

EDINBURGH CASTLE RESEARCH



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THE EARLY-MEDIEVAL TEXTS



EDINBURGH CASTLE: THE EARLY-MEDIEVAL TEXTS

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INTRODUCTION

This report consists of a study of the written evidence and the historical background for Edinburgh Castle up to the 12th century AD. The intention is to supplement the archaeological investigations and scholarship already known about the site and its context, in order to gain a fuller picture of its history (while acknowledging that separating documentary and archaeological analysis is never completely possible). In addition, this study will highlight key aspects of the site's history and provide a description and analysis of current thinking, in order to inform decision-making relating to the presentation of Edinburgh Castle by Historic Environment Scotland.

The structure will be broadly chronological from the Roman period to the 12th century, with a large digression on the Welsh evidence, in particular Y Gododdin. The report ends with an analysis of whether particular early-medieval places can be identified as Edinburgh Castle, followed by a summary of the main conclusions.

EDINBURGH CASTLE AND LOTHIAN IN THE ROMAN PERIOD

The Roman Empire began to be militarily involved in the area surrounding the site of Edinburgh Castle from the late 1st century AD onwards, when Roman control was expanded up to and beyond the Firth of Forth in 70s and 80s.¹ This was, however, a temporary occupation, since the Romans retreated back to the line of what later became Hadrian's Wall. The Roman frontier in the following centuries varied, with advances to the Clyde–Forth line in the reigns of Antoninus Pius (138–61), when the Antonine Wall was constructed, and Septimius Severus (193–211).² However, forward stations and forts were maintained north of Hadrian's Wall, projecting Roman power and influence northwards through military and diplomatic means for most of the period up to AD 400.³

In the area of Lothian, Roman direct control was therefore mainly sporadic, with government of the region left to the British. Our evidence for which British tribe was dominant around Edinburgh Castle comes largely from the 'Geography' of Ptolemy, written at some point in the period AD 140–50, although the traditional interpretation of this text, that the Votadini tribe controlled the lands from Lothian to Hadrian's Wall, has been questioned by Alastair Strang.⁴ Strang's study attempts to rectify Ptolemy's rotation and movement of places, partly by arguing that Ptolemy employed a different latitude and longitude grid for much of Scotland than for England and Wales.

He discusses the three places located by Ptolemy in the lands of the Votadini: Curia, Alauna and Bremenium. In the main text, he uses the Scottish grid and rotation to locate Curia at Cramond, Bremenium at High Rochester (by implication), while Alauna's position in Fife was regarded as a mistake for Learchild in Northumberland.⁵ This article states that the Votadini occupied a large area, from Northumberland to Lothian, including Edinburgh.⁶ However, in his postscript, Strang argues that Curia and Alauna should not be included on the 'Scottish' grid, but on the grid for the rest of Britain, moving them 2 degrees longitude, making Alauna Learchild and Curia Corbridge.⁷ The result is that all the Votadini places are located in Northumberland, so it becomes doubtful whether Lothian was under Votadini control.⁸ This analysis could be correct, and could lead to further arguments regarding the medieval Gododdin and their medieval centre of Din Eidyn – for instance, that it was somewhere close to the Eden Water, a tributary of the Tweed in the Borders north of Kelso, rather than in Edinburgh.

However, Strang's argument is not conclusive. The article does not explain the reasoning behind the revised calculations fully, and the shift in calculations so that Alauna fits Learchild better is not necessarily justified. The identification with Learchild is also made by Rivet and Smith, for no stated reason, and they suggest as an alternative that it could simply be a confused repetition of the Alauna among the Dumnonii in Scotland also found in Ptolemy's text.⁹ They, however, may have made the Learchild suggestion because it is near the River Aln in Northumberland, which appears as Alaunus in Ptolemy.¹⁰ However, there were many usages of the element Alauna in Britain in ancient Roman sources, including for rivers, places, people, a tribe and deities, and there is no reason to think that these should be associated with rivers of the same name.¹¹ This means that the need for Strang's postscript recalculation is not clear, so the theory as stated is not proven.

Even if Strang is correct, this simply creates a geographical hole in our understanding for the mid-2nd century AD, but it is unlikely that the size and location of the power of the Votadini remained static in the following centuries. The Votadini tribe are next mentioned in the early-medieval period in events relating to the late 6th or 7th centuries, so there is a question about what the situation in Lothian was in the centuries following Ptolemy's account. In general there seems, from the written if not the archaeological evidence, to have been a consolidation of political units north of the Roman Empire.

Cassius Dio in the 3rd century, writing about the campaigns of Septimius Severus in the first decade of that century, states that the unconquered British tribes had combined into two groups: the Maeatae and the Caledones beyond them. The Maeatae gave their name to two places north and south of Stirling, Myot Hill and Dunmyat on the southern edge of the Ochils, and were active later in the medieval period, so they could potentially have incorporated the Votadini.¹² James Fraser has identified the Maeatae with Ptolemy's Dumnonii, who controlled the lands from the Clyde to Strathearn.¹³ Guy Halsall has made the sensible suggestion that groups like the Maeatae themselves could have been subsumed for periods into

different polities, depending on the political circumstances, so there is no reason why the same cannot have been the case for the Votadini.¹⁴

There are similar fluid possibilities for the ethnic situation of the area. According to the earliest Roman accounts, such as Tacitus's, all the inhabitants of Britain were Britons, although the term Caledonii was used for some people living north of the Forth. However, from the end of the 3rd century AD, the term Picti, probably a term meaning 'painted' coined by the Romans, is found in our sources for enemies of the Romans to the north. It is clear from texts, such as Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History' and the Irish chronicles, that at the end of the 7th century Pictish territory was confined north of the Forth, or at least no further south than the area around Stirling.

However, the situation earlier on is uncertain, and the tendency to back-project the later situation has been questioned by some scholars. Most notably, in a context in which scholars increasingly stress the fluid nature of identity, Fraser has suggested that the term Picti may only have been used by the people of northern Britain from the late 7th century onwards, when an overlordship by Fortriu was established north of the Forth after the battle of Dún Nechtáin in 685.¹⁵ Halsall, based on Roman sources describing those north of the empire simply as Picti, has suggested that in the late-Roman period the peoples of southern Scotland were all regarded as Picts, and that the power of Pictish confederacies like that of the 4th-century Dycalidones may have extended south to Hadrian's Wall.¹⁶

This theory is not as implausible as it may have seemed 50 years ago, because it is increasingly recognised that ethnic identities are changeable, and recent studies of the Pictish language indicate that it included a strong Brittonic element.¹⁷ Indeed, there is very little difference in terms of 'Pictish' place names north of the Forth, and 'British' place names to the south of that estuary, so there may have been little practical difference between those living north and south of the Forth.¹⁸ Halsall's view, while possible, does, however, rest on vague Roman statements lacking nuance about those north of the wall. It also places considerable faith in Gildas's accuracy, in a prologue section that contains a number of distortions to fit his text's purpose of showing how the past will be repeated if the Britons did not reform themselves.¹⁹ While these texts may reflect the perceptions of those south of Hadrian's Wall, they do not necessarily indicate the identities held by people in southern Scotland themselves. Whatever their ethnic identity, it is likely that the Votadini in some form continued up to the Anglo-Saxon conquest in the 7th century, since the name lived on.

THE SUB-ROMAN/LATE-ANTIQUÉ PERIOD (300–650)

When the Roman Empire ceased to control its British province c.410, it led to a collapse in the socio-economic as well as political order that must have had ramifications in the frontier zone to the north, which included Lothian. However, at this point, the written evidence for the area becomes virtually non-existent, so for the 5th century to the late 6th century we have largely to rely on the

archaeological evidence derived from sites such as the important hilltop site at Traprain Law. It is difficult to know whether the processes of political fragmentation, with the return of kingships based on civitates or pre-Roman polities, found inside the former province, were paralleled in the zone between Hadrian's Wall and the Firth of Forth. Certainly, the polity of Dumbarton Rock seems to have been ruled by kings by the late 6th century, if Adomnán's 'Life of St Columba' (written c.697) is correct.²⁰ It might be expected that pre-existing military power sources, like the political groupings north of the Wall, would have been able to take advantage of the power vacuum and lack of martial experience among the provincial population. Moreover, the economic collapse of the former province would have made the balance of resources more equal, even if it did diminish the wealth of the zone beyond the frontier by reducing the gains from trade, diplomatic gifts and plunder. So we might expect the rulers of an agriculturally rich area like Lothian to be able to take advantage of the situation, but unfortunately our evidence for this is very meagre.²¹

In the long run it was not Lothian, but those dominating further south who took advantage, forming the kingdom of Bernicia. This kingdom, while ruled by Anglo-Saxons by the late 6th century, may originally have been British, since the name is British – Berneich, meaning 'Gap-land' or 'Pass-land', perhaps relating to the Solway-Tyne gap.²² It may initially have been a minor region between the rivers Tyne and Tees, but by the late 6th century it also included power centres at Bamburgh (close to the later ecclesiastical centre at Lindisfarne) and Yeavering.²³ In the reign of Æthelfrith, Bernicia expanded rapidly, conquering British lands and Anglo-Saxon Deira in Yorkshire, creating what became by the end of the 7th century a single Northumbrian polity from the Humber to the Forth, incorporating the Gododdin, led by the Bernician dynasty.

While the situation in Lothian for much of this period is uncertain, what we do know is that the area of Lothian became Christianised, a process perhaps (but not certainly) indicated by long-cist burials in the area, but more certainly by the appearance of inscriptions with Christian formulae at locations like the Cat Stane and associated cemetery at Edinburgh Airport.²⁴ This, combined with the fact that the inhabitants of this area came to regard themselves as British, not Pictish, indicates that Lothian was highly receptive to cultural influence from the Romano-British zone.²⁵

One of the main sources of evidence for the Britishness of the area is Y Gododdin, the poems in Welsh about warriors in the warband of the Gododdin, a medieval form of the word Votadini. As this is an important, but problematic, potential source for Edinburgh Castle, I will discuss it later in more detail. The other evidence for Lothian being British comes from Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History' (finished in 731) and the Welsh *Historia Brittonum* (written in 829 or 830).²⁶ Bede, in his introductory description of Britain and Ireland's geography, resources and peoples, stated that the Britons inhabited the island up to the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde (including Dumbarton Rock) on the northern bank.²⁷ However, he also makes it clear that by the reign of the Ecgrith, King of

the Northumbrians (combining Bernicia and the Yorkshire-based kingdom of Deira, as well as British polities), Anglo-Saxon rule extended to the Firth of Forth, since Ecgrith made the monastery of Abercorn, just south of that estuary, the seat of the bishopric of the Picts in 681.²⁸

Historia Brittonum, written from a British perspective in 829/30 in Gwynedd in Wales, provides further, if sometimes unreliable, evidence. In its prehistoric section it provides an account of the various settlements of Britain, stating that the Britons once occupied all Britain until the Picts and Gaels took much of the north of the island.²⁹ Later, the text specifies that the northern boundary of British territory was along the wall built by the Emperor Septimius Severus (actually the Antonine Wall) from Kinnaird to Kirkintilloch and the Clyde estuary.³⁰

Unlike the 'Ecclesiastical History', however, *Historia Brittonum* discusses the period of Anglo-Saxon expansion in northern England and southern Scotland from the late 6th century to the late 7th century. Most pertinently, it describes a conflict probably in 655 between King Oswiu of Northumbria (642–71) and King Penda of Mercia (probably d. 655) in which Oswiu was forced by Penda at a place named Iudeu to offer what is called 'The Restitution of Iudeu' in order to make peace.³¹ The location of Iudeu is much debated, but Stirling or somewhere on the southern side of the Firth of Forth are the main options, so it is likely that Lothian had been conquered by then.³² However, this text does not state when exactly when this conquest took place.

There is also a source that may mention Edinburgh itself, the Irish chronicles. In an item datable to c.641, probably derived from an 'Iona Chronicle', there is *obessio Eitin*, 'the siege of Eten' (genitive Eitin).³³ This has often been interpreted as a record of the capture of Edinburgh, and Lothian by implication, from the Britons by the English, but that is very uncertain since none of the participants are mentioned.³⁴ The siege could have been an internal conflict among the Britons of Lothian, have been caused by aggression from the Picts, the Britons of Dumbarton Rock or elsewhere, or have taken place with Anglo-Saxons as the defenders, and it is not clear that the siege was successful. Given our lack of other contextual evidence for this period, we cannot come to a conclusion on this event. However, what it does indicate is that there was a place called 'Eten' (reconstructing a Gaelic nominative form from a genitive) or 'Eitin' in existence at this time to be besieged, which could have been Edinburgh.

Apart from this, there is very little other textual evidence for the nature of the British society in Lothian during this period, apart from *Y Gododdin*. This is not particularly surprising, given that written evidence is generally scarce for the period, surviving through various filters. In particular, the lack of interest in the British past of particular kingdoms among Anglo-Saxons like Bede, combined with the transformation of the elite culture in Lothian from British to English, meant that the chances of survival for documents is very slim. What survives does so because it was transmitted elsewhere, to British or Gaelic lands.

In summary, by c.641 there is evidence for a fortified site called Eten or Etin, probably a power centre before Lothian became dominated by English speakers, a takeover which had occurred by the 650s, if not earlier. Lothian had been British in terms of identity and language from Roman times. However, there is more that can be gained through understanding Y Gododdin better.

Y GODODDIN

Y Gododdin, 'The Gododdin', is a collection of poems or stanzas attributed to a poet called Aneirin praising warriors, either individually or collectively, who died heroically in battle.³⁵ Until very recently, the general scholarly opinion is that the stanzas were concerned with a battle at a place called Catraeth, which was attacked by warriors who had set off from Eidyn, potentially Edinburgh, in the land of the Gododdin. This view has been challenged recently, as will be discussed below. The type of poem in Y Gododdin, praising and mourning the dead, is called an elegy, a popular medieval form found in many European societies. In the typical stanza of Y Gododdin, a person of the elite cavalry of the Gododdin force is praised for valour, for killing many foes, for reciprocating the generosity of the leader of the Gododdin by fighting and dying for him. Scholars have traditionally described this type of poetry and world-view as 'heroic', comparing it with similar perceptions represented in poems such as the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf and the ancient Greek Iliad by Homer.³⁶ Y Gododdin, along with other poetry, some contemporary, some later, contains heroic depictions about the British 'Old North', Yr Hen Ogledd, involving the 'Men of the North', Gwŷr y Gogledd, in lands lost to the English.

The form of the stanzas in Y Gododdin vary, but they average about ten lines in length.³⁷ Usually, there is a fixed number of syllables per line, often nine or ten, but there are cases with four syllables, and there are some in which the number of syllables per line varies a bit.³⁸ The main stylistic feature is that the ends of lines rhyme, with either all the lines sharing the same rhyme, or there is a change in rhyme part of the way through or rhyming couplets.³⁹ Rhyme can also be found inside the line, often found just before a mid-line break, and in the first or second halves of the line. For instance, in the eighth stanza in A there is (with end-rhymes in capitals, internal rhymes in italics):⁴⁰

Gwyr a aeth Gatraeth, / oed fraeth eu llŪ,	'The men went to Catraeth, swift was their host,
glasved eu hancwyn / a gwenwyn vŪ;	the pale mead was their feast and it was their poison;
trychant trwy beiryant / eu cattaŪ,	three hundred fighting according to plan,
a gwedy elwch / tawelwch vŪ; ...	and after the jubilation [of battle] there was silence.'

Alliteration inside a single line is also frequent,⁴¹ along with allusive imagery, adding to the stylistic effect of the poetic rhymes, creating effects that are difficult to reproduce in English versions without making the translations move away from the exact meaning of the original. In addition to this are common refrains, such as *Gwyr a aeth Gatraeth*, 'men went to Catraeth', often found at the start of stanzas, with the last line usually containing the person being commemorated, producing a rhetorical effect called 'incremental repetition', in which a single idea is stated in a sequence of verses, but with the details varying.⁴²

The *Gododdin* poetry has been regarded, along with the contemporaneous poetry of Taliesin, as the earliest Welsh or Scottish poetry or vernacular poetry in Britain, because it is written in the Welsh language, and has usually been thought to have a core derived from the late 6th or early 7th century.⁴³ However, the complex and accomplished verses indicate that this was not a new development, but part of a bardic tradition that had been developing for a considerable period. It is, therefore, a potentially very rich source for Edinburgh Castle and its culture in the British period, but there are many difficulties and controversies that need to be discussed before it is possible to determine how it should be employed as evidence.

The overarching fact that creates problems when using *Y Gododdin* is that the poetry survives more than 600 years later than the people and actions it depicts. This means that there are issues of authenticity and change over time to be dealt with alongside the question of finding a suitable historical context. The poetry survives in a single manuscript, perhaps produced at the abbey of Strata Marcella in Powys or Aberconwy Abbey in Gwynedd, *Llyfr Aneirin* (the 'Book of Aneirin', Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Cardiff MS 2.81),⁴⁴ datable to c.1250 or the second half of the 13th century, accompanied by four other poems, called *gorchanau*.⁴⁵

The manuscript actually contains more than one version of the *Gododdin* stanzas, by two scribes, hands A and B, who had access to either two, or three (according to John Koch) versions of the collection.⁴⁶ The A hand wrote 88 verses and the four *gorchanau*, then the B hand added 42 more stanzas, although six pages have been cut off, so there may originally have been more.⁴⁷ The *gorchanau* are late additions, relating to people mentioned in the main *Gododdin* poems and to a certain *Adebon*,⁴⁸ so are of dubious antiquity and will not be considered further. A and B share 14 very similar stanzas and another five are partly the same, so much is unique to each version.⁴⁹ In addition, the B version itself has two very similar and four further partially the same stanzas, while the A text has one pair of very close verses and another partly similar one.⁵⁰ This indicates that both the A and B texts are themselves compilations of different versions, whether through oral transmission, as Kenneth Jackson suggested, or through multiple written sources being used.⁵¹ Koch argues that B should be divided into B.1 (B.1-23) and B.2 (B.24-42, with B.25 an addition from the B.1 tradition), but other scholars are generally more cautious.⁵²

These versions, while surviving in a 13th-century manuscript, are clearly older. Linguistically, the Welsh of the B text (especially the part called B.2 by Koch) is older than A. The former text was derived from a version in Old Welsh, the form of the language existing between the end of the 8th century and the end of the 11th century, although much of the wording has been updated to the Middle Welsh of the scribe's own time.⁵³ Thomas Charles-Edwards argues that the spelling 'may carry the B version back to c. 900'.⁵⁴ The text actually becomes strikingly more archaic in the last 19 stanzas of the B text, which is a major reason why some scholars think that hand B used two versions of Y Gododdin.⁵⁵ The A text, on the other hand, is largely found in a 12th-century form of Welsh, although there are mistakes due to the miscopying of an earlier Old Welsh text, so both A and B were not created for Llyfr Aneirin, but were clearly the product of centuries of written transmission.⁵⁶

This, however, still leaves a very long period between these Old Welsh ancestor-texts and subject matter's date. To bridge that, scholars such as Kenneth Jackson argued for oral transmission, with the poems recounted over centuries by bards, until they were later written down.⁵⁷ Arguments like this for oral transmission for long periods have fallen out of favour among literary scholars, who now are less likely to regard tales and poems as authentic survivals of ancient traditions and instead tend to interpret our surviving sources as literary creations reflecting later contexts; this is overall a much more sceptical approach.⁵⁸

For the Gododdin we are fortunate to have some evidence from added stanzas that there was an earlier period of textual development, although Charles-Edwards has suggested that some oral transmission, especially in the A version, may have also been involved.⁵⁹ The latest clear addition is an elegy about an Owain ap Marro, which is in later Old Welsh or early Middle Welsh and found only in the A text.⁶⁰ Earlier in the A text is Pais Dinogad, a lullaby by a mother to a child called Dinogad, out of place in the collection, but which has a reference to a place in Cumbria (Rhaeadr Derwennyd, probably the Lodore Cascade of the Derwentwater), while in both A and B there is a stanza about the attack by the Gaelic-speaking men of Kintyre on the kingdom of Dumbarton in c.643 as its subject.⁶¹ These indicate that Y Gododdin was kept for a period along with other northern British poems in Strathclyde and, for the A version, also perhaps Cumbria, before being transmitted to Wales.⁶² Indeed, it has been argued that it was in the 9th or 10th century in Wales that Y Gododdin started to receive its current form, perhaps with an emphasis on conflict between the Britons and the English, reflecting a tendency in Wales to view current affairs and history as a struggle for mastery over Britain between the native Britons and the English newcomers, as well as being part of a desire to connect Wales, and the dynasty of Gwynedd in particular, to the heroes of the British 'Old North'.⁶³ Whether that is the case is uncertain, but it is likely that there was a corpus of Gododdin poetry in existence to which other poetry could be added by the 10th century, probably much earlier.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the text as we have it represents the original version. This is obvious from the differences found between A and B versions of the same stanzas, as well as from linguistic forms much later than the late 6th century. Moreover, it has been suggested that Y Gododdin came to be regarded centuries later as part of a poet's repertoire, with the reciting and perhaps creation of stanzas being one way of judging the skill of bards.⁶⁵ This produces the worrying possibility that pastiche 'Old North' verses mentioning real places like Catraeth and Eidyn found in the corpus were created centuries later than the 6th century.⁶⁶

However, when the works of the poets of the 12th to 14th centuries (known as the Gogynfeirdd, 'Not-so-early Poets', as opposed to the Cynfeirdd, 'Early Poets') are studied, there are few poems where direct borrowing from or knowledge of Y Gododdin or the similarly dated poetry of Taliesin can be identified, although some short expressions, images and concepts were continued in the later poetry.⁶⁷ Therefore, the putative creation of Gododdin stanzas would probably need to be placed at an earlier stage, before the 12th century. Scholars are divided on how to interpret the people and places in the text, and about the 'Old North' of the Britons. Some cite the appearance of many 'Old North' names and places in later Welsh texts as evidence that we cannot use them to claim the poems are ancient.⁶⁸ Other scholars regard them as obscure and lacking a subject or narrative with a clear purpose in later medieval Wales, and argue that they depict a social setting that fits the 6th century, giving these as strong arguments for the authenticity of much of the material.⁶⁹

Regarding the linguistic issue, while much of the text is in Old Welsh (late 8th to 11th centuries) or early Middle Welsh (covering c.1100 to the time of the manuscript), there are many words that reflect the Archaic period of the language (before c.750), while Koch suggests that many features in Y Gododdin can be understood if an Archaic text was misunderstood later.⁷⁰ There is also no obvious reason why the poems would not work in the language of the 6th century; the eminent linguist Jackson argued that, while there were sound changes to the language after the 6th century, these were not major.⁷¹ The poems could have been gradually updated by poets without destroying the poetic structure based on syllables (and possibly accents or metrical ornamentation) in the poetry,⁷² altering rhymes by replacing words if they no longer worked. Linguistics does, however, provide one important piece of evidence for dating, because the British language did change significantly over the 6th century, with the loss of many syllables in the middle or end of words by the mid- to late 6th century.⁷³ While such changes cannot be used to date texts precisely, as change can happen at varying rates and texts can be archaising, this does make a date for the origins of Y Gododdin before the last third of the 6th century unlikely.

So, overall, while the manuscript with Y Gododdin is 13th century in date, there are grounds for some of the stanzas dating back many centuries earlier, with a written version in existence by c.900, and with origins as poetry contemporary with people of the late 6th or early 7th century. However, the corpus has been updated

in terms of its language, and stanzas about the Gododdin and other subjects have been added later. Differences between the A and B versions of particular stanzas also shows that words, phrases and lines could be altered, omitted and interpolated, so it is often difficult to reconstruct what the early poems contained, although an in-depth comparison of shared and unique elements can provide evidence for what constitutes early and later material.

The Date and Context of Y Gododdin

There are various theories about the context of Y Gododdin, with a date-range from c.540 to 630 generally favoured. The focus has been on finding a suitable context for an attack on Catraeth, Catterick in North Yorkshire, directed from Din Eidyn, Edinburgh. Catterick was a Roman fort in a strategic location where the north-south route down the east coast meets the route across the Pennines from the west via the Stainmore Gap. Dunshea has questioned whether the references to Catraeth in Y Gododdin actually are to a real location, but his theory is unlikely given that Catraeth was also a real location, and it appears in both the A and B texts, so it is part of the early textual stratum.⁷⁴ Jackson favoured a late-6th-century date for the battle, preferring the period 588-90, when King Æthelric of Bernicia also gained control of Deira (based in the East Riding of Yorkshire), but before Bernicia had become very powerful under King Æthelfrith, whose accession was c.593.⁷⁵ Charles-Edwards favours an earlier context in which the Britons were powerful, and Bernicia weaker, certainly before King Æthelfrith's expansion of Bernician power, but after the late 5th century, when there is evidence for English occupation in Catterick.⁷⁶ He prefers a time when an attack on a Deiran Catterick, rather than Bernicia, makes sense, based on the location of Catterick in Deiran territory and the fact that the stanzas of Y Gododdin shared by A and B, as well as those in the more archaic B version, only have the Deirans as the English enemy of the Gododdin.⁷⁷ The appearance of Bernicians as the foes alongside the Deirans is confined to stanzas found in the A version, probably representing a later development, after Bernicia had come to dominate Deira.⁷⁸

John Koch's view is similar in terms of date, since he would place the battle 'c. 565x585, most probably c.570', but with a significantly different perception of the context.⁷⁹ He has argued that the Gododdin (including Bernicia) may have had a mixed British and English force, with Gwlyget of the Gododdin (mentioned in the A.32 and A.77 stanzas) as the British lord, and Urfei son of Golistan, lord of Eidyn (B.26), as their half-English war leader.⁸⁰ He also suggests that the words *mynyddawc mwynvawr* do not represent a leader of the Gododdin, but that these two words are adjectives, meaning 'mountainous' or 'of the mountains' and 'having great wealth' respectively, with the phrase translated tentatively as 'belonging to Edinburgh's (fortified) mount' (based on an assumption that Edinburgh was the main Gododdin centre).⁸¹ This reinterpretation is not certain, but given the uncertainty it is perhaps best not to argue that a person called Mynyddawc Mwynvawr (which may be an epithet, rather than an actual personal name) was the leader of the Gododdin. Much more dubiously, from another poem, Koch

argues that 'The Battle of Gwen Ystrat' is the same as the Battle of Catraeth, and he regards the ruler of Catterick to have been the British King of Rheged, Urien, again ruling over a mixed British and English polity.⁸² While the idea of mixed ethnic forces is plausible, and supported by Y Gododdin in the case of the Gododdin, Koch's theory of a Rheged-led enemy is not supported by much evidence and is highly speculative.

In addition, a much later date, 616–27, during the reign of the Deiran King Edwin who conquered Bernicia, has been proposed by James Fraser, since this was another time when the Bernicians were politically weak.⁸³ Given the lack of detail that can be used to compare with other sources, the exact date of the Catraeth campaign cannot be identified, although the mid-6th century to c.590 or 616–27 are the most likely periods, given the poem linguistically is unlikely to be earlier.⁸⁴

This is not, however, all that should be stated regarding the context and dating of Y Gododdin's subject matter, since it is clear that other events were recounted in the stanzas. Dunshea notes that some stanzas recount conflict on the boundaries of Gododdin territory, some with Gaels and Prydyn (usually translated as 'Picts', although 'Britons' cannot be ruled out as also being included by this term), and as a result suggests plausibly that the focus of Y Gododdin is on the warriors of the Gododdin, not necessarily the Catraeth campaign.⁸⁵ These references are all very difficult to contextualise, although it has been noted that the Gaels of Dál Riata were active in the Central Belt of Scotland in the years around 600, probably fighting against the Miathi (the earlier Maeatae) in Circin, probably in Strathearn, and losing a battle to the Bernicians at the unlocated Degsastane.⁸⁶ If the Catraeth campaign is no longer the sole focus of the poetry, there might be multiple contexts and dates for the events and composition of these poems, which were presumably collected together because of their shared subject matter. This is likely to have happened in the period before c.655, by which time Lothian and Edinburgh had been conquered.

Following on from this, and the appearance of warriors in Y Gododdin not from the Gododdin, Alex Woolf suggests that Eidyn may not have been in the Gododdin polity.⁸⁷ He follows Strang's interpretation of Ptolemy, that the places among the Votadini should all be located in Northumberland. A location of the Gododdin in Tynedale (around modern Newcastle), where Corbridge is, would make a battle at Catterick much closer.⁸⁸ There are reasons to be sceptical about Woolf's view that Din Eidyn was not in Gododdin territory. First, there is a brief statement that the royal dynasty of Gwynedd was descended from Cunedda, a person from Manau Guotodin, 'Manau of the Gododdin':⁸⁹

King Maelgwn the Great was reigning among the British, in Gwynedd, for his ancestors, Cunedda, with his sons, to the number of eight, had come from the north, from the country called Manaw Gododdin (Manau Guotodin), 146 years before Maelgwn reigned, and expelled the Irish from these countries with immense slaughter, so that they never again returned to inhabit them.

Cunedda is stated to have migrated to Gwynedd, driving out the Irish and settling Gwynedd with his children in the late 4th century. Manau is an early-medieval territorial name for the area around Stirling which survives in the place names Clackmannan just north of the Forth and Slamannan south of Stirling.⁹⁰ The account should be regarded as a fabrication created to explain and legitimise the ruling lines of Gwynedd, but this does indicate that at least part of Manau to the west of Edinburgh had been in Gododdin territory.⁹¹

The second piece of evidence is the statement in the Gaelic poem *Duan Albanach*, written in the kingdom of Alba in Scotland or in Ireland in the reign of Malcolm III (1058–93), that the British ancestor figure Bríutus ‘took splendid Alba / as far as the conspicuous peak of Fodudhán’.⁹² Fodudhán is a Gaelic version of Gododdin, with the ‘peak of Fodudhán’ identified as ‘North Berwick Law’.⁹³ This fits the context of the poem, since it should be somewhere on the northern edge of territory outside of the Gaelic part of Alba (‘Britain’ here), which in the 11th century had the Forth estuary as its boundary.⁹⁴ This makes it very likely that, if Din Eidyn is Edinburgh, it was in Gododdin territory. It supports the connection found in many of Y Gododdin’s stanzas (see, for instance, B.19 and B.26 below) between Eidyn and the Gododdin. This does not, however, rule out the possibility that the Gododdin were also based around Corbridge, since early-medieval polities could have multiple (sometimes competing) power centres.

This relatively brief discussion of the date and context of Y Gododdin should make it clear that there is a lack of a consensus view among scholars, although there is an increasing and justifiable trend not to interpret the stanzas as part of a single narrative of a campaign started in Din Eidyn that ended with a heroic defeat at Catraeth. It is likely that multiple military actions are alluded to in these stanzas, and that it is simply safest to date the events from c.540 to c.650, with the creation of the earliest poems to a slightly later period, to the late 6th to mid-7th century, on linguistic grounds. Woolf’s theory is perhaps a forerunner of future research focusing on the varied bases of warriors found in Y Gododdin, since we cannot now assume that all of these were campaigning from Din Eidyn. We should not assume that Din Eidyn was always the intended location when feasting is mentioned in Y Gododdin, since early-medieval kingship was generally peripatetic, with kings moving between a number of royal centres and the households of leading nobles and ecclesiastical centres. While the ideals and activities relating to these strongholds and halls recounted in the earliest stratum of the text could have happened in any of them, and so can all be used as evidence for what elite life was like in Din Eidyn, it is perhaps best to be cautious. It is therefore important to focus on stanzas that actually mention Eidyn as evidence for that site, although the other stanzas, if early, can provide evidence for common ideals and characteristics of society at roughly the same time.

We cannot be sure that Din Eidyn was a ‘royal’ centre from our sources, partly because we cannot be certain that the Gododdin had a king or underkings. However, from Y Gododdin, Din Eidyn was clearly a base for noblemen who came from there and seemingly a muster or meeting place for them (B.17: ‘When

noblemen came from Din Eidyn, a band of picked men from every provident region'). It was a centre that acted as a focal point for a wider territory and other groups, controlled by the 'elite', 'aristocracy', 'noble class' and, clearly, a 'lord'.

Eidyn and Din Eidyn in Y Gododdin

The following are the stanzas containing references to Eidyn, or variants of that word, in Y Gododdin.

1) B.4⁹⁵

This stanza, albeit without the Eidyn reference, is also found at A.42.⁹⁶ The preceding stanzas, B.3 and A.41, are also given, as they seem to be related to B.4 and A.42.⁹⁷ B.5 also seems to be related to these stanzas, so it is also included below.⁹⁸ The two pairs of stanzas clearly share some lines and subject matter, being concerned with Morien, Gwenabwy fab Gwen and Bradwen, but it is difficult to determine what the original text was. Dunshea, following John Koch, argues that the B text's references to Gaels and Picts may have been removed later because it did not fit a later anti-English focus, adding his own view that they also did not fit a later concentration on Catraeth as the main subject of the corpus.⁹⁹ Jackson also regards the reference to Myrddin in A.41 as a later interpolation, since Myrddin (that is, Merlin), belongs to a Welsh literary context, rather than a Scottish one, where he is not otherwise found.¹⁰⁰ There are, therefore, grounds for regarding the two A stanzas as being less reliable evidence for the early version, although this does not necessarily mean that the Eidyn reference here is early. In addition, Charles-Edwards argues that the words *prif eg weryt* in A.41, line 9, could be translated as 'a leader on the Forth'.¹⁰¹

B.3:

For the feast, most sad, disastrous,
For settled, for desolate land,
Three boars primed for combat at cock-crow
... Morien with his spear,
Against pagans and Gaels and Picts.
Very dear, the stiff red corpse of Bradwen,
Right hand of Gwenabwy fab Gwen.

B.4:

For the feast, most sad, disastrous,

Heavy, grievous, most desolate land,
The battle-leader,
The bearded warrior ...
... beholding Eidynd and its land.
His gauntlet was raised
Against pagans and Gaels and Picts.
Who tugs a wolf's mane without spear in hand
Needs a brave heart under his cloak.
I will sing so that Morien should not die,
Right hand of Gwenabwy ap Gwen.

A.41:

For the feast, most sad, disastrous,
For settled, for desolate land,
For the falling of hair from the head,
Among warriors, an eagle, Gwyddien,
Fiercely he defended them with his spear, a planner, a tiller, its owner.
Morien defended
Myrddin's praise-song, and placed the chieftain
In earth, our strength, our support.
Worth three men, for a maid's favour, Bradwen;
Worth twelve, Gwenabwy fab Gwen.

A.42:

'For the feast, most sad, disastrous,
Hard worked, the shields in the fighting,
In the fury of swordstrokes on heads.
In Lloegr, torn flesh before three hundred lords.
Who would seize a wolf's mane without sword in hand

Needs a bold heart under his cloak.
Form the clash of rage and destruction
Bradwen perished, he did not escape.

B.5:

Good fortune, Addonwy, you'd vowed to me:
What Bradwen did, you'd do; you'd slash, you'd burn.
You held neither far wing nor front line.
Bold eye ...
I have not seen from sea to sea
A horseman who'd be worse than

2) B.17:¹⁰²

Heaven's haven, longed-for land's home:
Woe is ours from yearning and ceaseless sorrow,
When noblemen came from Din Eidyn,¹⁰³ a band
Of picked men from every provident region,
In strife with Lloegr's mingled war-hosts,
Nine-score to one on each mail-clad man,
Piled-up horses and war-gear and silken garments,
Gwaednerth held his own in battle.

3) B.19:¹⁰⁴

Gododdin's picked men on shaggy mounts,
Swan-white steeds, war-harness drawn tight,
And in the vanguard attacking the war-host,
Fighting for Eidyn's forests and mead.
Through Mynyddawg's war-plan
Shields went spinning,

Blades descended

On pallid cheeks.

They loved ... attacking;

They bore no disgrace, men who would not flee.

4) B.26:¹⁰⁵

Natural - on a charger to defend Gododdin;

In the vanguard, swift his grey steed;

Natural - that he should be fleet as a stag;

Natural - before Deifr's picked men he'd attack;

Natural - what he said, Golystan's son, would be heard,

Though his father was no high lord;

Natural - on Mynyddawg's behalf, shattered shields;

Natural - a crimson spear before Eidyn's lord, Urfai.

5) B.32:¹⁰⁶

His blades were seen in the war-band,

Contending with a stubborn foe.

Before his shield's clamour they'd cower:

They'd flee before Eidyn's hill, countless men.

Those his hand grasped would not leave him.

There were candles for him, and chanting.

Stubborn, shield shredded, when hard pressed he'd press on;

He'd not strike twice: he'd strike when struck.

Frequent after the feast was his gift to the enemy;

Bitterly was he dealt with.

And before he was covered with clods of earth

Edar earned the right to drink his mead.

6) A.13:¹⁰⁷

A man went to Catraeth at daybreak.
He guzzled mead-suppers at midnight.
Woeful, fellow-warrior's lament,
His campaign, hot-blooded killer.
There hurried to Catraeth
No great man with aims
 So expensive over mead;
None from Eidyn's fortress
 Would so completely
Break up enemy ranks.
Tudfwlch Hir, from his hand and homesteads,
Would slay Saxons at least once a week.
His valour will stay long-lasting,
Kept in mind by his splendored comrades.
When Tudfwlch came, people's sustainer,
Spearmen's post was a killing ground, Cilydd's son.

Tudfwlch also appears in A.15, B.12 and in the Gorchan of Tudfwlch, where he is associated with Eifionydd in northern Wales.¹⁰⁸ Dunshea regards the A text stanzas starting with Gwyr (or Gwr, as here) a aeth gatraeth gan wawr/dyd, 'Men (or "a man") went to Catraeth with the dawn/the day' as later additions only to the A text, but Charles-Edwards is less certain about this.¹⁰⁹ The incomplete nature of the manuscript means that we cannot be sure that such stanzas had not been in the manuscript before the final pages were lost.

7) A.16:¹¹⁰

First out of Eidyn's bright fort, he inspired
Faithful warriors who'd followed him.
Blaen, on down pillows, would pass around

The drinking-horn in his opulent hall.
The first brew of bragget was his.
Blaen took delight in gold and purple;
First pick of sleek steeds raced beneath him:
At sound of battle his high heart earned them.
First to raise the war-cry, gainful return,
Bear in the path, ever slow to retreat.

8) A.17:¹¹¹

Force in the front line,
Sunlight on pasture:
Lord, where can be found
The isle of Britain's heaven?
Rough the ford before the warrior,
Shield as a shelter.
Splendid his drinking-horn
In Eidynd's great hall,
His grandeur a display.
His mead made one drunk;
He would drink strong wine,
Battle-bold of mind,
Battle-leeks reaper.
Battle's bright arm,
They sang a battle-song.
Battle-armoured,
Battle-pinioned,
His shield was sheared thin
By warfare's spears.
Comrades fell
In warfare's strife:

Unfaltering his fighting,
Blameless he avenged them.
His rage was appeased
Before green turf covered
The grave of Gwrwelling Fras.

9) A.18:¹¹²

They revere what is right.
They stain three spear-shafts,
Fifty, and five hundred.
Three hounds with three hundred,
Three horsemen of war
From gold-smithied Eidyn,
Three mail-clad war-bands,
Three gold-torqued leaders,
Three furious horsemen,
Three peers in battle,
Three leaping as one,
They routed foes savagely.
Three in hard fighting,
They slew foes easily,
Gold in close combat,
Three rulers in men
Who came from the Britons,
Cynri and Cynon,
Cynrain of Aeron.
The wily tribes
Of Deifr would ask:
Has there come from the Britons
A man better than Cynon,

Foe-stabbing serpent?

10) A.73:¹¹³

A lord of Gododdin will be praised in song;

A lordly patron will be lamented.

Before Eidyn, fierce flame, he will not return.

He set his picked men in the vanguard;

He set a stronghold at the front.

In full force he attacked a fierce foe.

Since he feasted, he bore great hardship.

Of Mynyddawg's war-band none escaped

Save one, blade-brandishing, dreadful.

In addition to these, Jackson mentions a reference in a difficult passage of the 'Gorchan of Cynfelyn' to Eidyn gaer, 'the fortified town Eidyn'.¹¹⁴ In the 'Gorchan of Maeldderw', Maeldderw, as well as being called 'the outer gate of the stronghold of Eidyn (esgor Eidin)', is described as 'lord of the northern region', and 'a bedfellow of the beer-hall'.¹¹⁵ However, as has been mentioned, these poems are considered to be later additions.

In the B text, Eidyn is found in these stanzas as a place with land (B.4), a fort, Din Eidyn (B.17), with noblemen and a warband (B.17), forests (B.19) and mead (B.19). B.19 states that the Gododdin fought for Eidyn's forests and mead, and did this according to the military plan of 'Mynyddawg', mentioned elsewhere as the leader (but 'mountain court', according to Koch). B.26 states that Eidyn's lord was a certain Urjai, and that a son of a Golystan (who was not a high lord), probably meaning Urjai, fought on the side of 'Mynyddawg', defending Gododdin against the Deirans. It may be that Urjai controlled Eidyn on behalf of 'Mynyddawg', although it is best to remain cautious about whether the latter was actually an overlord. B.32 recounts fighting around Eidyn's hill. Little detail is given of activities at Eidyn, with the focus being clearly being on the conflicts taking place around or associated with it.

In the A text, it states that people from 'Eidyn's fortress' went to fight at Catraeth (A.13); A.16 mentions 'Eidyn's bright fort', seemingly as the place from which Blaen and his warriors went to fight; A.17 has 'Eidyn's great hall'; A.18 has 'gold-smithied Eidyn', from where three war-horsemen came; and A.73 states that 'a lord of Gododdin' will not return to Eidyn (although it is unclear if the person in question was the ruler of Gododdin or simply a nobleman). The A stanzas include more description of Eidyn, seemingly in A.18 presenting it as a centre for metalworking in gold and producing military equipment like chain mail, and A.17 depicting it as a

place in which mead and strong wine were drunk, and drinking horns were used. According to the stanza, the mead was offered by Gwrwelling Fras, with the implication that he was the lord of Eidyn. A.16 also mentions drinking horns, but adds bragget (a drink of honey and ale fermented together) to the menu, and stresses the wealth of the 'opulent hall', sitting on down pillows and in a setting with gold and purple, colours redolent of wealth and power, to which Blaen was accustomed. A.13 supports the drinking theme, since it states that Tudfwlch son of Cilydd 'guzzled mead-suppers at midnight'. The depiction in A does not contradict that in B, but it is more detailed, and stresses the generosity and wealth of the subjects, with Eidyn the implied focus of these activities.

Overall, there are instance of Eidyn and variants in both the A and B versions, but none are found in both. It could reasonably, therefore, be asked whether any of these were in the common source rather than being late additions. Certainly, scholars are particularly sceptical about the antiquity of stanzas only found in the A text, particularly those, like A.13, beginning with 'a man went to Catraeth' or 'men went to Catraeth'.¹¹⁶ Statements that 300 or 303 men fought at Catraeth also look like later ideas,¹¹⁷ so A.18, with 'Three hounds with three hundred', could also be late, along with the similar A.17. However, Catraeth and the low number of British warriors also appear in the B text, but are less commonly found, while other subjects such as fighting around Eidyn (B.32) and against Gaels and Prydyn (B.3 and B.4) seem to represent a stage in the collection before the Catraeth campaign became more prominent. The more archaic and problematic character (demonstrated by the problems scholars have with translating some stanzas) of the B text also indicates an earlier date and less altered form to these stanzas. This increases the likelihood that we can use these B stanzas as evidence for the late 6th and early 7th centuries. Eidyn is found in B, on one occasion in a stanza shared with A, and elsewhere in the A text. If the views of Charles-Edwards about the text are followed, it would indicate that Eidyn was in the common source, since he is generally positive about assigning to an early date the words found in B and A stanzas and in shared stanzas, even where the word only appears in B.¹¹⁸

The presence of the stanza in both versions is strong evidence that the stanza itself is old; and since the B version has already been revealed as the more conservative of the two, a word found in its version is quite likely to have been in the text of the poem from which both the A and B version derived.

And:

If the word also occurs elsewhere in the A version, in addition to appearing in the B version of a stanza in both versions, the argument is stronger than when only the B version has the word.

This is not, however, conclusive for Eidyn, since it might be argued that this word was well enough known in Welsh literary circles for it to be independently included in late stanzas in both the A and B versions, as an intrinsic part of a later perception of a heroic British 'Old North'. To investigate this further, it is necessary to consider the pattern of later references.

Other Welsh References to Eidyn

Eidyn does appear in other Welsh texts. It appears in the collection of poetry attributed to the poet Taliesin, whose northern British poems have been regarded as broadly contemporary with Y Gododdin, although many are also considered to have been later compositions purporting to be by a visionary poet Taliesin.¹¹⁹ The poem praises a certain Gwallawg, and states that 'they [the retinue of Gwallawg] meet the demand from Prydyn / From Perth Manaw and Eidyn' and 'In Prydyn, in Eidyn, they confess, / In Gafran, all about Brecheinawg, / Embattled, in sturdy war-gear, / Who's not seen Gwallawg won't have seen a man'.¹²⁰ The earliness of this poem is highly uncertain, since the wide range of Gwallawg's interests are unrealistic, given that he is portrayed as active in Aeron (Ayrshire or Airedale), Elmet (West Yorkshire), Efracw (York), as well as Eidyn, and other places. This is not impossible, but is unlikely. We can regard this as poetic hyperbole, or as a later creation including a number of places associated with the 'Old North'.¹²¹ Given these uncertainties, it is best not to draw inferences from this poem.

Eidyn also appears twice in one of the early Arthurian tales produced before Geoffrey of Monmouth turned Arthur into an international sensation in the mid-12th century. In *Pa gur yv y porthaur?* ('What man is the gatekeeper?'), dated c.1100, there is a dialogue in which Cai and Arthur attempt to explain to a doorman who they are, so they can be let in.¹²² This includes brief references to feats performed by Arthur and his companions, including the following:¹²³

And Anwas the Winged
and Llŵch Windy(?) Hand:
they were accustomed to defend
at Edinburgh on the border.
...
Though Arthur laughed [or ?played]
he caused the/her blood to flow
in Afarnach's hall,
fighting with a witch.
He pierced Cudgel(?) Head
in the dwellings of Disethach.
On the mountain of Edinburgh
he fought with dogheads.
By the hundred they fell;
they fell by the hundred

before Bedwyr the Perfect [or Perfect-Sinew].

In the first reference there is Eidin, in the second *minit* Eidin, the 'mountain' (or 'mount'?) of Eidin.¹²⁴ The first instance parallels the subject matter in *Y Gododdin* by having warriors defending Eidin at the border, the second makes Eidin a site for exotic figures, dog-headed people found elsewhere in classical literature, usually located in India.¹²⁵ However, the appearance of *minit* with Eidin also displays similarities with *Y Gododdin*. Haycock also suggests that the witch episode references to another early Arthurian episode, in 'How Culhwch won Olwen' (written c.1100), in which Arthur and his men are given the task of obtaining the warm blood of the Black Witch who lives 'in the valley of grief', 'in the highlands of Hell' located somewhere in the north.¹²⁶ *Pa gur* seems to be referring to tales that may have had a more substantial form elsewhere.

Eidin also appears in Welsh Triads as an epithet associated with the names of early British figures. *Mynyddawg Eidin*, possibly the *Mynyddawg Mwynfawr* of *Y Gododdin*, appears in Triad 31, with 'The Retinue of *Mynyddawg* of Eiddyn' being one of the 'Three Noble(?) Retinues of the Island of Britain'.¹²⁷ A variant version has 'The Retinue of *Mynyddawg* at *Catraeth*' instead. Clearly, *Mynyddawg* is a person in this text, but that could be a later interpretation from *Y Gododdin* itself.

A *Clydno Eidin* appears as a descendant of *Coel* (hence Old King Cole) in a genealogy in *Peniarth MS 45*,¹²⁸ as someone with a magical halter ('whatever horse he might wish for, he would find it in the halter') in *Cardiff MS 17*,¹²⁹ and his son *Cynon* is stated to have been one of 'Three Counsellor Knights' who 'were in Arthur's Court' in *Peniarth MS 127*.¹³⁰ *Cynon* also appears in later poetry of the 12th century onwards.¹³¹ An 'Eurneid daughter of *Clydno Eidin*' is found in a long list of names in 'How Culhwch won Olwen'.¹³²

A *Llawgat Trwm Bagawt Eidin* ('Heavy Battle-Hand of the border of Eidin') appears in Triad 33 as the slayer of *Afaon* son of *Taliesin*, in a list of the 'Three Savage Men of the Island of Britain, who performed the Three Unfortunate Assassinations'.¹³³ In the same Triad there is a *Heidyn map Enygan*, whose name may originally have derived from the place Eidin, perhaps indicating a lack of knowledge of what Eidin was.¹³⁴

Eidin does not appear in the Triads nor in the later *Gogynfeirdd* bardic corpus as a place name, which, along possibly with the case of *Heidyn*, indicates that the place was not well known in later Wales.¹³⁵ Earlier than the 12th century the issue is more uncertain, since the date of *Gwallawg* poem's is contested. There certainly does seem to have been some notion of Eidin as a high place somewhere in the north, but it is not found in many surviving sources, when compared to other locations like *Dumbarton Rock*.¹³⁶ We cannot rule out that in the 10th and 11th centuries (or whenever else Eidin was occupied) that knowledge of the contemporary location can explain these references, but this seems unlikely, since other significant locations in Scotland (apart from *Dumbarton Rock*) in this later period are largely ignored in Welsh sources such as *Historia Brittonum*. It is most

likely that these later references are explained by the association of Eidyn with the British period before the Anglo-Saxon conquest, through literature and maybe oral traditions about the 'Old North'. Since the main surviving early source for Eidyn is Y Gododdin, where it is found in the A and B text (in both Koch's B.1 and B.2), it is reasonable to assume that Y Gododdin explains the later references. Therefore, the correct approach to Y Gododdin is to broadly follow Charles-Edwards's approach, assuming that references to Eidyn could be in the original if they are in the B text, but to regard material only found in A as much more suspect, possibly being later additions.

THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD, MID-7TH CENTURY TO LATE 10TH CENTURY

Our written sources from the period of Anglo-Saxon rule do not mention Edinburgh Castle. They do mention other sites, such as the royal centre of Dunbar and the monastery of Abercorn, so it is clear that there were a number of elite sites in the vicinity of Edinburgh. However, the variable coverage of the sources should be recognized: we have some details in the writings of Bede, the Anglo-Saxon chronicles and northern chronicles (such as those surviving in the *Historia Regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham, and a few other sources), but these concentrate on the period from 650 to 800 and are unlikely to be comprehensive in their coverage. Therefore, a site such as Edinburgh Castle could feasibly be of at least reasonable importance but not appear in surviving texts.

In terms of the background context, Lothian remained a part of the kingdom of the Northumbrians until the Scandinavian conquest of York in the 860s. After that time it seems likely that the northern, Bernician, part of the kingdom, including Lothian, remained in English hands, being ruled by the earls of Bamburgh. It is likely that there were fluctuations in their relationships with their Scandinavian neighbours to the south, the kingdom of the Picts (which became the kingdom of Alba by AD 900) to the north, and the British kingdom of Strathclyde (created after the Scandinavian sacking of Dumbarton Rock in 870).

In the 10th century, the kingdom of the West Saxons expanded its power, gaining periodic control of Scandinavian Northumbria from the reign of Athelstan onwards, until the last Scandinavian ruler was expelled in 954, and the region became established as part of the West Saxons' 'kingdom of the English'. Meanwhile, to the north, the kingdom of Alba was exerting influence and attempting to control the lands to the south of the Forth. These processes led to the division of Bernicia between these two external powers, with Lothian and the other lands north of the Tweed becoming part of the kingdom of Alba, also known as the kingdom of the Scots, and the south becoming ultimately part of the kingdom of the English.¹³⁷ Lothian was conquered by the end of the 10th century, although exactly when is not certain.¹³⁸ However, the 'Chronicle of the Kings of Alba' states that it was Ildulf (954–62) 'in whose time the fort of Eden [opidum Eden] was evacuated and left to the Scots up to the present day'.¹³⁹ Opidum

probably is a translation from Gaelic *dun*, since elsewhere *Dunottar* (Gaelic *Dun Foither*) is found in the same text as *opidum Fother* and the word order is Gaelic rather than English.¹⁴⁰ This source does use a contemporary 10th-century chronicle text, but in its current form it was compiled in the late 12th or early 13th century, with some later changes. Certainly, the statement that the fort at Edinburgh was left 'to the Scots up to the present day' looks retrospective, so the whole item could be regarded as dubious, but for the fact that it agrees with other evidence placing *Alba*'s expansion into Lothian in this period.¹⁴¹

A potentially earlier reference is found for 934 in the 'Annals of Clonmacnoise', written in the 17th century using medieval Irish chronicles, but the reference to *Edenburrogh* is likely to be a mistaken updating of *Dun Foither*, which is elsewhere associated with the same campaign by King *Æthelstan* of the English.¹⁴² Therefore, this reference should be discounted.

REFERENCES TO EDINBURGH IN THE 11TH AND 12TH CENTURIES

In the 11th century, there is one potential reference, in *Walter Bower's Scotichronicon* of the mid-15th century, where in 1093 *Margaret* wife of *Malcolm III* (1058–93) is stated to be dying in Edinburgh, and the account has *Donald Bán* subsequently besieging the castle (*castrum*).¹⁴³ While *Bower* did use earlier sources, such as the 14th-century work of *John of Fordun*, it is difficult to determine the origins of much of his more colourful pre-1100 episodes. Given Edinburgh's later status, it is quite likely that tales about the castle would have been created later, so, even if the account is plausible, we should not use it until we have identified its sources.

The most significant 12th-century reference for our purposes is found in a 'Life' of the Irish female saint *Moninne* (often found as *Monenna*) by *Conchobhrán*, written 'by the 1140s at the latest'.¹⁴⁴ In this life *Moninne* travels to what is now Scotland, building churches, including one at 'Dunedene, which in English is called *Edeneburg*' (*Dunedene, quae Anglica lingua dicta Edeneburg*).¹⁴⁵

This is very strong evidence that Edinburgh had once been called *Dunedin*, which, like Edinburgh, had the meaning 'fort of Eden'.¹⁴⁶ *Dunedene*, with Gaelic *dun* and the Gaelic connection indicated by *Moninne's* 'Life', show that this form was current when the Gaelic language was spoken in the Edinburgh area, from the 10th century (if not earlier) onwards.¹⁴⁷ *Dunedin* is extremely close to a potential British form with the cognate word (that is, derived from the common Celtic ancestor language) *din*, so it would have been easy for Gaels to simply translate the place name in their own language, as possibly an English speaker did at some point to create the name 'Edinburgh'. Neither the continuation of British names in the area nor late replacement by English would be unexpected: we can give *Dunbar* as an example of the former, and *Falkirk* (translated from British or Gaelic *Egglesbreth*)

as an instance of the latter.¹⁴⁸ It is unclear whether ‘Edinburgh’ and ‘Dunedin’ (and an earlier British form) were used concurrently before the 12th century.

In addition to this, and other references with forms like Edinburgh, there are two alternative names found in our sources. In the 12th century, Symeon of Durham called Edinburgh ‘Edwinesburch’, interpreting the place to have been named after King Edwin of Northumbria (616–33), a view also found in a charter of King David I to Holyrood abbey, which has Edwinesburgensis.¹⁴⁹ This is likely to be a folk etymology for the name, displaying knowledge of the area’s early-medieval Northumbrian background, but it is extremely unlikely that it reflects the origins of the ‘Edin’ part of the place name.¹⁵⁰ The actual origin of the ‘Edin’ element is uncertain,¹⁵¹ but the Celtic linguist Anders Ahlqvist has suggested that it may derive from Eidion, either being the name Atianus found in Romano-British inscriptions (so ‘Atianus’s fort’), or a word meaning ‘ox’ (so ‘Oxford’).¹⁵²

The other name for Edinburgh in many 12th-century texts, including charters of Holyrood Abbey, is the ‘Castle of the Maidens’, Castellum Puellarum.¹⁵³ According to Watson, the earliest references occur during the reign of David I (1124–53), although the earliest I have found in a charter is dated between 16 August 1139 and 1151.¹⁵⁴ Earlier than this is a reference in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *De Gestis Britonum* (also known as *Historia Regum Britanniae*, ‘The History of the Kings of the Britons’), written between 1123 and January 1139, which made the Arthurian legend popular throughout Europe. Book II.27:¹⁵⁵ in the time of the Biblical King David, ‘Ebraucus also built the city of Dumbarton towards Scotland, the town of Mount Agned, now called Edinburgh, and Mons Dolorosus’ (*Condidit etiam Ebraucus urbem Aldclud uersus Albaniam et oppidum Montis Agned, quod nunc Castellum Puellarum dicitur, et Montem Dolorosum*).

It is difficult to know why Edinburgh is called oppidum (possibly to be translated ‘fort’ rather than ‘town’) Montis Agned, but Mons Agned was earlier in *Historia Brittonum* found as one of Arthur’s battles, so this identification may have been one of Geoffrey’s inventions.¹⁵⁶ Castellum Puellarum is also somewhat obscure, although Watson argued that it derives from the idea that St Moninne and her nuns founded a church in Edinburgh on the rock in honour of St Michael, according to one of her ‘Lives’; as we have already seen, it is clear that by the 1140s Moninne was thought to have built a church in Edinburgh, so this theory is plausible, if difficult to prove.¹⁵⁷

IS DIN EIDYN EDINBURGH CASTLE?

From the preceding discussion it is clear that in the first half of the 12th century or earlier (depending on the date of the ‘Life of St Moninne’) Edinburgh was also known as Dunedene, and Edinburgh and Dunedin are equivalents in different languages. The oppidum Eden in the 10th-century reference in the ‘Chronicle of the Kings of Alba’ also means the same, although the antiquity of the reference is dubious.¹⁵⁸ Linguistically, Eitin in the Irish chronicle reference of c.641, as well as Edinburgh, Gaelic Éidean and other medieval forms like Dunedene, could have

been produced from the earlier Din Eidyn found in Y Gododdin.¹⁵⁹ Eidyn had a hard 'd' sound, and would rhyme with English wadin(g).¹⁶⁰

Therefore, Edinburgh is a very suitable candidate for Din Eidyn, but are there others? The most obvious is Carriden, which is located at the eastern end of the Antonine Wall, since it has been argued that it could be from a 'Caer Eidyn', caer being a British element for a fortified site.¹⁶¹ There is an Eidyn gaer in the Gorchan of Cynfelyn accompanying Y Gododdin, but Jackson states that caer after Eidyn is in the wrong position to be a place-name element, so it should best be translated 'Edinburgh the fortified town'.¹⁶² A more major problem is that the stress in the word on the first syllable of Carriden makes Eidyn as the second element impossible linguistically.¹⁶³

Etin's Ha, a broch on Cockburnlaw in Berwickshire, has got a similar name,¹⁶⁴ but apparently this is a recent alteration from Etten's Hall ('the Giant's House') by the Ordnance Survey.¹⁶⁵ Simon Taylor states that with this case, and 'The Reid Etin' also found in Watson, 'we are dealing with the Scots etin "giant", deriving ultimately from Old English eoten "giant". It can have nothing to do with the first element of Edinburgh, which is Celtic'.¹⁶⁶

Castle Eden (Co. Durham, National Grid ref. 442500 537500) is 'unlikely' to be British, according to Fox's study of P-Celtic place names.¹⁶⁷

I have not been able to find the reference mentioned by Watson as being present in Liber S. Marie de Melros to a Dunedin 'somewhere near the foot of Lauderdale', even though I have searched that source. Given the different spelling, it is also unlikely that Duneaton has the same element as Dunedin, given the different vowels in the word.¹⁶⁸ We might more speculatively suggest that a fortified place connected to the Eden Water, a tributary of the Tweed, could have produced a Din Eidyn name, but to my knowledge none has been found.

It has been suggested that Eidyn was a district, with Din Eidyn a place in this area.¹⁶⁹ Watson suggested that minit Eidyn references were to the Braid Hills, on Edinburgh's southern edge, but Edinburgh Castle could be intended in these cases. Jackson was very dismissive of this idea, partly because it had been linked to the theory, which he disagreed with, that Carriden was from Caer Eidyn.¹⁷⁰ In addition, according to Joseph Clancy's translation of B.4 in *The Triumph Tree*, this has 'Eidyn and its land', presumably from eidyn a breithell, but this line is translated differently by Jackson.¹⁷¹ The theory of Eidyn as a district name cannot be disproved, but there is little positive evidence for it, as all the references could be to different aspects of the place Eidyn, with Din Eidyn being the fort.

Overall, then, Edinburgh is the most likely identification of Din Eidyn, because of the positive evidence that it was called by the exact equivalents Dunedene in Gaelic and Edinburgh in English, it has suitable locations for such an important fortification, there is some archaeological evidence for early-medieval occupation and we might expect Din Eidyn to be in the Lowlands of Scotland in Lothian. It has been suggested that Din Eidyn could have been on Arthur's Seat or Calton Hill,

but that would entail a movement of the place name, which is plausible, but unwarranted.¹⁷²

KEY CONCLUSIONS AND ASPECTS TO HIGHLIGHT

- 1) Eidyn, Din Eidyn and variants in medieval Welsh texts are to Edinburgh, probably Edinburgh Castle. Dun Eitin was probably the Gaelic form of this.

- 2) The written sources indicate that there was a fort and presumably a hall at Edinburgh in the period from c.540–c.650, perhaps in the mid-10th century also.

- 3) There is much debate about the context and dating of the events of Y Gododdin, as well as the degree to which some or all of the stanzas were early productions of the northern Britons of what is now southern Scotland and northern England. However, it is likely that stanzas found in both the A and B versions or only in the B version are early, possibly from the late 6th or early 7th centuries. This includes stanzas in the B version mentioning Eidyn and variants, but those in the A text only are more likely to be later additions.

- 4) It is unlikely that Y Gododdin was simply about one expedition from Edinburgh (Din Eidyn) to Catterick (Catraeth), as conflicts on the border of Gododdin territory and against Gaels and Prydyn (presumably Picts, but maybe other Britons) are also mentioned. Y Gododdin is likely to have originated as a collection of elegiac stanzas, most of which related to warriors of Eidyn and the Gododdin more generally.

- 5) The evidence of current scholarship supports the view that Edinburgh was in the territory of the Gododdin polity, a successor of the ancient Votadini tribe. However, the area of modern Tynedale may have been another elite power area in this polity; Edinburgh was not necessarily the base for all the Gododdin warriors eulogised in Y Gododdin. Alex Woolf would place Edinburgh outside Gododdin territory, but there is evidence that Lothian was under Gododdin control.

- 6) Y Gododdin provides us with glimpses of the ideals and culture relating to the elite rulers and warriors of Edinburgh at this time, c.540–c.650. It was a British-speaking culture, not separated from the English (as indicated by one of the leaders being a son of 'Golystan', from English 'Wulfstan'), in which the warrior class was supposed to adhere to a concept of honour, re-pay the hospitality of overlords (represented by food, alcohol and expensive gifts), be brave and display prowess in battle and have the ability to die well. These ideals and the memory of

the brave individuals were promoted by poets such as those (maybe including Aneirin) who composed the stanzas of Y Gododdin, presumably reciting them at feasts and other public events.

7) Eidyn and Din Eidyn, probably through the dissemination and transmission of Y Gododdin in Wales, remained in the British imagination as a place in the 'Old North', the lands lost to the English. It was used in later Welsh Arthurian literature as a location for feasts by Arthur's followers (against, for instance, dog-headed people), and elsewhere in legendary literature people were associated with it, although no direct knowledge is indicated. It is possible that a contemporary important centre based at Edinburgh Castle in the 10th to 12th centuries could account for some of these later references, but apart perhaps from the 'Life of St Moninne' (depending on its date) there is little that obviously fits such a later context, until the 12th century when numerous records indicate that Edinburgh and its castle were significant. It seems likely that, while the early significance of Edinburgh Castle was largely forgotten in Lothian itself, its importance lived in on in various echoes in the remaining British land of Wales.

8) For the periods when Edinburgh Castle was actually important, apart from the c.540–c.650 period, when we have Y Gododdin and a siege of Eten recorded in the Irish chronicles c.641, we have little textual evidence for its role. We are dependent on archaeological evidence, and potentially extrapolating back from the post-1100 situation – always a problematic method – to reconstruct the overall pattern of occupation and usage at the castle and in Edinburgh more generally.

9) In the 12th century, new names were created for Edinburgh and its castle, with the creation of a folk etymology Edwinesburg and the romantic name 'Castle of the Maidens' perhaps being a romantic creation based on St Moninne and her nuns founding a church there. It is difficult to know whether either of these names existed before 1100.

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Notes

¹ For discussion, see J. E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland. Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 17–21.

² Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 17–18, 20, 22–61.

³ Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 24–5, 29.

⁴ Ptolemy, 'Geography', A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1979), 103–47, at 136–40. Alastair Strang, 'Explaining Ptolemy's Roman Britain', *Britannia* 28 (1997), 1–30.

⁵ Strang, 'Explaining Ptolemy's Roman Britain', 20, 21, 26, 28 (High Rochester by implication, see 30).

⁶ Strang, 'Explaining Ptolemy's Roman Britain', 27.

⁷ Strang, 'Explaining Ptolemy's Roman Britain', 30.

⁸ I should thank Alex Woolf for providing me with the Strang article, and for the view that the Votadini's territory was confined to Northumberland. The suggestion about the Eden Water is my own.

⁹ Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names of Roman Britain*, 245.

¹⁰ Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names of Roman Britain*, 137–8, 245.

¹¹ For discussion and examples, see Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names of Roman Britain*, 243–7. Interestingly, however, if the Alauna of the Damnonii is Ardoch Roman fort (Strang, 'Explaining Ptolemy's Roman Britain', 22), that site is close to the Allan Water, with a similar name (see W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland [CPNS]* (Edinburgh and London, 1926; repr. with an introduction by Simon Taylor, Edinburgh, 2004; 2nd edn with expanded corrigenda and addenda, Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011), 467–9).

¹² For the Maeatae place names, see Watson, *CPNS*, 56–9, 100. For the Maeatae and the Votadini, see Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 24–9, 40–1.

¹³ Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 17–19.

¹⁴ Guy Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur. Facts and Fictions of the Dark Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 152, 292–3.

¹⁵ James E. Fraser, 'From Ancient Scythia to The Problem of the Picts: Thoughts on the Quest for Pictish Origins', in Stephen T. Driscoll, Mark Hall and Jane Geddes (eds), *Pictish Progress. New Studies on Northern Britain in the Early Middle Ages, The Northern World 50* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 15–43, 25–34; Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 224–5.

¹⁶ Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 291–5.

¹⁷ Fraser, 'From Ancient Scythia', 16–25; Katherine Forsyth, *Language in Pictland: The Case Against 'non-Indo-European Pictish'* (Utrecht: de Keltische Draak, 1997). While Jackson's view (K. H. Jackson, 'The Pictish Language', in F. T. Wainwright (ed.), *The Problem of the Picts* (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1955), 129–66), that there were two Pictish languages, one P-Celtic like British, another non-Indo-European, is still adhered to by some, the existence of the non-Celtic language is based largely on negative evidence, that certain letters and words are not identifiably Celtic in origin, rather than any understanding of what they do actually mean.

¹⁸ Simon Taylor, 'Pictish Place-Names Revisited', in Driscoll et al. (eds), *Pictish Progress*, 67–118, at 68, 76.

¹⁹ Given that Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, §§14, 19, M. Winterbottom (ed. and trans.), *Gildas: On the Ruin of Britain and Other Writings* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1978), 21, 23, depicts the Picts as invaders from the islands north of the British mainland who conquered the land south to the wall in the period when Roman rule was collapsing, we should be wary of arguing that he was being accurate about the Picts (see Nicholas Evans, 'Ideology, Literacy, and Matriliney: Approaches to Medieval Texts on the Pictish Past', in Driscoll et al. (eds), *Pictish Progress*, 45–65, at 58).

²⁰ Adomnán, 'Life of St Columba', I.15, Richard Sharpe (trans.), *Adomnán of Iona. Life of St Columba* (London, 1995), 123.

²¹ Indeed, Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 293–8, suggests the opposite, based on his theory that Magnus Maximus in the 380s allowed local 'paramilitary' groups to run much of Highland Britain, and that those around Hadrian's Wall might actually have expanded to the north after the end of Roman rule in Britain. He gives the Votadini as a potential example of this, if they extended their control into Lothian from a base around the Wall region (a view reliant on an earlier Votadinian core territory centred around Corbridge).

²² T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350–1064* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 384.

²³ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 382–5.

²⁴ Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 36–7, 88–9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds and trans.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969). *Historia Brittonum*, John Morris (ed. and trans.), Nennius. *British History and The Welsh Annals* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1980).

²⁷ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.1, Colgrave and Mynors (eds and trans.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 20–1.

²⁸ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV.12, Colgrave and Mynors (eds and trans.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*.

²⁹ *Historia Brittonum*, §§9, 12, 15, Morris (ed. and trans.), Nennius, 18–19, 20, 21.

³⁰ *Historia Brittonum*, §23, Morris (ed. and trans.), Nennius, 23–4.

³¹ Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 185–6.

³² See J. E. Fraser, 'Bede, the Firth of Forth and the Location of Urbs Iudeu', *Scottish Historical Review* 87, no. 1 (2008), 1–25, for his own view and for earlier discussion on the location of Iudeu.

³³ 'The Annals of Ulster', Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (eds and trans.), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131) Part I Text and Translation* (Dublin, 1983), 638.1: *Bellum Glinne Mureson & obsesio Etin*. 'The Annals of Tigernach' (Whitley Stokes (ed.), 'The Annals of Tigernach. Third Fragment. A.D. 489–766', *Revue Celtique* 17 (1896), 119–263, at 184, repr. Felinbach: Llanerch Publishers, 1993) and the closely related *Chronicum Scottorum*, sub anno. 637 (William Hennessy (ed. and trans.), *Chronicum Scottorum* (London: Rolls Series, 1866), 84–5, both have *obsesio Etain*, but this is considered a later corruption, influenced by the Old Irish word *étan*, genitive *étain*, 'face' (Watson, CPNS, 340), and it is the case that the Annals of Ulster tends to retain more of the early forms of names, so this is likely. For the source of this item, see Nicholas Evans, 'The Irish Chronicles and the British to Anglo-Saxon Transition in Seventh-Century Northumbria', in Juliana Dresvina and Nicholas Sparks (eds), *The Medieval Chronicle VII* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 15–38, at 34, 38. For the AD date, see Nicholas Evans, *The Present and the Past in Medieval Irish Chronicles* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 241.

³⁴ See, for instance, Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson, *The Gododdin. The Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969), 10.

³⁵ I have generally used the translation by Joseph P. Clancy in Thomas Owen Clancy (ed.), *The Triumph Tree. Scotland's Earliest Poetry AD 550–1350* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1998), 46–78, 94 (for 'Dinogad's Coat').

³⁶ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 37–41. While there are obvious similarities in form with these external examples, it is important not to consider the differences between such societies, so it is important not to slip into the perception that the whole society had a 'heroic' ethos, when this could be closely linked to the genre of literature and a particular sector of society.

³⁷ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 53–4.

³⁸ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 54.

³⁹ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 54–5.

⁴⁰ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 54, 118–19.

⁴¹ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 55.

⁴² Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 44; Philip Dunshea, 'The Meaning of *Catraeth*: A Revised Early Context for *Y Gododdin*', in Alex Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin. Dark Age Scotland in Medieval Wales. Proceedings of a Day Conference held on 19 February 2005, St John's House Papers 13* (St Andrews: Committee for Dark Age Studies, University of St Andrews, 2013), 81–114, at 87.

⁴³ See, for instance the titles of A. O. H. Jarman (ed. and trans.), *Aneirin. Y Gododdin: Britain's Oldest Heroic Poem* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1988) and Jackson's *The Gododdin*.

⁴⁴ For the manuscript information, and digital images of the manuscript, see www.llgc.org.uk/collections/digital-gallery/digitalmirror-manuscripts/the-middle-ages/book-of-aneirin/ [accessed 10 April 2015].

- ⁴⁵ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 41–2, 51–3; Dunshea, ‘The Meaning’, 81; Nerys Ann Jones, ‘Hengerdd in the Age of the Poets of the Princes’, in Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin*, 41–80, at 41–2.
- ⁴⁶ John Thomas Koch (ed. and trans.), *The ‘Gododdin’ of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), lxvi–lxix.
- ⁴⁷ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 42, 45.
- ⁴⁸ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 51–2.
- ⁴⁹ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 44.
- ⁵⁰ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 44–5.
- ⁵¹ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 45.
- ⁵² Koch (ed. and trans.), *The ‘Gododdin’ of Aneirin*, lxvi–lxvii, lxix–lxxi.
- ⁵³ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 42–3, but note that more recently it has been argued that later Welsh scribes could write in Old Welsh orthography too (Dunshea, ‘The Meaning’, 82).
- ⁵⁴ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 370.
- ⁵⁵ Dunshea, ‘The Meaning’, 81–2; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 367, 371, for the view that B may have been a copy of a text with variant stanzas in the margins.
- ⁵⁶ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 43; Jones, ‘Hengerdd’, 42.
- ⁵⁷ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 43–4.
- ⁵⁸ See, for instance, Patrick Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), and in an Irish context, Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth: Department of Old Irish, NUI Maynooth, 1990).
- ⁵⁹ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 371, 372.
- ⁶⁰ Koch (ed. and trans.), *The ‘Gododdin’ of Aneirin*, lxxii–lxxiii.
- ⁶¹ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 46–8; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 367–70.
- ⁶² Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 369–70, 372.
- ⁶³ Dunshea, ‘The Meaning’, 91–2.
- ⁶⁴ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 372, mentions the possibility that the fall of Rheged in the mid-7th century could be used to date the inclusion of Pais Dinogad, and thus the original composition and addition of the Strathcarron stanza before then, but he adds, ‘But this is very far from being a proof’. Koch (ed. and trans.), *The ‘Gododdin’ of Aneirin*, argues that most stages of *Y Gododdin*’s development took place before the late 8th century, indeed, mainly in the mid-7th century in Strathclyde and (for the A version) Wales, but this is based on very speculative interpretations of the likely context, apart from the general Strathclyde connection, and some doubtful conclusions, such as that the lack of the Strathcarron stanza in the B.2 version means that B.2, and the common source of the surviving versions, was created before c.640.

⁶⁵ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 52–3.

⁶⁶ O. J. Padel, 'Aneirin and Taliesin: Sceptical Speculations', in Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin*, 115–52, at 133–4. This also is the implication of Dunshea's theory ('The Meaning') that *Catraeth* became an increasingly important element in *Y Gododdin* as it came to be regarded mistakenly (since he argues that it may not have been a place name originally) as the central event of the corpus. However, this argument is speculative and not conclusive (Patrick Sims-Williams, review of Alex Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin*. *Dark Age Scotland in Medieval Wales*, in *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 66 (Winter 2013), 85–8, at 85–6), and the argument that the people mentioned in the *Gododdin* stanzas were largely people from the 9th to 11th centuries relocated in a heroic 'Old North' setting seems unlikely to me, begging the question of why such an obscure method of memorialising someone was chosen.

⁶⁷ Jones, 'Hengerdd'.

⁶⁸ Marged Haycock, 'Early Welsh Poets Look North', in Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin*, 7–39, at 17–18.

⁶⁹ Dunshea, 'The Meaning', 106–7; Thomas Owen Clancy, 'The Kingdoms of the North: Poetry, Places, Politics', in Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin*, 153–75, at 165.

⁷⁰ See Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, lxxiii–lxxv. For examples, see *ibid.*, lxxviii–lxxix, and notes on individual stanzas. Others note that 'Archaic' features are found in texts composed much later, but, even if potentially there was a tendency to produce later *Gododdin* stanzas in an intentionally old-fashioned form, the quantity of such features, many difficult for later generations to know, makes it likely that some of the stanzas were written in the Archaic linguistic period.

⁷¹ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 59–60, 62–3; Padel, 'Aneirin and Taliesin', 117–29, presents a number of potential linguistic problems with such an early origin for the poetry, but these are suggested difficulties not supported by evidence (and in need of further research, cf. Sims-Williams, review of Alex Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin*, 86), which admittedly is relatively lacking, since we have very little continuous text (as opposed to odd words, personal and place names) in the British language before the 10th century.

⁷² Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, cxxxi–cxlili, for a discussion of poetic features.

⁷³ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 86–90.

⁷⁴ Dunshea, 'The Meaning', 84–90, 100–3. See the sceptical view of Sims-Williams, review of Alex Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin*, 85–6.

⁷⁵ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 8–13.

⁷⁶ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 385–7.

⁷⁷ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 376, 386.

⁷⁸ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 376.

⁷⁹ Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, xli, for the quote.

⁸⁰ Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, xlvii–xlviii, xxxix.

⁸¹ Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, xlv–xlvii.

⁸² Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, xxx, xxxv.

⁸³ Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 131.

⁸⁴ This assumes that there was not a substantial time lag between the Catraeth campaign and the creation of stanzas relating to this battle.

⁸⁵ Dunshea, 'The Meaning', 93–7, 103–5. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 375–6, expresses a similar overall view.

⁸⁶ Nicholas Evans, 'Circin and Mag Gerginn: Pictish Territories in Irish and Scottish Sources', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 66 (Winter 2013), 1–36, esp. 5–7, 32, 33; Dunshea, 'The Meaning', 104; Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 140–1.

⁸⁷ My thanks go to Alex Woolf for telling me about his theory and providing Strang's article and some leads to follow. He has told me the basic conclusion, and that it follows from Strang by email, so my discussion probably does not discuss all the relevant evidence. His full argument will be a Whithorn lecture publication.

⁸⁸ As Woolf has pointed out to me.

⁸⁹ *Historia Brittonum*, Morris (ed. and trans.), Nennius, §62, 37, 79.

⁹⁰ Watson, *CPNS*, 103–4, 128.

⁹¹ David N. Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend', *History* 62 (1977), 173–92, at 181–3; Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 153.

⁹² Kenneth Jackson (ed. and trans.), 'The Duan Albanach', *Scottish Historical Review* 36, part 2 (October 1957), 125–37, at 128, 129.

⁹³ Jackson (ed. and trans.), 'The Duan Albanach', 134.

⁹⁴ Nicholas Evans, 'Cultural Contacts and Ethnic Origins in Viking Age Wales and Northern Britain: The Case of Albanus, Britain's First Inhabitant and Scottish Ancestor', *Journal of Medieval History* 41, no. 2 (2015), 1–24, at 6–7.

⁹⁵ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 69. The Jackson numeration of the stanzas (here B.6), rather than Clancy's, is followed by most scholars, so I will give Jackson's numbers in the first footnote reference. Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 101 (B.6) has 'Morien is spoken of as "looking at Eidyn"'.

⁹⁶ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 57; this is Jackson's A.41.

⁹⁷ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 57, 68–9. B.3 and A.41 are Jackson's B.5 and A.40.

⁹⁸ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 69. B.5 is Jackson's B.7.

⁹⁹ Dunshea, 'The Meaning', 103.

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 49–50.

¹⁰¹ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 375. For Werid as a British name for the Forth, see Simon Taylor with Gilbert Márkus, *The Place-Names of Fife, Volume One. West Fife Between Leven and Forth* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), s.n. Forth, 42–3.

¹⁰² Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 71; B.17 is Jackson's B.19.

¹⁰³ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 105 (B.19), has 'the region of Din Eidyn'.

¹⁰⁴ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 72. B.19 is Jackson's B.21. Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, 49, translated line 5 of this stanza as 'due to the taking of counsel in the mountain court', so Clancy's 'Mynyddawg' is translated as 'mountain court'.

¹⁰⁵ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 73–4. Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 108 (B.28), has 'It was usual [for him] to defend Gododdin on a spirited [horse] in the forefront of battle ...; usual that he should be swift on the track of the deer; usual that he attacked in front of the household troop of Deira; usual for the son of Golistan (though his father was no great lord) that what he said was listened to; usual were shields broken on behalf of Mynyddog; [usual] a red spear before that lord of Eidyn, Urfai'. Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, 9, translates the second from last line of this stanza as 'It was usual for the sake of the mountain court that shields be broken through', again translating Clancy's 'Mynyddawg' as 'mountain court'.

¹⁰⁶ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 75. Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 110 (B.34): 'they fled before Eidyn, the hill ...'.

¹⁰⁷ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 49–50. Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 120 (A.13) has 'there was none who put the enemy to flight from the stronghold of Eidyn [Eidyn ysgor, *ibid.*, 76] so utterly as he'.

¹⁰⁸ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 27–8.

¹⁰⁹ Dunshea, 'The Meaning', 87, and n. 38; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 368–9, 372.

¹¹⁰ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 50. Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 122 (A.16), does not have Eidyn here, but starts with 'Blaen from the spacious (?), splendid city used to urge on the faithful warriors who followed him'.

¹¹¹ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 51; A.17 is also Jackson's A.17.

¹¹² Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 51–2. Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 123 (A.18), has 'three ... battle-horsemen of Eidyn of the many goldsmiths'.

¹¹³ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 64–5. Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 146–7 (A.76), reads: 'Of the courteous one of Gododdin it shall be told forth; courteous in the share-out, he shall be lamented. With the fury of flame, he did not retreat in front of Eidyn, he stationed his true men in the van, he set up a stronghold in the face of battle, fiercely he attacked the bold [enemy]; because he feasted he suffered great hardship. Of the retinue of Mynyddog there did not escape but one man, brandishing his weapon, huge'. Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, 117, translates line eight of this stanza as 'Of the retinue from the mountain court there escaped', taking Clancy's 'Mynyddawg' as 'mountain court'.

¹¹⁴ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 156.

¹¹⁵ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 157–8.

¹¹⁶ See, for instance, Padel, 'Aneirin and Taliesin', 137–40, but even the less sceptical Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 368, 375–6, and Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, lxxiii, ciii, regards such stanzas as potential additions.

¹¹⁷ Padel, 'Aneirin and Taliesin', 140–1; Koch (ed. and trans.), *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, xciii.

¹¹⁸ Both quotes are from Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 376.

- ¹¹⁹ Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007).
- ¹²⁰ Clancy, *Triumph Tree*, 91–2.
- ¹²¹ Haycock, 'Early Welsh Poets', 18. Clancy, 'The Kingdoms of the North', 155–6, 158, 164–5, who is more positive about the authenticity of this poem than I am here.
- ¹²² Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in Rachel Bromwich et al. (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh. The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 33–71, at 39.
- ¹²³ Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', 38–43, lines 25–8, 37–47, of the poem.
- ¹²⁴ Pa gur, Jon B. Coe and Simon Young (eds and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers, 1995), 127–33.
- ¹²⁵ Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', 42.
- ¹²⁶ Haycock, 'Early Welsh Poets', 13; 'How Culhwch won Olwen', Sioned Davies (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 179–213, at 197, 212–13, 270.
- ¹²⁷ Rachel Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), 65–9, 467–8.
- ¹²⁸ Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 238.
- ¹²⁹ Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 240, 241.
- ¹³⁰ Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 251, 253.
- ¹³¹ Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 309–10.
- ¹³² 'How Culhwch won Olwen', Sioned Davies (trans.), *The Mabinogion*, 188.
- ¹³³ Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 70–3, 419.
- ¹³⁴ Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 405; Haycock, 'Early Welsh Poets', 23, n. 28.
- ¹³⁵ Haycock, 'Early Welsh Poets', 23, n. 28.
- ¹³⁶ Haycock, 'Early Welsh Poets', 9–10.
- ¹³⁷ This summarises a somewhat more complex picture, since in the 12th century the kingdom of the Scots for a period controlled Northumberland, County Durham and parts of Cumbria. The general modern boundary was with hindsight only really settled in the late 12th or early 13th century. See William M. Aird, 'Northumbria and the Making of the Kingdom of the English', in Hirokazu Tsurushima (ed.), *Nations in Medieval Britain* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2010), 45–60.
- ¹³⁸ For this process, see Alex Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba. 789–1070* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 177–205, 209–11.
- ¹³⁹ 'The Chronicle of the Kings of Alba', Marjorie O. Anderson (ed.), *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1980; repr. Edinburgh: John Donald, 2011), 249–53, at 252: *Idulfus tenuit regnum .viii. annis; in huius tempore opidum Eden uacuatum est ac relictum est Scottis usque in hodiernum diem.*

¹⁴⁰ 'The Chronicle of the Kings of Alba', Anderson (ed.), *Kings and Kingship*, 251.

¹⁴¹ See Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, 193–5, who also notes that the spelling, Eden, is later.

¹⁴² David H. Caldwell, 'Edinburgh Under Siege' (unpublished report), 1; Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, 163–4; D. Murphy (ed.), *The Annals of Clonmacnoise* (Dublin: Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, 1896, repr. Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers, 1993), s.a. 928 (which is AD 934). Other texts clearly show that the campaign went further north than Edinburgh, which is what this source states.

¹⁴³ Caldwell, 'Edinburgh Under Siege', 2–3.

¹⁴⁴ For the date and the saint, see Pádraig Ó Riain, *A Dictionary of Irish Saints* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), 495–7.

¹⁴⁵ Mario Esposito (ed.), 'Conchubrani Vita Sanctae Monennae', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 28 C (1910), 202–51, at 233–4; Ulster Society for Medieval Latin Studies (ed. and trans.), 'The Life of St Monenna by Conchubranus: Part III (Continued)', *Seanchas Ardmhacha* 10, no. 2 (1982), 426–54, at 440, 441. Interestingly, the other places are Chilnecase (possibly Whithorn) in Galloway, Dumbarton (Dunbreten), Stirling and, unusually, Dunpelede (Traprain Law), *ibid.*, 452, while later events happen in Alyth and Luncarty in Perthshire, demonstrating that this source included local knowledge of Scotland.

¹⁴⁶ Watson, CPNS, 341.

¹⁴⁷ See W. F. H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2001, 2nd edn), 158–75, for discussion and examples of Gaelic place names in Lothian, including Balemo, Balleny, Ballencrieff, Auchendinny and Auchindoon. Baile place names, meaning 'land-holding, farm, vill', can be dated to the late 11th century or later (Simon Taylor with Gilbert Márkus, *The Place-Names of Fife. Volume Five. Discussion, Glossaries, Texts with Addenda and Corrigenda of Volumes 1–4* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2012), 223–4, 225–35). For a recent general discussion of the state of scholarship, see T. Clancy, 'Gaelic in Medieval Scotland: Advent and Expansion', *The Sir John Rhys Memorial Lecture, 2009*, in Ron Johnston (ed.), *Proceedings of the British Academy 167 (2009 Lectures)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 349–92.

¹⁴⁸ Watson, CPNS, 141, for Dunbar ('summit fort', probably taken over from British *din-bar* with the same meaning'), 348–9, for examples of translation, including Falkirk, which is a direct Scots translation of Gaelic 'an Eaglais Bhreac', ('the speckled church'), with a British form *Egglesbreth* in the early-12th-century 'Symeon of Durham'.

¹⁴⁹ Watson, CPNS, 340–1.

¹⁵⁰ Watson, CPNS, 341.

¹⁵¹ Watson, CPNS, 341.

¹⁵² Anders Ahlqvist, 'The Name *Din Eidyn* "Edinburgh"', *Celtic and Scottish Studies Research Seminar paper* (2012?); see now Anders Ahlqvist, 'Three Otago Place-Names of Celtic (?) Origin', *Australian Celtic Journal* 10 (2012), 83–103, which I have not been able to read.

¹⁵³ Watson, CPNS, 341–2.

¹⁵⁴ Watson, CPNS, 341–2; Document 4/4/1 in the *People of Medieval Scotland 1093–1314* database, at <http://db.poms.ac.uk/record/place/4075/#> [accessed 10 April 2015].

- ¹⁵⁵ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *De Gestis Britonum*, Michael D. Reeve (ed.), Neil Wright (trans.), Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain. An Edition and Translation of the De gestis Britonum (Historia Regum Britanniae)* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), 34, 35.
- ¹⁵⁶ Watson, CPNS, 341 for Mynydd Agned being one of Arthur's battles; *Historia Brittonum*, §56, Morris (ed. and trans.), Nennius, 35, 76 (bellum in monte qui dicitur Agned).
- ¹⁵⁷ Watson, CPNS, 342.
- ¹⁵⁸ 'The Chronicle of the Kings of Alba', Anderson (ed.), *Kings and Kingship*, 249.
- ¹⁵⁹ Watson, CPNS, 340; Kenneth Jackson, 'Edinburgh and the Anglian Occupation of Lothian', in Peter Clemons (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1959), 35–42; Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 75–6.
- ¹⁶⁰ Jackson, 'Edinburgh', 39–40.
- ¹⁶¹ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 76–7.
- ¹⁶² Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 76.
- ¹⁶³ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 77; Watson, CPNS, 369–70.
- ¹⁶⁴ Watson, CPNS, 341.
- ¹⁶⁵ Personal communication from Alex Woolf.
- ¹⁶⁶ Taylor, 'Introduction' to Watson, CPNS, xxi.
- ¹⁶⁷ Bethany Fox, 'The P-Celtic Place-Names of North-East England and South-East Scotland', *The Heroic Age* 10 (May 2007), www.heroicage.org/issues/10/fox.html [accessed 10 April 2015] at www.heroicage.org/issues/10/fox-appendix.html.
- ¹⁶⁸ Watson, CPNS, 341. *Liber Sancte Marie de Melros*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1837).
- ¹⁶⁹ Watson, CPNS, 340–1.
- ¹⁷⁰ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, 76–8.
- ¹⁷¹ See above, and Ifor Williams (ed.), *Canu Aneirin* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1938), xlv. B, 20.
- ¹⁷² See Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 171, for this suggestion.



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