(Figures 1–8)

Trojans at Totnes and Giants on the Hoe: Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historical Fiction and Geographical Reality

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Geoffrey of Monmouth's largely fictional History of the Kings of Britain, written in the 1130s, set the landing place of his legendary Trojan colonists of Britain with their leader Brutus on 'the coast of Totnes' – or rather, on 'the Totnesian coast'. This paper considers, in the context of Geoffrey's own time and the local topography, what he meant by this phrase, which may reflect the authority the Norman lords of Totnes held over the River Dart or more widely in the south of Devon. We speculate about the location of 'Goemagot's Leap', the place where Brutus's comrade Corineus hurled the giant Goemagot or Gogmagog to his death, and consider the giant figure 'Gogmagog' carved in the turf of Plymouth Hoe, the discovery of 'giants' bones' in the seventeenth century, and the possible significance of Salcombe's red-stained rocks.

THE TROJANS – AND OTHERS – IN DEVON

Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*) was completed in about 1136, and quickly became, in medieval terms, a best-seller. To all appearance it comprised what earlier English historians had said did not exist – a detailed history of

Britain and its people from their beginnings right up to the decisive victory of the invading Anglo-Saxons in the seventh century AD. Geoffrey claimed he had done no more than translate into Latin an ancient book written in the 'British' (Breton or Welsh?) language. This ancient book, he said, 'set out in order and in elegant language the deeds of all of [the kings] from Brutus, the first king of the Britons, down to Cadwallader, the son of Cadwallo' (*Historia Regum Britanniae* (*HRB*) 1; i.1).[1]

Geoffrey, presumably born or brought up in Monmouth, on the Welsh border, and perhaps of Breton family himself, wrote his history while living in Oxford, where he may have been a canon in the chapel of St George in Oxford Castle. In 1151 he became Bishop Elect of St Asaph, but probably never visited his see before his death a few years later (Crick, 2004).

Geoffrey of Monmouth begins his *History* by providing a sequel to the familiar 'origin myth' of Rome, set out by the Roman poet Virgil in his *Aeneid*: how Aeneas the Trojan had fled after the destruction of Troy by the Greeks and settled with his followers in Italy. Geoffrey boldly continues the story. Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas, left Italy after causing the death of his father Silvius in a hunting accident, and travelled first to Greece. Gathering around him a band of the descendants of other Trojan refugees, he sought a land beyond the Ocean where, in obedience to an oracle of the goddess Diana, they could establish a New Troy. This land was called 'Albion' and was inhabited only by giants. The Trojan settlers renamed it 'Britain' in honour of their leader Brutus (*HRB* 6–22; i.3–17).

But later, while celebrating a feast at the place where they had landed, they were attacked by a band of local giants, led by Goemagot, or Goemagog – better known now as Gogmagog. The giants were killed in the fighting, apart from Goemagot himself, who was left alive to take part in a wrestling match with Brutus's comrade Corineus – later to give his name to Cornwall. Corineus hurled the giant from a cliff, staining the sea with his blood – and the place, Geoffrey tells us, is called 'Goemagot's Leap' ('Saltus Goemagot' in Geoffrey's Latin) to this very day (*HRB* 21; i.16).

Geoffrey's story of the Trojan settlers is not entirely novel. A Welsh historian in the ninth century had suggested that Britain was first settled by and named after a descendant of Aeneas called Brutus or Britto (Clark, 1981, pp. 141–2; Faral, 1929, vol. 3, pp. 6–11). What is new is the circumstantial detail Geoffrey provides about the voyage of

the Trojan colonists' First Fleet and their landfall on the coast of Britain. According to a natural interpretation of Geoffrey's text, Brutus and his Trojans landed at Totnes, in Devon (*HRB* 20; i.15). The Trojans' landing has since at least the late sixteenth century been associated with the so-called 'Brutus Stone' in the pavement of Totnes's Fore Street (Windeatt, 1920; Westwood and Simpson, 2005, p. 201) (Figure 1). The 'legend' is recounted in guidebooks as well as local histories (Russell, 1964, pp. 1–3), and in 1982 the new bridge carrying Totnes's inner relief road across the Dart was named 'Brutus Bridge', a name chosen by the local residents.

Yet Totnes lies more than 11 miles (18 km) up the winding River Dart from where it enters the sea close to the modern town of

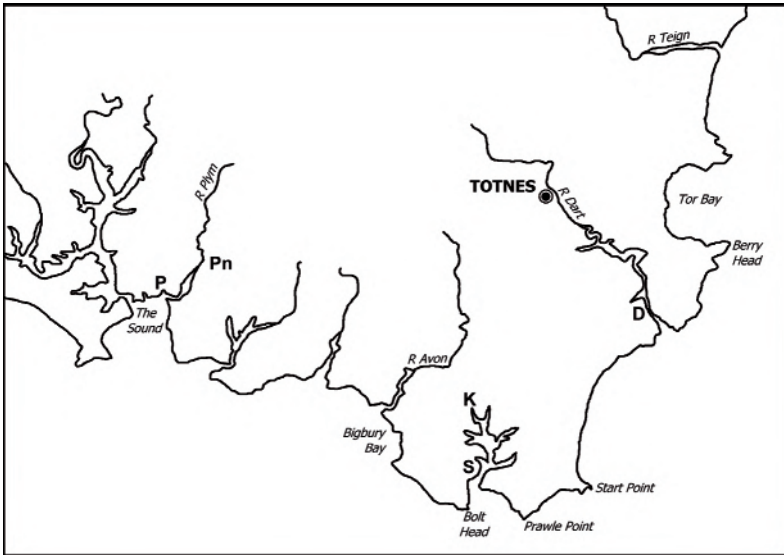Figure 1. *The 'Brutus Stone', Fore Street, Totnes. (Photograph: John Clark)*

Figure 2. *Totnes and the coast of south Devon. P: Plymouth; Pn: Plympton; K: Kingsbridge; S: Salcombe; D: Dartmouth.*

Dartmouth (Figure 2). Though the Dart is tidal, this seems a most unlikely inland excursion for a large (if imaginary) fleet – 324 ships when it left Greece, according to Geoffrey (*HRB* 15; i.11).

More puzzling, the *History of the Kings of Britain* reports that four other fleets later landed in the same locality: the Romans under their general Vespasian (*HRB* 69; iv.16); Constantine II of Brittany, invited to become king of Britain, with two thousand men (*HRB* 93; vi.5); his sons Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon, seeking to depose the usurper King Vortigern (*HRB* 118; viii.1); and the Saxons, at war with King Arthur and reneging on a promise to sail back to Germany (*HRB* 146; ix.3). Two of these fleets had sailed from Brittany, and their landfall on the south-west coast of Britain is not unexpected; moreover, as we shall see, in one version of the *History* yet another fleet, that of Cadwallo, later made the same crossing from Brittany to Totnes. But the Romans and the Saxons had apparently sailed westwards along the whole of the south coast of England in search of a suitable landing place.

Of course, none of this is history. However, it may be geography.

FACTS IN GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH'S FICTION?

Although there has been much debate about Geoffrey's sources, there is little doubt that his 'very old book in the British tongue' had no existence outside his own imagination. His actual sources included elaborations upon (and deliberate misrepresentation of) earlier historical writings, Welsh mythology and genealogies, local folktales, the works of Virgil and plenty of creative thought (Tatlock, 1950). Yet Geoffrey's 'British History' was for over four hundred years generally accepted as a true account of Britain's past, and incorporated by later chroniclers into their works (Kendrick, 1950).

Although he filled his book with fictitious people and events, and ascribed unlikely doings to 'real' historical characters, Geoffrey never set them in totally fictitious geographical contexts. His King Arthur ruled not from legendary Camelot but from Caerleon, where the ruins of a great 'city' (in fact a Roman legionary fortress) could still be seen in Geoffrey's own time (Tatlock, 1950, pp. 69–72). Events occurred not in Lyonesse or a generalised Waste Land, but in places that can be identified on a map of twelfth-century Europe. When Geoffrey tells us that King Bladud founded Bath and built the hot baths there, we may doubt the historical existence of Bladud but accept the twelfth-century existence of Bath – and that there were healing baths there in Geoffrey's time (*HRB* 30–1; ii.10–11; Tatlock, 1950, p. 47).

Geoffrey of Monmouth's historical fictions exist in a context of topographical verisimilitude. And the context is that of Geoffrey's own time, not of the putative Trojan arrival in the (?) twelfth century BC, or of the Roman invasions, or of the reign of King Arthur. We may therefore legitimately ask *why* he expects us to believe that so many invaders came to the same part of western Britain.

Allusions to places in Geoffrey's text are very specific but often obscure; only a minority of his readers would have ever understood them all. For example, who but a Londoner or someone familiar with London would have known of Ludgate, Billingsgate, and the Walbrook stream that ran through the city, all of which play important roles in Geoffrey's story (Tatlock, 1950, pp. 30–3), or would have recognised the significance of the human skulls found in the Walbrook, where Geoffrey provides a pseudo-historical explanation for an archaeological discovery (Clark, 1981, p. 149 note 2)?

Tatlock believed that Geoffrey 'knew of Totnes but little more of the region' (Tatlock, 1950, p. 52). On the other hand, in a study of

references to Cornwall to be found in the *Historia*, Oliver Padel (1984) argued that Geoffrey knew Cornwall well and had a strong interest in it and sympathy for its people. If so, it seems likely that he knew Devon – indeed the distinction between Devon and Cornwall may not have been a real one in his eyes. The arguments that follow assume that his knowledge of the Westcountry was, like Sam Weller's knowledge of London, 'extensive and peculiar' – and that some at least of his readers would have appreciated the local references.

'TOTONESIUM LITUS': THE TOTNESIAN COAST
There have been many attempts to identify the supposed Trojan landing place, but some previous commentators may have been misled by translations. Geoffrey does *not* say, as translators have it, that the Trojans and others 'came ashore at Totnes' or 'landed at Totnes', or 'near Totnes' or 'on the coast near Totnes', or 'made for the haven of Totnes' (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1963, 1966 and 2007, *passim*). Geoffrey never mentions 'Totnes' as a place in its own right. He adopts a rather surprising periphrasis – and repeats it several times. He uses only an adjectival form of the place name: *Totonesius* (perhaps 'Totnesian'). Four of the five invading fleets land on 'the Totnesian coast' ('Totonesium litus'), while Constantine II of Brittany comes to 'the Totnesian port' ('Totonesius portus'). We should not assume that this 'coast' or this 'port' were *at* the place we now call 'Totnes'. Rather, in some sense they *belonged* to Totnes.

What was the nature of the 'Totonesium *litus*'? In both classical and medieval Latin, *litus* generally means 'sea-coast' or 'shore' (Union Académique Internationale, 1957, pp. 168–9). Geoffrey uses it elsewhere in this normal sense. He sometimes attaches an adjectival form of a place-name – 'the Gallic coast' ('in Gallicano litore' (*HRB* 40; iii.6)), 'the Armorican coast' ('in Armoricano litore' (*HRB* 204; xii.16)), 'the Tyrrhenian coasts' ('per Tyrrena litora' (*HRB* 24; ii.3)) – or a possessive – 'all the coasts *of* Greece' ('per universa Graeciae litora' (*HRB* 15; i.11)). In each case the reference is apparently to a stretch of sea-coast named for the land or region that it bordered. How could upriver Totnes town have a *litus* in this sense?

Constantine II on the other hand arrives at the 'Totonesius *portus*' ('port' or 'harbour') (*HRB* 93; vi.5). Whether or not this was coextensive with the *litus*, the word sometimes seems to refer to the same locality, for after Brutus and his Trojans arrive at the 'Totonesium

litus' they celebrate a feast-day 'in *portu* quo [Brutus] applicuerat' ('in the *port* where Brutus had landed') (*HRB* 21; i.16). It is here that they are attacked by Goemagot and his giants. We may perhaps infer the existence of a specific 'Totnesian port' somewhere on the 'Totnesian coast'.

Once we question the location of these 'Totnesian' features, we find that there is little in Geoffrey's text to help us identify them. The Totnesian coast or port is a convenient landing place for travellers arriving from Brittany, like Constantine II (*HRB* 93; vi.5) and later his sons (*HRB* 118; viii.1), or from western France, like the Trojans whose previous stopping place had been the River Loire (*HRB* 17; i.12) (Figure 3). From Geoffrey's account we can surmise that (at least
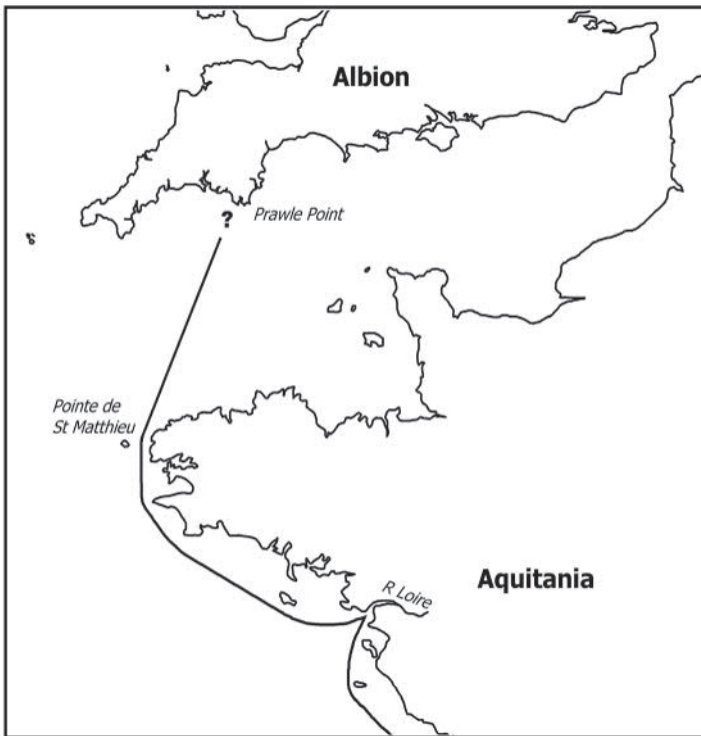

Figure 3. *The route taken by Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'Trojan fleet' – from the river Loire in* Aquitania *to the 'Totonesium litus' in* Albion.

in his imagination) there is safe mooring for several hundred ships. It is within easy reach of Exeter, besieged by the Roman Vespasian shortly after his landing (*HRB* 69; iv.16).

It is also close to (or even *in*) Cornwall, home to Goemagot and other giants (*HRB* 21; i.16). Indeed, according to Geoffrey, Corineus was especially pleased when Brutus granted him rule over the region now called Cornwall, since 'he delighted to fight against giants, and they were more abundant there than in any of the districts which had been distributed among his companions'.

It seems likely that Geoffrey here reflects a contemporary popular, and local, belief, for folklorists have long recognised the prevalence of folktales and beliefs about giants in the West of England (Spooner, 1965; Westwood and Simpson, 2005, p. 628). In his study of the folklore attached to prehistoric sites and monuments, Leslie Grinsell noted:

> The distribution of 'giant' names and traditions, as applied to prehistoric sites, shows a distinct emphasis on Cornwall, where 'giant' traditions have been encouraged by the size and number of the megalithic monuments, and by the character of the rock outcrops. (Grinsell, 1976, p. 25)

Thus J.T. Blight, on a visit to the Land's End peninsula, commented 'It is the tradition of the country that a much larger race of men stalked over this ground than any that are now to be seen […] their chief business seems to have been to throw about and overturn huge rocks' (Blight, 1861, p. 75). At the same time, J.O. Halliwell entitled his description of west Cornwall and its prehistoric monuments *Rambles in Western Cornwall by the Footsteps of the Giants* (Halliwell, 1861). His first chapter was 'The Land of Giants', and he devoted considerable space to the stories of giants that were attached to prehistoric monuments – many of them reflecting Blight's characterisation of the giants' 'chief business' of throwing rocks about! Robert Hunt dedicated the first section of his well-known collection of *Popular Romances of the West of England* to 'Romances of the Giants' (Hunt, 1896, pp. 35–77) and commented 'I find, over a tract of country extending from the eastern edge of Dartmoor to the Land's End – and even beyond it, to the Scilly Islands – curious relics of the giants' (*ibid.* p. 36).

Moreover, Geoffrey tells us that near the site of the Trojans' landing is the actual cliff where Goemagot was thrown to his death, called 'to

this day' *Saltus Goemagot* (Goemagot's Leap), and where the sea was reddened with his blood (*HRB* 21; i.16). Thus the existence of a suitable cliff and an evocative place-name near a plausible landing place might be corroborative evidence!

The 'special' nature of the Totnes coast and its odd lack of geographical precision are emphasised when we compare it with another south coast port that Geoffrey mentions frequently – Southampton ('Hamtonia' or 'Portus Hamonis'). Here the fleeing Roman general Laelius Hamo tries to board a merchant ship to escape after his defeat by the Britons (*HRB* 66; iv.13); Maximian arrives from Brittany to claim the crown of Britain (*HRB* 82; v.10); Hoelus King of Brittany lands with an army in support of his uncle King Arthur (*HRB* 144; ix.2); Arthur himself and his troops embark for Barfleur (*HRB* 164; x.2); and Brian, nephew of exiled King Cadwallo, lands on a secret mission (*HRB* 196; xii.7). There is no doubt of the importance of Southampton as a port in Geoffrey of Monmouth's own time. It was ideally situated for trade and for travel to and from Brittany or Normandy, the closest port to royal Winchester, and frequently used by Norman kings (Tatlock, 1950, pp. 48–9). In this, as elsewhere, Geoffrey's imaginary history is set in the geography of his own time; by contrast, his vision of Totnes seems at first sight out of step with contemporary conditions.

'THE PORT ON THE DART RIVER'

Writers immediately after Geoffrey had little doubt about his meaning. The conclusions of three of them are implicit in early adaptations and 'translations' of Geoffrey's text.

The earliest interpretation was that by the author of the so-called 'First Variant' version of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. There has been much discussion of the status of this Latin text since it was first identified and published by Jacob Hammer in 1951. It is now generally accepted that it was not Geoffrey's source, nor Geoffrey's own first draft, but a version written at some time before 1155 (since it was drawn on by Wace in that year) by an unknown author who, while transcribing many passages verbatim, abbreviated or altered much of Geoffrey's text, and even added his own interpretations of events (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1988, pp. xi–lxx). It never gained the popularity of Geoffrey's own version, but it had a lasting influence,

for it was the basis of much of the adaptation of the *Historia* into French verse by the Norman poet Wace in 1155. This was in turn the source of the first English version by Layamon (*c*.1200).

The 'First Variant' author, followed by Wace and Layamon, provides an extra instance of a landing at Totnes. Cadwallo, father of the last of Geoffrey's British kings, Cadwallader, arrives from Brittany with 10,000 troops to aid his nephew Brian, besieged in Exeter by Peanda, king of the Mercians (*HRB* 197; xii.8). In the standard text, Geoffrey does not say where Cadwallo lands, although clearly it provides the familiar easy crossing from Brittany and access to Exeter. The author of the Variant text has Cadwallo arrive (like Constantine II) 'ad portum Totonesium' (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1988, p. 183). So strong is the precedent that we are surprised that Geoffrey himself did not locate Cadwallo's landing here. Indeed it is tempting to suggest that the words 'ad portum Totonesium' were in the copy of Geoffrey's text consulted by the Variant author and thereafter dropped out from all subsequent, and all surviving, versions of the standard text!

However, the author of the First Variant abandons Geoffrey's consistent terminology. For example, he feels the need to clarify the first reference to the coming of the Trojans: they land 'in portu Derte fluminis qui Totonesium dicitur' ('in the port on the Dart river that is called 'Totnesian') (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1988, p. 20).

The Norman poet Wace lands the Trojans 'at Totnes in Dartmouth' (Wace, 1999, p. 28, line 1053) and is even more explicit about the Saxons: 'They entered Dartmouth; | They came to port at Totnes' ('En Dertremue sunt entré; | A Toteneis vindrent a port') (*ibid*. p. 232, lines 9234–5). In the case of the Trojans, Layamon transposes the prepositions, '*at* Dartmouth *in* Totnes', raising the spectre of a *place* Dartmouth in a *region* Totnes (Layamon, 1995, p. 48, line 895); but his Saxons come 'to Dartmouth at Totnes' (*ibid*. p. 538, line 10454).

None of these authors, it seems, has any doubt that the Trojans and the other travellers landed at Totnes on the River Dart – though we must remember that only the 'Variant' author was working directly from Geoffrey's own text, and his interpretation was simply accepted by Wace and thus by Layamon. Nor should we expect Geoffrey's contemporaries necessarily to have any better understanding of his obscurities than we have!

THE MOUTH OF THE DART: A TOTNESIAN PORT?

Wace was the first to mention 'Dartmouth', and it is clear, particularly in his account of the arrival of the Saxons, that he means 'the mouth of the Dart river' – which they 'entered' – not the modern port-town. Wace was born in the Channel Islands, a short sea voyage from Devon, and he seems to have visited the West of England and known it well, adding to his poem references that are not in Geoffrey's original text (Wace, 1999, p. xii; Houck, 1941, pp. 220–8). For example, on the reasonable assumption that, after their catastrophic defeat at the hands of King Arthur at the battle of Badon, the surviving Saxons would flee back towards the ships they had earlier left at Totnes, Wace places their last stand on the River Teign in Devon ('l'eue de Teigne': Wace, 1999, p. 236, lines 9389–94), not, as Geoffrey rather incongruously does, at Thanet in Kent ('Teneth': *HRB* 148; ix.5).

We should not therefore be surprised if Wace was aware of the location and nature of the Dart Estuary. For the safe haven at the mouth of the Dart was important long before the growth of Dartmouth town – but rather than the arrival of expeditions from abroad, it saw the gathering of ships and their departure on overseas ventures.

In 1147, just eight years before Wace produced his version of Geoffrey's work, an international fleet of about 164 ships had assembled 'aput portum de Dertemuthe' before setting sail in support of the Second Crusade, and to play a vital role in the siege and capture of Lisbon from the Moors (David, 2001, pp. 52–3; Kowaleski, 2008, p. 466). In 1189 and in 1190 two smaller crusader fleets assembled at the same place before sailing to join Richard I in the Holy Land – 37 ships in May 1189 (Stubbs, 1867, vol. 2, pp. 89–90; Diceto, 1876, vol. 2, p. 65) and ten ships in March 1190 (Stubbs, 1867, vol. 2, pp. 115–17). June 1217 saw yet another crusader fleet at Dartmouth, of variously '112' or 'nearly 300' ships from Frisia and the Rhine (David, 2001, p. 52 note 3; Röhricht, 1879, pp. 29, 59).

Although the campaign of 1147 is the first to be described in such detail, it may not have been the first time that a fleet had gathered at Dartmouth. In 1147 seamen from Southampton and Hastings among others were reluctant to join the attack on Lisbon, having taken part in an unsuccessful venture five years earlier (David, 2001, pp. 102–3), and there are several accounts of English fleets and mixed fleets from

northern waters operating in the eastern Mediterranean or along the Spanish coast from 1097 onwards (David, 2001, pp. 16–26). On the pattern of the later expeditions, it seems likely that ships from a number of ports would have mustered in a safe anchorage somewhere in south-west England before venturing in company on the hazardous voyage around the rocky coast of Brittany and across the notoriously stormy Bay of Biscay. Indeed, the crusader fleet of 1147 was scattered during a typical Biscay storm (David, 2001, pp. 58–61).

Between 1072 and 1076 Adam of Bremen included a geographical account of Scandinavia and the northern seas in his history of Hamburg and its archbishops. An early copyist of the work added to Adam's geographical chapter some detailed sailing instructions from the port of Ribe, in Denmark, to Acre, in the Holy Land (Adam of Bremen, 1846, p. 368; 1959, pp. 187–8). The first stage was from Ribe to 'Cincfal' in Flanders (the mouth of the former river Sincfal, later the Zwin, near modern Zeebrugge); thence to 'Prol' in England (Prawle Point, which the writer describes as 'the furthest headland of England to the south'); and on to 'Sanctum Mathiam' in Brittany (the Pointe de Saint-Mathieu at the extreme west of Finistère – Figure 3). Thus it is not unexpected to find crusader fleets from northern countries taking this route, making landfall at Prawle Point and mooring in the nearby Dart estuary. Nor perhaps would it be unexpected to find a putative Trojan fleet, sailing in the opposite direction from the Mediterranean, making a similar landfall!

In the crusade accounts that mention 'Dartmouth' there is little doubt that it means 'the mouth of the Dart river' or 'the harbour at the mouth of the Dart', not Dartmouth town. One of the participants in the 1217 expedition describes his first sight of 'Deutenmutha', 'where the harbour gathered us into its winding embrace between two high hills' ('ubi portus inter duos montes altos sinuoso nos collegit amplexu') – a fair description of the mouth of the Dart (Röhricht, 1879, p. 59) (Figure 4).

In the twelfth century the site of modern Dartmouth town was little more than a tidal creek on the west side of the Dart flanked by two hamlets, Cliffe to the south and Hardness to the north (Figure 4; Freeman, 1983, pp. 31–2, map 2; Watkin, 1935, p. 1). A weekly market was granted by King John in 1205 (Hardy, 1835, p. 295), but following law suits brought in 1233 and 1242 by the lord of Totnes, who claimed its competition harmed his market at Totnes, it was first sup-

pressed and then permitted only as long as dues from the market were reserved to the lords of Totnes (Watkin, 1914–19, vol. 1, p. 146; Kowaleski, 1995, pp. 70–2, 362; Kowaleski, 2008, p. 467).

Other rights of the lords of Totnes were even more extensive. In 1281, the heiress to the lordship of Totnes, Millisent de Montaut, claimed before the king's justices in Exeter that, among other privileges, she held rights over 'wreck of the sea from Totnes bridge to Blakeston without Dartmouth [the Blackstone, off Blackstone Point,
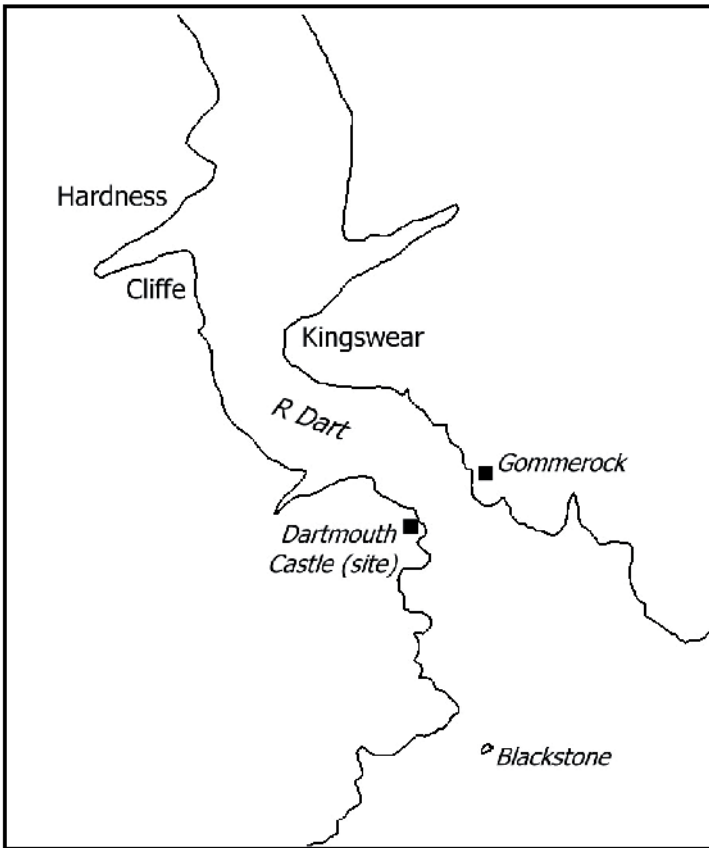

Figure 4. *The mouth of the Dart in the early Middle Ages, showing Dartmouth harbour, and the inlet on the site of the later Dartmouth town between the townships of Cliffe and Hardness.*

at the mouth of the Dart (NGR SX890494; see Figure 4)], *and customs of ships and boats arriving there*' (my italics) (Watkin, 1914–19, vol. 1, pp. 186–7). Asked by what warrant she 'holds the waterway of Dertemue and takes toll of men passing there' she affirmed that it was through inheritance. This surely reflects rights over the lower Dart that Judhael, the first lord of Totnes, had had two hundred years earlier (Russell, 1964, p. 9). With the growth of traffic using Dartmouth harbour those rights become valuable and a matter of dispute.

It was not until 1306 that the lords of Totnes relinquished their control over the port of Dartmouth, when Millisent's son William la Zouche granted 'the Water of the Port of Dertemouth' to Nicholas of Tewkesbury, a royal clerk. This grant included 'the tolls customs, etc., of the Port of Dertemouth and Dert from a place called Blakston next the entry of the port to Blakston next Corneworthy' (Watkin, 1914–19, vol. 1, pp. 201–2; for the date see Watkin, 1935, p. 19). Nicholas of Tewkesbury may have been acting throughout on behalf of the king, although it was not until 1327 that the rights were transferred to Edward III (Watkin, 1935, p. 28; Kowaleski, 2008, p. 467). In 1337 the port of Dartmouth was made part of the Duchy of Cornwall (Kowaleski, 2008, p. 468).

Thus when crusader fleets gathered at 'Dartmouth' it was apparently in waters over which the lord of Totnes held rights. The safe haven at the mouth of the Dart was indeed a 'Totonesius portus'. Could it also be the 'Totonesium litus'?

It was at the site of the Trojans' landing that they were attacked by giants, and nearby should be the cliff called 'to this day' *Goemagot's Leap*, where the Trojan Corineus threw the giant Goemagot to his death (*HRB* 21; i.16). Theo Brown (1955, pp. 68, 74) drew attention to the curious name 'Godmerock' (the Ordnance Survey prefers 'Gommerock', at NGR SX889505). The ruin of a late medieval fortified house (although the name may be presumed to be older than the existing building), Gommerock lies on the east bank of the River Dart, on the cliffs opposite Dartmouth Castle where the estuary narrows, just south of Kingswear village (Figure 4; Russell and Yorke, 1953, pp. 70–1; Seymour, 1996, pp. 15–16; Bradley *et al.*, 1999, p. 241). As a possible reminiscence of (or even inspiration for) the name of Geoffrey's giant, it has the attraction of lying in an area that could legitimately be called a Totnesian port, and even possibly a Totnesian

coast. Curiously, in the nineteenth century a 'lover's leap' story was attached to Gommerock (Holdsworth, 1844). There are doubts whether it is an authentic 'folk-tale' or simply Victorian romance (Russell and Yorke, 1953, p. 72); but if it is traditional, is it possible that it perpetuates a much older story of a 'giant's leap' (Clark, 2002, pp. 41–2)?

THE HONOUR OF TOTNES: THE DOMAIN OF THE NORMAN LORDS

The rights over the Dart held by the lords of Totnes seem a promising lead to the location of the Totnesian *port*, but the application of the term 'litus' to the same enclosed waters of Dartmouth harbour remains unconvincing. Is there any historical context in which Geoffrey could have considered a wider area of the Devon coast to be 'Totnesian'?

Commentators generally agree that Geoffrey's work is 'a mirror of his own time' (Gransden, 1974, pp. 206–7), and so it is to the Devon of Geoffrey's own time that we need to look. Close to Geoffrey's time is the Domesday Book of 1086, and it provides other plausible candidates for identification as the Totnesian coast.

In 1086, and probably ever since 1068, Judhael (or Iuhel), lord of Totnes, held 107 manors in Devon, as well as one in Cornwall, later known collectively as the Honour of Totnes (Figure 5; Page, 1906, pp. 467–79; Williams, 1994, pp. 271–4). The term 'honour' was applied to the properties making up the fiefdom held by a tenant-in-chief under the Norman kings. Although it would be named after the lord's chief holding, or *caput*, often a castle, it need have no territorial cohesion. Many comprised isolated manors scattered widely around the country. But sometimes a number of holdings seem to form a deliberate concentration in a particular area – probably for military purposes (Stenton, 1971, pp. 627–9).

Judhael's Honour of Totnes seems to fit this model. Although his manors were spread widely through the fertile lands of south and west Devon, there were significant clusters. They lay not around Totnes, where Judhael had his castle, but along the southern coast of the county (Figure 5).[2] This area of the Devon coast had suffered attacks from the sea, particularly by Vikings sailing from bases in Ireland. Nine of Judhael's manors, between the Kingsbridge Estuary and Bigbury Bay, had attracted the unwelcome attention of sea-borne
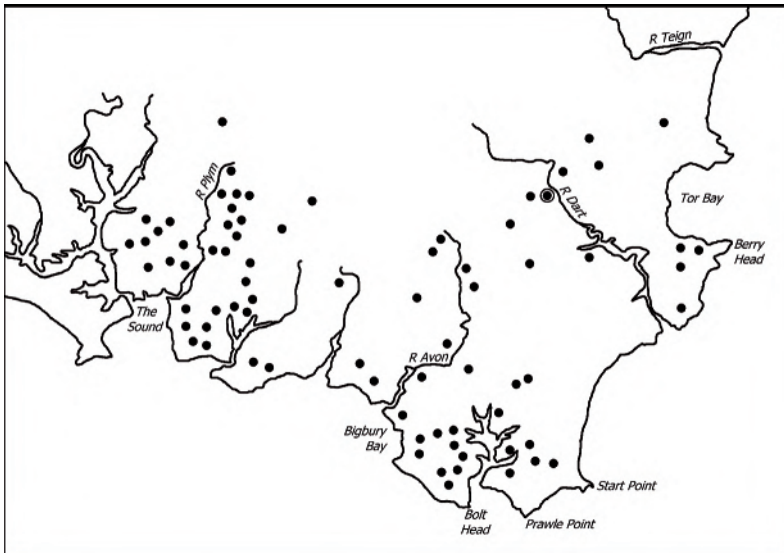
Figure 5. *The Honour of Totnes: the holdings of Judhael of Totnes in south Devon in 1086, according to the Domesday Book.*

raiders a few years before the Domesday survey. The Exeter text of the Domesday Book records that 'the nine aforesaid manors were laid waste by Irishmen' (Page, 1906, p. 472; Darby and Finn, 1967, pp. 273–4 and figure 63). Seven of these nine manors show a dramatic fall in value between the values quoted for the time of Edward the Confessor and those in 1086, and it has been pointed out that several adjacent manors in other ownership show a similar loss in value (Alexander, 1924), perhaps reflecting the same devastation. It has long been suggested that this was the result of the activities of King Harold II's sons, Godwin, Edmund and Magnus, who, after the Norman victory of 1066, had taken refuge in Ireland under the protection of King Dermot of Leinster. In the next two or three years they attacked western England on several occasions with the support of Irish forces and returned to Ireland with plunder from Devon and Cornwall (Alexander, 1924; Hudson, 1979, pp. 96–7; Williams, 1994, pp. 274–5). Recently Nick Arnold (2014, p. 36) has suggested that it was in 1068, after raids in the area of Bristol and Bleadon, in

Somerset, that Harold's sons' fleet 'might easily have rounded Land's End […] and attacked the nine manors in the estuary of the Devon Avon'.

On the basis of Judhael's holdings (Figure 5), one might conclude that the whole stretch of coastline from Plymouth Sound in the west to Start Point in the east could well have been regarded as Totnesian. If William I granted them to Judhael in return for an obligation to guard the southern coast against sea-raiders, as suggested by John Bryan Williams (1994, pp. 274–5), then a description of the coast as 'Totnesian' is appropriate. The usage would then imply that Geoffrey of Monmouth had a quite specific knowledge of the privileges and responsibilities of the lord of Totnes; and perhaps built his extraordinary vision of a series of invasions taking place here upon a perceived threat.

This coast is ideally placed to receive ships sailing from Brittany and has a number of safe anchorages. Geoffrey may simply wish us to infer that his invaders landed at one or other unspecified locality on this coastline. However, in one instance at least, as we have seen, he is more specific. The place where the Trojans themselves landed was also the site of the battle with the giants, and of Goemagot's death (*HRB* 21; i.16). Geoffrey insists that the name of this place 'Goemagot's Leap' survives 'up to the present day'. Even though we shall struggle to identify its location, if Geoffrey had an existing place-name in mind he was clearly intending to direct readers' attention to a single 'place', at least for the Trojans' landing – not a stretch of sea-coast some 30 miles long.

PLYMOUTH AND ITS GIANTS

Figure 5 shows two particularly striking concentrations of Judhael's holdings. One is at the western extremity of the Honour of Totnes, around Plymouth Sound and the River Plym, on the edges of the modern city of Plymouth; the other is further to the east, around Salcombe Harbour and the Kingsbridge Estuary.

Of these, Judhael's dozen properties in the Plymouth area (Gill, 1993, p. 19) did not include Sutton, where the medieval port-town of Plymouth was to grow up. At the time of Domesday, Sutton was held by the king, but granted to the Valletort family by Henry I; another part of Sutton belonged to Plympton Priory (Worth, 1890, pp. 17–18; Gill, 1993, pp. 21–2).

Unlike Dartmouth, the harbour itself was not 'Totnesian', and the Honour of Totnes had no particular rights over it. An inquiry in 1281 concluded that 'the port of Plymouth belonged to the king and paid £4 a year to the Exchequer' (Gill, 1993, pp. 31–2). Plymouth was slow to develop as a port (Oppenheim, 1968, p. 1). It is not mentioned as such (as Plym-mouth) until 1211 (Gill, 1993, p. 27), and only gradually replaced upriver Plympton as a trading port, as the river silted up. As late as 1346 and 1398 it provided fewer ships for the wars in France and Ireland than did its Devon rival Dartmouth (Oppenheim, 1968, pp. 14, 16). In 1439, however, the whole of Sutton was united by act of parliament as a single municipality with a mayor and corporation, under the name of Plymouth (Gill, 1993, pp. 53–4).

Plymouth can make a surprising claim to be the site of the Trojans' landing. It is inherent in its citizens' belief that the place where the Trojan Corineus hurled the giant Goemagot or Gogmagog to his death was Plymouth Hoe (Figure 6). And 'Goemagot's Leap', of course, is the only clue we have to the precise location of the Trojans' landing on the Totnesian coast.

Figure 6. *The Plymouth area in 1539–40, detail of a map of the coast of Cornwall and Devon commissioned for Henry VIII (British Library MS Cotton Augustus I i 38). 1: Plymouth Castle; 2: St Katherine's Chapel; 3: The Hoe. (© British Library Board)*

In 1586 the antiquary William Camden (1551–1623), in a description of Plymouth, refers to 'Corineus's fabulous wrestling match with the giant Gogmagog in this place…' (Camden, 1586, p. 81). He continues, in Philemon Holland's translation of the original Latin:

> As for that rock from whence, they say, this giant was cast down, it is now called the *Haw*, a very hill standing between the town and the Ocean, on top whereof, which lieth spred into a most pleasant plaine, there is a right delectable and goodly prospect every way... (Camden, 1610, p. 200)

Others of Camden's contemporaries agreed that the fight between Corineus and Gogmagog took place on the Hoe. Edmund Spenser, in the second book of *The Faerie Queene* (1590), writes of:

> The western Hogh, besprinkled with the gore
> Of mighty *Goëmot*, whom in stout fray
> *Corineus* conquered, and cruelly did slay. (Spenser, 1977, p. 260)

And Michael Drayton, writing in 1612, also sets the battle 'Upon that lofty place at Plymouth called the Hoe' (Drayton, 1876, p. 16). Thus, at the end of the sixteenth century, the belief that Plymouth Hoe was the place where Corineus fought and killed the giant was more than just a local Plymouth story.

This belief apparently received physical expression in the existence on the Hoe, cut into the turf, of the figures of two giants, one of them (or both) known, at least by the late fifteenth century, as 'Gogmagog' or 'The Gogmagog'. What seems to be the earliest account of these figures, and indeed the first to localise the giant's fall in this place, is in the work of John Rous (*c.*1420–1492), historian and antiquary of Warwick. In his *Historia Regum Angliae*, begun in about 1480 and completed in 1486, Rous provides a novel account of the arrival of Brutus and his Trojans (my translation from the Latin):

> And so when Brutus, a man of noble Trojan blood, landed […], on his first arrival on the sea shore at *Plympton* he was met by giants. There were more than sixty of them, though they had no weapons. The Trojans killed them with arrows, except for the captain of them all, called Gog-magog, who made a great impression on the Trojans because of his huge stature; he was saved for the time being, since Brutus wanted to see a wrestling match between him and Corineus, who was afire with eager-ness to get to grips with such monsters. (Rous, 1716, p. 15)

Although this account is clearly inspired by Geoffrey of Monmouth, the identification of the Trojans' landing place as Plympton (Figure 6) rather than Totnes seems to be unprecedented.

   After a description of the wrestling match and the death of Gogmagog that follows Geoffrey's version almost word for word, Rous continues (Rous, 1716, p. 16 – my translation and italics):

> Up until the present day this place has been named 'saltus Gogmagog'; in the common tongue it is called *Gogmagog's Leap*. And right up to the present day images of both of them are cut into the ground, according to the actual proportions in height and width of each of them. Certain people who hold land there and nearby, under the terms of their tenure, have to keep the images clean by cutting down the vegetation each year. I have never seen them myself, but *they are on the border of Cornwall and Devon, just by the very same 'leap'.*

Although Rous had never seen the figures himself, he must have had a local informant, who surely also provided the detail that the Trojans landed at Plympton. There can be little doubt that this place 'on the border of Cornwall and Devon', just by the 'leap' and thus (presumably) close to the Trojans' landing place at Plympton, is Plymouth. For within a few years of Rous's account, we find local confirmation not only that there was at least one giant figure carved into the turf on Plymouth Hoe, but that, as Rous said, 'certain people who hold land there and nearby […] keep the images clean by cutting down the vegetation each year'.

THE PICTURE OF GOGMAGOG UPON THE HOE

Ever since Plymouth historian Richard Worth published extracts from the Plymouth municipal records in 1893, the former existence of the 'Gogmagog' on the Hoe and the role of the civic authorities in keeping it clean have been well known. The first Receiver's (town treasurer's) Book begins in 1486 (coincidentally the year when John Rous completed his history), and in the financial year 1494–5 it records for the first time:

> Item paid to Gotewyll for þe renewyng of þe pycture of Gogmagog a pon þe howe... vij[d]. (Worth, 1893, p. 93; Wasson, 1986, p. 212)[3]

Thereafter similar expenditure is recorded on numerous occasions. Worth was selective in his abstracts, sometimes transcribing records verbatim, sometimes summarising them, and omitting a great deal. Fortunately John Wasson, for the Devon volume of the *Records of Early English Drama*, identified and included references to the cleaning of Plymouth's Gogmagog, on the grounds that the figure(s) on the Hoe might be associated with the May games (which is not evident from the records) (Wasson, 1986, p. lxi). From Wasson (1986, pp. 212–44) we learn that after the first recorded occasion in 1494–5, the image was cleaned in the financial years 1500–1, 1505–6 and 1514–15. Thereafter, hardly a year went past without renewed expenditure of 8*d* (8 pence) for the same purpose, until 1532–3. After that date expenditure, though it rose to 12d and then 2 shillings, was less frequent. The last occasion noted by Wasson was in 1574–5.

The process is described variously as 'renewing', 'makyng clene' or 'clensyng', 'cuttyng', 'dyggyng' or 'new dyggyng', or 'paryng'. A reference in 1526–7 to 'clensyng & ryddyng' led Theo Brown (1955, p. 71; 1970, p. 8) to conclude that the figure had been 'reddened' with red soil brought from elsewhere to make it more visible. However, the word is clearly 'ridding' – Middle English for clearance, or removal of debris (Lewis *et al.*, 1985, pp. 662–3).[4] The Plymouth 'Gogmagog' was a turf-cut image, similar to the more familiar images that still survive on chalk downlands (Marples, 1949; Newman, 1997). The cleaning or 'scouring' of these was sometimes the occasion of games or a fair, as at the Uffington 'white horse' (Marples, 1949, pp. 55–65) – no such celebration seems to have accompanied the renovation of the Plymouth image.

Rous clearly assumed that the two figures he refers to were of great age; like the place-name 'Gogmagog's Leap', they had survived 'right up to the present day'. Their actual age is unknown – though they obviously predate both Rous's reference in 1486 and the Plymouth expenditure of 1494–5 on 'the *renewyng* of the pycture of Gogmagog'. However, even a fifteenth-century date is significant; it antedates the earliest documentary evidence for most of England's other turf-cut figures of giants.

There is one apparent reference to a giant figure elsewhere as early as those on the Hoe – a rarely noticed mention in the writings of John Rous's contemporary, the topographer William Worcestre (1415–*c*.1482). Worcestre's manuscript notes (in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) include a detailed topographical description of Bristol, his home town, made in 1480 (Worcestre, 2000). Worcestre describes 'Ghyston Cliff' – on the Clifton side of the Avon Gorge, close to the site of the Clifton Suspension Bridge (Worcestre, 2000, pp. 32–5). On the hill-top above it, he tells us, is a *castellum*, a fort, 'destroyed and torn down to the ground hundreds of years ago' – presumably the Iron Age hillfort known as Clifton Camp (Russell, 1999, pp. 73–5). This *castellum* was, according to Worcestre, 'founded before the time of William the Conqueror by Saracens or Jews [pagans], by a certain giant [called] Ghyst'. Moreover, the giant is 'in terra portraiatum' – 'portrayed in/on the ground' – presumably a turf-cut figure of a giant somewhere on Clifton Down (Fleming, 2013, pp. 24–8).

By contrast, the well-known Cerne Abbas giant, in Dorset, is first recorded in the seventeenth century; the Long Man of Wilmington, East Sussex, in the eighteenth century; and the (lost) giants on the Gogmagog Hills, Cambridge, and on Shotover Hill, Oxford, both in the seventeenth century (Marples, 1949, pp. 159–212; Newman, 1997, pp. 68–156). Indeed, Bell (2004) and Hutton (2004) have suggested that these figures may have been only recently made when they were first mentioned, and date no earlier than the seventeenth century.

There is clearly an inconsistency between the Plymouth records and Rous's description of two figures of Corineus and Gogmagog. The Plymouth Receiver's Book refers instead solely to 'Gogmagog apon the howe', 'the pycture of Gogmagog', or 'Gogmagog the pycture of the Gyaunt' (Wasson, 1986, pp. 212–44). However, later writers seem to confirm the existence of *two* figures.

Thus the Cornish antiquarian writer Richard Carew (1555–1620) argued that the fight between Corineus and Gogmagog had taken place at Plymouth – and not, as some of his contemporaries claimed, at Dover.[5] As part of his argument he noted:

> Moreouer, vpon the Hawe at *Plymmouth*, there is cut out in the ground, the pourtrayture of two men, the one bigger, the other lesser, with Clubbes in their hands, (whom they terme *Gog-Magog*) and (as I haue learned) it is renewed by the order of the Townesmen, when cause requireth, which

should inferre the same to bee a monument of some moment. (Carew, 1602, f. 2v)

Carew was born in Antony, just over the Cornish border, five miles from Plymouth, and we can perhaps accept that his claim that there were two figures was based upon local knowledge. It was later confirmed by Thomas Westcote, of Shobrooke, near Crediton (1567?–1637?), writing in 1630 – although similarities in language suggest his account was not entirely independent of that of Carew:

> We may not forget the delightful place called the Hoe; a high hill standing between the town and the sea; […] in the side whereof is cut the portraiture of two men of the largest volume, yet the one surpassing the other every way; each having a club in his hand: these they name to be Corineus and Gogmagog: intimating the Wrestling to be here between these two champions: and the steep rocky cliff affording aptitude for such a cast. (Westcote, 1845, p. 383)

Carew had applied the term 'Gogmagog', used in the Plymouth records, to a *pair* of giant figures – perhaps 'Gog *and* Magog'. Is Westcote correct that 'they' (presumably the local people) 'name [them] to be Corineus and Gogmagog' – or is he simply extrapolating from the existence of two figures, large and small, and the name Gogmagog, by way of his own knowledge of the traditional story, to identify the two as the combatants Corineus and Gogmagog? He did after all live on the other side of the county, and his local knowledge cannot be taken for granted.

THE END OF THE GIANTS

Indeed, given his dependence on Carew, we cannot even be sure that the figures were still there in Westcote's time.[6] There are, it seems, no records of their maintenance after 1574–5, so Carew in 1602 is our last certain witness to their existence. However, accepting Westcote as reliable evidence of their continued existence in 1630, Worth concluded 'This interesting memorial of antiquity was destroyed when the Citadel was erected, about the year 1671' (Worth, 1890, p. 3). Although the erection of a massive fortification on top of the Hoe may indeed have spelt the end for the giants, the apparent cessation of periodic scouring of the figures in 1574–5 was shortly before the construction of earlier defences around the lower

part of the Hoe in the 1590s (Worth, 1890, pp. 409–11). Perhaps even when Carew wrote they were no longer easily accessible or visible.

Between 1678 and his death in 1689, William Scawen (1600–1689), Cornishman and pioneer campaigner for the revival of the Cornish language (Spriggs, 2005) wrote (and rewrote) a tract on Cornish history, language and customs under the title 'Antiquities Cornu-Britannick', which survives in three manuscript copies (Spriggs, 2005, pp. 109–13). A shorter version, abridged from an early draft, itself now lost, was eventually printed in 1777 (Scawen, 1777).

Scawen does not mention giant figures on the Hoe, but comments somewhat sceptically on 'giant bones' found during the building of the Citadel in the 1670s:

> I cannot affirm with so much reason (as some of our neighbours have done with confidence) who say, that at the last digging on the Haw for the foundation of the citadel of Plymouth, the great jaws and teeth therein found were those of Gogmagog, who was there said to be thrown down by Corineus, whom some will have to be the founder of the Cornish. (Scawen, 1777, p. 15)

Plymouth historian Richard Worth quoted Scawen and interpreted these 'giant's bones' thus: 'The caves and alluvial deposits on the Hoe have frequently yielded relics of the extinct mammalia of the local cavern period; and such a discovery was made while the Citadel was building' (Worth, 1890, p. 421).[7] Medieval finds of what were interpreted as 'giant's bones' were widespread. Thus for example the chronicler Ralph of Coggeshall reports seeing two 'giants' teeth' found in Essex in the time of King Richard (Ralph of Coggeshall, 1875, p. 120), and an early fourteenth-century poem *Des Grantz Geanz* (written to explain the origin of the giants that Brutus and the Trojans encountered) uses as evidence of their previous existence 'the great bones that man can find in many places in the land'. They include 'teeth, legs and ribs, and thigh-bones four feet long' (Brereton, 1937, p. 24, lines 444–52 – my translation).

It has long been recognised that chance finds of the fossil bones of large extinct animals, perhaps most often the remains of elephants or mammoths, may have inspired tales of humanoid giants (Figuier,

1865, pp. 308–9, 340–1; Mayor, 2000, pp. 104–29). Thus when in 1577 a storm uprooted an oak tree at Reiden, near Lucerne in Switzerland, and gigantic bones were revealed, Felix Platter, a physician and university professor from Basel, identified them as those of human giant, 19 feet in height (Figuier, 1865, pp. 340–1). At the beginning of the nineteenth century they were reidentified as the remains of a mammoth; however, the 'Giant of Reiden' still appears as a supporter on the arms of the city of Lucerne. Contemporary with the finds from Plymouth Hoe noted by William Scawen was the discovery of a large fossil bone in a quarry in Cornwell, Oxfordshire, recorded in 1677 by Robert Plot (1640–1696), naturalist and first keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Plot correctly identified it as the lower part of a femur, and after discussing whether it might be the remains of an elephant (perhaps one brought to Britain by the Roman army of Claudius) concluded that it was indeed from a human giant (Plot 1677, pp. 131–9, plate VIII, figure 4). Though the bone was lost, it has since been identified from Plot's illustration and description as the bone of a *Megalosaurus* (Spalding and Serjeant, 2012, p. 10).

Thus the interpretation of bones found in Plymouth in the 1670s as those of a giant should cause no surprise. Their identification as those of Gogmagog in particular confirms (and probably reinforced) the continuing belief of the citizens of Plymouth in the historical existence of Gogmagog, his fight with Corineus, and its localisation on the Hoe.

Did the people of Plymouth believe that their harbour – or perhaps Plympton – was where the Trojans landed, and for that reason locate the giant's death at the Hoe, and carve giant figures to commemorate the event? Did they simply appropriate the fall of Goemagot from Geoffrey and relocate it to the Hoe? Or was the Hoe linked to the death of a giant in local folklore even before Geoffrey's time – and regardless of where it was that Geoffrey himself intended us to believe the Trojans had landed?

The cases of Wilmington and Cerne now give little encouragement to the argument that the giant on the Hoe was a long-lived, perhaps prehistoric figure, one that existed long before the time of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Perhaps it had a practical purpose, to serve as a sea mark, alerting mariners to the entrance to Sutton Harbour and the medieval port of Plymouth, along a coastline in which there were a number of

confusing inlets (Figure 6) – and for this reason needed to be kept clean and visible at the expense of the town authorities.

John Rous admits he had not seen the giant figures himself – but we may assume that he had heard of them from a local source, and that the belief in a Trojan landing 'at Plympton' and a giant's fall from the Hoe was a local one. If Plymouth residents in the fifteenth century believed that the fight between Corineus and Gogmagog took place on the Hoe, they maintained that belief in the face of the common assumption elsewhere that Geoffrey of Monmouth placed the Trojans' landing 'at Totnes'. It would take a bold local storyteller to contradict Geoffrey – perhaps only a strong and long-standing independent Plymouth tradition could survive the contradiction.

Geoffrey did not take the story of the Trojan settlers from Devon tradition – but he might have found a local tale of a cliff-top fight between a giant and a hero that ended with the giant being hurled to his death. However, the place-name 'Goemagot's Leap' does not it seems survive at Plymouth; in its absence we have no sound basis for a belief that it was here that Geoffrey himself, who insisted that the place-name survived, set the death of Goemagot and the Trojan landing to which it was a sequel.

LOCATING GOEMAGOT'S LEAP

Despite these claims of the people of Plymouth, it could be that Geoffrey of Monmouth himself had a different locality in mind. He insists that the name *Saltus Goemagot*, Goemagot's Leap, survives 'up to the present day', and we should perhaps take him at his word. He often builds a story around the supposed etymology of a place-name. Sometimes, as at 'Thong-caster' (Caistor, Lincolnshire), he may have adapted a real piece of folk-etymology (*HRB* 99; vi.11; Tatlock, 1950, pp. 23–4, 384–7; Westwood and Simpson, 2005, pp. 443–4). In other instances, it is likely that Geoffrey made up his own fanciful etymologies.

The existence of an actual place-name served as a guarantee to the reader of the 'truth' of the story – and there is nothing to suggest that Geoffrey made a practice of *inventing* place-names (although he deliberately misinterpreted their etymology). Thus we may assume that some name that could be interpreted (by Geoffrey's peculiar etymology) as 'Saltus Goemagot' or 'Goemagot's Leap' did indeed exist in Geoffrey's time. Doubters could be referred to it while Devonians,

delighted to recognise the allusion, aired their superior local knowledge. It might have been an obscure place, and need not appear in recognisable form on a modern map. Its actual etymology would be very different, and we should not expect it to adhere to any linguistic rules of place-name development. Geoffrey was quite capable of distorting a name to make his point!

In recent times the search for Goemagot's Leap has been bedevilled by the belief that Geoffrey preferred a 'Celtic' name for the site of the giant's death: 'Lamgoemagot id est Saltus Goemagot'. As J. A. Giles's 1848 translation has it, 'The place where he fell, taking its name from the giant's fall, is called Lam Goëmagot, that is, Goëmagot's Leap, to this day', (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1848, p. 108). The implication is that 'Saltus Goemagot' is no more than Geoffrey's own translation into Latin of an original 'British' name. And *lam* does indeed mean 'leap' in Cornish (Nance, 1938, p. 95), as in Welsh (with double 'll') and in Breton.

It was thus tempting to assume that Geoffrey was quoting a pre-existing Celtic name, which (if it survived at all) would presumably be reflected today in a place-name beginning 'Lam...'. The Plymouth historian Richard Worth (1890, p. 4) wondered about the significance of the name 'Lambhay Hill' by Plymouth Hoe (which he interpreted as 'leap-field' hill, although it was 'the Lambe hay' – probably 'the lamb enclosure' – in 1627 (Gover *et al.*, 1931–2, p. 234)). Even Tatlock (1950, pp. 55–6) speculated whether Geoffrey had misinterpreted a lost place-name, similar to those that survive in Cornwall beginning with 'Lan...', 'church-site' or 'monastic enclosure' (cognate with the more familiar Welsh 'Llan-'), and that Goemagot was the name of a forgotten Cornish saint.

However, this 'British' name does not appear in early manuscripts. It is a later gloss added by an editor or copyist with knowledge of a Celtic language (Tatlock, 1950, p. 55). This was probably the Breton Ivo Cavellatus, editor in 1508 of the earliest printed edition of the *Historia*, in which the phrase seems first to occur (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1508, sig. Bii (recto)).[8] Thereafter the 'British' name appeared in every new printed edition of the *Historia* until 1929 (when two editions appeared with the correct text as it appeared in the original manuscripts (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1929, p. 251; Faral, 1929, vol. 3, p. 92)), and in translations even

later. Thus 'Lamgoemagot' is a red herring – Geoffrey provides only a Latin name.

Another approach might be to link the place to the stories of 'giants' leaps' found in English and Welsh folklore. These normally concern a leap made (or attempted) by a giant over a river or other obstacle, evidenced by 'footprints' in the earth and place-names like the Welsh *Llam Maria* ('Mary's Leap') and *Llam Trwsgl* ('Trwsgl's Leap') (Grooms, 1993, pp. 198, 228–9). There are apparently no recorded 'leap' stories or place-names of this type in south Devon – although suicidal 'lovers' leaps' are not unknown in the area, and there is a 'Smuggler's Leap' near Lynmouth on the north coast (Clark, 2002, pp. 40, 42; Briggs, 1971, vol. 2, p. 357). Perhaps to suit his history Geoffrey had deliberately replaced a now-forgotten local 'giant's leap' story, commemorated in an equally forgotten place-name, by one of a wrestling match and a giant's fall to his death (Clark, 2002, pp. 40–1).

However, a search for 'giants' leaps' fails to address an anomaly. When Geoffrey describes the death of Goemagot, hurled from a cliff-top by Corineus, he refers to it as *praecipitatio*, literally 'precipitation'. Modern translators have often rendered this simply as 'fall', but the recent *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (Howlett, 2007, pp. 2384–5) quotes this passage as an illustration of the meaning '(act of) casting down or causing to fall (especially from a great height)'. In this context, Geoffrey surely has in mind the traditional Roman form of execution, *poena praecipitationis* or *praecipitium* (du Cange *et al*., 1886, p. 452), by which a convicted traitor or murderer was thrown to his death from a high place, notably from the Tarpeian Rock, a crag overlooking the Forum in Rome (Hornblower *et al*., 2012, p. 1431). Yet when Geoffrey says that the place takes its name from the *praecipitatio* of the giant, why does he then insist that the place was called *saltus*, a 'leap' – which surely suggests a deliberate suicidal jump from the cliff?

Geoffrey's claim that a 'leap' place-name might commemorate the deliberate hurling of a victim from a high place is not unique. Tatlock (1950, p. 56 and note 231) drew attention to an account by Geoffrey's contemporary Orderic Vitalis of an occasion in 1090 in Rouen, when Henry, brother of William Rufus (and later to succeed him as

King Henry I of England), in an act of summary justice threw a Breton traitor, Conan, out of the window of a high tower to his death, a place thereafter, Orderic says, known as 'Conan's Leap'. Grim humour, perhaps, and if Orderic is correct, this place-name was in use long before we hear of 'Goemagot's Leap'. Tatlock does not comment on Orderic's oddly familiar phraseology: 'Locus ipse ubi uindicta huiusmodi perpetrata est *saltus Conani usque in hodiernam diem uocitatus est*' – 'The place where this punishment was inflicted is called "Conan's leap" to this day' (Orderic Vitalis, 1973, pp. 226–7). We can compare Geoffrey's 'Locus autem ille, nomen ex praecipitatione gigantis adeptus, *Saltus Goemagot usque in praesentem diem uocatur*' (*HRB* 21; i.16).

Its editor, Marjorie Chibnall, concluded that Book 8 of Orderic's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which contains this passage, 'was written between 1133 and 1135, possibly with additions a year or two later' (Orderic Vitalis, 1973, p. xix), and thus largely before the completion of Geoffrey's *Historia*. Orderic's work was little known to contemporaries, only two early manuscripts survive (Gransden, 1974, p. 165), and it seems unlikely that Geoffrey read it. On the other hand, Orderic is known to have drawn on Geoffrey's work later, and apparently to have interpolated material taken from it in text he had already drafted (Tatlock, 1950, pp. 207, 418–20; Gransden, 1974, p. 165). Yet although the similarity in wording tempts one to assume one is copying the other, if it is more than a coincidence, Geoffrey may independently have heard of 'Conan's Leap' and modelled his 'Goemagot's Leap' upon it.

Clearly, however, Geoffrey wishes to draw our attention to a place-name that seems to contain the word 'leap' – or rather, in Latin, 'saltus' – not 'fall'. Is there a surviving place-name beginning with 'Saltus...' – or modern 'Sal(t) ...'?

SALCOMBE AND THE GIANT'S LEAP

The only significant 'Sal(t)...' places listed in the English Place-Name Society's two volumes on Devon (Gover *et al.*, 1931–2) are Saltram, two Saltertons (Budleigh and Woodbury), Salcombe, and Salcombe Regis – to which one might add Saltash, just over the Tamar in Cornwall.

There may of course be a smaller place- or field-name (not included in early volumes of the Place-Name Society's series) or a now lost name that could lie behind Geoffrey's 'Saltus Goemagot'. For example, Darby and Finn (1967, pp. 269–73) note that some 28 Domesday manors in Devon (none of them with a 'Salt...' name) are credited with either *salinae* (salt-pans) or *salinarii* (saltworkers). About ten of these lay in the general area we have designated 'the Totnesian coast' (*ibid*. p. 271 figure 62). Any one of these saltworks might have inspired a purely local 'Salt...' place-name that is now lost.

But in this same area there is one obvious place-name that begins with an element which Geoffrey might have interpreted as 'saltus', and it lies at the centre of a cluster of properties that in 1086 belonged to Judhael, lord of Totnes. A score of Judhael's holdings lay on either side of *Salcombe* Harbour and the Kingsbridge Estuary, at the most southerly point of the Devon coastline and, perhaps significantly in this context, at the point facing the shortest sea-crossing from Brittany. Moreover, it was Judhael's manors in this area that were, as we have seen, 'laid waste by Irishmen'.

Salcombe itself was 'Saltecombe' ('salt-valley') in 1244 (Gover *et al*., 1931–2, p. 311). This provides not only Geoffrey's 'salt(us)' but a plausible mutation of the first syllable of the giant's name – at least, no less plausible than that which allowed Geoffrey to derive 'Gloucester' from 'Claudius' (*HRB* 68; iv.15)! Although the name of Salcombe is not recorded as early as Geoffrey's own time it is a good Old English name, and Devon's *other* Salcombe (Salcombe Regis, in the east of the county) was already 'sealt cumbe' in 1050–72 (Gover *et al*., 1931–2, p. 595). The name of our 'Saltecombe' presumably referred to a natural valley before a settlement grew up on the site; its absence from Domesday Book is not surprising.[9]

Salcombe Harbour and the Kingsbridge Estuary with their tidal creeks (or 'rias', a system of ancient river valleys drowned by rising sea-levels) are now an important haven for small craft. Salcombe was attacked by a Breton and Norman force in 1403 (Oppenheim, 1968, p. 18), and in about 1540 a small fort was built at Salcombe to guard the estuary and to prevent its use by any invader (Figure 7; Colvin *et al*., 1975, p. 595).

We have already noted that Prawle Point, two miles (three km) east of the harbour entrance, was in the late eleventh century a landmark for vessels sailing through the English Channel from north European
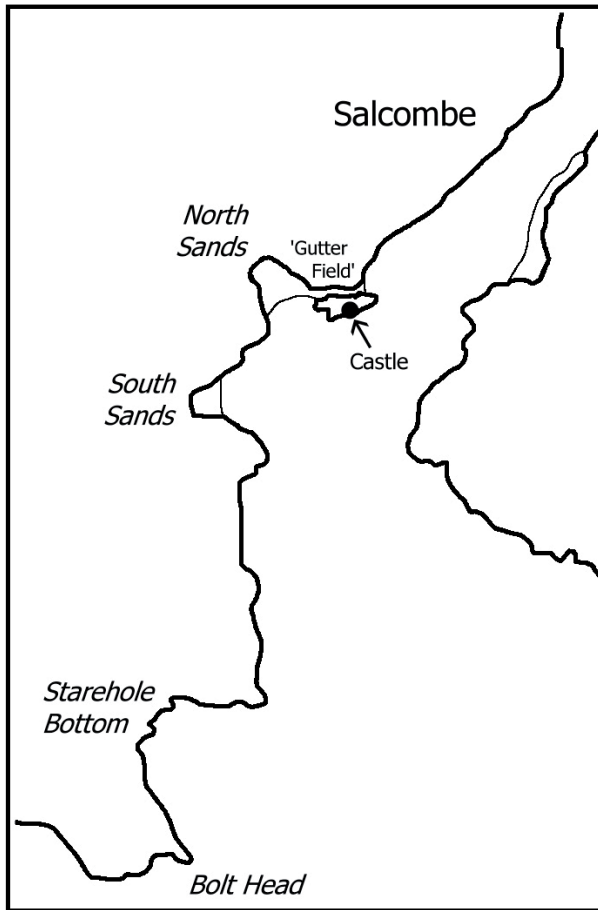
Figure 7. *Portlemouth: the approach to Salcombe and Salcombe Harbour.*

ports towards Finistère and the Atlantic. However, there is no apparent evidence for the use of the harbour itself at this time. It has been argued that the town of Kingsbridge, at the head of the estuary, was, like Totnes, an Anglo-Saxon defensive foundation (Haslam, 1984, pp. 271–5; Luscombe, 2005, pp. 110–12), but it seems to have been of little importance in Norman times. Salcombe town itself was a very late development and throughout the medieval period it had no

independent status as a town or port (Hoskins, 1972, p. 470; Fox, 2001, pp. 32, 43–4 note 76).

Yet the towns and villages of 'Portlemouth' (Figure 7), as the estuary is named in the records, provided ships for the royal fleet on a number of occasions in the fourteenth century (five for the French war in 1346, alongside 31 from Dartmouth, and one for the Irish campaign of 1398, alongside 12 from Dartmouth) (Oppenheim, 1968, pp. 14, 16). Pilgrims occasionally sailed from there to Compostella in Spain, although more usually from Dartmouth or Plymouth (Oppenheim, 1968, p. 20; Childs, 1992, pp. 83–4; Kowaleski, 2008, p. 478, table 19), and there was considerable coastal trade from the fourteenth century on (Kowaleski, 1995, pp. 32–3).

However, there seems no evidence that the estuary itself was in Geoffrey's time in use as a 'Totnesian port' or would be recognised as a suitable anchorage for a large fleet, as we have seen is true for Dartmouth. Unlike Plymouth with its figure of Gogmagog, the Salcombe estuary seems to have no local tradition, however late or indirect, linking it to the coming of the Trojans or the giant Goemagot. Yet there may be physical traces of the giant's presence.

BLOOD ON THE ROCKS

Devon folklorist Theo Brown (1955, p. 68) drew attention to another element in Geoffrey of Monmouth's story: the giant was smashed into a thousand pieces on the rocks at the foot of the cliff, and stained the waves red with his blood ('fluctus sanguine maculavit'). She noted the existence of red cliffs in south Devon. Particularly just west of the mouth of the River Dart, she tells us, 'a very slight churning of the sea produces red waves, as though coloured by a giant's blood'. If it is anything more than a flight of fancy on the part of Geoffrey of Monmouth, perhaps we should take note of an area of red rocks that might have inspired – or validated – such a story.

At first sight the cliffs near Salcombe are unpromising, comprising largely green-coloured (hornblende-chlorite) schists and grey-coloured (mica) schists (Selwood and Durrance, 1982, p. 38). Green schists, however, can become red or red-brown through oxidation (Ussher, 1904, pp. 48–9). In certain localities the cliffs and rocks of this coast are stained red – as between Outer and Inner Hope (NGR

SX675400), where striking vertical bands of red, about 10 metres wide, alternate with the more usual green (Ussher, 1904, p. 59 and frontispiece).

We need look no further than Salcombe Harbour itself for similar red staining. Local writer Anne Born described a site adjacent to ruined Salcombe Castle (Fort Charles), a cliff with, at its base, 'an unexpected glow of crimson among the blacks, greys and greens' (Born, 1986, p. 4). It is a striking feature (Figure 8). The flat rocks on which the castle was built, on the east corner of North Sands Bay (NGR SX731381), are separated from the mainland by a large fault, water-filled at high tide, and the fault zone 'is intensely reddened and impregnated with siderite which is being replaced by limonite' (Devon County Council, n.d., p. 2).

The red-stained rocks are clearly visible across the bay from the popular beach at South Sands, and from the ferry linking South Sands to Salcombe itself. Is this the trace of Goemagot's blood? Was he

Figure 8. *The red-stained rocks at the bottom of the cliff behind Salcombe Castle. (Photograph: John Clark)*

hurled from the cliff-top above? Were the red rocks of Salcombe already linked to a story of the spilling of a giant's blood, or can we see Geoffrey's own lively imagination at work again?

Red-stained rocks could have inspired a folktale about the shedding of a giant's blood, or could even have suggested the idea to Geoffrey himself. Indeed, such a tale is recorded about one of Cornwall's many giants. According to this tale, a giant named Bolster met his death at Chapel Porth, on the north Cornwall coast near St Agnes, through the wiles of the eponymous Agnes, with whom he was besotted. She persuaded him to bleed himself to prove his love for her; he did not realise that the hole in the ground she asked him to fill with his blood led to the sea, and bled to death (Westwood and Simpson, 2005, p. 95). According to Robert Hunt (1896, p. 75) 'The hole at Chapel Porth still retains the evidences of the truth of this tradition, in the red stain which marks the track down which flowed the giant's blood'.

There seems to be no similar story from Salcombe, but a nineteenth-century guidebook provides an intriguing counterpoint. James Fairweather (*c.*1897, pp. 99–100) notes that a field on the cliff-top above the site of Salcombe Castle was called 'Gutter Field' (Figure 7). He continues 'there is an old tradition that it derived its name from a great battle that took place there, when human blood ran rather freely over its slopes'. This sounds tantalisingly like the last remnant of a story that explained the red rocks, stained by the blood flowing from the legendary battle on the cliff above.

Perhaps the answer *is* simple. Perhaps 'Saltus Goemagot' was no more than Geoffrey's rendition of 'Saltecombe' into Latin. The pun (for that is all it is) would work as well in Anglo-Norman French, where 'salt' or 'sau[l]t' is a 'leap' (Stone and Rothwell, 1977–92, p. 673), as it does in Latin. Was there already a local story of a cliff-top conflict to explain the 'blood-stained' rocks? Did Geoffrey take a giant from local folklore? Did he combine it with a pun on French and English 'salt'?

It is the sort of audacious invention that critical readers of Geoffrey's work come to expect. It is no more outrageous than the derivation of London's Walbrook from the name of a fictitious Roman general 'Gallus' (*HRB* 76; v.4). Yet the allusion, if we are right, is so obscure that all Geoffrey's copyists, translators and commentators, from the author of the 'Variant' text in the twelfth century (who simply omitted the place-name) to Faral and Tatlock in the twentieth

century, have failed to recognise it. Who of Geoffrey's contemporaries, outside south Devon, would have understood the reference to a then obscure place in the South Hams?

CONCLUSION

Whether or not the West of England already had a reputation as the 'land of giants' in Geoffrey of Monmouth's time, his setting of the Trojan settlers' first meeting with giants, Corineus's fight, and the fall of Goemagot, all of them on Devon's 'Totnesian coast' would certainly reinforce such a belief. Reputed physical evidence could ensure the continuity of local tradition. Totnes had its Brutus Stone; Plymouth had its turf-cut figures on the Hoe, and in the seventeenth century the discovery of giant's bones. Nor is the tradition dead – both communities seem to have a nostalgic interest in their legendary past, revealed in the naming of Totnes's Brutus Bridge, and in plans to re-carve the giants on Plymouth Hoe – abandoned because of cost (Blackledge, 2015). On the other hand, if Geoffrey had Salcombe in mind, his meaning was so obscure that even the physical evidence of blood-stained rocks could not inspire a viable tradition!

In considering the question 'Where did the Trojans land?' we find contradictory answers. At the beginning of this paper we suggested that there are obscure allusions in Geoffrey's text, which would mystify most of his readers but provide others with a *frisson* of delighted recognition. Perhaps Geoffrey intended the implications of his 'Totnesian' references to be clear only to a few, those familiar with both the geography of south Devon and the privileges claimed there by the lords of Totnes. If so, he himself shared that familiarity and had a considerable interest in the area, which he expressed in coded references in the pages of his masterwork.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

1. References to the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (henceforth abbreviated to *HRB*) are given both to the sequential chapter numbers adopted in the

most recent edition and translation by Reeve and Wright (2007), and to the 'traditional' division into books and chapters followed, for example, in the translations by Evans (1963) and Thorpe (1966). Except where otherwise indicated translations from Geoffrey's text are my own.

2. The placing of Judhael's properties on this map is based on Darby and Versey's *Domesday Gazetteer* (1975, map 14). No account is taken of possible dispute over the identification and location of such manors as *Leuricestone*, Portlemouth and Ford, since they do not affect the overall pattern. (See also Williams, 1994, maps 1 and 2.)

3. Worth read the name as 'Cotewyll' rather than Wasson's 'Gotewyll'. Apparently misunderstanding Worth, Marples (1949, p. 209) dated this record to 1486.

4. Thus in a record from 1517–18, workmen engaged in demolishing and rebuilding a wall in Friars Lane, Plymouth, were further paid for '*rydding* of the strete' (Worth, 1893, p. 102).

5. The London historian Robert Fabyan (died *c*.1512), for example, placed the death of Gogmagog at 'the fall of Dover' (Fabyan, 1811, pp. 10–11). In this he was followed by the highly influential *Chronicles* of Raphael Holinshed (1587, p. 10).

6. A later reference, noted by Marples (1949, p. 212), in Robert Heath's *Natural and Historical Account of the Isles of Scilly* of 1750, implying that the figures were still visible at that late date, is misleading. It occurs in the introduction to Heath's chapter 'Description of Cornwall' (Heath, 1750, pp. 248–52), which is itself clearly an uncritical and uncredited rewriting of Carew's own introductory text from 150 years earlier (Carew, 1602, ff. 1r–3r).

7. For 'extinct mammalia of the local cavern period' see Cullingford (1982, pp. 282–4, figure 11.15). Bones of woolly mammoth might well be mistaken for gigantic human bones.

8. Ivo Cavellatus came from near Quimper in Brittany, and taught at the Breton-founded College de Cornouailles in the University of Paris (Kerviler, 1886–1908, vol. 8, p. 144; Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1929, pp. 10–11). He addressed his edition of Geoffrey's *Historia* particularly to a Breton readership.

9. Salcombe lay (at least by 1303) in the manor of Batson (Lyte, 1899–1920, vol. 1, p. 351). Not one of Judhael's Domesday manors, in 1086 Batson (*Badestana*) was held by Hugh from the Count of Mortain (Page, 1906, p. 444). The closest of Judhael's manors was at Collaton, just over a mile (2 km) to the west (*ibid*. p. 471).

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