

The Vandals in Wessex and the Battle of Deorham.

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IN 577 Cuðwine (or Cupwine) and Ceawlin are said by Saxon chronicles to have fought the Britons at Deorham (now Dyrham, in Gloucestershire); to have slain three kings—Connægl, Condidan, and Farinmægl; and to have taken three chesters—Gleawan ceaster, Cirencester, and Bathan ceaster. This victory was most momentous, for the capture of Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath separated Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall from Wales.

Of the *provenance* of these kings Freeman says nothing; Guest and Green infer that they were the kings of the three cities, and the former thinks that "in all likelihood" Connægl ruled Gloucester; I presume he would have given Cirencester to Condidan, and Bath to Farinmægl.

Sharon Turner and Villemarqué, Guest tells us, identify Condidan with "the Kyndylan whose death is bewailed in an old Welsh *marwnad*, or elegy. But it appears clearly enough from the elegy that Kyndylan was slain near Shrewsbury, and, therefore, could not possibly be the Condidan who, according to the chronicle, was slain at Deorham, in Gloucestershire". Mr. Plummer identifies the two without remark, adding that "nothing seems to be known of the other two Welsh princes".

If we want to get at the entire truth about these early campaigns we must not, as has been the unscientific fashion, totally ignore Geoffrey of Monmouth.¹ He tells us (xi, 8) that the head of the British kings at this time was Karetic, a lover of civil war, hateful to God and his own people. That the Saxons finding out his instability

¹ See my letters, "Mons Badonicus and Geoffrey of Monmouth", in *The Academy* for Mar. 14 and Apr. 11, 1896; no attempt has ever been made to answer them. Let me add the following additional remarks. Geoffrey certainly wrote the rubbish in Book VII (the prophecies of Merlin) about the "serpens Malvernica", "Totonesius aper", "Lindocolinus coluber", etc., which he meant to be applied by his readers to the troubles then going on. But the Breton element is very manifest in the following incidents:—(1) Brutus, before settling in Britain, lands at the mouth of the Loire, defeats the Pictavians, and founds the city of Tours (the future ecclesiastical metropolis of the Bretons)—i, 12, etc. (2) Maximian creates a British kingdom in Armorica under Conan Meriadoc—v, 12. (3) Hengist, in his final and fatal battle, is defeated only by a cavalry-charge of Bretons—viii, 5. (4) Arthur retreats from York to London before heavy Saxon reinforcements, but on being joined by his nephew Hoel, king of Brittany, with 15,000 Bretons, drives the Saxons to the neighbourhood of the Forth—ix, 2, etc. (5) Arthur conquers the Romans in Gaul—x. (6) Cadwallon flies to Salomon, king of Brittany, returns with 10,000 Bretons, and makes havoc of the Saxons—xii, 4, etc. (7) Cadwallader flees with his people, devastated by famine and plague, to Alan, king of Brittany—xii, 15. The Bretons were so largely derived from Cornwall and Devon that two of their four provinces were named Cornubia and Domnonia, and (8) Corineus, the eponymous hero of Cornwall, is Brutus's second in command, kills Tyrrhenian giants by threes and fours, and chooses Cornwall for his portion of Britain on account of its greater fertility in giants!—i, 12, 16; while (9) in the Roman and post-Roman times the *dux Cornubie*, or *rex Cornubie*, constantly figures as the most prominent person next to the *imperator*. Part only of the first two incidents had been given by Nennius, and that all the rest should be the mere invention of a South Welshman (whom we do not know to have ever set foot in Brittany or Cornwall) would be strange in any case. And in face of his statement that he had translated a Breton book brought him by the Archdeacon of Oxford (still alive to deny the statement if untrue) it seems to me to exceed the bounds of reasonable theorizing.

went to Godmund, Gotmund, Gormund, or Gurmund¹ king of the Africans (Vandals?) into Hibernia (? Hiberia, *i.e.* Spain) "in quam maximis navigiis advectus gentem patriæ subiugaverat". That the African landed with 166,000 men, attacked Karetic, after very many battles chased him from city to city, at last blockaded him in Cirencester, captured and burnt the city, beat Karetic again, and drove him beyond the Severn. And that, while he was besieging Cirencester, Isembard, grandson of Lodovic king of the Franks, came to him and entered into a treaty with him, by which he forsook his Christianity for the purpose of obtaining help to win the kingdom of Gaul from his uncle, by whom he said he had been unjustly expelled.

Now, if the whole of this story about the Africans were utter nonsense, it would still not be the nonsense that a South Welshman of the twelfth century would invent in writing a history of Britain, and, as in other parts of his work, Breton tradition is obvious. Chlodowig (Clovis), king of the Franks (who, of course, were neighbours to the Bretons), died in 511, and his grandsons were alive when the battle of Deorham was fought. In 558 his son Childebert, king of Paris, died, and the widow and two daughters were exiled by Childebert's younger brother Chlothachar. The widow may have given birth to a posthumous son, or a pretender may have claimed to be her son. Or, Isembard may have claimed to be the great-grandson of Chlodowig, posthumous child of one of the wives of

¹ The uncritical printed texts before me read Gor-. The Bern MS. (Stadtbibliothek, 568) has Got-, but in 1898 I found from the make-up of the volume that, in spite of its Stephen-dedication, it was not copied *before* the end of 1170. The Welsh version also has Got-. The Bodleian MSS. vary. MS. Bodl. 514 (12th cent.) and four others have God-. The important twelfth cent. MS. Rawlinson C. 152 is very careless at this point and has the remarkable reading *Gundoforū*.

Charibert, king of Paris, who died in 567, and whose kingdom was then taken by his younger brother Chilperic. Isenbard would be an excellent Frankish name, and the promise to renounce his Christianity is explained by the fact that the Vandals were Arians. It is vastly more probable that his story has a kernel of fact than that it is an irrelevant and purposeless fable.

And now for the Vandals. In 533 their African kingdom was destroyed; some were sent to Constantinople to be drafted into the imperial army, *and the rest were to be expatriated* (Procopius, *de bell. Vand.*, ii, 19). Where were they to go? Why not to Spain,¹ the country from which they had come, and of which the ruling race were Teutons like themselves? It would be equally natural that their males should take service as mercenaries under the Visigoths, who were then gradually completing the conquest of the Peninsula.

It would, of course, be *conceivable* that they should migrate to Ireland, but in Irish chronicles I cannot find any trace of an invasion at this time. And in favour of my emendation *Hiberiam* it is important to add that the "Lucius *Tiberius*" of our printed texts of Geoffrey should be Lucius *Hiberus* (the Iberian), according to the weight of the MS. authority known to me. I strongly suspect that beneath the fantastic romance of Arthur's war with him there lies the memory of a struggle between the Bretons and some Aquitanian Visigoth, who claimed to represent Roman authority, and against whom Arthur may have helped them as they had helped Arthur against the Saxons and Picts.

Vortigern is said to have invited the foreign-speaking

¹ The eighth cent. Ravenna geographer says the race fled to Mauritania Gaditana (iii, 12) and disappeared ("nusquam comparuit"). Mauritania Gaditana is the coast nearest Spain.

Saxons to aid him in fighting the Picts and Scots; it would be more natural that the Saxons themselves should invite the aid of Vandal mercenaries, who spoke a tongue virtually identical with their own. Dr. Guest, in his paper on "The English conquest of the Severn valley" (*Arch. Camb.*, III, ix, 134), has said "there is reason to believe that about the year 571 the kings of Wessex received an accession of strength, that enabled them to carry war into the very heart of the Welsh territory". He adds, "I do not stop to inquire whence came this increase of strength". That it came from Vandal mercenaries I propose to establish by an appeal to Old English place-names.

In Anglo-Saxon we meet with the name of a people Wend(e)las, of which the genitive Wendla and dative Wendlum occur. The Bosworth-Toller dictionary queries it as either the people of Vendil (North Jutland) or the Vandals. We also have Wendelsæ as the A.S. name of the Mediterranean, presumably given to it from the Vandals, who occupied first Andalusia (=Vandalusia?), then North Africa, the Balearic isles, and Sardinia. Consequently, we may presume that the name "Vandal" in Old English place-names would appear as Wendel-, Wendl-, or Wenl-. And we find that stem in the following names:—

In *Surrey*, Wendlesuurthe, now Wandsworth.

In *Berkshire*, Wendlesore, Windlesore, now Windsor.

Wændlescumb.

In *Oxfordshire*, Wendelebur', now Wendlebury.

In *Worcestershire*, Wendlesclif.

In *Hertfordshire*, Wendlesbiri.

On the borders of *Huntingdonshire* and *Cambridgeshire*, Wenlesmere, or Wendlesmére.

These are all the instances I can find. The first five are certainly within Ceawlin's Wessex, and the remaining two *may* have been.

It has been suggested that such places may have been stations of Vandal troops under the late Roman empire. But the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* exhibits no evidence that the Romans ever brought Vandals into Britain, and I must consider the distribution of the names as arguing the essential truth of Geoffrey's tradition. It is not unimportant to add that Wendlebury in Oxfordshire is the last station before Cirencester on one of the Roman roads, and has an old Roman camp which the Vandals doubtless occupied, perhaps after first driving Karetic out of it.

Let me also call attention to two places apparently named after the Vandal leader Godmund, for in Anglo-Saxon that name is only found twice, and not before the eleventh century.

The first of these is Godmundcestre, now Godmanchester. It is less than twenty miles N.W. of Bedford, Bedford, where Ceawlin's kinsman Cuthwulf fought the Britons in 571, and is the Roman Durolipons (Duroli Pons?), doubtless possessing *castra* which Godmund occupied.

The second is Godmundesleah, Godmund's Lea, the place at which a charter of 779 (Birch, *Cartularium*, no. 230) was signed. Its situation is unknown, but the land to which it relates lies on the ancient Fosse road, about fifteen miles N.W. of Cirencester, at Bourton-on-the-Water. I suspect that the name commemorates a battle fought by Godmund, and the fact that one of the boundaries is "slohtran ford"—represented by Upper Slaughter and Lower Slaughter—confirms this suspicion, though I know that M.E. *slaghter* has not been traced in Anglo-Saxon.

Remarkable, also, is the name of a place, close to Bourton, mentioned in the same charter—"urbi illi qui nominatur SULMONNES BURG".

Now, there is no Anglo-Saxon name at all like *Sulmonn*

to be found in Searle's *Onomasticon* earlier than *Domesday Book*, in which we get the name Salomon and a Salmones-berie in Sussex.

The Fosse road "passes within a few furlongs from the Village: and at about the same Distance from the Road is a Camp of a quadrangular Form, inclosing Sixty Acres, proved to have been a Roman Station, by the discovery of Coins and other Vestiges. On this Spot a Court Leet for the Hundred of *Salemansbury*, now of *Slaughter*, is annually held" (*Bigland, Co. of Gloucester, 225*). It is doubtless from this encampment that Bourton (=Burh-tún) takes its name.

That there were similar names in Old German can be seen in Förstemann—so that the absence of evidence for it in Anglo-Saxon before *Domesday* is not decisive against its having been an Anglo-Saxon name before 779. But Salomon was an undoubted Breton name, borne by a Breton king in 857-74, and, if we may believe Geoffrey's tradition, by an earlier Breton king of the seventh century. And, I suspect that, just as Arthur had (according to Geoffrey) obtained the help of a Breton force against the Saxons, so had Karetic; that its leader was named Salomon;¹ that he had occu-

¹ I suspect Salemansbury to be the Kaer Selemeion of the Triads in the *Red Book of Hergest*. In the printed text of Nennius this is Cair Celemion, with various readings, *elimon, eilimon, celemion, celimon, celimeno, ceileimon, ceilimon*. Prof. Rhys tells me that Solomon is Selyf in Welsh, but in the *Book of Llan Dâr* I find also Selim, and even Salomon: probably Nennius wrote Selimon. The vv.ll. beginning *el-eil-* suggest that all the existing readings spring from a MS. in which the illuminator omitted to fill in the S, and that some copyists wrongly supplied its place with a C. Compare the genealogies of the Harleian MS. 3859, where [S]elim is written without the S, at top of nos. xxii, xxiv. Those genealogies (xxvii) mention a Selemiaun, father of Catel: but this Catel, though he became a king, is said to have been originally only a king's servant (*Hist. Brit.*, 35), so it is doubtful whether a Caer could be named after his father.

pied the old Roman camp; that with him had come over the Frankish refugee Isenbard; that they had combined in an attempt to draw off Godmund to France; but that Isenbard shocked the Bretons by offering to become Arian. That would explain very simply how this unique information got into the Breton tradition which is at the bottom of Geoffrey's book.

The supposed number of the Vandals is, of course, absurd, but even that may contain the germ of the truth. It may have been originally written MCLXVI, *i.e.* 1166, and M may have been misinterpreted as = *millia*. If anyone thinks this too small a reinforcement to be effective, let me mention two facts. (1) Anglo-Saxon chronicles state that in the battle of 508 the British king had 5,000 with him, as if this were a very large number (compared at least with the Saxon strength). (2) In 655 the South Mercians were only 5,000 families, and the North Mercian land supported only 7,000 families¹ (Bede, *H.E.*, iii, 24)—a total for both kingdoms which represents little more than the present population of Oxford. In such times the addition of 1166 trained mercenaries, probably skilled in unfamiliar modes of fighting which would confuse their opponents, would be a most important gain to the West Saxons.

The Vandals would naturally land from Southampton Water, and I suspect that they were imported as early as 568, and that their first settlement was at Windsor. In that year Wessex defeated Kent at Wibban dun, supposed to be Wimbledon, near the banks of the Thames; and Wendlesuurthe, now Wandsworth, is on the river-bank only two or three miles distant. I am aware that Wandsworth is on the Wandle, but no other stream seems to bear that name, and I suspect that its Saxon style

¹ I do not know if Britons are included, whether as independent families or as serfs attached to English families.

(which has not come down to us) meant "the Vandal stream", *i.e.*, the stream on which the Vandals had settled.

In 571, Cuthwulf fought the Britons at Bedford. It would doubtless be from the events of this expedition that Wendlesbiri in Hertfordshire, Godmundcestre in Huntingdonshire, and Wendlesmere¹ on the borders of Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire, got their names.

In the same year Cuthwulf struck West, and captured Bensington and Eyusham in Oxfordshire, and it may have been then that Wændlescumb was occupied by the Vandals. It lay just opposite Oxford, in the Boar's Hill neighbourhood.

Wendlebury in Oxfordshire was probably occupied in 577, in the march on Cirencester, and Wendlesclif in Worcestershire either in the same year (after the capture of Gloucester), or a later year, perhaps 584, when Ceawlin apparently advanced North to Faddiley in Cheshire.

The question remains what became of these Vandals? Geoffrey's text applies to them (xi, 8) words used by Gildas (24) of much earlier invaders, and, later on (xi, 10), represents Godmund as wasting nearly the entire isle, and giving the greater part of it, called Loegria (*L[l]oegr* is Welsh for *England*), to the Saxons.

My own suspicion is that the Vandals became incorporated with the Saxons. That they left descendants in England seems to me morally certain, if not from the name of Wendling in Norfolk, at any rate from that of Wendlingburh (now Wellingborough) in Northamptonshire. And the name of Godmunddingaham, now Goodmanham, which is found as early as Bede (*H. E.*, ii, 13), suggests

¹ It is uncertain whether this means Vandal's boundary, or Vandal's lake: see the context in Kemble, *Cod. Dipl.*, 904, with *mére* "boundary", and the map with various *meres* (*e.g.*, Whittlesey Mere) in the particular district.

that even so far north as Yorkshire there was a family which claimed the Vandal leader as progenitor.¹

Let me now deal with the names of the British kings said to have been killed at Deorham.

Conmægl ("Great Hound") I strongly suspect to have reigned in Merioneth. His name would be Cynfael in modern Welsh. There is an Afon Gynfael, "Cynfael river", at Ffestiniog, doubtless so called because it flows past the two farms Cynfael Mawr, "Great Cynfael", and Cynfael Bach, "Little Cynfael". Doubtless, also, those farms are called (*more Celtico*) because they belonged to a man named Cynfael. Finally, some seven or eight miles south-west is a "Cynfael's Summer-residence", Hafod Gynfael. It is on the high undulating table-land from which descend the so-called "Roman steps" to Llyn Cwm Bychan, and only half a mile from them. Whether the steps are Roman or not, I have no experience to decide; from their rudeness I should have guessed them to be post-Roman. I believe they were meant to assist the carrying up of supplies from the lowlands, perhaps also from Llanbedr harbour,² and they may have been made by Conmægl himself, or one of his predecessors. The fact that his name is spelt Con- and not Cun-, Cin-, or Cyn-, leads me to suspect that he was a Goidel.

"Condidan" I, with Turner, Villemarqué, and Plummer, believe to represent Kyndylan, who was not really killed till about 584. If a man is carried off the field wounded, his enemies may very easily believe him to be

¹ There was a heathen temple here about 617, but Bede only says "et vocatur *hodie* Godmunddingaham".

² That there was a Roman officer close to Llanbedr harbour is suggested by the fact that inside the walls of the neighbouring church of Llandanwg is a Roman inscription, probably of the third century, of which only the words *equestri nomine* are left.

dead. His domain was in Shropshire, in the region of Viriconium (Wroxeter), and him, too, I believe to be a Goidel. Dr. Gwenogfryn Evans tells me that the celebrated elegy on his death, attributed to the sixth century poet, Llywarch Hen, contains no really old Welsh; but it is difficult to read the English translation (*Four Ancient Books of Wales*, i, 448) without feeling that a sixth century tradition, transmitted either in verse or in prose, underlies the whole of it, and that it may be a later mediaeval recast of a genuine sixth century poem.

Assuming this identification, an earlier Anglo-Saxon form was doubtless Condulan, misread as Condidan. That again suggests that all the Anglo-Saxon chronicles containing this entry descended from a single MS., the exemplar of which employed upright *d*. Had it employed only *ð*, a scribe could hardly misread that *ð* into an *l*. From the Con- I suspect this king also to have been a Goidel. "Dilann" might mean "landless" either in Irish or in Welsh: in Irish also "swordless". The name of his sister Freur, mentioned in the Elegy, is (from its initial *F*) almost certainly not Welsh, and looks like an Irish compound in *fre-*: as Welsh habitually changes *ō* to *ū*, I suggest that Freur = *fre* or *fri ór*, "comparable to gold", "Golden".

"Farinmægl"—for which the Parker MS. gives the later form *Farin mail*—represents the Fernmail of Welsh genealogies, and means "[He-of-the] Great Shield". It is, however, Goidelic beyond the smallest doubt, because Nennius (49) gives it as the name of a king then living, and when he wrote (about 796) the initial *V*, which gives *F* in Irish, had become *Gu* in Welsh.¹

Another king Fernmail died in 775 (*Ann. Camb.*), and

¹ In the Elegy itself we have *penngvern* (more correctly *separatim* in *Llys benn gvern*), where *gvern* = original *verno-*, Irish *fern*.

a third was contemporary with Ælfred. All three ruled in South Wales, and, knowing no other instance of the name, I conjecture that the king who was killed at Deorham came from the same region.

POSTSCRIPT.—Since the above was written, Mr. F. M. Stenton, in *The English Historical Review* for October 1905, has proposed to identify “Godmundes leah” with Gumley in Leicestershire: it is found in *Domesday* as Godmundelai and Gutmundeslea,¹ and is about five miles north-west of Market Harborough. If the identification is correct, it suggests a considerable extension of the Vandal leader’s progress in the East Midlands. But I somewhat hesitate to accept it, for the following reasons:—

Of the three charters dated thence,² one is of purely general import, while both the others relate to land in the neighbourhood of Bourton-on-the-Water, in Gloucestershire, and one of them (that of 779) was written at “Iorotla Forda”, said to be “Hartleford, co. Glouc.”, which I guess to be Harford (formerly Hartford), near Slaughter.

Mr. Bradley gravely doubts that in “slohtran ford” we have before us an A. S. form of *slaughter*; since neither W. Saxon nor Mercian should have had the *o*. Still, a ford is just the place where one expects an enemy to

¹ In 1426 “Gromondesley”. The corruption of God- to Got- and Gor- in Geoffrey of Monmouth is well illustrated by these forms, and by “Gorman’s Pond” at Godmanchester (Fox’s *Godmanchester*, 53). Palaeographical confusion is easy between early forms of *od* and *ot*, *ot* and *or*.

² One of 749 has the impossible form “Godmundeslaech”, obviously corrupted from -leah. One of 772 has “Godmundes leas” (pl. of *leah*); it relates to land at Evenlode.

be cut up, and there is also a Slaughterford only five or six miles east of Dyrham.

Whether the invaders marched from Wendlebury on Cirencester by the direct ancient road, or came down on the city by the Foss Way (driving the Britons out of Bourton-on-the-Water and cutting them up at Slaughter), there is little difficulty in realizing the rest of the campaign—especially if we assume that the main road from Bath to Stroud and Gloucester was then existing.

The Britons, driven out of Cirencester, struck for the line of this road, which would enable them to move either north to protect Gloucester, or south to protect Bath. The invaders marched on Bath by the direct ancient road from Cirencester. The Britons on their own line also moved south to Dyrham, five miles north of Bath, where they occupied the ancient camp of which traces remain. A few miles further they would have reached the strong defensive position of Sulisbury Hill, above Bath—but the Saxons marched across from the other road and attacked them. After the battle the Welshmen made for the Aust ferry over the Severn, or for Gloucester, while possibly there was a Wiltshire contingent which made eastward for its own country, and was pursued and cut up at Slaughterford: on the other hand, the latter name may have no connexion with this campaign. The invaders, having occupied Bath, turned north to Gloucester (which probably surrendered without serious resistance), and thus acquired a footing over the mouth of the Severn valley, to be used a little later as the starting-point of a further invasion northwards.

If my suggested derivation of Kyndylan's name is correct, it should apparently be written Con Dilann.