

The Early History of Man — Part 3. The Kings of the Ancient Britons: A Chronology

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INTRODUCTION

We saw in Part 2 of *The Early History of Man*¹ that the pagan kings of the ancient Britons traced their own descent back to Noah through Japheth, thus strongly enhancing the biblical account of the Table of Nations (Genesis 10 and 11).² A simplified genealogy, compiled from both Nennius's *Historia Brittonum* (IX century AD) and from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (XII century AD), demonstrated that descent. However, it is important that that genealogy now be tested for historical reliability, and we are going to test some of its credentials here by reconstructing the chronology of these kings. This, to my knowledge, has never been successfully attempted before, and this lack of success, or even effort on the part of previous scholars, has led to the denigration and eventual dismissal of this valuable record. And that, in turn, has cost us dear.

Previous attempts to compile the chronology of the ancient British kings have invariably ended with the scholar concerned giving it all up as a bad job. But most of these attempts were made by men who had already convinced themselves that the task would be hopeless. Even those rare scholars who thought that Geoffrey of Monmouth deserved more serious consideration than he currently receives, were easily dissuaded from the task. Witness Thorpe:

*'Accustomed as he is to precise dates, the modern reader will wonder occasionally just where he is in time. In what year did Bladud have his flying accident? When exactly did Leir die? When did Utherpendragon see the great star? Geoffrey gives only three dates: the death of Lucius occurred in AD 156, the abdication of Arthur in AD 542, and the death of Cadwallader in AD 689. He has, however, a series of synchronisms . . . by which he is at pains to reassure his readers and add verisimilitude to his story . . . (but) . . . Some of these synchronisms leave us more confused than if we had not read them.'*³

Worse, two of Geoffrey's given dates are demonstrably wrong! Lucius did not die in AD 156, and that is usually

enough to convince the modern investigator that Geoffrey was telling stories. However, the date AD 156 crops up elsewhere with regard to King Lucius, namely in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (ad 731):

*'In the year of our Lord's Incarnation 156, Marcus Antoninus Verus, fourteenth from Augustus, became emperor jointly with his brother Aurelius Commodus. During their reign, and while the holy Eleutherus ruled the Roman Church, Lucius, a British king, sent him a letter, asking to be made a Christian by his direction.'*⁴

Pope Eleutherus, we learn from the *Annuario Pontificio*, did not lord it over the flock until the years AD 175–189, and so Geoffrey's date for the death of Lucius (that is, AD 156) is wrong by twenty or thirty years or so. Did Geoffrey misread Bede in his attempt to date the events mentioned in the source-book he was translating from British into Latin? Or was the source-book itself in error? It is more likely that Geoffrey, in whichever book the misreading occurred, mistook 156 for the year 186. It is easy enough to mistake a 5 for an 8 even with the clear print of today. We must also remember that when Bede gives the date 156, he does not do so in any direct connection with Lucius, but with reference to the beginning of the joint rule of the empire by Antoninus and Commodus. It is within the more general framework of the joint reign of these two emperors that Lucius is introduced into the narrative. More importantly, however, Geoffrey's mistake is one of which we are aware, and moreover it is one that can be easily sorted out.

The same goes for the second wrong date that Geoffrey provides. He tells us that the British king, Cadwallader, died in the year AD 689. Cadwallader, however, actually reigned from AD 654–664. What Geoffrey (or rather his source-book?) has done is mistake the British Cadwallader for the Saxon king of Wessex named Caedwalla who did indeed die (at Rome) in the year AD 689! So, in our reconstruction of the British chronology, we shall assign to Cadwallader the true dates of his reign and not that given by Geoffrey for his death. But again, the error is something that we know about and

can easily sort out, so the reluctance of previous scholars to seriously grapple with these problems becomes more puzzling as we progress.

THORPE'S LAMENT

Thorpe complains that Geoffrey of Monmouth provides too few clues for dating purposes, and that even those that he does provide only serve to confuse us. Upon examination of Geoffrey's **Historia**, however, we find that Thorpe was quite mistaken. The **Historia** is rich in clues compared to many other of these early accounts, and far from confusing us, they actually help us to build a most erudite picture.

Let us begin with Brutus, the very first king of the Britons and from whom the Britons derived their name. Geoffrey tells us in Book 1, chapter 18 of his **Historia**, that Brutus was born two or three generations after the Trojan Wars. The Trojan Wars having occurred around 1240 BC, that would place his birth in about the middle of the XII century, say around 1150 BC. Moreover, Geoffrey goes on to tell us that Brutus reigned as king for 23 years, and further, that he ruled Britain at the time that Eli was judge in Israel. We know that Eli judged Israel between the years 1115–1075 BC. Thus, we are given two synchronisms, not one, and both of these confirm each other, thus allowing us to date the reign of Brutus with much confidence. No cause for complaint there!

Following Brutus's reign, we are told that his son Locrinus ruled for 10 years, and that his, Locrinus's, widow, Queen Gwendolen, ruled after him for 15 years at the time when Samuel judged Israel (Book 2, chapter 6). We know that Samuel judged Israel for the forty year period between 1075–1035 BC, and thus Geoffrey's synchronisms begin to take on an unexpected, and hitherto uncredited, aura of respectability.

Gwendolen abdicated in favour of her son, Maddan, and he went on to rule for 40 years after her. Then his son, Memprius, ruled for 20 years, and his reign, we are told, roughly coincided with that of Saul (Book 2.6). Saul was

(Bryt)	Brutus	23yrs	..c.1104–1081BC	
(Lloegr)	Locrinus	10yrs	..c.1081–1071BC	
	Gwendolen (Queen)	15yrs	..c.1071–1056BC	
	Maddan	40yrs	..c.1056–1016BC	
	Memprius	20yrs	..c.1016– 996BC	
	Ebraucus	39yrs	..c. 996– 957BC	
	Brutus Greenshield	12yrs	..c. 957– 945BC	
	Leil	25yrs	..c. 945– 920BC	
	Hudibras	39yrs	..c. 920– 881BC	
	Bladud	20yrs	..c. 881– 861BC	
(Llyr)	Leir	60yrs	..c. 861– 801BC	
(Creiddylad)	Cordelia (Queen)	5yrs	..c. 801– 796BC	
	Marganus I	2yrs	..c.796– 794BC	**ruled
	Cunedagius	35yrs	..c.796– 761BC	*jointly
	Rivallo	c. 18yrs	..c. 761– 743BC	
	Gurgustius	c. 20yrs	..c. 743 – 723BC	
	Sisillius I	c. 20yrs	..c. 723– 703BC	
	Iago	c. 20yrs	..c. 703– 683BC	
	Kimarcus	c. 20yrs	..c. 683– 663BC	
	Gorboduc	c. 20yrs	..c. 663– 643BC	
	Civil war period	c. 203yrs	..c. 643– 400BC	
	Pinner	c. 10yrs	..c. 440 – 430BC	
	Cloten	c. 10yrs	..c. 430 – 420BC	
	Dunvallo Molmutius	c. 40yrs	..c. 420– 380BC	
	Belinus	c. 6yrs	..c. 380– 374BC	
	Gurguit	c. 5yrs	..c. 374– 369BC	
	Guithelin	c. 6yrs	..c. 369 – 363BC	
	Marcia (Q. and wid.)	c. 11yrs	..c. 369 – 358BC	
	Sisillius II	c. 6yrs	..c. 358– 352BC	
	Kinarius	c. 5yrs	..c. 352– 347BC	
	Danius	c. 6yrs	..c. 347– 341BC	
	Morvidus	c. 5yrs	..c. 341– 336BC	
	Gorbonianus	c. 6yrs	..c. 336– 330BC	
	Archgallo	c. 4yrs	..c. 330– 326BC	(deposed)
(Elidyr)	Elidurus	c. 5yrs	..c. 326– 321BC	(abdica.)
	Archgallo	c. 10yrs	..c. 321– 311BC	(restor.)
(retook crown)	Elidurus	c. 5yrs	..c. 311– 306BC	(deposed)
	Ingenius	c. 7yrs	..c. 306– 299BC	**ruled
(Peredyr)	Peredurus	c. 10yrs	..c. 306– 296BC	*jointly
(retook crown)	Elidurus	c. 5yrs	..c. 296– 291BC	(restor.)
	Son of Gorbonianus	c. 2yrs	..c. 291– 289BC	
	Marganus II	c. 5yrs	..c. 289– 284BC	
	Enniaunus	c. 6yrs	..c. 284– 278BC	
	Idvallo	c. 5yrs	..c. 278– 273BC	
	Runo	c. 6yrs	..c. 273– 267BC	
	Gerennus	c. 5yrs	..c. 267– 262BC	
	Catellus	c. 6yrs	..c. 262– 256BC	
	Millus	c. 5yrs	..c. 256– 251BC	
	Porrex	c. 6yrs	..c. 251– 245BC	
	Cherin	c. 5yrs	..c. 245– 240BC	
	Fulgenius	c. 6yrs	..c. 240 – 234BC	
	Edadus	c. 5yrs	..c. 234– 229BC	
	Andragius	c. 6yrs	..c. 229– 223BC	
	Urianus	c. 5yrs	..c. 223– 218BC	
	Eliud	c. 6yrs	..c. 218– 212BC	
	Cledaucus	c. 5yrs	..c. 212– 207BC	
	Clotenus	c. 6yrs	..c. 207– 201BC	
	Gurgintius	c. 5yrs	..c. 201– 196BC	
	Merianus	c. 6yrs	..c. 196– 190BC	
	Bledudo	c. 5yrs	..c. 190– 185BC	
	Cap	c. 6yrs	..c. 185– 179BC	
	Oenus	c. 5yrs	..c. 179– 174BC	
	Sisillius III	c. 6yrs	..c. 174– 168BC	
	Beldgabred	c. 5yrs	..c. 168– 163BC	

king in Israel between 1030–1010 BC.

Likewise, Memprius was succeeded by his son, Ebraucus. Ebraucus reigned for 39 years, and we are told that his reign corresponded roughly in time with that of David

	Archmall	c. 6yrs	c. 163– 157BC	
	Eldol	c. 5yrs	c. 157– 152BC	
	Redon	c. 6yrs	c. 152– 146BC	
	Redechius	c. 5yrs	c. 146– 141BC	
	Samuil	c. 6yrs	c. 141 – 135BC	
	Penessil	c. 5yrs	c. 135– 130BC	
	Pir	c. 6yrs	c. 130– 124BC	
	Capoir	c. 5yrs	c. 124– 119BC	
	Digueillius	c. 6yrs	c. 119– 113BC	
	Hell	40yrs	c. 113– 73BC	
(Llud)	Lud	c. 15yrs	c. 73– 58BC	
(Caswallon)	Cassivelaunus	c. 20yrs	c. 58– 38BC	
(Tasciovanus)	Tenvantius	c. 20yrs	c. 38– 18BC	
(Cunobelinus)	Cymbeline	c. 30yrs	c. 18– 12AD	
	Guiderius	c. 31yrs	c. 12– 43AD	
	Arvirargus	c. 14yrs	c. 43– 57AD	
	Marius	c. 40yrs	c. 57– 97AD	
	Coilus	c. 40yrs	c. 97– 137AD	
	Lucius	c. 59yrs	c. 137– 186AD	
	Geta	c. 35yrs	c. 186– 221AD	
	Bassianus	c. 35yrs	c. 221– 256AD	
	Carausius	c. 40yrs	c. 256– 296AD	
	Asclepiodotus	10yrs	c. 296– 306AD	
	Coel	c. 3yrs	c. 306– 309AD	
	Constantius	c. 3yrs	c. 309– 312AD	
	Constantine I	25yrs	.... 312– 337AD	
(usurper)	Octavius	c. 5yrs	c. 330– 335AD	(deposed)
	Octavius	c. 13yrs	c. 335– 348AD	(restor.)
	Maximianus	c. 14yrs	c. 348– 362AD	
	Caradocus	c. 13yrs	c. 362– 375AD	
	Dionotus	c. 14yrs	c. 375– 389AD	
	Gracianus	c. 13yrs	c. 389– 402AD	
	Constantine II	c. 18yrs	c. 402– 420AD	
	Constans	c. 17yrs	c. 420– 437AD	
	Vortigern	c. 18yrs	c. 437– 455AD	(deposed)
(Guorthemer)	Vortimer	c. 5yrs	c. 455– 460AD	
	Vortigern	c. 20yrs	c. 460– 480AD	(restor.)
	Aurelius Ambrosius	c. 21yrs	c. 480– 501AD	
	Uther Pendragon	c. 20yrs	c. 501– 521AD	
	Arthur	c. 21yrs	c. 521– 542AD	
	Constantine III	4yrs	c. 542– 546AD	
	Aurelius Conanus	3yrs	c. 546– 549AD	
	Vortiporius	c. 1yr	c. 549– 550AD	
(Maelgwn)	Malgo	c. 5yrs	c. 550– 555AD	
	Keredic	c. 8yrs	c. 555– 563AD	
	3 unnamed kings	c. 53yrs	c. 563– 616AD	
	Cadvan	9yrs	.... 616– 625AD	
	Cadwallo	8yrs	.... 625– 633AD	
	Cadwallader	10yrs	.... 633– 643AD	(plague & famine)
	Court fled to Brittany	11yrs	.... 643– 654AD	
(restored)	Cadwallader	10yr	.... 654– 664AD	
	Yvor	c.39yrs	.... 664– 703AD	**ruled
	Yni	c.40yrs	.... 664– 704AD	*Jointly

Note: Between 1104 BC and AD 704, there are 1808 years. If we subtract from this the 203 years of civil war then we have 1605 years. From this, if we deduct the 11 years of Cadwallader's absence when he fled abroad, and a total of 31 years for joint rules, then we have 1563 years. In that time there was a total of 114 consecutive reigns. Thus, if we divide 1563 by 114, then we are given 13.71, say 14 years as the average length of reign for the kings of the ancient Britons. This compares with an average reign of 16.5 years among the Saxon kings of the house of Wessex, and 22.5 years among the English kings and queens since the Norman Conquest. (The above reigns are given in strict chronological order. That does not always necessarily agree with their genealogical order.)

Table 1. The chronology of the early British kings.

of Israel (Book 2.7). Again, we know that David ruled from 1010–970 BC.

The next two kings of the Britons were Brutus Greenshield and Leil who ruled for 12 and 25 years respectively,

and their reigns, Geoffrey tells us, coincided roughly in time with that of Solomon who ruled between the years 970–930 BC.

Hudibras and Bladud, the next kings of the Britons, ruled for 39 and 20 years respectively when Elijah prophesied in Israel (*Historia*, Book 2.10). We know that Elijah was active during the reign of king Ahab, and that Ahab was king of Israel between 874–853 BC. (The chronology in Table 1 gives these two reigns as running from c.920–861 BC).

Cunedagius, who ruled for 35 years (2 of them jointly with Marganus I), reigned during the time of Isaiah according to Geoffrey (Book 2.15), and we know that Isaiah was active between 740–701 BC. Now, referring to the chronology in Table 1 where we have followed Geoffrey exactly, we see that this particular synchronism of Geoffrey's is about 20 years out by modern reckoning. But, and as anyone who has ever worked on ancient chronologies will tell you, that is not a bad error for this period! Geoffrey, I think, can be forgiven such a trivial margin of error, especially as he enjoyed neither the benefits nor the amenities of modern research, and so far, rather than the much-lamented unreliability that is so readily laid at Geoffrey's door these days, we see that he shows surprising accuracy and consistency in his dates!

Hereafter, and without synchronisms of any description, we are given, out of a total of 61 kings, the lengths of reign enjoyed by only five. Dunvallo Molmutius reigned for 40 years (2.15); Archgallo reigned during his second term as king for 10 years; Ingenius reigned 7 years (3.9); Enniaunus ruled for 6 years (3.9) and Heli ruled 40 years (3.9).

It is not until Book 4 of the *Historia* that we come to our next synchronism, that of Cassivelaunus who resisted Julius Caesar's invasions of 55 and 54 BC (4.1–10).

Thereafter, we read that Guiderius and Arvirargus resisted the Claudian invasion of AD 43 (Guiderius was killed during that invasion, Book 4.12–15), and that Vespasian (AD 69–79) was emperor of Rome when

Marius ruled Britain (4.16).

Lucius, as we have already seen, must have been alive at least after AD 175, and our chronology allows him a reign of 59 years from AD 137–186.

The death of Arthur we can allow to stand as having occurred in AD 542, as this fits in very comfortably with the rest of the chronology, and the reign of Cadwallader we have already corrected to its true dates. In all, we are given sufficient information in Geoffrey's **Historia** to compile the chronology that appears in Table 1. We obviously cannot be certain about the lengths of reign or even the precise dates of **every** king. That is never possible in these early lists. Rather, the number of years of any given time-gap is divided up among the number of kings who reigned in that period, and each king is allotted an equal portion for his reign. This is an entirely legitimate exercise and is in perfect accord with accepted historical method.

For example, between Marganus II, who began to rule c.289 BC, and Digueillus, whose reign ended c.113 BC, there reigned 32 kings within a period of 176 years. That gives an average reign of 5.5 years for each king within this period. For convenience's sake, therefore Marganus II is allotted a reign of 5 years, and his successor Enniaunus is given 6 years. Enniaunus's successor is allotted 5 years, and his successor in turn is given 6, and so on. Now obviously, we know that some of these kings would have reigned for only a year or so, while others would have reigned for decades, but this is the best that we can possibly hope for at this remove.

The only thing that we are left to puzzle over is what on earth Thorpe and his colleagues have been complaining about all these years! What appears in Table 1 is an extremely comprehensive chronology, and it is, moreover, one that has been built entirely upon the information given us by Geoffrey of Monmouth. So why the reluctance to produce a perfectly feasible chronology similar to that which appears here as Table 1? Could it be that that would give Geoffrey of Monmouth (and Nennius) a credibility that would damage, rather than enhance, modern(ist) theories about our past? Could it also be that it would lend credibility to the ancient assertion that our ancestors were indeed descended from Noah as Genesis teaches? Such a descent was held to be true not just by early Christians, but by the pagan Britons and others who lived throughout the long centuries that preceded the coming of Christ. They themselves traced through long genealogies their descent from Noah, and there can be only one reason for this remarkable occurrence. But that would not accord with today's philosophy that would have us believe that Genesis is an insubstantial myth

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