

AD

402 - Events on the continent force Stilicho to recall one of the two British legions to assist with the defense of Italy against Alaric and the Visigoths. The recalled legion, known as the Sixth Victrix, was said by Claudian (in "De Bello Gallico," 416) to be "that legion which is stretched before the remoter Britons, which curbs the Scot, and gazes on the tattoo-marks on the pale face of the dying Pict." The barbarians were defeated, this time, at battle of Pollentia.

403 - Victricius, Bishop of Rouen, visited Britain for the purpose of bringing peace to the island's clergy, who were in the midst of a dispute, possibly over the Pelagian heresy.

405 - The British troops, which had been recalled to assist Stilicho, were never returned to Britain as they had to stay in Italy to fight off another, deeper penetration by the barbarian chieftain, Radagaisus.

406 - In early January, 406, a combined barbarian force (Suevi, Alans, Vandals & Burgundians) swept into central Gaul, severing contact between Rome and Britain. In autumn 406, the remaining Roman army in Britain decided to mutiny. One Marcus was proclaimed emperor in Britain, but was immediately assassinated.

407 - In place of the assassinated Marcus, Gratian was elevated "to the purple," but lasted only four months. Constantine III was hailed as the new emperor by Roman garrison in Britain. He proceeded to follow the example of Magnus Maximus by withdrawing the remaining Roman legion, the Second Augusta, and crossing over into Gaul to rally support for his cause. Constantine's departure could be what Nennius called "the end of the Roman Empire in Britain. . ."

408 - With both Roman legions withdrawn, Britain endures devastating attacks by the Picts, Scots and Saxons.

409 - Prosper, in his chronicle, says, "in the fifteenth year of Honorius and Arcadius (409), on account of the languishing state of the Romans, the strength of the Britons was brought to a desperate pass." Under enormous pressure, Britons take matters into their own hands, expelling weak Roman officials and fighting for themselves.

410 - Britain gains "independence" from Rome. The Goths, under Alaric, sack Rome.

413 - Pelagian heresy said to have begun, by Prosper (Tiro) of Aquitaine in his "Chronicle."

420-30 - Pelagian heresy outlawed in Rome (418), but in Britain, enjoys much support from "pro-Celtic" faction. Traditionalists (pro-Romans) support Roman church. During this time, according to Prosper, Britain is ruled by petty "tyrants."

421 - Honorius issued a decree forbidding any Pelagians to come nearer to Rome than the one-hundredth mile marker.

429 - At the request of Palladius, a British deacon, Pope Celestine I dispatches bishops Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes to Britain to combat Pelagian heresy. While in Britain, Germanus, a former military man, leads Britons to "Hallelujah" victory in Wales.

c.432 - Traditional dating for the beginning of St. Patrick's mission to Ireland

c.438 - Probable birth of Ambrosius Aurelianus, scion of the leading Romano-British family on the island.

c.440-50 - Period of civil war and famine in Britain, caused by ruling council's weakness and inability to deal with Pictish invasions; situation aggravated by tensions between Pelagian/Roman factions. Vacated towns and cities in ruin. Migration of pro-Roman citizens toward west. Country beginning to be divided, geographically, along factional lines.

c.441 - Gallic Chronicle records, prematurely, that "Britain, abandoned by the Romans, passed into the power of the Saxons."

c.445 -Vortigern comes to power in Britain.

446 - Britons (probably the pro-Roman party) appeal to Aetius, Roman governor of Gaul, for military assistance in their struggle against the Picts and the Irish (Scots). No help could be sent, at this time, as Aetius had his hands full with Attila the Hun.

c.446 - Vortigern authorizes the use of Saxon mercenaries, known as foederati, for the defense of the northern parts against barbarian attack. To guard against further Irish incursions, Cunedda and his sons are moved from Manau Gododdin in northern Britain to northwest Wales.

447 - Second visit of St. Germanus (this time accompanied by Severus, Bishop of Trier) to Britain. Was this visit spiritually motivated, to combat a revived Pelagian threat or was Germanus sent in Aetius' stead, to do whatever he could to help the desperate Britons?

c.447 - Britons, aroused to heroic effort, "inflicted a massacre" on their enemies, the Picts and Irish, and were left in peace, for a brief time. Could this heroic effort have been led, again, by St. Germanus?

c.448 - Death of St. Germanus in Ravenna. Civil war and plague ravage Britain.

c.450 - In the first year of Marcian and Valentinian, Hengest arrives on shores of Britain with "3 keels" of warriors, and are welcomed by Vortigern. This event is known in Latin as the "adventus Saxonus," the coming of the Saxons.

c.452 - Increasing Saxon settlement in Britain. Hengest invites his son, Oetha, from Germany with "16 keels" of warriors, who occupy the northern lands, to defend against the Picts. Picts never heard from again.

c.453 - Increasing Saxon unrest. Raids on British towns and cities becoming more frequent.

c.456 - Probably fictitious, but entirely believable event in which Saxons massacre 300 leading British noblemen at phony "peace" conference. Ambrosius' father, who may have been the leader of the pro-Roman faction, was probably killed either during the Saxon uprising or this massacre.

c.457 - Death of Vortigern. Vitalinus (Guitolinus) new leader of pro-Celtic Pelagian faction. Battle of Aylesford (Kent) in which Ambrosius, along with sons of Vortigern, Vortimer and Cateyrn, defeat Hengest for the first time.

c.458 - Saxon uprising in full-swing. Hengest finally conquers Kent, in southeastern Britain.

c.458-60 - Full-scale migration of British aristocrats and city-dwellers across the English Channel to Brittany, in northwestern Gaul (the "second migration"). British contingent led by Riothamus (perhaps a title, not a name), thought by some to be the original figure behind the legends of Arthur.

c.460-70 - Ambrosius Aurelianus takes full control of pro-Roman faction and British resistance effort; leads Britons in years of back-and-forth fighting with Saxons. British strategy seems to have been to allow Saxon landings and to then contain them, there.

c.465 - Arthur probably born around this time.

c.466 - Battle of Wippedesfleot, in which Saxons defeat Britons, but with great slaughter on both sides. Mutual "disgust and sorrow" results in a respite from fighting "for a long time."

c.466-73 - Period of minimal Saxon activity. Refortification of ancient hillforts and construction of the Wansdyke possibly takes place during this time.

c.469 - Roman emperor, Anthemius, appeals to Britons for military help against Visigoths. Reliable accounts by Sidonius Apollinaris and Jordanes name the leader of the 12,000 man British force, Riothamus. The bulk of the British force was wiped out in battle against Euric, the Visigothic king, and the survivors, including Riothamus, vanished and were never heard from again.

c.470 - Battle of Wallop (Hampshire) where Ambrosius defeats Vitalinus, head of the opposing faction. Ambrosius assumes High-kingship of Britain.

473 - Men of Kent, under Hengest, move westward, driving Britons back before them "as one flees fire."

477 - Saxon chieftain, Aelle, lands on Sussex coast with his sons. Britons engage him upon landing but his superior force drives them into the forest (Weald). Over next nine years, Saxon coastal holdings are gradually expanded in Sussex.

c.480 - Vita Germani, the Life of St. Germanus, written by a continental biographer, Constantius.

c.485-96 - Period of Arthur's "twelve battles" during which he gains reputation for invincibility.

486 - Aelle and his sons overreach their normal territory and are engaged by Britons at battle of Mercredesburne. Battle is bloody, but indecisive, and ends with both sides pledging friendship.

c.490 - Hengest dies. His son, Aesc, takes over and rules for 34 years.

c.495 - Cerdic and Cynric, his son, land somewhere on the south coast, probably near the Hampshire-Dorset border.

c.496 - Britons, under overall command of Ambrosius and battlefield command of the "war leader" Arthur, defeat Saxons at the Siege of Mount Badon.

c.496-550 - Following the victory at Mt. Badon, the Saxon advance is halted with the invaders returning to their own enclaves. A generation of peace ensues. Corrupt leadership, more civil turmoil, public forgetfulness and individual apathy further erode Romano-British culture over next fifty years, making Britain ripe for final Saxon "picking."

c.500-50 - Spread of Celtic monasticism throughout Europe

c.501 - The Battle of Llongborth (probably Portsmouth), where a great British chieftain, Geraint, King of Dumnonia, was killed. Arthur is mentioned in a Welsh poem commemorating the battle.

The poem below, found in the "[Black Book of Carmarthen](#)," is an English translation (believed to be accurate) of a sixth century Welsh battle poem written in praise of Geraint, a Dumnonian king, who fell during the conflict with the Saxons. The significant thing about the poem is that it is not a wild, legendary tale of one of Arthur's deeds, but mentions him only in an incidental way. While this does not absolutely prove Arthur's reality, it does indicate that his name was synonymous, at least as early as the sixth century, for prowess in battle. The Anglo Saxon Chronicle, in its entry for the year 501*, reports the event this way:

Port and his two sons, Bieda and Maegla, came to Britain at the place called Portsmouth, and slew a young Welshman, a very noble man.

Scholars believe that the Llongborth mentioned in the poem is, in fact, the Portsmouth of the Chronicle entry and that Geraint is the "young Welshman" who was killed, there. In those days, the term Welshman was used by the Saxons to refer to the Britons, in general, and did not denote a person from present-day Wales.

* According to John Morris' book, "The Age of Arthur," dates given in the early parts of the Anglo Saxon Chronicle are believed to be about 20 years off, due to an error by the 8th century historian, Bede, in dating the Adventus Saxonum, the coming of the Saxons. If true, then the Battle of Portsmouth (Llongborth) may have taken place as early as 480.

Elegy for Geraint
Welsh Battle Poem, c.500

Before Geraint, the enemy's scourge,
I saw white horses, tensed, red,

After the war cry, bitter the grave

Before Geraint, the unflinching foe,
I saw horses jaded and gory from battle,
After the war cry, a great driving force

Before Geraint, the enemy of tyranny,
I saw horses white with foam,
After the war cry, a terrible torrent.

In Llongborth I saw the rage of slaughter,
And biers beyond all number,
And red-stained men from the assault of Geraint.

In Llongborth, I saw the clash of swords,
Men in terror, bloody heads,
Before Geraint the Great, his father's son.

In Llongborth I saw spurs,
And men who did not flinch from the dread of the spears,
Who drank their wine from the bright glass.

In Llongborth I saw the weapons,
Of men, and blood fast dropping,
After the war cry, a fearful return.

In Llongborth I saw Arthur's
Heroes who cut with steel.
The Emperor, ruler of our labour.

In Llongborth Geraint was slain,
A brave man from the region of Dyvnaint,
And before they were overpowered, they committed slaughter.

Under the thigh of Geraint swift chargers,
Long their legs, wheat their fodder,
Ruddy ones, swooping like spotted eagles.

Under the thigh of Geraint swift chargers,
Long their legs, grain was given them,
Ruddy ones, swooping like black eagles.

Under the thigh of Geraint swift chargers,
Long their legs, restless over their grain,
Ruddy ones, swooping like red eagles.

Under the thigh of Geraint swift chargers,
Long their legs, grain-scattering,
Ruddy ones, swooping like white eagles.

Under the thigh of Geraint swift chargers,
Long their legs, with the pace of the stag,
With a nose like that of the consuming fire on a wild mountain.

Under the thigh of Geraint swift chargers,
Long their legs, satiated with grain,

Grey ones, with their manes tipped with silver.

Under the thigh of Geraint swift chargers,
Long their legs, well deserving of grain,
Ruddy ones, swooping like grey eagles.

Under the thigh of Geraint swift chargers,
Long their legs, having corn for food,
Ruddy ones, swooping like brown eagles.

When Geraint was born, Heaven's gate stood open;
Christ granted all our prayer;
Lovely to behold, the glory of Britain (Prydain).

508 - Cerdic begins to move inland and defeats British king Natanleod near present-day Southampton.

c.515 - Death of Aelle. Kingdom of Sussex passed to his son, Cissa and his descendents, but over time, diminished into insignificance.

519 - Kingdom of the West Saxons (Wessex) founded with Cerdic its first ruler.

c.530-40 - Mass migration of Celtic monks to Brittany (the "third migration").

534 - Death of Cerdic. Cynric takes kingship.

c.540 - Probable writing of Gildas' "De Excidio Britanniae."

c.542 - Battle of Camlann, according to Annales Cambriae. Death (or unspecified other demise) of Arthur (according to Geoffrey of Monmouth).

550 - St. David takes Christianity to Wales.

563 - Irish monk, St. Columba founds a monastery on island of Iona and begins conversion of the Picts to Christianity.

c.570 - Probable death of Gildas.

584 - Foundation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia in England

597 - The Roman brand of Christianity is brought to Britain for the first time by St. Augustine, the missionary sent from Pope Gregory to convert the Saxons. Augustine founded a monastery and the first church at Canterbury, and was proclaimed its first Archbishop.