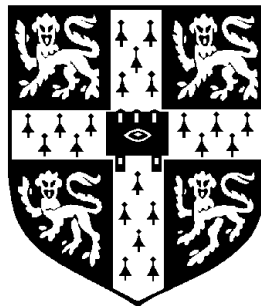


QUIGGIN PAMPHLETS
ON THE
SOURCES OF GAELIC HISTORY

8

The Kings Depart:
The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon Royal
Exile in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries

DÁIBHÍ Ó CRÓINÍN



DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE, AND CELTIC
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Edmund Crosby Quiggin (1875-1920) was the first teacher of Celtic in the University of Cambridge. His extraordinarily comprehensive vision of Celtic studies offered an integrated approach to the subject: his combination of philological, literary, and historical approaches paralleled those which his older contemporary, H.M. Chadwick, had already demonstrated in his studies of Anglo-Saxon England and which the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic continues to seek to emulate. The Department has wished to commemorate Dr Quiggin's contribution by establishing in his name, and with the support of his family, an annual lecture and a series of pamphlets.

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‘Of the various traditions that went into the making of the English Church, that of the Irish is the most complex, perplexing, and contentious’.¹ This statement, from the most authoritative recent historian of the subject, may be taken as representative of the views of most present-day historians in the English-speaking world, outside Ireland. On the other hand, the history of Anglo-Irish relations in the period c. AD 563 to c. AD 729² has been seen by most Irish historians as little more than a chapter — albeit a seminal one — in the ‘Expansion of Irish Christianity’ initiated by Columba (Colum Cille) in AD 563 and continued by his younger contemporary Columbanus, when he left Ireland for the continent c. AD 590.³ For England, the impact of that Irish missionary activity was dramatic, nothing less than ‘the effective conversion of the English kingdoms from the borders of Lothian to the Thames’.⁴ The consequences of that development have been succinctly stated by Julian Brown, the foremost English authority on the history of book-production in these islands during our period: ‘Until 669, then, Anglo-Saxon England was a cultural province of Ireland, and evidently a province in which Latin learning flourished much less vigorously than in Ireland itself’.⁵ Few — if any — would seriously disagree with that verdict.⁶

¹ John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford 2005), p. 45.

² Taking AD 563 as the date of Colum Cille’s exile from Ireland and AD 729 as the date of the death of Ecgfrith of Rath Melsigi and Iona.

³ The term ‘The expansion of Irish Christianity’ was coined by Félim Ó Briain; see his two-part article, ‘The expansion of Irish Christianity. An historiographical survey’, *Irish Historical Studies* 3, no. 11 (March 1943) 241-66; 4, no. 14 (Sept. 1944), pp. 131-63.

⁴ Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge 2000), p. 310.

⁵ T.J. Brown, ‘A historical introduction to the use of Classical Latin authors in the British Isles from the fifth to the seventh century’, *Settimane di studi del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’ alto medioevo* 23 (Spoleto 1979), pp. 237-99, repr. in Janet Bately, Michelle Brown & Jane Roberts (eds), *A Palaeographer’s View: Selected Writings of Julian Brown* (London 1993), pp. 141-77, at p. 150.

⁶ However, compare Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon library* (Oxford 2006), p. 29: ‘Anglo-Saxon libraries were *in the first instance* stocked with books from Mediterranean libraries’ (my italics) with the verdict of Charles W. Jones (ed), *Beda opera de temporibus*. Medieval Academy of America publications 41 (Cambridge, MA 1943), p. 113: ‘Except for those works which Bede expressly assembled for the composition of his History, like the selections from the *Liber Pontificalis* and Gregory’s letters, I can find no indication of a stream of literature from the south [of England] which in any way equals the obvious stream from Ireland’. The words ‘Ireland’, ‘Irish’, and ‘Northumbria’ appear nowhere in the index to Prof. Lapidge’s book, and ‘Iona’ only once. See now Jean-Michel Picard, ‘Bede and Irish scholarship: scientific treatises and grammars’, *Ériu* 54 (2004) 139-47.

On the face of it, then, the influence was all one-way, with little regard to the effects that such contacts between Irishmen and their near neighbours might have had on Ireland itself, still less on the politics of Anglo-Irish relations.⁷ And yet the activities of Irish missionaries in England in this period are incomprehensible — and the possibility of such missionary activities inconceivable — without an understanding of the underlying political currents in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of that time.⁸ It might be too stark to say that ‘the beginning of the Iona mission to the English was prepared by a political disaster’,⁹ but there can be no doubt that the political circumstances that pertained in the kingdoms bordering on the Irish Sea area were vitally important to the lives of some of the best-known ecclesiastical personalities of the time. What has not been much noticed previously, however, is that such patterns of displacement and exile were equally common amongst laymen (especially royalty and aristocracy), for much the same reasons.

In what follows I will be concentrating mainly on those Northumbrian aristocrats and royals who, at some time during the sixth and seventh centuries, spent some time in political exile in Ireland. Mainly, but not only in Ireland, because the phenomenon of political exile and political asylum was not, of course, confined exclusively to the kingdom of Northumbria (including its constituent kingdoms, Bernicia and Deira), nor was Ireland exclusively the country to which displaced royals and aristocracy fled whenever ‘regime change’ occurred in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. One of the best-known instances of our theme is the famous account in Bede of the death of Edwin, King of Northumbria, in AD 633, and its consequences.¹⁰ Edwin’s wife, Æthelberga, fled with their son Uscfrea and daughter Eanfreda, and Yffi, their grandson, first to the kingdom of Kent, then even farther away, to the Frankish king Dagobert I at Paris. The reasons are not far to seek: in the immediate aftermath of Edwin’s death, all close relatives of his were in mortal danger from his political rivals. That the queen fled to

⁷ I attempted to initiate just such a discussion in my pamphlet, *The First Century of Anglo-Irish Relations (AD 600-700)*. The O’Donnell Lecture 2003 (Dublin 2004).

⁸ A valuable contribution in this regard is Hermann Moisl, ‘The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish in the seventh century’, *Peritia* 2 (1983), pp. 103-26.

⁹ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 310.

¹⁰ I cite both the edition of Charles Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, 2 vols (Oxford 1896) and that of Bertram Colgrave & R.A.B. Mynors (eds & transl.), *Bede’s ‘Ecclesiastical History of the English People’* (Oxford 1969); here Bede, *HE* ii.20 (ed. Plummer, i.126; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 204-5). For genealogies, see Appendix 2 below.

Kent is explained by the fact that she herself had been born and reared there; her father, Æthelbert, was king of Kent when she was married off to Edwin in Northumbria, in one of those innumerable dynastic marriages that were part and parcel of Anglo-Saxon politics at the time.¹¹ That much is clear enough. It is worth noting, however, that Æthelberga did not feel that either she herself or her children would be safe in Kent — despite the fact that the then king, Eadbald, was her own brother. Bede pointedly remarks of them that ‘afterwards the mother, for fear of Eadbald and Oswald, sent [them] over to Francia to be fostered (*nutriendos*) by King Dagobert, who was her friend’ (*amicus*). The final destination was not a matter of chance, either: Dagobert was, in fact, Æthelberga’s second cousin; her maternal grandfather, Charibert, and his paternal grandfather, Chilperic, were brothers. As things worked out, the precautions were to prove of no avail: the three children all died in infancy in Francia (whether by natural causes or by some more dastardly deed, I cannot say).

There was nothing at all in the history of the respective families or dynasties that would lead one to doubt that the long arm of the assassin could very easily have caught up with the exiled royal children. Bede makes clear that political assassinations (or assassination attempts) were, in fact, the order of the day, and he recounts how Edwin, while receiving a West Saxon embassy in AD 626, was the subject of a murderous plot, one from which he barely escaped, and then only because a trusted thegn interposed his body and took the brunt of the blow from the two-edged poisoned dagger intended for the king.¹² So vivid was the memory of the episode still in Bede’s time that he could even name the would-be assassin (Eumer) and the king’s loyal bodyguard (Forthere).

That was not Edwin’s only brush with the assassin’s knife: while he himself was in exile (during the reign of his predecessor, Æthelfrith) *per diuersa occultus loca uel regna multo annorum tempore profugatus uagaretur ... ut uitam suam a tanti persecutoris insidiis tutando seruaret*,¹³ he was finally granted asylum by Redwald, king of East Anglia, and spent some time there. Several times Æthelfrith tried to bribe Redwald into murdering Edwin, and the pressure he exerted was such that Redwald eventually succumbed. But before he could do the deed, a strange nocturnal

¹¹ See, for example, D. P. Kirby, *The earliest English kings* (London 1991; rev. ed. 2000), p. 78. I owe my copy of this book to the generosity of the author.

¹² Bede, *HE* ii.9 (ed. Plummer, i.98-99; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 164-65).

¹³ ‘for so many years a vagabond through all the provinces of Britain, to escape the hands of [his] enemy’; Bede, *HE* ii.12 (ed. Plummer, i.107; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 174-77).

vision appeared (the story is recounted at length by Bede), as a result of which Redwald and Edwin combined to face down the threat of Æthelfrith, defeating him in battle (in AD 616/17) and restoring Edwin to the Northumbrian throne. Edwin had earlier still been ‘on the run’ in Mercia (and married his first wife Cwenburg there).¹⁴ He was then driven to seek refuge at the court of Cadfan of Gwynedd,¹⁵ and it has even been suggested that his presence at the Welsh court so enraged Æthelfrith that it brought about the Battle of Chester, in which Cadfan was killed and following which Edwin was forced to flee again.¹⁶

Thus life was not only dangerous for kings; it was even more dangerous for the sons of former kings. And harbouring a political fugitive could be an equally serious danger to the host kingdom. Nor were the ties established in exile always unbreakable: Cadwallon of Gwynedd, son of Cadfan, with whom Edwin had been fostered during his exile in Wales, was, according to Welsh tradition, forced to flee to Ireland because of Edwin’s murderous attacks on him.¹⁷ The enmity was to prove Edwin’s ultimate undoing.

Bede is also the source of our knowledge about a nephew of Edwin’s named Hereric, who was poisoned while in exile.¹⁸ Bede does not tell us where this Hereric was in exile, nor why he was poisoned, but he does tell us that he was the father of Hild (later foundress and first abbess of Whitby) and of her sister Hereswith, who married into the East-Anglian royal family, becoming mother of Eadwulf, king of East Anglia. By AD 647, however, Hereswith had departed for Francia to join the Frankish nunnery of Chelles (north of Paris), reinvigorated by the Frankish dowager queen Balthild, an English woman by birth, who had entered the community of Chelles after the death of her husband, Dagobert I. Hereswith’s sister Hild planned to join her sister in Francia, we are told, but was persuaded by Aidan, the first Irish Bishop of Lindisfarne, to stay at home in her native England, which she duly

¹⁴ *Osfrid et Eadfrid filii Regis Aeduini, qui ambo ei exuli nati sunt de Quoenburga filia Cearli Regis Merciorum*: Bede, *HE* ii.14 (ed. Plummer, i.114; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 186-87).

¹⁵ Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ii.103, citing Simeon of Durham’s ‘Life of Oswald’, I, 2: *Postea Cadwanus cis Humbram regnans, Edwinum ... nutriuit cum Cadwallone filio suo*.

¹⁶ Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ii.93; cf. *ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁷ *Annales Cambriae, s.a. 629* (ed. Egerton Phillimore, ‘The *Annales Cambriae* and the Old-Welsh genealogies from *Harleian MS. 3859*’, *Y Cymmrodor*, 9 (1888), 141-83, at p. 157); cited Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ii.115

¹⁸ Bede, *HE* iv.21 [23] (ed. Plummer, i.252; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 410-11).

did.¹⁹ It should be pointed out, however, that Hild entered the church in her thirty-third year, after (presumably) the death of a husband (unidentified). That she and her sister should have preferred the prospect of the religious life in the Frankish kingdoms, rather than in their native Northumbria, has often been remarked, though never really adequately explained; a political motivation should not, I think, be ruled out. It is tempting to see some significance in the fact of *BaltHILD*'s name — she was an Anglo-Saxon woman, after all — and a connection with *HILD*'s family might possibly be suggested (though no one, to my knowledge, has ever done so). It *has* been remarked, however (by Christine Fell), that it was likely *HILD* was the first element of *HILD*'s name (perhaps a shortened or hypocoristic form of the name *HILDithryth*, which actually occurs in a runic inscription on one of the Hartlepool commemoration stones), 'since it would be desirable that she should alliterate on H'.²⁰ She was, after all, the daughter of *Hereric* and *Breguswith*, so the fact that her sister's name, *Hereswith*, contained the first element of their father's name and the second element of their mother's suggests (as Christine Fell pointed out) 'a family careful of its nomenclature and its alliterative practices'.²¹

These, then, are just some examples of Anglo-Saxon royal exiles in the period of our discussion. But probably the best-known (and, in an Irish context, the most often cited) passage is Book III, chapter 27 of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, in which Bede reports that during the middle years of the seventh century:

. . . there were many of the English race, both nobles and commoners, who, in the days of Bishops Finan and Colman [of Lindisfarne], had left their own country and retired to

¹⁹ For these and other Anglo-Saxon links with Frankish religious houses, see Rosamond McKitterick, *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: Personal Connections and Local Influences*. Leeds University Vaughan Papers 36 (Brixworth 1991), especially pp. 5-6 and 14.

²⁰ Christine Fell, 'Hild, abbess of Streonshalch', in Hans Bekker-Nielsen (ed.), *Hagiography and Medieval Literature. A Symposium* (Odense 1981), pp. 76-97, at p. 78.

²¹ See the very instructive diagrammatic representation of these links in William George Searle, *Anglo-Saxon Bishops, Kings and Nobles. The Succession of the Bishops and the Pedigrees of the Kings and Nobles* (Cambridge 1899), pp. 322-33. Christine Fell, 'Hild, abbess of Streonshalch', p. 78, makes the cogent point that further evidence for such connections might be sought in the lists of *nomina reginarum et abbatissarum* preserved in the *Liber Vitae* of Durham; for an important series of discussions of that manuscript, see D. Rollason, et al. (eds), *The Durham Liber Vitae and its Context* (Woodbridge, 2004).

Ireland either for the sake of religious studies or to live a more ascetic life. In course of time some of these devoted themselves faithfully to the monastic life, while others preferred to travel round to the cells of various teachers and apply themselves to study. The Irish welcomed them all gladly, gave them their daily food, and also provided them with books to read and with instruction, without asking for any payment . . .²²

These seventh-century exiles were by no means the first Englishmen to take up residence amongst the Irish. We know from Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* that, in fact, the first two members of the Iona community to pass away during Columba's lifetime (he died AD 597) were both Saxons, Genereus and Pilu;²³ the former had been the community baker, and was therefore presumably one of the *mediocres*, rather than the *nobiles* of Bede's account. Bede himself refers to no fewer than a dozen of that group of Englishmen by name; others are mentioned in different but contemporary sources; some further ones are mentioned, but their names not given (an interesting point, to which I return below).²⁴ Bede says that 'among those were two young Englishmen of great ability, named Æthelhun and Ecgberct, both of noble birth'.²⁵ Æthelhun was a brother of Æthelwine, 'a man equally beloved of God, who, later on, also went to Ireland to study. When he had been well grounded he returned to his native land and was made bishop in the kingdom of Lindsey, over which he ruled for a long time with great distinction'. Some of these English exiles returned, then, to their native land; others did not. The most famous example of those who remained in Ireland is Ecgberct himself.²⁶

The subsequent passage in Bede's *History* relating how Ecgberct determined on his career is too long (and too well known) to quote here. In brief it tells how Ecgberct had spent many years already in Ireland when the

²² Bede, *HE* iii.27 (ed. Plummer, i.192; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 312-13).

²³ *Vita Columbae*, iii.10 and 22 (ed. & transl. A.O. & M.O. Anderson, *Adomnan's Life of Columba* (Edinburgh 1961), pp. 486 and 512).

²⁴ See the list in Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ii.196. Incidentally, in strictly statistical terms, Bede actually mentions *by name* more Anglo-Saxons who were in Ireland than he does Irishmen who were in England — but that only goes to show how treacherous statistics are!

²⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.27 (ed. Plummer, i.192; (mis)translation in Colgrave & Mynors, p. 313).

²⁶ For Ecgberct and Rath Melsigi, see Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the earliest Echternach manuscripts', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 17-49 = Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Irish History and Chronology* (Dublin 2005), pp. 145-72.

Great Plague struck in AD 664. Ecgberct vowed that, if he were spared, he would never again return to his homeland, but would devote whatever years remained of his life to a spiritual and physical exile. Ecgberct was saved, as it happens, and he lived to the grand old age of 90, dying on Easter Sunday, 24 April, 729.²⁷

Bede is also the source for the information that Ecgberct, twenty years or so after the Great Plague, conceived the desire to go and preach the gospel to the continental Germans, but then two prophetic visions were revealed to him by a member of his Rath Melsigi community, who had been instructed in his dreams to warn Ecgberct against his plans for the German mission.²⁸ Ecgberct twice ignored these warnings, but when finally the ship which he had provisioned for the journey was wrecked in a storm, he reluctantly decided that his destiny lay elsewhere. Frustrated in his plans, Ecgberct chose in his stead another member of his community, Uuictberct, ‘one of his companions . . . who was remarkable both for his contempt of this world and for his learning. He had spent many years in exile in Ireland, living as a hermit’.²⁹ This Uuictberct took ship, probably c. AD 684/85, and *circumnauigata Britannia* (‘having sailed around Britain’, in Bede’s words; the detail is important) reached Frisia. But after two years’ fruitless labour he gave up the ghost and returned to Rath Melsigi in Ireland (*ad dilectae locum peregrinationis* ‘his chosen place of exile’). He brought back with him, presumably, the books that he had taken with him on the mission, which included an Easter table for the years AD 684-702. Undaunted by this second setback, Ecgberct chose another member of his community, Willibrord, and in AD 690 — a century exactly after Columbanus’s departure for the continent in AD 590 — Willibrord and his companions set sail for Frisia.

When Willibrord departed from Ireland in AD 690 and travelled *ultra mare in Francia* (‘beyond the sea to Francia’, as he himself described it, in the autograph note penned by him subsequently into the margin of his famous Calendar),³⁰ he did so in the company of twelve companions: *qui*

²⁷ Bede, *HE* v.2 (ed. Plummer, i.347; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 554-5).

²⁸ Bede, *HE* v.9 (ed. Plummer, i.296; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 474-81)

²⁹ *At uero unus de sociis ...cum esset et ipse contemtu mundi et doctrinae scientia insignis (nam multos annos in Hibernia peregrinus anchoreticam in magna perfectione uitam egerat)*, Bede, *HE* v.9 (ed. Plummer, i.298; Colgrave & Mynors, p. 479).

³⁰ See H. A. Wilson (ed), *The Calendar of St. Willibrord*. Henry Bradshaw Society Publications 55 (London 1918), the November page. There is an excellent colour facsimile of the entry in Michele Camillo Ferrari, Jean Schroeder & Henri Trauffer (eds), *Die Abtei Echternach 698-1998*. Publications de CLUDEM 15 (Luxembourg 1999) 58, fig.

*cum illo aduenissent, erant autem numero XII.*³¹ In this Willibrord was repeating a practice first recorded in the case of Columba, who, when he set out for Iona in AD 563, was also accompanied by twelve companions. And when, a generation later, Columbanus departed from Bangor (Co. Down) c. AD 590 on his mission to Burgundy, he likewise was accompanied by companions twelve in number. This practice was, of course, in imitation of the number of Christ's apostles, and was doubtless repeated by other, later Irish missionaries, such as Fursa and his two brothers. In the case of Columba, we actually have a list of the twelve who travelled with him from Ireland: what is most striking about them is the fact that several were relatives of his. The same phenomenon can be seen in the case of Columbanus's Irish companions; his biographer Jonas preserves the names of five (Comininus, Eunocus, Equonanus, all *ex Scottorum genere*);³² Gallus, of course, and Lua (*ex monachis Columbani*).³³ Columbanus himself, in his letter to the Frankish bishops gathered in synod at Chalon-sur Saône in AD 603, refers to 'the bones of our seventeen dead brethren' (*ossa nostrorum fratrum decem et septem defunctorum*)³⁴ who had passed away by that time. He also mentions, in his parting letter to his own monks, written as he was about to be expelled from Francia, a certain 'holy bishop Áed' (*sanctus Aidus episcopus*), clearly also an Irishman, to judge by his name, who had blessed the altar at Luxeuil, and who was possibly also a member of the Columban community there.³⁵

The twelve men who accompanied Willibrord on the Frisian mission were presumably recruited by him from among the community at Rath Melsigi in Ireland (Clonmelsh, Co. Carlow), where that mission was first conceived by

3. Skepticism about the genuineness of the Willibrord entry (unjustified, in my view) has been expressed by Marco Mostert in the *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford 2000), p. 478. I have greatly benefited from reading unpublished papers by David Pelteret, 'A note on the Willibrord's memorandum', and David Howlett, 'Wilbrord's autobiographical note and the *Versus sybillae de iudicio Dei*', and am grateful to both for allowing me to see their respective papers prior to publication. They are forthcoming in *Peritia, Journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland*.

³¹ 'Those who had come with him were twelve in number', Bede, *HE* v.10 (ed. Plummer, i.299; Colgrave & Mynors, p. 480).

³² See Bruno Krusch (ed.), 'Ionae vitae sanctorum Columbani, Vedastis, Iohannis', in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum in usum scholarum* (Leipzig 1905) 174 (VC i.14).

³³ Krusch, 'Ionae vitae sanctorum', 198 (VC i.21).

³⁴ G. S. M. Walker (ed. & transl.), *Sancti Columbani Opera*. *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 2 (Dublin 1957), p. 16 (Ep. ii.6) (presumably Irishmen are intended).

³⁵ Walker, *Sancti Columbani opera*, p. 30 (Ep. iv.4).

pater Ecgberct,³⁶ and from which it was then despatched by him after his own intended mission had been aborted. They were not the only fellow-countrymen to take part in his mission: Bede is the source for our information that two brothers with the same name, but described by him *pro diuersa capillorum specie* as Heuuald ‘the fair’ and Heuuald ‘the dark’, followed Willibrord on the continental mission.³⁷ Wilhelm Levison, however, pointed to contradictions in Bede’s account, and suggested that the brothers may, in fact, have accompanied Willibrord from the start.³⁸ Bede also records how, after Willibrord had been made Bishop of Utrecht by Pippin, he constituted other bishops in those parts *ex eorum numero fratrum, qui uel secum, uel post se illo ad praedicandum uenerant*.³⁹ We know the identity of one of these: Suidbert.⁴⁰ Bede records how, when Willibrord took himself to Rome in AD 692, in order to seek consecration as bishop at the hands of Pope Sergius, the community he left behind in Frisia decided to send Suidbert back to England, to be ordained bishop by Wilfrid (then exiled from his native Northumbria to Mercia). After initial success amongst the Boructuarii, Suidbert subsequently received the site of Kaiserswerth (near

³⁶ The term *pater Ecgberct* is also used by the scribe/author of the famous ‘Moore Memorandum’ (Cambridge, University Library, MS. Kk.5.16, fol. 128v). See Peter Hunter-Blair, ‘The Moore Memoranda on Northumbrian history’, in Cyril Fox & Bruce Dickins (eds), *The Early Cultures of North-West Europe: Essays for Raleigh Radford* (Cambridge 1950), pp. 245-58; repr. in Hunter-Blair’s collected essays, *Anglo-Saxon Northumbria* (London 1984), no. VI.

³⁷ Bede, *HE* v.10 (ed. Plummer, i. 299; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 480-83).

³⁸ Wilhelm Levison, ‘St Willibrord and his place in history’, *Durham University Journal*, n.s., 1 (1940) 23-41, repr. Levison, *Aus rheinischer und fränkischer Frühzeit. Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Düsseldorf 1948), pp. 314-29, at p. 321, n.1. For valuable discussion, see Knut Schäferdiek, ‘Der Schwarze und der Weiße Heward. Der erste Versuch einer Sachsenmission’, *Westfälische Zeitschrift* 146 (1996) 9-24.

³⁹ ‘from among the brethren that either came with him or after him to preach there’, Bede, *HE* v.11 (ed. Plummer, i.303; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 486-7). For a useful discussion of Willibrord’s personal connections on the continent, see Lutz von Padberg, *Heilige und Familie. Studien zur Bedeutung familiengebundener Aspekte in den Viten der Verwandten- und Schülerkreises um Willibrord, Bonifatius und Liudger*. Inaug.-Diss. (Münster-Westfalen 1980). On the other hand, C. A. Rutgers (ed.), *De Utrechtse bisschop in de middeleeuwen* (Den Haag 1978) merely reproduces excerpts from primary and secondary sources, including, e.g., Wilhelm Levison’s ‘St Willibrord and his place in history’ (for which see the previous note). Rutgers omits the footnote references and has nothing new to add.

⁴⁰ Bede, *HE* v.11 (ed. Plummer, i.302; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 486-7). See Franz Flaskamp, *Suidbercht, Apostel der Brukerer, Gründer von Kaiserswerth. Missionsgeschichte der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften 2* (Duderstadt 1930).

Düsseldorf), an island in the Rhine, ‘which is called in their tongue *In littore*, where he built a monastery, which his heirs still possess’ (*quod hactenus heredes possident eius*). Suidbert’s episcopal seat was at Dorestat (now Wijk-bij-Duurstede). His remains still survive, housed in a shrine that was officially dedicated on 6 July 1264. An inscription on the shrine reads: *Istae sunt reliquiae beati Swiberti confessoris quarum facta est haec translatio a.d. 1264*, etc.⁴¹ He died probably in AD 713.

It is not usually remarked by historians that Suidbert’s remains were enshrined along with those of a companion; the inscription just mentioned also has the words: *Istae sunt reliquiae beati Willeici confessoris quae eodem tempore sunt translatae* (‘These are the relics of the blessed confessor Wileicus, which were [also] translated at that time’). Who this Uuilleicus was we do not know. Was he perhaps related to Willibrord? I believe there are reasons for thinking that he was. He may also be mentioned by Alcuin in his poem on the bishops, kings and saints of York.⁴² Another possible companion of Willibrord’s, Adalbert (i.e. Aethelberht in its original Anglo-Saxon form)⁴³ is mentioned in the Annals of Xanten, AD 690 and 694; he settled at Egmond in North Holland.⁴⁴ The anonymous author of the Wearmouth-Jarrow *Historia abbatum*, writing in Bede’s own monastery in Northumbria, tells how Ceolfrid (later Bede’s own abbot) chose the monastic life in his late teens, and entered the monastery of Gilling in Yorkshire, which had earlier been ruled by his brother Cynifrid, who had handed over the burden of administration to another kinsman (*cognatus*) named Tunberct, and had taken himself off to Ireland ‘in order to study the scriptures’.⁴⁵ To judge from the general chronology of the *Historia*, this

⁴¹ ‘These are the remains of the blessed confessor Suidbert, which were translated in A.D. 1264’; see E. Pauls, ‘Zur Geschichte der Suitbertus- und Willeicus-Reliquien in Kaiserswerth’, *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 63 (1886) 54-62.

⁴² Was he identical with the mysterious ‘Uuira sacerdos’, who is mentioned by Alcuin in this poem? See *De sanctis Eboracensis episcopis* v. 1073 = Peter Godman (ed & trans), *Alcuin, The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York* (Oxford 1982), p. 86. The names of the two Hewalds occur also in the Echternach sacramentary, 4 Oct., but the connection was missed by its most recent editor; see Yitzhak Hen (ed), *The Sacramentary of Echternach* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. Lat. 9433) Henry Bradshaw Soc. Publications 105 (London 1997), p. 72: *Natale* (sic) *sanctorum Heoualdi* [,] (sic) *et Eoualsi* (*recte* Eoualdi, MS.).

⁴³ According to Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ii.288.

⁴⁴ Georg H. Pertz (ed.), ‘Annales, chronica et historiae aevi Carolini’, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, *Scriptores* 2 (Hannover 1828), p. 220.

⁴⁵ Text in Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, i.388. For an English translation, see J.F. Webb & D.H. Farmer (transl.), *The Age of Bede* (Harmondsworth

would have happened sometime in the 650s. The Jarrow author further states that Cynifrid was one of the many Englishmen in Ireland (*cum aliis quoque Anglorum nobilibus*) who were carried off by the great plague (presumably of AD 664), *longe lateque grassante* (raging far and wide').⁴⁶ Further Anglo-Saxon names are recorded in native Irish liturgical sources.⁴⁷

Doubtless other such names would have come down to us, if the *Vita Uillibrordi* that was composed by an Irish member of the Echternach community shortly after Willibrord's death had survived. Unfortunately, Alcuin of York, later of Tours (who was himself a relative of Willibrord's), at the request of Beornred, a later abbot of Echternach, and subsequently archbishop of Sens (and another relative of Willibrord's), composed an *opus geminatum*, or prose and metrical Life of Willibrord, which displaced the earlier *Vita*. It was still extant, however, when the twelfth-century *Vita Willibrordi* by abbot Thiofrid of Echternach was composed (as he recorded himself, between Oct. 1104 and Oct. 1105) for he describes the seventh-century work in these words: *Nam primo quidam linguae ac gentis Scotticae aggressus tanti uiri gesta describere, rusticam stilo detriuit dignitatem hystoriae, dein Alcwinus de Britannia, uir urbanae elegantiae, ... conatus est in urbanum lepido seponere dicto et incompta comere* ('For at first a certain individual of Irish race and language had attempted to describe the deeds of this man, but ruined the dignity of the story by the crudeness of his style. Thereafter Alcuin of Britain, a man of urbane elegance, ... undertook to render the crude and incompetent version into an elegant style'; *Thiofridi V. Willibrordi*, cap. 24).⁴⁸ It is really a very great pity that the Irishman's work has not been preserved, for we can hardly doubt that he would have provided much valuable information, not only about Willibrord himself, but

1988), pp. 213-14.

⁴⁶ Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, i.389; Webb & Farmer, *Age of Bede*, pp. 213-14. It is possible, of course, that Cynifrid might have died in a later plague, e.g., in 688, in which case he would have been an exact contemporary of Willibrord's in Ireland. For discussion, see Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord', pp. 31-32 = *Early Irish History and Chronology*, pp.157-8.

⁴⁷ For example, *Uildbrit* (Martyrology of Tallaght, 36) = ? *Huiltbrith* (Martyrology of Gorman, 82). See Pádraig Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland: the Evidence of the Martyrology of Tallaght*. H.M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 3 (Cambridge 1998). For a good general discussion, see Vera Orschel, 'Mag Eó na Sacsan: an English colony in Ireland in the seventh and eighth centuries', *Peritia* 15 (2001) 81-107.

⁴⁸ On the *Vita Willibrordi*, see Michele C. Ferrari, "'Dum profluit est lutulentus": Thiofridi, Alcuino e la metrica della "Vita S. Willibrordi"', in Claudio Leonardi (ed), *Gli Umanesimi Medievali*. Atti del II Congresso dell' "Internationales Mittellateinerkomitee", Firenze, 11-15 settembre 1993 (Firenze 1998) 129-40.

also about the Irish background of his mission. Amongst other things, he would doubtless have named some or all of Willibrord's companions, Irishmen as well as Anglo-Saxon, for we may be certain that the earliest Echternach community contained men of both nationalities. It is a well known fact that the earliest Echternach charters were written and subscribed by two individuals by the name of Laurentius and Virgilius, and it has been argued by scholars (myself included) that one or both of these were probably Irishmen.⁴⁹ I have also shown on a previous occasion that at least one demonstrably Irish scribe was active in Echternach c. AD 700 (i.e., immediately after its foundation), when he wrote — and glossed in Latin and Old Irish — a miscellany of texts on the subject of Easter.⁵⁰

The earliest Echternach charters do not, however, record the names of any Englishmen. The names of the scribes other than Laurentius and Virgilius are *Huncio* (documents 3, 4, 6, and 9); *Warembertus* (10); *Elduinus* (11); *Docfa* (20); *Ansaldus* (21), and *Richisus* (26).⁵¹ But there *must* have been other Anglo-Saxons who accompanied Willibrord from Rath Melsigi in Ireland. Who were these men? What were their names? How many of them — if any — were related to Willibrord? To answer these questions we must go back to Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, and his account of the activities of the Anglo-Saxons associated with the Irish monastery at Rath Melsigi.

We are extremely fortunate in that we still have a book which was in Willibrord's own personal possession when he departed Rath Melsigi AD 690 to travel *ultra mare in Francia*. The manuscript known as the *Calendar of Willibrord* (Paris, Bibl. Nat., MS. Lat. 9389, fols 34-41) is the earliest such text to come down to us from either the Irish or the Anglo-Saxon church.⁵² It has also (as we saw above), on its November page, the earliest

⁴⁹ See Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Pride and prejudice', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 353-62, at p. 360.

⁵⁰ See Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Early Echternach fragments with Old Irish glosses', in Georges Kiesel & Jean Schroeder (eds), *Willibrord. Apostel der Niederlande, Gründer der Abtei Echternach. Gedenkgabe zum 1250. Todestag des angelsächsischen Missionars* (Luxembourg 1989), pp. 135-43 = *Early Irish history and chronology*, pp. 133-44. For a suggestion that one of Willibrord's own writings has survived, see Rob Meens, 'Christentum und Heidentum aus der Sicht Willibrords? Überlegungen zum *Paenitentiale Oxoniense II*', in Michel Polfer (ed), *L'évangélisation des régions entre Meuse et Moselle et la fondation de l'abbaye d'Echternach (V^e-IX^e siècle)*. Publications de CLUDEM 16 (Luxembourg 2002), pp. 415-28.

⁵¹ Camillus Wampach, *Geschichte der Grundherrschaft Echternach*, 2 vols (Luxembourg 1930) i, pp. 2, 20, 23, 26, 32, 34, 36, 52, 54, 65.

⁵² Besides the facsimile edited in H.A. Wilson, *The Calendar of St. Willibrord*, see also E.A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores* 5 (Oxford 1950), nos 605, 606a, 606b, and James

dateable example of English autograph handwriting, and also the earliest contemporary use of AD-dating, earlier even than Bede's use of the system in his Ecclesiastical History.⁵³ For our purposes it is worth pointing out too that Willibrord's script is an Irish script.

Also bound up with Willibrord's Calendar and its accompanying Hieronymian Martyrology (fols 2-33)⁵⁴ is a single-leaf Easter-table (f. 44¹) for the years AD 684-702 that must have been written in Ireland in what I have called 'the script of Rath Melsigi'.⁵⁵ Willibrord's Calendar — to which the table was later attached — is also written in that script, and so also is the manuscript now known as the Augsburg Gospels.⁵⁶ This latter codex is the earliest Insular decorated gospel-book for which we have a secure date.⁵⁷ It is also the earliest manuscript to contain Old English and Old High German (fourteen Old English and eighteen Old High German dry-point glosses,

F. Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland, 1: ecclesiastical* (New York 1929; 3rd rev. ed. Dublin 1979), pp. 233-34, no. 69, and Ó Cróinín, 'Pride and prejudice', pp. 360-61. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, vi, remarked: 'the script is personal and shows that to be a man of God you do not have to be an expert scribe'!

⁵³ There is a very interesting discussion of this subject by David Pelteret, in the unpublished paper cited in n. 30.

⁵⁴ See now the discussions of the early Insular history of the Jerome Martyrology in Pádraig Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the saints. A history of Irish martyrologies*. Subsidia Hagiographica 86. Société des Bollandistes (Brussels 2006) and Felice Lifshitz, *The name of the saint. The Martyrology of Jerome and access to the sacred in Francia, 627-827* (Notre Dame, Ind. 2006).

⁵⁵ Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord', pp. 35-36 = *Early Irish History and Chronology*, pp. 160-1.

⁵⁶ Full colour microfiche facsimile in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Evangeliarium Epternacense (Universitätsbibliothek Augsburg, Cod. 1.2.4^o 2), Evangelistarium (Erzbischöfliches Priesterseminar St. Peter, Cod. ms. 25)*, Codices Illuminati Medii Aevi 9 (Munich 1988).

⁵⁷ I do not believe that the Lindisfarne Gospels can be securely dated. See Lawrence Nees, 'Reading Aldred's colophon for the Lindisfarne Gospels', *Speculum* 78 (2003) 333-77; cf. David N. Dumville, *A Palaeographer's Review: the Insular System of Scripts in the Early Middle Ages* 1. Kansai University Institute of Oriental and Occidental Studies, Sources & Materials Series, 20-1 (Kansai 1999), p. 75, where he refers disparagingly to 'The ultimate expression of the Lindisfarne dream' (an article by Michelle Brown) and its 'fantastic elements'. For a further attempt to shore up the tottering edifice of the Lindisfarne scriptorium, see now Michelle P. Brown, 'House style in the scriptorium: scribal reality, and scholarly myth', in Catherine E. Karkov & George Hardin Brown (eds), *Anglo-Saxon styles*. SUNY Series in Medieval Studies (New York 2003), pp.131-50. Prof. Dumville's new-found radical scepticism has led him to question all the claims concerning the Lindisfarne Gospels, including the very existence of the Lindisfarne scriptorium, to the point even of vindicating statements made by me regarding the origins of the earliest Echternach manuscripts.

scratched with the sharp point of a stylus). Here too the English were good pupils, for the practice of glossing Latin texts with words in the vernacular was one initiated by the Irish a century or so earlier (c. AD 600).⁵⁸

These manuscripts accompanied Willibrord *ultra mare in Francia*. However, his mentor, Ecgberct, remained in Ireland, in fulfillment of that vow which he had made in the plague year of AD 664. He had been instructed by the nocturnal visitor to abandon his plans for a mission to Germany, and to go instead to Iona, ‘to the monasteries of Columba, for they are cutting a crooked furrow, and he must call them back to the true line’.⁵⁹ On this detail Charles Plummer dryly remarked: ‘Ecgberct seems to have taken his time in executing the commission which he received’.⁶⁰ The command to go to Iona must have come c. AD 684/5; Ecgberct eventually made his way to the island in AD 715 — a full thirty years later. How the Columban community fared with their furrowing in the meantime must be the subject of another study. It is enough to say here that Ecgberct’s arrival on Iona marked a turning-point in that monastery’s history, for in the spring of the following year the monks of Iona celebrated Easter, for the first time, in accordance with the rules of the Universal Church, abandoning that 84-year Easter table which Columba had brought with him from Ireland in AD 563, and which had been retained on Iona long after it was abandoned by the other Irish churches.⁶¹

Ecgberct, however, was better connected than most of his fellow countrymen. He was on terms of the greatest intimacy with King Ecgfrith of Northumbria, and urged the king against an attack which he subsequently made in AD 684 against Brega, on the east coast of Ireland. Bede was outraged by this attack against ‘a harmless race that had always been most

⁵⁸Dumville’s discussion of these glosses (*A Palaeographer’s Review*, pp. 90, n. 144) is tendentious. For the Irish background to Insular dry-point glossing, see Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ‘The earliest Old Irish glosses’, in Rolf Bergmann, Elvira Glaser & Claudine Moulin-Fankhänel (eds), *Mittelalterliche volkssprachliche Glossen* (Heidelberg 2001), pp. 7-31. For the earliest Old High German glossing, see Elvira Glaser, ‘Typen und Funktionen volkssprachlicher (althochdeutschen) Eintragungen im lateinischen Kontext’, *Sprachwissenschaft* 28/1 (2003) 1-27.

⁵⁹ ... *ad monasteria Columbae ... , quia aratra eorum non recte incedunt; oportet autem eum ad rectum haec tramitem reuocare*, Bede, *HE* v.9 (Plummer, i.297-8; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 476-9).

⁶⁰Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ii.335.

⁶¹ See the comment in the contemporary Iona chronicle, s.a. 715: *Pascha comotatur in Eo ciuitate* ‘the date of Easter is changed in the monastery of Iona’ (Seán Mac Airt & Gearóid Mac Niocaill (eds & transl), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* (Dublin 1983), p. 172).

friendly to the English.’⁶² Ecgfrith got his come-uppance the following year, when he and his army were wiped out by the Picts in the battle of Nechtansmere (Dunnichen Moss, in Forfarshire). Bede expressed the king’s fate graphically when he said that ‘the [Irish] resisted force by force so far as they were able, imploring the merciful aid of God and invoking His vengeance with unceasing imprecations. And although those who curse cannot inherit the kingdom of God, yet one may believe that those who were justly cursed for their wickedness quickly suffered the penalty of their guilt at the avenging hand of God’.⁶³ Bede further remarked that the king ‘had refused to listen to the holy father Ecgberct, who had urged him not to attack the Irish, who had done him no harm’.⁶⁴ Ecgfrith clearly had his own agenda, but he was not always hostile to the church. His name appears, after all, on the dedication inscription of Bede’s own monastery at Jarrow.⁶⁵

One would like to know how Ecgberct, permanently exiled in Ireland for at least thirty years before 684, was in a position to know about Ecgfrith’s plans to attack Ireland. The political connections between the two islands have been mentioned before; it was not by any means unheard of, as we have seen, for displaced members of the Northumbrian royalty to bide their time in Ireland until the circumstances were such that they could make a renewed bid for power.⁶⁶ But how did Ecgberct *know* that Ecgfrith was

⁶² *Gentem innoxiam et nationi Anglorum semper amicissimam*, Bede, *HE*, iv.26 (Plummer, i.267; Colgrave & Mynors, p. 427).

⁶³ Loc. cit.; *Et quamvis maledici regnum Dei possidere non possint, creditum est tamen, quod hi, qui merito impietatis suae maledicebantur, ocius Domino uindice poenas sui reatus lucerent*. The long-held belief that the battle is commemorated on the famous Aberlemno stone has been disputed (wrongly, in my view) by Lloyd Laing, ‘The date of the Aberlemno Stone’, in Mark Redknap et al (eds), *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art. Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Insular Art, Cardiff 3-6 September 1998* (Oxford 2001), pp. 241-51

⁶⁴ Loc. cit.; ... *noluerat audire reuertissimum patrem Ecgberctum, ne Scottiam nil se ledentem inpugnaret*.

⁶⁵ John Higgitt, ‘The dedication inscription at Jarrow and its context’, *The Antiquaries Journal* 59 (1979) 343-74, with plates. On the other hand, I do not believe that he was buried on Iona, after the disaster at Nechtansmere; the reasons for thinking so given by T. M. Charles-Edwards (transl.), *The Chronicle of Ireland*, Translated Texts for Historians, 44, 2 vols (Liverpool 2006), i.166, n. 2, are, to my mind, unconvincing. The (mistaken) belief arose, I suspect, by a confusion of Ecgfrith with Ecgberct, who would very likely have been buried on Iona after his death there in 729.

⁶⁶ For a good, general account of the background, see James Campbell, ‘Elements in the background to the Life of St Cuthbert and his early cult’, in Gerald Bonner, David Rollason & Clare Stancliffe (eds), *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community, to AD 1200*

planning an attack on Ireland? It is tempting, in the circumstances, to ask if there were family or other connections between some or all of the individuals involved in the various political and military episodes mentioned by Bede.

One possible *modus operandi* in such an investigation would be to examine the names themselves, to see if Anglo-Saxon (and Old Germanic) principles of name-giving might be applied, of the kind that we saw above, in relation to Hild of Whitby and her family.⁶⁷ These might involve the use of alliteration, variation, and repetition. The first needs no explanation; it was a principle recognized by Stenton: 'In royal, and doubtless in many noble, families, it was customary for a son to receive a name which would alliterate with that of his father, so that the names of father and son might be handed down together in commemorative verse'.⁶⁸ The second naming-principle (variation) could involve either the change of a name-theme (as in *Ælfred* and *Æthelred*, *Eadgar* and *Eadmund*), through the addition of a new element to an uncompounded name (as in *Gode* and *Godgifu*), or through the

(Woodbridge 1989), pp. 3-19; repr. in Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London & New York 2000), pp. 85-106.

⁶⁷ There is a substantial literature on this subject; I have found the following particularly useful: Moritz Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch der altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen nach der Überlieferung des klassischen Altertums bearbeitet* (Heidelberg 1911) [very comprehensive, but limited by its use of Classical sources only]; Mats Redin, *Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English* (Oslo 1919); Henry Bosley Woolf, *The Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving* (Baltimore 1939); Ruth Schmidt-Wiegand, 'Namengebung', in *Handwörterbuch der Rechtsgeschichte* 3 (1984) 831-36; Dieter Guenich, Wolfgang Haubrichs & Jörg Jarnut (eds), *Nomen et gens. Zur historischen Aussagekraft frühmittelalterlicher Personennamen* (Berlin & New York 1997); Hubert Le Bourdellès, 'L'anthroponymie dans la famille de Clovis', in Michel Rouche (ed), *Clovis, histoire et mémoire. Le baptême de Clovis, l'événement*, 2 vols (Paris 1997), i.805-16; Dieter Guenich, Wolfgang Haubrichs & Jörg Jarnut (eds), *Person und Name. Methodische Probleme bei der Erstellung eines Personennamenbuches des Frühmittelalters* (Berlin & New York 2002); Stefan Sonderegger, 'Prinzipien germanischer Personennamengebung', in Guenich, Haubrichs & Jarnut, *Nomen et gens*, 1-29; John Insley, 'Pre-Conquest personal names', in Heinrich Beck et al. (eds), *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 23 (Berlin & New York 2003), pp. 367-96; I am grateful to Dr Paul Russell, Pembroke College, Cambridge, for bringing this last article to my attention and supplying me with a copy.

⁶⁸ 'Personal names in place-names', in Allen Mawer & F.M. Stenton (eds), *Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names* 1 (Oxford 1924) 168-69, notwithstanding the scepticism voiced by Kenneth Sisam, 'Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 39 (1953) 287-348, at pp. 300-1, who wondered if it was likely that early Anglo-Saxon kings named their sons so as to produce 'a perfect verse pedigree'.

transposition of both name-themes (as in *Beorhtwulf* and *Wulfbeorht*).⁶⁹ That the English themselves acknowledged the existence and use of such name-giving practices is clear, for example, from a remark of William of Malmesbury, in his *Life of Wulfstan*: *Puero Wlstanus vocabulum datum; ex anteriore materni, et ex posteriore paterni nominis compositum*.⁷⁰ The third method involved repetition of identically the same name for different persons (witness the two Hewalds, mentioned above). Armed with these analytical tools, therefore, we can proceed to examine the names of the principal actors in Bede's narrative, and related contemporary sources.⁷¹

If we begin with Ecgberct of Rath Melsigi, and ask again how he knew in advance of the attack on Ireland by King Ecgfrith of Northumbria, then it is surely legitimate to ask whether there might have been ties of kinship between **Ecgberct** and **EcgFRITH**, or between **Ecgberct** and three of king **EcgFRITH**'s henchmen: *Berct* (leader of the Northumbrian expedition against Brega in AD 664); *BerctFRID*, *praefectus*, who fought against the Picts at Nechtansmere, and *Berctred*, *dux regius*, who also fought at Nechtansmere.⁷² Could there also be a link between these and *Uuictberct*, the man whom **Ecgberct** had chosen to undertake the Frisian mission when he himself had abandoned the task? And is it significant that Ceolfrid, Bede's abbot, had a brother named *Tunberct*,⁷³ formerly one of Wilfrid's monks at Ripon and subsequently abbot at Gilling (where CeolFRID's brother CyniFRID had ruled before he departed for Ireland)? Indeed, I wonder if perhaps there might also be a connection between all these individuals and the Anglo-Saxon scribe (and author?) of the psalm commentary in the Vatican MS. Cod. Pal. Lat. 68 (saec. VIIIⁱⁿ?) who gives his name in the distinctively Irish fashion: *Edilberict filius BerictFRIDI (hanc glosam scripsit)*.⁷⁴ The manuscript has both Old Irish and Old English

⁶⁹ Woolf, *Principles of Name-Giving*, p. 2.

⁷⁰ 'As a boy he was given the name Wulfstan, the first part made up of his mother's name and the second part from his father's'; see R.R. Darlington (ed.), *William of Malmesbury's 'Vita Wulfstani'*. Camden Soc. Publications (London 1928), p. 4.

⁷¹ There is a very useful and detailed analysis of Bernician and Deiran names in Woolf, *Principles of Name-Giving*, pp. 53-69. For a parallel contemporary continental example of the same principles, see Eugen Ewig, 'Namengebung bei den ältesten Frankenkönigen und im merowingischen Königshaus', *Francia* 18/1 (1991) 21-69.

⁷² See also D.P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (2nd rev. ed. London 2000), p. 118.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 91.

⁷⁴ See Martin McNamara (ed.), *Glossa in Psalmos. The Hiberno-Latin Glosses on the Psalms of Codex Palatinus Latinus 68 (Psalms 39:11-151:7)*, Studi e Testi 310 (Vatican 1986) (colophon at pp. 27-28); repr. in McNamara, *The Psalms in the Early Irish Church*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Ser. 165 (Sheffield 2000), pp.

glosses, but the form of Edilberict's name suggests that the milieu in which he wrote might more likely have been Irish than Northumbrian (or perhaps linked with Iona?). And it may be no coincidence, either, that there exists at the monastic site of Tullylease (Co. Cork) a remarkable stone cross-slab — with a striking affinity to one of the cross-decorated pages in the Lindisfarne Gospels — on which are inscribed the words: *Quicumque hunc titulum legerit orat pro Berechtuine* ('Whoever should read this inscription, let him pray for Berechtuine').⁷⁵ Edilberict adds a very similar prayer to the end of his psalm commentary: *quicumque hoc legat oret pro scriptore*.

Given what we know about the dynastic politics of Northumbria in the sixth and seventh centuries, and the ways in which those politics interacted with the politics of Scottish Dál Riata and of Ireland itself, we should not be surprised to find some members of Northumbrian royal or aristocratic families holding the reigns of power while others, either rival dynasties or the discard segments of the same families, languished in political exile. After all, while EcgFRITH was king in Northumbria, his brother AldFRITH was a political refugee in Ireland and Iona; he was able to return to his native Northumbria only after Ecgfrith had been killed by the Picts.

Despite his exile in Ireland, we know from another source, the *De abbatibus* of Æthelwulf,⁷⁶ that Ecgberct was in close contact still with Northumbria during the early years of the eighth century, to the point where he could advise Eanmund, the founder of Æthelwulf's monastery, on a suitable site for its location (? Bywell, c. 50 miles from Lindisfarne);⁷⁷ he also provided it with a consecrated altar-stone. Was this Æthelwulf himself related in some way to the brothers Æthelwine and Æthelhun, who were with Ecgberct in Rath Melsigi, or to *Edilberict filius BerictFRIDI* of the Vatican psalm commentary? The poem contains a lengthy account of

165-288 (colophon at pp. 187-88). For a palaeographical description, see E.A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores* 1 (Oxford 1934), p. 42, No. 78, and *Codices Latini Antiquiores* Suppl. (Oxford 1974), p. 44.

⁷⁵ Isabel Henderson & Elisabeth Okasha, 'The early Christian inscribed and carved stones at Tullylease, Co. Cork', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 24 (Winter 1992), pp. 1-36, at pp. 1-12. See now also Elisabeth Okasha, *The Early Christian Inscriptions of Munster; a Corpus of the Inscribed Stones* (Cork 2000), pp. 119-30.

⁷⁶ Alistair Campbell (ed), *Æthelwulf 'De abbatibus'* (Oxford 1967). The passage of the poem containing the Ecgberct episode is reproduced from the Cambridge MS., Cambridge, University Library, Ff.I.27, fol. 207, in George Henderson, *From Darrow to Kells. The Insular Gospel-Books, 650-800* (London 1987), p. 96, pl. 134.

⁷⁷ The identification of the site with Bywell was proposed by David Howlett, 'The provenance, date, and structure of *De abbatibus*', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 5/3 (1975) 121-30.

Ecgberct's prophetic vision of the site and of his continued interest in its subsequent development. Bearing in mind that Ecgberct had been in exile in Ireland for over fifty years when Æthelwulf's monastery was being established, it is legitimate to enquire how he could have had such close contacts with the founder, if not by virtue of kinship.⁷⁸ We also know from Bede's History that others of Northumbrian origin passed back and forth between Northumbria and Ireland. Two in particular of these individuals are of particular importance in this context: SigFRITH of Jarrow and HereFRITH of Lindisfarne.

It has been pointed out⁷⁹ that Bede, when he was composing his *opus geminatum* in praise of Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, had access to two sources of information on the subject of Cuthbert, when Cuthbert was prior in the monastery of Old Melrose.⁸⁰ One of these sources was Sigfrith, a priest of Bede's own monastery at Jarrow when Bede knew him, but before that a member of the community in Melrose.⁸¹ The other source was Herefrith, originally also a priest of Melrose, subsequently bishop of Lindisfarne.⁸² It is worth pointing out that in Bede's account of the aborted Frisian mission planned by Ecgberct, a member of the Rath Melsigi community told how he had been twice visited in his sleep by Boisil — whom the anonymous Rath Melsigi monk had known when both were members of the community at Melrose — and how Boisil had warned Ecgberct against undertaking the continental mission. 'Boisil emerges as an absolutely pivotal figure in the life of Cuthbert, as his teacher and mentor';⁸³ the same could almost be said

⁷⁸ In 'Pride and prejudice' (1982), and again in 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord' (1984), I speculated that Ecgberct's connection with Æthelwulf's monastery might have been a channel for the transmission of Rath Melsigi scribal practices (and books) to Northumbria, through the person of Ultán, an Irish scribe much praised by Æthilwulf in his poem. A similar conclusion was reached (independently) by George Henderson, *From Darrow to Kells*, p. 97. I was particularly gratified to find support for my views in the work of so eminent an authority.

⁷⁹ D.P. Kirby, 'Cuthbert, Boisil of Melrose and the Northumbrian priest Ecgberht: some historical and hagiographical considerations', in Michael Richter & Jean-Michel Picard (eds), *Ogma. Essays in Celtic Studies in Honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin* (Dublin 2002), pp. 48-53.

⁸⁰ *Vita sancti Cuthberto auctore anonymo*, iii.1 (Bertram Colgrave (ed. & transl.), *Two 'Lives' of St Cuthbert. A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life* (Cambridge 1940; repr. 1975), p. 94).

⁸¹ *Vita sancti Cuthberto prosaica*, 6 (Colgrave, *Two 'Lives'*, p. 172).

⁸² *Vita sancti Cuthberto prosaica*, 8 (Colgrave, *Two 'Lives'*, p. 180).

⁸³ Kirby, 'Cuthbert, Boisil of Melrose and Ecgberht', p. 50. For a suggestion that Boisil may, in fact, have been an Irishman, see Colin Ireland, 'Boisil, an Irishman hidden in the

of his formative role in Ecgberct's career. The very same emphasis on Boisil and Melrose is the distinguishing feature of the Life of Cuthbert composed by Bede, and one may wonder if perhaps Ecgberct too might have spent some time in Melrose before his departure for Ireland.⁸⁴

Bede states that his story about Ecgberct's death-bed vow during the plague of AD 664, never to return to his homeland should he be spared, had been told to him by an unnamed priest, 'aged and venerable' and 'most truthful', 'who declared that he had heard these things from his [Ecgberct's] own mouth' (*sicut mihi referebat quidam ueracissimus et uenerandae canitiei presbyter, qui se haec ab ipso audisse perhibebat*).⁸⁵ Another former monk of Melrose, Haemgils, provided Bede with his famous account of the otherworld vision of the monk Drythelm, and Bede states in passing that this Haemgils was living in Ireland at the time when he himself was writing his History (*quidam monachus nomine Haemgils, ... qui adhuc superest, et in Hibernia insula solitarius ultimam uitae aetatem pane cibario et frigida aqua sustentat*).⁸⁶ As David Kirby has remarked: 'There must be a possibility that Haemgils was the "aged and venerable" priest who was the source of Bede's story of Ecgberht's original vow never to return to his homeland, ... and even perhaps the source, directly or indirectly, of the story of the monk of Melrose's vision of Boisil and the command to Ecgberht to preach to the Columban foundations'.⁸⁷

Ecgberct lived on Iona for fourteen years from AD 715, and he died there on April 24, 729, Easter Sunday. The date had a special significance for Bede, who pointed out that it was the first year in which the Iona community had celebrated Easter on that particular date (which would have been impossible using the older Irish 84-year Easter tables).⁸⁸ Ecgberct received the ultimate honour from his hosts, an Irish nickname: *Mac Flathi* ('son of a lord' or 'son of a king').⁸⁹ I would like to suggest that Willibrord too was a

works of Bede', *Peritia* 5 (1986) 400-3. For an alternative interpretation of the name, however, see J. Insley, 'Pre-Conquest personal names', p. 379 (from *Bosa* + dimin. -*l* suffix).

⁸⁴ This is the conclusion arrived at also by Kirby, 'Cuthbert, Boisil of Melrose and Ecgberht', p. 50.

⁸⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.27 (Plummer, i.192; Colgrave & Mynors, p. 312).

⁸⁶ Bede, *HE* v.12 (Plummer, i.309; Colgrave & Mynors, p. 496).

⁸⁷ Kirby, 'Cuthbert, Boisil of Melrose and Ecgberht', p. 53.

⁸⁸ See D.P. McCarthy & Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'The "lost" Irish 84-year Easter table rediscovered', *Peritia* 6-7 (1987-88) 227-42 = *Early Irish history and chronology*, pp. 58-75.

⁸⁹ Georg H. Pertz (ed), 'Annales et chronica aevi Carolini' (Annales Laureshamensis) = *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Scriptorum, 1 (Hannover 1826), pp. 22-30, at p. 24:

mac flathi, a son of a lord' or perhaps even a 'son of a king'. The *Vita Willibrordi* records that Willibrord was born of a father named Uilgils, who had estates at a place now called Spurn Point, a promontory at the mouth of the river Humber.⁹⁰ In fact, Alcuin remarked that he himself was a relative of Willibrord's, and had inherited Uilgil's chapel on Spurn Point. Alcuin also remarked that Willibrord had been given his name at birth by his mother.⁹¹ I think there is a significance in the fact that the name was given by his mother; it doubtless signified an element of the maternal inheritance in Willibrord's early life (witness William of Malmesbury's comment about Wulfstan's name, cited above). Willibrord was subsequently offered by his father as a novice to the monastery of Ripon, but he left Northumbria in AD 678, at the age of twenty, to join the community of Rath Melsigi under Ecgberct.⁹² Uilgils himself had become an anchorite shortly after Willibrord's birth. I think it more than likely that the *Haemgils*, who was perhaps Bede's source for the story about Ecgberct at Rath Melsigi, was related to Willibrord's father, *Uilgils*. I would further suggest that Uilgils, Willibrord's father, may in turn have been related (closely or otherwise) to the Uilgils whose name occurs in the list of early Deiran kings.⁹³ In other words, Willibrord may have been himself of Northumbrian royal stock.⁹⁴

Macflatheus. Ecgberct's is the only obit recorded for the year AD 729 in the contemporary Iona chronicle preserved in the Annals of Ulster.

⁹⁰ The prose Life is in Wilhelm Levison (ed.), 'Vita Willibrordi archiepiscopi Traiectensis auctore Alcuino', *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum Rerum Merovingicarum in usum scholarum* 7 (Hannover 1920), pp. 81-141; there is a newer ed. by H.-J. Reischmann, *Willibrord — Apostel der Friesen* (Sigmaringendorf 1989), which I have not seen. The verse and prose Lives were edited by Albert Poncelet, *Acta Sanctorum*, November, 3 (Brussels 1910), pp. 435-57. For discussion, see Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life. Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400-1050* (London 2001), pp. 79-99.

⁹¹ Remarkably, Wilhelm Levison, in his edition of the *Vita*, unaccountably changed the text from *mater* to *pater*! See David Townsend, 'Alcuin's Willibrord, Wilhelm Levison, and the MGH', in Roberta Frank (ed.), *The Politics of Editing Medieval Texts. Papers Given at the 27th Annual Conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto, 1-2 November 1991* (New York 1993), pp. 107-30, at p. 127.

⁹² Levison, *England and the continent in the eighth century* (Oxford 1946), pp. 53-69, at p. 55, connected Willibrord's departure from Ripon with the expulsion of his abbot, Wilfrid, from Northumbria. Perhaps *Uuilfrid* and *Uuilibrord* too were related? The original Anglo-Saxon spelling of the name was *Uuilbrord*.

⁹³ Searle, *Anglo-Saxon Bishops, Kings and Nobles*, p. 255. See the table at the end of this paper in Appendix 2.

⁹⁴ See also Erna Hackenberg, *Die Stammtafeln der angelsächsischen Königreiche*. Inaug.-Diss. (Berlin 1918), pp. 99-101, who cites a *Queldgils* (= Cwe(l)dgils) from the *principes*

We may harbour suspicions about Alcuin's statement that Uilgils *pater* entered the religious life voluntarily; he may, in reality, have been one of the many Northumbrian noblemen, in the seventh century as in the sixth, who were forced by *political* circumstances to retreat from the secular life to the less hazardous existence of the cloister. So much had been surmised long ago by the great Charles Plummer, who remarked sagely: 'In some cases the exile was not wholly voluntary, but was due partly to political causes'.⁹⁵ In other words, if this speculation should be valid, then Willibrord was quite possibly a member of a discarded royal family, whose father had been on the losing side in one of the innumerable factional episodes of Northumbrian politics. The same could obviously also be the case with those fellow-countrymen who accompanied him into exile in Ireland, and who later joined him on the Frisian mission or at Echternach. We saw how Bede had the story about the two Hewalds, two brothers who accompanied or followed Willibrord from Rath Melsigi on the continental mission, but who were murdered, and their bodies dumped in the Rhine.⁹⁶ They had a companion, named Tilmon, who is described as *uir inluster et ad saeculum quoque nobilis* ('a distinguished man and noble also in the worldly sense'), 'who had been a military man before he became a monk' (*qui de milite factus fuerat monachus*). The same was true of Bede's own abbot Ceolfrid, and of others, who likewise had been driven by political adversity into the religious life. Indeed, the same was true also of that Eanmund who, sometime during the years between 706 and 715, established the monastery in Northumbria described by Æthelwulf, and who received advice and assistance in that undertaking from no less a person than Ecgberct of Rath Melsigi. Æthelwulf states specifically that Eanmund and his relatives were forced into the religious life by their political enemies. What was true of them was clearly true of several others, whose names appear either in early Anglo-Saxon or early Irish historical sources. One could almost say that it is a recurrent theme of those sources, though the significance of the details has yet to be worked out in most cases.

of the *provincia Lindissi* in the *genealogia Lindisfarorum*. The same list also includes the names *Beda* and *Biscop*!

⁹⁵ Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ii.197. For all that he was a son of the manse, and pretty much a recluse, Plummer was clearly not altogether blind to the ways of the 'real' world. On his reclusivity, see F.M. Stenton & R.I. Best, 'Charles Plummer, 1851-1927' *Proceedings of the British Academy* 15 (1929) 463-76, repr. in Michael Lapidge (ed.), *Interpreters of Early Medieval Britain* (Oxford 2002), pp. 77-88, at p. 79.

⁹⁶ Bede, *HE* v.10 (Plummer, i.299-301; Colgrave & Mynors, pp. 482-3 and n. 37 above).

The sole surviving evidence from Willibrord's own hand is the note he appended to his Calendar. None of his letters has come down to us, a striking contrast with Boniface, who began his continental missionary career in Willibrord's company, and whose 150 surviving letters provide a unique insight into the world that he came from as well as the one he came to work and die in. Boniface too was surrounded by relatives during his years in Germany; in this, as in other aspects of his work, Willibrord led the way. But the search for those companions of Willibrord has only just begun.⁹⁷ Of course, one can have too much of a good thing, and caution is required when applying analytical techniques that are, at best, uncertain. I am acutely conscious of the boast made by Canon George Browne, who stated categorically: 'Every step of Queen Victoria's descent from Cerdic is as well known as her descent from George III; and as the descent of Cerdic from the real personage Woden was carefully preserved, the Queen's descent from Woden is completely known'.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ An invaluable new tool in the search will, of course, be provided by the data accumulated by the *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England* project.: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/cch/pase>.

⁹⁸ G.F. Browne, *The Conversion of the Heptarchy* (London 1906), p. 40.

APPENDIX 1
ANGLO-SAXONS IN IRELAND
(according to Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*)

Alduine, abbot of Partney (Bede, *HE* iii.9)

Chad (Ceadda) [+ Cynebill, Caelin, Cedda (= Cidda in Willibrord's Calendar)] 'who had lived the monastic life with [Ecgberct at Rath Melsigi] when they were both youths in Ireland' (Bede, *HE* iv.3)

Cynifrid (br. of Ceolfrid), abbot of Gilling (Yorkshire), retires to Ireland, dies in plague (Bede, *Hist. abbatum*, cap. 3)

Ædilhun & br. **Ædiluini** (bp of Lindsey, 680-92), 'who later on also went to Ireland to study' (he iii 27); sister = **Æthilhild** (abbess), alive in Bede's time (Bede, *HE* iii.11)

Ecgberct

Hewald the fair & **Hewald** the black, 'two English priests who had long lived in exile in Ireland' (Bede, *HE* v.10)

Haemgisl, 'still alive, living in solitude in Ireland' (Bede, *HE* v.12)

Higebald (abbot of Lindsey) visited Ecgberct in Ireland (Bede, *HE* iv.3)

Tuda (bp of Northumbria) 'educated amongst the southern Irish' (Bede, *HE* iii.26)

Uuictberct, with Ecgberct at Rath Melsigi (Bede, *HE* v.9)

Willibrord, with Ecgberct at Rath Melsigi (Bede, *HE* iii.26)*

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APPENDIX 2: Genealogies of the Kings of Northumbria

				<i>Kings of Deira</i>				<i>Kings of Dál Riata</i>
				Uilgils				Gabrán
				Uiscfrea				Áedán
		<i>Kings of Bernicia</i>		Uffi				? = Ælfred
		Ida		Ælle				Osríc († 628 <i>rígdonna Saxon</i>)
		Adda		<i>Kings of Strathclyde</i>				Osuuin († 651 (AU))
		Æthelric		Urien				
				Rhun			Ceorld (King of Mercia)	
Theobald † c. 603		Bebbe 1 = Æthelfrith = Acha 2 † 616		Royth			Æthelburh 1 = Eduini = Cenburga 2 † 633	
			Colmán Rímid					
? = Eanfrith † 634		Osuald	Æbbe † 683 abb. Coldingham	Osuiu = Fín 1 = Riemmelth 2 † 670	= Eanflæd 3 abb. Whitby	Osfrith	Eadfrith	Anna (king of East Anglia)
				Ælfald abb. Whitby	Ahlfrith ⁹⁹ † c. 664?	Ælfuini † 679	Ecgfrith 1 = Æthelthryth = Tondberct ¹⁰⁰ 2 † 685	abb. Ely
Talorcan = ? = Bili † 657		Oetheluuald ¹⁰¹		Aldfrith (Fland Fína) † 705				
		Bruide † 693 (king of the Picts)						

⁹⁹ *princeps Australium Gyruiorum* (Bede, *HE* iv.19).

¹⁰⁰ Attacked his own father, Osuiu, in alliance with the Mercians (Bede, *HE* iii.14).

¹⁰¹ King of Deira, fought with Penda of Mercia against Osuiu (Bede, *HE* iii.24).