

SABRINA IN THE THORNS: PLACE-NAMES AS EVIDENCE FOR BRITISH AND LATIN IN ROMAN BRITAIN

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews published work which draws on various kinds of evidence to assess the linguistic situation in Roman Britain. Having reached some interim conclusions about the state of scholarship, it proceeds to examine the particular contribution that place-names can make to the debate on how far Latin may have taken hold in the province at the expense of the native British Celtic. While there is rather more evidence of Latin here than has often been allowed, the widespread continuity of British across much, at least, of Lowland Britain is reaffirmed, in the face of a recent suggestion to the contrary.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article falls into two principal parts.¹ The first aims to give a brief overview of the last sixty years' research into the language of Britain in the Roman and immediate post-Roman period. The second specifically examines the evidence on the topic that has been derived from place-names. This work is undertaken with a view, in particular, to assessing a significant recent challenge to orthodox opinion.

At issue here are some fundamental questions for the linguistic history of Britain. While the Anglo-Saxons were seizing political control of most of the former Roman province, in the fifth and sixth centuries, what was the language of the population that they encountered? In particular, who spoke Latin, who spoke British Celtic? How much of each survived, where and under what circumstances? And what were the languages like? Was the Latin like that of contemporary Gaul, where it had by now practically supplanted the earlier Celtic as vernacular? And was the British essentially uniform across the country, or were there dialect areas or zones where, for instance, Latin had had a greater or lesser influence?

Those are the sorts of question to which we would like definitive answers. Of course we are unlikely to get many clear answers in an area which might still very aptly be called—given the paucity of contemporary witnesses—‘Dark-Age Studies’. But, for all its difficulties, it is an area that has seen a good deal of research, much of it in relatively recent years. Work has been based, broadly, on analysis of four types of evidence: (1) surviving epigraphy from Roman and post-Roman Britain, (2) the influence of Latin on the surviving Brittonic languages, (3) the influence of Latin and British on early English language, and (4) pre-English place-names, as recorded from Roman times, and/or as subsequently adopted by the Anglo-Saxons. The approach taken here is to examine the place-names as a separate topic, having reviewed the

¹An earlier version of this paper was read to a seminar in the Classics Department in the University of Cambridge, November 2009, and I am grateful for the various contributions to discussion on that occasion. I am grateful also for comments and corrections from my editors and anonymous reviewers, and especially from Oliver Padel.

general lines of research, and looked in detail at some specific points derived from the other types of evidence.

2. LATIN AND BRITISH UNDER THE ROMANS

2.1. *Background*

The conventional background is that when the Romans arrived in Britain the native vernacular language was British – Brittonic Celtic, the ancestor of Welsh, Cornish and Breton. This, as far as is known, was the only language of the island, with the possible exception of the far north, in Pictland, an area which falls outside the scope of this review. We are concerned with the bulk of mainland Britain, where British speakers came under the sway of Latin-speaking conquerors. For 400 years Latin was widely spoken in the province, at least at the level of administration and army. The questions surround how far, and in what form, it permeated the everyday vernacular. The given, of course, is that Britain – almost alone of the provinces of the western Roman Empire – did not emerge in the Middle Ages with a Romance language. Instead, where the Germanic language of the Anglo-Saxon invaders did not triumph, British Celtic survived intact, albeit much influenced by Latin, most obviously in a good number of loanwords.

For half a century, discussion of the Latin spoken in Britain under the Roman Empire was largely dominated by the work of the great Celticist Kenneth Jackson. Jackson published an article on the ‘Vulgar Latin of Roman Britain’ in 1948, and then devoted a chapter to ‘Britons and Romans under the Empire’ in his hugely influential *Language and History in Early Britain* of 1953. In both works he makes two fundamental points. First, that although Latin in Roman Britain would have been widely spoken in a range of contexts – amongst the governing classes, civil administrators, the army, traders, and ‘very largely (but perhaps not entirely)’, amongst ‘the people of the towns’ (1953: 105) – nonetheless for most people it remained a foreign language: ‘the peasantry of the Lowland Zone, who constituted the great bulk of the population, spoke British and probably knew little Latin’ (1953: 105), whilst the Highland zone, comprising much of the west and north of Britain, remained exclusively British-speaking, at least outside the immediate environs of army-camps. Jackson’s second major point is that the Latin that *was* spoken amongst sectors of British society must have been a markedly conservative variety of the language when compared with contemporary Latin elsewhere, and particularly that spoken in Gaul. He characterised it as ‘stilted and pedantic’, as ‘semi-artificial’, and even perhaps as ‘upper-class and “haw-haw”’ (1953: 108–9), and he attributed these characteristics to the schoolroom: this was Latin acquired by the rural upper classes from schoolmasters whose work established artificial and conservative linguistic standards.

Now to say that Jackson’s views have dominated the field is correct, in the sense that they have conditioned almost all subsequent debate, though that does not mean that they have commanded total assent. The second point, the conservative or pedantic nature of British Latin, has proved particularly controversial, and a series of papers in the 1970s and 1980s chewed this matter over in great detail. The first point, that the great majority of Romano-Britons continued to speak British and not Latin through the Roman occupation, has received less detailed attention, at least until quite recently.

Opinions on both matters will be briefly reviewed here, but first a few words in defence of the late Professor Jackson (cf. similarly McManus 1984: 154). For some of the criticism levelled at his views, particularly on the *nature* of Latin in Britain, has been highly unreasonable. While some of his phrasing – “haw-haw” and the like – is no doubt to be regretted, Jackson, a groundbreaking, perceptive and accurate philologist, argued a coherent

case from the facts as he found them. In particular the two points isolated here knit closely together in his formulation. If I can hazard an attempt to reconstruct the stages in his thinking, it went something like this: following earlier Celticists, Jackson observed that the subsequent development in Welsh of a number of Latin loanwords demands origins in ‘correct’, ‘Classical’ Latin phonology rather than in forms belonging to the Vulgar Latin, or proto-Romance of the contemporary Continent; in seeking a sociolinguistic explanation for this circumstance, he thought of the schoolroom, and married it with a prevailing existing idea: that the language would have been a ‘polite tongue of the upper classes’ in Lowland Britain. He thus argued that it was these classes who were responsible for the transfer of many Latin loanwords into British, both directly and via the rural peasantry who would have acquired some Latin terminology from their masters. If this rural peasantry, whom he envisages as making up the bulk of the population, *had* adopted Latin as a demotic vernacular, then – his argument would presumably have run – conservative, non-Vulgar forms would not be at the root of many Welsh survivals: in this way the ‘educated’ nature of the loans, and the restricted distribution of the language, is closely related and mutually supportive.

As noted, Jackson did not deny that Vulgar Latin in various forms would have been heard in Britain amongst not only the army but merchants and both the middle and lower classes of the towns. His argument was rather that these folk would not have been the conduit for the bulk of loanwords into the later stages of Brittonic: for this he isolated instead the native upper classes, the well-to-do landowners.

Thus, when a good deal of the further comment on the subject has served to draw attention to apparent vulgarisms in the language of the inscriptions of Roman Britain, Jackson had got his defence in first: he conceded the existence of such Latin, but found reasons to deny its general significance to the history of Brittonic.

How plausible this theory is – that the Latin of the rural upper classes would be fundamentally more significant to the later history of Brittonic development than that of merchants and the body of townspeople – is another question.² But in Jackson’s own terms the case would turn on his identification and interpretation of the conservative features of the Latin loanwords in Welsh. If we could stand by the ‘schoolroom’ feel of the words, then his hypothesis might carry weight. But it must be said, as has been noted, that subsequent scholarship has not been much inclined to embrace his conclusions here. Not that he generally makes errors in the identification of features: rather, there are questions over their significance, and also over details of Vulgar Latin development that Jackson was accepting from the authorities of his day.

2.2. *Some details of Latin in Britain*

We might look briefly at two of the key linguistic points, both of them phonological. These were treated by Jackson, featured prominently in the renewed discussions of the 1970s and 1980s, and both have recently been revisited by J. N. Adams in his major 2007 study *The Regional Diversification of Latin*. The first concerns the phonemes /b/ and /w/ which, in intervocalic position, fell together as a fricative [β], later [v], in most varieties of late Latin/early Romance. Jackson (1953: 88–90) observed that there had been no such merger in the Latin that gave rise to the loanwords: the phonemes must have remained distinct since they are consistently differentiated in Welsh, as, e.g. *W ystafell* ‘room’ < Lat *stabellum*, *W cawell* ‘basket’ < Lat *cavella*. No one now disputes this finding with regard to the British loanwords. But both the wider context and the interpretation of the facts have been open to

²A question posed by McManus (1984: 155–6); cf. also Gratwick (1982: 63–4).

doubt and revision. For one thing, it has been observed that if the retention of intervocalic /b/ and /w/ is a peculiar feature of British Latin – and by definition it would be a conservative feature—then it might be explained other than by schoolroom pedantry. Since British Celtic had equivalent phonemes which did not merge, their retention in British Latin *could* be ascribed naturally enough to substrate influence (thus Smith 1983: 944; McManus 1984: 157; Russell 1985: 22). For another thing, there appears to be a great deal of uncertainty about the distribution and chronology of the merger within Latin. In 1982 A. S. Gratwick launched a blistering attack on Jackson's views (or rather, in most cases, on his sources of knowledge of Vulgar Latin). He argued that study of inscriptions across the Roman Empire actually suggested that, far from falling together at a relatively early date, as the handbooks had it, /b/ and /w/ remained distinct over a very wide area, and so Britain was not at all unusual in the feature (Gratwick 1982: 17–32). Adams, whilst severely critical of much of Gratwick's method and argument, now concludes, albeit guardedly, that evidence for the merger looks significantly rare in inscriptions from Gaul, as well as from Britain (Adams 2007: 661–2).

A key difficulty here is chronology. Intervocalic /b/ and /w/ *did* merge in French, just as they did in other Romance languages, but it appears that they may have done so rather later in the north of Europe than the south, and perhaps too late – in relation to the collapse of the western Empire – to show up in Britain (cf. Adams 2007: 627–8).³

Chronology may also be at the heart of our second point. This involves the Latin lowering of short stressed /i/ to /e/, which is one particularly visible outcome of major vocalic developments in late Latin according to which phonemic quantity was neutralised (and the /e/ < /i/ merged with earlier /e:/). Jackson believed that the lowering of stressed /i/ began very early on the Continent, and 'was general in ordinary V[ulgar] L[atin] by the third century' (1953: 86). Yet in British loanwords the original /i/, not the later /e/, is the required base for a series of examples, as W *ffydd* 'faith' < Lat *fides* and W *pys* 'pea' < Lat *pisum*. Since Jackson (1953: 77) could see no reason why loanwords should not have been freely adopted during the whole period 'from the end of the first to the fifth century', the absence of /e/ pointed to conservatism in the Latin of the province. Again, however, there are questions over the Latin background. Gratwick (1982: 62) asserted that /i/ > /e/ was not general in spoken Latin before the fifth century, while Adams states that: 'In imperial Latin of the first three centuries AD there are some misspellings of the type *e* for short *i* which might be taken to suggest the beginnings of the Vulgar Latin merger ... but they are infrequent, and many are open to alternative explanations' (Adams 2007: 67). So much, it appears, for Jackson's belief that the shift was 'general ... by the third century'.

Having said that, in this case there is a further twist in the evidence. For whilst the preservation of a distinction between /b/ and /w/ is suggested not only by the loanwords but also by inscriptions from the province (Smith 1983: 941; Adams 2007: 651–3), the lowering of /i/ > /e/ – which, as we have seen, is not generally found in the loanwords – is a recurrent feature of the inscriptions of Roman Britain (Smith 1983: 938–9). Adams (2007: 653) concedes in this latter case that 'the evidence is beginning to mount that the usual merger had taken place in Britain'. There is here, then, still something of a mismatch to explain. The loanwords and the inscriptions are not straightforwardly equated. Yet Jackson's proposal that they derive from socially separated varieties of Latin is not the only explanation for this situation that has been considered: there are questions about the reliability of late-recorded loanwords in this kind of enquiry (Evans 1983: 965–7; Smith 1983: 946–7; Russell 1985: 28–9), as well as questions of date, as we have seen, and of place, as we shall see.

³It is worth noting here also the point made by McManus (1984: 174) that early Latin loanwords into Germanic seem also to preserve the original distinction.

The complexity and uncertainty which still attaches just to the Latin half of the equation (i.e. without the British) is illustrated by the fact that the two sound-changes we have just discussed together take up some 40 pages of Adams's book. Tentatively, though, he does feel able to reach a conclusion: 'Britain ... seems to be aligned with Gaul, in having a vowel system in which short *i* and long *e* had merged, and in retaining [w]' (Adams 2007: 662). The first of these points is at variance with Jackson's conservative British Latin, while both – in linking Britain and Gaul – call into question his characterisation of Britain's exceptional, somewhat artificial situation. Adams is thus, in essence, echoing the opinions not only of Gratwick (who went too far), but also of Evans (1983: 974, 979), Smith (1983: 943–8), McManus (1984: 186) and Russell (1985: 29), who all concluded that the work of the early 1980s had, at the very least, cast some doubt on the case for a particularly influential archaic, schoolroom Latin in Britain. And if this is less clear, what about Jackson's other point – the language's restricted social distribution?

2.3. *The range of Latin in Britain*

Adams does not address at any length the question of how much of Romano-British society was Latin-speaking, but he does stress the importance for the study of vernacular language of the growing group of curse-tablets which have come to light at various sites in southern Britain. Adams is actually sceptical of the value of the whole corpus of monumental inscriptions of Roman Britain – upon which Gratwick and Smith base almost their entire findings – because he thinks that the great majority might be associated with incomers whose Latin could not be termed local (Adams 2007: 580–81).

But the curse-tablets are different (Adams 2007: 579–80, 584–7; cf. Adams 1992; Tomlin 1988; 1993; 2002). Their tone is personal, their palaeography individual, and their language, most importantly, demotic. It is possible to wonder whether occasional specific tablets might be the work of incomers – and this may conceivably be the case with the two examples from Bath which are apparently written in Celtic language (Tomlin 1987; Mullen 2007a) – but it is hardly possible to doubt that the group as a whole gives an insight into the Latin of some relatively ordinary people in Roman Britain. Quite how ordinary, and quite where they lived when they were not visiting shrines like Bath and Uley, are questions we cannot answer: they may be predominantly townsfolk (even those who travelled to a rural shrine, if that is how Uley should be characterised); there may be some country landowners amongst them. But how plausible is it to suppose that these folk who have lost their gloves, or a cloth, or are owed tiny amounts of money, are in some way significantly divorced from the 'bulk of the population'? It at least encourages us to reopen the question.

In fact, a number of scholars have suggested that a knowledge of Latin may have been more widespread than Jackson allowed. Few, in the generation after he wrote, went as far as Greene (1968: 76), who favoured 'massive bilingualism' during the Roman period, but others, like Mac Cana (1976), McManus (1984: 155–6) and even Evans (1983: 976–9), whose approach is always soberly cautious, have stressed the likely extent (and attendant complexity) of linguistic contact. More recently, two linguistically aware historians, Thomas Charles-Edwards (1995) and Alex Woolf (2003), have taken the proposition further. Both have argued – starting from the evidence of early medieval inscribed stones in western Britain – that Latin survived as a living, spoken language amongst the western elite well into the post-Roman period.⁴ This elite is not conceived

⁴Woolf (2003: 371–2) also draws upon the evidence of early Welsh and Irish orthography, which seems to depend on the post-Roman pronunciation of British Latin. All of this material was familiar to Jackson (1953: 67–75, 149–93), but he chose to place it in a very restricted social context of the clergy and the upper classes. Note that Adams (2007: 616–20) rejects Charles-Edwards' analysis of the medieval inscriptions as representing spoken Latin.

of as a small minority: according to Woolf (2003: 373) 'we are not to imagine that Latin usage was an affectation of a tiny number of kings and clerics but that Insular Romance was the normal language of intercourse for a significant proportion of the population'. And in talking this way about the situation in western Britain, the Highland zone, there is the concomitant implication that further east, in the more highly Romanised Lowlands, Latin would have taken still deeper hold.

Nonetheless, though they give greater emphasis than did Jackson to the extent of Latin-speaking at and after the end of the Roman occupation, both Charles-Edwards (1995: 731) and Woolf (2003: 379) follow him in another respect: they envisage a society that is linguistically stratified by status, where the lower classes clung to the British language while their superiors switched to Latin. Yet this is a suggestion that is easier to support in the west, where the post-Roman appearance of Welsh, Cornish (and Breton) and Cumbric prove that British survived among some classes of society in some regions. For the south and east, the Lowland Roman Britain of towns and villas, British survival in the Highland zone is arguably an irrelevance – how do we know that the language survived here?

It is into this breach that the Dutch linguist Peter Schrijver has stepped, first in a paper published in 2002. In a striking challenge to modern orthodox thinking, he suggested that 'in Lowland Britain in the later days of the Empire the man in the street spoke Latin and possibly nothing but Latin' (Schrijver 2002: 87). He justified this not only on grounds of general probability – observing that Latin was adopted throughout the empire except in a few remote mountainous areas – but also by invoking a series of models of linguistic influence. He makes the case, more strongly than most scholars have dared, that there is a very considerable and pervasive Latin influence on Highland British, going far beyond the loanwords: he suggests, in particular, that some fundamental sound-shifts and structural reorganisations which are believed to have taken place in the immediate post-Roman centuries were the result of interference and influence from spoken Latin (Schrijver 2002: 92–5). He argues that if this impact were felt so strongly in the Highland zone, then there was a great probability that in the far more Romanised Lowlands Latin must indeed have been very widespread. Further, he suggests that something more specific can be claimed about the circumstances of language contact found here: in his view, the passing over of the sounds and stress patterns of late Latin to surviving Highland British indicates a strong *substratum* influence from Latin speakers giving up their language in favour of British (Schrijver 2002: 100–102, 109). He suspects that these Latin speakers who turned to British would have been refugees from the warfare of the Lowland zone. In any case, it would certainly follow that evidence, albeit indirect, for large numbers of Latin speakers in the west tends to imply still larger numbers further south and east.

This is not the place to examine Schrijver's case in detail. His principal argument stresses the degree of Latin influence on surviving Highland British. While the details are plausible and thought-provoking, this is a type of argument – involving the identification of influence from the phonology and syntax of one language upon those of another – which is very difficult to seal conclusively, especially with regard to long-lost linguistic varieties. Celticists have long been aware of the resemblances between some Vulgar Latin and late British sound changes, but most have resisted suggesting a causal link, probably because it is necessary to concede a number of independent changes besides the potentially shared features (cf. the cautious survey in Evans 1983: 972–4). In the circumstances it may be wise to suspend judgement on this question. So too on another element that Schrijver has more recently introduced into the discussion: in one of the two texts from Bath that seem to be written in Celtic language he thinks he has identified some distinctive Latin-influenced characteristics

which, he argues, would strengthen his case (Schrijver 2005; 2007).⁵ Yet the interpretation of the text is difficult and hardly beyond doubt (Mullen 2007a: 37–41, with references to earlier studies),⁶ and its linguistic provenance is uncertain – there is nothing to show that it could not be the work of a Gaulish visitor, for instance (Mullen 2007a: 41–2).

Aside from its details, however, it may be that the greatest importance of Schrijver's argument lies simply in its initial premise. For, by decoupling the Highland and Lowland zones linguistically, just as they have long been contrasted archaeologically, radical possibilities arise. Specifically, it is hard to argue with the proposition that if British *had* been largely supplanted in the south-east, then the kind of evidence that we have encountered so far would be unable to illustrate the fact. At a stroke, all of the testimony supplied by the analysis of surviving Brittonic languages would become marginalised, if not wholly irrelevant. Epigraphy from the Lowland zone might hint, as we have seen, at aspects of the nature and social penetration of Latin in that region, but it is a problematic and one-sided record: and the near-complete absence of inscribed British is conventionally interpreted as a reflection of its perceived inappropriateness for writing, rather than as an indication that the language had been given up (e.g. Evans 1983: 977–8).

Whatever the merits of Schrijver's detailed arguments, therefore, it might at least be worth considering the possibility that a linguistic divide could have run through late Roman Britain, to the south and east of which Latin, or Insular Romance, had largely supplanted British as the everyday vernacular. Indeed, if there was such differential development, it might perhaps go some way towards helping to explain discrepancies between the conservative form of some borrowings and the later features attested in inscriptions: could Latin influence on the British of the Highland zone have been more intense at an earlier date, while in the Lowlands the language went from strength to strength?⁷

2.4. *Evidence from Old English*

Of course, if Latin did triumph by the fifth century in south-eastern Britain, then it would have been thoroughly replaced by Old English before we have access to any further direct evidence. It is natural, therefore, to turn to Old English in the search for further indications. Here, again, Schrijver precedes us, with another proposal based upon cross-linguistic influence. In this case, he boldly suggests that similarities in the phonological systems between Brittonic, early English (and its North Sea Germanic neighbours) and northern French (as the best attested approximation to Insular Romance) should all be associated (Schrijver 2002: 102–9). Specifically, he argues that in Old English, and especially southern Old English, the influence of both British and Latin substrate features can be discerned, and that this is best explained by positing a series of linguistic replacements: British speakers switched to Latin, but maintained a markedly British accent; these British Latin speakers then switched to

⁵It should be noted, as emphasized by Schrijver, that this text – although found, published and always discussed in connection with the numerous curse-tablets – is actually not a tablet but a disc, perhaps a pendant.

⁶It should be conceded, however, that Mullen looks favourably on Schrijver's explanation of the sequences which contain the two relevant diphthongs. Cf. a further interpretation by Sims-Williams (2007: 327) implicitly accepting one of the two – he does not commit himself on the other.

⁷Schrijver (2002: 100–101) argues something like this, but in a much more complex and nuanced way. Drawing on the models described by Thomason & Kaufman (1988), he proposes that two stages of Latin influence on Highland British can be discerned: loanwords entered the language relatively early, and thus sometimes look archaic; but the structural and phonological changes (including the new quantity system in vowels) were introduced when Latin speakers switched to British at a later date, when Latin had the lower prestige of the two languages and would no longer have furnished loanwords.

English, carrying across various phonological features, several of them ultimately British, into the evolving Germanic language.⁸

Once more, while Schrijver's arguments are cogent and thought-provoking, they make associations that have not seemed evident to previous generations of scholars, and are bound to remain controversial. We have seen, for instance, that the chronology of sound changes in Latin – a very well-documented language for the period – is difficult to establish and controversial. In the cases of British and Old English the relevant developments effectively belong to a pre-literate period, and assigning dates to them is fraught with still greater uncertainty. Any attempt to negotiate and connect together the shifting sands of the three, therefore, is unlikely to command a consensus. Again, however, if we suspend judgement on Schrijver's detailed reconstruction, we can still confront the main lines of the hypothesis with other, more straightforward, evidence for contact between languages.

If the identification of phonological influence across languages is usually problematic, the identification of loanwords is usually much less so. The various loanwords into Old English have been much studied. It is well known, notorious even, that Old English absorbed hardly any vocabulary from British. Conservative scholarship recognises fewer than ten (Campbell 1959: 220; the material is reviewed by Coates 2007: 177–80); Andrew Breeze has made heroic attempts to increase the number by perhaps a dozen (summary list and bibliography in Breeze 2002: 175–6, 179–81; cf. Coates 2007: 180); but even if his new suggestions were all accepted the total would still be very small. On the other hand, there are many hundreds of Latin loanwords in Old English. Naturally, a high proportion of these belong to the later Christian centuries of the Anglo-Saxon period, but there is a substantial group, perhaps as many as 200, which look to have gone through early Old English sound changes, and thus to have been borrowed 'early' (Campbell 1959: 199–214). One might think, therefore – with few British and many Latin loans – that Anglicists would tend to conclude that the Anglo-Saxons met more speakers of Latin than of British when they arrived in England. Certainly a century ago they did believe that: it is the view taken, for instance, in the fundamental study by Pogatscher (1888; cf. Wollmann 1993: 12–13 and further references; Jackson 1953: 246–56).

But the situation is not straightforward, because Germanic was clearly already borrowing from Latin on the Continent before the fifth century, and it is not easy to distinguish between pre- and post-Anglo-Saxon settlement phases in the 'early' loans. The pendulum has swung against borrowings on British soil, and in the last significant survey Alfred Wollmann concluded very firmly that the bulk of these early Latin loanwords 'were of continental origin' and did not reflect contact with Latin speakers in post-Roman Britain (Wollmann 1993: 21; the work summarises his survey in Wollmann 1990).

Wollmann's analysis, however, is largely predicated on Jackson's view of the linguistic situation in Roman Britain. Although he concedes some of the shifting emphasis of more recent work, his interim conclusion, before ever taking up the details of the loanwords, is that 'borrowing from romanised Celts or from surviving speakers of British Latin cannot have been but scant' (Wollmann 1993: 18). Beyond this assumption, he is unable to establish

⁸This paper was essentially complete when Schrijver (2009) came to hand. Whilst he reaffirms his suggestion that Latin 'may have been the dominant if not the only language spoken around 400 in the Romanized Lowland Zone' (Schrijver 2009: 194; cf. also 196), he now argues that the Celtic substratum which survived to influence Old English was closer to Primitive Irish than to early Brittonic as conventionally understood. This hypothesis about the nature of early British does not much alter the arguments at this point: he thinks that the 'Irish' substratum features may have been carried through a transition to British Latin before influencing Old English (Schrijver 2009: 208). Further comment will be called for below when we come to consider some details of early Celtic language in south-east Britain.

scientific or tangible grounds for placing the vast majority of the loanwords on the continent rather than in southern Britain.

It may be, therefore, that the evidence of early Latin loanwords into English deserves a re-examination without preconceptions as to the survival, or otherwise, of Latin in post-Roman Britain. Wollmann does, however, appear to have done an effective job of indicating the nature and size of the difficulties in determining continental or British origin purely on the evidence of form and attestation, and it may be that these difficulties are too great for a clear conclusion to emerge. In the context of the current discussion, it would certainly seem wise, once again, to suspend judgement, and to contemplate once more the possibility, at least, that Old English might have received a significant number of loanwords in the fifth and sixth centuries from contact with Latin speakers in Britain.

2.5. *Interim conclusions*

We have seen that there is now something of a consensus against Jackson's archaic schoolroom British Latin, and yet – as presented above, at least – this was half of a mutually supportive case for the restricted distribution of Latin in the province. If the argument for the importance of the schoolroom falters, then we ought to re-examine the argument for distribution, and we have seen that various scholars have gone some way towards exploring different models. Peter Schrijver's intervention in the debate may be of particular significance. His own developed arguments describe a process in which Latin replaced British in south-eastern Britain, before itself being replaced by Old English; further west and north, British survived, and indeed reclaimed a good number of Latin speakers. Clearly of the greatest importance – even if the argumentation that led him to these detailed conclusions is doubted or rejected – is the simple observation that Highland and Lowland zones might have developed quite differently from one another. This is difficult to disallow. Straightforward evidence for British linguistic survival all derives from the Highland zone. From the Lowlands it could be suggested that such indications as we have seen – the apparent vernacular Latinity in the curse-tablets, and the large number of Latin loanwords in early English – might suit Schrijver's position better than Jackson's. It is with this sense of a case to answer that we turn to the next category of evidence.

3. PLACE-NAMES

3.1. *Introduction*

The remainder of this paper considers what place-names are able to contribute to this debate. Besides the Roman-period inscriptions, names provide the only body of evidence for early linguistic development in Lowland Britain (leaving aside the uncertain matter of the Latin loanwords in Old English). We are still on territory that is very much Jackson's: he devoted a considerable proportion of *Language and History in Early Britain* to British place-names in England, and he addressed one key question that I am posing – could the surviving names have been transmitted through Vulgar Latin? – in that work. We shall come to some of his specific arguments, but we begin with some material that he did not explicitly discuss.

3.2. *Names in Romano-British sources*

The place-name record is fascinatingly split between two periods separated by the mysterious events of the fifth and sixth centuries. We have documentation and place-names from the Roman period itself, and then we have names that are recorded from the early medieval

period onwards. It is logical to start with the former. And here there is at once an apparent challenge, on numerical grounds, to Schrijver's hypothesis. If Latin had become the vernacular language of the Lowlands, might one not expect rather more Latin-language place-names than are actually found? Around 450 names are known from Roman Britain, of which about 30 are wholly or partly Latin in language: that represents no more than 7 per cent (cf. Rivet & Smith 1979: 18–20; Gelling 1988: 31–5, 242). Without further discussion, that probably looks more like a veneer of authority than an embedded vernacular.

The equation, however, is not a simple one. It is in the nature of place-names to preserve earlier stages of language and earlier languages. Cornish died out centuries ago, yet it dominates the map of Cornwall. Likewise there is no doubt that British was the vernacular language of Lowland Britain when the Romans arrived, and it must then have remained alive for a good while, at least. In fact, the Roman authorities seem to have shown a particularly tolerant attitude towards the local language, at least as regards nomenclature. The places that are named in records of the period are, after all, places that were by definition of interest and importance to the Romans – that is to say to the military and administrative Romans who undoubtedly spoke Latin. Yet for over 90 per cent of these places, it seems, they accepted or adopted local names. Sometimes, as at Colchester – *Camulodunum* – these names denoted substantial existing British sites taken over by the conquering power. But not infrequently the named places appear to be Roman creations, whether substantial walled towns or mere roadside stopping-points (Rivet 1980: 1, 15–19; cf. Gelling 1988: 45). For these places names were drawn from nearby features, transferred from native settlements that they were effectively replacing, or coined anew. Remarkably, even when coining new names for new Roman settlements, it appears that British was not infrequently used. (Rivet draws particular attention to walled or fortified places in *duro-* and *-dunum*, many of which seem likely to denote known Roman forts rather than recalling unknown Iron Age predecessors.) The mechanics of this are unclear and rather puzzling. But it does presumably indicate that British remained the local vernacular at the time of the naming.⁹

Despite all this, some places – especially Roman developments – were known by Latin names, as *Calcaria*, 'of limestone, lime-works', apparently denoting Tadcaster, and *Pontibus*, '(at the) bridges', which appears to refer to a crossing of the Thames at Staines, Middlesex (Rivet & Smith 1979: 288–9, 441). (The corpus of locatable examples, including hybrid formations such as *Glevum Colonia* for Gloucester, and *Caesaromagus*, Chelmsford, is mapped by Rivet 1980: 2.) Yet, as noted above, in Britain there are proportionally very few such Latin names. One obvious next step is to compare the situation in other provinces. Such comparison is not straightforward, partly because overall figures are not published in any consistent form. The material most ready to hand comes from the *Antonine Itineraries*, recently analysed in full by Isaac (2002; cf. a similar exercise in Gelling 1988: 35–7). This source, comprising lists of stopping-points on roads throughout the Roman Empire, is potentially of high value to us, for there are many minor stations between the major centres, and while substantial major places are more likely to have been founded early, often at sites of established importance, it is the minor settlements on the roads which are more likely to have developed later and are perhaps, therefore, more likely to receive names in Latin (whether that is the Latin of the administrators or of the local population). The figures, drawn from Isaac's analysis, reveal marked differences (Table 1). It is very tempting to see here Romance language developing on the Continent but not in Britain: the figures show that Latin is three times more common in these Roman-period names in Spain and France than in Britain.

⁹Though Rivet (1980: 15) does contemplate Celtic names given by (foreign) Celtic soldiers. Cf. concerns aired about the remarkable homogeneity in Celtic names across the Roman Empire in Parsons (2010: 182–3).

Table 1. The Latin element in the place-names of the *Antonine Itineraries*

	Total names	Latin	Percentage
Britannia	126	10	8
Hispania	347	92	27
Gallia (minus Germania and Belgica)	186	40	22
Germania and Belgica	157	27	17

These are telling statistics, but it is not clear that they should be the end of the matter. The problem, as so often with place-name evidence, is one of date. It is so hard to tell how much older a name may be than its date of first record; moreover, as in this case, we are often dealing with sources that are very imprecisely dated. The *Itineraries* are a collection of routes that appear to have been written down over a long period, perhaps between the beginning of the second to the end of the third centuries AD (Rivet & Smith 1979: 151–3). If, for argument's sake, a Romance language were taking hold in Lowland Britain from about 250 onwards, then this material would probably be too late to reflect it in any detail. The greater density of Latin names on the Continent is no doubt a reflection of a greater degree of Romanisation *at an earlier date* than in Britain; but it is doubtful whether this quashes the possibility that Romance could have been developing on this side of the Channel in the third and fourth centuries. And unfortunately, whilst there are later sources for Romano-British names, they are problematic and/or limited in extent, so that it is not possible, as we might wish, simply to repeat the exercise, comparing the density of Latin place-names in the provinces of the Western Empire at a date, say, in the later fourth century. As a straw in the wind, there is no doubt that the low percentage of Latin names recorded in Roman Britain is very noteworthy. Whether it should be allowed to clinch the argument, however, is doubtful.

3.3. *Names in medieval and later sources*

Instead, we turn to our second period, the post-Roman. And here our first impression may well be that our single straw has grown into a whole man made of the stuff. For amongst the place-names taken into Anglo-Saxon usage from the earlier population, very few are clearly Latin coinages. This whole material – the nomenclature that survives from the pre-English era into the medieval and later – was examined by Coates & Breeze (2000), and the county-by-county catalogue included by Coates in that work provides the starting point for the figures that follow.¹⁰ In sixteen historic counties of south-eastern England – an area bounded by Norfolk and Northamptonshire to the north, Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Hampshire to the west – I count some 100 possible pre-English survivals, of which no more than eight might be wholly or partly Latin (Table 2). Even this may be a significant overestimate: although some of the proposals made in recent years are persuasive, it is nonetheless the case that recent reference works (Mills 2003; Watts 2004) prefer, or at least allow, alternatives for most of

¹⁰I have taken over from this work the pragmatic, but awkward, decision to exclude from the count river-names – the single most common type of pre-English survival in the east. None of these is Latin, and so the percentage would fall still further had they been included. Note that I have modified Coates's statistics in various ways: excluding various avowedly dubious and late examples, but adding some instances that were perhaps omitted by oversight (Speen – discussed at length in the volume, but not listed in the gazetteer – and Portsmouth), and some that have arisen in later work, notably Coates 2005a (on Moggerhanger) and Breeze 2008 (on Romney). It should be noted that the totals for pre-English survivals (excluding rivers) are generous: of the 100 I have accepted as possible, Coates himself queries just over a third, and a good number of others are very late-recorded. Finally, I should stress that my emphasis here, on derivation from Latin, is not necessarily shared by other commentators: for Moggerhanger and Palgrave, for instance, Coates proposes Brittonic mediation – the words are ultimately of Latin origin, he thinks, but he argues that they have passed into English via British.

Table 2. Possible cases of Latin surviving in the place-names of south-east England

Name	Proposed Latin etymon	Reference
Colchester (Essex)	<i>colonia</i> 'colony'	Carroll & Parsons 2007: 102–3
Dovercourt (Essex)	* <i>corte</i> < <i>cohors</i> 'enclosure'	Gelling 1988: 79–80
Firle (Sussex)	* <i>feralia</i> 'wild land'	Coates & Breeze 2000: 44–53
Moggerhanger (Beds)	<i>maceria</i> 'masonry wall'	Coates 2005a
Palgrave (Norfolk)	<i>pagus</i> 'territory, region'	Coates & Breeze 2000: 322, 354
Portsmouth (Hants)	<i>portus</i> 'harbour'	Gelling 1988: 78–9
Romney (Kent)	<i>rumen</i> 'gullet, cow's stomach' (with reference to the topography of waterways through Romney Marsh)	Breeze 2008
Speen (Berks)	<i>spinis</i> '(at the) thorns'	Coates & Breeze 2000: 40–43

them (Colchester, Firle, Moggerhanger, Palgrave, Romney). It could also be argued that Portsmouth, which certainly contains an element of Latin origin, and Dovercourt, which very probably does so, need not represent *place-names* which have survived from the Roman period (see further below). That could leave only Speen, '(at the) thorns', as an almost certain instance (though this too has its complications, also discussed in due course). Even if we allow them all, however, it is clear that the conclusion to be drawn is that the place-names the Anglo-Saxons adopted seem to have been overwhelmingly British (or older) formations.

A moment's reflection, however, suggests that the further significance of this observation is not quite clear. We are not helped by the fact that these place-names were passed on – whether by Latin or British speakers – in very small numbers, and those that survived will represent a tiny, and probably quite biased, sample of the names in use on the eve of Anglo-Saxon conquest. Thus it is well known that the earlier names adopted whole or in part by the Anglo-Saxons fall into two principal categories: those of (some of) the major Romano-British centres and fortifications, such as London, Winchester, Reculver, Dover and – arguably – Portsmouth; and those of rivers, hills and woods, significant topographical features which orientated the geography of settlement, such as the **barrako-* or 'hilly' district which gave name to Berkshire, the woods represented by Chatham and Penge (each involving the ancestor of *W coed* 'wood'), and the many rivers, excluded from the numbers quoted here, from Thames to Granta to Itchen. In the linguistic circumstances which Schrijver has hypothesised, whereby a settled native British population became first bilingual in Latin, and had then perhaps begun to reject British all together, it does not follow – indeed, it seems most unlikely – that they would rename principal landscape features or long-established settlement centres. Since these are precisely the kind of names that the English ultimately adopted, it must be questionable whether the language of such names is actually much of a clue to the language of the immediately preceding population.

The new coinages which we might expect from a population that had recently shifted from one language to another would denote new buildings and institutions, and also individual holdings: estates, homes and enclosures. It is a tenet of onomastic study that places of central importance, well known to a large community, are resistant to name-change, while places of interest only to a small community are more open to change. Yet the latter are precisely the kind of names that do not survive the transition to English. From our sample area we can instance perhaps a single straw blowing gently in each direction. On the British side, Liss in Hampshire is apparently equivalent to Welsh *llys* 'court'; less certain is Coates's suggestion that Beccles in Suffolk was originally a *bach-llys*, a 'little court' (Coates & Breeze 2000: 335). In these cases we could be dealing with relatively humble buildings of not much more than local significance that might have found a Latin equivalent if Latin had indeed been the local vernacular in the fourth century. However, later Welsh usage tends to suggest that something

rather important is commemorated by a *llys* (cf. Johnstone 2000; Charles-Edwards 2004: 95–6). If so, the term might cross into the category of significant central place, which would reduce its value to the present discussion. Unfortunately, at Liss and Beccles we appear to have nothing more than the names to go on, and assigning precise significance, or a likely date, to them is really impossible.

The Latin evidence here, however, is perhaps more enticing. The name Dovercourt, in Essex, contains as its first element a British **dubro-* (W *dŵr*) ‘water’, used in stream-names and relatively common in England, as Dover, Andover, etc. (Ekwall 1928: 135–7). The second element is apparently an early English **corte* derived from Latin *cohors*, *cohortem*, later *cors*, *cortem*, and applied to yards or enclosures (Gelling 1988: 79–80); it is equivalent to the modern English word *court*, though that particular form comes more directly from French at a later date (*OED2* s.v. *court*, n.¹). Latin *cort-* could conceivably have been encountered, already applied to what are known Roman buildings at Dovercourt, by English incomers: the structure of such a name would be notable, but it is paralleled further north by Lincoln, undoubtedly a hybrid combination of original British **lindo-* ‘pool’ with Latin *colonia* ‘colony, settlement for veterans’, added later. Alternatively, early Old English could have adopted **corte* from British Latin speakers, perhaps as a word for a Romano-British enclosure. In this case its appearance here might be classified as a loanword added in the post-Roman period, rather than as part of a surviving place-name – though the combination with a pre-English first element is intriguing.

3.4. *Loanwords in English place-names*

Dovercourt is in fact representative of a group of names studied by Margaret Gelling (1967; 1977; 1988: 63–86). Drawing on the paradigm that was, at least briefly, fashionable amongst archaeologists, for a rather large-scale settlement of Germanic mercenaries during the century before the fall of Rome, she proposed that this context might explain the presence and distribution of a number of Latin terms found in English place-names. Her prize exhibit was the recurring compound *wīc-hām*, which involves as its first element a loan from Latin *vicus*. Although this term has a long life in Old English, and clearly comes to be applied to a range of settlements of various dates which do not have Roman precursors, this particular compound is so clearly and regularly associated with Roman archaeology – specifically, it seems, with nucleations around ‘small town’ size – that a direct connection between word and early settlement appears likely. A ‘Wickham’, Gelling argued, is what the earliest Anglo-Saxons called these small towns, picking up the word *vicus* from the language they encountered locally.

Gelling made similar proposals for other terms: *camp*, from *campus*, was again sufficiently associated with Roman archaeology to suggest a sense ‘wasteland, open land beyond the cultivated area’; **funta*, from *fontana*, was a particularly Roman spring or well, perhaps one with special technology for drawing water; *port*, from *portus*, denotes harbours exploited in the Roman period. To this early insular phase, she implied, might also belong the borrowing of (*via*) *strata* as *stræt* ‘road’, and *castra* ‘fortification, town’ as *ceaster*: these loanwords and their overwhelming application to specifically Roman remains had always been appreciated, but their origins have generally either been sought on the Continent or they have been considered loans into English through the medium of British (Wollmann 1993: 20; Green 1998: 217). Gelling, however, was building a case for contact between Anglo-Saxons in southern England and Latin speakers. Perhaps her most telling comment came on the group of English names of the form *Eccles(-)*, which had long been recognised as deriving from Latin *ecclesia* ‘church’, but was widely considered to have been mediated through British (cf. *W eglwys*). Gelling (1977: 11–12; 1988: 82–3) simply observed that, in the south and east of

England where her other Latin evidence was clustering, there was no need to invoke the intermediary.

Gelling's book *Signposts to the Past* appeared in 1978. Ten years later, in the second edition, she observed that archaeological opinion had in the meantime turned against the early Germanic mercenaries, leaving, in her words 'the Latin words used in English place-names without a well-defined overall context' (Gelling 1988: 245); but it certainly did not, in her view, detract from the case for overlap. Schrijver's suggestion inevitably encourages us to look at this afresh.

In this context, the obvious way to do that is by comparison with the British impact on the map of England. We have already established the principal characteristics of the latter, in terms of topographical features, especially rivers, and known major settlements. These are generally not places where we expect to find Latin. For smaller places we have seen the inconclusive indications of Liss and Dovercourt. But where does this wider group of Latin loanword material stand?

In *wīc-hām* a Latin word is adopted as part of an English compound appellative, which proves recurrent as a habitative place-name. There is nothing like this amongst place-names or loanwords from British. *Vicus*, *wīc*, itself, goes native in English usage (Ekwall 1964; Coates 1999), and one might compare the familiar instances of *stræt* and *ceaster*, which – while (unlike *wīc*) they generally retain an association with Roman and Roman-like things – are used very widely in later England and are also well attested in the literary language (Smith 1956: ii.161–2, i.85–7; Parsons & Styles 2000: 158–62). Not so **fūnta* and *camp*, which both have a restricted 'Lowland zone' distribution. Yet all show signs of having been adopted into the place-name forming language of southern England – they repeatedly appear in compounds qualified by apparently English specifiers (e.g. *Bulcamp*, Suffolk, OE *bula* 'bull' + *camp*, Havant, Hampshire, OE personal name *Hama* + **fūnta*). In these respects they contrast rather markedly with the British element in English place-names.

It was noted earlier that there are very few certain British loanwords in Old English. The examples are unevenly distributed. As Richard Coates has indicated, a good proportion of the accepted examples are topographical terms, including *torr* 'outcrop, peak' and *cumb* 'valley'. As he argues, the words recorded in Old English texts take their place alongside a number of words which seem to have been borrowed but:

for which there is no evidence outside place-names. The English seem to have taken some monomorphemic Brittonic words for landscape features to be proper names, possibly many times over, in such a way that no new lexical item of the relevant form entered English. (Coates 2007: 181)

His examples include (in Modern Welsh form) *coed* 'wood', *cors* 'bog', *crug* 'barrow' (used also of barrow-shaped hills), *penn* 'head, top, end', *rhos* 'moor'. (We might compare Jackson's (1968–70: 117) relief in finding a Brittonic limekiln in Devon: 'distinct from the usual wearisomely limited descriptive *penms* and *crugs* and *cēds*, etc. of England further east'.)

Coates (2007: 181) continues:

Significantly none of these is ever found as the generic in an early, two-element English place-name [which] reinforces the view gained from the minimal lexical borrowing: Brittonic was not much understood by the incomers, and most items that were borrowed were understood as making reference but not as denoting by virtue of their lexical content. That is, they performed the task of naming but rarely attained lexical status.

These British topographical terms are treated quite differently in English, therefore, from the group of Latin loans identified by Gelling, which combine freely with English elements in place-names. Though it should be conceded that the situation is not quite so clear-cut. In **ecles* there is a Latin-derived word which is never qualified in English place-names. And in one striking case, Old English *cumb*, apparently equivalent to Welsh *cwm* ‘valley’, there is a British word that is widely assimilated into southern English place-names (as Ashcombe, Devon, or Ulcombe, Kent). This is such an unusual circumstance, however, that Gelling (1984: 88–9; Gelling & Cole 2000: 106–7) doubted whether *cumb* was a ‘true’ loanword, suggesting rather that it was fundamentally a Germanic word meaning ‘vessel, cup’, drawn into service as a topographical term under influence from the British names of southern England.

If, more often, English borrowed simple British topographical terms as names, then this might itself imply contact with spoken British. But it need not do so: in a hypothetical language transfer from British to Latin, I have already argued that significant local place-names are likely to have been retained, and the same could perfectly well go for what we might call abbreviations or pseudonyms. So if the wood at the end of the lane was known by a British precursor of Modern Welsh *Coed Mawr*, then that name could have been carried into Latin and thence passed to English. Likewise, if neighbouring folk generally simply referred to it as ‘the *Coed*’, then that too could surely have followed the same route: a lexical translation of *coed* to Latin *silva*, in this context, would surely not be a necessary concomitant of more general language shift.

There is one intriguing point of detail here. Coates (2007: 181) completes his discussion of the topographical loans by citing the familiar case of the river Avon. This derives from British **abonā*, Welsh *afon* ‘river’, a simple common noun, never, in Celtic-speaking areas, a name. There is no river in Wales called the *Afon Afon*. Yet in England at least six rivers acquired the name, apparently a perfect example of this category of British-English toponymic borrowing, as described by Coates. Yet there is a complication, because one of these rivers is recorded also in Roman-period documentation – the Bristol Avon is already *Abona* long before the Anglo-Saxon conquest. The name is applied both to the river and to a Roman fort upon it (Rivet & Smith 1979: 239–40). It is possible that this example shows Roman administrators, or residents, uncomprehendingly accepting the British common noun, in just the way that Coates suggests the English did later (Parsons & Styles 1997: 3). But, however it came about, it tends to indicate that in this one case, at least – and it is the only relevant instance that is attested – *Abona* could have been mediated to the Anglo-Saxons via Latin rather than British.¹¹

The pattern of surviving names and vocabulary, therefore, does not seem to me conclusive, despite the predominance of British on the map. Place-names, especially the restricted types which came into English, could have been passed through a shift to a Romance language. And the testimony of generic elements picked up and used in names by the Anglo-Saxons, arguably in the earliest years of their settlement, might be held to suggest a good deal more contact with Latin than with British.

Yet it must be conceded that the case is hardly made the other way, either. Despite Gelling’s seductive arguments, most of the Latin loanword evidence can be approached differently: some of the terms, like *stræt* and *ceaster*, could have been borrowed on the Continent; others, like **ecles* and **funta*, could have been mediated through British, for both of the relevant

¹¹Padel (forthcoming) makes the interesting new suggestion that *Abona* may have originated as a river-name, later generalised in Welsh as a common noun. On the one hand this would resolve any difficulty about transmission through Latin; on the other it raises doubts about the use of *Abona* as a parallel for the other single-element names discussed here.

Latin words were also transmitted into the Highland variety, witness modern Welsh *eglwys* and *ffynnon*. It is certainly striking that Latin has a more marked influence on the active place-name-forming vocabulary of the Anglo-Saxons than does British; but whether this is due to more than a combination of Latin influence on the Continent and coincidence, it is hard to say.

3.5. Jackson's formal evidence

After considering the incidence of pre-English place-names, and the patterns of usage that can be identified among them, we now come to examine their form. Jackson has covered this ground before us, and is typically astute in identifying methodological problems. He introduces the topic as follows:

We should look for signs in the form of the place-names which point to Latin and not Brittonic pronunciations. Here we are baulked at the very start by the fact that at least the bilingual Britons pronounced Latin in most respects (though not all) as if it were British, and also that some of the changes which affected British took place by coincidence in Continental Vulgar Latin too; so that it is hard to tell the two apart. (Jackson 1953: 256–7)

He might have added that some key sound changes in one or other of these languages are effectively also shared by early Old English, through which we are trying to make out the outline of the others. Despite all this, Jackson did not believe the situation was hopeless. He continued, confidently: 'certain developments in British no doubt did not affect British Latin' (Jackson 1953: 257). While we might ourselves balk at this, on purely logical grounds, let us examine some of his material.

First is the shift of initial */s/ to /h/ such as produced Welsh *hen* 'old' from older **senos* (cf. Latin *senex*, a cognate, not the source of a loan). Jackson argued that where this has happened in place-names it indicates a British spoken form, not a Latin one. This does not seem unreasonable: certainly, for what it is worth, Latin *s-* appears intact in the early medieval inscriptions of the Highland zone, and in loanwords in Welsh it is very largely kept apart from original British */s/ > /h/ (Jackson 1953: 513–18; Sims-Williams 2003: 142–4). We might therefore conclude that the river Hamps in Staffordshire (Middle English *Hanespe*, apparently equivalent to the Welsh river-name *Hafhesp*, *Hafhesb* < Brit **Samo-sispā* 'summer-dry'; Ekwall 1928: 190), and perhaps the Ennick in Worcestershire (?cf. a Nant Henog, in Breconshire (on which see Sims-Williams 2003: 94); Ekwall 1928: 148), attest to British speech at the time of contact with the Anglo-Saxons (Jackson 1953: 518–19), and sit outside any putative proto-Romance zone. Unfortunately, as Jackson recognised, there are no convincing examples of initial */s/ > /h/ further south or east which might help settle the wider question. On the other hand there are a few names in *s-*, including Salisbury and Savernake Forest, in Wiltshire, and *Sabrina*, the river-name borrowed into English as Severn (Old English *Safern*), but transmitted through Welsh as *Hafren*.

Yet before we leap on this as proof that the Anglo-Saxons adopted these names from Latin-speakers, we have to recognise that the distinction may rather be one of chronology. Indeed, this is how it is usually interpreted: initial *s-*, it is argued, must have survived long enough in British for the Anglo-Saxons to have encountered it around the sixth century.¹² Indeed, the chronology of linguistic change in early British here, and in many similar cases, is calculated

¹²This is a simplification: we may rather have to do with a sound distinct from original /s/, but still close enough to it for the English to identify it as such: Jackson denoted this sound with Σ.

in part on this kind of material and argument. Clearly if the names might be mediated through Latin, there is a danger that the rules will change, which must be of concern to the Celticist. In this case the independent evidence of the early medieval inscriptions tends to support a transition around the sixth or seventh centuries, which is reassuring for the textbook chronology (Sims-Williams 2003: 142–6, 286, 291, 294). But this could be said to highlight another infuriating coincidence: that the distinctive sound change in British was taking place at about the same time that English was spreading at the expense of British and/or Latin in the east, which necessarily leaves us unsure as to whether the preservation of *s-* is a non-British, i.e. Latin, feature, or whether it simply pre-dates the sound change within British.

Jackson's second instance of a change that would not have happened in British Latin is the British development of /o:/ > /u:/ > /ü:/ (Jackson 1953: 257–8, 305–17). He observes that the first stage here is inconclusive because he accepts that British Latin might have shared in the raising of /o:/ > /u:/, and he notes that the two sometimes fell together in Vulgar Latin in Gaul (cf. Smith 1983: 903). The third stage he regards as the critical one: Latin simply would not have developed the central vowel /ü:/, a belief which he supports by observing that Irish borrowings from British Latin require /o:/ or /u:/ rather than /ü:/ (Jackson 1953: 314–15). Thus, he argues, evidence of sound substitutions in Old English which suggest a fronted vowel becomes evidence for transmission from British speakers.

In the west there is an excellent apparent example of this: a famous, and unique, clause in an Anglo-Saxon charter of 682 refers to a place south of the river Tone in Somerset as *Britannica lingua Cructan, apud nos Crycbeorh* (Sawyer 1968: no. 237): this is now Creechbarrow Hill, near Taunton. The representation of the British vowel with Old English *y*, a fronted sound continued in modern *Creech-*, makes the point; as of course does the reference to *Britannica lingua* (not to mention the form spelled <Cructan> which apparently, and tantalisingly, derives from British *written* tradition). Only a diehard devil's advocate could argue that this did not suggest British linguistic survival into the post-Roman period; though theoretically it could be suggested that by the seventh century the language might have regained ground on Latin from the west in the course of the previous centuries. This is nonetheless probably the strongest indication of British survival that we have seen so far, though it is frankly the documentary context rather than the phonology that is the more convincing (and it is relatively western).

The chronology of the development of British /ü:/, and the variety of representation when borrowed into English, are unresolved problems. The element that is found in Creechbarrow is the recurrent Welsh *crug* 'barrow, hill' (<British **krouko-*> mentioned earlier: it appears to be particularly well attested amongst place-names borrowed by the Anglo-Saxons but the details are far from clear, since both the vowel and the treatment of the final consonant are erratic. The variety of early spellings is still reflected in modern forms: beside Somerset *Creech-*, for instance, there are Crutch, Crook and Creek, all in Surrey, not to mention a Critch in Sussex.¹³ Jackson does a sterling job of attempting to explain the vocalic variety as, on the one hand, chronological – early loans involve British /u:/, later ones /ü:/ – and, on the other hand, a matter of inexact sound substitution – once /ü:/ had arisen in British he argues that it might be represented by <i>, <y> or <u> in Old English. He does not tackle what appears, to the Anglicist, to be aberrant palatalisation and assibilation of the final consonant: on the one hand, we would expect

¹³It should be noted that the Sussex and Surrey forms with front vowels – which are the challenging ones in a south-eastern context – are not attested in early records (Mawer & Stenton 1929–30: 58; Gover, Mawer & Stenton 1934: 226). They may possibly be doubted, therefore, though their spellings certainly accord with the range found across the country, including apparently at Lincoln near the east coast (Jackson 1953: 309–10), which suggests that a relatively early development of [ü:] does have to be reckoned with.

assibilated /tʃ/ after /i/ or /y/, so Creek is unexpected; on the other, we would not expect assibilation after /u/, so there is a query over Crutch (cf. Campbell 1959: §433). The details and chronology of all this remain immensely uncertain, and in some respects clearly in need of re-evaluation. Thus Jackson (1953: 316) accepted a seventh- or early eighth-century date for the Old English *i*-mutation which gave rise to /y(:)/, and this assumption plays a significant part in his argumentation; more recent scholars, however, including Coates (1984) and Wollmann (1993: 23), have preferred a much earlier date, around the first half of the sixth century for the English change. Jackson (1953: 316) dated the British transition of /u:/ > /ü:/ to a similar period – the later fifth or early sixth century – yet in reaching this conclusion he treated the confused and confusing English evidence as ‘crucial’ (1953: 315). Certainly the epigraphical evidence is unhelpful, since <u> went on being written for the fronted sound in British (and is still so deployed in Welsh). Sims-Williams (2003: 105) concedes that the dating of /u:/ > /ü:/ is a problem, and notes one piece of (Highland) epigraphical evidence which may suggest that Jackson’s suggestion was too late; Coates notes that ‘the representation of this element [crūg] in English names needs further careful study’ (Coates & Breeze 2000: 350).

It remains the case, it is true, that representation by front vowels in Old English seems to point to the stage /ü:/, surely in origin a British innovation; but it is not clear (a) how early this vowel might have developed, nor (b) – despite Jackson’s protestations – whether it could have affected the phonology of Latin speakers in the south and east, perhaps particularly when they were rendering place-names that were ultimately British. Given these uncertainties, it would appear unwise to base firm conclusions about the daily language of the fifth or sixth centuries on the English forms that have been mentioned.

If arguments from British phonology can be difficult, there is another side to this argument, which Jackson also tackled in his attempt to dismiss the notion that Latin may have been widely spoken (1953: 259–61). There is a group of names in which it had previously been claimed that specifically Vulgar Latin sound changes had taken place. The clearest cases involve the lowering of /u/ to /o/, parallel to, though usually regarded as rather later than, the lowering of /i/ to /e/ that we have discussed. They include Dover, Old English *Dofras*, which answers to Romano-British *Dubris*; Dorchester in Dorset, earlier *Durnovaria*, and Canterbury in Kent, which in Bede and elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon sources preserved its earlier name, *Durovernum*, but often in the form *Dorovernia*. In all of these /o/ could derive from the Latin sound change, but Jackson finds alternative, perfectly reasonable, explanations within British for Dover (*ā*-affection) and Dorchester (south-western Brittonic dialectal [u] > [o]). In the isolated case of *Dorovernia* he accepts the Latinism, but cunningly ascribes both its form and its survival to Continental manuscript tradition (cf. Carroll & Parsons 2007: 80–2). He concludes that ‘positive evidence for any of the ... well-known developments of Vulgar Latin ... is all equally lacking’ (Jackson 1953: 260). The two further negative examples which he gives – Penkridge in Staffordshire and Salisbury in Wiltshire – are not happy ones, however. *Pennocrucium*, he claims, ‘was taken over with the second *c* still a guttural, not *ts*’ (Jackson 1953: 260), but a recurrent Old English form *Pencric* and a long run of medieval spellings in <-ch> (Oakden 1984: 87–8) might at least suggest the possibility of a sound substitution of OE [tʃ] for Lat [ts] (cf. Campbell 1959: §§ 50, 53). Salisbury, *Sorviodunum*, appears to be an example of the retention of /w/, as against the development of [v] (Jackson 1953: 260); but this feature, as we have noted, nowadays tends to be conceded for Latin in Britain.

Some recent suggestions have begun to challenge Jackson's confident conclusions. Richard Coates has argued that two southern English names do betray Latin transmission. One is Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, which was an Old English *Dorcic* (Coates 2006). Coates suggests that, like *Durovernia*, and unlike Dorchester in Dorset (early *Durnovaria*), this is a name involving British *Duro-* 'fort, walled town'. But its first vowel cannot be reasonably explained by any of Jackson's evasions, and it is archaeologically known as a Roman site which was the focus of very early Anglo-Saxon settlement: here, if anywhere, may be the conditions for a Latin form. The contextual argument is similar also at St Albans in Hertfordshire, Romano-British *Verulamium*, which may have survived for a while as Old English *Werlameceaster*, where Coates (2005b) argues that <lam> rather than <lom> betrays development through Latin not British.¹⁴

Finally we return to the thorns of Speen, Berkshire. As we have seen, this name is generally acknowledged to be a very rare bird: a modern survival of one of the few recorded Latin place-names of Roman Britain. *Spinis* (rather 'at the thorn trees' than the 'in the thorns' of my title) is presumably shown by its very survival to have been in some degree of local usage and not limited to administrators. But more than that, as Coates has convincingly explained (Coates & Breeze 2000: 40–43), the stressed vowel in *Spinis* has not behaved as we should expect. Modern English *spine*, not *speen*, would be the expected result if it were borrowed from classical /spi:ni:s/. Instead we need an early form with stressed /e:/, and Coates observes that Jackson (1953: 304) demonstrated that in some Welsh loanwords Latin /i:/ was apparently lowered, within British Latin, to /e:/ (as W *paradwys* < Late Brit **paradēs*- < Lat *paradisus*). This is not a standard Vulgar Latin change, nor is it equivalent to any change within British. Rather it is apparently an innovation within British Latin, showing through later Welsh; and it appears also to be required by this Berkshire place-name. This could then be evidence of transmission within Latin, though – as Coates observes – on the basis of the loanword testimony the name could have passed from Latin into British before reaching the English.

As presented by Jackson, therefore, in his section tackling 'whether any of the British place-names adopted by the English were learned from speakers of Latin and not from speakers of Brittonic' (1953: 256–61), the material appears equivocal: despite his assertions, there are a number of names in England which could have been mediated to the Anglo-Saxons through British Latin. Their form may, to some extent, reflect developments within the local Latin; they may also betray some elements of British phonology which could arguably have persisted in place-names of British etymology even after a shift to British Latin had left some of the sounds otherwise redundant in the local inventory. On the other hand, and despite Coates's recent thought-provoking suggestions, it remains hard to point to any instances where transmission through Latin *must* be assumed. Yet the evidence produced by Jackson in this section of *Language and History* does not look sufficient to make his case conclusively either. All of this appears to leave room for Schrijver's hypothesis in more or less its full form: in the Lowland zone British could largely have given way to Latin by the time of the Anglo-Saxon conquest.

3.6. Other formal evidence

However, there is further place-name evidence from England, which Jackson did not emphasise in this connection, but which must throw considerable doubt on Schrijver's

¹⁴Whilst his etymology deserves respect, it can hardly be certain (and does not fit into a familiar series, such as the *Duro-* proposal for Dorchester on Thames); the point about transmission is the weaker as a result. I would also be concerned that the English form is found only in Bede, and could conceivably have come through written rather than oral sources.

hypothesis as formulated. Simply put, a number of place-names in England appear to bear witness to developments within British that appear to belong to the post-Roman centuries. Sims-Williams (1990: 238–42) reviews most of the relevant material in his re-examination of Brittonic chronology. He draws attention to apparent examples of British proection in the West Riding of Yorkshire and Staffordshire, of *i*-affection in Middlesex, of pretonic /u/ > /ö/ in Wiltshire, Yorkshire (North and West Ridings), Northumberland and Durham, and of the assimilation of /nd/ to /nn/ in Norfolk. He also mentions, as we have had occasion to do above, the /s/ > /h/ apparent in the West Midlands; it does not fall within the compass of that article to mention the rounding of British /a:/ > /ɔ:/, though that too is generally considered a post-Roman change with reflexes in English place-names:¹⁵ examples include the river Don (West Yorkshire; Romano-British *Dānum*), and various rivers Frome (Dorset, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire; cf. W *Ffraw*, in which a later change obscures the stage with /ɔ:/ (see Jackson 1953: 416)).

Though he did not deploy it where he might have done on this question, Jackson, of course, knew all of this: all of the place-name examples that Sims-Williams presents are drawn from *Language and History*. And while Sims-Williams questions aspects of Jackson's absolute chronology of sound changes, the dispute concerns details within the fifth and sixth centuries – there is general agreement that these changes belong to the post-Roman period. In that case, provided the various details stand scrutiny, then it would become very difficult to defend the proposition that the relevant areas had ever been wholly Latin-speaking. The sound changes are in line with the development of Highland British, and they are taking place after the collapse of Roman rule: if the British language in England is continuing to develop along with that in Wales at this date, then it surely attests to the continuous use of British throughout the period. A theoretical alternative of a Highland British reflux into the Lowlands, after the collapse of Rome and before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, is ad hoc and unsupported, as Schrijver (2002: 105) observes. And whilst parallel development from an identical sub-phonemic inheritance could be pressed into service to account for one or another innovation shared by Highland British and a monolingual British Latin, it will strain credibility as an explanation for a range of distinct developments.

In the preceding discussion we have already twice had to concede the apparent survival of British within the Lowland zone, once because of an explicit documentary reference to British language in seventh-century Somerset, and once as a result of /h/ < /s/ in Staffordshire and Worcestershire place-names. These examples are relatively western, which is suggestive. Most of the other instances alluded to above are also western (Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire,¹⁶ Dorset) or northern (Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham), at least in relation to the greater south-east that I defined above. It would appear that, without a rather large-scale assault on the established chronology of British developments (which will not be entertained here), such areas can be excluded from any putative zone in which Latin came to supplant the older language. There could have been widespread bilingualism here – the names need tell us nothing of Latin as a second language – but there does not appear to have been widespread replacement of British.

¹⁵Jackson (1953: 291–2) dated it to the later 5th and early 6th centuries; Sims-Williams (2003: 281–2) discusses it in the context of the later 5th century, though without committing himself to a particular date. In his earlier article (Sims-Williams 1990: 252) he appears to assign the change to the Late British, i.e. pre-Primitive Welsh, stage, and does not count it amongst neo-Brittonic innovations (probably because there are no contrasting examples in English place-names). Elsewhere in the same article (p. 225) he accepts Jackson's argument (from a loanword into Irish) that /a:/ > /ɔ:/ is later than the voicing of /t/ > /d/, which Sims-Williams places early in the 5th century (p. 248).

¹⁶Coates has developed a case for a group of late Brittonic place-names in north-west Wiltshire, suggesting survival into the 7th century (Coates & Breeze 2000: 112–16).

Further south and east, in the sixteen counties outlined above, late features appear to be less well attested. Sims-Williams's survey of post-Roman innovations mentions only a handful of names here, and the relevance of some of them can be doubted. Thus the voicing of the final consonant of *Andred*, the Old English form for Pevensey, British **Anderitā*, could conceivably be due to the Vulgar Latin development, rather than to British lenition. King's Lynn, Norfolk, as an instance of the assimilation of /nd/ > /nn/ (Brit **lindo-*, W *llyn* 'pool, lake') is geographically isolated, and might be questioned. Such assimilation is sporadically found in Old English (Campbell 1959: §484; cf. Wright 1905: 235–6 with extensive evidence from modern dialects), and in the case of Bedwyn, Wiltshire, it seems to take place in the late Old English period in a name that may well itself contain British /nd/ (Carroll & Parsons 2007: 29–34). King's Lynn is first recorded in 1086 (Watts 2004: 390), and it is not inconceivable that assimilation had already taken place within English at some point in the preceding centuries.

The remaining examples mentioned by Sims-Williams involve British final *i*-affection, a process dated to the turn of the sixth century by Jackson (1953: 600–601), but put earlier in the fifth by Sims-Williams (1990: 247–8). This sound change is conventionally identified in the second syllable of London, OE *Lūnden*, apparently from a Brit **Lūndonjon*, rather than the attested Romano-British *Lundinium*, earlier *Londinium* (Jackson 1953: 308; Coates & Breeze 2000: 15–31).¹⁷ It seems similarly to appear in the second syllable of OE *Bregent*, the river Brent, Middlesex, from earlier Brit **Brigantjā* (Jackson 1953: 602). It could be argued, however, that if something like the full British form could have been encountered in each case by the Anglo-Saxons, then Old English *i*-mutation would have had very similar effects. **Lūndonjon*, or **Lūdonium*, might have developed as **Lūndunjə* > **Lūndyn* > **Lūndin* > *Lūnden* (Campbell 1959: §§ 501, 339); **Brigantjā* as **Brigantja* > **Brigənt* > **Brigent* (Campbell 1959: § 193 (d)). Parallels for the retention of British final syllables to act in English are not conventionally accepted at all (Jackson 1953: 628–30), but Coates (2006: 58–60) has recently made a case along these lines in his account of Dorchester-on-Thames, which he thinks may have been borrowed very early in the fifth century, and from Latin. We could conceivably contemplate something similar for London and Brent. There would, however, be a number of problems to negotiate along the way: **Lūndyn* did not undergo double umlaut to ***Lȳndyn* (Campbell 1959: § 203), for instance; and in neither case would the development match the prosodic pattern which Coates proposes to explain the presence of *i*-mutation in his **Dorocuccium* but its absence from Romano-British *Regulbium* > OE *Reculf* (Reculver in Kent).

If it is just about imaginable to sidestep this post-Roman Brittonic innovation in Middlesex, there are a group of instances in Hampshire which look more stubborn. The set Andover, Candover and Micheldever all have as their second element a form that appears in Old English spellings as *defer*, generally explained as deriving from Brit **dubrī*, plural of the **dubro-* 'water' that we have previously met. The conventional sequence here involves *i*-affection on /u/ to give a central vowel /i/, which the Anglo-Saxons did not have, and therefore substituted with other sounds, in this case [e] (Jackson 1953: 285). An alternative explanation of English *i*-mutation will not really work in this case, because the umlaut vowel should then be /y/. This may begin, at the least, to push the zone of clear British survival further east, into central Hampshire.

¹⁷The mismatch between the suffix regularly recorded as *-inium* in Romano-British sources, and the *-onium* (British **-onjo-*) which is required by the later developments in English and/or early Brittonic, is an intriguing problem. If Rivet & Smith (1979: 398) were correct to surmise that *Londinium*/*Lundinium* became established Latin usage, and if this were true for spoken as well as written Latin, then this would provide a clear argument that transmission was not directly from Latin to English, since *Lundin-* must have become ***Lynden* by Old English *i*-mutation. It is conceivable, however, that **Lundonj-* could have been the local *spoken* form in either Latin or British.

One could continue to argue in this way through a number of further south-eastern place-names. To uphold a case for the loss of British before the coming of the Anglo-Saxons, some proposed etymologies would probably have to be abandoned (e.g. Coates's suggestions for Coslany, Norfolk, and Chevening, Kent; Coates & Breeze 2000: 153–9, 316; also the proposal for Moggerhanger, Bedfordshire, which Coates (2005a) argues shows Latin /a:/ developed in later Brittonic as /ɔ:/). Various chronological problems would also need to be negotiated (e.g. the dating of /ü:/ < /u:/ < /o:/, as discussed above – unless the possible examples with front vowels are deemed to be recorded too late to be significant). Even so, the number of clear post-Roman Brittonicisms is certainly very small, and we may indeed conclude that there is none which is indisputable. Whether this amounts to evidence in favour of the replacement of British by Latin over a significant area is another matter, however.

Something should finally be added here on Schrijver's latest formulation (Schrijver 2009; see n. 8 above). If he were right that the British of the south and east was in fact more like Primitive Irish than Jackson's Primitive Brittonic, then many of the rules would presumably change. Apparent instances of Brittonic innovations should perhaps be analysed quite differently and according to a different chronology. That such a theory can be proposed emphasises the lack of certainties in the area. On the other hand, the circumstance that early British place-names and their development *can* usually be understood through the prism of conventional Brittonic tends to place the burden of proof on the revolutionary theory. And, once again, the nature of that theory appears thorny: if, over the next generation, Celticists and Anglicists can agree that Old English attests to a widespread Celtic substratum of Primitive Irish type, then we may be in a position radically to reassess the details of early Brittonic. Until that consensus emerges, however, developments like the *i*-affection in Micheldever, which appear to be neither Latin nor Old English, but seems consistent with early Brittonic, are probably best interpreted in that way.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The present article essentially represents an attempt to weigh Schrijver's suggestions for the nature and prevalence of British Latin against the long-standing orthodoxy laid down by Jackson. This orthodoxy has largely been reaffirmed by the recent work of Coates. Despite his suggestions for Dorchester-on-Thames, *Verulamium* and Speen, Coates has reached the conclusion that transmission of the names through Latin is wholly exceptional. He has considerable general reservations about Schrijver's (original) hypothesis (Coates 2007: 191), and expresses himself carefully and clearly on the question in hand: 'the *phonology* of the names as learned, whether the words and grammar of the talk were Brittonic or Latin, was essentially Brittonic' (Coates & Breeze 2000: 8). It will by now be apparent that to a large extent I am in agreement with this position, with the modification (which perhaps seemed too obvious to Jackson and Coates to stress) that it is the evidence for post-Roman Brittonic phonological developments that is particularly compelling. Where such developments appear clear, and especially where they cluster, it is unreasonable to suppose that Latin could have replaced British as the general language of the population. British must have survived amongst plenty of the 'ordinary' people, whatever the situation in the higher reaches of society (about which the place-names have, arguably, little or nothing to say).

It appears nonetheless to be the case that the relevant evidence varies according to region. Schrijver's hypothesis, that Lowland Britain became predominantly Latin-speaking before the fall of Rome, looks very doubtful in the case of the west midlands and south-west (perhaps as far east as central Hampshire). Further to the south-east the evidence for British linguistic survival is sparser and might, perhaps, be contested. Knotty philological problems await anyone who wants to deny British *i*-affection in Brent and London, however. (And, one might

ask, if the name of London were not passed on by Latin speakers, where does this leave the hypothesis? Cf. Coates & Breeze 2000: 18; Zachrisson 1927: 80; above n. 15.) To some extent, therefore, this could become a question of how we define the ‘Lowland zone’. Jackson (1953: 96) drew a line ‘from the Vale of York past the southern end of the Pennines and along the Welsh border to the fringes of the hilly country of Devon and Cornwall’, though he noted that settlement seems to have been particularly dense ‘south-east of a line from the Fens to the mouth of the Severn’ (Jackson 1953: 97, n. 1). The latter catches the eye as more closely approximate to the south-east that I have defined here, though this is hardly the place to enter into a survey of archaeological opinion on the question, which has developed extensively over more than half a century’s work.

Nonetheless, it is interesting to draw attention to Woolf’s (2003: 355–61) review of the nature and significance of the Highland/Lowland division in post-Roman Britain. He suggests that a Highland zone is archaeologically visible in the distribution of the post-Roman inscribed stones of the fifth and sixth centuries, and that between this distribution and that of early Anglo-Saxon burials, there is a ‘broad band of territory in which neither class of site is found’ encompassing most of south-west England as far east as Hampshire, together with the West Midlands and most of the north (Woolf 2003: 356). This is an area in which he argues that Lowland British culture survived throughout the sixth century, distinct from the Highlands to its west, and from the area of Anglo-Saxon conquest to the east. The evidence of British linguistic innovation in the place-names of this central zone is thus placed in a specifically ‘Lowland’ context, despite Schrijver. And we are reminded that the zone to the east, in which innovations are harder to identify, equates to the area of early Anglo-Saxon domination. This itself may have snuffed out British too early for some of the innovations to appear; but it is also the area in which pre-English place-names survive in very small numbers, so that the sheer statistical chance of preserved innovations is not great. There *could* have been an area of the south-east where Latin replaced British; but the lack of positive evidence for British survival may have more to do with the circumstances of Anglo-Saxon conquest.

A great deal of this article has been concerned with matters other than the phonological details of surviving place-names, which have dominated the conclusions thus far. There are several reasons for this. Above all, Jackson’s own discussion of the question drew together various strands, and wove out of them a largely coherent and satisfying account. The separate strands have been pulled apart and questioned over the years, and new ones (such as Gelling’s Latin loanwords in place-names) have been added. Without reviewing them all, it is difficult to attempt any kind of overview – though, having arrived at the end, it is hard to replace Jackson’s confident coherence with anything equivalent. We have seen various indications to suggest that British Vulgar Latin may not have been archaic or artificial (though Jackson did not exactly say that it was), and that it may have been a good deal more widespread in society than Jackson allowed. Against this background, the active role of Latin loanwords in early English place-name formation is intriguing, and should not be lightly dismissed: none of the place-name evidence precludes bilingualism, nor the extensive use of Latin amongst certain sections of post-Roman society.

Nonetheless, in some places, at least, it does seem to preclude the total replacement of British. In this it could be considered to sit neatly beside one aspect of the invaluable new curse-tablets which has not yet been mentioned. Tomlin (1988: 97) and Mullen (2007b: 50) have shown that at Bath an albeit imprecise chronological sequence can be set up, showing – in effect – that the proportion of Celtic to Latin personal names borne by those invoking the goddess changes little between the later second and fourth centuries. Just over half the names are British in the first half of the period; just under in the second half. This, from a heavily Romanised Lowland centre, albeit from outside my narrow south-east, is readily interpreted as support for the primary conclusion drawn here from place-name evidence: it would appear

that Britain *was* an exception to the rule that Latin spread at the expense of native languages throughout the Western Roman Empire (cf. Schrijver 2002: 87).

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