The *xxuiii ciuitates brittannię* of the *Historia Brittonum*: Antiquarian Speculation in Early Medieval Wales

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Introduction

It is more than three quarters of a century since a full assessment of the list of *ciuitates* comprising Chapter 66a of the *Historia Brittonum* was last undertaken (Jackson 1938) and it might be thought that there is little left to be said about it. Indeed, most modern commentators seem to share Haverfield's (1924, 293) view that "it has had a long history which it did not deserve, and has wasted the time of many men" and consequently either ignore it or regard it with considerable suspicion. Scepticism regarding the nature of the information it purports to impart is unsurprising since it is clear that, whatever else it might be, it is not a list of the *ciuitates* of Roman Britain (Haverfield 1924, 290); nor, for that matter, is it a list of the urban centres—such as they were—of early ninth-century Britain, the time of the *Historia Brittonum*'s composition (Dumville 1974, 445; Higham 2002, 148).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the list in the light of recent research into the composition of the *Historia Brittonum*. The main thrust of this research has been to show that the *Historia* is the product of careful literary composition, far from being a badly thrown-together "heap" of poorly digested source materials claimed by some of its more enthusiastic promoters (e.g. J. N. L. Myers (1986, 16), John Morris (1980, 1 ff.), Leslie Alcock (1971, 32) etc.). Indeed, the view that it is little more than a compilation of earlier documents rested on the preface ascribed to one Nennius, now known to be spurious and a late addition to a text with a complex history (Dumville 1976, 89).

The current consensus is that the *Historia Brittonum* is a purposefully constructed work of interpretive history, composed using admittedly inadequate sources by an anonymous writer who was perhaps not up to the task he set himself. It aims to present a history of Britain from its first settlers up to the sixth century, where it breaks off suddenly; the section detailing Anglo-Saxon genealogies intermixed with a heavily abbreviated history of Northumbria from the later sixth to later seventh centuries appears to have been a late addition to the text. Although it is found in the Harleian recension of the text, it is absent from most manuscripts. In those places where the *Historia* can be compared with better sources, the author's methods are thrown into unflattering light: where he does not deliberately distort his source to fit with his muddled ideas about British history (as in his account of the Roman period and especially of Magnus Maximus), he seems to misunderstand it. How far this is a result of his own inadequacies as an historian and how far it reflects the poverty of the source material available to him remains a matter for debate.

His technique for combining sources is illustrated in §§31-48 of Mommsen's (1894) edition. Here, two separate sources—one dealing with Saint Germanus and his relationship with Vortigern, the other dealing with Hengest and his relationship with Vortigern—have been combined into a rather incoherent narrative. Neither appears to contain anything other than legendary or folkloric material, but the author's weaving together of the different elements ought to leave us in no doubt about his literary

abilities. At the same time, it displays his desire to include all the information available to him, even where it contradicts statements made a few sentences earlier.

On the face of it, then, this list is of no practical use or interest to the historian or archaeologist in investigating the Roman past. Before accepting this conclusion too readily, we may note the importance of Jackson's (1938, 48) observation that the second name on the list, *Cair Guintguic*, derives from a form such as **U̯entoṷiciọ-*. This form presupposes a colloquial British Latin form such as **U̯entouicium* not otherwise recorded for one of the towns named *Venta* in more 'respectable' sources. The list therefore appears to enshrine some genuinely interesting material about Romano-British placenames, albeit in a debased form. Is it perhaps worth examining it in greater detail than Jackson decided to do? That is the aim of the present paper. Furthermore, some of the names, such as *Cair Urnach*, appear to relate to folk tales that had not, for the most part, been recorded as early as the ninth century. This means that there may be important conclusions for folklorists about the dates and origins of some medieval Welsh tales. Other names, such as *Cair Custeint*, may also be early medieval learned speculation about what were essentially archaeological monuments in the landscape. In this case, they may be able to give us pointers about how a scholar in early ninth-century Wales understood and wished to portray the Roman past.

The textual tradition of the Historia Brittonum
More than forty manuscripts of the *Historia Brittonum* are known, which contain a bewildering number of different versions of the text. Such is the degree of variability in the textual tradition that John Koch has suggested that "over much of its early development, *Historia Brittonum* had the character of a scholar's 'workbook', a miscellany of excerpts and notes" (Koch 1997, cxxvii). This may be an exaggeration, but it neatly explains the lack of reverence attached to the *ipsissima verba* of the original author. This does not help the modern scholar, of course, as no edition published to date has attempted to reconstruct the state of the text as first conceived.

The printed edition most widely used by historians is that of Theodor Mommsen, part of the nineteenth-century *Monumenta Germaniae Historia* project (Mommsen 1894). His text was based on the version in British Library MS Harley 3859 but has been criticised for the labyrinthine complexity of its critical apparatus. This complexity is a consequence of Mommsen's attempt to represent all the different versions of the text in a single edition; David Dumville's promised edition of the variant recensions—ten in all—stalled after the publication of Volume 3 (the 'Vatican' recension), the only volume so far published (Dumville 1985). A diplomatic edition of the version of the list of *civitates* in BL MS Harley 3859 was printed by Egerton Phillimore (1888, 183) but for the remainder of the versions we are dependent on Mommsen and other printed versions.

A second widely used edition of the text is that produced by John Morris as part of the source material for his widely criticised *The Age of Arthur* (Morris 1973; for a recent summary of criticisms, see Halsall 2013, 7-9). Although his edition remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1977, it was based on that of Edmond Faral (1929), also based on BL MS Harley 3859, with additions taken from Mommsen (Morris 1980, Introductory Note). Morris inserts misleading subheadings (in both the translation and the Latin text) that have no manuscript authority and inserts late glosses as if part of the original. Unfortunately, this unreliable version remains popular because it has been in print continuously since 1980, is inexpensive and contains an English translation.

Few commentators on the text have given reasons for preferring the version of the text contained in BL MS Harley 3859. It appears to have become regarded as the

most important version because it is the earliest surviving complete manuscript of the text and it is part of the only recension to contain the genealogies of the Anglos-Saxon Kings and the Northern History (Tolstoy 1961, 118; Dumville 1994, 406). However, it is probable that the mention of Saxon genealogies as a source in the spurious Nennian preface has influenced this view; it is clear that the version falsely attributed to Nennius was based on an enlargement of the Harleian recension (Clancy 2000, 89). However, the relationship of the Harleian recension, the tradition of which BL MS Harley 3859 is the best representative, to the other principal versions (pseudo-Gildas, Vatican and Chartres) and the conflated texts (the Sawley and Prise recensions) has not been explored fully. An early critique of the view that the Harleian recension is primary, suggesting that the Chartres recension provides a text closer to the archetype (Newell 1905, 627 ff) has never been rebutted and appears to have been largely ignored in subsequent studies.

Examination of Mommsen's critical apparatus shows the close relationships between the Harleian, pseudo-Gildas, pseudo-Nennius and Sawley recensions of the text. It also shows that the Vatican and Chartres recensions, while very different from the Harleian and its relatives, are themselves closely related. It is evident that although an early redactor who produced an ancestor of the Vatican recension made large changes in vocabulary to the *Historia* (largely to make its highly individual Latin more elegant) and shifted the list of *xxuiii ciuitates* to a position earlier in the text, he occasionally retained readings that were superior to the ancestor of the Harleian recension and its relatives.

The chronological preface, which allows the archetype of the Harleian and related recensions to be dated to the fourth year of Merfyn Frych (King of Gwynedd 825-844), is not found in the Vatican or Chartres recensions. The Vatican recension replaces it with a passage dating it to the fifth year of the Edmund (King of England 939-946), although it gives an AD date of 976, presumably inserted by a later copyist in that year. Nevertheless, it retains the *computus* of §16, which dates the original to 828×9. The Chartres recension lacks both this and the chronological introduction, instead containing a rambling passage near the end of §31 that refers to *libine abas iae*, Slébhene Abbot of Iona (752-767). This probably means that the *computus* of §16 is a secondary development in the history of the text. An additional complication is that the Vatican recension also lacks the second half of §16, beginning *initium compoti*, which establishes a date of 859 for the clause. This dates the ancestor of the Harleian and related recensions to 859 rather than 828×9; in other words, the Harleian belongs to a secondary tradition in the transmission of the text.

This lengthy discussion of the textual history of the text has been necessary to establish the dates of the variant versions and the neglected importance of the Vatican and Chartres recensions to a reconstruction of the archetype of the *Historia*. Heinrich Zimmer (1893, 22) suggested a similar solution, only to reject it. What this means is that there are two broad groups of texts: one, which includes the Harleian and its relatives, I have termed the 'Computistical' because of the *initium compoti* section at the end of §16; the other, consisting of the Chartres and Vatican recensions, I have termed the 'Silvian' because these two recensions contain an alternative genealogy of Silvius in §10, which is lost in the edition of 859, perhaps accidentally.

It is possible to reconstruct the original form of the text by comparing the readings of different manuscripts. This makes it clear that not only do variant recensions and their individual manuscripts exhibit the usual variations in orthography, but that they also exhibit variations in order; moreover, the Vatican Recension increases the number of *ciuitates* to thirty-three and relocates the list in the geographical introduction (Chapter 7 of Mommsen's (1894) edition, Section 3 in Dumville's (1985)). In all other recensions (other than the incomplete Chartres recension, which breaks off before this point), the

list of *ciuitates* is placed after the end of the *Historia* proper and before the *Mirabilia Brittannię*. Since Mommsen relied too heavily on Harleian MS 3859 for his edition, retaining inferior readings against the weight of other manuscripts, Table 1 corrects his forms by reference to other manuscripts, whilst retaining his order.

cair guorthigirn. cair guintguic. cair mincip. cair ligualid. cair meguaid. cair colun. cair ebrauc. cair custeint. cair caratauc. cair graut. cair maunguid. cair lundein. cair ceint. cair guirangon. cair peris. cair daun. cair legion. cair guricon. cair segeint cair legion guar uisc. cair guent. cair briton. cair lerion. cair draithou. cair pensa uel coit. cair urnach. cair celemion. cair luit coit.

TABLE 1: THE PRIMARY RECENSION OF THE *XXVIII CIUITATES BRITTANNIĘ*

The content of the list
As already noted, the list is not a list of Romano-British *ciuitates* or towns. We cannot know for certain if the author of the *Historia Brittonum* is repeating a list found elsewhere or if it is entirely his composition. Either way, it does not matter. The list provides an insight into how the Roman past might be portrayed in early ninth-century Wales: the writer, who was familiar with the work of Gildas, will have learned that Britain once had 28 *ciuitates*. This supplements the curious Roman history section that appears earlier in the work, at §§19-30. Here the author regards the Romans as external actors, who occasionally send Emperors to Britain and are occasionally defeated by the Britons. There is little sense of Britain as an island with a Roman government; the *ciuitates* are said to exist in the present day (§7: *in ea sunt uiginto octo ciuitates*; §66a: *hęc sunt nomina omnium ciuitatum quę sunt in tota britannia*), in contrast to Gildas's statement that *Britannia* was *bis denis bisque quaternis ciuitatibus… decorata*. As Gildas was the ultimate source of the author's belief that there were twenty-eight *ciuitates* in Britain, their placement in his present day is either use of an historical present (as noted by Newell 1905, 669)—which can be paralleled elsewhere in the text—or sloppiness on his part.

It is evident, though, that the list does contain the names of at least a few Romano-British places. Some of these were still inhabited settlements in the early ninth century, while some had long been deserted. By working back from the given Old Welsh form of a name to its hypothetical Brittonic original, it is possible to recognise names attested in Classical and Late Antique sources (including Gildas and Bede). These then allow suggested identifications with Roman or Romano-British sites. In other instances, the survival of the name into more recent times may also permit identification with known sites. In working back to hypothetical Brittonic forms, there are rules of phonology that allow this to be done with considerable confidence in most instances, although some remain difficult. It is taken as axiomatic that emendation should be admissible only if no plausible antecedent Brittonic form can be derived from the Old Welsh of the *Ur*-text.

Familiar Romano-British names
There are some very obvious names that require no real comment: *Cair Ligualid* derives from **Luguụalịo-*, a Roman town whose name survives as Carlisle (Jackson 1938, 46; Rivet & Smith 1979, 402) and which appears in *Marwnad Cunedda* as *Chaer Liwelid* (Koch 2013, 54); *Cair Ebrauc*, from **Eburaco-*, is York (Jackson 1938, 46; Rivet & Smith 1979, 355-7); *Cair Lundein*, from **Lundinịo-*, is London (Jackson 1938, 46; Rivet & Smith 1979, 396-7); *Cair Daun*, from **Danu-*, may be Doncaster or, perhaps, Jarrow on the River Don (Jackson 1938, 49; Rivet & Smith 1979, 329); *Cair Guricon*, from **Ụricono-*, must be

Romano-British *Viroconium*, Wroxeter (Jackson 1938, 47; Rivet & Smith 1979, 505-6); *Cair Segeint*, from **Segontio̯-*, is Caernarfon (Jackson 1938, 47; Rivet & Smith 1979, 454); *Cair Guent*, from **U̯enta*, is still Caerwent (Jackson 1938, 47; Rivet & Smith 1979, 493); and, finally, *Cair Luit Coit*, from **Letoceto-*, is Wall-by-Lichfield (Jackson 1938, 47; Rivet & Smith 1979, 387-8), which appears in *Marwnad Cynddylan* as *Caer Lwytgoed* (Koch 2013, 235-6). The four recognisably Romano-British names peculiar to the Vatican Recension will be considered below.

These eight more-or-less readily identifiable names are all of Roman or Romano-British sites, mostly famous towns and fortresses still part of the geography of sub-Roman and early medieval Britain. But what of *Cair Daun* and *Cair Guricon*? It is possible to argue that although the occupation of Wroxeter does not seem to have lasted after AD 600, *Cair Guricon* actually refers to The Wrekin, famous in legend by its association with the hero Cynddylan (Williams 1935, II.3 and II.4) and which also preserves the name. However, no such associations are known for Doncaster, which seems to have remained unimportant throughout the sub-Roman and early medieval period. On the other hand, if *Caer Daun* can be identified with Jarrow (as Rivet & Smith (1979, 220) tentatively propose for the *Dano* of *Notitia Dignitatum Occ 12* xl.20), the association would be with the Venerable Bede. These possibilities should encourage us to look seriously at other names not so easily identified and to be wary of necessarily adopting the most superficially 'obvious' identification.

Other evidently Brittonic names

Of those names not readily identifiable with those familiar from Classical sources, *Cair Guintguic* has already been mentioned as preserving a spoken Latin form. Since *Venta Silurum*, Caerwent, probably appears elsewhere in the list as *Cair Guent*, it is perhaps more likely that this name is either *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester) or *Venta Icenorum* (Caistor St Edmund). Winchester was known as *Caer Gwynt* in the medieval period (*Book of Taliesin* 15, 23), and it is possible that *Cair Guintguic* is this particular *Venta*, but it must not be assumed that the early desertion of *Venta Icenorum* altogether rules out Caistor. Although an identification with Wenlock, *Wininicas* in a tenth-century charter, is superficially attractive, Wenlock appears to derive from **u̯indo-*, 'white' etc., and **loco-*, 'place' (Gelling & Foxall 1990, 304-5). The first element cannot have given Old Welsh *guint* (Gelling 1989, 192).

Cair Mincip is clearly derived from the Latin technical term *municipium* (Jackson 1938, 50). *Verulamium*, St Alban's, is the only such town unequivocally attested in Britain (Niblett 2001, 66-7). Although Aurelius Victor (*Caesares* XX.27) refers to *Britanniae municipio, cui Eboraci nomen*, this may be nothing more than a colloquialism, since York had been promoted to the status of *colonia* by the time he was writing, if not actually by the time he was referring to, the death of Septimius Severus in 211. Moreover, as York appears elsewhere in the list as *Cair Ebrauc*, it may not be the *municipium* in question here. It has been conjectured that certain other towns also received municipal status, notably Cirencester, Leicester, Wroxeter and Canterbury, all of which lack tribal epithets in the Antonine Itinerary, exactly as would be expected had such a promotion indeed taken place (Frere 1987, 194). With such a range of potential identifications, it is impossible to make a positive identification: Wroxeter and Canterbury both unquestionably appear under other names in the list (*Cair Guricon* and *Cair Ceint* respectively), while Leicester has sometimes been identified with *Cair Lerion* (a doubtful attribution) and the editor of the Vatican Recension seems not to have understood *Cair Mincip* to refer to Cirencester, as this was one of his additions to the text, as *Cair Ceri*. It is perhaps likely, though, that the usual identification with *Verulamium* is indeed correct.

Cair Colun similarly represents the Latin technical term *colonia* (Jackson 1938, 48), of which four examples are definitely known: Colchester, York, Lincoln and Gloucester. We may tentatively discount York for appearing under its Romano-British form, and as Gloucester is an addition to the Vatican Recension as well as occurring elsewhere in the *Historia Brittonum* as *Cair Gloiu*, it too may be dismissed provisionally. This argument cannot be pressed too far, though, as it is impossible to know whether or not the author of the *Historia Brittonum* would have recognised this. Colchester is a much more likely identification than Lincoln (*pace* Jackson 1938, 48) because not only does it appear in the Antonine Itinerary as *Colonia*, but also because the modern name is derived from the Roman title rather than its Brittonic name, *Camulodunum* (Rivet & Smith 1979, 312-3). This suggests that the earliest speakers of Old English discovered its name to be *Colonia*. Furthermore, the modern placename Lincoln is derived from the *Lindocolina ciuitas* of Bede (*Historia Ecclesiastica* II.16), itself from a colloquial British Latin form **Lindocolonia* (Jackson 1953, 247; Rivet & Smith 1979, 393). Here, the element **lindo-* survived into the Old English placename and we might expect it also to have survived in a putative Old Welsh form of the name, if such ever developed.

Cair Ceint is an interesting name; it is clearly for Canterbury (Jackson 1938, 46), the modern Welsh *Caer Gaint*. However, it does not appear to derive from the *ciuitas* name, which can be shown to have been *Ciuitas Cantiacorum* (Rivet & Smith 1979, 299); it is easier to derive *Ceint* from the name of the region, *Cantium*. If it represents the genuine survival of a colloquial Romano-British form and is not a post-Roman coining, then it may be for a British Latin **Cantii*; it cannot, however, be compared with the names *Icinos* or **Reginos* (both attested in the Antonine Itinerary 474$_6$ and 477$_{10}$), which employ *ciuitas*-names in place of town names. This was a common Gallo-Roman practice, which may have been more widespread in Britain than our limited sources suggest.

Cair Legion and *Cair Legion guar Uisc* both derive from a Latin **Castra Legionis*: the former is Bede's *Ciuitas Legionum... a Brettonibus autem rectius Carlegion appellatur* (*Historia Ecclesiastica* II.2), the modern Chester (Jackson 1938, 47). The latter is the modern Caerleon (Welsh Caerlleon ar Wysg: Jackson 1938, 47); *guar Uisc* derives from a Brittonic **ụor Isca*, 'on Usk'. *Isca* was the official name of Caerleon in the Classical sources. Gildas knows one of these places as *Legionum Urbs*, as does Bede following him. Although later writers, following Geoffrey of Monmouth (*Historia Regum Britannię* III.10), identify it as Caerleon, this is not necessarily correct. *Urbs* is presumably a stylish substitution by Gildas for an original **Castra* or **Ciuitas*: urbs appears not to have been a spoken form in Late Latin, as it does not have descendants in Romance (Grandgent 1907, 9) apart in references to Rome, a presumably ecclesiastical usage.

A further point that is often overlooked is that Gildas's form has plural legions – 'City of the Legions' – whereas the Welsh forms are singular – 'Fort of the Legion'. P. J. C. Field has suggested that this plural form is significant and rules out an identification with Chester or Caerleon, preferring to identify it with York (Field 1999), although it should be pointed out that Chester was consecutively the base of two legions (*II Adiutrix* and *XX Valeria Victrix*), making it a possible identification. Whatever the merits or otherwise of Field's arguments about the *Legionum Urbs* of Gildas, this does not allow us to identify the *Cair Legion* of the *Historia Brittonum* with York for the same reasons that York is unlikely to be *Cair Mincip* or *Cair Colun*.

Places named after real or legendary characters
Having exhausted those names with Latin or Brittonic antecedents recognisable in Classical sources, there are others in the list that can be identified by reference to sources of early medieval date. The first name, *Cair Guorthigirn*, falls into this class; in *Historia*

Brittonum §42, *Gwrtheyrn peruenit usque ad regionem quę uocatur guenesi et urbem ibi ędificauit quę uocatur suo nomine cair guorthigirn* and later, in Chapter 47, *guorthigirnus usque ad arcem guorthigirni (quem ędificauit et nomen suum imposuerat atque est in regione demetorum iuxta flument tebi) ignomine abscessit.* Of a number of Welsh hillforts today named after Vortigern, Craig Gwrtheyrn near Llandysul best fits the data supplied by the *Historia Brittonum* as being both in Dyfed and close to Afon Teifi.

The name must be of post-Roman date, commemorating a character of fifth-century history (or, at least, pseudohistory). *Cair Guorangon* further down the list also belongs to a less certainly historical fifth-century character: in *Historia Brittonum* §37, Gwrtheyrn gives Kent to Hengist and Horsa *guoirancgono regnante in cantia.* The form of the name in the list of *civitates* seems to be better than that of the text, deriving from a Brittonic **Uor̯anconos*; the spelling of the name is not altogether stable in the textual traditions of the *Historia Brittonum*, but *Cair Guorangon* is closest to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Gorangonus* (*Historia Regum Britannię* VI.12). The name is probably intended to refer to Canterbury or, possibly, Rochester if we discount the former on the grounds that it has already been named; on the other hand, as the name looks suspiciously like an antiquarian invention, this cannot be conclusive. If these names were added to the list by the author if the *Historia Brittonum*, then he has either forgotten his account of Roman and post-Roman history or is aware of the contradiction and is not bothered by it.

Three other names in the list are derived from personal names: *Cair Custeint* from the Latin Constantius, *Cair Caratauc* from a common Brittonic name spelt in Latin sources as Caratacus, and *Cair Urnach* from the name of the giant *Wrnach* of *Kulhwch ac Olwen*, derived from a Brittonic **Arnacos*. Like the two previous names, they seem to belong to a hazy world of legend and may not admit of ready identification, although Sir John Rhŷs (*apud* Haverfield 1924, 290) speculated that *Cair Urnach* lay in Snowdonia, for what that is worth.

The first name may be connected with the curious tale in *Historia Brittonum* §25 of *constantius constantini magni filius*, whose tomb was to be seen near *cair segeint, ut littere quę sunt in lapide tumuli ostendunt.* The author continues to explain how Constantius set gold, silver and bronze into the pavement there so that no resident should ever remain a pauper. This appears to be part of a folkloric tale, in which the name *Cair Custeint* was used as an alternative for *Cair Segeint.* It may never have been in current use as a placename, but would nonetheless have been familiar to those who knew the tale.

The eponymous Caratauc of the *Cair* cannot be the Coroticus to whom St Patrick addressed his letter of reproach (*Epistola* §2, §12, §19 and §21) and whom Muirchu identifies as *Coirthech regem Aloo* (*Vita Patricii* §29), as this is a different name from Caratacus. More promisingly, there are several hillforts that still bear the name *Caer Caradoc*, any one of which might be equated with this *Cair Caratauc.* There is Caer Caradoc near Church Stretton, Shropshire, Caer Caradog in Llafihangel Glyn Mawr, Denbighshire, and Caradoc Court in Herefordshire. Koch (2013, 168) makes a good case for identifying the *Caer Caradoc Vre* of *Moliant Cadwallon* with this last site, which may be the one intended by the author of the *Historia Brittonum.*

Finally, *Cair Urnach*, if it can be identified with the fort of *Vrnach/Wrnach Gawr* in *Kulhwch ac Olwen* lines 777-8, was "the greatest of forts in the world" (Jones & Jones 1974, 121); it may also be the *neuat Awarnach* of *Pa Gur?* line 39. Although this does not sound like a real place, other placenames in both texts belong to the real world, so it would be wrong to regard this as a purely folkloric name. However, it is not currently possible to suggest an identification for it, despite Rhŷs's conjecture.

This group of names shows that the author of the *Historia Brittonum* knew a stock of folkloric tales and possibly also heroic poetry that provided him with

placenames that he projected onto the Roman past. With *Cair Custeint*, the story that provided him with inspiration was set at the right time, but the others were less easily datable and suggest that he was guessing at the period in which they were set. There is a blending of historical periods that may upset modern sensibilities, but which was not an issue for our author.

The difficult residue

The remaining names all present problems of one kind or another and are perhaps corrupt. *Cair Meguaid* is obscure; Jackson (1938, 50) leaves it unexplained and no intelligible Brittonic from can be postulated for it, although something along the lines of **maṷadi̯o-*, with an initial element related to Breton *maw*, 'lively', is implied. Morris (1980, 40) identifies it with Lindisfarne, the *Medcaut* of the *Historia Brittonum* (§ 63 and 65); however, *Medcaut* derives from Latin *Medicata* (Breeze 2005, 188). The emendation is not easy even if we conjecture an intermediate form such as *<Metcaud>* to be involved and is best rejected; no other emendation suggests itself, although the element **maṷo-* suggests a river name.

    Cair Graut was emended as early as the twelfth century by Henry of Huntingdon to *Cair *Grant* (*Historia Anglorum* I.3) and identified with Cambridge, the pre-Norman *Grantebrycg* (Haverfield 1924, 292). Jackson (1938, 49) accepted this, although Asser 47 (Stevenson 1959, 49) mentions Cambridge without providing it was a Welsh name, his usual practice where such a name was known to him. It is always unsafe to argue *e silentio*, but the possibility that Henry's emendation owes more to local pride than to scholarship is not to be discounted. As a river name, Granta is of only dubious Brittonic etymology (although Ekwall (1928, 184) suggested that it might derive from a Celtic word related to Latin *gronna*, 'bog'). The name must therefore be left unexplained unless we accept Henry's identification.

    Cair Maunguid is less difficult as a form; Jackson (1938, 50) derives from Brittonic **Manoṷido-* meaning 'Bog Forest', which would be a placename form (with adjective preceding the noun) that could be older than the sixth century (Jackson 1953, 225). If taken at face value as a placename, it is conceivably of Romano-British (or earlier) origin, although it does not figure in any Classical source and cannot now be identified; the etymology of the name might suggest a location in the north or west of Britain, where bogs are more likely to be encountered than in the south and east. However, an easy emendation to *Cair *Manuguid* or **Managuid* would allow an identification with the *Vanawyt* of *Y Gododdin* line 35 (Koch 1997, 54). Koch identifies this Welsh legendary character Manawydan (Brittonic **Mannṷeti̯agnos*) with the Mandubracius whom Caesar names as the son of Immanṷenti̯us, King of the Trinoṷantes of south-eastern Britain, restored by Caesar in AD 54 (*de Bello Gallico* V.20, V.22). If accepted, *Cair *Managuid* might be a name for the king's putative capital (which can hardly have been *Camulodunon*, only founded a generation later, although our author will not have known this).

    Cair Peris, derived from a British **Parissi* by Jackson (1938, 50), is tentatively identified with Llanberis by Morris (1980, 40), following Haverfield (1924, 290). Peris figures as a personal name in *Bonedd y Saint* §41 (Bartrum 1966, 60), where a Saint Peris is described as a Cardinal of *Rhufain*, Rome, but the saint is otherwise unknown and not given a genealogy. He may thus be an abstraction from a pre-existing placename by a process of folk etymology. It is difficult to see how *Cair Peris* could have become Llanberis, rather than **Caerberis*, though, so the identification must remain possible, if unproven. There is probably no connection with the *Parisi* (from **pariso-*, 'commander' (Koch ed. 2006, 88)) of the East Riding of Yorkshire, though, as their name has a single -

s-, which would not give Old Welsh *Peris*: these may appear as *p(h)erym* in *Y Gododdin* line 862 (Koch 1997, 142).

Cair Briton exactly translates the Gaelic *Dún mBretan*, Dumbarton (Jackson 1938, 49), and may be a genuine alternative to the forms *Al Clut* and *Cair Glud*. Its status as a genuine Romano-British name or as a sub-Roman British Latin form (**Castra Brittonum*?) must remain doubtful, though, as occupation of the site appears to be post-Roman.

Cair Lerion has been thought to derive from a Brittonic **Lari̯ono-*, **Leri̯ono-* or **Lori̯ono-* of unknown meaning (Jackson 1938, 51); Morris (1980, 40) suggested an identification with Leicester, following Geoffrey of Monmouth *(Historia Regum Britannię* II.11, who gives *Kairleir*). The modern placename Leicester derives from a river name **Ligora* of unknown meaning with Old English *ceaster* (Jackson 1953, 459); in view of the lack of evidence for the development of Brittonic *-igo-* in the post-Roman period, it is possible that *Cair Lerion* may derive from a Brittonic **Ligori̯ono-*, a placename containing the river name. If this is Leicester, it suggests that a Brittonic form existed alongside the official Roman name of *Ratae Corieltauu̯orum*.

Cair Draithou is a puzzle; it is mentioned in *Vita Carantoci* §4 (Wade-Evans 1944, 145) and the same place is called *Din Tradui* in *Sanas Chormaic* (*Glossary* of Cormac mac Cuilenan; Stokes 1868, 111). According to the *Vita Carantoci*, the saint threw his portable altar into the sea, determined to follow it as it would lead him to where he should next preach. It washed up at the mouth of the River *Guellit* in the district of *Carrum/Carrou* (Carhampton, Somerset, where the parish church is dedicated to the saint), ruled by Cato and Arthur from *Dindraithou* (Dunning 2010, 69). The River *Guellit* is the River Willett, east of Carhampton (Orme 2000, 69). Although some have seen this as an indication that *Dindraithou* lay in the vicinity of Carhampton (e.g. Chadwick 1958, 122), this is not necessarily the case, although it was clearly somewhere in the south-western peninsula. Cormac states that *Din Tradui* was established by Crimthann *Srem* of Munster, whose *floruit* appears to have been around the middle of the sixth century. The Old Irish phrase means "triple-ditched fort" but no multivallate hillforts are recorded within ten kilometres of Carhampton; it is possible that an Old Welsh original has been rendered into a more recognisably Irish form. Kenneth Jackson suggested that an emendation *Din *Traithou*, 'the beaches', would assist an identification with *Din Tradui*, which he considered otherwise doubtful (Jackson 1938, 51). If the identification stands, then the author of the *Historia Brittonum* has again projected a post-Roman placename back into the Roman past.

Cair Pensa uel Coit also presents some difficulty. If emended **Cair Pensauel Coit* (although Jackson (1938, 49-50) suggested **Cair Pen Sauelcoit*), it can hardly be other than Penselwood, as recognised by Haverfield (1924, 290). However, Selwood is a purely English name, recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle s.a. 878 as *Sealwyda* and s.a. 894 as *Sealwuda*, meaning 'sallow wood' (Ekwall 1947, 412). Moreover, Asser (*Vita Ælfredi Regis* 55) gives it an Old Welsh name, *Coit Maur*, which may indicate that he was not aware of the name *Pensauel Coit* as an Old Welsh name for Selwood. It is quite possible that the names are not connected, after all: the initial element suggests a connection with Brittonic **penno-*, 'head', so an entirely Celtic name is not to be ruled out.

Finally, *Cair Celemion* may be emended **Cair Celeinion*, in which case it derives from **Colani̯ono-*, a tribal type name meaning 'people of the corpses' (Jackson 1948, 56), a remarkably vivid name. It may also be connected with the Κολανία/Κολάνικα of Ptolemy's *Geography* (II.3.7) and the *Colanica* of the Ravenna Cosmography (10754), which, despite the reservations of Rivet and Smith (1979, 311-12), appears to be a fort on the Antonine Wall, perhaps Castlecary rather than their suggestion of Camelon. The

unusual name may commemorate a long forgotten slaughter, perhaps a Roman victory over indigenous warriors or even the reverse, a local defeat of a Roman military unit. Assuming the identification to be correct, quite why an abandoned second-century Roman fort should be remembered in ninth-century Wales is not at all clear. It is possible that it was connected with now-lost traditional material relating to the Gododdin of this area or the *Gwyr y Gogledd* ('Men of the North') more generally, familiarising a placename that would otherwise have been obscure. Intriguingly, line 383 of *Y Gododdin* ends with the word *kelein*, **colanī*, which contains the same root (Koch 1997, 91).

The additions to the Vatican Recension

Possible (and in many cases even definite) identifications have been suggested for twenty-five of the twenty-eight names in the primary recension of the list and it remains to examine the five additions in the Vatican (or Edmundine) Recension of the text. It is possible that a copyist wrote xxxiii for xxviii at some point and a later writer sought five additional names to correct what he saw as an error (Haverfield 11924, 290-1); equally, it is possible that the addition was deliberate and reinforced the local interests of the redactor. The five names are *Cair Guorcoc*, *Cair Merdin*, *Cair Ceri*, *Cair Gloiu* and *Cair Teim*. The first is clearly a doublet of *Cair Guoricon*, with a spelling error; its position in the list (as will be explained below) reinforces this suggestion. *Cair Merdin* survives as Carmarthen (Welsh *Caerfyrddin* and Romano-British *Moridunum*); *Cair Ceri* is Cirencester, the Romano-British *Corinium Dobunnorum*, also found as *cairceri* in Asser (*Vita Ælfredi Regis* 57), although, as explained above, **Corinı̯o-* would be expected to give **Cerin*. *Cair Gloiu* derives from *Gleu̯um*, Gloucester, and appears in the same form elsewhere in the *Historia Brittonum* (§49 in Mommsen 1894). Finally, *Cair Teim* must be connected with the *Tamion* (for **Tami̯um*) of the Ravenna Cosmography 10828 and is to be identified with Cardiff, where the River Taff (Welsh *Taf*) is related to this name.

These additions point to an interest in South Wales and the southern Marches that is not in keeping with the original, shorter, version of the list, which dealt with all of Britain. They perhaps indicate a place of origin for the Vatican Recension or, more probably, of its immediate antecedents. This may have been the last Welsh revision of 875×925 identified by Dumville in the introduction to his edition (Dumville 1986, 54).

An attempt to map the places identified in the foregoing discussion shows that the author has managed a reasonable spread across the entire area of the Roman diocese, including places that were under Roman rule only in the late first and second centuries. This is perhaps an indication that he understood the geographical spread of Roman Britain. How far this reflects genuine historical knowledge is less clear though: the Picts still formed the principal kingdom north of the Forth-Clyde isthmus and he will have known from Gildas that they were the principal enemies of Rome in the north.

The map also shows very clearly the more restricted geographical view of the author of the Vatican Recension's source. His additions are concentrated in a small region of south Wales and Gloucestershire. Might this point to the origin of the text in a centre of learning in south-east Wales such as Llandaff, known for its antiquarian collection of charters?

Identified Roman sites
Possible Roman sites
Identified non-Roman sites
Possible non-Roman sites
Additions in the Vatican Recension

Cair Briton
Cair *Celeinion
Cair Daun
Cair Ligualid
Cair Ebrauc
Cair Daun
Cair Segeint
Cair Legion
Cair Luit Coit
Cair Guorcon
Cair Lerion
Cair Guintguic
Cair *Managuid ?
Cair Colun
Cair Guorthigirn
Cair Caratauc
Cair Gloiu
Cair Merdin
Cair Ceri
Cair Mincip
Cair Legion guar Uisc
Caer Guent
Cair Teim
Cair Lundein
Cair Ceint
Cair Draithou
Cair *Pensauel Coit
Cair Guintguic

0 km   200 km

FIGURE 1

triginta tres ciuitates:	*cair hebrauc*	*cair ceint*	*cair gurcoc*
cair guorthegern	*cair custeint*	*cair guorancgon*	*cair segeint*
cair guintruis	*cair merdin*	*cair peris*	*cair lion*
cair mencipit	*cair caratauc*	*cair ceri*	*cair gloiu*
cair luilid	*cair graut*	*cair daun*	*cair britoc*
cair meguaid	*cair mauiguid*	*cair ligion*	*cair guent*
cair collon	*cair londein*	*cair guorcon*	*cair lerion*
--			
cair draithou	*cair pensa uel coin*	*cair teim*	*cair urnahc*
cair celemion	*cair loit coit*	*hęc sunt nomina antiquarum ciuitatum*	

TABLE 2: THE *XXXIII CIUITATES*: SUGGESTED ORIGINAL ARRANGEMENT OF NAMES

Table 2 attempts to demonstrate graphically how the order of the names could have changed between the primary recension and the Vatican. The first twenty-seven names of the already-expanded list may have been written towards the bottom of one page in four vertical columns, while the remaining six were written horizontally across the top of the next page. In this hypothetical layout, *Cair Guoricon* was written twice in error, once at the bottom of column 3 and again at the top of column four. When this manuscript was used as a source, the copyist read the list as consisting not of vertical columns but of horizontal rows, so the duplication was not spotted and a further spelling error (one of at least eight) was introduced to the text. The inversion of the position of *Cair Guent* and *Cair Britoc* must already have been in the exemplar of the Recension.

The character and purpose of the list
The list is a collection of names without an evidently geographically ordered sequence and without apparent coherence in its choice of names. Whether it had any independent existence before the composition of the *Historia Brittonum* is impossible to determine; while it is clear that Dumville is correct to dismiss the 'heap' interpretation of the text (Dumville 1994, 421), he has failed to convince some that it was conceived as a synchronising text of the genre popular in early medieval Ireland (Field 2008, 6). Although the work is undoubtedly an attempt to provide a narrative history of the Britons since their first settlement in Britain through to the middle of the sixth century (and it is unclear why the author chose to stop at that point), he attempts few of the synchronisations with Biblical history that are characteristic of early medieval Irish scholars. Charles-Edwards has instead suggested that the work is a fusion between the genres of *historia gentis* and *historia ecclesiastica* (Charles-Edwards 1991, 21), closer to Bede's great *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. Indeed, Higham has suggested that the *Historia Brittonum* was specifically written as a rebuttal of Bede (Higham 2002, 123). To this extent, then, it is perhaps as much polemic as it is history.

There can be little doubt that the author's principal intention was to flesh out Gildas's bare *bis denis bisque quaternis ciuitatibus* with a list of twenty-eight names, which neither Gildas nor any other text available to him could supply. Elsewhere in the *Historia*, the author is keen to name places, including the sites of battles between the Britons and Julius Caesar in §§19-20 or the battles of Arthur in §56, which figure in no earlier sources. One may suspect that the author had a tendency to invent names he believed to be plausible or at least to use names he knew from a different context. His lack of reliable information about the Roman past led him to include names he ought to have known from his own history to belong to the post-Roman period.

Constructing a Roman past

The Roman past was remote from early medieval Wales. Its remains were visible in the crumbling walls of towns, fortresses, forts and villas; thanks to Gildas and Bede, brief accounts of its history were available, if not familiar, to scholars. These accounts were, in the first instance, polemical and, in the second, highly selective. Anyone, like our author, attempting to create a narrative of the period, would inevitably possess opinions shaped by these two earlier writers. The author of the *Historia Brittonum* viewed the Roman period as one of occasional visits by Roman armies and rebellions by troops stationed in Britain, whom he regards as Britons; this is a view that derives from Gildas.

It is not altogether clear why Gildas believed that there had been twenty-eight 'cities' in Roman Britain, if it were not his own invention. It is not even clear what he understood by the term *ciuitas*, although he regarded them as things that had ceased to exist by his own time. While a number of *ciuitates* survived as inhabited places into Gildas's lifetime and beyond—Wroxeter is the best known candidate, although other places also did (Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2014, 53-5)—it may be that he understood that their character and functions had changed irrevocably since the collapse of Roman rule in the early fifth century.

C. E. Stevens (1937) suggested that Gildas had seen, or at least knew of the existence of, a document similar to the *Notitia Galliarum* and derived the concept thence, whereas John Morris (cited in Winterbottom 1978, 148) suggested a connection with the πολείς of Ptolemy, who names fifty-eight in Britain, of which thirty-eight lie to the south of Hadrian's Wall. That Ptolemy's work could have been known in early sixth-century Britain is unlikely in the extreme, as Ptolemy's text appears to have remained unknown in western Christendom until the fifteenth century, while Gildas states unequivocally that he had no access to written documents from Britain (*scriptis patriae scriptorumue monimentis* (*de Excidio* 4)).

What may be altogether more probable is that he knew of an earlier ecclesiastical arrangement of bishops' sees. This could have been what Gregory the Great had in mind when determining that England, once converted, should be divided into two provinces, with Metropolitan sees at London and York, each with jurisdiction over twelve other sees (Stevens 1941, 534 *note* 4). Such a list could have been preserved in the papal archives in the expectation that Britain's loss to the empire was merely temporary. The places named as bishops' sees would presumably have included *Civitas* capitals and chartered towns, but probably not exclusively: the legionary fortresses of Caerleon and Chester (or their attached *canabae*) could also have had a sufficiently large Christian population to support a bishop, as may some settlements of lesser rank. The problem with this hypothesis is Gildas's explicit statement that he had no written sources from Britain: it might be rescued by suggesting that he viewed ecclesiastical documents as part of an imperial system, which he treats elsewhere as an external agent in British affairs.

As the concept of the *xxuiii ciuitates* derives ultimately from Gildas, it is reasonable to conclude that the author of the *Historia Brittonum* wanted to produce a list of ancient Roman towns, without access to any hypothetical list that may have been known to Gildas. He must therefore have sought out names of places associated with what were perceived to be Roman (or at least 'ancient') places of habitation. As we have seen, these included hillforts that were in use centuries before the Roman conquest and personal names borne by individuals of allegedly post-Roman date. Like a seventeenth-century antiquary, the author of the *Historia* had no means of dating ancient elements of the landscape: old, abandoned places that were clearly of artificial construction were all potential candidates for Roman *ciuitates*. This situation would not be remedied until the development of scientific archaeological methodologies in the nineteenth century.

The later history of the XXVIII ciuitates brittanniae

The enlarged (Vatican) version of the list was known to Henry of Huntingdon, although he cut it back to agree with the twenty-eight *ciuitates* demanded by the text of Gildas (Haverfield 1924, 291). He removed *Cair Guintruis*, *Cair Caratauc*, *Cair Mauiguid*, *Cair Pensa uel coin* and *Cair Guorcoc* (*Historia Anglorum* I.3), although his reasons for rejecting these five are unknown. Most of his attempts at identification were arbitrary and incorrect. The case of *Kair-Grant* has already been mentioned; a second example of his method is the transformation of *Cair Briton*, probably Dumbarton, to *Kair-Bristou*, enabling him to produce an identifiable name, Bristol. It almost goes without saying that although Bristol was a significant place in medieval England, it had not developed from an earlier, Roman town. A twenty-ninth name that has been introduced into the list, *Kair-Dorm*, is apparently his own antiquarian invention (Haverfield 1924, 292). It is a pseudo-Middle Welsh back-formation from the name *Dormeceastre*, Chesterton in Water Newton, where he states that Roman ruins were visible in his own day. This personal observation recalls those of the *Historia Brittonum*, which are particularly numerous in the *Mirabilia Brittannię* with which the work ends. The site of Chesterton is the Romano-British *Durobriuis* (Rivet & Smith 1979, 348), so Henry's Middle English form probably preserves part of the Brittonic original. The list as recorded and modified by Henry was copied by later medieval writers and was the source of the versions by which it was known until the Renaissance.

Geoffrey of Monmouth also used the list (Haverfield 1924, 293), as he did the whole of the *Historia Brittonum* as a quarry for the names of places, the names of characters and for plot details. He identified some places correctly (for instance, *Kaercolum* is identified with *Colecestria*, Colchester: HRB V.6), but others are mere guesswork and demonstrably wrong (for instance, the identification of *Kairluideoit* with Lincoln). It is likely that all of his identifications were based on guesswork rather than knowledge and that superficial resemblances were enough for him. Some of these resemblances were genuine because the Old Welsh names he used were closely related to the Middle English names he was familiar with; others were very poor misses.

The concept of thirty-three Roman cities in Britain is also to be found in the eighteenth-century forgery *De Sitû Brittaniæ* ascribed to Richard of Cirencester (Randall 1933, 56 wrongly states it to be a list of 92; Piggott 1986). There is no need to provide evidence for the imposture, since this is now generally accepted (although Richard Bagshaw (1979, 20) has presented a lone dissenting voice, at least with regard to the map), but the list retains some interest as the first attempt of modern times to relate the bald statement of Gildas (albeit via the expanded list of a late edition of the *Historia Brittonum*) to a more genuinely Roman past. Bertram achieved this by using a system of urban classification lifted straight from Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis*. As the text of the *de Sitû Brittaniæ* is no longer familiar even to specialists, it is reproduced here as Table 3, with suggested identifications based largely on the spurious *Diaphragmata* devised by Bertram.

Text	Identification	*Diaphragmata* reference
Fuerunt olim apud Brittones XCII urbes, earum verò celebriores et præ reliquis conspicuæ XXXIII.		
Municipia scilicet II,		
Verolamium	St Alban's	Iter I
et Eboracum	York	Itinera IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, XVII, XVIII
viiii Coloniæ sc'		
Londinium Augusta	London	Itinera I, III, XII, XV, XVII
Camulodunum Geminæ Martiæ	Colchester	Itinera III
Rhutupis …	Richborough	Itinera I, XV
Thermæ Aquæ Solis	Bath	Itinera XI, XII
Isca Secunda	Caerleon	Itinera XI, XIII, XIV
Deva Getica	Chester	Itinera I, VI
Glevum Claudia	Gloucester	Itinera X, XIV
Lindum …	Lincoln	Itinera III, IV, XIV, XVII
Camboricum …	Cambridge	Iter III
Et Civitates Latio jure donatæ X sc'		
Durnomagus	Water Newton	Iter XVII
Catarracton	Catterick	Itinera IV, V, VIII
Cambodunum	Slack?	Iter VI
Coccium	Blackrod?	Iter X
Lugubalia	Carlisle	Itinera VIII, IX, X
Ptoroton	Burghhead	Itinera IX, X
Victoria	Dalginross	Itinera IX, X
Theodosia	Dumbarton?	
Corinum	Cirencester	Iter X
Sorbiodunum	Old Sarum	Iter XVI
Deinde xii stipendiariæ minoresque momenti, scilicet:		
Venta Silurum	Caerwent	Iter XI
Venta Belgarum	Winchester	Iter XVI
Venta Icenorum	Caistor St Edmund	Iter III
Segontium	Caernarfon	Itinera I, II
Muridunum	Carmarthen	
Ragæ	Leicester	Iter XIV
Cantiopolis	Canterbury	Itinera I, XV
Durinum	Dorchester	Iter XVI
Isca	Exeter	Itinera X, XVI
Bremenium	High Rochester	Iter V
Vindonum	St Mary Bourne	Iter XV
et Durobrovæ	Rochester	Itinera I, XV

TABLE 3: THE *XXXIII URBES* OF 'RICHARD OF CIRENCESTER'

Such was the skill and artistry with which C. J. Bertram, the forger, concocted the work that it was a full seventy years before its spurious nature was even suspected and a further forty years after that before it was conclusively proven to be a forgery. Bertram's genius lay in telling the antiquaries of his day exactly what they most wanted to hear: he provided a literary justification and vindication of the hypotheses of Baxter, Camden, Horsley and others, while flattering his target, William Stukely. His work presents us with

an idealised view of Roman Britain in which Cambridge really ought to have been a *Colonia* named *Camboricum* and Dalginross a city with Latin Rights named *Victoria*. Bertram can be compared with Geoffrey of Monmouth and especially with the anonymous author of the *Historia Brittonum*, to whom he was a true if limited successor.

The importance of the XXVIII ciuitates brittannię

The names in the *Historia Brittonum* are a hodgepodge of genuine Romano-British names remembered long after the sites to which they referred were abandoned to posterity, some that remained conspicuous in the geography of early medieval Britain and others that never existed save in heroic tales but were believed in the ninth century to have flourished in the past. The real importance of the list is two-fold: first, it demonstrates that there was an antiquarian interest in the Roman past in ninth century Wales and goes some way towards showing what was believed about that past; secondly, the compiler of the list has preserved for us what may well have been the descendants of spoken forms of the Roman era unrecorded at the time but which continued to be spoken rather than written forms and thus underwent all the linguistic changes that transformed Brittonic into Old Welsh.

This gives us an insight into an aspect of the Roman past that no contemporary evidence is able to do, since even epigraphic evidence of Roman date is to a greater or lesser degree formalised by the very act of writing in Latin, however colloquial. Furthermore, it suggests that the Romano-British names preserved in classical sources were, in some cases at least, 'official' names, soon forgotten by the indigenous population when Latin ceased to be at all widespread as a language of everyday communication. John Koch (2013, 39 ff.) has presented a strong case for regarding *Marwnad Cunedda*, a poem found only in the *Llyfr Taliesin* of the fourteenth century and later copies, as a genuinely early fifth-century work. The poet shows a knowledge of the Roman past so different from and so much more accurate than that of the author of the *Historia Brittonum* that it underlines just how much information about Roman Britain was lost in the four centuries between the compositions of the two works. Not least, the author of *Marwnad Cunedda* has a clear understanding of the late Roman technical use of *ciuitas*: the word *kyfatot* in the text "is wholly intelligible as a direct but faulty modernization of **ciuataut* or **ciuatut*" and appears to refer to the Romano-British *ciuitates* of northern Britain (Koch 2013, 54).

Less than 150 years after the end of Roman rule, Gildas did not know the official name of Chester (or Caerleon) and uses a form *Legionum Urbs* that appears to be a Latinisation of the Primitive Welsh **Cair Legion*. Latin is unlikely to have been the first language of anything more than a tiny minority of the population, nor is it likely that a large proportion of the indigenous population was ever fluent in it except, perhaps in the *ciuitates*. Most people probably knew a little Latin, perhaps just enough to deal with officialdom and bureaucracy: the system of taxation and registration would have made this almost essential. Similarly, the survival of the name London from Brittonic **Londinjon* (via a later **Lundinjon*) rather than from *Augusta*, its official fourth-century name, can be contrasted with continental names, such as Augsburg, that do preserve these Latin honorifics. On the other hand, at least two names in the list (*Cair Mincip* and *Cair Colun*) derive from the Latin titles of two cities; in both these instances, if the identifications proposed here are correct, the titles were granted very soon after the Roman conquest and were without doubt the first examples of their classes in the province and may therefore have been regarded as the *municipium* and *colonia par excellence* from a very early date.

If the hypothesis that the concept of twenty-eight *ciuitates* derived from an ecclesiastical tradition was adopted by Gildas, who misunderstood this as the number of chartered towns is correct, his error had long-lasting consequences. The ninth-century author of the *Historia Brittonum* understood that these 'cities' had existed in the Roman past and then drew on his imperfect knowledge of that past to name these cities, some of which he took from folk-tales and some of which were no doubt still famous as places of ancient foundation. Some were still inhabited by small numbers of people, in the crumbling remains of their Roman masonry; others were impressive and empty but equally crumbling ruins. There is no reason to suppose that the list was intended to give the names of the Roman *ciuitates* in Britain; nor, indeed, that its anonymous compiler had any conception of what *ciuitas* actually meant to his fourth-century ancestors, in contrast to the author of *Marwnad Cunedda*. The author of the *Historia Brittonum* unwittingly misled—or, rather, distracted—those who wished to understand Roman Britain for more than a thousand years: no mean achievement for someone whose name remains unknown.

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