

# Ethnic differences endure, divide and unite

‘All the colonies were leveled to the ground by the frequent strokes of the battering-ram, all the husbandmen routed, together with their bishops, priests, and people, whilst the sword gleamed, and the flames crackled around them on every side. Lamentable to behold, in the midst of the streets lay the tops of lofty towers, tumbled to the ground, stones of high walls, holy altars, fragments of human bodies, covered with livid clots of coagulated blood, looking as if they had been squeezed together in a press; and with no chance of being buried, save in the ruins of the houses, or in the ravening bellies of wild beasts and birds ...’

Dramatic stuff. Though this sounds like a scene from the steamy HBO program *Game of Thrones*, it actually is about the only account we



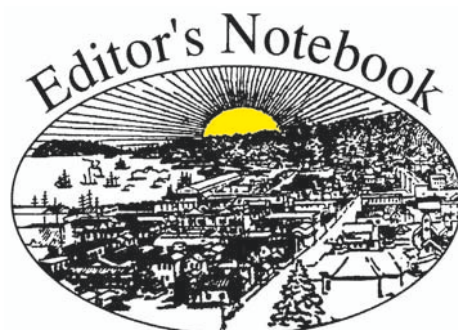
Matt Winters

have of the arrival of Anglo-Saxons in Britain in the Dark Ages. Written by the monk Gildas (c. 500 to 570 AD), this for centuries was taken as a true report on “ethnic cleansing.” According to Gildas and legends, the civilized but morally weak Britons of post-Roman times, briefly protected by King Arthur and his knights, eventually were slaughtered or driven away into the western wastes by the godless hordes.

Following publication of a long-awaited scientific paper this week, we now know once and for all that this was just so much propaganda. Although there were conflicts here and there, the Anglo-Saxon invaders appear to have been much more interested in making babies than making war.

A colossal genetic project published in the journal *Nature* proves the endurance of tribal affiliations across thousands of years on the islands of Britain. And just about in time for St. Patrick’s Day, the Wellcome Trust-funded People of the British Isles study demonstrates that “Celtic” isn’t one type of people, but several. Even to this day, some individual tribes that lived in Britain since before the Roman invasion nearly 2,000 years ago continue to occupy their own discrete territories. (See [www.peopleofthebritishisles.org](http://www.peopleofthebritishisles.org))

Without testing in the Republic of Ireland or some genetically intriguing places like the Isle of Man, researchers



found 17 different types of people in Britain as of the late-19th century. (Testees were elderly people, each with four grandparents all having been born within a close distance of one another. This provides a fairly accurate snapshot of population structure before the disruptions of 20th century wars and mass migration.)

Although Irish, Welsh, Scottish and Cornish people have each always regarded themselves as unique, historians tended to lump them together. The longstanding belief was that a fairly racially uniform population of aboriginal Celtic Britons became refugees in western fringes when pushy Anglo-Saxons arrived en masse starting in about 450 AD.

Now it looks like the native Britons and newcomers quickly re-established an equilibrium, settling down and managing to stay in one place. “Many of the genetic clusters show similar locations to the tribal groupings and kingdoms around end of the 6th century, after the settlement of the Anglo-Saxons, suggesting these tribes and kingdoms may have maintained a regional identity for many centuries,” study authors say.

Other key study findings include:

- The economically successful people in the central/eastern/southern “bulb” of England — the “BBC people” we are most likely to see on TV — are the most mixed together and have the largest genetic contribution from the Anglo-Saxon migrations (but still only 10 to 40 percent of total ancestry). “This settles a historical controversy in showing

that the Anglo-Saxons intermarried with, rather than replaced, the existing populations.”

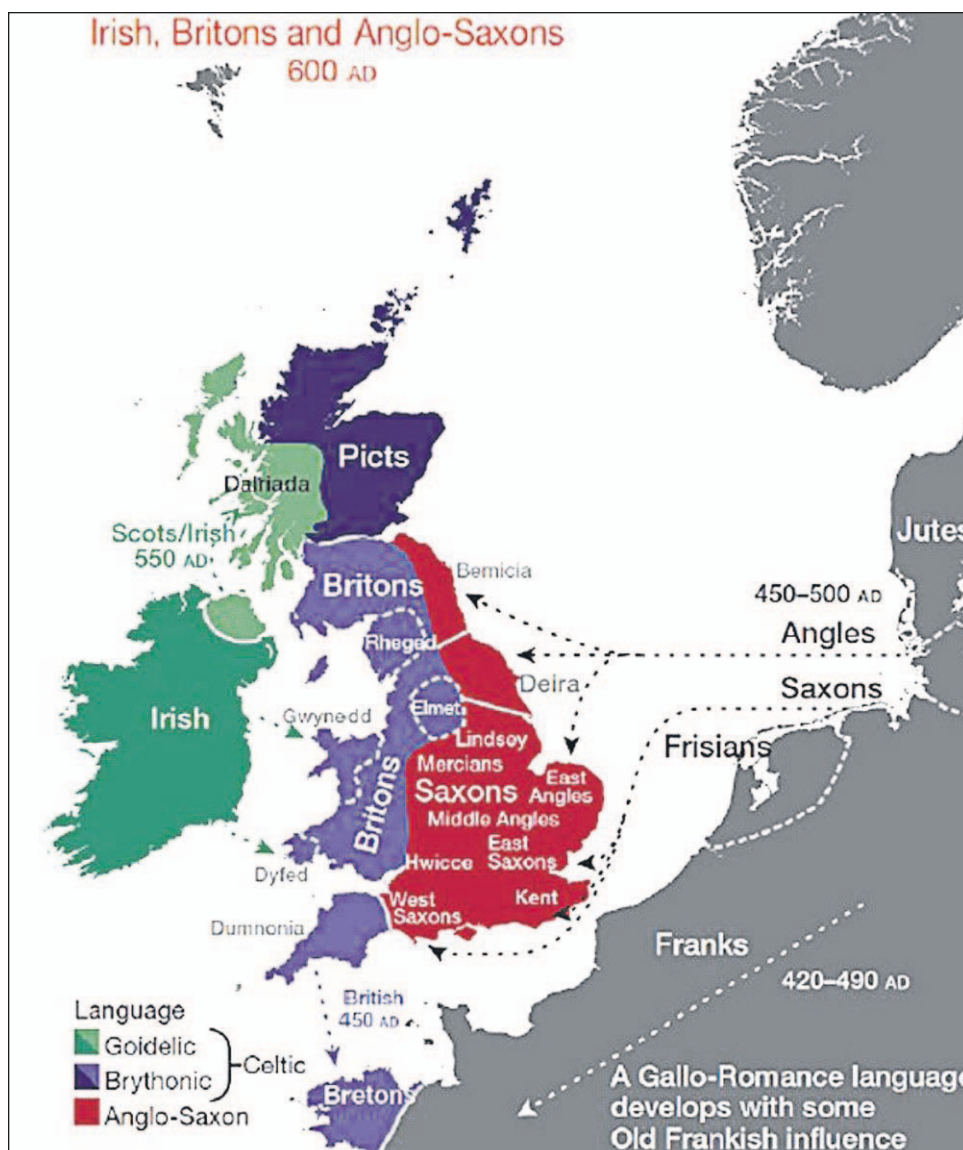
- The Welsh appear more similar to the earliest settlers of Britain after the last ice age than do other people in the UK.

- There is no obvious genetic signature of the Danish Vikings, who controlled large parts of England (“The Danelaw”) from the 9th century, or from the Normans, who invaded in 1066 AD. This fits with large-scale amateur genetic testing in the past 10 years that found



Romary via Wikimedia Commons

A statue in Morbihan, France commemorates Saint Gildas, the Briton monk whose writings incorrectly portrayed Anglo-Saxon migrations as an act of genocide.



Source: Nature article

This map of British Isles population structure in about 600 AD has been found to still have significant echoes in the population of the modern United Kingdom.

Vikings, Normans and Anglo-Saxons were all about as alike as puppies from the same litter.

The analyses suggest there was a substantial migration across the English Channel after the original post-ice-age settlers, but before Roman times. DNA from these migrants spread across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but had little impact in Wales. This means the average British person is about a third French — pretty amusing considering the bias many Englishmen still bear against the French, and vice versa.

Uncle Frank used to say, “I’m a racist. So’s everyone else, they just don’t want to admit it,” earning a cheerfully sharp elbow in the ribs from Aunt Lucille.

You’d be hard-pressed to find kinder or more generous man, but his views were indeed guided by a secure belief that white Americans — especially those from

Western Washington — are most likely to make mutually beneficial decisions: to act in the “right” way.

He wasn’t incorrect in perceiving that a vein of tribalism runs through human affairs. Being a responsible modern person requires acknowledging that tendency, while not allowing it to warp our behavior. In Britain, the Anglo-Saxon heartland is far better off than the rest of the nation. Racial, regional and cultural differences in the U.S. are sources of pride, but also impediments to economic and social justice.

Maybe one moral of the Wellcome Trust study is that those who mix best do better. We should aspire to nurture all that makes us unique, while giving Welshmen an even break.

—MSW

Matt Winters is editor and publisher of the *Chinook Observer* and *Coast River Business Journal*. He lives in Ilwaco, Wash., with his wife and daughter.

## Open forum

### High stakes at the Port

The original marine cluster development plan proposed for the Port of Astoria in the early 2000s was an outstanding example of regional cooperation, and if properly fleshed out and supported, it could have had a huge economic impact for everyone.

Standing back and looking at the great scope of the issue at hand, the Port property along the west Astoria waterfront is a true gem. It is most likely one of the most beautifully situated pieces of prime waterfront real estate north of San Francisco. If the former Red Lion hotel complex had been replaced with a major flagship hotel brand, the entire West End Mooring Basin significantly upgraded, and coupled with a forward looking regional economic development process, the return on investment would be huge.

Keep in mind one point: The Port land is public property, which is for the most part exempt from property taxes. If public property is leased to a private developer,

the underlying land value and the improved value becomes taxable. The public agency that leases the land receives the lease rental value and property taxes, while other local taxing districts would also receive the property taxes from such developments.

Related to this are the jobs and services that come from such development. A real estate term “highest and best use” becomes the driving factor to monetize the investment return for everyone.

A number of well-respected local businesses made a decision to embark on private development based on the original marine cluster development plan formally adopted by the Port. This investment put at a risk money, time and effort. There was also a lot of civic pride associated with this.

Recently the game plan has morphed into something totally different, which creates a serious credibility issue for the Port. Chasing the fickle log export market, becomes a major issue. Now the Port becomes a one booth trade show risking everything

in a high stakes international marketplace. When (not if) the logs stop going over the docks, the Port will find itself not able to recapture what it should have been doing in the first place.

In closing, there is nothing wrong with log exports. If properly managed in coordination with our entire region, this short-term niche opportunity could help the Port generate needed revenue. But it should not displace a well-thought-out process and long-term planning which people had already staked their investment decisions on.

Nor should the log export operations hinder where we need to be in the long run. Again, keep in mind log exports can be gone instantly. The local business, boat owners and waterfront trades are here for the long haul. How all this is handled will determine the future viability of the Port, or even if the Port exists in its present form.

JIM SANTEE  
Astoria

### Represent us

I have been reading the latest news regarding the Port of Astoria. Once again I question whether or not the elected commissioners are actually representing the interests of the county taxpayers.

I do not fish. No one in my very large extended family fishes commercially. But even I understand the need for a boatyard. I like fish, am very happy to be in close proximity to fresh fish, and want those who fish for a living to have a place to maintain and repair their boats. I want them to be safe on the water as they catch my dinner.

This is a town with a rich history associated with the fishing industry, and removing the boatyard is just plain wrong. The commissioners are supposed to be fiscally responsible, but they are also supposed to be representing us — the people of Clatsop County. Is this an election year? Maybe they’ll hear us then.

MARCIA FENSKE  
Astoria



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