

Letter to the Editor

THE EARLY HISTORY OF MAN

Dear Editor,

On reading the article ‘The Early History of Man — Part 2’ I came across some puzzling dates. Puzzling to me that is.

On page 11, column 1, paragraph 5, Brutus is said to be circa 1300BC.

Then on page 15 Gurguit #33 is said to be the prince who intercepted the ships of Partholan, who is listed in Table 2 as colonizing Ireland in 1484BC.

As a descendant of Brutus (c.1300BC), how could Gurguit meet Partholan (c.1484BC) and give him Ireland?

What did I read wrong or misinterpret? Where did I get confused? I’m sure the author didn’t intend these discrepancies in his terrific article, so perhaps one of these dates is a misprint. I hope so. Please help.

Thank you,

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The Author replies ...

Please be assured that you have neither misread nor misinterpreted anything regarding the discrepancy that you mention. When I laid out the contents of the Irish and British records, I was attempting to emulate, but with less success than he, the work of Nennius of the IX century, who simply passed down to us with the minimum of editorial comment all the records and information that he could lay hold of, even discrepant information, so that we could make of them what we would. What appears in the chronology and notes of Part 2 of the ‘The Early History of Man’ is exactly what appears in the Irish and British records. The British record does indeed state that Gurguit (4th century BC) conferred upon Partholan (15th century BC) the kingship of Ireland, but how could that be, seeing that over a thousand years separated them?

Clearly, it is the British record that is in error, but how did this error come about? The most honest answer is that, after the remove of so many centuries, we simply don’t know! There are various possibilities, of course. Firstly it could be that Gurguit was mistaken for a much earlier British king, but considering that Partholan (who began his reign in 1484BC) lived some 380 years before Brutus, who was the very **first** king of the Britons and who did not

begin his reign until 1104BC,¹ then that possibility is immediately discounted.

Could Partholan himself have been confused with a much later Irish king of similar name, someone whose reign was contemporary with that of Gurguit? Well, in entertaining this idea we have to note that the Irish records themselves mention no such king.

We must then entertain the possibility of a darker motive for the British claim. If the kingship of Ireland had indeed been conferred by the then British monarchy under Gurguit (4th century BC), or rather if it could have been **proved** and **accepted** to have been conferred by the British monarchy, then this would naturally have given the British crown a considerable and hereditary share in the government and affairs of Ireland, not to mention a sizeable and equally hereditary share in the immense wealth that sprang in those days from the highly lucrative export of Irish gold. After all, nearly two thousand years after Gurguit, during the 11th year of Elizabeth I’s reign, we have the Tudor Parliament incorporating the story of Partholan’s subjection to the British crown into one of its Irish acts! (I refer anyone who thinks that the troubles in Ireland are a recent phenomenon to Ecclesiastes 1 vv 9–10)! Interestingly, one eminent Elizabethan historian, John Stowe, dated Partholan’s settlement of Ireland to the year 375BC, which is surprisingly close to the time of **Gurguit’s** reign as it is given in my own chronology (374–369BC; see Reference 1 below). But could he or his sources, upon whom Parliament depended, have misread 375 for 1375BC, which would have been a lot closer to Partholan’s true date? Certainly, if he had consulted the original Irish records instead of just the British, then Stowe doubtless would have attributed to Partholan a somewhat earlier date!

One final possibility, and it is the one that I personally favour, is that there was indeed some kind of political agreement between the British and Irish monarchies during the 4th century BC, (that is, during the reign of Gurguit), and that Partholan’s name, as the original founder of the Irish monarchy and in whose name the present Irish kingship was held, simply became embroiled with that of the king under whom the agreement was made. During the 4th century BC, there was still much unsettlement between the native Irish population and the sudden influx of Milesian refugees that had occurred back in 504BC.² (This so-called influx was described at the time as an invasion.) The incoming Milesians had soon be-

come predominant, taking over the reins of power even to the extent of destroying native legal records. The unrest that this would have caused can best be imagined, and it is not at all unlikely that some kind of help was sought from the British crown in recognising and bolstering, with the aid of a spear of two, the validity of the Milesian claims. Like Partholan before them, the Milesians had been roaming the seas looking for a land in which to settle. They had, furthermore, just left the Spanish peninsula exactly as Partholan was earlier said to have done. They approached Gurguit with the request to let them settle in some part of Britain. He, however, simply sent them on to Ireland, taking care to confer upon them the right to rule, but only in submission to British policy and interests. (Henry VIII, ever noted for his sense of humour, was later to deal with certain Protestant Flemish refugees who were fleeing Catholic persecution on the continent in a similar fashion. He settled them in southern Ireland, the very heart of *Catholic* country! My own ancestors were among them.)

In short, in entertaining this last possibility, the discrepancy becomes one of name only rather than one of date, and I'm afraid that it is as close as we are likely to get to resolving the problem at this remove in time. Unless, of course, someone knows differently . . .

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REFERENCES

1. See Cooper, W. R., 1991. The early history of man — Part 3. The kings of the ancient Britons: A chronology. *CEN Tech. J.*, 5(2):139–142.
2. Cooper, W.R., 1991. The early history of man — Part 2. The Irish-Celtic, British and Saxon chronicles. *CEN Tech. J.*, 5(1):1–17.