fort itself) acting as the focus for a scattered agrarian community. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that seventh-century *Aechse* represents the survival of the Roman era *territorium* of the fort of Aesica.

That said, it would be unwise to assume that every recorded *regio* of the seventh-century was a survivor from Roman times.[105] Even though the size of the *territoria* earlier postulated for Roman forts is of the same order of magnitude as the *regio*, the dimensions of both are essentially best guesses. That said, the *regio* appears to be one label for type of small territory argued to be common amongst all Indo-European peoples.[106] The size of such territories was, almost certainly, primarily dictated by pragmatic considerations.[107] They were, at heart, units of political and agricultural organisation.[108] They relied on two-way traffic between the estate centre and the wider agricultural hinterland. Ultimately, everything came down to the successful exploitation of the latter by the former. Dues had to be rendered to the estate centre and, given that those rendering the dues had to be able to get there without too much difficulty, one might expect that each individual farmstead would be close enough to the estate centre that people could get there – and ideally back again – in a day. Given that cattle cannot really be driven for more than ten miles a day (and sheep even less) and given also that draft animals are not known for their speed, the need to effectively exploit the agricultural surplus would necessarily ensure that each *regio* was relatively small and that its size was dictated by topographical considerations rather than the whim of

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[104] Bullough, 'Manuscript', p. 118. *Aechse* is often spelled *Ahse*, but it appears that this variant arises from an earlier copying error and is incorrect.
[105] Yorke, 'Gentes and Regna', pp. 396-7. Also Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 8 and Higham, 'Tribal Chieftains', p. 137.
[106] Jones, 'Early Territorial Organization', p. 5. See also Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, pp. 155-6 for a useful summary of the evidence for similar sized units in early medieval Devon, Cornwall and Wales.
[107] This might explain why *regiones* in less agriculturally productive areas of the north were larger than those of peoples such as the *Stoppingas* in the more productive lowlands.
[108] Eagles and Faith, 'Small Shires', p. 159.

overlords.[109] As such – and given that estate centres are likely to have been sited at natural communications junctions and/or in the better land – continuity of any given site need say little about continuity of political administration.

An estate presumably had to produce a large enough surplus to support its owner. That might mean that *regiones* would be bigger in less productive areas, but if journey times to an estate centre were indeed a relevant consideration, it might rather be the case that less productive *regiones* simply had smaller populations. Where the owners of each *regio* sat in the early medieval hierarchy can only be guessed at and may have been fluid in any event. Bassett doubted that an area as small as a *regio* could be regarded as a kingdom.[110] That may be right, but the building blocks of early medieval society in Ireland were small kingdoms that were no bigger than Britain's *regiones*. They formed part of a hierarchy in which 'little kings' were subservient to bigger kings who, in turn, were subservient to even greater overlords. Byrne suggested that at any given time between the fifth and twelfth century, there could have been no fewer than one hundred and fifty kings in Ireland.[111]

There is reason to suspect that a similar model lay behind Britain's *regiones*. The title given to the owner of a particular *regio* (be that a king or, as may be more likely in an area such as Cumbria where the Roman army had been so prominent, a military or civilian title such as *praefectus* or *magistratus*) may not have been of primary importance in the negotiation of power. What was of primary importance was establishing personal links between the owner of each *regio* and their overlord. This was the best – and arguably the only – way for large hegemonies such as Northumbria to function on a day-to-day basis. With no discernible bureaucracy and no standing army, overkings in post-Roman Britain had no effective means of directly controlling large amounts of territory. Their personal retinues may have been

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[109] ibid., p. 160.
[110] Bassett, *Origins*, 18.
[111] Byrne, *Kings*, 7.

sufficiently large to directly govern the overlord's personal territories but, otherwise, they could only control territory indirectly, through personal networks of mutual obligation with the actual owners of land (albeit those networks might often have been established at spear point). Naismith argues that this model of what might be termed 'weak' kingship made it difficult for hegemonies to be established or, one established, to inure for the benefit of the overking's successors.[112] Hard-won overlordship could be lost in a single battle.[113] This model of kingship was common to those areas of Britain under British, Anglo-Saxon and Irish control.[114] In England, at least, it persisted until the eighth or ninth century, when the growth and consolidation of the earlier kingdoms led to the (re) emergence of a rudimentary bureaucracy and the rise of more permanent bases from which power could be projected.[115] However, until that had happened, overkings had no option other than to trust their clients to discharge their obligations and those clients would have retained effective power over their *regio*.

This inability of overkings to directly control land in the post-Roman period may therefore explain why *regiones* were so remarkably long-lasting.[116] The difficulties of using later forms of evidence to reconstruct earlier polities in Cumbria has already been commented upon, but some further comments may be made. The boundaries of modern civil parishes are often used to say something about earlier administrative units. The problem is that those boundaries can be fluid. In all cases where modern civil parish boundaries were consulted

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[112] Naismith, *Early Medieval Britain*, pp. 258-259. The gift to Cuthbert of the estate of Cartmel, discussed above, may show weak kingship in action – the Northumbrian overking obliged to involve his British clients in the giving of the gift.
[113] Byrne notes how Northumbria fell to the Vikings in a single battle. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 30.
[114] Naismith, *Early Medieval Britain*, p. 260.
[115] Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 104, 107.
[116] These exercises are undertaken in, inter alia Jones, *Early Territorial Organization,* Wood*, Craven,* Barrow, *Kingdom of the Scots* and, in relation specifically to Cumbria, in Phythian-Adams, *Cumbrians*, esp. chapters 3 and 4. See also the observations of Nicholas Brooks and John Blair on the antiquity of the territorial divisions of early medieval Kent and Surrey respectively. Nicolas Brooks, 'The creation and early structure of the kingdom of Kent' in Steven Bassett, ed. *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), pp. 69-74. John Blair, 'Frithuwold's kingdom and the origins of Surrey' in Steven Bassett, ed. *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), pp. 98 and 102.

as part of research into this thesis, it transpired that those boundaries had changed.[117] Since

the English Place Name Society volumes on Cumberland were first compiled in the early

1970s, the boundaries of the parishes that comprise the Brampton enclave as discussed in

Chapter 3.4.1 have also been redrawn. Some have been amalgamated with others and/or

have been renamed and/or have ceased to exist entirely. Bolefoot, a candidate for the lost

Bothelford as discussed in Chapter 3.3.3, ceased to be part of Natland parish after the

boundaries of that parish were redrawn at some point after the middle part of the nineteenth

century.

In other cases, the links between known units and putative earlier ones can be more

persuasive. For example, the little Northumbrian shires such as Coldinghamshire,

Islandshire and Norhamshire, first recorded in the eleventh century, may well have been the

same territories of Coldingham, Holy Island and Norham which had been gifted to Cuthbert

four centuries previously.[118] Each one of these shires is roughly the same size as the

putative *regio*. To this list we might also add Yetholmshire, which may have its origins in the

seventh-century grant to the church of twelve individual estates by Oswiu to celebrate his

victory over Penda.[119] The medieval Welsh unit known as the *cantref* appears to be of a

similar size and many *cantrefi* may once have been early medieval (although not necessarily

post-Roman, for the reasons as outlined by Comeau) kingdoms.[120] Although early medieval

kingdoms may have been extremely fluid in terms of extent and longevity, their building

blocks were, by necessity, far more resilient.[121] As Rosemary Cramp put it, time and again

we see links between a Roman period site, early place-names and later medieval territorial

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[117] The significant discrepancy between the stated size of the estate of post-Roman Carlisle and its earliest known diocese has already been commented upon but further underlines the difficulties of using later administrative boundaries to say something about early medieval ones, at least in this part of England.
[118] G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots*, p. 28 and maps pp. 29-31.
[119] ibid., pp. 32-34.
[120] Naismith, *Early Medieval Britain*, pp. 167-168.
[121] Fiona Edmonds, pers comm. Caitlin Green also identifies a number of *regiones* within the early British kingdom of Lindsey. Green, *Britons*, pp. 61-62, 167-200. See also Higham, 'Tribal Chieftains', pp. 140-141. See also Keith Bailey, 'The Middle Saxons' in Steven Bassett, ed. *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), pp. 108-122.

units. The importance of the owners of these building blocks may have diminished over time as new trade networks, literacy and the growing influence of the Church allowed bureaucracy to flourish once again and allowed kings greater scope to exercise direct control over land, but the *regio* remained the basic unit of agricultural exploitation. The link observed by Cramp applies not only to the more visible centres such as Carlisle, but also to less well-known sites such as Papcastle (a Roman fort with a very large civilian settlement which evolved into the first *caput* of the Barony of Allerdale) or Old Carlisle, around which later evolved the barony of Wigton.

In considering the very differing sizes of the various polities listed in the seventh or eighth-century document known as the *Tribal Hidage*, Bassett proposed his highly influential 'FA Cup' model in which the smaller polities stand for the giant-killing teams who, against all the expectations, get through the first few stages only to ultimately fall foul of one of the big sides, represented by the likes of Mercia and Northumbria.[122] The model is based on the assumption that it was a question of when – not if – the smaller kingdoms would be subsumed by the larger ones. However, the resilience of those smaller units might cause us to propose a different model. Like drops of oil in a salad dressing that separate out again if the dressing is left unattended, post-Roman *regiones* may have been temporarily subsumed by one hegemony only to re-emerge as separate units again after that hegemony broke up and before the next one formed. As such, rather than recording the last survivors of a once much larger corpus of small but independent polities, the *Tribal Hidage* may instead simply be a snapshot of one moment in a much longer process of hegemony formation and collapse.

With this in mind, we can return to consideration of the distribution of evidence as built up through Chapters 2 and 3. Each cluster of activity represents a mix of archaeological,

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[122] Bassett, *Origins*, 26-27.

toponymic and historical evidence. It seems reasonable to propose that each of those foci represents an early medieval estate centre. Whether the post-Roman owners of these foci were independent rulers of their own little kingdom, clients of a more powerful king or officers who managed the resources of a royal estate that was part of a circuit for a peripatetic king and his household is impossible to determine.[123] Seventh-century Irish society conceived of a bewildering number of social grades, including three types of king, up to five grades of nobles and up to another six of free farmers.[124] Even the overking only ruled a single kingdom and had no direct authority outside it.[125] Such a system may have been more apparent in the minds of early Irish writers than it was observable on the ground, but it does warn us against making simplistic assumptions about the independence or otherwise of Cumbria's post-Roman *regiones*. Equally, it is not possible to do anything more than guess at the precise geographical extent of each unit or, indeed, the extent to which they were contemporaneous with one another. Yet if consider the aggregated distribution of evidence considered in this thesis, it seems reasonable to conclude that we are looking at a group of nine previously unidentified British *regiones* which formed the backbone of political administration in the post-Roman period.[126]

In some ways, this section may be the most radical of this thesis as a whole. Reconsideration of some of the key pieces of evidence which are usually used to argue for a

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[123] Naismith argues that the sixth and early seventh centuries was the period when Britain became a "patchwork of relatively small kingdoms" that vied with one another for hegemony. Naismith, *Early Medieval Britain*, p.189. The status of the ruler of a post-Roman *regio* may have been very fluid, quick to change with the fluctuations of local and regional politics.

[124] O'Sullivan et al, *Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 80.

[125] Byrne, *Kings*, 41.

[126] The summary tables showing the evidence types in relation to each of these putative *regiones* can be found at Appendix 2. If Byrne was right about the number of petty kings in early medieval Ireland, the island of Ireland's 84,421 square kilometres would give an average size of 562 square kilometres for each polity. Cumbria's 6,768 square kilometres gives each polity an average area of 752 square kilometres, assuming nine foci. However, the foci identified in this thesis are, with two exceptions, clustered in the Eden Valley and the south-westward route from Carlisle to Maryport, in both cases close to the Roman road network. Although only nine foci can be proposed on the basis of the current evidence, there are another three potential candidates (Cartmel, Workington and the area around Dacre). This would give an average size for a Cumbrian regio of 564 square kilometres, which is remarkably close to the Irish estimates.
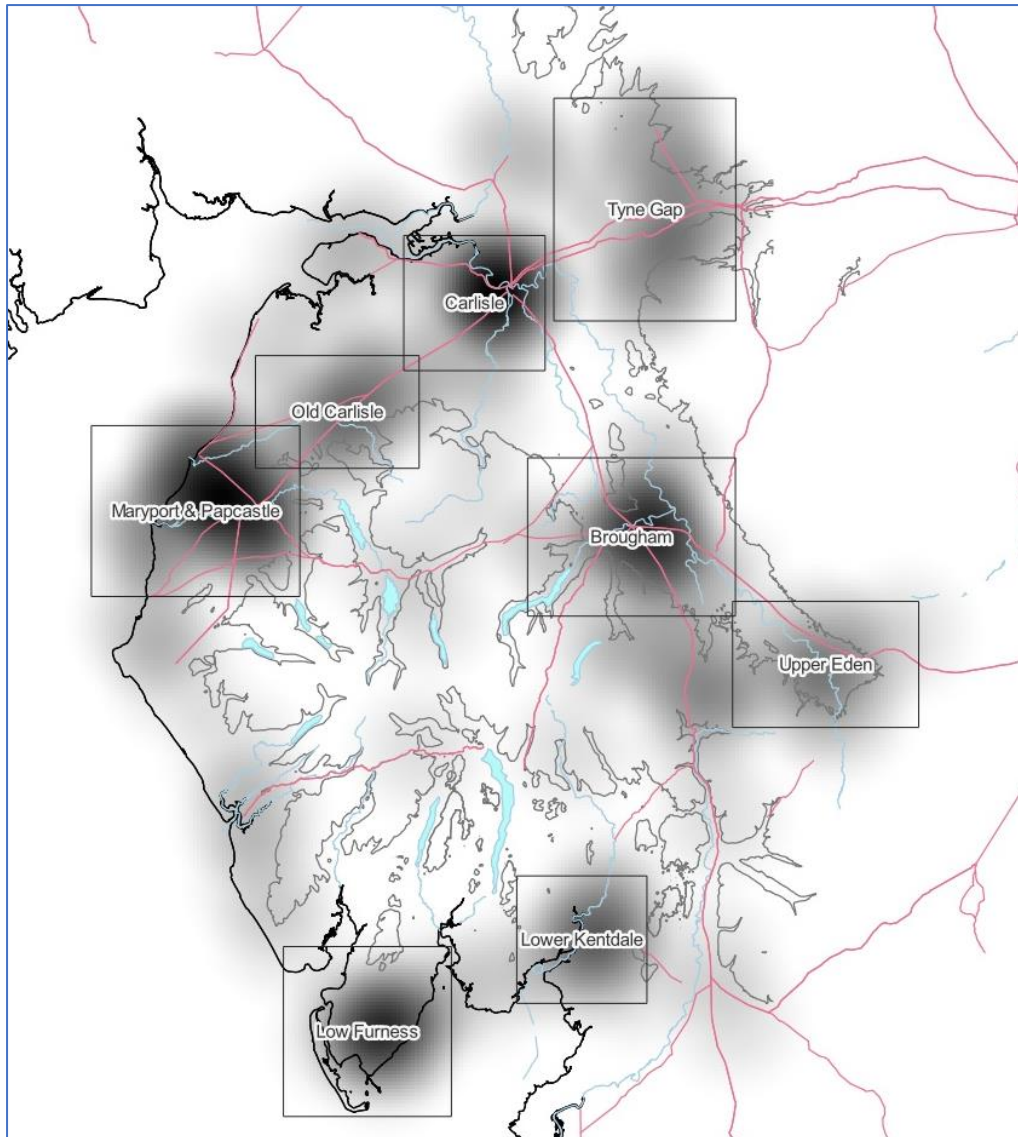
Map 30: Foci and Territoria. The nine most prominent foci are mapped in more detail in Appendix 2.

Northumbrian conquest of Cumbria as part of a seventh-century westward 'push' allows us to conclude that, far from being taken over by the kings of Bernicia, Cumbria remained in British hands for the entirety of the period under consideration in this thesis. Reconstructing post-Roman British history from our fragmentary documentary sources often feels akin to attempting to prepare an inventory of the contents of a lightless cellar by randomly flashing a torch a few times into the gloom. Nevertheless, we can advance some cautious arguments.

The marriage of Rìemmelth and Oswiu allows us to see something of the importance of Urien's line in the mid seventh-century. Not as important as Deira admittedly, but nonetheless sufficiently important that it was worth the king's brother marrying into it. The gifting of Cartmel may well only have been possible with the express consent of Ecgfrith's British allies. Furthermore, *contra* the established orthodoxy, there seems to be little reason to believe that there had been any violent expansion westwards across the Aire Gap at the time Wilfrid supposedly read out details of his bloated property portfolio at his Ripon dedication ceremony.

It seems to be the case that throughout our period, there had been a slow spread of Anglo-Saxon material culture and people into parts of Cumbria, particularly the less populous south of the modern county. Migration and political control are, of course, entirely different phenomena. The paucity of English estates west of the Pennines may well mean that we should regard the *regiones* of Cumbria as clients or allies of the seventh-century kings of Bernicia, rather than their direct subjects.[127] John Koch argued that persisting cultural and linguistic barriers between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons might explain why there is so little information about western events in *EHEP*.[128] Perhaps, but it may well also be the case that the silence is because the kings and leading churchmen of Northumbria simply did not enjoy the same authority over land and people in the west as they did in the east. How long this situation persisted after the seventh century is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is at least possible that Bede's palpable dislike of the Britons and his desire to airbrush them out of his providential account of the rise of the English may have been motivated as much by fear of still-powerful neighbours as by theological or doctrinal differences.

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[127] We have no way of knowing how strong these bonds were, but Oswald's problems with Cadwallon, Oswiu's problems with Penda and his British allies and Bede's comments about how some of the Britons had taken advantage of Northumbrian weakness in his day to reassert a measure of autonomy all suggest that expedience and pragmatism played a greater role than loyalty and genuine friendship.

[128] John Koch, 'Why?', pp. 21-22.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The arguments presented in this thesis allow us to advance a tentative framework for socio-political developments in Cumbria during the post-Roman period. Cumbria's geographical position shielded its early fifth-century inhabitants from many of the ructions that were steadily tearing apart Honorius' crumbling hegemony in the Roman west. Late fourth century barbarian incursions into the western provinces of Continental Europe drew imperial attention and troops away from Britain, but did not leave the northern frontier undefended. A significant number of forts along the line of Hadrian's Wall, down the west Cumbrian coast and along the main road from Carlisle to York remained occupied, in many cases by units who had been in garrison for generations, if not centuries. Hereditary recruitment and local marriage meant that, despite unit names recalling their origins in eastern Europe, Africa and so on, the late Roman *limitanei* of Cumbria were locally recruited and locally rooted. The third-century abandonment of the civilian *vici* around the forts may have led to the reuse of internal fort space as families, traders and other hangers-on moved inside the walls. Although such a move may have provided greater protection against the endemic raiding of the fourth century, in reality it probably had far more to do with the availability of intramural space as the garrisons slowly shrank to a level well below their official paper strength.

Day to day governance at each fort had always been the responsibility of the individual fort commanders who, unlike their men, held their posts in northern Britannia as a step on the military career path. The extent to which fort commanders looked to some centralised frontier authority – either at Stanwix (if the double sized cavalry unit stationed there really did indicate a regional command centre) or York (if it did not) can only be guessed at, but after Constantine's officials were expelled in or about 409, the last garrisons were left to their own devices. The death of Aetius in 454 brought an end to serious attempts to restore Roman

power in northern Gaul. From the mid- fifth-century, it must have become increasingly apparent that Roman authority would never return to the old frontier.

This sundering of Britain from both the Roman bureaucracy and from Roman markets necessitated a shift of focus to local supply if the last garrisons were to maintain themselves. The commanders of Stanwix, Birdoswald, Papcastle *et al* had long drawn on supplies from the agricultural populations of their respective *territoria* and were well placed to continue to exploit the surpluses of their dependent farmers. Unlike (for example) the provinces of Noricum, where the *Life* of St Severinus paints a vivid picture of the decay of Roman life in the face of increasing pressure from groups beyond the *limes*,[1] Cumbria's last garrisons remained the dominant regional power. They had always been able to deal with all but the most serious incursions from beyond Hadrian's Wall and there is little reason to think that Pictish or Irish influence led to a reshaping of Cumbrian identities in the fifth century. To the contrary, Cumbria's exclusion from the fifth-century trade with the eastern Mediterranean and the sixth-century trade with Atlantic Gaul may plausibly be regarded as a conscious rejection of the acquisition of ostentatious material artefacts.[2] If we can accept the notion of a relationship between ostentatious display and political uncertainty, the rejection of such artefacts should properly be regarded as indicating a certain amount of self-assurance in the minds of Cumbria's post-Roman elites. Flirtation with epigraphy (in the form of Class I inscribed stones) was brief, although it may have been Cumbria's soft power which led to the spread of epigraphy and Christianity across what is now south-west and lowland Scotland.

For the bulk of the population working the land, the collapse of imperial exchange networks led to little change in day-to-day life. The key relationship between farm and the local estate centre (be that Carlisle or, as would more usually have been the case, the nearest fort)

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[1] http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/severinus_02_text.htm, accessed 10th March 2016.
[2] In the interests of completeness, it should be noted that a tiny amount of glass at Carlisle *might* belong to this post-Roman trade.

remained unbroken. Cumbria's marginal soils had always meant that there was little or no scope for most producers to generate a sufficient surplus to acquire luxury goods or to build grandiose villas. A steady evolution of architectural style which saw rectilinear buildings slowly begin to replace the traditional Iron Age roundhouse represented pretty much the only visible change in rural settlement morphology over the years of Roman rule.[3] This does not mean, however, that a sense of 'being Roman' had only ever been a thin veneer. Three and a half centuries of inclusion in a Roman province was not merely an interlude. Latin (or more properly the low Latin of the army and its followers) and Christianity had been widely adopted and both survived into the post-Roman period. As such, a simplistic equation between 'Romanitas' and material artefacts which, whilst visible in the archaeological record, only ever formed a tiny proportion of the economic output of the Roman state, is fundamentally flawed. Cumbria's rural population may have been *differently* Roman to their metropolitan or villa-owning cousins in southern Britain or Gaul, but they were no *less* Roman.

Change was, however, more noticeable in Carlisle. As an isolated centre with administrative responsibilities for a huge area perhaps not dissimilar in size to the modern county, Carlisle had a role in a wider bureaucratic infrastructure which no longer existed after Constantine's bid for power failed in 409. The city suffered from the same processes of contraction that were affecting urban centres elsewhere in Britain and the wider western Empire. There was clearly still wealth in the late Roman city – someone had both the means and the desire to maintain their large town house on what is now Scotch Street – but a city with shrinking trade and no administrative function had no purpose. For Carlisle, redefinition saw evolution from a secular administrative centre to an ecclesiastical centre. Positive evidence for pre-Anglian Christianity in Carlisle may be slight and largely inferential, but when the city re-emerges into the documentary record in the late seventh century, it was a vibrant centre of

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[3] For the slow shift to rectilinear structures across Britain, see Carver, *Formative Britain*, pp. 145-146.

nunneries, schools and churches which still boasted at least some of its Roman infrastructure. That said, it was small and whatever else it might have been, it was most unlikely to have been the seat of a major early medieval kingdom, be that Rheged or otherwise.

At some point in the late fifth or early sixth century, the last of the one-time Roman forts were finally abandoned. A synthesis of the archaeological, place-name and historical evidence gives us some idea of where their occupants went. A number of *de novo* centres can be discerned for the first time, some still based on old Roman sites and some not. Several *regiones* emerged, each of which had a central site (or, at least, a core area rather than one specific building or structure *per se*)[4] which functioned as seasonal or temporary meeting-places for the dispensation of justice, delivering up of renders and livestock trading.[5] These seasonal events may also have provided a forum for social interaction for a scattered population whose relative isolation from one another may have been compounded by the practice of transhumance (in the form of driving animals to the upland pastures for the summer months). Brougham in particular has good claim to being a focal point from prehistory throughout the medieval period, but similar longevity can be argued for other sites. The relationship between these little foci is, however, far from clear. The lack of any evidence in pre-Roman Cumbria for the large Iron Age hillforts so visible on the northern bank of the Solway estuary has plausibly been seen as suggestive of greater fragmentation of power in Cumbria. The same phenomena are clearly visible in the post-Roman period, with Cumbria having nothing to rival Scotland's high-status sites such as Castle O'er, Mote of Mark or Trusty's Hill. If fragmentation of power also explains the post-Roman situation, we might think of Cumbria's *regiones* as small, relatively stable units operating within a series of unstable and ever-shifting wider hegemonies.

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[4] For the notion of core areas rather than central sites, see Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 103-138.
[5] Naismith argues that presiding over such assemblies was, alongside conducting war, one of the main tasks of a post-Roman king. *Naismith, Early Medieval Britain*, p. 262.

In addition to these secular foci, a number of other monastic centres may have evolved on the coastal fringes of Cumbria, perhaps using the same type of headland sites which have been noted at Whitby, Hartlepool, Jarrow, Heysham and elsewhere.[6] Workington is the most likely candidate for a Cumbrian equivalent, but further investigations on the Cartmel and Furness peninsulas at Castle Head and at Conishead Priory respectively may be warranted. We might also note that inland ecclesiastical sites which show evidence of great antiquity (such as Ormside and Ninekirks) often ape the siting of the coastal monasteries, being built on bluffs overlooking bends in rivers. As at Carlisle, positive evidence of pre-Anglian activity at these sites is slight, but burials, *ecles place-names and the early stone sculpture from Addingham, Falstead and Dalston speak of British Christian activity. Ongoing religious activity at Bewcastle (where a pre-Roman cult centre was appropriated by the Romans and was later the site of an early Anglian cross) also implies continuity of religious activity in the intervening 'British' period.

The late sixth and seventh centuries are usually seen as a time of violence during which the kings of the British north fought an ultimately unsuccessful defence of their lands against a bellicose and expansionist English Northumbria. However, although we have a reasonable corpus of documentary sources which purport to deal with this period, it must be used with rather more care than it so often is. Tempting as it may be to use the genealogies, annals and the poetry of the *Book of Taliesin* or *Y Gododdin* as a means of reconstructing sixth-century Cumbria as the backdrop of a stirring 'heroic age', the prosaic reality is that fiction, no matter how much it may look like history, is not history in the proper sense.

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[6] Gelling notes that the relative frequency of the place-name element *ēg* (island/dry ground in marsh) in the earliest English records (which are generally considered to be skewed towards monastic sites) may reflect the popularity of such locations for ecclesiastical structures. Gelling and Cole, *Landscape*, p. 36. For the tendency of early Northumbrian ecclesiastical sites to be located in such isolated and liminal positions, see, for example, Stocker, 'Early Church', pp. 105-106 and Foot, *Monastic Life*, pp. 96-100.

Nonetheless, close textual reading *does* allow us to put some flesh on the bones of the archaeological and place-name evidence. The panegyric of the *Book of Taliesin* allows us to catch a glimpse of a society in which political power was built around the personal charisma and martial prowess of cattle-raiding warlords. The nationalist narratives constructed for these warlords in ninth-century Wales are almost entirely a literary confection, but nonetheless, we *can* respectably argue for the historicity of Urien, Gwallawg and others. Similarly, although we may never be able to say with any certainty what Rheged was, still less where it was located, it is still just about possible to use our written sources to fix a handful of other names on a map. The fertile lands of the middle Eden valley *may* once have been called *Llwyvennydd*. Notwithstanding that we cannot recover the names of their *regiones*, we can respectably place Gwenddoleu in the Netherby area and, more speculatively, Dunaut in the Brampton area. A scattering of other names and places from our earliest English sources add to this picture – a *regio* called Aechse near modern Haltwhistle, a *regio* called *Dunatinga* in Dentdale and just perhaps also a *regio* called *Kintis* near Kendal.

The seventh century saw an increase in Anglo-Saxon influence in Cumbria. Sites such as Fremington may indicate a coming together of cultures and ideas as the influence of expansionist Northumbria began to be felt. However, the most plausible answer to the 'Eaglesfield question' posited in Chapter 2.3.3 is that English migration to Cumbria had already been ongoing for some time prior to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to Christianity. These earliest Old English speakers left their mark in a scattering of place-names but left few of the artefacts that are so visible in the material record elsewhere in England. We might therefore conclude that the early migrants to Cumbria adopted local custom in areas such as funerary practice, becoming as 'invisible' to the archaeologist's trowel as the Britons around them.[7]

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[7] As discussed in Chapter 2, this invisibility is slowly beginning to dissipate as we develop new artefact typologies and new techniques for observing ephemeral post-Roman layers.

Growing Northumbrian influence did not, however, take the form of the invasion which so many previous commentators have sought to identify. The marriage of Riemmelth to Oswiu at some point in the 640s should be regarded as a dynastic match which was designed to draw a British power base west of the Pennines closer into the orbit of the Bernician kings.[8] Such a match presupposes that the British were still independent. That this independence was long lived can be inferred from the likelihood that, as late as the second half of the seventh century, Ecgfrith of Bernicia required British consent to grant Cartmel to Cuthbert. We also have the negative evidence of the almost complete lack of mention of any grants of land in Cumbria by the Northumbrian kings. Given the slow contraction of Northumbrian authority after Ecgfrith's death in 685, we can reasonably conclude that if Cumbria was not directly controlled by Northumbria by the end of the period covered in this thesis, it arguably never was.[9]

Such sites as were in what we might loosely term 'English' hands by the end of the seventh century appear with one possible exception to have been ecclesiastical in nature. Cuthbert held Carlisle, Cartmel and Suthgedling and Wilfrid held *regio Dunatinga*. The early English monasteries at Dacre and Workington may have been founded following the gifting of those estates to English overlords, but it is equally possible that these foundations were encouraged by local elites, perhaps keen in the aftermath of the Synod of Whitby to show adherence to the Roman church as a means of protecting their position.

David Rollason once proposed three models which might explain the initial emergence of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria.[10] Insofar as the subsequent assimilation or incorporation of

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[8] The Cumbrian provenance for Riemmelth is discussed in Chapter 4. If the inscription on the Bewcastle Cross has been read correctly, it is tempting to see Riemmelth's hand behind the erection of a monument which commemorated her son, Ahlfrith, and which may have been erected very soon after her husband (who probably deposed Ahlfrith) had himself died.

[9] Alfred Smyth also proposed that the Britons of the North West may have retained independence nearly up to Bede's day. Smyth, *Warlords*, pp. 24-25.

[10] Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 65-66.

Cumbria is concerned, we can propose a fourth. There was no formal cession of power.

There was no violent invasion. Instead, a desire to 'get on' or at least to maintain status in an

Anglo-Saxon world was the trigger which led British Cumbria to start on its long – and often

interrupted – road to becoming part of England.

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THE ROMAN FORTS OF SOUTH CUMBRIA

South Cumbria has a number of known Roman forts (including Ambleside, Watercrook and Ravenglass), but no information as to their Roman-era names. Three documentary sources – the *Notitia Dignitatum* (which was discussed in Chapter 2.2), the *Antonine Itinerary* (a list of routes throughout the Empire which may have had its origins in the early third century) and the *Ravenna Cosmography* (a seventh-century collection of Roman towns and stations) – include place-names which may relate to forts in Cumbria, and specifically in the south of the county.

Of these sources, the *Antonine Itinerary* appears to be the most structured. Although the journeys described often take a somewhat circuitous route to their destination (one route between London and Carlisle crosses the Pennines three times), each route proceeds from station to station, setting out the distance of each leg in Roman miles. Itinerary X ('Iter X') of the British section describes a route which runs north from *Mediolanum* (Whitchurch, Shropshire) via *Bremetonaci* (Ribchester, Lancashire) to the unlocated *Glannoventa*. Between Ribchester and Glannoventa are three other unlocated stations at *Calacum*, *Alone* and *Galava*.

Glannoventa, *Alone* and possibly also *Galava* may appear as *Cantiventi*, *Alunna* and *Gallunio/Calunio* respectively in the Cosmography in a run of stations which are bookended with *Mantio* (most likely Manchester) and *Derventione* (Papcastle).[1] Between *Cantiventi* and *Derventione* are a number of stations which are clearly describing a northward route up Cumbria's west coast and inland via *Iuliocenon*, *Gabrocentio* (Moresby), *Alauna* (Maryport), *Bibra* (Beckfoot) and *Maio* (Old Carlisle).

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[1] Calunio and Gallunio appear as separate stations one after the other, but may be a doublet.

Glannoventa and Alone also appear next to one another in the *Notitia* as *Glannibanta* and

Alione in a list describing sites 'per lineam Valli' ('along the line of the Wall'). This route runs

	Calacum	Alone	Galava	Glannoventa
Meaning of name	(place at the) 'vigourous stream'[2]	'of (the goddess) Iolanus'/ 'the clear/pure one'[3]	(place at the) 'vigourous stream'[4]	'the market on the shore'[5]
Distance from last station (Roman miles)[6]	27	19	12	18
Identification (Haverfield)[7]	Burrow in Lonsdale	Watercrook (Kendal)	Ambleside	Ravenglass
Discrepancy (Haverfield)[8]	+4	0	+5.5	+3
Identification (**Rivet**)[9]	Burrow in Lonsdale	Low Borrow Bridge	Ambleside	Ravenglass
Discrepancy (Roman miles)	+4	+3.5	+14	+3
Identification (**Shotter**)[10]	Lancaster	Burrow in Lonsdale	Low Borrow Bridge	Brougham/Ambleside[11]
Discrepancy (Roman miles)	-3	-4	+10.5	+5/+8
Identification (**Smith**)[12]	Burrow in Lonsdale	Lancaster	*Beetham/Milnthorpe*	Ambleside
Discrepancy (Roman miles)	+4	-4	+3/+4.5	+1.5/+3

Table 13: The northern section of Iter X. Sites in italics have no known Roman remains.

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[2] Kenneth Jackson's proposals are set out in A. L. F. Rivet and Kenneth Jackson, 'The British Section of the Antonine Itinerary', *Britannia*, 1 (1970), p. 74.

[3] For the first derivation, see D. C. A Shotter, 'The Roman name for Lancaster', in eds D. Shotter and A. White, *The Roman Fort and Town of Lancaster* (1990), pp. 12-15. For the second, see David Shotter, *Roman Britain* (Abingdon, 2004), 85 and *PNW*, I, pp. 9-10. For Jackson, the etymology of Alone was unknown. Rivet and Jackson, 'British Section', p. 68.

[4] Rivet and Jackson, 'British Section', p. 74.

[5] Rivet and Jackson, 'British Section', p. 70. On the grounds that 'venta' tends to appear as the first element in Romano-British place-names, I have always been tempted to see the second element as cognate with the second element of *Derventio* ('oak river'), making *Glannoventa* '(at the) banks of the rivers'. This would be an excellent description of Ambleside, where the rivers Rothay and Brathay meet by the fort before emptying into Windermere. Alas, this theory does not appear to be supported by place-name experts.

[6] All distances to *Calacum* are measured from the preceding station, which we know to be Ribchester.

[7] F. Haverfield, 'The Romano-British names of Ravenglass and Borrans (Muncaster and Ambleside), *Archaeological Journal*, lxxii (1915), pp. 77-84.

[8] A Roman mile equates to roughly 0.85 statute miles. All calculations are rounded to the nearest half mile.

[9] Rivet and Jackson, 'British Section', pp. 34-68.

[10] Shotter, 'The Roman name for Lancaster', pp. 12-15.

[11] The principal problem with the first suggestion is that the likely name of Roman Brougham – *Brocavum* – is already known.

[12] Ian G. Smith, 'Some Roman Place-Names in Lancashire and Cumbria', *Britannia*, 28 (1997), pp. 372-383.

southwards to *Glannibanta* via *Gabrosenti* (Moresby) and *Tunnocelo* (probably to be identified with the *Iuliocenon* of the Cosmography) and thence from *Alione* to *Bremetenraco* (Ribchester). The route of Iter X and the locations of the forts have been subject to a number of different interpretations, as shown in tabular form, above.

The same data can also be expressed in more linear fashion. (Table 14, below).

The issue with the proposed routes should be fairly obvious. With one exception (Smith's placing of *Alone* at Lancaster), all of the stations derogate from the actual mileages between the proposed stations, often by a significant margin. The overall length of the four proposed routes (which range from eighty-one Roman miles for Smith's route to ninety-one for Rivet's route) all exceed the stated length of seventy-six Roman miles. Whilst there are undoubtedly errors in the mileages between known stations elsewhere in the British section of the *Notitia*, few of them are recorded as being three or more miles out from the actual distance.[13] If we wish to avoid smashing the emergency glass and making a plea to emendation, we are obliged to conclude that the four proposed routes are all problematic.

We also have to reject the identification of Ravenglass with *Glannoventa*. Two finds from the fort and foreshore at Ravenglass (a lead stamped seal and a military diploma, both of which refer to the *Aeliae classiciae*, a detachment of the fleet stated by the *Notitia* to have been based at *Tunnocelo*) strongly suggest that Ravenglass has to be *Tunnocelo*, thereby creating insurmountable issues with the Haverfield and Rivet routes.

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[13] Rivet and Jackson, 'British Section', p. 38. Of the 141 recorded distances for the British routes, 54 are correct, 42 are out by a mile either way and another 20 are out by two miles.
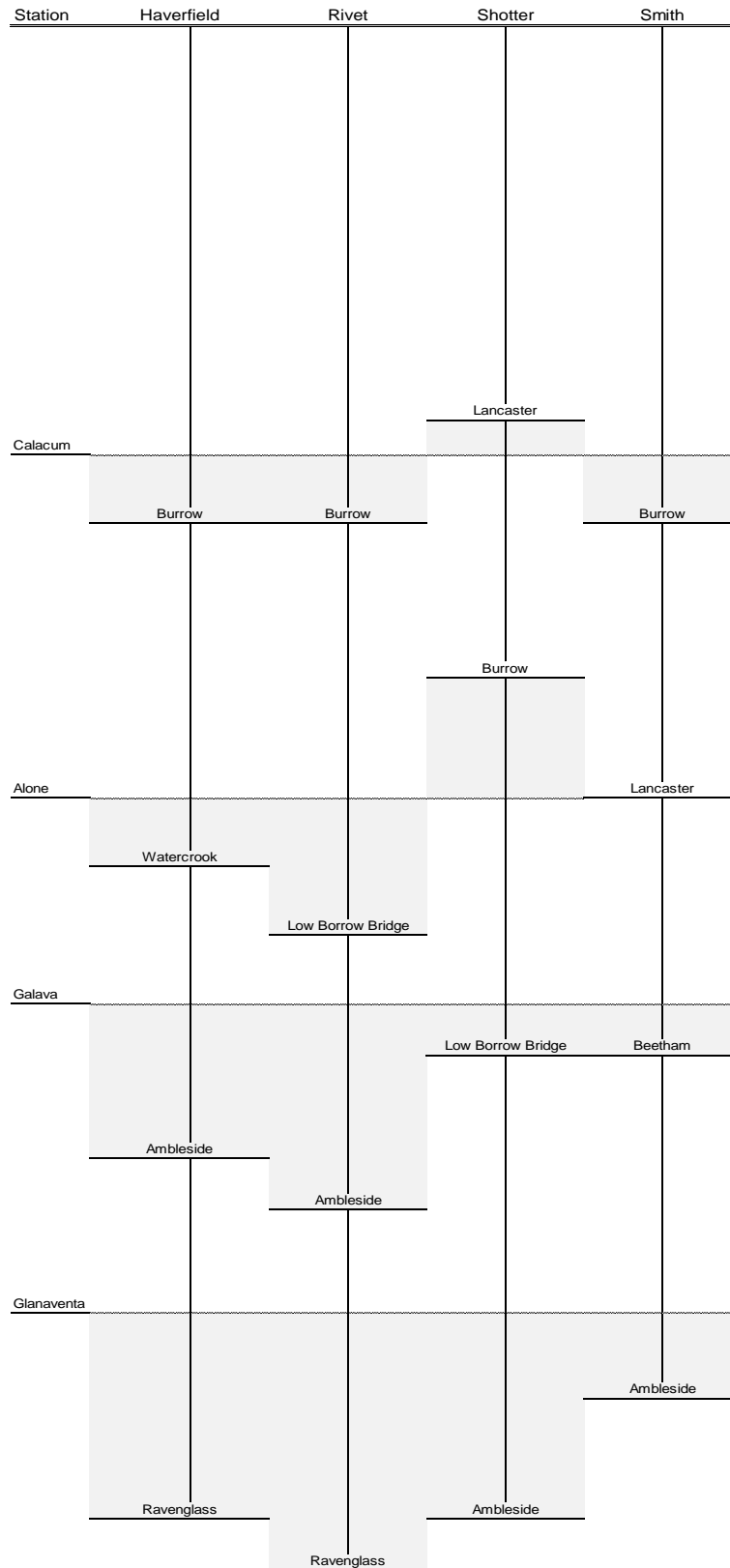
Station	Haverfield	Rivet	Shotter	Smith
			Lancaster	
Calacum				
	Burrow	Burrow		Burrow
			Burrow	
Alone				Lancaster
	Watercrook			
		Low Borrow Bridge		
Galava				
			Low Borrow Bridge	Beetham
	Ambleside			
		Ambleside		
Glanaventa				
				Ambleside
	Ravenglass		Ambleside	
		Ravenglass		

Table 14: Iter X from Ribchester showing discrepancies in mileages for the four proposed routes.

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If we start with a blank piece of paper, the following propositions may be advanced: -

1.   From the *Notitia* and the *Cosmography*, we can conclude that *Glannoventa* lay to the south of *Tunnocelo* (Ravenglass).

2.   From the *Notitia* and the *Cosmography*, we can conclude that *Glannoventa* lay to the north of *Alone*.

3.   *Mediobogdo* lay between *Glannoventa* and *Alone*.

4.   *Mediobogdo* means something like 'in the middle of the river'. The only innominate northern station for which this name would be a good fit is Watercrook, which (as the modern name also makes clear) is situated in a loop of the river Kent.

5.   Following Shotter, the place-name *Alone* should be sought in the Lune Valley.

6.   Lancaster's fort was rebuilt on the 'Saxon Shore' model in the fourth century and remained in use throughout the fourth century, presumably as part of the western coastal defence system.

7.   Lancaster fits the given mileage for *Alone* in Iter X (assuming that the route goes via Burrow in Lonsdale).

Lancaster can, therefore, be proposed as *Alone*, the late fourth-century base of the Third Cohort of Nervians attested in the *Notitia*. Despite the discrepancy in mileage, *Calacum* can be allowed as Burrow in Lonsdale. It is the only known station the right distance north of Ribchester and is sited next to the fast-flowing Leck Beck, which would suit the description of a 'vigourous stream'. The four-mile positive discrepancy at *Calacum* is essentially cancelled out by the four-mile negative discrepancy in the onward route to *Alone,* which means that the overall mileage from Ribchester to Lancaster as given by Iter X is correct.

If *Glannoventa* has to be south of Ravenglass but north of Kendal, the obvious candidate is the fort at Ambleside (as proposed by both Shotter and Smith). Ambleside's fort sat at the

head of Windermere at the junction of a number of Roman routes running north, west and south and which satisfies Jackson's proposed 'shore market'. The route from *Alone* to *Glannoventa* ran for thirty Roman miles via *Galava*. If we follow the most direct route into Cumbria across the sands of Morecambe Bay (which was still the main route as late as the early modern period), the twelve Roman miles from *Alone* to *Galava* takes us across the Kent Sands and to somewhere in the vicinity of Kents Bank/Flookburgh on the Cartmel peninsula. The channel of the Kent would satisfy *Galava's* meaning of 'vigourous stream', especially on the incoming tide, which creates a tidal bore on the river. It is about 21.5 Roman miles in total from Flookburgh to Ambleside, a discrepancy of 3.5 miles from the distance given in the *Notitia*.

The alternative would be to continue west from Flookburgh, making use of the cross-sands route over the Leven Sands. Eighteen Roman miles would take us across the sands to Conishead and then to bottom of the Furness peninsula, where Walney Island shields the tip of the Furness peninsula and gives Barrow its sheltered anchorage. There are no issues with a 'shore market' at such a site. The great weakness with this theory is that no Roman station is known on either the Cartmel or Furness peninsulas. That said, it has long been suspected that there must have been a station at or near Barrow, now lost under the modern town and/or the industrial archaeology of Barrow's enormous nineteenth-century iron and steel works. A station at Barrow would make sense, filling as it would the gap on the Roman coastal defences on the north side of Morecambe Bay and providing the link between Lancaster and the forts of Cumbria's west coast.

	Calacum	Alone	Galava	Glannoventa
Meaning of name	(place at the) 'vigourous stream'	'of (the goddess) Iolanus'/ 'the clear/pure one'	(place at the) 'vigourous stream'	'the market on the shore'
Distance from last station (Roman miles)	27	19	12	18
Alternative identification #1	Burrow in Lonsdale	Lancaster	*Cartmel peninsula*	Ambleside
Discrepancy	+4	-4	0	+3.5
Alternative identification #2	Burrow in Lonsdale	Lancaster	*Furness peninsula*	*Furness peninsula*
Discrepancy	+4	-4	0	0

Table 15: An alternative reconstruction of the northern section of Iter X.

APPENDIX 2

CUMBRIA'S POST-ROMAN FOCI

The distribution of the various evidence types as discussed throughout this thesis and as plotted on the distribution maps are not spread uniformly around Cumbria. There are a number of clusters of evidence which may denote the locations of post-Roman foci. As might be expected, these foci are generally sited along the Roman road network, save for Lower Kentdale, where a road is suspected but not known and Low Furness, which this far is inexplicably blank on maps of Roman Britain. They are also sited on the better agricultural land. Three (Carlisle, Brougham and Upper Eden) are in the Eden Valley. All bar one are situated so as to take advantage of both low lying pasture land and upland. The exception (Maryport) had access to marine resources.

There are nine such foci which are plotted on the map below. Maryport and Papcastle are mapped together due to their proximity to one another. Carlisle has already been discussed in detail in Chapter 4.4 and is not discussed further here. Seven of the nine foci (excluding Upper Eden and Old Carlisle, although Upper Eden has its burial evidence) are also the site of a putative early Christian centre as discussed in Chapter 2.5 and mapped in Map 14.

It is not the case that every piece of evidence for a given area occurs in exactly the same place. To take the Papcastle as an example, the fort at Papcastle, the cemetery at Tendley Hill and the *hām* name at Brigham are two miles or less from one another. It is, however, proposed that each of these three sites are sufficiently close together for them to have had some sort of relationship to one another. The same is true for Brougham, Maryport and Old Carlisle. The evidence from Tyne Gap, Upper Eden, Lower Kentdale and Low Furness is a little more spread out, but in each case is nevertheless felt to be sufficiently closely

distributed (having regard to geography and topography) to warrant each area being regarded as a distinct unit.

Modern names are used to identify each focus. Some of these are the same modern settlement names that have been used throughout this thesis (Brougham, Carlisle, Cockermouth and Maryport). Old Carlisle is the modern name for the Roman fort near the town of Wigton, but as the fort is closer to the focus of activity than is Wigton, Old Carlisle is here used. In other cases, modern terms are used for the locales in which the evidence is to be found. Tyne Gap includes Bewcastle and Birdoswald, which lie about six miles apart as the crow flies. Low Furness includes all of the sites on the Furness peninsula. Lower Kentdale captures all of the evidence along the last five mile stretch of the river Kent before it empties into Morecambe Bay. Upper Eden includes the area around Brough and the villages where possible early pagan burials are clustered. Modern names are deliberately used, as, with the exception of the sound link between Bede's *Luel* and modern Carlisle and the possible link between Brougham and the *Llwyvenydd* of the Urien poems in the Book of Taliesin, we do not know the post-Roman names of any of these foci and probably never can know them. Any attempt to link any of the other foci with names drawn from texts discussed in Chapter 4 would simply be an exercise in guesswork.

The key evidence types (those most indicative of possible high-status secular or ecclesiastical activity) relating to each focus are then plotted on the table which follows each map. There is then a brief discussion of each focus.

The political, social and temporal relationships between these foci remains elusive. Maryport and Papcastle are very close to one another geographically, yet the distribution of evidence for each of them suggests that they were two distinct entities. By contrast, the straggle of evidence along the Upper Eden valley and its tributaries is much less easy to organise into distinct units. The evidence from the Tyne Gap is focussed almost entirely on the two sites at

Birdoswald and Bewcastle. The former appears to have had its heyday in the fifth-century, whereas much of the evidence pertaining to the latter may be focussed on the late sixth- or seventh-century. That Bewcastle succeeded Birdoswald as the political centre of the Irthing valley and the approaches east is possible, but remains an unproven – and probably unprovable – hypothesis.
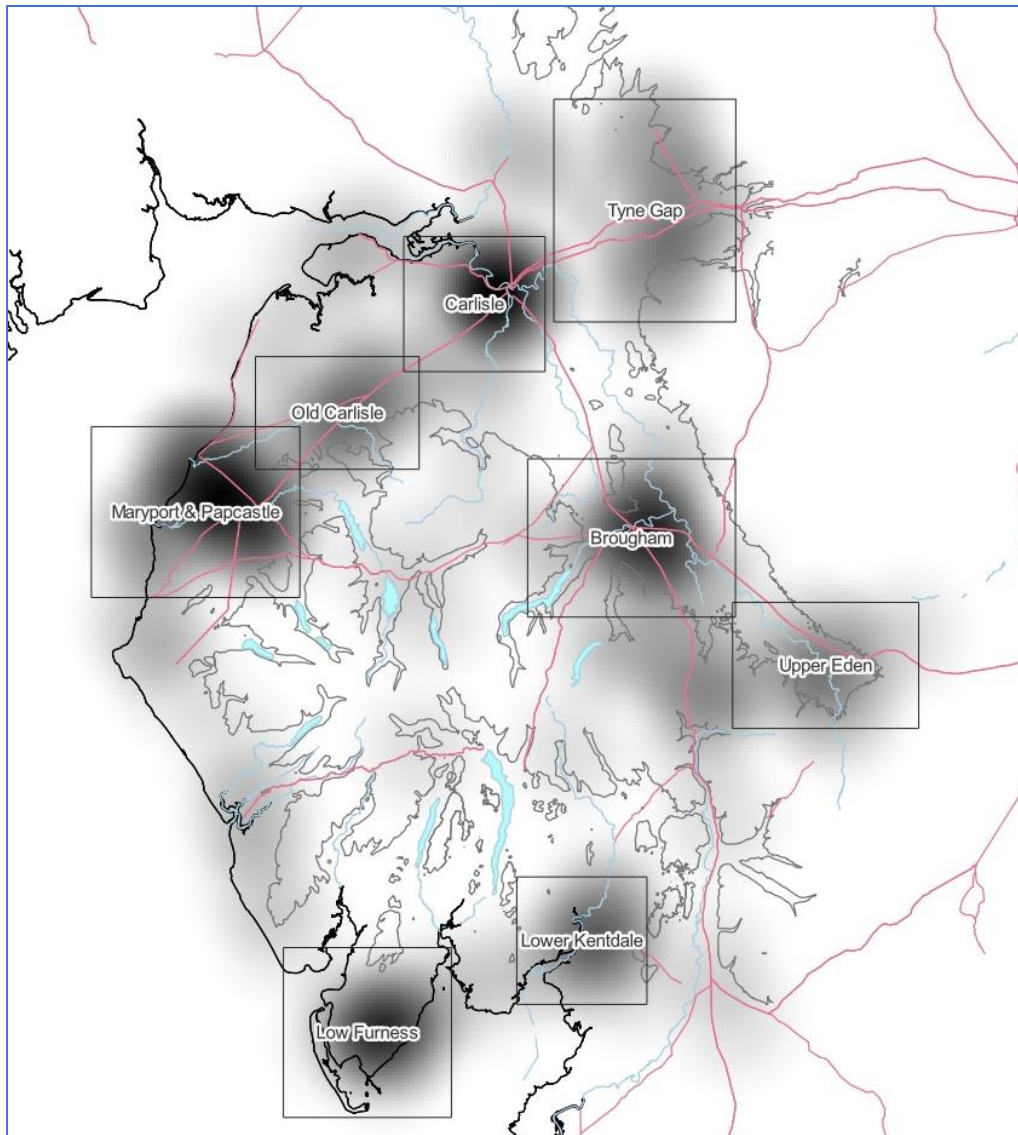
Map 31: Cumbria's post-Roman regiones?

It would also be unwise to attempt to say much about the evolution of these sites during the post-Roman period. It is true that all of them have both evidence for both British and Anglo-Saxon activity (using these phrases solely in the cultural and linguistic sense that was defined in Chapter 1.3), but to seek to argue (for example) that Old English speakers took these foci over from Brittonic speakers would be unwise. Many of the foci most likely owe their longevity to their position on established routeways or to the quality of the local land. The processes that led to language change or to changes in fashion in material artefacts may have been both subtle and lengthy. Nonetheless, if dots on distribution maps do not delude us into seeing patterns where none actually exist, it may be the case that at least some of them represent Cumbrian *regiones* of the sort that have been identified elsewhere in northern England and southern Scotland.

The location of the foci generally conform to what we know of *regiones* elsewhere. There is a clear relationship to communications networks (Roman roads in the north and the cross-sands route in the south) and natural communication corridors (principally the main river valleys such as the Eden and the Kent). Each focus is situated on areas of (relatively) good farming land, but with access to the uplands of either the Lake District or the North Pennines, which presumably fulfilled the same role as areas of seasonal and common exploitation as do the common pastures of the south.[14]

A number of other sites discussed do not appear on the list but deserve mention in passing. As argued in Appendix 1, a Roman road from Lancaster may well have connected Cumbria's southern peninsulas. The Cartmel peninsula would have been on this route. Cartmel is mentioned in the context of the gift to Cuthbert (as discussed in Chapter 4.4), has a *burh* name and (in the current writer's opinion, at least), the unexplored site at Castle Head (as

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[14] Eagles and Faith, 'Small Shires', pp. 160-161. The references in *Pais Dinogad* to hunting and fishing in what the writer believes to be the Lake District valley of Borrowdale would seem to show this exploitation in practice. The mention in *AVSC* of Cuthbert preaching to those who had come down from their shielings to hear him speak is suggestive of the same.

discussed in Chapter 2.5.3). There may well have been activity on the Cartmel peninsula and if there was, the place-names Staveley-in Cartmel and Cartmel Fell may give an indication of the size of a putative Cartmel polity (which would have been broadly in line with the estimates given for the northern *regiones* discussed above and which, like the sites discussed below, comprised a mix of lowland and upland). The potentially early Christian site at Workington is very close to Maryport and also to the scatter of possible early burial sites along the West Cumbria coast. The early medieval monastery at Dacre is very close to Brougham. It may be that these three sites hint at other one-time centres in Cumbria's fascinating early medieval history.

	Chapter Ref	C	TG	B	UE	LK	LF	M&P	OC
Occupation at Roman fort	*2.2*	Y	Y					Y	
Class I Stone	*2.3*		Y	Y				Y	Y
Burial evidence	*2.5*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Other Christian activity	*2.5*	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	
Structural evidence	*2.4/2.6.1*	Y	Y	Y					
Chance Find	*2.6.2*					Y	Y	Y	Y
Caer p.n.	*3.2.1*	Y	Y						Y
ecles p.n.	*3.2.2*						Y	Y	
Cæster p.n.	*3.2.2*	Y	Y			Y		Y	Y
Hām p.n.	*3.3.2*		Y	Y			Y	Y	
Boðl p.n.	*3.3.3*		Y			Y	Y	Y	Y
Burh p.n.	*3.3.4*			Y	Y	Y		Y	
Textual reference	*4*	Y		?		?		?	?

Table 16: Consolidated table: key evidence types. Key: C (Carlisle), TG (Tyne Gap), B (Brougham), UE (Upper Eden), LK (Lower Kentdale, LF (Low Furness), M&P (Maryport & Papcastle), OC (Old Carlisle).

Tyne Gap
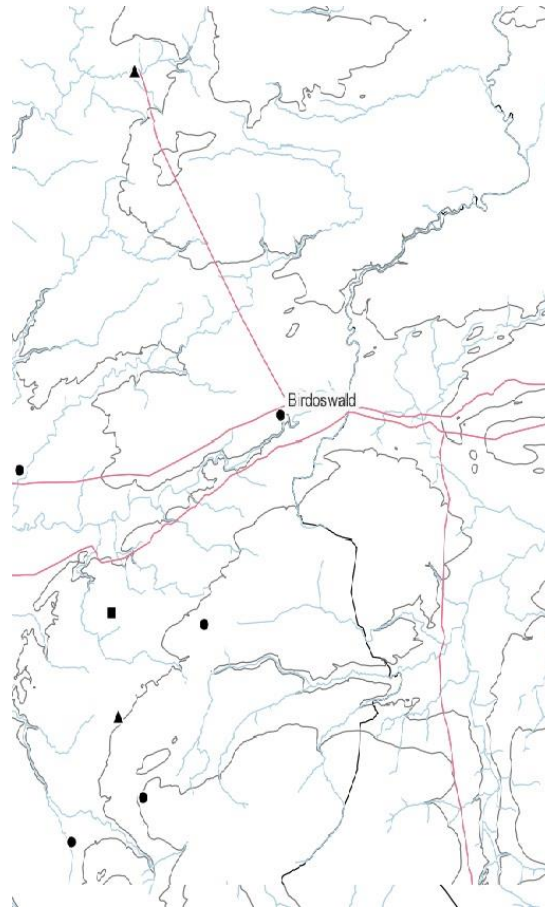
Map 32: The Tyne Gap focus

Evidence type	Chapter Ref	Site
Occupation at Roman fort	2.2	Birdoswald
Class I Stone	2.3	Castlesteads
Burial evidence	2.5	Birdoswald
Other Christian activity	2.5	Bewcastle &Birdoswald
Structural evidence	2.4/2.6.1	Bewcastle, Birdoswald, Brampton Old Church & Hawkhirst
Caer p.n.	3.2.1	Carnetly, Cardunneth & Castle Carrock
Cæster p.n.	3.2.2	Bewcastle
Hām p.n.	3.3.2	Farlam

Table 17: Tyne Gap – summary of key evidence

Centre: Tyne Gap may have two central places - the two erstwhile Roman sites of Bewcastle and Birdoswald. Birdoswald is situated on Hadrian's Wall and at the junction between the main east-west road and the northern spur to Bewcastle.

Communications: The main Roman roads from Carlisle to South Shields ran through the Tyne Gap, parallel to (and south of) Hadrian's Wall. A spur ran north from Birdoswald to Bewcastle, linking the two sites that later became the foci of post-Roman activity.

Continuity: Birdoswald's post-Roman halls mean that the site has good claim to being a post-Roman centre, although probably not for the entirety of the period under consideration. Like the other Roman forts for which there is evidence of fifth-century occupation, Birdoswald appears to have fallen out of use (at least as a permanently inhabited site) by the end of the fifth century. By contrast, Bewcastle's likely role as a Roman religious centre and the subsequent choice of the site for the erection of the culturally Anglo-Saxon Bewcastle Cross suggests that it remained important for the whole post-Roman period. The meaning of Bewcastle's place-name suggests *either* that its use as a seasonal meeting place was of more significance that its ornate sculpture, or that such activity predated the raising of the cross.

Topography: Tyne Gap's 'infield' comprises the Irthing valley (which cuts through the North Pennines and allows access to the Tyne river system) and the lowlands around Brampton. The 'outfield, comprises the North Pennines themselves.

Legacy: The uplands east of Brampton and south of the Irthing later became the King's Forest of Geltsdale, suggesting ongoing use as an aristocratic hunting ground. Much (or all) of the putative Tyne Gap polity was subsumed into the barony of Gilsland whose hereditary

owners the Howards of Naworth, were prominent in the Anglo-Scottish border turmoil of the medieval period.

Additional Comments: The Tyne Gap polity lies within the Brampton Enclave and, as such, has a significant corpus of Brittonic and part-Brittonic names. Although early fifth-century activity is close to the road, Bewcastle and the four place-names denoting high-status sites (three *caers* and one *hām*) are all sited away from the road. This seems to represent a shift in focus during the post-Roman period and this shift makes Tyne Gap unusual when compared to Cumbria's other foci. It may simply be that the road did not cross the better agricultural land, or it may be that the road came to bring unwelcome traffic in the form of eastern raiders from British Gododdin or Anglo-Saxon Bernicia.

Brougham
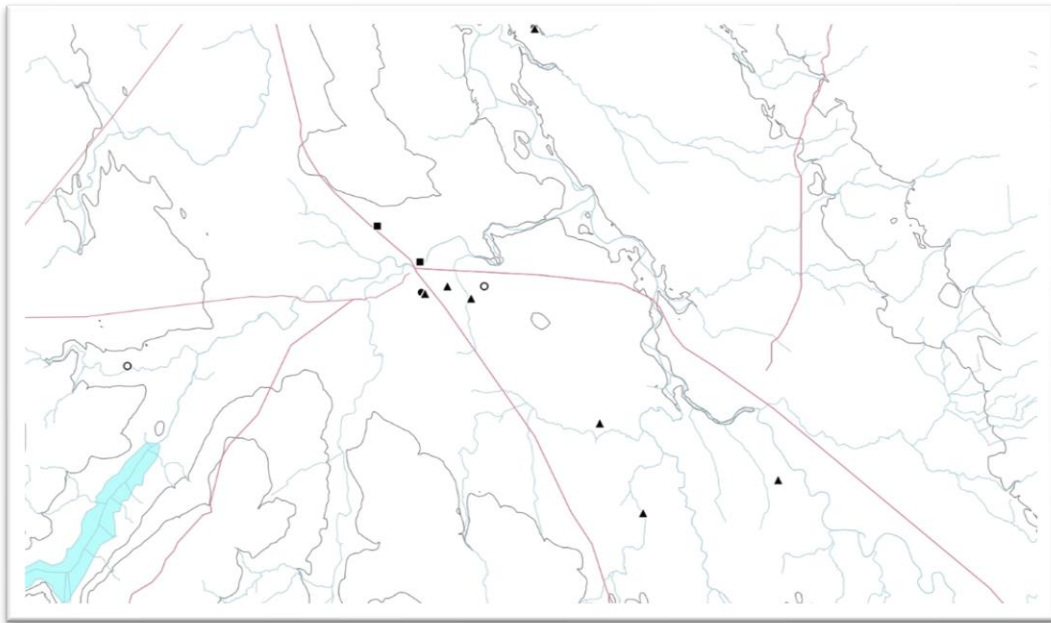
Map 33: The Brougham focus

Evidence Type	Chapter Ref	Site
Class I Stone	2.3	Brougham
Burial evidence	2.5	Morland
Other Christian activity	2.5	Brougham, Dacre & Addingham
Structural evidence	2.4/2.6.1	Brougham, Fremington & Lyvennet
Hām p.n.	3.3.2	Brougham & Addingham
Burh p.n.	3.3.4	Brougham
Textual reference	4	See below

Table 18: Brougham – summary of key evidence

Centre: The clear centre of the Brougham focus is in and around the site of the old Roman fort.

Communications: Brougham is located at a key communications junction where the road from York to Carlisle (which drops off Stainmore into the Eden Valley) joined the road between Carlisle and Chester. It is, to all intents and purposes, the western equivalent of Catterick. Other roads headed west to the Cumbrian coast and south west through the Lake District to the fort at Ambleside.

Continuity: Continuous activity throughout the late Roman and post-Roman period. British secular activity (at the fort and in the Lyvennet valley) gave way to likely Anglian secular activity at Fremington, just south of the fort. British ecclesiastical activity (at the Ninekirks site and possibly also at Dacre) gave way to Anglian ecclesiastical activity at Dacre.

Topography: The 'infield' of the Brougham polity is the fertile middle Eden valley, although the evidence is generally clustered around the Eden's tributaries (notably the Eamont and Lyvennet). The 'outfield' is the extensive tracts of upland on both sides of the valley (the North Pennines to the east and the northern Lake District fells to the west) and to large bodies of fresh water (notably Ullswater and, of course, the Eden itself).

Legacy: Brougham's medieval castle was built in one corner of the Roman fort, confirming the ongoing importance of the site. Settlement activity moved a short distance to the north at Penrith, probably in the ninth or tenth century, although the modern road network still converges at Brougham. The river Eamont was the site of a tenth-century meeting between Athelstan of Wessex and a confederation of northern rulers, suggesting ongoing significance, including perhaps as a border (a role it maintained until 1974, when Cumberland and Westmorland were amalgamated to form Cumbria).

Additional Comments: Although great care must be taken when assigning names derived from the documentary sources to real world places, the Brougham polity may be cautiously identified with the Llwyvenydd of the Urien poems.

Upper Eden
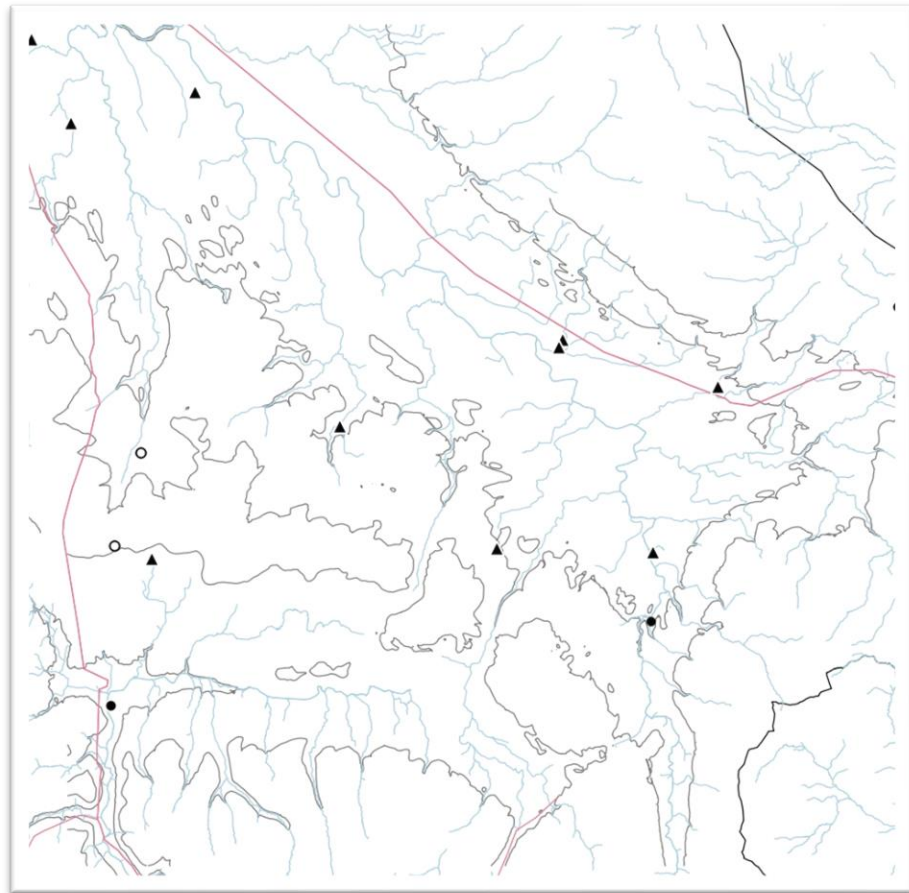
Map 34: The Upper Eden focus

Evidence Type	Chapter Ref	Site
Burial evidence	2.5	Asby, Warcop, Crosby Garrett, Kirkby Stephen & Orton
Other Christian activity	2.5	Tebay
Structural evidence	2.4/2.6.1	Orton?
Burh p.n.	3.3.4	Brough

Table 19: Upper Eden – summary of key evidence

Centre: Upper Eden is the least cohesive of the nine proposed foci and owes its place in the list largely to the cluster of possible early Anglo-Saxon burials on and around Orton Scar.

Although Brough might be thought of as the obvious focal point for any polity (being sited on the Roman road at the point it drops off the uplands and into the fertile Eden Valley), Orton Scar is potentially of greater strategic value at a local level, representing as it does the wedge of high ground that overlooks the roads running up both the Eden and Lune valleys. It remains possible that Upper Eden was simply part of the better attested middle Eden polity based on Brougham. Until (or unless) further archaeological data is forthcoming, the question must remain open.

Communications: Orton Scar proves a vantage point over, and easy access to, the roads running north from Chester and north west from York before they ultimately meet at Brougham. Brough itself guards the Eden Valley route.

Continuity: The evidence for continuity throughout the post-Roman period is predicated on accepting a) a British cultural context for the single cist at Kirkby Stephen and/or the incised markings on the now-lost Brandreth Stone and b) an Anglo-Saxon cultural context for the burials on and around the Eden/Lune watershed.

Topography: The Eden and Lune valleys were both (relatively) densely populated in the Roman period. The 'infield' is the two valley floors, which provide good agricultural land – indeed, in the case of the Eden Valley, the best in Cumbria. As with Tyne Gap and Brougham, the 'outfield' is the North Pennines, that rises on both sides of both valleys.

Legacy: As at Brougham, Brough's medieval castle was built within the boundaries of the Roman fort. The modern county boundary with Durham is located at the site of the Rey Cross, on the uplands just east of Brough and is another candidate for the medieval boundary between England and Scotland.

Additional Comments: In the event that the burials prove not to be of post-Roman date,

Upper Eden's status as a putative polity in its own right falls away.

Lower Kentdale

Map 35: The Lower Kentdale focus

Evidence Type	Chapter Ref	Site
Burial evidence	2.5	Heversham & Beetham
Other Christian activity	2.5	Heversham
Chance Find	2.6.2	Kendal
Hām p.n.	3.3.2	Heversham & Beetham
Cæster p.n.	3.2.2	Hincaster
Boðl p.n.	3.3.3	Bothelford
Burh p.n.	3.3.4	Burton in Kendal
Textual Reference	4	See below

Table 20: Lower Kentdale – summary of key evidence

Centre: Ecclesiastical activity is focussed around Heversham, the point where the Kent widens to join Morecambe Bay. The place-names of Heversham and Beetham are just two and a half miles apart and suggest early estate centres. Further north, the lost name of

Bothelford suggests a notable structure, perhaps with some relationship to the small prehistoric hillfort on top of the Helm, a ridge just to the south of Kendal that commands open views over the old Roman fort at Watercrook and up the Kent valley. The focus of later medieval activity moved to Kendal itself.

Communications: The Roman road network in this part of Cumbria has always proved elusive, although the fort at Watercrook must have been connected at least to Lancaster to the south and Ambleside to the north. The main route through the region was, arguably, the cross-sands route that linked – and still links – Lower Kentdale to the Cartmel and Furness peninsulas. That route is likely to have lain to the south of the Lower Kentdale focus. The sites are all scattered along the corridor of the modern A6, a route which, in places, follows the earlier Roman road network (such as the stretch between Penrith and Carlisle). If, as seems likely, Watercrook *was* connected to Lancaster, it is quite possible that the A6 now follows that route.

Continuity: Unless the burials at Heversham are indeed Christian burials from the early post-Roman period (in which case there is continuity from a culturally British to a culturally Anglo-Saxon context at that one place), the evidence otherwise suggests that activity was concentrated towards the end of the period considered by this thesis. Culturally British activity is largely inferential, although later place names such as Brettargh attest to the presence of recognisably British groups in or from the ninth century, when Hiberno-Norse influence began to make itself felt.

Topography: The 'infield' of the putative *regio* is the Kent valley itself, which steadily narrows over the course of its twelve-mile length from the sea to the southern fells of the Lake District. The 'outfield' is represented by the Lake District but also by the fisheries of Morecambe Bay itself.

Legacy: The likely western extent of the polity is the river Winster, which until 1974 marked the boundary between Westmorland and Lancashire. The Norman barony of Kendal was one of the principal administrative divisions of Westmorland, although covered a significantly larger area than any putative post-Roman *regio*. The *HSC* refers to a monastery at Heversham in the early tenth-century.

Additional Comments: The salt marshes and sands of the Kent estuary fit the liminal locations that appear to have been favoured by early monastic communities. This perhaps explains the Christian activity at Heversham. The relative lack of activity at Kendal itself (a place occupied in the Roman period and again in the later medieval period) is notable, although it is possible that Cuthbert's estate of Suthgedling was somewhere in that area. It is also possible that *regio Kintis* is to be identified with the Kent valley.

Low Furness
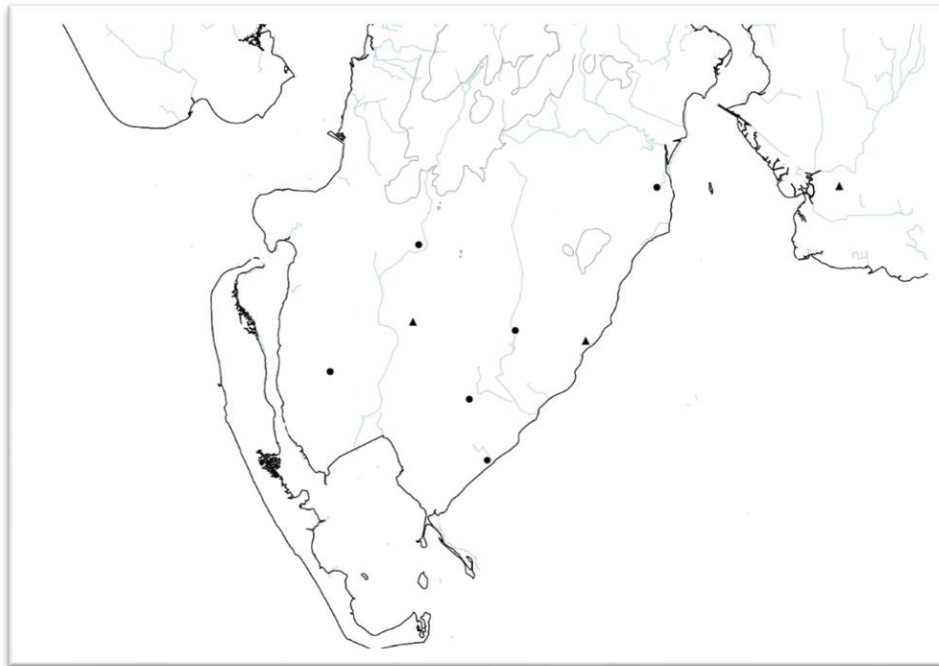
Map 36: The Low Furness focus

Evidence Type	Chapter Ref	Site
Burial evidence	2.5	Roosebeck
Other Christian activity	2.5	Rampside & Aldingham
Chance Find	2.6.2	Ulverston, Barrow & Dalton
Llys p. n.	3.2.1	Leece
ecles p.n.	3.2.2	*Eglisfylde*
Hām p.n.	3.3.2	Aldingham
Boðl p.n.	3.3.3	*Fordbottle*

Table 21: Low Furness – summary of key evidence

Centre: The central place of the putative Low Furness *regio* is uncertain. The three names that might denote a central place (Aldingham, Leece and *Fordbottle*) are all located in the southern half of the peninsula, below the point at which the cross-sands route reaches dry land just south of modern Ulverston.

Communications: Furness has always been a blank spot on maps of the Roman road network. For the reasons as advanced in this thesis (and especially Appendix 1) is seems unlikely that there was no route through Furness and equally unlikely that Roman authorities would have tolerated a gap in the western coastal defence system stretching from Ravenglass to Lancaster. It is the contention of this thesis that a Roman road used the cross-sands route from the Cartmel peninsula to Ulverston and then progressed in a roughly straight line to reach the Duddon sands crossing into Copeland. If this is correct, post-Roman activity was concentrated on the lower land to the south of that routeway.

Continuity: Early post-Roman Christian activity seems likely at *Eglisfylde* (the location of which was close to (or at) the point where the cross-sands route made land) and possible at Roosebeck. A small group of Brittonic names in the immediate area, including Roose itself (which derives from a Cumbric word cognate with Welsh *rhos* – moor) and three diagnostically British finds (a small group, but nevertheless one representing over a quarter of the total number of confirmed post-Roman chance finds from the county) lends support to the notion of an early British centre, perhaps centred at nearby Leece, notwithstanding that uncertainties over Leece's etymology must be recognised. Later interpolation of Viking burials at Rampside certainly suggests the existence of a recognisably religious space beyond the end of the post-Roman period.

Topography: The 'infield' of Low Furness is the land of the peninsula itself, which comprises low-lying pasture. North of Ulverston, the Furness fells form a low, southern outlier of the Lake District massif that gives way to much higher fells, notably around Coniston. This area

is 'High Furness'. The 'outfield' is a mix of High Furness, together with the salt marshes of Morecambe Bay and the freshwater resources of Coniston Water and Windermere.

Legacy: The religious character of *Eglisfylde* survives to this day in the Buddhist community that now occupies Conishead Priory. The religious legacy of the peninsula as a whole is amply attested by Furness Abbey, once one of the great houses of northern England. In territorial terms, a number of 'in-Furness' place-names (Barrow, Dalton, Lindal, Kirkby and Broughton) suggest the extent of the earlier polity, capturing all of the land between the rivers Leven and Duddon and the uplands as far north as Little Langdale in the Lake District, where the Three Shires Stone (very close to Tilberthwaite) marks the boundary of the ceremonial counties of Lancashire, Westmorland and Cumberland. Furness survived as one of the two divisions of Lancashire North-of-the-Sands (Cartmel being the other).

Additional Comments: As with Castle Head and Heversham, *Eglisfylde* is located in a liminal position, on the very edge of the Morecambe Bay sands. Furness retains a strong local identity, perhaps partially as a result of its perceived modern isolation (the main A590 road from the M6 motorway is known locally as 'the longest cul-de-sac in England'). Although it is the contention of this thesis that there is insufficient evidence to say with any certainty that modern boundaries reflect early medieval ones, the homogeneity of modern Furness may well recall the extent of the post-Roman polity.

Maryport & Papcastle
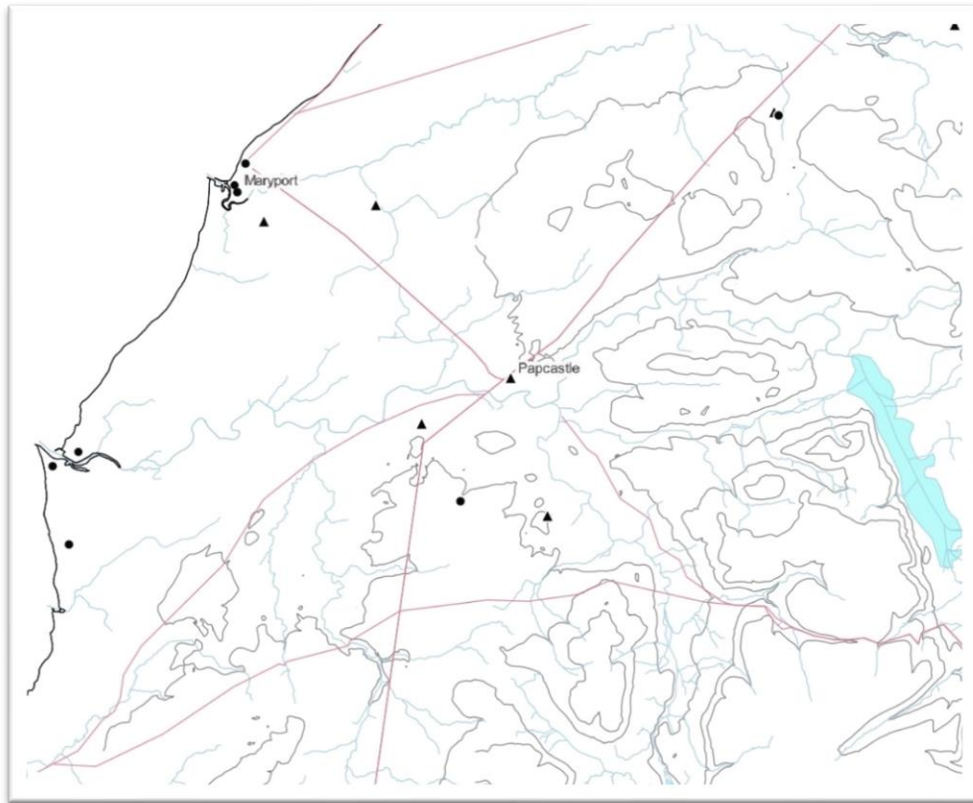
Map 37: The Maryport & Papcastle foci

Centres: The area immediately around the Roman fort at Maryport was the centre of the Maryport focus. Post-Roman activity appears to have been focussed on an open country site just outside the fort walls; it is possibly the case that the Roman harbour (which lay just below the fort, rather than at the mouth of the Elen where it lies today) dictated the choice of site. The evidence for Papcastle is more nugatory, but as much of the evidence is clustered in small area around the road junction and the crossing of the Derwent, it seems plausible that the old Roman fort remained the local assembly place even after post-Roman occupation at the site had come to an end.

Evidence Type	Chapter Ref	Maryport site	Papcastle site
Occupation at Roman fort	2.2	Maryport	Papcastle
Class I Stone	2.3	Maryport (x2)	
Burial evidence	2.5	Maryport	Eaglesfield
Other Christian activity	2.5	Maryport	Brigham
Chance Find	2.6.2		Cockermouth
ecles p.n.	3.2.2		Eaglesfield
Cæster p.n.	3.2.2		Papcastle
Hām p.n.	3.3.2	Dearham	Brigham
Boðl p.n.	3.3.3		Blindbothel
Burh p.n.	3.3.4	Ellenborough	
Documentary evidence	4		See below

Table 22: Maryport & Papcastle – summary of key evidence

Communications: Papcastle sits at a major road junction, where the main road south west from Carlisle linked to the spur road running north west to Maryport and then split to head in the direction of unknown locations around St Bees Head and presumably further south to Ravenglass. Maryport was one link in the chain of Roman coastal defences down the Cumbrian coast and is also a candidate for a one-time fleet base of the Roman navy. It is notable that many of the other forts in that chain have also produced evidence of post-Roman occupation, even if not on the scale of Maryport. Maryport may even have been the point of embarkation from which Christianity spread into Galloway in the post-Roman period.

Continuity: The results of the Maryport Temples Project, when taken with the two Class I stones, provide good evidence of both secular and Christian activity in the fifth century. Culturally British activity at Papcastle (again both secular and Christian in character) is attested by the hints of post-Roman occupation at the fort and by the name and the burials from Eaglesfield, a short distance to the south. Evidence for culturally Anglo-Saxon activity

derives largely from the place names but suggests that both sites remained focal throughout the post-Roman period. Brigham's name in particular attests to the continued existence (and continued use) of a presumably Roman bridge over the Derwent, just south of the Maryport junction.

Topography: Maryport lies on the lowlands of the Cumbrian coast. Its outfield would presumably have been the Irish Sea. Papcastle lies on the same belt of lowland, but at its eastern edge, where the north-western fells of the Lake District rise up from the coastal plain.

Legacy: Papcastle was the first *caput* of the later Norman barony of Allerdale, although the focus of activity subsequently moved to Cockermouth, a short distance to the east. The medieval town was important and co-hosted Cumberland's assize courts with Carlisle There is still a bridge at Brigham. Maryport, by contrast, dwindled in importance until the Industrial Revolution.

Additional Comments: The relationship between the two foci is hard to decipher. They have been discussed together for convenience, but their proximity need not imply any connection between the two areas in the early medieval period (although neither does it preclude it). That there were two post-Roman centres existing contemporaneously around six miles apart seems clear, but what that meant in terms of administration or exploitation of resources remains unknown. To allow ourselves to delve briefly into unwarranted speculation, one might wonder whether Dearham's old English name, meaning as it does something like *hām* of the deer, recalls something of the Roman-era *Carvetii* ('the deer people'). It is also tempting to wonder whether *Pais Dinogad* recalls a trip into the outfield of the Papcastle *regio* by one of its inhabitants.

Old Carlisle

Map 38: The Old Carlisle focus

Evidence Type	Chapter Ref	Site
Class I Stone	2.3	Old Carlisle
Chance Find	2.6.2	Mealsgate
Caer p.n.	3.2.1	Caermote
Cæster p.n.	3.2.2	Old Carlisle (Palmcastre)
Boðl p.n.	3.3.3	Boltons, Boltongate & Bothel
Textual reference	4	Palmcastre

Table 23: Old Carlisle – summary of key evidence

Centre: The one-time Roman fort at Old Carlisle is the obvious centre although Caermote, a few miles to the south west of Old Carlisle and away from the known road network, may also be a candidate.

Communications: The Old Carlisle focus straggles along the main Roman road south west from Carlisle to Papcastle. It has no obvious relationship to either of the spur roads to Maryport (the southern spur at Papcastle and the northern spur that splits from the main road a few miles to the north east of Old Carlisle). However, four of the nine foci considered in this thesis have some relationship with this communications corridor (Carlisle, Old Carlisle, Maryport & Papcastle), which strongly suggests that it remained an important routeway in the post-Roman period.

Continuity: Unlike Brougham, Maryport and Papcastle, the fort at Old Carlisle appears to have fallen out of use by the late Roman period. Culturally British activity is represented by the Mealsgate brooch, the name of a second Roman fort at Caermote and, at Old Carlisle itself, the Tancorix stone and the passing reference in the marginal notes of one surviving copy of *HB* that links Vortigern's *Caer Guorthegirn* to a place known in English as *Palmcastre*. A positive link between either of these names and Old Carlisle is, however, based solely on inference. In addition to *Palmcastre*, the area has a number of *boðl* names spread along the Roman road to the south west of the fort, suggesting ongoing activity in a culturally Anglo-Saxon context. Bothel and Caermote are close to one another.

Topography: The Old Carlisle focus is situated on low lying lands of west Cumbria. This area (sometimes known as the Carlisle plain) begins to narrow south of Old Carlisle as the western fells of the Lake District come ever closer to the Irish Sea. The infield of the focus is the wide pastureland around the modern town of Wigton. The outfield was presumably the north-western fells of the Lake District, above Bassenthwaite Lake, and perhaps also the northern section of the coast.

Legacy: The *caput* of a small Norman barony was Wigton, a very short distance from Old Carlisle. The *boðl* place names of the focus have survived as modern parish names (Bothel and Boltons). Moota Hill, a little further south along the road from Bothel, contains the Norse

element for a moot – an open-air assembly – suggesting ongoing use of the area as a meeting place further into the early medieval period.

Additional Comments: The southern sites plotted for the Old Carlisle focus are equidistant between Old Carlisle and Papcastle. It is not easy to ascertain where one focus ends and the next begins. Notwithstanding that the use of later territorial divisions to draw conclusions about earlier ones has been largely eschewed throughout this thesis, it may be worth noting that the Barony of Wigton was carved out of the much larger Barony of Allerdale. If the baronies did follow earlier divisions, Old Carlisle may also have had some relationship to the foci at Maryport and Papcastle; it appears to have been contemporaneous with both of its southern neighbours.