



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

SCHOOL OF WELSH AND BILINGUAL STUDIES

MA CELTIC STUDIES

The Celtic Arthur and the Matter of Britain

CYCS7021

**Module tutor
Professor Jane Cartwright**

ASSESSMENT FOR THIS MODULE

Assessment for the module is one essay. For this the student is expected to choose a topic from the list of essay questions and write a 5,000 word essay, paying particular attention to the wording and focus of the question.

Some general guidelines for writing the essay:

- The question should be defined, the general thrust of the answer previewed, the state of knowledge on the specific topic of the question surveyed and then a structured answer provided with a clear conclusion which sums up the foregoing argument. Use of sub-headings, tables and other aids may be made, though writing in point-form should not be used in an essay.
- It is very important to remember that you are not writing a summary of the topic for the non-specialist, but addressing an answer to a specific question to a specialist marker—your style in the assignment should be closer to that of the short articles in your select reading ‘bricks’ than to the style of more general books which might provide the broad background reading. The marker can be assumed to know much of the basic detail, so while you should set out an account of events as much as it aids your argument, do not provide lengthy accounts of events or details where it does not *specifically* answer the question.
- The essay should be fully referenced, allowing the reader to identify the sources of information, as well as allowing the candidate to direct the reader to basic information and discussion in other works, thereby freeing space for analysis and discussion of the specific question.
- Detail on the specific topic is required, but the student should also demonstrate a wider knowledge of the general methodological issues of the subject. To this end, it is important that the student read the entire module notes and, ideally, perhaps do some comparative reading from the lists provided for the other essay topics in the module. Often, while the articles and books concerned with the specific topic upon which you are working will provide *substantive* data on the topic, it may be from articles or books on related topics that you will pick up ideas on how to *approach* certain types of question—i.e. transferable *methodological* ideas.
- **Do not use these module notes as a model for writing an essay**—they are not intended for that purpose. Your overall model should be a journal article—while you won’t match the level of original argument, you should aim at matching the critical and analytical positioning, the selective use of quotation and the full provision of supporting evidence.
- see also the marking criteria provided with the assessment questions separately.

READING FOR THE MODULE

CYCS7021 The Celtic Arthur and the Matter of Britain

Some readings are provided for this module in the form of a reading ‘brick’. Other readings may be obtainable on request, subject to availability. You are expected to hunt down your own reading where possible, and to seek your tutor’s advice on choices of reading. See below for more information on the reading brick.

Some reading tips:

- Be systematic in your reading: begin with the set reading; the more general first, the more particular later.
- Encyclopaedias and other reference works provide useful *basic* information. Such use of reference works is only a starting point, however; such use is assumed and does not require reference. Such works are also normally not quoted in academic work.
- Every effort should be made to acquire and read primary sources (*e.g.* authors such as Gildas, Geoffrey of Monmouth, texts such as *Historia Brittonum*). Where these are cited by other, modern, authors it is desirable, if possible, to check the actual work, even if only in translation, rather than quote from someone else’s usage.
- If you’re not quite clear on what constitutes a primary as opposed to a secondary source, see for example <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/education/008-3010-e.html>. There is also a slightly wordy but useful discussion of primary and secondary sources as item 7 on this webpage:
<http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Whatishistory/marwick1.html>
- In note-taking and essay-writing try to avoid making extensive quotation from secondary (i.e. modern) sources: *citation* is usually sufficient. Remember that a modern author’s opinion, when quoted, is not by itself proof of any event in the past—it may just be a shared delusion. Avoid quoting secondary sources for what are clearly very banal statements—you don’t need Barry Cunliffe to tell you that water is wet.
- Ideally, quotation should principally be from ancient sources. In verifying archaeological facts, data should be cited in detail and an effort made to explain exactly *why* it proves the point in question.

A NOTE ON INTERNET MATERIALS

There are copious Arthurian materials and sites on the internet, some of which you’ll find cited here for primary source materials. There are several things to keep in mind when using the internet for such resources, however.

- First, concerning the primary source materials cited here: those materials which have been scanned onto the internet are for the most part those which are out of copyright. This means that they are of a certain age, and this of course can bring various problems. The main problem is that they will not incorporate scholarly advances or changes in fashion of the last hundred or so years. A secondary problem may be the archaism of their language, which can be off-putting. Nevertheless they can be extremely useful, and I have cited them whenever possible; I have tried to cite those which are most easily available, those which change their addresses (URLs) least often, and those which are surrounded by the least amount of extraneous commentary (for which see below).
- The problem of Arthur has also inspired numerous secondary-source discussions on the internet. That is, not only will you find primary historical materials on the

web, you'll often find that these are accompanied by interpretation and criticism. Some sites are exclusively devoted to such discussions (a third type of site contains bibliographies, which are often useful but shouldn't be necessary to supplement what you'll find in this module). These discussions are of an extremely uneven character, and it is safer, at the moment at least, to avoid citing them as you might cite a discussion published in a more traditional medium.

- If you are citing online resources be careful to appropriately reference these. Be careful, as well, in taking notes or when writing as it is **extremely** easy to fall into inadvertent plagiarism by cutting and pasting, or by insufficiently changing wording if paraphrasing. This is true of all research, but online material seems to be particularly prone to causing such problems. Even if a deliberate intent is absent, plagiarism is extremely serious.

A note on online library resources:

As a student at the University of Wales Trinity Saints David you will have access to a valuable group of online resources via Athens. These include JSTOR (a gateway to a large collections of online journal resources especially *Speculum*) which not only makes material accessible from home but also searchable, as well as *Dictionary of National Biography* and various reference works. These are invaluable, so be sure to sign up for your Athens account (see Learning Resources Centre web pages as well as School, Faculty and LRC Moodle pages for information). Different referencing conventions will apply depending on whether the material you're using is essentially paper but scanned for the internet, or, as in relatively rare now but increasingly the case, is designed for online use. You will need to consult the School's Referencing Guide (which you should have in electronic form) for further information. If you don't have a copy of the Referencing Guide, please contact me.

A note on reprints:

There are relatively numerous reprints of primary-source material available, especially from Llanerch Publishers, who specialise in inexpensive reprints of out of copyright material. The same cautions apply to this material as apply to out of copyright material found on the web (indeed, it is usually the same material). Some translations may be perfectly useful, some may be relatively useful, and some may have been significantly superseded—the date of the original translation (if it is a reprint) is not always made clear, so if you're in any doubt, look at library catalogues (The British Library catalogue is a good starting-point to get information about the original dates of books) online to check.

CELTIC ARTHUR AND THE MATTER OF BRITAIN

CYCS7021

This module examines the complicated historical and traditional context of Arthur as known from Celtic (mostly but not exclusively Welsh) sources, leaving partially to one side the large body of material directly dependent on Geoffrey of Monmouth. This module begins with the historical context, and moves more or less chronologically through the sources for our 'historical' Arthur, which are of an extraordinarily varied nature. It does not so much try to reconstruct a linear and unified narrative of events (which for the period would at any rate be a less than useful, if not downright misleading, enterprise—see, for example, Kirby and Williams' Review of John Morris's, *The Age of Arthur*, pp. 456-9) as to establish a historical context for the consideration, thematically and more or less chronologically, of the relevant primary sources.

Seminar Units for this module:

Unit 1: The Arthur of History?: Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae* and post-Roman Britain

Unit 2: The Arthur of History? II: *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum*

Unit 3: The Arthur of Early Welsh Poetry

Unit 4: Arthur in Welsh and Breton Saints' Lives

Unit 5: The Arthur of Folklore? *Culhwch ac Olwen*, other Welsh Prose, and Arthurian tradition in Cornwall and Ireland

Unit 6: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*

PRELIMINARY READING FOR THE MODULE

There are no definitive books which deal with all aspects of this subject. Two relatively recently published books are recommended for their critical appraisal of the subject: *The Arthur of the Welsh*, edited by Rachel Bromwich *et al.*, (Cardiff, 1991) is an excellent collection of essays, which both bring the reader up to date in terms of recent scholarship, and present a general picture (for the most part) for those new to the field; Oliver Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Writers of Wales Series, Cardiff, 2000), similarly gives a user-friendly overview as well as making some particular critical points.

Other highly recommended reading includes:

Alcock, L., *Arthur's Britain* (Harmondsworth, 1973). The most useful survey of the material, although not uncontroversial in its view of the 'evidence'. See Dumville's review, 'Sub-Roman Britain', listed below.

Davies, W., *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1982). The most useful survey of early medieval Welsh history and its sources.

Dumville, D.N., 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend', *History* n.s. 62 (1977), pp. 173-92. Reprinted, with new material (but same pagination), in D.N. Dumville, *Histories and Pseudo-Histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1990). Somewhat argumentative but introduced a number of important and enduring revisions to the orthodoxy of the 1970s. **Included in the reading brick.**

Green, Thomas, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007). I confess to some reservations about the extent to which the author doesn't fully credit earlier scholars who first developed his central idea about Arthur, but apart from that this is a useful survey and its point of view probably could be described as 'the new orthodoxy' about Arthur (Alcock representing the 'old orthodoxy').

CYCS7021 The Celtic Arthur and the Matter of Britain

- James, Edward, *Britain in the First Millennium* (London, 2001). A very useful survey of the period, incorporating many recent methodological and theoretical questions.
- Jankulak, K., *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (Writers of Wales) (Cardiff, 2010). Explores the position of Geoffrey with respect to Welsh literature including the Celtic Arthurian material.
- Jarman, A.O.H., and G. R. Hughes (eds), *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, vol. I (Swansea, 1976; rev. ed. Cardiff, 1992). A good general introduction to many different genres of literature in Welsh.
- Padel, O.J., 'The Nature of Arthur', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 27 (1994), pp. 1-31. The most recent exploration of the problem—very very very useful. Covers a smaller amount of material than his *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature*, but in more depth, and with useful references.
- Included in the reading brick.**

Useful surveys:

- Barber, Richard, *The Figure of Arthur* (Cambridge, 1972).
- Bromwich, R., 'The Character of the Early Welsh Tradition', in H.M. Chadwick, *et al.* (eds) *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 83-136.
- Bromwich, R., 'Celtic Elements in Arthurian Romance: a General Survey', in P.B. Grout *et al.* (eds), *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1983), pp. 41-55; 230-231.
- Chambers, E.K., *Arthur of Britain* (repr. with supplementary bibliography by B.F. Roberts, Cambridge, 1964).
- Charles-Edwards, 'The Arthur of History' in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, eds. R. Bromwich *et al.* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 15-32.
- Jackson, K.H., 'The Arthur of History', in R.S. Loomis (ed.), *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 1-11.
- Jones, T., 'Datblydiadau Cynnar Chwedl Arthur', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 17 (1958), pp. 235-52. Translated by Gerald Morgan as 'The Early Evolution of the Legend of Arthur', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 8 (1964), pp. 3-21. **Included in reading brick.**
- Kirby, D.P. and J.E. Caerwyn Williams, Review of John Morris, *The Age of Arthur* (London, 1973), *Studia Celtica* 10/11 (1975/76), pp. 454-86.

Collections of Primary Sources:

- Coe, Jon B., and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995). This is a collection of facing-page translations of a number of sources, some easily available, some far less so. It is very useful, and it is hoped that Llanerch Publishers (for which see below, 'a note on reprints') finds someone to keep publishing it. I have noted some of its rarer translations in the section on 'Primary Sources'.
- There is also a useful summary of the Pre-Geoffrey Arthurian material (with some texts quoted at least in part) at <http://www.arthuriana.co.uk/concepts/index.htm>

Unit 1. The Arthur of History? I: Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae* and post-Roman Britain

In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, after 300-odd years of political and cultural dominance, the Roman presence in Britain was in the process of fragmenting and withdrawing. This period of British history is known mainly from external chronicles and annals which sometimes but not always mention specific events at particular dates; other information from within Britain goes some way towards providing a relative chronology of events, but never without obscurity and problems.

The areas in which we have particular interest, that is northern Britain, Wales, and Cornwall, seem to have been less subject to intense and thorough Roman influence than that part of Britain which would become England (for example, the degree to which Christianity, by the later fourth century the official religion of the Roman empire, had affected these areas is debatable). Nevertheless most of these remoter regions were officially part of *Britannia* and show signs of Roman presence, if only rudimentary roads and marching camps and the occasional villa (described by Ken Dark as 'one of the most widespread and most visible forms of secular élite domestic settlement in Late Roman Britain', *Civitas to Kingdom*, p. 25).

Roman acculturation, however, seems to have worked differently in northern Britain, Wales, and Cornwall. The kingdoms of southern Scotland (for example the kingdom of the Votadini around Edinburgh and the groups who lived in south west Scotland) and Cornwall seem to have existed as 'buffer' zones on the edge of Roman Britain and only receiving minor Roman settlement. It has been argued, and reasonably so, that the localised kingdoms which afterwards replaced Roman political and administrative divisions depended, more or less, on similar (at least in type if not in area) political entities which had obtained before the coming of the Romans. We must admit, however, that we know very little of pre-Roman British political administration, and such information as we have filtered through the Romans themselves is probably selective.

The immediate post-Roman geography of Britain is in some cases not much clearer. Each case must be decided on its merits, and in some cases (most notably that of Cornwall) while we suspect that we can have a broad picture of a post- (and to a lesser extent, pre-) Roman political entity, the particular detail almost entirely escapes us.

The beginning of the end? Magnus Maximus and the withdrawal of troops

Internal and external factors combined to both diminish Roman Britain's sense of itself as a Roman power, and to progressively isolate it from the central authority of the empire, in particular the repeated withdrawal of troops as a result of pretenders to imperial power between 383 and 407 (although such usurpations began as early as the late third century). Britain had proved to be an ideal location for such a pretender to establish himself with his army, and an ideal base from which to launch a campaign upon the continent. In 383 Magnus Maximus, a Spaniard who subsequently was enshrined in British pseudo-historical tradition (including some of our central 'Arthurian' texts) took his discontented troops to Gaul and held it until his death in 388. Subsequent campaigns by imperial forces to curtail raiding were successful, but the gaps in Britain's defences were never really effectively plugged.

Moreover, Roman troops and even perhaps Britons as well were withdrawn to the continent, not merely in the service of pretenders but also in the defence of Rome itself, increasingly under pressure from continental barbarians. One such withdrawal took place in 401. Another, final, withdrawal occurred in 407 with the elevation by the hopelessly

harassed army in Britain of a series of pretenders. The final pretender, who took the title Constantine III, took himself off to Gaul and then Spain, and was ultimately recognised by the emperor Honorius, although his further actions in Italy led to his execution in 411. In the aftermath, Britain was left without troops, and Gaul subject to invasions and rebellions. The Byzantine historian Zosimus implies, in his *Historia Nova*, that the barbarian raids forced the British and ultimately the Gauls into rebellion:

The barbarians beyond the Rhine, attacking in force, reduced the inhabitants of Britain and some of the Celtic tribes to the point where they were obliged to throw off Roman rule and live independently, no longer subject to Roman laws. The Britons therefore took up arms and, braving the danger on their own behalf, freed their cities from the barbarians threatening them. And all Armorica and the other Gallic provinces followed their example, freed themselves in the same way, expelled their Roman rulers and set up their own governments as far as lay within their power (see Ireland, *Roman Britain: A Sourcebook*, pp. 168-9).

Zosimus's account, however, is very controversial: how accurate was it? Where might he have obtained his information? Did he embroider basic information? While a barbarian (in this case explicitly Saxon) presence in Britain at the time (sometime around 409 or 410) is corroborated by a fifth-century continental (Gallic) source, the *Chronicle of 452*, the rejection of Roman law and magistrates described by Zosimus is nowhere mentioned, and the accuracy of the somewhat apocalyptic situation his description implies is difficult to assess. However, as Ian Wood has noted, there are significant continental examples of something similar, in particular the revolts in Gaul (in the third century) and later (in the early fifth century) Brittany of rebellious peasants known as *Bacaudae*. In no case, however, are *Bacaudae* associated with Britain. Moreover it is difficult to argue with any certainty that a revolt against local Roman magistrates in Britain (and the continent) was directed against the Roman emperor as opposed to against the usurper Constantine III, who was so ineffectual against the barbarian invaders. Zosimus is also our authority for a suggestive sequel, known as the 'Honorian rescript': the emperor Honorius, he says in a later chapter, wrote letters to cities (rather than to an overall Roman official, such as the *dux* or *comes Britanniae*) in Britain (*Bretannia*) telling them to undertake their own defence, presumably in response to requests for help. The localisation of this event is complicated by the fact that the place-name is ambiguous, and the rest of the chapter concerns Italy (Rivet and Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain*, p. 102).

The coming of the Saxons

The *Chronicle of 452* reports a devastation of Britain by Saxons in 410, and Wood admits, 'Zosimus's account gives us a glimpse of the sort of ambivalent situation which would have left Procopius [a sixth-century writer] retrospectively to see Roman Britain ending in 410, while closer observers noticed nothing of such a sort' ('The End of Roman Britain', p. 6). Indeed Procopius judged this to be the end of Roman Britain, stating that the Romans, from the time of Constantine III's revolt onward, never regained Britain, which 'continued to be ruled by tyrants', which seems to be an accurate enough view, albeit in hindsight, of the ultimate result.

Prosper of Aquitaine, in his *Chronicle*, gives us the next date in this history: in 429 Germanus of Auxerre came to Britain to combat the Pelagian heresy (having mainly to do with the role of human freedom vis-à-vis God's grace), an event also described in the *Vita Germani*, composed by Constantius of Lyon in the late fifth century. The *Vita*, among other things, describes a victory by the Britons, with the help of preaching by Germanus and a fellow Gallic bishop, Lupus of Troyes, over the Saxons and Picts, the

famous ‘Alleluia’ victory, so-called as the Britons shout ‘Alleluia’ three times in unison, at which the enemy flees. This episode, however, is heavily allegorical, and its historical significance heavily debatable. The text also describes a second visit by Germanus to Britain, again an event whose historical accuracy has provoked controversy. The extent of Pelagianism in Britain, and the implications of this as regards the extent to which Britain was still Romanised, or perceived to be Romanised by contemporary observers, depends on one’s interpretation of the information suggested by the Life of St Germanus, as well as by various corollary chronicles and theological writings touching on the matter.

Continental chronicles also provide a date, in the 440s, for the Saxon conquest of Britain, as part of a more general picture of collapse of Roman political power and barbarian incursions into the empire. The *Chronicle of 452* seems to date this to 445/6 or 441/2 (depending on the interpretation of the text’s dating scheme), stating that at this time ‘the Britons ... were reduced to Saxon rule’ (*in dicionem redigere*); another, slightly later, continental source, the *Chronicle of 511* dates this to 440/1 which is perhaps the better date. With this information we leave our contemporary sources, and enter the somewhat murky realm of retrospective (for the most part) British sources.

Gildas and *De excidio Britanniae*

Gildas’s *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* (‘Concerning the Ruin and Conquest of Britain’) is our best source for late Roman and post-Roman Britain, but this is a relative judgement—best of a bad lot! The text is remarkably early, almost (the author hints) contemporary with the age in which Arthur might have acted. It has pretensions, it seems, to historical description and interpretation, albeit in the service of a polemical purpose. It is long and in places detailed. But for all this, we cannot establish to our full satisfaction exactly when it was written, precisely where, and for what precise purpose. Most tellingly, where its author might be expected to speak of Arthur by name, he falls silent.

The structure and purpose of the *De excidio*

The *De excidio* is difficult to classify. It seems to be, in the main, a complaint, moral tract, or broadside, although one with a chronological narrative at the beginning. The main thrust of its polemic is the decayed state of the church and government of the Britain as it had become by the author’s day, although it seems at times that the author has taken pains to complicate his point, both structurally and in terms of his extremely contorted Latin. It has been argued (by Patrick Sims-Williams, ‘Some Functions’) that it is the earliest example of a theme which was to be immensely productive in British and Welsh (as well as in Irish) historical and pseudo-historical writing: that of an island unity subject to a series of invasions, both good and bad. Yet while this conception of history may inform the background to Gildas’s work, it still doesn’t explain its main purpose: the *De excidio* is in the main a denunciation of contemporaries. Perhaps the *De excidio* as a whole makes more sense when considered, as does Gardner (who notes, not without justification, that the work ‘has often been treated as a wrecker’s yard, in which historians climb over the debris to find and salvage some item usable for their own purposes’, ‘Gildas’s New Testament Models’, p. 1), in light of the protomartyr Stephen’s speech in Acts, chapter 7. While Gildas does quote much material from the Old Testament, and while the *De excidio* is as reasonably characterised as a ‘jeremiad’ as any other literary genre, it is important not to overestimate the work’s Old Testament character at the expense of the New Testament. Moreover, the work’s apparent combination of historical and homiletical purpose makes much greater sense when

compared to Stephen's speech before martyrdom, a speech to which is ascribed great gravity and authority by the circumstances. Stephen spends 49 verses recounting an abbreviated version of the history of Israel as given in the Old Testament; its purpose is to illustrate his main point, that of the consequences of the rejection of God. Stephen's historical setting is thematic rather than detailed: Gardner notes that he names only nine people (as does Gildas). Because Stephen's audience can be assumed to know the details of the story as well as he does, he is able to abbreviate by allusion and by telescoping and conflating chronology; Gildas's technique, such as it is, does seem to follow a similar procedure, and some of his historical 'errors' (such as an apparent confusion in a chronology of the building of two northern walls, the Antonine Wall and Hadrian's Wall, which Gardner, 'Gildas's New Testament Models', pp. 5-6, suggests is in fact a description of the building of Hadrian's wall in two stages, one turf and one stone) can be ascribed to the fulfilling of polemical demands (in this case the inept British turf wall compared to the efficient stone Roman wall and shore defences). Gildas may not be as historically misinformed as we think, although it is important not to overstate his access to and interest in historically accurate information.¹

Gildas and his milieu

Fortunately (!) for us we don't need to worry overmuch about the *De excidio* as a whole, although we do need to keep in mind its unusual and to some extent inexplicable character (and language). The style of the *De excidio* can tell us a good deal about the milieu in which its author lived. For our purposes, we can consider Gildas (and by implication his audience) as an example of someone educated in a more or less traditional Roman (late antique) school, perhaps, as Michael Lapidge argued, in preparation for a secular administrative career; this suggests a continuing Roman government at least during part of Gildas's lifetime.

But what was his lifetime? While a consensus has emerged that *ca* 540 is as reasonable an approximation as any for the composition of the *De excidio*, the matter is by no means securely established. The main obstacle to dating Gildas is Gildas himself: his date (and location) must be established from the clues he himself gives us, and in terms of chronology, his is a relative rather than an absolute one. That is, Gildas gives us, or seems to give us, a reasonable amount of information about himself as well as events of the period in which he lived, but as we have no one securely datable event with which to anchor his information, it floats tantalisingly adrift. From the (mainly) Welsh rulers he castigates by name, in particular from Maelgwn of Gwynedd (if that is the *Maglocunus* of the *De excidio*) in a later portion of the *De excidio*, we may obtain an approximate date of composition in the mid sixth century (*ca* 540 is the usual suggestion), but, as David Dumville has argued ('Gildas and Maelgwn'), albeit in typical arch-reductionist fashion, the dates of these rulers come from much later sources (chiefly the *Annales Cambriae*, for which see Unit 3), of dubious authority. Moreover, it has been argued, such a date sits uneasily with the degree of functioning Roman government implied by Lapidge's account of Gildas's probable education ('Gildas's Education'). It is perhaps worth noting that while Dumville discarded the date of *ca* 540 based on the supposed *floruit* of Maelgwn of Gwynedd (itself derived from the supposed death date found in the *Annales Cambriae*), he arrived at a similar date based on a reading of the chronology of the *De excidio* itself ('The Chronology', p. 83). We will examine the

¹ Note Sims-Williams's discussion of Gildas's supposed knowledge of the 'Honorian rescript', which is sometimes cited as proof of access to genuine historical tradition: Sims-Williams ('Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons', p. 17) concludes that the passage in question in which the Roman legions finally tire of rescuing the ceaselessly hapless Britons (18.1) provides a convenient narrative link rather than an historically convincing explanation.

chronology of Gildas's 'Arthurian' sections below.

Moreover, the question of Gildas's geographical perspective raises similar questions: did Gildas characterise events in one region of Britain as typical of the whole, or of another region altogether? Gildas, it should be noted, provides very few place-names (as well as very few personal names); this makes it difficult to localise him. It has been argued that Gildas wrote much of the *De excidio* from a northern British point of view: in this case his account of the Saxon settlement should be located in the north. Neil Wright (echoing Patrick Sims-Williams's arguments) however points out that the narrative context of the *De excidio* is that of Britain as a whole. In addition, the most definite information provided by Gildas, the account (heavily if not obsessively critical) of the rulers of his own day, is biased towards Wales and the south-west.

The *De excidio* as history

Despite these difficulties, Gildas, and in many cases Gildas alone (or later sources such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* or Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which, however are to a great extent based on Gildas), provides us with much of the information we have about events in Britain from about the 440s onwards, that crucial period in which Roman government finally collapsed and in which various barbarians invaded and settled. Even here we are somewhat confused: Gildas's account of the events of the 440s involves an appeal to Rome against Picts and Irish rather than Saxon domination of Britain.² He writes that the British sent a plea for help to 'Agitius, thrice consul' (seemingly Aëtius, *magister militum* whose third consulship was held in 446, to his death in 454), stating that 'The barbarians push us back to the sea, the sea pushes us back to the barbarians; between these two kinds of death we are either drowned or slaughtered' (20.1). When no help was forthcoming, Gildas tells us, a council convened to consider the situation, including a 'proud tyrant' (*superbus tyrannus*, named by Bede and later authors—as well as in two manuscripts of the *De excidio*—as Vortigern, which is a British name made up of the same elements as Gildas's Latin phrase), invited Saxons to settle in the east, clearly as *foederati*, to defend Britain from attacks from the north. As Ian Wood notes, Gildas's account does not necessarily contradict that of the continental *Chronicles*: if Gildas's concern is with the north and the *Chronicles* with the south-east, we may consider a situation in which Saxons already settled in the south were later called to settle further north (although Gildas's language seems to imply that this is the Saxon's initial settlement rather than a relocation from one part of Britain to another). Another possibility involves taking Gildas's information over that of the continental *Chronicles*, and seeing Saxon domination of Britain as a later phenomenon. A final possibility is to conclude that Gildas is confused, and that Saxon settlement in Britain was well underway by the 440s, rather than slightly later as Gildas implies (23.3-5):

Then, a pack of cubs erupting from the lair of the barbarian lioness, coming in three keels, as warships are called in their language. . . First, the ill-fated tyrant having ordered it, they fixed their dreadful claws on the east side of the island, as if to fight for our country, but actually to fight against it. The mother lioness, on learning that her first contingent had prospered, sent a second and larger troop of satellite dogs. ... The barbarians who had been admitted to the island, falsely representing themselves as soldiers willing to undergo extreme dangers for their excellent hosts (*hospites*) ... asked to be given supplies (*annonae*), then complained that their monthly allowance (*epimēnia*) was insufficient. . . and vowed that they would break their agreement (*foedus*) and plunder the whole island. ... without delay they put their threats into immediate effect.

While the exact date and chronology of these events will always be to come extent

² It should also be noted that Gildas does not mention historical Irish settlements in Wales and Cornwall of the period (Sims-Williams, 'Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons', p. 19).

debatable, the general picture is believable enough, supported by Gildas's use of various technical terms to do with *foederati*. Federate troops were commonly found across the western empire in the fifth century: The Britons (led by Vortigern?) would seem to have been following Roman tactics. During the fifth century there were frequent revolts by these troops, just as there were amongst the regular army. Often this led to forcible requisition of Roman estates, under the law of forage (*hospitalitas*). Using this law, barbarian soldiers settled on Roman estates, ultimately becoming no more, or less, than Roman landlords. The details of the events, however, are less credible, not the least because of the highly literary language (reminiscent, as Sims-Williams points out, [‘Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons’, p. 22] of origin-legends found in other contexts) used to describe the invaders.

The *De excidio* as contemporary witness

At this point we approach Gildas's description of his own lifetime, the main chronological information supplied by him, and, most importantly for our purposes, his ‘Arthurian’ material (25.2-26.1):

After some time, when the cruel plunderers had returned home, God strengthened the survivors. ... Their leader was Ambrosius Aurelianus, a gentleman who, perhaps alone of all the Romans, had survived the shock of such a notable storm in which his parents, who had worn the purple, had been slain. His descendants in our day have greatly degenerated from their grandfather's excellence. Under him our people regained their strength, and challenged the victors to battle. With the Lord assenting, the battle went their way. From that time victory went now to our countrymen, now to their enemies ... this lasted right up until the year of the siege of Badon Hill (*obsessio Badonici montis*), almost (*ferme*) the last defeat of the villains, and certainly not the least. That was the year of my birth; as I know, one month of the forty-fourth year since then has already passed.

There are several difficulties with this passage, both concerning the seemingly unnamed victor of Badon Hill and concerning the dating of the *De excidio* and hence Badon Hill itself. To take the latter first: if one dates the *De excidio*, with reference to Maelgwn of Gwynedd, to *ca* 540, then the siege of Badon Hill can be dated to *ca* 500. Gildas's wording does admit of more than one interpretation: Ian Wood has suggested that what is being described is a victory by Ambrosius in the year of Gildas's birth, with Badon Hill coming 43 years later. Thus (for various reasons) he would date Badon Hill, and the composition of the *De excidio*, to between 485 and the 520s (‘The End’, p. 23); note, however, that Charles-Edwards, in his review of this volume, finds Wood's reading, with which he takes issue in some detail, to lead to ‘syntactical or other absurdities’.

As for the victor of Badon Hill, one can construct a number of arguments from what Gildas does and does not tell us. One possibility is that the battle was indeed won by Arthur, whose name was however omitted by Gildas because of political prejudice or because it was too obvious to mention. Another, more convincing possibility (or set of possibilities), is that the battle had nothing to do with Arthur, whether or not he existed. Much depends on how much time is estimated to have elapsed between the victory of Ambrosius Aurelianus and that of Badon Hill; the matter has perhaps been obscured somewhat, as Oliver Padel points out, by the insertion of a paragraph break between the narration of the two events (‘The Nature of Arthur’, pp. 16-17, and references there). It is entirely possible that Ambrosius and the victor of Badon Hill are one and the same. The aftermath of Badon Hill is forty-four years of relative peace between Britons and Anglo-Saxons, although this is not to say that Anglo-Saxon settlement halted: it seems not to have done.

This, then, is the ‘Arthurian’ portion of Gildas: a narrative of unclear chronology, uncertain date (although as close to contemporary as we can get in the matter), and of

suggestive (apparent) omissions, whether deliberate or not. Gildas, because of his very contemporaneity, is one of the most valuable sources for this period; his 'evidence' for Arthur must be carefully considered.

Select Bibliography: Roman and Post-Roman Britain

- Burgess, R.W., 'The Dark Ages Return to Fifth-Century Britain: the Restored Gallic Chronicle Exploded', *Britannia* 21 (1990), pp. 185-95. **available via JSTOR**
- Casey, P. (ed.), *The End of Roman Britain* (1979).
- Charles-Edwards, Thomas, 'Language and Society among the Insular Celts AD 400-1000', in *The Celtic World*, ed. Miranda J. Green (London and New York, 1995), 703-36.
- Cleary, A.S.E., *The Ending of Roman Britain* (1989).
- Dark, K. R., *Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity 300-800* (Leicester, 1994).
- Frere, Sheppard, *Britannia. A History of Roman Britain* (London: 1967).
- Ireland, S., *Roman Britain: A Sourcebook* (New York, 1986).
- Johnson., S., *Later Roman Britain* (London, 1980).
- Jones, M.E., and P.J. Casey, 'The Gallic Chronicle Restored: a Chronology for the Anglo-Saxon Invasions and the End of Roman Britain', *Britannia* 19 (1988), pp. 367-98. **available via JSTOR**
- Miller., M., 'The Last British Entry in the "Gallic Chronicles"', *Britannia* 9 (1978), pp. 315-18. **available via JSTOR**
- Muhlberger, Steven, *The Fifth-Century Chroniclers. Prosper, Hydatius, and the Gallic Chronicler of 452* (Leeds, 1990).
- Myres, J. N. L., 'Pelagius and the End of the Roman Rule in Britain', in *Journal of Roman Studies*, i (1960), 21-36. **available via JSTOR**
- Rivet, A.L.F., and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979; rept. 1982).
- Salway, Peter, *Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1981).
- Thomas, Charles, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500* (London, 1981).
- Thompson, E.A., 'Peasant Revolts in Late Roman Gaul and Spain', *Past & Present* 2 (Nov. 1952), 11-23. **available via JSTOR**
- Thompson, E.A., 'Zosimus 6.10.2 and the Letters of Honorius', *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 32 (1982), pp. 445-62. **available via JSTOR**
- Thompson, E.A., *Germanus of Auxerre and the End of Roman Britain* (Woodbridge, 1984).
- Todd, Malcolm, *Roman Britain, 55 BC-AD 400* (London, 1981).
- Wood, Ian, 'The End of Roman Britain: Continental Evidence and Parallels', in M. Lapidge and D.N. Dumville (eds), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984), 1-25.

Select Bibliography: Gildas

Primary Source: edition of Latin text and translation into English

Winterbottom, M. (ed. and trans.), *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Documents. Arthurian Period Sources vol. 7* (Chichester, 1978).

See also the translation (dating from about 100 years ago, however) by J.A. Giles at

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1949> or

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/gildas-full.html>

Secondary Sources:

Bartrum, P.C., 'Was there a British "Book of Conquests"?', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 23 (1968-70), 1-6.

Dumville, David, 'Gildas and Maelgwn', in M. Lapidge and D.N. Dumville (eds), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 51-9.

Gardner, R., 'Gildas' New Testament Models', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 30 (1995), 1-12. **Included in the reading brick.**

Higham, Nicholas, *The English Conquest: Gildas and Britain in the Fifth Century* (Manchester, 1994).

Jackson, K.H., 'Varia: II. Gildas and the Names of the British Princes', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 3 (1982), pp. 30-40.

Lapidge, M., 'Gildas's Education and the Latin Culture of Sub-Roman Britain' in M. Lapidge and D.N. Dumville (eds), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 27-50.

Lapidge, M. and D.N. Dumville (eds), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984).
See also review by Thomas Charles-Edwards in *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 12 (1986), pp. 115-20.

Sims-Williams, P., 'Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 6 (1983), 1-30.

Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions of Origin Stories in Early Medieval Wales', in *History and Heroic Tale: a Symposium*, eds T. Nyberg *et al.* (Odense, 1985), 97-131.

Included in the reading brick.

Unit 2. The Arthur of History? II: *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum*

With *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum* we move to sources which in some ways are less perplexing, but are also much later than Gildas—they are certainly not contemporary with the immediate post-Roman ‘Arthurian’ period. It should be noted that one manuscript, BL Harleian MS 3859, contains both *Historia Brittonum* as well as the earliest version of the *Annales Cambriae*, in addition to various Welsh dynastic genealogies. Leslie Alcock refers to this particular manuscript as the *British Historical Miscellany* (*Arthur’s Britain*, pp. 29ff), thus implying a deliberate and organic connection between these sources. Although the presence (indeed, the deliberate intermingling) of these, clearly related, texts in the one manuscript is suggestive and worth consideration (and notice that it is echoed in John Morris’s translation of *Historia Brittonum* and the *Annales Cambriae* in his *Arthurian Period Sources* series), it does not follow that these texts formed a seamless whole to the medieval authors and scribes. We shall here follow usual practice and treat each text as a distinctive entity, keeping in mind, however, their at times common textual tradition (and no doubt common origin in many aspects).

The *Annales Cambriae*: the nature of the source

One source which is often assumed to be ‘early’ (this being a relative term), and to provide almost conclusive, because almost contemporary, evidence of Arthur’s existence (as Leslie Alcock, *Arthur’s Britain*, p. 88, and Thomas Jones, ‘The Early Evolution’, p. 6, for example, have argued) is *Annales Cambriae*, the ‘Welsh Annals’, which Alcock (but no one else!) calls the Welsh Easter Annals.

The Annals are a series of short notices in a year-by-year format, a type of text common in the early medieval period and later. The earliest of the four versions of *Annales Cambriae* is that found in BL Harleian MS 3859, a manuscript we referred to above: dated to *ca* 1100, it contains various British historical texts, including *Historia Brittonum* and Welsh royal genealogies. The last entry in the *Annales* refers to the year 954, and Kathleen Hughes has argued that this probably marks the completion of that particular version. Entries from the late eighth to the mid tenth century show a particular interest in St David’s, suggesting the keeping of the annals there at this period. The nature and sources of the earlier entries (which include the Arthurian entries) are more difficult to pin down. Hughes has argued that the keeping of the Annals was only begun in the eighth century, that earlier entries represent ‘a scholar’s exercise compiled well after the event’ (‘The Welsh Latin Chronicles’, p. 69). Entries up to the early seventh century correspond closely with entries in Irish Annals, some of which are clearly retrospective in character (for example, the recording of the birth of saints is an inherently retrospective exercise). The seventh and eighth-century entries of the Annals seem to depend on a lost northern Chronicle: this would have implications for the authorship of *Historia Brittonum* and will be discussed below.

The nature (and by extension the authority) of the sources for the information contained in the *Annales* is crucial. One possible origin for this type of source is the science of ‘computistics’: the setting up of chronological frameworks relating to the calculation of the date of Easter. Easter, of course, falls upon a different day in any given year and its date is calculated formulaically with reference to the calendar of religious festivals. Not all early churches used the same formula, a topic for much controversy in early Britain. To facilitate the calculation of Easter, churches would keep a table of years in a lunar cycle, with the dates of forthcoming Easters calculated and recorded in

advance. In such a text, the passing of a year might be distinguished by the jotting down of some significant events, with one or more tables then collated at a later date. Clear examples of such a practice are known from the early seventh century (Ó Cróinín, p. 77), and Ó Cróinín has argued that we may have examples from Irish sources from the mid-seventh century. If, as Ó Cróinín concludes, the Irish annals are at least partly based on such contemporary recordings, the possible contemporaneity of the records of at least some events must be considered.

Such an origin has not been argued for the Welsh annals: the question of the origin of the habit of recording yearly events in this case has mostly been avoided by scholars. The possibility of an origin in paschal tables (so central to Alcock's mostly discredited arguments for the historicity of Arthur based on this source) has not therefore been rejected outright in this case. The clear interest shown by the *Annales Cambriae* in the dating of Easter is attributed by Hughes and Dumville to their inception at St David's in the late eighth century, just after the vexed question of the dating of Easter was resolved in Wales. The Annals are presented in the form of a 532 year cycle, dated as years 1-532 (the year numbers appearing intermittently), with year one beginning ('mysteriously', Dumville comments, ['When was the "Clonmacnoise Chronicle" Created?', p. 209]) at AD 445. Individual entries (including the very first one) note the stages in the various Easter debates. Perhaps the relationship between the keeping of annals and the calculation of Easter, at whatever period, deserves more attention.

The Arthurian entries

The actual entries which have interested Arthurian scholars are in the pre-seventh-century group, and are among the eleven entries (mostly concerning northern Britain and northern Wales) found in the Welsh but not Irish annals of the period:

[516] The battle of Badon (*Bellum Badonis*), in which Arthur carried the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ on his shoulders for three days and three nights and the Britons were victors.

[537] The battle of Camlann (*Gueith Cam lann*) in which Arthur and Medraut fell.

It is impossible to discern the source or assess the historicity of the very small number of pre-seventh-century British entries in the *Annales Cambriae*, especially these two Arthurian entries. Discussion of the date assigned in the *Annales* to the battle of Badon as well as to the death of Maelgwn of Gwynedd (both mentioned in Gildas with an implied relative chronology, and the latter often the main chronological anchor on which discussion of the date of the *De excidio* is moored) is probably a more or less futile exercise, given the utter uncertainty of the source of the information found in the *Annales*. Discussion of the Arthurian entries' content, relative to what one might expect contemporary sixth-century entries to look like, is no more revealing of their age, examples of sixth-century sources being utterly lacking, although it illuminates to a certain extent their character. The entry concerning Badon is, as Jones and others have commented, much longer than other 'early' entries, and resembles (in the bit mentioning Arthur, which could, it is argued, be a later addition) a religious legend. The reference to the cross on Arthur's shoulder may well be due to a confusion between Old Welsh *scuit* 'shield' and Old Welsh *scuid* 'shoulder': this would imply a Welsh (oral?) source. The entry concerning Camlan uses the British word *gueith* rather than the Latin word *bellum*; this is not the only entry to do so. Attempts to find the location of Camlan rest on the slender evidence of the *Annales Cambriae*; it had a lively career in later Welsh tradition, being localised in Merioneth (*Englynion y Beddau*; see Unit 3) as well as in Cornwall (by Geoffrey of Monmouth; see unit 6). Modern scholarship's identification of the site

with a site on Hadrian's wall (and consequent attempts to argue for a 'northern' Arthur) very much depend on the assumption that one is dealing with a historical battle, one that can be known from the evidence of the *Annales* more or less alone.

While the entries in the *Annales* cannot prove the existence of Arthur (nor do they necessarily disprove it), they do point to traditions about an Arthur figure, quite possibly existing primarily in Welsh, at the date of the compilation of the *Annales*, whenever one might put that. It is worth noting, as well, that the entry connecting Arthur and Mordred (who of course appears in later tradition as Arthur's treacherous nephew and the instrument of his downfall) does not comment on their relationship: that was left to Geoffrey of Monmouth to clarify (or invent).

***Historia Brittonum*: a 'heap' of pseudo-historical tradition?**

One of the most important sources for early medieval British history, the *Historia Brittonum*, is also one of the most difficult to comprehend. *Historia Brittonum* is generally dated to the year 829, a date established from a computistical note in chapter 16, which reckons the number of years from the coming of the Saxons to the presumed year of composition, the fourth year of the reign of King Merfyn of Gwynedd, that is 829/30. The text's authorship is somewhat more complicated: of the 35 or so medieval manuscripts of *Historia Brittonum*, five contain the preface with its attribution to Nennius; most of the rest ascribe it, clearly anachronistically, to Gildas (probably as a well-known name of an historian). The earliest recension (version) of the text, that found in BL Harleian MS 3859, does not contain the Nennian preface. The earliest manuscript containing the preface, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 139 (for which see Dumville, 'Celtic-Latin Texts'), is dated to 1164, and is reliably considered to be the archetype of all the other 'Nennian' manuscripts. The manuscript, and the preface itself, are highly suggestive of a much-altered text, and the preface itself seems to date to the tenth or, more likely, the eleventh century (see Dumville, "Nennius").

The rejection of the preface (mainly by Dumville) represents a significant change in our view of the *Historia Brittonum* over the last 30 or so years. Moreover, it has implications beyond the mere loss of a named author: it also inevitably leads to the rejection of the editorial method that it describes. In the preface, 'I, Nennius' states that he has 'made a heap of all that I have found, both from the Annals of the Romans and from the Chronicles of the Holy Fathers, and from the writings of the Irish and the English, and out of the tradition of our elders' and follows with an apology for the modesty of his skills as a writer (Preface). In its most basic sense, the preface invokes an easily recognised commonplace of medieval writing: the modesty of the author and his inability to thoroughly rise to his task (but persistence in it and consequent craving the indulgence of his audience). Yet because of the varied and at times visibly unconnected nature of the material itself, the method described in the preface has been taken as a realistic description of procedure. Thus *Historia Brittonum* has been treated as 'a suitable quarry for materials relating to the history of [the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries]' (Dumville, 'The Historical Value', p. 2; compare what Gardner has to say about the *De excidio*) rather than primarily as a source for the period of its composition, the ninth century. The assumption had been that the text preserves, more or less without overly intrusive editorial emendation, fragments of much older material, 'heaped' rather than adapted by the unskilled author. This was a tempting view of the text, both in light of the relative absence of other sources for these centuries, and in light of the obvious disconnectedness of the text itself.

However, if we reject (as we almost certainly must) the Preface, this has meant that other explanations for the text's apparently fragmentary, repetitive, and certainly at times contradictory, character have been sought. One possible explanation has been to consider the text as an example of the genre of 'synthetic pseudo-history', which seeks to 'harmonise', or synchronise, a number of different events, from different historical traditions. Dumville's description of this genre, which he labels 'synchronising history' is worth quoting in full:

the point about synchronising history is that it attempts, though rarely with complete success, to provide a smooth account of a period of history by combining all the available, and often wildly contradictory, witnesses into a slick, coherent, and "official" whole. The "harmonisation" ... is the important process. (Dumville, 'The Historical Value', 5)

Thomas Charles-Edwards has attempted to present a more nuanced view of this somewhat large genre. He argues for a distinction between synthetic history and synchronistic history. The first, synthetic history, includes the projection of national unity into the legendary past with recourse to a single ancestor, the assimilation of various strands of indigenous traditions, and the application of Christian learning to the whole. The second, 'synchronistic' history, is the articulation of a chronological relationship between different peoples. As he admits, both 'occur more often as elements in a larger whole than as self-contained entities'; both were 'practised by the Irish, sometimes in combination ... [and] both [are] present in the *Historia Brittonum*' ('The Arthur of History', 20). One might ask, then, why they should be distinguished: the answer is that while synthetic history entails synchronisms almost as a matter of necessity, synchronising history 'is not necessarily a quasi-historical presentation of a legendary past: it is an essential part of any history which draws upon records and traditions from distinct peoples' ('Charles-Edwards, 'The Arthur of History', 20). This point is worth keeping in mind, although it might be added that Charles-Edwards makes this somewhat self-serving point in the course of an attempt at the rehabilitation of the *Historia Brittonum* as a historical source for the Arthurian period: he argues that the materials used by its redactor need not have been legendary, that the genre does not automatically equate to fantasy. This is broadly true, but this argument's applicability to *Historia Brittonum* might be less than say its applicability to, say, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. We can also note here, for fuller discussion in Unit 6, that Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* in many ways presents a tidied-up, fleshed-out, version of *Historia Brittonum*—many of Geoffrey's overarching themes come from this text. There is a full discussion of the genre of synthesising pseudo-history, *Historia Brittonum*, and *Historia Regum Britanniae* in Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*.

Where are we left? While we might not automatically rule out *Historia Brittonum* as a source for the early medieval period of British history (but won't automatically rule it in either), it does mean that its direct relevance will be for its time of composition; any attempt to use it as a source for an earlier period will need to prove the use (unaltered) of specific sources. Some sources we can in fact discern: various continental chronicles, some sort of account of St Patrick, an account of a St Germanus, and various English legendary material concerning the coming of the Saxons (see Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain', p. 177). Another posited source, far more controversial, is a lost 'Northern British Chronicle' whose existence was suggested by Kenneth Jackson. Jackson thought that this was a text (with a quite complicated development) based on very early, even sixth-century, sources, and augmented by a reading of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It is clear that *Historia Brittonum* takes much interest in northern British material: a perhaps less cumbersome suggestion as to the source of this is some sort of northern

annalistic record, perhaps similar to that which some have discerned as lying behind the *Annales Cambriae* (Dumville, 'On the Northern Section', pp 348-9; see also Hughes, 'The Welsh Latin Chronicles'). It seems clear that while *Historia Brittonum* and the *Annales Cambriae* cover much of the same ground as regards northern Britain, the one is not relying directly on the other.

Other sources of *Historia Brittonum* include Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies, a regnal list of Northumbrian kings, and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. The latter contains one of the earliest British written references—the earliest in fact appears in the same author's *De temporum ratione*—to a ruler named Vortigern (the name was also known as a personal name in Irish sources at an earlier date). The fact that Vortigern seems to appear (although not by name) in the *De excidio Britanniae*, but is not named in Welsh tradition until *Historia Brittonum* (in which his role is pivotal), itself significantly postdating Bede, raises the interesting question of Bede's own source for this tale, one which however is beyond our scope here.

Arthur's Battles

The first of the two main Arthurian sections appears in chapter 56:

At that time the English increased their numbers and grew in Britain. On Hengest's death, his son Otha came down from the north of Britain to the kingdom of the Kentishmen, and from him are sprung the kings of the Kentishmen. Then Arthur fought against them in those days, together with the kings of the British; but he was their leader in battle [The 'Vatican' recension adds: 'And although there were many more noble than he, he however was leader and victor in twelve battles'].]

The first battle was at the mouth of the river called *Glein*. The second, the third, the fourth and the fifth were on another river, called the *Dubglas*, which is in the region of *Linnuis*. The sixth battle was on the river called *Bassas*. The seventh battle was in *silva Celidonis*, that is, the *Cat* ['Battle'] *Coit Celidon*. The eighth battle was in *castellum Guinnion* and in it Arthur carried the image of the holy Mary, the everlasting Virgin, on his [?shield—*super humeros suos*, literally 'on his shoulders'] and the heathen were put to flight on that day, and there was great slaughter upon them, through the power of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the holy Mary, the everlasting Virgin, his mother. The ninth battle was fought in the City of the Legion [the 'Vatican' recension adds: 'which in the British language is called *Cair Lion*']. The tenth battle was fought on the bank of the river called *Tribruit* [the 'Vatican' recension states: 'which we call *Traht Treuroit*']. The eleventh battle was on the hill called *Agned* [in the 'Vatican' recension '*Breguoin*, where he put them to flight, which we call the *Cat Bregion*']. The twelfth battle was on *mons Badonis* and in it nine hundred and sixty men fell in one day, from a single charge of Arthur's, and no one laid them low save he alone; and he was victorious in all his campaigns.

It is generally agreed that the source of this must be a Welsh poem listing the battles attributed to Arthur (see for references see Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', p. 15), a genre relatively well attested in early and later medieval Welsh poetry (the 'Vatican' recension, the origin of which can be dated to the tenth century, seems to have been augmented by a Welsh speaker with further access to Welsh legend: Dumville, *Historia Brittonum*, pp. 47-8). Various attempts have been made to discern either an actual or a literary geographical pattern (in particular by Kenneth Jackson; note that Charles-Edwards views the geographical spread in terms of the text's own attempts at plausibility rather than as a historical reflection of Arthur's actions) in the battle list. But while individual battles have at times been suggested as historical, there is general agreement that the battle list as a whole can cast no real light upon a historical Arthur, partly because many of the place-names are unidentifiable (through too few or too many candidates), partly because those that arguably are are widely, and implausibly, scattered. Moreover, as Jackson argued, if we see in chapter 56 a reflection of a battle-listing poem, it must have been an antiquarian description of events long in the past—a past separated from the poem's

composition by time and, not unimportantly, great linguistic change ('The Arthur of History', p. 8). Such a poem would happily have attached a list of battles to a well-known figure, with little interest in historical accuracy. It seems quite reasonable to argue that this passage contains no securely historical information, either about the location of Arthur's battles, the identity of his enemy (which is a vague 'them' at any rate), or his possible rank ('leader in battle', *dux bellorum*, probably being a translation of a poetic Welsh phrase such as *tywysawc cat*).

The battles which have been seen to have a claim to greater historical accuracy are those seemingly attested (or at least mentioned) elsewhere: these are Badon Hill (which appears in the *Annales Cambriae* in connection with Arthur, and in the *De excidio* perhaps in connection with Aurelius Ambrosius) and the tenth battle. This latter battle, or something very much like it, seems to be mentioned, in connection with Arthur, in an independent source, the poem *Pa gwr yv y porthaur* (for which see Unit 4); this does not prove its historicity, although it may show wider diffusion of the tradition found in *Historia Brittonum*. This is probably as much as we can hope for from this type of source (not to mention a source of this late date, relative to its ostensible subject). Similarities between some of the information contained in *Historia Brittonum*, the *Annales Cambriae*, and the *De excidio Britanniae* are suggestive: in the first two sources Arthur is said to carry a religious image or artefact on his shoulders (see Jones, 'The Early Evolution', p. 9), although at different battles; the battle of Mount Badon is presented in the first and third source as a great victory (in one as Arthur's greatest victory; in the other not so clearly). Suggestive differences include the absence of mention of Arthur's final battle, Camlan, an absence which Alcock argued might be due to the nature of the posited Welsh source: was it a poem in praise of the still-living Arthur (*Arthur's Britain*, p. 59)? The appearance in some versions of the battle list of battles which seem to be attributed elsewhere to different victors (see Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', pp. 18-19) undermines this sort of argument.

The Mirabilia

Alcock's reliance on the historicity of the entries in the *Annales Cambriae* and some of the information found in *Historia Brittonum*, however, is exceptional: there is generally agreement that whether or not an historical Arthur may have existed, *Historia Brittonum* is at best a relatively distant and highly stylised source (see Charles-Edwards, 'The Arthur of History', pp. 21-9, for Arthur's symbolic and literary function in *Historia* as a whole). Such a view of *Historia Brittonum* seems to be strengthened when one looks at the other Arthurian section contained in it, which is to be found in what are known as the *mirabilia*, a list of the marvels of Britain. Chapter 73 describes two wonders related to Arthur: one, in *Buelt* (Builth Wells) is a cairn of stones showing the footprint of Arthur's hound, Cabal, on its top stone (which also has magical properties): a short account of how this came to be follows (the story concerns a pig hunt which figures in the tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*, for which see Unit 6). A second, in *Ercing* (Ergyng, Archenfield in Herefordshire), concerns the tomb of Arthur's son Amr, which is of variable size (a fact of which the author, we're told, has personal experience). The first tale is an onomastic account, which explains the place-name Carn Cabal, from the name of the hound. As the word *carn* signifies either a pile of stones or the hoof of a horse, and the word *cafall* signifies horse, the tale seems to have been at some point confused (this confusion also affected *Culhwch ac Olwen*, which also has Cabal as Arthur's hound). The second tale seems to be an onomastic account as well, with the wonder located near to Lygad Amr, probably Gamber Head. Amr (or *Anir*, as some manuscripts have it), killed by Arthur so *Historia Brittonum* tells us, nowhere else appears in Welsh tradition, apart from a passing reference in the romance *Ystoria*

Gereint uab Erbin. Both stories of the *mirabilia*, as Oliver Padel has noted, are set in the area of the Welsh borders, and both explain remarkable features of the landscape ('The Nature of Arthur', pp. 2-3). While Dumville has tentatively suggested a written source for much of the *mirabilia* ('The Historical Value', p. 22), these show a clear affinity to other folk and onomastic tales; at the very least their information is visibly different in genre and character than the account of Arthur's battles. 'Their milieu', notes Padel, 'is one of magic', an atmosphere having more in common with the so-called 'folk-tale' *Culhwch ac Olwen* than the historical or even pseudo-historical portion of the battle list in chapter 56.

It is worth stressing, Padel has argued ('The Nature of Arthur', p. 4), the dual nature of the information contained within *Historia Brittonum*, which is, after all, probably our earliest source speaking by Arthur, at least by name. While it is tempting to see a progression in references to Arthur, from early, Latin, sources to later, Welsh sources, increasingly legendary as distanced in time from the 'Arthurian' period (as does, for example, Jarman, 'The Arthurian Allusions in the Black Book of Carmarthen', p. 110), *Historia Brittonum* presents Arthur as a figure of heroic ethos as well as of wonderment.

Select Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Edition of Latin text and translation into English (*Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae*):

J. Morris (ed. and trans.), *Nennius. British History and the Welsh Annals. Arthurian Period Sources vol. 8* (Chichester, 1980).

See also the translation (dating from about 100 years ago, however) by J.A. Giles at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/nennius-full.html> and <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/annalescambriae.html>

Edition of Latin text (*Historia Brittonum* only):

Dumville, D.N. (ed.), *The Historia Brittonum. 3. The 'Vatican' Recension* (Cambridge, 1985). Note that this is an edition of one manuscript family of the text, a family which is not typical of *Historia Brittonum* as a whole

Secondary Sources:

***Annales Cambriae*:**

Dumville, D.N., 'The Welsh Latin Annals' [a review of K. Hughes *The Welsh Latin Chronicles*], *Studia Celtica* 12/13 (1977/78) pp. 461-7. **Included in the reading brick.**

Dumville, D.N., 'When was the "Clonmacnoise Chronicle" Created? The Evidence of the Welsh Annals', in Kathryn Grabowski and David Dumville, *Chronicles and Annals of Mediaeval Ireland and Wales. The Clonmacnoise-Group Texts* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1984), pp. 209-26.

Hughes, K., *The Welsh Latin Chronicles: Annales Cambriae and Related Texts*, Sir John Rhys Memorial Lecture (*Proceedings of the British Academy* 59 (1973), pp. 233-258); reprinted in K. Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. David Dumville (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 67-85.

Hughes, K., 'The A-Text of the *Annales Cambriae*', in K. Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. David Dumville (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 86-100.

Miller, M., 'Date-Guessing and Dyfed', *Studia Celtica* 12-13 (1977-78), pp. 33-61.

Ó Cróinín, D., 'Early Irish Annals from Easter Tables: a Case Restated', *Peritia* 2

(1983), pp. 74-86.

Historia Brittonum:

- Carey, John, *The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudo-History*, Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Medieval Gaelic History no. 1 (Cambridge, 1994).
available online at
http://www.ucc.ie/academic/smg/CDI/PDFs_articles/JC_Carey_QuigginPamphlets_I.pdf—see **<http://www.ucc.ie/academic/smg/CDI/carey.html>** for other articles by Carey available online
- Charles-Edwards, 'The Arthur of History' in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, eds. R. Bromwich *et al.* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 15-32.
- Dumville, D.N., 'Some Aspects of the Chronology of the *Historia Brittonum*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 25 (1972-74), pp. 439-445.
- Dumville, D.N., 'The Textual History of "Lebor Bretnach": a Preliminary Study', *Éigse* 16 (1975-6), pp. 255-73
- Dumville, D.N. '"Nennius" and the *Historia Brittonum*', *Studia Celtica* 10/11 (1975/76), pp. 78-95. **Included in the reading brick.**
- Dumville, D.N., 'Celtic-Latin Texts in Northern England, c. 1150-c. 1250', *Celtica* 12 (1977), pp. 19-49.
- Dumville, D.N., *The Historia Brittonum. 3: The 'Vatican' Recension* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985).
- Dumville, D.N., 'The Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*', *Arthurian Literature* 6 (1986), pp. 1-26.
- Ford, Patrick, 'On the Significance of some Arthurian Names in Welsh', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 30 (1982-3), pp. 268-73.
- Hanning, R.W., *The Vision of History in Early Britain: from Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York, 1966).
- Hay, Denys, *Annalists and Historians. Western Historiography from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London, Methuen, 1977).
- Jackson, K.H., 'Once again Arthur's Battles', *Modern Philology* 43 (1945/6), pp. 44-57.
available via JSTOR
- Jankulak, K., *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (Writers of Wales) (Cardiff, 2010).
- Ó Corráin, D., 'Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy: Recurrent Aetiologies', in *History and Heroic Tale: a Symposium*, eds T. Nyberg *et al.* (Odense, 1985), 51-96.
- Ó Corráin, D., 'Legend as Critic', in *The Writer as Witness: Literature as Historical Evidence*, ed. T. Dunne, *Historical Studies* 16 (Cork, 1987), 23-38. **Included in reading brick.**
- Thornton, D., 'Orality, Literacy and Genealogy in Early Medieval Ireland and Wales' in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, ed. Huw Pryce (Cambridge, 1998), 83-98.

Unit 3. The Arthur of Early Welsh Poetry

The examination of early Welsh poetry as an Arthurian source moves us, at least superficially, from prose Latin texts which are for the most part relatively datable, to a distinctly different type of source: poetry in the vernacular (in this case, Welsh), which is for the most part datable only within a very wide range (if at all). While this might seem to imply a move from ‘historical’ to ‘literary’ sources, it is worth keeping in mind the varied nature of our ‘historical’ Latin texts, as well as the at times distinctly political (and therefore historical) nature of some if not all of the early Welsh poetry (see especially Rowland, ‘Genres’). Poetic composition was in medieval Wales (as in medieval Ireland), a professional, socially portentous, pursuit. Moreover, as Patrick Sims-Williams has stressed (‘The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems’), the consideration of poetry in terms of a dichotomy between a ‘learned’ Latin tradition and a ‘popular’ vernacular tradition has been for the most part rejected: the composition of medieval Welsh Arthurian (and other) poetry is now increasingly seen as an exercise conducted by a class of professional similar to that which composed and preserved other types of Welsh, and Latin, literature. Certainly many of the assumptions underlying ostensibly different genres (and works in different languages) are arguably the same.

The Welsh poetic evidence, however, is quite different from that of the *De excidio*, *Historia Brittonum*, and *Annales Cambriae* in one important respect: most of it is difficult to date, and very possibly quite a bit later in date. The earliest Welsh poetry that we have, various *englynion* (the plural of *englyn*, a type of metre) appearing in the margin of one manuscript (Cambridge Juvenius) date to the early tenth century, but most other poetry postdates the thirteenth century in its extant form (some of the poetry has been accepted as dating, originally, to an earlier period, but this is for the most part outside our subject). Linguistic arguments can supplement our arguments about dating (especially in places where metrics affect or fossilise archaic usages) but these can only go so far. Content again can add some information, but this is a subjective exercise much of the time, depending on what we might expect of an early poem in terms of content. One of the main questions to be asked, does a particular piece of information arise from knowledge of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s influential *Historia*, is often difficult to answer.

Y Gododdin

The poem most often mentioned in pursuit of an historical Arthur is that known as *Y Gododdin*. It is ascribed (with debatable accuracy) to a named poet, Aneirin (who seems to appear as *Neirin* in *Historia Brittonum*), and lauds in a series of stanzas the warriors of the Gododdin of the area around Edinburgh (that is, the Votadini, for whom see Unit 1), fallen in battle against a somewhat indeterminate enemy at Catterick, in Yorkshire. The battle is unknown outside the poem, and dating it is an exercise of some difficulty (and perhaps inadvisability)—nevertheless we may repeat Charles-Edwards’s tentative date of between *ca* 550 and *ca* 640, taking into account Dumville’s stipulation that nothing but our own convenience rules out as early a date as possible (see ‘Early Welsh Poetry’, esp. pp. 2-4). The poem’s broad substance (as opposed to individual detail) is generally taken as historically plausible. In the poem, one particular hero’s abilities are praised as falling just short of an Arthur’s; this is presumably meant to be understood as our Arthur, although Jarman (‘The Arthurian Allusions’, p. 19; see also Barber, *The Figure of Arthur*, p. 28) has ventured the suggestion that Arthur here might represent a local hero:

He [Gwawrddur] glutted black ravens on the rampart of the fortress

although he was no Arthur (lines 1241-2; stanza CII in Williams's edition)

This reference has generally been taken very seriously: even Dumville, the arch-sceptic, described it (at least in 1977; see 'Sub-Roman Britain', p. 187; see also Jarman, 'The Arthurian Allusions', p. 15 as well as others), as 'the only potentially early item' concerning the historical Arthur. Nevertheless, as Dumville soon makes clear, the weight of the qualifier 'potentially' entirely crushes the *Gododdin* as an historical source in his opinion; most other scholars would (at times reluctantly) agree. Indeed, *Y Gododdin* is a distinctly problematical source: while it seems to describe events of the early seventh century, its textual history is so complex as to border on opaque, and its susceptibility to interpolation clearly significant (not the least because of its form as a series of mainly disconnected stanzas celebrating various individuals). The orthography of this particular item does not take us back earlier than the early twelfth century, although its general orthographic milieu (it appears only in the clearly older 'B' text of the poem) may suggest an early tenth-century exemplar (an exemplar being a text from which our version was presumably copied). This, however, depends on our imperfect understanding of the development of the spelling of medieval Welsh. Moreover, even then it is long after the events it purports to describe, or the lifetime of our historical Arthur. The fact that Arthur is mentioned (historical or not) in a poem from northern Britain (as is the *Gododdin* as well as much other early Welsh poetry) has been taken by some to support a 'northern' Arthur, but this again would depend on taking the poem as an early, certainly pre-seventh-century, source. Similarly, the debatable assertion that the *Gododdin* does not otherwise refer to unhistorical figures (Jones, 'The Early Evolution', 13; Alcock, *Arthur's Britain*, pp. 72-3; [editors], 'Introduction', *Arthur of the Welsh*, p. 4; *contra* see Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', p. 14; as well as *idem*, 'A New Study', p. 54) depends at the very least on taking the reference to Arthur as part of the original poem.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Arthur in this poem (or stanza), belongs to the heroic milieu of chapter 56 of *Historia Brittonum* rather than the legendary milieu of the *mirabilia*. Moreover, it is a reasonable conjecture that the poem's (or stanza's) audience, although of indeterminate date, was meant to know who the hero Arthur was, given the allusive, non-narrative, nature of early Welsh poetry.

Gereint filius Erbin

Another ostensibly 'historical' poem mentioning Arthur is *Gereint filius Erbin*, occurring in two manuscripts (Black Book of Carmarthen, dating to the mid-thirteenth century, and Red Book of Hergest) with slight variations. The poem, in terms of its subject and metre, would seem to belong to a type of early Welsh poetry known as 'saga poetry' or 'saga *englynion*' (for which in particular see Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*). This type of poem is thought to represent the remains of a larger prose narrative: it arguably provided some sort of dramatic interlude or link in the telling of a tale. This argument, however, is highly controversial, and it is best to keep an open mind about the exact purpose of the poem, which is at any rate as we have it devoid of context. It has been dated by Jarman to ca 900-1100, and its subject, the Dumnonian prince who would have lived around 600 AD, is perhaps also mentioned in the *Gododdin*, although one can easily overstate the case for a connection between the two figures (as well as the historicity of either one). In the poem *Gereint* the hero (whose relationship to the eponymous hero of the later romance *Gereint uab Erbin* is complex) is the leader of a military band from Devon who died fighting at Llongborth (not easily identifiable; *llongborth* mainly signifies 'harbour', and it is worth noting that the *Triads* knows *Gereint* as one of the Three Seafarers of the Island of Britain—see Bromwich, *Trioedd*,

pp. 25-6) against an unspecified enemy. In one stanza Arthur (described as an *amherawdyr*, literally 'emperor', although this is a poetic commonplace) is said to have participated in some fashion as well:

In Llongporth Arthur lost [or as in BBC: 'I saw (?) Arthur']
brave warriors, they hewed with steel
ruler (*ameraudur*), leader of battle (see Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 505).

Arthur himself is not necessarily said to be present on the actual occasion: the BBC reading throws up difficult textual problems, for which see Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems'. Nevertheless, given the posited historical Arthur's floruit, compared to that of the posited historical Gereint, the juxtaposition of the two is arguably anachronistic. A genealogical link between the two would seem to date from a later period, stemming from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*. The name Gereint is well attested in the legendary as well as historical traditions of the south west, and it is worth noting that a king of Dumnonia of a similar name is known to have corresponded with Aldhelm in the early eighth century (see Doble, 'Saint Gerent'; as well as Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p. 46). Arthur is also well-attested as having south-western, in particular Cornish, connections as well, although in a somewhat different context (see Unit 6). Arthur's connection to Gereint, however, is perhaps best seen as a drawing of originally separate traditions into an Arthurian circuit (note that Gereint appears in a list of heroes in *Culhwch ac Olwen*; see Unit 6).

Englynion y Beddau

Another poem from the Black Book of Carmarthen mentions Arthur in a similar fashion: he appears as an allusion in a pseudo-historical, or perhaps antiquarian, context. The poem itself, the *Englynion y Beddau*, or 'Stanzas of the Graves', is difficult to classify. Jenny Rowland situates it in her 'personal ratbag class' ('Genres', p. 183) of antiquarian poetry, taking its desire to 'preserve and/or display knowledge' as its primary characteristic, the knowledge in this case being a list of individual heroes linked to onomastic tradition via a description of their graves, producing an elegiac tone. It is thus not unlike *Y Gododdin* in structure and tone. This onomastic and antiquarian impulse perhaps also lies behind the description of Arthur's son's grave in *Historia Brittonum*'s *mirabilia*. The poem as a whole is described as 'early' (according to Jones it should be dated to the ninth or tenth century), although like *Y Gododdin* it is of a type particularly susceptible to interpolation, being a frame into which one can put disconnected items. The fact that very few characters who are associated with Arthur in the Welsh prose tradition (especially the tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*) appear in the poem might be taken as a sign of the poem's 'early' character, or as a sign that its pool of tradition is distinct from that of the prose tradition. Many of its heroes, in fact, are not known elsewhere. The stanza mentioning Arthur has a particular interest, in that it can be taken as implying that Arthur has no grave, was never buried:

[There is] a grave for March, a grave for Gwythur,
a grave for Gwgawn Red-sword;
the world's wonder [*anoeth*] [is] a grave for Arthur
(see Jones, 'The Black Book', p. 127)

The word *anoeth* is suggestive: it is an early, archaic, form, which is found in prose only in the Arthurian tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*, where it can be taken to signify 'something difficult to find'. In this case we seem to have evidence of a folk-motif, the 'vanished undying hero', attached to Arthur (Jones, 'The Black Book', p. 108). It should be noted,

however, that there is no mention of his imminent return, an aspect of his story clearly well-established by the twelfth century (see Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', pp. 49-50).

Another possible connection to *Culhwch ac Olwen* is the name Gwythur: this is the name of one of Arthur's companions in *Culhwch ac Olwen*. March is the Cornish king from the Tristan tales and Gwgawn appears in the Arthurian tale *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (for which see Unit 6). Thus all these characters appear in a prose Arthurian context (and all, as Sims-Williams has pointed out, are well known from the *Trioedd*) from a relatively late date.

Another stanza refers to Camlan, as well as Bedwyr's grave which is apparently in Snowdonia. This suggests that Camlan was identified with a Camlan in Merioneth, as well as showing another Arthurian character (with suggestive connections, for which see Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p. 51) in the context of this battle.

Pa gur yv y Porthaur

A third poem from the Black Book of Carmarthen touches upon the Arthurian material in a quite different tone. The incomplete poem, *Pa gur yv y porthaur* ('What man is the gatekeeper', sometimes known as 'The Dialogue of Arthur and Glewlwyd Gafaelfawr'), classified by Rowland as an 'informational dialogue' and tentatively dated to the tenth or eleventh century by Bromwich (*Trioedd*, p. 304), or to south-east Wales at the turn of the twelfth century by Sims-Williams ('The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p. 39), begins as an interrogation of Arthur by Glewlwyd Gafaelfawr, a gatekeeper, although it soon settles down into a monologue by Arthur himself. The poem mainly consists of an enumeration of Arthur's knights and description of some of their exploits (as they attempt to gain entry past the gatekeeper, Glewlwyd Mighty-Grasp), which belong, as Jarman has noted, to the 'weird and fantastic world of primitive saga' (*Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*, p. 352; note that Jarman had earlier made this observation, replacing 'primitive' with 'Irish' however: 'The Arthurian Allusions', p. 109). The poem clearly is closely related to *Culhwch ac Olwen*: it clearly draws upon the same, or a similar, body of tradition and relies upon many of the same structures, in particular lists of companions and deeds. Sims-Williams has argued that *Culhwch ac Olwen* may have been drawing on an at times poorly-remembered (not written) version of the poem. *Pa gur* is, Bromwich has argued, the earliest evidence that 'Arthur was already becoming the centre of a cycle of stories at a date too early for there to be any question of back-influence from continental sources' ('Celtic Elements', p. 45).

Among Arthur's 'knights' enumerated in *Pa gur*, some of whom are familiar from later incarnations and some not, Cai figures heavily, in a character which strongly resembles that of the figure of the same name in *Culhwch ac Olwen*. Several lines seem to refer to Arthur's own exploits, but these are more or less unknown elsewhere, and at any rate textual problems render the connection of these to Arthur rather than Cai uncertain.

Jarman sees in *Pa gur* the result of a process of transformation, from historical or semi-historical warrior of *Historia Brittonum* and 'other early sources' into a marvellous figure of folklore, 'by the interaction of popular memory and imagination'. He adds that while Arthur in this incarnation is invincible, he 'was not so completely integrated into the world of marvels which enveloped him as to be dependent on the aid of magical powers rather than on the strength of his own right arm', commenting that this no doubt enabled Geoffrey of Monmouth's portrait of Arthur as a 'feudal monarch rather than as a king of faery' ('The Arthurian Allusions', pp. 110-11). This view, however, with its implied evolution of a more or less unified Arthurian tradition, surely overstates its internal consistency, as well as its very unity (and evolution, one might add). While *Pa*

gur is suggestive, not the least in its links to other Arthurian sources, its allusive and piecemeal portrait of Arthur will surely not bear the weight of being a milestone in the development of a fully-articulated, and recoverable, Arthurian tradition.

Other poems from the Black Book of Carmarthen

Other poems in the Black Book contain only passing references to Arthur, for which see Jarman, 'The Arthurian Allusions'. One, 'The Dialogue of Gwyddneu Garanhir and Gwyn ap Nudd', refers to Llacheu, here as Arthur's son. Llacheu, however, is otherwise mostly (and, as Bromwich comments, surprisingly) obscure: he also is mentioned pretty much in passing in *Pa gur*; without epithet; in another poem in the Black Book of Carmarthen (for which see Coe and Young, *The Celtic Sources*, pp. 124-5), in two Triads, as well as in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, he is described specifically as Arthur's son. There is no detail given in any of these sources, however, and Llacheu remains a pool of allusions, albeit suggestive of a once fuller story.

The last Arthurian poem from the Black Book, a much later poem by Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr dated to the mid-twelfth century, refers to Arthur's war band, in the company of other allusions which make it clear, as Jarman notes, that 'Cynddelw thought of [Arthur] as inhabiting the undefined borderland between history and legend' ('The Arthurian Allusions', p. 102). The twelfth century, however, takes us well beyond our chronological remit for this unit (for other references to Arthur in the poetry of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, see Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp. 276-7).

The Book of Taliesin

Of the five Arthurian poems in the fourteenth-century Book of Taliesin, only one, *Preiddeu Annwryn*, contains much of substance as regards our subject. *Canu y Meirch*, 'The Song of the Horses', includes Arthur's horse (unnamed) 'fearless to give battle', in a list of famous horses; a related text from the Black Book of Carmarthen includes the horses of 'Arthurian' heroes, but not that of Arthur himself (see Bromwich, 'The Triads'). Another horse appearing, although with owner unspecified, in *Canu y Meirch*, is *Llamrei*, who appears in *Culhwch ac Olwen* as Arthur's mare. *Cat Goddau*, 'The Battle of the Trees', is a long poem mostly recounting the deeds of the legendary (as opposed to the reasonably historical) poet Taliesin. Taliesin, a mystical figure comparable to Myrddin, has been described by Marged Haycock as a 'a medium for displaying different strands of traditional and exotic learning, primarily, it would seem, for the purposes of entertainment' ('The Significance', p. 297). In this poem, which is at least in part a mock-heroic parody (as Haycock, 'The Significance', p. 307, has suggested) Arthur is mentioned near the end, either as the object or as the audience of druidic prophecies (Sims-Williams prefers the latter possibility: 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', pp. 51-2). Other hints at Arthurian connections (the poem mentions a *Prydein wledic*, 'ruler of Britain', who may or may not be taken as Arthur; the battle itself is mentioned in a triad along with those of Camlan and one other; the battle may also be tentatively identified with that of Celyddon Wood, one of the Arthurian battles in *Historia Brittonum*; for this see Haycock, 'The Significance', pp. 308-9) are suggestive but indistinct. Another Arthurian poem from this manuscript, *Kadeir Teyrnnon*, 'The Chair of Teyrnnon', is, as Sims-Williams has admitted, 'even more obscure [than *Cat Goddau*]' ('The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p. 52). The poem refers briefly to Arthur's heroic virtues in complimentary and triadic fashion, but is ultimately obscure. Finally there is the poem entitled in the manuscript *Marwnat vthyr pen[dragon]*, 'Elegy for Uthr Pendragon', which, however, does not mention Arthur's father Uthr in the poem

itself. It does, however, invoke Arthur in terms of praise, and may represent, along with *Kadeir Teyrnnon*, some lost (beyond recovery, certainly) Arthurian tale (Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p. 53).

*Preiddeu Annwryn*³

The fifth Arthurian poem in the Book of Taliesin makes a much more substantial contribution to our knowledge of Arthurian tradition. *Preiddeu Annwryn*, 'The Spoils of Annwryn' [Annwryn being more or less the Otherworld; see Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms'], is presented, like those described above, through the persona of Taliesin, and, like the other Arthurian poems in the Book of Taliesin, is mystical and fantastic in character. While the poem's narrative is not entirely clear, the poem does seem to describe a raid by Arthur and his hosts on an otherworld, in which a cauldron and a prisoner figure strongly. It is well worth noting, along with Marged Haycock ('"Preiddeu Annwn"', p. 55) that the poem is unusual amongst Welsh poetry in having a (relatively) strong narrative character, although as she admits, its tone is allusive rather than explanatory, 'as though the poetry were designed to lock into a layer of known story material already laid down in the minds of contemporary audiences'. Much of the actual story behind the poem is lost to us, and it is possible that some of the references are deliberately obscure, a calculated invocation of esoteric lore. The poem's use, for example, of a device well-attested in early Welsh poetry, that is, repetition with slight changes, means that the final two lines of each stanza repeatedly invoke a ship, Prydwen, and Arthur (not always at the same time) but also provide an opportunity for the poet to describe the otherworld by different, often obscure, titles, presumably displaying his virtuosity in this regard.

Nevertheless some narrative threads can be identified, threads which have analogues in a number of different, Irish and Welsh, sources. The poem itself in the first stanza states that the rescue of the prisoner, Gwair, is connected, although it does not say how, to 'the story of Pwyll and Pryderi', presumably such as is found in the first and third branches (as the component tales are known) of the medieval Welsh collection of four tales, the *Mabinogi*. Gwair would seem to be kept prisoner in the otherworld (whose designation in this stanza, *Caer Siddi*, will be discussed below) with a chain; this, combined with the reference to Pwyll and Pryderi, strongly evokes the third branch of the *Mabinogi*, *Manawydan fab Llyr*. The fact of an overseas journey to rescue a prisoner evokes the second branch of the *Mabinogi*, *Branwen ferch Llyr*, in which Bran goes to Ireland to rescue his sister Branwen; indeed, it seems entirely likely that Ireland has been substituted for the otherworld in several Welsh tales, including *Branwen*. The second stanza refers to a cauldron of the Chieftain of Annwfn, which will not boil food for a coward. Medieval Welsh and Irish literature is well-supplied with suggestive cauldrons with special properties; in particular such cauldrons figure in Welsh tales seemingly drawing on Irish models or episodes (for which see especially Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', pp. 55-7; as well as *idem*, 'The Evidence'). Among these we number *Culhwch ac Olwen*, as well as a text known as the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* (edited and translated by Bromwich in *Trioedd*, pp. 240-2). The fourth stanza of the poem, Sims-Williams has argued, most closely echoes an episode (chapter 13) in *Historia Brittonum*, which itself would seem to have originated in an early, probably Latin, version of the Irish text *Lebor Gabála*.

A glance at the table of analogues compiled by Sims-Williams ('The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p. 56) shows the complexity of these strands, and the contorted

³ see <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/preideu.html> for an online edition and translation of the poem by Sarah Higley

relationship between them. In general, however, *Preiddeu Annwryn*, Sims-Williams concludes, belongs to the same wonder-tale milieu as *Culhwch ac Olwen*; *Historia Brittonum* and the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi* are, by contrast, essentially origin-legends (as is *Lebor Gabála*).

The Irish features shared by *Preiddeu Annwryn* are not confined to Welsh tales showing Irish influence. Various Irish texts themselves are similar in structure or detail to the poem. In particular, one of the terms for the otherworld used by the poet, *Caer Siddi*, is directly of Irish extraction (the term also appears in another Taliesin poem from the same manuscript). The word *sidi*, in this case, seems to be a borrowing from Irish *síd*, which is the dwelling-place of the otherworld folk. Sims-Williams, it should be noted, has argued that this is an isolated borrowing rather than a symptom of profound knowledge of Irish literature ('The Evidence', p. 247).

Ymddidan Arthur a'r Eyr

One final poem remains to be considered. *Ymddidan Arthur a'r Eyr* ('The Dialogue of Arthur and the Eagle', sometimes known as *Englynion yr Eyr*, 'Stanzas of the Eagle') presents a dialogue, set in Cornwall, between Arthur and his dead nephew, in the guise of an eagle. The dialogue is essentially one of Christian instruction, with Arthur as a pagan seeking enlightenment; as such the poem calls to mind Irish dialogues between Oisín and St Patrick. Arthur's position, as Sims-Williams notes, also calls to mind his role in various saints' Lives (for which see Unit 5), as a more or less typical member of the aristocracy ('The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p. 57. As such he is a typical warrior, with typical epithets (including *penn kadoed Kernyw*, 'the head of the battalions [or battles] of Cornwall', a title similar to the *dux bellorum* of *Historia Brittonum*?) although he is, somewhat unusually, also described as a bard.

Conclusion

It is tempting to see the development of the Arthurian tradition as an evolution from a historical, or pseudo-historical, figure, to a legendary folk hero, and then to the hero of romance. The pre-Norman Welsh poetry indeed seems to suggest such an evolution, if one ranges its 'historical' mentions of Arthur among the earliest pieces of evidence, and its 'legendary' mentions among the later evidence. However to do this is perhaps to impose upon a fragmentary and disparate body of evidence a misleading unity. Even among sources which seem to belong together and to reflect a common pool of tradition (among which *Pa gur*, *Preiddeu Annwryn*, and *Culhwch ac Olwen* come to mind), the question as to how these might fit together is difficult and complex. We must resist the temptation to see the pre-Norman Arthurian tradition as a mere development from an early, simple, historical milieu, to a later, complex, and literary milieu; while a synthesis of various elements (at any stage of the process) seems possible (see, for example, Budgey, '*Preiddeu Annwryn*'), it is not always advisable.

Select bibliography

Primary Sources:

Llyfr Aneirin/ Book of Aneirin (Y Gododdin):

Translation into English

Jackson, Kenneth (trans.), *The Gododdin. The Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh, 1969).

Be aware that Jackson's ideas about the poem are controversial and now mostly discredited. See Padel, 'A New Study' (below).

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English

Jarman, A.O.H. (ed. and trans.), *Aneirin: Y Gododdin, Britain's Oldest Heroic Poem* (Llandysul, 1988).

Koch, John T., ed. and trans., *The Gododdin of Aneirin* (Cardiff, 1997). You'll probably find it easier to make sense of this controversial edition by using it in conjunction with Oliver Padel's review: 'A New Study of the *Gododdin*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 35 (1998), 45-55.

Edition of Welsh text

Williams, Ifor (ed.), *Canu Aneirin* (Caerdydd, 1938). The most widely-used edition, but the introduction and notes are in Modern Welsh.

Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin/Black Book of Carmarthen:

Pa gur yv y porthaur:

Translation into English

translated by R. Bromwich in *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1983), pp. 45-6; translated (in sections) by Patrick Sims-Williams, in *Arthur of the Welsh*, pp. 40-5; see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 128-33.

Editions and digital manuscript of Welsh text

facsimile in *Facsimile of the Black Book of Carmarthen* (Oxford, 1888), fos 47b-48b; semi-diplomatic edition by A.O.H. Jarman in *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Caerdydd, 1982), pp. 66-8; edited by B.F. Roberts in *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd* (Caerdydd 1978), pp. 300-309. Digital version available at <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=blackbookofcarmarthen>

Geraint fab Erbin:

The poem appears in the Black Book of Carmarthen, the Red Book of Hergest and also in fragmentary form in the White Book of Rhydderch. The BBC and the RBH versions are slightly different.

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English

Black Book of Carmarthen version edited and translated by Gwyn Williams in *The Burning Tree* (London, 1956), pp. 42-5; see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp.118-21; a composite version based on the Red Book of Hergest text edited and translated by Jenny Rowland in *Early Welsh Saga Poetry* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 457-61; 504-5; 636-9.

Edition of Welsh text

Black Book of Carmarthen version edited by A.O.H. Jarman in *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Caerdydd, 1982), pp. 48-9; also edited by B.F. Roberts in *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd* (Caerdydd, 1978), pp. 289-296.

Englynion y Beddau:

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English

Jones, T., *The Black Book of Carmarthen Stanzas of the Graves* (London, 1967); see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 100-101.

Edition of Welsh text

Jarman, A.O.H., in *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Caerdydd, 1982), pp. 36-44.

***Llyfr Taliesin*/Book of Taliesin:**

Kat Godeu:

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English

Partial translation (not of the Arthurian portion) in Marged Haycock, 'The Significance of the "Cad Goddau" Tree-list in the Book of Taliesin', in Martin J. Ball *et al.* (eds), *Celtic Linguistics* (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 321-31; see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 144-7 for portions.

Edition and digital manuscript of Welsh text

Diplomatic edition by J. Gwenogvryn Evans in *Facsimile and Text of the Book of Taliesin* (Llanbedrog, 1910), pp. 23-27; digital version of manuscript available at <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=bookoftaliesinpeniarthms2>

Kadeir Teyrnnon:

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English

(partial): see Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 148-9.

Edition of Welsh text

Diplomatic edition by J. Gwenogvryn Evans in *Facsimile and Text of the Book of Taliesin* (Llanbedrog, 1910), pp. 34-5.

Kanu y Meirch:

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English

(partial): see Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 148-9.

Translation into English

Partly translated by R. Bromwich in *The Horse in Celtic Culture* (Cardiff, 1997), p. 106.

Edition of Welsh text

Diplomatic edition by J. Gwenogvryn Evans in *Facsimile and Text of the Book of Taliesin* (Llanbedrog, 1910), p. 48.

Preiddeu Annwryn:

Translation into English

Partly translated by Andrea Budgey in *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples* (Halifax, 1992), pp. 400-402.

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English

Haycock, Marged (ed. and trans.), "'Preiddeu Annwn" and the Figure of Taliesin', *Studia Celtica* 18/19 (1983/84), at pp. 60-77; see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 136-9.

Edition of Welsh text

Diplomatic edition by J. Gwenogvryn Evans in *Facsimile and Text of the Book of Taliesin* (Llanbedrog, 1910), pp. 54-6.

Marwnat Uthyr Pen[dragon]:

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English

(partial): see Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 150-51.

Edition of Welsh text

CYCS7021 The Celtic Arthur and the Matter of Britain

Diplomatic edition by J. Gwenogvryn Evans in *Facsimile and Text of the Book of Taliesin* (Llanbedrog, 1910), pp. 71-2.

Other:

Ymddidan Arthur a'r Eyr (or sometimes *Englynion yr Eyr*):

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English of parts of the poem:

Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 104-7.

Edition of Welsh text and translation into Modern Welsh

Marged Haycock in *Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Crefyddol Cynnar* ([Llandybie], 1994), pp. 300-12.

Edition of Welsh text

Williams, Ifor (ed.) in *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 2 (1925), pp. 272-80.

Secondary Sources:

Budgey, A., 'Preiddeu Annwn and the Welsh Tradition of Arthur', in C.J. Byrne *et al.* (eds), *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples. Proceedings of the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies held in Halifax August 16-19, 1989* (Halifax, 1992), pp. 391-404.

Charles-Edwards, T.M. 'The Authenticity of the *Gododdin*: an Historian's View', in R. Bromwich and R.B. Jones (eds), *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd. Studies in Old Welsh Poetry* (Caerdydd, 1978), pp. 44-71.

Doble, G.H., 'Saint Gerent', in G.H. Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, pt. 3 (Oxford, 1964), pp. 74-88.

Dumville, David 'Early Welsh Poetry: Problems of Historicity', in *Early Welsh Poetry: Studies in the Book of Aneirin*, ed. Brinley F. Roberts (Aberystwyth, 1988), 1-16.

Haycock, M., 'Preiddeu Annwn and the Figure of Taliesin', *Studia Celtica* 18/19 (1983/84), pp. 52-78. **Included in reading brick.**

Haycock, M., 'The Significance of the *Cad Goddau* Tree-List in the Book of Taliesin', in M.J. Ball *et al.* (eds), *Celtic Linguistics: Readings in the Brythonic Languages for T. Arwyn Watkins* (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 297-331.

Jackson, K.H., 'Arthur in Early Welsh Verse', in R.S. Loomis (ed.), *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 12-19.

Jackson, K., *The Gododdin: the Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh, 1969).

Jarman, A.O.H., 'Geraint: Gerontius', *Llên Cymru* 2 (1952), p. 129.

Jarman, A.O.H., 'The Arthurian Allusions in the Black Book of Carmarthen', in P.B. Grout *et al.* (eds), *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1983), pp. 99-112; 240-242. **Included in the reading brick.**

Jarman, A.O.H., '*Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*/The Black Book of Carmarthen', Sir John Rhys Memorial Lecture 1985, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 71 (1985), pp. 333-56.

Jarman, A.O.H. (ed. and trans.), *Y Gododdin: Britain's Oldest Heroic Poem* (Llandysul, 1988).

Jarman, A.O.H., 'The Arthurian Allusions in the Book of Aneirin', *Studia Celtica* 24/25 (1989/90), pp. 15-25.

Jones, T., *The Black Book of Carmarthen 'Stanzas of the Graves'* Sir John Rhys Memorial Lecture 1967, (*Proceedings of the British Academy* 53 (1967), pp. 97-137).

Koch, John T., ed. and trans., *The Gododdin of Aneirin* (Cardiff, 1997).

Lloyd-Morgan, Ceridwen, 'The Celtic Tradition', in W.R.J. Barron (ed.), *The Arthur of the English. The Arthurian Tradition in Medieval English Life and Literature*

- (Cardiff, 1999), pp. 1-9; 268-9.
- O Hehir, Brendan, ‘‘What is the *Gododdin*?’, in Brinley F. Roberts (ed.), *Early Welsh Poetry: Studies in the Book of Aneirin* (Aberystwyth, 1988), 57-95.
- Owen, Morfydd, ‘‘Hwn yw y Gododdin. Aneirin ae cant’’, in R. Bromwich and R.B. Jones (eds), *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd. Studies in Old Welsh Poetry* (Caerdydd, 1978), pp. 123-64.
- Padel, O.J., ‘A New Study of the *Gododdin*’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 35 (1998), 45-55.
- Roberts, B.F. (ed.), ‘Rhai o Gerddi Ymddiddan Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin’, in R. Bromwich and R.B. Jones (eds), *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd. Studies in Old Welsh Poetry* (Caerdydd, 1978), pp. 281-325.
- Rowland, J., ‘Genres’, in B.F. Roberts (ed), *Early Welsh Poetry: Studies in the Book of Aneirin* (Aberystwyth 1988), pp. 179-208.
- Rowland, J., *Early Welsh Saga Poetry* (Cambridge, 1990).
- Sims-Williams, P., ‘The Evidence for Vernacular Irish Literary Influence on Early Mediaeval Welsh Literature’, in Dorothy Whitelock *et al.* (eds), *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe. Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 235-57.
- Sims-Williams, P., ‘Some Celtic Otherworld Terms’, in A.T.E. Matonis and Daniel F. Melia (eds), *Celtic Language, Celtic Culture: a Festschrift for Eric P. Hamp* (Van Nuys, California, 1990), pp. 57-81.
- Sims-Williams, P., ‘The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems’, in R. Bromwich *et al.* (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71.

Unit 4. Arthur in Welsh and Breton Saints' Lives

The Lives of the Saints

Arthur appears in a significant role in seven Lives of saints: five of these originated in Wales, and two originated in Brittany. The portrayal of Arthur in these texts is notably consistent: this is perhaps not surprising when one considers that such texts are perhaps more than most bound by literary (that is, hagiographical) conventions, and that a famous ruler such as Arthur easily serves as a stereotypic ruler against which the saint can prove himself. The secular lord is a useful element of a saint's biography: not only does he provide an opportunity for the saint to prove himself in some sort of contest, but he also serves as an authoritative donor of land and privileges, to whom the saint's church can hark back as legitimising these goods. Such rulers (both named and anonymous) are very common in Lives of Celtic (as well as non-Celtic, it should be said) saints, and include Conan Meriadoc, Conomor, Constantine, Guerec, Theodoric, Teudar. Maelgwn of Gwynedd and Arthur are especially common, as Elissa Henken has commented (*Traditions*, p. 301). Nevertheless, Arthur's appearance in the Lives is not entirely straightforward, and one Life at least seems to include specific local tradition. The Lives for the most part are quite difficult to date, and the usual question of influence from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* cannot be clearly answered in several cases. Perhaps the most useful view is that these Lives existed in a milieu *other* than that of Geoffrey's text.

The Life of St Cadog

Probably the longest, and in some ways the most complex, portrait of Arthur is found in the Life of St Cadog by Lifris of Llancarfan: this Life has been dated, more or less to general satisfaction, to the end of the eleventh century, although whether or not it predates another Life from the same period, Rhygyfarch's Life of St David, is less agreed. At any rate one or the other is the oldest surviving Life of a Welsh saint. The matter is slightly complicated by the fact that the main version of the Life of St Cadog (that edited by Wade Evans in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*) is in fact a composite of the Life by Lifris and a slightly later (twelfth-century) rewriting of the Life by Caradog of Llancarfan, whose Arthur is slightly different (mostly more belligerent). However the Arthurian sections in the text given by Wade-Evans belong to the earlier Life. In Section 22 of the Life, Arthur appears as a powerful king ('the most illustrious king of Britain', *rex illustrissimus Britanniae*) who pursues another king, Ligessauc, against whom he has an apparently justified claim (the king in question having killed three of Arthur's soldiers). When Ligessauc seeks refuge with St Cadog, Arthur brings his army to negotiate with the saint (he fears to merely invade the saint's refuge, we are told). The dispute is adjudged, with Arthur's consent, by various saints, and after lengthy negotiations Arthur agrees to a payment of cattle, as ordained by law, but with 'perverse desire' (*prava cupidine*) stipulates that these should be red and white, the colour of magical, otherworldly, animals. St Cadog transforms normal cattle into the desired colours, which are then again transformed into ferns when they get to Arthur. Arthur, realising he has offended, seeks and gains St Cadog's pardon, and reaffirms, at length and in legalistic language, St Cadog's right to sanctuary. The point of the episode (in which Cei and Bedwyr appear although without active part) is Arthur's affirmation of sanctuary: Arthur hasn't really done anything wrong, apart from having sought to capture (legitimately enough, as far as one can tell) a fugitive who has taken refuge with the saint. Even then, Arthur doesn't hear of, and therefore doesn't seek, the fugitive until the

seven years of refuge have elapsed: the resulting conflict clearly establishes that St Cadog's period of refuge extends beyond the expected period. Throughout the episode Arthur is cautious and conciliatory, if 'perverse' (in Caradog of Llancarfan's rewritten Life of St Cadog Arthur is somewhat more belligerent; see Henken, *Traditions*, pp. 90-2). The episode ends with explanations of local place-names, and Padel has commented that its milieu, of localised folklore, is that of *Culhwch ac Olwen*. While Arthur's role in this episode is clearly mostly functional, his cautious behaviour can be compared to the more aggressive action undertaken against the saint or his family by other kings in the Life: compare Maelgwn in section 23, and Rhun in sections 24-5 and 70.

Another Arthurian episode in the same Life presents Arthur in a more subsidiary and somewhat bizarre role, as that of an accidental helper somewhat reminiscent of *Culhwch ac Olwen*. The Life's Prologue describes how the saint was conceived: it tells of the abduction of the saint's mother by the saint's father. The saint's father, having been pursued by the girl's father's army, reaches the safety of his own kingdom with his booty. At this point they are spotted by Arthur and his companions Cei and Bedwyr, who were sitting upon a hill playing dice. Arthur tells his companions that he lusts after the girl, but is dissuaded from doing anything about it by them, who remind him that their role is to help the 'needy and distressed'. Their version of doing this is to bring the chase to an end; but in a fashion that is, to say the least, morally ambiguous: they establish to whom the land belongs, and rush against his enemies. Thus they end up helping the abduction. Arthur's role in the episode is curious in a number of ways: while he assists in hastening the saint's eventual birth, this is achieved only by chasing off an arguably rightfully pursuing army. Moral right in this case has yielded to a dubious legal right of land ownership. Moreover, Arthur's original reaction can best be described as perverse: it is not at all necessary to the progress of events, serving no discernible purpose. Henken describes the abduction as 'romantic' and the Arthurian episode as 'amusing', with some justification (*Traditions*, p. 89), but it is a curious business nonetheless.

Other Welsh Lives

Another Life, the Life of St Illtud, presents a far less detailed and complex picture of Arthur. In the Life, the saint, then a soldier, makes a convenient, and entirely conventional, visit to his cousin Arthur, 'so great a conqueror' (section 2), at his illustrious court; after this visit he proceeds to the court of another king. As Henken has noted, in this Life 'Arthur reflects honour on Illtud; Illtud does not take power from Arthur' (*Traditions*, p. 302). The conventional nature of the cousinly relationship, and the lack of a stated motivation for the saint's visit, suggested to Roberts that such a visit had become a conventional feature of narrative ('*Culhwch ac Olwen*', p. 82), and suggested to Tatlock ('The Dates', p. 355) the influence of *Historia*. In general, however, although there are hints elsewhere that the Life postdates Geoffrey's *Historia* (see Tatlock, 'The Dates', pp. 353-6), there is not enough detail in the Arthurian section to establish the debt (or lack thereof) to Geoffrey. We are not even told of the location of Arthur's court, although as it lies between Brittany and Glamorgan both Cornwall and Caerleon (as in Geoffrey's *Historia*) are good candidates.

The short Life of St Carannog, or Carantoc, probably originating in Ceredigion, has also been dated to the twelfth century; it shows no particular debt to Geoffrey's *Historia* (there is, however, an interesting section concerning the Irish settlements in Wales, which fall outside the scope of this discussion). In the Life (section 4) the saint comes to Somerset seeking his altar: in Somerset Arthur and Cadwy are jointly ruling. The saint tames a dragon for Arthur, who then grants land for a monastery to the saint. This exchange is polite and respectful, and entirely conventional. The Life's main noteworthy contribution to the Arthurian material is his location as a ruler (a co-ruler) in Somerset.

The brief Life of St Patern (or Padarn) is of either Welsh (Ceredigion) or Breton origin, and exists in uncertain relationship to Geoffrey's *Historia*. In it Arthur, 'a certain tyrant' (section 21) plays a more active, and unattractive (although not overtly evil) role, acting (in a manner reminiscent of the Life of St Cadog) 'against the counsels of his [unnamed] companions': he craves the saint's tunic and petulantly tries to take it, stamping on the ground when he cannot get it. At this point the earth swallows him. Arthur repents and begs the saint's pardon, is forgiven, and freed. Maelgwn also appears in this Life, in a more aggressively hostile fashion (sections 15-19). The Life is of interest mainly for its portrait of Arthur as a somewhat foolish foil for the saint's goodness, but it is also worth keeping in mind the possibility that it may represent some local, perhaps onomastic, legend: in the parish of Llanbadarn Fawr in Ceredigion is a place-name Llys Arthur, 'Arthur's Court' (Henken, *Traditions*, p. 123).

The Life of St Gildas presents an interesting problem as regards the Arthurian tradition. The first, anonymous, Life of Gildas dates from eleventh-century Brittany: Arthur does not appear in it. The second Life, by Caradog of Llancarfan, dates from early twelfth-century Wales, and is thought to predate Geoffrey's *Historia*. This Life, described by Roberts as 'the most important of the lives for its Arthurian evidence' (*Culhwch ac Olwen*, p. 83), contains two Arthurian episodes. The first explains that the saint's brothers were constantly in rebellion against Arthur, 'king of the whole of Britain' (section 5). Arthur kills one, Hueil (while acting, as in the Life of St Cadog, legitimately enough in defence of his kingdom), an action which Gildas, 'the historian of the Britons', deplored, but nevertheless one which did not stop him from praying for Arthur, according to the apostolic precept of returning good for evil.⁴ Penance leads to reconciliation (section 6), and Arthur leads a chastened life thereafter, although as Henken comments, Arthur was not really bad enough in the first place to make the point of the story, Arthur's rehabilitation, very convincing (*Traditions*, p. 136). The story, she suggests, has undergone a shift in purpose, and indeed there are hints of a tradition of enmity between Arthur and Hueil elsewhere, in particular in *Culhwch ac Olwen* (see also Tatlock, 'The Dates', p. 189; as well as Roberts, '*Culhwch ac Olwen*', p. 83).

A second Arthurian episode appears in Caradog's Life of St Gildas: Arthur was about to besiege *Glastonia*, where king Melvas was holding Arthur's wife Gwenhwyfar captive, having abducted her. The abbot, along with Gildas, convinced Melvas to return Gwenhwyfar to Arthur and averted the siege. In return both kings donated land to the abbot (sections 10-11). This story has a clear and predictable point: it supports Glastonbury's claim to various estates by locating their donation in the past and ascribing it to a famous king who can be thought to have ruled over the region. Yet, as Henken argues, we should differentiate between the deployment of the tale and its original materials: the latter may have significantly predated the former, and Gildas, rather than Arthur, may be the late addition to the Glastonbury material (*Traditions*, p. 137). To Roberts the appearance of the episode in many and widespread later Arthurian tales pointed to its character as a 'deeply entrenched story in the Arthurian complex of tales', a complex which Caradog drew upon rather than contributed to (*Culhwch ac Olwen*, p. 83; see also the poem *Ymddiddan Gwenhwyfar ac Arthur* as found in Coe and

⁴ It should be noted that Loomis, 'King Arthur', p. 482, gives a somewhat misleading account of Caradog of Llancarfan's Life of St Gildas. He quotes, or *seems to quote* the Life as saying that St Gildas quarrelled with Arthur, and the resulting bad feeling explains why Arthur was left out of Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae*. In reality Loomis summarises (not quotes) the Life, and the comment about the *De excidio* not mentioning Arthur is Loomis' own, not that of Caradog. But Loomis has left us with several misleading impressions: first that Caradog thought that the subject of the Life of St Gildas and the author of the *De excidio* were one and the same (he probably did but we don't know that and the Life itself merely calls Gildas a 'historian'); second that Caradog noticed the absence of Arthur from the *De excidio*, decided it didn't make sense, and explained it (this Arthurian 'problem' is first mentioned by Gerald of Wales in his late twelfth-century *Description of Wales*).

Young, *The Celtic Sources*, pp. 110-15).

Lives from Brittany

Two Breton Lives include Arthur. One, the Life of St Eflam, is fairly straightforward. Dating probably from about the twelfth century, it presents Arthur (not king or ruler, but merely *fortissimus*) as the cousin of Hoël, king of Brittany. As in the Life of St Crannog, the saint performs the sort of service for Arthur that one might expect Arthur to have performed for himself: that is, ridding the region of a destructive beast. Arthur is entirely incidental to the episode, and little is made of any particular fame or attribute that he might contribute (see Tatlock, *The Legendary History*, p. 193 see also Coe and Young, *The Celtic Sources*, pp. 38-43). The second Breton Life to be considered is that of St Goueznou, about which much more can be said, although perhaps not conclusively. The Life's prologue seems to date it to 1019, with reference to a particular year of the episcopacy of a particular bishop; the problem arises in finding the bishop apparently in question, an exercise which has for some called into question the entire dating (Tatlock, 'The Dates', p. 361), although the most recent explorations have reaffirmed the Life's date (see Fleuriot, "'The Stubborn Date'"; Le Duc, 'L'Historia'; Fleuriot, 'Histoire'; as well as Williams, 'Brittany', pp. 265-6). The prologue goes on to give a detailed account of the origins of Brittany and the Arthurian period of British history which seems to relate closely (although is not identical with) that found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*. The Arthurian section reads as follows:

After a time Vortigern, the usurping king, in order to support himself, in the defence of the realm of great Britain which he held unjustly, invited warlike men from the Saxon region, and made them his allies in his kingdom. These, since they were pagans as well as evil men, striving to pour out human blood as was their nature, inflicted many evils on the Britons. Their pride, after a time, was curtailed by Arthur, a glorious British king, and they were repelled from the greater part of the island and pressed into slavery. But after many victories, which he famously achieved in British and Gaulish lands, when Arthur was summoned from human life, the way to return to the island stood open to the Saxons, and there was a great oppression of the Britons and destruction of churches as well as persecution of saints (see for the Latin text Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, pp. 241-3; see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 36-7).

Here, Arthur is named as the defender of Britain against the Saxons, as in Geoffrey, as well as in *Historia Brittonum*. Arthur is also given credit for the conquest of Gaul, not found in *Historia Brittonum* but figuring in Geoffrey's *Historia*. However, one must agree with Le Duc that the Life's presumed addition of this information to the store of Arthurian lore is marginal ('mince'). Le Duc concludes, 'C'est une preuve bien maigre' ('L'Historia', p. 833), as well as entirely predictable; it cannot be used to argue for an especially strong or detailed stream of tradition different from that known from British sources. It seems clear that the sort of pseudo-historical tradition (both as regards information as well as themes and framework) found in *Historia Brittonum* and used by Geoffrey of Monmouth was common to both Britain and Brittany, and that Arthur was included among its characters.

Arthur in the Lives of Saints

In general, Arthur appears in the Lives of the saints as a somewhat generic secular ruler against whom the saint can contend, or from whom the saint can gain associated honour. The Life of St Cadog is useful in suggesting a more individual characterisation (as well as naming some of Arthur's companions); the Life of St Crannog in locating Arthur in yet another Celtic region (Somerset). The Life of St Gildas seems to draw upon

Arthurian tales known from elsewhere, although it also seems to show how such a figure could be added to a tradition from which he was originally entirely absent (although apparently before Arthur gained significantly in reputation from Geoffrey's *Historia*). The Life of St Patern perhaps incorporates local legend, although it is difficult to say to what extent. Arthur, as Henken has commented, is 'spoiled, demanding what he fancies, but basically well-meaning' (as opposed to the other main king figure, Maelgwn, 'a bully and a trouble-maker'; *Traditions*, p. 301). This portrait is relatively consistent, and has much in common with the Arthur presented in the Triads or in *Culhwch ac Olwen* (Roberts, 'Culhwch ac Olwen', pp. 81-4). Only the Breton Life of St Goueznou gives a different picture: in it Arthur is not a character fulfilling a function, but a piece of information. Arthur's significance in this Life is that of *Historia Brittonum* and Geoffrey's *Historia*, that is, as a character in a pseudo-historical chronology. If, as has been reasonably argued, the Life can be dated to before Geoffrey's *Historia*, we have another hint (one of many in Breton tradition) that the large and rich body of British pseudo-historical tradition had a comparable life in Brittany as well.

Select bibliography

Primary Sources:

Edition of Latin text and translation into English

- Vita Sancti Cadoci*: edited and translated by Arthur Wade-Evans in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae* (Cardiff, 1944), pp. 24-141; see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 26-37.
- Vita Sancti Illuti*: edited and translated by Arthur Wade-Evans in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae* (Cardiff, 1944), pp. 194-232; see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 20-1.
- Vita Sancti Gildae*: edited and translated by Hugh Williams, *Gildas, Cymmrodorion Record Series 3* (London, 1901); reprinted as *Two Lives of Gildas* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1990); see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 22-7.
- Vita Sancti Carantoci*: edited and translated by Arthur Wade-Evans in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae* (Cardiff, 1944), pp. 142-6; see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 18-21.
- Vita Sancti Paterni*: edited and translated by Arthur Wade-Evans in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae* (Cardiff, 1944), pp. 252-68; see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp. 16-19.

the directly relevant bits of the Lives of Efflam and Goueznou are translated in Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, [Llanerch], 1995), pp 36-43.

Secondary Sources:

- Chambers, E.K., *Arthur of Britain* (repr. with supplementary bibliography by B.F. Roberts, Cambridge, 1964).
- Doble, G.H., *Lives of the Welsh Saints* (ed. by D. Simon Evans) (Cardiff, 1971).
- Fleuriot, L., "The Stubborn Date of 1019", *Études celtiques* 19 (1982), pp. 271-4.
- Fleuriot, L., 'Histoire et légendes', in L. Fleuriot and A-P. Ségalen (eds), *Histoire Littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne. Vol I: Héritage celtique et captation française* (Paris, 1987), pp. 97-129.

CYCS7021 The Celtic Arthur and the Matter of Britain

- Henken, E.R., 'The Saint as Folk Hero', in P.K. Ford (ed.), *Celtic Folklore and Christianity* (Santa Barbara, 1983), pp. 58-74.
- Henken, E.R., *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* (Cambridge, 1987), especially 'Arthur and Maelgwn', pp. 301-6.
- Henken, E.R., *The Welsh Saints. A Study in Patterned Lives* (Cambridge, 1991).
- Lapidge, M, and R. Sharpe, *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature 400-1200* (Dublin, 1985).
- Le Duc, G., 'L'Historia Britannica avant Geoffroy de Monmouth', *Annales de Bretagne* 79 (1972), pp. 819-35.
- Loomis, C.G., 'King Arthur and the Saints', *Speculum* 8 (1933), pp. 478-482. **available via JSTOR**
- Roberts, B.F., 'Culhwch ac Olwen, the Triads, Saints' Lives', in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, eds. R. Bromwich *et al.* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95.
- Tatlock, J.S.P., 'The English Journey of the Laon Canons', *Speculum* 8 (1933), pp. 454-465. **available via JSTOR**
- Tatlock, J.S.P., 'The Dates of the Arthurian Saints' Legends', *Speculum* 14 (1939), pp. 345-365. **available via JSTOR**
- Williams, J.E. Caerwyn, 'Brittany and the Arthurian Legend', in R. Bromwich, *et al.* (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 249-72.

Unit 5. The Arthur of Folklore?: *Culhwch ac Olwen*, other Welsh Prose, and Arthurian tradition in Brittany, Cornwall, and Ireland

Our final category of (arguably) pre-Norman (or, more precisely, pre-Geoffrey of Monmouth) Arthurian material includes not only the hugely detailed tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*, but also various items which might be classified as folklore, in that they are localisations of Arthuriana in various regions with respect to various local legends or topographical features. In this category, as well, one might put evidence such as genealogy, as well as evidence that Arthur was popular as a personal name in a particular time and place. Clearly, this category is something of a miscellany.

Culhwch ac Olwen: date and character

There is no doubt that *Culhwch ac Olwen* is an enormously important source of Arthurian material. The tale forms part of the collection known as the *Mabinogi* (or *Mabinogion*), although this name derives from and only properly belongs to the first four tales of the collection, the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi* (*Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*). The collection exists in two manuscripts, and while *Culhwch ac Olwen* shows variations between the two, these are minor. The language of the tale has usually been taken to suggest a date of *ca* 1100; its content, which is a more subjective guide to dating, seems to indicate a tale far less affected by Norman language and habits than the other tales in the collection. Nevertheless, the value of the tale's 'crudity of tone and archaic social and legal customs' (Roberts, '*Culhwch ac Olwen*', p. 73) for its date must be carefully considered, and a new reconsideration of these issues has thrown up significant doubts about how certain we can be (Rodway, 'The Date')!

Much of the later twentieth-century scholarly debate surrounding medieval Welsh prose narrative concerned whether various tales (in particular the Four Branches) were essentially mythological (either fossilised or adapted), or whether they were merely examples of what is termed the 'International Popular Tale', that is, more or less predictable collections of plot and motifs. The answer need not be entirely one or the other, and surely the labelling of various structures and episodes with titles taken from classifications of so-called 'International' motifs probably overstates the organic and independent existence of such rigidly defined structures: it is important to keep in mind that labels such as 'The Giant's Daughter' are convenient categories assigned by us rather than independently existing items. Nevertheless, it is clear that *Culhwch ac Olwen* contains elements of storytelling which are recognisable from other tales found in other cultures, and these can be usefully described by these terms.

These classifications carry certain implications, however. Roberts has quite rightly pointed out, for example, that the closest useful analogue to *Culhwch ac Olwen* is found in the medieval Irish genre of wooing tales (this was a genre well known from Irish literature, as is shown from the extant lists of Irish tales produced by the classifying-obsessed medieval Irish literati). *Culhwch ac Olwen* can also be located in a wider, international sphere: the tale is most often described as a version of the motif known as 'The Giant's Daughter'. Whichever classification one views as most illuminating, it remains clear that certain predictable features will appear in tales that appear to conform to certain types. Yet *Culhwch ac Olwen* seems in some cases to anticipate these features, only to disappoint expectations—for example Culhwch is assigned forty tasks to complete before he can marry his intended, but the story then describes the completion of only ten of them. This has been taken either as a sign of a failed attempt to achieve a coherent narrative, or as a deliberate subversion of the genre (for which see Radner, 'Interpreting Irony'). The latter view has much to recommend it in its detail: it does seem

likely that some of the generic devices employed, overemployed, or underemployed, by the tale are intended to be humorous, in particular the over-exuberance of its lists and descriptions, a characteristic which is found in other medieval Welsh and Irish tales. However the overall characterisation of *Culhwch ac Olwen* as ironic is difficult to assert with certainty, irony being so dependent on tone, and its detection so dependent on cultural context.

Arthur's role

These problems of interpretation bear directly on the implications of the role of Arthur in the tale: he almost entirely usurps the role of central protagonist from Culhwch, whose name (having something to do with 'pig'; see Bromwich and Evans, eds, *Culhwch and Olwen*) probably points to his original role as central figure. In the tale as we have it, Arthur and his companions are responsible for completing the tasks assigned to the hero, as the giant Ysbaddaden indeed points out. (It is perhaps worth digressing to point out that this distinguishes *Culhwch ac Olwen* from later Welsh and continental romances: Arthur is an active figure in the former.) Is this yet another ironic device, by which the ostensible 'hero', Culhwch, is unheroically ineffective (a further irony, Radner has argued ['Interpreting Irony', pp. 46-7], is visible in Culhwch's breezy replies to the enumeration of his impossible tasks by the giant: it is true that none of them will be terribly difficult for him to achieve, although this is not because he is especially gifted or brave, but because he isn't going to personally do them!)? Or is Arthur's somewhat disruptive presence (disruptive to the expected unfolding of plot) indeed a reflection of a process, at this point still visible, by which an Arthur figure and his retinue were attracting originally independent tales to themselves? It is worth repeating Jarman's observation ('The Arthurian Allusions in the Black Book', pp. 108-9) that Arthur does not appear in the Four Branches, and that the characters of the Four Branches mostly do not appear in an Arthurian context, apart from passing allusions in *Pa Gur* and *Preiddeu Annwfn*. Clearly this large and important group of medieval Welsh tales, at least, were not subject to Arthurian influence (it should also be noted that the Triads know all these characters). Culhwch, on the other hand, is eclipsed by Arthur in *Culhwch ac Olwen*.

Analogues and connections

This Arthurian influence, if we see it as such, would seem to have been profoundly achieved by a relatively early date. *Historia Brittonum*, in particular, presents an interesting analogue: in the *mirabilia*, discussed above in Unit 3, one item refers to Arthur's hound, Cabal, and the pursuit of the boar *Troit*, which is basically that named as *Twrch Trwyth mab Tared Wledic* in *Culhwch ac Olwen*. The name (and, in the case of *Culhwch ac Olwen*, the pedigree) of the boar suggests that he was meant to be seen as a king transformed into a beast (see Bromwich and Evans, eds., *Culhwch and Olwen*, pp. lxx-lxx, 131). The episode provides the opportunity, much exploited in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, to list place-names, suggesting, as Bromwich and Evans note, that 'the author ... was drawing for his story on popular folk-tradition from a wide area of Wales, covering Pembroke, Glamorgan, Ceredigion, and Brycheiniog'. *Carn Cabal*, the place-name giving rise to *Historia Brittonum* episode, does not figure. Yet the description of Cabal as a hound, and the connection to Arthur, connects both tales.

Notable boar hunts are relatively common in medieval Welsh (and Irish) literature (and seem to be especially fertile in producing onomastic asides). One in particular, in two versions, shows a process of the inclusion of Arthur. This appears in the Welsh Triads, a collection of references to tales and episodes, grouped by threes, in several

manuscripts and of somewhat indeterminate date (see Bromwich, ed., *Trioeidd*). Most of the triads are relatively brief, but no. 26 (Three Powerful Swineherds of the Island of Britain) is quite lengthy, and tells a relatively detailed tale. The first powerful swineherd is Drystan son of Tallwch: this is Tristan of the Tristan cycle, and Arthur appears in the account found in the Triad, showing that already by this date Arthur was being connected with this character. The second is Pryderi, who features, at times as a swineherd, in the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*: Arthur does not appear in this account. The third is Coll son of Collfrewy: here we are treated to a long narration of the chase (for reasons not given) of his sow, Henwen, from Cornwall to north Wales, replete with names of the places she traversed (none of which appear in *Culhwch ac Olwen*). Arthur does not appear in this episode, but he does in a later version, which the editor has given as no. 26w. This version is more detailed, reverses the order of the first two swineherds, and names Arthur and his host as those chasing Henwen, because ‘it was prophecied that the Island of Britain would be the worse for her womb-burden’. This later version of the Triads, found in the White Book of Rhydderch and the Red Book of Hergest, shows, as Bromwich has pointed out, ‘the increasing popularity of Arthur and of the Arthurian material’ (‘The Welsh Triads’, p. 46).

Other episodes in *Culhwch ac Olwen* point to a large, if not necessarily coherent or unified, body of tradition: in particular the poems *Pa gur* and *Preiddeu Annwryn* contain or refer to episodes found or echoed in *Culhwch ac Olwen*. The latter’s delight in lists provides us with a long (improbably long, even considering the genre) list of Arthur’s companions: these resemble the far shorter list in *Pa gur*, and probably drew on the poem. The quest for a cauldron, which takes the heroes to Ireland in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, not only brings to mind the Irish cauldron which features in one of the Four Branches, *Math vab Mathonwy*, but also that, somewhat indistinctly alluded to, of *Preiddeu Annwryn*. The former tale’s episode does not mention Arthur; the latter certainly does although not entirely consistently. Moreover, *Preiddeu Annwryn* also alludes to the rescue of a prisoner, another one of the episodes of *Culhwch ac Olwen*. We can also see, in the most detail in *Culhwch ac Olwen* but to a lesser extent in these poems, a growing list of Arthur’s possessions and companions: he has a ship (Prydwen, also appearing in *Preiddeu Annwryn*), a sword (*Caledfwlch*, which is of particular interest as regards Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*), a shield (*Wyneb Gwrthucher*), a dagger (*Carnwennan*), a wife (*Gwenhwyfar*, who appears in the later, but not the earlier, versions of the Triads), and a court (*Celli Wic y Gherniw*, also appearing in the Triads, discussed below with reference to Cornwall). Interestingly, there is an allusion to the battle of Camlan (in what seems to be a pseudo-triad) but not to Badon Hill.

Breuddwyd Rhonabwy

Another tale from the same collection, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (‘The Dream of Rhonabwy’), resembles *Culhwch ac Olwen* in striking ways. Like *Culhwch ac Olwen*, it has no satisfying plot, no real point, and it invokes a framework (in this case a dream) that is soon abandoned. Moreover, its literary dream framework is unlike the usual literary dream one finds in medieval texts—it has, as Edgar Slotkin has argued (‘The Fabula’), the confused quality of a real dream rather than a literary vision.

Yet it seems to be a profoundly *written* tale: its spelling suggests a written source (see Lloyd-Morgan, ‘*Breuddwyd*’, pp. 183-4), it exists only in one version, and its hero seems to be completely unknown outside of the tale. Its statement that no one, neither poet nor storyteller, knows the story without a book because of the large amount of detail, seems to support this argument. Indeed, one of the most satisfying explanations of its character is that it is a rhetorical exercise, with little plot but much list and description (indeed Jeffrey Gantz described it as ‘the visual counterpart to the lists of names’ in *Culhwch ac*

Olwen; *The Mabinogion*, p. 178), with no moral or narrative closure reached, and showing a heavily formulaic style. There is no attempt at characterisation, and people and events drop in and out without apparent consistency. If it is a satire (as has been argued as well for *Culhwch ac Olwen* on similar grounds), its object is well hidden.

Of the characters and events which drop in and out, Arthur, his friends, and his battles most concern us here. First of all, we have an unusual mention of the Battle of Badon, which has yet to take place (the battle of Camlan, well enough known in medieval Welsh tradition as Arthur's last battle, has already taken place; this has been explained as an example of the deliberately skewed passing of time in the dreamlike world of the tale). Arthur is notably unheroic, a characteristic perhaps ironically highlighted by the use of the title 'emperor' (or is this merely a reflection that this tale was clearly composed in a post-Geoffrey milieu, in which Arthur is an emperor and that it that?). Perhaps Arthur's very inaction is a reflection of or upon the post-Geoffrey romance tradition of the overking who doesn't actually do very much? The tale's post-Geoffrey-ness is clearly visible in the presence of the bad Medrawd (before Geoffrey this character was not so defined, ambiguous as best and neutral at worst), and by a few other characters first known from Geoffrey's *Historia*. It seems as well to hark back to a pre-Geoffrey tradition, however, in Cei's essential goodness, in the location of Arthur's court in Cornwall, as well as in references to minor characters from *Culhwch ac Olwen*. Nevertheless, one of these, Owein, appears in a quite different guise in the two tales: in *Culhwch ac Olwen* he is one of Arthur's helpers; in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* he is Arthur's antagonist in the somewhat bizarre pseudo-battle. All told, Idris Foster's conclusion that *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is a satisfactory literary treatment of various traditional themes ('*Culhwch and Olwen*', p. 43) is hard to agree with, and perhaps its most useful comparison in general as well as in terms of the Arthurian Material is with *Culhwch ac Olwen*.

Triodd Ynys Prydein

The Welsh Triads, as noted above, are references, mostly very brief, to notable events and characters, grouped in threes, which seem to have acted as an easily-recalled repository for medieval Welsh storytelling and poetry.⁵ While the manuscripts date from a later period, it is probably safe to say that the Triads in the form we have them (keeping in mind that there are earlier and later versions, as described above) were put together around the eleventh century—this is, of course, a quite vague generalisation (see Bromwich, ed., *Triodd*). As mentioned above, the later versions of the Triads refer more often to Arthur and Arthurian tradition: as Bromwich notes ('The Welsh Triads', p. 46) Arthur's court is 'a convenient framework for assembling heroes from diverse and unrelated saga-cycles', and Arthur himself shows signs of being grafted onto originally separate groupings as well. Indeed, David Dumville has compared the activity behind the Triads to the sort of harmonising impulse seen in *Historia Brittonum* (for which see Unit 3) and the Irish *Lebor Gabála*, pointing specifically to 'the increasingly avaricious Arthurian cycle' as a prime instigator of this sort of synchronisation ('The Historical Value', p. 7). It is, of course, a difficult question as to whether we should see the spread of the Arthurian material as a cause or as a result of a desire to combine and rationalise medieval pseudo-historical tradition, but it is worth keeping in mind that much of what we examine as sources for the Arthurian legend falls into this category.

The question most often asked of the Arthurian material, as noted above, is that of

⁵ Unusually, while this genre is also attested in medieval Irish literature, it is much more fully represented in the Welsh material.

outside influence. That is, any particular piece of Arthurian lore originating in a Celtic area will be examined for continental, usually Norman, influences (this speaks to the vexed question of whether the later Welsh Arthurian material represents a continuum from an earlier tradition, or a reintroduction from the continent). In particular Geoffrey of Monmouth stands out as the most influential figure in later Arthurian tradition, and the presence or absence of his influence can sometimes help to date otherwise intractable material. The Triads present an interesting study: Rachel Bromwich has argued that they show an indigenous Welsh development of the Arthurian legend, as the earliest versions show hints of later developments, but show no sign of the influence of Geoffrey ('The Welsh Triads', p. 47; the later versions are clearly influenced in part by Geoffrey). While few would now agree with Bromwich that Arthur's portrait in the Triads as a warrior defender of Britain is 'a natural offshoot from the remote historical memory of a great leader who championed the British cause against the Saxons' (ibid., based mainly on Triad no. 37R, which, as Roberts—'*Culhwch ac Olwen*', pp. 81-2—has pointed out, is nevertheless critical of Arthur's actions in this case), it can be noted that Arthur's presentation in at least some triads falls somewhere in between the hero of *Historia Brittonum* and the early poetry and the folk-ruler of *Culhwch ac Olwen*. As in the latter tale, the battle of Camlan figures highly, while that of Badon Hill is not mentioned (this probably has much to do with the fact that in the *Bruts*, the Welsh versions of Geoffrey's *Historia*, the former is mentioned while the latter is not; nevertheless it is striking that Welsh tradition makes so much of the one and not the other, despite the fact that *Historia Brittonum* mentions Badon but not Camlan).

Arthur in other Celtic tradition

Oliver Padel has argued that Arthur is a pan-Brittonic folk-hero, with tales and memorials localising him in most regions of Britain and Brittany, in varying degrees. He has enumerated instances of the ascription of Arthur's name to notable natural or manmade features of the landscape either as mentioned in medieval sources (in Cornwall or Devon were Arthur's seat and Arthur's oven, in Pictland was a palace of Arthur), known from medieval place-names (Arthur's bower in Carlisle, Arthur's seat in Wales, or known from modern sources or place-names (various Arthur's chairs, seats, and especially quoits, in Wales; Arthur's Stone in Herefordshire, a cromlech in Brittany, and several sites in Cornwall, discussed below). These have been conveniently listed by Tom Greene on the internet (<http://www.arthuriana.co.uk/concepts/folkgazt.htm>). Padel points to these, in particular, in arguing that the emphasis on the Welsh material has 'distorted the overall picture, as if the other pieces of evidence, from Cornwall, Brittany, and Scotland, exist only to supplement the Welsh evidence' ('The Nature of Arthur', p. 12). His point, that 'the Welsh material can be used to give an idea of what may have existed in its own right in other countries, not of what those lands might have borrowed from Wales', puts quite a different, and illuminating, slant, on how we might view the Arthurian tradition as a whole.

The catalogue of instances of the personal name Arthur appearing in medieval records (for which see Bromwich, 'Concepts of Arthur', pp. 177-9) presents a fairly wide geographical spread: the name appears in the Breton *Cartulary of Redon* from the late ninth century, for example. There are also interesting examples of the name from an Irish context: several late sixth or early seventh-century figures bear this name, although the details of most (and the historicity of some) are more or less obscure. The best known is the son, Arturius, of Aedán mac Gabráin, the king of Dál Riada in Scotland; Aedán, as Jackson has pointed out, had British as well as Irish and Pictish connections. This Arturius is named by the relatively reliable (and almost contemporary) source, the Life of St Columba by the abbot Adomnán. Another, far less reliably historical Arthur, is

Artúr mac Petuir (or perhaps *Retheoir*), who appears in Welsh and Irish versions of the (mostly legendary) genealogies of the Welsh-Irish dynasty ruling Dyfed in the sixth century. A less controversial, but still difficult to argue, question is whether or not this Arthur harks back to our Arthur, and is a sign of the latter's popularity. Another difficulty is establishing that these figures bore the same name as Arthur, rather than a similar but differently derived name (for references see 'Introduction' in *Arthur of the Welsh*, p. 5; see as well Jackson, 'The Arthur of History', pp. 3-4; see as well Coe and Young, *The Celtic Sources*, pp. 160-9. There is a useful online bibliography of Irish and Scottish Gaelic Arthurian literature and references at <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/acpbibs/gowans.htm>).

There are several suggestive Arthurs in medieval Irish literature, although as Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan has noted, 'Arthurian material in Irish is rare, late and derivative' ('The Celtic Tradition', p. 1; see *ibid.*, pp. 1-2 and 268 for references to such Irish texts as exist; see also Macalister, ed., *Eachtra an Mhadra Mhaoil*. For late medieval and early modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic texts, see Gillies, 'Arthur in Gaelic Tradition Part I', and 'Arthur in Gaelic Tradition Part II'; as well as Gowans, 'Arthurian Survivals in Scottish Gaelic'). A twelfth-century list of titles of tales includes one apparently referring to Arthur; it does not appear in other versions of the list and would seem to have been added in the twelfth century, probably due to Geoffrey's *Historia* (Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales*, pp. 107-8). The name Arthur appears in the twelfth or thirteenth-century Irish compilation of tales, the *Acallam na Senórach*, 'Colloquy of the Ancients', as Artúir son of Benne Brit, who is a British king. The most recent translation comments that the name 'is intriguing in that knowledge of an historical or literary Arthur of Britain is not evident in medieval Irish tradition until the later fourteenth century' (Dooley and Roe, *Tales*, p. 226). This is perhaps as much as one can say of the Arthurian legend in Ireland for the moment: Oliver Padel's juxtaposition of an Arthurian tradition common to and localised in all Brittonic-speaking regions with an analogous Irish tradition concerning a different hero is discussed below.

Arthur in Cornwall and Brittany

Cornwall and Brittany were closely related by language, culture, and history, until at least the Reformation. Migrants from Britain, mostly the south west, arrived some time between the third and seventh centuries in sufficient numbers to bring a new language to the peninsula, albeit one that was arguably closely related to what it might have (partly or entirely) replaced. Cults of saints are also closely shared between the two areas; place-names also are closely related. Both medieval Cornwall and Brittany (although perhaps for different reasons) show a notable lack of written vernacular literature, or at least of surviving texts of vernacular literature (for one exploration of this phenomenon as regards Brittany, see Brett, 'Breton Latin Literature'). Breton Latin literature, in particular, however, shows close affinities with the British pseudo-historical tradition (one that holds, among other things, that the Bretons were descended from British emigrants), including that which mentions Arthurian stories and characters (see Bromwich, 'Celtic Elements', p. 49).

The descent of Bretons from British migrants first appears in written form in *Historia Brittonum*: according to this Brittany was settled by British troops taken by Maxen (one of the usurping Roman generals) to the continent. Various twelfth-century Latin and French writers know the Arthurian material as the *matière de Bretagne*—it is a nice question as to whether this refers to Britain or Brittany in the eyes of those who used the material. One author in particular, Marie de France, composed *lais*, a rhyming narrative, which had an obvious Breton contribution in subject matter as well as names. Other, later, writers of romances also seem to be drawing in part upon Breton material. But this

does not speak to the question of a pre-Norman Breton Arthurian tradition. We would be more certain of the state of this if we knew more about the sources used by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who is thought by some to have been of Breton extraction, although this is unprovable. While Brittany occupies an important, in some ways the most important, symbolic place in his *Historia*, this probably has more to do with how Geoffrey wished to structure his vision of the sweep of British history (a structure possibly derived from Welsh, or British, tradition) than with the primacy of Breton sources, especially as regards Arthur himself. It may be noted that the ninth-century Cartulary of Redon includes the personal name Arthur (Le Duc, 'L'Histoire', p. 833; Tatlock, *The Legendary History*, p. 218).

Other hints of Arthurian tradition in Brittany (and Cornwall) come from the twelfth century: although some clearly predate Geoffrey's influence, others provoke lively debate as to their exact relationship to Geoffrey's writings. Apparently in the former category is the statement of Herman of Laon who recorded, soon after 1145, an episode occurring in 1113 in Cornwall: a group of canons from Laon provoked an argument among the Cornish by scoffing at the idea that Arthur was not dead (see Coe and Young, *The Celtic Sources*, pp.46-7). This anecdote tell us about Arthurian belief amongst the Cornish; Herman adds at this point that the Bretons are given to arguing with the French on Arthur's behalf as well. As Padel notes, however, 'this is almost the only piece of evidence about the state of the legend in Brittany at this period', the other two sources being the Life of St Goueznou (see above, Unit 5) and the *Livre des faits d'Arthur*, the latter, at least, relatively late and of uncertain significance (Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', p. 9; see also Le Duc, 'L'Histoire'; and Fleuriot, 'Histoire'). Compelling arguments for the dating of the Life of St Goueznou to the early eleventh century, well before Geoffrey, have been advanced (see, in general, Fleuriot, "The Stubborn Date"). Another Breton source, Etienne of Rouen's *Draco Normannicus*, makes use of the notion of Arthur's return as a foil against the Angevin king Henry II: in it, the Breton Roland de Dinan appeals to Arthur to help free the Bretons from Henry, and Arthur obliges by sending a letter to Henry announcing his return. A thirteenth-century rewriting of Geoffrey's *Historia*, the *Gesta Regum Britanniae* (sometimes ascribed to William of Rennes), presents Arthur in an anti-English aspect, but this dates from the thirteenth century, well after the period under consideration here. Much of the detail of later Arthurian cycles is derived from Wace, who translated into French and augmented Geoffrey's *Historia*: most of this, he tells us, comes from Breton sources. Appearances of the name Arthur in Brittany also postdate Geoffrey (leaving aside the question of Geoffrey's own name).

These last items of Breton Arthurian tradition, however, not only postdate Geoffrey of Monmouth, most of them concern themes, characters, and episodes of 'Arthurian' tradition rather than mentions of Arthur himself. The Life of St Gurthiern contains material closely related to that found in *Historia Brittonum* (see Jankulak, 'Breton *Vitae*') and suggests pseudo-historical tradition common to Wales and Brittany, but does not specifically mention Arthur. Thus the Breton material falls mainly into two related categories: pseudo-historical material clearly related to that found in *Historia Brittonum*, although not that portion mentioning Arthur; and material having to do with the Arthur of Geoffrey of Monmouth, either postulated (reasonably) as part of Geoffrey's sources or later accretions to Geoffrey's material. Both categories are of a very different order than the early Welsh and Cambro-Latin material speaking of an Arthur figure, but in the case of Brittany, as of Cornwall, it is worth keeping in mind that one should not argue too conclusively from an absence of material, such an absence being the main characteristic of medieval Breton and Cornish literature. Certainly the Life of St Goueznou implies that the shared pseudo-historical tradition of Britain and Brittany included Arthur as a character of some significance; the independence of the Breton from the British tradition

is also arguable, if with some difficulty (Le Duc, 'L'Histoire', pp. 833-4).

Cornish sites associated with Arthur

As Oliver Padel has noted, there are many topographical features and place-names associated with Arthur in the Celtic regions of Britain and Brittany, including Cornwall. However, Cornwall also figures strongly in the pre- and post-Geoffrey Arthurian tradition (mainly the latter) as the site of particular Arthurian events. Tintagel, a site of great interest for the period in which an 'historical' Arthur would have lived, first appears in Geoffrey's *Historia* as the site of Arthur's conception; as such its Arthurian associations postdate our material. A site of far more direct Arthurian association is that mentioned in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and the Welsh Triads (as well as in some later poetry), *Celli Wic y Gherniw*, 'Forest Grove (?) in Cornwall'. Attempts to find the site, mainly on the basis of place-names, have been inconclusive: there is no overwhelmingly convincing candidate (see Padel, 'South-Western Sites', pp. 234-8). The obvious, and entirely logical, conclusion, that *Celli Wic* was not meant to be a real place, is slightly undermined by a reference to a reference to someone known as Thomas de Kellewik in fourteenth-century legal records (Padel, 'South-Western Sites', pp. 236-7).

It is interesting, then, that Geoffrey of Monmouth locates Arthur's court at Caerleon, rather than at Celli Wic: in other respects Geoffrey accorded Cornwall great prominence (in particular as regards Arthur) in his *Historia* (see Padel, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth'). It seems likely that Geoffrey was drawing upon some specifically Cornish source, although as we have seen above with respect to the Breton material, drawing conclusions on what tradition might have existed before Geoffrey by working backwards from a posited source for Geoffrey's information is less than satisfying. Nevertheless, Padel assembles an impressive catalogue of Cornish Arthurian folklore predating Geoffrey ('Geoffrey of Monmouth', pp. 19-20). He notes that while Cornwall is not the only Celtic area showing Arthurian folklore, the localising of Arthur's court at Celli Wic is different from such folklore in one crucial respect: it would seem to be a Welsh tradition (well-established, appearing as it does in more than one text) situating Arthur in Cornwall rather than a Cornish tradition doing so. As such its significance would seem to be clear, although perhaps its precise meaning is less so. Other Welsh literary tradition associating Arthur with Cornwall, in particular that found in the *Ymddidan Arthur a'r Eyr*, reinforces the sense that to the medieval Welsh Arthur had some particular association with Cornwall (note also the fact that Arthur, in the Life of St Gildas, comes to Glastonia with an army from *Cornubia* and *Dibnenia* [Devon, apparently]).

The Welsh Triads and associated texts (in particular 'The Names of the Island of Britain', edited by Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp. 228-37) divide Britain into three main realms; Cornwall is sometimes (although not always consistently) one of the three. It seems clear that Cornwall had some sort of symbolic resonance in medieval Welsh literature as a distinct region. Yet it is arguable whether or not this is directly connected to its Arthurian associations; Bromwich surely overstates the case when she glosses the statement found in the 'Names' that of the three Coronets of the Island of Britain one should be worn in Cornwall with 'i.e. at *Kelli Wic*' (*Trioedd*, p. 235). Arthur is nowhere mentioned in this tract; nor is his court. One of the Triads does associate Arthur and his courts with a threefold division of Britain: no. 1 gives Arthur as 'Chief Prince' presiding over three Tribal Thrones of the Island of Britain. These are at St David's, Celliwic, and Pen Rhionydd in the north of Britain; essentially the same scheme appears in Triad no. 85 (see also Pearce, 'The Cornish Elements'). Certainly, as Padel has shown ('Geoffrey of Monmouth'), Cornwall holds a special and distinct place in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*: once again we find ourselves trying to piece together a coherent traditions from pre-Geoffrey hints and from Geoffrey's posited lost sources.

Arthur's genealogy

It has been suggested above that *Culhwch ac Olwen* may represent an interim stage in the development of the Arthurian tradition, in which Arthur was still in the process of being linked with originally separate tales and heroes. In this connection, Arthur's absence from the Four Branches is suggestive: this set of tales resisted this process. Other significant absences might also be cited: the poem *Armes Prydein*, probably datable to the tenth century, invokes various Welsh heroes who will return to save Wales from the Saxon, but Arthur is nowhere mentioned. Arthur also does not appear in the early Welsh genealogical records: he is given a descent associated with the Dumnonian royal line in records postdating Geoffrey of Monmouth (Bromwich, ed., *Trioedd*, pp. 274-5). As Sims-Williams has commented, this is a clear example of the fabrication of a genealogy owing to the pressure of a literary tradition ('Historical Need', p. 5).

Conclusion: Arthur as a Brittonic Fionn?

Sims-Williams compares the provision of Arthur with a genealogy associated with a (pseudo)-historical dynasty to a similar example from Ireland: the mythological hero Fionn mac Cumail was by the eighth century linked to the dynasty of Leinster because of the literary prestige of the former. Other similarities between the Arthurian material and that dealing with Fionn have been noted. These, in some cases relatively superficial, similarities have suggested to some that Arthur and Fionn may have been similar types of hero: a somewhat magical leader of a band of warriors whose milieu is the forest or uncultivated areas and whose character is lawless, outside civilised society. Their exploits are especially connected with the names of places or features of the landscape, and are localised wherever their respective languages were spoken; their respective leaders had particular responsibility to defend their islands against invaders. The tales concerning them are especially given to exuberant lists of names of items and people (see Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', pp. 20-2). The apparent process by which this body of material developed with respect to Fionn, the bringing together of arguably 'disparate pieces of local folklore' into a self-conscious literary creation (Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', p. 22), is if not instructive at least suggestive with respect to the Arthurian material. (Bromwich's somewhat ambiguous rejection of the comparison between Arthur and Fionn because of the securely mythological origins of the latter and the debatable origins of the former is undermined by her conclusion that Arthur's historicity is not an essential part—or not even relevant—to the discussion of the Arthurian tradition as a whole: see 'Concepts of Arthur', especially p. 166.) Moreover, the subsequent 'historicising' of Fionn by entering him into the Irish Annals and by giving him as enemies historical invaders (Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', pp. 22-3) will be very familiar to those investigating the Arthurian legend. It can be argued, as Padel does, that the debate over Arthur's historicity is a result of a more convincing, because more consistent, historicising of Arthur by the Welsh. This, however, remains an argument: much of Arthur's attraction will remain the unprovability of his essential nature, and the wealth of argument that can be derived from the abundant material of his legend.

Select Bibliography

Primary Sources

Culhwch ac Olwen:

Translation into English

Gantz, J. (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (London, 1976).

Jones, G., and T. Jones (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (London, 1949).

Edition of Welsh text

Bromwich R., and D. Simon Evans (eds), *Culhwch ac Olwen* (Caerdydd, 1988) and *Culhwch and Olwen* (Cardiff, 1992—note that the introductions to the Welsh and English versions cover different ground).

Breuddwyd Rhonabwy:

Translation into English

Gantz, J. (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (London, 1976).

Jones, G., and T. Jones (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (London, 1949).

Edition of Welsh text

Richards, M. (ed.), *Breudwyd Ronabwy* (Cardiff, 1948).

Trioedd Ynys Prydein:

Edition of Welsh text and translation into English

Bromwich, R. (ed), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff, 1978); see also Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 76-93 for a reprint of the relevant sections (although without Bromwich's copious notes).

Lists of Arthurian features in the landscape:

<http://www.arthuriana.co.uk/concepts/folkgazt.htm>

Secondary Sources

Brett, Caroline, 'Breton Latin Literature as Evidence for Literature in the Vernacular, AD 800-1300', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 18 (1989), pp. 1-25.

Bromwich, R., 'The Welsh Triads', in R.S. Loomis (ed.), *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 44-51.

Bromwich, R., *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff, 1978).

Bromwich, R., 'The Triads of the Horses', in S. Davies and N.A. Jones (eds), *The Horse in Celtic Culture. Medieval Welsh Perspectives* (Cardiff, 1977), pp. 102-120.

Bromwich, R., and D. Simon Evans (eds), *Culhwch ac Olwen* (Caerdydd, 1988).

Bromwich, R., and D. Simon Evans (eds), *Culhwch and Olwen* (Cardiff, 1992).

Dooley, Ann, 'Arthur in Ireland: the Earliest Citation in Native Irish Literature', *Arthurian Literature* 12 (1993), pp. 165-72.

Dooley, Ann, and Harry Roe (trans.), *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* (Oxford, 1999).

Fleuriot, L., "'The Stubborn Date of 1019'", *Études celtiques* 19 (1982), pp. 271-4.

Fleuriot, L., 'Histoire et légendes', in L. Fleuriot and A-P. Ségalen (eds), *Histoire Littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne. Vol I: Héritage celtique et captation française* (Paris, 1987), pp. 97-129.

CYCS7021 The Celtic Arthur and the Matter of Britain

- Foster, I. L., 'Culhwch and Olwen and Rhonabwy's Dream', in R.S. Loomis (ed.), *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 31-43.
- Gowans, Linda, 'Arthurian Survivals in Scottish Gaelic', *The Arthurian Yearbook* 2 (1992), pp. 27-76.
- Green, Tom, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007).
- Jankulak, Karen 'Breton Vitae and Political Need in the Cartulary of Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé', *Literature and Politics in the Celtic World. Papers from the Third Australian Conference of Celtic Studies, University of Sydney, July 1998* (Sydney, 2000), pp. 212-41.
- Le Duc, G., 'L'Historia Britannica avant Geoffroy de Monmouth', *Annales de Bretagne* 79 (1972), pp. 819-35.
- Lloyd-Morgan, C., 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later Arthurian Literature', in R. Bromwich et al (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 183-208.
- Lloyd-Morgan, Ceridwen, 'The Celtic Tradition', in W.R.J. Barron (ed.), *The Arthur of the English* (Cardiff, 1999), pp. 1-9, 268-9
- Macalister, R.A.S. (ed.), *Eachtra an Mhadra Mhaoil; Eachtra Mhacaoimh-an-Iolair. Two Irish Arthurian Romances*. Irish Texts Society vol. 10 (London, 1908).
- Mac Cana, P., *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1980).
- Padel, Oliver, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 8 (1984), pp. 1-28.
- Padel, Oliver, 'South-Western Sites with Arthurian Associations', in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, eds. R. Bromwich et al. (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 229-48.
- Pearce, S., 'The Cornish Elements in the Arthurian Tradition', *Folklore* 85 (1974), pp. 145-63. **available via JSTOR**
- Radner, Joan N., 'Interpreting Irony in Medieval Celtic Narrative: the Case of *Culhwch ac Olwen*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 16 (1988), pp. 41-59. **Included in reading brick.**
- Roberts, B.F., 'Culhwch ac Olwen, the Triads, Saints' Lives', in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, eds. R. Bromwich et al. (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95.
- Rodway, Simon, 'The date and authorship of Culhwch ac Olwen: a reassessment', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 49 (Summer 2005) 21-44.
- Sims-Williams, P., 'The Significance of the Irish Personal Names in *Culhwch ac Olwen*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 29 (1982), pp. 600-20.
- Sims-Williams, P., 'Historical Need and Literary Narrative: a Caveat from Ninth-Century Wales', *The Welsh History Review* 17 (1994), pp. 1-40. **Included in the reading brick.**
- Slotkin, E., 'The Fabula, Story and Text of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 18 (1989), pp. 89-111. **Included in the reading brick.**
- Williams, J.E. Caerwyn, 'Brittany and the Arthurian Legend', in R. Bromwich, et al. (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 249-72.

Unit 6. Geoffrey of Monmouth

Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* ('The History of the Kings of Britain') was and is one of the most popular texts of the Middle Ages. Perhaps its main importance (for the medieval as well as modern audience) was that it presented for the first time a coherent and detailed story of the history of Britain from its foundation to the decisive establishment of the Anglo-Saxons as rulers of England. Before Geoffrey, almost all British historical materials were fragmentary and often contradictory, with *Historia Brittonum* being something of an exception (we will return to this below). For this reason, the student of Arthurian material often greets Geoffrey with a sigh of relief, one that resembles that emanating from a large portion (although certainly not all!) of Geoffrey's medieval audience. Geoffrey's great strength was in presenting a complete story from beginning to end, with no gaps—his text begins to resemble, at least superficially, in structure, what the modern audience thinks of as a 'history'. Somewhat ironically, then, his factual accuracy is minimal, and probably wasn't his concern. Instead, the *Historia Regum Britanniae* is told as a story, and one with an overall literary, and thematic, unity. It is a lively and imaginative work, full of incident, although entirely bereft of what we would call 'characterisation'. This latter aspect is especially noticeable in his treatment of figures such as Arthur whose 'character' was greatly developed in the later romance tradition (in part from seeds sown by Geoffrey or his vernacular translators, notably Wace).

In terms of Arthurian studies, then, Geoffrey is a pivotal transition from our fragmentary Welsh (or perhaps Brythonic) Arthur to a more fully-rounded romance character who forms the basis of the Arthur we know from modern stories and films. Part of the interest of Geoffrey's text, therefore, lies in his treatment of Arthur: on what was it based and how did he adapt his material (and what did he invent?). In a larger sense, however, he is also typical of the post-Norman treatment of British history: from the Norman period and onwards we get far more detailed and when dealing with contemporary events, accurate accounts of what happened. This has been lacking for British history (although the Anglo-Saxon world has had its historians such as Bede and Asser well before this) until now. Geoffrey, however, is not writing about his own time, but about the pre-Saxon portion early British history.

Britain in the early twelfth century

By the early twelfth century, when Geoffrey wrote his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, England had been ruled by Norman kings and their barons for over 100 years. Wales was a slightly different matter: it was left mostly to the barons to conquer as they wished, and was subject to many vicissitudes. By the twelfth century most of southern Wales (especially the south-east) was subject to Norman rule in the form of lordship by several families of Norman (and at times Breton) barons; the king of England, the theoretical overlord of many of these areas, as R.R. Davies has commented (*Domination and Conquest*, 69), paid relatively little attention to the 'Celtic fringe' unless his barons there misbehaved in one way or another. The Normans, then, added yet another element into the complex and decentralised political arena that was medieval Wales: while the tendency among the Normans themselves was for centralising authority and regularising institutions and ways of doing things, the delegation of power to the barons in outlying areas effectively added to the already patchwork nature of Wales.

In the wider Norman world, politics were equally complicated. In 1120 the Norman king of England, Henry I, lost his only legitimate son and male heir—this set the stage

for the inevitable civil war after his death in 1135. His nephew Stephen took up the crown, but was challenged in this after 1138 by Henry I's daughter Matilda, the wife of Geoffrey of Anjou (formerly the wife of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V, hence her epithet 'empress'). This conflict, which lasted until the accession of Matilda's son Henry II in 1154, enlisted the powerful Norman and Breton barons on either side, resulting in a pattern of different and at times shifting political loyalties. It might be noted that Robert earl of Gloucester, Geoffrey's chief patron and one of the dedicatees of the *Historia*, was one of Matilda's chief supporters.

Needless to say, the fact that the Norman kings and barons were somewhat preoccupied with the civil war was quickly put to advantage by the other polities subject to the Normans, chiefly the Scots and the Welsh. In John Gillingham's words, 'after Henry I's death the Welsh and the Scots seized the military initiative and in the late 1130s began to intervene within England with devastating effect', a devastation which was vividly described by several twelfth-century historians ('Conquering the Barbarians', 70).

Who was Geoffrey of Monmouth?

Within this picture we try to place Geoffrey of Monmouth, the self-proclaimed author of one of the most popular texts of medieval Britain, and indeed Europe, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, 'The History of the Kings of Britain'. We know that the *Historia Regum Britanniae* was available by 1139, as another writer, Henry of Huntingdon, refers to it in that year. Leaving aside debates about authorship and variant versions, three times in the *Historia* the author names himself as 'Geoffrey of Monmouth'. Another work, a Latin Life of Merlin in verse (the *Vita Merlini*, for which see Unit 5, below), also proclaims itself to have been composed by 'Geoffrey of Monmouth'. There is general agreement that this is the Geoffrey who signed at least six charters having to do with twelfth-century Oxford religious houses, as Geoffrey *magister* ('teacher'?) and as Geoffrey *Artur* (Arthur). As a literate person, he clearly had some education—in this period this would make him a cleric of some sort. By 1150, Geoffrey describes himself as 'bishop-elect' of St Asaph (Gwynedd), although he does not seem to have visited there before his death in 1155 (late in life he also produced a second text, the *Vita Merlini*). The epithet 'Arthur' has been taken either as a patronymic, as a signifier of Breton ancestry (the name was at the time common in Brittany but rare in Wales), or, perhaps most likely, as a nickname. Certainly his near-contemporaries Gerald of Wales and William of Newburgh used it in this fashion. We can at least be certain that Geoffrey was a cleric, with some connection to Oxford during the composition of the *Historia*.

The connection with Monmouth is left to us to explain as there is no other evidence of it apart from Geoffrey's self-description in his literary works. The best explanation is that this is where he was born—certainly in the 'History' Geoffrey takes a great interest in Wales and in the area around Monmouth in particular.

***Historia Regum Britanniae*: Geoffrey's sources**

Scholars have debated Geoffrey's motives for writing the *Historia*, sometimes with reference to the text, sometimes with reference to Geoffrey's purported background and sympathies, sometimes with reference to Geoffrey's faithfulness to his sources, or lack thereof. Therein lies the problem: we must ask ourselves how much of the *Historia Regum Britanniae* is Geoffrey, how much is 'traditional' material; how much is Geoffrey's political machinations, how much is the telling of an exciting and coherent story.

The question of sources is a difficult one: it is worth stating at the outset that Geoffrey's famous claim to have translated 'a certain most ancient book' (as he states in the 'Dedication'; Thorpe, 51; for the 'ancient book', see also Thorpe, 284, n. 1) from the British language (presumably Welsh, but some argue Breton) is mostly viewed as a pure fiction, although there are always one or two people who take it seriously, at times for good reasons, at times less obviously so. It might be noted that the claim to translate, or revise, older sources is a common one, achieving the status of literary cliché, and should be viewed as at least potentially meaningless (to us and to its contemporary audience—see, for example, M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory*, especially 318-27). Leaving this aside, it is clear that Geoffrey had sources, oral or written, among the native (which is to say, Welsh-language, pre-Geoffrey) Welsh tradition. It is equally clear that he made relatively free with these sources, changing roles, adapting names of one character to another, combining and altering stories to suit his purpose. The extent to which he did this, and the extent to which he invented things altogether, is often not clear.

Much of the earlier chronological framework of the *Historia* can be found in the early ninth-century text, the *Historia Brittonum*. There, at the very least, we have the legend of the founding of Britain by Brutus (as it appears in Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*) and the stage set for later events, especially those connecting Britain and Rome. This is one of Geoffrey's main sources: like Geoffrey's *Historia*, *Historia Brittonum* took a wide view of a large period of Britain's founding history; like Geoffrey's *Historia* it was very popular, perhaps surprisingly so given its miscellaneous nature; unlike Geoffrey's *Historia* it wasn't polished, accessible, and dramatically satisfying. Geoffrey's *Historia*, then, presented what is to a surprising degree the historiographical framework offered by *Historia Brittonum*, tidied up, augmented, embellished, and especially in the person of Arthur, very readable

Arthur

It will be useful to consider the overall progress of Britain's history as presented in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The work begins with the origins of Britain, its foundation by Brutus, a survivor of the Trojan war. The account of pre-Roman Britain describes various dynastic successions and crises, interspersed with comments on where this fits into a classical and biblical scheme of events. The climax of this period is probably the conquest of Rome by a British prince, Belinus, who then returns to Britain. The next portion describes the conquest of Britain initiated by the Roman emperor Claudius, who marries his daughter to a British prince. More dynastic squabbles occur, partly to do with internal British politics, partly to do with Roman politics. Over and over Britain is presented as a platform from which rightful or less rightful Roman rulers gain or regain the rule of Rome. Brittany is conquered and populated with Britons. Finally Rome withdraws her legions leaving the British to cope alone in the face of incursions from numerous barbarian invaders. The next portion concerns the coming of the Saxons after the fall of Rome: the British appeal to Brittany for help, and the Breton rulers from time to time supply armies and fill the kingship of Britain. The British (although quite obscure in origin) prince Vortigern is instrumental in inviting the Saxons to assist him in his ambitions and to chase out other barbarian invaders, but this backfires as the Saxons take over. Meanwhile we have the story of the boy magician and prophet Merlin. A long section, probably originally separate (it has its own introduction and dedication) is devoted to relatively obscure 'prophecies' from Merlin, but the main one concerns a red dragon (the British) which will fight, be temporarily vanquished by, and ultimately overcome and chase away, a white dragon (the Saxons). A combined force of British and Bretons fight the Saxons with reverses and advances on both sides, until Arthur, with help from the Bretons, decisively defeats them (as well as other barbarian invaders).

Arthur then conquers the rest of Europe, holds a grand court at Caerleon, and sets off to conquer Rome, handing over Britain to his nephew Mordred during his absence. Arthur is winning the war, and is on the point of gaining Rome itself when he is called back by news of Mordred's treachery. Arthur is mortally wounded at the battle of Camlan, and carried to the Isle of Avalon. His cousin Constantine becomes king. After this Britain is increasingly subject to the Saxons (partly because the Saxons are stronger, partly because the British are quarrelsome and disunited), most of the British flee to Brittany, appeals for help from Brittany finally fail, as the Bretons explain that they're tired of helping the feeble British. The British prince Cadwallo explains that the British are feeble because their strongest people went to Brittany. Finally the last British prince, Cadwallader, hears an angel telling him that the British are not to rule Britain any more, until Arthur should return. The Saxons finally prevail and rule well over a united nation.

Arthur's career (see <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/geoffhkb.htm> for a translation of the Arthurian sections of Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*) clearly signals the climax of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, although he is neither the most successful nor the last British ruler. Yet it is he, as the Angelic Voice implies (with some ambiguity, for which see below, Unit 5) who will return to lead the British to regain their rightful possession of the Island of Britain, and it would seem to be Arthur to whom Merlin refers in his prophecies (as among other things 'the boar of Cornwall') as this redeemer.

It could be argued that Arthur's importance in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* is as one element in the large-scale picture of British history rather than as an individual character. This is arguably true: Arthur occupies an important slot in an overall chronology, and this perhaps is his defining feature. It is difficult to see in him an individual hero, as his career is ultimately unsuccessful. He has no individual personality as such (see, for example his non-reaction to the revelation of his wife's adultery). Yet this is not the whole picture: Geoffrey isn't interested in personalities at all, and no one person really bears the weight of the whole. Inasmuch as anyone has individuality, Arthur does (see, for example, Echard, "'The Anger'"). Geoffrey pays great attention to the trappings of Arthur: his friends, his court, etc. Arthur also provides a link between the two main phases of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, between the Roman/British period and the Saxon/Welsh period. It would seem that Arthur can be both a historical cog and a prominent character at the same time. It is important, however, not to allow what later writers made of Geoffrey (and the enthusiasm with which they took up Arthur in particular) to blind us to the limitations of Geoffrey's Arthur, who has been given by Geoffrey a full biography (including a magical conception) and elements of later romance portraits (friends, a court, etc), but who has not yet been singled out to the extent that he will be by later medieval writers. Perhaps there is no better illustration of this than in the consideration of the career of Merlin in Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae* an Arthurian non-event, in later accounts a central figure.

Political Considerations: Arthur as redeemer

In the second, and much-less read and copied, text composed by Geoffrey, *Vita Merlini*, we have the earliest direct reference, in a conversation between Telgesinus (that is, Geoffrey's version of Taliesin) and Merlin, to the bearing of Arthur to the otherworld to be healed by Morgen. Telgesinus suggests that Arthur be brought back in order to lead the Britons to victory, but Merlin states that this is premature: victory will be achieved later, through an alliance of Scots, Welsh, Cornish, and Bretons led by Cynan and Cadwaladr (almost exactly the scenario offered by *Armes Prydein* (see Williams, *Armes Prydein*, xxi-xxii). While one of the vexed questions about Geoffrey concerns his statement, in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (Thorpe, p. 261), that Arthur, mortally

wounded, was carried off to the Isle of Avalon so that his wounds might be attended to; later, at the end of the story, the Angelic Voice stops Cadwaladr from coming to the aid of the Welsh by saying that the British would not be sovereign in Britain until the moment should come that Merlin prophesied to Arthur. This can be (but need not be) read as meaning that Arthur would return to redeem Britain (certainly as Arthur never met Merlin, Merlin could not, strictly speaking, have prophesied anything *to* him but rather *about* him). Did Geoffrey invent this?

In this context, then, we should consider the account of the Laon canons when on a fundraising tour through Britain in 1113. Their account of this notes a near-riot on their visit to Bodmin, as a Cornishman insisted that Arthur was not dead ('as the Bretons are wont to do, commented the writer') and one among the French canons expressed disbelief (see Padel, 'The Nature', 9; Tatlock, 'The English Journey'). This is, as Padel notes, one of the few suggestions we have that Arthur's return might have been expected before Geoffrey got ahold of it. Otherwise, we have William of Malmesbury's comment that Arthur's grave cannot be found (as in *Englynion y Beddau*? see Unit 3 above) and that fables say that he will return (in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, as quoted by Padel, 'The Nature', 10).

James Carley points to the 'discovery' of Arthur's body (and by some accounts that of Guenevere as well) at Glastonbury Abbey in 1191 as 'a turning point in the historicizing and anglicizing of Arthur' ('Arthur', 48). Historians have long agreed that the purpose of this was to reconcile the British to the Angevin rulers, both by establishing that Arthur was indeed dead, and by associating his remains with the current kings of England. Glastonbury had an active and imaginative antiquarian tradition, and the site was one of the candidates for the location of Avalon even before 1191. Angevin politics dictated the nature and characterisation of the discoveries (including the presence or absence of Guenevere), and various revisitations were carried out when the Welsh (or the Scots) were particularly restive. As Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan has pointed out, Elis Gruffydd, in the mid sixteenth century, commented that the English paid more attention to Arthur than the Welsh did ('The Celtic Tradition', 9). Perhaps this is one explanation for Arthur's perhaps surprising absence from medieval Welsh prophetic poetry (see Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*)—having been turned into Arthur of the English, he would not do as a candidate for the redeemer of the Welsh from their oppressors.

Select Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Clarke, B. (ed. and trans.), *Life of Merlin. Geoffrey of Monmouth, Vita Merlini* (Cardiff, 1973). A useful facing-page translation, but long out of print.

Faletra, Michael A., *The History of the Kings of Britain. Geoffrey of Monmouth* (Peterborough, Ontario, 2008). Clearly aiming to be the new Thorpe (see below) and succeeds to a large extent—accessible translation of one manuscript and useful appendix of related Arthurian texts. These include a translation of Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini* which is otherwise quite difficult to obtain (see Clarke, above).

Reeve, Michael D. (ed) and Neil Wright (trans.), *Geoffrey of Monmouth. The History of the Kings of Britain* (Woodbridge, 2007). Now in paperback and thus cheaper, this is an important facing-page edition and translation. Its introduction is mainly concerned with textual matters.

CYCS7021 The Celtic Arthur and the Matter of Britain

Thorpe, Lewis (trans.), *Geoffrey of Monmouth. The History of the Kings of Britain* (Harmondsworth, 1966). The most accessible translation of Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, with notes and introduction.

Secondary Sources:

- Carley, James, 'Arthur in English History', in W.R.J. Barron (ed.), *The Arthur of the English* (Cardiff, 2001), 47-57.
- Clanchy, T.M., *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (Oxford, 1993).
- Crawford, T.D., 'On the Linguistic Competence of Geoffrey of Monmouth', *Medium Ævum* 51 (1982), 152-162.
- Crick, J., 'The British Past and the Welsh Future: Gerald of Wales, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Arthur of Britain', *Celtica* 23 (1999), 60-75. **Included in reading brick.**
- Davies, R.R., (ed.), *The British Isles 1100-1500. Comparisons, Contrasts, and Connections* (Edinburgh, 1988).
- Davies, R.R., *Domination and Conquest: the Experience of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales 1100-1300* (Cambridge, 1990).
- Echard, S., "'The Anger of Saturn shall Fall": Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and the Limits of History', in Echard, S., *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge, 1998), 31-67.
- Echard, S. (ed.), *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature* (Cardiff, 2011).
- Gillingham, John, 'The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 13 (1990), 99-118. **Included in reading brick.**
- Gillingham, John, 'Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Twelfth-Century Britain', *The Haskins Society Journal* 4 (1992), 67-84.
- Hanning, Robert W., *The Vision of History in Early Britain from Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York, 1966).
- Leckie, R. William, *The Passage of Dominion. Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto, 1981).
- Padel, O.J., 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 8 (1984), 1-28.
- Padel, O.J., 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Development of the Merlin Legend', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 51 (2006), 37-65.
- Parry, J.J., and R.A. Caldwell, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth', in R.S. Loomis (ed.), *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1959), 72-93.
- Roberts, B., 'The Treatment of Personal Names in the Early Welsh Versions of *Historia Regum Britanniae*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 25 (1972-74), pp. 274-290.
- Roberts, B., 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 20 (1976), 29-40. **Included in reading brick.**
- Tatlock, J.S.P., *The Legendary History of Britain. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and its Early Vernacular Versions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1950).
- Wright, N., 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas', *Arthurian Literature* 2 ([1982]), 1-40.

Reading Brick

The reading brick contains items pertinent to various of the essay questions in this volume. It does not provide all the reading recommended, nor all the reading that might be desirable for the course.

The individual bibliographies to the units within the module will guide you as to which items are most pertinent to which topics. For the essay questions, you should not limit your reading to only that which is recommended for the pertinent unit. Depending on which question you are working upon, some items will be more important than others and you should consult your tutor if in doubt as to which items are most important. Also, use your imagination in looking through titles and read that which appears relevant!

In a few cases, items on the list are not (or may not yet be), in the Lampeter campus library, and may be included primarily for the benefit of those using other libraries. You are not in all cases expected to be able to obtain every item. Again, ask your tutor whether an item is indispensable, or whether there are other readings that would be of interest.

Some basic points on use of the reading brick:

- The items selected for the pack comprise material which should be of interest to more than one unit in the module. Take time to browse through the items, even if they do not appear on the specific bibliography for your module.
- Your best guide to further reading is the references in the *most recent* works you have read. You are expected to read more widely in the area of your question, making use of library facilities and support from academic staff where appropriate.
- If a work looks relevant it may be worth asking your tutor's opinion of it—sometimes works are not recommended! Likewise if you *cannot* obtain a reading item it is worth checking if it is indispensable or not. After a certain point it often matters more to read a *primary* source than a secondary one.

Reading Brick contents CYCS7021 The Celtic Arthur and the Matter of Britain

- Crick, J., 'The British Past and the Welsh Future: Gerald of Wales, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Arthur of Britain', *Celtica* 23 (1999), 60-75.
- Dumville, D.N. "'Nennius" and the *Historia Brittonum*', *Studia Celtica* 10/11 (1975/76), pp. 78-95.
- Dumville, D.N., 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend', *History* n.s. 62 (1977), pp. 173-92. Reprinted, with new material (but same pagination), in D.N. Dumville, *Histories and Pseudo-Histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1990).
- Gardner, R., 'Gildas' New Testament Models', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 30 (1995), 1-12.
- Gillingham, John, 'The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 13 (1990), 99-118.
- Haycock, M., 'Preiddeu Annwn and the Figure of Taliesin', *Studia Celtica* 18/19 (1983/84), pp. 52-78.
- Jarman, A.O.H., 'The Arthurian Allusions in the Black Book of Carmarthen', in P.B. Grout *et al.* (eds), *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1983), pp. 99-112; 240-242.
- Jones, T., 'Datblydiadau Cynnwr Chwedl Arthur', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 17 (1958), pp. 235-52. Translated by Gerald Morgan as 'The Early Evolution of the Legend of Arthur', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 8 (1964), pp. 3-21.
- Matthews, J.F. (1982-3): Macsen, Maximus, and Constantine, in: *The Welsh History Review* 11, pp. 431-448.
- Ó Corráin, D., 'Legend as Critic', in *The Writer as Witness: Literature as Historical Evidence*, ed. T. Dunne, *Historical Studies* 16 (Cork, 1987), 23-38.
- Padel, O.J., 'The Nature of Arthur', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 27 (1994), pp. 1-31.
- Radner, Joan N., 'Interpreting Irony in Medieval Celtic Narrative: the Case of *Culhwch ac Olwen*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 16 (1988), pp. 41-59.
- Roberts, B., 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 20 (1976), 29-40.
- Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions of Origin Stories in Early Medieval Wales', in *History and Heroic Tale: a Symposium*, eds T. Nyberg *et al.* (Odense, 1985), 97-131.
- Slotkin, E., 'The Fabula, Story and Text of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 18 (1989), pp. 89-111.