



MYTHOPOUCH

RETELLING

THE KINGS OF BRITAIN

Also called Historia Regum Britanniae

Chapters 1-11

A modern educational version for readers aged 15 and up

This is original Mythopouch wording. It is not Geoffrey's Latin text and not a translation.

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CONTENTS

THIS RETELLING

Chapter 1: Prologue

Chapter 2: Brutus and the Founding of Britain (Books 1-2)

Chapter 3: Leir and the Early Kings (Books 2-3)

Chapter 4: Belinus and Brennius: The Road to Rome (Book 3)

Chapter 5: Caesar, Claudius, and the Christian King (Book 4) Chapter

6: Constantine, Maximian, and the Draining of Britain (Book 5)

Chapter 7: Vortigern and the Coming of the Saxons (Books 5-6)

Chapter 8: Merlin's Wonders and Uther Pendragon (Books 6-8)

Chapter 9: The Reign of Arthur (Books 8-10)

Chapter 10: Mordred and the Twilight of the Britons (Books 11-12)

Chapter 11: Epilogue

CHAPTER 1: PROLOGUE

Geoffrey of Monmouth, writing in the twelfth century, says he wondered why Gildas and Bede had said so little about the kings who ruled Britain before the Incarnation and about Arthur and others who came later. Then Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, placed in his hands what Geoffrey describes as a very ancient book written in the British tongue, telling the deeds of the kings from Brutus down to Cadwallader. Geoffrey says that, at Walter's request, he translated that story into Latin and dedicated his work to Robert, Earl of Gloucester.

Historian's note: A claimed book

Geoffrey presents the *Historia* as a translation of a British book given to him by Walter of Oxford. No independent manuscript matching Geoffrey's claimed source is known to survive. Read what follows as Geoffrey's twelfth-century story of Britain, not as a record that can be checked against a lost original.

CHAPTER 2: BRUTUS AND THE FOUNDING OF BRITAIN (BOOKS 1-2)

The story begins in the aftermath of Troy. Aeneas escaped to Italy, and through his descendants came Brutus. His birth was shadowed by prophecy: his mother died giving birth to him, and when he was fifteen he accidentally killed his father Sylvius with an arrow while hunting. Banished from Italy, he travelled to Greece, where descendants of Trojan captives were living under King Pandrasus. Brutus became their leader, defeated Pandrasus and secured their freedom.

Seeking a homeland, Brutus consulted the oracle of Diana. The goddess directed him towards an island in the western ocean, once held by giants and now largely deserted, where a second Troy could rise. Brutus and his followers eventually reached Albion. A few giants still remained there, including Goemagot, whom Brutus's companion Corineus wrestled and hurled from a cliff. Brutus named the island Britain after himself, while Corineus took Cornwall as his share.

Brutus built New Troy on the Thames, the city that Geoffrey says would later become London. After his death his sons divided the island: Locrin received Loegria, Kamber received Kambria or Wales, and Albanact received Albania or Scotland. Locrin later concealed his love for the captive Estrildis for years. After the death of Corineus he cast aside his wife Guendoloena, but she raised an army against him, defeated him and took the kingdom.

The line continued through kings including Maddan, Menpricius, Ebraucus, Leil and Bladud. Ebraucus founded cities including Kaerebrauc, identified in the edition with York. Leil was associated with Kaerleil, or Carlisle. Bladud built the hot baths at Bath, practised magical arts and finally attempted to fly, falling upon the temple of Apollo at Trinovantum and dying.

Ages 15+

The captivity of Estrildis is told as a political concealment, not as a romance. The giant's death is a founding feat in Geoffrey's story, stated once.

CHAPTER 3: LEIR AND THE EARLY KINGS (BOOKS 2-3)

Bladud's son Leir ruled for sixty years and built Kaerleir on the river Soar, identified with Leicester. Having no son, he decided to divide his kingdom among his three daughters and tested how much each claimed to love him. Gonorilla and Regan answered with extravagant praise. Cordeilla, the youngest, refused to flatter him and said that she loved him as a daughter ought to love her father. Leir was angered and denied her a share of the kingdom, although she later married Aganippus, king of the Franks.

Leir's two elder daughters and their husbands eventually stripped him of power and reduced his household until he crossed to Gaul in distress. Cordeilla received him with compassion, restored his royal dignity and helped raise an army. Leir returned to Britain, defeated his sons-in-law and recovered the crown for three more years. After his death Cordeilla ruled for five years before her nephews Margan and Cunedagius rebelled, captured her and imprisoned her, where she killed herself.

Later civil war between Ferrex and Porrex helped throw the island into disorder. Dunwallo Molmutius eventually reunited the kingdom, made a golden crown and established the laws Geoffrey calls the Molmutine laws, including sanctuary protections for temples, cities, roads and ploughs.

Ages 15+: Cordeilla

Geoffrey records that Cordeilla killed herself in prison after her nephews took the crown. The retelling states that fact and does not describe the act. It is part of the succession story, not a spectacle.

CHAPTER 4: BELINUS AND BRENNIUS: THE ROAD TO ROME (BOOK 3)

Dunwallo's sons Belinus and Brennius quarrelled over the succession. Brennius went to Norway and married the daughter of Elsingius, king of the Norwegians, hoping for foreign support. After war between the brothers and Brennius's exile in Gaul, their mother Conwenna finally reconciled them. Together they invaded Gaul and marched towards Rome. Geoffrey has the brothers defeat their enemies and take Rome, after which Brennius remained in Italy while Belinus returned to Britain.

Belinus confirmed his father's laws and ordered great roads to be laid across the island. His successors include Gurgiunt Brabtruc, who sent wandering settlers from Spain to Ireland; the learned queen Martia, associated with the Martian law; and Morvidus, whose cruelty ended when he went alone against a sea-monster and was swallowed.

Arthgallo was deposed once for tyranny. His brother Elidure became king, found the impoverished Arthgallo in exile and forced the nobles to accept him again, restoring the crown to him. After Arthgallo's death Elidure became king a second time, was later deposed and imprisoned by his brothers Vigenius and Peredure, and finally returned to the throne a third time after their deaths.

CHAPTER 5: CAESAR, CLAUDIUS, AND THE CHRISTIAN KING (BOOK 4)

Geoffrey's Julius Caesar twice invades Britain and is twice driven back by Cassibellaun. During the first campaign Nennius, Cassibellaun's brother, encounters Caesar and gains possession of Caesar's sword, later called *Crocea Mors*, the Yellow Death. Nennius dies from the wound he received in the encounter and is buried with the sword. On a later invasion Caesar gains the advantage only after Androgeus turns against Cassibellaun. Peace follows, with Cassibellaun agreeing to pay tribute.

Generations later Claudius invades. King Guiderius is killed, but his brother Arviragus continues the resistance. Geoffrey has Claudius seek peace, give his daughter Genuissa to Arviragus and leave him governing Britain. Under later rulers came Lucius, who asked Pope Eleutherius for instruction in Christianity. Geoffrey says Faganus and Duvanus baptised the king and people, converted pagan temples to Christian use and established bishops and archbishops.

CHAPTER 6: CONSTANTINE, MAXIMIAN, AND THE DRAINING OF BRITAIN (BOOK 5)

After Lucius died without an heir, the kingdom entered another unsettled period. Rome sent Severus, who fought the Britons and ordered a defensive wall across the island. After Severus died, his sons Bassianus and Geta fought for the crown. The Britons supported Bassianus, whom the 1842 edition also identifies as Caracalla, and he defeated Geta.

Carausius was a separate figure. Geoffrey says he gathered a fleet, won support, killed Bassianus and seized the kingdom. Allectus was then sent from Rome, killed Carausius and took power, only to be defeated and killed by Asclepiodotus. During Asclepiodotus's reign Geoffrey places the persecution of Diocletian and the martyrdom of Alban and others.

Coel of Colchester was followed by Constantius, who married Coel's daughter Helena. Their son Constantine went on to defeat Maxentius and gain the Roman Empire. Later Octavius held Britain, and Maximian, a Roman senator of British royal descent, received Octavius's daughter and kingdom.

Maximian conquered Armorica and ordered one hundred thousand common people from Britain to settle there, together with thirty thousand soldiers for their defence. Conan Meriadoc received the new British kingdom. Later Conan sought wives from Britain for his men. Geoffrey's story then turns grim: Britain had been drained of fighting men, and Guanius and Melga ravaged the weakened island.

When Roman help finally ended, Archbishop Guethelin went to Aldroen, king of Armorica. Aldroen refused the British crown but sent his brother Constantine with two thousand men. Constantine defeated the attackers, was crowned king in Britain and later left three sons: Constans, Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon.

CHAPTER 7: VORTIGERN AND THE COMING OF THE SAXONS (BOOKS 5-6)

Constans was drawn from religious life and placed on the throne, but Vortigern used him as a puppet and arranged his murder by Pictish soldiers. Vortigern then took the crown. Fearing enemies at home and abroad, he accepted Saxon warriors under Hengist and Horsa. Their success

won them land, and Hengist later brought over more followers, including his daughter Rowena, whom Vortigern married.

Vortigern's son Vortimer led the British resistance and drove the Saxons back. Geoffrey says Rowena then plotted his death, bribing one of Vortimer's intimates to give him poison. After Vortimer died, Hengist returned in force and proposed a peace meeting at the monastery of Ambrius near Salisbury. His men concealed long daggers beneath their clothes. At Hengist's signal they attacked the unarmed Britons and killed four hundred and sixty barons and consuls. The dead were buried near the monastery, and Geoffrey later places the Giants' Dance as a monument around their burial place.

Vortigern fled into Wales and attempted to build a tower, but the foundations repeatedly failed. His magicians told him to find a youth without a father and use his blood. The youth was Merlin. Geoffrey says Merlin's mother was the daughter of the king of Demetia and lived among the nuns of St Peter's Church. She described a mysterious young man who appeared to her and later left her pregnant. The scholar Maugantius suggested that such beings were the spirits called incubuses, but Geoffrey presents this as an explanation offered by Maugantius rather than a proved fact.

Merlin exposed the king's magicians by revealing a hidden pool beneath the foundations and two hollow stones containing sleeping dragons. When the dragons emerged and fought, Merlin interpreted the red dragon as the Britons and the white as the Saxons, beginning the prophecies that fill Geoffrey's seventh book.

Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon eventually returned from Armorica. Aurelius became king, defeated Vortigern and fought Hengist. Hengist was captured by Eldol of Gloucester and, after counsel was taken, beheaded. Britain now passed into the age in which Merlin, Uther and Arthur dominate Geoffrey's story.

Ages 15+: massacre and Merlin's birth

The peace-meeting killings are a political betrayal in Geoffrey, stated as a number and a burial, not played out. Merlin's conception is given as his mother's account and as Maugantius's suggestion. It is not narrated as a scene.

CHAPTER 8: MERLIN'S WONDERS AND UTHUR PENDRAGON (BOOKS 6-8)

Aurelius wanted a lasting monument for the nobles murdered by Hengist. Merlin advised him to bring the Giants' Dance from Mount Killaraus in Ireland. Geoffrey says giants had once carried the stones from Africa and that water used to wash them possessed healing power. Uther Pendragon went to Ireland with fifteen thousand men, defeated King Gillomanius and reached the great stones. When ordinary strength and engines failed to move them, Merlin used his own contrivances. The stones were carried to Britain and set around the burial place near Salisbury.

Aurelius was later poisoned by the Saxon Eopa, acting for Pascentius. At the king's death a great star appeared with a fiery dragon-like sign. Merlin interpreted it as an omen for Uther and for the son who would come after him. Uther took the crown and became known as Pendragon.

Uther fought renewed Saxon wars against Octa and Eosa. Later he became consumed with desire for Igerna, wife of Gorlois, duke of Cornwall. Gorlois placed Igerna in Tintagel and rebelled. Merlin disguised Uther in Gorlois's likeness so completely that Uther entered Tintagel without challenge and slept with Igerna, who believed him to be her husband. Geoffrey says Arthur was conceived that night. Gorlois was killed during the fighting, and Uther later married Igerna.

While seriously ill, Uther was carried in a horse-litter to fight the Saxons once more. His enemies later poisoned a spring from which he drank, and he died. The crown then passed to Arthur.

Ages 15+: Tintagel

Geoffrey's conception of Arthur depends on a disguise. Igerna does not know the man is Uther. The retelling keeps that as a stated deception, not as a sexual scene. Arthur's birth in this book begins with a wrong.

CHAPTER 9: THE REIGN OF ARTHUR (BOOKS 8-10)

Arthur was fifteen when the nobles assembled at Silchester and asked Dubricius, archbishop of the City of Legions, to crown him. Geoffrey praises the young king's courage, generosity and popularity. Arthur immediately fought the Saxons and their allies, including battles around the river Douglas, Lincoln, the wood of Caledon and Bath.

Before the battle of Bath, Geoffrey describes Arthur's armour. His shield is called Priwen and bears an image of the Virgin Mary. His sword is Caliburn, made in the Isle of Avallon, and his lance is named Ron. Geoffrey has Arthur kill hundreds with Caliburn and then continue his campaigns across Britain.

Arthur next expands his power overseas. Ireland, Iceland and other islands submit, and he later campaigns in Norway, Dacia and Gaul. Hoel of Armorica, Arthur's nephew, is one of his major allies. Bedver serves as his butler and Caius as his sewer. After nine years of warfare in Gaul, Arthur returns in triumph and later holds a magnificent Pentecost court at the City of Legions.

Then comes the Roman challenge. In the 1842 witness the Roman commander is called Lucius Tiberius. He demands tribute from Britain, and Arthur answers that Rome has no greater right to demand tribute from him than he has to demand it from Rome. War follows. Arthur leaves Britain in the care of his nephew Mordred and Queen Guanhumara and crosses to the Continent.

On the way Arthur kills the giant of Mont Saint-Michel. The British and Roman armies finally meet after Arthur positions his forces in the valley of Suesia. Bedver is killed and Caius mortally wounded, but the Britons eventually break the Roman army. Lucius Tiberius is killed by an unknown hand. Arthur sends Lucius's body to the Roman senate with the message that this is the only tribute Britain ought to pay.

Arthur remains on the Continent through the winter. At the beginning of the next summer, as he begins to cross the Alps towards Rome, news arrives that Mordred has seized the crown in Britain and that Guanhumara has joined him. Arthur abandons the Roman expedition and turns home.

CHAPTER 10: MORDRED AND THE TWILIGHT OF THE BRITONS (BOOKS 11-12)

Mordred has gathered Saxon and other allies. Arthur lands at Rutupi, identified by the 1842 edition with Richborough, and fights his way ashore. Walgan, Arthur's nephew, falls in the fighting. Mordred retreats first to Winchester and then into Cornwall. Arthur pursues him to the river Cambula, where the final battle is fought.

Mordred is killed and his forces destroyed, but Arthur himself is mortally wounded. Geoffrey says he is carried to the Isle of Avallon to be cured of his wounds and gives the crown to his kinsman Constantine, son of Cador, duke of Cornwall, in the year 542.

The kings who follow cannot restore Arthur's world. Constantine, Aurelius Conan, Wortiporius, Malgo and Careticus rule amid renewed wars. Under Careticus the Saxons bring in Gormund, king of the Africans, and Geoffrey blames the Britons' own civil divisions for weakening them.

Much later Cadwallo returns from exile with help from Armorica. He defeats Peanda, marches into Northumberland, kills Edwin in battle and wages brutal war against the Angles. He eventually becomes ruler of all Britain and, according to Geoffrey, dies after forty-eight years. His son Cadwallader succeeds him.

During Cadwallader's reign famine, civil war and plague devastate the island. So many die that the living cannot bury the dead, and many surviving Britons flee to Armorica. Geoffrey says Britain remains desolate for eleven years. When Cadwallader later prepares to return, an angel forbids him and directs him to Rome. He dies there in 689.

The Saxons then bring in new settlers, cultivate the abandoned land and rebuild towns. Geoffrey says Athelstan is the first of the Angles to wear a crown. The surviving Britons in Wales are thereafter called Welshmen and never recover the monarchy of the whole island.

CHAPTER 11: EPILOGUE

Geoffrey ends by leaving the later kings of Wales to Caradoc of Llancarfan and the Saxon kings to William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon. He nevertheless insists that they should not write about the kings of the Britons because they do not possess the British-language book that Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, brought to him and from which Geoffrey says he translated his history.

SOURCE NOTE

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