

THE ARTHURIAN CAMPAIGN

By JOHN EVANS, F.S.A.

ARTHUR and his battles have been often debated as one of the many problems which make the history of the fifth and sixth centuries so tantalizing and yet so enticing to the student. For it is not only that the records of this period are so meagre, their meanings so often obscure and their value so doubtful, but, such as they are they often contradict each other.

Ignoring the last and fatal, if dubious, battle of Camlann, Arthur is credited with twelve famous battles with the Saxons, in all of which he was victorious, or so Nennius tells us in a well-known passage.¹ Here is the tale of them including the various readings of the site names from the different recensions of Nennius's book.²

First	At the mouth of the river Glein (Glem, Glemu, Gem).
Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth	On the river Dubglas in the region Linnuis (Duglas, Linuis, Inniis).
Sixth	On the river Bassus (Lassus).
Seventh	In the wood of Celidon, which is Cat Coit Celidon (Callidonis, Calidon).
Eighth	In the castle of Guinnion (Guinnon, Guinon, Gunnion).
Ninth	In the city of the Legion, or Cair Lion.
Tenth	On the river Tribut (Ribroit, Robroit, Trahtreuroit, Tractheuroit).
Eleventh	On the mount Agned (Bregomion, Agnet tha Bregomion, Agned Cath Regomion, Breguion, Breouin, Cat Bregion).
Twelfth	On the mount Badon (Badonis, Hadonis).

Inserted in Nennius is a brief chronicle of events from the middle of the fifth century to the middle of the tenth which is known as the *Annales Cambriæ* and in it the battle of Badon is listed as having been fought in the year 516. Now there can be no doubt that Nennius believed that he was describing a campaign of which he gives the battles

¹ Nennius. *Historia Brittonum*. The notes on the variant readings are those supplied by Mr. R. G. Collingwood in *Antiquity*, III, 297.

² *Cat* and *Cath* are Old Welsh for battle, *cair* for city or fortress, and *coit* for wood.

in their order and numbered them accordingly, and we have independent and unassailable evidence as to the historicity of the mount Badon battle, for it is mentioned in a personal connexion by a much earlier writer, Gildas, who wrote his book before 547.³ He even tries to date it but, true to his usual almost unintelligible style, he so phrases the information as to make his meaning very uncertain. He writes, in Latin which has been described as very peculiar and obscure, that the Badon battle was fought in the year of his own birth which was forty-four years from some event which he does not make clear. It could mean forty-four years from the time that he was writing, probably about 545, which would date the battle about 501, or he may have meant that the battle was fought forty-four years after the first appearance of the Saxons in Britain. The traditional date for the landing of the Saxon war-bands in Kent was 447 to 449, which would date Mount Badon back to 492. But 447 to 449 is the earliest which we can allow for the *adventus Saxonum* in Kent and it may well have been later. We have thus derived three dates for the *last* battle, 492, 501 and 516, and assuming that the campaign lasted a decade⁴ we get the following three periods for it :

1. 482-492
2. 491-501
3. 506-516.

These estimates give a maximum spread of thirty-four years (482-516) to cover the campaign and we need now to look for clues which may narrow this field.

We turn first to the Arthurian passage in Nennius itself ; ‘ At that time ’, he writes, ‘ the Saxons were waxing strong in numbers and were increasing in Britain. When Hengist was dead, Oetha, his son, passed over from the northern part of Britain to the kingdom of the Kentishmen and from him sprung the kings of the Kentishmen. *Then it was that Arthur was wont to fight against them in those days along with the kings of the Britons, but he himself was dux bellorum.*’⁵ In other words, Arthur fought against the Saxons, there being no word of the Picts and Scots, at the time of the death of Hengist and the appearance of his son in Kent. We are not sure of the identity of this son for although Nennius calls him Oetha, Bede names him Oisc, surnamed Oeric, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* agrees⁶ with this by calling him Aesc ; Octa, according to Bede, was the son of Oisc and therefor

³ Gildas. *De Excidio et Conquestu Britannicæ*.

⁴ The only excuse for this assumption is the weak one that on the *very dubious* authority of the *Chronicle* the first three battles of the mid-fifth century Kentish campaign were spread over eleven years. And presumably campaigns were only undertaken in the summers.

⁵ Nennius, Cap 56. My italics.

⁶ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Rolls Edn. Hereafter the *Chronicle* or ASC.

the grandson of Hengist.⁷ The Chronicle records the death of Hengist as occurring in 488, and even if this date is only approximate its significant agreement with the period of the Arthurian campaign is striking. For if when the new king had settled in Kent he began an aggressive movement towards the west it could have provoked the initiation of the Arthurian campaign against him about 490, which carries with it the further implication that the 500 date for Mount Badon is very near the mark.⁸

The names of the battle sites cannot be identified now although many attempts have been made to do so ; often such exercises have lacked conviction if only because they so frequently locate them in areas where there were no Saxons to fight at the time, and, in some cases, not for long afterwards if at all. Yet the battles have been located in districts as far apart as the lowlands of Scotland and the south-west of England. There were certainly no Saxons in the latter region until long after this date, while in the north two powerful British states, Rheged and Strathclyde, were holding in check both the beginning of Anglian settlement on the south coast of the Firth of Forth and the small territory of the Niduarian Picts in Wigtownshire and Kirkcudbright. Commentators have been too much influenced by the 'Arthurian' country of the south-west, forgetting that Arthurian names and legends, when they do not date from the twelfth century, have persisted there through the long survival of the Celtic peoples and their language long after they had disappeared from the remaining areas of the lowland zone of England. For Kent, East Anglia, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire were once as Celtic as Wales, Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. Two of the battle names in particular have been misleading, for that fought in the wood of Celidon has been widely interpreted as referring to the Caledonian forest in Scotland, while the ninth battle at the city of the Legion, glossed as Cair Lion, suggests Caerleon-on-Usk, although how Arthur could have fought Saxons in Perthshire and Wales, where no Saxons ever were, is beyond conjecture.⁹ One view of

⁷ In one Welsh text Arthur is represented as on his way with his whole army to fight an Osla Gyllellvawr (Osla or Ossa of the Big Knife) at Baddon. This is in the early thirteenth-century tale of *Rhonabwy's Dream* preserved in the Red Book of Hergest.

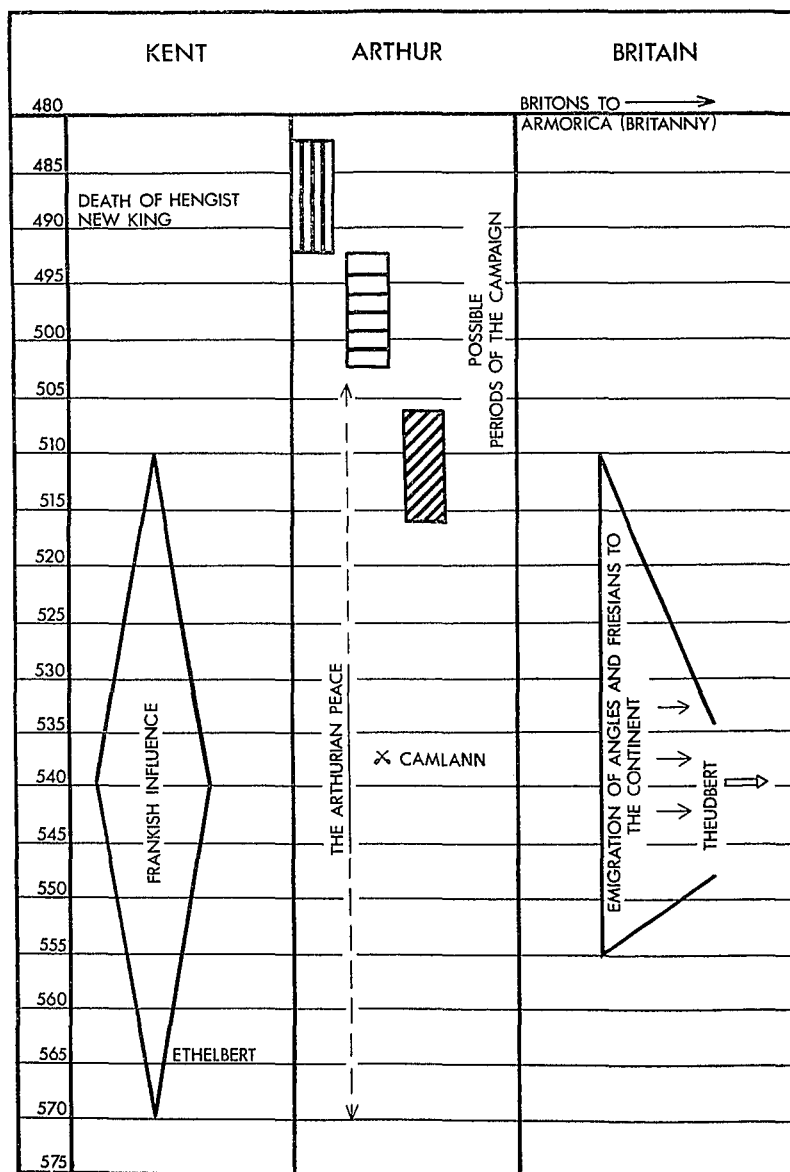
In the Dingestow version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* it is stated that Ossa was a cousin of 'Otea (Octa)mab Heingyst', i.e. Octa, son of Hengist. Here we seem to have a tradition that Arthur did fight Octa-Oise, son of Hengist.

⁸ For further discussion on the battle date see later.

⁹ K. H. Jackson writes, 'Arthur was fighting "Saxons" (as Nennius clearly shows, and specifically the Kentish men) and there were none near Chester or in the North in Arthur's time', and goes on, 'no amount of ingenuity can make Badon, the most probably genuine of them all, anything but a battle against the Saxons or Jutes in southern England'. R. S. Loomis, *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, 1959, Chap. 1. K. H. Jackson, *The Arthur of History*, 10.

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TABLE 1.



Arthur's battles is that they were fought up and down the country in England and the lowlands of Scotland by means of a cavalry force which could dash from place to place as need arose ;¹⁰ this involves the proposition that the invaders had made deep penetrations into Britain at an earlier date than we have knowledge, or the traditions of the English themselves allow. Gildas, it is true, speaks of devastations from coast to coast, but his historical perspective is so distorted and his attitude so hysterical that little reliance can be placed upon him in this regard. The long occupation of Roman villas in Central and South Britain militates against the theory of an earlier occupation by the barbarians.

At the time of the floreat of Arthur the chief Saxon bases for any advance to the west were first and foremost Kent, less certainly the Thames valley, possibly East Anglia, while limited incursions may have been possible from the small holdings on the coasts of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. But undoubtedly the chief threat to Celtic Britain came from the established Saxon settlement in Kent. For here the dry and open plateau tract of the North Downs extended from the Channel coast westwards to the Thames valley, pointing to the heart of Britain. Its backbone was the Roman military Way of Watling Street which ran from Canterbury through Rochester to London, while near its southern margin an ancient track, known today as the Pilgrim Way, took its long course from the coast near Folkestone to Salisbury Plain, crossing the Medway near Aylesford and the Darent near Otford. With Canterbury as centre a network of roads extended like the fingers of a hand to the Kentish forts of the Saxon Shore of Richborough, Reculver, Dover and Lympne, and another road ran from the last-named fort through Maidstone to Rochester. This land corridor, guarded by the fortresses of Canterbury and Rochester, its coastal rear covered by the Saxon Shore forts, and served by an excellent road system, formed a bastion of defence for the natives, but, by the same token, a base and a corridor for advance in the hands of an enemy. It constituted the early Saxon kingdom of Kent for neither archæology nor place-names provide any evidence whatever of early Saxon settlement south of the North Downs. For the great forest of the Weald filled the heart of Kent wherein operations even by small bands would have been difficult.

So far as we know the first Kentish campaign of 455-473(?) was confined to this corridor. The two records of it are as follows :

¹⁰ In the same place Jackson writes that the 'cavalry tactics' concept is unfounded and remarks that even Collingwood, who championed the theory, admitted that Arthur as leader of a band of mounted knights is unknown before Geoffrey of Monmouth (early twelfth century); 'it is, of course, a Norman concept'. 9, and footnote 4.

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British Record Nennius	Saxon Record The <i>Chronicle</i>	
1. Derquentid (Darent, Derwent)	Aegelesthrep (Aylesford)	455
2. Episford (Aylesford)	Crecganford (Crayford)	457
3. Lapis Tituli, or the inscribed stone by the Gallic Sea	Wippedes Fleot	466
4. No record	No name	473

It is assumed that Nennius's Darent battle is the same as that noted in the *Chronicle* as taking place near Crayford, and that the mysterious Lapis Tituli equates with the equally unknown Wippedes Fleot. Nennius asserts that the invaders were driven out of Kent into the sea, and both the Gallic Sea and Wippedes Fleot suggest the Channel coast in east Kent, but the *Chronicle* as always only records Saxon victories.

Arthur's battles may have constituted the second Kentish campaign having for its object either to expel the Saxons finally from Kent or to contain a westward thrust by the new king in Kent. If the first was the object we might expect the battles to range into mid if not east Kent, but if the second was the fact then the battlefields might be sought in west Kent, in that area bound by the Thames in the north, the Medway in the east, the Downs along the south and the Darent-Cray in the west. There is no intention here to repeat the barren task of attempting to identify the battle sites but a comment on the character of the engagements may be useful. Of the twelve battles no less than seven were fought on river banks, four of them on the same river, one in a wood or forest, two on hills and two associated in some way with fortresses. The high proportion fought on rivers is true also of the battles of the first campaign where three out of four were associated with rivers or streams. This feature of the campaigns is in accord with the known Saxon predilection for camping and settling in defensible positions on rivers, especially near fords, and it would therefore seem that these particular battles were fought either to force or defend the lines of rivers. As noted above a battle in the first campaign was fought on the Darent or Cray, which both bear Celtic (British) names, while less certainly we are told that the Medway may mean the mead-coloured Wye or Wey. We learn also that the name of Thames means, in British, the *dark river* which is precisely the meaning of the name of the Duglas river (*black stream*),¹¹ on whose shores were fought the four battles in the second campaign. Two other engagements were fought on mounts or hills of which there are no lack in Kent, while as regards

¹¹ Cameron. *English Place-Names*, 38. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*. Ekwall.

the wood of Celidon or Celyddon we are informed that this was a common British name for woods.¹²

These ten battles are of a campaign in open country but the two remaining encounters were in some manner concerned with fortresses. The Saxons could storm such defended positions but it is very improbable that they would garrison such places themselves ; indeed it is insisted that they avoided the Roman towns and forts but this is rather negative evidence since no early Saxon living site is known. The battles of Guinnion and Cair Lion could thus have been Saxon assaults on British garrisons or attempts by the British forces to relieve garrisons, or, of course, the battles may have been fought in the open fields near these places. When writing of the twenty-eight cities of Britain both Gildas and Nennius¹³ differentiate between civitates or cities and castellis or castles ; the former, when protected by ramparts, were cairns, from the Latin castra, and the twenty-eight cities were all cairns as opposed to castles which were smaller military works. Rochester (Durobrivis) was such a cairn and its Celtic British name which means *fortress at the bridges* well describes its function in guarding the place where Watling Street crosses the Medway.¹⁴ We need not take too seriously the expression 'City of the Legion' for this need not imply a legionary fortress such as York or Richborough, but simply a walled city which once had a garrison. Unless, of course, Arthur reached Richborough.

Except for a few river names Celtic British place-names are rare in the south-east of England, but even if we knew them all it would not necessarily follow that this would solve the problem of Arthur's battles ; for by the time that they were written down the site names may have become corrupted, changed or forgotten. We have the parallel case of the above-mentioned list of the twenty-eight cities in which Canterbury (Durovernum) is called Cair Ceint and the names of other cities are quite unrecognizable although they all had perfectly good British-Latin names in the time of the Empire.

But whatever doubts may reasonably be entertained concerning the personality of the commander of the native British armies or of the area of their operations there need be none whatever regarding the results of them. For there is no doubt but what the British campaign which ended with the crowning victory of Mount Badon halted the Saxon advance and brought a long peace to the island. Gildas, who was born in the year of the battle and who therefore grew up in the

¹² 'Celyddon seems to have been used of British forests generally and the most famous was the Weald.' W. G. Collingwood, *Antiquity*, III, 295.

¹³ Gildas, 3. Nennius, 8.

¹⁴ I have suggested that it might be the Cair Guiragon of the List. *Arch. Cant.*, LXXVI, 209.

decades which followed, is emphatic ; for he writes that the victory of Mount Badon was almost the last slaughter of the enemy, and thereafter there was peace, an unexpected recovery and prosperity in his time. The traditions of the English as preserved in the *Chronicle* confirm this peace, for from the year 488, when Hengist died, until 547, when Ida is reported to have founded the Anglian kingdom of Northumbria, a period of sixty years, the only entries concern alleged landings of Saxons on the south coast. These episodes are of very doubtful validity, for some of the incidents have been duplicated while others are clearly mythical since the leaders Port and Whitgar are obvious eponyms of Portsmouth and Wight. The dates also are particularly unsatisfactory ; for instance, Cerdic and Cynric are reported to have landed in 495, yet the latter did not capture Salisbury until 552, apparently taking a leisurely fifty-seven years to advance twenty-five miles, during which time also Cynric, who must have been a young man in 495, became an old man of near sixty when Salisbury was taken and was apparently well on to seventy when he was reported to have died several years later. Discrepancies like this occur frequently in the earlier parts of the *Chronicle*, and it would seem that events in the fifth century particularly are dated too early. On affairs in Kent the *Chronicle* is entirely silent from 488 until 565 and much happened in the county during those seventy-seven years.

Not only were the Saxons halted but there is good evidence of a retreat and an emigration out of Britain. For Procopius, the Byzantine historian, writing soon after the middle of the sixth century, reports that Britons, Angiloi and Phrissones (Friesians) were crossing in great numbers from Britain to the Continent in the first half of the sixth century and that this movement was at its peak during the reign of the Frankish king Theudbert, whose dates are 534 to 548.¹⁵ The migration of the native Britons is well known and was reported also by Gildas ; it was that great movement which turned Armorica into Brittany and established that close cultural link between the Celtic peoples of Brittany, Cornwall and Wales which is exemplified in the Arthurian legend ; but it is believed that this migration took place somewhat earlier. Of the passage in Procopius Sir Frank Stenton has written¹⁶ : ‘ If it is at all near the truth, it means that the English penetration of the south had been checked, some, and perhaps many, years before the middle of the sixth century. No Germanic race ever took to the sea without some urgent reason, and a reverse migration of English peoples to the Continent at this date would imply that the invaders had outgrown their first settlements and abandoned the attempt to find new ones. Whatever may have been the English

¹⁵ Quoted by Sir Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 5, 6, 7. .

¹⁶ Sir Frank Stenton, as above.

frontier after the battle of Mons Badonicus it cannot have been materially extended during the long peace which followed. It (the statement of Procopius) is a warning against the assumption that the war left the English in possession of the centre as well as the east and south-east of Britain. It (the statement of Procopius) is brought within the sphere of history by an independent Germanic tradition of a migration of English peoples from Britain to the Continent in the first half of the sixth century.'

We are concerned here primarily with the effect in Kent of the Arthurian war, and since no written records are available we turn to Dr. E. T. Leeds, who gives the verdict of archæology¹⁷ :

'To put the matter in a simple form, three, if not four, stages of Kentish archæology can be recognized. They stand out in strongly defined outlines, clearly distinguishable from one another, illustrating the fortunes of the Kentish settlers in a manner to which the rest of Anglo-Saxon England can offer no parallel :

From c. A.D. 450 to 500, the Jutish Phase, the period of initial occupation, in which the material is scarcely distinguishable from that of other districts . . . It consists, in short, of types common to the tribes of Anglo-Saxon stock which migrated from North Germany to Britain.

Early to late sixth century, the Frankish Phase, one of pronounced foreign influence. It is unnecessary nowadays to dilate upon the markedly Frankish character of much that is found in Kent. One might even speak of Frankish pure and simple without any reservations whatever in regard to their place of origin, so close are the points of resemblance between many of the Kentish finds and others on the Continent. So much so that a suspicion is aroused as to whether the causes that lie behind the rapid alteration in the whole character of the Jutish culture are not something more than the mere vagaries of fashion, and are not in reality due to economic factors for which we possess no historical evidence but which seem to be implied in the very changes themselves.

We thus arrive at a position where Kent, after an initial period of an Anglo-Saxon culture in its limited connotation passes with amazing suddenness into one of a purely Frankish type, out of which is rapidly developed a Kentish style.

The change that thus takes place in Kent falls into line with a gradual westwardly shift of a large part of the Franks, and may indeed be due to settlement of some body of them in this country. I do not for one moment believe that it is possible that the Jutes should have undergone such a complete transformation simply as a result of mere commercial imports.'

¹⁷ E. T. Leeds. *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*, 43, 44, 53, 57.

Elsewhere, writing of the culture of the Cantwaras, Dr. Leeds remarks¹⁸ :

‘The main culture, on the other hand, stands out in such striking contrast to that of the rest of England that it becomes at once hard to credit that the Cantwaras could ever have been of a race that traced its origins to ancestors of the same stock as the Angles or Saxons proper.’

These various pieces of evidence and expressions of opinions have been brought into relationship with each other in the data exhibited in Table 1. Here, against the background of the first three-quarters of the sixth century, are shown the three possible periods for the Arthurian campaign and the contemporary events which accompanied the resultant Arthurian peace. From eastern Britain generally and possibly also from Kent there was a considerable exodus of Anglo-Saxons. In Kent the sudden phenomenon of Frankish influence indicates a weakening of the original settlements and the imposition of Frankish suzerainty if not an actual Frankish occupation. Nor was this Frankish influence confined to art for the differences in custom, law and usage from those in the rest of Anglo-Saxon England have the same origin.

Bede declared that the ancestors of the Cantwaras were Jutes from Jutland, although he does not call Hengist a Jute and he elsewhere refers to the people of Kent as Angles. Archæology knows nothing of the Jutes and in order to reconcile the observed facts with the statement of Bede it has been assumed that the ‘Jutes’ came not from Jutland but from the lower Rhine country, where they had long been under the influence of Frankish culture and custom so that when they passed into Kent they were to all intents and purposes Franks. On the other hand the simple explanation may be that the original fifth century invaders were indeed Jutes from Jutland, associated with the Angles and the Saxons and sharing that generalized culture to which Dr. Leeds refers.

In ascribing the campaign to the generalship of Arthur we are following Nennius. It is not clear to me that Gildas attributes the Mount Badon battle to Ambrosius Aurelianus, for this is surely too late for this earlier *dux bellorum* who was also Great King among the kings of the Britons.¹⁹ Possibly Arthur served his apprenticeship in war under Ambrosius. It is really no stumbling block to the recognition of Arthur that Gildas does not mention him by name for this author seems

¹⁸ E. T. Leeds, *The Archæology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, 102.

¹⁹ Vortigern, Nennius tells us, was in dread of Ambrosius, which means that they were contemporaries, although Ambrosius was probably the younger man; this must have been about the middle of the fifth century, so that Ambrosius could hardly have been in command throughout the campaign. He certainly seems to have succeeded Vortigern as high king for he gave lands in Wales to Pascent, a son of Vortigern.

to have had a psychological inhibition about names, for, incredible as it may seem, in an historical sketch covering Roman and sub-Roman Britain he only gives three personal names, apart from three others of martyrs. He does not mention Vortigern, Hengist or St. Germanus, and for an earlier period cannot even bring himself to identify the 'deceitful lioness', Boadicea.

Arthur himself may have been Great King in succession to Ambrosius for he is sometimes called emperor and 'Head of the Princes of this Isle' in Welsh traditional literature. A rebellion against his authority during the peace by jealous kinglets may form the basis of the legend of the revolt of Medraut, which ended in the fatal battle of Camlann which appears in the *Annales* under date 537. Certain it is that a decade or so later the Saxon advance was resumed and the long peace came gradually to an end. Within eighty years more Loegria was lost to the Britons for ever.

EXCURSUS ON GILDAS AND THE MONS BADONICUS

Gildas writes three things about this battle two of which are plain statements of fact and the third a computus which has baffled his readers ever since. The statements are that Mount Badon was almost the last battle in a campaign waged by the natives against the invaders, and that it was fought in the year of his own birth. He then adds a mysterious sentence to the effect that a period of forty-four years is associated in some way with the year of the battle and his birth with an event either forwards or backwards in time.

It will be worth while at this stage to recall what we know of Gildas himself. He was reputedly born in the British kingdom of Strathclyde, was educated under St. Iltud, became an ecclesiastic of some kind and carried out missionary work in the North and visited Ireland. Certainly St. Gildas Sapiens was held in high esteem in the latter country and, according to the *Life* of him by the monk of Ruys (eleventh century) it was a king Anmericus who invited him to Ireland to reform the Church there. The *Annales Cambriæ* give the following dates for Gildas : born, i.e. battle of Mount Badon, 516, a voyage to Ireland in 565 and death in 570.

The date of the writing of *De Excidio Britanniae* is generally taken to be between 540 and 545. The evidence for the latest date in which it could have been written is furnished indirectly by the book itself. Among five British kings so fiercely and bitterly assailed by our author in the Epistle section of the book was Maglocunus (Mailcun, Mælgwn) king of Gwynedd in north Wales ; and he is reported in the *Annales* to have died in 547, a victim of the Great Pestilence which was then raging in Britain. Now this same plague, the Great Mortality, was ravaging the empire of Justinian in 544 and might thus be expected to reach

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Wales two or three years later. The date of Maglocunus's death thus seems confirmed, and as he was still alive and pursuing his wicked courses when Gildas finished his book, then this could not have been later than 545 or so.

TABLE 2.

THE PERSONAL CHRONOLOGY OF GILDAS			
THE THREE DATES FOR BADON			
	LATE	MIDDLE	EARLY
490			BIRTH
495			
500		BIRTH	
505			
510			
515	BIRTH		
520			
525			
530			
535			
540			
545	DE EXCIDIO COMPLETED		
	AGED 29	AGED 44	AGED 53
550			
555			
560			
565	IRELAND	IRELAND	IRELAND
570	DEATH AGED 54	DEATH AGED 69	DEATH AGED 78

Kenny²⁰ tells us that the king Anmericus who invited Gildas to Ireland was undoubtedly Ainnire, an *ard-ri* or high king of that country, but unfortunately there is as yet no agreement among scholars in the matter of Irish regal chronology and the dates for Ainnire have been variously given as 548-551, 566-569 and 573-576. The middle

²⁰ J. F. Kenny, *The Sources for the early History of Ireland*, 178.

period agrees best with *Annales* entries as regards voyage and death, but any of the periods could be made to cover a possible life-span of Gildas.

The three possible dates for the Mons Badonicus and their effect upon the personal chronology of Gildas is shown graphically in Table 2. The objection to the late battle-birth year of 516 (*Annales*) is that it involves the proposition that Gildas wrote the *De Excidio* before he was thirty years of age, and it is impossible to believe this, unless he was really acting as an amanuensis to an older man, of which we have no evidence whatever. And also in this case the forty-four years sentence has no application at all that we can see. The middle battle-birth date indicates that Gildas was writing at the age of forty-four and died at sixty-nine. This is reasonable, as is the assumption upon which it is founded which is that Gildas meant that the battle was fought forty-four years before the time that he was writing. The early date involves the theory that the forty-four years dated from the first coming of the Saxons, and we have to assume also that Gildas himself thought that this event took place around 447-449. And if the *Annales* entry as to his death-year is accurate Gildas would have lived to the very old age of 78 years which is difficult to accept.

Kenny²¹ quotes yet another theory to the effect that Gildas really meant that he was forty-four years old *at the time of the battle*. In which case he would have been a very old man when writing and both the Irish and *Annales* evidence, for what it is worth, must be ignored. And, of course, we get no clue whatever as to the date of Mount Badon.

The fragility of this evidence needs no stressing, but we have to work with what data we can obtain. In the last resort all these matters must to a large extent be a matter of individual opinion. This writer believes that a date in the early years of the sixth century for the end of the Arthurian campaign suits all the circumstances best.

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²¹ Kenny, as above, 151.