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THE CHILTERN HILLS, CILTRIA AND THE NAME OF THE CELTS

Abstract

The name of the Chiltern Hills has long been acknowledged to derive from a root comparable to the ethnonym Celt. The name of the Celts has recently been explained as reflecting an underlying meaning 'covered', but the alternative etymologies that have been supposed for the name of the Chilterns are not properly supported from a comparative linguistic perspective. The name of the Chiltern Hills and related toponyms from the south of England suggest that the early Britons called themselves Celts, contrary to the claims made by Celtosceptics.

A key contention of the Celtosceptical literature is the claim that the term *Celt* was not used of the ancient British and Irish by Greek and Roman writers. This observation is widely held to be true even if the use of the term Κελτοί 'Celt' in Ancient Greek was imprecise and did not necessarily exclude Britain.[1] But as John Koch has responded, '[S]o what? … since the people of Iron Age Britain and Ireland have left us only fragmentary written records, we do not know with absolute certainty … that they did not identify themselves as Celts'.[2] Koch's criticism can be put more strongly, however. There is evidence that the ancient Britons considered themselves to be Celts because a reflex of the term *Celt* appears to be recorded quite widely in British place-names, most pertinently in that of the Chiltern Hills. The name of the Chilterns is first recorded in the *Tribal Hidage* as that of a territory *Ciltern sætna* 'of the Chiltern dwellers' (for an expected nominative plural **Cilternsætan*) and it has usually been assumed that the description *Ciltern* predates the Anglo-Saxon period.[3]

Patrick Sims-Williams notes that the Greek geographer Strabo records that his predecessor Hipparchus claimed that Britain was inhabited by Κελτοί and that Hipparchus seems to have relied on the explorer Pytheas of Massalia for his information.[4] The works of both Hipparchus and Pytheas are only known through quotations or fragments preserved by later authors, but there

[1] Philip M. Freeman, 'The earliest Greek sources on the Celts', *EC* 32 (1996), 11–48.

[2] John T. Koch, 'Celts, Britons, and Gaels—names, peoples, and identities', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, New Series 9 (2003), 41–56, at 43.

[3] David N. Dumville, 'The Tribal Hidage: an introduction to its texts and their history', in Steven Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), 225–30, recension A, l. 21. On Old English *sætan* 'dwellers', see John Baker, 'Old English *sǣta* and *sǣtan* names', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 46 (2014), 45–81 and idem, 'Old English *sǣte* and the historical significance of "folk" names', *Early Medieval Europe* 25 (2017), 417–42.

[4] Patrick Sims-Williams, ' "Celtic Britain" in pre-Roman archaeology, reconsidered', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 44 (2025), 446–61.

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is no doubt that some early Greek authors held the inhabitants of Britain to have included Κελτοί. Pytheas appears to have written his Περὶ τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ (*About the Ocean*) in the late fourth century BC and Hipparchus compiled his Πρὸς τὴν Ἐρατοσθένους γεωγραφίαν (*Against the Geography of Eratosthenes*) in the second-century BC.[5] But in the early first century AD Strabo disagreed with Hipparchus, contending that he was wrong and that the inhabitants of Britain were properly called Βρεττανοί 'Britons': οὗς ἐκεῖνος μὲν ἔτι Κελτοὺς ὑπολαμβάνει, ἐγὼ δ' οἶμαι Βρεττανοὺς εἶναι 'whom he [i.e. Hipparchus] takes to be still Celts, but I think they are Britons'.[6] Strabo, however, may have merely recorded a change in the way the inhabitants of Britain referred to themselves. By the time Strabo was writing, it appears that the people of Britain who spoke languages related to those of Gaul had come to principally see themselves as Britons rather than Celts, although evidence they had formerly used the term *Celt* of themselves appears to be preserved in British toponymy.

The name of the Celts seems to be preserved quite widely in British place-names. The name *Ciltern* appears to be derivationally Celtic and it is most obviously explained as retaining a form of the ethnonym *Celt*. *Ciltern* has long been explained as a reflection of an element **kelto-* 'high' comparable to Latin *celsus* 'high' and Old English *hyll* 'hill' (derivatives of Indo-European **kelH-*, **kl̥H-* 'to rise, to be tall'), but despite the obvious appeal of a place-name element with such a meaning to explain the name of a range of hills, no suitable reflexes of an earlier **kelto-* with a meaning comparable to 'high' are attested in the Celtic languages.[7] The derivation of *Ciltern* from a formation **kelto-* 'high' was originally proposed by Eugen Zachrisson before the development of contemporary Indo-European root-structure theory and it is extremely unlikely: *-to-* enlargements are customarily formed with zero-grade root apophony in the Indo-European languages and the expected Celtic reflex of inherited **kl̥H-to-* would be **kālto-*.[8]

In the nineteenth century, Latin *celsus* was similarly associated with the name of the Celts, but Richard Coates dismisses a connection of *Ciltern* with *Celt* on the grounds that 'little can be said about *Celt*, as it is not even clear in which language the name was formulated'.[9] Coates's supposition that *Ciltern* may reflect a 'Pre-British **ciltā* "steep hill" ' may seem semantically reasonable, but it is quite irregular from a derivational perspective. No matter whether

[5]Hans Joachim Mette (ed.), *Pytheas von Massalia* (Berlin, 1952), no. 6b; David R. Dicks (ed.), *The Geographical Fragments of Hipparchus* (London, 1960), no. 61.

[6]Strabo, trans. Horace L. Jones, *The Geography of Strabo*, 8 vols (London, 1917), 2.1.18.

[7]R. Eugen Zachrisson, 'English place-name puzzles: a methodical investigation into the question of personal names or descriptive words in English place-names', *Studia Neophilologica* 5 (1932), 1–69, at 60; idem, 'English place-name compounds containing descriptive nouns in the genitive', *Englische Studien* 70 (1935), 60–73, at 66; Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1960), 104.

[8]Zachrisson, 'English place-name puzzles', 60; Ranko Matasović, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic* (Leiden, 2009), 6.

[9]Christian Wilhelm Glück, 'Celtae', *Beiträge zur vergleichenden Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der arischen, celtischen und slawischen Sprachen* 5 (1868), 97–8; Richard Coates, 'Remarks on "pre-English" in England: with special reference to **uentā*, **ciltā* and **cunāco*', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 16 (1984), 1–24, at 24, n. 20.

the element is held to be of archaic Celtic or pre-Celtic origin, there is no good reason why such a form (which lacks clear cognates in any of the Indo-European languages) would ever have existed.[10] The only likely derivation is from a slightly Anglified or late Brittonic spelling of the ethnonym *Celt*, a term that can hardly be characterised as 'Pre-British' even if a reflex of the ancient designation is not obviously recorded in the medieval Brittonic languages.

The place-name *Ciltern* appears to be related to the similarly derived toponyms *Cheltenham* (< Old English *Celtanhom*), *Chilcombe* (< *Ciltacumb*), *Childerditch* (< *Celta*), *Chilgrove (< lytle Ciltene), Chilthorne* (< *Cilterne*), *Chiltington* (< *Ciltine*), *Chiltley* (< *Ciltelei*) and *Chilton Candover* (< *Chiltecandevere*). But rather than reflecting a meaning 'high', the ethnonym *Celt* appears to be a vṛddhi of the inherited Indo-European past participle **ḱl̥tos* 'covered, hidden' (to Indo-European **ḱel-* 'to cover'), related to Middle Irish *celt* 'covering, garment, clothing', that originally indicated 'those who are covered, those who have clothes'.[11] While vṛddhi formations are rare in the Celtic languages, they reflect a type of internal modification that is widely attested in other Indo-European dialects which was originally employed to create possessive derivatives. The description *Celt* seems most likely to have arisen as a term that originally distinguished humans from animals (as those who possess clothes) and the apparent preservation of the term in the name of the **Cilternsætan*, *Cheltenham*, *Chilcombe*, *Childerditch*, *Chilgrove*, *Chilthorn*, *Chiltington*, *Chiltley* and *Chilton* indicates that it is likely that it was formerly employed in British Celtic.

The most difficult aspect of the place-name *Ciltern* is its enlargement by *-ern*. The nasal is not recorded in *Ciltria*, a name first attested in the thirteenth-century *Gesta abbatum monasterii sancti Albani* of Matthew of Paris that is also recorded in the inflected forms *Ciltre* and *Cyltre* (in the expression *tria hundreda de Ciltre/Cyltre*).[12] But it is not as clear what the function of the final *-n* recorded in Anglo-Saxon sources may have been. Matthew of Paris records the name *Ciltria* in an account of the life of an eleventh-century abbot of St Albans called Leofstan, so the term may date back to the late Anglo-Saxon period, and the *Ciltern* dwellers mentioned in the *Tribal Hidage* have long been supposed to represent a British people who were conquered by the West Saxons in the late sixth century. It may be that *Ciltern* continues a form first employed to describe a polity from the sub-Roman period that is alluded to in a sixth-century entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

[10]Coates, 'Remarks on "pre-English" ', 7–15; and thereto Victor Watts (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Cambridge, 2010), 134.

[11]Kim McCone, 'Greek Κελτός and Γαλάτης, Latin *Gallus* 'Gaul" ', *Die Sprache* 46 (2006), 94–111; idem, *The Celtic Question: Modern Constructs and Ancient Realities* (Dublin, 2008); idem, 'The «Celts»: questions of nomenclature and identity', *Cahiers de Centre de Linguistique et des Sciences du Langage* 38 (2013), 21–37; Bernard Mees, 'The etymology of *Britain*', *Journal of Celtic Linguistics* 26 (2025), 85–101, at 95–7; and cf. Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism', *CMCS* 36 (Winter 1988), 1–35, at 21–2.

[12]Henry T. Riley (ed.), *Gesta abbatum monasterii sancti Albani*, 3 vols (London, 1867–9), i, 39; *Inquisitions and Assessments relating to the Feudal Aids; with other analogous documents preserved in the Public Record Office; A.D. 1284–1431*, 6 vols (London, 1899–1920), i, 89, 108 and 114.

In 571, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* mentions a victory over the Britons at a battle of Bedcanford. The entry is recorded in the Parker manuscript, the most archaic of the recensions of the *Chronicle*, in the following manner:

> *Her Cuþwulf feaht wiþ Bretwalas æt Bedcanforda 7 .iiii. tunas genom, Lygeanb[u]rg 7 Ægelesb[u]rg, [Benn]ingtun 7 Egonesham, 7 þy ilcan geare he gefor.*[13]
>
> This year Cuthwulf fought with the Britons at Bedcanford and took four towns: Lygeanburg & Ægelesburg, Benningtun & Egonesham. And this same year he died.

How reliable the entry for 571 may be is unclear as it stems from part of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that seems to have been assembled in the ninth century from sources that are otherwise lost.[14] Yet Cuthwulf's victory was taken by Rutherford Davis to be an indication that he was conquering a British kingdom in the former Roman *Civitas Catuvellaunorum* ('district of the Catuvellauni') that lay to the east and north of Dorchester upon Thames.[15] Lygeanburg, Ægelesburg, Benningtun and Egonesham are usually accepted to be Limbury, Aylesbury, Benson and Eynsham, and the site of Cuthwulf's victory has long been supposed to be Bedford, recorded as *Bedanford* later in the *Chronicle*. An otherwise unrecorded figure, Cuthwulf bore a name that suggests that he may have been one of the princes or even the subkings of the West Saxons (or Gewisse) mentioned by Bede – after all, members of the House of Cerdic typically bore alliterating names – and the Britons defeated by Cuthwulf have usually been associated with the later **Cilternsætan* of the *Tribal Hidage*.

The name *Ciltern* suggests that the defeated people may have been known as the **Cilterni* in Latin. But Sims-Williams proposes that the 571 record should not be taken to be reliable.[16] Instead, Sims-Williams suggests that the entry should be understood from a ninth-century perspective – as an assertion of West Saxon rulership over the **Cilternsætan* in the light of the Mercian victory of 779 in the Battle of Bensington. '[W]ithout asserting that the 571 annal was simply invented to form a "charter" for West Saxon territorial aspirations', Sims-Williams contends, 'it may nevertheless be suggested that it may have been shaped by the events of 779 and after'.[17] The main basis of Sims-Williams's proposal is ostensibly linguistic: 'It is odd that the captured British *tunas* all have English names'. But *Lygeanburg* was evidently named for a stronghold on the River *Lea*, a hydronym that seems to have a Celtic etymology, and it is not clear that any of the first elements of *Ægelesburg*, *Benningtun* and *Egonesham* are etymologically English either.[18] The first element of *Ægelesburg* could

[13]Janet M. Bately (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Vol. 3: MS A* (Cambridge, 1986), 24.

[14]Daniel Anlezark, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (Woodbridge, 2025), 54–85.

[15]K. Rutherford Davis, *Britons and Saxons: The Chiltern Region 400–700* (Chichester, 1982), 63–5.

[16]Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The settlement of England in Bede and the *Chronicle*,' *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983), 1–41, at 32.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Eilert Ekwall, *English River-Names* (Oxford, 1928), 239–41.

reflect an earlier Latin *Agilius*, *[Benn]ingtun* (corrected to *Bænisingtun* in the Parker manuscript) a Celtic personal name *Benusa* and *Egonesham* a Brittonic form of *Aeco*.[19] Sims-Williams's claim may reflect no more than evidence that the compilers of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* supplied ninth-century names for the four towns (with the original Celtic second elements replaced by their Old English equivalents), updating an earlier record.

Davis supported his contention that the 571 entry records the conquest of a British polity by arguing that the Chiltern region is characterised by the paucity of place-names that preserve the Old English elements *-hām*, *-tūn* and *-ing-*. He contended that place-names with *-hām* and *-ing-* are a sign of archaism – that they appear in regions of England that were settled by the Anglo-Saxons before the seventh century – and that this is further evidence that the Chiltern region remained under British political control until 571.[20] It is not clear that place-name evidence can be employed in such a manner, however, the appearance of the forms *[Benn]ingtun* and *Egonesham* in the entry for 571 undermining Davis's case. But a closer morphological analysis of the name *Ciltern* may support his interpretation of the entry for 571 in the *Chronicle* as reflecting the conquest of a sub-Roman Brittonic kingdom.

A key problem with analysing the Old English form *Ciltern* is that its morphology is unexpected. *Ciltria* seems best taken to be a Middle Latin derivative of *Ciltern*, the Old English form also being attested in a charter from 1006 as *Cilternes* and *Cilterni*, and in an entry in the *Peterborough Chronicle* for 1009 as *Ciltern*.[21] But a similar enlargement to that found in *Ciltern* seems to be reflected in the British and Gaulish personal names *Andernus*, *Carnirnus*, *Logirnus*, *Tigernus* and *Tocirnus*. *Tigernus* (cf. Old Irish *tigern* 'lord' < **tigerno-*), however, appears to feature a Hoffmann suffix, indicating mastery, that is also attested in Latin *dominus* 'lord'.[22] As a place-name, *Ciltern* is likely to have been enlarged with a different nasal suffix, with *Cilt-er-* reflecting the Celtic base that *Ciltern* was derived from.

The main problem with taking *Ciltern* as a derivation of a form of the ethnonym *Celt* is that Celtic enlargements with a suffix *-r-* are typically very old – they usually date to the Indo-European period. Inherited adjectives were regularly formed with **-ro-* as part of the archaic Indo-European Caland system, and while there is some secondary use of enlargement by *-r-* in the Celtic languages, such formations are not typically derived from nominal bases.[23]

[19]Iiro Kajanto, *The Roman Cognomina* (Helsinki, 1965), 248; Xavier Delamarre, *Dictionnaire des thèmes nominaux du Gaulois*, 2 vols (Paris, 2019–23), i, 36 and 119.

[20]Davis, *Britons and Saxons*, 68–96 and 108–11.

[21]Peter Sawyer (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (London, 1968), no. 914 and cf. no. 1047; Bernard J. Muir and Nicholas A. Sparks (eds), *The Peterborough Chronicle*, 2 vols (London, 2022), s.a. millesimo ix.

[22]Karl Hoffmann, 'Ein grundsprachliches Possessivsuffix', *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 6 (1955), 35–40; Matasović, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic*, 378–9; Delamarre, *Dictionnaire des thèmes nominaux du Gaulois*, ii, 462.

[23]Patrizia de Bernardo Stempel, *Nominale Wortbildung des älteren Irischen* (Tübingen, 1999), 228–40; Jeremy Rau, *Indo-European Nominal Morphology: The Decads and the Caland System* (Innsbruck, 2009), 65–186.

From this perspective, it appears more likely that *Ciltern* reflects a compound with a phonologically reduced second element. *Chilthorne* (< *Cilterne*) in Somerset may feature a form of Old English *ærn* 'house, habitation' as its second element, but a more plausible candidate for *Ciltern* is a cognate of Old Cornish *rid*, Old Breton *rid* and Welsh *rhydd* 'free' (< Proto-Celtic **ɸriyos*) or, more regularly, Middle Welsh *rihyt* and Old Irish *ríge* 'kingdom' (< Proto-Celtic **rīgi̯om*). It is usually assumed that inherited Brittonic **g* first lenited to **ɣ* in the late fifth century and then had palatalised to *i̯* after a palatal vowel already by the early decades of the sixth century. The grammatical endings of Brittonic terms had also been lost by that time, the syncopation of composition vowels occurring in the mid- to late-sixth century.[24] A second element reflecting **rīgi̯om* 'kingdom' would be likely to be pronounced merely as **rī(i̯)* by 571 and it seems possible that *Ciltern* could continue an earlier Brittonic **Celto-rīgi̯om* 'kingdom of the Celts' (or an uncompounded **Celtoi rīgi̯om* or the like). In his *Life of Camillus*, Plutarch records a similar ethnonym Κελτόριοι 'Celtorians' for a people of the south of Gaul whose name has been analysed either as 'free Celts' or 'royal Celts' and a comparable formation seems likely to underpin *Ciltern*.[25] The final nasal of *Ciltern* may be an Old English (cf. Old English *Frysan* 'Frisians') or Latin (cf. Latin *regnum* 'kingdom') rather than a Celtic marker, and rather than a Brittonic development comparable to Middle Welsh *gwyllt* 'wild' < **gᵘeltis* (cf. Middle Irish *geilt* 'crazy person'), the raising of the root vowel of *Celt* to *Cilt-* is more regularly associated with *i*-umlaut, an early English sound change that runic evidence shows was finalised no later than the first half of the seventh century.[26]

The names of *East* and *West Chiltington* in Sussex are also remarkable as they seem to reflect an earlier form *Ciltine* recorded as the name of a place that Cædwalla of Wessex had been exiled to and, as *Ciltinne*, in charters of King Offa of Mercia and Eadberht of Kent.[27] Nasal suffixes of this sort are generally typical of Celtic river names formed as if they were those of goddesses, such as the River *Devon* in Leicestershire (< *Dyvene* < **Dubinā* 'the dark') and the *Vendaine* in France (< **Vindinā* 'the white').[28] *Ciltin(n)e*, however, may be better understood to preserve the singulative suffix attested in *Corinium* (< **kori̯o-* 'troop, host'), *Lendiniae* (< **lend-* '(drinking) water') and *Londinium* (< **lond-* 'fierce, strong'; cf. Old Irish *lonn* 'fierce, strong, violent, vehement, eager, bold; irascible, angry' and Welsh *llon* 'merry, glad, cheerful, happy, gay, joyous; excited, agitated; mighty, strong') as if it originally designated 'the

[24]Kenneth H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), 433–48, 560–1, 631–3 and 646–51.

[25]Plutarch, *Camillus*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, *Plutarch's Lives*, 10 vols (London, 1914), ii, 15.2; Delamarre, *Dictionnaire des thèmes nominaux du Gaulois*, i, 207.

[26]Gaby Waxenberger, 'Absolute chronology of early sound changes reflected in pre-Old English runic inscriptions', *NOWELE: North-Western European Language Evolution* 72 (2019), 60–77, at 73.

[27]Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfred*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927), 42; Sawyer (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, nos 106 and 1612; Coates, 'Remarks on "pre-English" ', 7–10.

[28]Delamarre, *Dictionnaire des thèmes nominaux du Gaulois*, ii, 463 and cf. Lionel Joseph, 'The sources of the **-ono-* "god" suffix', in Joseph F. Eska et al. (eds), *The Method Works: Studies on Language Change in Honor of Don Ringe* (Leiden, 2024), 79–97.

place of the Celts'.[29] Similarly, *Chilgrove*, the name of a site attested in Ardley, Oxfordshire, appears to be first recorded in a tenth-century charter as *lytle Ciltene* as if there were two places with the name, much as names preserving the ethnic description *walh* 'foreigner, Briton' are widely attested throughout England.[30] The place-names with a first element reflecting *Celt*, however, are restricted to the south of England, much as those that continue *Cumbre* 'British, Cumbrian' (presumably a calque on Latin *compatriota* 'fellow-countryman') are only found in the West Midlands and the northwest and those that continue *Brettas* 'Briton' are restricted to the north.[31] Yet the comparable place-names reflecting *Cumbre* and *Brettas* are Old English coinages, and formations such as *Celtanhom* seem to be more closely paralleled derivationally by *Sault-Saint-Rémy* (Ardennes), first recorded in the tenth century (in a will of St Remigius, ostensibly of sixth-century date) as a villa called *Celtus*.[32]

It may be that pre-Celtic place-names survived long enough to influence medieval English toponymy and elements otherwise unknown in Celtic are sometimes preserved onomastically. But the name of the Chilterns can be explained quite regularly as reflecting the ethnonym *Celt* and there are no other directly attested options other than Middle Irish *celt* 'covering, garment, clothing' which is used figuratively in the compound *celtbrais* 'thickly covered' (once) to indicate woods.[33] A hypothetical element **celto-* or **ciltā* 'high' has no obvious reason to have existed and it is methodologically unwarranted to prefer a derivation from a term that is not attested otherwise over one that is. The root vowels in the first elements of *Chilcombe*, *Chiltley* and *Chilton* (and early variants such as *Ciltan ham* for Cheltenham) can be explained by postulating an adjectival base **Celti̯o-* which is attested otherwise in the Hispano-Celtic name *Celtius* that is attested over twenty times (presumably as an ethnic identifier) in Lusitania.[34] But it is the names *Ciltern* and *Ciltene* that are particularly important because it is not only their first elements that appear to be derivationally Celtic. It is not entirely certain whether Middle Latin *Ciltria* is a remodelled form of Old English *Ciltern* or a reflex of an earlier **Celto-rīgi̯om* 'kingdom of the Celts'. It is evident, however, that Davis's contention that the entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 571 indicates that an independent British polity survived in the former *Civitas Catuvellaunorum* until the late sixth century is supported by the likely etymology of the name of the Chilterns.

[29]Peter Schrijver, *Language Contact and the Origin of the Germanic Languages* (New York, 2014), 57.

[30]Sawyer (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 883.

[31]A. Hugh Smith, *English Place-Names Elements*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1956), i, 50, 119–20 and ii, 242–4.

[32]Flodoard, *Historia ecclesiae Remensis*, in Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina* 135 (Paris, 1879), 1.18; Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Recherches sur l'origine de la propriété foncière et des noms de lieux habités en France* (Paris, 1890), 501; Delamarre, *Dictionnaire des thèmes nominaux du Gaulois*, i, 208.

[33]Richard I. Best et al. (eds), *The Book of Leinster*, 6 vols (Dublin, 1954–83), i, fol. 18r, l. 2259.

[34]Eugenio R. Luján, 'Celtic and Celtiberian in the Iberian Peninsula', in Eduardo Blasco Ferrer et al. (eds), *Iberia e Sardegna: Legami linguistici, archeologici e genetici dal Mesolitico all'Età del Bronzo* (Milan, 2013), 97–112, at 99.

The kingdom conquered by the West Saxons in 571 seems likely to have been known as **Cilt(ə)ri* in Old English, an *i*-umlauted form of a Brittonic **Celtrī* 'the kingdom of the Celts', while *Ciltern* may be an old plural formation (comparable to *Frysan*), perhaps influenced by Old English *ærn* 'house, habitation'. Middle Latin *Ciltria* appears to reflect a development of the name of the Chilterns, although *Ciltria* may well be an older designation than the date that is suggested by its first appearance in the *Gesta abbatum monasterii sancti Albani*. What the place-names *Ciltern*, *Ciltria* and the related forms *Cheltenham*, *Chilcombe*, *Childerditch*, *Chilthorn*, *Chiltington*, *Chiltley* and *Chilton* indicate most importantly, however, is that a key claim of Celtosceptics – that the ancient Britons were never called Celts – is almost certainly wrong. It may be that some of these settlements were named after people called Celtius or Celtus rather than Celts plural (although *Celtius* was only employed in Roman Spain as what seems to be an ethnic designation) or were described as 'covered' in Brittonic (even if a cognate of Middle Irish *celt* rather than *Celt* might not explain all the *i*-umlauted forms). But the best paralleled interpretation is that the *Chilt-* and *Chelt-* names of southern England were derived from an ethnic description, much as are the many place-names that, although being Old English formations, include the elements *walh* 'foreigner, Welsh', *Cumbre* 'Welsh, Cumbrian' and *Brettas* 'Briton'.

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