

## The Early Church in Britain

### 1. The Church of Arimathea and its Roman offshoot

Julius Caesar raided Britain in BC 55 and BC 54 and then the Islanders were left in peace by the Romans until they came again in AD 43 during the reign of Emperor Claudius, this time to conquer Britain.

Joseph of Arimathea arrived in Marseilles about AD 35 with Lazarus, Mary, Magdalene, Martha, her handmaiden Marcella and Maximin, a disciple. From there they travelled to Britain where Joseph preached the Gospel.

The Bible gives us the following information about Joseph of Arimathea. He was a rich man, a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews, a good man and righteous person, a respected member of the Jewish Council (Sanhedrin) who had not consented to the purpose and deed of the Council in condemning Jesus to death. He went to Pilate secretly after the death of Jesus and asked that he might take the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him leave to do this. With the help of Nicodemus, who brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, they took the body of Jesus and bound it in cloths with the spices, as was the burial custom of the Jews. The body was placed in the unused tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. The Talmud confirms the eastern tradition that Joseph was the uncle of Mary, the mother of Jesus. (Ref 12).

According to Whitehead (Ref 6), Cornish tradition states that Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy tin merchant shipping tin from the Isles while a resident of Judea.

Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, his sister Mary, who wiped the feet of Jesus with ointment and her hair, and their sister Martha, were loved by Jesus.

Mary Magdalene was the woman out of whom went seven devils. She was at the cross of Calvary, at the sepulchre after the death of Jesus and the first person that Jesus spoke to after the Resurrection.

This Mary, with the mother of Jesus and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (John and James), were among the women who administered to the needs of Jesus and the disciples.

Joseph first preached the gospel in Britain sometime between AD 36 and AD 39. He built the first Christian Church building in Avonlea (or as it was named by the Saxons, Glastonbury) of wattle and daub. King Arviragus (see below) conferred on the Arimathean Church 12 ploughs of land which were exempted from tax.

This is recorded in the Domesday Survey of AD 1080 (p.449) as follows:-

"The Domus Dei, in the great Monastery of Glastonbury, called the secret of the Lord. This Glastonbury Church possesses in its own Villa X11 hides of land which have never paid tax." (Ref 3). Keating, (Ref 9), quoting Stow, records the building of the Monastery in AD 73 when Mauritius Arviragus was King. Three years later, in AD 76, Joseph died and he has his last resting place in Glastonbury with his 11 associates.

However, the real Church was the people of this early congregation. They included members of the Royal family of Siluria, which country appeared to surround the Bristol Channel, from Southern Wales to Avon. In AD 36 Bran, the King of Siluria abdicated his crown in favor of his son Caradoc to become the Arch-Druid of the college of Siluria. Caradoc had 3 sons, Cyllin (or Cyllinus), Lleyn (who became known as Linus) and Cynon. His daughters were Eurgain and Gladys ( who later became known as Claudia ). Arviragus (see above) was a cousin of Caradoc. The first Christians were Gladys, the sister of Caradoc and his daughters Gladys and Eurgain, with his son Linus.

In AD 43 the Emperor Claudius ordered the invasion of Britain. The invasion ended with the battle of Mons Granpius, (AD 86), when the Caledonians (Picts) were finally defeated but the fighting did not end there. Morgan (Ref 3) points out "..... it was not until the reign of Adrian, (AD 120), that Britain was incorporated, and then by treaty not conquest, with the Roman Dominions, the Britons retaining their kings, land and rights, and stipulating in return to raise and support 3 legions to be officered by the Emperor for the defence of the common empire. In the north of Scotland, the northern Caledonians (Picts) retained their independence. Caradoc (whom became known to the Romans as Caratacus) was elected Pendragon (Arch King) to head the British Armies.

Despite the war, Gladys, the daughter of Caradoc, became engaged to Aulus Rufus Pudens, (known as Rufus) a young Roman Senator and relative of the Roman General, Aulus Plautius, Commander of the Roman forces in Britain. Rufus and Gladys met while he was at Regnum (now Chichester) where he held the post of praetor castrorum. It is interesting to note that the " Pudens Stone" found in Chichester, records that the site was given for the erection of a Temple to Neptune and Minerva by Pudens, son of Pudentinus. It was obviously donated prior to his becoming a Christian in Rome.

Caradoc, after 9 years of fighting against the Romans, was defeated by Ostorius Scapula, the Roman General. He escaped the battlefield and sought sanctuary with the Brigantes under Queen Cartimandua but she betrayed him to the Romans. Caradoc and his family were taken as captives to Rome.

Arviragus, who had given the first vote to Caradoc when he was elected Pendragon, was himself elected by the British Kings to take the place of Caradoc.

In Rome Caradoc made his famous speech. The Romans admired his courage and his oratory and he and his family were spared. He took up residence in Rome, where he was required to remain for seven years, and not to ever take up arms against the Roman Empire again.

In AD 53, Gladys and Rufus Pudens were married in Rome. She was adopted by the Emperor Claudius and became known by her adopted name Claudia. The Latin poet, Martial, a friend of Pudens, praised the beauty and intelligence of Claudia " although she was born amongst the blue-eyed Britons".

Llyr (Lear), the grandfather of Caradoc died in Rome. Caradoc, his father Bran and Rufus Pudens became Christians while living in that city.

The families of Caradoc and Pudens occupied the property in Rome owned by Pudens which became the first church in Rome under Hermas, its first Pastor. Another branch of the Church at that time in Rome was in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. Aquila and Priscilla were Jews whom St. Paul had met in Corinth and with whom he had shared a house in that City. Aquila was also a tent maker and the two of them carried on their trade while St. Paul preached the Gospel in Corinth. (Acts 18 v1 to 3).

In his Epistle to the Romans, before he came to Rome, St. Paul salutes Hermas (Romans 16 v14). He also "Salutes Rufus chosen in the Lord , and his mother and mine". (Romans 16 v13). His other greetings include the household of Aristobulus (Romans 16 v10) and Priscilla and Aquila and the Church in their house. (Romans 16 v3 to 5).

Aristobolus was the father in law of St. Peter and brother of St. Barnabas. (see below).

Morgan, (Ref 3 p60) questions whether the mother of Rufus Pudens and St. Paul was a spiritual or physical relationship. He favours the latter state and concludes that Paul and Rufus were half brothers, his mother having been married to the father of Paul, who like Paul had also been a Pharisee, and then subsequently to a Roman, the father of Rufus.

St. Paul first arrived in Rome sometime between AD 56 and AD 60 for his appeal to the Caesar. He lived two year's in Rome at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered. (Acts 28 v30 and 31).

It was probably during this time that Linus, son of Caradoc and brother of Claudia, was appointed the first Bishop of Rome. (Ref 7 p.428).

No doubt during these two years Paul was able to spend time with the four children of Rufus and Claudia. The eldest was named Timotheus after Timothy, St. Paul's spiritual son, Bishop of Ephesus. The other three children were Novatus, Pudentiana and Praxedes. All four children served in the early Church in Rome as will be indicated below.

## 2. Other Apostles and Disciples in Britain

Joseph of Arimathea was not the only disciple to go to Britain. Dr. Herman Hoeh in 1987 in his article "Where did the original Apostles go to?", (Ref 2), quoting William Camden, pointed out that, apart from Joseph of Arimathea, St. Peter, St. Paul, Simon Zelotes and Aristobulus planted Christianity in Britain. Dr. Hoeh also pointed out that the Apostles were instructed to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10 v6). We, therefore, find the lost tribes where the Apostles went to preach.

Dr. Hoeh, (Ref 2), pointed out that Nicephorus and Dorotheus both reported that Simon the Zealot preached the Gospel in North Africa and then went to Britain where he was crucified and buried.

Morgan, (Ref 3), indicates that Simon preached in East Britain in the vicinity of Caistor which he believed was in Lincolnshire. A "Caister" appears in a map of Roman Britain (Ref 14 map 60) which was very close to the present city of Norwich and this was in the territory of the Icenii. Cottrell (Ref 8 p.158) confirms this Caistor as Caistor St. Edmunds, near Norwich. It was the Prefecture of Caius Decius (or Decianus Catus - Ref 8).

Tacitus, the Roman Historian, writes that, due to the rapacity of this Prefect, the Province was driven to war. Prasutagus, the Icenian King, had died in AD 61 but he made Nero his co-heir to his realm and his daughters. However, his widow Boadicea and his daughters suffered the most atrocious barbarities. Seneca called in his loan to Prasutagus, as did other Roman officials call in their loans to other British Chieftains. The Romans also massacred the Druidic Priests and Priestesses. In final desperation, the response was swift and bloody. The Britons, lead by Boadicea, put Camulodunum (Colchester), Verulamium (St. Albans) and Londinium (London) to flames and the people, Roman and Briton alike, were slaughtered, (over 70000 in the first two mentioned cities). Seutonius, the Roman commander, then stopped the advance of the Britons, 80000 of whom lost there lives.

Sometime, before, during or after all this carnage, Simon the Zealot was crucified, obviously by the Romans, as crucifixion was not practised by the Britons.

As mentioned above, Aristobulos was the father in law of St. Peter and brother of St. Barnabas. He was also one of the original 70 disciples (Ref Luke 10 v1 ). His wife was healed by Jesus (Matthew 8 v14 and 15). His daughter, married to St, Peter, had a son and daughter. He preached with St. Paul to the Gentiles and then was chosen by St. Paul to be Bishop to the Britons.

In Britain he built many congregations and ordained Deacons and Priests. He was often scourged and dragged through the towns and finally martyred.

An interesting record comes from the British (Welsh) Achau, or Genealogies of the Saints of Britain. This records the return from Rome to Britain of Bran, father of Caradoc, with Caradoc's daughter Eurgain and her husband Salog and "Arwystli Hen (Senex), Ilid, Cyndaw, men of Israel, Maw or Manaw, son of Arwystli Hen." Arwystli is the Welsh name for Aristobolus and Hen (Welsh) and Senex (Latin) indicate his venerable age. Ilid established his mission under Bran and his grandson Cyllinus in the centre of Siluria in Glamorganshire known as Llan-Ilid. At this Llan, or sacred enclosure, Eurgain founded and endowed the first Christian Choir in Britain.

A district in Montgomeryshire on the Severn has the name Arwystli. In 1908, (48 years after Morgan wrote his book - Ref 3), a slab of Purbeck marble was found face downward at the basement to one of the pillars of the porch at the entrance of St. George's, Fredington, Dorchester . On this slab the name "Aristobolus" is written.(Ref 5). Whether either one of these places indicate the spot where Aristobolus died, appears uncertain and the date of his death is also unknown.

What about St. Peter? Dr. Hoeh (Ref 2) pointed out that "Peter was made by Christ the chief among the 12 apostles to coordinate their work. Of necessity Peter would be found traveling to many more regions than he would personally be ministering to. The question is, where did Peter spend most of his time after those first 12 years in the Holy Land? Dr, Hoeh continues:- "Metaphrastes, the Greek historian, reports " that Peter was not only in these western parts" - the western Mediterranean - "but particularly that he was a long time" - here we have Peter's life work to the Lost Ten Tribes - "in Britain, where he converted many nations to the faith"."(quoting p. 45 in Cave's Atiquitates Apostolicae)."

Dr. Hoeh also points out that St. Andrew met St. Peter in Sinope where Andrew was preaching to the "Lost Tribes" of Israel. Sinope was on the northern shore of Turkey on the Black Sea.

Andrew had covered the shores of the Black Sea, Scythia or Sarmatia to the North and the Caucasus to the East, where some of the lost tribes were living at that time.

After two years in Rome, St. Paul moved onto Spain and Britain, to fulfill the final task given to him by Jesus, which was to carry the message to the lost tribes of Israel. (Acts 9v15).

Dr Herman Hoeh, (Ref 2). points out that in the New Testament, 3 books do not include the usual "Amen", the three books concerned being Acts, James and III John. He goes on to state "Each missing "Amen" is a special sign. It indicates God wants us to understand that certain knowledge was not to be made known to the world - until now, when the Gospel is being sent around the world as a final witness before the end of this age. If they had been included, the identity and whereabouts of Israel and of the true Church would have been revealed. It was part of God's plan that the House of Israel should lose its identity and think itself gentile."

According to Frederick Haberman, a copy of the Acts of the Apostles in the Turkish Archives at Istanbul (Constantinople) contains twenty nine chapters compared with the twenty eight in our Bible. (Ref 4 p141). He records that "This twenty-ninth chapter states, Verses 1-10: "And Paul, full of the blessings of Christ, and abounding in the spirit, departed out of Rome, determining to go into Spain; for he had a long time purposed to journey thitherwards, and he was minded to go from thence into Britain. For he had heard in Phoenicia that certain of the children of Israel, about the time of the Assyrian Captivity, had escaped by sea to the 'isles afar off' as spoken by the prophet, and called by the Romans, Britain. And the Lord has commanded the Gospel to be preached far hence to the Gentiles, and to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And no man hindered Paul, for he had testified boldly of Jesus before the tribunes, and among the people, and he took with him certain of the brethren which abode with him at Rome; and they took shipping at Ostium, and having the winds fair, were brought safely into an haven in Spain. And much people were gathered together from the towns and villages and the hill country; for they had heard of the conversion of the Apostle, and the many miracles which he had wrought. And Paul preached mightily in Spain, and great multitudes believed and were converted, for they perceived he was an Apostle sent from God.

And they departed out of Spain, and Paul and his company finding a ship in Armorica sailing into Britain, they went therein, and passing along the South coast, they reached a port called Raphinus. Now when it was noised abroad that the Apostle had landed on their coast, great multitudes of the inhabitants met him, and they treated Paul courteously, and he entered in at the East Gate of their

city, and lodged in the house of an Hebrew, and one of his own nation.

*And on the morrow he came and stood upon Mount Lud; and the people thronged at the gate, and assembled in the Broadway, and he preached Christ unto them, and many believed the word and the testimony of Jesus Christ."*

The writer has not been able to trace a port "Raphinus" on maps of Roman Britain but Lud is the British (Welsh) name for London, named after former King Lludd (c. 70 BC). (Ref 15).

According to tradition, St. Paul preached in London from Parliament Hill, formerly known as "Llandin". On this account the Apostle became Patron Saint of London, his emblem, the sword of martyrdom, incorporated in the arms of the City. (Ref 15). However, it appears possible that "Mount Lud" mentioned in the 29th Chapter of Acts, is today known as "Ludgate Hill", on which St. Paul's Cathedral is built.

Jarrold (Ref 5), refers to an ancient manuscript in Merton College, Oxford which purports to contain a series of letters between St. Paul and Seneca which has more than one allusion to St. Paul's residence in Siluria. Unfortunately Jarrold does not give any clear reference to the manuscript nor its contents. However, St. Paul would be expected to spend time at the Arimathean Church which would have fallen under Bishop Aristobolus and Joseph.

In AD 68, in the time of Nero, St. Paul, returned to Rome to face the end of his mission. In his final Epistle to his dearly beloved spiritual son Timothy he warns him as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, not to become entangled with civilian pursuits; states that the time of his departure is at hand; asks Timothy to bring Mark with him to Rome; sends greetings to his good friends Aquila and "Prisca"; he records that only Luke is with him at that time and sends greetings from Pudens, Linus, Claudia and Eubulus (a cousin of Claudia and Linus). (See II Timothy 2 v3 & 4, 4 v6, v11, v19, & v21). After he was beheaded he was buried by Linus in the tomb of the Pudens family on the Ostian way.

It appears that St. Peter returned to Rome shortly after and was crucified. Again Linus and the Pudens family would have been their to attend his burial and he was also buried on the Ostian way, probably in the Pudens family tomb.

The work of Paul's family, whether physical or spiritual, continued in Rome. All of the family were martyred except Claudia, Linus in AD 90, Pudens in AD 96, followed by the natural death of his wife Claudia in AD 97.

The Pudens property in Rome, named successively Titulus, Palatium Britannicum, Hospitium Apostolorum, was given by Claudia to be the first church property in Rome and was dedicated to her daughter Pudentiana who was martyred in AD 107. This was followed by the death of Novatus in AD 139. The church building S. Prassede in Rome was built on property owned by the other daughter Praxedes who was the last to die, shortly after her brother Timotheus, who returned from Britain in his extreme old age.

Timotheus had gone to Britain to baptise his nephew, Lleeurer (or Lleiver) Mawr, whose Latin name was Lucius. This great grandson of Caradoc was crowned King in AD 124 and ruled for 77 years. (Ref 13 Appendix L).

The father of Lucius, Cyllinus, in the absence of his father and grandfather in Rome, had met priests from Rome and Greece and introduced child baptism. This was probably corrected when his grandfather returned with Aristobolus but the adult baptism of Lucius ensured the return to the custom followed by Jesus.

Bede, writing about 730 AD, (Ref 11- Bk.1 Ch.4) says that in AD 156 Lucius wrote to Pope Eleutherus in Rome asking to be made a Christian by his direction. This is not correct because by this time Lucius had been baptised by Timotheus. At that time the Bishop (not Pope) of Rome was Anicetus or Soter (Ref 7), and the letter from Bishop Eleutherus to Lucius in AD 177 states:-

"You have asked us to send you the Roman laws and those of Caesar, which you are anxious to use in your Kingdom of Britain. We are always at liberty to reject Roman laws and those of Caesar, not so the laws of God." (Ref 13 - Appendix k).

Bede (Ref 11 - Bk.1 Ch. 4), however, is correct in the latter comment he makes in his History:- ".....and the Britons received the faith and held it peacefully in all its purity and fullness until the time of the Emperor Diocletian."

Lucius established the first church building of London in AD 179 known as the Church of St. Peter in Cornhill (Ref 13) and Britain was studded with churches by the end of the second century. (Ref 3).

Not only did the church movement grow very rapidly in Britain in the first two centuries AD, but three people from Britain and Ireland played a prominent part in the formation of the church in Gaul (France) and Helvetia (Switzerland). Suetonius Beatus, born, converted and baptised in Britain became the founder of the Helvetian Church. His mission was at Underseven on the Lake of Thun where he was martyred in AD 110.

Marcellus, another Briton became Bishop of Tongres, and afterwards founder Bishop of Treves. Mansuetus was born in Ireland, converted and baptised in Britain. He was said to be a disciple of St. Peter. He was sent afterwards from Rome with Clement (later the second or third Bishop of Rome) to preach in Gaul. Mansuetus was the first Bishop of Toul. Subsequently he extended his labours to Illyria (now Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Hertzogovina) and was martyred in AD 110.

#### Author's Note

The information on the Church of Arimathea and of the part played by the Royal family of Siluria in Britain and Rome is based on the careful research of R.W. Morgan. (Ref 3).

In his book, on page 72 , Morgan records:-

"For our part, we cast aside the addenda and crescenda, the legends, poems, marvels which after ages, monk, troubadour, and historian piled high and gorgeously on the original foundation". Likewise, the author of this article has tried to avoid the "crescenda" and to only include such additional information as clarified or placed the events into a proper historical or geographical context or to include other relevant information which may not have been available to Morgan. The manner in which God used five generations of the family of Caradoc; that is, from his father Bran to his great grandson, King Lucius; for the work of his Church in Britain and Rome, is miracle enough!

#### Author's Note (Not intended for publication)

As indicated in my letter to Mr. W. Dixon of Perth North Church, Australia, dated 31 July 1992, I would appreciate any comment or criticism from him or Church Officials in respect of the possible publication of this article by the Church. In particular, it is appreciated that the Church will need to examine the 29th Chapter of Acts which Haberman (Ref 4) claims is in the Turkish Archives in Istanbul.

In my letter to Mr Dixon of 31 July 1992. I also indicated that I would follow up the History of the Early Church in Ireland and then deal with the position of the Early Christian Church in the Western Isles, its confrontation with the Church of Rome and the consequences. Before doing this research, a fair amount of material about the early Britons (Welsh) and the genealogies of the their kings is now in my possession and so I am endeavouring to collate this information and to relate it to our search for the lost tribes and kings of Israel.

## Publication References

### (A) Bible references

Joseph of Arimathea - Matt. 27v57 to 60. Mark 15v43  
to 46. Luke 23v50 to 53  
John 19v38 to 42

Lazarus and Sisters - John 11

Mary Magdalene - John 19v25, 20v1, v11 to 18  
- Luke 8v2 & Matt 28v56

For other specific Bible references see the text .

### (B) Other references

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(3) *St. Paul in Britain (or The Origin of British Christianity) by R.W.Morgan (Published by Artisan Sales PO Box 1497 Thousand Oaks Calif 91360 USA - Abridged Version -A reprint from an 1860 edition -ISBN 0-934666-12-1 - Library of Congress Catalog card number : 83-073168)*

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