The Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic is a yearly spring conference organized by postgraduate students of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at the University of Cambridge. Information on the next Colloquium, including details of registration and submission of abstracts, may be found on the Colloquium’s official website: http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/ccasnc/.

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Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic

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<th><em>Anglo-Saxon England</em></th>
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<tr>
<td>EME</td>
<td><em>Early Medieval Europe</em></td>
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<td>JEH</td>
<td><em>Journal of Ecclesiatical History</em></td>
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<td>MS cand</td>
<td><em>Medieval Scandinavia</em></td>
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<td>MP</td>
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<td>PASE</td>
<td>Prosopography of Anglo–Saxon England &lt;www.pase.ac.uk&gt;</td>
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<td>PMLA</td>
<td><em>Publications of the Modern Languages Association</em></td>
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<td>SBVS</td>
<td><em>Saga–Book of the Viking Society</em></td>
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<td>SJH</td>
<td><em>Scandinavian Journal of History</em></td>
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<td>SS</td>
<td><em>Scandinavian Studies</em></td>
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It gives me great pleasure to introduce the eighteenth number of *Quaestio Insularis*, the journal of the annual Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic (CCASNC). Both the journal and the Colloquium, established in 1999 on the initiative of the postgraduate community of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, have maintained an impressively high standard, driven by the enthusiasm and commitment of successive cohorts of students. The 2017 conference, on the theme of Identity and Ideology, was very lively and saw a stimulating array of papers given by postgraduate students from a wide range of institutions. The centre-piece of the day was the keynote lecture by Dr Alex Woolf, who explored ideas about English origins before the Viking Age. The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic is delighted to continue its association with CCASNC and its published proceedings. *Quaestio Insularis* 18 and all back numbers of the journal can be ordered directly from the Department’s website (www.asnc.cam.ac.uk).

Dr Rosalind Love  
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COLLOQUIUM REPORT

The 2017 Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic took place in Room GR06/07 of the Faculty of English on Saturday 11 February. The audience enjoyed a day of stimulating and indeed topical discussion on the theme of ‘Identity and Ideology’, followed by a dinner hosted at Wolfson College. We welcomed nine postgraduate speakers from across the country and from further afield, along with our plenary speaker, Dr Alex Woolf. The thematic, geographic and temporal scope of the papers roamed widely and gave rise to much thought-provoking discussion; as the day drew to a close we gave thanks to our speakers, the organising committee and, in particular, our tireless undergraduate helpers — James Miller and Liam Waters — for their time and effort in making the 2017 Colloquium a worthy successor to its forebears.

Session I (Chair: James McIntosh)
Rebecca Thomas, ‘Scholar, Courtier, Welshman: Asser and his Life of King Alfred’
Thomas Kearns, ‘Ideology in the Landscape: Reassessing Benedictine approaches to History and Identity at Tenth-Century Worcester’
Katherine Olley, ‘Labour Pains: Scenes of Birth and Becoming in Old Norse Legendary Literature’
Session II (Chair: Emma Knowles)
Danica Ramsey-Brimberg, ‘Nothing is More Deceptive than an Obvious Fact: Vikings’ Manipulation of Christianity in Burials in the Irish Sea Area’
Ben Allport, ‘The Construction and Reconstruction of Regional Identity in Medieval Norway’
Samantha Leggett, ‘Identity, Ideology and Diet in the Anglo-Saxon Conversion Period’
Plenary Speaker (Chair: Alice Taylor)
Dr Alex Woolf, ‘Imagining English Origins before the Viking Age’

Session III (Chair: Sven Rossel)
Rachel Fletcher, ‘William Somner’s Dictionarium Saxonic-Latino-Anglicum: Defining the Identity of Early Anglo-Saxon Studies’
Steve Walker, ‘Who Do We Think They Were? Problems of Identity in Early-Medieval Britain’
Kathryn Haley-Halinski, ‘Burning Boats, Not Bridges: Modern Ideologies and the Expression of Identity Amongst Ibn Fadlan’s Rus’

The members of the colloquium committee for 2016–17 were Sarah Christensen, Tom Grant, Emma Knowles, James McIntosh, Sven Rossel, Alice Taylor and Jon Wright.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Quaestio Insularis 18 was edited by Sarah Christensen, Tom Grant, Emma Knowles, James McIntosh, Sven Rossel, Alice Taylor and Jon Wright. The editors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Ben Guy, Katherine Olley, Dr Rosalind Love and our anonymous peer reviewers. Editorial design is by Alistair Vining and the Quaestio Insularis logo was drawn by Katharine Scarfe Beckett. The production of this volume and the successful running of the conference have been made possible through the generosity of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic and the support of the Faculty of English.
 Imagining English Origins

Alex Woolf
University of St Andrews

When we think of English origins we are drawn, inevitably, to the legendary history presented to us by Bede in Book One of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the story of Hengist and Horsa that was repeated in *Historia Brittonum*, and by Geoffrey of Monmouth and by every respectable historian right up until H. E. Marshall.ⁱ At the same moment, however, we are aware that the narrative he gives us is legendary and problematic in many ways. The alternative that presents itself is to focus on archaeology and to imagine the ‘pagan period’ as an alternative unstructured prehistoric past. Doing this, it is likely that iconic images drawn from Sutton Hoo and the other princely burials of eastern England come to mind, inevitably interpreted through the heroic lens of *Beowulf* and the Finnsburh fragment, which, once read, cannot be unread. This England, however, was also new in the early seventh century. Princely burials and feasting halls have so far proved elusive for the period before about 590 and they do

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not represent the culture brought from the Continent by early Germanic-speaking invaders in the fifth century, for they were equally unknown there at that early date.² Childeric’s burial from the 480s seems to be the earliest of these wealthy burials amongst Continental Germanic-speaking rulers, and combined features that seem to have been of Hunnic and Roman origin. This burial, at Tournai, was located within late Roman Gaul where its occupant had been born and had served the Roman administration, perhaps as a dux, for many years before his death.³ Beyond the limes such funerary rights emerged slowly and appeared in Scandinavia, if we accept the second- and third-century cemetery from Himlingøje as something of a false start,⁴ from only a generation or two before the first English examples

of c. 600. The same can be said of the feasting halls such as Yeavering, in Northumberland, which seem to be a phenomenon of the same transformation, appearing in Scandinavia only from the mid sixth century and in England from the turn of the century. The heroic age of feasting halls and princely burials had thus only been in its early stages when Bede’s grandparents had been children and was not a part of some primitive Germanic Urkultur. The parallels with Scandinavian developments reflect continued or renewed contact and interaction in the course of the sixth and seventh centuries rather than shared ancestral inheritance dating back to before the adventus Saxonum. What I would like to try to do in this paper is to explore some of the evidence which might shed light on how the Germanic-speaking peoples of Britain thought about their identity and origins before these North Sea links emerged c. 600 and to explore why this new trajectory was adopted then.

As someone who has dabbled in the history and culture of all of the various peoples of the early Insular world, one of the things that has long struck me as odd about the English is their lack of common ancestry. The Irish famously produced complex genealogical schemes which linked all the various ethnic and dynastic groups to common ancestors with a series of apical figures producing a ranking of status for the actually existing

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peoples of the historical present. Whilst the British material is less complete, *Historia Brittonum* records traditions going back to a single ancestor, either Brutus or Britto. Beyond these islands, texts like *Hversu Noregr byggðist* fulfilled a similar function. In that specific case, interestingly, an Irish-style agnicity descent network links the inhabitants of each of the provinces of Norway into a single tree to which the contemporary kings, allegedly of Swedish origin, are then attached only through a series of maternal connections. Admittedly these schemata mostly survive in extant forms that are somewhat later than the English material but the distinction is one still worth making. The English, however, had no such ancestral pedigree. Even if we confine ourselves to the so-called Anglian Collection of pedigrees, which, at least, have gone through the hands of a single editor, we find the common ancestors belong to the mythical rather than the legendary sections. They are not connected with Britain. We might have expected Offa of Angeln or his grandson Eomer, perhaps, to have been the proto-Englishman. Instead the

7 There is a vast literature but see for example John Carey, *The Irish National Origin Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory* (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, University of Cambridge, 1994); the earliest surviving account would seem to be that in *Historia Brittonum* 13–15 (see next note for reference).
latest common ancestor in each case (save that of the West Saxons who seem to have borrowed the upper portion of the Bernician pedigree) is Woden Frealafing, upon whom the English had no special claim. This evidence might even tempt us to imagine that this schema pre-supposed the existence of a pan-Germanic sense of identity of the sort that is viewed with extreme scepticism by many scholars today.

Bede and *Historia Brittonum*, of course, supply us with the figure of Hengest. Curiously Bede describes him, together with his brother Horsa, as the first leaders of the *Anglorum sive Saxonum gens* while at the same time making him the ancestor of the rulers of Kent, whose people he describes as Jutes.\(^ {11} \) One might have imagined Hengest, or his hypothetical brothers, to have been the ancestors of all English kings, after the fashion of the sons of Míl in Ireland, but no trace of such a structure survives. It remains unclear how significant he was to the English as a whole. J. R. R. Tolkien, in the stimulating series of lectures edited by Alan Bliss under the title *Finn and Hengest: the fragment and the episode*, attempted to reconstruct an English origin legend that followed Hengest in his exile from a Danish *imperium* in Jutland to Frisia and then, after a tragic conflict of loyalties, driven from there, a *wærglice wræcce*, to Britain, where he found himself once more drawn into a terrible conflict.\(^ {12} \) This was Hengest as the

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\(^ {11} \) *HE* I.15. The apparent contradiction might be avoided if one were to assume that the Jutes in Britain were ruled by Angles.

English Aeneas, perhaps? The Vergilian parallels have been further explored by Nicholas Howe.\(^\text{13}\)

The late Patrick Wormald once told me that Tolkien had actually written a novel on this theme which circulated in \textit{samizdat} form amongst Oxford Anglo-Saxonists but I know of no other evidence for such a text, and find it hard to believe that Christopher Tolkien could have resisted the temptation to publish it, had it existed. More recently, in a survey of the material relating to the legend of the \textit{adventus Saxonum}, Rick Sowerby, without making any claims to the historicity of the brothers, raised the possibility that Horsa, rather than Hengest, may have been the original Kentish hero on the grounds that Bede cites archaeological evidence for his existence. Hengest, he suggested, was a ghost figure created as a pair for Horsa.\(^\text{14}\)

The idea of Hengest, and Horsa, for that matter, as ghost figures is not new. Bede himself tells us that the Kentish royal dynasty took its name from Oisc, the son or grandson of Hengest according to the pedigrees, and this has long suggested to scholars that the latter was added to the pedigree at a late stage.\(^\text{15}\) Personally I have long worried over, or \textit{at}, the question of whether Hengest was originally the first Englishman, appropriated by Kentish genealogists, or, alternatively, the first


\(^{15}\) \textit{HE} II.5. Scepticism goes back at least as far as Joan Turville-Petre, ‘Hengest and Horsa’, \textit{SBVS} 14 (1953–57), 273–90.
man of Kent whose claims to have pan-English significance reflect the ambitions of either the Oiscing kings or the Church of Canterbury. In both *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *Historia Brittonum* Hengest’s story is intimately connected with that of Vortigern. This, in itself, suggests some level of construction since neither name seems to have been garbled as much in transmission as one might have expected had there been an oral stage, favouring either Welsh or English, in the process. We might contrast this with the Taliesin poems, for example, which do not provide us with English names for Urien and Owain’s opponents.  

The name Hengest itself has long been recognised as a likely construct of the legendary process since, despite superficially resembling the dithematic names common amongst Germanic peoples, particularly those in –*gast*, like Arbogast or Frithugast, it never appears as a personal name outside the heroic corpus. It is in fact not dithematic but a simplex noun meaning, in West Germanic, ‘gelding’ (the Scandinavian cognate has come to mean ‘stallion’). Not only does this seem an unlikely name to give to a boy, since it might be taken to reflect poorly on his virility, but there is also some evidence that this name may have been constructed in a bilingual literate context. If one investigates the use of *hengest* as a common noun, rather than as a name, one also encounters the Latin used to gloss it. One of the Latin words used to gloss *hengest*, in both Old English and Old High German examples, immediately draws one’s eye: this Latin word for

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gelding is *canterius* or *cantarius*.\textsuperscript{17} It seems to me beyond coincidence to imagine that the man claimed as the ancestor of the kings of the Cantware should bear a name glossed in Latin as *canterius*. The conclusion I feel obliged to draw from this observation is that the name Hengest was invented in Kent in a bilingual, and probably literate, context, to anglicize a Latin eponym for Kent or its people.

The suggestion here is that an eponym of Kent itself was developed in Latin, or just possibly adapted from a British name identical to, or similar to, the Cantiorix/Cantiorius attested in the Penmachno inscription,\textsuperscript{18} and that at some subsequent point this term was, perhaps jokingly (given the aspersions it casts on its bearer’s virility), rendered as Old English *hengest*. The date at which the Old English form was coined must, of course, have been prior to Bede’s composition of Book One of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, presumably in the year or two leading up to 731, but it need not be have been very much earlier. It is extremely tempting to imagine this as having taken place in Canterbury at the school of Theodore (d. 690) and Hadrian (d. 710).\textsuperscript{19} A further, less secure suggestion, might be that the name was also designed

\textsuperscript{17} Bosworth-Toller cites both Old English and, significantly, Old High German glosses to this effect. *S.v. ‘Hengest’.*

\textsuperscript{18} Ffestiniog 1, in *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales*, ed. by Nancy Edwards, vol. III (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 385–89. Were this British origin the case then it might mark greater continuity in Kentish government than has previously been seen and mark a tradition originating in the *ciuitas* of the Cantiaci.

\textsuperscript{19} For the school of Theodore and Hadrian see Michael Lapidge, ‘The School of Theodore and Hadrian’, *ASE* 15 (1986), 45–72.
to echo that of the Mercian ancestor Eomer, the ‘famous horse’, father of their dynastic eponym Icel, since the age of Theodore and Hadrian also coincides with the beginning of the Mercian hegemony under the sons of Penda. Here we might note than in the Anglian Collection of pedigrees the first Mercian chain begins with Æthelred Pending whose *floruit* (675–704) overlapped almost precisely with that of Theodore and Hadrian. If we accept a learned origin for Hengest the similarity of his story, as reconstructed by Tolkien, to that of Aeneas may owe more to direct literary influence than to common folk motif, cleverly interwoven into Gildas’s narrative of the *adventus* by the scholars of Canterbury.²⁰ Whether or not ‘Cantarius’ had a prior existence as the eponymous ancestor of the Romano-British Cantiaci remains, I fear, a matter of speculation only. Bede then presumably discovered Hengest in the portfolio of material provided by Abbot Albinus, Hadrian’s successor at Canterbury.²¹

Having disposed of Hengest, are there any further clues as to how the English thought about their earlier history in the period before his creation? Staying with the pedigrees I would like to draw your attention to what might be termed the Gothic horizon in the royal pedigrees.²² The historicity of individuals named in the pedigrees between those whose existence is confirmed by contemporary sources and those who are clearly mythological, such as Woden Frealafing and his sons, will always

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²¹ HE, Preface.
²² Dumville, ‘Anglian Collection’.
be a matter for debate. The group I want to focus on here, however, form the generation which are purported to have flourished immediately prior to the Augustinian mission of 597 and who thus have, perhaps, the best claim to historicity. They include Æthelberht of Kent’s father, Eormanric, Rædwald of East Anglia’s father, Tyttla, and Æthelfrith of Bernicia’s father and uncle, Æthelric and Theodric (made famous in *Historia Brittonum’s* account of the siege of Lindisfarne).\(^{23}\) There is a further possible example in the Mercian pedigree but this is less clear cut so I shall set it to one side for now.\(^{24}\) These men, if they lived at all, must have flourished in the last third of the sixth century having been born perhaps in the middle third. Their names are extremely rare in the surviving Anglo-Saxon corpus and correspond precisely to names found in the Amal dynasty of Ostrogothic Italy. Eormanric is the English form of Ermanaric, the ruler of the Greutungi encountered in the pages of Ammianus Marcellinus who was transformed into a Gothic Alexander and ancestor of the Amals in the pages of Jordanes, presumably following Cassiodorus.\(^{25}\) Tyttla is, of course, Totila, the valiant leader of resistance to Justinian’s armies who died in 552,\(^{26}\) while

\(^{23}\) *HB* 63.

\(^{24}\) This is Cnebba Iceling whose name might just possibly be cognate with Gothic Cniva but this seems unlikely.


Theodric is clearly the Gothic Theodoric and Æthelric is cognate with Athalaric, the son of Amalasuntha, Theodoric’s heir in Italy. This Gothic horizon is striking, and we might perhaps add to it Eadwine of Deira whose name echoes that of the Langobard ruler Audoin who belonged to the same generation as Totila and Athalaric and ruled from 546 to about 560. Eadwine is of a slightly younger generation than the others.

Two possible explanations for the Gothic horizon suggest themselves. One might be that it is, like the creation of Hengest, a learned construct of a later generation. It is hard to see, however, how this would benefit anyone. Neither English churchmen nor Italian missionaries are likely to have wanted to link the current royal dynasties to Arian rulers of a defunct line. The second possible explanation is that these men really bore these names and that they were born during, or shortly after, the struggle between the East Roman forces and the Ostrogoths in Italy and Illyricum between 535 and 554. Although Audoin the Langobard had been allied to the Romans during this war, his son and successor Alboin invaded Italy in 568 and wrested much of it from imperial control. Eadwine of Deira we know to have been born in the 580s when the Romans were at war with the Langobards. If we accept this second option, that these names

phonological equivalence with Tyttla but Procopius’ original Τοντίλας should leave us in no doubt. See Moritz Schönfeld, Wörterbuch der altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1911) s.v. ‘Totila’ for a full range of original forms.

27 For a survey of these wars see John Moorhead, ‘Ostrogothic Italy and the Lombard Invasions’, in The New Cambridge Medieval History Vol.1, c.
belonged to real men and were not merely learned constructs, as the more plausible, it raises interesting questions about what was going on in Britain in the 540s and 550s when Italy was a battleground between Roman and Goth and when these royal ancestors were born and named. What were Oisc, Wuffa and Ida thinking when they named their sons?

If these links are real, a number of issues can be investigated. As noted above, none of these Gothic names became widely used in the Old English name-hoard and the later popularity of the name Eadwine may resulted from its popularisation via the medium of the Old English translation of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* in the ninth century and Eadweard the Elder’s choice of it for one of his own sons. The chronological synchronism with the Gothic War is too close to be coincidence. We seem to be seeing rulers along the east coast from Canterbury to Bamburgh simultaneously making some sort of identification with the opponents of Roman imperial power. This should lead us to question at least two major tenets about the English in the sixth century. Firstly, that before the emergence of princely burials and feasting halls in the archaeological record, in the closing decades of the sixth century and opening decades of the seventh, English society was small-scale and local in character. Secondly, that early English society was closed in and insular and

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28 Of the nearly two hundred bearers of this name in PASE only one, in addition to the seventh-century king of Deira, is noted before the tenth century.
that links between Britain and the Mediterranean in this period were confined to west coast princely sites such as Tintagel, Cadbury-Congresbury, Whithorn and so forth, safely in the hands of the Britons.\textsuperscript{29}

What this evidence suggests instead is that in the middle of the sixth century eastern England was still part of the Late Antique world, in touch with developments and trends in its Mediterranean heartland. This should not surprise us too much. Theodoric the Great’s daughter married a king of the Thuringi,\textsuperscript{30} and we know from Cassiodorus’ \textit{Variae} that Theodoric was in diplomatic contact with Clovis, whom he envisioned boating on the Scheldt,\textsuperscript{31} and even with a king of the Varni, a group living somewhere in the north of modern Germany.\textsuperscript{32} We have no such correspondence surviving from the period after Cassiodorus left the court in the 530s, but had we correspondence from later Gothic kings might we find letters directed to rulers in Britain? Procopius tells us that Belisarius offered to exchange Sicily for Britain, an offer usually dismissed as facetious, but perhaps it was not such an outlandish suggestion.\textsuperscript{33} While it is probably not credible to imagine Britain becoming part of the Ostrogothic

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\textsuperscript{29} For the west see, for example, Anthea Harris, \textit{Byzantium, Britain and the West: The Archaeology of Cultural Identity} (Stroud: Tempus, 2003) and Ewan Campbell, \textit{Continental and Mediterranean Imports to Atlantic Britain and Ireland, AD 400–800} (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2007).
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Variae} II.41, III.4.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Variae} III.3.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Wars}, VI.6.
realm as we have grown accustomed to picture it, it is not implausible that Justinian’s government might have thought in terms of what today would be called spheres of influence, analogous to the division of Africa between Britain and France in 1899 along the largely as-yet-unexplored watershed between the Nile and the Congo. Theodoric — whose imperium, if not his regnum, extended to the shores of the Baltic and the North Sea — might credibly have imagined his authority to extend across the narrow sea. But how would it have looked from Britain? In all three cases the fathers of our Gothic-named dynasts are themselves dynastic eponyms: Oisc of the Oiscingas, Wuffa of the Wuffingas and Ida of the Idingas. Might English kingship owe its origins to Ostrogothic patronage? Might clientage of the Gothic kings, the receipt of prestigious gifts and letters, have propelled a small number of barbarian officers or chieftains into the ranks of kings?

Alternatively we might see this development as entirely internally generated. News from the South may have helped ambitious rulers struggling to find an ideology to underpin their ambition. The situation in Italy had been one in which peaceful cohabitation between Gothic soldiers and Roman civilians had allowed a status quo to emerge that was only overthrown by Roman perfidy. By the 540s the Goths were facing an existential crisis and fighting for their very survival as a gens. Did the early English commanders begin to view their British neighbours with anxiety verging on paranoia or, more knowingly, encourage their soldiery to do so? The mid-sixth century may well have been the period when across what had been the Western Empire
people were compelled to make choices about identity and allegiance that had not been necessary in the fifth century. Whatever the practical realities on the ground, most fifth- and early sixth-century Germanic kings had notionally accepted the superiority of the Emperor and claimed to be ruling, in some sense, as his agents or subordinates. Justinian’s decision to ‘reconquer’ the devolved provinces gave the lie to this understanding of the world. English identification with the Goths and with the Germanic, indeed Scandinavian, ancestry that Cassiodorus and Jordanes had cultivated for them may well have been a reflex of a more hostile attitude to Britons, both inside English-controlled polities and beyond.

It would be interesting to know whether a similar identification with Justinian’s Romans occurred in British communities at the same time. We have become used to identifying the finds of B-ware and other high-quality eastern Mediterranean ceramics with the Justinianic project but the refined dating produced by Ewan Campbell, Maria Duggan and others now seems to suggest that this material mostly arrived in Britain during the period c. 470–540, which coincides closely with the sustained peace between the Eastern Empire and the Vandals. This pax Vandalicum in the western Mediterranean seems to have provided the context for Aegean and Cilician material to pass out into the Atlantic. My discussion of the

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English dynasties began with naming practices and it might be worth looking into Welsh pedigrees for sixth-century influences. It is well known that British personal names in the Middle Ages, and indeed today, contained, and contain, stock of both Celtic and Latin origin. Names of Roman origin, like Tegid and Iestyn, are still current in Wales today. The tendency has been to keep the analysis of such names to this primary binary division, Celtic or Latin, but it might be worth seeing if layers can be identified within the name-stock. Certain Roman names like Justin and Romanus, for example, do seem to be late names, only becoming widespread across the Empire after the traditional date for the ending of Roman Britain at the beginning of the fifth century. The existence of *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* would make such a project relatively easy, perhaps within the scope of a master’s dissertation. But enough of that for now, when my concerns lie with English identities.

I would like to close by returning to the cultural identity of the English in the conversion period, in the 590s and the early seventh century. As was noted earlier the most striking and best known developments in the material record seem to follow developments in Scandinavia. Germanic-style metalwork, princely burials and large halls designed for feasting retinues all spring to mind. The question I would like to pose is why we seem to see a late sixth-century replacement of a discourse focused on Mediterranean identities with one focused instead upon the North Sea. The disappearance of the Goths from Italy and their replacement by the less dynamic and politically ambitious Langobards is of course a major factor. In the former Roman
West both Italy and Spain became more concerned with internal strife and continued squabbles between Roman enclaves and local Germanic kings, and the hegemony which Theodoric and his immediate successors had aspired to was gradually usurped by the Franks of the Meroving dynasty. We owe our enduring impressions of this dynasty and its origins to Gregory, bishop of Tours, who was born shortly after the Roman reconquest of Italy began and who wrote his *Ten Books of History* in the 590s. Like all historians of medieval dynasties, he presents the founder, in his case Clovis (though presumably the use elsewhere of the dynastic name Merowing suggests an alternative tradition which saw Merowech as the significant figure), as a greater man than his descendants. It is notable, however, that it is the sons of Clovis who take advantage of the collapse of Gothic hegemony and annex the Burgundian kingdom and extend their power beyond the Rhine, destroying Thuringia and entering into conflict with the Saxons. Clovis’s eldest son, Theoderic, and his son Theudebert are particularly significant in the *Drang nach Osten* and may be given credit for creating the characteristically hybrid nature of the Frankish *imperium*, straddling Germany and Gaul, which was to survive into the tenth century.

This eastward expansion had, as I see it, two major outcomes. One was to reinforce the Germanic character of Frankish identity and probably contribute to the preservation of

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35 Halsall, ‘Childeric’, cited above, makes a good case that Clovis’ father had already achieved much of what his son would go on to be credited for.

Frankish language (in contrast to relatively rapid linguistic assimilation of Langobards, Goths and Sueves in Italy and Spain). The other was the impact it had on Germanic gentes beyond the confines of the former Roman Empire. The early sixth century sees a new group appearing in this region: the Danes. No pre-sixth-century sources mention these people, who first appear in the pages of Procopius and Jordanes.\(^{37}\) Those who seek historicity in the narrative of *Beowulf* would be wise to note that if the internal chronology of the poem is to be respected much of the action might seem to take place before there were any Danes. The emergence of this people as a major power in the course of the sixth century may explain why Gregory of Tours ascribes Danish ethnicity to Chlochilaicus, the Scandinavian king who died in an attack on the kingdom of Theoderic son of Clovis in around 520.\(^{38}\) Although later sources seem to agree that this king was not Danish but a king of the Gautar, rightly or wrongly, Gregory — writing seventy years after the event — seems to have believed that the Danes were the most likely perpetrators of such an audacious seaborne attack. The ongoing archaeological campaigns at Lejre\(^{39}\) and Uppåkra\(^{40}\) also indicate that Zealand and Skåne had become the most dynamic region in Transrhenic Germania in the course of the sixth century.

\(^{37}\) *Wars* VI.15 and *Getica* III.

\(^{38}\) Gregory of Tours, *History* III.3.

\(^{39}\) Tom Christensen, ‘Ældste Lejre?’, *Skalk* 6 (2008), 18–24.

\(^{40}\) *Continuity for Centuries. A ceremonial building and its context at Uppåkra, southern Sweden*, ed. by Lars Larsson (Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004).
What I have suggested elsewhere and would like to restate here is that during the course of the sixth and seventh centuries Denmark emerged as a counter to Frankish hegemony in the contracting Germanic-speaking world. Increasingly, as much of the area between the Vistula and the Elbe ceased to play a part in the cultural and political nexus that maintained Germanic identity, it seems the Germanic-speaking world developed a bipolar structure with competing centres on the lower Rhine and in Southern Scandinavia. This polarisation was not without its impact on the Germanic-speaking communities in Britain. In his important 1983 work *The Merovingian North Sea*, Ian Wood argued for Frankish hegemony in Britain for much of the sixth century. The smoking gun for this hypothesis was of course Æthelbert’s marriage to a Frankish princess and the presence of a Frankish bishop, Liudhard, at the Kentish court. Further evidence could be deduced from Venantius Fortunatus’ apparent reference to Chilperic’s seaborne victory over the Eudoses, tentatively identified with Insular Jutes, and from the garnet-studded gold-work from Kent which closely resembles contemporary Frankish work.

The evidence, however, is largely confined to Kent and it is worth noting that, to date, Kent also lacks evidence for the kind of Scandinavian-style princely burials and feasting halls that we see in the regions north of the Thames. Indeed the richest such

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burials found to date, at Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell and Taplow are all immediately north of the Thames or what might be considered its outer estuary. I would like to conclude by suggesting that what we are seeing here is another discourse of resistance, not this time aimed at a perceived Roman threat, as the Gothic horizon suggested, but now countering Frankish aspirations for hegemony which had been made real in some parts of southern Britain. The natural language for such a discourse was that of the Franks’ major rivals with Germania: the Danes. It may well be to this late sixth- and seventh-century series of interactions that the adoption and development of much of what has been identified as the Anglo-Saxons’ Germanic heritage can be attributed.