What if you mapped Caesar's description of the ships and strongholds of the Venetii of Brittany on to the shoreline of South Munster from the south coastline of the Dingle Peninsula to the Old Head of Kinsale, and from Kinsale to Hook Head in Wexford?

Would this explain the density of promontory forts and *dún* (pronounced doon) named (or related) headlands along these coastline stretches, so accessible for Roman naval or merchant fleets out of the Severn estuary or from the southern coast of Britannia? Following already long established routes from the Gallic world of Brittany and Biscay Bay prior to Roman conquest?

Did these ports and harbours open up to the commercial world of Roman trade, as noted by Tacitus for the end of the first century AD? When he speaks of Irish harbours and their approaches what are his sources? Is he summarising what is currently common knowledge? Does he mean that these ports are opening up to Roman merchants for the first time? Did they not exist and were they not open to Venetii merchants and others from the Atlantic ports linked into the maritime trade networks of the Mediterranean prior to Rome occupying Britannia? Does he mean that they are re-opening after a period of closure for some reason and if so what might that reason have been e.g. a fear of invasion, panic, when Roman ships (biremes?) first crossed to English shores?

Had there been, previously, a coastal 'fortress mentality', one of a 'clear and present danger', one of fear of invasion, one which had begun to relax a little for trade

and interaction after the progress of the conquest of Britannia a few years earlier in the mid 70s AD? One which saw some promontory forts of earlier times being re-purposed and used as trading stations; a world of a social fabric and palimpsests of Bronze Age technologies, an archaic indigenous social world bedecked by the trade and the migrant arrivals of elites from the Age of Iron, Halstatt to La Tène?

Some *dúns* being newly created, some of more ancient times being enhanced. *Dúns and baile seans* as places of import tax, of seizen*,* as trading places, places of cultural interaction and the influence of ideas and new norms, of the modern, guarding beaches, bays and coves, harbours and ports, ship wharves, jetties, quaysides *(Úr Luinge? or* **Murus *Luinge**?)* beneath them perhaps, driven by the advantages of commerce and an increasing demand for wealth and prestige among the elite classes, perhaps with a desire for some of the civilities of Roman living?

So accessible for migrants either from a fallen Gallic world - including Cornwall as a way station between Brittany and the other shorelines of Biscay Bay, or from the ports of a Britannia prior to, during and after the Roman presence there?

Were some of the coastal promontory forts already in existence as maritime trading stations of the Venetii; in previous centuries linking the amber trade of the Baltic from the north and from the south the merchants of Biscay Bay and the Celtic peoples of the southern English coastline prior to the arrival of Rome? When the

name of Rome was but a whisper, what Celtic chieftains or tribal women wore beads of amber? What archaeological presence?

Inland from the coast of South Munster following its biggest rivers what royal settlements existed and where? At river confluences perhaps? Were earthworks and towers of timber erected and if so where? In places where the word **túr** (natural or manmade tower), subsequently still resonating in place names though disembodied from a clash?

Doorway to lost memories in a Cork souterrain.

Lands of the **Tigh Faoi Talamh** [underground house] from Gaul to Brittany to Bavaria, from Saxony to Scotland, from Brittany to Cornwall and Ireland, from Spanish/Galician Castille to Cork...this souterrain type and the common people...who were they in the coastal lands of

small fishing hamlets, of skin boats, of sea-weed harvesters, of self sufficiency on remote islands, of a free choice of life and the price of it through its hardships of nature's wildness? Who were they, remnants, 'the last of their name' Blasket faces peering out from a faded photograph of islanders, a majestic patterned knit-working, women's hearts in the turning of the needles, *crios*-belts of drystone walls criss-cross across island landscapes, fishermen of **currach** clans in the chains of knitware patterns, pampooties on the feet of harpoon-carrying whale hunters in **naomhóga** and sea-cliff descending children in search of gulls' eggs, a **chevaux de frise** [as also found in Northern Spain] against posterity at **Dún Aonghasa** (**Aengus** a Celtic god or **Aon Gasa** meaning a chief soldier/warrior?) on *Inis Mór,* of the Aran Islands, off the coast of Galway?

So, of the Venetii, of their ships and strongholds Caesar said in his **De Bello Gallico (1982, 79):**

'Most of the Veneti's strongholds were so situated on the ends of spits or headlands that it was impossible to approach them by land when the tide rushed in from the open sea, which happens regularly every twelve hours;

[What scenario is presented here? Coastal promontory forts i.e. earthworks on headlands, land-spits and promontories? Why was it impossible to approach them if they are on headlands, promontories or spits? Unless they have become sea-stacks or islands are they not still

connected to the mainland? Was a causeway below high water level involved in the cases of those either seen or reported to Caesar? How could the inflow of the tide prevent access otherwise??]

and they were also difficult to reach by sea, because at low tide the ships would run aground on the shoals. For these reasons the strongholds were hard to attack.

Sometimes the Romans made them [the Venetii fortresses?] *untenable by building huge dykes* [ditches and banks]*,*

[Doesn't make sense. What does this mean from an engineering perspective? What is meant by this...did they cut 'dykes' i.e. trenches (and / or banks) to raise the besiegers to a platform level on the mainland where they could fire arrows and missiles into the promontory fort? ....need a military / siege engineering explanation on this!!] which both kept the sea away and enabled the besiegers to get on a level with the top of the walls [What walls i.e. the walls (defensive earthen banks??..of the stronghold?... very confusing, disjointed description?...badly edited information in early transmissions of the text???]

[Promontory forts (*Dún*s) are usually separated from the mainland by means of a 'bank and ditch' defence which is situated on the mainland side. Behind this is a narrow causeway leading to the land area of the 'fort' and its precincts. At Kinsale's Old Head (*Dún Cearmna)* and

Dunworley (**Dún Urluinge**) - both on the Cork coast and close to each other - in later times

(Anglo-Norman times), stone walls and towers were used to defend access to the steep sided (to sea level) causeways (man-made to create an easily collapsable pathway by mining to the tunnel ceiling below?) leading onto the promontory fortress (**Dún**)].

but as soon as the defenders saw that their position was hopeless, they would bring up numbers of ships, of which they had an unlimited supply, transfer all their property to them, and retire to neighbouring strongholds equally well suited for defence.

[How would this be done from the level of the promontory fort situated high above sea level and with, say, a steep cliff face to sea level? What was at the base, just jagged rocks as today, or were there some types of platforms or wharf walls or jetty walls (**murus**?) against which their ships could rest while being loaded? If Roman troops, and their engineers, were attacking **Dún Cearmna** - on the Old Head of Kinsale, say, having landed at Sandy Cove and approached the promontory fort from the landward side, would Gaelic or Venetii (both?) occupants of the promontory fort slip down the cliff in some way or by some means to a wharf platform, load their flat bottom ships - as Roman ships watching from afar could not approach due to hidden shoals and unknown reefs - and make haste to **Dún Urluinge** (Dunworley) to the west on the opposite side of Timoleague/ Courtmacsherry Bay, or even further on to similar promontory fortresses along the

coast of West Cork and South Kerry (Iveragh and Dingle)?
]

They found it easy to pursue these tactics during most of the summer, because our ships were weather-bound and sailing was very hazardous

in that vast, open sea [the wild Atlantic]*, where the tides were high and harbours almost non-existent...The Gauls' own ships were built and rigged in a different manner from ours. They were made with much flatter bottoms, to help them to ride shallow water caused by shoals or ebb-tides. Exceptionally high bows and sterns fitted them for use in heavy seas and violent gales, and the hulls were made entirely of oak, to enable them to stand any amount of shocks and rough usage....' [III. 13.4]*

How suitable was the heavily indented shoreline beyond Kinsale, and westward to Dingle, for the tactics of **Venetii** seamen out of Brittany or northwards in the lands of the predecessors of the **Hansa**...in later times Cork was once a **Hansa** port (Hanseatic League))…? How suitable was the coastline many centuries later when in the 16th and 17th centuries AD it was the principal haven of pirate ships from many Atlantic shores; the coast of Barbary in Mediterranean North Africa (once the lands of Carthage) being their winter haven, their Mediterranean transit being made easy as naval ship patrols were wintering ? But what was meant by the word **pirate** (pyrate) ultimately and just how old were the maritime codes and practices and routes associated with it? Do we first hear of this

word from renowned author Daniel Defoe in the early 18th century (a book on the General History of the Pirates published 1724)? Do we hear of it from a clansman on Cork harbour after the battle of Kinsale in 1601, his vessel flying the flag of the House of *MacCarthaigh*?

But were they not also merchants and traders? Who were their equivalent in Medieval times and Templar times, in Roman times, before that in Bronze Age times? Was *Eoghan Mór* also a **Venetii** merchant for a time who purchased some land in Munster for his tribe? Was he a naval as well as a land commander? What ships visited from other ports, what ships were native to the maritime people of Ireland's tribal and clan territories? Who were those people? Were they different in origin and lifestyle from those who farmed inland? Were they less influenced by its elites? Were the islanders, living apart, though close to the shores of those tribal and clan lands, different, of different origins, and less subordinated (**imperium in imperium?**), compared with certain social classes living on the mainland?

What foreign merchant fleets to Munster shores existed in Roman Britannia? What happened to the Roman navy in Britain after Britannia collapsed in the early 5th century AD? What kinds of ships did the Irish Pirates who raided Britannia before and after it fell use...just *currach*s and other small crafts, or something sometimes larger and more solid? What 'ships' carried young Irish nobles (e.g. *Ciaráin*) to the Mediterranean in search of training as Christian missionaries, who owned such ships...did ships of the *Corcú*

(Corca) Laoidhe travel between West Cork and the Bay of Biscay? Did ships of the *Déise* lords carry young princes such as *Declán (*founder of the coastal promontory monastery of Ardmore) abroad for Christian training, for him to return as a missionary to his own people? Where is the archaeology of such a maritime history? Buried beneath large stretches of coastal mud-lands?

What was the history of Iron Age Ireland, the neighbour of Roman Britannia during the first five centuries AD?

What if, resonated though not directly referenced, within a confusion and conflation of chronologies and person-hoods within oral memory, prior to the writing down of Irish folklore 'histories' in later centuries, the **Irish mytho-historical** stories of the **Miles Espaigne** (Spanish Soldier), of **Breoghan (Br- Eoghan**??) of Galicia in Northern Spain, of **Roman Emperor Magnus Maximus** born in the Roman coastal province of **Gallaecia,** in Northern Spain, a **Galicia** which was much larger than today and within which was **Castille**, the legend of the great Celtic General *Eoghan Mór* his marriage to **Beara** a daughter/princess of **Castille** for whom he named the **Beara Peninsula** of West Cork and perhaps also the **Rinn Beara** (Roche's Point???), the density of **promontory forts and Dún named headlands** along the stretch of Ireland's South and South West coastline from Wexford's Hook Head to the southern side of the Dingle Peninsula, the **'Castellum' at Cashel** and the founding of the *Eoghanacht* tribe, of Eoghan Mór's defeat of Conn of

the Hundred Battles and the land of Ireland being divided into two halves, the subsequent interactions between *Eoghan* and *Conn'*s families and their continued warfare down to *Eoghan Mór's* grandson who bore the same name as him, stories which stretch - according to current understandings of the genealogical chronologies - from the 2nd century AD to the 3rd century AD while the chronology for **Emperor Magnus Maximus** is more historically fixed in the **4th century AD,** were all related stories?

It was in Roman Britain that the **Spanish Roman Soldier** (a '**Miles Espaigne'**) named **Magnus Maximus** declared himself **Emperor of Rome** and led Roman and Romanised troops out of Britannia to Gaul and beyond. Were there southern Irish tribesmen, settled in recent generations or of older associations, among them? Was Magnus the *Miles Espaigne* of Irish mytho- history? Were his troops which fought against Conn of the Hundred Battles largely of Spanish origin and trained as a Roman military force during the conquest of northern Spain or generationally related to soldiers of that conquest? How many returned to Spain, and to where in Spain (Galicia?) after the truce between **Conn** and **Eoghan**?

In a melting pot of cloudy fact and legend how much of this mytho-history of Ireland is part of a history of Roman Britannia intermingled with southern Ireland's (South Munster's?) relationships with it during its years of thriving

and a multitude of parallel and divergent stories of its subsequent centuries of decline to its opening of new doors upon the threshold of Early Medieval times, an old world slow dying, evolving, fragmentally blurring, visually changing by degrees, a new reality emerging, visible vestiges remaining but no longer speaking of their times and daily living, just ruins in a landscape of forgotten interlocking sounds and sights, those captured and frozen beneath the carved script of a headstone's dedication?

What impact did the history of Roman Britannia have on the history of its neighbouring island Hibernia from mytho-history to legend to tradition; from Britannia's period of conquest to its period of demise?

When Roman General Agricola conquered (before 83 AD) and took control over the **Brigantes** tribeland of north western England did many of this tribe make a short crossing westward over the Irish Sea and establish a new tribal settlement on the south east coast of Hibernia (Ireland) somewhere between the coastal counties of Wicklow and Waterford? Is this what the 'map' of Hibernia constructed centuries later from Ptolemy of Alexandria's Geography (140 - 150 AD) is saying? Is the information in this 'map' showing what had emerged sixty to seventy years (i.e. one or two generations, grandfather to grandson) after Agricola conquered them and placed their English tribe-land under Roman administration? Does any archaeology of recent years support the view that a different material culture emerged during the later Iron Age in that part of the Irish landscape where Ptolemy

placed the **Brigantes**? Were the English **Brigantes** a Celtic tribe originally of Spain / Northern Spain i.e. **Brega**?

What does the Gaelic personal name *Eoghan* mean? A range of suggested meanings exists stretching from, young warrior to person of noble birth, to high-born, to yew tree. How do these name meanings sit with the Latin words Magnus and Maximus? Magnus (great, elevated, high) and Maximus (greatest, best, highest, most senior, most powerful). Did all of these names, both the Gaelic ones and the Latin ones, refer to one and the same person i.e. a person of high ambitions within the later years of Ancient Rome and its Western Empire?

Though from the point of view of the central administration in Rome, Magnus (383-88 AD) did not succeed in his bid for overall Emperorship, if in the guise of *Eoghan Mór* he did conquer the southern half of Ireland and thereby draw native troops and clansmen from it to aid his campaign, would Roman administration and its 'histories' have sought to diminish the memory of his actions? While serving in Britannia as a soldier of Rome he declared himself Emperor, gathered the Roman troops from there, was joined by Gaelic troops (tribesmen, clansmen and Roman military recruits?) of Gaul, but was subsequently killed in battle advancing eastward.

What was the Milesian Invasion and Conquest of Ireland? Was it actually of the later La Tène Iron Age rather than the earlier part, chronologically? Who was the **Miles** of Spain (Espaigne...Hispania), whose troops came here?

Where were they stationed before they came here, in Spain e.g. northern Spain's **Gallaecia**; that Roman province from which *Eoghan Mór*'s wife **Beara,** a princess, came?

After *Eoghan*'s death was his body placed upon a pyre and set alight? Or were his remains taken to a hidden sepulchral place somewhere, where in cloak and armour and crown he was laid to rest, a place of legends, a place of 'noblest bloods'?

Reference:

Caesar, Julius (1982) The Conquest of Gaul. Translated by S.A. Handford revised with a new introduction by Jane F. Gardner. **Penguin Classics, London.**

Note: Compare details of the promontory fort at *Dún Cearmna* (Old Head of Kinsale) with that at *Dún Úrluinge* (Dunworley) which is on the opposite side of Timoleague Bay using the 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps of the 1840s, available via osi.ie

The Magnus name as found in Ogham Stone Inscriptions from County Cork souterrains.
A list of examples of Ogham stone inscribed elements of the word Magnus occurring in such inscriptions, in the genitive case i.e. as **Magni**, as a part of some of the personal names which occur.

These sites are:
Ahaliskey townland souterrain = 3 inscriptions have it,

Ballyknock townland souterrain = 2 inscriptions have it,

and also, the name **Vertigern** (**Vertigernos**?) appears in one of these Ballyknock inscriptions as well as what may be the name of the British Celtic tribe known as the **Corotani / Coritani**. The tribe-land of the **Coritani** lay immediately to the south of that of the **Brigantes** in northern England. Did Agricola subdue them also? The role existence and activities during the Saxon invasion of Britain of **Vertigern** or **Vortigern** is a subject of debate among English scholars.

Carhoovauler townland souterrain = 1 inscription,

Glenawillin townland souterrain = 1 inscription,

Monataggart townland souterrain = 1 inscription.

Does the use of the genitive case mean that the word referenced in the first part of such names is a personal name , an individual who is '**of Magnus**' e.g. loyal to someone called **Magnus**, a follower of?, ... etc???? or does the use of a **magni** suffix to a personal name simply imply that the person was honoured or of a high status locally or a person respected within a community...etc????

How interesting it is to speculate if such persons were in some way connected to the story of **Magnus Maximus**...but then that may be stretching the imagination too far. However **Magnus Maximus** was of the 4th century AD some scholars would argue that that is when Ogham stone inscriptions began.

Footnote:

Also in Cork are :

1.Cooldorragha townland souterrain has an Ogham inscription for someone called **Veqoanai** who was a son of someone called **Eqod** (someone connected to horses?? a knight, a cavalryman?).

2. **Burnfort townland souterrain** has an Ogham stone inscription with the word **Sagittari.** Does this word refer to an archer, a bowman?

Cork Ogham stone inscriptions tabulation:

For a tabulation of the Ogham stone inscriptions found in Cork souterrains see this website under the heading **Data Tables** and select the **Ballyknock** file. Typing **Erratum** = for the name **Cronun** in this tabulation the name **Bait** should be in the **Father column** of the table.

British Celtic Tribes move to Ireland as a result of the Roman Conquest of Britain circa 76 AD: Migrations of the Dispossessed.

For the year 1750, based on the nature of his informants, the South Munster antiquarian Charles Smith, in his Cork volume, was able to say with confidence, drawing on the earlier writings of William Camden (1551-1623), that

'It is certain that many of the ancient British people retired into Ireland upon the invasion of the Romans, in the reign of

Emperor Vespasian about the year 76 during the government of Petilius Cerealis in Britain'.

Agricola served under Emperor Vespasian. Camden also stated

'that they fled hither: some for the sake of ease and quietness; others to keep their eyes untainted with the Roman insolence; and others, again, to preserve their liberty.'

One is curious to know if his statements were derived from reliable source documents or simply opinions.
Irish archaeologist Barry Raftery (1994, 200......Pagan Celtic Ireland, Thames and Hudson) writes

The doomed defenders of Masada [Israel] *would not have known, nor indeed cared, that at the other end of the empire, on the rain-soaked downs of northern England, Roman legions were at the same time similarly engaged in containing another revolt against the might of imperial Rome. In this instance it was the Brigantes, one of the most powerful of Celtic Britain, who waged war on the Romans under their leader Venutius between AD 71 and 74* [i.e. during the time of Emperor Vespasian]. *One year after the fall of Masada, Venutius was defeated and the Brigantian uprising was at an end. Roman retribution in such circumstances was customarily swift and brutal, and the situation in Brigantia* [i.e. a tribeland comprising most of northern England and some of its midlands] *can hardly have been an exception. Thus it is likely that there were groups of survivors fleeing Roman vengeance in as yet unconquered regions to the north and west. It may be that one such group reached Lambay* [County Dublin]*, a small island off the east coast of Ireland.*

There has been much scholarly debate as to whether or not the Irish tribes on the east coast described by Ptolemy were connected to British Celtic tribes with similar names and some of whom seem also to have had names resonating with tribes on the European mainland from northern Spain to Belgium. Such debates are ongoing today. Were the Irish **Menapi** a branch of the **Menapi** in the region of Belgium? Were the Irish **Coritani** the same tribe as the **Coriondi** in Britain; one name version being a corruption of

the other as suggested by Charles Smith or his informants? Were the Irish **Brigantes** the same tribe, or of the same tribal origin, as those in northern England and did they all originate in Spain at some earlier time in the Iron Age? And where exactly were they all located on the modern map of Ireland? Were the **Coritani** as far west as Cork county? Were the **Menapi** in the Wicklow / Dublin area? Were the **Brigantes** in Waterford and if so how did their land become that of the **Déise**? Or were Ptolemy's informants saying that these tribes - or their clans and sub-tribes due to land purchase or renting (called 'rent tribes' at the time of *Eoghan Mór*?) - were accommodated by existing tribes and fragmentarily scattered along the east coast from Dublin to Waterford as a result of being driven out of their tribal homelands by Agricola and the army of Rome and subsequent settlement / plantation? Would such a scenario explain why the town of **Menapia,** according to Ptolemy's information was located in the lands of the **Coriondi** i.e. by Carnsore Point in Wexford, while perhaps other **Coriondi** clans were scattered in what would in later times become the Cork landscape? Was *Eoghan Mór*, as per a legend, once a Venetii ship merchant out of Brittany (Armorica, France) who bought land (or rented?) in Cork, or somewhere, in the South Munster landscape?

Aftermaths and the Scatterings:

From **Vercingetorix** (meaning young warrior, leader?) **'of the Hundred Battles'** and great hero of the Gauls against Rome's Caesar, to Hibernia's **Conn** (meaning chieftain, leader?) **'of the Hundred Battles'** the conqueror of the Northern Half of Hibernia against Spaniard *Eoghan Mór* whose wife was Princess **Beara** of **Castille,** to Celtic warrior leader *Breoghan* of Roman **Gallaecia** (Northern Spain) and of the **Túr Brigantium** at **A Coruña,** to the **Miles Espaigne** (Spanish Soldier) of the **Mileasian (Celtic) Invasion** of Hibernia and to *Eoghan Mór (*with *Oilill Olum)* the conqueror of the Southern Half of Hibernia (Ireland), is what is being witnessed, beneath all of the above, the much faded folk memory of the demographic and ethnographic impact of Rome's Westward Expansion from the time of Caesar's conquest of Gaul (De Bello Gallico) in the 1st century BC, vague whisperings of scraps of oral memory, a long-tailed folklore eventually committed to writing in the scriptoria of Celtic monasteries in the later centuries of the 1st Millennium AD as great tales

Exploring a Cork souterrain by a flickering light.

to be told, as fragments of identity almost lost to time to be preserved as a record for posterity?

Was it an impact of such cultural magnitude that it changed, deeply affected, lastingly and forever, the native identities and associated topographies of, all of the then traditional 'Celtic' peoples of Western Europe, their complex social networks and relationships and ethnogenicities, their cultural variations and distinctions and norms and hereditary skills uprooted, as their survivors either became Romanised or were pushed to the remotest fringes of the Western part of the European landmass in their efforts to remain free and preserve their ancient patrimonies as a legacy for their genetic and cultural descendants, a legacy embedded within their Gaelic languages, laws and social customs?

Was the impact a social cataclysm, leaving some as multitudes upon the roadways for centuries to come, some to tribal centres on commanding hill-scapes e.g. oppida, some to 'big farmer' clan lordships - *tuatha* petty kingdoms - of cluster formation agricultural villages/hamlets and their communities of the *dún* and *dangan*, a chaotic amorphous cultural paradigm shift which much older cultural entities on the remotest island fringes of mainland Western Europe had to absorb and accommodate; while the threat of Roman invasion to even those remote fringes loomed as an ongoing threat, until the Architecture of Empire finally began to collapse inward upon itself, as external forces began rushing in,

continuously assailing it, until its world finally ended; until all became just a glimmer of embers from the fiery dying of the sunlight, infused into a cloudy tapestry, a multi-coloured sunset emblazoning rocky shorelines of the west opening to an empty vastness beyond, where the evening's horizon kissed the Atlantic Sea and a ship of fast fading memories slowly dematerialised into the enveloping darkness of an oncoming night.

And what of the veterans of Rome's centuries of militarism? Did any find solace in their later years as members of small semi-cenobitic hermit groups? What alternative life did early Christianity offer? What promise? How different would a life in one of its communities of kindness have been, in retirement, in those twilight years, compared with that of the military garrison and its, say six, soldiers per hut, versus six hermit monks in a monastic hut (*séisiúr ceann - * six heads*, Seskin?…* a C3 souterrain?)?

Exploring a Cork Souterrain in the Flickering Light!