A Wirral location for the Battle of Brunanburh**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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Abstract

There has been significant local publicity relating to the search for the site of the Battle of Brunanburh.[[2]](#footnote-2) The purpose of this article is to explore why the Wirral would have made strategic sense as the location for the conflict.[[3]](#footnote-3) To contextualise the discussion, brief consideration will be given to the historical context of the battle, the development of narratives about it (including the claim that the conflict took place near the River Humber), and the place name evidence that has survived. It should be noted that many different locations have been put forward for Brunanburh, and no doubt arguments for alternative locations will continue in scholarly debates.

The battle of Brunanburh has been integral to the narrative of the ‘making of England’ in the Middle Ages. When vikings first arrived in Britain, there were multiple English-speaking kingdoms. The first king who could claim to have unified them was Athelstan, grandson of Alfred the Great. He inherited the thrones of Mercia and Wessex from his father Edward the Elder. In 927 he successfully seized Northumbria from the dynasty of Ivar and sought over-lordship over the Welsh and Scottish rulers. He employed the title *rex totius Britanniae* (‘king of all Britain’) on coins and in charters. As Athelstan came to use more assertive attempts to make this claim a reality, a coalition of opposing rulers gathered against him. These tensions would culminate in the Battle of Brunanburh in 937.

  Athelstan’s main opponents at Brunanburh were Constantine, king of Alba, and Olaf Guthfrithsson, king of Dublin. Olaf’s family were heirs to the throne of Northumbria but the Dublin dynasty had been unable to make a concerted effort to win back Northumbria after 927 due to rivalries within Ireland between the viking kings of Dublin and Limerick. It was only when Olaf Guthfrithsson defeated his Limerick rival Olaf ‘Scabbyhead’ in 937 could he return his attention to matters across the Irish Sea. Constantine’s motive for allying against Athelstan in 937 was probably revenge. In 934, Athelstan commanded an invasion of Alba by land and sea. The land army is said to have reached as far north as Dunottar and the fleet went to Caithness.[[4]](#footnote-4) The expedition did not seem intent on conquest but rather to subdue Constantine as Athelstan’s under-king. Both Constantine and Owain of Strathclyde (a neighbouring polity based on the River Clyde) are found witnessing charters of Athelstan after 934 as *subreguli* ‘sub-kings’. Constantine may have bided his time after 934, working towards a coalition that could undermine Athelstan.

  It seems that Northumbria’s allegiance was also in question during this northern campaign as*Historia Regum*(Section 6) tells us Athelstan took hostages on his way north. In 934 he gave large gifts to the archbishop or York and the shrine of St Cuthbert perhaps to win the acquiescence or support of the most powerful churches of Northumbria.[[5]](#footnote-5) While the somewhat jingoistic presentation of Brunanburh as a conflict between the English and a coalition of their enemies is a familiar trope, it must be remembered that a unified kingdom of the English-speaking peoples was a political novelty at this time. Not all Northumbrians were keen to fall under the control of Wessex or turn against the line of Hiberno-Scandinavian kings who had previously ruled them.[[6]](#footnote-6)

  There were other rulers who appeared to join the forces of Constantine and Olaf. The ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ mentions the death of five kings in the battle, suggesting a wide-reaching coalition. One likely contender is Owain, king of Strathclyde as *Historia Regum*(Section 6) describes the involvement of his people.[[7]](#footnote-7) It is possible a Manx/Hebridean contingent may have been involved in the conflict. While there is evidence that Welsh rulers were called to fight against the English, in the tenth century prophetic poem *Armes Prydein Vawr* it is not clear if any took part in the Battle of Brunanburh. The English-speaking polity of Bamburgh wedged between Northumbria and Alba may have been involved, but again the sources do not give a full picture of events. Ultimately the range of the people involved in the conflict was significant, making it one of the most important battles that was fought on English soil before 1066. In terms of political impact, the battle was perhaps less glorious than the poet whose composition was included in the ‘Anglo Saxon Chronicle’ made out. The conflict only kept the English kingdom together for two more years until Athelstan died. At that point, Northumbria once again fell under the control of the viking dynasty of Dublin.

The development of the Brunanburh narrative

Through looking at the early texts describing the Battle of Brunanburh, it is possible to trace how the narrative of the battle developed over time. This can help evaluate the reliability of various claims relating to it.[[8]](#footnote-8) The earliest and most comprehensive source is the Battle of Brunanburh poem which was entered into the ‘Anglo Saxon Chronicle’ before AD 955. The account is biased towards Athelstan in celebrating his victory, but being within living memory of the events it described, it could not simply invent key aspects of the conflict without being open to challenge. The Chronicle poem located the conflict ‘near Brun(n)anburh’.[[9]](#footnote-9) The combatants are identified as the people of Wessex and Mercia on one side, led by King Athelstan and his brother Edmund. The enemy is identified as Constantine king of the Scots, whose son was killed in the conflict and Olaf, king of Dublin. The battle is described as a heavy defeat for Athelstan’s enemies. Olaf fled with a small band of followers and Constantine escaped home to Scotland while the departure of the ships of Northmen to Dublin from ‘Dingesmere’ is also reported.[[10]](#footnote-10) The battle was fought from sunrise to sunset with those fleeing the battlefield being pursued. Five ‘young kings’ were killed and seven of Olaf’s earls. A curious feature of the poem is the lack of reference to Northumbrians which suggests their allegiances may have been split in the conflict, they fought with the ‘enemy’ or they did not take part at all. The poem in the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ underlies many of the later accounts of Brunanburh, in particular the ‘Chronicle of Æthelweard’, written around 980 and the early twelfth century English historians, John of Worcester, Henry of Huntingdon, Geoffrey Gaimar and William of Malmesbury.

           The ‘Annals of Ulster’ must be given serious consideration as a primary source for Brunanburh, as much of the data within it reflects near contemporary records.[[11]](#footnote-11) According to this source, the main combatants were Olaf and Athelstan and there were heavy losses on both sides. The statement that ‘King Olaf escaped with a few men’, echoes the poem in the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ and the annalist concur that it was a great victory for Athelstan. The ‘Annals of Ulster’ report that Olaf did not return to Dublin until 938, thus it appears that he did not go straight back to Dublin with other escapees. Olaf may have spent the months after the conflict trying to negotiate with allies. He would eventually regain control of Northumbria in 939 after the death of Athelstan.

There are other key details concerning Brunanburh that are drawn from other sources, which are generally later and whose validity may be called into question. A lost Northumbrian chronicle appears to underly an account of the battle found in two texts associated with the early twelfth century writer Symeon of Durham. A short chronicle covering the events 888-957 is the sixth section of the compilation *Historia Regum Anglorum.* Symeon was the author of one of the later sections of this text. The chronicle is question was put together after 1064 but it copies earlier material and includes some tantalizing details which are not in the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’, but which might date back to the tenth or eleventh centuries.[[12]](#footnote-12) It claims that the invading force comprised of 615 ships, and that the battle took place at a site called Wendun. It also reports that the men of Strathclyde fought alongside Constantine and Olaf.The same additional information is found in *Libellus de Exordio* which was written between 1104 and 1115 by Symeon of Durham.[[13]](#footnote-13) Both texts would seem to hearken back to the same chronicle text. The claim of 615 ships is also included in the ‘Chronicle of Melrose’*.* The presence of Strathclyders at the battle finds some independent support in ‘The Annals of the Four Masters’ this is an early seventeenth century compilation which copied earlier Irish chronicles. Æthelweard referred to Picts fighting along with Scots at the battle. The Picts and people of Strathclyde are mentioned in the battle in the early twelfth century *Estoire des Engleis*, written by Geoffrey Gaimar.[[14]](#footnote-14) On balance, the evidence surviving from the lost Northumbrian chronicle which underlies section six of *Historia Regum*and *Libellus de Exordio*is treated as credible evidence.

Due to the significance of the ‘Battle of Brunanburh’ and its value as propaganda in demonstrating a victory by the English over their neighboring peoples, the story drew in extra details and legends over time. One of these stories begins with the late eleventh century *Vita Odonis* by Eadmer of Canterbury whose account of the battle is laced with religious propaganda. The viking side at Brunanburh are presented as pagans hell bent on destroying Christian laws. Eadmer claims that Athelstan brought Oda, future archbishop of Canterbury, with him to the front line of the conflict. The king’s sword shattered at the hilt but was restored through a miracle of Oda which helped secure Athelstan’s victory in the battle. A retelling of the same event is given in Eadmer’s ‘Life of Oswald’ which was written around AD1115. Variations of the miracle story appeared in later accounts including William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* of c. 1127, the ‘Chronicle of Ramsey’, c. 1170 and the ‘Genealogy of the kings of England’, c. 1274.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Another legend which added to the Brunanburh story is first found in the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*of William of Malmesbury written in 1127. He recorded Olaf had ventured into the enemy camp disguised as a harper the night before battle in order to gather information. He then murdered a bishop and some others who accompanied Athelstan’s army and approached the sleeping king to murder him to, however he was woken by the noise. Athelstan’s sword fell in the chaos but crying out to Saint Aldhelm it was miraculously restored and the king was able to save himself.  This story can be compared to the sword miracle mentioned above and a tale which is recorded earlier in *Gesta Regum Anglorum*that King Alfred the Great had entered the viking army camp disguised as a harper to gather information before the Battle of Edington in 878. The story of Olaf’s exploits as a spying musician is included in the late thirteenth century ‘Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester’.[[16]](#footnote-16) It appears then that stories of the battle grew over time.

The tale of the Humber invasion

Perhaps the most controversial account in terms of locating the battle is that the invasion fleet of 937 came via the River Humber. If this were true, then the Wirral would be an unlikely site of battle as the army would have to traverse England to reach the Irish Sea. The claim is first found in *Chronicon ex Chronicis* or the ‘Chronicle of John of Worcester’ which was written between 1128 and 1140.[[17]](#footnote-17)Michael Wood has argued that ‘the tale of the Humber Landing cannot be John’s own invention’.[[18]](#footnote-18) However, I think it probably is a twelfth century invention, or at least it cannot count as reliable evidence. It is worth analysing the relevant text in detail:

*Hiberniensium multarumque insularum rex paganus Anlafus, a socero suo rege Scottorum Constantino incitatus, ostium Humbre fluminis ualida cum classe ingreditur. Cui rex Æthelstanus fraterque suus clito Eadmundus in loco qui dicitur Brunanburh cum exercitu occurrerunt, et prelio a diei principio in uesperum tracto, v. regulos viique duces, quos aduersarii sibi in auxilium conduxerant, interfecerunt, tantumque sanguinis quantum eatenus in Anglia nullo in bello fusum est fuderunt, et reges Anlafum et Constantinum ad naues fugere compellentes, magno reuersi sunt tripudio. Illi uero summam infelicitatem de interitu sui exercitus consecuti, cum paucis redeunt in sua.*

Anlaf, the Pagan king of Ireland and many other islands, incited by his father-in-law Constantine, king of the Scots, entered the mouth of the River Humber with a strong fleet. King Æthelstan, and his brother, Prince Edmund, stood against him with an army at the place called Brunanburh. When the battle had drawn on from dawn into the evening, they had killed five under-kings and seven earls whom their adversaries had gathered as allies, and they had spilled more blood than was ever shed before then in any war in England. They forced kings Anlaf and Constantine to flee to their ships; and they then returned home in great jubilation. Having faced the greatest misfortune in their army’s ruin, Anlaf and Constantine went back to their own lands with very few men.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The underlined section of text from John of Worcester contains information which can be traced back to the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ narrative of the battle. The last sentence (after the underlining) is a reasonable deduction based on the poem in the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ that Olaf and Constantine returned to their own countries, but it is problematic. The poem tells us that Constantine ‘returned to the North’ and that many of the Dubliners fled back across the Irish Sea. The poem suggests that Olaf left the battle separately with a small band of followers. According to the ‘Annals of Ulster’ Olaf did not return to Dublin until 938. Thus, John of Worcester maybe adding an inaccurate assumption to the account of the battle.

The first sentence of the annal contains information not found in surviving texts that pre-date John of Worcester. Olaf is somewhat ambitiously identified as king of the Irish and many islands. King Constantine is said to instigate the Brunanburh campaign and that Olaf is married to his daughter. John of Worcester also has biographical material about Constantine’s children in the year 934 which has not survived from earlier texts. It is claimed that Constantine gave his son to Athelstan as a hostage. If true this may have been his son Indulf who would later become king of Alba, or another unnamed son who died at Brunanburh. One might speculate that these details about Constantine’s offspring and incitement to war against England may have come from the same source. It is interesting to note Alex Woolf’s suggestion that there may have been a lost poem or saga about Constantine which underlies the claim in the ‘Chronicle of the Kings of Alba’ that Constantine incited a later invasion of England after he had retired to a monastery.[[20]](#footnote-20) If John of Worcester drew on an earlier source for this information, particularly a poem or saga which might be liable to ornamentation and hyperbole, it is hard to evaluate its reliability.

If the detail on Constantine’s relationship with Olaf comes from an earlier source, we shouldn’t assume that the River Humber claim is derived from an earlier source as well. Just as John of Worcester seems to have presumed the nature of Olaf’s return journey, he may have guessed the path of his arrival. From a twelfth century perspective, it would be plausible to calculate that a large fleet arriving in Northumbria came via the Humber. That was, after all, the path taken by invading fleets in 1066 and 1069. Pauline Stafford has noted that John of Worcester was ‘no mere slavish collator’ and that it was ‘his tendency’ to elaborate on the materials he was using.[[21]](#footnote-21) R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk note the difficulty of interpreting the source of unique material in John of Worcester’s *Chronica*, and demonstrate that some additional information that may be attributed to ‘editorial tidying’ and ‘assumptions reasonably deduced from the text’.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Examples provided by Darlington and McGurk of John’s possible inferences are in 894 adding that Alfred was angry that his people were besieged, in 895 being more emphatic than the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ that the actions of the English drove the vikings into North Wales.[[23]](#footnote-23) I would suggest that John drew on at least two sources for his record of the year 937. One was the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ poem for 937, another source provided information on Constantine’s kinship with Olaf (a source of uncertain merit). To glue these sources together and create a narrative for Brunanburh, John added details of Olaf’s arrival and departure from the conflict, based on his own deductions.

As the title *Chronicon ex Chronicis* suggests, John of Worcester compiled his history from a myriad of sources. These included the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicl’e, a set of Continental Annals based on the work of Marianus Scotus, the writings of Bede, Asser, various Saints’ Lives, ‘poetic and folk sources’.[[24]](#footnote-24) John of Worcester was also working as part of a research team over a number of years to create the chronicle.[[25]](#footnote-25) A close study highlights how working drafts of texts were shared between historians.[[26]](#footnote-26) Inclusions from Simeon of Durham’s *Libellus de Exordio* added into an early version of *Chronicon ex chronicis*.[[27]](#footnote-27) Simeon for his part used an early version of John’s *Chronicon ex chronicis* to construct section 8 of *Historia Regum*, suggesting an exchange of texts between Durham and Worcester. The Humber claim cannot be found in other historical writings attributed to Symeon of Durham, nor is it found in the writings of William of Malmesbury who included materials gathered at Worcester that had been used by John.[[28]](#footnote-28)

It is necessary to consider Michael Wood’s suggestion that John of Worcester had access to a lost set of Northern annals that may have given him information linking the Battle of Brunanburh to the River Humber. No other surviving source seems to record the Humber claim without it being linkable back to John of Worcester. As already mentioned, *Chronicon ex Chronicis* was used as a source for section 8 of *Historia Regum* which was written between 1129 and 1164 which includes reference to the River Humber.[[29]](#footnote-29) *Historia Regum*was then used as a source for Alured of Beverley’s *Annales sive Historia de gestis regum Britanniae*, which was written around 1143.[[30]](#footnote-30) *Historia Regum*  was also used by the mid-twelfth century *Historia Saxonum sive Anglorum post obitum Bedae.*[[31]](#footnote-31) A text related to *Historia Regum* and *Historia Saxonum sive Anglorum post obitum Bedae* was used for the ‘Chronicle of Melrose’ which was put together around 1173 and which mentions the Humber.[[32]](#footnote-32) *Historia Saxonum sive Anglorum post obitum Bedae*, and the ‘Melrose Chronicle’ have been identified as sources for Roger of Howden’s *Chronica* written *circa* 1200.[[33]](#footnote-33) Roger of Howden (or a version of *Historia Regum,* Section 8) was used in Roger of Wendover’s *Flores Historiarum*.[[34]](#footnote-34) *Flores Historiarum* was used a source for the *Chronica Maiora* of Matthew Paris.[[35]](#footnote-35) The Humber landing also appears in Peter de Langtoft’s somewhat fanciful account of Brunanburh written *circa* 1300, with the claim that the invading fleet comprised of 715 ships (perhaps a transcription error for 615) which drew from *Historia Regum*.[[36]](#footnote-36)John of Worcester was used directly by Ranulf Higden in his popular fourteenth century universal chronicle *Polychronicon*. *Polychronicon* was in turn used as a source for the fifteenth century ‘Book of Hyde’.[[37]](#footnote-37) Another medieval text which referred to the River Humber was the thirteenth century ‘Metrical Chronicle’ attributed to Robert of Gloucester. This text drew on a complex array of earlier chronicles including John of Worcester, *Historia Regum*, Roger of Howden, Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris, all of which, as noted above make reference to the Humber in their account of the battle.[[38]](#footnote-38) There need not be a common ‘northern source’ which mentions the River Humber that underpins the narrative of John of Worcester and others, as suggested by Wood.[[39]](#footnote-39) Rather the tale of the Humber landing seems to have first appeared in John of Worcester’s *Chronicon* and been disseminated from there.

Even so, there are references to Northumbrian events in *Chronicon ex chronicis* not found in the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ which cannot be accounted for by borrowings from Simeon of Durham’s *Libellus* into a draft of the text. The inclusion of a lost set of vernacular annals which drew on a northern recension of the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ has been suggested by C.R. Hart and Pauline Stafford. Could it be that the reference to the Humber was drawn from this hypothetical lost source? Hart calls this hypothetical text the ‘Worcester Chronicle’ and suggests it was compiled at Ramsey abbey in the early eleventh century.[[40]](#footnote-40) Stafford cautions that ‘its shape, its making, even its existence are all debatable’, but a case can be made that John of Worcester had access to a text similar to (but not the same as) the D recension of the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ for the mid to late years of the tenth century.[[41]](#footnote-41) It is unclear, if this hypothetical text existed, if John of Worcester had access to a version with stretched back to 937, then if an item of unique information found in John of Worcester derived from that source, and if it came from that source, whether it marks contemporary record or unreliable later material incorporated into a text before John used it in the twelfth century.[[42]](#footnote-42) It is therefore very tenuous indeed to claim that the reference to the Humber comes from a reliable lost northern source.

As a casual observation, the text of John of Worcester consistently adds riverine locations, not found in known sources, across a broad timeframe. So, for example, in the narrative of the seventh century there are references to the River Idle (Nottinghamshire) in AD 616, the River Alne (Worcestershire) AD 684. In the ninth century there are references to the Wylye (Wiltshire) AD 871 and Frome (Herefordshire) AD 876. In the tenth century there are references to the Sowe (Warwickshire) AD 914 and to the Great Ouse that runs through East Anglia in AD 905 and 915. In general, the river names indicate a familiarity with the south Midlands. But if these additions reflect the intervention of one author (perhaps John himself), his geographical knowledge of Northumbria is questionable. We have in 867 reference to “the city of York which stands on the north bank of the River Humber” (*Eboracum civitatem…quae in aquilonali ripa Humbrae fluminis site est*). This uncritically repeats a geographical error found in Asser’s ‘Life of King Alfred’.[[43]](#footnote-43) A similar level of geographical naivety could have led to the invasion of Northumbria in 937 to be linked with the Humber, regardless of accuracy.

In sum, the claim that the invasion fleet of 937 arrived via the River Humber should not be the starting point from which scholars should seek a location for the Battle of Brunanburh. The claim can only be traced as far back as a twelfth century historical narrative. The best contemporary evidence we have to track down the battle’s location is the place name Brun(n)anburh recorded in the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’. This draws the argument back to Bromborough in Cheshire as the only recorded placename that can be linked with the battle site. The possibility must always remain that the name was once found elsewhere but has been lost. So many other medieval events could by hypothetically relocated on the same premise. However, the Wirral is also a credible location for the battle on geo-political grounds.

William of Malmesbury’s ‘ancient book’

William of Malmesbury gives two accounts of Brunanburh in *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. The first narration includes the fanciful details of Olaf’s escapades as a spy and a miracle story. The second description, William claims was derived from an ancient book (*uolumine uestuto*) and he quotes a poem ‘of the versifier from whom I have taken all this matter’ (*illius uersifici, de quo omnia haec excerpsimus*). This has generated some debate among historians, as to whether this claim was invented or whether William had access to an earlier source. Claiming exclusive access to an ancient book was a literary artifice used by other medieval writers, most famously Geoffrey of Monmouth.[[44]](#footnote-44) Rodney Thomson who edited *Gesta Regum Anglorum* concluded that William had access to an old book, but it may have been of eleventh or early twelfth century date rather than being a near contemporary source.[[45]](#footnote-45) Michael Wood and Sarah Foot have argued that William may have had access to tenth century material, but this was re-written rather than quoted verbatim in *Gesta Regum.* However Foot has advocated caution in using William’s evidence as it is unclear how much he altered the material he was using.[[46]](#footnote-46) Interesting details included by William are that the Northumbrians submitted to Olaf, and that Olaf’s army conducted plundering expeditions for some time before Athelstan led an army north to fight them. Neither of these details detracts from the case the Brunanburh was fought on the Wirral, situated close to the Northumbrian border. The value of William of Malmesbury’s evidence can however be questioned by the incredible claim that Athelstan led 100,000 men to battle. The real army would have been considerably smaller.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Icelandic saga

One narrative which has received a lot of attention as a source for the Battle of Brunanburh is the Icelandic ‘Egils saga’. This text dates from the early thirteenth century and is praised for its detailed description of the conflict. However, so many details of the battle described in the saga do not match with Brunanburh, it is not clear if it is even the same battle that is recounted.[[48]](#footnote-48) According to ‘Egils saga’, Athelstan is the leader of an English side in battle, but his opponent is Olaf king of Scotland who died in the conflict. If this is Brunanburh, some details have got confused (both Olaf and Constantine survived, and Olaf was not king of Scotland). The text also claims that Olaf had previously won a victory bringing parts of England under his control, which does not tally well with the events of 937 recorded elsewhere. If such essential elements of the narrative are wrong, then it should be questioned whether other details of the battle narrative are correct or relate to Brunanburh. The account does not indicate the area where the battle was fought, but the place-name is recorded as Vínheiðr.

Locating the name Brunanburh

Much work has been done on the placenames of Wirral by J. McN. Dodgson and Paul Cavill and only a brief overview of the name Brunanburh is given here.[[49]](#footnote-49) The name Brunan(n)burh is found in the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’. The first element of the name can be interpreted as *Bruna*, a masculine Old English personal name or *brune*a name meaning ‘dark, brown, shining’, or a variant of *burne*, an Old English word for stream, well or spring, influenced by Old Norse *brunnr*. The word appears in English forms of the name with the weak genitive form ending -*an*. The spelling with ‘nn’ advanced by Michael Wood is found in the A recension (as a correction) and apparently in the B recension of the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ favours the association of the site with a stream.[[50]](#footnote-50)

The second element -*burh* is an Old English term meaning a fortified place or stronghold. Variant second elements are found in accounts by Æthelweard, William of Malmesbury and Symeon of Durham. Æthelweard wrote when memories of the battle were still fresh in people’s memories: ‘Brunandun, wherefore it is still called the “great battle” by the common people’.[[51]](#footnote-51) Symeon of Durham also provides an alternative name We(o)ndune. The first element *wen* is a term found in English placenames to signify a mound in the landscape. Alternatively, it might be linked to the Old English adjective *weoh* which means ‘holy’.[[52]](#footnote-52) The second element -*dun*  tends to define a low hill with an extensive summit.

 Paul Cavill has demonstrated through a detailed linguistic argument that the name Brunanburh can be linked directly with Bromborough.[[53]](#footnote-53) The name *Brunburg* is recorded in a document dated 1100-1135 and other forms *Bruneburgh, Brumburg and Brombur* are recorded in documentation from the 1150s. An objection has been raised in personal communication, that because the place name Bromborough is first recorded in the twelfth century, the evidence for the name is no better than the claim the battle was fought on the Humber. However, in using onomastic evidence and narrative history, we are not comparing like with like. While narratives are open to fabrication and elaboration, the twelfth century documents recorded a name known to the community for the purpose of identifying land. For the reference to be meaningful, the name needed to be well established before the documents were drawn up. Bromborough is not named in Domesday Book, but it does not follow that the name must have been coined afterwards, Domesday Book recorded a fraction of pre-1066 names. Scholars working on Viking Age placenames are often reliant on using linguistic forms recorded from the twelfth century onwards. Documentary records provide a *terminus ante quem* for placenames. Names are linguistic relics, and just as artefacts dug from the ground do not usually date to the day they were discovered, the first written record of a name is most likely to post-date its creation. The earlier origins of a name may be deduced by examination of the elements it contains.

In identifying Brunanburh with Bromborough, Cavill argues that the Old English name Bruna or Brune (perhaps Brunne) applied to an area of the Wirral. This follows the arguments of Dodgson in suggesting the first element of the name is also found in Brimstage (three miles west of Bromborough) and Brimston (a place name which is now lost). This could suggest that the name Bromborough was linked with a larger tract of territory than today, perhaps co-extensive with the Domesday manor of Eastham (in the twelfth century, Eastham was a chapel dependent on the church at Bromborough).[[54]](#footnote-54) The manor included the parishes of Eastham and Bidston, and thus comprised a significant tract of land on the Mersey side of the Wirral. In identifying the -dun name element which is found in records of the battle, Cavill notes that there are a number of low hills in the Wirral. On inspecting a contour map of the Wirral, the nearest high ground near Bromborough (with an elevation of over 55 metres above sea level) is a narrow ridge running roughly north to south, which follows the line of Mount Road from Red Hill Road to Prenton Lane. This may be significant in marking a historic routeway through the medieval landscape. The southern tip of the high ground would give a strategic vantage point.

While Brunanburh is the earliest name form recorded for the battle, other names presented in written records, in particular Simeon of Durham’s *AetBrunnanwerc* and *Wendune* have provoked much debate.[[55]](#footnote-55) Rival theories to the Bromborough identification sometimes lack a clear linguistic link or can only attest one element of the attested names (e.g. the River Browney or the River Went) and assume that this was combined with another element (e.g. burh or dun) in a form which has not been historically attested. The placename debate has not reached consensus and there is not space here to represent a range of different views. It is however clear that strong linguistic case can be made for Bromborough as Brunanburh.

If the first element of the name Brunanburh is an Old English word (*burne*) influenced by an Old Norse word (*brunne*) as the attested spelling with ‘nn’ suggests, it might point to an area of mixed English and Scandinavian settlement. This would be relevant to a large swathe of northern and eastern England that was settled by vikings, including the Wirral. Comparison may be made with the name Greasby in the Wirral, which was originally Old English *græf burh* but the second element of the name was changed to -*býr*, through the influence of Old Norse speech in the area.[[56]](#footnote-56) It is also interesting that there are names for the battle site preserved in Welsh and Gaelic sources, ‘Brune’ in *Annales Cambriae* and ‘Duinbrunde’ in the ‘Chronicle of the Kings of Alba’. This might lead one to assume that the place in question was in contact with Welsh and Gaelic speakers, which could fit the pattern of cross-cultural contact that we see in the Wirral, close to the border with Wales and with wide-ranging links across the Irish Sea.

Why the Wirral?

In addition to the place-name evidence, the association of the battle with Bromborough makes sense from a tactical point of view. The invading forces would have many concerns which might include: How to co-ordinate the attack? Where is easy to reach? How can the army be supplied? Where are the best communication routes for retreat or advance? Would the local population be hostile?

In terms of coordinating the attack, the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ makes it clear that the Dublin contingent arrived in English territory by sea. However, it is less clear how the Northern British forces arrived. Twelfth century sources give more detail, but their information may be questioned. John of Worcester suggested that Constantine’s forced arrived and fled by ship. Henry of Huntingdon stated that the ‘Danes of England’ joined the Scottish army, which could suggest that Constantine’s forces travelled overland and collected Northumbrian allies en route. Dave Capener has pointed out that logistically it would have been harder for the northern forces to travel by land than sea and has suggested that the fleets of the coalition may have gathered together in the Irish Sea before attacking Athelstan’s kingdom.[[57]](#footnote-57) There are few historical sources for Northern Britain in this period, but it is expected that Alba and Strathclyde did have a naval force, as did Hebrides and Isle of Man which may have joined the coalition. Some light is cast on military organisation by *Míniugud Senchusa fer nAlban* (‘An explanation of the history of the men of Alba’) which is part foundation legend and part military census. It was compiled in the tenth century from seventh of eighth century materials and it records military levies for terrestrial and maritime warfare in British Dál Riata.[[58]](#footnote-58) Naval warfare became increasingly important during the Viking Age one might expect the kingdoms of North Britain to develop their naval capacity accordingly.[[59]](#footnote-59) In 1014, A Scottish contingent led by the *mormaer* of Marr, fought against Dublin at the Battle of Clontarf and their presence indicates access to a fleet. In 937, the alliance of Strathclyde and Alba would facilitate the movement of an invasion fleet from the Clyde valley to the west coast of England. This would be logistically less challenging than sending an army by land. Whether the forces gathered at sea first, or met by land at an agreed time, the preparations for the invasion of 937 required messengers and co-operation between the different coalition forces. After landing it may have made sense for the invading force to encamp near their fleet to ensure its safety, but at a location from which forays and raids could be undertaken further inland.

Given that the polities of Dublin and Strathclyde are based around the western seaways of Britain, it would make sense for the invading fleet to base themselves near the Irish Sea coast. If there were Northumbrians supporting the viking/northern side in the conflict (as some sources suggest) it would make sense for the invaders to strike near the Northumbrian border, rather than drawing Aethelstan’s forces into Northumbrian territory where they could wreak havoc. It is unlikely that the aim of the invading force was to take over all Athelstan’s territories (to which they held no legitimate claim), but rather to restore the authority of the Dublin dynasty of Ívarr over Northumbria. The plan, if the invaders had won the Battle of Brunanburh, could have been to march to York using the Roman road network and to establish Olaf as king. For its accessibility by sea the Wirral would have been easy to reach for fleets from Ireland and Northern Britain, located near the Northumbrian border and with good access to roads to York.

Such a large coalition of forces could not hope to gain enough supplies by living off the land in potentially hostile territory.[[60]](#footnote-60) The invaders would have therefore sought a safe location to replenish the needs of their troops. In terms of timing, it is known that the Brunanburh campaign took place after 1 August 937 when the Dubliners defeated their Limerick rivals in Ireland. If they sailed to England in September, they would have benefited from good sailing conditions and equinox tides, and perhaps most importantly, arriving as the harvests had been gathered. This would have maximised supplies from the point of departure. It also optimised the potential devastation the invaders could bring by consuming or destroying food supplies as they travelled, depriving the population of stores for the winter and taking the food renders that underpinned the income of the aristocracy.

A location on the west coast of Britain also makes sense from a supply perspective. Dublin and Chester were the wealthiest ports in the Irish Sea region in this period with a regular trade between them, taking advantage of a well-established sailing route along the north Welsh coast that minimising the dangers of sailing across a large stretch of the Irish Sea. Irish Sea trade is also evidenced at Meols on the tip of the Wirral. An army meeting on the Wirral would have access to a secure and efficient maritime supply line from Dublin to meet their needs before battle and to provide for an onward campaign, had the invaders been successful.

As the Wirral is surrounded on three sides by water, if offered a good defensive position for an invading army arriving by sea. There were potential allies north of the Mersey in Northumbria, and south of the Dee in North Wales. If ships were moored at Wallasey Pool or Bromborough Pool (a suggestion made by Ann Anderson), this would have been a sheltered body of water surrounded by marshy land which would be difficult to assail.[[61]](#footnote-61) Given the size of the invading fleet, and the need to keep the ships well defended, a small force may have remained to guard them. Wallasey Pool is considered by Dave Capener to be the most likely site for mooring the invaders’ ships before battle. [[62]](#footnote-62) Prior to modern drainage works and development, Wallasey Pool would have been a much large stretch of water. South of the pool there is a natural ridge running inland from Bidston Hill. This would have offered a dry route for an army to travel with commanding views over the neighbouring countryside.

There is a debate whether the Bromborough location would suggest that an invading army was heading directly to Chester and were intercepted, which prompted the battle. However, it might make more strategic sense if an invading force camped on high ground near Bromborough, where they could hold a strong defensive position with a line of retreat back to their ships, forcing English defenders to attack from a disadvantageous position on the lower ground. There are reasons why holding back on an immediate attack on Chester might be a wise strategy.

Vikings had tried and failed to take Chester on two previous occasions. The first was in 893 when the combined army of East Anglia and Northumbria came to Chester pursued by the forces of Alfred the Great and occupied the fortification. However, they failed to hold Chester as Alfred’s army killed anyone outside the walls, besieged the settlement for two days, burned fields and drove cattle away from the surrounding area so that the army was starved out and moved to Wales.[[63]](#footnote-63) Later, according to the ‘Fragmentary Annals of Ireland’ vikings who had been granted land near Chester by the Mercian rulers attacked the town around 906 AD but failed to take it. The ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ in 907 records that ‘Chester was restored’. This suggests the reinforcement or repair of the town’s defences. Olaf and Constantine’s army therefore risked failure if they headed straight to Chester, if the walls could not be breached immediately, a siege situation would leave the invading army in a vulnerable position in low lying land outside the walls where they could be encircled or attacked by an English army sent to relieve the town. Even if they captured the fortress, an English army could besiege and starve them out eventually. If the invaders had wanted to take Chester straight away, it would make sense to sail their fleet up the River Dee, rather than stopping near Bromborough first.

While any plan is speculative, if Olaf and Constantine could draw English troops into the Wirral peninsula, surrounded as it is on three sides by water, they could predict the line of English advance. Had the English army been defeated, it is unlikely that Chester could have put up much resistance to a victorious army arriving at their gates. This would have paved the way to secure Chester as a supply base for the onward movement of the invading army along the Roman road network heading east. Furthermore, the invaders might have hoped to draw support from the neighbouring territories north of the Mersey and south of the River Dee following a military victory.

There is inconclusive evidence for a Roman road running from the heart of the Wirral into Chester. Initial exploration has suggested that it ran from Chester via Mollington to Willaston.[[64]](#footnote-64) This route makes sense in light of Willaston’s later role as a hundredal centre for the Wirral. From Willaston it is possible that the road reached the coast at Meols where Roman market activity is recorded, and another branch may have headed towards the River Mersey.[[65]](#footnote-65) There is record in the fourteenth century of a road running from Claughton (Birkenhead) to Chester and this may follow the line of an earlier medieval or even Roman route.[[66]](#footnote-66) The road running south of Bromborough to Chester could have been the intended route of advance for an invading army.

Such a scenario is speculative. In any case, the invading army were defeated at Brunanburh. According to the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’, Olaf fled first with a small body of men, and then other forces fled back to their ships. Given that the Hiberno-Scandinavians were able to claim Northumbria two years after the defeat at Brunanburh, it may be that the retreat was more successful than the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ poem suggests, without too much loss of life of resources. The army retreated to their ships, with English forces in pursuit, but they were able to get away effectively by sea. There is no account of the English capturing or destroying the enemy fleet which one might imagine would have been celebrated.[[67]](#footnote-67) It would be in the invaders’ best interests to plan a good route for retreat if the battle failed and had a good plan for advance if they had succeeded.

In 1957, Dodgson advanced the argument that Brunanburh was fought on the Wirral based on place-name evidence, not only linking it with the name Bromborough, but arguing that the cluster of Old Norse placenames in the Wirral indicates that the local population may have been sympathetic to an invasion force led by a viking king.[[68]](#footnote-68) While cultural connections do not pre-determine political outlook, there were strong economic links between the Wirral and Dublin through Irish Sea trade. This is attested by early tenth century coin finds from Chester in Ireland and Viking Age finds from the trading site at Meols. The Wirral was a border zone with interests in Wales and across the Irish Sea. The region was involved in resistance against the imposition of Wessex control during the reign of Edward the Elder more than a decade before Brunanburh. William of Malmesbury, writing in the twelfth century, claimed that Edward died after defeating a rebellion in Chester in 924. His death at Farndon (possible Farndon in Cheshire) is recorded in the C and D recensions of the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’.

Bromborough lay near the southern boundary of what appears to have been a Scandinavianised administrative unit with its meeting place at Thingwall and its inland boundary at Raby. It would certainly be better for an army to travel through and camp within friendly rather than hostile territory and Olaf may have calculated on local support. For the reasons outlined above Wirral may have seemed a sensible place for Olaf and Constantine to launch an invasion with the ambition to win back Northumbria for the Hiberno-Scandinavian kings of Dublin.

Conclusion

In the Viking Age, Wirral stood at a crossroads of different cultures: Brittonic, English, Gaelic and Scandinavian. The impact of Hiberno-Scandinavian settlers is evidenced in both place names and archaeology. These cultural links help provide a context for interpreting the location of the Battle of Brunanburh fought in 937. The strongest argument for the battle site is linguistic in that the place name Bromborough can be derived directly from the name Brun(n)anburh recorded in tenth century sources, and these arguments have been well established by Cavill and others.

The main challenge to the theory that Brunanburh was fought near Bromborough is the claim advanced by the twelfth century historian John of Worcester that the invasion fleet came via the River Humber. By analysing how the Brunanburh narrative developed across a range of sources, it is evident that inaccuracies and legends had crept into the Brunanburh narrative by the twelfth century. We cannot trace John of Worcester’s claim to earlier evidence, and therefore it should not be taken at face value.

The border location of the Wirral on the edge of the Irish Sea, close to Wales, near to the historic border of Northumbria and on the edge of a Hiberno-Scandinavian enclave in Mercia offered potential advantages to the invading force in terms of gaining supplies and winning local support. The area also offered access to a network of Roman roads penetrating Britain and leading to Northumbria’s historic capital of York. From a historical, linguistic, geographical perspective, the Wirral is a plausible location for the Battle of Brunanburh.

1. I would like to thank Paul Sherman, Michael Wood, Dave Capener and Pete Jenkins for discussions which informed this paper, and the anonymous reviewers for their feedback. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Wirral Archaeology Press Release ‘The Search for the Battle of Brunanburh is over’, Liverpool University Press Blog 22.10.19 <https://liverpooluniversitypress.blog/2019/10/22/the-search-for-the-battle-of-brunanburh-is-over/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. D. Griffiths, Vikings of the Irish Sea, Conflict and Assimilation AD 790-1050 (Stroud, 2010), 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. C. Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland; The Dynasty of Ívarr to AD 1014* (Edinburgh, 2007), 151-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Downham, *Viking kings*, 103; F. Edmonds, *Gaelic Influence in the Northumbrian Kingdom: The Golden Age and the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, 2020), 158-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. It may be relevant to note that Henry of Huntingdon claimed ‘Danes living in England’ fought on Olaf’s side, while William of Malmesbury claimed that the northern lands yielded to the invaders. The claim in William’s text may derive from an earlier source. M. Livingston, ed. *The Battle of Brunanburh: A Casebook* (Exeter, 2011), 58-61. Cf. N. McGuigan, ‘Neither Scotland nor England: Middle Britain, c.850-1150’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of St Andrews, 2015), pp. 97-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. M. Livingston, ed. *The Battle of Brunanburh: A Casebook* (Exeter, 2011), 64-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The relevant sections of texts referenced in this section are usefully edited and translated in Livingston ed. *Battle of Brunanburh.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. ‘*ymbe Brunnaburh*’; J. Bately, ed. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition. Volume 3, MS A* (Cambridge, 1986), 70-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. P. Cavill *et al.*,‘Revisiting*Dingesmere’, Journal of the English Place-name Society*, 36 (2004), 25-38. The authors suggest the name is linked to the thing-site/assembly place at Thingwall. Another possibility is that it is linked to the Old English personal name Dynne. The name appears four times in the ‘Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England database’, including an early ninth century Mercian lord: S. Keynes *et al*. *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England database* <<http://pase.ac.uk>>. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. S. MacAirt and G. MacNiocaill eds and trans. *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* (Dublin, 1983), *s.a*. 937. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. C. Downham, ‘The Chronology of the Last Scandinavian Kings of York’, *Northern History,*40 (2003) 25-51, at 36-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Livingston ed., *Battle of Brunanburh*, 64-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Livingston ed., *Battle of Brunanburh*, 48-49, 64-67, 152-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Livingston ed., *Battle of Brunanburh*, 50-51, 54-59, 66-67, 82-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Livingston ed., *Battle of Brunanburh*, 86-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Livingston ed., *Battle of Brunanburh*, 56-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. M. Wood. ‘Searching for Brunanburh: The Yorkshire Context of the ‘Great War’ of 937’, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal,* 85.1 (2013), 138-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. R.R. Darlington *et al*. eds and trans. *The Chronicle of John of Worcester* (Oxford, 1995), ii. 392-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. A. Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba: Scotland 789-1070* (Edinburgh, 2007), 178-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. P. Stafford, *After Alfred: Anglo Saxon Chronicles and Chroniclers 900-1150* (Oxford, 2020), 142-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk, ‘The *Chronicon ex Chronicis* of ‘Florence’ of Worcester and its use of sources for English History before 1066’, *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 5 (1982), 185-196, at 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. P. Hayward ed. and trans., *The Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles: Hitherto Unnoticed Witnesses to the Work of John of Worcester*, 2 vols (Tempe AZ, 2010), i.69; Darlington and McGurk, ‘*Chronicon*’, 191-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Hayward ed. and trans., *Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles*, i.64; M. Brett, ‘John of Worcester and his contemporaries’, in the *Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. R.H.C. Davis and J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford, 1981), 101-126, at 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Brett, ‘John of Worcester’, 125 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. ibid, 119; D. Rollason ed and trans. *Simeon of Durham:* Libellus de exordio atque procurso istius, hoc est Dunhelmensis, ecclesie (Oxford, 2000), lxxvii. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. This includes the Winchcombe and Coventry chronicles which appear to have drawn on a lost text by John: Hayward ed. and trans. *Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles*, i.64; Brett, ‘John of Worcester’, 115-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Livingston ed., *Battle of Brunanburh*, 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. H. Davis, ‘Alredus, Alured or Aluredus of Beverley’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, 29 vols (Cambridge, 1910-11), I.755. McGuigan, ‘Neither Scotland’, 19-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. M. Twomey, ‘Historia Saxonum sive Anglorum post obitum Bedae’ in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, ed. G. Dunphy and C. Batu (Leiden, 2016) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139\_emc\_SIM\_000362> [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. D. Broun and J. Harrison, *The Chronicle of Melrose Abbey. A Stratigraphic Edition: Volume 1, Introduction and Facsimile Edition* (Woodbridge, 2007), 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. J. Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2000), 71. Cf McGuigan, 19-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. McGuigan, ‘Neither Scotland’, 20; D. Corner, ‘Wendover, Roger of (d. 1236), historian and prior of Belvoir’ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, ed. H. Matthew et al. (Oxford, 2004)

     <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-29040>. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. L. Ruch, ‘Roger of Wendover’, in *Encyclopedia*, ed. Dunphy and Batu <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139_emc_SIM_02210>> accessed 1/11/20. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Livingston ed., *Battle of Brunanburh*, 94-95, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*. Volume 2, *c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca NY, 1982), 44; Livingston ed., *Battle of Brunanburh*, 212, 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. M. Fisher, *Once called* Albion, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Oxford, 2005), 120-21; S. Peverley, ‘Robert of Gloucester’, in *Encyclopedia*, ed. Dunphy and Batu, 1284-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. e.g. It is notable that *Libellus de Exordio* of Symeon of Durham does not mention the Humber landing*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. C. Hart, ‘The early section of the Worcester chronicle’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 9.4 (1983), 251-315. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Stafford, *After Alfred*, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Stafford, *After Alfred*, 138-139, 146; Hart, ‘Early Section’, 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Darlington *et al.* eds and trans. *John of Worcester*, ii.281, note 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. # Monika Otter, *Inventiones Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 82-83.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. R. Thomson, ed. and trans., *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1998-99), ii.114-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Wood, ‘Searching for Brunanburh’, 152-54; S. Foot, *Æthelstan: The first king of England* (London, 2011), 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. C. Downham, ‘Note: How big was the Battle of Brunanburh?’, <<https://www.academia.edu/43891453/Note_How_big_was_the_Battle_of_Brunanburh>> accessed 1/11/20. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. A. Grant, ‘Egil’s Saga why the Battle of Vin-Heath was not the Battle of Brunanburh’, online publication, 14th June 2019

    <https://www.academia.edu/39566274/Egils\_Saga\_Why\_the\_Battle\_of\_Vin-Heath\_was\_NOT\_the\_Battle\_of\_Brunanburh> accessed 1/11/20. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. J. Dodgson, J., ‘The Background of Brunanburh’, *Sagabook of the Viking Society*, 14.4 (1957), 303-16; P. Cavill, ‘The Place-name Debate’, in *The Battle of Brunanburh: A Casebook*, ed. M. Livingston (Exeter, 2011), 327-50 . [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. M. Wood, ‘The spelling of Brunanburh’, *Notes and Queries,* 64. 3 (2017), 365-369; British Library, ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Manuscript B’, <<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/anglo-saxon-chronicle-manuscript-b>> folio 31v, line 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. *Brunandune, unde et uulgo usque ad praesens bellum praenominatur magnum*: A. Campbell ed and trans., *The Chronicle of Athelweard* (Edinburgh, 1962) 54-55 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. R. Coates, ‘A further snippet of evidence for Brunanburh= Bromborough’, *Notes and Queries,* 45.3 (1998), 288-90.  [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Cavill, ‘The Place-name Debate’, p. 344. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Dodgson, *Place names of Cheshire,*IV. 239.  [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. A recent summary is provided by P. Cavill, ‘The Battle of Brunanburh in 937: Battlefield Despatches’, in S.E. Harding *et al*. eds, *In Search of Vikings: Interdisciplinary Approached to the Scandinavian Heritage of North West England* (Boca Raton FL, 2014),95-108. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. J. Dodgson, *The Place-names of Cheshire*, part IV, English Place-Name Society (Cambridge, 1972),

    IV. 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. D. Capener, ‘A Long Walk South: Constantine’s route to Brunanburh’, online publication 2020, https://www.academia.edu/41847691/A\_Long\_Walk\_South\_Constantines\_Route\_to\_Brunanburh\_By\_Dave\_Capener?sm=b. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. D. Dumville, ‘Ireland and North Britain in the earlier Middle Ages: contexts for *Míniugud senchusa fher nAlban*’, in C. Ó Baoill and N. McGuire (eds.), Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 2000 (Aberdeen, 2002), 185-212. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Note for example reference to a new fleet of Ulster in 913 indicating developments in the maritime power of Insular polities. MacAirt and MacNiocaill eds and trans. *Annals of Ulster*, *s.a.* 913. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Cf. Bately ed., *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (A), 55-58, 65 (AD 893, 914). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. A. Anderson, *The Story of Bromborough* (Bromborough, 1964), cited in S. Harding, *Ingimund’s Saga: Viking Wirral*, second edition (Chester, 2016)*,* 122-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. D, Capener, *Brunanburh Battlefield Assessment*, online publication, 2020 <<https://www.academia.edu/42918649/Brunanburh_Battlefield_Assessment>> [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Bately, ed. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (A), 55-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Roman Roads Research Association, ‘Roman Roads in Cheshire’ <<http://www.romanroads.org/gazetteer/cheshire/M670.htm>>; C. Stagg, ‘Searching for a lost Roman road north of Chester’, *Cheshire Antiquary: Newsletter of the Chester Archaeological Society*, 2008, issue 1 <<http://chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/che_antiq08_spring.pdf>>. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
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66. Dodgson, *Place Names of Cheshire*, IV. 198, 202, 232, 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Cf. Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill eds and trans. *Annals of Ulster*, *s.a.* 902; J. O’Donovan, ed. and trans. *Annala Rioghachta Eireann. Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, 7 vols (Dublin, 1856), *s.a*. 935[=937]. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Dodgson, ‘The Background of Brunanburh’. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)