

‘Gallici Nautae de Galliarum Provinciis’ — A Sixth/Seventh Century Trade with Gaul, Reconsidered¹

By CHARLES THOMAS

IN AN EXTENDED MODEL for maritime trade with Atlantic Britain and Ireland in post-Roman times, two ‘phases’ are postulated. Phase 1 involves long-distance imports of amphorae, accompanied by fine red slip-wares and glass, from the Mediterranean. Phase 2, perhaps rooted in 4th–5th century contact with Gaul, is best seen in the late 6th and 7th centuries, and marked by widespread importation of ‘Class E’, a kitchen-ware of continuing Gallo-Roman appearance. It is suggested that this was ancillary to a vigorous trade of Gaulish wine in barrels, not archaeologically evidenced; literary references are adduced. Possible witnesses to Insular contact with Merovingian or Frankish Gaul are examined. Actual Frankish mercenaries serving abroad are seen as likely, with a range of British and Irish finds of ornaments and weapons that, while seen generally as ‘Germanic’, may be Frankish rather than Anglo-Saxon and so support this hypothesis. Despite years of sporadic searching, the production centre for Class E pottery remains unlocated; re-affirming a belief that it lies in north-central France, ideas for further work conclude the paper.

Thirty years ago, in volume III of our Society’s journal, I contributed a paper on post-Roman imported pottery found in western Britain and in Ireland.² It contained a pioneer description, with illustrations and a gazetteer of find-spots, of a kind of pottery labelled ‘Class E’. Why this name? Reporting in 1954 upon the finds from Gwithian, Cornwall, site GM/I, I was able to match some of the sherds — from a stratified domestic settlement near the sea-shore — with what at Tintagel Dr Radford was calling his ‘Class A’ and ‘Class B’, respectively the late classical red-slipped table wares and the various Mediterranean amphorae.³ The letters ‘C’ and ‘D’ were pre-empted for other Tintagel ceramic groups,⁴ ‘C’ being some pitchers now known to be fully medieval⁵ and ‘D’ subsequently regarded as the French *groupe Atlantique* among the late forms derived from Gaulish *sigillées paléochrétiennes*.⁶ ‘Class E’, not being found at Tintagel, was simply the next available letter. In a 1956 report⁷ Class E, as encountered in Cornwall, was correctly linked to occurrences in Devon, Wales, Ireland and Scotland and its obvious ‘late Roman’ appearance was emphasized. Within my 1959 descriptive round-up I suggested that Class E was probably Merovingian, using the term in a broad cultural and chronological sense; or else Frankish, and that its sources lay between the rivers Somme and Rhine. This remark

had been influenced by a number of published near-parallels in current German and Dutch journals — at that date not only more widely available in Britain than many of the French regional periodicals, but tending to contain long reports on sites of a particular period that (cemeteries apart) our French colleagues had hardly begun to explore. However by 1966 the sheer improbability of an otherwise un-evidenced maritime trade-link between the Baltic or Frisian ports and, exclusively, Atlantic Britain and Ireland, together with the discovery⁸ that Class E lacked the distinctive grits and minerals of the Rhenish fabrics, led to fresh ideas. In 1967 Dr David Peacock and I published a paper⁹ arguing in favour of an Atlantic French, or possibly Paris basin, origin. This was proposed both on distributional and on detailed petrological grounds. Since the late 1960s the topic — one might say, the enigma — of Class E pottery has spawned a minor industry of dissertations, notes and counter-notes, to some of which I shall have occasion to refer. I conclude this introductory passage by asserting my belief that Class E is a range of wheel-made domestic pottery of ‘continuing Gallo-Roman’ character, that it originates in what is now France, that today we have a great deal of the material for examination and that its importation formed part of a necessarily seaborne trade to be defined below as *Phase 2*. What neither we nor, more to the point, our fellow-workers in France yet know is exactly where Class E was made.

Gallici nautae de Galliarum provinciis. The words are found in the 28th chapter, 1st book (‘Of prophetic revelations’), of the *Life* of Columba of Iona, by Adamnan.¹⁰ The setting is the little isle of Iona, then called *Í* (*Hii* in Bede) and latinized as *Iova* by Adamnan, just west of Mull off the western Scottish coast at NGR NM 2724. The occasion was one when, after harvest, St Columba experienced a vision of a far-away volcanic eruption, in that very hour taking place in Italy (*intra Italiae terminos*), in which thousands had perished. Columba validated his vision, as it were, by simultaneously recounting it to his associate Lugbe (*Lugbeus*) moccu-Min and adding ‘Before this year’s end, Gaulish seamen arriving from the provinces of the Gauls will tell you the very same thing’. The harvest in the Inner Isles then, as now, probably took place at the start of our autumn; agriculturally there would be some slack time over the winter, and ‘after a few months’ (*post aliquot menses*) when Columba and Lugbe happened to be visiting another place, Lugbe was able to talk to the masters and crew of a ship that arrived. They confirmed exactly what Columba had said.

The date must lie between the foundation of the monastery at Iona in 563 (better, 565) and the saint’s death in 597. The story is very probably true; the exegeses of many of Adamnan’s anecdotes strain modern credulity, but mundane details and reports of external events have a decided ring of historicity.¹¹ Adamnan, the 9th abbot of Iona and from the same extended Irish family as Columba, composed his *Life* between 688 and 692,¹² could talk with men who in youth had known Columba’s immediate circle, and (since Adamnan was born about 628) may conceivably have met old men who lived well before 597. If we could pinpoint this Italian eruption or catastrophe we would have a useful absolute date; but we cannot, and Notker Balbulus’s 9th-century pointer¹³ to what is today Cittanova, or rather Novigrad, south of Trieste is only a guess.

Adamnan called the ship from Gaul a *barca*; not any of the words he used for the local craft and presumably for a larger or exotic merchantman.¹⁴ It was encountered when Columba and Lugbe travelled *ad caput regionis*, 'to the head (place) of the region'. In Primitive Irish as in British, place-name study makes it clear that the words translatable by Latin *caput* (respectively **quenn-as*, **penn-os*, now Irish *ceann*, Welsh *pen*) were early subject to a semantic spread, in the abstract towards 'top, chief, principal' and in the physical from 'head (= *caput*)' to 'end, extremity'. Thus earlier commentators supposed that *caput regionis* here must have meant the promontory of Kintyre (Gaelic *Ceann-Tìre*, 'end of the land') and W. J. Watson went so far as to have the ship from Gaul land at the modern port of Campbeltown, NR 7221.¹⁵ Subsequently, the prominent citadel of the Rock of Dunadd in western Argyll (at NR 8494) has been favoured.¹⁶ It seems likely that the *caput regionis* was on a coast, but so too are most of the better-known citadels within the post-Roman, Irish-colonized, kingdom of Dalriadic Scotland.¹⁷

The *Life* of Columba was by no means Adamnan's only literary production. Between 683 and 686 he compiled *De Locis Sanctis* — an extended, and still very readable, travelogue about a visit to the Holy Places, based on what he had learnt from a certain bishop Arculf.¹⁸ This man, *gente Gallus*, 'by race a Gaul', turned up at Iona after an eastern tour that had occupied him between 679 and 682, stayed for a while and dictated his reminiscences at great length to his host. Bede, who acquired a copy of *De Locis Sanctis* and much admired it, was somehow informed that Arculf was a bishop among the Gauls, *Galliarum episcopus*; had been shipwrecked by tempest on the west coasts of Britain (unspecified); and had got to Iona after various adventures (unspecified).¹⁹ Arculf's name, for the right date, cannot be identified among surviving bishop-lists, though there are slight hints in favour of Burgundy.²⁰ How his failure to reach a, presumably Atlantic, port in France took him *via* western Britain to Iona remains a mystery.

We have, then, sailors said to be Gaulish arriving in their *barca* in western Scotland between 565 and 597 — say around 580; a century later the enforced landing, probably from a Gaul-bound ship, of Arculf; and going back to the 5th century Patrick, a Briton, narrating in his *Confessio* how as a lad he escaped from slavery in the north of Ireland (this in the late 430s)²¹ and from some point on Ireland's southern coast sailing in a ship to — I believe myself — the north coast of Armorica. Master and crew were pagans, Patrick conversed with them, and hence they were native Irish; individual trading between Ireland and Gaul forms the least unlikely explanation for a trip that is not, in Patrick's version, implied to be anything remarkable.

From the 5th to 8th centuries we have a cluster of such tantalizing references. This is no place to repeat them in detail; all are well known to specialist students, and they have been recently and usefully summarized by both Charles Doherty²² and Edward James.²³ Still for the 5th century, we have a distinct possibility that a real Palladius came to the east coast of Ireland, and if he was connected with Auxerre (or any part of central France) a direct sea-voyage from some such point as the Loire is — for 431 — perhaps more likely than a circuitous trip across Britain. The Irish cleric Columbanus, who towards the end of the 6th century may equally as well have

gone by sea from north-east Ireland (Bangor, Co. Down?) directly to Gaul, was in 610 in the area of Nantes; expelled from Burgundy, he was being sent home. Here Columbanus met a ship that had just brought goods from Ireland, and was waiting to make the return voyage.²⁴ What all these *barcae* or Irish and Gaulish traders could have been carrying is open to conjecture. The 8th-century Life of St Philibert (Filibert),²⁵ referring to the previous century, tells how various ships 'of the Irish' (*Scothorum*) arrived at the island monastery of Noirmoutier, just south of the river Loire's mouth. They brought *calciamenta ac uestamenta larga copia*, an ample supply of footwear and clothing. Notable individuals could be ferried around (including Bishop Arculf, who as a proto-archaeologist actually noted the dimensions of key buildings and sketched ground-plans for Adamnan)²⁶ and the surviving accounts of western pilgrims to the Holy Land, from the 4th century, portray something of the arduous of travel by sea and land.²⁷ The young Merovingian prince Dagobert, bundled off to exile in Ireland in 656 through the agency of Desiderius (or Dido) of Poitiers, probably made a direct voyage from Atlantic France. In an ingeniously-reasoned paper Dáibhí Ó Cróinín shows²⁸ that Dagobert's twenty-year stay was likely to have been at 'Rath Melsigi', a monastery that also housed a group of Anglo-Saxon monks.²⁹ This may be identifiable as the present Clonmelsh, Co. Carlow,³⁰ which would be reached from some east-coast landing place.

One could construct a distribution-map of such travellings. It would have little point, alas; accidents of history and chance survivals have given us these scattered glimpses. As allusions, and some of them are mere incidental allusions, they confirm the past existence of a sea link between Britain, Ireland, and — where, in satisfactorily precise terms? For the last point, we can glance at yet another puzzle, conveniently introduced from the *Lives* of Ciaran of Clonmacnoise.

Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, forms the site of a large monastic enclosure against the R. Shannon, traditionally founded in the 6th century; the site still holds any number of inscribed cross-slabs dating back to the 8th and later 7th centuries. The recensions of the traditional founding saint Ciaran are all late; in Latin, of the 13th and 14th centuries, and an Irish *Life* from the Book of Lismore (15th century). The most that the cautious James Kenney would allow is that a collection of texts and tales underlying these Lives may have been locally compiled 'not later than the 9th century'.³¹ One stock episode depicts a time of harvest and a feast held in honour of a visit by Columba of Iona; and then, perhaps in the following spring, merchants with the wine of the Gauls arrived and filled up a huge vessel that the community happened to own. *Mercatores cum vino Gallorum* — it is the wine, not the merchants, being described as 'of the Gauls'.³² In the Book of Lismore, put together before 1500 in Munster by a committee of clerics, the Irish version is slightly re-cast; *tucad telcoma lan d'fin otha tire franc*, 'there is brought a large vessel full of wine from the land of the Franks'.³³

We must be wary. This is not historical, the episode in Latin or Irish is nothing but a pretty literary-hagiographical trope, and by the 15th century wine, and wine-jugs, from Bordeaux and the Saintonge had been getting into Munster, mainly through Cork, for several hundred years. The confusion as to source is the point. In

the 1st millennium A.D., Insular³⁴ perception of the civilized world beyond the Channel had only the most meagre frame of reference; post-Ptolemaic geography, casual inclusions in secular Latin sources, and such rich but confusing encyclopaedias as Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*.³⁵ Of course we must take out, dust down and re-examine our few Insular references to maritime trade; but what did our predecessors mean by 'Gauls' or 'Franks'?

In the 5th century Patrick could contrast *romani galli christiani* — Gauls who, like himself, were also Roman citizens and Christians — with the pagan, because as yet unconverted, *franci*, 'the Franks'.³⁶ In written Latin, this spatial terminology continued to be drawn from that of the Roman administration with its civil divisions. Patrick wrote of his homeland as *in Britanniiis* (plural: *provinciis*, understood), and of the land of the Gauls as *Galliae* (plural).³⁷ Not much later the Briton Gildas knew that opposite Kent lay *Gallia Belgica* and that the usurper Maximus had withdrawn the army *ad Gallias* (plural).³⁸ In the late 7th century Adamnan was punctilious in writing of *Galliarum provinciis*. Bede, with access to wider learning and range of uses, employs in the *Historia* both singular and plural forms, *Gallia* and *Galliae*, in part according to whether he writes of the late Empire or of contemporary places and events.

Eventually, and most notably in the Irish-language literature of Ireland, the word borrowed from Latin *Gall-us*, *-i* (Ir. *Gall*) was eroded in meaning to the stage where it meant little more than 'from the Continent' and then popularly 'stranger, foreigner', hostile unless otherwise shown. *Gall* might be used of Scandinavian intruders; in connection with areas of mixed or partly non-Irish settlement (Galloway); and eventually for Anglo-Normans, the English, and even Irish who had lapsed into paganism.

From this process, even in the confines of an archaeological discussion, it is worth picking out (and archaeologically desirable to pick out) the name of the Franks. When Bede mentions the Franks, *Franci*, as when he writes of Frisia and the Frisians (*Frisonis*), these are precise allusions, just as his allusions to the real and definite Gauls. In a much wider setting, we must be struck by the long-lasting potency of the name of the Franks. Fuller exploration can be left to historically-minded psychologists, who might like to define the national trauma resulting from invaders superimposing their own labels upon the conquered. The daily and near-universal misuse of 'England' to describe (mainland) Britain, annoying as it may be to the Scots, Cumbrians, Manx, Irish, Welsh and Cornish, still does not provoke a counter-movement by those who prefer to regard themselves as British. In France, however, we observe the momentum of an odd process. France itself, with its inhabitants and speech, is named from the virile Germanic invaders beyond the *limites*, leaving the French of today with their 'Asterix' complex — that national need to reiterate a descent from the Gauls and, with it, their role as the prime inheritors of western Roman civilization. Linguists will know that, while it is still the majority opinion that Breton (the Celtic language of Armorica) was introduced by mass settlement from post-Roman southern Britain, there is an alternative proposition, at once more *séduisant* and more in accord with French feelings; namely, that Breton is principally or solely a remnant of Gaulish.³⁹

The *potestas* of Frank-dom, unlike the hazy image of the Gauls, spread much further afield. There are place-names in medieval Cornwall like the farm of Trink, probably from *Tre-freynk*, 'the tenement of the Franks', despite the near-certainty that these were simply post-Norman Bretons. Modern Egyptian Arabic contains a proper word for 'French' (*faransis* < Français) but also the very common *firengi*, plur. *afrang*, a generic for nearly all Europeans from the north side of the Mediterranean and one that, surely, pre-dates the impact of Napoleon. The early Frankish rulers, to judge from their relatively well-recorded story and the often curious attributes in their lives, and burials, partook strongly of sacral kingship⁴⁰ in a fashion not weakened by Roman control. Connoisseurs of the bizarre may like to know that the ultimate claim has now been voiced; the Merovingian kings, whose representatives even now hover in the wings until Europe summons them, are directly descended from Jesus Christ.⁴¹

The word *Franc*, in early Irish sources, having served as a kind of synonym for 'a Gaul, Gaulish',⁴² eventually replaced the latter word under the influence of written models as the 'correct' term for inhabitants of France.⁴³ The replacement left aside a separate incorporation into a compound noun *franc-amus*, the usual translation being 'a foreign mercenary', such as a Frank employed as a hired soldier outside his own land.⁴⁴ Discussion of this odd word has been largely philological. It also occurs in this sense in Welsh (as *ffranc*);⁴⁵ interestingly, Sir Ifor Williams considered it pre-Norman, as in his own inspired explanation of three isolated stanzas from the 9th-century glosses in the Juvenius Gospels.⁴⁶ They come from a poem in which a chieftain, defeated in battle, bemoans to himself at a camp-fire over his supper. He is to all intents now alone, because his sole companion is indicated in the words *mi amfranc* — 'Me and my Frank', a despicable mercenary who cannot count as a companion. Neither Sir Ifor, nor a range of distinguished Irish scholars noting other references to 'Franks' in early secular literature, took any of this literally. There has been a propensity to assign all such mentions to post-Norman times, the Franks having to stand for actual Normans. The point of our earlier excursus is to suggest, gently, that at least some of these early Franks may have been real. Did their reputation as the fearsome, once-pagan warriors who conquered much of Gaul place them in demand as bodyguards? Are we so positive that Merovingian soldiers from 6th–7th century Neustria and Austrasia, singly or in small bands, could not have reached Ireland (and western Britain)? What if they chanced to leave behind, in the lands where they served as mercenaries, recognizable items of their equipment?

Sherds of Class E pottery, as many excavators know, are often found singly or in small groups, and can be safely identified only through in-hand matching with reference specimens, the match being preferably confirmed by thin-sectioning.⁴⁷ In surface appearance and fabric, Class E can be confused with certain varieties of medieval wares (for example, in Scotland); yet it possesses a diagnostic texture, range of colours, composition, feel, and even (when dropped on a hard surface) sound or ring. All of it, in other words, is sufficiently uniform to imply a source no more diffuse than one group of commercial potters and kilns in a restricted locality. In Britain and Ireland, up to the end of 1989, fragments from nearly 200 vessels have

been recovered at about 60 sites — in some cases as a single sherd from limited trenching, in others as the remains of between ten and twenty pots.⁴⁸

Four relevant observations present themselves. Firstly, the whole appearance of Class E tells us that we are within a broad tradition of Roman wheel-made coarse pottery (and one can sympathize with those who, from time to time, have argued that E ware *must* have been made in post-Roman Britain — in some secret enclave of anachronistic potters). This typological descent was obvious even when the Rhine-land centres were thought to be germane, and it is still so now that a Gallo-Roman background is preferred. The occasional Atlantic French excavation⁴⁹ yields, in common hard grey fabrics, 3rd- and 4th-century material that provides a repertoire

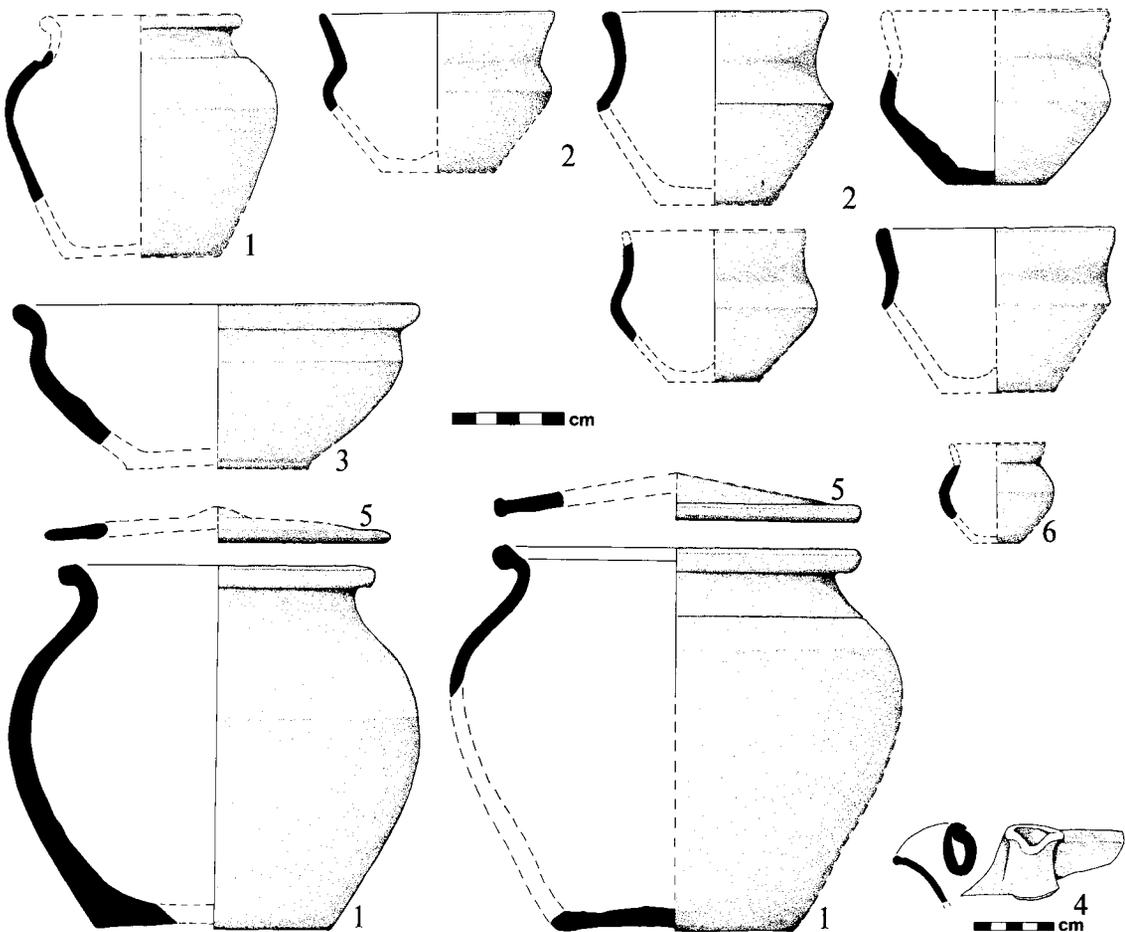


FIG. 1

Class E ware: numbered forms (replacing illustration in *Medieval Archaeology*, III (1959), fig. 43). 1: jars, large and small. 2: carinated beakers. 3: carinated bowl. 4: detail of spout from handled pitcher (body similar to large E1 jar). 5: conical pot-lids. 6: tiny 'unguent jar'. Drawings, all from Irish finds, by Mary O'Donnell

of background forms. There is a suspicion that Class E, if we encounter it in the 6th and 7th centuries, comes from a ceramic production-centre that had an unbroken output since the 4th century, if not before.

Secondly, the range of products is wholly domestic (Fig. 1). Jars of varying capacity (E1), to contain perhaps 1.5 to 3 of our Imperial pints, can have flatly-conical fitting lids (E5); the carinated bowls (E3) are like the modern pudding-dish; the small beakers (E2), if handle-less, are the same capacity as a modern coffee-mug; the spouted handled jars or pitchers (E4) have a body-size as for the plain E1 jars; and now we have a single instance of a tiny pot (E6) like an unguent- or cosmetic-jar.⁵⁰ Modern parallels must be adduced with caution, but (the absence of any plates or flat platters being recorded) there are any number of 'craft' or 'studio' potteries in present-day Britain and France, producing in sombre earthenware or Bernard Leach-inspired stoneware more or less the whole E ware range for the Good Life, the country week-ender and the vegetarian. We are seeing the ceramic furniture of a post-Roman villa kitchen, turned out by professionals and available from a market stall. I emphasize this to assert that, in its own home district, Class E pottery cannot have had very much value.

Thirdly, and this refers to the Insular recipients, Class E ware introduces a new *social* note — particularly in post-Roman Ireland, where because of the lack of a Roman occupation and other ill-defined causes domestic pottery was virtually unknown (the coarse 'souterrain ware' cooking-pots of the north-east may be no earlier than the 7th century).⁵¹ E2 beakers and E3 bowls or mugs are designed, Roman-style, for individual use, made in sizes to hold individual servings of stew or gruel and liquid. In Cornwall and Scilly, where Class E ware occurs at a number of sites, rustic *Dumnonia* had been sufficiently romanized to adopt the custom of the individual helping, and it is interesting to note that the two items missing from the Class E range — the flat low-walled plate or platter, and the straight-sided cooking pot to sit on or to hang over a fire — were precisely those supplied by the local, native, 'grass-marked' pottery.⁵² As for Wales, Dalriadic Scotland, and above all Ireland, Jonathan Wooding's percipient note⁵³ points out that the 'consumer currency' of Class E pots, emphasizing as they did the consumption rather than the preparation of food, must have been quite different from any mode of communal dips into a cauldron or of greasy Celtic fingers squabbling over a parboiled joint of meat. To which stratum of Irish society, and in what fresh context of social participation in a formal meal, would this imported domestic pottery appeal? This may be rather more than a marginal query.

Lastly, granted that all Insular finds of Class E represent imports, it seems outside reasonable belief to imagine that maritime traders would have braved the Channel approaches and the south Irish Sea simply to deliver small parcels of the local jars and mugs; and there are hints that, unlike the summer-only sailings from the Mediterranean, the ships from Gaul might arrive early in the year (*ad caput regionis*) and of course face shipwreck (Arculf's adventures). As in the case of the red-slip dishes that reached Britain from the Byzantine world, accompanying much more bulky shipments of amphorae, Class E pots must have been space-fillers.⁵⁴ The accident of their survival and their detection through archaeology gives the sherds of

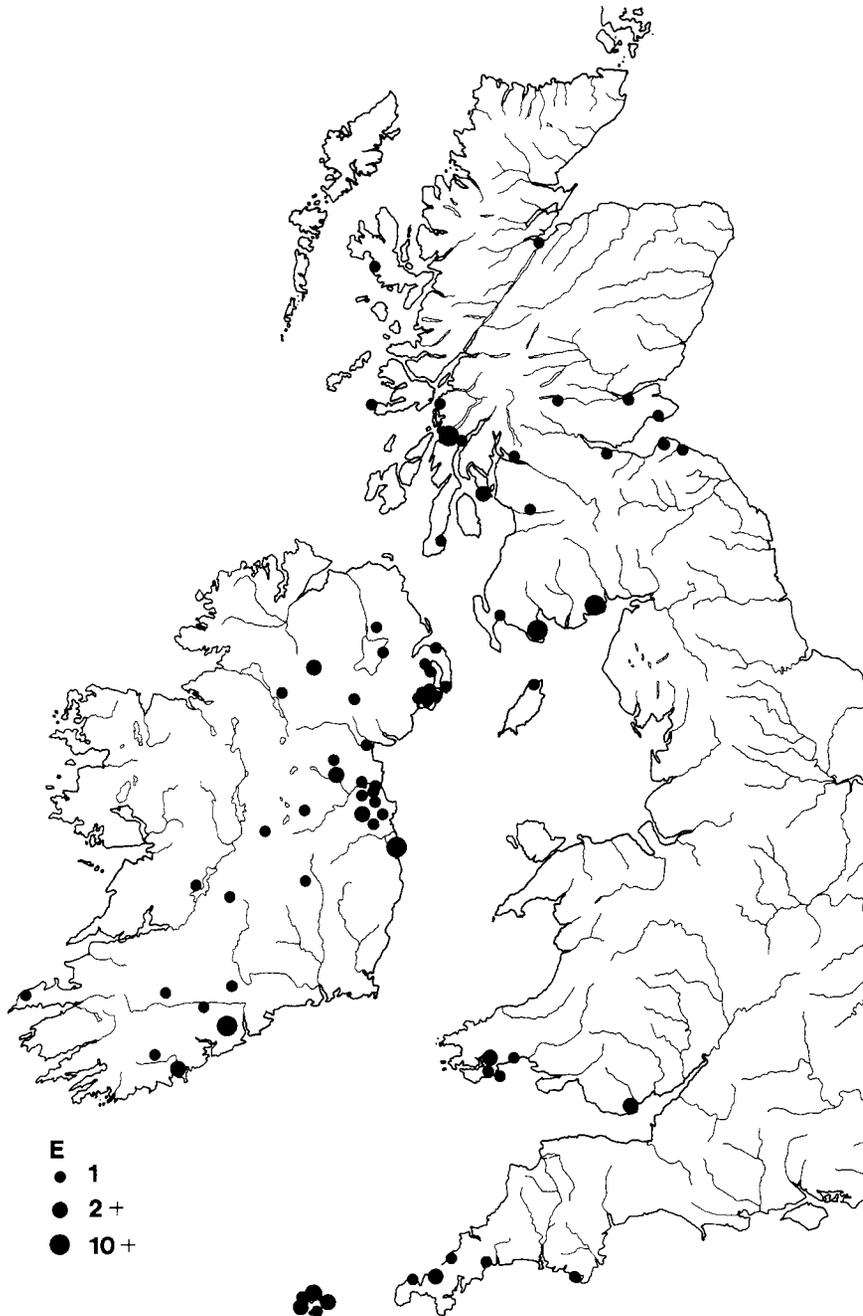


FIG. 2

Britain and Ireland: distribution of Class E ware, believed correct to end of 1989. Symbols indicate single sherd, or sherds of single vessel; two or more vessels; and ten or more

Class E a biased prominence. It will remain to be conjectured what form the main cargoes may have taken.

A new distribution map (believed to be correct to the end of 1989) shows the spread of Insular finds of Class E (Fig. 2). Most of the finds are admittedly from excavations, and while it is impossible to ignore (on such a map) the outcome of decades of field-work concentrated in north-east Ireland there are probably sufficient discoveries to show a partially representative pattern. Many of the inland sites or find-spots yielded one or two sherds or, at most, fragments of only one vessel.⁵⁵ Examining this map in economic terms, the impression is not unnaturally that importations were coastal, that batches of Class E were dismembered and items found their way to the interior. Thus, for example, the scatter of Class E sherds on Scotland's east coast is not necessarily to be read as the outcome of a bold ship circumnavigating the far North; these fragments probably came across country.

I am by no means unaware of, nor unsympathetic to, the very large corpus of writings that posit theoretical models for early medieval trade (perhaps one should say 'trade' if the word itself remains further undefined), but over the course of some years I have come to suspect that our shadowy pictures of post-Roman Insular contact with Europe are too imprecise, contain too many variable factors and too many peculiar features, and are in some strange way too pointedly *sui generis*, to fit into hypotheses of emporia and into the patterns that seem familiar as we move forward in time and closer to the former Roman heartlands in space. Using the present discussion of Class E pottery as a springboard, it may be helpful to start afresh, with the suggestion that the transmarine contact implied by Fig. 2 — depicting events centred on the period A.D. 550 to 650, let us say — was really a jerkily continuous story of contact extended through three or four centuries. Discontinuity, the temptation to isolate individual facets and aspects, is illusive; it has arisen from the episodic nature of discoveries, from the formation of constructs taken from uneven evidence, and from a failure to appreciate that those few individual, maritime, mercantile journeys which have left us any archaeological traces at all may represent a (genuinely) random fraction, out of a total tally across the centuries of a hundred or more sailings.

The assertion that contact across the seas — E. G. Bowen's 'western seaways' — may have been commonplace will always (unless and until the maritime archaeologists, against all probability, discover and date an appropriate wreck) have to rely on inference. This has had to be acceptable for years; if — as the evidence of language and history informs us — post-Roman Armorica was settled *en masse* from Cornwall, Devon and Dorset, that hundred-mile sail across the chops of the Channel must have been a weekly norm. No tangible evidence remains. Nor, indeed (as our Society's members from Cornwall and Brittany are all too aware), is there any archaeology, in terms of diagnostic artefacts including pottery, of any such settlement, despite fairly prolonged search.

We all know (if we pause to think about it) that the Roman empire, the traces of whose western provinces are inevitably presented to us in the guise of terrestrial archaeology, was also a maritime power. In later times it contained crude approximations to our own Royal Navy, Merchant Navy and perhaps fishery co-operatives.

One of the bases of cosmography had been the practical accounts of ships' masters, in a sphere where precise knowledge spelled competitive success and where navigational skills could be handed on through guilds. In Britain and Ireland, our remote north-western corner of that empire, the emphases within external maritime contact — the actual routes to the western seaways — can be expected to have varied from the 4th to 8th centuries, as Roman Europe itself dissolved and re-formed. It is therefore convenient, even if we have to speak from comparative ignorance, to posit a new model of two major phases of sea-trading.

Phase 1, we can picture, stands for events in the 5th and 6th centuries (more closely, one might say from the mid 5th to later 6th) and is characterized by contact with Mediterranean lands; the long haul through the Pillars of Hercules and then northwards along the Iberian coast. Classical sources imply that such hazardous trips were confined to the full summer, and the probability that some part of the voyage involved coast-hopping and occasional beachings raises the problem (valid, wholly relevant, and insufficiently explored)⁵⁶ of any intermediacy involving Spain and Portugal. *Phase 2*, a less extended link, is presumably rooted in the 3rd and 4th centuries and a general sea-contact between Roman Gaul and Roman Britain, from Boulogne westwards around Brittany and down to the Gironde. The early ceramic importations (e.g., certain types of amphorae,⁵⁷ *poterie à l'éponge* and so-called Argonne Ware)⁵⁸ stress the use of land or river-routes across the western provinces and the short Channel crossings, very much at the expense of any longer voyages starting from the Atlantic coast. Less clearly apparent in what may involve the 5th and 6th centuries are the importations, from some part of Gaul, of glass (vessels rather than fragments) that might be called 'Merovingian' and of very small quantities of 'Class D' pottery.⁵⁹ The focus of Phase 2, overlapping with (but later than) Phase 1, seems to lie in the 6th and 7th centuries and is evidenced by Class E pottery, if not by other objects; and the emphasis, as the scant historical clues tell us, is now Atlantic.

These two phases represent quite different commercial phenomena. We need not search for any direct connection between a Greek or Levantine entrepreneur, financing the odd summer-sailing venture to distant Britain, and the surviving Gallo-Roman *navicularius* sending his *barca* out from the Loire or the Gironde. Yet where the two worlds did, momentarily and mysteriously, meet was at the destination; in the coincidence, perhaps only of space and not of space-plus-time, that sometimes they dealt with the same Insular customers. While modern archaeology leaves no doubt as to the reality of that statement, historians and linguists may remain puzzled that the rich resource of early Insular literature yields absolutely no hint of it.

The commerce behind Phase 1 lends itself to a new and close analysis, stemming from the re-examination (since 1981) of the huge range of imported vessels — they amount to thousands of sherds, many large — found at Tintagel, Cornwall.⁶⁰ Areas and points of manufacture of nearly all the Mediterranean varieties have been identified. If we glance at a recent map (Fig. 3) of these Phase 1 imports, we observe a southern emphasis. On the map, the differentiated and numbered lines pick out just four, potential and individual, voyages. This is a minimal view, but voyage No. 1

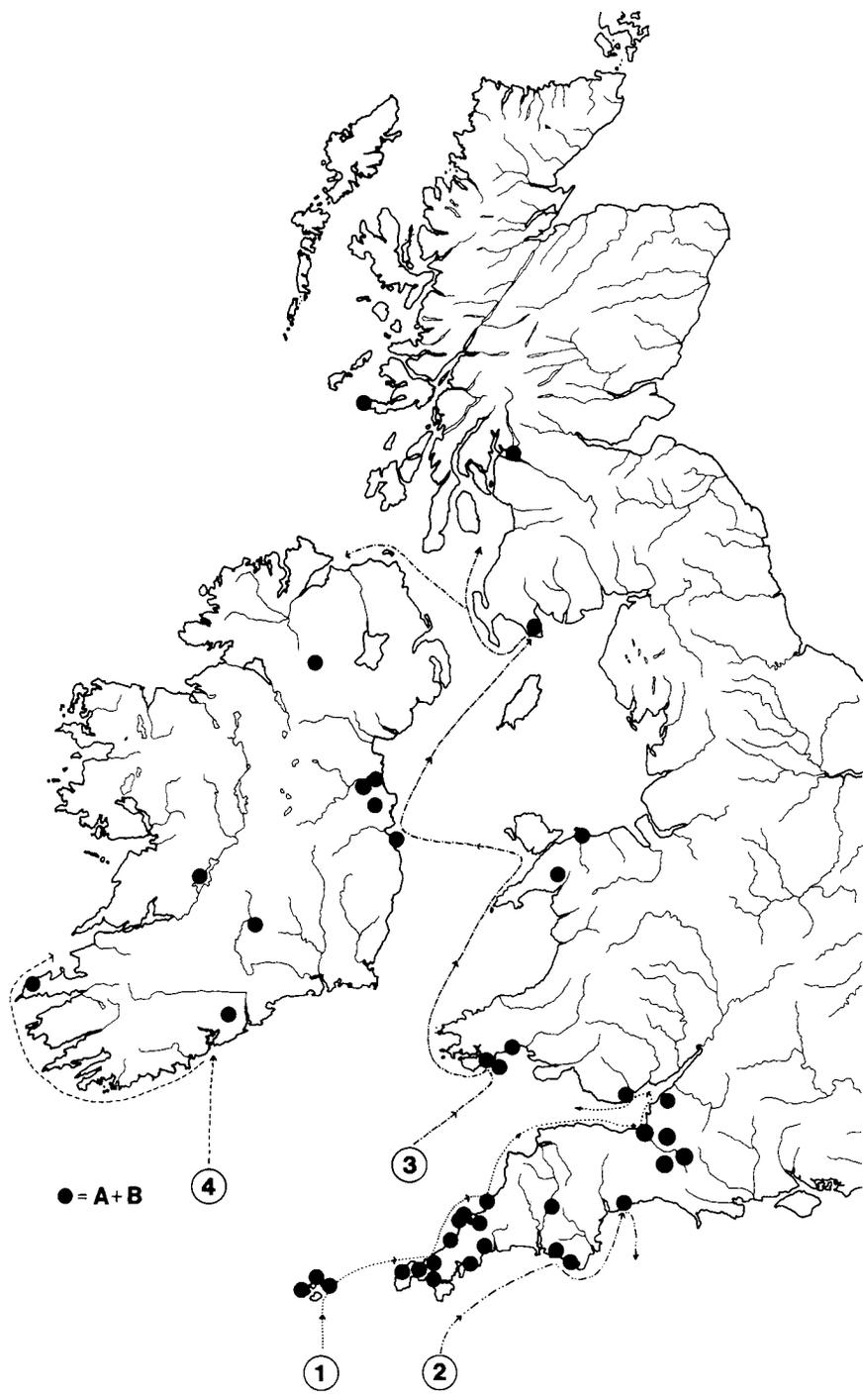


FIG. 3

Britain and Ireland; distribution of imported Mediterranean wares, former 'A' (red slip wares) and 'B' (amphorae). Lines indicate suggested routes of a minimum four separate trading-voyages

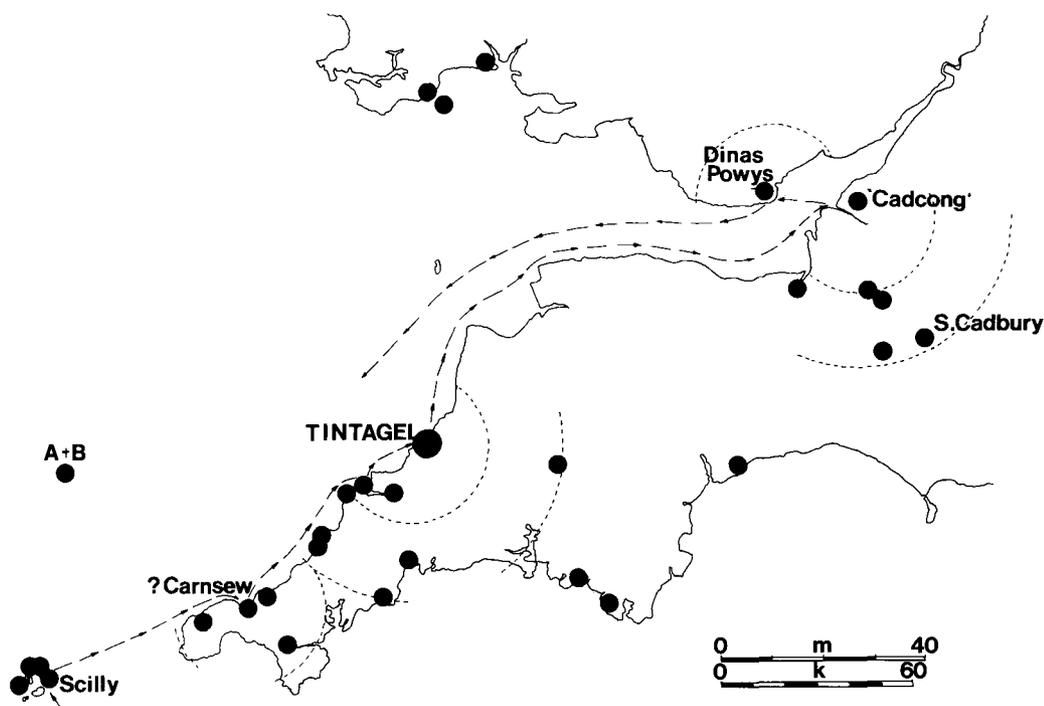


FIG. 4

Details of 'Voyage no. 1' from Fig. 3. Symbol indicates all finds of imported Mediterranean pottery, undifferentiated as to type and quantity. Radiating arcs at 15 and 30 miles (24 and 48 km) suggest trips on foot or with pack-animals of one and two days respectively

might be portrayed in rather more detail (Fig. 4) because circumstances have allowed its reflections to be studied in depth. The first landfall was Scilly, where during the historic Middle Ages ships usually called to get fresh water, if not to pillage the few inhabitants and to slaughter livestock. At least two identifiable landings took place on the north Cornish coast, the principal one at Tintagel, where most of the cargo was unladen; this preceded eventual calls in the Severn estuary, firstly to the riverine citadel of 'Cadbury-Congresbury' and then across to Dinas Powys on the Welsh shore. Ingot tin in Cornwall, pewter in Somerset, and a final re-stocking with provisions at Dinas Powys,⁶¹ may have constituted the trade returns for the delivery of amphorae filled with edible oil (fairly certain), wine (assumed) and perhaps other commodities.

All other excavated or casual finds of Phase 1 imports in south-west Britain can be explained as the outcome of a process of diffusion from these named coastal points; whether as gifts to subordinates, as items of exchange or as souvenirs will have depended upon precise circumstances. What the coastal points on the mainland — possibly a fortlet at Carnsew, Hayle, in west Cornwall; then Tintagel; Cadcong or Cadbury-Congresbury; and Dinas Powys — had in common, within a purely Celtic fabric of society,⁶² was their contemporary 5th–6th century status as

'centres of power' or 'centres of tribute'. Rather than being commercial entrepôts in any sense that later centuries might allow, they were all places of defensive (and in the case of Tintagel, one would add 'princely') character where goods suitable for trade could be gathered in by tribute or levy, using appropriate and indigenous social mechanisms.

As for the later or secondary aspect of Phase 2, its 'lateness' depends upon the dates allotted to the import of Class E ware. In the absence of known Continental sources, where even one certain kiln might yield absolute chronology, such dates can only be inferred with difficulty from the Insular contexts. In general, it has long been realized that Class E finds occur later, or are bunched later, than those of Phase 1 Mediterranean material; but, pending a proper and lengthy examination, a brief summary must be its substitute here. Scottish citadels, subjected to trial excavation, and with both C-14 determinations and annalistic dates for such events as sieges, *combustiones* and probable re-fortifications, allow Class E sherds to be fairly certainly 7th century.⁶³ At Clogher, Co. Tyrone, sherds of Class E are significantly above, and separated by a sterile yellow layer from, a level with Phase 1 Mediterranean pottery (B ii amphorae).⁶⁴ At Dinas Powys, as also at Gwithian, site GM/I, more of Class E comes from higher stratified levels than do any of the Phase 1 imports.⁶⁵ In Cornwall and Scilly generally the Class E pottery, markedly more so than with the Phase 1 material, is contextually associated with the native grass-marked pottery; and while the latter is concentrated in the west of Cornwall, both it and Class E ware are totally missing from Tintagel, where specific types of amphorae, and of both Phocaeen and African Red Slip Wares, suggest that the occupation of Tintagel Island did not outlast the 6th century.⁶⁶

If one reproduces the distribution map of Class E finds, one can now distinguish upon it (Fig. 5) those sites that also yielded the earlier Phase 1 imports. This adds a dimension to the problem, because no consistent factor springs to the eye. The immediate explanation would be that such sites were occupied (continuously or at intervals) over the 5th to 7th centuries, and it is clear that many of them are in south-west Britain and in Wales, where any disruption from the Anglo-Saxon settlements was hardly a factor before the 8th century. Deeper explanations will have to be sought in consideration of individual sites, and some may have retained a local or regional importance throughout the whole period of history. This may have been the case with native strongholds like Dumbarton Rock on the Clyde, or Garranes (Co. Cork) and Clogher in Ireland; we await the elucidation of whatever existed at pre-Anglian Whithorn, now under excavation;⁶⁷ and as for such Irish monasteries as Reask and Iniscealtra, there would be independent grounds for thinking that they existed in the 6th and 7th centuries.

But for both Phase 1 and Phase 2, a more important question remains. Since most of the Mediterranean imports were containers, primarily for liquids, it has to be supposed that they were brought to Britain and Ireland with appropriate contents (wine, olive oil) and that in due course this is open to confirmation through residue analysis. For Phase 2, it was contended earlier that Class E pots are no more than ancillary, fortuitously preserved, markers within a commerce about which we lack hard information. To start at the other end, the *Life* of St Filibert suggests Irish

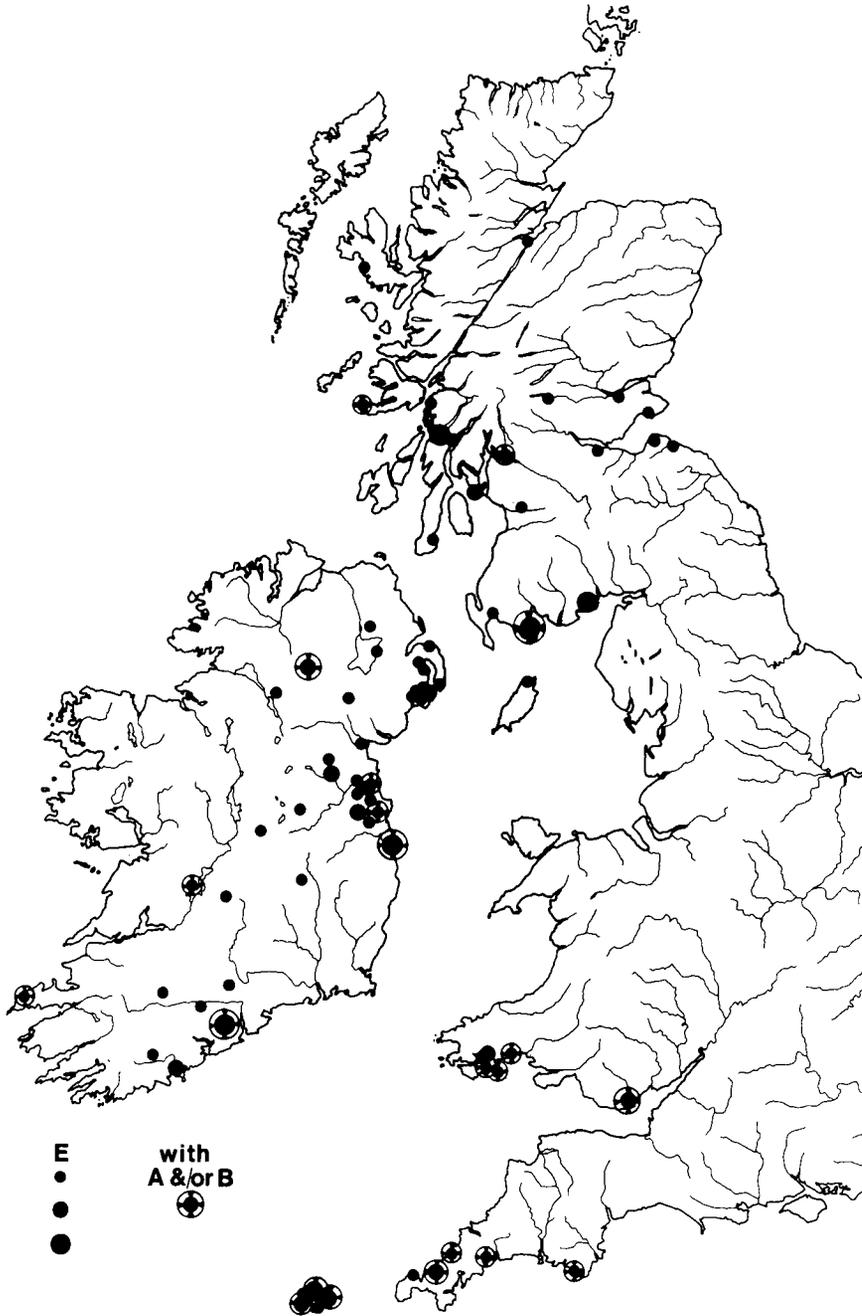


FIG. 5

Distribution of Class E ware (as Fig. 2), indicating all sites that also yield the, presumably earlier, imported Mediterranean pottery

exports of shoes and clothing, products of hide from a pastoral country and products of weaving from a country replete with sheep and wool. Putting aside the chance of specialized, Phase 1, exports like Cornish tin, one might guess that in the casual supply of woollen *vestimenta* — like the ingots of streambed alluvial tin, from a 'cottage industry'⁶⁸ — parts of western Britain form as likely a supplier as Ireland. J. P. Wild, as the man who rehabilitated the famous *byrrus Britannicus*, long ago listed⁶⁹ all those terms for clothing that, like the articles themselves, entered the Roman world through Celtic. This makes sense, and there is hardly a post-Roman site that has not contained evidence for sheep, spinning and simple textiles. The attractive notions about exports of Irish wolf-hounds and of Irish slaves ought to be relegated to folklore.

As for the imports, in particular whatever Phase 2 imports overshadowed Class E pottery, Heinrich Zimmer (who lived and wrote too long ago to have recourse to archaeological evidence)⁷⁰ was convinced that *wine* was the predominant commodity brought in. In re-reading his arguments, nearly a century after their utterance, two things now persuade me that Zimmer was right. Trade will succeed, and then be repeated, if one can get others to accept at an agreed rate some commodity that they find desirable, in exchange for goods that one desires, needs, or does not produce one's self. Whether or not wine was made in any quantity in Roman Britain, the Irish (who took the very word *fin* from Latin *vinum*) may have known what it was, but certainly did not and could not make it in Ireland. The literary and grammatical references to wine in early Irish sources (in both Irish and Latin) are invariably to wine of the Gauls, or of the lands of the Gauls, and regardless of what a phrase like *i tirib gallaib* means in terms of precise geography I believe we must accept that the Irish did not have cause to refer to wine from any place other than Atlantic Europe. It is remotely possible that the occasional amphora (of types Bi and Bii) was re-filled with wine in a Gaulish or Frankish locality⁷¹ but that does not outweigh the cumulative force of all our references to 'Gaul', *lato sensu*. That is the first point; the second may come as a slight surprise, and is too technical to be expanded in a general article. The amphorae, the mass-produced pottery containers, that dominate the Phase 1 goods brought in from the eastern Mediterranean and from North Africa, have for years been assumed by most students (myself included) to have held wine. This is because within their known production areas and circulations such amphorae were so used; wine, from obvious and well-known regions *vignobles* around the Aegaeon,⁷² was a major, but by no means exclusive, content. However, so simple a belief is increasingly to be questioned. Of the total of all amphorae identified from rims, handles and bases found at Tintagel — between 100 and 120, and these from excavations of possibly only 5 to 10 per cent of the site — 27 of type Bv, the largest, seem to be of a North African variety firmly linked to the export of olive oil,⁷³ the 29 of Bii (from the SE. coast of Turkey) are also very probably for oil, three of Biv were used as water-bottles, twenty or more untyped are mostly North African and again possibly for oil, and only the Bi amphorae (34 noted) are candidates for wine-containers. In view of what has been said, we should require the negative evidence of residue analysis before being able to state that the Bi amphorae were *not* used for oil.⁷⁴ The quantities of Bi amphorae from the relevant

sites in Ireland, so far only three or four all told, rule out the Mediterranean on archaeological grounds as a Phase 1 supplier of wine to the Irish.

We therefore return, with Zimmer and others, to the notion of the principal Phase 2 cargoes from Gaul consisting of wine in cask, or barrel. While it is never easy to find much hard evidence for perishables, I pointed out various telling clues many years ago.⁷⁵ There is ample witness (documentary, archaeological and pictorial) to the widespread use of wooden barrels in Roman Gaul, up to the Rhine itself, and if conditions under Merovingian rule permitted the continuation of numerous crafts and trades — potters, for instance — why deny this to the useful cooper? For Britain and Ireland, we must note (from the *Life of Columba*)⁷⁶ Adamnan's use of a simile, in which he linked his own imperfect recital of Columba's sanctity to 'little droplets oozing out through the cracks of a vessel full of new, strongly-fermenting wine'. He wrote *vas* ('vessel') because he knew no specific word for 'barrel' — Irish *bairille* and *casca* are much more recent loan-words — but I am confident that the passage was composed only as a result of first-hand observation. Wine was most certainly known at Iona in Columba's time⁷⁷ and was necessary for the Eucharist on certain occasions; it was presumably drawn off from a barrel in the *urceus* or pitcher otherwise used to collect well-water. From Ireland only (this without examining a great many excavation reports) there are examples of staves and bottoms of composite wooden vessels, mostly of yew when they have been examined, and while some are from buckets there is a barrel-stave from Lagore,⁷⁸ a pegged hoop from Lough Faughan crannog, Co. Down, just south of Downpatrick,⁷⁹ and possibly other barrel fragments from Ballinderry.⁸⁰ All these sites also produced fragments of Class E.

Terms like 'Frankish' and 'Merovingian', applied to a huge range of smaller decorative and functional objects from north-west Europe in the 5th to 8th centuries — objects of both Roman and native Iron Age typological descent — can be as imprecisely mis-used as the word 'Germanic', when employed for small finds from post-Roman British and Irish sites outside the area of English settlement, so-called because they are not apparent as later versions of either local late Iron Age or Romano-British character. Nevertheless it is possible to move towards slightly more satisfactory identifications, the more so when exotic or 'Germanic' trivia are found in Insular contexts where the earliness of the date, or sheer distance, or both together, preclude haphazard diffusion from any Anglo-Saxon source as a likely explanation.

The objects in question tend to be (a) decorative or ornamental, and (b) items of warlike equipment, and this second category takes us back to the suggestion that some of the material may have been introduced on or with the persons of Frankish (or Gaulish, or even Visigothic) mercenaries serving in Ireland. In the discussion below, which is no more than a dip — if a revealing dip — into a promising bran-tub, I omit a considerable array of plain or complex glass beads, bangles and even small glass vessels, many of which (however described in early reports) can certainly be matched on the Continent.⁸¹ We travel from south to north. In the Isles of Scilly, an agricultural homestead on the island of Tean was superseded around 700 by a lay burial-ground and small stone chapel, but during the 5th to 7th centuries was in receipt of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 pottery imports — for example, at least nine

Class E pots, Class E being not uncommon in Scilly where it has now been found at five or six sites. The farm was pastoral in emphasis, its midden yielding traces of 20 cattle, 33 sheep and 6 pigs, all small island breeds, and as it lay on the northern periphery of the islands it may somehow have functioned as a small victualling establishment. Among small bronze objects (Fig. 6) was a little openwork ornament with dot-and-circle work and opposed birds' heads, its back studded for fastening to leather, that in so remote a spot was surely an import; and, with one end hammered flat, a piece of end-loop bronze twisted around its stem that resembles components of the multi-piece *Gürtelgehänge*, or 'chatelaines', found in the graves of Frankish ladies.⁸²

From the triple ring-fort at Garranes, Co. Cork. came both Phase 1 Mediterranean imports, and three Class E1 jars. Bronze finds included a small sphere of

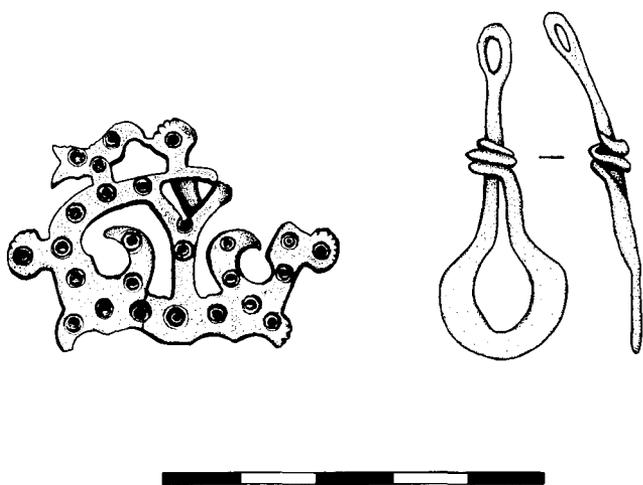


FIG. 6

Tean, Isles of Scilly; exotic bronze objects, 6th–7th centuries context. *Left*, openwork belt device (stud at back) with bird and dot-and-circle ornament; *right*, part of a chatelaine? with bottom loop subsequently hammered flat. Scale, 5 cm

lightly-tinned bronze, surface fluted, the flat base with signs of attachment to some stem or other component.⁸³ It may be a rather large version of a knob-head (*Kugelkopf*) pin, 11.6 cms long, from grave 1 at Minden near Trier.⁸⁴ The type is admittedly late Roman, but what is this doing at Garranes, where the occupation must embrace the 6th if not 7th century?

The numerous finds from the 'royal' crannog at Lagore, Co. Meath,⁸⁵ with some from the 1934–36 excavations, some from older discoveries and some from the immediate area, included many that H. O'Neill Hencken and the Harvard Archaeological Expedition rightly spotted as 'Germanic' (as opposed to Irish, or Romano-British *tardif*). The difficult chronology of Lagore, a confusedly stratified site to which a pseudo-historical 'foundation' date of 676 was formerly attached, has long been a matter of debate. Six Class E vessels, all from 'Periods 1a and 1b', support the idea that most of the occupation is late 6th and 7th century, which means that by and large the 'Germanic' finds are too early to be explained (as they were in the 1930s) as connected with the Viking incursions.

Lagore yielded a good deal of evidence for the production of woven cloth, some of it elaborate, and the catalogue of finds repays fresh study. Weapons are prominent. Among a range of iron swords (two of which are probably medieval; 'Old Finds')⁸⁶ Hencken illustrates three scramasaxes⁸⁷ and, stressing their rarity in Ireland, added that while their presence at Lagore 'could have been due to direct contact with Northern Europe and Merovingian Gaul it is more probably that the nearest Germanic people, the Anglo-Saxons, were the intermediaries'. But another sword from the National Museum of Ireland, shown for comparison,⁸⁸ was found in 'The Old Course of the (river) Boyne', that is, some ten miles north of Lagore; it is distinctly Frankish and can be paralleled from, for example, Trier.⁸⁹ The presence of armed men at Lagore is revealed by such other items as iron shield-bosses,⁹⁰ one large carinated example (no. 1588) from 'period Ia' (early 7th²) and four others. Are these all Irish? No. 1588 matches, in shape and in size (*c.* 12 cms dia.), a boss from grave 103 — a well-stocked warrior-grave — at Rittersdorf in the Mosel region.⁹¹ (The little iron shield-boss from the Lough Faughan crannog, mentioned earlier, is however only 8 to 9 cm across,⁹² and may be a native item.) Of other pieces at Lagore, Hencken himself drew attention to a curious iron linked horse-bit, no. 354, found in a Period 1a context,⁹³ for which he cited partial parallels from a 7th-century grave at Hintschingen in Baden, and (undated) from Obrigheim, Rheinbayern.

These instances (like the others mentioned by Edward James) are intended as pointers to a fuller and far more rigorous enquiry. It is by no means certain that such objects are necessarily all *echt fränkisch* — genuine trappings of Merovingian military and aristocratic life — and not just peripheral copies, if imports from Gaul, or local modifications, if made in Ireland. For example, one might expect barrel-staves of Pyrenean fir, or larch, instead of yew, and a fine Frankish sword-blade might be pattern-welded. On the other hand the overall impression is that much of the catalogue did not arise from the known material culture of Early Historic Ireland and that Anglo-Saxon influence is far less probable in 7th-century Ireland than in, say, parts of Scotland.⁹⁴

Some minor parallels are striking, and one could end with just two more. Lagore produced a small low-triangular bone plaque⁹⁵ that the report considered 'looked like part of a comb, but does not really seem to be so'. Unlike the native bone combs illustrated, it does have close counterparts in the triangular-topped bone combs of the Frankish world, with a good match from one in a 6th-century man's grave at Mainz.⁹⁶ From Scotland, a small bronze disc with geometric interlace, a 6th–7th century find from Dunadd, was published some time ago⁹⁷ without identification; tempting parallels, here selected from both the Netherlands and the Trier region, suggest that it is the face of a Frankish composite disc-brooch or *Pressblechfibel*.⁹⁸

Arms and martial equipment might be explained in the light of the influence of, even the presence of, mercenaries. Personal ornaments and small items, however, suggest something slightly more than the arrival of *barcae* and the discharge of wine-barrels; we are back to the chance of individual travellers, and in all this I avoid the temptation of widening discussion to include the Church, ecclesiastical metal-work, the sources for manuscript art and the background to Irish Christian

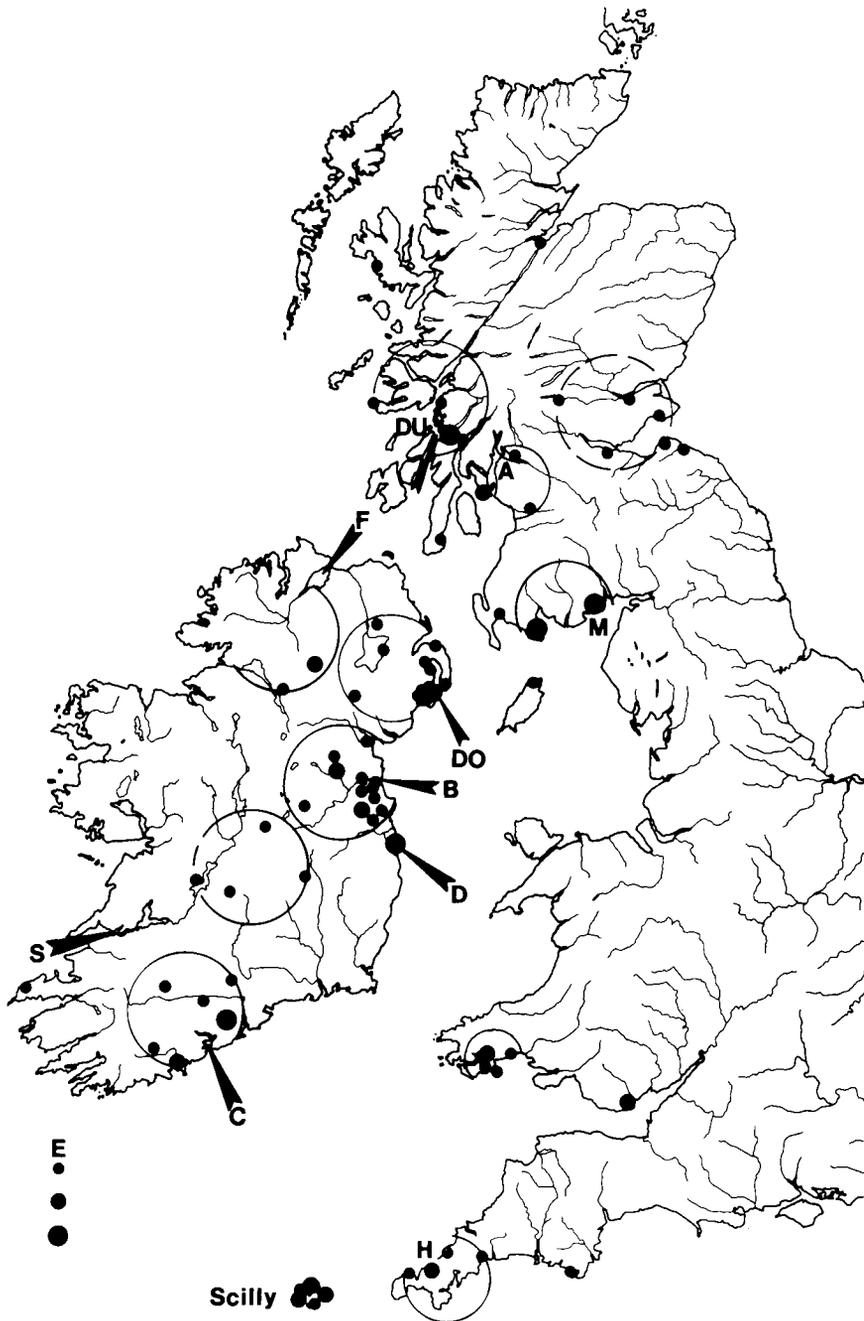


FIG. 7

Distribution of Class E ware (as Fig. 2), with likely points of entry and inland diffusion.
 H, Hayle; C, Cork harbour; S, Shannon estuary; D, Dalkey Island; B, mouth of the Boyne;
 DO, Downpatrick; F, Lough Foyle; M, Mote of Mark; A, *Alt Clut* (Dumbarton Rock);
 DU, Dunadd

ornament upon stone — still, be it noted, in the setting of Phase 2 Gaulish commerce, and hence disregarding the influx of artistic or other innovations that might be ascribed to Phase 1 and the Mediterranean world.

In a final map (Fig. 7) it is time to refine the spatial implications of a trade with Gaul. There seems no good reason to reject the notion that, at any rate along the coasts of south-west Britain and of south Wales, the points of contact during the late 6th and 7th centuries were the same as those involved for Phase 1 in the 5th and earlier 6th, and the map should be compared with its predecessor, Fig. 3. For Ireland, and for the North Irish Sea littoral and the Irish colonies in Scotland, where Phase 1 contact with the Mediterranean was minimal, the considerable body of sites yielding Class E pottery may encourage a tentative elaboration. Ireland is a country in which the river-mouths, and the lower navigable stretches of the larger rivers, have played a role whose archaeological significance has not always been appreciated.⁹⁹ In Fig. 7, superimposing arbitrary circles, some clear foci emerge. It looks as if 'merchants with the wine of the Gauls' may indeed have sailed up the R. Shannon, and that the medieval *Lives* of Ciaran of Clonmacnoise were in this respect right for undeserved reasons. On the southern side, Cork harbour and the river-ways leading inland from it have been a vital aspect of all of Munster's recorded past. On the east of Ireland, while the mercantile status of the site on Dalkey Island¹⁰⁰ remains unclear, it is the mouth of the great R. Boyne that seems to be indicated, and here an appropriate secular focus — a citadel? a centre of power or tribute? — could be sought.¹⁰¹ Looking at the north-east corner (where the plethora of dots reflect the many sites published, over the last 30 years, in the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*), the entry must have been the mouth of Strangford Lough and (as Richard Warner points out) the appropriate secular centre is the oppidum, its history still uncertain, of *Rath Chealtair*, the fortress on Cathedral Hill at Downpatrick.¹⁰² Along Ireland's northern coast — and, inland, with relatively unexcavated territory — a sea-entry through Lough Foyle may explain imports at (among other places) the royal centre at Clogher. On the other side of the Irish Sea, the Mote of Mark was a specialized centre within the British kingdom of Rheged; and the Clyde mouth leads to Dumbarton Rock, *Alt Clut*.¹⁰³ As for the Irish-settled kingdom of Dalriada it may well be that Dunadd, with its framework of excavated finds of the right period and its short access to a sea-coast, was in fact the *caput regionis* of Adamnan's story.

The only loose end (a substantial one) now left is the blunt question: where does Class E ware come from? Another distribution-map would hardly help. From time to time, sherds said to be of Class E are reported from the Continent. Professor P.-R. Giot has published some from his own work in Brittany.¹⁰⁴ I have seen (but not, recently, been able to re-examine) others from the Channel Isles. Class E has been reported, if anecdotally, from Tours, where in recent times the pedestrianization of that ancient city's centre led to widespread urban excavation. Dr David Williams analysed¹⁰⁵ some Gallo-Roman pottery from Bordeaux, and found that the composition of the inclusions compared well with those in previous Southampton thin-sections of Class E from Dunadd and Abercorn. These incidents are, at least, in the expected quarter of France.

Some pointers do emerge from all that has been written above. The clues surely lie within the circumstances of the 6th and 7th centuries, rather than to be sought through working backward in time (historically and petrologically) from the products of the full Middle Ages. Within the vast, and still not particularly well-defined, phenomenon of Phase 1 trade, it is worth noticing that the 'space-fillers' are related to the major cargoes; Phocaean Red Slip Ware, widely current in Asia Minor and the Aegean, was appended to amphorae of types Bi, Bii and Biv; African Red Slip Ware (from Carthage) with the large Bv oil-jars from the same province; and 'Egyptian' glass, if that is what the fragments are, could have been picked up by peripatetic merchantmen in such places as Alexandria or Caesarea. If for Phase 2 wine in barrel was the principal commodity, it makes sense to suppose that Class E was a local kitchen-ware readily to hand in the same region. Between Brittany and the Pyrenees, the mouth of the Loire below Nantes is an opening for the whole system of the Loire valley, and to the south the Gironde performs the same function for Bordeaux, ancient *Burdigala* — a place-name that was actually transferred to Ireland in the form *Bordgal*¹⁰⁶ — and for another wine-producing area whose ability to supply the medieval merchants of Cork and Bristol is a matter of record. The weight of the historical references, and so far perhaps the slighter evidence of archaeological reports, favour the Loire.¹⁰⁷ We therefore consider the possibility of a commercial pot manufactory, maintained from the 4th century to the 6th and 7th, which would itself be appended to a major Gallo-Roman centre that was also unextinguished. It can be no more than an informed guess, were one to list Nantes, Angers, Orleans, Auxerre and Nevers in this guise, and (less attractively) Poitiers and Autun.¹⁰⁸ From that point, the quest becomes exclusively one of archaeological field-work, including the (for many of us, all too familiar) pilgrimage around the fascinating provincial museums of rural France.

The Society for Medieval Archaeology has always prided itself on exhibiting a European dimension, in its encouragement of research and its publication of factual and analytical results. An outgoing President has the pleasant duty of posing unanswered questions in the domain of the Society's interests, and of delineating intellectual challenges. Finding the source of Class E pottery, in some corner of 6th–7th century Merovingian Gaul, admirably fills that bill. Nor is the enquiry otiose or marginal; a great many sites in post-Roman Britain and Ireland *are* only dated, if approximately, by their content of exotic imports of Phase 1 or Phase 2. Thirty years on, if enabled by circumstances to define the problem in slightly wider terms, I hope that I can pass the search for the Class E kilns, their location and date, to a new generation of enthusiasts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to numerous friends, former pupils and colleagues for information on these topics over a number of years — their names will be apparent from the references. In preparing this paper, I would thank particularly Leslie Alcock for keeping me in touch with Scottish finds and for an interchange of ideas; Edward James, who read the text in advance of publication; Mary O'Donnell, for allowing me to consult her M.A. dissertation and to use her

admirable drawings; Richard Warner, for details of his views on early Irish trade; and my research assistant Carl Thorpe, who re-drew all the text figures.

NOTES

¹ Institute of Cornish Studies, Trevithick Building, Trevenson Road, Pool, Redruth, Cornwall TR15 3PL. This paper is modified from a presidential address at the Society for Medieval Archaeology's A.G.M., London, 11 December 1989. I am grateful to members for comments in discussion, and for giving me the stimulus to collate my thoughts on the topic.

² 'Imported Pottery in Dark-Age Western Britain', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 3 (1959), 89-111.

³ 'Excavation of a dark age site, Gwithian, Cornwall; interim report, 1953-54', *Proc. West Cornwall F.C., n.s.*, 1 (1954), 59-72.

⁴ C. A. R. Radford, 'Imported pottery found at Tintagel, Cornwall', in D. B. Harden (ed.), *Dark-Age Britain — Studies presented to E. T. Leeds* (Oxford, 1956), 59-70; replacing an earlier classification noted in the Garranes report, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 47 C (1942), 133-34, n. 66.

⁵ Included, but not distinguished as former 'C' items, in C. O'Mahoney, *Medieval Pottery from Tintagel Castle* (Inst. of Cornish Stud., special report no. 8: Redruth, 1989).

⁶ J. Rigoir, Y. Rigoir, and J.-F. Meffre, 'Les dérivées paléochrétiennes du groupe atlantique', *Gallia*, 31 (1973), 207-64.

⁷ C. Thomas, 'Excavations at Gwithian, Cornwall, 1955 — catalogue of imported pottery', *Proc. West Cornwall F.C., n.s.*, 1, *Appendix* (1956), at 10-18.

⁸ This was first pointed out by J. G. Hurst (early 1960s).

⁹ 'Class E imported post-Roman pottery: a suggested origin', *Cornish Archaeol.*, 6 (1967), 35-46.

¹⁰ A. O. Anderson, and M. O. Anderson (ed., trnsl., annot.), *Adomnan's Life of Columba* (London, 1961) — the valuable notes do not wholly replace those of W. Reeves, *The Life of St Columba . . . written by Adamnan* (Dublin, 1857).

¹¹ Cf. my comments; C. Thomas, 'The "Monster" Episode in Adomnan's *Life of Columba*', *Cryptozoology*, 7 (Tucson, Ariz., 1988), 38-45.

¹² So the Andersons, *op. cit.* in note 10, 96.

¹³ See Reeves, *op. cit.* in note 10, 56, note b.

¹⁴ Discussed by the Andersons, *op. cit.* in note 10, 116-17; and also by Edward James, 'Ireland and western Gaul in the Merovingian period', in D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick and D. Dumville (eds.), *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes* (Cambridge, 1982), 362-86, especially 377-78.

¹⁵ In his *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), 92.

¹⁶ For reasons apparent in M. R. Nieke and H. B. Duncan, 'Dalriada: the establishment and maintenance of an Early Historic kingdom in northern Britain', in S. T. Driscoll and M. R. Nieke (eds.), *Power and Politics in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1988), 6-21.

¹⁷ List and map (by Elizabeth Alcock), Driscoll and Nieke (eds.), *op. cit.* in note 16, 40-46.

¹⁸ Denis Meehan (= Fr. Molaise Meehan OSB), *Adamnan's De Locis Sanctis* (Scriptores Latini Hiberniae, vol. III, Dublin, 1958).

¹⁹ *HE*, v. 15; on this, see also Ludwig Bieler's remarks in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi, etc.* (London, 1976), 219-20.

²⁰ So Meehan considers (*op. cit.* in note 18, 6-8) — adding, of course, that Arculf's see 'was probably near the coast in Neustria'.

²¹ I support a late dating elsewhere; *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500* (London, 1981), chaps. 13 and 14.

²² Doherty, C., 'Exchange and Trade in Early Medieval Ireland', *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 110 (1980), 67-90.

²³ James, *op. cit.* in note 14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 376-77, offers the fullest analysis.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 377; Doherty, *op. cit.* in note 22, 78; see also Kenney, *Sources*, 495 (no. 290).

²⁶ Meehan, *op. cit.* in note 18, cap. 11.

²⁷ J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (Warminster, 1971); and J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades* (Warminster, 1977); also E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460* (Oxford, 1982).

²⁸ 'Merovingian Politics and Insular Calligraphy; the historical background to the Book of Durrow and related manuscripts', in M. Ryan (ed.), *Ireland and Insular Art AD 500-1200* (Dublin, 1987), 40-43; see also his 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord and the earliest Echternach manuscripts', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 17-42.

²⁹ Bede, *HE*, iii. 27.

³⁰ T. Fanning, 'Some field monuments in the townlands of Clonmelsh and Garryhundon, Co. Carlow', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 43-49.

³¹ *Sources*, 378-80, with reference to appropriate editions.

³² C. Plummer (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford, 1910), i. 213-14 (cap. xxxi).

³³ W. Stokes, *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford, 1890), 131 (line 4408).

³⁴ 'Insular' = pertaining equally to Ireland and Britain in the early historic period.

³⁵ The literature on the Irish currency of Isidore's writings is considerable; in the context of the present paper, see J. Hillgarth, 'Ireland and Spain in the seventh century', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 1-16, with numerous references.

³⁶ *Ep.* 14.

³⁷ *Conf.* 23, 32, 43.

³⁸ *DEB*, 3, 13.

- ³⁹ A moderate expression of this; L. Fleuriot, *Les origines de la Bretagne* (Paris, 1980), chap. iii.
- ⁴⁰ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings and other studies in Frankish History* (London, 1962); and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford, 1971); also E. James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), chap. 5.
- ⁴¹ M. Baigent, R. Leigh and H. Lincoln, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (London, 1982); for a background, see the invaluable *Rennes-le-Chateau. A Bibliography*, by John M. Saul and Janice A. Glaholm (London, 1985).
- ⁴² *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin: in fasciculi, 1913–76), G, 38–40, s.v. *Gall*.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, *fochtratae-futhu*, 401, s.vv. 1 *franc*, 2 *franc*.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; especially Kuno Meyer, note on this term in *Miscellanea Hibernica* (Univ. of Illinois, 1916), sect. 21. R.I.A. *Dictionary*, A (fasc. 2), 313, discusses *amus*, *amhus*.
- ⁴⁵ *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, 1 (1950–67), 1310, *Ffranc*, *ffranc*¹.
- ⁴⁶ See his *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry* (Dublin, 1954), 28–31, 72–73 (notes); Sir Ifor's main works are all in Welsh, but *ffranc* itself is also discussed in his *Canu Llywarch Hen* (Cardiff, 1953), n. 97c (237–38).
- ⁴⁷ The main museum holdings of Class E are in the Royal Scottish Museums (Nat. Mus. of Antiquities), Edinburgh; Ulster Museums Belfast, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin; National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; and Royal Institution of Cornwall, Truro. Thin-sectioning has almost all been at the Dept. of Archaeology, University of Southampton.
- ⁴⁸ The last catalogue (to be updated, 1991) is: C. Thomas, *A Provisional List of Imported Pottery in Post-Roman Western Britain and Ireland* (Inst. of Cornish Stud., special report no. 7; Redruth, 1981). Most post-1981 additions come from notes in the annual *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (C.B.A., now C.S.A.); from *Excavations 1985* (and annually since), *Summary accounts of archaeological excavations in Ireland* (Dublin, Organization of Irish Archaeologists); and from the 'Medieval Britain and Ireland in (year)' feature in *Medieval Archaeol.* Welsh finds to 1988 are listed (pp. 124–36) in N. Edwards, and A. Lane (eds.), *Early Medieval Settlements in Wales 400–1100* (Bangor and Cardiff, 1988). Other finds (Cornwall, Scilly, Isle of Man, Channel Isles) will be included in the 1991 revision.
- ⁴⁹ E.g. C. Gabet, 'La céramique gallo-romaine recueillie à Pépiron (Charente-Maritime)', *Gallia*, 27 (1969), 45–70, where 4th-century versions of (undecorated) El jars appear.
- ⁵⁰ Mary G. O'Donnell, *An Analysis of E Ware in Ireland* (unpubl., M.A. dissertation, U. C. Cork, 1984), identified and named this among the 9 Class E vessels from Ballycatteen, Co. Cork (see S. P. Ó Riordáin, and P. J. Hartnett, in *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 49 C (1943–44), 1–44).
- ⁵¹ An open question, but see M. Ryan, 'Native Pottery in Early Historic Ireland', *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 73 C (1973), 619–45.
- ⁵² C. Thomas, 'Grass-marked pottery', in J. M. Coles and D. D. A. Simpson (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Europe. Essays presented to Stuart Piggott* (Leicester, 1968), 333–58.
- ⁵³ 'What Porridge Had the Early Irish? E Ware and Early Irish History', *Australian Celtic Journal*, 1 (Sydney, 1988), 12–17.
- ⁵⁴ M. G. Fulford's conclusion — 'Carthage: Overseas Trade and the Political Economy, c. A.D. 400–700', *Reading Medieval Stud.*, 6 (1980), 68–80.
- ⁵⁵ Detailed in my *Provisional List*, op. cit. in note 48; among 56 (Insular) sites with Class E, no less than 36 had produced a single vessel, often evidenced by one or two sherds.
- ⁵⁶ See Hillgarth op. cit. in note 35, with reference to other papers on the same theme.
- ⁵⁷ Instances, *passim*, in D. P. S. Peacock, *Pottery in the Roman World; an ethnoarchaeological approach* (London, 1982); and D. P. S. Peacock and D. F. Williams, *Amphorae and the Roman economy* (London, 1986).
- ⁵⁸ M. G. Fulford, 'Pottery and Britain's Trade in the Later Roman Period', in D. P. S. Peacock (ed.), *Pottery and Early Commerce* (London, 1977), 35–84, with maps, figs. 1 and 4.
- ⁵⁹ Not mapped here; the finds of glass are the subject of a separate study by Professor Leslie Alcock.
- ⁶⁰ All finds were catalogued in 1988 (copies available, outside Cornwall, at the National Archaeological Record, N.M.R. (R.C.H.M. England) and with English Heritage, both at Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London W1X). For an assessment of the meaning, see C. Thomas, 'The Context of Tintagel. A New Model for the Diffusion of Post-Roman Mediterranean Imports', *Cornish Archaeol.*, 27 (for 1988) (1990), 7–25.
- ⁶¹ Cf. now R. Gilchrist, 'A reappraisal of Dinas Powys; local exchange and specialised livestock in 5th–7th century Wales', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 32 (1988), 50–62.
- ⁶² See discussion of this in Nieke and Duncan, op. cit. in note 16.
- ⁶³ Relevant papers on his Scottish explorations are listed by L. Alcock, in his *Economy, Society & Warfare among the Britons and Saxons* (Cardiff, 1987), bibliography, 313.
- ⁶⁴ R. Warner, 'The Clogher yellow layer', *Medieval Ceramics*, 3 (1979), 37–40; for the site itself, R. Warner, 'The archaeology of Early Historic Irish kingship', in Driscoll & Nieke op. cit. in note 16, 47–68.
- ⁶⁵ Re-expressed in Alcock, op. cit. in note 63, 116–25.
- ⁶⁶ This is a conclusion and not yet a demonstrated fact, but the absence of the (distributionally, expected) Class E is striking.
- ⁶⁷ P. Hill, *Whithorn 2. Excavations 1984–1987, Interim Report* (with *Whithorn 1988 Supplement*), Whithorn Trust, 1988, 1989.
- ⁶⁸ R. D. Penhallurick, *Tin in Antiquity* (London, 1986), part 3.
- ⁶⁹ 'Loanwords and Roman expansion in north-west Europe', *World Archaeol.*, 8 no. 1 (1976), 57–64.
- ⁷⁰ 'Über direkte Handelsverbindungen Westgalliens mit Irland im Altertum und frühen Mittelalter' (in five instalments), *Sitz. der König. Preuss. Akad. der Wissenschaft* (Berlin, 1909, 1910).
- ⁷¹ Amphorae of British types Bi and Bii (= Peacock and Williams (1986), op. cit. in note 57, classes 43 and 44, Carthage types LR2 and 1) frequently bear *dipinti* or *tituli picti* marks in Greek characters. A few examples from

Britain exhibit, as added graffiti, *Latin numerals* — Tintagel, *V* and *XIV* (and capital 'R?'); Mothecombe, Devon, *XXV* — implying commerce in some Latinate western province.

⁷² A handy map — C. Seltman, *Wine in the Ancient World* (London, 1957), 134.

⁷³ These are probably within Peacock and Williams op. cit. in note 57, class 35, as eventual reconstruction of examples should show; for the oil, see D. J. Mattingly, 'Olea mediterranea', *J. Roman Archaeol.*, 1 (Michigan, 1988), 153–61.

⁷⁴ For the technique, see J. Condamin, *et al.*, 'The application of gas chromatography to the tracing of oil in ancient amphorae', *Archaeometry*, 18 (1976), 203–07.

⁷⁵ As in C. Thomas, 'Imported Late-Roman Mediterranean Pottery in Ireland and western Britain: chronologies and implications', *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 76 C (1976), 245–56.

⁷⁶ *Vit. Columbae*, lib. i, closing passage.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, lib. ii, cap. i.

⁷⁸ H. O'N. Hencken, 'Lagore Crannog: an Irish royal residence of the 7th to 10th centuries A.D.' *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 53 C (1950), 1–247, fig. 76, 'W 89'.

⁷⁹ A. E. P. Collins, 'Excavations in Lough Faughan Crannog, Co. Down', *Ulster J. Archaeol.*, 18 (1953), 45–80, at fig. 14, no. 87.

⁸⁰ H. O'N. Hencken, 'Ballinderry Crannog No. 1', *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 43 C (1936), 103–239.

⁸¹ And also a variety of minor objects, not mentioned here, but already described by Edward James, op. cit. in note 23, 385–86.

⁸² For Tean, see C. Thomas, *Exploration of a Drowned Landscape — Archaeology and History of the Isles of Scilly* (London, 1985), 183–84; the Gürtelgehänge, see G. Behrens, *Das Frühchristliche und Merowingische Mainz (= Kulturgeschichtliche Wegweiser des Röm.-German.Zentralsmuseums no. 20: Mainz, 1950)*, 15, Abb. 30 no. 2, and K. Böhner, *Die Fränkischen Altertümer des Trierer Landes* (Berlin, 1958), 2 vols.; 2, tafel 24, no. 3.

⁸³ S. P. Ó'Riordáin, 'The Excavation of a Large Earthen Ring-Fort at Garranes, Co. Cork', *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 47 C (1942), 77–150, at 98 and fig. 4, no. 351.

⁸⁴ Böhner, op. cit. in note 82, 2, tafel 23, no. 2.

⁸⁵ Hencken, op. cit. in note 78, 12–17, general summary of findings.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, fig. 25, nos. E and F (per Professor Etienne Rynne).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, fig. 25, G, H and I, and discussion, p. 94.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, fig. 27, D and D. 1; admittedly small, it has a straight bronze guard with fine herring-bone ornament, the blade being 44 cm.

⁸⁹ Böhner, op. cit. in note 82, 2, tafel 25, no. 1 (from Oberleuken, but blade is 70 cm.).

⁹⁰ Hencken op. cit. in note 78, fig. 33, no. 1588.

⁹¹ Böhner, op. cit. in note 82, 2, tafel 34.

⁹² Collins, op. cit. in note 79, fig. 12, no. 75.

⁹³ Hencken, op. cit. in note 78, 103–04, fig. 36.

⁹⁴ On Pictish Class II stones, men, bird-headed monsters and centaurs carry axes as weapons and the warrior on the Golspie Stone in Sutherland (early 8th century?) holds a splendidly 'Frankish' T-axe, J. Anderson and J. R. Allen, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1903), fig. 48, a, b. The source here, if not pictorial, ought to be Anglian Northumbria.

⁹⁵ Hencken, op. cit. in note 78, 181–83, fig. 96, no. 745 (lined borders with dot-and-circle ornament, and remains of rivet-holes).

⁹⁶ Behrens, op. cit. in note 82, 17, Abb. 34 (grave from Greiffenklaustrasse, Mainz) and (18–20) catalogue of the *Beinkamm mit dreieckigem Griff* as a restricted, but known, type.

⁹⁷ From Craw's excavations, *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland*, 64 (1930), 115–16; described as 'bronze, gilt' with traces of 'green enamel'(?), and 3 cm. diameter.

⁹⁸ Grave-group (6th century) from Rhenen, Netherlands — J. Ypey, *Kunst en Schoonheid uit de Vroege Middeleeuwen. De Merovingische Grafvelden van Alphen, Rhenen en Maastricht* (ROB, Amersfoort, 1955), fig. 24 (3 cm. dia.); and from Eisenach, grave 23, found on breast of skeleton, with date of 'Stufe IV' (= c. 600-plus), Böhner, op. cit. in note 82, 2, tafel 17 (4.2 cm. dia.).

⁹⁹ Though see Richard Warner's paper, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 76 C (1976), 267–92, dealing with much earlier imports but entirely relevant to Early Historic times.

¹⁰⁰ G. D. Liversage, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 66 C (1968), 53–233. The nature of the 5th–6th century occupation has so far defied any convincing analysis.

¹⁰¹ Warner suggests (*in litt.*) at least one possibility; and note that a site at Randalstown, Co. Meath (N 839712, not yet published), apparently an enclosure, has produced both Phase 1 and Phase 2 imports.

¹⁰² *An Archaeological Survey of County Down* (Belfast, 1966), 98–99; limited excavation reported in *Ulster J. Archaeol.*, 17 (1954), 97–102.

¹⁰³ L. Alcock, 'A multi-disciplinary chronology for Alt Clut, Castle Rock, Dumbarton', *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, 107 (1976), 103–13.

¹⁰⁴ 'Les sites "protohistoriques" des dunes de Guissény (Finistère)', *Annales de Bretagne*, 80 (1973), 105–27; a typical Er jar.

¹⁰⁵ From the St Christoly site (for which see *Gallia*, 33 (1975), 461–65, and *Archéologia*, 158 (Sept. 1981), 36–39); unpublished note, Ceramic Petrology Unit, Univ. of Southampton.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas, op. cit. in note 75, and locations, fig. 3; but (as E. James points out) these place-name occurrences may be later than Phase 2 trade.

¹⁰⁷ Mary O'Donnell op. cit. in note 50 sets out at length the evidence for the Saintonge area, with Bordeaux as the port mainly involved, or some part of northern Aquitaine, adding that though Phase 2 contacts 'seem to have been mainly with Nantes and the area around the Loire . . . this may merely reflect the nature of the information'; an entirely valid point.

¹⁰⁸ Tours, having undergone recent urban-centre exploration but having failed to yield anything save the reported odd sherd of Class E — and the local pottery being slightly different (cf. B. Randoïn, *Recherches sur Tours*, tome 1 (Tours, 1981)) — must for the moment be excluded.