

The eastern terminus of the Antonine Wall: 12th- or 13th-century evidence

David Dumville*

ABSTRACT

A crucial element in the recent definition of the eastern end of the Antonine Wall has been the testimony of early modern antiquaries. The claim of the now-favoured choice of Carriden (West Lothian) was in fact anticipated in a manuscript written at Sawley in the West Riding of Yorkshire (now in Lancashire) in 1202 x 1214.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known how unsatisfactory are ancient and medieval historical writers' references to the construction of the Roman frontier-walls in Britain (for the Antonine Wall see Hanson & Maxwell 1983; in general see Breeze 1982). One branch of historical 'knowledge' was summed up by St Jerome in his *Chronicon* (completed in AD 378), *sub anno Abrahae 2221* (AD 205): 'Severus in Brittanos bellum transfert; ubi, ut receptas provincias ab incursione barbarica faceret securiores, vallum per .cxxxii. passuum milia a mari ad mare duxit' (Helm 1956, 212). By way of Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*, VII.17, 7 (Zangemeister 1882, 475), this information, slightly augmented, passed into Insular historical writing of the early Middle Ages. Bede (*De temporum ratione*, §LXVI, *Chronica maiora* §345) wrote, 'Severus in Britannias bellum transfert; ubi, ut receptas provincias ab incursione barbarica faceret securiores, magnam fossam firmissimumque vallum crebris insuper turribus communitum per .cxxxii. milia passuum a mare ad mare duxit' (Mommsen 1891–8, III.289; Jones 1977, 502). In the summary chronicle which concludes his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (V.24: Colgrave & Mynors 1969, 562–3) he provided AD dating for Severus's reign (189–206): 'Anno ab incarnatione Domini .clxxxviii. Severus imperator factus .xvii. annis regnavit; qui Britanniam vallo a mari usque ad mare praecinxit'. Full details were provided in an early chapter of the work (I.5: Colgrave & Mynors 1969, 24–7) which embodied some controversialist writing (cf Miller 1970). It seems clear that all these references were to Hadrian's Wall.

The Hieronymian tradition passed by a different route into Insular Celtic writing. In the early ninth-century Cambro-Latin *Historia Brittonum* (cf Dumville 1990, ch. I–VII), §23, we read that Severus was the third Roman ruler to visit Britain: 'Tertius fuit Severus, qui transfretavit ad Britannos; ubi, ut receptas provincias ab incursione barbarica faceret tutiores, murum et aggerem a mari usque ad mare per latitudinem Britanniae, id est per .cxxxii. milia passuum deduxit, et vocatur

* Girton College, Cambridge CB3 0JG

britannico sermone *guaul'*. The author went on to observe that it was to separate the Britons on the one hand from the Gaels (*Scotti*) and Picts on the other (Mommsen 1891–8, III.165).

In this last point we see a reflex of a quite different approach. For the sixth-century British writer Gildas the history of the two Roman Walls was a live issue (*De excidio Britanniae*, I.14–19; Mommsen 1891–8, III.33–5; Winterbottom 1978, 21–3, 93–5). Here they dated, in reverse order of construction (turf Wall first, stone Wall later), from a period definable (although Gildas himself gave no dates) as AD 388 x 454 (for discussion see Thompson 1979, 205–8, and Dumville 1984 [= 1993, ch. II], 64). They were built to keep Gaels and Picts at bay.

Bede contrived to adopt Gildas's account also into his own narrative (*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I.12; Colgrave & Mynors 1969, 40–5). In a well-known passage he added precise topographic indications concerning the Antonine Wall: 'Cuius operis ibidem facti, id est valli latissimi et altissimi, usque hodie certissima vestigia cernere licet. Incipit autem duorum ferme milium spatio a monasterio Aebbercurnig [= Abercorn, W. Lothian: see Thomas 1984] ad occidentem in loco qui sermone Pictorum Peanfahel lingua autem Anglorum Penneltun appellatur [= Kinneil], et tendens contra occidentem terminatur iuxta urbem Alcluith [= Dumbarton].'

THE SAWLEY SCHOOL OF HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL RESEARCH

The Cistercian monastery of Sawley (otherwise Sallay) in the West Riding of Yorkshire was founded in 1148. From a half-century period, 1164 x 1214, we have two surviving manuscripts, each apparently written as well as owned there, containing a wide range of Latin historical (and some religious) texts (for disavowal of Sawley origin, see Baker 1975; for specific refutation see Dumville 1990, ch. VIII–XI). These are Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 139, written in 1164, and *ibid.*, MS. 66 + Cambridge University Library MS. Ff.1.27 (1160), pp 1–40, 73–252, written in 1202 x 1214 (see Dumville 1990, ch. VIII–XI; Miller 1982, 137–42; cf Anderson 1980, 237, 243–4). The earlier manuscript contains texts copied with relatively few embedded additions, while the later comprises fair copies of texts which had been subjected to considerable revision and augmentation. One text in particular – *Historia Brittonum*, already mentioned – survives in both manuscripts and provides the clearest possible indication of the extensive processes of collation, revision, and augmentation undertaken before the fair copy was made; even then, some minor augmentations of the fair copy continued to be made for a brief while (Dumville 1990, ch. VIII–XI, and forthcoming). The texts contained in these two manuscripts, approximately 50 in all, provide a compelling range of testimony to a school of textual and historical research of remarkable industry.

Among the several unusual features of this activity, three should be mentioned here. The texts may survive only in the Sawley copy, or are extant here in a recension otherwise unknown to scholarship. Secondly, among the many items with which the texts copied were subsequently augmented at Sawley are materials of Celtic interest or origin, a fact which is only partly explained (Dumville 1977 [= 1990, ch. XI], and forthcoming). Finally, the Sawley editors developed a passion for prefacing detailed lists of *capitula*, contents-tables, to the texts which they were in effect preparing for republication.

THE ROMAN WALLS AND ARTHUR'S O'ON IN ADDITIONS TO *HISTORIA BRITTONUM*

In §XIX of the Sawley copies of *Historia Brittonum* an addition was made which decisively identified the Severan *murum et aggerem* with the Antonine Wall, taking the Brittonic word *guaul*, 'wall', as the cue. The additional information, dependent on Bede but moving beyond him, is

presented as a gloss on the statement of distance found in the text of *Historia Brittonum*: ‘Per .cxxxii. miliaria passuum, id est, a Pengual – que villa scottice Cenail [= Kinneil], anglice vero Peneltun, dicitur – usque ad ostium fluminis Cluth [= R. Clyde] et Cair Pentaloch [= Kirkintilloch], quo murus ille finitur, rustico opere Severus ille predictus construxit; sed nichil profuit’ (Dumville 1977, 22–4; Dumville 1985–, VII; note that the text should probably read ‘usque ad Cair Pentaloch et ad ostium fluminis Clut’). A further addition, immediately following, tells us that another Emperor, unhelpfully named *Carucius/Carutius* (*Karitius* in some other versions), renewed the wall; this Emperor is then credited (in an addition which, on the evidence of the *capitula*, was at one time intended to go into the following chapter) with the building of a triumphal monument by the River Carron: ‘Carutius postea imperator reedificavit, et .vii. castellis munivit inter utraque ostia; domumque rotundam politis lapidibus super ripam fluminis Carun, quod a suo nomine nomen accepit, fornicem triumphalem in victoriae memoriam erigens, construxit’. This would appear to be the earliest certain reference to Arthur’s O’on (on which monument see most recently Brown & Vasey 1989; but cf Loomis 1956, 4–5, 15; Dumville 1975 [= 1990, ch. XII], 107, and 1977 [= 1990, ch. XI], 22–4).

Finally, a third *capitulum* (§XXIII) refers very specifically to what we know as Hadrian’s Wall: ‘De secundo etiam Severo qui solita structura murum alterum, ad arcendos Pictos et Scottos, fieri a Tinemthe [= Tynemouth, Northumberland] usque Boggenes [= Bowness-on-Solway, Cumberland]’ (Mommsen 1891–8, III.128; Dumville 1985–, VII; this is marginally the oldest and linguistically most archaic form attested for Bowness, as may be seen from Armstrong *et al.* 1950–2, I.123).

CARRIDEN: THE EASTERN TERMINUS OF THE ANTONINE WALL

In the later of the two Sawley manuscripts (MS. Ff.1.27, pp 1–14) is preserved a copy of Book I of Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae*, a rare work in the Middle Ages. The text ends uniquely with a hexametrical scribal colophon naming one Cormac:

Historiam Gylde Cormac sic perlege scriptam
 Doctoris digitis sensu cultuque redactam.
 Hec tenues superat multos carpitque superbos.

Dr Neil Wright has kindly offered the following translation:

Read Gildas’s History, copied thus by the fingers
 of the teacher Cormac [and] edited with meaning and elegance.
 It overcomes many who are lightweight and it criticises the proud.

The name Cormac is Gaelic. Previously I assumed Cormac to have been Irish (Dumville 1977, 44–6), but in view of the run of Scottish (perhaps especially St Andrews) interests through the Sawley manuscripts the possibility of a north British domicile for Cormac should not be overlooked. This may be a red herring, however: unless Cormac’s poem was written at Sawley, he can have had no connection with the *capitula* discussed in what follows. The text here has been equipped in the Sawley fashion with a list of 20 *capitula* (printed with minor inaccuracies by Mommsen 1891–8, III.17–18). Two of these (IX, XI), given Gildas’s concern with the Walls, turn out to be of interest here. We may begin with the second.

.XI. Quomodo Britones rursus romanum solatium repetierunt, et qualiter Romani sese excusaverunt, sed tamen laudare et monere ceperunt, ut murum a mari ad mare facerent, quod et fecerunt **a mari**

Norwagie **usque ad mare** Galwadie, per *octo pedes latum et duodecim* ‘in’ *altum et turres per intervalla* construxerunt, eo in loco *ubi Severus* imperator maximam **fossam firmissimumque vallum, crebris insuper turribus communitum, per .cxxxii. milia passuum** longe ante *fecerat*, id est a villa que anglice Wallese dicitur, latine vero Caput Muri interpretatur, que est iuxta Tinemuthe, qui murus multum distat a prefato vallo apud meridiem, quem antea apud Kair Eden supra mare Scotie constituerunt.

I have italicized what is drawn from the account of this episode by Bede (*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I.12), emboldened what is found in his account of the Severan *vallum* in I.6 and underlined what occurs in his treatment of the same in *De temporum ratione* (above). The chronicle from the latter text is found in the same Sawley manuscript as the copy of Gildas’s work (Cambridge University Library MS. Ff.1.27: Bede’s text at pp. 73–116; they are separated by the copy of *Historia Brittonum*).

Here we have some specification about the eastern end of Hadrian’s Wall, at Wallsend (with a name-form identical to that of the first attested occurrence, c 1085: Ekwall 1960, 493; cf Mawer 1920, 205) near Tynemouth. The capitularist then concluded with a cross-reference to the Antonine frontier-line, noting that Wallsend was far distant from the more northerly Wall which the Romans had previously constructed *apud Kair Eden supra mare Scotie*.

Before giving the text to which this reference naturally leads us, I should like to hesitate for a moment over the capitularist’s names for the seas around Scotland. Hadrian’s Wall stretches, in his account, from *Mare Norwagie*, ‘the sea of Norway’ (viz, North Sea), to *Mare Galwadie*, ‘the sea of Galloway’ (viz, Solway Firth); likewise, the Antonine Wall extends from *Mare Scotie*, ‘the sea of Scotia’ (viz, Firth of Forth), to (in *capitulum IX*) *Mare Hibernie*, ‘the sea of Ireland’ (water which leads ultimately to the Irish Sea but is, in fact, the Firth of Clyde). There are interesting parallels of arrangement here, but also unexpected names. It would be good to know how these fit with 12th- and 13th-century Scottish and English usage.

.IX. Qualiter Britones arctati a Scottis et Pictis pro romano miserint auxilio et obtinuerint; et quale consilium Romani eis dederint, videlicet ut *inter duo maria murum* per milia passuum plurima *trans insulam instruerint* a mare Scotie usque ad mare Hibernie, id est a Kair Eden civitas antiquissima *duorum ferme milium spacio a monasterio Abercurnig* – quod nunc vocatur Abercorn – *ad occidentem tendens, contra occidentem iuxta urbem Alcluth, at insulani murum non tam lapidibus quam cespitibus construentes ad nichilum utilem statuunt*, quia statim Romanis repatriantibus iterum ab ipsis impugnati sunt.

I have italicized those portions of this statement which have been drawn verbatim, though not in the same order, from Bede (*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I.12). This reference to Carriden (*Kair Eden*) was known to and quoted in translation by W J Watson (1926, 369–70), albeit with an impenetrable series of following comments about the identification, thus inaugurating a philological tradition of making heavy weather in this connection; but it seems to have escaped the attention of recent students of the Antonine Wall. Its importance is twofold: it tells us where the Wall was thought to have terminated, what the name of this place was, and therefore about the shifting relationships of name and place. We also learn something about the connections between Scotland and Cistercian Yorkshire in the later 12th century.

First, there is the question of the name. The oldest datable form quoted by Watson (1926, 370) and Angus MacDonald (1941, 25–6) was of c 1148, in a document (allegedly an original single sheet) of Robert, bishop of St Andrews (1124–59), granting the church of Carriden to the Augustinian abbey of Holyrood at Edinburgh (Lawrie 1905, 165–6, 416, no. CCVI), and showing the usual later medieval form for the first element (*Karreden*). These Gildasian *capitula*, in a manuscript of the beginning of the 13th century, twice demonstrate the Old Cumbric form with great clarity; and

from the Sawley additions to *Historia Brittonum* we must remember also *Penguaul* for Kinneil and the remarkable hybrid Cumbro-Gaelic *Cair Pentloch* for Kirkintilloch (Watson 1926, 346–8). There is every reason to think that the Sawley school was in effective contact with Scotland in the half-century 1164–1214 (for further evidence to this effect, see Barrow 1973, 200–3), but also that it had connections with Wales (Dumville 1977, *passim*); either or both of these points could have ensured the accurate use of Brittonic forms. The multilingualism displayed, in as much as it included Gaelic, suggests that the claim for Scottish influence in the work of the Sawley school should be admitted.

Kenneth Jackson strongly denied that Carriden derives from Old Cumbric *Cair Eidynd* (1969, 77–8; cf 1953, 362, n.1 and 1963, 80–3; MacDonald 1941, 26, offered a possible explanation involving the Cumbric equivalent of Welsh *cardden*) and urged that the notice in the Gildasian *capitulum* was a foreigner's attempt to refer to Edinburgh. (But the capitularist was not living in Ireland, as Jackson supposed – he wrote at Sawley; for further and fuller discussion see Watson 1926, 340–2, who showed beyond reasonable doubt what Jackson was to deny, that *Eidynd* could have been an area-name.) The objections that ancient Carriden had a Roman-period name, *Velunia(s)*, and that it was not the sort of major site which would attract a Brittonic *Cair*-name (the latter statement is doubly incorrect; note also Jackson's earlier opinion, 1963, 80–1, that Cumbric *Cair*- referred to minor places), may be brushed aside as neither here nor there, in view of the specific identification in the text. (One is also tempted to wonder whether in the phrase *Kair Eden civitas antiquissima* the capitularist was attempting an etymology.)

Secondly, there is the question of situation. The text describes *Kair Eden* not only as a very old *civitas* but also (accepting Bede's information) as situated almost two miles west of Abercorn (the capitularist's appears to be the first reported occurrence of this form: MacDonald 1941, 13), as standing on the *mare Scotie*, and as constituting one end of the Roman Wall. Carriden meets all these points very satisfactorily (Bailey & Devereux 1987; St Joseph 1949; Richmond & Steer 1957). It was a major Roman fort; moreover, a substantial *vicus* stood on its eastern side. Edinburgh is 15 miles to the east and it is inconceivable that the capitularist, accepting Bede's specific geographical information, was seeking to refer to it. We may allow, then, that the Sawley capitularist, writing c 1200, had access to local knowledge: Carriden was observed to meet Bede's data about the eastern end of the Roman Wall. Its relationship to the place which was called *Peanfahel* in Pictish, *Penneltun* in Old English, both according to Bede, and also *Cennfháil* in Irish and *Penguaul* in Old Cumbric, is a consequent difficulty. On the face of it, this is Kinneil (Watson 1926, 346–8; cf MacDonald 1941, 30–2), where there is a Roman fortlet. There is indeed an apparent contradiction between the two statements in Sawley additions, the *capitula* & Gildas's text (the Wall begins at *Kair Eden* near Abercorn) and the scholium to *Historia Brittonum* (at *Penguaul-Cenail-Peneltun*); although the existing copies of both were written c 1200, the scholium seems to derive from an earlier written source. We are obliged to suppose that the settlement-name has shifted: Kinneil, even taken as estate or parish (extending to the east of Bo'ness) rather than place, does not meet Bede's description; in as much as the name, in three Celtic languages, means 'end of the wall' (compare the English equivalent, Wallsend [on Tyne], at the eastern end of Hadrian's Wall), we must suppose that it once applied to Carriden, but that, as that name became established and physical evidence for the line of the easternmost sector of the Wall disappeared, the name 'End of the Wall' (in whichever Celtic language) moved westward in pursuit of its monument.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, M O 1980 *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland*. 2nd edn. Edinburgh.
 Armstrong, A M, et al. 1950–2 *The Place-names of Cumberland*. 3 vols. Cambridge.
 Bailey, G B & Devereux, D F 1987 'The Eastern Terminus of the Antonine Wall: a Review', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 117 (1987), 93–114.

- Baker, D 1975 'Scissors and paste: Corpus Christi, Cambridge, MS 139 again', *Studies in Church History* 11 (1975), 83–123.
- Barrow, G W S 1973 *The Kingdom of the Scots*. London.
- Breeze, D J 1982 *The Northern Frontiers of Roman Britain*. London.
- Brown, I G & Vasey, P G 1989 'Arthur's O'on again: Newly-discovered Drawings by John Adair, and their Context', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 119 (1989), 353–60.
- Colgrave, B & Mynors, R A B (ed & trans) 1969 *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Oxford (rev. imp., 1991).
- Dumville, D N 1975 'The *Liber Floridus* of Lambert of Saint-Omer and the *Historia Brittonum*', *Bull Board Celtic Stud*, 26 (1974–6), 103–22.
- Dumville, D N 1977 'Celtic-Latin Texts in Northern England, c. 1150–c. 1250', *Celtica*, 12 (1977), 19–49.
- Dumville, D N 1984 'The Chronology of *De Excidio Britanniae*, Book I', in Lapidge, M & Dumville, D (ed), *Gildas: New Approaches*, Woodbridge, 61–84.
- Dumville, D N (ed) 1985– *The Historia Brittonum*. 10 vols. Cambridge. In progress.
- Dumville, D N 1990 *Histories and Pseudo-histories of the Insular Middle Ages*. Aldershot.
- Dumville, D N 1993 *Britons and Anglo-Saxons in the Early Middle Ages*. Aldershot.
- Dumville, D N forthcoming *Cistercians, Northumbrians, and British History: Sawley Abbey and the Scholarly Tradition*.
- Ekwall, E 1960 *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names*. 4th edn. Oxford.
- Hanson, W S, & Maxwell, G S 1983 *Rome's North-West Frontier: The Antonine Wall*. Edinburgh (rev. imp., 1986).
- Helm, R (ed) 1956 *Eusebius Werke, VII, Die Chronik des Hieronymus. Hieronymi Chronicon*. 2nd edn. Berlin.
- Jackson, K [H] 1953 *Language and History in Early Britain*. Edinburgh.
- Jackson, K [H] 1963 'Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria', in Lewis, H (ed), *Angles and Britons (O'Donnell Lectures)*, 60–84. Cardiff.
- Jackson, K H (trans) 1969 *The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem*. Edinburgh.
- Jones, C W (ed) 1977 *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars VI: Opera Didascalica, 2*. Turnhout (= *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, 123 B).
- Lawrie, A C (ed) 1905 *Early Scottish Charters Prior to AD 1153*. Glasgow.
- Loomis, R S 1956 'Scotland and the Arthurian Legend', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 89 (1955–6), 1–21.
- MacDonald, A 1941 *The Place-names of West Lothian*. Edinburgh.
- Mawer, A 1920 *The Place-names of Northumberland and Durham*. Cambridge.
- Miller, M 1970 'Bede's Roman Dates', *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 31 (1970), 239–52.
- Miller, M 1982 'Matriline by Treaty: the Pictish Foundation-legend', in Whitelock, D et al. (ed), *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, Cambridge, 133–61.
- Mommsen, T (ed) 1891–8 *Chronica Minora Saec. IV. V. VI. VII*. 3 vols. Berlin.
- Richmond, I A, & Steer, K A 1957 'Castellum Veluniate and Civilians on a Roman Frontier', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 90 (1956–7), 1–6.
- St Joseph, J K 1949 'The Roman Forts at Carriden and Brownhart Law', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 83 (1948–9), 167–74.
- Thomas, C 1984 'Abercorn and the Provincia Pictorum', in Miket, R & Burgess, C (ed), *Between and Beyond the Walls: Essays on the Prehistory and History of North Britain in Honour of George Jobey*, Edinburgh, 324–37.
- Thompson, E A 1979 'Gildas and the History of Britain', *Britannia*, 10 (1979), 203–26, & 11 (1980), 344.
- Watson, W J 1926 *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland*. Edinburgh.
- Winterbottom, M (ed & trans) 1978 *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*. Chichester.
- Zangemeister, C (ed) 1882 *Pauli Orosii Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII; accedit eiusdem Liber Apologeticus*. Vienna.