

CVpedia More

A repository of essays, independently authored, offering supplementary information to that available in The National CVpedia of Britain. Whilst items are subject to editorial input and the firm obligation is placed upon authors to articulate the truth as they see it, no responsibility is taken for the accuracy of the information presented.

More 2

20 March 2012

Constantine the Great's mother, St Helen of the Cross, was British

by Alan Wilson & Baram Blackett

Constantine the Great, the first Christian Roman Emperor, had a British mother. Her name was Helen and she became known as St Helen of the Cross.

Helen was the daughter of King Coel II, who died in the early AD 300s. Coel II is not to be confused with Coel I, who apart from reigning himself in the AD 100s was the father of King Lleirwg, known to the Romans as Lucius or Luke, the first Christian king anywhere. There is also Coel III, who reigned in the AD 400s.

To learn more of Coel II, his daughter Helen and their times, reference can be made to the *Tysilio Chronicle* of the seventh-century British monk Tysilio, using the 2002 translation of W^m R Cooper [see More 18]. The corresponding notice from the 1811 translation by Peter Roberts of *Tysilio* is reproduced in Appendix I. We read of the time of Diocletian, Emperor of Rome AD 284-305, during which Asclepiodotus, Earl of Cornwall, came to power in Britain and St Alban was martyred.

‘And after these things, Asclepiodotus took the crown and ruled the kingdom for twenty years. And in his days began the persecution which Diocletian, emperor of Rome, instigated against the Christians, almost wiping out the Christian faith...And then arose Coel, earl of Gloucester, and he fought against Asclepiodotus and straightway slew him. And then Constans, a senator of Rome who had been subduing Spain, came [with his host] to Britain to make war against Coel. But, having named the day upon which battle was to be given, they suddenly made peace. And when but a month and a week had passed by, Coel died. And he had held the crown for ten years. And Constans took Helen as his wife, [she being] the only daughter of Coel. And she was surnamed Helen the Fair, for such beauty of face and figure had never before been seen. And a son was born to them whose name was Constantine, the son of Constans. And this is he who wrested Rome from [the hands of] Maxen the Cruel, he and his three uncles, his mother's brothers, who were called Ioelinus, Trahern and Marius.’

As we will learn, this notice sets the marriage of Helen too late for her to produce a son, Constantine, old enough to take over the empire when his father dies. We will tackle and overcome this vital chronological challenge later, by showing that although the key elements are all present in *Tysilio*, the account is garbled.

For now we will refer to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* of 1136. This was described by the archaeologist and historian Flinders Petrie as a

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

‘flowery expansion’ of *Tysilio* [see More 4], yet Geoffrey may sometimes be consulted with profit for additional information, from whatever conjectural source he acquired it. Geoffrey describes Helen’s husband ‘Constans’ in *Tysilio* more correctly as Constantius, while agreeing that he succeeded Coel. In contrast to *Tysilio* though, Geoffrey tells us that Helen was brought up as a queen-in-waiting because of a lack of brothers.

Tysilio informs us that Ioelinus – said to be Helen’s brother, but an uncle in Geoffrey – married the daughter of a Roman senator. Their son Maximianus, we learn, went on himself to rule Britain, crossing from there into Gaul and killing Gratian, co-emperor of Rome. The modern translator of *Tysilio* tells us in a footnote that this occurred in Lyons in AD 383. *Tysilio* later has the great King Arthur himself recalling to his knights “...Constantine, the son of Helen and the great Maximianus, nobles all of the land of Britain...”.

In E O Gordon’s *Prehistoric London*, first published in 1914, there is a page entitled ‘St Helen of Britain at Trèves’. Trèves is the French name for Trier, a German city on the banks of the Moselle River, which had been the capital of Belgic Gaul. In *De Imperatoribus Romanis*, an online encyclopedia of Roman Emperors, under ‘Helena Augusta’, we learn that Constantine’s foremost residences in the West were Trier and Rome and that Helen may well have lived at Trier.



The images above are courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, provided in support of the Wikipedia article ‘Helena (Empress)’. The legend is as follows: ‘Coin of Flavia Iulia Helena, mother of Constantine I. Æ Follis (19mm, 3.45 gm). Treveri (Trier) mint. Struck 325-326 AD.’

Here is what E O Gordon has to say on Helen at Trèves:

‘Trèves is more closely connected with our early British monarchs than any other continental town, from its having been the favourite residence of the Queen-Empress Helena, who founded here the first Christian Church in Germany. The

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

basilica of the palace of her husband, Constantine Chlorus, forms the actual walls of the present Cathedral. From her gifts of one of the nails of the Cross, of the Holy Coat, and other relics, the name of King Coel's beautiful and accomplished daughter "Elaine" is held in the greatest veneration as a patroness of the city. And it is of no little interest to find that the ruins of the imperial palace at Trèves, built by her son Constantine, bear so strong a resemblance to similar ruins in Colchester that postcards of the one may easily be taken for those of the other.'

(The Holy Coat, incidentally, is said to be the robe Jesus was wearing when he died.)

Notwithstanding the indications that Helen was high born in Britain, there is an obnoxious fiction that Helen was an innkeeper's daughter from the Balkans (Illyria), Bithynian Greece or some such place. Referring to the online version of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, we read under 'St. Helena':

'She was of humble parentage; St. Ambrose, in his "Oratio de obitu Theodosii", referred to her as a *stabularia*, or inn-keeper.'

Ambrose was the Bishop of Milan from AD 374-397. He is regarded now as a notorious misogynist. His suggestion, provided without evidence, that in the previous century a future Roman Emperor had in early life married into the pub trade seems to have been compounded by later 'glosses'. A gloss is where some unnamed and undatable individual scribbles a note in the margin of an old manuscript. These glosses are invariably damaging, intended to be harmful and are simply gross libels aimed at leading researchers away from the truth. The glosses on Helen have been misogynistic. Mary Magdalene's reputation has received the same treatment. The genuine researcher would do well to pay no heed to such calumnies. The genuine Helen may be found readily enough in real historical notices (see the final paragraph of this article), though these can require careful interpretation.



Husband of Helen: Constantius Chlorus – as depicted on a Medallion in the Yorkshire Museum, York, in which city he died in AD 306

Princess Helen was the first wife of Constantius Chlorus ('the Pale'), a Roman Emperor who in fact died in the north of Britain in AD 306. Helen, born around AD 248, was a British Christian and so, momentously, was her only son Constantine the

Great, a pivotal figure in world history. So scurrilous has been the treatment of Helen that in some accounts – though not that of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* – she has even been denied the status of a wife and been described as a concubine, which would make Constantine illegitimate. This is patently absurd as Constantius Chlorus is attested as having later divorced Helen for political reasons, as we shall see. You cannot divorce someone to whom you are not married!

According to *De Imperatoribus Romanis*, cited previously, Philostorgius (*Hist. Eccl.*, 2.16) called Helen ‘a common woman not different from strumpets’. This is a woman whose image was to appear on coins, whose inscription indicated her rank as *Nobilissima Femina*, and who, after 324, was to receive the title of Augusta.

To appreciate the true provenance and status of Helen, it will be helpful to establish the correct chronology of events. To this end, reference can be made to *The British Chronicles* (Heritage Books, 2008) by present-day author David Hughes, who has evidently steeped himself in the ancient sources. On page 115 of the first of Hughes’s monumental two volumes there is much of interest. In this passage, Coel is referred to as ‘Coilus [II]’ and ‘wledic’ is defined later as representing a national office, ‘Prince of Britain’; the square brackets throughout are the author’s own.

‘The Roman Emperor Aurelian[us] was called “restitutor orbis” [“restorer of the world”] for re-uniting the Roman Empire, ending the “Age of Pretenders”.... Roman authority was restored in Britain in 274 by Constantius “Chlorus”, one of Aurelian’s generals, whom the Roman emperor sent to Britain with the mission to bring the lost province back into union with the empire. Coilus [II], the British “wledic”, surrendered immediately to Constantius “Chlorus” on his landing with a Roman Army in Britain. Thus, the last break-away province, Britain, was re-incorporated into the Roman empire. It was at this time that Constantius “Chlorus” married the British princess St. Helena, the daughter of the British “wledic” Coilus [the later king], and begot a son, Constantine, i.e. Constantine “The Great”. Legend says that Constantine “The Great” was born in Britain in 275 either at York or Caernarvon Castle, however there are other legends that put his birth-place at other sites. Constantius “Chlorus” was recalled during the unrest following the murder of the Roman Emperor Aurelian[us] in 275.’

After this visit to Britain in 274, Constantius Chlorus returns twice more to Britain, in 296 and 305. According to Hughes, the situation in 296 was as follows:

‘ASCLA (ASCLEPIODOTUS) (ALYSSGLAPITWLWS), the Duke of Cornwall, was elected King of Britain by the city-dukes in a convention in London, occupied by the Roman Army under Constantius “Chlorus”. It was Constantius’ second tour-of-duty in Britain. Constantius assents to the election of Ascla as king, or client-king, for Ascla has earlier been his “praetorian prefect” as was his duty in Roman service...’

Hughes’s list of rulers of Britain in the relevant period goes like thus:

296-305	Ascla (Asclepiodotus)
305	Coilus II
305-328	Helena “The Saint”
305-306	Constantius “Chlorus”

306-337 Constantine I “The Great”

Abbreviating Geoffrey of Monmouth as ‘GM’, Hughes gives this report of the year 305, which was to see the third of Constantius’s visits to Britain:

‘...Ascla was killed by the British city-duke Coilus, identified with GM’s Duke Cole of Colchester, who held national-office as the British “wledic” [“Prince of Britain”], and usurped the nation’s throne as King Coilus II.’

Coel (Coilus II) then surrenders the crown to Constantius Chlorus, dying shortly afterwards, as reported in *Tysilio*. Hughes’s entry for Constantius Chlorus reads thus:

‘305-306 CONSTANTIUS “CHLORUS”, on King Coilus’ death, seized the British Crown in trust for his ex-wife, St. Helena, and their son, Constantine, and reigned as King of Britain for about a year. Constantius about that time also became Roman Emperor on the abdication of Maximian and transferred the imperial court [again] to York. He was joined in Britain by his father, Eutropius, the ex-governor of Illyria [Yugoslavia] in Roman service, and by his son, Constantine.’

We then read the following, at the end of the same entry, after some material on Ireland:

‘The Picts renewed their raids on Roman Britain during the reign of Constantius, and he defeated them in battle in 306 and slew their king, Fyandor “Albus”. This was his second northern [Scottish] expedition against the Picts; his first had been during his second tour-of-duty in Britain in 296. It was shortly after the northern campaign that Constantius died, in 306 (23/25 July), and was succeeded as King of Britain by his son Constantine...’

The ninth-century monk Nennius in his *Historia Brittonum* lists seven Roman emperors who held power in Britain. The fifth is tantalisingly called ‘Constantine, son of Constantine the Great’. As this emperor is described as dying in Britain, presumably the entry should have read ‘Constantius, father of Constantine the Great’. Yet maybe there is a confused echo here of both men.

Hughes’s next entry reads as follows:

‘306-337 CONSTANTINE I “THE GREAT”, reigned as King of Britain for thirty years, however, was an absentee monarch for most of that time.’

Hughes’s notice for Helen precedes those of Constantius Chlorus and Constantine.

‘305-328 HELENA “THE SAINT”, queen/empress, was associated in the reigns of her husband and son... in 306 upon her husband’s death, her son, Constantine, succeeded his father in Britain as “King of Britain”, and mother and son reigned co-equally over Britain.’

This discloses why Helen has always been described as a Queen Empress. The title is incomprehensible in the context of a low-born origin.

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

We believe that with these notices David Hughes has established the correct chronology, reign lengths and events. Constantius Chlorus made three visits to Britain, in 274, 296 and 305. On the first of these visits the gallant Constantius was awarded in marriage the beguiling Helen and shortly afterwards, in 275 in fact, she bore him Constantine, who was thus high born within wedlock.

In contrast, *Tysilio* gives us a three-visit conflation. Asclepiodotus is said to have reigned for twenty years rather than ten and Coel to have reigned for ten years rather than a few months. Yet in a broad sense *Tysilio* is correct: the personalities are there and the relationships are correctly articulated. All that is required of the modern-day reader is some judicious untangling.

The excursions of Constantius Chlorus in 274, 296 and 305 had the same background – the need to reassert Roman control – and on all three occasions this was achieved with the assistance of the Romanophile Coel, in his roles as future father-in-law and father-in-law (274) and ex-father-in-law (296, 305)! So the conflation in *Tysilio* is at least in some sense explicable.

Failure to recognise the 274 visit to Britain of Constantius Chlorus leads to the obliteration of Helen as a British historical figure, because it implies a marriage by Constantius to a non-Briton around that time and a divorce before he comes to Britain in 296. Here for example is Oxford scholar J F Matthews in an article entitled ‘Macsen, Maximus, and Constantine’ (*Welsh History Review*, **10**, 431-448, 1983):

‘...the name of the wife of Constantius and mother of Constantine I is perfectly well known. She was Helena, later famous as ‘St. Helena’ for her pious works, benefactions to churches, and the pilgrimage to the Holy Land during which she was supposed to have discovered the relics of the True Cross. Helena never, in fact, went to Britain, having been made to accept divorce from Constantius at the time of his elevation to the throne. She took the young Constantine off to the east and only reappears after her son’s successful claim for empire.’

This line of argument depends on a rejection of the admittedly problematic British testimony. Yet we believe the British histories are correct in describing Helen as British; it is just that her marriage happened earlier than is said. There is good contemporary evidence for Constantine himself having been born in Britain, probably in 275, which we will come to in due course.

Details of the early career of Constantius Chlorus are sometimes described as ‘sketchy’, yet it is possible to say more on this important subject.

Juliette Arden published a book in 1920 entitled *Cole 200-1920 A.D.* (A note appended to the present article provides a web link to a scanned version of this work.) Among much of interest, Arden has this to say:

‘Three years after Aurelian’s accession, when Zenobia and Tetricus were being paraded in Rome in the triumphal procession of Aurelian, Constantius was distinguishing himself, and obtained a great victory for the Romans at Vindomessa in Switzerland. He was afterwards known as “The Conqueror of Spain”.’

This chimes with the statement in *Tysilio* that we encountered earlier:

‘And then Constans, a senator of Rome who had been subduing Spain, came [with his host] to Britain to make war against Coel.’

As the Emperor Aurelian reigned from 270-5, this is in line with the view that there is mixed into the *Tysilio* notice information relating to the 274 visit to Britain of Constantius. In further support of this, Arden speaks of Helen’s ‘marriage to Constantius, then only at the dawn of his rising fortunes...’. That has to be a reference to 274. Arden adds that ‘The noble name of Flavius was given to her upon her marriage to Constantius...’ Yet while providing useful information, Arden does not sort out the chronological confusion that runs through the British records and her own account. Helena and Constantius have to be married earlier than is implied in the British histories, if Constantine is to be old enough to take over from his father when Constantius dies in 306.

Constantius earned the governorship of Dalmatia from Emperor Diocletian in 284 or 285. This was at a time when he had been married to Helen for about a decade and when Constantine will have been about nine years old. Insightfully, Arden has this to say on Constantius’s rise to greatness at the time of Diocletian and his co-emperor Maximian:

‘Constantius so distinguished himself in his government of Dalmatia that in 292 he was offered adoption by Maximian, and the title of Caesar, on condition that he divorce Helena, and marry his stepdaughter, Theodora. At the same time a second Caesar was appointed, Galerius, and the Roman Empire was divided into four parts... This was a plan mapped out by Diocletian himself. (The full significance of it will be understood when one remembers that Constantius Chlorus was a very brilliant man, whose many victories had given him the title years before of “Conqueror of Spain”; whose title to the Kingdom of his father-in-law, King Coel, was beyond dispute; and his son, Constantine, the legal heir to all his father’s holdings.)’

Arden reports Helen’s birthplace as Colchester and her father as Coel. David Hughes gives the name of Helen’s mother, Coel’s wife, as Strada, in a genealogical tree in his Book 2, page 423. Arden comments:

‘Concerning the much disputed point as to where Helena was born and who her parents were, the principal and vital evidence regarding her birth is to be found in the “Colchester Chronicles”, preserved in that city.’

The birthplace of Helen can be further considered via a quotation from David Hughes:

‘The early historians, until the seventeenth century, accepted the view that St. Helena was a British princess based on a note appended by an editor to a now missing portion of a manuscript by the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who wrote during the latter part of the fourth century (380s/390s), which is somewhere among the numerous ancient manuscripts in the Vatican Library. It was probably seen by Cesare Baronius, who was sometime the Librarian of the Vatican Library during the sixteenth century, who says in his “Ecclesiastical Annals” that St. Helena was a Briton. The German writer, Melancthon, who wrote his “Epistles”, during the sixteenth century,

says that “Helena was a British princess”. It was when Edward Gibbon wrote his “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire”, that he passed on the fiction that Helena was not a Briton but an innkeeper’s daughter, or tavern-maid, at either Drepanum in Bithynia, Anatolia, or at Naissus in the Balkans, but Gibbon himself admitted that Helena’s birthplace and nationality had been “the subject not only of literary but of national disputes”. And since Gibbon’s time, other historians have copied him and generally ignore earlier historians with contrary views, and most 20th century encyclopedias completely ignore altogether any British references. The confusion is probably due to her misidentification with Constantius’s concubine, who may have been a tavern-maid or innkeeper’s daughter, who Constantius took up with early in his career.’

Speaking of Helen in the early 300s, Hughes goes on:

‘She had always been treated with distinction by her husband, Constantius, who earlier divorced her [the British heiress] to marry Theodora [the imperial heiress] for political purpose, to secure his succession to the imperial throne. The next year, in 306, upon her husband’s death, her son, Constantine, succeeded his father as “King of Britain”, and mother and son reigned co-equally over Britain.’

Note that Constantius is reckoned to have left Helena to marry Theodora in the year 288 or 289, though the Restoration historian Percy Enderbie has the divorce date as 294 [see Appendix III, Enderbie’s page 167]. As a resource for scholars, Enderbie’s account of Helen, with which we agree, and which has many references in the margins, is reproduced in full in Appendix III.

The foregoing analysis builds to an emphatic conclusion: Helen was certainly British. She married Constantius Chlorus in 274, in London according to Geoffrey (*Tysilio* is silent on this issue). She bore Constantine in 275 and was divorced in 288 or 289.

Apart from being stripped of her true British provenance, Helen has also been denied her status as a life-long Christian, from a famous line of Christians, with the fabrication of a conversion story. Her father may even have gone to war to counter the Diocletian persecutions, if *Tysilio* is an accurate guide. *De Imperatoribus Romanis* says in its entry ‘Helena Augusta’ that there are indications that she was favourably disposed towards Arianism. This would be in line with a British form of Christianity. And perhaps Helen’s Christian influence was felt on her husband; the article in *De Imperatoribus Romanis* on Constantius I Chlorus remarks, ‘It is worth noting in passing, that while his colleagues rigidly enforced the "Great Persecution in 303", Constantius limited his action to knocking down a few churches.’ As well he might, we would deduce, with his beloved Christian Helen in the background!

Helen’s influence via her son was to be even greater, though even that is sometimes denied. The previously cited J F Matthews puts it thus:

‘Helena was remembered in later times for her supposed (but inauthentic) role in the conversion of her son to Christianity...’

In contrast we believe that the Empress Helen was literally the establisher of Christianity in Western Europe. After Constantine the Great defeated his rival

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

Maxentius at the battle of the Milvian Bridge and seized Rome in AD 312, it was his mother Helen who then ensured that Christianity was made a legal religion in Rome. Previously it had been regarded as pagan and heathen and the Christians had been persecuted.

British Christians believed that god had to have a place to live. They believed that God lived in the Sun. God was not the Sun, but the Sun was his dwelling place. This accounts for there being Sun emblems on coins of Constantine the Great. It also accounts for the head of a Horse on the coins as the Sun god rode in the Sun Chariot. Under St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican is an ancient mosaic painting depicting Jesus the Nazarene riding the Chariot of the Sun God – where he lived with his father as a dwelling place.

So Constantine was not a pagan Sun worshipper.



This picture, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, from the Wikipedia article entitled 'Constantine I', shows part of the famous statue of Constantine in the Capitoline Museums in Rome.

Constantine's first wife was Minerva, whom we believe was a British Princess, like his mother indeed. Constantine, as his father had done before him, was to set aside his first British wife for political reasons, in favour of Fausta, whose behaviour eventually became so distressing to him that he had her murdered. At his wedding to Fausta Constantine claimed that he had all along honoured Britain. Let us see how the Roman Catholic Church deals with this, by quoting from the online version of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. We start mid-way through the first paragraph of the entry we have already encountered, entitled 'St. Helena':

'The statement made by English chroniclers of the Middle Ages, according to which Helena was supposed to have been the daughter of a British prince, is entirely without historical foundation. It may arise from the misinterpretation of a term used in the fourth chapter of the panegyric on Constantine's marriage with Fausta, that Constantine, oriendo (i.e., "by his beginnings," "from the outset") had honoured Britain, which was taken as an allusion to his birth, whereas the reference was really to the beginning of his reign.'

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

The second paragraph then begins with ‘Helena was still living in the year 326, when Constantine...’. This paragraph therefore need not detain us.

The last phrase of the first paragraph presumably refers to the fact that Constantine had been with his father in Britain when Constantius Chlorus died there in AD 306. The troops had proclaimed Constantine the successor of his father.

It has been asserted that Constantine was born in the Moesian military city Naissus, modern-day Niš in Serbia, where there is even an airport named after the great man. Of relevance to this is what Arden has to say on the subject of Constantius’s father:

‘His father, a noble Lord of Illyria, was a native of Naissus, the capital of the Dardanian nation, which then consisted of a great part of Moesia, and there the childhood of Constantius was passed. (This is undoubtedly one reason for the persistent errors made by historians regarding the place where Helena was born, many of whom claim she was born at Naissus.)’

On Constantius’s ‘union with Helena’ there is this in Arden:

‘They traveled all over the empire together with their infant son, and were known as a most devoted pair. If their son, afterwards Constantine the Great, was born at Naissus, as he is reported to have been, it was because they were there at the time, it having been the birthplace of Constantius, and the place where his relatives lived.’

David Hughes comments on Constantine’s birthday and birthplace, referring to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles as ‘A-S’:

‘He was born 27 Feb. 275. There are five different countries and towns that historians commonly assign as his birthplace, which are: (1) Britain; (2) Naissus [Nyssa] in the province of Moesia in Bulgaria; (3) Drepanum in Bithynia, Anatolia; (4) Persia; and (5) Treves, France. The classic (sic) Eumenius says that Constantine was born in Britain. The A-S “Life of St. Helena” (c 950); William of Malmesbury’s “History”; the “History” of Polydore Vergil; Henry of Huntingdon’s “History”; the “Chronicles” of Dexter; and those of Martin Polonius; as well as John of Salisbury’s “Polycration” all say that Constantine was born in Britain. However, where in Britain, the accounts differ, some say at the imperial palace at York, or at the royal residence in London, or at Caernarvon Castle, Wales, where the royal court was supposedly then in residence. Constantine at first remained in Britain and carried on his father’s work of refurbishing Britain’s defences.’

Bearing on the question of Constantine’s birthplace, an excerpt from the 1811 translation of the *Tysilio Chronicle* is reproduced in Appendix I. Footnote 1 on page 96 refers to the marriage panegyric. The translator, Peter Roberts, first disposes of the mistranslation of ‘oriendo’ by Edward Gibbon. Then we are referred to Eumenius the Panegyrist, also referred to above by David Hughes. Eumenius was a contemporary of Constantine, who we are told addressed his emperor at his wedding in these terms:

‘Fortunate Britain! Now the happiest of all countries, that thou didst FIRST behold Constantine. Justly has nature endowed thee with every advantage of clime and soil. Whence, ye Gods, is it, that new deities always come to us from some EXTREME

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

LIMIT of the earth? thus Mercury made his presence visible from the Nile – Bacchus from India.’

Peter Roberts comments that ‘These compliments cannot be well reconciled to any other idea than that of Constantine’s birth in Britain.’ The translator then asks why the panegyrist would write about Britain in this way ‘unless in compliment to the place of his hero’s birth’.

These days scholars seem to be less certain who was the author of the marriage panegyric. Yet if it was Eumenius, then these words carry authority indeed – for Eumenius had been none other than the private secretary of Constantine’s father, Constantius Chlorus, accompanying him on several of his military campaigns.

So the real reason why Constantine had lauded Britain at his wedding, rather than the hospitality industry of the northern Mediterranean area, is simple to deduce. He had been born of a British mother and a Roman father, probably in Britain. He had parted from his British first wife purely for reasons of state and was keen that there should be no slight on Britain, particularly with his adored British mother on hand and bearing in mind that her British kinsmen had helped him fight his way to the imperial purple. The English chroniclers of the Middle Ages were right: Helen *was* British and therefore her son Constantine was half-British. And the monk Tysilio was right, too – and he was writing in the AD 600s.

Note in all this that Constantine’s birthplace is irrelevant to his half-Britishness.

In Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* we read that Constantine picked up his Christianity in Britain. If his first visit was at the time of his father’s impending death in York in 306, then it must have involved a rapid conversion! An alternative view, of a thirty-odd year association with his Christianised birthplace, is more plausible.

An example of the assured British treatment of the Helen and Constantine story is given in Appendix II. This dates from 1455 and comes from the pen of John de Wavrin. The words of Peter Roberts’s splendid 1811 *Tysilio* footnote may be quoted once more:

‘If the decision of Mr. Gibbon, that Helen was not British, were to be admitted, it may surely be asked, how has it happened that such a tradition should become perfectly national?’

While endorsing this sentiment, we note that in the De Wavrin extract is seen the same chronological confusion that runs through all the British histories. Constantius Chlorus had to have married the British Princess Helen in 274, *not* during one of his two later visits to Britain, if Constantine is to be of an age to succeed his father in 306. Note that the three kinsmen of Helen, brothers in *Tysilio*, uncles in Geoffrey (and also in Raphael Holinshed the Tudor historian), are now cousins in De Wavrin.

In AD 325 the Empress Helen, already getting on a bit by this time, went with a huge bodyguard of Roman soldiers and toured around Sinai to see the places where Moses went during the Exodus. She then went to Jerusalem where she demanded that the Holy Cross be given to her. This caused a long process of arrests, threats, tortures and

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

so on until finally senior clergyman told her where to locate the True Cross. Some of the entertaining legends surrounding how it was decided that the True Cross was the True Cross are recounted in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* under ‘Archaeology of the Cross and Crucifix’.

Helen then got hold of the Cross and plastered it with gold and jewels, encasing it in a silver casket. She had the nails made into a bridle bit for her son's horse and sent this to Constantine in his new capital Constantinople, which became modern-day Istanbul in Turkey. The church that she built in Jerusalem was dedicated to St Constantinus. British princes and princesses had for generations been the only ones eligible in Britain for sainthood – witness St Tysilio the seventh-century royal monk behind the *Tysilio Chronicle* – and Constantine was accorded the same accolade.

Then Helen assembled her fleet and sailed from Judea – back to Britain, we would argue.

The following is a quotation from ‘The Arms of the Chieftains’ (*Iolo Manuscripts: a Selection of Ancient Welsh Manuscripts*, Liverpool, 1888, page 415):

‘From the time of Lucius to that of Coel Godebog, one hundred and forty years. This Coel was a king, whose daughter, named Ellen Lueddawg, went to Jerusalem, where she found the Holy Cross, which she brought with her to Britain; as the Bard has recorded in the following stanza:–

When Coel’s fair daughter, Ellen, found, with toil,
The HOLY CROSS, on Canaan’s guilty soil,
And thence to Britain bore it, – faith-elate, –
Three hundred years and twenty told the date.’

Although this dating is too early, we nonetheless share the view that the Holy Cross in its silver box did indeed come to Britain, but in AD 326. It is apparent that Helen then paraded the Holy Cross around western Britain.

When ancient Emperors, Empresses, Kings and Queens travelled they took all their treasures with them. This usually required a wagon train of ox carts, travelling at around 10 miles a day. All around Wales and parts of England this route can be traced along the path of place names - Field of the Cross, Ford of the Cross, Ridge of the Cross, Pass of the Cross and so on. All these Khumric-Welsh names are around 10 miles apart. From the Nevern area in West Wales the route meanders east through South Wales before turning north to reach the Liverpool area, at – note – St Helen’s. The route then heads west once more to Anglesey, where a sea passage seems to have brought the Cross south once more, to be brought ashore at Deu Gleddyf (Milford Haven).

Ancient Roads around Wales are named Sarn Helen – the Highways of Helen. These include sections of roads from Chester to Caerleon, Caernarvon to the south and from Neath to Brecon. Yet in the matter of the roads there is scope for confusion with a later Helen (Elen), daughter of Eudaf, so this particular evidence is presented more tentatively.

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

In the Harleian 3859 Manuscript Constantius is rendered 'Constanti' and next to this emperor's name is given the attested death date of AD 306. There is a note in Latin after this entry, referring to the wife of 'Constanti', which in English says this:

'Elen Linyddog who went out of Britain to search for the cross of Christ as far as Jerusalem and from there she brought it with her to Constantinople and there it is to this day.'

The reference to Constantinople in the quotation from Harleian 3859 provokes from us a question: "Which Constantinople?" The reader may be surprised to learn that there is a tiny hamlet in West Wales called Constantinople. Nearby is the ruined site of Castell Ellyn Fawr – the Castle of the Great Helen. There is Cefn Banon – Ridge of the Empress, and Avon Banon – River of the Empress. Other names are Avon Nanhyfer – River of the Sanctuary and Castell Nanhyfer – Castle of the Sanctuary, and so on.

The Ancient British Mabinogi Tales have an account of the knight Peredur ('Steel Shirt') arriving at a small town and taking lodgings with a miller and his wife. Near the Helen sites is the hamlet of Trefelyn Farchog, which means Town of the Mill-Knight or the Mill-Town Knight. Peredur finds that there are dozens of mills in the area to grind flour and make bread for the large number of soldiers of the Empress. Modern research confirms that just West of Trefelyn Farchog every farm had a small mill complete with mill-pond etc. The present-day researcher Richard Wyer has traced at least fourteen in a small area.

So Peredur lodges with the miller and his wife and regularly visits the powerful Countess at her nearby court. Then the Countess is revealed to be the Empress of Constantinople – Helen.

As this Mabinogi Tale is a Solar Story and Peredur represents the planet Jupiter, it is apparent that the many large earth mounds in the area represent Stars. Three are laid out as the Sceptre of Cephus, five as the 'W' of Cassiopeia, three as the heavenly Triangle - and so on and on. This immediately identifies the major constellation of the Cross that the Greeks and Romans knew as Cygnus the Swan. There are ancient monuments placed on the ground to represent the Stars that mark the top and bottom of the upright shaft of the cross and others to represent the extremities of the horizontal beam of the cross. Where these lines intersect is another star site and a sealed cave, which merits investigation.

King Edward I of England demanded in AD 1282 that the Welsh give him the Holy Cross – and also King Arthur's Iron Crown (on which more anon). He was refused on both counts. We note that Edward erected the 'Eleanor Crosses' in the east of the country during the period 1291-4, to mark the passing of the funeral cortege of his beloved wife Eleanor of Castile. Meanwhile, King Arthur is depicted at Landaff Cathedral, near Cardiff, in a stained glass window. He is shown carrying the True Cross into battle, confirming that there is a tradition in Britain relating to this object. Helen's Cross is the basis of Colchester's arms, which consists of a cross and three crowns. Nottingham, also associated with Coel and Helen, has similar arms.

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

The Christian British Queen Empress Helen died of old age around AD 330. We postulate that she passed away at the real Constantinople in West Wales, not, as is said, in Constantine's new capital Constantinople, in modern-day Turkey.

It has proved feasible to trace what is possibly the grave of the Queen Empress Helen in this same area of West Wales, though if her burial took place elsewhere, as is asserted, this does not affect the argument that Helen's provenance was British. The mound anyway seems worthy of excavation. Large ruins in a nearby wood may also be associated with Helen.

On the death of Helen, David Hughes has this to say:

'She died in 328 in Rome, Italy, and was buried there with great pomp in the church of "Ara Coeli" [Tillem. "Mem." Vii. N. 7]. There is a tradition that her body was removed from the church of "Ara Coeli" in Rome in 480 by British monks who planned to take it to Britain but due to unfavorable circumstances that had developed in Britain brought it to Hautvilliers in the diocese of Rheims, France, and interred it there.'

We note the name of the church with interest, given that Helen's father was Coel. We also note the name of Helen's ultimate French resting-place, at least in the tradition articulated by Hughes. Altman, a monk of Hautvilliers (sic) near Rheims, was the author of the mid-ninth century *Life of St Helena*. It seems to have been Altman in fact who introduced Hautvilliers into the story of Helen's last resting-place. Presumably it was Helen's association with Trier that led Altman to state wrongly that that was her birthplace.

Constantine had several cities around the Eastern Roman Empire named Helenopolis after his mother. The siting of one of these presumably gave the sixth-century historian Procopius the erroneous idea that Helen came from Bithynia in Asia Minor. The twelfth-century chronicler Henry of Huntingdon, in Book 38 of his *History of the English*, has something to say about Constantine in this regard:

'Rebuilding the city of Deprana in Bithynia, in honour of the martyr Lucian, who was there buried, he changed its name to Helenopolis, in memory of his mother.'

In Britain, Helen's true birthplace, homeland and possible last resting-place, the Lancashire town of St Helens still bears her name as probably the northernmost point of the peregrination of the True Cross around western Britain. Helen is the patron saint of Colchester and also Abingdon. At Colchester, St Helen's Chapel is believed to have been founded by Helen herself. There are a couple of dozen holy wells in Britain dedicated to St Helen. St Helen's, Bishopsgate, is a church in London. Besides being a parish church it once served as the chapel for an adjoining medieval nunnery called St Helen and the Holy Cross. There are other churches dedicated to Helen dotted around this country and indeed the world. One of Britain's oldest colonies is an island in the South Atlantic called Saint Helena.

Helen was a huge figure in the history of Western Europe. She brought the Holy Cross back to Britain, where we believe Western Christianity had been founded in AD

37 – "the last year of Tiberius", according to the monk Gildas and others. She made Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire – it had always been so in Britain.

The British Christian provenance of Helen solves a mystery for historians: why her son chose Christianity as the official state religion of the Roman Empire. The risible rival idea – that the great Empress Helena arose from an innkeeping obscurity so profound as not even to have had parents whose names have come down to us – instead yields an enigma: how come Helen hasn't become the patron saint of barmaids?

Helen was a huge figure in her own right, but also because of her only son, who honoured his British mother abundantly and also her homeland, which with high probability was his own birthplace. Tradition has it, as recounted by E O Gordon, that he took with him to his new capital of Constantinople the sword of Julius Caesar. This had been lost by the Roman invader during his invasion of Britain in 55 BC. The sword is represented to this day on the coat of arms of the City of London [see More 6]. Access to this talismanic weapon and the ability and desire to move a British national treasure across the Roman Empire is incomprehensible in the context of a non-British Constantine. He could take it where he wanted because he was 'King of Britain'.

David Hughes possibly discloses another national treasure as having come down to King Arthur, when he describes on his page 173 the situation in AD 494, a time when a new leader had to be selected from among rival contenders:

'It was at this time that the pope, St. Gelasius, wrote his "Epistle to the Britons", and in it suggested to let God decide. He sent along with the epistle a crown. The crown was probably the old British crown inherited by Constantine "The Great" from his mother, Saint Helena, daughter and co-heiress of the British King Coilus II, which had been added to the imperial regalia when Constantine, the King of Britain, who, associated with his mother, Queen Helena of Britain, succeeded his father, Constantius "Chlorus", the Roman Emperor, on the imperial throne.'

Henry of Huntingdon, whose Book 38 has just been cited, commented in the same passage on Constantine, thus:

'Constantine, who reigned thirty years and ten months, was the flower of Britain; for he was British both by birth and country; and Britain never produced his equal, before or afterwards.'

This reign length corresponds to the period from the death of Constantine's father in AD 306 until Constantine's own death in AD 337. This speaks to the accuracy of Henry of Huntingdon's source material.

An article by Hans Pohlsander on Constantine the Great in *De Imperatoribus Romanis* has this to say:

'The emperor Constantine has rightly been called the most important emperor of Late Antiquity. His powerful personality laid the foundations of post-classical European civilization; his reign was eventful and highly dramatic. His victory at the Milvian

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

Bridge counts among the most decisive moments in world history, while his legalization and support of Christianity and his foundation of a “New Rome” at Byzantium rank among the most momentous decisions ever made by a European ruler. The fact that ten Byzantine emperors after him bore his name may be seen as a measure of his importance and of the esteem in which he was held.’

Some of the above has been set out in detail in our book *The King Arthur Conspiracy* published in 2005. A good account of Helen acquiring the True Cross in Jerusalem can be found in the English Manuscript called *The Exeter Book* and the account of Helen depositing the Cross in ‘Constantinople’, West Wales, is in the Harleian 3859 Manuscript, as we have said. Note, though, that our conjectures relating to the Cross and Helen’s possible last resting-place in Britain are very carefully differentiated here from the independent contention that Helen was British. The *Tysilio Chronicle*, garbled though it can be at times, should not be overlooked. It and the other British sources are correct: Helen was most definitely British.

Alan Wilson & Baram Blackett are the authors of *Arthur & the Charters of the Kings*, *The King Arthur Conspiracy* and *The Trojan War of 650 BC*

Notes on Sources

David Hughes’s *The British Chronicles* (Heritage Books, 2008) is in two parts: Book 1 (ISBN 978-0-7884-4490-6) and Book 2, Appendix: Genealogical Charts (ISBN 978-0-7884-4491-3)

Juliette Arden’s book *Cole 200-1920 A.D.* (Tercentenary Edition, 1920) may be viewed at:

<http://www.archive.org/details/cole2001920ad00arde>

For drawing our attention to the Eumenius footnote material in the 1811 translation of the *Tysilio Chronicle* [Appendix I], we thank Mike Gascoigne, author of *Forgotten History of the Western People* (Anno Mundi, 2002; ISBN 0-9543922-0-5)

See below for Appendices I-III

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

Appendix I

On the next page is an excerpt from the 1811 translation by Peter Roberts of the *Tysilio Chronicle*. Its original title was *Chronicle of the Kings* (Bodleian Library, Shelfmark Douce T., 301). Consideration is given in footnote 1 on page 96 to the birthplace of Constantine, with the conclusion that it was in Britain.

Asclepiodotus now became sovereign of the nation, and governed it for ten years.

Then followed the persecution which Dioclesian the Roman Emperor raised against the Christians, by which Christianity was nearly extirpated. For about this time Maximian Herculius by his order came into Britain, and destroyed the Churches, burned the holy Scriptures, and put the Christian clergy and laity to cruel deaths. In this persecution died Alban of Verulam, and his friend Aaron of Caerleon.

“ After this, Coel, surnamed Coedhebawg, Earl of Gloucester, arose against Asclepiodotus, and having begun a war, soon slew him; in consequence whereof Constantius, a Roman Senator, who had already been engaged in the reduction of Spain, came to Britain, to carry on a war against Coel. But when Constantius had appointed a day for the commencement of hostilities, and manifested his wish to engage, a peace was suddenly concluded. Five weeks after this event Coel died, having reigned ten years.

Constantius afterwards married Helen, surnamed the Prosperous, the only daughter of Coel, a lady of unrivalled beauty, and by her had a son, called Constantine. Constantius died after a reign of eleven years, and was buried at York.

¹ The other copies are more diffuse, and certainly less correct, in detailing the accomplishments of Helen. If the decision of Mr. Gibbon, that Helen was not born in Britain, were to be admitted, it may surely be asked, how has it happened that such a tradition should become perfectly national? or is not such a tradition as likely to be accurate as that of the historians, whose authority he adopts, especially when it is singular? Is it not also confirmed by the subsequent attachment of the Britons to the family of Constantius? Mr. G. mundi, nova Deum numina universo orbis

This Constantine, with his three uncles, (the brothers of his mother) Llewelyn, Trahaern, and Meurig, conquered Rome, and Maxentius the cruel. And this Trahaern returned with three legions to recover Britain from ¹ Eudaf, the Earl of Erging, and ² Euas, and landed at Caerberis, (*Portchester*.) The next day Eudaf came to Maes Urien, (*the field of battle of Urien*) near Winchester, where he gained the first battle. Trahaern was thus compelled to flight, and betaking himself to his ships, he sailed to Albany, where he landed and renewed the war; defeated Eudaf, and pursuing him, forced him to leave the kingdom. Eudaf therefore fled to ³ Godbert, king of Scandinavia to implore his aid. ⁴ “ Trahaern therefore proceeded to reduce the island under the Roman power,” and in the mean time Eudaf sent to urge his friends in Britain to compass the death of Trahaern. The Earl of ⁵ the Strong-Castle therefore with an hundred horsemen, lay in wait for Trahaern in a glen, through which he was to pass, and suddenly slew him when he entered it. Eudaf now assumed the sove-

descendant.—Sic Mercurius a Nilo—Liber ab Indis—se gentibus ostendere presentes. *Eumenius in Panegyri.*
Fortunate Britain! now the happiest of all countries, that thou didst first behold Constantine. Justly has nature endowed thee with every advantage of climate and soil. Whence, ye Gods, is it, that new deities always come to us from some EXTREME LIMIT of the earth? thus Mercury made his presence visible from the Nile—Bacchus from India.
These compliments cannot be well reconciled to any other idea than that of Constantine's birth in Britain. Had the Panegyrist intended them of his accession to the people, the word *prima vidisti* alone would be far from intimating it. In fact they

convey merely the idea of Britain having been the country that first saw Constantine himself. This is confirmed by the references to the births of Mercury and Bacchus, and still more by the manner in which the Panegyrist labours to extol Britain; a labour hardly necessary or intelligible, unless in compliment to the place of his hero's birth.
¹ Of the Eudaf G. M. makes an Octavius, and I imagine he is right.
² Erging and Euas are two small districts (Hundreds) of Monmouthshire.
³ Gombert, G. M.
⁴ B. G.
⁵ *Strong mountain*, B. G. a *municipal town*, G. M. where I know not.

EMBARGO: Strictly NOT for publication or dissemination without the prior written approval of the copyright holder

Appendix II

Reproduced below is the frontispiece of a translation published in 1864 of a book by John de Wavrin, which appeared in 1455. (The layout is imperfect because the frontispiece was scanned and digitized for this appendix.)

On the following page is an excerpt from the synoptic table of contents, dealing with the story of Constantine and his British mother Helen. It is typical of the confident handling by British chroniclers of the Helen and Constantine story.

A COLLECTION
OF THE
**CHRONICLES AND ANCIENT HISTORIES OF GREAT
BRITAIN, NOW CALLED ENGLAND,**

BY
JOHN DE WAVRIN, LORD OF FORESTEL.

TRANSLATED
BY
WILLIAM HARDY, F.S.A.,
CLERK OF THE RECORDS OF H.M. DUCHY OF LANCASTER.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, UNDER THE
DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

FROM ALBINA TO A.D. 688.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, AND GREEN.

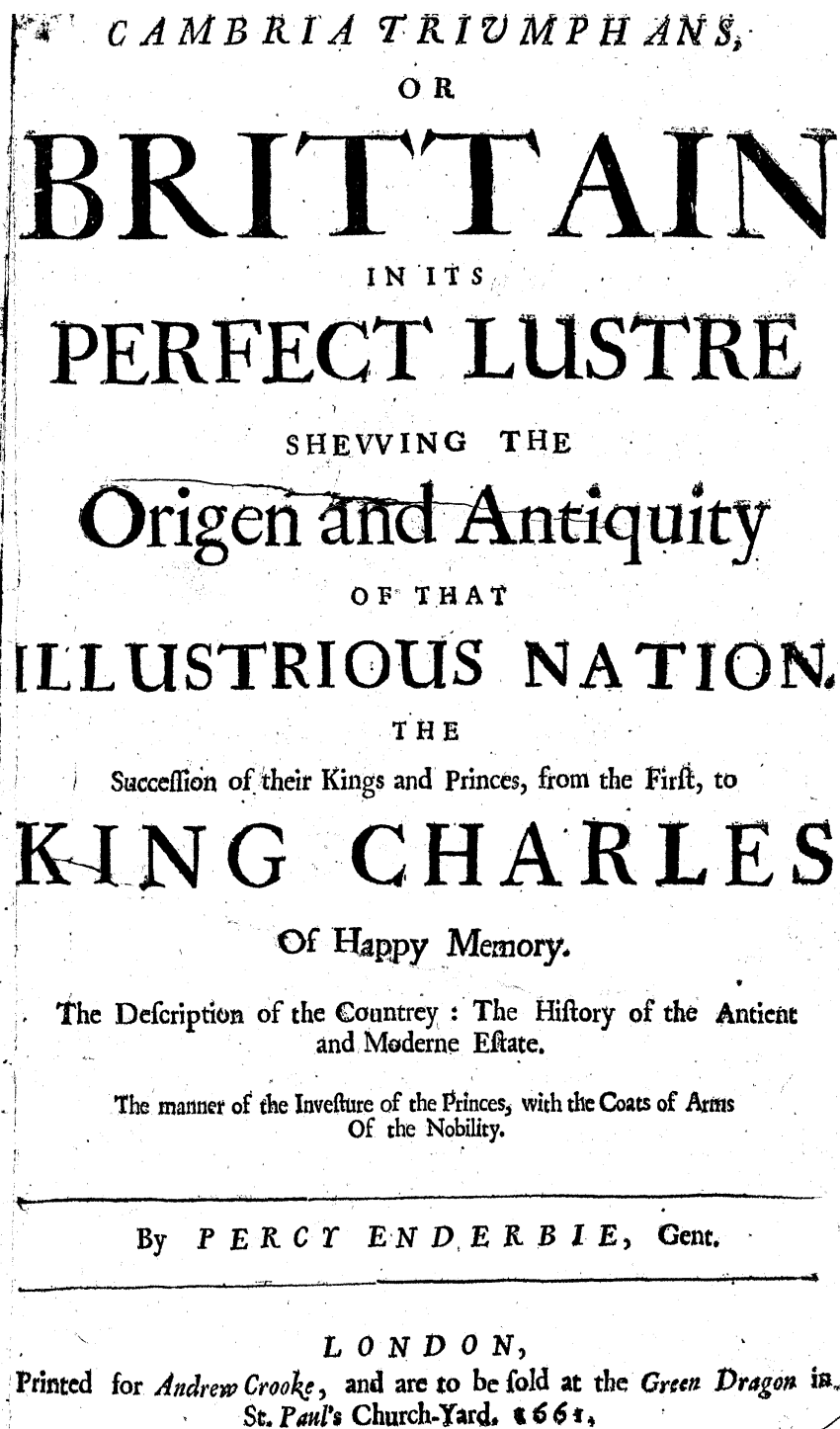
1864.

How Constantius came into England, and espoused Helen, the daughter of King Choel. Concerning the birth of Constantine; how he drove out the Emperor Maxentius, and how Helen found the cross. CHAPTER XLIV. p. 144

[The Romans are overjoyed at the death of King Asclepiodatus. They send Constantius, a senator, over to Britain with a large army. Choel receives him amicably, and engages to renew the tribute to Rome. Peace is made. Choel dies shortly after, leaving an only daughter, Helen. Constantius marries Helen, and comes to the throne. He offers up prayers for the birth of a son, which at last is born, and is named Constantine. His father, Constantius, dies eleven years after, and the government is undertaken by Queen Helen. Constantine succeeds at a competent age, and endears himself to his people by his goodness. The persecutions of Maxentius, emperor of Rome, who by his tyranny forces several noble Roman families to flee into Britain. They exhort King Constantine to go to war with Maxentius. Constantine sails to Rome, deposes Maxentius, and proclaims himself emperor. He is accompanied by his mother and his three cousins, Leominus, Trahen, and Maurius. Queen Helen crosses the sea, and goes to Jerusalem, where she summons all the Jewish elders, by whose assistance she finds the Cross, which had remained concealed. Leominus marries a Roman lady, and has a son named Maximian (Maximus). Ostones, duke of Wales, seizes the kingdom of Great Britain on the departure of Constantine. Trahen is sent by Constantine to oppose him. He lands at Porchester, and thence marches to Winchester. A battle is fought here, in which Trahen is defeated, and forced to take to his ships. He goes into Scotland, and ravages the country. Is pursued by Ostones, but gains a victory over him, and Ostones is obliged to fly. He goes over to King Compert, of Norway, for aid against Trahen. Ostones uses his influence with his friends in Britain to kill King Trahen, on whose death Ostones returns to Great Britain. He takes possession of the country, and kills all the Romans whom he finds.]

Appendix III

Percy Enderbie published a history of Britain in 1661. This was shortly after Charles II had taken the throne, following the Cromwellian republic. Enderbie's opus, *Cambria Triumphans or Brittain in its Perfect Lustre*, was dedicated to the new sovereign. In it is to be found an analysis of the evidence for the British provenance of Helen of Colchester. The present appendix comprises extracts from Enderbie's book. [Note that 'f' is frequently to be read as 's'.]



The first item, p130, describes 'Old King Coel', Coel I, Helen's great-great-grandfather, described here as 'Coillus'. Coel I founded Colchester, we learn, wherein both Helen and Constantine are reported as having been born.

130

The Ancient and Modern

Lib.III.

COILLUS.

K. Coillus
brought up at
Rome.

COILLUS the Son of *Marius*, was after his Fathers decease made King of *Brittain*, in the year of our Lord 125. saith *Holinshed*, *Fabian* saith 126. This *Coillus* or *Coill*, had his youthful education amongst the *Romans*, in the very Imperial City it self; who being of a Martial spirit, applyed his time to warlike exercises, in which he so excelled, that he was both admired and beloved by the *Romans*; and to requite their favours, and to continue towards him their good affections, he payed without any grudging or seeming discontent their accustomed Tribute, by which means he spent his dayes in peace and tranquillity; he so far excelled in bounty & liberality, that he drew unto himself the hearts and good wills, both of the Nobles and Commons. The building of *Colchester* is ascribed to this King, which is the chiefest City at this day in *Essex*, wherein *Lucius*, *Helena* and *Constantine*, the first Christian King, Empress, and Emperour in the world were born, which made *Nechan* to sing as he did.

*From Colchester there sprung a star,
The rays whereof gave glorious light
Throughout the world in climates far,
Great Constantine, Romes Emperour bright.*

This City is walled about, raised upon a high trench of earth, though now much decayed, having six gates of entrance, and three posterns in the West wall, besides nine watch Towers for defence, and containeth in compasse 1980 paces, wherein stand 8 fair Churches, and two other without the walls for Gods divine Service; *St. Tenants* & the *Black-fryars* decayed in the suburbs, *St. Mary Magdalen*, the Nunnery *St. John's* and the *Crochiet Fryers* suppressed: within towards the East is mounted an old Castle, and elder ruines upon a trench containing two Acres of Ground, where as yet may be seen the provident care they had against all ensuing assault.

The 'Coelus' in the following item, from p154, is Coel II, in the third century:

Asclepiodotus deposed him; next to *Asclepiodotus* was King *Coelus*, Father to the most renowned Empress *St. Helena*, married to *Constantinus* Emperour, and Mother to great *Constantine* their son, our most glorious King and Emperour, after which time our History will not be so obscure and confused as now it is; for as in the succession of these I have now remembered there is question, so concerning the time of their Government, and their conversation also, whether it were Christian or otherwise, it is not free from difficulty. Antiquaries say that *Carausius* was next King to *Bassianus*. Therefore when

...p154:

Catal. Reg. and other writers, that *Severus* dyed in the year of Christ 213. The Author of the *Ca-*
Brit. antie Hist. talogue of our Brititish Kings, thus setteth down their successions and Regiments, with
Galf. Mon. their continuance, *Bassianus* Ceracel six years, *Carausius* seven years, *Alecius* six years, *Asclepiodotus* thirty years, *Coelus* twenty seven years. After whom *Constantius* his son in law by marrying his Daughter, *St. Helena* succeeded in the crown, by which account we have between the death of *Severus* and *Constantius* his reigning here 76. years, and from

p155:

hereafter. And it seemeth that divers Historians not observing that *Constantius* was here twice, marrying *St. Helena* the first time, and the second time receiving her again, when *Maximian* the persecuting Emperour, had forced him to put her away, do thereupon vary and differ much about the years of our Kings in those times: an old manuscript Chronicle

p156:

Coel.

King *Coel* (who began his reign in the year of our Lord 262.) having now both Warrant and Way to advance the Title to the Crown of this Kingdom, and help to free the afflicted Christians thereof, from the miseries of their so long and grievous persecution (as it seemeth most probable) at this time and upon these occasions, he took Armes against *Asclepiodotus*, reputed King in this persecution, slew him and was crowned King, as our Historians deliver unto us: *Harding* also plainly saith, that *Coel* took Armes against *Asclepiodotus*, by reason of this great persecution.

...p156:

And howsoever *Asclepiodotus* concurred with the Roman persecutors, and pleased them in vexing and tormenting Christians here in Britany; yet otherwise he was very unpleasing unto them: He troubled the Roman power in all things, and therefore they were glad of his death. *Ponticus Virunnius* himself, a Roman, saith, they

L I B. IV.

Brittish and Welsh History.

157

they did esteem him their great enemy, and as for such an one rejoiced at his death, and this joy was not onely of particular Romans, but of the whole Senate which ruled chiefly in matters of Estate. Therefore when our Antiquities assure us that *Coel* obtained the Kingdom, and was crowned, and as an old French manuscript speaketh, *regna sur Britania*, ruleth over Brittain, and was thus enabled and made powerful to redresse what he found offensive and wicked, being absolute King, and joyfully received of the Brittaines, as our Historian said before.

*Wherefore Brittaines were all full glad and faine,
Of King Coelus that succoured all their pain.*

And he himself taking exception to *Asclepiodotus*, next to his charging him with usurping the Crown, for being backward in resisting the Roman persecutors, would not fall into the like error with him, but as is proved already succoured all their pain, and utterly ceased the persecution against Christians of Brittain which were thus joyful of his coronation and thereby relieved and redeemed them from their afflictions all his time, which both by our own and forreign Historians, continued to the end of the third hundred of years. The Romans having no power here either to persecute Christians, or to any other purpose. Mr. Broughton; But as our Brittainish and other Historians testify, wholly lost their government here, untill after the death of King *Coel*, or the coming of *Constantius* his son in law hither, the second time, very little before King *Coel* his death. Our *Scottish* Historians say that King

...p157:

this Kingdom, being an aged man before *Dioclesian* his persecution began. Thirdly our Historians say that his daughter *St. Helena*, which had her education by his direction, was instructed and taught in the christian faith. A late Authour thus speaketh, of this, *Helena she was first instructed in the faith of Christ by Coel her father, as Petrus de Natalibus saith;* and yet if we en-

...p157:

The Roman Emperours after the death of *Heliogabolus*, until *Constantius* married first, or after received again *Helena* daughter of *Coel*, had little command in this Kingdom, there-

p158:

lives. *Dioclesian* was then chosen Emperor, who adjoyned *Maximianus* unto him; in like Government these two Emperours elected two *Cesars*, *Valerius Maximus* and *Constantius Chlorus*, to which *Constantius* he committed the recovery of Brittain.

...p158:

knowing that by the Regal claim and title of *Brittain*, Queen *Helena* was the lawfull heir and Owner thereof, that she was a Christian, and descended of such parents, and absolute Queen of such a Country, the rare virtues and wisdom, she was endued with, her potency thereby, with her victorious and triumphant husband *Constantius* that they had children to succeed them in the Kingdom, and Government of *Brittain*, and such as by credible Antiquities before were Christians, and thereby more likely to enlarge and dilate, then to refrain or hinder the profession of Christianity, they knew these Impediments to their wicked disignments must be taken away before they could take effect, whereupon beginning with the chiefest and principal propugnacle, the title of Queen *Helena*, her marriage with *Constantius*, and love between them, they first assaulted this by pretended disability in that title and marriage. Her lawfull Title by Regal Lineal descent

...p158:

Like to this have some other flatterers of the Romans written, by which we see they went about utterly to disable the Queen to have any title to the Kingdom. This they so urged to *Constantius*, and so disgraced his marriage with that renowned Lady, that in the end they compelled him, to put her away, and take *Theodora* a Pagan, Daughter of the persecuting Emperor *Maximian* in her place, then they banished St. Lu-

p165:

But after the death of so many renowned and glorious Martyrs, whose blood beautified *Maria* Scot. l. 2. and increased the Church of God (*Sanguis Martyrum semen Ecclesie*) let us return to Ætat. 6. Col. 304. in Constant. *Constantius Clarus*, and his most admired confort and chaste Spouse *St. Helena*: Some Flor. Wigorn. Chron. an. 321. & 299. Capp. Catal. prefat. in vita St. Helene. Marianus Scot. l. 2. Ætat. 6. in Aurel. Bar. romo 2. Annal. an. 306 Jac. Gordon an. 273. in Aurel. Harr's Hist. Eccl. Britt. Tom. 4. c. 2. Zosim. l. 2. Suid. in Constantian. Marib. West. an. 273. Mar. Sco. l. 2. Ætat. 6 in Aurel. there be (whether to detract so great a glory from this Nation, and give it to another, or of Ignorance in History) do say, that one *Theodora* was the first lawful wife of *Constantius*, and the blessed *Helena* mother of that happy Emperour the great *Constantine*, was not only a stranger to this Nation, but of a mean estate (and which is unworthy to be written) not the wife, but concubine of *Constantius*, with name and attribute *Concubina*; this, the most noble Empreiss *St. Helena* is filed by, not onely among divers forreign Writers, but of this Nation also, as *Marianus Scotus*, and *Florentinus Nigorniensis* (as they are now published) many of which do not, to the dishonour of that most holy Lady and this her Countrey, abstain from the same phrase of speech. This error being overthrown, overthroweth the other, that she was a stranger and basely born, for excepting those that wander in that Tract, all agree, she was the sole daughter and heir of the Noble British King *Coel*, far from being either an Alien, or of base parentage and descent; and the more easily to overthrow them, it first fighteth with, and so overthroweth it self. Some which incline to this error, say, that she did secretly fly out of her Countrey, and went to *Rome*, and there was so familiar with *Constantius* the Emperour; but it is evident by all Histories, that *Constantius* at the first acquaintance with *Helena*, was not Emperour, nor long after; neither was he at *Rome*, but in *Brittain*, in this time sent hither by *Aurelianus* the Emperour, in the year of Christ 273; and (as both *Zosimus* and *Suidas* say) lived most here; and being sent hither by *Aurelianus* the Emperour (as so many agree) to have long employment, and great cause to stay here; he must needs come hither about that time,

time, for by all Antiquities *Aurelianus* died soon after, and was Emperor but a short time, so that neither *Constantius* nor Queen *Helena* could be either at *Rome*, or in any place but in *Brittain* at this time.

Nicephorus and some later after him would have her to be born in *Bitthinia* at *Drepanum*, and the Daughter of an Inkeeper there, with whom *Constantius* passing that way to the *Persians*, fell in love, but this is made impossible, by that is said before, of the being of both *Constantius* and *Helena* in *Brittain*, so remote from any part of *Bitthinia* at that time, and neither of them coming to or neer *Drepanum* or any part of *Bitthinia*, at or after this time, but when she an holy Widdow, many years after *Constantius* death, passed by *Greece* in her pilgrimage to *Hierusalem*, as is evident in all kind of Antiquaries, and will most manifestly appear in its due place. Others there be which do term this renowned Empress by the name of *Concubina*, as *Marianus*, and *Florentius Wigorniensis*, as they have been lately published, and *Regino*, without speaking any thing of her parentage or country; and *Martinus Polonus*, who confesseth she was Daughter to the King of *Brittain*; but it is evident that either *Martinus* or his publisher, hath with gross Ignorance abused the Readers; for he saith, that *Constantine* (not *Constantius*) begot *Constantine* the great in the year of Christ 307. when by common opinion *Constantius* was dead before. And not content with this, they bring in *Constantine* the great to be Emperor in the year 309. when by their account he could not be two years old. The other three if their Publishers have not abused them speak in the phrase of the Pagan Romans, who in those times called all the Wives of their Lieutenants taken for strangers, though never so lawfully joyned in true marriage by the rude term of *Concubine*, as their old Pagan Decree is still witness against them, when I shall make it as clear as the Sun, that *St. Helena* was from the beginning the only true lawfull wife to *Constantius*. This I have written here to answer these frivolous Cavils against that blessed woman, and with *John Capgrave*, call their Allegations no better then dreams, and to speak still in his words, *That opinion doth not only blemish the fame of so holy a Woman, but maketh that most Noble Constantine to be a Bastard begot out of marriage, and so disableth him to have been the Heir of Constantius either King or Emperor, when all Men know he came to the imperial Dignity by right of Inheritance.* And thus he taxeth the Authors of Ignorance, these things pleased them, because they knew not the truth. *Ipsos forsan qui ista scripserunt talia placuerunt, quia potiora & veriora invenire minime potuerunt.* Divers forraign Historians, as *Baronius*, *Spondanus*, and others, write as plainly in this matter, and may with great warrant; for as *Cassiodorus* is an able witness, it is but a Pagan report, and raised first by *Zosimus*, that most malicious Ethnick, and *Rayler* against *Constantine*, for professing and advancing of Christian Religion, and renouncing Idolatry: and this is evident by the best learned Authors themselves which in any sense called *St. Helena* by that name, for they do plainly confess, as namely *Marianus*, that *St. Helena* was the true wife of *Constantius*, and he forced by *Maximian* the Emperor to put her away and take *Theodora* his wives Daughter. And further saith, *Constantine* was the true Son and heir of *Constantius*, and by that title succeeded him in the Kingdom and Empire, which could not be truly said, if *Helena* had not been his lawfull wife; neither could *Constantius* by this learned and holy Author be named a Religious Father, if he had not begot his Son lawfully in true marriage. And *St. Bede* confesseth from *Eutropius*, that *Constantine* succeeded his Father in the Kingdom of *Brittain*, and so by him also must needs be his lawfull son, *Florentius Wigorn* writeth in the same manner, and confesseth *St. Helena* to have been here in *Brittain* long after her son *Constantine* was Emperor, yet these be the chiefest Authors that in any sense have termed *St. Helena* by that name.

It is evident by all histories, not only of Christians, that *St. Helena* was a most chaste and holy Woman, and that *Constantius* also lived in conjugal chastity, marrying when he was but young, but also even by the Pagan writers themselves, as witnesseth *Gallicanus* the Orator that lived in this time, in his publick oration to his son *Constantine*, and others; therefore *St. Helena* being the first woman, that was thus wedded unto him in marriage, she must needs be his true lawfull wife by their own testimonies. And the same Author witnesseth before *Constantine* at the publick solemnity of his marriage with *Fausta*, in most plain and expresse words that *Constantine* was born in *Brittain*, to testify divers Authors even of the Roman History, among whom one plainly saith, that *Constantine* was the lawfull son of *Constantius* and *Helena*, and born in *Brittain*, and that his Father *Constantius* was compelled by *Herculius* the Emperor to be divorced from *Helena* his true wife, to take *Theodora* Daughter in Law of that Emperor. *Eutropius* plainly saith, that *Constantine* was son of *Constantius* in true marriage: *Constantinus Manasses* saith, *St. Helena* was the wife of *Constantius*, and a most blessed Woman. *Hunibaldus* above 1000. years since, relateth the History of the composition between *Constantius* and our British King *Coel*, as our writers do. As soon as *Coel* heard that *Constantius* was arrived, he sent Embassadors desiring peace, and promised to pay the tribute, so that he might enjoy his Kingdom, to which *Constantius* agrees, this thus composed, *Coel* with-

in 40. dayes dyed, whose Daughter Helen (to whom for beauty, and loveliness, knowledge in the liberal sciences, and rare skill in musick, Brittain never bred the like) Constantius took to wife, by whom he begat Constantine, who not only succeeded his Father in the Kingdom of Brittain, but also (prevailing against Maxentius) in the Empire. Victor, Eutropius, Eusebius, and other ancient Authors, are witnesses, that when Dioclesian made Constantius and Galerius Cefars, he compelled them to put away both their lawful wives ; Constantius to put away St. Helen, and to take Theodore his daughter in law ; and Galerius, Veleria his own daughter, which account of theirs, that St. Helen was thus put away in the year 294. invincibly proveth, how according to Eusebius and many others, before setting down the age of Constantine to have been about 60 years, that St. Helen had been the wife of Constantius 20. years. Severus Sulpitius doth not only call St. Helen the true wife of Constantius, but saith she was Empreffe both in her husbands and sons time, which proveth her daughter and heir to Coel our Brittish King, by which title only she reigned with Constantine. Theophilus Cepameus, an old Greek writer, saith, there were Arrian Hereticks and Pagans which denied Constantine to be legitimate, and that they lyed therein, mentiuntur. Egbertus saith, she was Queen and mother of Constantine. Beringosus an eyewitness of the most things, writing of her, saith, first, she was a Queen and so the lawful wife of Constantius, for a Concubine of the greatest Emperour that ever was, is not thereby a queen, as the Authours name her, Queen to Rule, to Govern : nor can the lawful true wives of Kings, be termed Queens by such worthy Authours, except they were Queens by title of Inheritance, or such like, as our Antiquaries write of Queen Helen, that she was daughter and heir to her father King Coel, which this worthy author doth also (though a stranger to us) confirme, when he proveth she was of most noble parentage : and by experimental arguments ; because he had seen the old buildings of her stately pallace, continuing in his time, the pavement whereof was marble and Touchstone, the most Regal Palace in all those parts, the walls were gilded with gold, her chamber was so sumptuous, that the like was not in the World, and to free her from all slanders, the chamber of her heart and soul was far more pure ; and in all things she was obedient to the will of God, and yet externally pleasing to her husband Constantius ; although more pleasing to God then to her husband.

Thus we see how far this most blessed and noble Queen and Empreffe, was in all times from being base, either by birth or conversation, such sanctity of life could never agree with that foule name, by which some have so wrongfully termed her ; such parentage, Pallaces and Revenues, able to entertain the greatest Princes according to their state and dignity, must denominate their noble owners with better termes and attributes. The Hostesse, Inkeeper, Stabularia, except we will expound them in so large a sense, that we shall stile Abraham and Lot that lodged the Angels, those that entertained Christ, all receivers of Kings, Princes and Emperours, and all Harbourers or Exercisers of Hospitality ; for so both St. Helen and King Coel, entertained Constantius, the one a husband, the other a son in law, as Princes use. It seemeth this Pallace and lands in and about Trevers to have descended to St. Helen by her mother, or some Ancestour of that Country, for both Beringosus saith, St. Helen was brought up at Trevers ; and Otho Frigensis saith, she was by some of her Ancestours come from thence. And Trevers being at that time, the most renowned place of those countries for Nobility, Learning and Christianity, and she the only child of her father King Coel, and to succeed him in the Kingdom of Brittain, he sent her thither to have the most noble education, and there it was probably where she first came to be acquainted with Constantius, then living in those parts. And this made the Attonement between the Romans and K. Coel to be so soon and peacably effected, without any effusion of blood, as our Antiquities tell us.

The marriage of Constantius and Helena is by what is said so clear, that it is needlesse to speak any more of that subjeēt. I will only add this for the present ; The old Inscription of the Church of St. Gereon at Cullen, founded by her, proveth her to be a Queen, and an example to Kings.

*Regibus exemplum, sacroque chrismate plena,
Condidit hoc Templum Sancti Gereonis Helena.*

A patterne unto Kings, this heavenly light ;
St. Helen shining with all vertue bright.
In honour of St. Gereon here did raise
This stately Church to her eternal praise.

At the agreement betwixt Constantius and Coel, besides paying the Tribute, and Coel to enjoy the Kingdom during his natural Life, it was further agreed that Constantius should take again his wife St. Helen, daughter and heir to King Coel, and by her right be King after the death of her father. By which covenant and article agreed upon and truly executed as it was, the first marriage between Constantius and Helen was even by Roman Pagan

Pagan laws themselves proved and declared to be true and lawful, and the children therein begotten legitimate, and the taking of *Theodora*, living with her, and children by her to be adulterate, and utterly unallowable in any sense, even by their own Pagan constitutions; for although those Pagan wicked decrees, did allow to the Presidents of Provinces which were unmarried without penalty to keep Concubines, prophanely thinking (as some new seeming Christians have done) that men unmarried could not live chaste, yet they never permitted it to married Prefects, and Presidents, such as *Constantius* was, as their own Historians witness. By which Heathenish Roman Law *Helena* was not only the Concubine, and no wife of *Constantius*, but a Concubine, prohibited in their own proceedings, and her children in like case of reproach with her.

Elius Lampriid. in Alex. Sever.

Math. West. & alii supra. Manusc. Hist. Eccles. Win-ton. Caius Hist. Cantabr. Academia p. 19.

Therefore *Constantius* being against his will by power of *Maximian* separated from *St. Helen* his true wife, and a Christian from that time ever in affection, could not but be ever most ready and joyfull to be so quietly and honourably reconciled unto her again, which is sufficiently insinuated by our Authors testifying that *Constantius* in all things granted to King *Coel* his commands, requiring nothing of him for the Romans but their old Tribute, which as our Antiquaries say was 1006. pounds, only in money: one of our Historians saith of this matter in this manner.

Harding c. 60.

Of which *Constance* was glad of his entent,
And here abroad at prayer of the King.

Whereby he did sufficiently declare the great content and joy he had of this reconciliation to his wife *St. Helen*, and her Father, his Father in Law, King *Coel*, rather chusing and preferring, during his life, to make his abroad here as a Subject, then now being chosen and deligned Emperor to continue in any other Nation with that greatest temporal glory and command.

He retook *Helena* Daughter of the King to conjugal society.

Thus he signified this so long and much desired attonement. *Helenam Coeli Regis filiam in societatem Thori recepit*, which word *RECEPIT*, that *Constantius* did at that time receive *Helena* again, if we had no other argument or authority used by divers our ancient Antiquaries, proveth that this was the reconciliation, and not the first marriage of those noble persons. And impossible it is that any of these Authors which speak of this union, should take it for the first union in marriage, for all of them acknowledge that *Constantius* died soon after this Reconciliation, (the Monck of *Westminster* sayeth within three years) by *Merianus* within two years, by *Martinus Polonus* the same year. The like have others, by which account and confession *Constantine* should be either unborn, or not above two years old at the most, when he was King of *Brittain*, and Emperor also after his Fathers death. Shortly after this coming of *Constantius*, and this attonement between him and King *Coel* thus made, King *Coel* dyed within five weeks, saith *Harding*, a moneth and eight dayes, saith *Galfridus*, *Virunius* saith within one moneth, so likewise doth the Monck of *Westminster*, *Harding* writeth that *Constantius* was Emperor before he was King of *Brittain*.

Math. West. an. 302. 305. Mavi. Sc. anno. 305. 306.

Hard. Chron. c. 6. Galf. Mon. Hist. Reg. Brit. l. 5. c. 6.

Pont. Virun. Hist. l. 5. Harding c. 61. Howes fol. 44.

But King *Constance* of *Rome* was high Christain,
By the Senate first made the Emperor,
After King of *Brittain* and Governour.

Howes in his Chronicle bringeth in *Peter de Jeham* to tell us, that *Coel* Duke of *Caric Glow* of *Glocester*, *Holinshed* saith, he was Earl of *Colchester*, but where he died, or where buried, no mention is made. *Fabian* sayeth he ruled after the accord of most writers 27. years.

p179:

The *Brittish* History saith, that *Constantine* residing at *York*, although he seemed at *Brittish* Hist. first unwilling to accept the Imperial Title, and protested openly against it, yet when fol. 138. the Senate had confirmed the Election, he took upon him the Government of those Provinces which his Father had held in the West parts, and with an Army of *Brittains* and other Nations, he first settled *France* and *Germany*, being then in Arms against him, and afterwards subdued *Maxentius*, *Maximianus* Son, that usurped the Empire in *Italy*. Then with like success he made war upon *Licinius*, his Associate, who persecuted the Professors of Christianity in the East parts of the World, by which means *Constantine* alone enjoyed the Empire, and for his many and glorious Conquests was worthily surnamed The Great. In this time the form of the Government in *Brittain*, both for Civil and Martial Causes, was altered, and new Lawes established. The Civil Government of the Province he committed to *Pacatianus*, who ordered the same as Deputy to the *Praefectus Praetorio* of *Gallia* (an Officer entituled by him) with a limitation of place, and restriction of that power which the ancient *Praefectus Praetorio* had under the first Emperors.

Constantine is the 'he' in this next quotation, from p179:

Among those Noblemen which he took with him when he departed out of this Land, as our Writers do testify, were the three Uncles of his Mother *Helen*, *Hoelus*, *Trabernus* and *Merius*, whom he made Senators in *Rome*.

p181:

as these men say? And *Eusebius* saith, that *Constantine* himself came hither again, and was here longer after this pretended Revolt, and at his death gave *Brittain* the ancient Patrimony to his Eldest Son. Again, these men say, *Octavius* was King here

...p181

it is a common consent in Antiquities, that this *Maximus*, or *Maximinianus*, was not King in *Brittain*, till after the 380. year of Christ. Therefore he must needs be

Usurper Octavius, date uncertain to Enderbie; the author speculates that he might have been later, at the time when a descendant of Helen assumed the imperial purple, p181:

glory of it grew to that greatness, that he might towards the time of *Maximus*, *Galf. Mon.* here to bar the Emperors of that honour. But he might towards the time of *Maximus*, *Galf. Mon.* or *Maximinianus*, when the Empire had more Enemies and less power, prevail in some *Hist. Reg. Bri.* such sort, as these Historians have written of him, although they differ also in *Maxi- l. 5. cap. 9.* *man* as well as in *Octavius*; one saith, he was the Son of *Traberne* the Uncle of *St. Pont. Virun.* *Helen*, *Maximian* King *Trabern* his Son next Heir to *Constantine*; others say he *Hist. l. 5.* was Son of *Leolinus* another Uncle of *St. Helen*, Great Uncle to *Constantine*; *an. 379.*

'The Second Tome' carries a dedicatory epistle to the Duke of York, the brother of Charles II:

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Let us march a little further into the Court of Honour, and great Theater, where mighty Emperors and Monarchs act their parts, and there we shall find a great *Brittish* *Constantine* the first Christian Emperor

[ENDS]