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Title of extract: '**Nennius**' and the *Historia Brittonum*

Name of Author: **Dumville, D.N.**

Title/Author of book/edition (if applicable)

Name of Visual Creator or other acknowledgement (if applicable):

Journal details –title/Vol/Year (if applicable): **Studia Celtica Vol X/XI (1975/76)**

Publisher: **University of Wales Press**

Pages scanned: **78 - 95**

Course of Study (Module name and number): **Celtic Arthur CYCS7021**

Name of Designated Person

authorising scanning: *E.L. Harris*

Date authorised: 27.03.17.

Moodle/Powerpoint

'Nennius' and the *Historia Brittonum*¹

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THE ascription of the early-ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* to 'Nennius' seems to be universally taken for granted.² Yet this has by no means always been the case, least of all in the Middle Ages. I hope to show here, by a discussion of the implications of the place of the Nennian attribution in the manuscript-tradition of the *Historia*, that the author remains unknown and that the ascription to 'Nennius' is no older than a Welsh recension of the text in the mid-eleventh century.

There survive today five medieval manuscripts of the *Historia Brittonum* which assign the text to 'Nennius'. Of the remaining manuscripts, approximately thirty in number, the overwhelming majority attribute it anachronistically to Gildas whose claim was to be the only early British 'historian' identifiable by name. It has been generally agreed by scholars—and with good reason—that the so-called 'Harleian' recension³ of the *Historia*, comprising a group of four manuscripts bearing no indication of authorship, preserves best the work as it was originally composed, probably in the year 829–30.⁴ However, the desire to ascribe the text to 'Nennius' has caused some embarrassment owing to the absence from this group of the prologue of 'Nennius', which constitutes the sole evidence for that authorship. The conclusion appears therefore to have been reached either that the Harleian group has suffered some slight abridgement⁵—regrettably including the omission of the prologue—or that 'Nennius' was responsible for a series of recensions over a number of years,⁶ in the last of which alone he added the prologue bearing his name. Neither conclusion is supported by the manuscript-tradition.

Let us consider instead the manuscripts which bear the name of 'Nennius'. Of these five, one is the ultimate source of all the others. This is Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 139,⁷ happily dated precisely to

¹ My grateful thanks are due to Professor Jackson for reading and making most helpful comments on drafts of this paper. I am indebted also to Dr. Michael Lapidge and the late Professor Melville Richards for advice and generous assistance on specific points.

² Ed. Theodor Mommsen, *Mon. Germ. Hist., Auctores Antiquissimi*, xiii (Berlin, 1894–98), pp. 111–222; Ferdinand Lot, *Nennius et l'Historia Brittonum* (Paris, 1934). I am preparing a new edition.

³ There is a separate edition of the text in Harley 3859 (printed in parallel with the Chartres text) by Edmond Faral, *La Légende arthurienne* (Paris, 1929), iii, pp. 1–62.

⁴ On the date, see D. N. Dumville, 'Some aspects of the chronology of the *Historia Brittonum*', *BBCS* 25 (1972–4), pp. 439–45.

⁵ Thus Lot, pp. 16–19.

⁶ R. Thurneysen, *ZCP* 1 (1896/7), pp. 163–6.

⁷ Henceforth abbreviated to CCCC 139.

1164;¹ from it descends the Nennian material in Durham Cathedral MS. B. 2. 35, added in 1166 to a text of the recension attributed to Gildas (and from this was copied in 1381 the composite text in British Library MS. Burney 310); from CCCC 139 descends also the expanded text in the early-thirteenth-century Cambridge University Library MS Ff. I. 27 (Part 1), from which the prologue was added to an already existing text, now in St. John's College, Oxford, MS. 99. It is worth noting that all of these manuscripts come from a geographically restricted area and represent the results of the work of one school of historiographical activity:² the two Cambridge manuscripts originated at Sawley in the West Riding of Yorkshire; the Durham and Burney manuscripts were written at Durham; the Oxford manuscript comes from Jervaulx, and was perhaps earlier at Bridlington.

When one comes therefore to consider the archetype of this group, MS. CCCC 139, a host of problems immediately demands one's attention. The original text of the *Historia Brittonum* contained in this manuscript belonged to the secondary, Gildasian, recension (indeed, to a subgroup associated with Cistercian houses); thereafter, a massive series of alterations, collations, and additions—*by as many as ten hands*—has accumulated on every folio. The lack of a guide to the palaeographical (and consequent textual) problems presented by this manuscript has been a major stumbling-block in the way of a scientific investigation of its importance in the tradition of the *Historia*; such a guide is now available, however, and on the basis of that clarification this study may proceed.³

At some point during the years 1164 to 1166, a series of additions was made to this text by three hands, apparently acting in concert and deriving their material from the same source.⁴ Amongst this material was the prologue, which—since it has never been printed with complete accuracy—I give here from CCCC 139, fo. 168^v.

Incipit eulogium breuissimum Brittannie insule quod Ninnius, Eluodugi discipulus, congregauit.

Ego Ninnius, Eluodugi⁵ discipulus, aliqua excerpta scribere curauit que hebitudo gentis Brittannie deiecerat, quia nullam peritiam habuerunt neque ullam commemorationem in libris posuerunt doctores illius insule Brittannie. Ego autem coaceruavi omne quod inueni tam de annalibus Romanorum quam de cronicis sanctorum patrum (id est Ieronimi Eusebii Isidori Prosperi) et de annalibus Scottorum Saxonumque, et ex traditione ueterum nostrorum quod multi doctores atque librarii scribere temptauerunt. Nescio quo pacto difficiliter reliquerunt an propter mortalitates frequentissimas uel clades frequentissimas⁶ bellorum.

¹ A rubric on fo. 51^v was written in September of that year.

² I shall be devoting a paper to the Sawley school in due course.

³ D. N. Dumville, 'The Corpus Christi "Nennius"', *BBCS* 25 (1972-4), pp. 369-80.

⁴ Hands *C*¹, *C*², *C*³, described in my paper cited in the last note.

⁵ On this form, see below, pp. 92 f.

⁶ This word is glossed *creberrimas* by hand *C*⁷, written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century; this gloss has passed into the received printed text, displacing its lemma, without comment.

Rogo ut omnis lector qui legerit hunc librum, det ueniam michi quia †cuius†¹ sum post tantos hec tanta scribere quasi garrula auis uel quasi quidam inualidus arbiter. Cedo illi qui plus nouerit in ista peritia satis quam ego.
Explicit eulogium.

The first point which plainly requires to be noted is the form *Ninnius* for, if the only manuscript on which textual reliance may be placed twice gives a reading totally at variance with that which has long been accepted, it is a matter of some concern. Two other hands, providing new rubrics for the whole text, give the forms *Nennio* (ablative)² and *Nemni* (genitive),³ thus testifying to a certain orthographical instability, but it is to be stressed that the authoritative form must be that (*Ninnius*) which occurs in the only section of text intimately connected with that name.⁴

Associated with the prologue is the remainder of the material which, taken as a whole, constitutes the so-called 'Nennian' recension of the *Historia*. All this has been added to the copy of the Gildasian recension in our manuscript in interlinear or marginal positions; we are therefore in possession only of the detritus of the Nennian recension, merely of such material as the collators saw fit to incorporate into the Sawley manuscript. That this material is the result of a collation with a complete copy of a recension attributed to Ninnius we need not doubt, and there are sufficient variant readings given to allow us to place this recension with some assurance in the textual tradition of the *Historia Brittonum*. It should also be possible to indicate the approximate date at which the recension took shape.

Let us attempt first to place this lost version in the tradition of the *Historia* with the aid of the textually significant additions and variants found in CCCC 139. A selection of twenty-five examples will permit us to document with abundant clarity the affiliation of this recension and to avoid overburdening this paper with the consideration of variant readings. A good number of these may be relegated to a footnote,⁵ but some major

¹ Certainly corrupt. The antiquaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries conjectured *ausus* (which has passed silently into the printed texts) and *conatus* (which is perhaps more satisfactory on palaeographical grounds).

² *C*¹, writing in the years 1164 × 1166.

³ *C*⁸, probably writing shortly after 1200.

⁴ The various forms of the name were studied by R. Thurneysen, ZCP 20 (1933-6), pp. 98-104. His view was that *Nemnius* and *Nemnius* (see below) were orthographical variants of the same name (of which *Nennius* was a corruption); he adopted the former for general usage. Unfortunately, owing to the shortcomings of Mommsen's edition, with regard especially to CCCC 139, he did not consider the possible importance of the form *Ninnius*.

⁵ (1) c. 10, *habitata est hec insula*; (2) c. 11, *Quando Britto regnabat* in Britannia; (3) c. 15, *Et postea consules rursum*; (4) c. 20, *honorem* (replacing 'hereditatem'); (5) c. 31, *et dum ipse regnabat* (replacing 'pugnabat'); (6) c. 32, *et uiuus*; (7) c. 39, *concilio Brittonum*; (8) c. 44, *mortem suam ad familiam suam*; (9) c. 44, *manebunt* (replacing 'mutabunt'); (10) c. 48, *Et unam* (replacing 'Quintam'); (11) c. 54, *leprosos mundabat*; (12) c. 54, *ad patrem et ad magistrum suum*; (13) c. 56, *ipse primus rex fuit in Beornica*; (14) c. 71, *traxit ad se*; (15) c. 73, *ipse occidit eum ibidem*; (16) c. 75, *qui est in medio pelagi*; (17) c. 76, *margarite multe*; (18) c. 76, *et uocatur Luch Echac*. The significant readings are those in italics.

examples may be listed here: (1) the end of a genealogy has been supplied—*fili Enohc, f. Iareth, f. Malaleel, f. Chainan, f. Enos, f. Seth, f. Adam, f. Dei uiui*;¹ (2) the seventh Roman emperor in Britain, properly called 'Maximus' by the Gildasian text, is altered *passim* to 'Maximianus';² (3) the sentence *Maximianus Uictorem filium suum consortem regni fecit* has been inserted,³ as has (4) *Satis dictum est de Gortirgirno et de regno suo et de genere eius*,⁴ and (5) a clause about Arthur, *et in omnibus bellis uictor exstitit*.⁵ In addition, (6, 7) two passages in the *mirabilia*, lost owing to *sauts du même au même* and already missing in the common ancestor of every Gildasian subgroup of the *Historia*, have been supplied.⁶ All these readings leave no room for doubt that the recension attributed to Ninnius was essentially of the Harleian type.⁷ However, there is also evidence for a quantity of additions and subtractions of a substantial nature, which must now be considered.

The text of Ninnius embodies one major alteration which at once both confirms that it was based on the Harleian type of text and reveals some information as to the circumstances and nature of the changes effected. This is a substantial marginal addition to CCCC 139, fo. 177^r:

Ida filius Eubba tenuit regiones in sinistrali parte Humbri maris duodecim annis, et iunxit arcem (id est Din Gueirin)⁸ et gurd Birnech que due regiones fuerunt in una regione (id est Deur a Bernech, anglice Deira et Bernicia). Elfled, filia Edwini, duodecimo die post pentecosten baptismum accepit cum innumerabili(b)us hominibus de uiris et mulieribus cum ea; et hec prima

¹ c. 17.

² cc. 27, 29, 31. The same variation occurs in the versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, as Professor Dorothy Whitelock kindly points out to me: *Maximianus* A, G; *Maximus* B, C, E, F.

³ c. 29.

⁴ c. 49.

⁵ c. 56.

⁶ (1) c. 68: se] *in modum arietum; et procedit unusquisque ad alterum et collidunt se* [ad inuicem . . .]; (2) c. 69: ad sissam] *et mare similiter inundatur in ostio supradicti fluminis, et in ostio stagni recipitur in modum uoraginis mare et non uadit sursum. Et est litus iuxta flumen; et quando Sabrina inundatur ad sissam* [istud litus . . .].

⁷ Special comment is required on four small textual points thrown into relief by the comparison of the 'Nennian' text as represented by the additions in CCCC 139 and by the Irish version (on which see below, pp. 87–9) with the various other recensions of the *Historia*. (1) In c. 29 the date A.M. 5690 is found in the Gildas, Irish, and Vatican recensions; it is not deleted by the Sawley collators. Its presence in all these texts suggests that its absence from the manuscripts of the Harleian recension may be due to scribal failure in their archetype. (2) A similar position obtains in c. 46, where the Irish text, the additions in CCCC 139, and the Vatican recension all name Middlesex among the areas ransomed for Gwrtheyrn. (3) In c. 10, the Vatican, Gildas, and Irish texts all agree on Ascanius as the founder of Alba, as against Aeneas in the Harleian text. This could equally well be a case either of scribal error in the archetype of the extant representatives of the Harleian recension or of independent correction by the other recensions of an original error in the Harleian version. (4) A short form of the genealogy in c. 17 is a feature shared by the Irish and Gildasian texts, but not by the 'Nennian' collations in CCCC 139 which complete the text. The Irish and Gildasian texts have abbreviated independently (the Irish version stops at Lamech, the Gildasian at Methuselah), no doubt in the belief that the remainder of this biblical genealogy was common knowledge (Genesis *cap.* 5; Luke 3: 36–8) and need not be written out in full. On two other problematical textual points (the section *Initium compoti* . . . in c. 16; the seven sons of Amolghith in c. 54) this version offers no special additional guidance.

⁸ On this form, see below, p. 93 and n. 7.

baptizata est. Edwinus uero postea in sequenti pascha baptismum suscepit, et duodecim milia hominum in uno die baptizati sunt cum eo. Si quis scire uoluerit quis baptizauit eos, sic mihi Renchidus¹ episcopus et Elbobdus² episcoporum sanctissimus tradiderunt: Run mep Urbeghen³ (id est Paulinus Eboracensis archiepiscopus) eos baptizauit, et per quadraginta dies non cessauit baptizare omne genus Ambronum (id est Aldsaxonum), et per predicationem illius multi crediderunt Christo. Sed cum inutiles⁴ magistro meo (id est Beulano presbitero)⁴ uise sunt genealogie Saxonum et aliarum genealogie gentium, nolui eas scribere; sed de ciuitatibus et mirabilibus Brittannie insule, ut alii scriptores ante me scripsere, scripsi.

One may see from this that the Old English genealogies and associated North British historical material were contained in the text which was received and then remodelled to form the recension of Ninnius. It can have been a representative only of the Harleian type. Two items from these chapters were, however, retained, albeit somewhat rewritten: one related to Ida and the unification of Northumbria, the other to the baptism of Edwin and his followers; evidently Beulan had not thought these to be *inutiles*. The equation of Paulinus and Rhun⁵ reflects another aspect of this recension which is apparent from its surviving remains; namely, a tendency to explain by means of glosses (which may at times seem maladroit to the historian of today) any points which might occasion some difficulty. Also omitted as *inutiles* were *aliarum genealogie gentium*, a phrase which has caused previous commentators some trouble. It seems to me that the only section of the original text which fits the description exactly is the chapter *Brittones a Bruto*⁶ which catalogues in summary form the descent of the European nations. This is missing from the Gildasian recension, and was not added to CCCC 139 by any of the Sawley collators; it was therefore probably missing also from the text of Ninnius.⁷ It may very well be that, when it was dropped, its most relevant point was added at the very beginning of the work, which in this recension reads 'Brittannia insula a Britone filio Isioconis qui fuit filius Alani de genere Iaphedi dicta est uel, ut alii dicunt, a quodam Bruto consule romano', relegating the original derivation to a subordinate role.

¹ The name *Renchidus* does not appear to be attested elsewhere in Welsh sources.

² *Elbobdus* was emended in CCCC 139 (after 1166, for the original reading is found in Durham B. 2. 35) to *Elbodus* by the erasure of the second *-b-*. See below, p. 93, n. 4. The altered form would have been quite acceptable c. 1200, granting that by this time the first *-b-* (for MW *-u-*) would have been a little archaic.

³ MS. *Run. MepuR. Beghen*. See further below, p. 93, nn. 2 and 6.

⁴ (...) These words were rewritten in CCCC 139 by C⁷, a hand of the first quarter of the thirteenth century. The accuracy of the rewriting is guaranteed by the evidence of the Durham manuscript.

⁵ This information on the baptism (and, by implication, the identification) was allegedly supplied by Bishops Renchidus and Elbobdus; the mention of Elfoddw supplies a link with the prologue, the only other reference to him in the *Historia*.

⁶ c. 18.

⁷ It forms a part of the text written in C.U.L. MS. Ff. I. 27, Part 1, but appears to have been added from a text of the Vatican type. This chapter is missing also from the Irish translation (see below, p. 88).

Perhaps the most notable feature of this passage is the reference to the writer's *magister*. Although the scribe does not name himself here, he refers to the priest Beulan who, from his title *magister* and his decisive role in the transmission of the text, was doubtless the master of the scriptorium or school in which this recension was prepared.

There is another major addition (CCCC 139, fo. 169^v) which refers to Beulan. It begins with a cryptic remark about the Irish,¹ then gives a genealogy of 'Britus' contrived from the Vergil scholiasts,² and ends as follows:

Sic inueni ut tibi Samuel (id est infans magistri mei, id est Beulani presbiteri) in ista pagina scripsi. Sed hec genealogia non scripta in aliquo uolumine Brittannie sed in scriptione mentis scriptoris fuit.

Some commentators have taken *Samuel* as a nominative, presumably on the ground that the gloss *infans* appears to be nominative, and translated 'I have found thus, as I Samuel (the *infans* of my master Beulan the priest) have written for you in these pages'. Others, however, have felt that this defies both the natural order of the piece and the sense, which require that *tibi* and *Samuel* be taken together, with the latter (and *infans*) as a vocative: 'Thus have I found, as I have written for you, Samuel, in these pages.' Some support for this latter view comes from the obscure verses associated with this recension. These occur on fo. 168^v of CCCC 139 where, after the prologue of Ninnius, a rubric reads *Item eiusdem quod scribi debet in fine libri*.³ There follow a tract on the characteristics of nations⁴ and two sets of verses in somewhat obscure language. These latter have never been completely or properly translated, in spite of a number of attempts,⁵ and have accordingly sometimes been stigmatized as corrupt or spurious; the glosses which accompany the first piece have, above all, been regarded with grave suspicion. I think it is now possible to comprehend these texts; let us consider the first.

Adiutor benignus,⁶ caris / doctor effabilis fonis:⁷

¹ 'Hec est genealogia istius Briti exosi nunquam ad se nos id est Brittones ducti quandoque uolebant Scotti nescientes origenes sui ad istum domari.'

² Mommsen, ed. cit., p. 152, n. 1.

³ *eiusdem* plainly refers back to Ninnius; hence the specific attribution (often denounced) in MS. Ff. I. 27.

⁴ Ed. Theodor Mommsen, *Mon. Germ. Hist., Auctores Antiquissimi*, xi (Berlin, 1894), pp. 389-90. This is the 'forma secunda', found also in two Continental manuscripts of *saec.* xi and xii. It does not seem to have been noted that there exists an interesting Middle-Irish metrical translation of a version of this tract: K. Meyer, ZCP 1 (1896/7), pp. 112-13; a more modern Irish text is given by Eugene O'Curry, *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History* (Dublin, 1861), pp. 580 f.

⁵ V. H. Friedel, 'Les vers de pseudo-Nennius', ZCP 3 (1899-1901), pp. 112-22; 'Ad versus Nennii', *ibidem*, p. 515. A substantial advance was made by Lot, ed. cit., pp. 124-6.

⁶ Line 1 might be thought to refer to Christ, but one would then expect the vocative *benigne*.

⁷ See the 'Hisperic' poem *Rubisca*, line 35, where this word occurs and is glossed *uocis*: ed. F. J. H. Jenkinson, *The Hisperica Famina* (Cambridge, 1908), p. 56. In the Brittonic-Latin colloquy in 'Codex Oxoniensis Posterior', *fona* is glossed *.i. uoces uel uerba*; ed. W. H. Stevenson, *Early Scholastic Colloquies* (Oxford, 1929), p. 10, l. 23.

sit .i. Samueli
 Gaudium honoris isti / katholica lege magni!
 Nos omnes precamur: / qui ros¹ sit, tutus utatur!
 .i. Beulan
 Xpiste, tribuisti patri / Samuelem leta Matre.²
 .i. Mater .i. Samuel
 Hymnizat³ hec semper tibi. / Longeuus ben,⁴ seruus tui;
 Zona induc salutis / istum tis⁵ pluribus annis!⁶

'The gentle helper, doctor praiseworthy with dear voices:
 (May there be) joy of great honour to him [Samuel] (in accordance) with universal law!

We all beseech (you), May he dwell safe who is a divine blessing!
 O Christ, you granted Samuel to (his) father [Beulan], to the joy of his Mother;
 She [Mother] hymns you for ever. (May he [Samuel] be) a long-lived son, your servant;
 Clothe him with the girdle of your salvation for many years!

¹ *Rubisca*, line 39, where *ros* is glossed by *caput*; so, too, in a glossary in the now destroyed Chartres MS. 90, quoted by Friedel (p. 119, n. 2). This is a Hebrew word. There is an alternative tradition, developed from the Latin *ros*, 'dew', by the Fathers (especially Jerome) under the influence of biblical usage. *Ros* comes to mean 'divine grace' (cf. *Bulletin Du Cange: Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi*, 27 [1957], p. 129) and thus 'divine blessing' (cf. Albert Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens* [Strasbourg, 1954], pp. 725 f.). For this use in Insular hermeneutic poetry, see Frithegodus, *Breuilquium Vite S. Wilfredi* (ed. A. Campbell [Zürich, 1950]), line 1337.

² Line 4 embodies an obvious comparison of Beulan and Samuel with the Heli and Samuel of 1 Kings (1 Samuel) i-iv. The *mater* is the Church, which hymns Christ for ever.

³ Cf. *Rubisca*, ll. 89 and 92, where *ymniste* is twice glossed *laudate*. The otiose initial *H-* of *Hymnizat* is not significant and does not affect the strict abecedarial form which requires *y* at this point.

⁴ A Hebrew word. See the *Mittelaltersches Wörterbuch*, p. 1418, s.v.

⁵ Cf. *Rubisca*, lines 12 (glossed *tui*) and 62. *Mis* (= *mei*) is also found in *Rubisca*, line 7, and in the late-eleventh-century poetry of the sons of Bishop Sulien (see the edition by M. Lapidge, *Studia Celtica*, 8/9 [1973/4], pp. 68-106). *Mis*, *tis*, and *sis* (= *sui*) are ancient Latin monosyllabic forms, normally employed for metrical reasons. A record of them was preserved by the grammarians; see *Thes. Ling. Lat.* v. 2, cols. 253 f. and H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini* (Leipzig, 1857-70), ii. 578 and iii. 34 (Priscian), iv. 357 (Donatus), iv. 410 (Servius). The use of these words was reintroduced by medieval Latin poets.

⁶ The strict abecedarial form of the poem is stressed by the addition of coloured capitals, A to Z, between the lines. The metrical form of these verses is noteworthy: they are rhythmic octosyllables arranged in pairs joined by endrhyme. This poem could well be printed (as does Friedel, p. 118) in twelve lines rather than the six of the manuscript. The first half of line 3 lacks two syllables. The continuity of the abecedarial form demonstrates that this is due to the poet's inadvertence, not to scribal error. This syllabic form (in which quantity is irrelevant) is derived ultimately from (quantitative) trochaic tetrameter hymns of the Late Latin period, and is found first in Ireland in the late seventh century. The form was popular in England, being used by Aldhelm, Aedilwald, Boniface, etc.; see I. Schröbler, 'Zu den Carmina Rhythmica in der Wiener Handschrift der Bonifatiusbriefe oder über den Stabreim in der lateinischen Poesie der Angelsachsen', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* [Tübingen], 79 (1957), pp. 1-42 (esp. pp. 12-17). However, its distribution is neither exclusively Insular nor confined to the seventh and eighth centuries: it is found, for example, in a poem written at Metz c. 1000 (*M.G.H., Poetae Aevi Carolini*, v, p. 116); cf. Dag Norberg, *Introduction à l'étude de la versification latine médiévale* (Stockholm, 1958), pp. 125 f.

It does appear very unlikely that Samuel, the *infans* of Beulan (be he spiritual or fleshly son, or both), could be the author of these verses. They are rather composed in his honour. The logical interpretation of the passage quoted above (*Sic inueni ut tibi Samuel . . .*) must therefore be the same; that it was produced 'for you, O Samuel'.

It would seem, then, that one has to do with the activity of a scribe working under the direction of Beulan, and producing a work in honour of Samuel. The remaining verses introduce us to a scribe; they seem to represent a similar milieu, and we may well believe that the scribe who identifies himself in this verse colophon is the *scriptor* who has acted under the instructions of Beulan.

Fornifer,¹ qui digitis scripsit ex ordine trinis,
Incolumis obtalmis² sitque omnibus menbris!
Eu uocatur ben³ notis litteris nominis quini.⁴

'May the bearer of gifts,⁵ who according to custom has written with three fingers,

¹ Although a perfectly good Greek word, *φεινοφόρος* is apparently attested only in the Latin context of St. Jerome's Commentary on Daniel (on xi. 6), ed. in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, lxxv A (Turnhout, 1964), p. 903 (line 941, but see critical apparatus); cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961-8), p. 1473. For its use in Insular Latin, cf. *forniferi* in Lantfridus (saec. x²), *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni* (*Analecta Bollandiana*, 4 [1885], p. 374), and Ælfric Bata (saec. x/xi), *Colloquia Difficiliora* (Stevenson, op. cit., p. 69, l. 10) where *forniferi* is glossed *didascali* (cf. p. 68, l. 21: *didascole .i. magister*). Jerome must have been the ultimate source of the word's employment by Insular Latin writers.

² Cf. *Rubisca*, line 47, where *obtalmum* is glossed *oculum*. The fact that the unusual words (except *ben* and *fornifer*) in these two sets of verses can be paralleled in *Rubisca* is striking; we have no reason to assume borrowing, but we are naturally led to seek some connection. A common glossary-source would be the obvious deduction, but only *fonis*, *obtalmis*, and *ros* may be discovered in the glossaries. The *Rubisca* occurs only in two English manuscripts: Paris, Bibl. Sainte-Geneviève, MS. 2410 (saec. x/xi), and Cambridge U.L. MS. Gg. 5. 35 (Canterbury, saec. xi med.). Given our present knowledge of the use of hermeneutic Latin in tenth- and eleventh-century England (cf. M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 4 [1975]), Jenkinson's unargued description of *Rubisca* as 'presumably Irish' will not do (nor am I convinced by the conjectures of M. Herren, *Ériu*, 25 [1974]); it is very likely an English work of the late tenth century (cf. Schröbler, op. cit., p. 25). The date suggested below (mid-eleventh century) for the present recension of the *Historia Brittonum* and therefore for our two poems fits well the contemporary English evidence; it is notable that all the unusual words employed here may be paralleled in the Anglo-Latin literature of the century between the Benedictine reform and the Norman Conquest.

³ Tmesis (*Eu . . . ben*) is a favourite device of Insular poets; some examples are given by A. Campbell, *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1953), p. 20.

⁴ The metrical form of this little poem is extremely interesting. Each line comprises two parts: 7+8 syllables with a caesura between. The end of the first part rhymes with that of the second (with one exception which may therefore be due to scribal error, *notis: quini(s?)*). These verses have a trochaic rhythm, the first half of each line being acatalectic. The second half of line two appears to lack one syllable. This verse-form seems not to occur elsewhere: see the index to Norberg, op. cit., pp. 212-15.

⁵ A periphrasis for 'scribe'. One may quote two amusing periphrases relating to scribal activity from the charters of King Æthelstan (924-39): *scedula . . . uirgineo aterrimi lacrimas liquoris forcipe in planitiem tetragoni campuli albentem destillante perscripta est*, from a charter dated 930, ed. A. S. Napier and W. H. Stevenson, *The Crawford Collection of Early Charters and Documents now in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1895), p. 7, ll. 63-7;

be safe in eyes and all limbs!

He is called "Euben",¹ the letters of (his) fivefold name having been recognized.'

'Euben' was doubtless the author of both sets of verses: he was the typical scholar-scribe whom we meet so often in the earlier medieval period. These poems would be seen as forming a fitting conclusion to the work which he had just executed. The ingenuity, and the arcane vocabulary, of the closing verses together tell us something of the intellectual milieu of which this writer was a part; this verbal ingenuity is also a feature of the style of some of the additions peculiar to this recension of the *Historia*.

May we deduce from our materials any indications as to the time and place of this activity? At the beginning of the text, some three alterations and additions have been made to the chronological computations. Owing to subsequent alterations to CCCC 139, two of these are preserved only in Durham B. 2. 35, into which they were copied from the Sawley manuscript in 1166. The calculations of the original text, indicating that the opening chapters of the *Historia Brittonum* were written in 829, have been altered to give the date-series A.P. 880,² A.D. 912, A.M. 6108.³ The continuous, emended text reads:

A passione autem Christi peracti sunt anni dccc.lxxix; ab incarnatione autem eius anni sunt dcccc.xii, usque ad .xxx. annum Anarauht regis Monie (id est Mon) qui regit modo regnum Wenedocie regionis (id est Guernet).⁴ Fiunt igitur anni ab exordio mundi usque in annum presentem sex milia .c.viii.

Anarawd, son of Rhodri the Great, and king of Gwynedd, appears to have reigned from 878 to 916.⁵ The dates above may therefore manifest some

hanc . . . breuiculam atrae fuscationis pallore depictam ac lacrimosa uirginei forcipis destillatione fedatam . . . corroboraui, quoted by Napier and Stevenson, p. 73. Further research is required to determine whether the inflated 'Hisperic' style of Æthelstan's reign has any direct English antecedents, or whether it may be traced to his close relations with the Celtic countries, or to contacts with the Continent.

¹ The form *Euben* is otherwise unattested. It must stand for *Euuen*. The Old Welsh form was *Ougen* which in later Old Welsh became *Ouwen* and finally *Euuen*: cf. K. H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (henceforth, LHEB) (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 370, n. 1. There is a real difficulty here, however, for *u* = /w/ and *b* = /v/ are very rarely confused in Old Welsh before *Liber Landauensis*, and *b* is apparently never written for /w/. There are accordingly two possible explanations of the form *Euben*. First, *u* and *b* were often confused in Late Latin spelling; the fact that *eu* and *ben* are intelligible as Latin words (cf. the use of *ben* a few lines before, in the first poem) not only gives an added ingenuity to this line but provides a Latin context for such an orthographical slip (cf. LHEB, pp. 74, 90 n. 1). The alternative and perhaps more likely possibility would provide an explanation purely in terms of the development of Welsh orthography. The /v/ which was written *b* in Old Welsh came to be written *u* (*v*, *w*) in Middle Welsh (cf. the form *Eluodugi*, discussed below); in the period of transition from Old Welsh to Middle Welsh, the reverse (*b* for *u*) might well be a possible slip, giving such a form as *Euben* for correct *Euuen*. For the implications of this error, see below, p. 92.

² 879 years having been completed.
³ According to the computus there were 5,228 years from Adam to the Passion. These calculations are therefore consistent with each other, *pace* Heinrich Zimmer, *Nennius Vindictus. Über Entstehung, Geschichte und Quellen der Historia Brittonum* (Berlin, 1893), pp. 43 f.

⁴ On this form, see below, p. 93 and n. 3.
⁵ J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales* (3rd edn., London, 1939), i, pp. 326-33, for the sons of Rhodri Mawr. The dates for this period of Welsh history are still highly uncertain; the

slight error if the thirtieth year of Anarawd (perhaps 907/8) was the precise date intended.¹ At any event, these data appear to point to north Wales (and perhaps more precisely to Môn, Anglesey) as the area in which the monastery of Beulan was situated.² There is one other small indication which may point towards Anglesey. The only likely trace of local knowledge manifested is when in the *Mirabilia Monie* the name *Cereuus* is removed and a different, vernacular, name—*Pol Kerist* (Pwll Ceris in the Menai Straits)—is substituted.³

The explicit internal evidence of the recension points therefore to the early years of the tenth century, but since we must be to some extent in the realms of forgery (the Ninnius prologue: see further below) an external check is desirable. In some measure this is available, although the evidence is sufficiently early only to demonstrate that this redaction is not to be associated with the controversial literature of the earlier twelfth century. The witness to which I refer is the *Lebor Bretnach*,⁴ the Irish translation of the *Historia Brittonum*, ascribed to the 'synthetic historian' Gilla Coemáin⁵ of whom we can say only that he was alive in 1071–2.⁶ This chronology of the *Annales Cambrie* has yet to be subjected to a rigorous critical scrutiny. It is presumed that Anarawd was Rhodri's eldest son and that he succeeded directly to Môn and Gwynedd, but there is no certain historical evidence for this.

¹ It is not impossible that the author of these calculations followed the Victorian system, where A.P. 880 = A.D. 907; the change to 912 could then be deliberate (substitution of Dionysian calculation) or accidental (scribal confusion of *v* and *x*: *dccccvii* > *dccccxii*). See further below.

² It was proposed by H. Zimmer (*Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 19 [1893/4], pp. 667–9) that the church of Llanbeulan in Anglesey was to be associated with the Beulan of the *Historia Brittonum*. J. Loth ('Le Beulan-Peulan de Zimmer', *Revue celtique*, 16 [1895], pp. 238–9) replied that Zimmer 'viole les lois les plus élémentaires du consonantisme et du vocalisme gallois', and that *Llanfewlan would be the modern name for a foundation deriving from Beulan. More recently, K. H. Jackson (LHEB, p. 370, n. 1) has classed *Beulan* with instances of *eu* which 'are clearly only early examples of the *eu* regular in MW', in other words late Old Welsh forms deriving from OW *ou* (thus implying a possible Old Welsh form **Boulan*). However, the initial *B-* for the necessary *P-* remains a totally insuperable objection to Zimmer's theory, for *Llan*+*Beulan* would of course give ModW. **Llanfeulan*. Three further points should be noted: the name *Beulan* is unique to this text, and cannot be explained in terms of Welsh philology; Llanbeulan must derive from an eponym Peulan, earlier Poulan (from *Poul* < Lat. *Paulus*, with addition of suffix *-an*); even if *Beulan* could give a place-name Llanbeulan (which it cannot), the Beulan of our text would almost certainly be of too late a date to have a *Llan*-name called after him. (I should like to acknowledge the kind help given me by Professor Melville Richards in dealing with the problems raised by Zimmer's theory.)

³ On Pwll Ceris, see W. W. Gill, *Folklore*, 50 (1939), pp. 40 f., and J. E. Caerwyn Williams (gol.), *Llên a Llafar Môn* (Llandysul, 1963), p. 54.

⁴ Ed. and tr. James H. Todd, *Leabhar Bretnach annso sis. The Irish Version of the Historia Brittonum of Nennius* (Dublin, 1848); ed. A. G. Van Hamel, *Lebor Bretnach* (Dublin, 1932).

⁵ R. Thurneysen, ZCP 20 (1933–6), pp. 101–3, doubted this ascription. His stated reasons are weak, but his instinct may well have been correct; the ascription occurs only in a related pair of manuscripts. However, since the linguistic evidence supports an eleventh-century date, this is not a matter of great importance for the present purpose. A study of Gilla Coemáin's other writings may throw further light on this question.

⁶ It has been repeatedly stated that Gilla Coemáin died in 1072. To illustrate the dubious reasoning behind this unsupported statement, I propose to quote its author (Zimmer, *Nennius Vindictus*, pp. 13 f.) at some length: 'Wir haben von ihm [sc. Gilla

date appears acceptable both on linguistic grounds and from the evidence of the extant manuscripts. A fragment of the text is preserved in the oldest part of that great Irish codex *Lebor na hUidre* [LU], written c. 1100.¹ None of the complete manuscripts is earlier than the fourteenth century; it is therefore especially fortunate that the material in LU has survived. There is a certain variation in content between the several manuscripts but, as far as may be deduced from the editions, this fluctuation involves only material which is found in none of the Latin recensions and which shows every sign of having been added during the Irish period of transmission. An important fact is that the text in LU suffers from some corruptions which are not present in other and later manuscripts; LU does not therefore stand at the head of the tradition, whose origin should perhaps be pushed towards the middle of the eleventh century, a satisfactory date for the floruit of Gilla Coemáin.

Now this Irish text corresponds with the essential peculiarities of the recension of Ninnius, as we have seen them manifested in CCCC 139. It contains the prologue, and gives the author's name as Nemnus or Nemnius;² the opening sentence is modified as in CCCC 139; the interpolated Roman genealogy of Britus is found, but the closing sentence attributes it to Cuanu and there is no mention of Beulan or Samuel; the chapter *Brittones a Bruto* is lacking; the seventh emperor is 'Maximen' or 'Maximain' (Maximianus); the additional passage about Ceredig the interpreter³ is present; the description of the *mare fre(nes)icum*—'quod inter nos Scotosque est'⁴—appears to have been known to the Irish translator; the two notes, one about Ida and the other on the baptism of Eanfled and the English, which are associated with the second Beulan passage are found, while the body of the Saxon genealogies and Northern

Coemáin] . . . im Book of Leinster . . . eine grosse Reimerei annalistischer Art. Sie hebt an mit der Versicherung, dass der Verfasser die Dinge vom Anfang der Welt bis auf seine Zeit chronologisch behandeln wolle. . . . Im Verlauf kommt der Verfasser schliesslich auf den Tod von Dondchad mac Briain (ob. 1064), "zwei Jahre vom Tode des Dondchad mac Briain die Schlacht der Sachsen, in der der Dänenkönig fiel (1066 . . .), von da bis in das heurige Jahr 5 Jahre, den 7. des Januar". Am 7. Januar 1071 schloss also Gilla Coemgin dies Werk ab; er machte im folgenden Jahr noch eine zweite Ausgabe, die ausser einem Schlussgebet an Christus noch enthielt: "1072 Jahre sind es von Christi Geburt bis auf dieses Jahr, in dem Diarmait durgen fiel". Diarmait, der Sohn des Mael na mbo, König von Leinster, fiel nach den Annalen der vier Meister am Dienstag den 7. Februar 1072. . . . Da wir keine Spur einer weiteren Recension der annalistischen Reimerei haben, wird Gilla Coemgin das Jahr 1072 kaum überlebt haben.' [My italics.]

¹ Ed. R. I. Best and O. Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre. Book of the Dun Cow* (Dublin, 1929); see also H. P. A. Oskamp, 'Notes on the history of *Lebor na hUidre*', *PRIA* 65c (1966-7), pp. 117-37; Edmund Hogan, *The Irish Nennius from L. na hUidre and Homilies and Legends from L. Brecc* (Dublin, 1895), pp. 10-16. LU also contains a fragment of the unedited Irish tract *Sex Aetates Mundi* (Hogan, pp. 1-10; Best and Bergin, pp. 1-6), on which see H. P. A. Oskamp, 'On the author of *Sex Aetates Mundi*', *Studia Celtica*, 3 (1968), pp. 127-40. This work also draws on a text of the *Historia Brittonum*; Oskamp's conclusions must be treated with some reserve, owing to his reliance on Van Hamel's theorizing.

² Other variants are listed and discussed by R. Thurneysen, *ZCP* 20 (1933-6), pp. 99 f.

³ CCCC 139, fo. 173^v.

⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 2.

historical material is missing; finally, the rubric *De myrabilibus Monie insule*¹ was doubtless in the translator's exemplar.² The complete text which lay before the Irish translator appears, then, to have been—making due allowance for the somewhat free nature of his Irish version—just what the additions in the Cambridge manuscript would lead one to expect. The translation also has the virtue of providing an external and independent check which establishes the third quarter of the eleventh century as an approximate *terminus ante quem* of the Nennian recension of the *Historia Brittonum*.

We thus have a period of a century and a half between the date which this recension claims for itself (the thirtieth year of Anarawd) and the first independent witness to its existence. Is there any reason to doubt the internal evidence of the text? The first ground for suspicion is the dubious nature of the prologue of Ninnius, and it is to this we must now turn. There can be no doubt that this prologue is a secondary addition to the *Historia*, and it seems to me that all the indications point to its having been composed and added at the time of the revision of the text, apparently under the direction of Beulan. But the question must be put, whether or not there is any reason to believe that, though we first find the prologue and the other new materials in association with one another, they embody two strata: namely, the prologue on the one hand, and the work of revision associated with the name of Beulan on the other.³ I should regard this as the production of a hypothesis for which there is neither evidence nor necessity. These additions contain nothing which need suggest such a twofold division,⁴ and there is one slight piece of evidence which points in the opposite direction.⁵ Scholars have often noted that the prologue refers to 'annales Saxonum' in its list of sources employed, and that this seemed perhaps an odd description of the English genealogies and associated materials, some certainly of British origin, relating to Northern history. If, however, one takes the prologue to refer to the work as it was after the revision superintended by Beulan (remembering that the note by the reviser refers specifically to the exclusion of 'genealogie Saxonum'), its author will have had no need to refer to English genealogies and his general term 'annales Saxonum' will suit very well the material relating to the story of Hengist and the *aduentus Saxonum*, just as the 'annales Scottorum' covered the historical materials relating to the *aduentus Scottorum in Hiberniam* and the *aduentus Patricii ad Scottos*.

¹ CCCC 139, fo. 178v.

² He misunderstood it as referring to the Isle of Man. See W. W. Gill, *Folklore*, 50 (1939), pp. 33-44.

³ Such a view is of course based on the desire to make 'Nennius' the original author of the *Historia* in opposition to the evidence of the manuscript-tradition. This reasoning allows 'Nennius' to add his prologue in a last recension which itself then suffers changes at the hands of Beulan and company.

⁴ If we are to believe in a twofold process, a different division of the additions suggests itself. See below, p. 94.

⁵ Cf. also p. 82, n. 5, above.

What is known of the Ninnius to whom this prologue is attributed? He is described there as *Eluodugi discipulus*, which allows some degree of chronological certainty. Elfoddw is known from two references in the so-called *Annales Cambrie*; these annals have not yet been subjected to a close scrutiny to test their chronological precision, so one must for the moment adopt the dates which have gained currency and which are unlikely to be grossly incorrect. In 768 Elfoddw was apparently the bishop responsible for the conformity of the Welsh Churches in the paschal question; his death is placed in 809. A pupil of Elfoddw might therefore be active at any time in the last generation of the eighth century or the first generation of the ninth. Important in this connexion is a curious tract contained in an early-ninth-century Welsh manuscript.¹ It begins as follows:

Nemnius istas reperit literas, uituperante quidem scolastico saxonici generis quia Brittones non haberent rudimentum; at ipse subito ex machinatione mentis suae formauit eas ut uituperationem et hebitudinem deieceret gentis suae; de figuris et de nominibus dicens. . . .

There follows an alphabet, based on the Old English runic 'futhorc', but adapted with Welsh names.² We know nothing else about this Nemnius, but modern scholars were quick to identify him—and no doubt correctly—with the 'Nennius' of our prologue. This manuscript was almost certainly written in 817,³ precisely in the period in which one might expect to find an alleged *discipulus* of Elfoddw. Nemnius, as we see him through this tract, was a synchronizing scholar with a knowledge of English materials; depending on the value that was placed on such ingenious activity—and it may well have been considerable⁴—Nemnius may have been a famous Welsh scholar. From the evidence of this manuscript alone, we cannot date his activities with great precision, for he is referred to strictly in the past tense.⁵ It will be well to remember also that we know only from the dubious evidence of the prologue of Ninnius that he was a pupil of Elfoddw.⁶

¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Auct. F. 4. 32 (S.C. 2176), fo. 20^r. There is a facsimile of this codex, edited by R. W. Hunt, *St. Dunstan's Classbook from Glastonbury* (Amsterdam, 1961). For earlier notices of this manuscript, see Thurneysen, ZCP 20 (1933-6), pp. 97 ff., and I. Williams, BBCS 7 (1933-5), pp. 380 ff.

² René Derolez, *Runica Manuscripta. The English Tradition* (Brugge, 1954), pp. 157-9.

³ The evidence consists of prickings in the margin of an Easter-table. See Hunt, op. cit., p. viii and note. The Easter-cycle spans the years 817-835 (not -832, as stated by Hunt).

⁴ One may compare here the contemporary Bamberg cryptogram, the story of which involves the court of Merfyn Frych. See R. Derolez, *L'Antiquité Classique*, 21 (1952), pp. 359-75; W. Stokes, *The Academy*, 42 (1892), pp. 71-2, 215; J. Loth, *Annales de Bretagne*, 8 (1892/3), pp. 289-93.

⁵ Sir Ifor Williams believed the manuscript to have been copied by a disciple of Nemnius, thus raising the possibility that other materials in this manuscript are to be associated with that scholar: BBCS 7 (1933-5), p. 381.

⁶ Of course, to produce a credible forgery or simulation of an author's prologue, one had to have some grounding in fact. If Nemnius was a famed scholar, this information is likely enough to be accurate.

It is in the light of the evidence provided by the genuine, early-ninth-century source that we must consider the prologue of Ninnius. Since we have seen that the evidence of the text-tradition of the *Historia* is decisively against the genuineness of the prologue, we have three possibilities to consider.

1. The attribution to Ninnius was a guess, a belief that this perhaps famous synchronizing scholar (given the identification with Nemnius) was responsible for the *Historia Brittonum*, itself an example of synchronizing historiography. The attribution could even be correct, but there is no evidence for it.¹

2. It was a deliberately false attribution, and the prologue is an outright forgery.

3. The prologue really was written by someone called Ninnius (who attempted to claim the whole work as his own) but who lived in the tenth or eleventh century.

There is one piece of evidence that argues strongly against the last suggestion, namely the fact that there is a literary relationship between the Nemnius note and the prologue of Ninnius. Consider the first sentence of the prologue: 'Ego Ninnius . . . aliqua excerpta scribere curavi que hebitudo gentis Britannie deiecerat, quia nullam peritiam habuerunt neque ullam commemorationem in libris posuerunt doctores illius insule Britannie'; this bears a remarkable resemblance to the note about Nemnius, sharing especially the idea *hebitudinem deieceret gentis suae*. We may reasonably infer direct borrowing.² A motive for deliberate forgery seems to be lacking: the explanation that the writer of this prologue believed Ninnius-Nemnius to be the author of the *Historia* (and took great pains to produce a credible preface)³ is not only the more charitable but also fits the evidence more satisfactorily.⁴

Although we have seen that the prologue is a carefully manufactured

¹ A variation on this would be the wishful belief that Nemnius ought to have been responsible for this History.

² Sir Ifor Williams proposed an emendation of the text of the prologue, based on the notion that both were contemporaneous: BBCS 9 (1937-9), pp. 342-4. With reference to the Nemnius tract, he wrote: 'The censorious Saxon had his leg pulled by a Briton who resented the charge of *hebitudo* so much that he stooped to counter it by faking. This incident makes it very unlikely that the same Briton would preface his *Historia* with a frank admission of the stupidity of his people, for that is what the Preface does, in its present form. It is quite out of character' (p. 342). I agree with this assessment, but would draw the conclusion that these are the words of two different writers, one borrowing from the phraseology of the other.

³ Cf. N. K. Chadwick, *Studies in the Early British Church* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 92, who seems to have suspected this possibility. For other doubts about the 'Nennian' authorship, see Joseph Stevenson, *Nennii Historia Britonum* (London, 1838), pp. viii, xv; Arthur de La Borderie, *Études historiques bretonnes. L'Historia Brittonum attribuée à Nennius et l'Historia Britannica avant Geoffroi de Monmouth* (Paris and London, 1883), pp. 2, 11 f., 121; W. W. Newell, PMLA 20 (1905), p. 626.

⁴ A partial parallel may be found in the other concocted preface to this work (printed by Mommsen, ed. cit., pp. 126 f.), written at Sawley c. 1200 in line with contemporary historiographical standards.

literary conceit, this by itself is insufficient to damn the explicit testimony of this recension as to its own date. A more substantial basis for concern is provided by a consideration of the linguistic evidence.

It will be seen from the list of Welsh words printed as an appendix to this paper that they are all essentially Old Welsh forms. Some of them, however, point unmistakably to the latter part of the Old Welsh period. The *Gor-* of *Gorti(r)girno* is in fact a form known rather from Middle Welsh than Old Welsh sources, but some examples are found in *Liber Landauensis*.¹ The final *-ug* seen in *Eluodugi* (ignoring the Latin genitive termination) is a spelling first attested in the *Annales Cambrie* and 'Harleian Genealogies' in British Library MS. Harley 3859; it seems not to be found in sources later than *Liber Landauensis*.² Another late Old Welsh form is the *-eu-* from earlier *-ou-* found in *Beulan* and *Euben*;³ again, this is first found in the two mid-tenth-century texts in Harley 3859. We are therefore in the context of the late stages of Old Welsh but the forms already discussed are not sufficiently precise as dating criteria to challenge the early-tenth-century date which our text seems to claim for itself;⁴ none the less they do provide some cause for unease.⁵

Two other considerations, however, require us to place the execution of this recension at the latest possible date. The *-b-* of *Euben* (for *Euuen*) is most plausibly explained as an example of a confusion which would occur only in the period of transition from Old Welsh to Middle Welsh.⁶ More significant is the *-u-* for */v/* in *Eluodugi*. In Old Welsh, before the time of *Liber Landauensis*, this sound is represented only by *-b-*;⁷ the use of *-u-* displays an orthographic development which is associated with the beginnings of Middle Welsh. That this form in our manuscript is no later modernization is strongly suggested by its appearance in the manuscripts

¹ Ed. J. G. Evans and J. Rhys, *The Text of the Book of Llan Dâw, reproduced from the Gwysaney Manuscript* (Oxford, 1893): *Goruan* (p. 72), *Guoruan* (p. 77), *Goruannus* (pp. 303, 311).

² LHEB, p. 387.

³ LHEB, p. 370, n. 1.

⁴ The date of origin of the written forms *eu* (< *ou*) and *-ug* (*-gu*, *-g*) depends on one's view of the texts in Harley 3859. There is no certain evidence for modernization (beyond Anglo-Norman scribal interference) of the ninth-century forms in its copy of the *Historia Brittonum* (cf. LHEB, pp. 48 f.). There is accordingly no reason to assume that the mid-tenth-century forms of the *Annales Cambrie* and Harleian Genealogies have been updated, especially in view of the orthographic differences which occur between HB on the one hand, and AC and HG on the other. Harley 3859 is an Anglo-Norman manuscript of c. 1100 (its ascription to St. David's by N. Denholm-Young, *Handwriting in England and Wales* [Cardiff, 1954], p. 41, is based on a misunderstanding) and could very well depend directly on a Welsh exemplar of *saec. x med.* or *x²* (pace LHEB, pp. 393 f.; but cf. p. 387 [c]). The forms *eu* and *-ug* are therefore later Old Welsh, but are not sufficiently precise as dating criteria in the present case.

⁵ The form *Mineu* has no significance for the present discussion. The earlier form **Moniu* might be written as late as *saec. x*, but *Minu* (of which *Mineu* is a variant spelling) had already arisen: LHEB, p. 378.

⁶ For full details, see above, p. 86, n. 1.

⁷ Compare the first *-b-* in *Elbobdus*, also in this manuscript. (For a few apparent exceptions, see LHEB, p. 90, n. 1.) The existence in the one text of the older *Elbo(b)dus*, the confused *Euben*, and the newer *Eluodugi* strongly suggests the transitional period from Old Welsh to Middle Welsh.

of the *Lebor Bretnach*.¹ This gives an approximate *terminus ante quem* of the third quarter of the eleventh century: we can hardly accept a much earlier date for the Latin recension attributed to *Ninnius Eluodugi discipulus*.²

The forms found in CCCC 139 also show a degree of corruption which may indicate either an intervening Anglo-Norman exemplar from which the Sawley collators worked, or merely those scribes' own failings. *Guernet* (< *Guenet*)³ and *Gortirgirno* (< *Gortigirno*) both show the intrusion of a superfluous -r-, *Elbobdus* (< *Elbodus*)⁴ a superfluous -b-;⁵ *Run. MepuR. Beghen* displays false word-division and the corruption of OW. *map*;⁶ *Din Gueirin* (< *Din Gueirui*)⁷ is a simple error. The K- in *Pol Kerist*,⁸ and the W- and -ci- of *Wenedocie* reflect Anglo-Norman spelling-conventions. Finally, the presence of one gloss which can today be explained only by reference to Geoffrey of Monmouth may also suggest late interference with the text.⁹

How, then, are we to face the dilemma forced upon us by the linguistic evidence? An argument that we have here a recension of the beginning of the tenth century which has later been linguistically modernized in only a few particulars is hardly likely to carry conviction. A much less unsatisfactory solution of this difficulty may be suggested. The sole evidence for the early-tenth-century date comes from the introductory computation.

¹ Van Hamel, ed. cit., p. 1.

² The form *Urbeghen*, retaining its composition-vowel, does not require any modification of this conclusion. If the final reduction and loss of the composition vowel was due to the accent-shift (LHEB, p. 649), then this form offers no more than a *terminus ante* of the occurrence of that shift in the eleventh century (for the date, see LHEB, pp. 682 ff., and *Studia Celtica*, x/xi [1975/6], pp. 40-53). One may compare also the occurrence of the form *Urbagen* in the fragments of the late and derivative recension of the *Historia Brittonum* found in the eleventh-century flyleaves of Chartres MS. 98 (destroyed in 1944).

³ See K. H. Jackson in *Celt and Saxon. Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. N. K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1963; rev. imp., 1964), p. 30, for other forms of this name. The form *Guined* occurs in British Library MSS. Harley 3859, fo. 182^v, and Cotton Vespasian D. 21, fol. 8^f. *Guenet* is found in the Vatican text (MS. Reginensis lat. 1964, fo. 53^v, col. 2).

⁴ Corrected to *Elbodus* by a later editor (probably in the years soon after 1200) who also alters an earlier gloss *Mermini* to *Meruini* (fo. 170^v). There must be a strong suspicion that this editor had a knowledge of Welsh.

⁵ *Celt and Saxon*, p. 54, n. 5, for the impossibility of the original reading.

⁶ *Celt and Saxon*, pp. 32 f.

⁷ Cf. *Celt and Saxon*, pp. 27 f., for a discussion of this name. It occurs twice in the Harleian recension: in c. 61 as *Din Guayrdis*, and in c. 63 as *Din Guoaroy* (MSS. *dinguoroy*). The reading *Din Gueirin* in CCCC 139 stands in the section representing c. 61 of the Harleian version. The only way of reconciling *Guayrdis* and *Gueirin* is by taking -di as an error for -oi in the former (there are other examples of this error in the manuscripts of the Harleian text), and -in as a very simple error for -ui in the latter. These would then harmonize very satisfactorily with the -oy in the reading of c. 63, leaving no real doubt as to the nature of the termination. But it is still not easy to explain the internal opposition of -ei-, -ay-, and -oa-.

⁸ *Pol* is merely a variant spelling for OW. *Pull*.

⁹ On fo. 173^r, the *Taneth* of the text is glossed *.i. ars chorii* by hand C² (Durham MS., p. 242, col. 1: *.i. ars corii*). The story explaining this name for Thanet (which depends on an etymology from English 'thong', Latin *corium*) is found in Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*: ed. Acton Griscom (London, 1929), pp. 369 f. [= VI. xi], or E. Faral, *La Légende arthurienne* (Paris, 1929), iii, p. 178 [= cap. 99].

The initial *computus* is, however, usually copied mechanically (and without regard to the date it contains) in manuscripts of the *Historia Brittonum*, but is also sometimes capriciously altered; it is, of course, of no value in dating a manuscript nor, without strong supporting evidence, can it be used to date the recension in which it occurs.¹ A case in point is the recension, of the *Historia Brittonum*, falsely ascribed to Gildas. In the initial computation, all the Gildasian manuscripts contain a date A.D. 831, yet this recension was executed probably in England in the years around 1100. The most likely explanation is therefore that the thirtieth year of King Anarawd merely represents the date which was found in the copy of the 'Harleian' text which formed the basis for the new recension created under the direction of the priest Beulan, probably by the scribe Euben, and ascribed to Ninnius.²

Of this, the so-called 'Nennian' recension of the *Historia Brittonum*, we can now speak with some degree of certainty. It is a work which dates only from about the middle of the eleventh century; the attribution of the *Historia* to Ninnius, or 'Nennius' as he is traditionally known, is no earlier than this date. In terms of the textual tradition of the *Historia* it is a secondary development. The primary text of the *Historia* is represented by the anonymous 'Harleian' recension; we must admit to ignorance of the name of its ninth-century author.

APPENDIX

I list here, with references to the folios of MS. CCCC 139, all the occurrences of Welsh words in the collations made in the period 1164 × 1166 by hands C¹, C², C³, from a manuscript of the Nennian recension, now lost.

a (177 ^r)	Din [Gueirin] (177 ^r)
Anarauht (169 ^r)	Elbobdus ³ (177 ^r)
Beulan (168 ^v); Beulani (169 ^v);	Elmet (173 ^v)
Beulano ³ (177 ^r)	Eluodugi (168 ^v , twice)
Bernech (177 ^r)	Euben (168 ^v)
Birnech (177 ^r)	Gortirgirno (176 ^r)
Cair [Costaint] ⁴ (171 ^v)	[Din] Gueirin (177 ^r)
[Pol] Kerist (178 ^v)	Guernet (169 ^r); Wenedocie (169 ^r)
[Cair] Costaint ⁴ (171 ^v)	gurd (177 ^r)
Deur (177 ^r)	(stagnum) Liguane ⁵ (177 ^v)

¹ The date A.D. 829 for the Harleian recension is guaranteed by explicit internal support (see BBCS 25 [1972-4], pp. 439-45) and by the consistent agreement of all the internal evidence with an early-ninth-century date. The date of the Vatican recension (the fifth year of King Edmund, A.D. 943/4) is also guaranteed by statements elsewhere in its text.

² Allowing the necessary reservations as to the precise form of the name, not only of 'Ninnius' but also of 'Beulan' and 'Euben'.

³ Reading guaranteed by the Durham manuscript.

⁴ Glosses *Cair Segeint*. The form *Costaint* shows two errors, presumably scribal (read *Custeint*); but the -o- might be due to recognition that the name comes from *Constantius*.

⁵ The Harleian recension gives (stagnum) *Liuan*.

Man ¹ (170 ^r)	Ninnius (168 ^v , twice)
Menei ² (178 ^v)	Orc .i. Orcades insule (169 ^r)
mep (177 ^r)	Pol [Kerist] (178 ^v)
Mineu (170 ^r)	Renchidus (177 ^r)
Mon (169 ^r); Monie (169 ^r ; 178 ^v)	Run (177 ^r)
Nennio (169 ^r)	Urbeghen (177 ^r)

¹ Glosses *Euboniam*.² The Harleian recension gives *Mene*.