Words and Swords: People and Power along the Solent in the 5th Century

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The years between the withdrawal from Britain of Roman Imperial power and the establishment of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms have long provoked interest among historians and archaeologists as to what was actually happening. One reason for this perennial fascination must be the lack of evidence, which allows theories to develop: none of the (few) written sources is impartial, and any concrete archaeological evidence will suggest an historical belief according to the believer. As David Mattingly puts it succinctly, “The ending of Roman Britain is a subject of few facts and many theories.”¹ When we develop a theory, we bring our own prior knowledge and interests, hoping to add just that little bit extra to what has been proposed before. And thus it is here.

Where written sources, archaeology or landscape offer little to work on, place-names may provide evidence, by indicating who first used the elements in those place-names and passed them on in the names which survive even to the present day. However, even place-names can become traps for the unwary.² No contextual evidence should be ignored. Just as it has been stressed that context and local factors were, and are, important where names are first used, it is also important to consider why names survive. The history of an area will help to discover reasons for name survival: likewise name survival will contribute to what is known of the area’s history. Thus here, not only place-names, but also history and archaeology too take their place in understanding what was happening in the Solent area in the pre-Roman and Roman times, and during the events of the 5th and 6th centuries. The Solent appears to have been a waterway of ancient and continued importance, and the people who lived on its shores to have been people of some standing. Coastal change would have affected trade and lifestyle as the years progressed. In the area here under consideration, i.e. the Solent coast between Southampton Water and Bognor, together with the north coast of the Isle of Wight, geological and landscape

1 David Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire* (London, 2007), p. 529.

2 Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, 1st ed. (Chichester, 1978), p. 12. This is a sentiment which Barbara Yorke will recognise from our discussions when I was her student.

change have brought great differences to the way people have lived their lives in the last 1,500 years. Place-names will reflect people's lives, and what is significant to those people.

The Place-name Element *ōra*

One of the recurrent place-name elements in the area under consideration is *ōra*. The word in this form appears to have, or to have developed, various significances in Old English, and has sources and cognates in more than one language, deriving from Latin, and also from Old Norse and Latin.³ There is also the OE term *ōr* "beginning, origin, front,"⁴ cognate with ON *óss* "mouth, outlet of a river" (as in Oslo) and with Latin, *ōs, oris; ostium*, "mouth" (as in Ostium, port of Rome), and O Slav *usta*, "mouth."⁵ In oblique cases *ōr* would have needed a second syllable, thus adding to the confusion with oblique cases of *ōra*.

It is therefore quite difficult to ascertain the exact significance of derivatives of *ōra* in the many place-names along the Solent and Channel coasts which contain the element, and to complicate things further, there are two places called Ower, both in different situations, in Hampshire. Here, names on the section of coast between Southampton Water and Bognor, and the coast of the Isle of Wight will be considered. Since there are other elements deriving from Latin in the area, it appears likely that it is the Latin word *ōra* which should be considered, and this in itself has been the focus of discussion by many scholars.

The Significance of the Element *ōra*

In the days of the Roman Empire, the word *ōra* was used in Latin by Classical authors to indicate some sort of edge in general, and in particular a coast or sea-coast. The term *ōra maritima* could be used to signify the inhabitants of a coastal region, and hence a region or country, even a world or a zone. In either a transferred or a different meaning, *ōra* could be used for a boat's rope or cable.⁶ Among related Latin words and uses are *ōrārīus*, 'belonging to the coast, a coastal vessel', **ōrātīm*, 'from coast to coast'.⁷

The discussion gradually became wider and more detailed as the study of philology progressed. Eilert Ekwall did not mention the Latin connection,

3 John Hines, pers. comm., 2 Oct. 2009.

4 Henry Sweet, *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1896), p. 133.

5 *CDEPN*, p. xlvii.

6 C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879), p. 1274; *CDEPN*, p. 415.

7 Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, p. 1274.

FIGURE 3.1 The distribution of *funtia*, *ora* and *portus* place-name elements against select archaeological sites dated to the Roman and Saxon periods

concentrating on the word as an OE word 'border, margin, bank',⁸ suggesting specific waterside connotation: "firm foreshore, gravelly landing-place" as on the coast of Hampshire, and indeed in places such as Windsor, "riverside landing place with a windlass."⁹ In 1956, A.H. Smith gave two uses of the word, giving the OE use as "border, margin, bank, edge," and the Latin use as "rim, bank, shore."¹⁰

In his unpublished collection of notes on Hampshire place-names, J.E.B. Gover listed the two places called Ower in Hampshire, giving both as from *ōra*. Inland Ower near Cadnam (O.S. SU 3216) is "bank, shore etc."; coastal Ower near Calshot (O.S. SU 4701) is "shore, bank."¹¹ Richard Coates listed both places, considering OE *ofer* and *ōra* to differentiate significance, while he uses the meaning of a landing-place in his explanation of Copnor as "Coppa's shore or bank."¹²

Margaret Gelling brought up the idea of different meanings, pushing the discussion further with the statement that "There is a clear dichotomy of meaning between coastal settlements ... and inland examples ..."¹³ Later research by Ann Cole has concentrated on the use of *ōra* to signify a certain shape of hill, inland as well as near the coast,¹⁴ contrasting the use of *ōra* with that of *ofer*, and, in an important collaboration with Margaret Gelling, illustrations were employed to prove the point;¹⁵ Cole suggests that the beach (*ōra*) could have transferred its name, when called out by approaching sailors, to be understood by foreigners as referring to the nearby flat-topped hill. The OE word *ōra*, it is suggested, is related to Latin *ōra*, 'rim, bank, shore'.¹⁶ Thus, although concentrating on the significance 'flat-topped hill', Cole still admits a

8 ODEPN p. 350.

9 ODEPN, p. 523.

10 A.H. Smith, *English Place-name Elements*, 2 parts (Cambridge, 1956), 2:55.

11 J.E.B. Gover, *The Place-Names of Hampshire* (Unpublished typescript, held in Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, c.1961).

12 Richard Coates, *The Place-Names of Hampshire* (London, 1989), p. 128; p. 59. With regard to Gover and Coates, see also the discussion of the two places in Hampshire called Ower, in CDEPN, p. 457. The former is suggested as a possible confusion with *ofer* (not discussing Ann Cole's 1989/1999 distinction [for which, see below]), the latter from *ōra* which he takes to signify "shore" and gives as an OE word.

13 Margaret Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (London, 1984), pp. 179–82 (quotation at p. 179).

14 Ann Cole, "The Meaning of the Old English Element *Ōra*," *JEPNS* 21 (1989), 15–22; "The Origin, Distribution and Use of the Place-Name Element *Ōra* and its Relationship to the Element *Ofer*," *JEPNS* 22 (1990), 26–41.

15 Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, 2000), pp. 203–10.

16 Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 204.

dual meaning. John Pile agrees with Gelling's 1984 point that *ōra* has two meanings, and that in the Portsmouth area and the coast here, it is the Latin meaning 'shore, foreshore' which should be preferred.¹⁷

In a later piece on the linguistic aspects of British identity, Coates made the point that borrowed vocabulary betrays the presence of another culture, in this case a Latin word used in Britain by locals.¹⁸ In this area it appears obvious that *ōra* was a word used locally, its significance deriving from the Latin *ōra*, used by the locals (and visitors) and taken on by Germanic newcomers, who had probably visited the coast before the 5th century for trade. David Parsons discusses loan-words, concluding that "relevant evidence varies according to region."¹⁹ Given the nature of the local coastal region, and its variation over the last two millennia, it is obvious that *ōra* here has the significance so well described by Ekwall, i.e. a good place to beach your boats. However, the diversity of significance cannot be faulted. It is necessary, therefore, to accept that one word may have two quite different meanings, a not unknown linguistic feature, and echoing Smith's dual use (above), noted even in 1956.

The concentration of names with an *ōra* element suggests that the area itself may have been known as *The ōra*, and the name used by residents and visitors alike.²⁰ Also, since it is a Latin word, it may be assumed that it was used before the Germanic *adventus*, corresponding to Ptolemy's "Magnus Portus" (discussed below), continuing to be used afterwards, and even to the present day.

Some Local Names Containing the Element ōra.

In most of the *ōra* names which are still used today, the word has changed in pronunciation—and thus spelling—with usage through the years. This indicates that the word and its significance were important in the local *lingua franca*, and was evidently widely used by the locals and by visitors. Some of the *ōra* names no longer appear to contain the element, such as Gurnard, Isle of Wight (O.S. SZ 470950), recorded as *de Connore*, *de Gomore als Gonmore* in 1279, from OE *gyru* + *ōra*, 'muddy shore';²¹ and Marker Point (O.S. SU 746023),

17 John Pile, "Ōra Place-Names in the Portsmouth Area," *Hampshire Field Club Newsletter* 32 (1999), 5–8.

18 Richard Coates, "Invisible Britons: the View from Linguistics," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Nick Higham (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 172–91, at p. 188.

19 David Parsons, "Sabrina in the Thorns: Place-Names as Evidence for British and Latin in Roman Britain," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 109 (2011), 113–37, at p. 134.

20 Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape*, p. 179.

21 Helge Kökeritz, *Place-Names of the Isle of Wight*, *Nomina Germanica* (Uppsala, 1940), p. 187; *CDEPN*, p. 266.

1296 *Merkore*, from OE *mēarc* + *ōra*, ‘boundary on the shore’.²² Today this is the point where the boundary between Hampshire and West Sussex arrives at the shore.

These names illustrate the acceptance of the element *ōra* by the newcomers, and the eventual addition of their own OE words to differentiate the places, a process of adoption followed by adaptation. Two names have the element *wīc* added, which, as discussed below, may be counted as either local Latin or brought from the homelands: Wickor Point on Thorney Island (O.S. SU 746039), which is suggestive of an *ōra* place-name;²³ Wicor (O.S. SU 600050), a trading (*wīc*) site outside the walls of Portchester castle, recorded c.1400 as *Wikoure*.²⁴ An indication of the persistence of place-name traditions is that Wicor has now given its name to the local area and primary school.

Other Local Place-names Containing Latin Elements and their Significance

There is also a noticeable occurrence locally of other place-name elements which derive from Latin. Their survival alongside the *ōra* names is an indication that not only did local people use some Latin words in speech, but also that new arrivals adopted local terms.²⁵ Certain place-name elements still survive in names we use today. These elements are *vīcus*, *portūs* and **funta*, which are examined below. These Latin elements were later added to elements from OE, as they were taken on by people now speaking the early Old English language. When people give names to places, they use words which are significant to them in the context, and adapt them to suit their own pronunciation.²⁶

The elements are as follows:

- Latin *vīcus*: district, street, village, estate, thus a designated place of settlement, with various significances.²⁷ The element *vīcus* was known to the Germanic incomers, and used in Old Saxony before the *adventus*, often there to

22 Allen Mawer and F.M. Stenton, with J.E.B. Gover, *The Place-Names of Sussex* (Cambridge, 1929–30), p. 62.

23 See generally Martin Bell, “Saxon Sussex,” in *Archaeology in Sussex to AD 1500*, ed. P. Drewett, CBA Research Report 29 (London, 1978), pp. 64–69, at p. 64.

24 Gover, *The Place-Names of Hampshire*, p. 22.

25 Margaret Gelling, “Towards a Chronology for English Place-Names,” in *Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, ed. Della Hooke (Oxford, 1988), pp. 59–76, at p. 63.

26 *CDEPN*, p. xlvii

27 Simpson, ed., *Cassell's New Latin-English, English-Latin Dictionary*, p. 641.

signify a road with dwellings. It continued to be used in parts of England, for many centuries, with various significances and alterations. One of the earliest uses combined *wīc* with OE *-ham*, to give *wīchām*, found across much of south-east England and indicating to the Germanic folk a place where Romano-British people were to be found.

- Latin *portūs*: Classical Latin uses the word to signify a harbour, haven or port, where customs duties could be collected²⁸ The element *portūs* survives in names in the area of Portsmouth harbour: Portsmouth (O.S. SU 6501), recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 501 (from *portūs* + OE *muþa*, “harbour mouth”); Portchester (O.S. SU 625045), recorded in S 372 (A.D. 904) as *Porcestre* and *Porceastra* (from *portūs* + OE *cæster*, *ceaster* from Latin *castra*, “harbour, military camp”); Gosport (O.S. SZ 6199), recorded in 1251 as *Goseport* (from OE *gōs*, genitive plural *gōsa* + *portūs*, “goose place in the *portus*”).²⁹
- OE **funta* (from Late Latin *fontāna*, ‘spring’): this word would have been taken from the Latin into Brittonic.³⁰ Even though it has never been found in writing in this form (hence the asterisk), it exists in place-names in oblique forms. Historical, landscape and archaeological evidence suggest that this was a place where there was, and in fact usually still is, a spring, perhaps of supernatural significance, and therefore important.³¹

The position of these names on what may have been cultural boundaries has been interpreted as reflecting their role as meeting places between resident Romano-British and incoming Germanic peoples. During the period of the Germanic settlement, resident and newcomer could meet there, to make a territorial agreement.³² This is especially evident in Wiltshire, at Teffont (O.S. ST 985328) (*at Teofunten* in S 730 (AD 964), from OE **tēo* ‘boundary’ + OE **funta*) and Fovant (O.S. SU 005285), recorded in S 364 (AD 901) as *Fobbefunte*, which lie at the western limit of Germanic influence before the 7th century, together with Urchfont (O.S. SU 042574), recorded in Domesday Book (1086) as *Ierchesfonte*.³³

28 Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, p. 1402.

29 *CDPEN*, pp. 478 (Portchester) and 257 (Gosport).

30 See the entry for *fons*, *fontanus* “spring, fountain,” in Simpson, ed., *Cassell's New Latin-English, English-Latin Dictionary*.

31 Jillian Hawkins, *The Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta in the Early Middle Ages*, BAR Brit. Ser. 614 (Oxford, 2015), pp. 12–15.

32 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta*, pp. 101–06.

33 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta*, pp. 22–28, 119–30.

The element **funta* is known in only 21 names, all in the south-east part of England, and four of them are in the Solent area. Together with Mottisfont, some distance to the west on the river Test, at O.S. SU 326269, Hampshire and West Sussex have almost a quarter of **funta* sites. In this area the four **funta* names occur in a clear demarcation line between the coastal *ōra* area and the early Anglo-Saxon settlement area on the Meon north of Wickham, and Apple Down 1 north of Chichester. These names are: Funtley (O.S. SU 562082) (*Funtelei* in Domesday Book, from **funta* + OE *lēah*, ‘spring in a clearing’); Boarhunt (O.S. SU 604084) (OE *burh* gen sing *byrig* + **funta*, ‘spring in an enclosed space’), recorded in a 12th-century list of lands belonging to Old Minster, Winchester from a likely 10th-century context (S 1821) as *æt byrhfunt*; Havant (O.S. SU 717061) (OE pers name *Hama* + **funta*, ‘Hama’s spring’), recorded in S 430 (AD 935) as *æt hamanfuntan*; Funtington West Sussex O.S. SU 801081 (**funta* + OE *-ing* + OE *-tūn*, ‘settlement where there are springs’).

Arranged as they are to the north of the *ōra*, these names show a line of places where the resident British met the newcomers, apparently to give the latter permission to go inland from the *ōra*.³⁴ Along the *ōra*, trade was still important at that time, but the Germanic newcomers were largely farmers, as evidenced by their settlements upstream on the Meon. Havant lies at the southern end of the way to Rowland’s Castle Roman industrial site, at O.S. SU 733106, and at the junction of this road with the main Roman road from Chichester to the west. Havant was therefore a place to be kept in British hands. Funtington is north of the Roman site at Ratham Mill (O.S. SU 809064) but south of the early Saxon site at Apple Down; the new folk could go north but not stay in the south. Boarhunt may well have been an early sacred site; if the **funta* here had a supernatural significance, the early church may well commemorate this. The present early Saxon church is on a slight hill overlooking the **funta*. There are pre-English names such as Creech, O.S. SU 636102 (*crūg*, ‘hill, barrow, mound’) to the east of Boarhunt. Funtley is near the mouth of the Meon river, to the north of the *ōra* and at the western end of the Portsdown Hills. Rather than blocking the way upstream, since early Saxon artefacts are known from Meonstoke, it would seem that the **funta* here was an agreement site allowing passage upriver, but not settlement nearer the coast. The earliest Saxon evidence was found some 10 km north of Funtley.

34 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta*, pp. 101–06.

The Geology of the Solent Area and its Significance in Early Trading Links

The coastline of the Solent has changed substantially during past millennia. Southampton Water has developed from a river into the present wide estuary, fed by the Test, Itchen and Hamble rivers. Portsmouth, Langstone and Chichester harbours have developed from dendritic (branching) river systems, as the sea level has risen. Research by Chichester Harbour Conservancy group's project *Rhythms of the Tide* has indicated that in this harbour at least, change during the Holocene (the 10,000 years since the last Ice Age) has been very localised and varied.³⁵ Thus each locality should be individually assessed for change, although in general terms sea level has risen substantially all along this stretch of coastline.

In considering trade along this coast, *The Ora*, our concern here is not the trade for provisioning the Roman army in Britain following the Claudian invasion, which would have been supervised and controlled, in *The Portūs*, but a more general trading network. There is good evidence for wider than coastal trade along this stretch, and in fact there had been trade across the Channel and from further afield for many years. Links with the near Continent were important, and evidence from ceramic and coin finds demonstrates that in the 1st century BC the main local link was between Armorica and Hengistbury.³⁶ Despite the Roman invasion of Gaul in the 1st century BC, and the subsequent disruption there, including the rebellion in Armorica in 56 BC, the importance of Hengistbury continued during the first half of that century. However, trade routes changed through the years, each becoming more or less important.³⁷ Cultural links were also important. The similarity of the Iron Age temple on Hayling Island to those in northern France has been noted, indicating a more than economic link.³⁸

Strabo, the Greek geographer, born perhaps in 63 BC, was in Rome in AD 21, where he wrote that the known exports from Britain at that time were grain, cattle, gold, silver, iron, slaves and hides.³⁹ In Mary Beard's apt paraphrase of

35 *Past Matters*, Heritage of Chichester District Annual Report, Chichester District Council 4 (2006). Pile, "Ora Place-Names," pp. 6–7.

36 Barry Cunliffe and Philip de Jersey, *Armorica and Britain*, Studies in Celtic Coinage 3 (Oxford, 1997), pp. 104–08.

37 Francis M. Morris, *North Sea and Channel Connectivity During the Late Iron Age and Roman Period (175/150 BC–AD 409)* (Oxford 2010).

38 Anthony King and Grahame Soffe, *A Sacred Island: Iron Age, Roman and Saxon Temples and Ritual on Hayling Island* (Winchester, 2013).

39 Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, p. 491.

Strabo, the British people are described “tall, bandy-legged and weird”⁴⁰ (though not too weird to be traded as slaves, apparently): “taller than the Celts, and not so yellow-haired” (εὐμηκέστεροι τῶν Κελτῶν ... καὶ ἥσσον ξανθότριχες). In Rome, Strabo claims to have seen “mere lads towering as much as half a foot above the tallest people in the city.” (ἀντίπαιδας ... τῶν ὑψηλοτάτων αὐτόθι ὑπερέχοντας καὶ ἡμιποδίω.)⁴¹ He described how ships leaving Gaul on the evening ebb tide to cross the Channel would reach Britain by the eighth hour on the following day, the four main cross-channel routes being from the mouths of the rivers Rhine, Seine, Loire and Garonne. Unfortunately no destination ports are named.⁴² Gallo-Belgic coins appear in Britain before the Christian era, also wine and oil amphorae.⁴³ It is easy to understand why this part of the Channel coast became a profitable trading area. Not only was there good beaching facility in many accessible places all along the coastline, but also the Isle of Wight gave a measure of protection, as well as creating by its position the four tides a day of the Solent. The nature of the coastline provided sheltered berthing and shallow water for small boats. Proximity to the Continent encouraged contact. Best times and routes would have become common knowledge to traders. There is as yet no evidence that trading took place up-river, apart from on the Medina, where there are *ōra* names. Properly excavated and dated early Germanic evidence in the Isle of Wight is thin on the ground, except for the Chessell Down cemetery, at O.S. SZ 404851.⁴⁴ However, the mainland rivers flowing south on the mainland would have enabled the items listed by Strabo to arrive at the coast for export.

The only sure modern evidence of trade along the Solent coastline lies in the place-names in *ōra*, and the fact that a Latin word was used suggests that trade along here grew up during the Roman period. In the hinterland were the territories of the Atrebates around *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester) and the Belgae, around *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester). These two groups had fled to Britain from the strife on the Continent, prior to the Claudian invasion of Britain in 43 AD, and it appears that contact was maintained. The importance of the sea to the Belgae is shown by the number of marine creatures on their coinage.⁴⁵

40 Mary Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (London, 2016), p. 482.

41 Strabo, *Geography, Volume 2: Books 3–5*, ed. and trans. Horace Leonard Jones, Loeb Classical Library 50 (Cambridge, MA, 1923), IV.5, pp. 255–57

42 Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, p. 30.

43 Morris, *North Sea and Channel Connectivity*, pp. 10–21.

44 Pat Barber, pers. comm. 17 Feb. 2016. On burials at Chessell Down, see Sue Harrington, “A Well-Married Landscape: Networks of Association and 6th-Century Communities on the Isle of Wight,” below, pp. 103–09. For Carisbrooke, see below, p. 64.

45 Chris Rudd, *Ancient British Coins* (Witham, 2010) p. 57.

However, it is difficult to see what items or substances were traded along the coast: the soil here provides little archaeological evidence, but at the Roman villa site *Spes Bona*, at Havant, ceramic evidence from the Isle of Wight and the New Forest was found, with Black Burnished Ware 1 from Poole and a little Samian ware from Gaul.⁴⁶ Havant was an important site in this part of Roman Britain: it was a route meeting place with access to the Channel, close to the pre-Roman temple on Hayling Island and possibly itself a religious site, as the Church of St Faith is still prominent in the centre.⁴⁷

Along the coast to the east at Fishbourne, Purbeck marble and other stone from the Isle of Purbeck was used in the construction of the north wing of the palace, and there were also marbles from Turkey, Greece and Europe—as Barry Cunliffe has it, “a wide range of the most exotic veneers.”⁴⁸ This speaks of a much wider trading area than merely cross-channel or coastal, probably with bigger boats with a greater draught, needing deeper water than that provided at an *ōra*.

We have more information from Ptolemy (Claudius Ptolemæus), who lived in Alexandria until his death, probably around AD 170. He was an astronomer, mathematician and geographer, and though his observations and writings have been superseded, they are still a valuable source of information. Though his map of Britain was inaccurate by present standards, the system of latitude and longitude he developed helps to understand the information he gives, in his book *Geography*, Ch. 2, about the coast of what is now the English Channel. The mouths of the Exe, *Alaunus* (Avon) and Arun are shown, and between them the *Magnus Portus*. The use of *portūs* does not here necessarily indicate deep water; the word can be used to signify a harbour or port in general terms, and in this case is usually taken to refer to the stretch of coast between the Exe and the Arun. By using this term, Ptolemy gives us to understand that trade along the coast here was dense and important, so much so that it was common knowledge in the world at that time and deserved his name for it. The continued use of the element *ōra* demonstrates that the beaching facility was hugely significant to the locals, who were happy to make use of a Latin word which their trading partners used too. The terms *Magnus Portus* and *ōra* here probably indicate certain areas, rather than being used as actual place-names.⁴⁹

46 Oliver J. Gilkes, “The Roman Villa at *Spes Bona*, Langstone Avenue, Langstone, Havant,” *PHFCAS* 53 (1998), 49–77.

47 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta*, pp. 36, 141–43.

48 Barry Cunliffe, *Fishbourne: A Roman Palace and its Garden* (London, 1974), p. 109.

49 A.L.F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), p. 408.

Trading continued into the 5th century, although the pattern of trade altered during the Roman period, as Roman expansion continued and conditions on the Continent changed.⁵⁰ However, during the later centuries of Roman power in Britain, piracy in the Channel became more and more threatening, usually from Saxons and Franks from the other side of the water. The defence system which was established for Britain was the line of forts along the Saxon Shore, or *Litus Saxonicum*, details of which were set out in the 4th-century *Notitia Dignitatum* which survives today only in 15th-century and later copies. The forts lie on the coast from Brancaster in Norfolk round to Portsmouth near Portsmouth. In this situation it would be surprising if trade had not been disrupted in the Channel. However, in the little creeks the people were more protected, so local trade could continue, and the use of the word *ōra* was still appropriate, and well-established. Gradually the power of Rome in Britain was eroded, until, early in the 5th century, Britain was apparently told to manage its own defence, under attack as it was on all sides.⁵¹

Events of the 5th and 6th Centuries: Evidence from Written Sources

Written accounts of the post-Roman Germanic incursus, such as those of Gildas or the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, are necessarily hardly impartial: neither gives the whole picture, since each reflects a single point of view. In any case, the *Chronicle* as we have it today was not written down until the 9th century, so was hardly a contemporaneous account of events, and the intent was to validate the presence of the emerging Anglo-Saxon power in Wessex. The entry for 449 describes how the incoming Germanic force in Kent, originally there to help the local folk, sent a message home, saying that they found the British whom they encountered worthless and the land profitable, hoping thus to persuade more of their kinsmen to join them. Their description of the British (whether well-founded or not) would have been a good incentive to farmers from across the Channel whose land was under threat in a changing climate.

However, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does also offer some details of the arrival of Germanic people in the small coastal area here under consideration.

50 Michael Fulford, "Britain and the Roman Empire: the Evidence for Regional and Long-Distance Trade," in *Roman Britain: Recent Trends*, ed R.F.J. Jones (Sheffield, 1991), pp. 35–47.

51 On the problems of interpreting this narrative and the account of the 6th-century Greek historian, Zosimus, see Nicholas J. Higham, "Britain in and Out of the Roman Empire," in Nicholas J. Higham and Martin Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (New Haven, CT, 2013), pp. 41–42.

We are told that in 449 Jutes settled on Wight and in the area which would become Wessex. The story of the Jutes was told by Barbara Yorke⁵² and their presence is confirmed by place-names: Bishopstoke (O.S. SU 465191) on the lower Itchen was recorded in the 960 charter S 683 as *Ytingstoc*, the outlying farm of the Jutes; and a valley near East Meon was *Ytedene*, which later became Eadens, now Roundabout Copse on the A272 (O.S. SU 678260).⁵³ This is not the place to discuss the names of these groups of people, whether they were in fact Saxons or Jutes, and in any case their ethnic or tribal affiliation may have changed after they had settled.⁵⁴

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* also describes other arrivals in the area. The dates, names and events listed in the *Chronicle* should not be taken literally, but provide a starting point for any discussion of the incursus,⁵⁵ so for the sake of simplicity the personal names, and the dates, used in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* are kept in the following discussion. In 477 Ælle, with his sons Cymen, Wlencing and Cissa, are said to have arrived at *Cymenesora*, now The Owers, off the coast at Selsey Bill, but probably, given local sea-level changes, a good *ōra* to land on in those days. Once on land, they appear to have moved off to the east, as after a battle they drove the locals into the Weald, which may have been any wooded area to the north. In 485, we are told, Ælle and his forces had arrived at Beachy Head, where they apparently broke through an agreed river border, the *mercreadesburne*, which name indicates that at some point they had been obliged to negotiate with the locals and thus that they did not have all the power. The border river which is called *mercreadesburne*, 'border river', is usually taken to be the Arun but which is more likely to have been the bourne at Eastbourne, since there is a **funta* site nearby, Bedford Well, now the name of a roundabout. The presence of a **funta* reinforces the statement of an

52 Barbara Yorke, "The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the origins of Wessex," in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. S Bassett, (Leicester, 1989), pp. 84–96, 256–63.

Barbara Yorke, "The Meonware: the People of the Meon," in *The Evolution of the Hampshire Landscape: the Meon Valley*, ed. Michael Hughes, Hampshire County Council Archaeological Report 1 (Winchester, 1994), pp. 13–14.

53 *Ytedene* is in *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester 1301–2*, ed. Mark Page (Winchester, 1996). The Tithe Map and Tithe Apportionment Records for East Meon (1851–52), which include local places names are at Hampshire Record Office, 46M68/PD1 and 46M68/PD2.

54 See below, Nick Stoodley, "Costume Groups in Hampshire and their Bearing on the Question of Jutish Settlement in the Later 5th and 6th Centuries AD," pp. 70–94, and John Baker and Jayne Carroll, "The Afterlives of Bede's Tribal Names in English Place-Names," pp. 112–53.

55 Barbara Yorke, "Fact or Fiction? The Written Evidence for the Fifth and Sixth Centuries AD," *ASSAH* 6 (1993), 45–50. See also Courtney Konshuh, "Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*," below, pp. 154–80.

agreed boundary in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.⁵⁶ Having broken through the boundary, Ælle then proceeded further eastwards to *Anderitu* (Pevensey).

In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 495, Cerdic and Cynric arrived at *Cerdicesora*, which has so far not been securely located, but which appears from the following events to have been to the west, perhaps on the shore of what is now Southampton Water, which was part of the *ōra*. This may have been Cracnore (O.S. SU 405109), or maybe Calshot (O.S. SU 480012), recorded in a 980 charter as *æt Celcesoran* (S 836). Some years later, in the *Chronicle*'s entry for 508, Cerdic and Cynric are said to have killed a British king named Natanleod (*leod*, "leader"), whose land extended across country as far as the river Avon, to Charford. Thus these two incomers, with their men, seem to have travelled across land to the north of the New Forest, to the Avon valley, instead of entering the Avon at Avonmouth and travelling upstream. Excavations in the Avon valley, for example at Breamore, demonstrate that there was indeed a strong, élite Germanic presence here. In 552—so the *Chronicle* relates—they were as far as Salisbury.

Again the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* states that in 501, a certain Port, with his sons Bieda and Mæglā, landed with two ships at Portsmouth (once again there is no comment here on the personal names given) and fought locally. No mention is made in the *Chronicle* as we have it of the occupation at Portchester. The fort was occupied from its inception, probably in the late 3rd century, and occupation continued more or less densely. Evidence suggests that, as well as the military, there was a civilian population here, with women and children, and that normal household activities were carried out. The occupants appear to have been a community of *læti*, who continued to live here in the 5th century, perhaps supplemented by more Germanic settlers. There are remains of sunken-featured buildings and ceramic débris to substantiate this.⁵⁷ Evidence of activity outside the fort is still provided by the presence of the place-name Wicor (*wīc* + *ōra*): since trading did not take place inside a fort, in this case *wīc* would indicate the usual external commercial site of the fort.

Is it to be assumed that the 5th-century arrivals ignored the people at Portchester? The fort was set well back into what is now Portsmouth harbour, protected from any piracy in the Channel. What is to be made of the British nobleman allegedly killed by the conveniently named Port and his men? Maybe they needed some action in the story as it was told in the 9th century. The *Chronicle* states that in 514 Stuf and Wihtgar arrived, turning south to the Isle of Wight. There are *ōra* names on the Solent coast of the Isle of Wight, and on the shores of the Medina, indicating that boats could be beached here, perhaps to trade

56 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funtā*, pp. 37, 152–53.

57 Barry Cunliffe, *Excavations at Portchester Castle*, 2 vols (London, 1975–76).

here. The newcomers appear to have penetrated up the Medina to Carisbrooke, and we are told that Wihtgar died in 544 and was buried at his stronghold: indeed a rich male burial, dated to the early 6th century, has been excavated at Carisbrooke,⁵⁸ which at least gives some credence to the story if not to the names.

Thus, allowing for the inexactitudes of the *Chronicle*, we have four groups of Germanic incomers landing somewhere along the coast which, it is believed, from place-name evidence, was still known as the *ōra*. Where Port and his men went is not stated. Aelle and his men went east, Cerdic and his followers went west, and Stuf and Wihtgar went south. No-one went north, according to the story in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, yet archaeology tells it differently. There seems to have been a certain British power-base along this stretch of coast; there is no mention of weakness among the locals, as had been proclaimed in Kent. We have no tales of battles in this location, but finds of artefacts suggest a Germanic presence here. There are gaps in the official account as given in the words of the *Chronicle*.

Events of the 5th and 6th Centuries: Evidence from Archaeology

At present there appears to be no significant evidence of a Germanic presence along the *ōra* shore. Slight evidence has been found near Funtley⁵⁹ and a continuing occupation at Portchester is known,⁶⁰ but new Germanic settlement along the coast is notable for its absence. Either, any immigrants were absorbed into the local culture, or, which seems more likely, the *ōra* residents had the power to direct newcomers elsewhere, along the coast or up the Meon or the Itchen. The lack of archaeological finds of Germanic settlement may well reflect the importance of the *ōra* as a British power base.

Upstream on the Itchen was Winchester, Roman *Venta Belgarum*. Just south of Winchester is St Cross, where two brooches were found: a supporting arm brooch of the early to mid-5th century and a miniature bow brooch of the late 5th or 6th century.⁶¹ A low status farmstead existed just to the south.⁶² A little

58 C.J. Young, ed., *Excavations at Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight, 1921–96* (Salisbury, 2000).

59 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta*, p. 35.

60 Cunliffe, *Excavations at Portchester Castle*, Vol. 2.

61 Mark Stedman, "Two Migration Period Metalwork Pieces from St Cross, Winchester, Hampshire," *PHFCAS* 59 (2004), 111–15.

62 James Lewis, "The Road to Nowhere? Winchester Park and Ride: Interim Results from the 2009 Compton Dig by Thames Valley Archaeological Services," Hampshire Field Club Lecture, 16 Mar. 2010.

further downstream at Shawford a small-long brooch of the late 5th or 6th century was found.⁶³ A cemetery dating from the late 5th or 6th century was excavated nearby at Twyford.⁶⁴ These finds demonstrate an early Germanic presence to the south of Winchester, where there appears to have been no hiatus in occupation: excavation in the city demonstrates that people were living here, apparently continuously: wherever excavation has taken place within the city, there is evidence of a continuity of activity from the 4th century into the 5th and 6th. Burials have been found close to the city, on St Giles Hill and West Hill, possibly relating to the population within.⁶⁵ Upstream on the Itchen, some 3 km from the city walls, the cemetery at Worthy Park dates from the 5th century, and the cemetery at Itchen Abbas primary school appears to span the late Roman/early Saxon period (Historic Environment Record site 32037).⁶⁶ The many finds from the Itchen valley above Winchester bear out the notion of a continuity of settlement in the area.⁶⁷

There is no account in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* of any incomers going up the Itchen, but it is evident that they did. There is no evidence, so far, of any battles, warfare or strife which would have allowed the Germanic folk to go to, and beyond, Winchester. It would appear that they came peacefully, or at least without fierce fighting, and were allowed to settle in peace by the local inhabitants who had the power. If there had been a battle which the British won, it would not have made an impressive entry in the account of how the fierce newcomers fought their way into this area. If there had been a battle which the newcomers won, it would have been part of the foundation story and is unlikely to have been forgotten. Even though records are patchy, and written many years after the events, it is unlikely that such strife would have been ignored in the *Chronicle*.

However, in the Meon valley there is more convincing evidence of where the power lay. There has been significant excavation in this river valley, and investigation has continued with the Meon Valley Project. The earliest finds of

63 Mark Stedman, "Two Anglo-Saxon Metalwork Pieces from Shawford, Compton and Shawford Parish," *PHFCAS* 58 (2003), 59–60.

64 Kirsten Egging Dinwiddy, "An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Twyford, Near Winchester," *PHFCAS* 66 (2011), 75–126.

65 Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbbye Biddle, "Winchester from *Venta* to *Wintancæster*," in *Pagans and Christians: from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Papers in Honour of Martin Henig, Presented on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. Lauren Gilmour, BAR Int. Ser. 1610 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 189–214.

66 Sonia Chadwick Hawkes with Guy Grainger, *The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Worthy Park, Kings Worthy, Near Winchester, Hampshire* (Oxford, 2003).

67 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta*, pp. 30–32.

an early Germanic presence have been at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke, where an early 5th-century supporting arm brooch was found, and also a 5th-century quoit brooch style belt fitting.⁶⁸ There had been a Roman villa at Meonstoke, notable enough for its façade now to be exhibited in the British Museum, and signs of a continued occupation were seen when the villa site was excavated,⁶⁹ so there may have been continuous sub-Roman occupation within the villa, and by the early 5th century there was a Germanic presence in the Meon valley. The cemetery near Shavards Farm demonstrates that people with Germanic tastes settled, worked, lived and died here.⁷⁰

Again, instead of the incomers taking territory after fierce battles, killing the natives and destroying their way of life, in fact something else was going on. The new people did not have all the power, or gain an overall control, they had to negotiate with the residents. This is not unknown elsewhere: a similar situation seems to have occurred at Orton Hall Farm, Peterborough.⁷¹ There is further evidence of genetic and cultural amalgamation in this area. South of Cambridge, Oxford Archaeology has revealed that at Oakington (O.S. TL 410644), the four individuals examined were culturally Anglo-Saxon but genetically a mixture of British and Anglo-Saxon ancestries.⁷²

Landscape Features

To the north of the coast between Selsey and Funtley there is the sharp rise of the Portsdown Hills, and behind these was, in the 5th century, the dense forest of Bere. These formed a barrier to anyone wishing to travel by land, but the incomers travelled by boat, seeking land to farm. There would have been access

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- 68 Barry Ager, "A Quoit Brooch Style Belt-Plate from Meonstoke, Hampshire," *ASSAH* 9 (1996), 11–14. (On the supporting arm brooch, Nick Stoodley, pers. comm.; this find is so far unpublished)
- 69 Anthony King, "The South-east Façade of Meonstoke Aisled Building," in *Architecture in Roman Britain*, ed. Peter Johnson and Ian Haynes, CBA Research Report 94 (York, 1996), pp. 56–69.
- 70 Nick Stoodley and Mark Stedman, "Excavations at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke: the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," *PHFCAS* 56 (2001), 129–69, at pp. 164–65.
- 71 D.F. Mackreth, "Orton Hall Farm, Peterborough: a Roman and Saxon Settlement," in *Studies in the Romano-British Villa*, ed. Malcolm Todd (Leicester, 1978), pp. 209–28; Mackreth, *Orton Hall Farm: a Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon Farmstead*, East Anglian Archaeology Report 76 ([Peterborough] 1996). Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta*, pp. 30–32.
- 72 S. Schiffels, et al. "Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon Genomes from East England Reveal British Migration History," *Nature Communication* 7 (2016), <<https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomm10408>>.

inland via the Test, the Itchen and the Hamble rivers which flow into Southampton Water, and via the Meon which empties into the Solent. The entrance to the Test is shallow, muddy and difficult to navigate, and also is in the path of the prevailing south-westerly wind. The Hamble is winding, hence its name, OE *hamel* + OE *ēa*, ‘winding water’.⁷³ and tidal still for quite a long way upstream, muddy and uninviting, so perhaps it is not altogether surprising that these river mouths were, apparently, ignored, as no archaeological evidence has been found to date which might suggest an entry into them. Perhaps this gap in the written account is true. Yet neither are there are entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* telling of Germanic progress up the Meon or the Itchen, which would appear to have been an easier journey, and in fact in these two cases archaeology tells a different story: there was indeed a Germanic presence in these two river valleys, but no record of any strife which would have enabled such a presence. So two river mouths may well have been ignored for nautical reasons, but whereas the Meon and the Itchen also appear to have been ignored according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, archaeology and place-names provide evidence to the contrary, filling in more gaps. This suggests a variation in perceived power, perceived indeed by resident and newcomer alike, and by the historian, but studiously ignored by anyone writing the *Chronicle* and wishing to portray the Germanic settlement as following violent conquest.

Conclusion: The Contribution of Place-names

At this point it is necessary to consider the information to be gained from a study of local place-names, and to remember that, after the lapse of anything approaching a Roman culture in Britain, literacy was extremely restricted. The incoming folk from the North Sea coast had runic script. The passage of any word from resident Briton to Germanic newcomer had to be effected in speech. To communicate in speech requires both parties to be alive, and near enough to each other to be within hearing distance. It also requires a willingness to listen and take notice of each other. If the resident cannot tell the new arrival the name for a place, that newly-arrived person will not know it. How else but by spoken communication would the new folk take on the names of the local rivers, names which are cognate with those of rivers on the European continent and adapted by them into the Old English names Test, Itchen, Hamble and Meon—thus continuing from a long tradition in the language. Such a transmission requires attention, interest and understanding. The proof that these names were transmitted is that we still use them today, just as we use

73 CDEPN, p. 274.

Wight (Latin *Vectis*, Brittonic * *ŪeXta*) and Solent (*Solunte*).⁷⁴ What price fire and the sword? History is written, we are told, by the victor, but victory may be achieved by various means.

It may be that the use of the word *ōra* was widespread through the trading network, so it cannot be assumed that this was a new word for anyone arriving from the opposite shore of the Channel. Even though it may be assumed that by the 5th century trade had diminished, if that were the name by which the coastal area was known, there must have been no reason to use a different name.

The Roman road from Chichester and the coast runs north-west, then forks just beyond the Meon to become the roads to Winchester and Clausentum. Near this fork, with varied evidence of Roman activity in the vicinity, is Wickham (O.S. SU 575115), the river Meon running through, Funtley to the south, Boarhunt to the east and the early Anglo-Saxon settlement to the north. Wickham as a place-name is quite widespread in southern England, and the word is believed to have a wider significance, in fact a compound of two elements used by the Anglo-Saxons as a description of a type of place which they encountered, thus an appellative. Its significance appears to have been that of a place where newcomers found an enclave of native power which was to be respected, so they coined a term for such a place, using *wīc*, a place of non-military settlement, not a *ceaster* which would have been a military camp, + *-hām*, an early habitative term.⁷⁵ The existence of a *wīchām* is always a clue to the events in its area.

There is also a sub-text within the *Chronicle*, to be found in the gaps. This will exist in any written account, for, according to Jacques Derrida, “writing is never governed by the intention and avowed aims of its authors,”⁷⁶ and this will be especially true of an account produced for propaganda. For example, when Ælle is said to have landed at Selsey, he obviously turned east, but no comment is made. Neither is a reason given for the western landfall of Cerdic and Cynric: the only people who seem to have landed where they wanted to be were Stuf and Wihtgar. It is therefore to be assumed that the northern Solent coast was either unattractive, which was obviously not the case, or impossible to settle on because there was already a strong power base there, having been built up through trade for many centuries. The Saxons of the 9th century were not prepared to admit that. It would not have added to the foundation myth.

74 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta*, pp. 29–30.

75 Hawkins, *Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta*, p. 208.

76 Ann Jefferson and David Robey, eds., *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London, 1986), p. 116.

So in the 5th century any arriving Germanic folk were directed to the north of the *ōra*, and into Southampton Water. Allowed into the mouth of the Meon, they were then permitted upstream beyond the important Romano-British settlement at Wickham, and settled with or near the Romano-British people who were still occupying the villa at Meonstoke, and where the land had already been tilled. Allowed into the Itchen, they progressed upstream to Winchester, where they settled beyond the city walls.

Why is there no record of battles, with numbers of the slain, blood and gore and victory for the newcomers? No record of the warlike, glorious beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Wessex? It may indeed have been that there were no such happenings in this particular area, even though there was probably plenty of warfare elsewhere. Place-names bear witness to the fact that Germanic people did indeed settle in this small area, perhaps in different circumstances from elsewhere in Britain, and perhaps with eventual cultural assimilation, supporting the evidence of archaeology, and filling in the gaps in the story. The words we use in modern place-names supplement, and often override the words used in the *Chronicle*. You don't learn someone else's words by killing him. With a supra-semantic significance, words can be more powerful than swords and can take on a life of their own.