

Urbs Giudi: text, translation and topography

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ABSTRACT

This paper re-examines Bede's reference to *urbs Giudi* for previously overlooked clues that may help to identify the location of this elusive fortress, somewhere in, on or near the Firth of Forth in what is now eastern central Scotland. After considering Bede's abilities as a geographer, it assesses and challenges the persistent suggestion that *urbs Giudi* was on an island. It then analyses the implications of Bede's use of Latin *in medio sui* and *sinus* by comparing these terms with other examples in Bede's writings and elsewhere. This points to the importance of secondary and elliptical, rather than literal, senses of *in medio sui* and *sinus* respectively. The outcome of this is that *urbs Giudi* was located neither 'in the middle of' the Firth of Forth, nor 'halfway along' it, but further inland, on the Links of Forth, the meandering section of the Forth Estuary. This excludes all previously proposed locations for *urbs Giudi* with the exception of one, Stirling.

INTRODUCTION

One of the enduring enigmas of early medieval northern Britain is the identification of a place which Bede records as *urbs Giudi*. *Urbs Giudi* features in Bede's account of 'How the Britons were ravaged by the Irish and the Picts' (*Vt Brettones a Scottis uastati Pictisque*).¹ Bede clarifies Gildas' description of 'the Scots from the north-west and the Picts from the north' as *gentibus transmarinis* 'overseas peoples',² that is, peoples who invaded Britain from across the sea. He explains that:³

¹ *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* [hereafter *HE*] i. Contents, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), pp. 8–9. Bede uses *Scotti* when referring to both the Irish in Ireland and the 'Irish in Britain', that is, the Scots of Dál Riata. See *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 16 n. 1.

² *De excidio Britonum*, xiv; *Gildas: the Ruin of Britain and other Works*, Hist. from the Sources: Arthurian Period Sources 7, ed. M. Winterbottom (London, 1978), p. 93.

³ *HE* i. 12; 'We call them races from over the waters, not because they dwelt outside Britain but because they were separated from the Britons by two wide and long arms of the sea, one of which enters the land from the east, the other from the west, although they do not meet. Half way along the eastern branch is the city of *Giudi*, while above the western branch, that is on its right bank, is the town of *Alcluith* (Dumbarton), a name which in their language means "Clyde Rock" because it stands near the river of that name.' *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 40–1.

Transmarinas autem dicimus has gentes non quod extra Britanniam essent positae, sed quia a parte Brettonum erant remotae, duobus sinibus maris interiacentibus, quorum unus ab orientali mari, alter ab occidentali Britanniae terras longe lateque inrumpit, quamuis ad se inuicem pertingere non possint. Orientalis habet in medio sui urbem Giudi, occidentalis supra se, hoc est ad dexteram sui, habet urbem Alcluih, quod lingua eorum significat Petram Cluit; est enim iuxta fluuium nominis illius.

This follows an earlier passage in the *Historia ecclesiastica*:⁴

Est autem sinus maris permaximus, qui antiquitus gentem Brettonum a Pictis secernebat, qui ab occidente in terras longo spatio erumpit, ubi est ciuitas Brettonum munitissima usque hodie, quae uocatur Alcluih; ad cuius uidelicet sinus partem septentrionalem Scotti, quos diximus, aduenientes sibi locum patriae fecerunt.

Although Bede does not mention them by name, these ‘arms of the sea’ are clearly identifiable as the firths of Forth and Clyde, which cleave what is now central Scotland. This is evident from Bede’s references to their great size (*longe lateque, permaximus*) and the Antonine Wall that runs between them, while *Alcluih/Petram Cluit*, near the river of the same name, is readily identifiable as the distinctive landmark of Dumbarton Rock. In marked contrast to *Alcluih*, the location of *urbis Giudi* remains controversial. With some understatement, Kenneth Jackson described *Orientalis habet in medio sui urbem Giudi* as ‘a rather obscure sentence ... which has caused some perplexity’.⁵ The conundrum surrounding the identification of *urbis Giudi* is given greater irony by Bede’s stated intention ‘to remove all occasions of doubt about those things I have written’ and, reflecting his status as a ‘truthful historian’ (*uerax historicus*), his commitment to recording information ‘in a straightforward manner’ (*simpliciter*).⁶

Despite describing *urbis Giudi* as being literally ‘in the middle of’ the Firth of Forth, Bede’s reference is both terse and ambiguous, fuelling speculation about its location. Over twenty different sites have been proposed for *urbis Giudi* since the sixteenth century.⁷ Taking a literal interpretation of Bede’s description, *urbis Giudi* was traditionally sought among the islands of the Firth of Forth, usually Inchkeith.⁸ From the mid-twentieth century, *urbis Giudi* was

⁴ HE i. 1; ‘There is a very wide arm of the sea which originally divided the Britons from the Picts. It runs far into the land from the west. Here there is to this day a very strongly fortified British town called *Alcluih* (Dumbarton). The Irish whom we have mentioned settled to the north of this arm of the sea and made their home there.’ *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 20–1.

⁵ *The Gododdin: the Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh, 1969), p. 6.

⁶ HE Preface, iii. 17; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 3 and 264–5.

⁷ Limitations of space prevent a detailed historiography here.

⁸ For example, W. Camden, *Britannia, sive Florentissimorum regnorum, Angliae, Scotiae, Hiberniae, et insularum adjacentium ex intima antiquitate chorographica descriptio* (London, 1586), Lothian, 6; *Camden’s Britannia Newly Translated into English, with Large Additions and Improvements*, trans. E. Gibson

tentatively identified with the Roman forts at Cramond, four miles (6.4 km) north-west of the centre of Edinburgh, or Inveresk,⁹ six miles (9.7 km) east-south-east of Edinburgh city centre, both on the southern shore of the Firth of Forth. Stirling is the location of *urbs Giudi* favoured by most scholars,¹⁰ although it has been rejected by others.¹¹ As a result, support for Stirling has waned since the 1980s.¹² This uncertainty is reflected in the subsequent proposed identifications of *urbs Giudi* with Stirling, Inveresk or even

(London, 1722), II, col. 1190 (but see II, col. 1285, where Gibson identifies *Giudi* [sic] with Kirkintilloch); T. Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides, 1772*, ed. A. Simmons (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 555 and 578; W. F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: a History of Ancient Alban*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1886–90), I, 71 n. 10 and II, 258 n. 57; J. Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, 3rd edn (London, 1904), p. 152.

⁹ P. Hunter Blair, 'The Origins of Northumbria', *AAe* (4th ser.) 25 (1947), 1–51, at 28 (Cramond or Inveresk); repr. in *Anglo-Saxon Northumbria*, ed. M. Lapidge and P. Hunter Blair (London, 1984); I. A. Richmond and O. G. S. Crawford, 'The British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography', *Archaeologia* 93 (1949), 1–50, at 34 (Inveresk); *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 40 n. 3 (Inveresk); G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 2003), p. 55 (Inveresk); L. Alcock, 'Forteviot: a Pictish and Scottish Royal Church and Palace', in *The Early Church in Western Britain and Ireland: Studies Presented to C. A. Ralegh Radford*, ed. S. M. Pearce (Oxford, 1982), pp. 211–39, at 213 (Cramond or Inveresk).

¹⁰ A. Graham, 'Giudi', *Antiquity* 33 (129) (1959), 63–5; K. H. Jackson, 'On the Northern British Section in Nennius', in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. N. K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 20–62, at 36–7; K. H. Jackson, 'Varia: I. Bede's *Urbs Giudi*: Stirling or Cramond?', *CMS2* (Winter 1981), 1–7; Ordnance Survey, *Map of Britain in the Dark Ages*, 2nd edn (Southampton, 1974); C. Thomas, 'The Evidence from North Britain', in *Christianity in Britain, 300–700: Papers Presented to the Conference on Christianity in Roman and Sub-Roman Britain, 17–20 April 1967*, eds M. W. Barley and R. P. C. Hanson (Leicester, 1968), pp. 93–121, at 107 and 109; I. Ll. Foster, 'Presidential Address: Wales and North Britain', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 118 (1969), 1–16, at 7; B. K. Hope-Taylor, *Yeaving: an Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria* (London, 1977), p. 287; L. Alcock, 'Early Historic Fortifications in Scotland', in *Hillfort Studies: Essays for A. H. A. Hogg*, ed. G. Guilbert (Leicester, 1981), pp. 150–80, at 175–6; J. Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places', in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 99–119, at 100 (first published in *Names, Words and Graves: Early Medieval Settlement*, ed. P. H. Sawyer (Leeds, 1979), pp. 34–54); P. Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn (Cambridge, 2003), p. 41 n. 1; A. Breeze, 'Some Celtic Place-names of Scotland: Ptolemy's *Vernubium Promontorium*, Bede's *Urbs Giudi*, Mendick, Minto, and Panlathy', *Scottish Lang.* 23 (2004), 57–67, at 61.

¹¹ A. Rutherford, '"Giudi" Revisited', *BBCS26* (1976), 440–4; J. E. Fraser, 'Bede, the Firth of Forth, and the Location of *Urbs Iuden*', *Scottish Hist. Rev.* 87 (2008), 1–25; A. Durham, 'North from the Forth', Roman Era Names blog, 8 July 2017, available at <https://www.romaneranames.uk/essays/forth.pdf>.

¹² This is most evident in the publications of Leslie Alcock: 'Forteviot', p. 213; 'The activities of potentates in Celtic Britain, AD 500–800: a Positivist Approach', in *Power and Politics in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland*, ed. S. T. Driscoll and M. R. Niece (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 22–39, at 32; L. Alcock, *Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons* (Jarrow, 1988), p. 4.

Edinburgh,¹³ despite a strong argument against the latter,¹⁴ Stirling or Cramond,¹⁵ and ‘possibly Inveresk but also possibly Stirling’.¹⁶

The location of *urbs Giudi* remains unresolved. The most recent study adds further uncertainty by suggesting additional identifications. James Fraser not only revives cases for Cramond Island (Midlothian) and Blackness (West Lothian) as the site of *urbs Giudi*, originally made in the nineteenth century,¹⁷ but also proposes a new location, Carlingnose Battery, North Queensferry (Fife).¹⁸ As the first candidate site for *urbs Giudi* on the northern shore of the Firth of Forth, within the territory of historical Pictland, the latter marks a departure from previous studies.¹⁹ Fraser suggests that Carlingnose Battery was the site of *urbs Giudi* on the grounds that the strait between Queensferry and North Queensferry lies at ‘the most obvious “mid-point” of the estuary’,²⁰ consistent with Bede’s *in medio sui* ‘in the middle of itself’, and that an elevated coastal promontory was the type of location favoured by builders of early medieval fortresses.²¹ However, there is no evidence for the presence of any fortifications on Carlingnose Point until the 1650s, when it may have been the site of a battery intended to prevent Cromwell’s army from crossing the Forth,²² and it was used to defend the entrance to the

¹³ D. R. Perry, *Castle Park, Dunbar: Two Thousand Years on a Fortified Headland* (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 7 and 317.

¹⁴ Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, p. 3 n. 7.

¹⁵ *Bede: the Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. J. McClure and R. Collins (Oxford, 1999), p. 365.

¹⁶ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People: a Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), p. 17.

¹⁷ P. Miller, ‘Suggestions Respecting the Site of Bede’s Ancient City, Giudi’, *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland* 19 (1884–85), 54–62, at 54 and 56; P. Miller, ‘Additional Notes Respecting the Identification of the Site of Bede’s Gudi’, *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland* 29 (1893–94), 55–8, at 58.

¹⁸ Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iudeu*’, pp. 9, 12, 15–21 and 24.

¹⁹ This disregards the spurious identification of *urbs Giudi* with Bell Hills, near Limekilns, which has received no support. See G. C. Meiklejohn, *Guidi: a City of the Horestii* (London, 1926).

²⁰ Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iudeu*’, p. 17. In reality, Queensferry marks the point where the Forth Estuary opens out into the Firth of Forth. Fraser, in common with other commentators on *urbs Giudi*, uses firth and estuary synonymously. This contrasts with their geographical definitions, which are employed here. A firth (derived from Old Norse *fiordr* ‘fjord’) is an arm of the sea, comprising undiluted sea water. An estuary is a semi-enclosed body of water with an unrestricted connection to the open sea and experiences tidal fluctuations, giving its waters a graduation of salt water, from fresh water at its head to salt water at its mouth. A river is a body of fresh water that flows in one direction, towards the head of its estuary, and does not experience tidal fluctuations. The normal tidal limit of the Forth is at Old Mills Farm, Kildean, 1.2 miles (2 km) north-east of, and upstream from, Stirling Castle. According to these definitions, the River Forth flows as far as Kildean, the Forth Estuary stretches from Kildean to Queensferry and the Firth of Forth extends seawards from Queensferry.

²¹ Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iudeu*’, pp. 16–17.

²² R. Morris and G. J. Barclay, ‘The Fixed Defences of the Forth in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1779–1815’, *Tayside and Fife Archaeol. Jnl* 23 (2017), 109–33, at 119.

Forth Estuary from the late eighteenth century.²³ The key factor in the attractiveness of Carlingnose Point as a fortification was the development of modern artillery.

Fraser's proposed alternative locations for *urbs Giudi* have received a mixed reception, being described as both 'convincing' and 'contentious'.²⁴ His identifications have also been criticised on the grounds that they 'involve disregarding Bede's distinction between "Orientalis (sinus) habet in medio sui" and "occidentalis supra se, hoc est ad dexteram sui"'.²⁵ Fraser deepens, rather than resolves, the enigma of *urbs Giudi*. Instead of recent research narrowing the field of candidate sites, opinions on *urbs Giudi* have become increasingly divergent as additional possible locations are proposed. The prospect of identifying *urbs Giudi* appears more remote than ever.

This paper does not rehearse well-established arguments or indulge in further speculation concerning the identification of *urbs Giudi*. Instead, it reassesses one strand of evidence in an attempt to break the scholarly stalemate. Bede records four points about *urbs Giudi*: its place-name, location, and its status as both a counterpart to *Alcluith* and as an *urbs*. Although usually translated 'city',²⁶ Bede uses *urbs* to refer to a fortress or stronghold.²⁷ This paper focusses on Bede's description of the location of *urbs Giudi*. This has been attempted on several occasions previously.²⁸ Fraser, for example, suggests that 'careful consideration of

²³ *Ibid.* pp. 119–21; G. J. Barclay and R. Morris, *The Fortification of the Firth of Forth, 1880–1977: 'the Most Powerful Naval Fortress in the British Empire'* (Edinburgh, 2019), pp. 85–8 and *infra*.

²⁴ T. O. Clancy, 'The Kingdoms of the North: Poetry, Places, Politics', in *Beyond the Gododdin: Dark Age Scotland in Medieval Wales*, ed. A. Woolf (St Andrews, 2013), pp. 153–75, at 154 ('convincing'); A. G. James, *The Brittonic Language in the Old North: a Guide to the Place-Name Evidence*, 3 vols. ([n. p.], 2020), II: *Guide to the Elements*, p. 166 ('contentious'), available at <http://spns.org.uk/bliton>.

²⁵ T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), p. 7 n. 30.

²⁶ For example, A. O. Anderson, *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers, AD 500 to 1286* (London, 1908), p. 4 n. 3; *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People and other Selections from the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. J. Campbell (New York, 1968), p. 21; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 41; *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. McClure and Collins, p. 22; *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. L. Sherley-Price, rev. R. E. Latham (Harmondsworth, 2003), p. 58; *Beda: Storia degli Inglesi (Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum)*, I: *Libri I–II*, ed. M. Lapidge, trans. P. Chiesa (Milano, 2008), p. 59 (*cittā*). French translations use *ville*. *Bède le Vénérable: Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, trans. P. Delaveau (Paris, 1995), p. 79; *Bède le Vénérable: Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais, I: Conquête et Conversion*, ed. and trans. O. Szerwiniack, F. Bourgne, J. Elfassi, M. Lescuyer and A. Molinier (Paris, 1999) I, 24; *Bède le Vénérable: Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais (Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum)*, I (Livres I–II), eds. A. Crépin and M. Lapidge, trans. P. Monat and P. Robin (Paris, 2005), p. 151.

²⁷ Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places', pp. 99–108.

²⁸ Graham, 'Giudi'; Jackson, 'Northern British Section', pp. 35–8; Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*'; Rutherford, "'Giudi" Revisited'; Fraser, 'Location of *Urbs Iuden*'; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 7–8.

his [Bede's] geographical references ... may help scholars to locate ... *urbs Giudi*?²⁹ However, analyses of the relevant passage tend not to be objective but are influenced by previous studies and preconceptions about the likely location of *urbs Giudi*. The continued absence of any consensus on this reveals that a different approach is required, beginning with a detailed examination of the terms used by Bede and their possible implications. Surprisingly, given the level of interest in *urbs Giudi*, previous analyses of the vocabulary used by Bede are superficial. This study, therefore, takes a literary and lexical approach, focussing on the range of possible meanings expressed by Bede's reference to *urbs Giudi* and following Bede's words to see where, if anywhere, they lead on the ground. Identifying the most plausible interpretations within the context of the topography of the Firth of Forth may provide new insights and possibly even assist the identification of *urbs Giudi*. This paper does not begin with the intention of making a case in favour of, or against, any particular identification of *urbs Giudi*. Instead, it aims to be objective about the possible location of *urbs Giudi* and unencumbered by the baggage of five centuries of inconclusive debate and speculation.

After reviewing Bede's interest in geography and his abilities as geographer, this paper assesses the plausibility of the enduring theory that *urbs Giudi* was an island. It then seeks fresh insights into the identity of *urbs Giudi* by comparing the key details from Bede's description of it as being situated *in medio sui*, referring to the eastern *sinus*, with other instances within the *Historia ecclesiastica* and across Bede's other writings in which Bede uses the phrase *in medio* or the word *sinus*. This opens a new dimension to the debate, because Bede's wider use of these terms presents the possibility of determining their most probable meaning in his description of *urbs Giudi*.

Urbs Giudi justifies renewed study for several reasons. It merits attention by virtue of its appearance in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, one of the outstanding literary accomplishments of the early medieval period, alone. The *Historia ecclesiastica* is a profoundly important work of, and source for, early medieval Insular history. The enigma of *urbs Giudi* features in successive editions and translations of, and commentaries on, the *Historia ecclesiastica* and has been the subject of several studies.³⁰ This alone makes *urbs Giudi* of intrinsic interest. In addition, *urbs Giudi*

²⁹ Fraser, 'Location of *Urbs Iudei*', p. 2.

³⁰ Editions, etc.: *The History of the Primitive Church of England, from its Origin to the Year 731, Written in Latin by the Venerable Bede*, trans. W. Hurst (London, 1814), p. 533 n. B; *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Gens Anglorum*, in *Monumenta Historica Britannica, or Materials for the History of Britain from the Earliest Period*, I: *Extending to the Norman Conquest*, ed. H. Petrie with J. Sharpe (London, 1848), pp. 103–289, at 117 n. d; *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Omnia: Historia Ecclesiastica Gens Anglorum*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 95 (1851), 38 n. l; *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, 2 vols, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1896) II, 24 and 468; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England: a Revised Translation with Introduction, Life, and Notes*, trans. A. M. Sellar (London, 1907), pp. 23–4 n. 3; *Baedae Opera Historica*, trans. J. E. King

is one of only four places referred to by Bede in what is now central Scotland, while its status as an *urbs* indicates that *urbs Giudi* was a major, probably royal, power centre. This makes *urbs Giudi* of archaeological and historical importance as well as being of wider significance to the study of early medieval northern Britain, particularly the political organisation of a region about which very little is known.

Making it of added interest, *urbs Giudi* is usually identified with ‘the city called *Iudeu*’ (*urbem quae vocatur Iudeu*) recorded in the *Historia Brittonum*.³¹ This was the scene of *atbret Iudeu*, the ‘distribution of Iudeu’, in which Oswiu, king of Northumbria, was forced to surrender his treasure to an alliance of Penda, king of Mercia, and British kings in 654.³² A reading of one manuscript of the *Historia Brittonum* locates *Iudeu* in the region of *Manau*, a British territory straddling the Forth Estuary.³³ However, it is impossible to determine whether this represents

(London, 1930) I, 56 n. 1; *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, Books I and II*, trans. M. Maclagan (Oxford, 1949), p. 59 n. 4; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 40 n. 3; Wallace-Hadrill, *Historical Commentary*, pp. 17 and 210; *Bede: Ecclesiastical History*, ed. McClure and Collins, p. 365; *Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, ed. Szerwiniack *et al.*, I, 215 n. 104; *Bede: Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sherley-Price, p. 58 n. 1; *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. Crépin *et al.*, I, 151 n. 4; *Histoire ecclésiastique*, trans. Delaveau, p. 379 n. 57; *Beda: Storia degli Inglesi*, ed. Lapidge, p. 306.

Studies: Miller, ‘Suggestions Respecting the Site of Bede’s Ancient City, Giudi’; ‘Additional Notes Respecting the Identification of the Site of Bede’s Guidi’; Meiklejohn, *Guidi*; Graham, ‘Giudi’; Jackson, ‘Northern British Section’, pp. 35–8; Rutherford, ‘“Giudi” Revisited’; Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’; Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iudeu*’; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 7–8.³¹ §62; ed. and trans. D. N. Dumville, ‘The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Univ. of Edinburgh, 3 vols, 1975) I, 248–9, available at <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/8972>; see also *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals*, Hist. from the Sources: Arthurian Period Sources 8, ed. and trans. J. Morris (London, 1980), 38 and 79, §64. On the identification: Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, p. 304; Anderson, *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers*, pp. 24–5 n. 5; P. Hunter Blair, ‘The Bernicians and their Northern Frontier’, in *Studies in Early British History*, ed. N. K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 137–72, at 164–5; Jackson, ‘Northern British Section’, pp. 36–7; ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, p. 6; Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, p. 40 n. 3; J. Morris, *The Age of Arthur: a History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* (London, 1973), p. 582 n. 302.4; Dumville, ‘The Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*’, I, 248 n. 3; D. Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents, I: c. 500–1042*, 2nd edn (London, 1979), pp. 10 and 643 n. 1; L. Alcock, *Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons*, p. 3; Breeze, ‘Some Celtic Place-names of Scotland’, pp. 58–61; A. Breeze, ‘Some Scottish Names, including *Vacomagi*, *Boresti*, *Iudanbyrig*, *Aberlessic* and *Dubnice*’, *Scottish Lang.* 26 (2007), 79–95, at 87; Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iudeu*’, pp. 11–12; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 7–8 and 395; P. Dunshea, ‘The Road to Winwæd? Penda’s Wars Against Oswiu of Bernicia, c. 642 to c. 655’, *ASE* 44 (2015), 1–16, at 9; S. Taylor with T. O. Clancy, P. McNiven and E. Williamson, *The Place-Names of Clackmannanshire* (Donington, 2020), p. 57; M. Wood, *In Search of the Dark Ages: a History of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 2023), pp. 89–90.

³² Jackson, ‘Northern British Section’, pp. 37–8; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 395–6.

³³ British Library MS Harley 3859. On *Manau*, see W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), pp. 103–4, 128 and 130–1; Jackson, *The Gododdin*, pp. 71–4; Taylor *et al.*, *The Place-Names of Clackmannanshire*, pp. 54–60.

anything more than a scribal error.³⁴ Although they are usually thought to be Old English and Brittonic reflexes of the same name,³⁵ any resemblance between the place-names *Giudi* and *Iudeu* may be more perceived and/or superficial rather than actual.³⁶

Moreover, the location of *Iudeu* is disputed. Not surprisingly, given the prevailing association of *urbs Giudi* with Stirling, most scholars also identify *Iudeu* with Stirling,³⁷ specifically its Castle Rock.³⁸ Alternatively, *Iudeu* has been identified with Carriden, Cramond, Inveresk, and as a possible nickname for *Din Eidyn*, Edinburgh.³⁹ By contrast, Tim Clarkson challenges the association of *Iudeu* with *urbs Giudi* and the Forth of Forth, suggesting that *Iudeu* was located ‘in southern Deira or north-east Mercia rather than at Stirling’ — or, presumably, elsewhere in, on, or near the Firth of Forth — and that it may be equated with the unidentified **Iudanburg (Iudanbyrig)*,⁴⁰ ‘somewhere in eastern Mercia or southern

³⁴ Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iuden*’, pp. 22–5; Taylor *et al.*, *Place-Names of Clackmannanshire*, p. 57.

³⁵ For example, Breeze, ‘Some Celtic Place-names of Scotland’, pp. 59–60; Taylor *et al.*, *Place-Names of Clackmannanshire*, p. 57. This issue requires more detailed analysis but lies beyond the scope of this paper.

³⁶ Although this leaves the closeness in form between *Iudeu* and *Merin Iodeo*, the Brittonic name for the Firth of Forth, unresolved. On *Iodeo*, see *Canu Aneirin*, ed. I. Williams (Caerdydd, 1938), pp. 48 line 1209, and 338; *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age Northern Britain* ed. and trans. J. T. Koch, (Cardiff, 1997), pp. lxxviii, 132, 141 and 169; S. Taylor with G. Márkus, *The Place-Names of Fife, I: West Fife between Leven and Forth* (Donington, 2006), pp. 39 and 41; James, *The Brittonic Language in the Old North*, II, 167, available at <https://spns.org.uk/resources/bliton>.

³⁷ Jackson, *The Gododdin*, p. 72 n. 1; L. Alcock, *Arthur’s Britain: History and Archaeology, AD 367–634* (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp. 338–40, reprinted in L. Alcock, *Economy, Society and Warfare among the Britons and Saxons* (Cardiff, 1987), pp. 303–4; J. Morris, *The Age of Arthur: a History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* (London, 1973), p. 582 n. 302.4; Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, p. 6; Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin*, pp. xxii, liv, lxx, xcix and cxiv; Breeze, ‘Some Celtic Place-names of Scotland’, pp. 58 and 61; Taylor with Márkus, *The Place-Names of Fife* I, 41; S. Taylor *et al.*, *The Place-Names of Clackmannanshire*, p. 57.

³⁸ Jackson, ‘Northern British Section’, p. 37; A. A. M. Duncan, *Scotland: the Making of the Kingdom*, *The Edinburgh Hist. of Scotland* 1, rev. edn (Edinburgh, 1978), 61; J. E. Fraser, *The Battle of Dunnichen, 685* (Stroud, 2002), pp. 47–8; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 7.

³⁹ Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, p. 304 (Carriden); Richmond and Crawford, ‘The British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography’, 34 (Inveresk); Rutherford, ‘“Giudi” Revisited’, pp. 443–4 (Cramond or Inveresk); Wallace-Hadrill, *Historical Commentary*, p. 17 (‘Possibly Inveresk but also possibly Stirling’); P. H. Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England* (London, 1998), p. 31 (Cramond); M. Wood, *In Search of the Dark Ages: a History of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 2023), p. 89 (Inveresk); A. Hunt, ‘Bede’s *urbs Giudi* and the Udd Urfai of Eidyn’, *Shadows in the Mist: the Quest for a Historical King Arthur* blog, 29 April 2021, available at <https://mistshadows.blogspot.com/2021/04/bedes-urbs-giudi-and-udd-urfai-of-eidyn.html?m=1> (*Din Eidyn*, Edinburgh).

⁴⁰ ASC D-text *s.a.* 952. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. M. Swanton (London, 1996), p. 112.

Northumbria'.⁴¹ Consistent with this, the identities of the warring parties, who were from Mercia, Northumbria, and North Wales, imply a location much further south than the Firth of Forth. This may be compared with, and is possibly supported by, the location of Oswiu's revenge the following year. Oswiu defeated and killed Penda in battle near the river Winwæd (*prope fluvium Uinued*), in the district of Leeds (*in regione Loidis*).⁴²

In the absence of any reliable evidence for the location of *Iudeu*, its identification with *urbs Giudi* is doubtful and, therefore, *Iudeu* is not discussed further here. As a result, there appears to be no reliable source for *urbs Giudi* other than Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, while the meagre nature of the evidence available emphasises the importance of its analysis and interpretation.

BEDE AS A GEOGRAPHER

The extensive corpus of Bede's surviving writings amply demonstrates his richly-descriptive language skills.⁴³ Indeed, Bede has been praised as 'without question the most accomplished Latinist produced in these islands in the Anglo-Saxon period'.⁴⁴ Traditionally, Bede's prose style was thought to be characterised by its clarity, simplicity and debt to Classical Latin.⁴⁵ By contrast, recent studies demonstrate that Bede's prose varies considerably in style and that his Latin can be more complex.⁴⁶ Although this conclusion is drawn primarily from the study of

⁴¹ T. Clarkson, *The Men of the North: the Britons of Southern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 142; see also T. Clarkson, *The Picts: a History*, rev. edn (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 108; T. Clarkson, *The Makers of Scotland: Picts, Romans, Gaels and Vikings* (Edinburgh, 2012), p. 106. Contrast Breeze, 'Some Scottish Names', pp. 87–9.

⁴² *HE* iii. 24; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 290–3. Contrast Dunshea, 'The Road to Winwæd?', p. 9, where, on the basis of the identification of *Iudeu* with *urbs Giudi*, Dunshea states that this battle 'could have been fought very much further north'.

⁴³ R. Love, 'The World of Latin Learning', in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 40–53.

⁴⁴ M. Lapidge, 'Poeticism in pre-Conquest Anglo-Latin Prose', in *Aspects of the Language of Latin Prose*, ed. T. Reinhardt, M. Lapidge and J. N. Adams (Oxford, 2005), pp. 321–37, at 323; see also S. J. Harris, 'Bede', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, ed. D. S. Kastan (Oxford, 2006), pp. 150–2, at 150.

⁴⁵ For example, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. Plummer, I, liiii; D. R. Druhan, *The Syntax of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica* (Washington, DC, 1938), pp. xx–xxii; A. de Bruyne, *Études d'esthétique médiévale* (Bruges, 1946), p. 149; W. Wetherbee, 'Some Implications of Bede's Latin Style', in R. T. Farrell, ed., *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England: Papers in Honour of the 1300th Anniversary of the Birth of Bede*, BAR Brit. Ser. 46 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 23–31, at 23; C. Grocock, 'Bede and the Golden Age of Latin Prose in Northumbria', in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 371–82.

⁴⁶ C. B. Kendall, 'Rhetoric in Early Medieval Latin. Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*: the Rhetoric of Faith', in *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. J. J. Murphy (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 145–72; R. Sharpe, 'The Varieties of Bede's Prose', in *Aspects of the Language of Latin Prose*, ed. T. Reinhardt, M. Lapidge and J. N. Adams (Oxford, 2005), pp. 339–56; D. Shanzer,

Bede's exegeses, the prose style of the *Historia ecclesiastica* can also be very ornate, as the sparrow simile demonstrates,⁴⁷ while elaborate wordplay features prominently throughout his writings.⁴⁸ Might this be relevant to Bede's reference to *urbs Giudi*? Certainly, the difficulties presented by this passage — and, therefore, of locating *urbs Giudi* — may be contrasted with Charles Plummer's frequently-quoted claim that 'it is very seldom that we have to pause to think of the meaning of a sentence' in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.⁴⁹

Bede was a polymath. The anonymous *Life* of Bede, copied in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries,⁵⁰ emphasises the importance of geography to Bede by placing it first in a list of his many and varied interests.⁵¹ This is apparent from the start of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, which begins with a geographical study, a description of Britain, following Gildas.⁵² His abilities as a geographer are also evident in his exegeses, where 'Bede takes great care to account for geographical features' and 'demonstrated the greatest attention to geographical questions, creating examples for later scholars to follow'.⁵³ As 'a scholar quite exceptionally conscious of geography',⁵⁴ Bede displays a 'fascination with the landscape of history'.⁵⁵

Although his comments are limited, Bede includes enough detail to demonstrate his knowledge of the Forth-Clyde isthmus. He notes that the 'two wide and long arms of the sea' do not meet and locates *Alcluith* on the right (north) bank of the western *sinus*, near the river *Alcluith* shares its name with.⁵⁶ This accurately locates *Alcluith* near the point where the River Clyde widens into the Clyde Estuary. Bede is

'Bede's Style: a Neglected Historiographical Model for the Style of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*?', in *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. C. D. Wright, F. M. Biggs and T. N. Hall (Toronto, 2007), pp. 329–52; G. H. Brown, 'Ciceronianism in Bede and Alcuin', in *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. V. Blanton and H. Scheck (Tempe, AZ, 2008), pp. 319–29, at 323–5.

⁴⁷ *HE* ii. 13, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 182–5; Shanzer, 'Bede's Style', pp. 333–6.

⁴⁸ L. T. Martin, 'Bede's Structural Use of Wordplay as a Way to Truth', in *From Cloister to Classroom: Monastic and Scholastic Approaches to Truth*, ed. E. R. Elder (Kalamazoo, 1986), pp. 27–46; T. Major, 'Words, Wit and Wordplay in the Latin Works of the Venerable Bede', *Jnl Med. Latin* 22 (2012), 185–219.

⁴⁹ *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, I, liii.

⁵⁰ D. Rollason, 'The Cult of Bede', in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, pp. 193–200, at 195.

⁵¹ *Vitae Bedae Venerabilis, Presbyteri et Monachi Girvensis*, §3; *PL* 90 (1850), cols 35–42, at col. 37C.

⁵² *De excidio*, §3; *Gildas: the Ruin of Britain*, ed. and trans. Winterbottom, pp. 16–17 and 89–90; see N. J. Higham, 'Old Light on the Dark Age Landscape: the Description of Britain in the *De Excidio Britanniae* of Gildas', *Jnl of Hist. Geog.* 17.4 (1991), 363–72.

⁵³ N. Lozovsky, '*The Earth is Our Book*': *Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400–1000* (Ann Arbor, 2000), pp. 49–50.

⁵⁴ G. W. S. Barrow, 'Midlothian — or the Shire of Edinburgh', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* 35.2 (1985), 141–8, at 143.

⁵⁵ A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 242.

⁵⁶ *HE* i. 12, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 40–1.

not only aware that the Antonine Wall crosses the Forth-Clyde isthmus but that it ‘starts almost two miles west of the monastery at *Aebbercornig* (Abercorn) in the place which the Picts call *Peanfabel* (Kinneil) and ‘stretches westward as far as *Alcluith*’.⁵⁷ Although the eastern terminus of the Antonine Wall is actually at Carriden,⁵⁸ just under four miles (6.5 km) from Abercorn, *Peanfabel* means ‘end of the wall’.⁵⁹ Moreover, Bede records that the Anglo-Saxon name for *Peanfabel* was *Penneltun* and Old English *tun* probably denotes a royal estate.⁶⁰ This suggests that *Peanfabel* referred to a wider area, which may have included the end of the wall. Bede also demonstrates his familiarity with the toponymy of some of these places. As well as recording both the ‘Pictish’ and Old English names for Kinneil,⁶¹ Bede also includes a gloss on *Alcluith*, ‘a name which in their language means *Petram Cluif*’. This is a convincing account and its accuracy implies that the information Bede provides on *urbs Giudi* is also reliable. It was probably based on sources originating in the Anglian monastery at Abercorn,⁶² on the southern shore of the Firth of Forth, although Bede may have been drawing — directly or indirectly — on multiple informants.

As an accomplished geographer and Latin scholar, Bede would have selected the words he uses to describe *urbs Giudi* with great care, skill and attention to detail. Although he refers to *urbs Giudi* only in passing, this is not a casual reference or throwaway remark but part of a larger, carefully constructed and complex passage. We know what Bede wrote, but what, exactly, did he mean? And what implications do his lexical choices have for the identification of *urbs Giudi*? Although Bede’s reference to *urbs Giudi* is terse, it need not be interpreted in isolation. A reassessment of Bede’s description of *urbs Giudi*, in which the words and expressions Bede uses are compared with other examples elsewhere within the *Historia ecclesiastica* or in his other writings, may help to clarify his intended meaning and, perhaps, assist the identification of *urbs Giudi*.

URBS OR INSULA?

Bede records that *urbs Giudi* was located *in medio sui*, referring to the eastern ‘arm of the sea’, that is, the Firth of Forth. Until the mid-twentieth century, the literal

⁵⁷ *HE* i. 12, in *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 43.

⁵⁸ G. B. Bailey and D. F. Devereux, ‘The Eastern Terminus of the Antonine Wall: a Review’, *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland* 117 (1987), 93–104; D. Dumville, ‘The Eastern Terminus of the Antonine Wall: 12th- or 13th-century Evidence’, *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland* 124 (1994), 293–5; Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iuden*’, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, p. 347; W. F. H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names: their Study and Significance*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 219.

⁶⁰ Campbell, ‘Bede’s Words for Places’, pp. 113–15.

⁶¹ Bede’s ‘Pictish’ *Peanfabel* is actually a hybrid of Brittonic *penn* ‘end’ and Gaelic *fal*, gen. *fail* ‘wall’. See Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names*, pp. 211–12 and 219.

⁶² Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iuden*’, pp. 5–6.

interpretation of this phrase led most scholars to conclude that *urbs Giudi* was located on an island, 'the insular town of Giudi'.⁶³ Of the several islands in the Firth of Forth proposed, Inchkeith was an early and enduring favourite for the site of *urbs Giudi*.⁶⁴ Many editors and translators of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* also identified *urbs Giudi* with Inchkeith, with varying degrees of certainty.⁶⁵ Not only is Inchkeith one of the largest islands in the Firth of Forth but, although closer to the Fife coast, it is also more realistically described as being located 'in the middle' of the Firth of Forth than most of the other islands.

Claims that *urbs Giudi* was located on an island persist. *Urbs Giudi* is still identified as Inchkeith in the Penguin Classics translation of the *Historia ecclesiastica*,⁶⁶ while Fraser resurrects earlier suggestions that Cramond Island may be the site of *urbs Giudi*.⁶⁷ Indeed, Fraser claims that the Middle Irish and Brittonic names for the Firth of Forth, *Muir nGiudan* and *Merin Iodeo* respectively, strengthen the case 'that Giudi might lie in an island'.⁶⁸ Moreover, Fraser not only interprets the *urbs* of *Iudeu*, with which *urbs Giudi* is often identified, as an island fortress,⁶⁹ but also asserts that it was located 'in the midst of the Firth of Forth, probably in or opposite West Lothian'.⁷⁰

Despite the popularity of the insular hypothesis, there are archaeological, topographical and textual arguments against an island location for *urbs Giudi*. Most obviously, no physical traces of an *urbs* have been identified on any of the islands in the Firth of Forth. Some antiquarians attempted to explain this by claiming that *urbs Giudi* was 'probably built of wood, as no vestige of it has been seen for many ages'.⁷¹ This is unconvincing, as many early medieval royal centres

⁶³ Skene, *Celtic Scotland* I, 238.

⁶⁴ p. 2, above.

⁶⁵ *Historia Ecclesiasticae Gentis Anglorum libri quinque, auctore sancto & Venerabili Baeda*, ed. J. Smith (Cambridge, 1722), p. 50 n. 1; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation: a New Translation*, trans. L. Gidley (Oxford, 1870), p. 30 n. 3; *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. Plummer, I, 446 and II, 24; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sellar, p. 23 n. 3; *Baedae Opera Historica*, trans. King, I, 56 n. 1.

⁶⁶ *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sherley-Price, pp. 58 n. 1 and 384. As does one French translation: *Histoire ecclésiastique*, trans. Delaveau, p. 379 n. 57.

⁶⁷ W. F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* (Edinburgh, 1868) I, 92; P. Miller, 'Suggestions Respecting the Site of Bede's Ancient City, Giudi', *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland* 19 (1884–1885), 54–62, at 54; G. MacDonald, *The Roman Wall in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1911), p. 33; I. C. Hannah, *The Berwick and Lothian Coasts* (London, 1913), p. 312; Hunter Blair, 'Origins of Northumbria', p. 28; Fraser, 'Location of *Urbs Iudeu*', pp. 10 and 12.

⁶⁸ Fraser, 'Location of *Urbs Iudeu*', p. 10.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 12.

⁷⁰ J. E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh, 2009), p. 186.

⁷¹ D. Macpherson, *Geographical Illustrations of Scottish History, Containing the Names of Places Mentioned in Chronicles, Histories, Records, etc* (London, 1796), col. HAM.

recorded in northern Britain were strongly fortified with earthwork, stone or timber-laced defences.⁷² There are, however, exceptions. A timber palisade provides the simplest form of defence and elaborate timber enclosures occur on some early medieval royal sites in northern Britain.⁷³ Large double-palisaded enclosures are prominent features of the Northumbrian royal centres at Milfield, Sprouston and Yeavinger,⁷⁴ while an enclosure at the Pictish possible royal centre at Rhynie (Aberdeenshire) comprised a complex wall of posts and planks, perhaps with a wall-walk.⁷⁵ However, the landscape contexts of these sites contrast markedly with the small islands in the Firth of Forth. In addition to the absence of structural evidence, in the form of fortifications, there are no small finds that might indicate the presence of an undiscovered early medieval *urbs* on any of these islands.

The absence of archaeological evidence may be assessed in conjunction with the unsuitability, both logistically and defensively, of an insular *urbs*. Most of the islands in the Firth of Forth are small and rocky, while all are exposed to sea-borne assault, as repeated English — and one French — attacks on, and occupations of, Inchcolm, Inchkeith and the Isle of May between the fourteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries attest.⁷⁶ Although several islands in the Firth of Forth were fortified,⁷⁷ this did not begin until the sixteenth century, when the development of artillery gave them a new role in defending the ports of, and shipping within, the firth. The challenges associated with constructing, resupplying and defending an early medieval royal centre make these islands unlikely locations for the site of *urbs Giudi*. While Peter Hunter Blair entertained the possible identification of *urbs Giudi* with the tidal Cramond Island, he rejected Inchkeith, ‘an island which lay some

⁷² Alcock, ‘Early Historic Fortifications in Scotland’, pp. 150–80; Alcock, *Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons*; L. Alcock, *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen and Priests in Northern Britain, AD 550–850* (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 180–96; I. Ralston, *The Hill-Forts of Pictland since ‘The Problem of the Picts’* (Rosemarkie, 2004), pp. 18–22.

⁷³ Alcock, *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen and Priests*, pp. 180–3.

⁷⁴ Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger*, pp. 76, fig. 29, and 78–88; T. Gates, and C. O’Brien, ‘Cropmarks at Milfield and New Bewick and the Recognition of Grubenhäuser in Northumberland’, *AAe* (5th ser.) 16 (1988), 1–9; I. M. Smith, ‘Sprouston, Roxburghshire: an Early Anglian Centre of the Eastern Tweed Basin’, *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland* 121 (1991), 261–94, at 272–4; Alcock, *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen and Priests*, pp. 234–8.

⁷⁵ G. Noble, M. Gondok, E. Campbell, N. Evans, D. Hamilton and S. Taylor, ‘A Powerful Place of Pictland: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Power Centre of the 4th to 6th Centuries AD’, *MA* 63.1 (2019), 56–94, with the timber enclosure at 67–9.

⁷⁶ On raids on Inchcolm see, for example, Walter Bower, *Scoticronicon* xiii. 33, 36, xiv. 45 and xv. 38; *Scoticronicon* by Walter Bower, in *Latin and English VII* (Books XIII and XIV); ed. and trans. A. B. Scott and D. E. R. Watt with U. Morét and N. F. Shead (Edinburgh, 1996), 109–11, 118–21 and 398–401; *Charters of the Abbey of Inchcolm*, ed. D. E. Easson and A. Macdonald (Edinburgh, 1938), pp. 39–40.

⁷⁷ Barclay and Morris, *Fortification of the Firth of Forth*, *infra*.

four miles offshore in the middle of a tidal estuary', as a 'scarcely conceivable' location for an early medieval royal centre.⁷⁸ Jackson concurred, noting that 'Dark Age' *urbes* were not sited on 'little islands' because it would have required fleets to make them viable.⁷⁹ Supporting this, there are no clear or convincing parallels for the insular location of an early medieval *urbs*.

Bede does not attach the word *insula* to *urbs Giudi*. However, this could be explained either as indicating that Bede did not think that *urbs Giudi* was an island or, alternatively, that he was under the impression that describing it as being 'in the middle' of a body of water adequately conveyed that this place was an island. Some scholars proposed ingenious solutions to Bede's omission of a reference to an island. Sir John Rhys speculated that Bede confused two separate places sharing the same name, *Insula Giudi* and *Urbs Giudi*, the former in the Firth of Forth, the latter on its southern shore, at Carriden or possibly Edinburgh.⁸⁰ If correct, this would require the identification of two separate places named *Giudi* although they were, presumably, associated by more than just their name. However, Rhys did not provide any evidence to support his theory, for example, in the form of attestations of an **insula Giudi* or an equivalent Celtic place-name, and none is apparent.

Another theory is that the location of *urbs Giudi* may be resolved by inferring the existence of a scribal error. According to John Edward Lloyd, Bede mistakenly refers to *Giudi* as an *urbs* when it was actually an *insula*.⁸¹ However, a copying error seems most unlikely because of the reliability of the text of the *Historia ecclesiastica* and its preservation in four early manuscripts.⁸² The earliest of these, the Moore manuscript, dates to 734 × 737,⁸³ no more than two years after Bede's death (735) and around six years after the date traditionally attributed to the completion of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, in c. 731. Unusually for an early medieval source, these manuscripts reveal that the text has been transmitted with great accuracy, with the result that major emendations are required or acceptable only in exceptional cases.⁸⁴

The only way of reconciling Bede's description of *urbs Giudi* with an insular setting might be if Bede was either unaware that *urbs Giudi* was located on an island or if his account is somehow confused. However, it seems unlikely that Bede

⁷⁸ Hunter Blair, 'Origins of Northumbria', p. 28. This argument was originally made by Miller, 'Bede's Ancient City, Giudi', p. 57.

⁷⁹ Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*', p. 3.

⁸⁰ Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, pp. 304–5; see also F. P. Magoun, 'Territorial, Place-, and River-names in the Old English Annals, D-Text (MS. Cotton Tiberius B. IV)', *Harvard Stud. and Notes in Philol. and Lit.* 20 (1938), 147–80, at 163.

⁸¹ J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (London, 1911) I, 190, n.120.

⁸² *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. xxxix–xlvi.

⁸³ P. Hunter Blair, 'Preface', *The Moore Bede: Cambridge University Library MS Kk. 5. 16*, Early Eng. Manuscripts in Facsimile 9 (Copenhagen, 1959), 11–32, at 26–32.

⁸⁴ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. xxxix–xl.

would have referred erroneously to an *insula* as an *urbs* for several reasons. Firstly, Bede's competency as both a geographer and a Latin scholar makes such a mistake improbable. Bede's reliability as a commentator in general and as a geographer in particular is apparent from his extensive writings, where no parallels to such an inaccuracy can be identified. Moreover, Bede may have been less likely to make such a mistake when referring to an *urbs*, as this term denotes the most important settlements. Bede refers to only eight *urbes* in Britain, four of which are in northern Britain: *Bebbanburgh* (Bamburgh, Northumberland), *Coludi urbem* (Coldingham, Berwickshire), *Alcluith*, and *urbs Giudi*.⁸⁵ Secondly, the importance Bede attaches to islands makes it implausible that he would have either confused or not mentioned its insular status if *urbs Giudi* was (on) an island. Insularity and remoteness were fundamental to Bede's vision of Britain and its place in the wider world from the opening words of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, *Brittania Oceani insula* 'Britain is an island of the ocean',⁸⁶ a theme which dominates the first chapter. Indeed, the island of Britain defines the extent of Bede's history, its insular status providing his geographical terms of reference, as well as a powerful ideological role, underpinning 'the ideal of unified church in Britain' and a driver for 'the internal colonialism of religion'.⁸⁷

Above all, Bede regards islands as places of great symbolic and spiritual significance. They not only mirror the island of Britain but, by evoking the Garden of Eden, are also associated with the terrestrial paradise.⁸⁸ Bede was particularly interested in islands as monastic retreats and these feature prominently throughout the *Historia ecclesiastica*: Farne Island, Inishboffin, Iona, Lindisfarne and an unnamed island (St Herbert's Isle) on Derwentwater.⁸⁹ Bede also refers to Anglesey, the Isle of Man, the Orkney Isles, the Isle of Thanet and the Isle of Wight as islands.⁹⁰ To Bede, islands were places of great sanctity, separated from the world and ideally suited to an ascetic life of devotion, contemplation and spiritual salvation.

⁸⁵ *HE* i. 12 (*Alcluith, urbs Giudi*), iii. 6 and 16 (*Bebbanburgh*), iv. 19 and 25 (*Coludi urbem*), in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 40, 230, 262, 392 and 420.

⁸⁶ *HE* i. 1, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 14–15.

⁸⁷ C. A. M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700–1400* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 4 and 16–20. The quotations are from p. 17.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 10 and 18; see also J. O'Reilly, 'Islands and Idols at the Ends of the Earth: Exegesis and Conversion in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*', in *Bède le Vénérable entre Tradition et Postérité*, ed. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniak (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2005), pp. 119–45.

⁸⁹ *HE* iii. 3, 4, 16, 17, 22 and 25, iv. 4 and 27–30, v. 1, 9 and 19, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 218, 220, 222, 262, 264, 282, 294, 346, 430, 436, 438, 440, 442, 442, 444, 454, 456, 478 and 518.

⁹⁰ *HE* Pref., i. 3 and 15, ii. 9, iv. 13 and 16, v. 19, 23 and 24, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 6, 22, 24, 50, 162, 372, 382, 384, 518, 524, 558 and 560.

By contrast, there is no unequivocal evidence for the occupation of islands by early medieval power centres in northern Britain. Although it is argued that both Dumbarton Rock and Dunadd, a fortified royal centre of the Scots of Dál Riata,⁹¹ were tidal islands during the mid-first millennium AD,⁹² this seems unlikely in the case of Dunadd, at least. Moreover, this need not have any implications for the location of *urbs Giudi*. The status of *Alcluth* and *urbs Giudi* as counterparts does not imply that, even if Dumbarton Rock was a tidal island, it follows that *urbs Giudi* was too. And, despite the defensive potential of a tidal island being indicated by the siege of Theodoric, king of Bernicia, on Lindisfarne by Urien, king of Rheged, in the 570s,⁹³ this event may have been the exception rather than the rule. In addition, it is unclear whether Lindisfarne was a royal power centre at the time, or simply an expedient defensive location to which Theodoric had retreated.

Bede's fascination with both the geography and sanctity of islands is also evident in his *Life of Cuthbert*. For example, he records the location of Coquet Island, explains how the island acquired its name and states that 'It was renowned for its monasteries'.⁹⁴ Bede makes a distinction between Cuthbert's choice of a 'true island' as his place of retreat and the tidal island of Lindisfarne. To Bede, Farne Island is 'an island ... in the middle of the sea'.⁹⁵ Emphasising its insular status, Bede adds that Farne Island is 'cut off on the landward side by very deep water and facing, on the other side, out towards limitless ocean'.⁹⁶ By contrast, Lindisfarne is a *semiinsula*, literally 'half-island', because it 'is an island in the strict sense of the word only twice a day, when cut off by the tide. When the tide is out it is joined to the mainland'.⁹⁷ This distinction is of potential relevance to one of the

⁹¹ Historic Environment Scotland, Canmore database, Canmore ID 39564, available at <https://canmore.org.uk>; The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *Argyll: an Inventory of the Monuments*, VI: *Mid-Argyll and Cowal, Prehistoric and Early Historic Monuments* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 149–59, no. 248; A. Lane and E. Campbell, *Dunadd: an Early Dalriadic Capital* (Oxford, 2000).

⁹² R. Lathe and D. Smith, 'Holocene Relative Sea-level Changes in Western Scotland: the Early Insular Situation of Dun Add (Kintyre) and Dumbarton Rock (Strathclyde)', *The Heroic Age: a Jnl of Early Med. Northwestern Europe* 16 (2015), 1–12, available at <http://www.heroicage.org/issues/16/lathe-smith.php>.

⁹³ *Historia Brittonum*, lxiii; *Nennius*, ed. and trans. Morris, pp. 38 and 79. On which see T. Clarkson, 'The Lindisfarne Campaign', Senchus: Notes on Early Medieval Scotland blog, available at <https://senchus.wordpress.com/2009/04/29/the-lindisfarne-campaign/>.

⁹⁴ xxiv; *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: a Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (London, 1940), p. 235; 'Bede: Life of Cuthbert', trans. J. F. Webb, in *The Age of Bede*, ed. D. H. Farmer (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 39–102, at 74.

⁹⁵ *Life of Cuthbert*, ch. 17; trans. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, p. 215.

⁹⁶ 'Life of Cuthbert', trans. Webb, 'Life of Cuthbert', p. 66.

⁹⁷ *Life of Cuthbert*, ch. 17; trans. Webb, 'Life of Cuthbert', p. 66.

proposed sites of *urbs Giudi*. Cramond Island is also a tidal island, although William Skene suggested that this is inconsistent with the location of *urbs Giudi*: ‘By the expression “in medio”, Bede seems to imply ... an island at all times surrounded by the sea’.⁹⁸

Ultimately, the evidence of Bede’s own words is inconclusive in attempting to determine whether *urbs Giudi* was located on an island or not. More conclusively, no archaeological evidence of an early medieval fortress has been discovered on the islands of the Firth of Forth. Moreover, these islands make unlikely locations for a stronghold of this period because they could not have been defended effectively from sea-borne attacks. Indeed, the islands of the Firth of Forth contrast markedly with the hill-top and coastal promontory locations of known early medieval fortifications in northern Britain.⁹⁹ As a result, it seems implausible that *urbs Giudi* was either an island or was located on an island. How, then, can this be reconciled with Bede’s description of *urbs Giudi* as being situated ‘in the middle’ of the Firth of Forth? Although there appears to be an inherent and fundamental contradiction in Bede’s account, this rests entirely on the interpretation of *in medio sui*.

IN MEDIO SUI

The Latin adverbial phrase *in medio sui* is fundamental to locating *urbs Giudi*. *In medio sui* comprises a preposition, *in* ‘in’, plus *medio*, the ablative of *medius* ‘central, middle’,¹⁰⁰ used as a noun/substantive in this context, and *sui*, the genitive of the reflexive pronoun *se*, here meaning ‘itself’.¹⁰¹ As a result, the interpretation of *in medio sui*, literally ‘in the middle of itself’, referring to the eastern *sinus*, initially appears to be straightforward. Most translations of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* translate *in medio sui* fairly literally, as ‘in the middle of’,¹⁰² ‘in the midst of’,¹⁰³

⁹⁸ W. F. Skene, ‘On the Early Frisian Settlements in Scotland’, *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland* 4 (1860–62), 169–81, at 177 n. 1.

⁹⁹ Alcock, ‘Early Historic Fortifications in Scotland’; Alcock, *Bede, Eddius, and the Forts of the North Britons*; Alcock, *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen and Priests*, pp. 180–96; Ralston, *Hill-Forts of Pictland*, pp. 18–22.

¹⁰⁰ *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. R. E. Latham, D. R. Howlett and R. K. Ashdowne (Oxford, 1975–2013) VI: *M*, 1747.

¹⁰¹ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. W. Glare, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2012) II, 1890 and 2054.

¹⁰² *The History of the Church of Englande, Compiled by the Venerable Bede, Englishman*, trans. T. Stapleton (Antwerp, 1565), fol. 21v; *History of the Primitive Church of England*, trans. Hurst, p. 33; *Baedae Opera Historica*, trans. King, I, 55; *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sherley-Price, p. 58; Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, 3.

¹⁰³ *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, trans. J. Stevens (London, 1723), p. 36; *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, trans. J. A. Giles (London, 1840), p. 22; *The Complete Works of Venerable Bede, in the Original Latin*, ed. J. A. Giles (London, 1843) II, 61; *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Gidley, p. 30; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sellar, p. 23.

‘in its midst’,¹⁰⁴ [a]u milieu de,¹⁰⁵ and [a] la moitié du.¹⁰⁶ Not surprisingly, this prompted the (fruitless) antiquarian quest for *urbs Giudi* among the islands of the Firth of Forth.

THE ‘HALFWAY ALONG’ HYPOTHESIS

By contrast, Bertram Colgrave’s translation of the *Historia ecclesiastica* interprets *in medio* as ‘half way along’.¹⁰⁷ This divergence from the literal translation of *in medio* is not explained. However, it reflects contemporary thinking about the location of *urbs Giudi*, given the absence of plausible locations for a fortress among the islands in the Firth of Forth and, therefore, the perceived inadequacy of the literal translation ‘in the middle’. As early as 1885, it was noted that *in medio* could mean either ‘in the middle’, in the sense of between two opposite shores, or refer to ‘the middle’ laterally, between the two ends of the Firth of Forth.¹⁰⁸ And, in 1908, Alan Anderson argued that *in medio* meant that *urbs Giudi* was ‘not necessarily on an island’,¹⁰⁹ although he did not propose any alternative interpretations.

By the mid-twentieth century, the search for *urbs Giudi* had shifted from the islands of the Firth of Forth to its coast. Colgrave and Mynors do not refer to Hunter Blair’s suggestion that ‘the site of *urbs Giudi* should be sought in some suitable position, such as Cramond ... or perhaps Inveresk, on the southern shore of the Forth’,¹¹⁰ but note that ‘[t]here is some possibility that it may be Inveresk’.¹¹¹ It could be argued that Cramond or Inveresk are situated approximately in the middle of the southern shore of the Firth of Forth, particularly in the absence of maps or surveys and given the inability to see from one end of the firth to the other because of its curving course.¹¹² This led Hunter Blair to suggest that *in medio* refers to a location ‘not out in the middle of the Forth, but half way along it’,¹¹³ then to state as fact that ‘*urbs Giudi* ... according to Bede lay halfway along the Firth of Forth’.¹¹⁴ Hunter Blair subsequently noted that ‘the words *in medio* ... are commonly taken to mean “in the middle of”, but “half-way along” seems to be a

¹⁰⁴ *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers*, trans. Anderson, p. 4 n. 3; Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, pp. 1–2. Jackson describes his translation as ‘deliberately literal’: ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, trans. Delaveau, p. 79.

¹⁰⁶ *Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, trans. Monat and Robin, I, 151.

¹⁰⁷ *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 41.

¹⁰⁸ Miller, ‘Bede’s Ancient City, Giudi’, 56.

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers*, p. 4 n. 3.

¹¹⁰ Hunter Blair, ‘Origins of Northumbria’, p. 28.

¹¹¹ *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 40 n. 3, citing Richmond and Crawford, ‘The British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography’, p. 34.

¹¹² Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, p. 3.

¹¹³ Hunter Blair, ‘Origins of Northumbria’, 28.

¹¹⁴ Hunter Blair, ‘The Bernicians and their Northern Frontier’, p. 164.

better translation'.¹¹⁵ 'Halfway along' was already in use before its adoption by Colgrave and Mynors,¹¹⁶ was declared to be a 'perfectly acceptable' translation of *in medio*,¹¹⁷ and is now accepted widely.¹¹⁸ One French translation of the *Historia ecclesiastica* follows Colgrave's interpretation: *À mi-chemin du bras oriental* 'Halfway up the eastern arm' but, inconsistently with this, notes Stirling as the possible location of *urbs Giudi*.¹¹⁹

The only dissent was from Kenneth Jackson,¹²⁰ who disputed as 'incorrect' the assessment that 'halfway along' is a 'perfectly acceptable' interpretation, describing it as 'not nearly so natural' a translation as 'in the middle' and even 'forced'. Despite Jackson's misgivings, a possible parallel may be identified in Classical Latin *in colle medio*, literally 'in mid-hill', but translated as 'half-way up the hill'.¹²¹ However, there are other objections. Firstly, and most fundamentally, *in medio* does not mean literally 'halfway along'. Secondly, Bede uses a different expression to express this meaning. This is apparent from his description of the position of a ship in the English Channel as *ad medium itineris*, literally 'to the middle of the journey', which Colgrave translates as 'half-way across'.¹²² Thirdly, Bede was skilled in both Latin and geography and appears to have had access to sources originating in Abercorn. If *urbs Giudi* was located 'halfway along' the Firth of Forth, then Bede might be expected to have described it in such terms and to have specified which shore it stood on, just as he does with *Alcluiþ*. But he does not. Moreover, the manner in which Bede contrasts the location of *Alcluiþ*, on the right hand bank of the Clyde Estuary, with that of *urbs Giudi* implies that *urbs Giudi* was situated on neither the northern nor southern shores of the Firth of Forth but *in medio sui*, wherever that may be. Nowhere else does Bede use the phrase *in medio* in the sense 'halfway along'.

It seems unlikely to be coincidental that 'halfway along' emerged at the same time as Hunter Blair's proposed location of *urbs Giudi* at Cramond or Inveresk.¹²³ The translation of *in medio* appears to have changed from 'in the middle' to 'halfway

¹¹⁵ Hunter Blair, *Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 41 n. 1.

¹¹⁶ E. A. Fisher, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Architecture and Sculpture* (London, 1959), p. 41.

¹¹⁷ Rutherford, "'Giudi" Revisited', p. 441.

¹¹⁸ For example, Barrow, 'Midlothian', p. 143; J. Marsden, *The Illustrated Bede* (London, 1989), p. 37; J. Morris, *Arthurian Period Sources, IV: Places and Peoples and Saxon Archaeology* (London, 1995), 33; D. Rollason, *Northumbria, 500–1100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 32; M. Adams, *The King in the North: the Life and Times of Oswald of Northumbria* (London, 2013), p. 283.

¹¹⁹ *Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, ed. and trans. Szerwiniack *et al.*, I, 24 (with my translation from the French), with the location at I, 215 n. 104.

¹²⁰ Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*', p. 3.

¹²¹ Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, i. 24; Caesar, *The Gallic War*, ed. and trans. H. J. Edwards (London, 1917), pp. 36–7.

¹²² *HE* i. 17; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 54.

¹²³ Hunter Blair, 'Origins of Northumbria', p. 28.

along' in order to reflect what was then considered to be a plausible theory concerning the location of *urbs Giudi*, rather than being based on an objective analysis of Bede's text. The translation 'halfway along', therefore, rests on a circular argument in which a proposed location for *urbs Giudi* has influenced the interpretation of the text and vice versa, providing false corroboration of both. As a result, 'halfway along' cannot be accepted as a reliable translation of *in medio*. This has fundamental implications for the location of *urbs Giudi*. If *urbs Giudi* was neither 'in the middle' of, nor 'halfway along', the Firth of Forth then where was it?

THE 'APEX OF A TRIANGLE' HYPOTHESIS

Graham proposed a third interpretation, suggesting that Bede 'may well have imagined the Firth [of Forth] to be a more or less triangular opening with a wide base to seaward'.¹²⁴ As a result, Bede may 'have used the words *in medio sui* to mean "at its apex", regarding the apex as a kind of mid-point between evenly converging shores'.¹²⁵ Interpreting this as referring to the angle between the northern and southern shores of a triangular-shaped firth, Graham suggested a location for *urbs Giudi* at the tidal reach of the Firth of Forth: 'Stirling, placed as it is at the highest point that a seaman would be likely to reach, would exactly fit this meaning of *in medio sui*'.¹²⁶ Interpreting *in medio sui* as 'at its apex', Graham concluded that *urbs Giudi*, if located at Stirling, may legitimately be described as 'in the middle of a bay'. Believing that Bede's claimed perception of a 'triangular' firth may explain his description of it as *longe lateque*, Jackson accepted Graham's interpretation of *in medio* as referring to the apex of a triangle and, therefore, found the identification of *urbs Giudi* with Stirling 'entirely convincing'.¹²⁷

Graham's interpretation is followed in the most recent translation of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, although his paper is not referred to there. In a marked departure from previous translations, Paolo Chiesa renders the passage as *L'insegnatura orientale ha al vertice la città di Giudi* 'The eastern inlet has the city of *Giudi* at its apex'.¹²⁸ Consistent with this, Jackson's identification of *urbs Giudi* with Stirling is referred to, although it is noted that this is disputed.¹²⁹

Fraser suggests that Graham's 'translation of *in medio sui* as "at its highest point" surely strains credulity',¹³⁰ although this could be said to be equally true of more

¹²⁴ Graham, 'Giudi', p. 64.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 64.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 64. Stirling is near the head of the Forth Estuary, not the Firth of Forth. See note 20, above.

¹²⁷ Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*', pp. 4–5.

¹²⁸ *Beda: Storia degli Inglesi*, trans. Chiesa, p. 59, with my translation from the Italian.

¹²⁹ *Beda: Storia degli Inglesi*, ed. Lapidge, p. 306.

¹³⁰ Fraser, 'Location of *Urbs Indeu*', p. 8.

widely-accepted translations of the phrase. Most obviously, the Firth of Forth does not resemble a triangle because it does not have ‘evenly converging shores’ but irregularly curving coasts instead. If Bede had perceived the Firth of Forth as a triangle, he might have been expected to describe it as such. Instead, Bede refers to this body of water as a *sinus*.¹³¹ In addition, the Firth of Forth could only form a triangle if it is treated in isolation. By contrast, Bede perceives the eastern *sinus* not as a separate body of water but as an ‘arm of the sea’ that penetrates deep inland. Given ‘[t]he usual medieval belief about the flow of rivers ... that it was supplied from the sea’,¹³² this perception must have seemed self-evident in the case of firths and estuaries. Emphasising the weakness of his argument, Graham contradicts his own hypothesis by suggesting that his interpretation of *in medio* ‘would be even more natural if the *sinus* was thought of as a kind of rounded pocket’,¹³³ rather than a ‘triangle’.

Jackson makes two more points in support of Graham’s ‘triangle’ hypothesis. Firstly, he compares the Firth of Forth with the Moray Firth and Dublin Bay,¹³⁴ but this is irrelevant to Bede’s description because all three have unique topographies. Secondly, in an attempt to reconcile Bede’s use of *in medio sui* with the proposed location of *urbs Giudi* at the head of the Forth Estuary, Jackson claims that Bede ‘must have known this region by hearsay only’, thereby introducing ‘a certain vagueness and inaccuracy about the true character of these two waters’.¹³⁵ Jackson follows Graham’s presumption that Bede ‘was not ... familiar with the Firth of Forth’ but ‘depended on the reports of sailors or other casual informants’.¹³⁶ Only by finding fault with Bede and/or his sources does the ‘triangle’ hypothesis stand up. However, this contrasts with Bede’s geographical skills and access to reliable sources originating at Abercorn. The ‘triangle’ hypothesis is a weak argument,¹³⁷ a contrived attempt to rationalise Bede’s description and make it compatible with the identification of *urbs Giudi* with Stirling.

Despite this, it is widely agreed that Castle Rock, Stirling, is the probable site of an early medieval fortress.¹³⁸ A massive volcanic crag-and-tail formation towering

¹³¹ pp. 28–39, below.

¹³² G. H. T. Kimble, *Geography in the Middle Ages* (London, 1938), p. 173.

¹³³ Graham, ‘Giudi’, p. 64.

¹³⁴ Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, p. 5.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 3 and 5.

¹³⁶ Graham, ‘Giudi’, p. 64.

¹³⁷ Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iuden*’, pp. 3–9.

¹³⁸ For example, E. Stair-Kerr, *Stirling Castle: its Place in Scottish History*, 2nd edn (Stirling, 1928), pp. 3–5; Graham, ‘Giudi’, p. 63; Alcock, ‘Early Historic Fortifications in Scotland’, p. 176; Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, pp. 4–5; R. Fawcett, *Stirling Castle* (London, 1995), pp. 16–17; S. T. Driscoll, ‘Formalising the Mechanisms of State Power: early Scottish Lordship from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries’, in *Scottish Power Centres: from the Early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, ed. S. Foster, A. MacInnes and R. MacInnes (Glasgow, 1998), pp. 32–58, at 41; P. A. Yeoman,

over the surrounding alluvial plain of the Carse of Stirling, this was occupied by a royal castle by the early twelfth century, although its earlier history remains obscure. Its strategic location, commanding the lowest crossing of the Forth and the 'Stirling Gap' between surrounding hills, makes Stirling the 'gateway to the Highlands'. This ensured that its castle was besieged repeatedly during the Scottish Wars of Independence and later conflicts while its intended relief led directly to the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314.¹³⁹ No evidence of early medieval activity on Castle Rock has been detected, presumably because it has been destroyed by, or lies beneath, successive phases of medieval and later fortifications. Despite rejecting its identification with *urbs Giudi*, Fraser concedes that Stirling 'suggests itself' as the site of an early medieval royal power centre.¹⁴⁰ Could Graham and Jackson have arrived at the correct location for *urbs Giudi* but for the wrong reasons?

Bede's references to *urbs Giudi* and *Alcluith* within the same sentence appear to imply some form of equivalent status. Inferring from *Alcluith*, this is presumably as impressive and important fortifications of the northern Britons, on opposite sides of the Forth-Clyde isthmus. Bede seems to indicate that *urbs Giudi* and *Alcluith* may have been similar types of places but that their relationship with the estuaries on which they were situated was dissimilar. Bede describes the locations of *Alcluith*, on the right bank of the western *sinus*, and *urbs Giudi*, *in medio sui*, referring to the eastern *sinus*, in very different and precise terms. In doing so, he appears to make a fundamental distinction between their situations relative to the estuaries with which they are associated. In particular, the absence of a reference to which bank *urbs Giudi* stood on is surely significant. Bede implies that *urbs Giudi* was not located on either bank of the eastern *sinus*. This impression is reinforced by the precision with which Bede records that *urbs Giudi* was situated *in medio sui*, although the significance of *in medio sui* in this context is obscure. Whatever *in medio sui* means, it appears to undermine the arguments in favour of a location for *urbs Giudi* on either shore of the Firth of Forth and, therefore, most of the sites proposed previously, including Cramond, Inveresk, and Edinburgh, as well as Fraser's proposed sites of Blackness, Cramond Island, and Carlingnose.¹⁴¹ Given the doubts that *in medio sui* refers to an island in the Firth of Forth or a location on either of its shores, this leaves Stirling as the only remaining plausible, but disputed, identification from

Stirling Castle: Official Souvenir Guide [with K. Owen, *Argyll's Lodging and Mar's Wark: Official Souvenir Guide*] (Edinburgh, 2011), p. 38; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 7; G. Lock and I. Ralston, *Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland*, ref. SC4228, available at: <https://hillforts.arch.ox.ac.uk>. See also G. Ewart and D. Gallagher, *'With thy Towers High': the Archaeology of Stirling Castle and Palace* (Edinburgh, 2015), p. 21.

¹³⁹ Fawcett, *Stirling Castle*, pp. 19–24; Ewart and Gallagher, *'With thy Towers High'*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁰ Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, p. 358.

¹⁴¹ Fraser, 'Location of *Urbs Inde!*'.

suggested locations for *urbs Giudi*. Is Stirling compatible with a place which is described as being located *in medio sui* of the eastern *sinus*?

OTHER INSTANCES

Bede's language appears to be precise but his intended meaning of *in medio sui* and, therefore, its implications for the location of *urbs Giudi*, are unclear. Although its translation as 'halfway along' is rejected above,¹⁴² *in medio* is capable of more than one reading, as its use in other contexts indicates.

The phrases *in medio*, *in medium* occur seventeen times in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.¹⁴³ Bede uses *medius* in two different ways, as a noun, in 'the middle' of something, and as an adjective, in 'mid-' something'. Although the reference to *urbs Giudi* as being situated *in medio sui* employs *medius* as a noun, adjectival examples are also revealing and are therefore included here. For clarity, adjectival phrases are distinguished from nominal phrases where they are discussed. Published translations of *in medio*, *in medium* are often too free to convey nuances and do not always distinguish between *medius* as an adjective and as a noun or *in* plus accusative 'into' and *in* plus ablative 'in'. As a result, literal translations are sometimes included here in an attempt to capture the exact meaning of Bede's phrases.

Seven examples of Bede's use of *in medio* refer to a centrally-placed location within a building. These include *porticus ... in medio pene sui altare* 'in the middle of the chapel is an altar',¹⁴⁴ literally 'the chapel ... has an altar almost in the middle of it', and *ecclesia ... in cuius medio* 'in the centre of the church',¹⁴⁵ literally 'the church ... in the midst of which ...'. Bede also describes how Edwin constructed a church at York, 'in the midst of which (*in cuius medio*) the chapel which he had first built was to be enclosed'.¹⁴⁶ In addition, Bede uses *in medio* of sites associated with Christ.¹⁴⁷ The expression carries the same meaning in domestic and secular contexts: *accenso ... foco in medio*, literally 'with the hearth in the middle [of the hall]',¹⁴⁸ and *accenso grandi igne in medio ... domus* 'a great fire burned in the midst of the dwelling'.¹⁴⁹ Elsewhere, Bede refers to *in medio tuguriunculi mei* 'in the midst of my little

¹⁴² pp. 18–20, above.

¹⁴³ P. F. Jones, *A Concordance to the Historia Ecclesiastica of Bede* (Cambridge, MA, 1929), p. 313. Not all instances of *in medio* are discussed here.

¹⁴⁴ *HE* ii. 3; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 144–5.

¹⁴⁵ *HE* v. 17; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 510–11.

¹⁴⁶ *HE* ii. 14; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 186–7.

¹⁴⁷ *HE* v. 16 and 17, quoting Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*; *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 510–11.

¹⁴⁸ *HE* ii. 13; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 184–5.

¹⁴⁹ *HE* iii. 10; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 244–5.

dwelling'.¹⁵⁰ Bede's intended meaning is also clear in his description of Earth as *orbis ... in medio totius mundi positus* 'a sphere set in the middle of the whole universe'.¹⁵¹ Bede was familiar with the Biblical concept of the world in which Jerusalem was located *in medio gentium*, at the centre of the earth with the peoples or nations arranged around it, even if he himself remained unconvinced: *Hierusalem ... putant ibi mediam esse terram* 'some suppose Jerusalem to be at the centre of the earth',¹⁵² where *mediam esse terram* means literally 'to be mid-earth'. This example differs from the others discussed above because here *medius* is the adjective not the noun. Nevertheless, all these instances of the literal sense of *in medio* (and one of *mediam*) appear to be straightforward and incontrovertible.

Bede also employs *in medio* when referring to groups of people or animals. He mentions a tribune who *procedit in medium* 'came into the midst' of a crowd.¹⁵³ Bede records that Æthelthryth (Etheldreda), abbess of Ely, died *in medio suorum* 'in the presence of her nuns',¹⁵⁴ literally 'in the midst of her people',¹⁵⁵ and was buried *in medio eorum* 'among them',¹⁵⁶ literally 'in the midst of them'. In another context, Bede uses the phrase *in medio luporum* 'among the wolves',¹⁵⁷ literally 'in the midst of wolves'.¹⁵⁸ In these examples, Colgrave usually translates *in medio* literally and Leo Sherley-Price more freely. In some cases, Bede's use of *in medio* may be better expressed in English as meaning something being 'surrounded by' another thing or things, rather than by the strict sense of being precisely 'in the middle' of something.

In medio occurs in a wide range of other contexts in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. For example, using *medius* as an adjective, rather than as a noun, Bede relates how monks were caught in a storm *in medio mari* 'in the midst of the sea',¹⁵⁹ literally 'in mid-sea', when returning from Farne Island. According to Bede, Farne Island was *insula medio in mari posita* 'an island in the middle of the sea',¹⁶⁰ literally 'an island situated in mid-sea'. This does not reflect geographical reality, because Inner

¹⁵⁰ *Life of Cuthbert* xviii; *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. Colgrave, pp. 218–19.

¹⁵¹ *De temporum ratione* xxxii; *Beda Venerabilis: Opera* VI, *Opera Didascalica* II, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 123B (Turnhout, 1997), 380; *Bede: the Reckoning of Time*, trans. F. Wallis (Liverpool, 1999), p. 91.

¹⁵² *De locis sanctis* ii.6; 'Beda De locis sanctis', ed. J. Fraipont, in *Itineraria et alia geographica: Itineraria Hierosolymitana. Itineraria Romana. Geographica*, ed. P. Geyer, O. Cuntz, A. Francheschini, R. Weber, L. Bieler, J. Fraipont and F. Glorie, CCSL 175 (Turnhout, 1965) I, 244–80, at 258.

¹⁵³ *HE* i. 18; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 58–9.

¹⁵⁴ *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sherley-Price, p. 237.

¹⁵⁵ *HE* iv. 19; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 392–3.

¹⁵⁶ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 237.

¹⁵⁷ *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sherley-Price, p. 113.

¹⁵⁸ *HE* ii. 6, quoting Matthew 10:16; John 10:12; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 154–5.

¹⁵⁹ *HE* v. 1; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 454–5.

¹⁶⁰ *Life of Cuthbert* xvii; *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. Colgrave, pp. 214–15.

Farne, the location of Cuthbert's cell, lies only 2.4 km (1.5 miles) off the Northumbrian coast. Bede's descriptions of monks at sea and the location of Farne Island may be paralleled by his use of *in medio* to express examples of something being 'surrounded by' other things, as both the monks and the island were 'surrounded by' the sea, that is, cut off from the mainland, regardless of how close to the shore they were. Here, Bede's use of *in medio* conveys the isolation of Farne Island, emphasising Cuthbert's ascetic credentials, spiritual devotion and life of austerity. This sense of *in medio mari* may be better expressed as 'far out to sea'.¹⁶¹ In this context, Bede's use of (*in*) *medio* may parallel the sense of Classical Latin *medius* '(in contexts emphasising remoteness from the edge, boundary, etc.) [t]he inside of, the middle of, the heart of'.¹⁶²

Another example where Bede uses the adjectival phrase *in medio* is *in medio sermone*, literally 'in mid-talk'.¹⁶³ This is translated 'in the midst of their talk' and 'in the course of conversation'.¹⁶⁴ The intended sense is apparent from the context, a meeting in which Cuthbert foresees the death of King Ecgrith and informs Ecgrith's sister Ælfflæd, abbess of Coquet Island. The emotional and spiritual intensity of this discussion suggest a more elegant, but flexible, translation, that Cuthbert and Ælfflæd were 'deep in conversation'. However, as Bede relates that Cuthbert and Ælfflæd continued their discussion after Ælfflæd asked about Ecgrith, *in medio sermone* may be taken literally to mean that she posed her question 'in the middle' of a much longer conversation about a range of issues.

Bede's commentary on the Canticle of Habakkuk contains his gloss on the biblical image of being *in medio duorum animalium* '[b]etween two living beings',¹⁶⁵ literally 'in the middle of two animals'. Bede's objective here is to establish what these 'two living beings' might signify. His suggestion that they may denote Moses and Elijah refers to Matthew 17:3, where these prophets talk to Christ, who might then be described as being 'in their midst'. Bede also suggests that the 'two living beings' may represent the two thieves crucified on either side of Christ. In both cases, Bede's suggestions stem from taking *in medio* fairly literally as an indication that the words from Habakkuk must refer to another biblical event in which

¹⁶¹ 'Life of Cuthbert', trans. Webb, p. 66.

¹⁶² *Oxford Latin Dictionary* II, 1200.

¹⁶³ *Life of Cuthbert* xxiv; *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. Colgrave, p. 234.

¹⁶⁴ *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, trans. Colgrave, p. 235 ('in the midst of their talk'); 'Life of Cuthbert', trans. Webb, p. 74 ('in the course of conversation').

¹⁶⁵ *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc Prophetæ* iii. 2; *Expositio Bedæ presbyteri in Canticum Prophetæ*, in *Bedæ Venerabilis Opera* II, *Opera Exegetica*, ed. J. E. Hudson, CCSL 119B (Turnhout, 1983), 377–409, at 383; *Bede: On Tobit and on the Canticle of Habakkuk*, trans. S. Connolly (Dublin, 1997), p. 68 and fn. See B. Ward, "'In medium duorum animalium": Bede and Jerome on the Canticle of Habakkuk', *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993), 189–93.

something was located either alongside two other things (Christ, Moses and Elijah) or in between them (Christ and the two thieves).

Returning to the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede's description of Hell from Drythelm's vision indicates his non-literal application of *in medium*. In it, Bede uses *in medium* as a nominal phrase three times when describing tormented souls in Hell: *prosiliebant miserae in medium rigoris infesti* 'they leapt into the midst of the deadly cold' and *resiliebant rursus urendae in medium flammarum inextinguibilium* 'they jumped back only to burn once again in the midst of the unquenchable flames', before *Trabentes autem eos maligni spiritus descenderunt in medium baratri illius ardentis* 'The evil spirits dragged them down into the midst of the burning pit'.¹⁶⁶ The last passage may be translated literally as 'dragging them [the souls], the evil spirits descended into the midst of that burning pit/Hell'. This may express a sense of something being 'surrounded by' something else, like some examples of *in medio* discussed above. However, Bede's description of Hell presents a more complex use of *in medium* because it refers to motion occurring in different dimensions simultaneously, with the demons not only pulling souls *into* a fiery pit but also *downwards* inside it. This is emphasised by Colgrave's translation of *cum longius subeuntibus* 'as they descended deeper' later in the same sentence.¹⁶⁷ In these cases, *in medium* refers to both 'midst' and 'depth'. Bede's account of Drythelm's vision of Hell provides the strongest evidence that he uses *in medium* in a non-literal sense, at least in some instances.

ASSESSING *IN MEDIO*

It is evident from the examples discussed above that Bede's usual practice was to employ the nominal phrase *in medio* 'in the middle' literally. This, by itself, does not exclude the possibility of a non-literal meaning for *in medio sui* as it applies to the location of *urbs Giudi* in relation to the eastern *sinus*. This is because Bede employs *in medio* in different ways in different contexts. *In medio* clearly carries a literal meaning when applied to a physical structure, whether a chapel, church, hall or dwelling, or even to the world itself. Beyond the confines of a building, *in medio* appears to carry a more flexible sense. When applied to a group of living beings, whether nuns or wolves, *in medio* may still mean 'in the middle', but in the sense 'surrounded by'. These (predominantly) small-scale, local contexts, both structural and social, account for most instances of *in medio* in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

By contrast, Bede appears to use *in medio/in medium* in a different sense when referring to wider physical contexts, specifically the location of Farne Island and

¹⁶⁶ *HE* v. 22; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 490–3.

¹⁶⁷ *HE* v. 22; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 492–3.

perceptions of Hell. In these open settings, Bede employs *in medio* to express depth and/or distance, with the possible meanings ‘far out to’ and ‘deep into’. In this manner, Bede uses *in medio* to convey the remoteness of Farne Island, with its associated perils for the monks caught in a storm on the open sea, and to evoke the desperate fate of those souls dragged into the centre and depths of Hell, as perceived in Drythelm’s vision. Although these instances are in the minority, they indicate a broader range of meanings for *in medio* that are dependent on context. Bede’s application of the nominal phrase *in medio sui* in his reference to *urbs Giudi* falls into this select category, concerning as it does the location of a fortress within the wider setting of the Firth of Forth. Indeed, in both its geographical scale and estuarine setting, Bede’s reference to *urbs Giudi* may be compared with his use of the adjectival phrase *in medio*, in a marine or coastal context, to describe the location of Farne Island. In the cases of both Farne Island and *urbs Giudi*, Bede is pinpointing specific locations within their more extensive geographical settings, a tiny island in the vastness of the North Sea and an *urbs* within the great eastern *sinus* respectively.

These distinctions in Bede’s use of *in medio* have potential implications for the interpretation of the passage concerning *urbs Giudi* and the location of this stronghold. A combination of text and topography suggests that Bede’s description of *urbs Giudi* being situated *in medio sui* may carry a secondary, more obscure, meaning rather than literally ‘in the middle of itself’. Although they are not identical — *in medio* is an adjectival phrase when referring to Farne Island, whereas *in medio sui*, used to locate *urbs Giudi*, is a nominal phrase — Bede’s description of Farne Island as *in medio mari* may imply that *urbs Giudi* was not ‘in the middle of’ the Firth of Forth at all. This is consistent with the absence of archaeological evidence for an *urbs* on the islands in the Firth of Forth and their poor suitability for the site of an early medieval fortress. Similarly, there is no evidence to support more imaginative interpretations of *in medio* as meaning ‘at the highest point’,¹⁶⁸ or ‘half way along’.¹⁶⁹

That *in medio sui* may carry a more opaque secondary meaning has been overlooked previously in the debate on *urbs Giudi*. Bede’s description of Farne Island and his accounts of Drythelm’s vision indicate that Bede sometimes employs *in medio* to convey depth, distance and/or remoteness. These meanings may be inferred from their contexts. *In medio sui* may also carry a subsidiary and figurative, rather than literal, meaning when applied to *urbs Giudi* because this is another example of Bede’s use of this phrase within a more extensive geographical setting. Moreover, this is the only reading that makes sense. In this context, *in medio sui* reflects the great size, both length and breadth, of the Firth of Forth.

¹⁶⁸ Graham, ‘Giudi’, p. 64.

¹⁶⁹ *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 41.

By describing its location as *in medio sui*, Bede did not necessarily mean that *urbs Giudi* was literally ‘in the middle’ of the Firth of Forth but may use this phrase to express that it was ‘far along’, ‘deep inside’, ‘at the heart of’, ‘in the depth, at the deepest or furthest point of’, or something similar. Rather than a site on an island in, or on the shore of, the Firth of Forth, *in medio sui* expresses remoteness, implying a location that was further upstream and deeper inland. This is consistent with a location at or near the head or tidal limit of the Forth Estuary. This parallels Graham’s theory that *urbs Giudi* was sited ‘at the highest point’ or ‘apex’ of the Firth of Forth,¹⁷⁰ where the Forth Estuary is intended.¹⁷¹ The only previously-proposed location for *urbs Giudi* that is consistent with this re-reading of *in medio* is Stirling. This reinterpretation of *in medio sui* counters the objection ‘that Stirling is “too far inland”’ to be the location of *urbs Giudi*.¹⁷² On the contrary, Stirling’s location at the head of the Forth Estuary and a short distance below its normal tidal limit fits this re-reading of Bede’s description of *urbs Giudi* in a way that no other proposed location in, on or around the Firth of Forth does.

The evidence for this reinterpretation of *in medio sui* as it relates to *urbs Giudi* is suggestive but far from conclusive. With this in mind, the significance of the topographical terms Bede uses to locate *urbs Giudi*, *fretum* and *sinus*, may also be reassessed.

SINUS

Previous attempts to locate *urbs Giudi* have focussed on the phrase *in medio sui* at the expense of the analysis of other terms which may be significant topographically. According to Bede, the Picts and the Scots were separated from the Britons by *duobus simibus maris . . . longe lateque* ‘two wide and long arms of the sea’, which he also describes as *duo freta uel sinus . . . maris*, ‘two channels or arms of the sea’.¹⁷³ The western of these is introduced as *sinus maris permaximus* ‘a very wide arm of the sea’,¹⁷⁴ subsequently referred to simply as a *sinus* ‘arm’.¹⁷⁵ Bede uses *fretum* and *sinus* — apparently synonymously, despite their different meanings — when referring to the firths of Forth and Clyde.

Fraser attaches importance to Bede’s reference to the Firth of Forth as a *fretum* ‘channel, strait’.¹⁷⁶ However, the Firth of Forth is no more accurately described as a ‘channel’ or ‘strait’ than a ‘bay of the sea’. *Fretum* may carry various associations in

¹⁷⁰ Graham, ‘Giudi’, p. 64.

¹⁷¹ See note 20, above.

¹⁷² Unattributed but cited in Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, p. 5. See also Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iudei*’, p. 11.

¹⁷³ *HE* i. 12; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 40–3.

¹⁷⁴ *HE* i. 1; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 20–1.

¹⁷⁵ *HE* i. 12; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 40–1.

¹⁷⁶ Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iudei*’, pp. 7–8; *Dictionary of Medieval Latin*, IV: *F–G–H*, 1009.

this context from its Classical Latin sense ‘[a] place where the sea boils up’.¹⁷⁷ This may refer literally to turbulent waters. Exposed to the North Sea, the Firth of Forth can be blasted by violent storms and sudden squalls, such as that which forced Alexander I (1107–1124) to seek shelter on the island of Inchcolm.¹⁷⁸ Alternatively, or in addition, *fretum* may hold a metaphorical significance, perhaps alluding to the violence of Pictish raids across the Firth of Forth. Although of intrinsic interest, these meanings are not relevant to the location and identification of *urbs Giudi* and, therefore, *fretum* is not discussed further here. By contrast, *sinus* occurs more frequently than *fretum* in Bede’s references to these firths, indicating that it is the more significant of the two terms, while its ablative plural *sinibus* appears in the passage concerning *urbs Giudi*. *Sinus* is fundamental to Bede’s perception or ‘mental map’ of the Firth of Forth and, therefore, the identification of *urbs Giudi*.

THE FORTH: RIVER, ESTUARY, AND FIRTH

Despite noting that ‘negative evidence is dubious grounds for presuming that Bede did not know about Din Etin [Edinburgh]’, Fraser claims that Bede displays no awareness of either the River Forth or that it flowed into the eastern *sinus*.¹⁷⁹ Bede does not refer to the firths of Forth and Clyde by what would appear to be the most obvious term, Latin *aestuarium* ‘[a]n inlet, etc., covered by the sea at high tide, tidal opening’, ‘river estuary’,¹⁸⁰ ‘tidal inlet or channel, estuary’.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, this is unlikely to reflect the limitations of Bede’s knowledge. The Firth of Forth is the major geographical feature on the east coast of what is now Scotland and was known from at least the second century AD, when Ptolemy recorded it as *Boderiae aest[uarium]*.¹⁸² Bede was almost certainly aware that this was an estuary from his sources originating at Abercorn, skills as a geographer, and familiarity with such environments. Indeed, Bede ‘spent his entire life near a tidal estuary’,¹⁸³

¹⁷⁷ *Oxford Latin Dictionary* I, 807.

¹⁷⁸ Bower, *Scoticronicon* v. 37; *Scoticronicon* by Walter Bower III (Books V and VI), ed. and trans. J. MacQueen, W. MacQueen and D. E. R. Watt (Edinburgh, 1995), pp. 110–11. For accounts of other storms in the Firth of Forth, see Bower, *Scoticronicon* xiii. 33 and xv. 38; *Scoticronicon* by Walter Bower VII (Books XIII and XIV), ed. and trans. Scott and Watt, pp. 110–11; VIII (Books XV and XVI), ed. and trans. D. E. R. Watt (Aberdeen, 1987), pp. 136–9.

¹⁷⁹ Fraser, ‘Location of *Urbs Iudei*’, pp. 1–2. Fraser attributes this to F. T. Wainwright, ‘The Picts and the problem’, *The Problem of the Picts*, ed. F. T. Wainwright (Edinburgh, 1955), pp. 1–53, at 39–40, although no such claim appears there.

¹⁸⁰ *Oxford Latin Dictionary* I, 80.

¹⁸¹ *Dictionary of Medieval Latin* I: A–B, 45.

¹⁸² A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), pp. 269–71.

¹⁸³ *Bede: On Genesis*, trans. C. B. Kendall (Liverpool, 2008), p. 35.

probably the Wear,¹⁸⁴ and refers to ‘we who live at various places along the coastline of the British Sea’.¹⁸⁵ As a result, Bede’s writing is ‘the product of a littoral, as much as [a] literary, environment’.¹⁸⁶ This is reflected in Bede’s interests in coastal fauna and tides.¹⁸⁷

Although Bede does not refer to the eastern *sinus* as a river, its estuary, and firth explicitly, this may be because he regarded their relationship as self-evident. Bede was certainly aware that the western *sinus* was associated with a river: ‘above the western branch ... is the town of *Alcluth* ... which ... stands near the river (*fluvium*) of that name’.¹⁸⁸ Thomas Charles-Edwards assesses that Bede ‘undoubtedly combined the Firth of Clyde with the estuary of the River Clyde as the western *sinus*, so he may also have combined the Firth of Forth with the lower course of the River Forth as the eastern *sinus*’.¹⁸⁹ Charles-Edwards’ ‘lower course of the River Forth’ conforms with local usage but refers to what is more accurately described as the Forth Estuary.¹⁹⁰ Just as Bede refers to the Firth of Clyde and the Clyde Estuary jointly as the western *sinus*, it may reasonably be inferred that Bede’s eastern *sinus* comprises both the Firth of Forth and the Forth Estuary. This may be supported by Bede’s comment that both the eastern and western *sinus* extend for a considerable distance inland: *Brittaniae terras longe lateque intrumpit*, literally ‘penetrates the lands of Britain far and wide’.¹⁹¹

This point, if accepted, has major implications for the location of *urbs Giudi*. If the eastern *sinus* comprises both the Firth of Forth and the Forth Estuary, then it follows that a location *in medio sui* may not have been located in or on the Firth of Forth, but further upstream, on the Forth Estuary. This is paralleled by Dumbarton Rock, which is located on the Clyde Estuary. Just how far up the Forth Estuary *urbs Giudi* was situated is unclear and is dependent on the interpretation of *in medio*

¹⁸⁴ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. McClure and Collins, pp. xiii–xiv; I. Wood, ‘Bede’s Jarrow’, *A Place to Believe In: Locating Medieval Landscapes*, ed. C. A. Lees and G. R. Overing (University Park, PA, 2006), pp. 67–84, at 68 n. 2.

¹⁸⁵ Bede, *De temporum ratione* ixix; *Reckoning of Time*, trans. Wallis, p. 85.

¹⁸⁶ Merrills, *History and Geography*, p. 252.

¹⁸⁷ On coastal fauna see *HE* i. 1; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 14; *In Genesis* i. 1, 20–3; *Beda’s Venerabilis Opera* II, *Opera exegetica* I: *Libri Quatuor in Principium Genesis usque ad Nativitatem Isaac et eiectioem Ismaelibus Adnotationum*, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnhout, 1967), 20–2; *Bede: On Genesis*, trans. Kendall, pp. 85–7. On tides see *De natura rerum* xlix; *Beda’s Venerabilis Opera* VI, *Opera Didascalica* I, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 123A (Turnhout, 1975), 173–234, at 224–5; *Bede: On the Nature of Things and on Times*, trans. C. B. Kendall and F. Wallis (Liverpool, 2010), p. 95; *De temporum ratione*, xxix; *Reckoning of Time*, trans. Wallis, p. 85; see also T. R. Eckenrode, ‘Venerable Bede’s Theory of Ocean Tides’, *The Amer. Benedictine Rev.* 25 (1974), 456–74; W. M. Stevens, *Bede’s Scientific Achievement* (Jarrow, 1985), pp. 11–18.

¹⁸⁸ *HE* i. 12; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 40–1.

¹⁸⁹ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁰ See note 20, above.

¹⁹¹ *HE* i. 12; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 40.

sui and Bede's awareness and perceptions of the extent of this watercourse. However, if the revised reading of *in medio sui* as 'far along', 'deep inside', 'at the heart of' or 'in the depth, at the deepest or furthest point of' is accepted,¹⁹² then this may suggest that *urbs Giudi* was located at or near the head of the estuary, placing it at, or in the vicinity of, Stirling.

THE FORTH AS A *SINUS*

Sinus is not an obvious term for the Firth of Forth because it cannot be described accurately as a curving bay.¹⁹³ Indeed, the Firth of Forth is rarely referred to in print as a bay and, on the few occasions it has been, only by authors who appear to have limited familiarity with it.¹⁹⁴ Most translators of the *Historia ecclesiastica* have sought to resolve this apparent inconsistency between text and topography by adapting Classical Latin *sinus*, 'a curved indentation in the coastline, bay, gulf',¹⁹⁵ to suit Bede's application of it, interpreting it as an 'arm',¹⁹⁶ 'branch',¹⁹⁷ 'creek',¹⁹⁸ or 'inlet' of the sea,¹⁹⁹ 'estuary',²⁰⁰ 'firth',²⁰¹ archaic 'frith',²⁰² or simply 'sea'.²⁰³ More conventionally, other translators retain 'bay',²⁰⁴ or 'gulf',²⁰⁵ of the sea.

¹⁹² See pages 27–8, above.

¹⁹³ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁴ For example, A. Rees, *The Cyclopædia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature* (London, 1819), XXI, *s.v.* Linlithgowshire ('an extensive bay'); W. C. Bryant, *The Picturesque Souvenir: Letters of a Traveller; or, Notes of Things Seen in Europe and America* (New York, 1851), p. 182 ('the Frith ... forms the bay of Edinburgh'); J. S. C. Abbott, *The Life of Rear Admiral John Paul Jones* (New York, 1874), p. 60 ('the frith or bay of Edinburgh', 'the Bay of Edinburgh').

¹⁹⁵ *Oxford Latin Dictionary* II, 1953.

¹⁹⁶ *Bede: Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Maclagan, pp. 39 and 59; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 21, 41 and 43; *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sherley-Price, p. 47; *Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, trans. Monat and Robin, I, 151.

¹⁹⁷ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 41.

¹⁹⁸ *History of the Church of Englande*, trans. Stapleton, 15v, 21v and 21r; *History of the Primitive Church*, trans. Hurst, pp. 33–4; *Baedæ Opera Historica*, trans. King, I, 21, 23 and 57; *Bède le Vénéérable: Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*, trans. Delaveau, p. 79.

¹⁹⁹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Stevens, p. 36; *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Giles, p. 22; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sellar, p. 24.

²⁰⁰ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sherley-Price, pp. 58–9.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 255.

²⁰² Bede, *History of the Primitive Church*, trans. Hurst, pp. 33 and 406.

²⁰³ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sellar, p. 23.

²⁰⁴ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Stevens, p. 14; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sellar, p. 24.

²⁰⁵ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Stevens, p. 14; *History of the Primitive Church*, trans. Hurst, p. 12; *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Giles, p. 8; *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Gidley, pp. 12–13, 30 and 31; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sellar, p. 9; *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers*, trans. Anderson, p. 4 n. 3; J. B. Johnston, *Place-Names of Scotland*, 3rd edn (London, 1934), p. 182; *Bede: Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Maclagan, p. 60.

Medieval Latin *sinus* ‘curved or narrow area of water, enclosed by coastline, bay, strait, arm of the sea’ may be used to describe a wide variety of bodies of water.²⁰⁶ Bede himself uses *sinus* flexibly, even inconsistently. He explains how ‘the Red Sea is divided into two gulfs’ (*Mare Rubrum ... scinditur ... in duos sinus*), the Persian and the Arabian,²⁰⁷ refers to the English Channel as ‘the *sinus* between Britain and Gaul’ (*gallico sinu brittaniae*),²⁰⁸ and describes Ambleteuse Bay, at the mouth of the Slack Estuary, as a *sinus maris* ‘bay of the sea’.²⁰⁹ And, although Bede refers to the firths of Forth and Clyde as *sinūs*, the Humber estuary is the *Humbrae fluminis*²¹⁰ and *Humbrae fluminis maximi*²¹¹ ‘the (great) river Humber’. The contrast between the bodies of water referred to as *sinūs* by Bede suggests that this is not, either primarily or exclusively, a precise topographical term but perhaps has another significance.

Could successive scholars have misinterpreted Bede’s intended meaning of *sinus* as it relates to the firths of Forth and Clyde? Some nineteenth-century dictionaries include a more specific topographical sense of Latin *sinus* ‘anything bent or winding’²¹² and ‘a bending, winding, a bay, gulf, frith, creek’.²¹³ Peter Heylyn (1599–1662), the English ecclesiastic and geographer, defines a *sinus* as ‘a *Creek* or *Bay* ... a Sea contained within a crooked or circling shore, wherewith it is almost environed ... and this is sometimes called a *Gulf*’.²¹⁴ Although Heylyn’s definition applies to the Firth of Forth, it may have been influenced by Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*, which was first published in England in 1643.²¹⁵ An earlier topographical sense is recorded as *sinus* ‘the turning or hollownes of water bankes’, giving *sinuosus* ‘that hath many turnings or windings’,²¹⁶ and *Sinus, ripa, vel litus incurvum sive sinuosum, fluminis sinus* ‘the turning, winding, or hollownesse of water-banks, the curving reach of a river’.²¹⁷ These definitions make a direct link between Latin *sinus* as a topographical term and its adjectival form *sinuosus*

²⁰⁶ *Dictionary of Medieval Latin XV: Sal–Sol*, 3100.

²⁰⁷ *De natura rerum* xlii; *Beda Venerabilis Opera VI, Opera Didascalica I*, ed. Jones, 226; *Bede: On the Nature of Things*, trans. Kendall and Wallis, p. 96.

²⁰⁸ *HE* i. 17; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 54.

²⁰⁹ *HE* i. 33; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 114–15.

²¹⁰ *HE* i. 15 and 24, ii. 3, 5, 9, 16 and 25; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 50, 72, 142, 148, 162 and 190.

²¹¹ *HE* i. 25; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 72.

²¹² A. Adam, *A Compendious Dictionary of the Latin Tongue*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 1814), pp. 642–3.

²¹³ J. E. Riddle, *A Complete Latin-English Dictionary*, 4th edn (London, 1844), p. 638.

²¹⁴ P. Heylyn, *Cosmography in Four Books, Containing the Chorography and History of the Whole World* (London, 1677), p. 23.

²¹⁵ *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Gentis Anglorum Libri V a Venerabilis Beda presbytero scripti*, ed. A. Whelocus [Whe(e)lock] (Cambridge, 1643).

²¹⁶ T. Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae* (London, 1584), s.v. *sinus*.

²¹⁷ W. Somner, *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum: voces, phrasisque praecipuas Anglo-Saxonicas* (Oxford, 1659), s.v. *wic*.

‘[c]haracterized by curves, sinuous, winding ... (of rivers, coasts),²¹⁸ ‘characterized by bending, curving, twisting, winding, or sim[ilar]’,²¹⁹ from which English *sinuous* ‘[c]haracterized by or abounding in turns, curves, or sinuosities; sinuate, curving’ is derived.²²⁰ Could these meanings express the sense in which Bede employs *sinus* in the context of *urbs Giudi*? Charles-Edwards suggests that Bede describes the location of *urbs Giudi* as *in medio* because he uses a term for the Firth of Forth, *sinus*, which suggests ‘a curving indentation’, although he does not elaborate on this.²²¹ However, Charles-Edwards also attempts to explain Bede’s use of *sinus* in this context by suggesting that ‘Bede may well have had only a very general knowledge of the shape of the Firths of Forth and Clyde’.²²²

‘Crooked, turning, bending, winding, curving’ describes the course of the Firth of Forth more accurately than Graham’s ‘triangle’ or ‘rounded pocket’.²²³ However, it is even more relevant to, indeed defines, the lowest reaches of the River Forth and most of the Forth Estuary. Between Craigforth, 1.2 miles (2 km) west-north-west of Stirling Castle, and Alloa, these sections of the River Forth and Forth Estuary follow such a serpentine course that an 18 mile (29 km) length covers a distance of only 7 miles (11.6 km) as the crow flies. This is known as the Links of Forth.

Most previous attempts to reconcile terminology and topography assume that Bede uses *sinus* to refer to the Firth of Forth, rather than to the Forth Estuary and the Firth of Forth. As a result, relying on the dictionary definition of medieval Latin *sinus* when attempting to locate *urbs Giudi* may introduce a circular argument, giving false confirmation that Bede’s *sinus* refers only to the firths of Forth and Clyde, rather than to their more extensive watercourses. The Links of Forth suggests an alternative identification and interpretation of *sinus* which has been overlooked previously in the debate on *urbs Giudi*. It seems unlikely to be coincidental that Bede applies the term *sinus* to one of the most sinuous estuaries in Britain, renowned for its meandering course. This reinforces the argument that *sinus* applies not only to the Firth of Forth but also includes the Forth Estuary. Bede may have been aware of the Links of Forth from sources originating in Abercorn and/or clerics who travelled along the Forth Valley on their way between Iona and Lindisfarne. *Sinus* may be a synecdoche, referring to both the estuary and firth as a whole by their most distinctive feature. Stirling is located on this meandering section of the Forth Estuary, just below its normal tidal limit.

²¹⁸ *Oxford Latin Dictionary* II, 1952.

²¹⁹ *Dictionary of Medieval Latin* XV: *Sal-Sol*, 3099.

²²⁰ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 20 vols (Oxford, 1989), XV (*Ser-Soosy*), 540.

²²¹ Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 8.

²²² *Ibid.* p. 8.

²²³ Graham, ‘Giudi’, p. 64.

Indeed, although the ‘halfway along’ hypothesis is rejected above,²²⁴ it may be significant that Stirling lies at approximately the mid-point of the combined river, estuary and firth of Forth, depending on how the source of the former and mouth of the latter are defined.

LEXICAL RANGE AND METAPHORICAL MEANINGS

Bede eschews the more obvious term *aestuarium* in favour of *sinus* when referring to the Forth, both estuary and firth. Given his skills as both a geographer and Latin scholar, this indicates that Bede selected *sinus* carefully to convey his intended sense(s). Bede’s use of *sinus* may reflect his command and imaginative use of Latin to express a more complex geographical or wider reality. Although *sinus* may refer to the sinuous course of the Forth Estuary, its rich lexical range suggests that it may hold additional meaning(s).

Perhaps significantly, *sinus* ‘a bay of the sea’ is very much a subsidiary sense in both Classical and Medieval Latin, comprising only the eleventh of twelve definitions listed in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* and the tenth of eleven meanings in the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*. Its primary sense is ‘[t]he cavity or fold produced by the looping of a garment; ... clothes draped in folds’ and, by association, ‘the part of the body covered by the *sinus*, the breast’.²²⁵ From its meaning ‘[t]he fold of a garment over the breast or the breast itself as the part where a person, etc, is held as a demonstration of affection, for protection, etc’, *sinus* also carries the figurative senses ‘the place where secrecy is preserved’ and ‘[b]osom, refuge, shelter’.²²⁶ Older Latin dictionaries also define these meanings as ‘[a] hiding-place, place of concealment ... in secret’,²²⁷ ‘a refuge, place of safety’.²²⁸ These senses are also shared with medieval Latin *sinus*: 1 ‘fold (of garment, in quot[at]ions] fig[uratively])’, b ‘fold of garment over the breast’, c ([in a] transf[erred sense]) ‘pocket, purse’; 2 ‘breast, bosom’; 3 ‘embrace’; 4 (transf[erred] & fig[uratively]) b (with implication of secrecy, refuge, comfort or sim[ilar]) ... ; 5 ‘the breast as the seat of the thought or emotion, heart, mind’; 6 ‘innermost part, heart’ (of a place); 7 ‘swelling, curvature’ (of sail); 8 ‘curved recess, hollow interior, cavity’; 9 ‘curved form or part of object’; 10 ‘curved or narrow area of water, enclosed by coastline, bay, strait, arm of the sea’; 11 ‘sine’ (math[ematical]).²²⁹

²²⁴ See pp. 18–20, above.

²²⁵ *Oxford Latin Dictionary* II, 1952.

²²⁶ *Ibid.* II, 1952–3.

²²⁷ C. T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879), p. 1709.

²²⁸ Riddle, *Latin-English Dictionary*, p. 638.

²²⁹ *Dictionary of Medieval Latin* XV: *Sal–Sol*, 3099–3100.

Bede was ‘well aware that its [*sinus*] primary meaning referred to a fold in a garment and hence (though not in a strictly physical sense) to the bosom’.²³⁰ For example, Bede describes how Bothelm placed moss from a holy cross *in sinum sibi* ‘in his bosom’,²³¹ and refers to *in sinum Abrahamae* ‘in the bosom of Abraham’,²³² symbolising heaven and the resurrected life. Despite this, these senses and their potential significance have been overlooked in previous discussions of *urbs Giudi*. More surprisingly still, another topographical application of *sinus* in the *Historia ecclesiastica* has not been noted in this context before.

Sinus also occurs in Bede’s Latin gloss on the Anglo-Saxon place-name *Streanaeshalch*, Whitby (North Yorkshire).²³³ Whitby’s coastal location initially appears to be consistent with the sense *sinus* ‘a bay of the sea’. However, *sinus fari*, ‘the bay of the light house’ or ‘bay of light’,²³⁴ is not a Latin translation of *Streanaeshalch*. Instead, *sinus fari*, possibly a pun on *sinus maris* ‘bay of (the) sea’, can also be read as ‘bosom of light’.²³⁵ *Sinus fari* refers both literally to the bay on which Whitby is located and metaphorically to the radiant jewel worn in the bosom of Breguswith, or the folds of her garment, in her prophetic dream,²³⁶ the saintliness of her daughter Hild, abbess of Whitby, and the monastery at Whitby as the beacon shining the traditions of the Roman Church over the island of Britain.²³⁷

²³⁰ P. Hunter Blair, ‘Whitby as a Centre of Learning in the Seventh Century’, *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Colmeos on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 3–32, at 11.

²³¹ *HE* iii. 2; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 218–19.

²³² *In Lucae evangelium expositio* v. 16; *Bedaе Venerabilis Homiliarum Evangelii* II, *Bedaе Venerabilis Opera* II: *Opera Exegetica* III, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout, 1960), 1–425, at 303; *Homelia* i. 11, *Bedaе Venerabilis Opera* III, *Opera Homiletica*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955), 1–403, at 74; *Bede the Venerable, Homilies on the Gospels, I: Advent to Lent*, trans. L. T. Martin and D. Hurst (Kalamazoo, MI, 1991), p. 105.

²³³ C. Hough, ‘Strensall, *Streanaeshalch* and Stronsay’, *JEPNS* 35 (2002–2003), 17–24; N. J. Higham, *(Re-) Reading Bede: the Historia Ecclesiastica in Context* (London, 2006), p. 46; but see P. S. Barnwell, L. A. S. Butler and C. J. Dunn, ‘The Confusion of Conversion: Streanaeshalch, Strensall and Whitby’, in M. Carver, ed., *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 311–26.

²³⁴ *HE* iii. 25, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 298–9 (‘the bay of the light house’). Hunter Blair, ‘Whitby’, p. 10 (‘bay of light’). Although Hunter Blair criticises Colgrave’s translation ‘bay of the light house’, it is evident that Bede uses *farus* (from Greek *pharos*) to mean not only ‘light’ but ‘beacon, lighthouse’ elsewhere (*HE* i. 11). *Sinus fari*, therefore, can mean literally ‘bay of the beacon’. I owe this point to Professor Rosalind Love.

²³⁵ Hunter Blair, ‘Whitby’, p. 12.

²³⁶ *HE* iv. 23, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 410. The metaphorical reference to the radiance of Breguswith’s jewel is consistent with Colgrave’s translation of *sinus fari* as ‘the bay of the light house’, rather than Hunter Blair’s ‘bay of light’. See note 234, above.

²³⁷ Hunter Blair, ‘Whitby’, pp. 9–12; see also T. Styles, ‘Whitby Revisited: Bede’s Explanation of *Streanaeshalch*’, *Nomina: Jnl Soc. Name Stud. Britain and Ireland* 21 (1998), 133–48, at 143–5; Hough, ‘Strensall’, p. 17; Higham, *(Re-) Reading Bede*, p. 46; M. Ryan, ‘Place-names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape: an Introduction’, *Place-Names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape*,

This gloss provides an insight into the complexity and richness of Bede's imagery and his metaphorical use of a term in what initially appears to be a straightforward topographical reference. This calls for a reassessment of *sinus* as it relates to the Forth and *urbs Giudi*.

REASSESSING *SINUS*

Bede was familiar with, and played on, the lexical range of *sinus*. *Sinus fari* demonstrates that Bede invests *sinus* with a deliberate ambiguity, using it to mean not only 'a bay of the sea', but also 'a fold of garment over the breast' and, by association, 'the bosom'. As *sinus fari* echoes the *duobus sinibus maris* in the passage on *urbs Giudi*, is it plausible that *sinus* carries only a literal and topographic sense when applied to the Forth? This seems unlikely for several reasons. Firstly, Bede may have used the more obvious *aestuarium* if he was referring only to the Forth Estuary and Firth of Forth. Instead, Bede employs *sinus* because of its wider associations and greater literary potential. Supporting this, *sinus* has an extensive lexical range and carries a rich symbolism. Secondly, Bede uses *sinus* to express complex metaphorical meanings elsewhere in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, as *sinus fari* attests. Thirdly, the Firth of Forth and Forth Estuary do not conform to the standard topographical sense of *sinus* 'a bay of the sea', indicating that this term has been selected for another reason. Fourthly, several of those senses are directly relevant to the Forth Estuary and/or to *urbs Giudi* itself. Fifthly, *sinus* 'a fold of garment over the breast' parallels a wider pattern in Bede's wordplay. Bede uses two homonyms involving clothing elsewhere,²³⁸ including a recurring pun on *habitus* 'garment' and 'character, nature'.²³⁹ Sixthly, exclusively topographical readings of *sinus* have proved unproductive in previous attempts to locate *urbs Giudi*, indicating that a metaphorical sense may be more relevant.

Bede's words are carefully selected and his sentences are skilfully constructed, while his rhetoric displays 'a style grounded on the premise of a real correspondence between language and physical reality'.²⁴⁰ As with *sinus fari*, Bede employs *sinus* as a monolingual pun in his reference to *urbs Giudi*. Playing on its ambiguity, Bede appears to use *sinus* in several different senses concerning the Forth and *urbs Giudi*. Firstly, Bede stretches the topographical meaning of *sinus* 'a bay of the sea' to apply to the Firth of Forth. Secondly, its primary sense, *sinus* '[t]he hanging fold of the

ed. N. J. Higham and M. J. Ryan (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 1–21, at 4; Major, 'Words, Wit and Wordplay', p. 213.

²³⁸ Major, 'Words, Wit and Wordplay', pp. 201–2 and n. 83.

²³⁹ *De tabernaculo* ii. 27.3 [79], iii. 28.12 [102] and 28.39 [116]; *Bede: On the Tabernacle*, trans. A. G. Holder (Liverpool, 1994), pp. 88 n. 5, 117 n. 2 and 134 n. 7.

²⁴⁰ Kendall, 'Rhetoric in Early Medieval Latin', p. 147.

upper part of the *toga*, about the breast, *the bosom* of a garment; also *the bosom* of a person; sometimes also *the lap*,²⁴¹ may refer to both the winding course of the Firth of Forth and, in particular, the Forth Estuary. Here, the undulating folds of a loose garment are a metaphor for the meandering course of the Links of Forth. Thirdly, *sinus* ‘curved, winding’ expresses the sinuous course of the Links of Forth. Fourthly, *sinus* ‘bosom’ conveys the topography of the Firth of Forth, enclosed between curving coastlines. This sense is echoed in a 1578 reference to ‘a gret Naue ... sett in that bosum and arme of the Sey’,²⁴² where Scots *bosum* is a translation of the original Latin *sinus*.²⁴³ In this case, the presence of a hostile English fleet in the very heart of Scotland expresses a sense of violation. *Sinus* ‘bosom’ also applies to the Links of Forth, where ‘[m]any peninsulæ are embosomed in the watery foldings’.²⁴⁴ The dominant feature here is Castle Rock, Stirling, which sits in the bosom not only of the surrounding hills but also of the winding Links of Forth at its foot, as if caught metaphorically in the folds of a garment.

A possible objection to the interpretation of *sinus* ‘bosom; winding’ as a metaphorical reference to the sinuous course of the Links of Forth is that Bede also describes the Clyde as a *sinus*. However, the Firth of Clyde and Clyde Estuary also follow a crooked course, although not as winding as the Forth. Moreover, Bede may have applied *sinus* to the Clyde by association, because he was referring to both the Forth and Clyde but had descriptions of the Forth — reports of which he may have been more familiar with — in mind, either for literary effect or simply for convenience. More prosaically, Bede’s reference to both the Forth and Clyde as *sinus* may reflect his wider and flexible use of the term and its lexical range. So rich are the range of meanings, literal and metaphorical, of *sinus* that not all them can have applied to every body of water Bede refers to as a *sinus*.

Bede may also use the transferred and figurative senses of *sinus* ‘the interior, innermost part, heart, centre (of a place)’ and, by association or implication, ‘a hiding-place, place of concealment, in secret’ to express the character, location and perhaps even function of *urbs Giudi*. *Sinus* ‘heart, centre (of a place)’ echoes *in medio* but may express the status of this location as a perceptual and/or socio-political centre, perhaps consistent with an *urbs* as a seat of power, rather than in a strictly geographical sense. *Sinus* ‘the interior, innermost part, heart, centre (of a place)’ implies a location which is not in or on the Firth of Forth but further upriver and,

²⁴¹ Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, p. 1709.

²⁴² J. Leslie, *De Origine, Moribus et Rebus Gestis Scotorum libri decem* (Rome, 1578) viii, chap. 103 [1675 ed., p. 308]; *The Historie of Scotland*, trans. J. Dalrymple, eds E. G. Cody and W. Murison, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1888–95) II, 96.

²⁴³ *Historie of Scotland*, ed. Cody, II, 359 n. 60.

²⁴⁴ Fullarton, *Topographical Gazetteer of Scotland* I, 578.

therefore, less accessible, more remote, ‘hidden’ or even ‘secret’. This is more consistent with the Forth Estuary and River Forth, which penetrate deep into the interior.

The terminology of Bede’s reference to *urbs Giudi* implies an unfamiliar, perhaps even remote, location. This may reflect the combination of geography and navigation. Although Stirling is only 20 miles (33 km) from Abercorn as the crow flies, the sailing distance is doubled by ‘the endless windings’ of the Links of Forth,²⁴⁵ which also create a strangely disorientating experience for those travelling up the estuary.²⁴⁶ Nestled deep within the eastern bosom, at the head of a sinuous estuary, Bede implies that *urbs Giudi* was concealed within the interior. The obscurity of Bede’s reference to *urbs Giudi* may be a playful reflection of the perceived remoteness or hidden nature of this place, at least when viewed from a Northumbrian perspective.

Another transferred and figurative sense of *sinus* is also of potential relevance to *urbs Giudi*. *Urbs Giudi* presumably represents a latinised form of a native place-name. As *Giudi* is a Celtic place-name,²⁴⁷ *urbs* may represent a latinised form of a Northern Brittonic place-name element.²⁴⁸ A possible candidate here may be *din* “‘a fort’”, often — but not necessarily — a hill-fort’.²⁴⁹ If so, this may imply that Bede employs *sinus* in a fifth sense, as ‘a refuge, place of safety’, ‘protection, asylum’. Paralleling this, *din* also means ‘fortress, place of refuge’,²⁵⁰ while it is suggested that ‘[p]erhaps “a place of refuge” comes closest to the core sense’ of *din*.²⁵¹ In addition, the Forth Estuary, particularly the Links of Forth, provided sheltered berths for shipping.²⁵² The natural defensive strength of Castle Rock, Stirling, the fortified character of an *urbs* and its strategic domination of the surrounding area reinforce the status of this location as ‘a refuge, place of safety’.

The multiple senses in which Bede appears to have used *sinus* invite analysis of its other meanings to see if any of these are also applicable to *urbs Giudi*. In what may be another play on words, *sinus* ‘in the power or possession of’ may imply that *urbs Giudi* was a socio-political, perhaps royal, centre. This is consistent with its

²⁴⁵ R. Brown, *Our Earth and its Story: a Popular Treatise on Physical Geography*, 3 vols (London, 1887–9) I, 298.

²⁴⁶ For example, J. G. Kohl, *Travels in Scotland*, new edn (London, 1849), p. 71; J. G. Kohl, *Travels in Scotland (1842)*, trans. U. C. Smith and J. M. Y. Simpson ([n. p.], 2012), p. 45; J. T. Reid, *Art Rambles in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (London, 1878), p. 17.

²⁴⁷ Breeze, ‘Some Celtic Place-names of Scotland’, pp. 58–61.

²⁴⁸ This requires more detailed analysis than space permits here.

²⁴⁹ See James, *Brittonic Language* II, 108.

²⁵⁰ K. H. Jackson, ‘*Varia*: II. Gildas and the Names of the British Princes’, *CMCS* 3 (Summer 1982), 30–40, at 33.

²⁵¹ James, *Brittonic Language* II, 108.

²⁵² A. Graham, ‘Archaeological Notes on Some Harbours in Eastern Scotland’, *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland* 101 (1968–1969), 200–85, at 278.

status as an *urbs* and fits the context of *urbs Giudi* as the eastern counterpart of *Alcluith*, the fortified power centre of the kingdom of Dumbarton and, later, Strathclyde. However, the socio-political context of *urbs Giudi* lies beyond the scope of this paper.

CONCLUSIONS

Generations of scholars have struggled to reconcile the apparent inconsistencies between the location Bede gives for *urbs Giudi*, the topography of the Firth of Forth, and the absence of any evidence for an early medieval fortress there. Previous attempts at rationalising this dilemma have resorted to the claimed limitations of Bede's knowledge of the Forth.²⁵³ This not only underestimates Bede's skills as a geographer and his access to first-hand sources on this region, acquired from members of the community of Abercorn, but also overlooks his command and playful use of Latin. An alternative approach suggests that the *Historia ecclesiastica* contains subtle clues to the location of *urbs Giudi*. Analysis indicates that *in medio* and *sinus* are used by Bede in elliptical, presumably deliberately ambiguous, senses that have eluded interpretation previously. In particular, *sinus* carries a wide range of literal, topographical and metaphorical meanings. Like *sinus fari*, the use of *sinus* to describe the location of *urbs Giudi* may be identified as another example of Bede's wit and wordplay. Bede gives a playfully-imaginative location for *urbs Giudi*, rich in metaphor and allusion. This may be interpreted as a display of Bede's learned knowledge, of both geography and Latin, and was perhaps intended to impress and/or raise a knowing eyebrow from those who knew *urbs Giudi* by experience or report.

Acknowledging the complexity of Bede's text and the prominence of wordplay in this passage yields new insights into his reference to *urbs Giudi*, enabling it to be viewed from fresh literary, metaphorical and topographical perspectives. The ambiguity, lexical range and subsidiary and figurative senses of *in medio* and *sinus* have fundamental implications for the location of *urbs Giudi*. *In medio*, in this context meaning 'deep inside, far along, at the deepest or furthest point, in the heart of, or similar, indicates that *urbs Giudi* was located not 'in the middle of' or 'halfway along' the Firth of Forth but further upstream and, therefore, deeper inland. This is supported by the lexical range of *sinus*, which is more applicable to the Forth Estuary, particularly the sinuous Links of Forth, than the Firth of Forth. The effect of this is not simply to extend the area within which *urbs Giudi* was located but to shift the focus of the search for it away from the Firth of Forth to the upper reaches of the Forth Estuary. Although the range of meanings held by both *in medio* and *sinus* is difficult to capture in translation in a single phrase, Bede

²⁵³ Graham, 'Giudi', p. 64; Alcock, 'Early Historic Fortifications in Scotland', p. 176; Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*', pp. 2 and 5; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 8.

evokes a place nestled ‘deep inside the eastern bosom’ but also ‘far along/at the deepest point of the eastern meander’. The sense is perhaps phrased more naturally, but ambiguously, in translation as ‘at the head of the eastern estuary’ or ‘at the top of the eastern inlet’, implying a place at or near the tidal limit of the Forth.

Only one location for *urbs Giudi* on the Forth Estuary has been proposed previously: Stirling. Stirling is sited in a *sinus* ‘bosom’ by virtue of being nestled within the folds of the meandering Links of Forth and located on the valley floor, framed by surrounding hills. Bede’s terse phrase evokes the distinctive landscape setting of Stirling. Castle Rock, Stirling, is located only 2 km south-south-east and downstream from the normal tidal limit of the Forth Estuary. The presence of a harbour at Stirling is first recorded in 1147,²⁵⁴ although it may have had much earlier origins, and it thrived until the First World War, with ships trading as far afield as Archangel and the Baltic Sea.²⁵⁵ Commonly regarded as the head of navigation on the Forth, Stirling Harbour, at Forthside, is 62 miles from the mouth of the Firth of Forth at the Isle of May. As one might expect, given his background and the probable origin of his source(s), Bede’s perception of *urbs Giudi* is essentially a littoral one, approached from the Forth estuary and through the Links of Forth. This perspective is now unfamiliar, as Stirling’s status as a port declined after 1914,²⁵⁶ the last merchant vessels docked there during the 1950s,²⁵⁷ and this stretch of the Forth is rarely used for boating now.

This paper does not prove the identification of *urbs Giudi* with Stirling. However, if its analysis is accepted, it excludes all previously-proposed sites for *urbs Giudi* with the exception of Stirling. It does this without requiring any criticism of Bede’s sources, his understanding of them, or imaginative massaging of Bede’s meaning to explain how Stirling may be described as *in medio sui*, referring to the eastern *sinus*. Stirling not only presents a very plausible site for *urbs Giudi* but also one which may now be recognised as fitting the location Bede gives for it. This reassessment has reached the same conclusion for the location of *urbs Giudi* as Graham and Jackson, but as a result of a very different reading of the evidence and using an alternative approach, based on a comparative analysis of Bede’s use of *in medio sui* and *sinus*, and taking their lexical range and elliptical senses into account.

The fortified place *par excellence* at Stirling is, without doubt, the imposing Castle Rock, with formidable natural defences on all but its narrow eastern side. This

²⁵⁴ *Early Scottish Charters: Prior to AD 1153*, ed. A. C. Lawrie (Glasgow, 1905), pp. 142 and 170.

²⁵⁵ ‘Stirling Shipping’s Last Survivors: How the Tide Turned Against a Thriving Port’, *Stirling Jnl and Advertiser*, 2 October, 1930, p. 5 [no byline given].

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ Stirling Archives, ‘The Last Ship to Dock at Stirling Harbour’, Stirling Council Archives blog, 1 December 2021, available at <http://www.stirlingarchives.scot/2021/12/01/the-last-ships-to-dock-at-stirling-harbour/>. Not, as Jackson states, the 1930s. Jackson, ‘Bede’s *Urbs Giudi*’, p. 5.

provides an ideal site for an early medieval *urbs*. However, no evidence of an early medieval presence on Castle Rock has been discovered, at least so far, presumably because of its continued occupation since at least the twelfth century. On the basis of the text of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, the terminology Bede uses, and on topographic grounds, the best candidate for the location of *urbs Giudi* is Castle Rock, Stirling. Although two other sites for *urbs Giudi* at Stirling have been proposed,²⁵⁸ neither of them are as attractive a site for an *urbs* because they do not offer the strong natural defences that Castle Rock possesses.

This paper is unlikely to be the final word on the identification of the controversial *urbs Giudi* but it is hoped that it places the debate on a new footing by identifying a wider range of meanings in, and clarifying the intended senses of, Bede's terse and ambiguous phrasing. When taken together, these point to the identification of Bede's *urbs Giudi* with Stirling, where the most plausible location for an early medieval fortification is Castle Rock.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ R. Page, 'Early Historic (Dark Age) Stirling: Was the Gowan Hill Bede's *Giudi*?', *Forth Naturalist and Historian* 26 (2003), 97–104; R. Page, 'Bede's *urbs Giudi*: Stirling and its Context', *Scottish Place-Name News* 21 (2006), 8–10, available at <https://spns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SPNNNews-21-Autumn-2006.pdf>; L. Main, 'An Early Historic Fort on the Abbey Craig', *Forth Naturalist and Historian* 29 (2006), 39–40, at 40.

²⁵⁹ I am most grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback and to Professor Rosalind Love for her patient guidance, particularly on points of Latin grammar. Their valuable comments have helped me to improve this article greatly by both strengthening the case presented here and saving me from several errors. Any remaining errors and idiosyncrasies are, of course, my responsibility alone.