

# WILLIAM CAMDEN'S INSULA ROMANA



By Geoffrey Eatough

*Camden's Britannia, this most English of works, written by a contemporary of Shakespeare, which told the English especially who they had been and were, and helped shape the politics of the country, is written in Latin, Camden's preferred historical language, and is informed by Roman civic values, well exemplified in the introduction to the 1607 edition, where Camden confronts the rancours of contemporary society. The Britannia is historical chorography where Roman remains are the major key to understanding the English landscape, and Roman culture remains inwoven in the history of the people, even in its religion, and in its imperialism. The Britannia is a dynamic not just a monumental work, it engages with the future as well as the past, the past being used to deconstruct the prejudices and assumptions of the present, or reinforce them. The history of Rome had been a history of ethnic assimilation, and the British had become Romano-British and for this and historico-geographical reasons had evolved as nations of mixed races. The sea was part of the chorography of Britain. It made Britain a trading nation but also encouraged imperialistic designs. The narratives on Ireland are followed by a classically inspired poetic of islands and territories adjacent to Britain which serve also as images of an imperial future.*

In the letter of dedication to Lord Burghley,<sup>1</sup> in the 1590, third Latin edition of *Britannia*, William Camden<sup>2</sup> writes “it is now ten years since Abraham

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an attempt to demonstrate a major thesis of Camden's *Britannia*, Britain as the inheritor of Rome, a thesis which is apparent from a mere reading of the Latin editions of Camden. Camden had contacts with a large number of British and European intellectuals, which makes another interesting story. Where I mention people who influenced Camden, I give brief details on their importance, in almost all instances to be found in the on-line edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, which I found was accessible even through a small rural library in a remote part of Wales, which might suggest that it has a near universal presence. The details I present are sufficient for the purposes of this article but there are further interesting details to be accessed. William Cecil (1520/21–1598) who became the first Baron Burghley, was the most influential of Queen Elizabeth's ministers, Secretary of State 1558–1571, and Lord Treasurer from 1572. He was a modernising statesman intent on promoting the commonwealth (*res publica*), while protecting the interests of his monarch. Immediately after the death of Elizabeth there was the sense of a golden age, which was in danger of being lost to a new monarch and his sup-

Ortelius,<sup>3</sup> the preeminent restorer of Universal geography, kept pressing me to shed light on that ancient Britain of ours, that is that I should restore her antiquity to Britain and Britain to her antiquity". The Britain who has her antiquity restored is modern Britain, the antiquity to which she is restored is at base a Roman antiquity.<sup>4</sup> The frontpiece of the book describes the work as "Britannia or a chorographical description of the most flourishing kingdoms of England, Scotland, Ireland and the adjacent islands from deepest antiquity (*ex intima antiquitate*)", what can be called an intimate archipelagic empire.<sup>5</sup> The 1607, final Latin, edition of the *Britannia*, which was

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porters who wished to return to a distant past. There is a paragraph in Wallace T. MacCaffrey's contribution to the *ODNB* which illustrates the philosophy of Burghley, which Camden shared: "the influence of the classical treatises on citizenship and the conduct of public affairs, particularly Cicero's *De officiis*, was definitive to [Burghley's] outlook. From these authors he derived his concept of civil society as a compact of the various degrees of mankind, rationally and equitably governed by men self-disciplined in these classical virtues, indispensable to active participation in public life".

<sup>2</sup> On William Camden (1551–1623) see Herendeen 2004 and 2007. Camden was the premier historian of the age, and the vitality and importance of his *Britannia* and *Annales* endures. He was from 1575 second master of Westminster School, then and now one of the premier schools in the country, and headmaster from 1593–1597. He composed a Greek grammar which was in use for many decades. In 1597 he was made Clarenceux Herald. By then the *Britannia* had brought him recognition as the country's premier antiquarian. He was a member of the Society of Antiquaries whose researches on the past brought them into conflict with Elizabeth's successor, James I. Less controversial, a by-product of the *Britannia*, is *The Remaines of a Greater Worke concerning Britain, their languages, Names, Surnames, Empreses, Wise speeches, Poesies and Epitaphes* (1605), an entertaining and informative work for the common reader. In 1620 he endowed and had instituted at Oxford a chair in in civil history.

<sup>3</sup> Ortelius, Abraham (1527–1598), had published his *Theatrum orbis terrarum* in 1570. Joost Depuydt *ODNB* writes: "At heart, [however] he was less a "cosmographus", than a humanist, obsessed by antiquity, and he was a pioneer in the construction of historical maps related to the ancient world", and Camden in his introduction acknowledges this change of emphasis. Ortelius' small work on the life and customs of the ancient Germans *Aurei saeculi imago* (1596) must have further endeared him to Camden, who was proud of his own Anglo-Saxon ancestry.

<sup>4</sup> "ut Britanniam nostram antiquam illam illustrarem: hoc est ut Britanniae antiquitatem et suae antiquitati Britanniam restituerem". I first read the *Britannia* in the 1590 edition. My reason for originally choosing this edition to read was the clarity of the print, and its proximity to the original 1586 edition, which would have been my preferred edition, since I came to Camden by way of his precursors Price, Lhuyd, and Twyne. John Twyne's *Commentarium*, edited or written up by his son Thomas, was also published in 1590. The seventeen years from the 1590 edition of *Britannia* to the final 1607 edition gives us a perspective on the direction of Camden's work, as it moved into a new age, where each succeeding edition was an expansion of its predecessor.

<sup>5</sup> I take the epithet from Kerrigan 2008, *Archipelagic English*. Much of Kerrigan's book lies outside the period of the *Britannia*, but the long introduction reaches back to Camden on topics which were his concern

published in an English translation by Philemon Holland in 1610,<sup>6</sup> is dedicated to James, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, Born for the Eternity of British Renown and Empire, the Founder of Lasting Peace and Author of Public Security. Here Holland is faithful to Camden's Latin, but in the letter of address to the reader, which incorporates material from the 1590 letter to Burghley, Holland amplifies the Latin text by having Camden say that Ortelius came to England, which we can learn too from Thomas Smith's biography of Camden,<sup>7</sup> to "deal earnestly with me that I would illustrate this Ile of Britain". In the centre of the front-piece of the 1607 edition is a map of the isle of mainland Britain, with many of its ancient British tribes named, along with London, Chester and York, surrounded by its oceans, which are the German, the British, that is the Channel, the Irish, and the Deucaledonian or Scottish, with eastern Ireland and a fragment of France providing a frame. Above is seated Britannia, in what was to become her traditional seated pose, but here with spear at rest pointing down and in her grasp a sceptre, an image which originates on coins of Antoninus Pius, found in a numismatic section, new to the 1600 edition, where on the first example of this type she is seated on rocks, and in the second on a globe.<sup>8</sup> On the left side of the map of Britain in the front-

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<sup>6</sup> I have increasingly read the 1607 edition and Philemon Holland's translation in the bilingual digital edition of Dana Sutton, 2004. The original editions, which are available in English Books On Line (EEBO), as are all the works published in Britain before 1700, are less easy to read, despite the clarity of the print in the 1590 edition. It is extraordinarily easy to move around in Sutton's edition, and to search words, especially to compare Holland's translation with the original. Holland is supposed to have worked in close liaison with Camden. See Herendeen 2007, 7. I am sceptical about the closeness of the collaboration, and the gap between Camden's Latin and Holland's English can be a heuristic tool. Because of the convenience and accessibility of Sutton's texts I had intended to make them the reference points in my notes, but have in the end chosen to make my references to the original texts. I refer to Camden's 1607 edition by C and to Holland's text by H. The section at the end of Holland's text dealing with Scotland through to the Islands has a separate pagination. I refer to them by H followed by general section heading and page, e.g. H *British Ilands* 204. Camden's *Annales* came out in two parts in 1612 and 1627. I refer to them by the year of the edition, followed by the particular year being reported and page, e.g. Camden 1612, *Ann.* 1578, 279–280. On the astonishing Philemon Holland (1552–1637) see John Considine's contribution to the *ODNB*. Holland was the first to translate Livy into English. In rapid succession he translated the whole of the Elder Pliny, which is still commended, Plutarch's *Moralia* and *Lives*, Suetonius' *Lives*, Ammianus Marcellinus, this last in 1609 followed the next year by Camden's massive *Britannia*, then a supplement to Thomas Thomas' Latin dictionary, a translation into Latin of John Speed's *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine*, a work which should be read in conjunction with the *Britannia*, and, passing over other works, Xenophon's *Cyropedia*.

<sup>7</sup> Smith 1691, xii.

<sup>8</sup> The coins, according to Sarah Bendall *ODNB*, were supplied by John Speed (1551/2–1629), a member of the Society of Antiquaries, who in turn was encouraged by Camden, to

piece of the 1607 edition stands a naked Neptune, his private places concealed by the tail of a fishy monster, and on the right Copia with her horn, who primarily may represent the agricultural abundance of the land of Ceres,<sup>9</sup> and also the abundance of all good things, which could be found in this state, which traded with all the world. Below are three cartouches, the central and largest one a depiction of idyllic city life, *rus in urbe*, the left one a fleet of ships, and the right an impressive church. In this edition at this point Ortelius himself is described as preeminent restorer of old or ancient geography.

### Locating the British

The Britannia, on which Camden was to shed light, had been inhabited by Britons, whom the Welsh claimed as their ancestors, and as a race apart, unrelated to others, and claimed also as imperialists, who in their time and in their way had been world conquerors like the Romans.<sup>10</sup> These claims were supported by selective readings of ancient Latin texts, toponymies, mainly erroneous, and a tenuous oral tradition, which included modern poetry, and romance, especially Arthurian romance. Camden had demonstrated, mainly by linguistics, that the ancient Britons had not been a distinctive insular race but one which had demonstrable connections with peoples in continental Europe.<sup>11</sup> This demolition of Welsh, or ancient British particularism, had implications which reached beyond the Welsh, and was fundamental to Camden's work as a whole, to his understanding of the ethnography and history of Britain, enabling the modern British, to understand who they were. He expedited his argument by giving preference to the Classical literary tradition, and gave weight to this tradition by quoting in the 1607 edition large chunks of ancient Roman texts, making their testimonies visible to his readers. They were the evidences for this Roman state of Britain,

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use Roman coinage to incorporate Roman emperors into the English royal succession in his book, *The History of Great Britaine* (1614).

<sup>9</sup> Copia with her horn or *cornu* appears in Horaces' *Carmen Saeculare*, 60, part of the celebration of the new Augustan age. Ceres is found in Camden's introduction on Britain in lines from an allegedly Orphic poem referring to the country's fertility H3: "Howbeit, the ground enriched so with all sorts of corne, that Orpheus hath reported it to be the very seat of Ladie Ceres; for that which we read in his Poeme thus,

*Lo, heere the stately hauls  
Of Ceres Queen.*

is meant of this our Iland; yea, and it hath been the very barne, garner, and storehouse for victuals of the West empire; from whence the Romans were wont yeerely to transport into Germanie, with a fleet of 800 vessels bigger than barges, great store of corne for the maintenance of their armies which there defended the Frontiers".

<sup>10</sup> Lhuyd 1572, Price 1573; Eatough 2005 and 2007.

<sup>11</sup> C 12–16 H 16–22.

in which his own Latin writings were enmeshed. More tangible evidence was offered by archaeology, numismatics and epigraphy, mostly Roman. These literary and physical monumenta substantiated Roman urban culture as the exemplary culture, and the major fault line which reveals itself in Camden's chorography is between the urbanised societies of England and of Scotland, and in Ireland mainly Dublin, in contrast to the less developed societies mainly within Scotland and Ireland. The Scottish Highlander typify these others, and the anachronistic nature of their existence, in the eyes of the English governing classes, is brought out by the antique cast of Holland's language.<sup>12</sup> There were later other fault lines of a religious nature, which often approximated to this line, yet though there are references to religious buildings or events, religion does not provide a dynamic in the *Britannia*, as it does in its political contexts in Camden's *Annales Rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum Regnante Elizabetha*.<sup>13</sup> He was ready to leave religious antiquities and their modern implications to the relevant experts such as Matthew Parker,<sup>14</sup> though in this later edition there are some cutting observations on Henry VIII's destruction of the monasteries and the appropriation of their property by secular speculators.<sup>15</sup> Camden, this most Anglican

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<sup>12</sup> "There inhabite these regions, a kinde of people, rude, warlicke, ready to fight, querulous, and mischeevous: they be commonly termed High-landmen, who being in deed the right progeny of the ancient Scots, speake Irish and call themselves Albinich: their bodies be firmly made and well compact, able withall and strong, nimble of foote, high minded, inbread and nuzeled in warlick exercises or robberies rather, and upon a deadly fued and hatred most forward and desperate to take revenge. They goe attired Irish-like in stript or streaked mantles of divers collours, wearing thicke and long glibbes of haire, living by hunting, fishing, fowling, and stealing. In the warre, their armour is an head-peece or Morion of iron, and an habergeon or coate of maile: their weopons bee bowes, barbed or hooked arrowes, and broade backswordes: and beeing divided by certaine families or kinreds which they terme Clannes, they commit such cruell outrages etc". H *Scotland* 39, on Braid Albin or Albanie.

<sup>13</sup> I found it illuminating to read the *Annales*, on which Camden was working during the publication of the later editions of the *Britannia*.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Parker (1504–1575), made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1559. In 1534 he had become chaplain to Anne Boleyn, and in the following year when she faced death she had entrusted her child, the future queen, Elizabeth, to Parker's spiritual care. Parker had shown outstanding administrative gifts and was to help steer the English reformation. Later in his life he was a great collector of manuscripts and books with the purpose of uncovering the history and the origins of the English church back to a remote past (see Parker & Joscelyn 1572), which led him to becoming a promoter of Anglo-Saxon studies. Like many of his contemporaries he was a public benefactor and gave generously to Cambridge University and his former college Corpus Christi. See the detailed contribution of David J. Crankshaw and Alexandra Gillespie in the *ODNB*.

<sup>15</sup> See especially *South-Folke sive Suffolk*, where Camden describes in extraordinary detail Bury St. Edmunds, named after an Anglo-Saxon king turned saint, revered by the English nation, a fine display of Camden's methodology. It is, despite Bury's later papal inspired wealth, a celebration of this monastic settlement. Towards the end he inserts a bitter

of Englishmen, was thought by some to harbour Catholic sympathies.<sup>16</sup> He also wisely left Scottish matters to the Scots, though he does not totally conceal some antipathies. On the Irish however he wrote at ever greater lengths over the six editions.

Much happened between 1586 and 1607 while the successive editions of the *Britannia* were being published. Britain had become an aggressive naval power, increasingly able to defend itself and reach most parts of the world, either militarily as a royal navy or as privateers, and also as merchants trading in ships that were armed,<sup>17</sup> through a proliferating variety of trading companies. Drake and Cavendish had sailed round the world.<sup>18</sup> In the *Britannia* Camden has an idealised portrait of London, where the wealth of the world pours in<sup>19</sup>, whereas in the *Annales*, which he had begun to write during the final editions of the *Britannia*, he describes the sources of that wealth, for example, trade concessions by the Russians, and English merchants making their way down the great Russian rivers in the direction of Persia,<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth intervening with the Turkish sultan to allow the English to trade in the Turkish dominions and beyond,<sup>21</sup> or energetically pressing the Danes to abandon their restrictive practices in the Baltic<sup>22</sup> and setting up at the same time the East India Company, so that trading posts reached to Japan.<sup>23</sup> Close to England however, in the Netherlands and in France, the British were continually involved in an amphibious continental war, which shaped Britain. The siege of Ostend, described in Camden's Latin, with its trench warfare, its massed forces subject to heavy gun fire, the huge casualties, is a foretaste of European warfare of the early twentieth century, and illustrates Britain's indissoluble connection to continental Europe.<sup>24</sup> Readers of Arthurian legends might dream of ancient British who were world con-

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attack on those who supported Henry VIII's destruction of the monasteries: "Verum huic operi tanto tempore surgenti, et opibus tot annos congestis finem attulit Henricus Octavus cum monasteria subrueret, ab iis persuasus qui privatas rationes et suam opulentiam principis et patriae, imo et Dei gloriae specioso restaurandae religionis obtentu praetulerunt", C 335. "by King Henrie the Eighth utterly overthrowne, what time as at one clap hee suppressed all Monasteries, perswaded thereto by such as under a goodlie pretense of reforming religion preferred their private respects and their owne enriching before the honour of Prince and countrie, yea and before the Glorie of God himselfe", H 461.

<sup>16</sup> Herendeen 207, 501.

<sup>17</sup> Camden 1612, *Ann.* 1578, 279–280.

<sup>18</sup> Camden 1612 *Ann.* 1580, 301–302 for Drake, *Ann.* 1587, 470 for Cavendish.

<sup>19</sup> Camden 1607, 303–304.

<sup>20</sup> Camden 1612, *Ann.* 1567, 127–128, *Ann.* 1569, 153–154.

<sup>21</sup> Camden 1612, *Ann.* 1579, 285.

<sup>22</sup> Camden 1627, *Ann.* 1597, 138–141, *Ann.* 1600, 206–208.

<sup>23</sup> Camden 1627, *Ann.* 1600, 206–208.

<sup>24</sup> Camden 1627, *Ann.* 1601, 252–255.

querors, the Elizabethan reality was ferocious more limited wars,<sup>25</sup> not far from London, on which the survival of nations depended, and in which a series of able commanders emerged, John Norris (1547/50–1597), Roger Williams (1539/40–1595), Francis de Vere (1560/61–1609) and Horace Vere (1565–1635),<sup>26</sup> to complement their more famous naval contemporaries. The islands themselves were in a permanent state of instability with recurrent war or rebellion in Ireland, and with England and Scotland riven by factions, generating suspicion and conspiracies, trials for treason with inevitable condemnation and executions, people destroyed by whispers or by misplaced flamboyance, the great dramas being the destruction of Mary Queen of Scots and the Earl of Essex.<sup>27</sup> With Essex's death Elizabeth herself declines and dies. The atmosphere of the *Annales* is often oppressive, the tone Tacitean,<sup>28</sup> the language in the high style. In comparison the *Britannia* can seem to be an inward looking celebration of the country, but it offered those, who wished to know, a perspective on who they were and who they might become. It was also an open ended work, which pointed to a future, and to which all could contribute. Within its inwardness are metaphors for more world wide ambitions, which are seen in the Irish accounts and more ambitiously unconcealed in Camden's final poetic journey round Britain.

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<sup>25</sup> Camden 1612, *Ann.* 1584, 365–366, *Ann.* 1585, 384.

<sup>26</sup> The lives of these four commanders in the *ODNB* are all written by D.J.B. Trim. It is he, who in the life of Norris, makes the comparison with the more famous naval commanders, and reminds us of the importance of the war in Europe. On Williams and his fellow Welshman, Sir Thomas Morgan see Camden 1627, *Ann.* 1595, 103.

<sup>27</sup> The final tragic scenes in Mary's life were played out in 1586 and 1587. Essex (1565–1601), was the favourite of Elizabeth and aspired to be the great military commander of the age, but his ambition for personal glory won in the field of battle was anachronistic, and dangerous. He was undone by his personal instabilities and politicians who knew how to compromise, and intrigue. Camden 1612 *Ann.* 1584, 353–354, reports the complaints of the Catholic exiles against the oppressive behaviour of Elizabeth's advisers, Leicester and Walsingham, and acknowledges there was truth in their complaints "Et certe ad explorandos hominum animos subdola arte fuere adhibitae, literae ementitae sub Reginae Scotorum et profugorum nominibus clam submissae, et in Pontificiorum aedibus relictas, emissarii ubique ad colligendos rumores et verba captanda dispersi", or in Richard Norton's translation, which is used by Dana Sutton for his bilingual edition, "And certainly to grope mens mindes there were used some subtile devises indeede, counterfeit letters were privilly sent under the names of the Queene of Scots and the fugitives, at least in Papistes houses, spies were sent abroad every where to gather rumors, and lay hold of words". On Norton's translation and other translations see Sutton's introduction, § 17, to Camden 2004.

<sup>28</sup> See Sutton's introduction to his edition of the *Annales*, § 4 to the end, for a detailed discussion of this feature.

### The antiquarian theatre

The 1590 edition had two prefaces, one to his patron, Lord Burghley, Queen Elizabeth's senior statesman, and then an address to the reader, whereas in the edition which came out in 1607, by which time Burghley was dead, there was the one address to the reader, which reworks some of the material addressed to Burghley. In the 1590 address to the reader he describes himself as stepping forth into the theatre of this most erudite age, amid the various tastes formed by men's minds and judgements. He has been compelled by his love of his country, the glory of the British name and the advice of his friends to take up this *persona*. *Persona* with its implications of concealment or representation or self-definition, or as is the case here perhaps, role playing, is an interesting metaphor, as is *theatrum*. Chorography, such as Camden wrote, had its origins in seeing things, either by walking the land, graphically through writing and images, or by maps, which Camden had inserted in this last Latin edition. A work of chorography could be a *theatrum*.<sup>29</sup> But it might be relevant to remember that the first production of a Shakespearean play, a history play, Henry VI part 2, was in 1590 or 1591, and the whole corpus of Shakespeare's dramatic production, many of them history plays, coincides with the publication of the final four Latin editions of Camden. One can however go further. In his *Annales* the incriminations and execution of Mary Queen of Scots is movingly presented as a tragic drama,<sup>30</sup> as is that of the Earl of Essex.<sup>31</sup> Camden watched the trial of Essex

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<sup>29</sup> As with Speed 1614a. Thomas Thomas, 1589, in his entry for *theatrum* offers "A theatre, A place made halfe rounde where people assemble to beholde players; the multitude that beholdeth the sight or play set foorth in that place; stage or scaffold; a spectacle or common play: an open place where all men doe see and behold, or wherein one sheweth or declareth etc". I thank Keith Sidwell for pointing me in the direction of the Tudor Latin dictionaries.

<sup>30</sup> Camden in the course of his narrative shows how Mary becomes enmeshed in a past, which she cannot escape, by people and forces out of her control. Her execution is deeply moving, as she reaches out to greatness, and highly theatrical. In Camden 1612, *Ann.* 1587, 458–460 Camden summarises the chain of events which had brought about her death, and then presents the epithet on her tomb, in which she is made to forecast that her death means that all rulers can be reduced to the status of the lowest class and suffer punishment. It is a new form of tomb where the living are enclosed with the dead, meaning that the ashes of Mary, as *diva* or saint, were holy and immortal.

<sup>31</sup> Essex was forced by his status to act out a drama. He had brilliance and imagination without the political awareness that was now required. Camden concludes a most sympathetic obituary of Essex with these words "Nec ille certe ad aulam factus videbatur, qui ad scelera segniss, ad offensionem accipiendam mollis, ad deponendam difficilis, et sui minime obtegens, sed, ut Cuffus mihi conqueri solitus, *philophaneros* et *misophaneros*, id est, amorem et odium in fronte semper gessit, nec celare novit. Ut verbo expediam, nemo gloriam ex virtute magis expetivit, et caetera omnia minus curavit". "And indeed he seemed not to be made for the Court, who was slow to any wickednesse, of a soft nature to take



and his subsequent execution, as did Walter Raleigh who had to be seated where Essex at the point of death for decency could not see his enemy.<sup>32</sup> The trials themselves were dramas where the axe was paraded with its cutting edge facing away from the defendant until their almost inevitable condemnation. Camden continues his address to the reader by creating the environment of the hostile court: “Iudicia, praeiudicia, censuras, obtrecciones, reprehensiones, confertim quasi sub signis in praecinctu undique me circumstare prospicio”.<sup>33</sup> And yet *persona* could simply refer to the fact that Camden was by profession a school teacher, albeit second master of Westminster School, soon to be headmaster, a *seminarium* or *plantarium* for the future civil and religious leaders of the nation, that he, the schoolmaster, was being thrust into the limelight to perform a public role at a level to which he was not yet accustomed. Smith in his biography stresses the modesty of Camden,<sup>34</sup> a key to understanding the man,<sup>35</sup> Camden, but no doubt an impression reinforced by Camden's careful proposals of new arguments, or his frequent ironies, as for example in his dealings with the Scots.<sup>36</sup> The theatrical image may also have been a natural one for Camden since, Herendeen tells us, Westminster School had deeply rooted musical

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offence, and hard to lay it downe, and one that could not cover his affections, but (as Cuffe was wont to complaine to me) he carried alwayes his love or hatred on his forehead and could not conceale it. To speake in a word, *No man was more ambitious of glory by vertue, no man more carelesse of all things else*”. His death, for those with eyes to see, meant the death of the old order, and Camden conveys this in the sombre ending to the *Annales*. That others did not perceive this, led to the Civil War and the death of a king on the scaffold.

<sup>32</sup> *Ann.* 1601§ 39. Raleigh (1554–1618) was Essex's rival as an earlier favourite of Elizabeth and as a military commander. Camden had sympathy for Essex, but he must have recognised a kindred spirit in Raleigh who had vision, even if misplaced. Raleigh was an early promoter of a British overseas empire, and harnessed the support of the elder Richard Hakluyt (d. 1591), and the younger Richard Hakluyt (1552–1616) soon to be the editor of an epic collection of voyages. Raleigh became an explorer and searched for the mythical El Dorado (1595–1596 and 1616–1618). He was also a conscientious parliamentarian. He was a poet, as was Camden, and the author of three prose classics: *The Last Fight of the Revenge*, *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich and Bewtiful Empire of Guiana*, *The History of the World*. He was executed on trumped-up charges of treason by the reactionary regime of James I, by which time he was destined to become a hero for many in the English nation. See the contribution of Mark Nicholls and Penry Williams in *ODNB*.

<sup>33</sup> On the second page of *Lectori*. H second page of To the Reader translates, “For I see judgements, preiudices, censures, reprehensions, obtrecciones, detractions, affronts, and confronts, as it were, in battaile array to environ me on every side”.

<sup>34</sup> Smith 1691, xv, “incomparabilem modestiam”, xvi “Inter tot ingestas amicorum laudes et gratulationes, quasi iisdem pectus impervium habuisset, innatam animi modestiam retinuit Camdenus”, xviii “vir modestissimus”, and most importantly lxxv “Honorum minime appetens, ne equestris quidem dignitatis, quam prae modestia recusavit”.

<sup>35</sup> Sensitively discussed by Herendeen 2007, 14–15.

<sup>36</sup> C 86, H 120; C 680–1, H1610, *Scotland*, 3.

and dramatic traditions. Ben Jonson that most Latinate of dramatists, author of *Sejanus*, was a product of the school, a pupil and enduring friend of Camden.<sup>37</sup>

Camden uses the same language in the 1607 edition but drops the mask, confesses that he is indeed an antiquarian, though from the lowest bench (*qui ex infimo antiquariorum subsellio*), which Smith, who pillages these introductions for biographical colour, demonstrates in his adaptation is a metaphor from the classroom.<sup>38</sup> One can imagine that the less accomplished boys sat at the back of the class, or more likely those of a lower social class. Camden's modesty in this edition however might be ironical, perhaps a concealed barb directed at his fierce critic Ralph Brooke, the York Herald, piqued that in 1597 Camden had been advanced, because of his *Britannia*, into the position of Clarenceaux King of Arms, one of the three leading heralds of the College of Arms. This meant that Camden had to understand and define the genealogies of the nobility, and be present on state occasions, indeed help organise such events.<sup>39</sup> It made him an expert on the British constitution.

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<sup>37</sup> Herendeen 2007, 145–157 on the theatrical nature of Elizabethan education, a section which is particularly inspiring. Herendeen's *William Camden: A Life in Context* is a most learned and informative book, and a large book on Camden. Many, like me, will find it a revelation on the social context which produced Camden and the *Britannia*. Herendeen discusses in detail the literary and historiographical nature of the *Britannia*. He does however point Camden in what might be called the vernacular direction, he does not quote the Latin of the *Britannia*, and it seems to me that Camden is a brilliant Latinist, nor does Herendeen have space to wander among the particularities which contribute to the *Britannia*. You may not gain a feel of the topographical nature of the *Britannia* from Herendeen. This means of course that there is scope for others to tread or sail their own path through the *Britannia*.

<sup>38</sup> H second page of To the Reader, "For all this I may be censured unadvised, and scant modest who being but of the lowest forme in the schoole of Antiquity, where I might well have lurked in obscurity, have adventured as a scribler upon the stage in this learned age amidst the diversities of relieshes both in wit and judgement". Smith 1691 xiii, describes how Camden's reputation even in his younger days stood at such a high, that Barnabé Brisson, President of the Senate of Paris, on an important ambassadorial visit to London, turned his back on the court and sought out Camden "umbratici viri et pulvere scholastico obsiti".

<sup>39</sup> On Camden's role as herald, his relations with Brooke and the role of heralds in the world of a new historiography see the extensive discussions in Herendeen 2007, 353–396, 410–428 and 445–487, one of the many strengths of Herendeen's book. More immediately accessible might be Herendeen's succinct contribution to the *ODNB* on Ralph Brooke (c.1553–1625), whom he tells us was educated at the Merchant Taylors' School, London, where he would have been a younger contemporary of Edmund Spenser and William Harrison, then was apprenticed to the Painter-Stainers' Company, where Camden's father was an active member. He was made herald in 1580, and York Herald in 1592. He was a contentious man, though not without right on his side, and Camden in an appendix to his 1600 edition had to reply to Brooke's criticism which had been published under the title of *A discoverie of certaine errors published in print in the much-commended Britannia*, 1594.

### What the antiquarian now needed to know

In the 1590 edition he had modestly written “Quid vero praestiterim dicant qui recte iudicare norunt: et mihi ipsi hoc liceat praefari, tria illa quae ad antiquitatis veritatem eruendam plurimum habent momenti, neutiquam a me fuisse neglecta”. (What I have achieved, let those say who know how to judge rightly: as for myself let me say this by way of preface that those three things which are most important for digging out the truth about the past, have in no way been neglected by me<sup>40</sup>). The three things were acquiring the language of the most ancient inhabitants, that is the Welsh, traversing by far the greatest part of the country, and spending long time and much effort reading among the country’s writers (“in scriptoribus diu multumque versatus fui”). Then he says punningly “and what befits an antiquarian I have done this in my ancient good faith. To sin, that is to err, against my faith and against my talent (or guardian spirit or conscience) is forbidden by my religion”<sup>41</sup> (“et quod Antquarium decet, fide sane antiqua et optima. In fidem enim aut Genium meum peccare mihi religio”). In the address to the reader in this 1590 edition he reveals that he has carefully studied Greek and Roman authors and his country’s writers, and has consulted the glossaries of the [ancient] British language, and anyone who was an expert in this language.

The 1607 version shows a massive shift and increase in his duties as antiquarian, the basis of a confident authority.

Hoc tamen dicam, quae ad latentem antiquitatis veritatem eruendam imprimis faciant, a me neutiquam fuisse neglecta; subsidio mihi antiquissimae linguae Britannicae et Anglo-Saxonicae notitiam qualemcunque comparavi. Angliam fere omnem peragravi; versatissimum et peritissimum quemque in sua regione consuli. Scriptores patrios, Graecos, Latinos qui vel semel Britanniae meminerunt, studiose evolvi. Publica regni commentaria, sacra scrinia, et archiva, bibliothecas plures, urbium et Ecclesiarum Tabularia, monumenta, et veteres schedas excussi; eaque quasi testimonia de coelo omni exceptione maiora advocavi, et certe ipsissimis quibus loquuntur verbis, licet barbarie infuscatis, ut Veritati suus integer constet honos, in medium, cum res postulare videretur, produxi.

(Thus much give mee leave to say, that I have in no wise neglected such things as are most materiall to search and sift out the Truth. I have attained to some skill of the most ancient British and English-Saxon tongues: I have travailed over all England for the most part; I

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<sup>40</sup> My translation.

<sup>41</sup> My assessment of the meaning.

have conferred with most skillfull observers in each country, I have studiously read over our owne countrie writers, old and new; all Greeke and Latine authors which have once made mention of Britaine. I have had conference with learned men in other parts of Christendome: I have beene diligent in the Records of this Realme. I have looked into most Libraries, Registers, and memorials of Churches, Cities, and Corporations. I have poored upon many an old Rowle, and Evidence: and produced their testimonie [as beyond all exception] when the cause required, in their owne words [although barbarous they be] that the honor of veritie might in no wise be impeached.)<sup>42</sup>

The things to note are his acquaintance with the Anglo-Saxon language. The Anglo-Saxons succeed the Romans as the final race of the three which define the early antiquity of Britain. The Anglo-Saxons were there from the early editions of the *Britannia*, but Camden here expresses the need seriously to engage with them. The experts whom he now consults are not those who are expert in the old British language, but those whose versatility derives from moving around their locality, and who consequently are most knowledgeable about it, who would in many cases be the local gentry or professional classes. The country's writers are here placed before the Greeks and Latin writers that is Romans.<sup>43</sup> Even one reference to Britain makes a writer a source for British history, part of the great enterprise, an implied requirement to search for authentic minute detail and reject the great weavers of fiction. There is also the germ of the idea that it is this class to whom the land in its particular portions belongs. Finally the vast range of official source material, which he has used, is identified by terms which are Roman, but which must have usually come from sources and contexts which were post Norman conquest, mainly in Latin, or French, a Latinate language, some in Anglo-Saxon, like the Romans a legalistic people, whose laws were being made available in bilingual Anglo-Saxon and Latin translations.<sup>44</sup> And he will let his sources do their own speaking in their own language, mainly Latin, even if this language is barbarously disfigured.

Most of these public documents but especially the historians, the *scriptores patrios*, belonged to what we call the Middle Ages. The great period of English Latin was when the Normans were the imperial power.<sup>45</sup> The

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<sup>42</sup> Camden 1607, first page of *Lectori*. H first page of *To the Reader*.

<sup>43</sup> Camden compiled a brief anthology of later writers on Britain, his *Anglica, Normannica, Hibernica, Cambrica, a veteribus scripta*, on which see Herendeen 2007, 176.

<sup>44</sup> Lambarde 1644 (originally published 1568).

<sup>45</sup> Camden does not give us a coherent view of the great post Roman *imperia*, such as that of the later Anglo-Saxons and above all that of the Normans and their immediate English successors, and he gives us scarcely a glimpse of the Danes and Norse. On the post Conquest empire see Davies 2002.

Normans, like the Anglo-Saxons, and indeed the Danes and Northmen, had in a sense become new Romans, imperialists, rulers of a British empire. Camden was pleased to be able to associate the Normans with Britain, since they had been an amazing imperial power, but they had been cruel oppressors of the English. They encouraged magnificent architecture but they also destroyed villages to extend forests, which had primitive connotations, and were the antithesis of Camden's preferred urbanisation.<sup>46</sup> Yet King William's Domesday book in a perverse way is an anticipation of Camden's *Britannia* in its attention to detail, where accumulation of detail gives power, and Camden uses the book under its many titles.<sup>47</sup> The Middle Ages creep into the *Britannia* through these sources, and because the higher nobility, whom Camden mentions county by county, often had a Norman origin. There were medieval ruins in the country and unavoidable memories attached to recent civil wars.<sup>48</sup> In the 1590 edition Camden had declared as his objectives an investigation of the most ancient origins of the British and English and the digging out from the realms of darkness the old cities of Britain.

Ad hoc opus elimandum, id est, ad antiquissimam Britannorum et Anglorum originem indagandam, et vetustas Britanniae urbes, quarum meminerunt Ptolemaeus, Antoninus, et alii, e tenebris eruendas, omne industriae meae curriculum, hos aliquot annos subcisivis operis elaboratum est.

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<sup>46</sup> C 108–110, 188, H, 152–153, 259 on the destruction and suffering caused by the extension of the New Forest, C 210, H 293 where he mentions the Forest of Windsor, and uses that as an opportunity to deliver what might be called a brief paper, long promised, on the custom of forests and their harsh laws.

<sup>47</sup> “*Iste Rotulus vocatus est Rotulus Wintoniae, et ab Anglis pro sua generalitate, quod omnia tenementa totius terrae integre continuit, Domesday cognominatur. Huius libri libentius meminerim, quod eius subinde memoria usurpanda sit, quemque librum Guilielmi Librum Censualem, Angliae Notitiam, Angliae commentaries Censuales, Acta publica et Angliae lustrum nominare placet*”, C 109. “*And this Roll was called the Roll of Winchester, and by the Englishmen (for the generalitie thereof, because it contained full and exactly, all the tenements of the whole Land) named Domesday. I have been more willing to make mention of this book because it is to be cited and alleaged often times hereafter: which booke also, it pleaseth me to name, Gulielmi librum Censualem, that is, The Tax-booke of William; Angliae Notitiam, that is, The Notice of England; Angliae commentarios Censuales, that is, The Taxe register or Sessing booke of England; and Angliae Lustrum, that is, The Survey of England*”, H 153.

<sup>48</sup> At the end of his account of Gloucestershire, when he comes to where he must deal with the dukes of Gloucester, he puts on the mask of historian (“*historici personam paulisper induere*”) to tell the story of Richard III, a bad man but a good prince, and how he gained power by organising public opinion, relying especially on lawyers. At the end of a long digression, Camden remembers that he is a chorographer and resumes that role, *deposita iam persona*.

(to accomplish this worke, that is to search out the most ancient origins of the Britons and English, and to dig up out of darkness the old cities of Britain which Ptolemy, Antonius and others mentioned, the whole maine of my Industrie has been employed for many years, tasks of my leisure hours.)<sup>49</sup>

In 1607 the aim is apparently simply to illustrate or shed light on the country:

ad hoc opus elimandum omne industriae meae curriculum hos aliquot annos pertinaci veritatis studio et fide syncere antiqua ad patriam illustrandam elaboratum est

(to accomplish this worke the whole maine of my Industrie hath beene employed for many yeares with a firme setled study of the truth, and sincere antique faithfulness to the glory of God and my countrie.)<sup>50</sup>

The light which Camden shed on the country is also an illumination of the future. A most remarkable example in the 1607 edition is Bristol, the great trading city, with its new enterprising class creating a modern city, and involving themselves in the voyages to America,<sup>51</sup> but inevitably, and most of all, London, *urbs Britannorum quae digna Britannia dici*.<sup>52</sup>

### The bonds of civility which must unite writer and readers

Let us now return to the address to Burghley and the sentence “*Quid vero praestiterim dicant qui recte iudicare norunt*”. In the 1607 edition this is expanded into a magnificent confident affirmation of the intellectual complexity of the *Britannia* and its destiny.

*Quid praestiterim dicant qui recte iudicare norunt, nec illi quidem facile diiudicent. Tempus autem testis incorruptus edocebit, cum invidia quae vivos sectatur conticiscat.*

The two sentences form a memorable statement, enhanced by Camden's liking for alliteration, assonance and balance. Philemon Holland's translation is colloquial and vigorous,

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<sup>49</sup> My translation based on Holland's translation for the 1607 Camden edition.

<sup>50</sup> C, third page of *Lectori*. H, fourth page of *To the Reader*.

<sup>51</sup> A vastly expanded account, C 172–173, H 237–238.

<sup>52</sup> This line comes from the poem *Connubium Thamae et Isis*, which makes varied appearances in the *Britannia* but is never attributed to any known writer. The coyness of the presentation points the finger at Camden, who in writing topographical verse is following the path of his great predecessor John Leland, and at the same time inserting himself into the British Latin poetic tradition, on which he wrote in his *Remaines of a Greater Work*. This line is an excerpt from a few lines which appear in the climax to the description of London, C 313, H 436, and the sentiments perfectly harmonise with Camden's view of London.

What I have performed, I leave to men of judgment. But time, the most sound and sincere witness, will give the truest information, when envie, which persecuteth the living, shall have her mouth stopped”.

but the English is less incisive than the Latin and interestingly he omits the second clause, translated in Edmund Gibson's famous edition from the Augustan period of English literature as “which perhaps will require some consideration”. Camden had made a detailed rebuttal of Ralph Brooke's criticism in an appendix to the 1600 edition of *Britannia*.<sup>53</sup> He was however aware of the troubles and dangers of his work not being accepted by people more important than Brooke. He had, under pressure from Burghley, started to gather materials for the *Annales* in 1597 and was to refuse to have the sections describing the years posterior to 1589 published in his lifetime, avoiding the criticisms and dangers of publishing accounts which had a direct relationship to near contemporary politics.<sup>54</sup> Towards the end of the address to the reader in the 1607 *Britannia* he confesses that he may have made mistakes in previous editions, but makes a plea for tolerance in the language of civility and religion.

Errata possint esse plura ex imperitia: Quis enim tam peritus ut caeco hoc Antiquitatis mari cum Tempore colluctatus scopulis non allidatur? [...] Locorum pecularia alii qui incolunt accuratius observent, si monuerint in quo erraverim, cum gratia corrigam; quod imprudens omiserim, adiciam; quod minus explicaverim, edoctus plenius edocebo, modo sine livore et contentionis studio, quae candidis et veritatis studiosis sunt indignissima, hoc fiat. Haec tamen interea a te, humanissime Lector, tua humanitas, mea industria, patriae communis charitas, et Britannici nominis dignitas mihi exorent, ut quid mei sit iudicii sine aliorum praeiudicio libere proferam, ut eadem via qua alii in his studiis solent insistam, et ut erratis, si ego agnoscam, tu ignoscas. Quae ut ab aequis et bonis magis speranda quam petenda sentio.

Holland translates:

There may be mistakings in regard of my unskilfulnesse, for who is so skilfull that, strugling with Time in the foggie darke sea of Antiquity, may not run upon rockes? [...] Others may be more skilfull and more exactly observe the particularities of the places where they are conversant. If they, or any other whosoever, will advertise me wherein I am

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<sup>53</sup> Camden 1600. This is an address to the reader which initially echoes the praefatory address and then a defence against the man who thirteen years after the appearance of the *Britannia*'s first edition has vomited his bitter poison against him (*virus acerbitatis evomit*). The defence takes up nearly thirty close typed pages.

<sup>54</sup> Collinson 1998, 154.

mistaken, I will amend it with manifold thanks, if I have unwitting omitted ought, I will supply it. If I have not fully explicated any point, upon their better information I will more cleere it, if it proceed from good meaning, and not from a spirit of contradiction and quareling, which doe not befit such as are well bred and affect the truth. Meanewhile let your kinde courtesie, my industrie, the common love of our common mother our native Country, the ancient honour of the British name obtaine so much upon their entreaty, that I may utter my iudgment without preiudice to others, that I may proceed in that course that others have formerly done in the like argument, and that you would pardon my errors upon my acknowledgement, which may be as well hoped as requested, from good indifferent and reasonable men.

The picture of Camden being dashed upon the rocks as he fights with time owes much to Sidonius Apollinaris' (430?–489) picture of daring Saxon pirates, the ancestors of the English, battling with the sea amid storm lashed rocks, an image to which Camden returns at the end of his work.<sup>55</sup> No one is in control of historical knowledge, he the teacher is ready to be taught, he is ready to be advised by those whose advice is sincere. He wants a fellowship of those who are willing to learn. Then comes the dominant sentence addressed to the *humanissime lector*, to which Holland fails to do justice, though he gives us a clue as to how it might be translated. “Kind reader” has prevailed over “courteous reader”, both of which are included in Holland’s translation of *humanissime* ... *humanitas*. Thomas Thomas in his Latin English dictionary<sup>56</sup> under *humanus* offers “gentle” so we might also have “gentle reader”, but Thomas also offers “not abhorring from the state of man”, and under *humanitas* he includes “civility”, “learning” “liberal knowledge”. Caesar famously praised the *humanitas* of the men of Kent, a maritime people which meant they communicated with others, they were the British people closest to Europe. In Camden they are moulded by a region where there were lots of towns and villages, an agriculture system, including cherries, which reflected that of Italy, secure harbours and industrial raw materials, making them thoroughly civilised. Holland’s preferred translation of *humanitas* was courtesie, but he has to supplement it in Kent, since these people were not courteous to Caesar, indeed Camden quickly reminds us they were warlike.<sup>57</sup> On the western boundary of England Worcester, Camden

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<sup>55</sup> C 96–97 H 134–135. Sidonius Apollinaris *Epistle* vi.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas 1589.

<sup>57</sup> “Incolis ea humanitatis laus quam Caesar olim tribuit etiamnum iure debetur”. “The same commendation of civilitie and courtesie which Caesar in old time gave the inhabitants is yet of right due unto them”. Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, v.14, “Ex eis omnibus longe sunt



suggests, had performed the same function as the Roman cities on the south bank of the Rhine, defence against the barbarians, in this case the Welsh, before the Welsh were engrafted on to the English state. Worcester because of its antiquity, a Roman antiquity, or perhaps because of its beauty, seemed to cause the river Severn as it passed by, to flow more slowly in admiration. Its inhabitants were numerous, civilised and wealthy through the manufacture of cloth, able to finance splendid buildings,<sup>58</sup> which we might well compare with the magnificent buildings, which by public and private initiatives were transforming London, as described in detail in this final edition of Camden.

There are further clues to the weighting which we should give to *humanitas* in the address to Burghley in the 1590 edition, where one can find the origin of this 1607 plea for *humanitas*. Camden had been impelled to complete this difficult work by observing Burghley's example of service to the state, and at a more personal level by Burghley's generosity in the warm support he had given Camden's school, his remarkably kind treatment of Camden himself, his sensitive scholarly advice based on Camden's fields of investigation, and his allowing Camden the use of his own first class library, in a world where libraries had become a scarce commodity, and were to become a serious political issue,<sup>59</sup> We might think that he had not only facilitated Camden's work but had been the making of Camden. He was in Camden's early days the most important of many individuals who influenced Camden.

Privatae vero quae impulerunt causae sunt benignitas tua perspecta plane et cognita, qua Collegium nostrum Westmonasteriense amplexaris et foves, humanitas in me singularis, politissimum in his et huiusmodi eruditis studiis iudicium, et lux non exigua quae mihi in his scriptis e tua instructissima bibliotheca effulsit.

The 1607 address to the reader points to a transformation of this world in which he had lived with Burghley. It is now a world in which Camden is an authority and he must help create a society of like minded individuals, who in this the age of the Stuarts will express the liberal values of the Elizabethan age, which derived from the ancient Roman *intelligentsia*, and the ancient Christian religion embedded in Roman civilisation. He wants to be

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humanissimi qui Cantium incolunt, quae regio est maritima omnis, neque multum a Gallica differunt consuetudine”.

<sup>58</sup> “Sed decus est ab incolis, qui sunt numerosi, humani, et lanificio opulenti, ab aedificiorum nitore, a templorum numero”, C 434. Wealth through manufacture is linked to *humanitas*. Holland describes them as trading in cloth, H 575–576.

<sup>59</sup> For an understanding of the importance of particular book collections for Camden especially, and their political contexts see Herendeen 2007, 162–166, 205–209 and 449–450.

treated the same as his fellow human beings, to be given forgiveness, if he recognises the error of his ways. He is looking for it from the *boni*,<sup>60</sup> which is a political as well as a moral class, who are *aequi*, that is both equal and fair-minded,<sup>61</sup> from whom it ought to be expected rather than requested. The *candidis*, I presume, are not those who are well bred, as Holland translates, but those whose integrity is transparent.<sup>62</sup>

*Patriae charitas* is not simply love of one's country, but showing one's love by the way that one acts towards one's country. Camden does not overuse the word, but it was *patriae charitas* which made the English nobility rally to Harold in great numbers to go to their deaths at Hastings, as Harold had previously won a singular *charitatem cum autoritate* for himself by his gentle, egalitarian behaviour.<sup>63</sup> But it also appears in Camden as a characteristic of the good works done by monasteries in time past. He dares to use the manuscript foundation document of the Cluniac Abbey at Lewes to show that it was the *sanctitatem, religionem, charitatem* of the Burgundian house which had inspired William de Warren (c.1119–1148), third earl of Surrey and crusader, to bring such monks to England, and there is Malmesbury's description of the great abbey of Tewkesbury, "ubi et aedificiorum decor rapuit adventantium oculos et monachorum charitas allexit animos".<sup>64</sup> More immediately it comes from Camden's address to Burghley. The *Diva*, our Elizabeth, summoned forth Burghley's wisdom to be used on behalf of the commonwealth and Burghley had been summoned forth by his own very great love for his country, which he measured not by his own feelings, but by the well-being he could bring to his country, and by its glory.<sup>65</sup> This was the example, Camden says, which had inspired him to write and have published the *Britannia*. Besides Burghley's exemplary *charitas* there was Camden's well-known *industria*. Smith tells us at the outset of his biography that the honours, which others owed to the splendour of their birth, Camden owed to his own qualities and hard work. It becomes a dominant

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<sup>60</sup> There is a lot of imprecision surrounding *bonus*, but some of Thomas' 1589 offerings suit the present context rather well; "honest, gentle, liberall, easie to speake to, treatable, not vile or base, not counterfeyted or suborned".

<sup>61</sup> Thomas 1589 offers for *aequus* "plaine and even, iust, indifferent, reasonable, equall, alike, content, which taketh all things well or in good wyrt, sometime good, favourable".

<sup>62</sup> Thomas 1589, offers Holland's much used "courteous", and indeed "prosperous", but also "sincere, without malice or ill will".

<sup>63</sup> C 105, 107, H 146, 149.

<sup>64</sup> C 224 H 314; C 253 H 359. Malmesbury (c.1090–1142?), a Benedictine monk who travelled widely in England, though attached to the monastery at Malmesbury all his life. R.M.Thomson *ODNB* describes him as "England's greatest national and local historian since Bede, and as the most learned European of his day".

<sup>65</sup> "Charitas in patriam maxima, quae non sensu tuo, sed ipius patriae salute et gloria ita metiris".

thread in Smith's narrative. Camden wrote and researched his *Britannia* with help from his friends while being a fulltime school teacher, and worked himself close to death.<sup>66</sup> He tells us in the 1607 edition that he had set about his task *deo auspice et comite industria*.

Nor is *dignitas* necessarily Holland's ancient dignity though dignity must have a history, but it can be present dignity. While Ripon owed its *dignitas* to religion, "especially to a Monasterie built in the primitive Church of the English-Saxons", that is in the uncorrupted early age of English Christianity,<sup>67</sup> Hull had recently emerged into its *dignitas* through its ships, trade and affluence.<sup>68</sup> *Dignitas* could refer to social standing, the dignitaries being those who often were very much the products of history, the dukes, marquesses, counts and barons, both those by hereditary right and those new created, (*Nobiles maiores vocamus duces, marchiones, comites, et barones, qui vel haereditario iure his titulis gaudent vel iisdem virtutis ergo a rege exornantur.*), on whom Camden writes at great length and in fascinating detail in his section *Ordines Angliae*. These people as King Herald Clarenceux he well knew, yet, in order to undermine Welsh claims to a noble Trojan ancestry, he did expose the folly of taking a pride in birth, with a quote from Seneca by way of John Whethamstede, its origins in Plato, "neminem regem non ex servis oriundum, neminem non servum ex regibus" (that there is no king but hee came from slaves, and no slaves but he descended of kings).<sup>69</sup> Families which seemed destined to succeed could come to grief in spectacular fashion, as the Courtenays who became Earls of Devonshire, got themselves embroiled in civil wars, in which it was necessary to take sides, prompting Camden to say "optimi quique (ut Quadrigarii verbis utar) minime diurnant",<sup>70</sup> and later in a synopsis of the Anglo-Saxon king-

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<sup>66</sup> Smith 2002, i "tot honores quos alii natalium splendori, ipse propriae virtuti et industriae debuit". On p. vi Smith tells us great difficulties, such as Camden experienced, are the making of great men like Camden, and he enhances Camden's phrasing to commend Camden, "duce divina providentia et comite indefessa industria".

<sup>67</sup> C 570 H 700.

<sup>68</sup> C 578–579 H 712–713.

<sup>69</sup> C 6 H 8. John Whethamstede (c.1392–1465) became abbot of St Albans Benedictine monastery at an exceptionally early age in 1420. For much of his time he was engaged in defending the privileges and property of the abbey, and his life was complicated by the war of the Roses, during which two battles were fought near the abbey. He was involved with the brother of Henry V, Duke Humfrey of Gloucester, who helped bring the Italian renaissance to England and whose books became the basis of the the Duke Humphrey library, later incorporated in what was to become the Bodleian Library Oxford. Whethamstede himself was above all a scholar and James Clark, contributor of the *ODNB* entry, writes: "He was probably the first English scholar to cite Leonardo Bruni's translation of Aristotle's *Politics* and he also owned early copies of translations of Plato and of the Latin Plutarch".

<sup>70</sup> C 151–152 H 207–208.

doms he writes “quod indies videmus, fortissimorum virorum et clarissimarum familiarum sobolem perinde ac stirpium suos habere natales, florescere, maturescere, demumque marcescere, et sensim emori”.<sup>71</sup>

### More common classes and commonwealths

At the bottom of the list of the *Ordines Anglorum*, each accounted for in just one sentence, are in ascending order the *opifices*, workdoers, or wealth creators we might feel encouraged to translate, whom Camden says work for pay, and were called by the Romans *proletarii*, then the free yeomanry, that is the *plebeii*, who pay taxes, above them are people, whom we might define as the Elizabethan middle class, the rising bourgeoisie, citizens with a strong sense of civic duty, the kind of men who got elected to parliament, and above them gentlemen and common nobility, either distinguished by their birth, or whom their qualities or fortune lifts up from the dregs of humanity, politely translated by Holland as “or raised up from the base condition of people for their vertue or wealth”. Wealth may be the right translation, since you could buy into the nobility, or otherwise, for example, be knighted for bravery and military expertise, like Drake who raised himself and was raised from a base condition.<sup>72</sup>

Generosi vel promiscue nobiles sunt qui natalibus clari aut quos virtus aut fortuna e faece hominum extulit.

Cives sive burgesses, qui in sua quilibet urbe publicis funguntur muneribus et in parlamentariis nostris comitiis locum electione habent.

Plebeii sive yeomen sunt quos alii ingenuos, lex nostra homines legales dicit, et ex agris quos optimo iure tenent quadraginta ad minimum solidos quotannis colligunt.

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<sup>71</sup> C 211. “The race or issue of the most valiant men, and noblest Families, like as of the of-spring of plants, hath their springing up, their flowring and maturitie, and in the end begin to fade, and by little and little to die utterly”, H 294.

<sup>72</sup> Camden 1612, *Ann.* 1580, 308–309. There is a wonderful account of Elizabeth’s reception of Drake, the knighting of him and the immortalising of his ship the Golden Hind at Deptford. There was one thing which made Drake anxious and that was that several of the leading men at court, when he offered them gold, spat it back at him, as if it had been gained by piratical crime. The common people had however a rather sophisticated view of Drake’s achievement “Vulgus hominum nihilominus admiratione et laudibus celebrarunt, qui non minus gloriosum existimarunt Angliae laudis terminos, quam imperii promovisse”. Drake had indeed shifted the limits of empire, since England could now threaten the Spaniards in her American possessions. Meanwhile the important thing was the increase in status for England. The Queen was not the only person who could knight her subjects. Commanders could knight soldiers for bravery on the field of battle Camden 1612, *Ann.* 1588, 497. This custom with an ambitious commander such as Essex had subversive potentiality, Camden 1627, *Ann.* 1591, 32.

Opifices autem sunt qui mercede operam locant, sedentarii, mechanici, fabri, &c., qui capite censi et proletarii Romanis dicebantur.

Camden's attitude to class was ambiguous. His father is described by Smith as "mediocris fortunae virum", which Sutton translates as man of middling fortune, though Smith clearly regarded him as of humble condition. He was a painter and belonged to the company of Painter Stainers. There is evidence that Camden remained loyal to his father's memory.<sup>73</sup> On his mother's side he coyly claimed distant connections with nobility, by way of the Curwens of Workington. His mother came from the family of Curwens at Poulton Hall in Lancashire and therefore belonged to that Lancashire gentry, for whose provident moderation and contentment with their own estate Camden expresses such admiration in the *Britannia*.<sup>74</sup> The four lower classes were extremely important in the Britain that was evolving. He lived in a kingdom whose ruler had *merum imperium*, that is was answerable in theory to no man, a theory whose mystique Camden was unwilling to analyse,<sup>75</sup> but quietly undermines. Elizabeth, whose paternal ancestry had roots in the cloth trade,<sup>76</sup> is a godlike figure in the *Britannia*, removed from the political scene, but her image is dependent foremost on the good governance of the state. "reginam Elizabetham principem optimam, ob rempublicam prudentissime administratam et suas virtutes supra sexum heroicis".<sup>77</sup> Many in Camden's circle would belong to the *generosi* and *cives*. The *plebeii* and *proletarii* were the source of the wealth and much of the manpower of the modern commercial state, which Camden promoted. In the *Annales* Camden worries about the sustainability of Britain's world trade with the outflow of silver and the constant loss of ships' crews.<sup>78</sup> In a rare visit in the *Britannia* to the working classes, he gives us a picture of the heroic yeomen fishermen of Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs, seamen, exporters and traders, and

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<sup>73</sup> Smith 1691 i, "mediocris fortunae virum, et arte ac professione pictorem. Neutiquam pudit filium, quem divinum ac plane heroicum ingenium longe supra humilem istam vitae conditionem ad quam damnatus videbatur evexerat".

<sup>74</sup> C 633 H 769. Through these Curwens Camden claimed a connection to the Gospatricks, Earls of Northumberland. He seems to have been aware that some might regard this as pretentious, "et a quibus nobis, absit verbo invidia, genus maternum" which Holland translates, "from whom (without offence or vanity be it spoken) my selfe am descended by the mothers side". On Lancashire gentry see C 612 H 748 "provida moderatio et antiqua suis bonis contenta simplicitas".

<sup>75</sup> C 118, "Sed haec sublimioris sunt loci, et non huius argumenti". "But these are points of a loftier discourse, and not of the argument now in hand", H 163.

<sup>76</sup> Albeit Geoffrey de Boleyn, who was the great grandfather of Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, was a wealthy mercer and former Lord Mayor of London.

<sup>77</sup> C 186 H 256–257.

<sup>78</sup> Camden 1627, *Ann.* 1600, 208–209.

no doubt tax payers, whose industry must have surpassed that even of Camden, men who knew how to turn to their advantage a shipwreck, of which fortunately there were many, to their advantage.

Sunt enim viri summe industrii, qui quasi amphibii et mari et terra victum quaerunt, cum utroque elemento rationem habent, et piscatores et aratores, et agricolae et nautae; quique stivam in agro sulcando, iidem clavum in navigando tenent. Pro ratione anni retia nectunt, asselos, halesces, scombros &c. piscantur, navigant, merces exportant; iidem agros stercorant, arant, seminant, occant, fruges demetunt et recondunt, in utramque instructissimi, sic illis labor in orbem agitur. Cum subinde hic naufragia fiunt, obiacent enim littori formidolosa illa navigantibus vada et pulvini quae The Godwayn (de quo loco in insulis), The Brakes, The Foure Foote, The Whitdick &c. vocitant; strenuam in mercibus recuperandis operam navare solent.<sup>79</sup>

For they are passing industrious, and as if they were *amphibii*, that is, both land-creatures and sea-creatures, get their living both by sea and land, as one would say, with both these elements: they be Fisher-men and Plough men, as well Husband-men as Mariners, and they that hold the plough-taile in earing the ground, the same hold the helme in steering the ship. According to the season of the yeare, they knit nets, they fish for Cods, Herrings, Mackarels, &c., they saile, and carry foorth Merchandise. The same againe dung and mannure their grounds, Plough, Sow, harrow, reape their Corne, and they inne it, men most ready and well apointed both for sea and land, and thus goe they round and keepe a circle in these their labours. Furthermore, whereas that otherwhiles there happen shipwrackes here (for they lie full against the shore those most dangerous flats, shallowes, shelves, and sands so much feared of Sailers, which they use to call The Goodwin Sands, The Brakes, The Four-Foots, The Whitdick &c.), these men are wont to bestir themselves lustily in recovering both ships, men, and Marchandise endangered.

It was however to the *generosi* and *cives* that political power in the near future would however increasingly belong. The Romans in their imperial age had a prince and the pretence of the old republic. In England, when the monarchy was abolished, the *respublica* or Commonwealth would take command.

It is interesting to see some of the occurrences of *respublica* in the *Britannia*, or the instances where citizens are taking important initiatives. Three times Oxford is called a *respublica literaria*, market for ideas, its teachers walking libraries, no doubt dangerous items. Camden was not well treated

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<sup>79</sup> C 240 H 340.

by Oxford but he in his modesty responded with generosity, endowing a chair in civil history from which public lectures would be given.<sup>80</sup> The Anglican church was a *respublica ecclesiastica*, Henry's attack on the monasteries is portrayed like an attack on an independent state, and it is a passage which is not found in the 1590 edition,<sup>81</sup> the body controlling the mines in Cornwall was a *respublica*.<sup>82</sup> York, was a most ancient city, Roman in origin since the Britons did not know how to build cities, said Camden, its minster built with considerable help from the local nobility, its new walls and laws provided by its citizens, and its *dignitas* well established in recognition of which Henry devolved to it a council or Parliament, like those in France, to decide on local matters.<sup>83</sup> However it was London which was the *respublica* par excellence.

Quo tempore Burgus hic Londino ponte ita coniunctus, non solum amplificata urbs erat sed etiam optima reipublicae forma descripta, cives in corpora sive Collegia distributi. Urbs ipsa in XXVI regiones divisa, conciliumque Reipublicae penes totidem senes constitutum, qui ex aetate nostra lingua *Aldermen*, id est *Senatores*, dicuntur, quorum singuli singulis regionibus praeesent, et cum antiquitus pro summo magistratus *Portreve*, i. e. *Urbis Praefectum*, habuissent, duos *Ballivos* instituit Richardus Primus, pro quibus statim Ioannes Rex concessit ut *Maiorem* sive Praetorem annum magistratum suis suffragiis e XII primariis corporibus eligerent, duosque Vicecomites, *Shirifs* vocant, quorum alter Regius, Urbanus alter dicitur, nominarent.

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<sup>80</sup> C 267–271 H 377–383.

<sup>81</sup> C 117–118, “Fuerunt etiam regnante Henrico Octavo (fas sit meminisse) avitae pietatis monumenta ad Dei honorem, fidei Christianiae, bonarumque literarum propagationem et pauperum sustentationem domus religiosas, scilicet monasteria sive abbatiae et prioratus numero 645, e quibus cum pontificis Clementis VII permissu 40 fuerint suppressae in gratiam cardinalis Wolsaei, qui tunc duo collegia, alterum Oxoniae, alterum Ipswichi inchoaverat, statim circa annum 36 Henrici VIII in rempublicam Angliae ecclesiasticam quasi torrens rupto aggere irruit, qui gentis ecclesiasticae partem maximam, orbe stupente et Anglia ingemente, cum pulcherrimis aedificiis funditus prostravit”. “There were also, in the reigne of Henrie the Eight (I hope without offence I may speake the truth) many religious places, Monuments of our forefathers pietie and devotion, to the honor of God, the propagation of Christian faith and good learning, and also for the reliefe and maintenance of the poore and impotent, to wit, Monasteries or Abbaies, and Priories, to the number of 645: of which when, by permission of Pope Clement the Seventh, fortie were suppressed by Cardinall Wolseies meanes, who had then begun to found two Colleges, one at Oxenford, the other at Ipswich, straightwaies, about the xxxvj yeere of the reigne of the said Henrie the Eight, a sudden floud (as it were) breaking thorow the banks with a maine streame, fell upon the Ecclesiasticall State of England, which while the world stood amazed, and England groned thereat, bare downe and utterly overthrew the greatest part of the Clergie, together with their most goodly and beautifull houses”, H 163.

<sup>82</sup> C 134 H 185.

<sup>83</sup> C 575 H 706.

(What time as the bridge was thus made between London and this Burrough, the Citie was not onely enlarged, but also an excellent forme of Common-welth was therein ordeined, and the Citizens reduced into certaine distinct Corporations and Companies, the whole City divided into six and twenty wards, and the Counsell of the Citie consisted of as many ancient men, named of their age in our tongue *Aldermen*, as one would say, *Senatours*, who each one have the overseeing and rule of his severall ward: and whereas in ancient time they had for their head-Magistrate a *Portreve*, that is, a governour of the City, King Richard the First ordeined two Ballieues. Instead of whome soone after King John granted them liberty to chuse by their voices yeerely out of the twelve principall companies a Maior for their chiefe Magistrate; also two Sherifes, whereof one is called the Kings, the other the Cities Sherife.)<sup>84</sup>

The Latin resonates much more than the English of Holland for those who have at any time of their life been steeped in ancient Roman history.

What was also required in such a commonwealth was that there should be private funding of great public works by private individuals. In Oxford Camden was to found the chair of history named after him, and Bodley had established his library “*ut denuo habeat academia publicum sapientiae armamentarium*”.<sup>85</sup> Bodley is described as of the equestrian order, which carries both the Roman connotation and the English sense of knight.<sup>86</sup> The Royal Exchange in London was built by Thomas Gresham *cive equestris ordinis* for the use of business people and to adorn the city;<sup>87</sup> the Guildhall,

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<sup>84</sup> C 312 H 435.

<sup>85</sup> C 270 H 382.

<sup>86</sup> Sir Thomas Bodley, (1545–1613), son of John Bodley (c.1520–1591), his father being a publisher in Exeter who had married into one of the leading merchant families in Exeter, and become a prominent religious radical and Marian refugee. John Bodley set up the printing press which produced the Geneva bible and was given the rights over it by Queen Elizabeth. See Charles Littleton’s contribution to the *ODNB*. Thomas became a lecturer at Oxford, its first lecturer in Greek. From 1576 he travelled and gradually became a diplomat. He married the widow of a wealthy fish merchant, who also had a rich merchant father. Exasperated by court politics, from 1598–1613 he was engaged in the restoration of the Oxford university library and in making provisions for its vast expansion, for which he was knighted by James I. He was to leave most of his wealth to the library. See W.H.Clennell *ODNB*.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Gresham (c.1518–1579), was the son of a dynamic father Richard Gresham (c.1485–1549), who founded what became known as the House of Gresham. Richard was initially a mercer, or trader in cloths, who traded on the continent, especially in Antwerp, but also following the shifts in trade with the Middle East and Baltic. Later using his knowledge of monetary exchange he became a financier and also a property speculator, involved in lending money to the political establishment. He was one of those who profitted mightily from the disestablishment of the monasteries, buying up properties and stripping them of their assets. He became Lord Mayor of London in 1537, where he was able to dis-



a beautiful building, was built by Thomas Knolles,<sup>88</sup> the mayor; Leadenhall by Simone Eyre,<sup>89</sup> a splendid spacious building “the common garner in the time of dearth to pull downe the price of corn” (“ad annonam laxandam”). Gresham also gave a magnificent house, which he had in the city, to be an institute of learning, with professors in six major fields of learning, on generous salaries, so that London was not just a commercial centre, but a well equipped workshop for all the best forms of knowledge, a centre of a *humanitas*, which included all the sciences, as well as a proper attitude to the human race.<sup>90</sup>

### Insula romana; the multi-ethnic origins of Britain

In a discussion early in the work on the ancient names of the British isles Camden makes the point that the name of a place is not only the name which the inhabitants give to it, but the name by which it is known to other

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play a public generosity and press the king, Henry VIII, for among other things the setting up of hospitals. Thomas was trained to follow in his father's footsteps, even serving an apprenticeship. He proved himself an adept trader though not on the scale of his father. He married this to work for the Crown and from 1551–1564 was royal agent in the Netherlands, where he showed great skill operating amid international financial crises and the political incompetence at home. He found more congenial circumstances when Elizabeth came to the throne, a monarch who knew the necessity of keeping sound national accounts. It was most fitting therefore that it should be Thomas who had the Royal Exchange built, though Ian Blanchard says that it was the death of his only son, Richard, which launched Thomas on a career as public benefactor. Blanchard's contributions on the Greshams in the *ODNB* from which I derive this summary give wonderful insights into the realities of London as a world centre of trade, which needless to say shed light on our modern situation.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Knolles (*d.* 1435) was a grocer whom Pamela Nightingale *ODNB* suggests may have made his vast wealth in the distribution of raw materials rather than in export. He also invested in property. For Camden he is a figure from more distant times, and in this respect he represents a tradition of generosity among the civic leaders of the city, helping it meet its financial needs even in a time of recession.

<sup>89</sup> Simon Eyre, (*c.* 1395–1458), was a member of the Draper's Company who made his money trading cloth within England, though also acting as middleman to Italian merchants who were excluded from English markets. His Leadenhall project which resulted in him quickly being elected mayor extended to the establishment of schools as part of the development, a visionary project which did not succeed. His was a rag-to-riches story, which even as Camden was writing his later editions of *Britannia* was fictionalised in Thomas Deloney's *The Gentle Craft* (1597) and Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1600). For these details and others see Caroline Barron in the *ODNB*.

<sup>90</sup> C 312–313 H 435. Gresham's wife attempted to overturn his will. This loss of her house was obviously for her a step too far in the giving of charity. The college still exists with distinguished holders of the chairs, and offering through invited speakers free lectures at their institution near the City of London. See [www.gresham.ac.uk](http://www.gresham.ac.uk) By coincidence in May 2011 I heard three of their present and past professors at the Hay on Wye Literary Festival providing illumination to packed audiences in the fields of multi-universes, the mathematics of biology and the King James Bible.

people, and he gives tenuous proofs, but nonetheless proofs that by one or two historical authorities Britain was known as the *Insula romana*, a phrase which Camden is happy to recall, since it nicely states the position of Britain, as place that was thoroughly Romanised, and subsequently had a Roman heritage.

Omitto quod Aristidi *Magna et ultima Insula* appellata fuerit. Quod Romania etiam dicta, innuit quodammodo Gildas, qui scribit a Romanis ita subactum fuisse, ut *solo nomen Romanae servitutis haereret*; statimque, *Ita ut non Britannia sed Romania censeretur*; et post unam et alteram paginam de eadem, *Insula Romanum nomen, non tamen morem et legem tenens*. Prosperque Aquitanus expresse Insulam Romanam dixit.

(I passe over to speak of Aristides, who named it *The great, and the furthest Island*. That it was called also *Romania*, Gildas after a sort doth intimate, who writeth that *subdued it was of the Romanes so, as that the name of Romane servitude stucke to the soyle thereof*: and by and by after, *so as it might not bee counted Britannia, but Romania*; and one or two pages after, speaking of the same, *The Island*, quoth he, *keeping indeed the Romane name, but neither their custome nor law*. And Prosper Aquitanus in expresse words called it the *Romane Island*.)<sup>91</sup>

*Magna et ultima insula*, the phrase, which he will for the moment overlook, is a phrase taken from Aelius Aristides' (d. A.D. 189) Roman Oration where he likens the Roman empire to a walled city with its impenetrable defences, differing from the walled cities of an earlier antiquity through its extent, an empire which extended from the settled area of Ethiopia to the river Phasis, from the Euphrates to the great outermost island toward the West, which was of course Britain. So then Britain in a crucial area of the globe defined the Roman empire. The whole of Aelius' oration<sup>92</sup> is compulsory reading as a key to appreciating the spirit of the *Britannia*. In the *Roman Oration* Rome is portrayed as on or beyond the periphery of eastern empires, and as having succeeded them as an empire of comparable or superior extent but orientated towards the west. Aristides' phrase is freighted with importance but Camden instead turns to Gildas, the great authority on the collapse of Roman power in Britain, since he is our closest native extant authority to this event. Camden mischievously suggests that Gildas thought of Britain as Romania which would mean that it was indeed *insula romana*. In fact Gil-

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<sup>91</sup> C 18 H 24.

<sup>92</sup> See the major article of James H. Oliver, "The Ruling Power: A Study of the Roman Empire in the Second Century after Christ through the Roman Oration of Aelius Aristides" (1953), especially p. 904.

das' *innuit* is Camden's innuendo, he presents Gildas, the British patriot, as revealing that the British had become so abject that they were allowing themselves to be regarded as Romans, and then as not very Roman.<sup>93</sup> Prosper Aquitanus,<sup>94</sup> a valuable authority on the years immediately following the Roman empire, gave Camden the resonant phrase he wants. Prosper was a correspondent of St. Augustine with whom he shared a concern about the Pelagian heresy, which had its origins with a Briton and infected Britain. Gildas in his *Chronicon* mentions the sending of Germain, bishop of Auxerre, by pope Celestine to redirect the island [from its British heresy] to the Roman faith.

Gildas' view of ancient British history is still the popular view, Roman abandonment of the Welsh to Pictish and Scottish invasions, that is foreigners from Scotland, and an invitation for Anglo-Saxon help, which proves treacherous. Camden devotes a complete section, the *Excidium Britannia*, or *The Down-Fall or Destruction of Britain*, to a long extract on these events in Gildas' fantastic unclassical Latin.<sup>95</sup> He is happy to do so, since from Gildas' mouth he is able to show that all the current inhabitants of modern Britain, that is victims, attackers and treacherous saviours, were once equally barbarous, and that now they have for the moment sunk their identities and become one people.

Haec cum legerimus non bono Gildae succenseamus, quod in suorum Britannorum vitia, in immanem Pictorum et Scotorum feritatem, in nostrorum Saxonum insatiabilem crudelitatem tam aspere invehatur. Sed cum insitione vel commixtione quadam per tot saecula, iam cuncti gens una simus, religione bonisque artibus emolliti, cogitemus quales et illi fuerint, et quales nos esse debeamus, ne pro nostris itidem vitiis summus rerum moderator alias huc gentes, vel nobis excisis transferat, vel devictis inserat.

(When we shall read these reports, let us not be offended and displeased with good Gildas, for his bitter invectives against either the vices of his own countrymen the Britans, or the inhumane outrages of

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<sup>93</sup> See Gildas 1567 sections § 5 and §10 pp. 9 and 11–12. I presumed *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* meant *The Destruction and Lament of Britain*, but I see *conquestu* constantly translated as conquest. Jocelyn's edition was dedicated to Matthew Parker, see n.14.

<sup>94</sup> (c390–c455). The location of the phrase is unknown to me since I have not yet been able to gain access to most of Prosper's writings. In his *Chronicon* he tells us in 416 that the Briton Pelagius preached the beliefs associated with his name contesting the grace of Christ. In 433 the Pelagian Agricola, son of a Pelagian bishop, corrupted the churches in Britain, but the pope Celestine sent Germain, bishop of Auxerre to cast down the heretics and steer the Britons towards the Catholic faith.

<sup>95</sup> For an overturning of the common Gildian view, using in the final analysis DNA evidence, see Oppenheimer 2006.

the barbarous enemies, or the insatiable crueltie of our Fore-fathers the Saxons. But since that for so many ages successively ensuing, we are all now by a certain engrafting or commixtion become one nation, mollified and civilized with Religion and good Arts, let us meditate and consider, both what they were, and also what we ought to be: lest that for our sinnes likewise the supreame Ruler of the world either translate other nations hither, when wee are first rooted out, or incorporate them into us, after we are by them subdued.)<sup>96</sup>

What happened to them all and how the contemporary British have arrived at their present state is a history lesson, which if ignored, might lead to them being rooted out, or becoming the base stock on which a superior people will be engrafted. Camden believed that the troubles in Ireland had in part been caused by the distraction of civil war in England, that is the war of the Roses, and more recently by the threats posed by factions in England and Scotland. There is a weakness in the argument, since it might be in everyone's interest to be engrafted by a superior, more civilised race. He has however a more sophisticated view of national identities than Gildas, and some of his very best writing is where he deconstructs national pretensions. One could say that it is in his interests to do so, since he wishes to eliminate difference, so that everyone can be absorbed into this greater British whole, dominated by a lowland urbanised England, or to be more precise London. The interest, as always with Camden, is in the detail, whereas here for the moment I merely touch on the main thrust of the argument.

Paradoxically Camden's *insula Romana* is best understood by being seen in its initial guise as *insula Britannica*, but not in the sense in which a patriotic Welshman might have assumed. The Picts, a people who had sought to destroy ancient Britain, were in fact unRomanised British, who included both those in the north who for the most part lived outside the ambit of the Romans, and those who had fled from the south to escape the Romans.<sup>97</sup> The similarities between Welsh, that is ancient British, and Irish languages showed that the Irish were in origin British as well, this was supported in Camden's mind by Classical testimonies, and the shared heritage of British and Irish had in all probability been reinforced by Britons seeking refuge from the Romans in Ireland.<sup>98</sup> So the British Isles had a unity based on peoples speaking versions of the ancient British language. War laid the foundation of nations, whether through refugees, settlement, conquest or colonisa-

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<sup>96</sup> C 79 H 110.

<sup>97</sup> The section on the Picts is a brilliant, sometimes amusing piece of writing, as is his section on the Scots. People can be the victims of the way they are labeled or label themselves.

<sup>98</sup> C 728 H *Ireland* 64–65; C 557 H 686.

tion, to this extent the myth of the Brutian origins of Britain contained a truth. The *insula Romana*, which succeeded the *insula Britannica*, had at various times extended well beyond Hadrian's Wall, as far as the Antonine Wall obviously, from which Camden had confirmatory epigraphic evidence.<sup>99</sup> The Romans under Agricola had won a battle in the north of Scotland by the Caledonian Forest and mainland Britain had been circumnavigated, which means that in this respect at least the whole island was brought within Roman bounds.<sup>100</sup> The role of the sea and a navy in defining territory is a crucial topic, to which I shall come. In the course of the Roman occupation the British, especially in what is now England, had become Romanised and had absorbed a provincial Latin (*incolae provincialem Latinam imbibissent*).<sup>101</sup>

All the British Isles had afterwards been subjected to a Germanic influence. Camden does not subscribe to the idea that the ancient British were slain, or as an entity gradually pushed into the furthest west of the island. He thinks that these Romano-British were for the most part absorbed, and presumably in the north as well, where, as demonstrated by the shared English language, most of Scotland, which had been British, and not thoroughly Romanised, was occupied and transformed by Anglo-Saxons. It was only a small minority of the ancient southern British who preferred the liberty of an otherwise inhospitable country, Wales, to being absorbed by the Anglo-Saxons.

Victi enim omnes in gentem, leges, nomen, linguamque vincentium, praeter pauculos quos locorum asperitas in occiduo tractu tutata est, concesserunt. Nam praeter Angliam pars longe maxima Scotiae ab Anglo-Saxonibus occupata (Sassones enim sylvestribus et veris Scotis etiamnum vocantur) eadem qua nos lingua, dialecto parum variata utitur. Quam nos cum illis annos iam 1150 quodammodo illibatam simulque regionis possessionem conservavimus.

(For all the conquered, except some few, whom in the Westerne tract the roughnesse of the countrey defended and kept safe, became one nation, used the same lawes, tooke their name, and spake one and the selfsame language with the conquerours. For besides England it selfe, a great part of Scotland, being possessed by the English Saxons [and still to this day the wilde and naturall Scots indeed, terme them Sassones] useth the same tongue that we do, varying a little in the Dialect onely. Which tongue we and they together for the space now of 1150

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<sup>99</sup> C 698–699 H *Scotland* 26–27.

<sup>100</sup> C 45 H 58 C 42–43 H 60–61.

<sup>101</sup> C 83 H 116. Holland translates *imbibissent*, meaning *drink deeply*, *absorb*, with the colourless *used*.

yeeres have kept after a sort uncorrupt, and with it the possession also of the Land.)<sup>102</sup>

He makes the telling and extremely important point that the English and the English speaking Scots had kept their shared language for 1150 years. There was a basic truth in the remark, but the sameness of the language may have been in details a more recent development, as the English and Scottish kingdoms drew closer together and both came under the influence of the Reformation. It was of course not just the Anglo-Saxons, who occupied the northern parts, but also the Norse, who apart from the damage they inflicted on the English, became almost the forgotten people of Camden's *Britannia*.<sup>103</sup>

As for the Picts they were in 740 virtually annihilated by the Scots who absorbed the remainder. As for the Scots, they and their historians swore by their altars and hearths that they originated from Spain and from there went to Ireland,<sup>104</sup> Camden was inclined to accept this, and, after reviewing the ancient evidence, he came to the conclusion that they were Goths. Goths were a Germanic people too, and so this is an instance where language does not prove a link, because the Gaelic language, which these latter day Goths spoke, had, according to Camden, no links with any Germanic language. They had linguistically been assimilated by the native ancient British. The connecting link with the Goths was in this case a cultural artefact, the kilt, as worn by the Goths in Sidonius Apollinaris' description.

They are (saith he) of a flaming deepe yellow, died with saffron; they buckle upon their feet a paire of Broges made of raw and untanned leather up to their ankles; their knees, thighes, and calves of their legs are all bare; their garments high in the necke, straight made and of sundry colours, comming skarce downe to their hammes; the sleeves cover the upper points of their armes and no more; their souldiers coats of colour greene, edged with a red fringe; their belts hanging downe from the shoulder; the lappets of their eares hidden under the curled glibbes and lockes of haire lying all over them.<sup>105</sup>

The Vikings too had been a Germanic people, as had all the other *septentrionales*, God's scourge on the civilised nations when they became deca-

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<sup>102</sup> C 95 H 132–133.

<sup>103</sup> Crystal 2005, 202–206, 298–299.

<sup>104</sup> Holland may miss a joke here, since he translates it "with all their might and maine". Altars and hearths are where one's home is, and the Scots seem to have a strong attachment to Spain, C 87 H 121.

<sup>105</sup> H 123 translating from C 88.

dent.<sup>106</sup> And these Norsemen in their imperial period had settled throughout the British Isles. He suggests that Scotland was in fact a collection of nations, as was England. Ireland too, which was in the middle of the French Sea, midway between Spain and Britain, was a natural place for many peoples to flow together over the centuries and fix their settlement, Norwegians, Easterlings from Germany, Englishmen, Welsh and Scots from the British mainland.<sup>107</sup>

### **Insula romana and the material facts of Roman history old and new**

National origins were bedevilled by myth and ideology. Camden keeps clear of the passions aroused by origins by playing the sceptic,<sup>108</sup> from which position he makes a series of tentative suggestions for the Gothic origins of the Scots, which of course he expects to be accepted, based on literary evidence, oral tradition and likely historical processes. In the case of the Roman occupation of Britain, however, which lasted nearly five hundred years, reasonable hypotheses could be supported by material evidence. Even if the sole occupants of what we now know as England had, in pre-Roman times, been, as Camden thought, speakers of a language whose descendant is Welsh, and this is doubtful, the population of the country at the end of the Roman empire had multiple origins.

Haec dum ego commentor de Romanorum in Britannia imperio quod ad quadringentisimum septuagesimum sextum plus minus annum, ut modo dixi, pertigit, commentor, et subinde mecum repeto quot tanto tempore Romanorum coloniae huc deductae, quot milites huc Roma in praesidia continuo transmissi, quot ad res suas vel imperii agendas huc submissi, qui cum Britannis connubiis coniuncti hic et sedes fixerunt, et sobolem susceperunt, ubicunque, inquit Seneca, vicit Romanus, habitat [...] Et par est credamus Britannos et Romanos tot seculis in unam gentem quasi laeta insitione coaluisse

(In writing of these matters concerning the Romanes government in Britaine, which continued [as I said] CCCCLXXVI yeeres, or much thereabout, whiles I consider and thinke otherwise [sometimes] with

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<sup>106</sup> “ita hi a Deo asservantur septentrionales ac Hyperborei terrores, ut pro poena quadam, quando et quibus providentiae divinae visum fuerit, immitantur”, quoting Nicephorus *Historia Romana* I.xxxii.2, C110 H 154.

<sup>107</sup> C 88–89 H 124. On the weave of Irish identities, and the Gothic idea in the two centuries following Camden, see Kidd 2006; on the Germans as a key to understanding European identities and especially English identity, see Verstegan 1605 chapter one, “Of the Originall of Nations”, chapter two, “How the Ancient Noble Saxons, the True Ancesters of Englishmen, were originally a people of Germanie; and how honorable it is for Englishmen to be descended from the Germans”.

<sup>108</sup> C 86, “Nam ego in hac re Scepticus”.

my selfe, how many Colonies of Romans were in so long a time brought hither, how many souldiers continually transported over hither from Rome to lie in garrison, how many sent hither to negotiate either their own busines, or the affaires of the Empire, who joyning in mariage with Britans, both planted themselves, and also begat children here [for *wheresoever the Romans winneth, saith Seneca, there he woneth, and inhabiteth*] [...] And meet it is we should beleieve, that the Britans and Romans in so many ages, by a blessed and joyfull mutuall ingraffing, as it were, have growen into one stocke and nation.)<sup>109</sup>

Camden is suggesting that at the end of empire there was a new Romano-British people, and in this section he reminds us that for this reason it was called *insulam Romaniam* or *insulam Romanam*. Because of this miscegenation we can conclude that the Romans never left Britain, and it was the Romano-British who became one nation with the Anglo-Saxons. The processes of assimilation could be rapid as Camden immediately goes on to illustrate. Within twenty eight years of a colony being founded among them, which was to become the city of Cologne, the Ubii refused to massacre the Roman settlers with whom they had already started to intermarry.

Deductis olim et nobiscum per connubium sociatis, quique mox provenere, haec patria est. Nec vos adeo iniquos existemus, ut interfici a nobis parentes, fratres, liberos nostros velitis.

(This is the naturall Countrey, as well to those that being conveyed hither in times past, are conjoynded with us by mariages, as to their offspring. Neither can we thinke you so unreasonable, as to wish us for to kill our parents, brethren, and children.)<sup>110</sup>

If it were possible to define the Romano-British, account might have to be taken of the number of Britons people who moved abroad. The main evidence concerns British soldiers who must often have settled abroad. Camden has evidence that twelve cohorts or squadrons composed of Britons were serving elsewhere in the Roman empire.<sup>111</sup> More startling is the ethnicity of the Romans who were serving in Britain. They were mainly people from what had been, in their time, regarded as the more uncivilised parts of the empire, and still often were. It becomes a refrain as one reads through the *Britannia*. The emperor Probus sent Vandals and Burgundians, whom he himself had conquered, to Britain, where he gave them a place to settle, reward for the useful work they had done for the Romans, whenever anyone

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<sup>109</sup> C 61 H 87–88.

<sup>110</sup> C 61 H 88.

<sup>111</sup> C 60 H 87.



plotted sedition.<sup>112</sup> Anderida on the Saxon shore was defended by a company of Abulci against Saxon pirates,<sup>113</sup> at Richborough, the main port of entry into Britain, Heruli, Batavii, Moesici were landed to defend Britain against the Picts and Scots,<sup>114</sup> there were Frisians in Manchester,<sup>115</sup> a race who were to take part in the Anglo-Saxon movement of peoples, Asturians and Sarmatian horsemen at Ribchester,<sup>116</sup> Dalmatian horsemen at Warwick. Warwick prompted Camden to repeat a theory about the reason for so many foreign troops in Britain, based on a premise which does not fit well with the drift of his own general thesis. It is in the nature of Camden's style of writing that a variety of voices are heard, what Herendeen describes by the convenient term polyvocality. Not all voices were subjected to Camden's critique. The voice from Warwick states

such was the provident wisdome and forecast of the Romans that in all their Provinces they placed forraine souldiers in garrison, who by reason of their diversity as well of maners as of language from the naturall inhabitants, could not joyne with them in any conspiracy, for (as he writeth) *Nations not indured to the bridle of bondage easily otherwise start backe from the yoake imposed upon them*. Heereupon it was that there served in Britaine out of Africke the Moores, out of Spaine the Astures and Vectones, out of Germany the Batavi, Nervii, Tungri, and Turnacenses, out of Gaul the Lingones, Morini, and from other remoter places Dalmatians, Thracians, Alani &c., as I will shew in their proper places.<sup>117</sup>

This is a description of the policing of a nation that would prefer to be free. The troops are a mixed bunch and for the purposes of this divergent thesis are an ill-considered group. The Morini especially were near neighbours of the British and may have spoken a very similar language, the ones designated as Germans were from continental areas very close to Britain, with whom there we can reasonably presume there had been constant traffic from prehistoric times, in a world where the sea joined peoples, did not divide

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<sup>112</sup> C 50 H 71. Probus also permitted the Britons to have vines.

<sup>113</sup> C 247 H 351 Perhaps from Avila in Spain.

See <http://www.roman-britain.org/places/anderitum.htm>

<sup>114</sup> C 240 H 341. Heruli were a nomadic people from east Germany, of Scandanavian origin.

<sup>115</sup> C 611 H 746. Camden owed the information to John Dee who had copied out an inscription for him. He described Dee, in Holland's words, as "that most famous Mathematician and Warden of Manchester Colledge".

<sup>116</sup> C 614–615 H 750–751. "I hapned upon the greatest and fairest Altar that ever I saw, dedicated to the Mother Goddesses by a Captaine of the Asturians", and C 615–616 H 751–752.

<sup>117</sup> C 425 H 562–563.

them, and these had not always existed in their present definitions. In this kind of world the Asturians with their mining skills were near neighbours. Nonetheless the Roman rule could be oppressive. There were unresolved problems for Camden as he contemplated Roman imperialism and its benefits

In a brilliant passage which is a celebration of Roman civilisation, above all Roman roads, Camden prefaces his laudation in the 1590 edition by saying “Hoc Romanorum iugum quamvis grave, tamen salutare fuit”. (This yoke of the Romanes although it were grievous, yet comfortable it proved and a saving health unto them.)<sup>118</sup>

In the 1607 edition he vastly expands the section on roads making it into a mini-dissertation. He also in a new paragraph, inserted prior to this account, explains why the Roman yoke could be difficult for those used to their own freedoms. Even here he starts with positive remarks about the Roman military occupation, to the effect that legionary camps could give rise to cities, and we can think of York and Lincoln. He then goes on to describe the unpleasantness of the process of being subject to another's rule with its inevitable abuses of power and Roman misrule. It is as if he were finally confessing how civilisation, of the kind that he approved, such as he wished to see established in Ireland, could be built on cruelty and injustice, such as the English had experienced at the hands of William the Conqueror, and which was evident in Camden's own London, as described vividly by Camden's friend and colleague John Stow, who wrote material which he thought might be of use to Camden.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> 1590, 37. The Latin wording in the 1590 edition is the same as the in 1607 edition, so we can use Holland.

<sup>119</sup> Stow 1598 in “The Epistle Dedicatorie” to the *Survey* comments on regional work being done up and down the country which could add up to a chorography of the country, and “might give occasion and courage to M. Camdin to increase and beautifie his singular worke of the whole”. In fact as well as the good deeds done in London, Stow can tell of things Camden is not as quick to mention, of the degradation of the green spaces in London by rampant industrialisation, 92–93, of a much loved bailiff who was framed on a false accusation and hanged outside the door of Stow's house, of William Powlett building a great house and garden on land which had provided an amenity near St. Augustine's Friary, of Thomas Cromwell in Throgmorton Street commandeering land for his private property, some of it belonging to Stow's father, 140, of weaving establishments of foreigners with special skills replaced by rich drapers, 171. Stow, (1524/5–1605) is not identified with any school or university. Nonetheless Barrett Beer *ODNB* writes that, “it is likely that Stow was the most knowledgeable record collector of the sixteenth century” and also its most prolific historian, who besides *The Survey of London* wrote *Chronicles of England* (1580) and *Annales of England* (1592). Beer also describes him as “a prolific manuscript collector whose interests included chronicles, charters, ecclesiastical and municipal records, wills, literary works, and learned treatises”. This is the kind of material that Camden celebrates in the introduction to the 1607 edition of the *Britannia*.

Et proculdubio stationes et praetenturae Legionum et Romanorum militum fuerunt saepenumero quasi geniturae urbium et oppidorum cum in aliis provinciis, tum in hac nostra Britannia. Sic Britannis iugum impositum primum praesidio militum qui semper cum terrore impenderant incolis, inde tributo et vectigali, eoque nomine Publicanos habere cogebantur, id est Harpyae et hirudines qui eorum sanguinem exugerunt, bona publicarunt, et mortuorum nomine tributa exegerunt: nec legibus suis patriis uti permissi sunt, sed magistratus a populo Romano, cum imperio et securibus missi, qui ius dicerent. Habebant enim provinciae Proprætores, Legatos, Praesides, Praetores, et Proconsules, singulae etiam civitates habebant municipales magistratus. Praetor conventum singulis annis indicebat, et maiores lites dirimebat: excelso in suggestu superba iura reddebat stipatus lictoribus, virgae populi tergo, securis cervicibus intentabantur, et quotannis alium atque alium dominum sortiri cogebantur. Nec hoc satis, discordias inter eos alebant, et quosdam indulgentius fovebant, ut ipsos suae servitutis instrumenta haberent.

(And doubtlesse, the standing guards and Camps of Legions and Romanes souldiers were many times the Seminaries, as it were, and Seedplots of Cities and townes, as in other Provinces, so also in this our Britaine. Thus was the yoke of subiection laid upon the Britans, first by a garison of souldiers, which alwaies with terror were ready to command the Inhabitants, afterwards by tribute and imposts; and in that respect forced they were to have Publicans, that is to say, greedy cormorants and horsleeches, who sucked their blood, confiscated their goods and exacted tributes in the name of the dead: Neither were they permitted to use the ancient lawes of their country, but magistrats were sent from the people of Rome, with absolute power and commission to minister iustice even in capitall matters. For, Provinces had Propretors, Lieutenants, Presidents, Pretors and Proconsuls. Every city also and State had their municipall magistrates. The Pretor proclaimed yeerely solemne sessions and Assizes, at which he determined the waightier causes sitting aloft upon a high Tribunall seat, and guarded with his Lictors about him proudly executed hee his iurisdiction: rods and whipping cheere were presented to the backs, the ax and heading to the necks of the common people, and every yeere they were forced to receive one new ruler or another allotted to them. Neither was this sufficient: they maintained discord and dissension among them, some also they favoured above the rest, that they might have them to be the instruments of this their servitude.)<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> C 44 H 62.

Inscriptional material and archaeological remains could give indications of more attractive public and personal aspects of life under the Romans. Camden was, for example, interested in the religion of these people. There is an inscription to the god of all the Brigantes,<sup>121</sup> another to Verbeia which he suggests might be a name derived from the nearby river Wharf, itself an ancient British name, meaning swift, and which can be further illustrated by the ancients' deification of rivers and water.<sup>122</sup> The altar at Ribchester dedicated to Mother goddesses perplexes Camden. There were lots of altars there, some of them small and very personal, so that Camden could muse on whether the predominant religion was a religion of the altar, where people had their own personal altars.

In these altars the posterity no doubt imitated *Noah*, even after they had fallen away and revolted from the true worship of God. Neither erected they altars to their Gods onely, but also unto their Emperors by way of servile flattery, with this impious title, NVMINI MAIESTATIQUE EORVM, that is, *Unto their GOD-HED and Majesty*. Unto these they kneeled in humble manner, these they clasped about and embraced as they praied: before these they tooke their othes, and in one word, in these and in their sacrifices consisted the maine substance of all their religion, so farre forth, that whoever had no altar of their owne, they were thought verily to have no religion, nor to acknowledge any God at all.<sup>123</sup>

This was a hypothesis too far, but altars, especially if each man or woman had their own personal altar, was thought provoking. Camden was living in an age of increasing religious deviation. There were other forms of historical support for the modern implications of ancient religion, since Camden followed Origen's line that the Druids, the native priests of those far-off times, were in their wisdom and doctrines part of the *praeparatio evangelica*.<sup>124</sup> Camden himself at the end of his labours dedicated his *Britannia* to the inclusive *Deo Optimo Maximo*.

At Maryport at the western extension of Hadrian's Wall facing the Irish Sea an astonishing number of altars had been discovered,<sup>125</sup> which leads Camden to think of the time of Prudentius, from whom he quotes, when the new Christian religion led to the breaking of the pagan altars. We might note in Camden's time altars had been destroyed by the new Reformed religion. Elsewhere near the old Roman fort of Bravionacum, by the Wall,

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<sup>121</sup> C 563 H 691 "votiva Deo civitatis Brigantum Topico".

<sup>122</sup> C 567–568 H 696–698.

<sup>123</sup> C 615 H 751.

<sup>124</sup> C 47–48 H 68.

<sup>125</sup> C 633–636 H 769–773.

an old lady had in her possession a small altar to the local god,<sup>126</sup> while in the village of Melkrigh there was a broken altar to a Syrian goddess, on which, Holland, adds the women now beat their laundry. Camden gives us the inscription on this altar in all its imperfections, so that we can join with Camden in trying to understand these ancient peoples

DEAE SURI  
AE SUB CALP  
VRNIO AG.....  
ICOLA LEG. AUG  
PR. PR. A. LICINIUS  
....LEMENS PRAEF  
....III. A. IOR.....  
.....

He then gives us his reading of the inscription and launches into a wide ranging lively interpretation of this, which includes some very personal imperial detail. Here in Holland's translation

Which if I were able to read, thus would I willingly read it, and the draught of the letters maketh well for it: Deae Suriae, sub Calphurnio Agricola legato Augusti, Propraetore Licinius Clemens Praefectus, that is, Unto the Goddess Suria, under Calphurnius Agricola Lieutenant of Augustus and Propraetor, Licinius Clemens the Captaine. This Calphurnius Agricola was sent by Antoninus Philosophus against the Britans, what time as there was likely to be warre in Britaine, about the yeere of Christ 170. At which time, some Cohort under his command erected this altar unto THE GODDESSE SURIA, whom with a turreted crowne on her head, and a Tabber in her hand, was set in a coach drawn with Lions, as Lucian sheweth at large in his Narration of the Goddess Suria. Which Goddess also Nero, albeit hee contemned all religion, especially worshipped for a time; and soone after so aviled and despised that hee defiled her with his urine.<sup>127</sup>

facts which would might unknown to the good ladies of Melkrigh. Other inscriptions, of course, told of service done by men from overseas in language, which had become the language of contemporary British inscriptions, often terse and full of dignity, the language and style of power.

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<sup>126</sup> C 659, "Anicula vero quae casulam proximam incoluit arulam votivam antiquam nobis ostendit sic deo indigeti Vitirineo inscriptam". H 800.

<sup>127</sup> H 801 from C 659–660.

### The other island; the unRomanised Irish

At the very beginning of the long section entitled *Romani in Britannia* Camden writes that Caesar, when he had finished mapping the Gauls in victories, so that he might join what nature had made separate, by taking captive both land and sea, turned his gaze on the Ocean, as if the world of Rome were too small. Josephus magnifying the achievement of Vespasian wrote that Britain is surrounded by the Ocean, and is scarcely smaller than our world.<sup>128</sup> In the section describing Britain, Camden writes that the ancients believed that the circumference of Britain was so large that Caesar, who was the first Roman to reveal the nature of Britain, wrote that he had found another world, thinking that it was of such a magnitude that it seemed not so much to be poured around by the Ocean but to embrace the Ocean.<sup>129</sup> It is appropriate to end by glancing at the nature of this embrace, not so much Britain's relationship to its surrounding seas as to its ownership. John Selden, Camden's colleague and friend, wrote an extremely popular book called *Mare Clausum*, the first half of which discusses the legalities of ownership, the second the historical *de facto* ownership, tracing the British navy back to prehistoric times, but naturally giving due weight to the period when, what was sometimes, and we might guess most times, a cosmopolitan Roman navy, guarded and exploited the British shores.<sup>130</sup> It is clear in Camden that Britain had been the America of its day, in Roman eyes the second largest island in the world, with Ireland the third, the two islands in the West, the largest island in the world being Taprobane which signified the

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<sup>128</sup> C 44 H 62

<sup>129</sup> C 1 H 2.

<sup>130</sup> Carausius "a Menapian borne, a man of very base parentage", as Holland describes him, is a good example of this, albeit a usurper who constructed an invincible navy from barbarians, especially Franks, and governed Britain in exemplary fashion, C 50 H 72. John Selden (1584–1654), lawyer and historical scholar had an amazing linguistic competence. According to Paul Christianson, the author of the *ODNB* article, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Latin, Greek, Old English, Hebrew, Chaldean, Samaritan, Aramaic, Arabic, Persian, and Ethiopic were all cited in his published works. He became the leading Hebrew scholar of his day, as evinced in the title of Jason Rosenblatt's book on Selden's scholarship, *Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi* (2006). He helped ease the return of the Jews to England. He also wrote frequently and with complete authority on the laws and governance of England and Britain over the ages in works such *Analecton Anglobritannicon* (1615), *Jani Anglorum facies altera* (1610), *Titles of Honor* (1614), *The Historie of Tithes* (1618). Christianson in his comments on Selden's notes to Sir John Fortescue's *De laudibus legum Angliae* (1616) draws attention to Selden's opinion on the profound Romanisation of the ancient Britons especially in law. This influence was to become part of the organic growth of the nation under successive invasions and immigrations, and was to make English law more like continental law than the English cared to think. Selden became a Member of Parliament, at one time for Oxford, and he was on the side of those who wanted open accountable government. We are told that at one point he sat on fifty seven committees.

exotic East.<sup>131</sup> The imperial nature of *insula Romana* is particularly illuminated by its relation to the sea, and in the sections which deal with this relationship there is a significant shift between the 1590 and 1607 editions.

In the 1590 edition the sections on Ireland and the islands were attached as a separate book *Hiberniae et Insularum Britanniae Adiacentium Descriptio*, and this was dedicated to Edward Hoby, Golden Knight and best of friends. Hoby (1560–1617) was blessed by fortune, a nephew of Burghley, yet an independent person who frequently irritated those in power, such as Elizabeth herself. He was involved in the preparations to confront the Spanish Armada, and present at the attack on Cadiz, and later in life was governor of the isle of Sheppey, so that he makes an appearance in the book dedicated to him, since in the 1590 edition Sheppey is mentioned among the islands.<sup>132</sup> He was a highly regarded Parliamentarian, both under Elizabeth, but especially James. He had charge of the rolls for the county of Kent, and was a combative Calvinist who engaged in public controversy with Catholic recusants. One can see in these details taken from Louis Knafla's *ODNB article* some of the reasons why this work might in 1590 have been dedicated to him. In the 1607 edition Ireland and the Islands are integrated into the main body of the text with a continuous pagination and Hoby disappears.<sup>133</sup>

Nonetheless the accounts neither of Ireland nor of the islands are in harmony with the rest of the *Britannia*, though in various ways and styles major themes from the main body of the *Britannia* disclose themselves. Ireland had never been occupied by the Romans, which was says Camden its misfortune.

Ubicunque enim Romani victores victos humanitate excoluerunt, nec sane alibi per Europam humanitatis, literarum, et elegantiae cultus nisi ubi illi imperarunt.

(For wheresoever the Romans were victours, they brought them whom they conquered to civility; neither verily in any place else throughout Europe was there any civility, learning, and elegance, but where they ruled.)<sup>134</sup>

There was a problem with the theory that the Irish had needed Roman civilisation. Camden recognised that Ireland had once been a centre of learning, to which the Anglo-Saxons had flocked “tanquam ad bonarum literarum

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<sup>131</sup> C 726 H *Hibernia* 1.

<sup>132</sup> Camden 1590, 751.

<sup>133</sup> Holland's translation keeps a separate pagination including the Scottish and these later sections

<sup>134</sup> C 729 H *Ireland* 66.

mercaturam”, even to learn writing as demonstrated by the similarity of Irish and Anglo-Saxon scripts, writing the *sine qua non* of being a civilised person. He knew that Ireland had flourished intellectually, while letters in the rest of the Christian world had lain neglected and half buried. He resorts to a theological explanation for this subsequent loss of culture, *optimi maximi rectoris providentia*, which, by use of a poetic conceit, he suggests here acts in a random way. The present state of Ireland is “rudis, semibarbara et politioris literaturae ignara”. Nor did it have that ancient historical material which so fascinated Camden. Its history was medieval. It also suffered the defect, which marred Camden’s account of Scotland, that Camden had never walked the land, his view is from the outside, but whereas it is clear that Camden had difficulty summoning interest in Scotland, or had good reason to fear his lack of knowledge of Scotland, he was seriously engaged with Ireland. There is both what Ireland was, and what it represented for Camden. I merely touch on both issues, by way of a few references and observations.

Leinster is the centre of *humanitas* in Ireland, “Fertilis et frugifera est terra, mitissimo coelo, et incolae ad humanitatem et cultum vicinae Angliae, e qua magna ex parte orti, quam proxime accedunt”,<sup>135</sup> fertile with a good climate, its inhabitants inclining to the civilised behaviour and culture of neighbouring England, from which most of them came and which was close at hand, the bridgehead to conquest one might say as Kent had been with regard to a Roman continent. The capital city is Dublin, “emporium nobilissimum et primae iustitiae forum, moenibus validum, aedificiis splendidum, civibus frequens” (This is the roiall City and seat of Ireland, a famous towne for Merchandize, the chiefe Court of Justice, in munition strong, in buildings gorgeous, in Citizens populous),<sup>136</sup> all the qualifications required for a great, civilised settlement, and recently, endowed by Elizabeth with a new college, Trinity, on an old monastic site, and a fine library. These it was hoped would make Dublin a market place of good letters. Ulster on the other hand illustrated unregenerate Ireland with the characteristics of a country destined for colonisation.

Regio ampla, multis et immensis stagnis interfusa, immanibus sylvis umbrosa, alicubi ferax, alicubi macra, viriditate tamen ad aspectum ubique iucunda et pecoribus passim oppleta. Sed ut regio sine subactione inhorrescit, ita incolarum ingenia sine humaniori cultura maxime efferantur.

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<sup>135</sup> C 744 H *Ireland* 84.

<sup>136</sup> C 751 H *Ireland* 92.



It was alluring, with too many cattle, characteristics of a nomadic people, with not enough agriculture, that is settlement and culture.<sup>137</sup>

Donegal is the last place mentioned in this Irish chorography, and at the end of the account of Donegal, in a graphic coda, comes an advertisement for English colonisation, prefaced by some bold political statements, though we like Holland, may struggle to extract the correct meaning from *providentiam damnosam*. Holland's solution when in doubt is to translate twice.

Nec sane in re quavis alia magis desideratur (modo loqui liceat) Regum Angliae pietas et prudentia, quam quod hanc Provinciam, imo totam Hiberniam, in religione propaganda, Republica constituenda, et incolarum vita ad humanitatem excolenda tot iam seculis negligentius habuerint; an per supinam socordiam, parsimoniam, aut providentiam damnosam non dixerō. Ne diutius autem negligatur ipsa suo iure efflagitare videtur, quae Insula est tanta, tam vicina, tam ubere gleba, tam pascuis supra fidem laeta, tot sylvis obsita, tot metallorum venis, modo quis scrutaretur, dives, tot fluminibus irrigua, tot portibus circumcincta ad navigationes in opulentissimas regiones tam opportuna, et inde vectigalibus quaestuosa futura, hominumque altrix tam foecunda, qui sive animos sive corpora spectemus, ad omnia pacis bellicae munia usui esse potuerunt singulari.

(And verily in no one thing whatsoever [pardon this my over-boldnes] have the Kings of England beene more defective in pietie and policie, than that they have for these so many ages seene so slightly to this Province, yea and to all Ireland, in the propagation of religion, establishing the weale publicke, and reducing the life of the inhabitants to civility, whether it was for carelesse neglect, sparing, or a forecast of dammage, or some reason of state, I am not able to say. But that the same may be no longer thus neglected, it seemeth of it selfe by good right to importune most earnestly, being an Iland so great, so neere a neighbour, so fruitfull in soile, so rich in pastures more than credible, beset with so many woods, enriched with so many mineralles [if they were searched], watered with so many rivers, environed with so many

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<sup>137</sup> C 762. Holland *Ireland* 104–105 paraphrases, “A large country, bespred with many and those very large loghes or lakes, shaded with many and thicke woods, in some places fruitfull, in others baraine, howbeit fresh and greene to see to in every place, and replenished with cattaile. But as the country for want of manuring is growne to be rough, so the naturall dispositions of the people, wanting civill discipline, are become most wilde and barbarous. Con O’Neale cursed all his posterity, in case they either learned to speake English, or sowed wheat, or built houses: being sore affraied, least by these inducements the English might bee allured to enter againe into their lands and possesssions: often saying the language bred conversation, and consequently their confusion, that wheat gave sustenance with like effect: and by building they should doe but as the crowe doth, make her nest, to bee beaten out by the hawke”, *H Ireland* 120.

havens, lying so fit and commodious for sailing into most wealthy countries, and thereby like to be for impost and custome very profitable, and, to conclude, breeding and rearing men so abundantly as it doth, who, considering either their minds, or their bodies, might be of singular employment for all duties and functions as well of warre as of peace, if they were wrought and conformed to orderly civilitie.)<sup>138</sup>

Contextually it is appropriate that from here Camden goes on to give a long account of the rebellion of the O'Neills,<sup>139</sup> which was however contemporary history, not even medieval history. He says he includes this account, which he has "compendiously collected" from his *Annales*, where events in Ireland are a yearly refrain, to honour the memory of an old friend, probably Burghley.<sup>140</sup>

He concludes the section on Ireland with the insertion of a medieval chronicle of an outrageously old fashioned kind, covering the years 1152 to 1370, which brings out the brutality of the country, as could a medieval chronicle on England. Between the two chronicles, and found also in the 1590 edition, is what one might call an anthropology of the Irish. It is entitled *Hibernicorum mores, veteres et recentes*. The testimonies of the *veteres* have just three representatives,<sup>141</sup> headed by Strabo who claimed to know about their cannibalism and incest, and indeed incestuous cannibalism. The *recentes* have as their chief spokesperson Giraldus Cambrensis,<sup>142</sup> a party to the early Norman invasions of Ireland. He had to be for Ireland what Caesar was to England. The effect is to make the early modern Irish interesting, but strange and primitive, the kind of people about whom the new historians

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<sup>138</sup> C 773 H *Ireland* 118.

<sup>139</sup> Sean O'Neill (c.1530–1567) was the youngest son of Conn O'Neill who had on Irish terms been a king or chieftain in Ulster but had to settle with Elizabeth to becoming according to an English settlement, Earl of Tyrone. Sean fought his way to this Ulster chieftainship, but desired recognition as Earl of Tyrone. Elizabeth granted this. He promised Elizabeth, as quoted by Christopher Maginn in his *ODNB* article, that his people "will fall to cyvilite and here after be faithfull obedyent and trew subjectes". A rift however was created between Elizabeth and Sean by the queen's advisers with a view to removing Sean by military means. When this failed, Sean came to London with his followers in their Gaelic array as described below. A reaffirmation of Sean's position was made, but the machinations continued., leading to what has been called the revolt of the O'Neills and the death of Sean.

<sup>140</sup> Dana Sutton suggests he refers to Burghley on the strength of the phrase "quem vivum colui", a view which Holland's translation reinforces, "whom while hee lived I observed with all respect".

<sup>141</sup> C 788 H *Ireland* 140. The three witnesses are Strabo, Pomponius Mela and Solinus.

<sup>142</sup> Gerald de Barry (c.1146–1220/23), an ecclesiastic of impeccable noble Anglo Norman Welsh ancestry, descendants of whom were to become founders of one of the most distinguished Irish families, the Fitzgeralds. Gerald served Henry II for twelve years and was dogged for much of his life by an ambition to become Archbishop of St. David's, the Welsh metropolitan see, which he hoped would become independent of Canterbury.

on America could have talked. Indeed in his *Annales* Camden has for the year 1562 a marvellous description of the bodyguard, which accompanied Sean O'Neill to court, so like those ancient Scottish Goths in their dress:

cum securigero Galloglassorum satellitio, capitibus nudis, crispatis cincinnis dependentibus, camisiis flavis croco vel humana urina infectis, manicis largioribus, tuniculis brevioribus, et larcernis villosis;

(with a Guard of Ax-bearing Galloglasses, bare-headed, with curled haire hanging downe, yellow surplices dyed with Saffron, or mans stale, long sleeves, short coates, and hairy mantles.)<sup>143</sup>

One detects a sly note in Camden's Latin. The English, whom he suggests were a little provincial themselves, in the early Elizabethan period, and even now, gawped at them in wonder, as they would nowadays at Chinese or Americans (*Chinenses et Americanos*).

There were problems with Camden's aspirations for Ireland. When he talks of the great potential in the Irish population for service in peace or in war, he for the moment puts to the back of his mind two problems which concerned him. The first was that the English, who had manpower deficiencies, were already employing the Irish as soldiers in their wars, with the consequence that in any Irish rebellion they found themselves confronting men, trained by themselves in modern warfare, able to resist assimilation.<sup>144</sup> Secondly the assumption of colonialism is that the natives become like us. A concern for Camden was the English in Ireland often "went native".<sup>145</sup> Camden was hoist by his own petard. This could prompt us to ask to what extent in the Romano-British miscegenation in mainland Britain at the end of the Roman empire, the sentiments of the resultant stock, in ways that can no longer be detected, might have remained essentially British, a product of their environment and an underlying culture.

### **Embracing the ocean; Camden's imperial Odyssey**

In what was now the final section of the *Britannia* he launches out from Ireland, into the seas which Britain embraces, to visit the islands, to conduct an Odyssey, we might say, among a variety of islands, which for good or bad, and usually good, are exemplary. He fears to be dashed on the rocks or to be overwhelmed by the waves of ignorance, but daring will be the captain of

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<sup>143</sup> C 1612, *Ann.* 1562, 78. The translation is that of Richard Norton used by Dana Sutton to create his bilingual edition of the *Annales*.

<sup>144</sup> Camden 1612 *Ann.* 1587, 476.

<sup>145</sup> C 757 on the Berminghams, who, like people who having forgotten their birth, had slipped into Irish barbarism and scarcely acknowledged that they were English; C 761 the Burkes married into the Irish, put aside their English culture and donned Irish manners. Camden 1612 *Ann.* 1580, 311; Camden 1627, *Ann.* 1598, 173.

his ship.<sup>146</sup> It is in fact going to be a speculative trip which will include fabulous islands, or islands with an interesting historical tale to tell. First he gives a general summary of the islands of Britain from Plutarch, out of Demetrius, mysterious sacred islands inhabited by demons who control the elements, and where Saturn lies drugged in sleep guarded by Briareus<sup>147</sup> and comments

sic libuit olim, ut etiam hodie, de locis remotissimis miranda et fabulosa quadam mentiendi securitate audacter confingere.

(Thus they tooke pleasure in old time, as now also at this day, boldly to devise strange wonders and tales of places farre remote in a certaine secure veine of lying, as it were, by authority.)

Holland faced with the strange phrase “quadam mentiendi securitate” translates it twice, first with the opaque rendering “secure veine of lying” and then “by authority”. Camden having confronted a voyage on which he might be dashed on the rocks, a journey which had political implications, will on second thoughts be protected by the imaginative guise of his narrative. Holland hints he may also have a passport. Both Camden’s final Latin edition and Holland’s translation are dedicated to King James, among his other offices, “publicae securitatis auctori”.<sup>148</sup>

There are imperial designs in most of Camden’s island visits. He made almost the same trip in the 1590 edition but some islands have now been lost. Anglesey, for example, was scarcely an island. It was also regarded by the Welsh, as their mother country. Camden restores it to the Welsh while dismantling their claims to it. Anglesey means the English island; it contained remains of ancient Irish cottages and had been troubled by the Norwegians, so it was not as Welsh as the Welsh might like<sup>149</sup> The Isle of Wight too was returned to the mainland, as was Canvey Island, whose distinction was that they had milk youths instead of milkmaids,<sup>150</sup> as was Sheppey the island of his one time patron Hoby, no longer required. Thanet, dear to the English, and entry point for both them and the Romans, no longer physically an island, remained in the *Britannia* an island, a memorial

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<sup>146</sup> C 837 H *British Ilands* 201.

<sup>147</sup> C 837 H *British Ilands* 201–202. See Plutarch *De defectu oraculorum* 419E.

<sup>148</sup> Camden ends the account of the Ilands with the tale of Oleron, the statement of Pomponius Mela on the history of this island being sufficient authority. Holland translates Camden then adds a pedantic paragraph of his own, where he says his authority is the Lord great Admiral of England, and gives a potted history of English ownership of the neighbouring French territorie. H *British Ilands* 232, cf. C 859–860.

<sup>149</sup> C 540–541 H 672.

<sup>150</sup> C 318 H 441, “which I have seene young lads taking womens function, with stooles fastened into their buttokes to milke”.

also to that prophet of geological change, and Roman civilisation, John Twyne,<sup>151</sup> and with it the Godwin Sands long since lost to the sea, which perhaps had never been an island. A large number of beautiful but insignificant islands, mainly famous as bird haunts, remain in the text. More important islands, such as the Hebrides are too quickly passed over, bought by the Scottish nation from the Norwegians, an unproductive place, source of the troublemakers, who poured every summer into Ulster to kill and pillage.<sup>152</sup>

The Isle of Man had once been an object of Scots aggression, on one of the routes from Scotland to Ireland, as shown by another of Camden's intrusions the *Chronicon Regum Manniae*, covering the period 1066–1318, taken from an old manuscript, with a pendant by Camden bringing it up to the modern day.<sup>153</sup> The chronicle is a boring account of squalid warfare, but the modern Isle of Man was different, a strange place, which was Irish with a flavour of Norwegian,<sup>154</sup> it was in fact a natural centre for an Irish Sea thalassocracy, and even in Camden's time Don Juan of Austria, with the encouragement of recusants and the Guises had, according to Camden, considered using it as a base to invade England or Western Scotland, because of its proximity to Catholic populations in Ireland, western Scotland and northern England.<sup>155</sup> It was now under the control of the Early of Derby<sup>156</sup> who had invested heavily in its security. It had its own peculiar language, which turns out to be Scottish Gaelic in the North and Irish Gaelic in the South. We are told the wealthier people took their lead from Lancaster, they were religious, which meant Anglican, peace-loving, and deplored the great disturbance

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<sup>151</sup> Twyne's work has never been translated, but he stands between Camden and the Welsh antiquarians, Price and Lhuyd, representing an English and pro-Roman viewpoint on British antiquities.

<sup>152</sup> C 848 H *British Islands* 215–216.

<sup>153</sup> C 840–847, H *British Islands* 205–215.

<sup>154</sup> C 838 H *British Islands* 204.

<sup>155</sup> Camden 1612, *Ann.* 1577, 267. Mary Guise (1515–1560) was mother of Mary Queen of Scots. The Guise family were leaders in France of the Catholic opposition to the Protestant Huguenots, among the movers of the Bartholomew's Day massacre. They had aspired to the French throne through marriage alliance with Philip II of Spain.

<sup>156</sup> Despite their title as earls of Derby the Stanley family were essentially a Lancastrian family with possessions in Lancashire, Cheshire, North Wales and the Isle of Man. Their first loyalty may have been Lancastrian, but during the conflict between Lancastrians and Yorkists Lord Thomas Stanley (c.1433–1504), contrived to stand on whichever side was in the ascendant. He commanded powerful forces, which were needed by whomever was king, to secure the North West, a strategic area, which Stanley managed to preserve from the worst kind of destruction during the conflict, earning his people's gratitude. He effectively put Henry Tudor on the throne by refusing to participate in the Battle of Bosworth, at which he was present as a notional ally of Richard III. He was married to Henry Tudor's mother, who on becoming Henry VII, created Stanley, Earl of Derby. For these and other detail see *ODNB* article by Michael Bennett.

they saw in the countries around them. These it should be said were the views of John Meyrick who was bishop of Sodor and Man, which meant that in theory he was bishop of much reformed Man but also the trouble makers who lived in the Western Isles, since that is where Sodor lay. Man had its own extraordinary, peculiar legal system, and method of execution.<sup>157</sup>

Man nonetheless was now within the colonising ambience of the English.

The Farne Island off the coast of Northumberland on the east coast of England is of much less strategic significance than Man, being nowadays another of those groups of beautiful small islands famous as the haunts of birds. Camden however gives it symbolic value by recalling Bede's (672/3–735) life of Cuthbert (635–687). Cuthbert was the patron saint of the northern English and Bede the first English historian. Camden quotes from Bede in a glancing way as he hurries on his journey round Britain, recalling Cuthbert's *imperium* there, the city he erected, and the amazing house he built to concentrate his mind on heaven. If Camden's reader had been induced to return to Bede's text, as some no doubt were, Bede tells us much more that is pertinent to the present theme. After a training in the solitary spiritual life on Lindisfarne, Cuthbert went to live on the Farne island, which is described as a remote island towards the east, enclosed by the deep and limitless ocean on all sides ("ad Eurum secreta, et hinc altissimo, et inde infinito clauditur oceano"), but not as remote as Bede paints it. No one before Cuthbert, this servant of the Lord, had had the power to live there as a *colonus*. He had to rout the *phantasias daemonum* who lived there. These devils are then described as tyrants, which might remind readers of Gildas of the tyrants who had destroyed Britain. This soldier of Christ, when he had

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<sup>157</sup> C 839 H *British Islands* 204–205. Meyrick derives from Maurice. The Welsh form of the name is Meurig and the most common, more anglicised, variant on the name is Morris. The Welsh are portrayed by their Elizabethan contemporaries as being too interested in their ancestry. Consequently we know that John Meyrick (1537/8–1599) was the illegitimate son of Owen ap Hugh ap Meyrick of Bodorgan, Anglesey, and Gwenllian, daughter of Evan of Penrhyndeudraeth, Merioneth. Anglesey was along the old sea routes, the island next to Man, so when he was appointed to the bishop of Sodor and Man, he might be already have been familiar with Man, though Sodor deep in Scottish Catholic territory posed different problems. Stephen Wright in his *ODNB* articles gives us the invaluable information that Meyrick sent Camden his account of Man in 1585 and that it had been written as a rebuttal of an attack made in Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England* that the people of Man were primitive and exploited by the Earl of Derby. It gives us an indication of how Camden might have sometimes flattered powerful men in the provinces. Meyrick was no ordinary Welshman, having been educated at Winchester School and New College Oxford, both elite institutions. This and the spelling of his name are an indication of the ongoing anglicisation of the Welsh.

overcome the army of the tyrants, was made sole ruler of the land to which he had come, and he founded a city suitable for his imperial rule and erected the houses which were perfectly appropriate for this city (“miles Christi, ut devicta tyrannorum acie monarchus terræ, quam adierat, factus est, condidit civitatem suo aptam imperio, et domos in hac æque civitati congruas erexit”). The city was in fact a monastery, which means to say that a well run monastery could have civic virtues, which Cuthbert, this ancient Anglo-Saxon saint, had in abundance. Nonetheless he was a monk and there was a round building where he could withdraw from this world, with walls which prevented him from looking out and being corrupted by the lasciviousness of his eyes and of his thoughts, so that he were forced to look heavenwards (“quatenus ad cohibendam oculorum simul et cogitatum lasciviam, ad erigendam in superna desideria totam mentis intentionem, pius incola nil de sua mansione præter cælum posset intueri”).<sup>158</sup> This last is the section which Bede, a respecter of early monasticism, quotes in full, but it is mere part of a more expansive tale.

Orkney which had only come into possession of the Scottish nation in recent times, and was of strategic importance, was given serious historical and geographical treatment.<sup>159</sup> Sometimes simple chorography is not enough. Orkney is on the northern approaches, and a key to the defence of Britain. The western approaches, where Ireland was thought of as British, was well defined and had been guarded, but in the north was a vast sea, which had in recent times been dominated by the Scandinavians, an important route to new worlds. In geographical mythology Ultima Thule had been the limit of the known world in the north. In the 1590 edition by long argument Camden claims to show that Thule was the Shetlands,<sup>160</sup> again islands which had recently come into Scottish possession, and therefore metaphorically peoples of Britain commanded the northern limits of the known world.<sup>161</sup> In 1607 we find the same set of arguments but not the same determination to press the claim. Further north than Shetland was, according to Plutarch, a British isle, clearly in a sea of ice, where Cronos, that is Saturn, lay imprisoned in his sleep.<sup>162</sup> Camden suggests that this was emblematic for an island with concealed mineral wealth, release of which, we might extrapolate, would usher in a golden Age. There also was the Isle of the Dead to which

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<sup>158</sup> C 851–852 H *British Islands* 220–221. I quote from the Latin of Bede which Camden uses. The passages are from chapter 17 of the life. I am grateful to the Online Library of Liberty at <http://oll.libertyfund.org> for being able to find a Latin text of this life.

<sup>159</sup> C 848–850 H *British Islands* 216–217.

<sup>160</sup> Camden 1590, 745–746.

<sup>161</sup> C 849–850 H *British Islands* 217–218.

<sup>162</sup> C 851 H *British Islands* 220.

British seamen conveyed the souls of the dead.<sup>163</sup> As he came down the eastern side of Britain Camden was short of islands, so he gently fingers other people's islands, some, as he says, obviously belonging to the Danes, but others, as he gets nearer the launching points of the ancient Anglo-Saxons, were almost British. He spends an inordinate amount of time trying to deduce what a ruin called the Huis te Britten meant, and clearly he is mentally trying to gain a foothold in Europe near the Rhine.<sup>164</sup> The English famously in Elizabeth's time tried to creep back into France and they spent a long time fighting in Brittany on the behalf of French Protestant interest. The great success story was the Channel Islands, and Camden devotes more space to them in the 1607 edition. They guarded Britain just a few miles from the French coast. They are described as stretching out by the French shore, *praetentae*.<sup>165</sup> The Roman fortresses which had protected the civilised British in the Roman conquest of Britain, and which had developed sometimes into cities, were called *praetenturae*. Camden's chorographical description of these islands make them exemplary islands, the Phaeacia of his *Odyssey*. Guernsey has a special dispensation, a place where the enemy, French and others, are allowed to trade even during the heat of war.<sup>166</sup>

From the Channel islands Camden bends his course back towards the British mainland, to Cornwall, from where the chorography of the *Britannia* had begun, and passes on from Cornwall, appropriately to the Scillies, which he suggests are the Cassiterides, or Tin Islands, the lure which brought first the Phoenicians, or as described by Avienus the men of Tarshish, colonists of the Carthaginians, to Britain, followed eventually by the Romans. It is perhaps the place where the older civilisations became aware of Britain. The island men themselves are described by Avienus as great traders, who amazingly sailed the vast oceans in boats of leather, the British coracle, the Irish corragh. There was an image of them as simple folk dressed in long black cloaks, who did not use money, but traded by exchange of goods, very religious and skilful in foretelling the future. When they felt the time had come to die, they flung themselves off rocks, Camden suggests because they were of the Druid persuasion.<sup>167</sup> Islands were clearly places where one could experience the supernatural. Camden friend of

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<sup>163</sup> C 849 H *British Ilands* 217–218.

<sup>164</sup> C 852–853 H *British Ilands* 221–222.

<sup>165</sup> C 854–856. H *British Ilands* 224–227.

<sup>166</sup> There is another aspect to this appetite for free trade. Elizabeth had to confess to the French ambassador that she had problems controlling her merchants; “id genus hominum suo lucro ubique velificari”, Camden 1612 *Ann* 1573, 235. Camden 1627 *Ann*. 1592, 53 tells of English merchants shipping ordnance and metals to the Spaniards at a time of war between England and Spain, such was their gaping avarice.

<sup>167</sup> C 858 H *British Ilands* 230.



Richard Hakluyt, would have learned about the shamans of insular America and the simple ways of the Amerindians.

Camden sails on from the Scillies, his horizon being the seas which stretch to the the Pyrenees, since Pomponius Mela, a Spaniard who should know the truth of these things, said that the Pyrenees jutted out into the British Ocean, which Camden interprets to mean that British naval power must have reached at least to the Spanish border.<sup>168</sup> In the 1590 edition the introductory section on the *Oceanicus Britannicus* is undeveloped, without its separate heading and there is no mention of Mela,<sup>169</sup> whereas in the 1607 there is also much more on the commodities of the British Ocean especially on its pearls, which make it seem a rival to the Indies. He sails towards his Spanish mark, passes Ussant which had indeed been in waters which were once British, said in ancient times to have been populated by Bacchantes, vowed to perpetual virginity, enchantresses able to control the sea and its elements, to turn themselves into the shapes of any creatures, to heal any maladies and foresee the future, in their celebrations superior Bacchantes to the Bacchantes of the Far East who danced with Lyaeus near the Ganges. Other neighbouring islands were inhabited by the Veneti, the Gallic race, said to be related to the Venetians. The Veneti had inhabited what was later known as Little Britain, and with technically advanced ships had fought Caesar on the sea.<sup>170</sup> Camden finally comes to rest at the island of Oleron in the Gulf of Aquitaine, which in the time when the kings of England were the dukes of Aquitaine, attained such a distinction for its naval science and achievements, that in 1266 laws were passed here, by which these seas were governed, as effectively as the ancient Mediterranean by the laws of Rhodes, a vision for the British,<sup>171</sup> later effectively promoted by John Selden, antiquarian and lawyer, Camden's associate, in his *Mare Clausum*. His chorographical journey accomplished, like a sailor who on escaping shipwreck fulfills his vows to Neptune, Camden, the good Roman, the interpreter of inscriptions, makes his dedication to DEO OPTIMO MAXIMO ET VENERANDAE ANTIQUITATI, a politic SOLI DEO GRATIA being added after the end of his work.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> C 712 H *Oceanus Britannicus* 60.

<sup>169</sup> Camden 1590, 675–676.

<sup>170</sup> C 858–859 H *British Islands* 231–232.

<sup>171</sup> C 859–860 H *British Islands* 232.

<sup>172</sup> Holland Christianises *Deo Optimo Maximo* by translating “Almighty and Most Gracious God”.

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