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# NENNIUS

## British History and The Welsh Annals

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*History from the Sources*  
General Editor: John Morris

PHILLIMORE  
London and Chichester

with

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD  
Totowa, New Jersey

1980

~~your seed a king shall not fail † for ever † (for he is Cadell Ddyrnllug), and you alone shall be king from this day.' So it was, and so was fulfilled the saying of the prophet 'He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.' According to saint Germanus' words, he was made a king from a servant, and all his sons were made kings, and from their seed the whole country of Powys is ruled, even to this day.~~

[THE KENTISH CHRONICLE, PART 2]

36. And it came to pass, after the English were encamped in the aforesaid island of Thanet, the aforesaid king promised to supply them with food and clothing without fail; and they agreed, and promised to fight bravely against his enemies. But the barbarians multiplied their numbers, and the British could not feed them. When they demanded the promised food and clothing, the British said 'We cannot give you food and clothing, for your numbers are grown. Go away, for we do not need your help.' So they took counsel with their elders, to break the peace.

37. But Hengest was an experienced man, shrewd and skilful. Sizing up the king's impotence, and the military weakness of his people, he held a council, and said to the British king 'We are few; if you wish, we can send home and invite warriors from the fighting men of our country, that the number who fight for you and your people may be larger.' The king ordered it to be done, and envoys were sent across the sea, and came back with sixteen keels, with picked warriors in them. In one of the keels came Hengest's daughter, a beautiful and very handsome girl. When the keels had arrived, Hengest held a banquet for Vortigern, and his men and his interpreter, whose name was Ceretic, and he told the girl to serve their wine and spirits. They all got exceedingly drunk. When they were drinking, Satan entered into Vortigern's heart, and made him love the girl. Through his interpreter he asked her father for her hand, saying 'Ask of me what you will, even to the half of my kingdom.'

Hengest took counsel with the elders of Angeln, to decide what they should ask of the king for the girl, and they all agreed to ask for the country that in their language is called Canturguoraleu, in ours Kent. So he granted it to them, although Gwyrangon was ruling in Kent, and did not know that his kingdom was being handed over to the heathens, and that he was himself given secretly into their power on his own. So the girl was given in marriage to Vortigern, and he slept with her, and loved her deeply.

38. Hengest said to Vortigern 'I am your father, and will be your adviser. Never ignore my advice, and you will never fear conquest by any man or any people, for my people are strong. I will invite my son and his cousin to fight against the Irish, for they are fine warriors. Give them lands in the north about the Wall that is called Guaul.' So he told him to invite them, and he invited Octha and Ebissa, with forty keels. They sailed round the Picts and wasted the Orkney Islands, and came and occupied many districts beyond the Frenessican Sea, as far as the borders of the Picts. So Hengest gradually brought over more and more keels, until they left the islands †whence† they came uninhabited; and as his people grew in strength and numbers, they came to the aforesaid city of the Kentishmen.

[THE LIFE OF SAINT GERMANUS, PART 2]

39. Then, on top of all his misdeeds, Vortigern took his daughter to wife, and begot a daughter upon her. When this was made known to saint Germanus, he came with all the clergy of Britain to accuse him. When the great Synod of the clergy and laity met together in a single council, the king told his daughter beforehand to come to the meeting, and put her son in the lap of Germanus, and say that he was the child's father. The woman did as she was told, but Germanus took the child kindly, and addressed him 'I will be your father, and will not send you away, unless a razor and scissors and comb are given me, and you are permitted to give them to your father after the flesh.' The boy heard him, and turned to his grandfather Vortigern, his father after the flesh, and said to him 'You are my father. Crop my head, and the hair of my head.' But he was silent, and said nothing, and refused to answer the boy. He got up in great anger, and fled from the face of saint Germanus, and was accursed, and was condemned by saint Germanus and the whole council of the British.

[THE TALE OF EMRYS]

40. Then the king invited his wizards to him, and asked them what was to be done. They said 'Go to the farthest borders of your kingdom, and find a fortified stronghold to defend yourself, for the people whom you received into your kingdom has turned against you, and will seek to slay you treacherously, and will occupy all the countries you loved, and all your people, after your death. Then the king came with his wizards to seek the stronghold, and encompassed many countries and many provinces, and did not find it, and at last they came to the country called Gwynedd; and when he was exploring in the mountains of Eryri, †that is, in English, Snowdon,† he at length reached a place in one of the mountains that was suitable for building a stronghold. So his wizards said to him 'Make a stronghold in this place, for it will be for ever safest

against the barbarian peoples.' So he assembled his workmen, that it the masons, and assembled the timber and stones, and when he had assembled all the material, it disappeared in a single night. Three times he ordered it to be assembled, and it was nowhere to be seen. So he summoned his wizards, and interrogated them about the cause of the evil, and how it had come about. They answered 'Unless you find a child without a father, and he is killed, and the stronghold is sprinkled with his blood, it will never be built at all.'

41. So he sent envoys from the council of the wizards through the whole of Britain, to discover whether there was a child without a father. As they explored all the provinces and many countries, they came to Maes Elledi, in the country called Glywysing. Boys were playing ball (there). Two of them were quarrelling and one said to the other 'You have no father, you will come to no good.' So they questioned the boys closely about him, and asked his mother if he had a father. She denied it, saying 'I do not know how he was conceived in my womb, but one thing I do know is that I have never known a man', and she swore to them that he had no father. So they took him with them and introduced him to king Vortigern.

42. So on the morrow a meeting was held, for the killing of the boy. But the boy said to the king 'Why did your men bring me to you?' The king replied 'So that you could be killed, and your blood sprinkled around this fortress, so that it can be built.' The boy replied 'Who told you that?' 'My wizards told me' said the king. 'Call them to me' said the boy. So the wizards were summoned, and the boy said 'Who revealed to you that this fortress is to be sprinkled with my blood, and that if it is not sprinkled with my blood, it will never be built at all? Who proclaimed this about me, for you to know it? And the boy went on 'Now I will explain it to you, oh king, and fully satisfy you of the truth. But I must question your wizards. What is in the foundation of this place? I want them to show you what there is under the foundations.' But they said 'We do not know.' He said 'I know. There is a lake in the midst of the foundation; come and dig, and you will find it.' They came and dug, and it fell in. The boy said to the wizards 'Reveal to me what there is in the lake.' But they were silent, and could not tell him. So he said to them 'I will show you. You will find that there are two vessels there.' They came and saw that it was so, and the boy said to the wizards 'What is shut up in the vessels?' But they were silent and could not tell him. But he declared 'There is a cloth in the midst of them; separate them and you will find it.' The king ordered them to be separated and a folded cloth was found, as he had said. He asked the wizards again 'Tell me what is inside the cloth.' But they knew not. So he showed them

'Two worms are in it, one white the other red. Unfold the cloth.' They unfolded it, and found two worms, asleep. The boy said 'Wait and see what the worms do.' The worms began to drive each other out. One used his shoulders to drive the other on to a half of the cloth. This they did three times; then the red worm was seen to be weaker, and then was stronger than the white, and drove him beyond the edge of the cloth. The one pursued the other across the lake, and the cloth vanished.

Then the boy asked the wizards 'What is the meaning of this remarkable sign, that happened on the cloth?' They admitted 'We do not know.' The boy answered 'This mystery is revealed to me, and I will make it plain to you. The cloth represents your kingdom, and the two worms are two dragons. The red worm is your dragon, and the lake represents the world. But the white one is the dragon of the people who have seized many peoples and countries in Britain, and will reach almost from sea to sea; but later our people will arise, and will valiantly throw the English people across the sea. But do you go forth from this fortress, for you cannot build it, and travel over many provinces, to find a safe fortress, and I will stay here.' Then the king asked the lad 'What is your name?' He replied 'I am called Ambrosius', that is, he was shown to be Emrys the Overlord. The king asked 'What family do you come from?' and the answered 'My father is one of the consuls of the Roman people.' So the king gave him the fortress, with all the kingdoms of the western part of Britain, and he went himself with his wizards to the northern part, and came to the region called 'Gwynessi', and there he built a city, that is called by his name, Caer Gwrtheyrn.

#### [THE KENTISH CHRONICLE, PART 3]

43. Meanwhile, Vortigern's son Vortimer fought vigorously against Hengest and Horsa and their people, and expelled them as far as the aforesaid island called Thanet, and there three times shut them up and besieged them, attacking, threatening and terrifying them. So they sent envoys overseas to Germany to summon keels with a vast number of fighting men. And afterwards they used to fight against the kings of one nation, sometimes victoriously advancing their frontiers, sometimes being defeated and expelled.

44. Vortimer fought four keen battles against them. The first battle was on the river Darenth. The second battle was at the ford called Episford in their language, Rhyd yr afael in ours, and there fell Horsa and also Vortigern's son Cateyrn. The third battle was fought in the open country by the Inscribed Stone on the shore of the Gallic Sea. The barbarians were beaten and he was victorious. They fled to their keels and were drowned as they clambered aboard them like women.

But Vortimer soon after died. Before he died he told his followers to set his tomb by the coast, in the port from which (the English) had departed, saying 'I entrust it to you. Wherever else they may hold a British port or may have settled, they will never again live in this land.' But they ignored his command and did not bury him where he had told them: †for he is buried in Lincoln. But if they had kept his command, there is no doubt that they would have obtained whatever they wished through the prayers of saint Germanus. †

45. But the barbarians returned in force, for Vortigern was their friend, because of his wife, and none was resolute to drive them out; for they occupied Britain not because of their strength, but because it was the will of God. Who can resist the will of God, even if he tries. The lord did what He would, for He rules and governs all the nations.

So it came to pass that after the death of Vortimer, son of king Vortigern, and after the return of Hengest and his hosts, they instigated a treacherous plan, to trick Vortigern and his army. They sent envoys to ask for peace and make a permanent treaty. Vortigern called a council of his elders to examine what they should do. Ultimately one opinion prevailed with all, that they should make peace. The envoys went back, and conference was convened, wher the two sides, British and English, should meet, unarmed, to confirm the treaty.

46. But Hengest told all his followers to hide their daggers under their feet in their shoes, saying 'When I call out to you and say "*English, draw your knives*", take your daggers from your shoes and fall upon them, and stand firm against them. But do not kill the king; keep him alive, for my daughter's sake, whom I wedded to him, for it is better for us that he be ransomed from us.' So the conference assembled, and the English, friendly in their words, but wolfish in heart and deed, sat down, like allies, man beside man. Hengest cried out as he had said, and all the three hundred Seniors of king Vortigern were murdered, and the king alone was taken and held prisoner. To save his life, he ceded several districts, namely Essex and Sussex, †together with Middlesex and other districts that they chose and designated. †

#### [THE LIFE OF SAINT GERMANUS, PART 3]

47. But saint Germanus preached at Vortigern, to convert him to his lord, and to separate him from his illicit union. But he fled in desperation to the country that is called Gwerthryinion after him, and hid there with his wives. So saint Germanus followed him with all the British clergy, and stayed there forty days and forty nights, standing upon a rock day and night and beseeching him. Then Vortigern withdrew in disgrace to the fortress of Vortigern, which is in the country of the Demetians, on the river Teifi. Saint Germanus

followed him, as before, and stayed there fasting with all the clergy for three days and as many nights to achieve his end, and on the fourth night, about midnight, the whole fortress was suddenly destroyed by fire sent from heaven, and the fire of heaven burned. Vortigern was destroyed with all who were with him, and with all his wives. This is the end of Vortigern, as I found it in the book of the Blessed Germanus; but others have different versions.

48. When he was hated for his sin, †because he received the English people, by all men of his own nation, mighty and humble, slave and free, monk and layman, poor and great, he wandered from place to place until at last his heart broke, and he died without honour. Others say that the earth opened and swallowed him up on the night when his fortress was burnt about him, for no trace was ever found of those who were burned with him in the fortress.

He had three sons, whose names are Vortimer, who fought against the barbarians, as I have described above, the second, Cateyrn; the third, Pascent, who ruled in the two countries called Builth and Gwerthryinion after his father's death, by permission of Ambrosius, who was the †great king among all the kings of the British nation. A fourth son was Faustus, who was born to him by his daughter. Saint Germanus baptised him, and brought him up, and taught him, and he founded a great monastery on the banks of a river, called Riez, that stands to this day. He also had one daughter, who was the mother of saint Faustus.

49. This is his genealogy, traced backwards to the beginning. Ffernfeal, who now rules in the countries of Builth and Gwerthryinion, is son of Tewdwr. Theodore is king of the country of Builth, the son of Pascent, son of Gwyddgant, son of Moriud, son of Eldat, son of Elaeth, son of Paul, son of Meuric [son of Idnerth], son of Briacat, son of Pascent, son of Vortigern the Thin, son of Vitalis, son of Vitalinus, son of Gloiu. Bonus, Paul, Mauron and Vitalinus were four brothers, sons of Gloiu, who built the great city on the banks of the river Severn that is called in the British *Caer Gloiu*, in English Gloucester. Enough has been said of Vortigern and his family.

50. After his death, saint Germanus returned to his own country.

#### [THE LIFE OF SAINT PATRICK]

At that time, saint Patrick was a captive among the Irish, and his master was named Milchu, and he was his swineherd, and [he was] in the seventeenth year of his age. He returned from captivity, and by God's will was later schooled in divine letters, and came to Rome and stayed

there for a long time. He went through a course of reading and of studying the mysteries of God and of the books of the holy scriptures. When he had been there seven years, Palladius was sent by Celestine, Bishop and Pope of Rome, as the first bishop to convert the Irish to Christ. But God hindered him with various misfortunes, for no one can acquire anything on earth, unless it be given to him from heaven above. So Palladius left Ireland and came to Britain and died there, in the land of the Picts.

51. When the death of bishop Palladius was known, Patrick was sent as second legate, in the reign of Theodosius and Valentinian, by Celestine the Roman Pope and by an angel of God named Victor, on the urgent advice of the holy bishop Germanus, to convert the Irish to the faith of Christ. Germanus sent with him an elder, Segitius, to a wonderful man, the chief bishop Amator, who lived nearby. There the holy bishop, knowing all that would happen to him in the future, received the rank of bishop from Amator, and took the name Patrick, for he had formerly been called Maun. Auxilius, Isernius and others were ordained with him, in a lower rank.

52. Then, when they had received blessing, and completed all else in the name of the Holy Trinity, they embarked on a waiting ship, and sailed to Britain, and preached there for not many days; avoiding all digressions on their journey, they sailed down the Irish Sea with all speed and a favourable wind with their ship. The ship was laden with overseas marvels and spiritual treasures, and they reached Ireland, and he baptised them.

53. From the beginning of the world to the baptism of the Irish there are 5,330 years. In the fifth year of king Loegaire he began to preach the faith of Christ.

54. So saint Patrick preached the Gospel of Christ to foreign nations for forty years, working wonders like the Apostles, bringing light to the blind, cleansing lepers, making the deaf hear, chasing demons from the bodies wherein they dwelt, raising the dead, to the number of nine, ransoming many captives of both sexes by gifts of his own. He wrote three hundred and sixty five or more alphabets, and also founded the same number of churches, three hundred and sixty five. He consecrated three hundred and sixty five or more bishops, and the spirit of God was in them; and ordained as many as three thousand priests, and converted and baptised twelve thousand men to the faith of Christ in a single region, Connacht, and baptised on one day seven kings, who were sons of Amolgaid. He fasted for forty days and forty nights on the summit of Eile hill, that is Cruachan Eile; and on that hill that reached to the skies, he gently asked three petitions for those of the Irish who had received the faith. The Irish say that the first of his petitions is that every-

one should enter into repentance, even in extreme old age; and second that they should not be destroyed by barbarians for ever; the third, that none of the Irish should survive to the Advent of Judgment, but that in honour of Patrick they should be brought to their end seven years before the judgment. On that hill he blessed the peoples of Ireland, and he climbed it in order to pray for them and to see the fruit of his labour. And there came to him innumerable birds of many colours for him to bless, which signifies that all the saints of the Irish of both sexes should come to him on the Day of Judgment, to their father and teacher, to follow him to Judgment. Afterwards, he passed over in good old age, wherefore he now has joy for ever and ever. Amen.

55. In four ways Patrick is like Moses; in talking with an angel in the burning bush; secondly, he fasted on a mountain for forty days and forty nights; thirdly, both alike were 120 years old; fourthly, no man knows his tomb, for he was buried in secret, no one knowing where. He was 15 years in captivity, and in his twenty fifth year he was appointed by the holy bishop Amator, and he preached in Ireland for 85 years. The matter demands that more should be said of Saint Patrick, but nevertheless I must be brief, to shorten my tale.

#### [THE CAMPAIGNS OF ARTHUR]

56. At that time the English increased their numbers and grew in Britain. On Hengest's death, his son Octha came down from the north of Britain to the kingdom of the Kentishmen, and from him are sprung the kings of the Kentishmen. Then Arthur fought against them in those days, together with the kings of the British; but he was their leader in battle.

The first battle was at the mouth of the river called Glein. The second, the third, the fourth and the fifth were on another river, called the Douglas, which is in the country of Lindsey. The sixth battle was on the river called Bassas. The seventh battle was in Celyddon Forest, that is, the Battle of Celyddon Coed. The eighth battle was in Guinnion fort, and in it Arthur carried the image of the holy Mary, the everlasting Virgin, on his [shield,] and the heathen were put to flight on that day, and there was a great slaughter upon them, through the power of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the holy Virgin Mary, his mother. The ninth battle was fought in the city of the Legion. The tenth battle was fought on the bank of the river called Tryfrwyd. The eleventh battle was on the hill called Agned. The twelfth battle was on Badon Hill and in it nine hundred and sixty men fell in one day, from a single charge of Arthur's, and no one laid them low save he alone; and he was victorious in all his campaigns.