

Introduction: re-thinking early medieval Cornwall

Why would someone whose teaching and research career was based firmly on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries set off on what might prove to be a dangerous foray into early medieval Cornwall? Early retirement gave me the time to start reading up on a period of which I was relatively unaware. Once begun, I was hooked. It soon became clear that, over the past few decades, an immense amount of scholarship has been devoted to the early history of Cornwall. This is a body of work that potentially revolutionises our understanding of Cornwall between the departure of the Romans in the fifth century and the coming of the Normans in the eleventh.

Yet only potentially. While historians and archaeologists of the early medieval British Isles have been busy churning out fascinating new studies of the period,¹ to an outsider Cornish medieval studies look more quiescent, becalmed in a backwater. In some forgotten side creek, we discover its proponents wandering around their stagnant mausoleum. Their rituals have grown rotten with age, their methods are festooned with cobwebs, dangling through the echoing halls. We glimpse its denizens peering ever more myopically at scraps of tattered evidence, textual and material, the holy relics that they revere as they recycle a set of hoary old myths about Cornwall.

As I explored the work on this early period of our past, I became increasingly surprised and not a little irritated that no-one has bothered to write an up-to-date or convincing narrative history of early medieval Cornwall. There are very few recent works that review the whole span of the 700 years between the fifth and the twelfth centuries.² The scholarship cries out for a convincing narrative, one that could make sense of an age that no longer warrants the description of 'dark'. So this is what I offer here, a history of the land we now call Cornwall in the period from the fifth to the twelfth centuries.

How do we explain the slowness of specialists in Cornish early medieval studies to create their own narratives of this period? Alan Kent, in a critique of traditional Cornish medieval studies, claims that it is 'no longer fit for critical purpose'.³ Its 'liberal humanist' approach, focusing on original texts, place names, locales and micro-specialist studies, prevents it from seeing the broader picture. To counteract this, Kent calls for theory to be imported into the study of the Cornish medieval past. One of his suggestions is to adopt 'presentism', which involves a more explicit recognition of the ongoing dialogue between past and present and an awareness of how past texts can become agents of present change (or non-change) in the hands of their modern interpreters. It might seem a little over-ambitious to expect those who currently embrace Cornish medieval studies to have this level of self-awareness, although, as we shall see, there are encouraging signs that archaeologists are more open to new approaches than their historian colleagues.⁴

Alan Kent's 'theory' is literary theory. Those of us from a social science background are more familiar with social science theory, which is not the same. For us theory has a rather tighter meaning, involving the specification of cause and effect in order to understand observed regularities and predict as yet unobserved relationships. From this standpoint, literary theory looks more like a general approach to the world around

us. Nonetheless, one aspect of literary theory as sketched out by one of its defenders looks very relevant. Jonathan Culler argues that theory might be identified through its practical effect on people's views: 'a questioning of the most basic premises or assumptions of literary study, the unsettling of anything that might have been taken for granted'.⁵ Replace 'literary study' here with 'Cornish early medieval studies' and you have my approach in this book. I want to question and open up for debate the taken-for-granted understanding of Cornwall's early medieval past. In doing so I'll introduce a more familiar (to me anyway) sociological theory later in this introduction. But first, what are the problems bedevilling Cornish medieval studies in general and early medieval studies in particular? I would contend that, methodologically, four issues combine to make them 'no longer fit for critical purpose'. These are the nature of the sources, a reluctance to generalise or compare, an over-specialization and an unwillingness to reflect or examine foundation assumptions.

The four problems of Cornish early medieval studies

The basic technique employed by students of this period is the close interrogation of source material. Small clues are examined in a method that is claimed to be forensic and rigorous. Conclusions arise solely from the material at hand. Thus, Oliver Padel could claim that 'hypothetical reconstructions have been entirely eschewed'. Although, just eleven pages later in the same text, he was forced to reach a conclusion which he describes as 'pure speculation'.⁶ This is not surprising as, in practice, forensics turn out to be unavoidably laced with a considerable quantity of rhetoric. The most fanciful medievalists go so far as to claim their method is somehow scientific. But the natural sciences test hypotheses on data, much of which they generate as part of their procedures. The insurmountable problem any student of the early medieval period soon confronts is that data cannot be easily generated and insufficient sources survive.

Historians of the modern period, or even the early modern period, can feel overwhelmed by potential data. The historian and (to a somewhat lesser extent) the archaeologist of early medieval times suffers from the opposite problem, a relative lack of data. For example, Charles Thomas points out that, whereas perhaps as many as a quarter of a million people lived and died in south-western Britain from 300 to 700, historical sources that can be dated to the period name just three or four of them. Two of these are not natives at all but bishops exiled on Scilly.⁷ Hagiographic sources dated to this period give us another three names, while around 50 more can be gleaned from stone memorials. This comprises a minute proportion of the contemporary population. Incidentally, hagiographers of later centuries, once relied upon for information on the early medieval period, are now curtly dismissed as not knowing 'anything reliable'.⁸

While early medieval historians seem mired in stagnation, archaeologists are producing fascinating new interpretations of early medieval Cornish society and have been a lot more fruitful than historians in terms of creating new models of Cornwall's early past. But even archaeologists have to deal with a forbidding problem. This is the problem of excavational bias and the selective survival of material.⁹ Like any researcher, they can only analyse that evidence which survives. Although the amount

of archaeological finds from the Roman and post-Roman periods has increased greatly in recent decades, there is still a lingering suspicion that remains from the early medieval period may, or even must, lie undetected and undisturbed in a corner of some forgotten field. Archaeologists make use of ever more sophisticated statistical techniques and analytical tools and have more cause to be described as adopting scientific method than document-based historians of the early medieval period. However, they ultimately have to grapple with the same problem – the relative paucity of data from which convincing conclusions can be drawn.

At least most archaeologists, if not historians, have shaken themselves free from what some call naive empiricism, the view that knowledge can only derive from experience and evidence that arises from the 'facts' alone. Empiricism as a method may make some sense when a mass of data exist to be drawn into the web of analysis. However, data are exactly the things in rather short supply in the period we are interested in here. In fact, the absence of texts, possible survival bias and the relative paucity of material artefacts point to three other conclusions. First, even, or perhaps especially, 'specialists in early Celtic history ... know that all must be guesswork in such matters'.¹⁰ Second, if much is guesswork then we might expect a wide zone of uncertainty to exist in early medieval studies. Third, if there is a zone of uncertainty then it follows that multiple interpretations will be compatible with the limited evidence. Indeed, in the absence of conclusive data, multiple interpretations are not only possible but essential for progress to be made.

The second problem of Cornish early medieval studies involves a reluctance to generalise or draw wider comparative conclusions. Recently, Imogen Wood has criticised an antiquarian research framework that dominates 'current approaches to understanding the post-Roman and early medieval period in Cornwall'. This approach, which concentrates on disconnected studies of place names, inscribed stones, Christian crosses and ecclesiastical textual sources, has 'relegated [Cornwall] both archaeologically and theoretically, to the periphery'.¹¹ Little seems to have changed since the 1970s as Cornish early medieval studies have become trapped within a local history paradigm. Such an approach emphasises the unique and discrete but fails to place Cornwall in its proper comparative setting. In particular, despite widespread agreement that it was part of a transoceanic culture zone embracing Brittany, surprisingly little effort has been made to compare Cornwall with its close neighbour. A lack of comparative context goes hand in hand with hesitant generalisation and a reluctance to impose a narrative on post-Roman Cornwall. This explains the scarcity of recent works that review the whole span of the 700 years between the fifth and the twelfth centuries.

A failure to place their work into a larger context links to the third problem, one that Cornish early medieval studies shares with much other academic endeavour. It is over-specialised. In-depth research on small areas replaces works of synthesis. What we see is a local version of the more general process whereby 'academic scepticism and specialization have worked together to marginalise the Britons'.¹² Only in this case it serves to exclude an overall narrative of Cornwall and the Cornish in the period between the end of Roman rule and the onset of Norman administration.

The fourth and final problem of Cornish early medieval studies is their unexamined assumptions. This is exacerbated by the wide zone of uncertainty of the field, which, as I suggested above, should produce multiple interpretations. In order to control the potential chaos this would create, Cornish medievalists have set about whittling them down. However, this process of exclusion or elimination is carried out unreflexively and its mechanism is not made transparent. Instead, taken-for-granted assumptions stand in for clear principles or criteria for exclusion. In consequence, the process turns out to be anything but scientific.

Even medieval studies have not been immune from changes in intellectual fashion. Those who toil in the field of Cornish early medieval studies are, in practice, as prone to intellectual fashions as any other discipline. It is no coincidence that archaeologists of the 1970s turned their attention away from issues of culture, migration, race and ethnicity to those of trade, innovation, economics and social competition.¹³ That reflected a more general turn towards materialism, influenced by neo-marxist perspectives on the one hand and rational choice theories on the other. Archaeologists then went further, explicitly embracing 'post-processual' or 'interpretative' methods, recognising the subjectivity inherent in their conclusions. They have gone on to apply these approaches to issues of ethnicity and identity, with examples of this appearing in relation to south west Britain.¹⁴ This more reflexive approach was part of a general 'postmodernist' turn in the academy. Even historians in the 1990s began to recognise more explicitly that historical reconstruction and moral polemic were inextricably bound together and blurred in early texts.¹⁵ The texts spoke more about the time they were written than the time they wrote about. But as archaeologists and at least some early medieval historians followed their colleagues in other fields and became more self-reflexive, the practice of those specialising in early medieval Cornwall lagged behind, growing increasingly dated and out of touch.

The majority, reflecting a more general tendency among historians, tend to deny the influence of broader philosophies of knowledge on their work. Instead, they resort to an apparently tried and trusted simplistic empiricism that has held sway for the past couple of hundred years. But in this sense, even scholars of early medieval Cornwall in practice cannot avoid presentism, the analysis of the past in terms of the present. For some of its practitioners, Cornish early medieval studies seem to be stuck in that nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonist approach to the 'dark ages' between the Roman and English Empires. This was not just textually dark but metaphorically so, lacking the brilliance of its glorious predecessor or successor.¹⁶ Moreover, three assumptions in particular hold scholars of medieval Cornwall in thrall. Two are related. The first tends to adopt a top-down, authoritarian default perspective on society. The second assumes that a monarchical form of government must have been present. Unexamined authoritarianism and monarchism is then combined with the third assumption - anglo-centrism.

In relation to this last assumption, Susan Pearce argues that the investigation of life among the Cornish in the early medieval period 'involves eschewing anachronistic and emotional concepts of Celtic nationalism'.¹⁷ It's difficult to see how 'Celtic nationalism' prevents anyone studying the social and economic life of the early Cornish. Or how 'Celtic' nationalism is more 'anachronistic and emotional' than any

other form of nationalism. Beams and motes come to mind here, as many of those working on Cornwall's early medieval period seem quite incapable of detecting or admitting their own English nationalist perspective. This will become particularly evident in Chapter 6 when we meet what I call the assimilationist model of Cornish history, infatuated by the incorporation of the Cornish into 'England'.

This model creates a powerful ethno-historical narrative that looks back from the contemporary perspective of a Cornwall incorporated administratively into England, with a people clinging on rather forlornly to their identity in the face of mass migration from England. But this is a fundamentally circular history. As we shall see, it's endlessly and uncritically recycled. Unfortunately, despite their more self-reflexive approach, and models that offer new insights into early medieval Cornwall, even archaeologists are too often apt to resort to a hegemonic narrative uncritically culled from the historians.¹⁸

Moreover, those historians and archaeologists who adopt a Devon and Cornwall perspective appear blithely unaware of how modern political assumptions intrude into their work. Susan Pearce, for example, asserts that Cornwall was part of a 'broader regional story' and there is a 'need to see the south-western peninsula as a whole'.¹⁹ Such a Devonwall approach may have some validity when applied to the immediate post-Roman centuries. Then, the whole of the south-western peninsula was inhabited and ruled by Britons. But from the late seventh century onwards its relevance begins to wane, making the construction of an overall narrative for the period difficult, if not impossible. Moreover, David Dumville viewed the treatment of the south west as a single unit as an 'unfortunate tendency', because a 'kingdom of Dumnonia' could barely be identified from any contemporary sources.²⁰ Sam Turner's Devonwall approach is also ultimately unconvincing. In the main his *Medieval Devon and Cornwall* reads as two separate accounts - of Cornwall and of Wessex.²¹ David Harvey, in reviewing this work, points out the problems of lumping Devon and Cornwall together in this way.²² In fact, the insistence of some historians and archaeologists on using a Devonwall framework speaks more of their inability to escape the influence of modern administrative arrangements (and university locations) than it does of the realities of early medieval society in south-west Britain.

Scholars working in the field of Cornish medieval studies can betray a prickly defensiveness when faced by actual or potential iconoclasts. Those who patrol the boundaries of Cornish medieval studies stand ready to repel interlopers. In particular, anyone threatening to encroach on their hallowed ground from the field of Cornish Studies, with its emphasis on modern Cornwall, is liable to be regarded with deep suspicion by all good medievalists. In its extreme form, as we have seen, this excludes Cornish 'nationalists' from the fellowship of medievalists. Although, oddly, such shunning has not stopped some of the latter identifying a Cornish 'nation' and 'national boundaries' as early as the tenth century.²³ Most modernists in contrast would be far more cautious about applying the concept of nations this early and would hesitate to apply it to political units of this period. Terminological chaos such as this would surely benefit from dialogue with modernists but the gulf between studies of medieval Cornwall and Cornish Studies remains a wide one.

A glimpse of alternatives

Voices criticising the consensus view of Cornwall's early medieval history have not been absent. However, dissent has come from outside the academic early medieval historical establishment and has been firmly consigned to the margins. In addition to Alan Kent's critique of Cornish medieval studies, at the turn of the century a more explicitly Cornish nationalist perspective on early Cornwall finally appeared.²⁴ This was a welcome breath of fresh air, energetically debunking and questioning a whole raft of previously taken-for-granted myths. Unfortunately, John Angarrack's powerful critique was combined with a very conservative methodology. For example, he fell back on older assumptions that later sources - even as late as the nineteenth century - were able to provide an unproblematic picture of what happened before the eleventh century. His approach also entailed an even more empiricist attitude towards the sources. From these, we are supposed to be able to recover the 'truth', if only the untruths are identified and discarded. As a result, this explicitly kernowcentric approach, while succeeding in creating an alternative narrative for the early medieval period, ended up being methodologically more traditionalist than traditional Cornish medieval studies. In addition, while drawing opposite conclusions, it was equally over-concerned with the process whereby Cornwall was assimilated (or not) into the English state, while imbued with a strong element of wishful thinking, as lines of continuity were traced between British rulers of the ninth century and the Duchy of Cornwall in the fourteenth.

Yet several of the conclusions I arrive at in this book echo those reached by John Angarrack. These include the rejection of early (ninth century) conquest following the battle of Hingston Down, the role played by the English King Edgar rather than Athelstan in the incorporation of Cornwall, and the continuation of a level of Cornish autonomy into the twelfth century. But the methodological flaws and the no holds barred style of polemics he employed meant that the questions he raised could be safely ignored by those who sheltered within the Cornish medieval studies bunker. Attitudes towards the new Cornish nationalist narrative from the academic establishment, when they deigned to notice it, were a mix of patrician dismissiveness in public and not a little bemused and perplexed horror in private.

Nonetheless, the wolf had arrived and was sniffing around the door. The straw house of Cornish medieval studies was beginning to look decidedly flimsy. The central point made by Angarrack about anglocentric historians' attitude to early medieval Cornwall stands. There is a reluctance on their part to recognise that a long period of independence occurred, during which a unique society and culture was crafted, one that lay down its imprint for the following millennium. Indeed, this early period established the foundations for a modern sense of Cornish identity and the survival and later revival of a sense of difference. Bryan Ward-Perkins' observation that 'only Cornwall ... remains the one part of England where not all indigenous inhabitants automatically describe themselves as "English"' must owe something to its period of independence, when it 'resisted this trend' of being 'anglo-saxonised'.²⁵ But anyone seeking further illumination would have to look long and hard among the corpus of work produced by the historical academic consensus on early medieval Cornwall to find any reference to this.

What this book does

When attacking the ‘old cultural determinism’ that he detected in some of the new Cornish Studies of the 1990s, attracted as it was by an uncritical adoption of a (mainly early twentieth century) model of Cornish individualism, Peter Herring called on ‘the new generation of historical synthesists’ to recognise recent archaeological work on Cornish settlement patterns and strip fields.²⁶ In making this very valid criticism, he missed a bigger point. What Cornish early medieval studies desperately need is precisely that historical synthesising which he dismissed in passing.

What I set out to do in this book is to provide an unashamed critical synthesis of the considerable amount of scholarly effort that has gone into researching Cornwall’s early medieval period. I intend to incorporate the new insights from archaeologists into a more over-arching narrative of the period between the fifth century, when Roman oversight ended, and the twelfth, when Norman rule was consolidated. In order to construct this narrative I bring two kinds of theory into play. The first is borrowed from historical sociology and specifically the ethno-symbolist perspective on nationalism. This introduces the concept of the cult of golden ages. Anthony Smith has argued that memories of a lost golden age, of victories and defeats, have been a crucial part of a ‘myth’ of ethno-history, establishing the significance of the past for the present.²⁷ These become the mechanism through which an ethnic intelligentsia can ‘mobilise a formerly passive community into forming a nation’.²⁸

In Cornwall’s case, nineteenth century antiquarians began this work of national rediscovery, albeit largely implicitly, identifying a golden age in the far distant past when ‘a national enmity betwixt the Britons and the Saxons’ led to the Britons retreating into Wales, Cornwall and Brittany’.²⁹ Later, more explicit revivalists, at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, built on the work of the ‘fathers of Cornish history’ to look back to a golden age of medieval Cornwall, although the focus was on a rather later Cornish-speaking high medieval golden age.³⁰ There are two better candidates for a Cornish golden age. The first is the period I’m writing about here, before Cornish independence was lost in the early part of the second millennium. The second obvious golden age is the period of industrialisation based on mining that occurred between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.

To add to the notion of our first golden age, I will also apply ‘theory’ in the looser sense of literary theory, by critiquing taken-for-granted assumptions and offering new interpretations of various aspects of Cornwall’s first golden age. I will challenge the authoritarianism, monarchism and anglocentrism privileged in the dominant perspective. These will be replaced with a bottom-up, kernowcentric focus that does not assume that kings must always have been present.

In Chapter 1 I begin with King Arthur but soon discover that Arthur’s importance for the Cornish lay more in later imaginings than earlier doings. Chapter 2 argues that the evidence for historical rulers based, at least seasonally, at the archaeologically remarkable and unique citadel of Tintagel, easily makes up for the slim sources relating to a legendary ruler called Arthur. Indeed, it suggests that Cornwall was the location of one of the more powerful elites of post-Roman Britain, one locked into

sophisticated trading networks that stretched far down to the Mediterranean. However, what precisely was the political entity controlled by this elite? In practice, evidence for the existence of a kingdom called Dumnonia, comprising Cornwall, Devon and parts of Somerset, turns out to be remarkably scanty. Indeed, we might better view this early kingdom as a greater Cornubia.

Chapter 3 lays bare a series of interlocking changes - economic, religious, linguistic, demographic - which were occurring over the period from the fifth to the beginning of the seventh centuries. How far did those who ran the relatively centralised early kingdom have a hand in stimulating some of these changes? Were lords or communities more important in organising a profound change in the landscape and in settlement patterns? And did early rulers based in Cornwall extend their influence across the sea to Brittany?

The power of this fifth/sixth century kingdom was undermined and collapsed in the later sixth century when the flow of luxury goods from the south rather suddenly dried up. Chapter 4 describes what took its place. The south-western kingdom is perhaps misnamed, as this was a 'kingdom' where kings were not very visible. Indeed, they only infrequently ruled. Instead of a society looking up to an authoritarian ruler, we might imagine a decentralised, non-hierarchical world of self-managed communities, very like Brittany. While considerable evidence has been unearthed by archaeologists and historians for the existence of this libertarian social structure of light lordship and local authority, they have been reluctant to draw the necessary conclusions (although some archaeologists have done so). In Brittany a similar social structure has been identified and I use the Breton analogy extensively to reinforce my interpretation of this period. Weak dynastic power meant that the institutional basis for ethnic allegiance may also have been relatively weak.³¹ After the mid-sixth century there was a retreat into more local worlds, with circumscribed horizons, although some communities, those near the coast in particular, would have retained regular trading and cultural links with British-speaking places in Brittany. In this power vacuum the church took on a greater role. But even the church in Cornwall was relatively dispersed and non-hierarchical.

This local, decentralised society endured for around 200 years, from the decline of the post-Roman elites in the late 500s to the 700s, years that saw the creation of Cornwall. But then it began to come under pressure in the eighth century as the needs of intermittent warfare with English settlers and warbands encroaching from the east demanded a greater level of organisation. Chapter 5 recounts Cornwall's long 100 years war with the English. Ultimately, the greater resources of the English inevitably won out, although the resistance of the Cornish over a century or more was a critical factor in saving Cornwall from the fate of anglicisation that had swept up the Britons who lived east of the Tamar. Without that resistance, 'Wales and Cornwall would not have had the time to develop a distinct language and identity of their own'.³²

If Cornwall had been created over the course of the seventh century and the turn away from 'Dumnonia' to the local, then the Cornish identity was the product of the succeeding period of military struggle against the encroaching English of the Kingdom of Wessex over the 'long' eighth century. That experience left the Cornish of

the ninth century in an extremely vulnerable position. In Chapters 6 and 7 I argue that Cornwall was saved from English settlement by a combination of two main factors. The first was the appearance in Britain of the Vikings, Danish and Norse traders and raiders, then settlers and conquerors. This distracted the English. The second entailed a turn from military to cultural resistance on the part of the Cornish. Chapter 6 addresses the dominant academic assimilationist model of Cornwall's 'conquest' in the ninth century and incorporation into England by the early tenth. Its over-simplistic and at times contradictory conclusions are deconstructed and replaced by an alternative model. This rejects the notion of 'conquest' in the ninth century and adopts the change of perspective urged by John Angarrack, from a focus on early Saxon infiltration to one of late Cornish survival.³³ But how late? And 'survival' in what way? The beginning of administrative incorporation is dated to the reign of King Edgar in the 960s rather than Athelstan in the 920s or even earlier English kings.³⁴ Faced by growing interference from English overlords, Cornish landholders began to adopt the ways of their masters for the purposes of self-preservation. Yet despite this, the mass of the Cornish peasantry held on stubbornly to their traditional culture.

In that culture, legends of Arthur and a past golden age were redrawn and flourished. As did dreams of a future golden age. In the final chapter I show how this cultural matrix was in fact highly political. It led to explicitly pro-British reactions by the Cornish intelligentsia to Geoffrey of Monmouth's writings in the twelfth century. That century saw what might be described as a Cornish cultural-political renaissance. Anti-English and anti-Norman political prophecy surfaced. The cultural resistance of the twelfth century meant that the Cornish had succeeded in resisting cultural integration even as politically they began to sink without trace in an over-arching England. Except that it wasn't without trace, as the cultural resistance and the survival of the Cornish language into the early modern period provided the raw material for later Cornish ethnic re-imaginings to be passed on to future generations. The Cornish exist, and that existence owes a lot to our first golden age, between the fifth and the tenth centuries, with its cultural aftermath extending into the high medieval period.

Cornish early medieval history is in dire need of a fresh approach and an interpretation that can impose a more coherent narrative on these years. I can only hope that this will be received by the entrenched defenders of Cornish medieval studies as an opportunity for dialogue and will stimulate a greater awareness of theory and context. Hopefully, the vexed relationships between Cornish Studies and Cornish medieval studies can be opened up and difficulties embraced and explored. In this way practitioners of Cornish medieval studies might once again be able to contribute to Cornish Studies and join in the enterprise of understanding the implications of our collective past.

Timeline

Agreed dates for the history of these centuries are few and far between. However, for those with no prior knowledge of the period, here are some of the more generally accepted dates.

410s	Romans leave the Britons to defend themselves
440s	Saxon mercenaries rebel and seize territory in middle and/or eastern Britain
450s	First wave of migration from southern Britain to Armorica
500-700	Custom of erecting stone inscriptions to the memory of the dead introduced from Wales
525-535	Samson travels across Cornwall on his way to Brittany
530s	Gildas writes of a King Constantine of Dumnonia
550-575	Peak of second wave of migration from Dumnonia to Armorica
550s-600s	Decline of long-distance Mediterranean trade via Tintagel
from 500s	Appearance of hamlets known as <i>trevs</i>
603	British clergy reject Roman reforms, including manner of dating Easter
673	Synod of Whitby and English church accepts Roman ecclesiastical reforms
690s	Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, writes to Gerent, king of the western realm, and visits Cornwall
710	Gerent at war with King Ine of Wessex
722	The battle of Hehil, 'among the Cornish', who defeated the English
750s	Conflicts between Wessex rulers and the Cornish
768	Welsh church accepts the Roman Easter
815	King Egbert of Wessex 'spread devastation in Cornwall from east to west'
825	Battle between 'Welsh in Cornwall and the people of Devonshire' at Gafulford
838	Battle of Hingston Down – Cornish and Viking force defeated by Egbert
875	Drowning of King Dungarth, king of Cornwall, near St Cleer
930s	Athelstan settles border between Cornish and English at the Tamar
930s	<i>Armes Prydein Vawr</i>
936-1100	Bodmin manumissions (freeing slaves)
960s	King Edgar of England begins to make number of land grants in Cornwall
1069	Norman conquest of Cornwall and subsequent rebellions
1130s	Geoffrey of Monmouth's <i>History of the Kings of Britain</i>
1150s	<i>Old Cornish Vocabulary</i>
1150s	John of Cornwall's <i>Prophecies of Merlin</i>

- 1 For two I found particularly illuminating see Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, London, 2011 and Guy Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur: Facts and Fictions of the Dark Ages*, Oxford, 2013.
- 2 Earlier examples are Charles Thomas, *Celtic Britain*, London, 1986; Malcolm Todd, *The South West to AD1000*, London, 1987. More recent but less convincing are Susan Pearce, *South-western Britain in the early Middle Ages*, London, 2004 and Caradoc Peters, *The Archaeology of Cornwall: the foundations of our society*, Fowey, 2005, chapter 6. Other overviews have been provided as part of more specialist works. See Charles Thomas, *Tintagel: Arthur and Archaeology*, London, 1993 and *And shall these mute stones speak? Post-Roman inscriptions in western Britain*, Cardiff, 1994; Nicholas Orme, *A History of Cornwall: Volume II, Religious history to 1560*, Woodbridge. 2010.
- 3 Alan Kent, 'Mending the gap in the medieval, modern and post-modern in New Cornish Studies: 'Celtic' materialism and the potential of presentism', in Philip Payton (ed.), *Cornish Studies Twenty*, Exeter, 2012, pp.13-31.
- 4 Peter Herring, Ann Preston-Jones, Carl Thorpe and Imogen Wood, 'Early medieval Cornwall', *Cornish Archaeology* 50, 2011, pp.263-86; Peter Dudley, *Goon, hal, cliff and croft: the archaeology and landscape history of west Cornwall's rough ground*, Truro, 2011.
- 5 Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A very short introduction*, Oxford, 1997, pp.4-5.
- 6 Oliver Padel, 'The Cornish background to the Tristan stories', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 1, 1981, pp.54 and 65.
- 7 Thomas, *Mute stones*, 1994, p.5.
- 8 Nicholas Orme, *Cornwall and the Cross: Christianity 500-1560*, London.2007, p.5.
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- 12 Christopher Snyder, *The Britons*, Oxford, 2003, p.280.
- 13 John Collis, *The Celts; Origins, Myths and Inventions*, Stroud 2003, p.154.
- 14 Kirsten Jarrett, 'Cives and Saxones: the expression of ethnicity in southwest Britain in the early Middle Ages', in Lorna Bleach et al.(eds), *In Search of the Medieval Voice: Expressions of Identity in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, pp.180-200. See also Peter Herring, 'Multiple identities in Cornwall', in Susan Pearce (ed.), *Recent Archaeological Work in South-Western Britain: Papers in honour of Henrietta Quinnell*, Oxford, 2011, pp.159-67.
- 15 Nicholas Higham, *King Arthur, Myth-Making and History*, London, 2002, pp.5/6.
- 16 Higham, *King Arthur*, 2002, p.250.
- 17 Susan Pearce, *South-western Britain in the Early Middle Ages*, London, 2004, p.257.
- 18 Tompsett, 2012, pp.12-13
- 19 Pearce, *South-western Britain*, 2004, p.2.
- 20 David Dumville, Foreword to Lynette Olson, *Early Monasteries in Cornwall*, Woodbridge, 1989, p.ix.
- 21 Sam Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape: the countryside in early medieval Cornwall, Devon and Wessex*, Exeter, 2006.
- 22 David Harvey, 'Review of Sam Turner (ed.), *Medieval Devon and Cornwall: shaping an ancient countryside*, Macclesfield, 2006', *English Historical Review* cxxiii, 2008, pp.992-994.
- 23 Oliver Padel, 'Place names', in Roger Kain and William Ravenhill (eds), *Historical Atlas of South West England*, Exeter, 1999, p.88.
- 24 John Angarrack, *Breaking the Chains: propaganda, censorship, deception and the manipulation of public opinion in Cornwall*, Camborne, 1999 and *Our Future is History: Identity, Law and the Cornish question*, Bodmin, 2002.
- 25 Bryan Ward-Perkins, 'Why did the Anglo-Saxons not become more British?', *English Historical Review* cxv, 2000, p.521.
- 26 Peter Herring, 'Cornish strip fields' in Turner (ed.), *Medieval Devon and Cornwall*, 2006, p.51. And see Chapter 3 below.
- 27 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, London, 1998, p.191.
- 28 Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, Harmondsworth, 1991, p.64.
- 29 William Borlase, *Antiquities Historical and Monumental of the County of Cornwall*, London, 1769, pp.40-42.
- 30 For the concept of 'fathers of Cornish history' see P.S.Morrish, 'History, Celticism and propaganda in the formation of the Diocese of Truro', *Southern History* 5, 1983, pp.238-266. His 'fathers' were Carew, Borlase and Polwhele.
- 31 cf John Breuilly, 'Approaches to nationalism', in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, London, 1996, pp.150-51.
- 32 Roger White, 'Managing transition: western Britain from the end of empire to the rise of Penda', *History Compass* 11.8, 2013, p.594.
- 33 Angarrack, *Our Future*, 2002, p.57.
- 34 See also Angarrack, *Chains*, 1999, pp.30/31.