

THE MATTER OF BRITAIN

A collection of material from primary sources telling the early history of Britain.

Forward

I intended collecting all primary written sources together in date order. This would give a clear narrative of events in Roman and Dark Age Britain. Of course, I failed.

There are no real primary sources. For centuries everything was re-copied, translated, and glossed over.

Then there were my subjective decisions on which versions to use. What religious discussion or Roman political intrigue would I leave out to save space?

I have put in the secondary source works of Sabine Baring-Gould, (**SBG**) because I could find little else. Worse, I have edited and cut his work to a more succinct length.

And what was Britain? I am part Scottish, English, Welsh and Irish. So I include Ireland, but many do not. Then what about Brittany? Northern Gaul? Germany? Surely events there effected Britain?

Thus my original clear narrative became a heap of odd facts in rough date order.

I invite you to make the best of it.

Edwin Hopper

THE FIRST AGE. FROM ADAM TO THE FLOOD.

NENNIUS

The first age of the world is from Adam to Noah; the second from Noah to Abraham; the third from Abraham to David; the fourth from David to Daniel; the fifth to John the Baptist; the sixth from John to the judgement, when our Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge the living and the dead, and the world by fire.

CRONICUM SCOTORUM

The First Age of the world contains 1656 years according to the Hebrews, but 2242 according to the Seventy Interpreters; all which perished in the Deluge, in the same manner that oblivion is wont to swallow up infancy. Ten generations. Thus do the Gaedhel express the number of this age:—

Six years, fifty, and six hundred, as I reckon,

A great thousand I count from Adam to the Flood.

Anno Mundi 1599. A.M. 1599 In this year the daughter of one of the Greeks came to Hibernia, whose name was Eriu, or Berba, or Cesar, and fifty maidens, and three men, with her. Ladhra was their conductor, who was the first that was buried in Hibernia. This the antiquaries of the Scoti do not relate.

ANNALS OF CLONMACNOISE

ADAM in the 130 yeare of his age Begatt Seth, and after- wards Adam Liued 800 yeares & in all he lived 930 yeares. Seth in the 105 th yeare of his age Begatt Enos, and lived afterwards 137 yeares. Enos in the Qo th yeare of his adge Begatt Cainan and liued after his Birth 815 yeares. Cainan in the yo th yeare of his age Begatt Malalle and lived himself after 840 yeares. Malalele in the 65 th yeare of his age Begatt Jareth and liued after 830 yeares. Jareth in the 62 nd yeare of his adge begatt

Enoch and lived after 800 years. Enoch in the 65th year of his age begat Methuselah, after whose birth he walked with God. Methuselah in the age of 187 years begat Lamech and lived himself after 782 years. Lamech in the year of his age 182 begat Noah and lived after 595 years.

This year of Lamech's age came the woman called Cesarea or Keassar accompanied only with three men and 50 Women to this Land which was the first habitation of Ireland, though others say this land was first discovered and found by three fisher men who were sailing in these parts of the world, and because they made no residence in the Land I will make no mention of them. The 3 men that came with the said Keassar were called Layerie, Beth, and Fintan. Layerie after 7 years continuance in the Land dyed, and was the first that ever dyed in Ireland of whom Ardreyren (where he dyed and was entered) took the name. Beth dyed at the mount called Sliew Beth. Fintan survived and was drowned where the general flood did overtake him. Keassar died at Keassra 1 in Connaught and so every of the 50 women were drowned where each of them was overtaken as my Author Eochy O'Flannigan reporteth, who giveth no credit to that fabulous tale of many that give out that Fintan lived in Ireland before the flood, shunned himself from the violence thereof in a cave at Lochdeirke until the flood was past and then after lived in the Kingdom for many hundred years, is a thing contrary to Holy Scripture sayeth that all the world was drowned in the general flood saving Noah and his 3 sons Sam, Cham, and Japheth with their 4 wives.

Dindshenchas SLIAB BETHA

I behold the grave of a stranger from afar, the monument of a leader, crowned with sad splendour, whose name, bright in lustre, was Bith son of Noah, vast of vigour. Forty days by tale before the doleful Deluge, to Erin came the short-lived swarm, a multitude, a numbered array. Hither came Bith, skilled in battle, marching before his noble wives: five and twenty wives, by firm bond, made up his family. As for Bith, the chieftain's time was short; shaking seized him and sore sickness: his own wives dug a grave on the mountain for his burial. From him, high above the planets' path, is named Sliab Betha, the wild bulls' home; the body of the corsair, who lived not long, lies yet under the cairn thou seest. O Christ, unshaken, above all coasts, that didst not abandon Bith eternally, be mine no sadness in thy dwelling yonder, when I have told of each thing I see!

LIBER BRITANNICUS.

The Britons at first filled the whole island with their children, from the sea of Icht to the sea of Orck, both with glory and excellency.

Now after the deluge the world was divided into three *parts*; between the three sons of Noe, viz.: Eoraip, Affraic, and Asia. Sem was in Asia; Cam in Affraic; Jafeth in Eoraip. The first man of the race of Jafeth that came into Eoraip at the beginning was Alanius, with his three sons; viz.: Isacon, Gothus or Armion, and Negua. Isacon had four sons, Francus, Romanus, Britus, Albanus. Now Armion had five sons, Gotas, Uilegotas, Cebetus, Burgandus, Longobardus. Negua had three sons, Vandalus, Saxo, Boarus. It is from Saxo, son of Negua, that the Saxons are *descended*; but it is from Britus the Britons *come*. He is the son of Isacon, the son of Alanius, the son of Fethuir, the son of Ogaman, the son of Tai, son of Boidhbh, son of Semoibh, son of Athacht, son of Aoth, son of Abar, son of Raa, son of Asra, son of Iobaith, son of Ioban, son of Japheth, son of Noe, son of Laimiach. Thus it is recorded in the histories of Britain.

Furthermore it is related in the Annals of the Romans, that Aenius the son of Anacis arrived in Italy after the destruction of Troy, and took to wife Lavina the

daughter of Ladin, son of Pan, son of Pic, son of Saturn, &c. After having slain Turn, and after the death of Ladin the king, Aenius took the kingdom of Ladianda; and the city of *Alba Longa* was founded by Ascan, son of Aenius, and he married a wife, and she bore him a son, viz. Silvius, shortly after. Silvius afterwards married a wife, and she became pregnant, and it was told to Ascan that his son's wife was pregnant; and he sent a messenger to his son *to say* that he would send his Druid to give an opinion on his wife, to know whether it was a son, or whether it was a daughter she was about to bring forth. The Druid went, and after *his* return the Druid said to Ascan, that it was a son that was in her womb; and said that he would be powerful, and that he would kill his father and his mother, and that he would be hated by all. In fact his mother died in giving him birth. He received a name, viz. Britus, and afterwards he was nursed.

Now Britus *was* the son of Silvius, son of Ascan, son of Aenius, son of Anacis, son of Caipen, son of Essarc, son of Tros, son of Airic, son of Idus, son of Dardain, son of Jove, son of Sardain, son of Ceil, son of Polloir, son of Zororastres, son of Mesraim, son of Cam (*filius maledicti ridentis patrem*), son of Noe. Moreover, Tros, son of Airictodus, had two sons; viz., Ilium *Ilus* and Asarcus; it was by him *i. e. by Ilus* was founded Ilium, *i. e.* Troy he had a son, Laimidoin, the father of Priam. Assarc, moreover, *was* the father of Capen, Capen *was* the father of Anacis, Anacis the father of Aenius, Aenius the father of Ascan, the grandfather of Britan exosus, *i. e.* of Britan the abhorred. It was in this way that our noble elder Guanach deduced the pedigree of the Britons, from the Chronicles of the Romans.

After many years subsequently, according to the prophecy of the Druid, it happened to Britus to be shooting arrows in presence of the king, *i. e.* his father, and an arrow from him pierced the temple of the king, and the king died immediately there, *i. e.* his own father and afterwards he was driven out of Italy, to the islands of the Torrian *Mediterranean* sea, and the Greeks expelled him out of the Islands in revenge for Turn, who had been killed by Aenius. After this he came to France, and Torinis was founded by him, and he was not suffered *to remain* there, but came afterwards into the island of Britain, where he took possession of the kingdom, and the island was named from him, and became full of his children and his descendants. And thus was it first peopled, according to the Romans.

From the conquest of Britus to the conquest of the Picts in the islands of Orc, were nine hundred years, and they took the northern third part of the island of Britain by force from the Britons, and they dwell there unto this day.

Afterwards the Gaels took the same division *occupied* by the Picts; and they made a treaty with the Picts against the Britains.

Annals of the four masters

2952 BCE Forty days before the Deluge, Ceasair came to Ireland with fifty girls and three men; Bith, Ladhra, and Fintain, their names. Ladhra died at Ard Ladrann, and from him it is named. He was the first that died in Ireland. Bith died at Sliabh Beatha, and was interred in the carn of Sliabh Beatha, and from him the mountain is named. Ceasair died at Cuil Ceasra, in Connaught, and was interred in Carn Ceasra. From Fintan is named Feart Fintain, over Loch Deirgdheirc.

From the Deluge until Parthalon took possession of Ireland 278 years; and the age of the world when he arrived in it, 2520.

The age of the world when Parthalon came into Ireland, 2520 years. These were the chieftains who were with him: Slainge, Laighlinne, and Rudhraidhe, his three sons; Dealgnat, Nerbha, Ciochbha, and Cerbnad, their four wives.

2667 BCE Fea, son of Torton, son of Sru, died this year at Magh Fea, and was interred at Dolrai Maighe Fea; so that it was from him that the plain is named.

THE SECOND AGE. AFTER THE FLOOD.

CRONICUM SCOTORUM

The Second Age of the world begins, which contains 292 years, that is according to the Hebrews, as the poet says:—

From the Flood to Abraham, who was happily born,
Two full, prosperous years, ninety and two hundred;
but according to the lxx. Interpreters, 940 years.

Anno Mundi 1859. A.M.1859 Ten years after that to the demolition of the Tower. Nine years after that to Fenius. In this year Fenius composed the language of the Gaeidhel from seventy-two languages, and subsequently committed it to Gaeidhel, son of Agnoman, viz., in the tenth year after the destruction of Nimrod's Tower.

THE BOOK OF INVASIONS

Magog, son of Iafeth, of his progeny are the peoples who came to Ireland before the Gaedil: to wit Partholan s. Sera s. Sru s. Esru s. Bimbend (sic) s. Magog s. Iafeth; and Nemed s. Agnomain s. Pamp s. Tat s. Sera s. Sru; and the progeny of Nemed, the Gaileoin, Fir Domnann, Fir Bolg and Tuatha De Danann. As the poet said, *Magog son of Iafeth there is certainty of his progeny; of them was Partholon of Banba -- decorous was his achievement.* Of them was noble Nemed son of Agnomain, unique; of them were Gand and Genand, Sengand, free Slaine. The numerous progeny of Elada, of them was Bres, no untruth: son of Elada expert in arms, son of Delbaeth son of Net. S. Inda, s. Allda -Allda who was s. Tat, s. Tabarn s. Enda, s. Baath, [son of] pleasant Ibath. s. Bethach s. Iardan s. Nemed grandson of Paimp: Pamp s. Tat s. Sera s. Sru s. white Braiment. Of Braiment s. Aithecht, s. Magog, great in reknown: there happened in their time a joint appearance against a Plain. Baath, one of the two sons of Ibath s. Gomer s. Iafeth, of him are the Gaedil and the people of Scythia. He had a son, the noble eminent man whose name was Feinus Farsaid.

It is he who was one of the seventy-two chieftains who went for the building of Nemrod's Tower, whence the languages were dispersed. Howbeit, Nemrod himself was son of Cush s. Ham s. Noe. This is that Feinius aforesaid who brought the People's Speech from the Tower: and it is he who had the great school, learning the multiplicity of languages.

Now Feinius had two sons: Nenual, [one of the two] whom he left in the principedom of Scythia behind him; Nel, the other son, at the Tower was he born. Now he was a master of all the languages; wherefore one came [to summon him] from pharao, in order to learn the multiplicity of languages from him. But Feinius came out of Asia to Scythia, whence he had gone for the building of the Tower; so that he died in the principedom of Scythia, at the end of forty years, and passed on the chieftainship to his son, Nenual.

At the end of forty two years after the building of the Tower, Ninus son of Belus took the kingship of the world. For no other attempted to exercise authority over the peoples or to bring the multitude of nations under one had, and under tax and tribute, but he alone. Aforetime there had been chieftains; he who was noblest and most in favour in the community, he it was who was chief counsellor for every man: who should avert all injustice and further all justice. No attempt was made to invade or to dominate other nations.

Now that is the time when Gaedel Glas, [from whom are the Gaedil] was born, of Scota d. Pharao. From her are the Scots named, ut dictum est *Feni are named from*

Feinius a meaning without secretiveness: Gaedil from comely Gaedel Glas, Scots from Scota. It is Gaedel Glas who fashioned the Gaelic language out of the seventy-two languages: there are their names, Bithynian, Scythian, etc. Under poeta cecinit The languages of the world, see for yourselves Bithynia, Scythia, Cilicia, Hyreania, Gothia, Graecia, Germania, Gallia with horror, Pentapolis, Phrygia, Palmatia, Dardania. Pamphylia, Mauretania, populous Lycaonia, Bacctria, Creta, Corsica, Cypros Thessalia, Cappadocia, noble Armenia, Raetia, Sicilia, Saracen-land, Sardinia. Belgia, Boeotia, Brittaina, tuneful Rhodos, Hispania, Roma, Rhegini, Phoenicia, India, golden Arabia, Mygdonia, Mazaca, Macedonia. Parthia, Caria, Syria, Saxones, Athenae, Achaia, Albania, Hebraei, Arcadia, clear Galatia, Troas, Thessalia, Cyclades. Moesia, Media, Persida, Franci, Cyrene, Lacedaemonia, Langobardi, Thracia, Numidia, Hellas (?) -- hear it! Lofty Italia, Ethipia, Egypt. That is the tally of languages without tarnish out of which Gaedel cut Gaedelic: known to me is their roll of understanding, the groups, the manifold languages.

BEDE

There are in the island at present, following the number of the books in which the Divine Law was written, five languages of different nations employed in the study and confession of the one self-same knowledge, which is of highest truth and true sublimity, to wit, English, British, Scottish, Pictish, and Latin, the last having become common to all by the study of the Scriptures. But at first this island had no other inhabitants but the Britons, from whom it derived its name, and who, coming over into Britain, as is reported, from Armorica. They possessed themselves of the southern parts thereof. Starting from the south, they had occupied the greater part of the island, when it happened, that the nation of the Picts, putting to sea from Scythia, as is reported, in a few ships of war, and being driven by the winds beyond the bounds of Britain, came to Ireland and landed on its northern shores. There, finding the nation of the Scots, they begged to be allowed to settle among them, but could not succeed in obtaining their request. Ireland is the largest island next to Britain, and lies to the west of it; but as it is shorter than Britain to the north, so, on the other hand, it runs out far beyond it to the south, over against the northern part of Spain, though a wide sea lies between them. The Picts then, as has been said, arriving in this island by sea, desired to have a place granted them in which they might settle. The Scots answered that the island could not contain them both; but "We can give you good counsel," said they, "whereby you may know what to do; we know there is another island, not far from ours, to the eastward, which we often see at a distance, when the days are clear. If you will go thither, you can obtain settlements; or, if any should oppose you, we will help you." The Picts, accordingly, sailing over into Britain, began to inhabit the northern parts thereof, for the Britons had possessed themselves of the southern. Now the Picts had no wives, and asked them of the Scots; who would not consent to grant them upon any other terms, than that when any question should arise, they should choose a king from the female royal race rather than from the male: which custom, as is well known, has been observed among the Picts to this day. In process of time, Britain, besides the Britons and the Picts, received a third nation, the Scots, who, migrating from Ireland under their leader, Reuda, either by fair means, or by force of arms, secured to themselves those settlements among the Picts which they still possess. From the name of their commander, they are to this day called Dalreudini; for, in their language, Dal signifies a part.

It (Ireland) is properly the country of the Scots, who, migrating from thence, as has been said, formed the third nation in Britain in addition to the Britons and the Picts.

ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE.

The island Britain is 800 miles long, and 200 miles broad. And there are in the island five nations; English, Welsh (or British), Scottish, Pictish, and Latin. The first inhabitants were the Britons, who came from Armenia, and first peopled Britain southward. Then happened it, that the Picts came south from Scythia, with long ships, not many; and, landing first in the northern part of Ireland, they told the Scots that they must dwell there. But they would not give them leave; for the Scots told them that they could not all dwell there together; "But," said the Scots, "we can nevertheless give you advice. We know another island here to the east. There you may dwell, if you will; and whosoever withstandeth you, we will assist you, that you may gain it." Then went the Picts and entered this land northward. Southward the Britons possessed it, as we before said. And the Picts obtained wives of the Scots, on condition that they chose their kings always on the female side; which they have continued to do, so long since. And it happened, in the run of years, that some party of Scots went from Ireland into Britain, and acquired some portion of this land. Their leader was called Reoda, from whom they are named Dalreodi (or Dalreathians).