

In the 3rd century A.D. lapidary skills in the west were in decline, at least in terms of intaglio engraving. The Sasanians took over as the new patrons of lapidaries in the eastern Roman Empire and its borderlands,²⁹ commissioning large numbers of flat garnet ringstones. At the same time garnet cloisonné was on the rise and some lapidaries may have found new outlets for their skills in the production of flamboyant but cost-effective cloisonné ornaments. The garnet stones on the Armaziskhevi hilt and Hatra pendant serve as a reminder that from the outset there were considerable variations in quality in cloisonné plates, from flawlessly cut and polished stones to roughly shaped inlays, perhaps simply ground by hand with abrasives rather than against a spinning wheel. The basic technology of stone preparation with a bow-driven wheel, although primitive by modern standards, was a sophisticated craft, which was never practised in large areas of the late- and post-Roman world whose elites wore garnet cloisonné ornaments.³⁰

Over the centuries of its *floruit*, the producers of garnet cloisonné evolved plates cut in a multitude of shapes and combined in many different decorative styles. Underpinning this creative revolution in lapidary shapes, however, was a conservatism of skills and tools across many generations of craftsmen. The production of top-quality garnet cloisonné from the 4th to 7th centuries most probably involved craftsmen trained in the hereditary craft of working with man-powered bows and small cutting wheels. The equipment was compact and transportable, but reliant upon a good supply of gemstones and abrasives. For the most part, ancient craftsmen operated in ignorance of the mineralogical niceties which have diverted modern scholarship. By recognising the origins of garnet cutting in the lapidary traditions of the ancient world we can begin to appreciate the technological, as opposed to mineralogical, underpinnings of Early-medieval garnet cloisonné.

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NOËL ADAMS

AUGUSTINE'S OAK

The purpose of this note is to revisit the question of the identity of the meeting-place of Augustine and British church leaders who had assembled, Bede tells us, on the boundary that in his time divided the West Saxons from the Hwicce. Bede reports that the meeting took place around A.D. 602/603 between Augustine, the missionary to the Anglo-Saxons, and teachers and bishops of the nearest kingdom of the Britons.³¹ He says that they met at a place known to the English as Augustine's Oak, which in his day, about a hundred years later, lay on the border between the Hwicce and the West Saxons.

²⁹ M. Henig and M. Whiting, *Engraved Gems from Gadara in Jordan: The Sa'd Collection of Intaglios and Cameos* (Oxford, 1987), 3.

³⁰ The absence of traditional lapidary technology explains why, for example, tribes in the Hunnic confederation used primarily garnet cabochons on locally produced ornaments and never developed the ability to cut plates for cloisonné. Garnet plates on high-status finds from both Hunnic and Alanic contexts are either of poor quality or clearly pre-cut, re-used stones.

³¹ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.2: B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969). The meeting may have taken place by 601; I. N. Wood, 'Some historical re-identifications and the Christianization of Kent', 27–35 in G. Armstrong and I. N. Wood (eds.), *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals* (Turnhout, 2000), at p. 33.

Attempts to identify the location have long proved to be in vain. Thus Plummer notes 'Aust, on the Severn, opposite Chepstow, has been most commonly suggested' and refers to proposed alternatives near Malmesbury and Down Ampney.³² More recently, Charles Thomas has written that 'Augustine's Oak . . . has been traditionally identified as Aust-on-Severn but is probably a now-untraceable locality presumably in the west of England'.³³ Mayr-Harting says 'Augustine arranged a conference with [the British bishops] on the borders of their own territory somewhere near the River Severn'.³⁴

Recent research on the nature and extent of Early Anglo-Saxon culture in Wiltshire, together with a re-examination of Brittonic place-names, has led to the identification of a possible boundary between the Britons and the Saxons in the north-west of that county.³⁵

The archaeological evidence from Wiltshire shows a clear zone of Early Anglo-Saxon material culture, most evident in furnished burials, which even in the 6th century extended across the county, except for the extreme south-west, as far as the northern limit of Salisbury Plain, the Vale of Pewsey and the Marlborough Downs. 7th-century graves confirm this distribution. The westernmost burials and finds are shown on the map in Figure 10. They include the richly accompanied female grave of the late 7th century at Roundway Down (one of a group of three burials, all probably of the 7th century) and another, with a work-box and of some high status, at Yatesbury. The 'line' continues into eastern Somerset, as far as Burnett, near Keynsham, where there is another woman's grave, with a gold pendant and of the same date, between the Avon and West Wansdyke. Other sites and finds appear relevant to the definition of a boundary in the vicinity of these burials. Thus in the west of the county the spread of pre-Roman Dobunnic coins exhibits a pattern essentially complementary to, that is to the west of, the 'Anglo-Saxon' distribution.³⁶ It is also notable that two large Celtic zoomorphic penannular brooches, dress items of both men and women, intended for display and which could betoken rank, have been recovered from 'near Calne' and Oldbury Castle; they probably date between the mid-5th and the later 6th century.³⁷ Furthermore, the explanation of the severance, by the East Wansdyke, of the Roman road from Silchester to Bath at Morgan's Hill, may lie not so much in its location on the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs but rather in its position on the boundary between the former Roman *civitates* of the Dobunni and the Belgae. A particularly notable find in the north-west of the county is an unfinished escutcheon of a mid- to late 7th-century Celtic hanging-bowl from Seagry, on the Bristol Avon south of Malmesbury; evidence for the manufacture of these bowls is otherwise known only in Scotland.³⁸ The absence of 'Anglo-Saxon' burials in the north-west of Wiltshire is equally noticeable in South Gloucestershire, where the southernmost example occurs at Chavenage (Avening), just north of Tetbury.

Brittonic place-names are of particular interest in this context and point to the likelihood that the language continued to be spoken in the north-west of the county into the 7th century. The British name Kemble, and Minety and Keevil both probably British, may all refer to their location on a boundary. Kemble, by the source of the Thames, a location in all likelihood marked, typically, by a Romano-British temple site, possibly lay

³² C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), Vol. II, 74.

³³ C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to A.D. 500* (London, 1981), 209.

³⁴ H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Pennsylvania, 1991), 71.

³⁵ B. N. Eagles, 'Anglo-Saxon presence and culture in Wiltshire, A.D. c450-675', 199-233 in P. Ellis (ed.), *Roman Wiltshire and After: Papers in Honour of Ken Annable* (Devizes, 2001); R. Coates and A. Breeze, *Celtic Voices, English Places: Studies of the Celtic Impact on Place-Names in England* (Stamford, 2000), 112.

³⁶ R. D. Van Arsdell, *The Coinage of the Dobunni: Money Supply and Coin Circulation in Dobunnic Territory. With a Gazetteer of Findspots by P. de Jersey* (Oxford, 1994).

³⁷ S. Youngs, 'A penannular brooch from near Calne, Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeol. Nat. Hist. Mag.*, 88 (1995), 127-31.

³⁸ S. Youngs and B. Eagles, 'Medieval hanging bowls from Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeol. Nat. Hist. Mag.*, 91 (1998), 35-41.

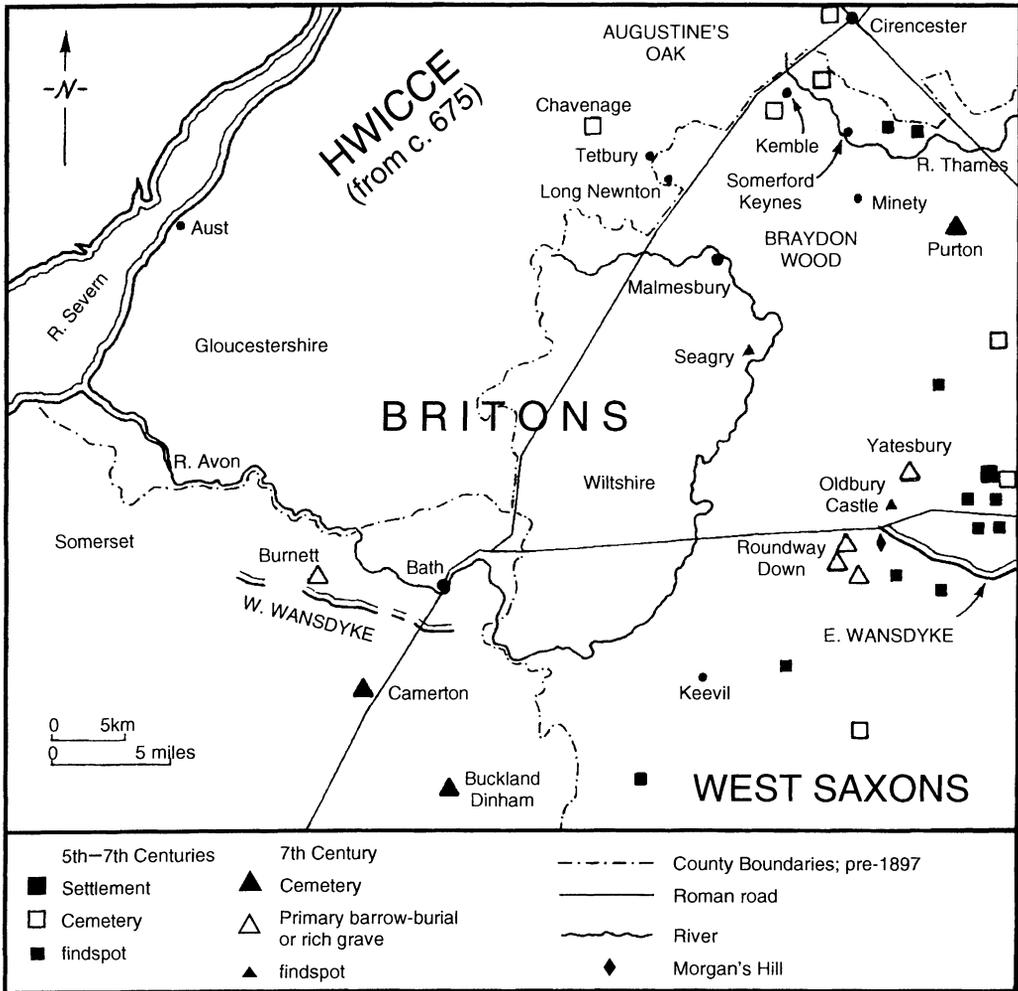


FIG. 10

'Augustine's Oak': Location map of sites and features referred to in the text.

on an internal division of the Dobunni.³⁹ The place retained its liminal location, being transferred from Wiltshire to Gloucestershire only in 1897. Minety is nearby. Thereafter the suggested British boundary is likely to have swung southwards, away from the Thames, through Braydon Wood towards Keevil. Such a boundary could have defined the eastern limit of a British territory which extended westwards to the River Severn and southwards to Bath. Anglo-Saxon control of this area seems to have been achieved c. 675. The earliest

³⁹ Temple complex: RCHM(E), *Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds* (London, 1976), 99; T. Moore, 'An archaeological assessment of Hailey Wood Camp, Sapperton, Gloucestershire: a Roman temple complex in the Cotswolds?', *Trans. Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeol. Soc.*, 119 (2001), 83-93. Temples sited near river source: M. J. T. Lewis, *Temples in Roman Britain* (Cambridge, 1966), 129. Internal division of Dobunni: A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Gloucestershire, Part I* (English Place-Name Soc., 13, Cambridge, 1964), 75. Temples on boundary: A. L. F. Rivet, *Town and Country in Roman Britain* (London, 1958), 134.

charters for the monasteries at Bath (a grant by the king of the Hwicce) and Malmesbury date between that year and 688.⁴⁰ The latter relate to Mercian grants of estates at Tetbury, in Gloucestershire, and Long Newnton and Somerford Keynes in Wiltshire (the last also transferred to Gloucestershire in 1897), and to a West Saxon grant in Wiltshire at Kemble plus an exchange of estates in that county between one near Malmesbury and another east of Braydon Wood where the monastery already held land by c. 676/686.

The diocese of Worcester, which incorporated South Gloucestershire, was established around A.D. 680. Its boundary is recorded in full only c. 1291, when it followed that of the county of Gloucestershire as it existed until 1897. Its limit generally lay close to the Thames but coincided with the river itself only at South Cerney and from Kempsford eastwards (immediately east of the mapped area) — though the river may have provided a continuous division between the Hwicce and the West Saxons in earlier times.⁴¹ If this information is combined with that of the British boundary names, it is possible to argue that the only district which lay both on a British frontier in Augustine's day and on the West Saxon and Hwiccan boundary in the time of Bede was that around Kemble. Recent discussion of British sources behind Bede's account of the meeting at Augustine's Oak has drawn attention to their possible preservation, on account of their local interest, at Malmesbury, only some 11 km to the south-east.⁴² Around the year 600 a British territory which extended this far eastwards would indeed have been the closest to Canterbury, whence Augustine set out. Bede tells us that Æthelberht afforded the archbishop his protection; perhaps he made most of the journey along the Thames. Perhaps too his oak tree was in the wood of Kemble, which receives a mention in one of the earliest charters!⁴³

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BRUCE EAGLES

THE RE-USE OF A FIGURATIVE PANEL FROM EIGG

This paper suggests that a cross-slab from Eigg, decorated on its rear face with a hunting scene, was originally part of a separate and distinct monument, the possibilities of which include a type of architectural fragment, a composite church furnishing, such as an altar, or most likely a shrine. Early-medieval shrines or fragments of shrines make up a small part of the sizeable corpus of sculpted stone monuments from Scotland. Most well known are the St Andrew's Sarcophagus (late 8th- or 9th-century), a composite shrine and the Govan Sarcophagus (10th- or 11th-century), a hollowed monolith of stone with four sculpted outward faces. Composite shrines are rectangular stone boxes with the long and short sides joined together. Charles Thomas has classified these monuments into three different types: grooved shrines where the slabs fit directly into slots on another slab; corner post shrines; and corner-block (or corner-slab) shrines where the panels fit into specially

⁴⁰ P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968), nos. 51, 71/73, 1169, 1170 and 231/234.

⁴¹ S. Bassett, 'In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms', 3–27 in S. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester 1989), at p. 9, fig. 1.2.

⁴² C. Stancliffe, 'The British Church and the mission of Augustine', 107–51 in R. Gameson (ed.), *St Augustine and the Conversion of England* (Stroud, 1999), at p. 128; cf. P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England 600–800* (Cambridge, 1990), 78. J. R. Green, *The Making of England* (London, 1885), 224, n.1, long ago suggested the Malmesbury area as a possible location for the meeting.

⁴³ Sawyer, *op. cit.* in note 40, no. 234.