

#### IV.

AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE HOW FAR THE CYMRIC ENCRÓACHED UPON THE GAELIC BRANCH OF THE EARLY CELTIC POPULATION OF NORTH BRITAIN. By A. HENRY RHIND, Esq., F.S.A. Scot., Wick.

Mr A. H. Rhind communicated a paper entitled "An attempt to define how far the Cymric encroached upon the Gaelic branch of the early Celtic population of North Britain." After stating at some length his reasons for believing that the northern Picts were Gael, and that, being the same people, the Caledonii mentioned by Tacitus were also Gael, who had been pressed northward by invading Cymry, Mr Rhind proceeded to consider how far the latter extended their conquest. Observing that Agricola, in proceeding northwards, encountered no foes but such as were of British or Cymric lineage, until he had reached the confines of modern Fifeshire and Perthshire, where he met the Caledonii; and suggesting the probability that, after the disasters sustained by the latter in the famous battle at the Mons Grampius, the neighbouring Britons would push their conquests farther to the north,—the author called attention to the fact that in the geography of Ptolemy the name Caledonii does not occur further south than a line stretching from the Moray Firth to Loch Fyne or the Firth of Clyde; and stated that, in his opinion, the Britons extended up to this line (there or thereabout). Dividing the country of North Britain into three sections, viz., 1. The district south of the Firths of Clyde and Forth; 2. The district stretching from the isthmus formed by these firths to a line drawn from the Moray Firth to the Firth of Clyde; and, 3. The district north of that line,—Mr Rhind shewed that in Ptolemy's Geography, supplemented by the *Itinerary* of Antonine, the first of these divisions contains eighteen names of tribes, rivers, towns, &c., for

one-third of which precise parallels can be found in the Roman topography of South Britain, as might be expected, since the district in question was undoubtedly possessed by British tribes; that in the second division there are sixteen names, of which six or even seven are identical with names located by Ptolemy, or by the *Itinerary* of Antonine, in South Britain, so that here the proportion of names having southern counterparts is even greater than in the first division; and that in the third division, Ptolemy gives twenty names, of which only *two*, appellations of tribes on the east coast, had representatives in South Britain; while of these two, one, if not both, belonged to Britons who had penetrated so far.

It would not be safe to build exclusively upon the results of such a comparison, because of the affinity of language between the Gael and the Cymry, and because the names given appear as transmuted into the Greek of Ptolemy. Still, after making every deduction demanded on these accounts, the fact that in North Britain, south of a line drawn from the Moray Firth to the Firth of Clyde, fully one-third of the names preserved by Ptolemy have precise parallels in the topography of South Britain, can scarcely be accounted for otherwise than by assuming the presence of Britons in that district, especially if we consider that in the region immediately to the north of the line in question, which was undoubtedly occupied by the Gael, none of the twenty names handed down by the same author have representatives in South Britain, except two which are in all probability appellations of Cymric intruders. The result thus arrived at is strikingly confirmed by a careful examination of the modern nomenclature of Scotland. Taking, for instance, names holding in composition the particle *aber* (which is solely a Cymric, and not also a Gaelic word, as is evident especially from the fact, that not a solitary instance occurs in the topography of Ireland, or of those districts of Scotland which were the undoubted aboriginal seats of the Gael, in which any place bears a name containing this prefix), it will be found that, with a single exception to be afterwards noticed, as a proof of Cymric presence, *aber* is not to be detected in the nomenclature of the whole territory that would be cut off to the north, by a line drawn from the Moray Firth, along Loch Ness, to its junction with Loch Oich, and from thence to Loch Lomond and the Firth of Clyde; whilst in the district stretching from this line to the isthmus formed by the Clyde and Forth there may be enumerated nearly thirty names, of which the dissyllable in question forms a component part. Now, this latter district is nearly identical with that in which Ptolemy has preserved names, one-third of which have counterparts in his topography of South Britain—a coincidence which can hardly be considered accidental, and which must be held as affording evidence as to how far the invading Cymry had incroached upon the Gael.

Reverting to the two names above referred to, which form exceptions to the general rule in division third, viz., the appellation of the Cantæ in Ross, and that of the Cornavii in Caithness, it may be observed that the former tribe were certainly Cymry, as appears (without founding too strongly on the identity of their name with that of the Belgic [?] Cantii of Kent, though these seem to have been Cymric Celts) from the following facts:—

“1st, If we once admit that the Cymry had extended up to the line drawn from the Moray Firth towards the Clyde, there can be little difficulty in allowing them to cross that arbitrary boundary, when they would immediately enter the territory where we find the Cantæ, and which being along the sea-board, is comparatively level, and therefore favourable to conquest.

“2d, The only name commencing with *aber* (*i.e.* Aberscours) that I can discover north of the line I have mentioned, occurs in Strathfleet in Sutherland, which must have been about the boundary of the Cantæ with the Logi.

“3d, In Strathcarron there are two places called respectively Langell and Langollo, the last of which names, in particular, has a peculiarly Welsh character.

“4th, Richard of Cirencester places the Penuxellum promontorium in the territory of the Cantæ,—a name, which, as well as bearing its Welsh origin palpably impressed upon it, is of rather frequent occurrence, either in this or some modified form, in the early geography of South Britain. I state this circumstance, however, to shew that I have not overlooked it, rather than as an argument; for I confess that I am extremely sceptical as to the authenticity of the work ascribed to Richard.

“Although, then, there are grounds for believing that the Cantæ were a Cymric tribe, we have no such evidence respecting the Cornavii,<sup>1</sup> except the mere identity of their name with that of a tribe in Cheshire and Warwickshire; for the remnant of the Celtic nomenclature of Caithness, which has survived the Norse conquest and other succeeding influences, does not exhibit a single specimen which could be regarded as indicative of Cymric presence. It is nevertheless perfectly possible that the Cymry, in accordance with that invariable law of primeval conquest,—the cession of the low country to the invaders,—might have penetrated by the level strip along the east coast of Sutherland, and gained possession of the plains of Caithness; but still it would be quite unjustifiable to frame any such hypothesis from the mere similarity of a name, unsupported by corroborative proof, especially in a case like the present, where,

<sup>1</sup> Prichard advances as the etymology of this name, “the Welsh Cernywi, which would describe the inhabitants of a promontory or projecting land.”—*Physical Hist.*, iii. 154. But this would scarcely apply to the Cornavii of South Britain, if their position be considered.

as I have formerly said, we are discussing dialects of such radical affinity, that it is quite conceivable that tribes of both branches might have the same appellation. Indeed, if all circumstances are considered, it is perhaps most likely that such was the fact with respect to the Cornavii of Caithness and those of Warwick; and I would not venture to affirm, on existing data, that the Cymry had probably extended beyond the confines of the Cantæ.”

The following presents a tabular view of the facts and results on which the conclusions in this paper are built:—

*Comparison of Names in Ptolemy's Geography of North Britain.*

DIVISION I.

| <i>North Britain.</i> | <i>South Britain.</i>  | <i>North Britain.</i>      | <i>South Britain.</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Novantæ.              | Trin-oantes.           | Boderia.                   |                       |
| Selgovæ.              |                        | Leucopibia. <sup>4</sup>   |                       |
| Gadeni. <sup>1</sup>  |                        | Rherigionium. <sup>5</sup> |                       |
| Otadeni.              |                        | Carbantorigum.             |                       |
| Damnii. <sup>2</sup>  | Damnonii.              | Uxellum.                   | { Uxela.              |
| Rherigionium.         |                        |                            | { Oxellum prom.       |
| Vidotara.             |                        | Corda.                     |                       |
| Clota.                |                        | Trimontium. <sup>5</sup>   |                       |
| Abravannus.           | Bravinium (Itinerary). | Colania. <sup>5</sup>      |                       |
| Jena.                 |                        | Vanduara.                  |                       |
| Deva.                 | Deva (do.)             | Coria. <sup>5</sup>        |                       |
| Novius. <sup>3</sup>  |                        | Curia. <sup>5</sup>        |                       |
| Alaunus.              | Alaenus.               | Bremenium.                 |                       |

<sup>1</sup> It is a disputed question whether the Gadeni should be placed north of the Firth of Clyde, or between the Selgovæ and Otadeni; but its determination is of no great consequence in the present inquiry.

<sup>2</sup> The possessions of the Damnii stretched into Division II., and they, perhaps, might have been classed in it. I have, however, included in it those of their towns which were north of the isthmus.

<sup>3</sup> Novius is sometimes found Novus, and may possibly be a Latin rendering of the native name.

<sup>4</sup> Leucopibia, as Ritson suggests, is simply the correlative term in Greek, corresponding to “Candida-casa in Latin, and Hwit-herne in Anglo-Saxon.”—*Annals of the Caledonians*, &c., vol. ii., p. 306, note.

<sup>5</sup> The names thus marked seem all of Roman origin. As to Trimontium there can be no doubt; and Colania is, in all probability, Colonia, a name which occurs, too, in the *Itinerary*, apparently as another designation for Lamelodunum, the second stage northwards from London. Curia likewise seems Latin, and Coria is too slight a variation not to be regarded as the same word.

## DIVISION II.

| <i>North Britain.</i> | <i>South Britain.</i> | <i>North Britain.</i> | <i>South Britain.</i> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Vacomagi.             |                       | Devana. <sup>1</sup>  | Dēūna.                |
| Venicontes.           |                       | Castra Alaṭa.         |                       |
| Texali.               | Vexala-Estuary.       | Tuessis.              |                       |
| Vara or Varar.        | Varis (Itinerary).    | Tameia.               | { Tamissa.            |
| Tuai.                 |                       |                       | { Tamarus.            |
| Celnius.              |                       |                       | { Tamare.             |
| Taizalum.             |                       | Orrhea.               |                       |
| Deva.                 | Deva (as before).     | Lindum.               | Lindum.               |
| Tava.                 |                       | Victoria.             |                       |
| Tinna.                |                       | Alauna. <sup>2</sup>  | Alaenus.              |
| Banatia.              |                       |                       |                       |

## DIVISION III.

|                         |           |            |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Epidii.                 |           | Longus Fl. |
| Cerones.                |           | Itys.      |
| Carnonacæ.              |           | Volsas.    |
| Creones.                |           | Nabæus.    |
| Careni.                 |           | Tarvidum.  |
| Cornavii (or Cornabii). | Cornavii. | Orcas.     |
| Logi.                   |           | Vervedrum. |
| Mertæ.                  |           | Berubium.  |
| Cantæ.                  | Cantii.   | Ila.       |
| Caledonii.              |           | Ripa Alta. |
| Lelannonius.            |           | Loxa.      |
| Epidium prom.           |           |            |

*Result of the foregoing comparative statement.*

In Division I. there are in all . . . . . 25 names.

From which deduct Novius, Leucopibia, Trimontium, Colonia,  
Curia, and Coria, which are not seemingly of native origin, 6

---

19

And the duplicate Rherigonium, that name occurring twice, 1

---

18, of which

<sup>1</sup> The similarity here is very complete,—Deyana being a town on the Dee in Aberdeenshire, and Deuna being a town (Chester) on the Dee in Cheshire. Chester is called Deva in the *Itinerary*, which brings out the analogy more strongly.

<sup>2</sup> Alauna occurs once or twice in South Britain in the *Itinerary*, and in the work of the geographer of Ravenna. Perhaps, also, it can be recognised in Mediolanus.

Have exact counterparts in South Britain, . . . . . 5  
 And in another case (Bravinium) there is a strong simi-  
 larity, . . . . . 1  
 — 6

In Division II. there are in all . . . . . 19 names.  
 From which deduct *Castra Alata* and *Victoria*, which are pal-  
 pably Roman, . . . . . 2  
 —  
 17  
 And the duplicate *Taizalum* prom., which is probably a formation  
 from *Texali*, . . . . . 1  
 —  
 16, of which

Have precise parallels in South Britain, . . . . . 5  
 And in another case (*Tamissa*, &c.) there is nearly an  
 identity, . . . . . 1  
 While in another (*Vexala*) there is an apparent simi-  
 larity in construction, . . . . . 1  
 — 7

Massing these two Divisions together, there are in both . . . . . 34 names.  
 Of which have counterparts in South Britain, . . . . . 13  
 But deduct, as being more doubtful, *Bravinium* and  
*Vexala*, . . . . . 2  
 And still we have nearly one-third of the whole, or — 11

In Division III. there are in all . . . . . 23 names.  
 From which deduct *Longus Fl.* and *Ripa Alta*, whose origin can-  
 not be mistaken, . . . . . 2  
 —  
 21  
 And the duplicate *Epidium*, . . . . . 1  
 —  
 20, of which  
 Have representatives in South Britain, . . . . . 2

*Names of placès in Scotland, north of the Firths of Clyde and Forth,  
having Aber as a prefix.*

|                             |                  |               |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Abersco,                    | Inverness-shire. | Aberargie,    | Perthshire.      |
| Aberchalladyr, <sup>1</sup> | Do.              | Aberfamill,   | Stirlingshire.   |
| Abertarf,                   | Do.              | Aber,         | Do.              |
| Aberriachan,                | Do.              | Aberdour,     | Aberdeenshire.   |
| Aberardour,                 | Do.              | Aberdeen,     | Do.              |
| Do.                         | Do.              | Abergeldie,   | Do.              |
| Aberlour,                   | Banffshire.      | Abercatie,    | Do.              |
| Abernethy,                  | Do.              | Aberluthnet,  | Kincardineshire. |
| Aberchirder,                | Do.              | Aberbrothock, | Forfarshire.     |
| Abernyte, <sup>o</sup>      | Perthshire.      | Aberlemus,    | Do.              |
| Aberruthven,                | Do.              | Aberlemno,    | Do.              |
| Aberdalgie,                 | Do.              | Abereromby,   | Fifeshire.       |
| Aberfeldie,                 | Do.              | Aberdour,     | Do.              |
| Aberfoyle,                  | Do.              |               |                  |
| Abernethy,                  | Do.              | Aberscours,   | Sutherlandshire. |

<sup>1</sup> Grant—*Origin of the Gael*, p. 356—refers to another Aberchalladyr, also in the neighbourhood of Loch Ness. On his authority, too, I insert Aber-riachan, which he says is on the bank of the same loch.

June 13, 1853.

PROFESSOR JOHN SHANK MORE in the Chair.

The following Gentleman was elected a Fellow of the Society :—

CHARLES FREEBAIRN SLOAN, M.D., Ayr.

And the following a Corresponding Member—

JOHN FINCH SMILES, M.D.

PATRICK CHALMERS, Esq. of Aldbar, exhibited and presented to the Society the following Donations of Matrices connected with the See of Brechin, from WILLIAM ANDERSON, Esq., Writer there.

A pointed oval Brass Matrix of exceedingly beautiful workman-

ship, in the fine style of art of the thirteenth century. Chapter Seal of Brechin (see woodcut, No. I.). Under a Gothic canopy a representation of the Trinity. The Father seated, supporting between his knees the Son extended on the Cross. Over the head of the former is inscribed, on the under edge of the trefoil arch, the word PATER : on the arms of the Cross, the word FIL ; and between them, over the head of the Son, is the Sacred Dove, with the designation, s. SPS. The Legend : † S. CAPITVLI · SANCTE · TRINITATIS · D · BRECHIN. The reverse of this Seal is richly ornamented in scroll work, as shewn in the woodcut, No. II.



No. I.



No. II.

Brass Matrix of the Seal of the Official of the Provincial of the Dominicans or Friars Preachers of Perth. Under a Gothic canopy the Virgin crowned, with the Child in her arms : in the lower

part a Friar praying : the Legend should read : S · OFFICII · PRIORIS · ORDINIS · PREDICATORVM · DE · PERTH ; but the words are contracted, and illegibly written, or spoiled by stamping two letters, one in the midst of the word *Prioris*, the other in *Predicatorum*.

Copper Matrix of the Seal of David Strachan, Bishop of Brechin. A.D. 1662-1671—SIGIL : DAVIDIS · EPISCOPI · BRECHINENSIS.

Also a double Seal, or Matrix, cut in steel, of the seventeenth century, believed to be the Seal of the Setons of Culbeg. Quarterly 1st and 4th Seton, 2d and 3d Hay. Crest, a boar's head, with the motto *Forward*.

The other Donations laid on the table included—

A large Ring or Armlet of Bituminous Shale, dug up near an old Cairn, in the parish of Knockando, Morayshire. By J. W. GRANT, Esq. of Elchies.

A fine old Basket-hilted Sword, dug up on the south side of Edinburgh Castle, during the construction of the Southern Approach in 1828. By GEORGE ROBERT AINSLIE, Esq., Duke Street, Leith.

Two Flint Arrow-heads, found in a ploughed field at Lesmurdie, Banffshire. By Captain STEWART of Lesmurdie.

Two Sculptured Stones from the Trinity College Church, Edinburgh, demolished in 1848. By ALFRED LANCEFIELD, Esq. F.S.A. Scot.

A small collection of Coins and Medals, ancient and modern, including several Turkish Coins found at Gozzo, on the coast of Africa. By ROBERT HAMILTON, M.D., F.R.S.E.

An Esquimaux Stone Vessel for cooking, and Bone Fishing-hook. Also two Polynesian Fishing-hooks made of bone and shell. By W. A. SUTHERLAND, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The following Communications were then read before the Meeting.