

PLINY ON BRITAIN

BOOK IV CHAP. 30. BRITANNIA.

Opposite to this coast is the island called **Britannia**, so celebrated in the records of Greece and of our own country. It is situate to the north-west, and, with a large tract of intervening sea, lies opposite to Germany, Gaul, and Spain, by far the greater part of Europe. Its former name was **Albion**; but at a later period, all the islands, of which we shall just now briefly make mention, were included under the name of "**Britanniæ**." This island is distant from Gesoriacum, on the coast of the nation of the Morini, at the spot where the passage across is the shortest, fifty miles. Pytheas and Isidorus say that its circumference is 4875 miles. It is barely thirty years since any extensive knowledge of it was gained by the successes of the Roman arms, and even as yet they have not penetrated beyond the vicinity of the Caledonian forest. Agrippa believes its length to be 800 miles, and its breadth 300; he also thinks that the breadth of Hibernia is the same, but that its length is less by 200 miles. This last island is situate beyond **Britannia**, the passage across being the shortest from the territory of the Silures, a distance of thirty miles. Of the remaining islands none is said to have a greater circumference than 125 miles. Among these there are the Orcades, forty in number, and situate within a short distance of each other, the seven islands called Acmodæ, the Hæbudes, thirty in number, and, between **Hibernia** and **Britannia**, the islands of Mona, Monapia, Ricina, Vectis, Limnus, and Andros. Below it are the islands called Samnis and Axantos, and opposite, scattered in the German Sea, are those known as the Glæsariæ, but which the Greeks have more recently called the Electrides, from the circumstance of their producing electrum or amber. The most remote of all that we find mentioned is Thule, in which, as we have previously stated, there is no night at the summer solstice, when the sun is passing through the sign of Cancer, while on the other hand at the winter solstice there is no day. Some writers are of opinion that this state of things lasts for six whole months together. Timæus the historian says that an island called Mictis is within six days' sail of **Britannia**, in which white lead is found; and that the **Britons** sail over to it in boats of osier, covered with sewed hides. There are writers also who make mention of some other islands, Scandia namely, Dumna, Bergos, and, greater than all, Nerigos, from which persons embark for Thule. At one day's sail from Thule is the frozen ocean, which by some is called the

Cronian Sea.

BOOK I CHAP. 77. WHERE THE DAYS ARE THE LONGEST AND WHERE THE SHORTEST.

Hence it follows, that in consequence of the daylight increasing in various degrees, in Meroë the longest day consists of twelve æquinoctial hours and eight parts of an hour , at Alexandria of fourteen hours, in Italy of fifteen, in **Britain** of seventeen; where the degree of light, which exists in the night, very clearly proves, what the reason of the thing also obliges us to believe, that, during the solstitial period, as the sun approaches to the pole of the world, and his orbit is contracted, the parts of the earth that lie below him have a day of six months long, and a night of equal length when he is removed to the south pole. Pytheas, of Marseilles , informs us, that this is the case in the island of Thule , which is six days' sail from the north of **Britain**. Some persons also affirm that this is the case in **Mona**, which is about 200 miles from **Camelodunum** , a town of **Britain**.

BOOK I CHAP. 99. CONCERNING THE CAUSE OF THE FLOWING AND EBBING OF THE SEA.

On which account neither lakes nor rivers are moved in the same manner. Pytheas of Massilia informs us, that in **Britain** the tide rises 80 cubits . Inland seas are enclosed as in a harbour, but, in some parts of them, there is a more free space which obeys the influence .

BOOK IV CHAP. 37. THE GENERAL MEASUREMENT OF EUROPE.

Having thus made the circuit of Europe, we must now give the complete measurement of it, in order that those who wish to be acquainted with this subject may not feel themselves at a loss. Artemidorus and Isidorus have given its length, from the Tanais to Gades, as 8214 miles. Polybius in his writings has stated the breadth of Europe, in a line from Italy to the ocean, to be 1150 miles. But, even in his day, its magnitude was but little known. The distance of Italy, as we have previously stated, as far as the Alps, is 1120 miles, from which, through Lugdunum to the **British** port of the Morini , the direction which Polybius seems to follow, is 1168 miles. But the better ascertained, though greater length, is that taken from the Alps through the Camp of the Legions in Germany, in a north-westerly direction, to the mouth of the Rhine, being 1543 miles. We shall now have to speak of Africa and Asia.

BOOK VIII CHAP. 57. THE INVENTORS OF VARIOUS THINGS.

Midacritus was the first who brought **tin** from the **island called Cassiteris**.

Danaüis was the first who passed over in a ship from Egypt to Greece. Before his time, they used to sail on rafts, which had been invented by King Erythras, to pass from one island to another in the Red Sea. There are some writers to be found, who are of opinion that they were first thought of by the Mysians and the Trojans, for the purpose of crossing the Hellespont into Thrace. Even at the present day, they are made in the **British** ocean, of wicker-work covered with hides; on the Nile they are made of papyrus, rushes, and reeds.

BOOK XXXIV CHAP. 49.--BLACK LEAD.

Black lead is used in the form of pipes and sheets: it is extracted with great labour in Spain, and throughout all the Gallic provinces; but in **Britannia** it is found in the upper stratum of the earth, in such abundance, that a law has been spontaneously made, prohibiting any one from working more than a certain quantity of it.

BOOK XXII CHAP. 2. PLANTS USED BY NATIONS FOR THE ADORNMENT OF THE PERSON.

There is a plant in Gaul, similar to the plantago in appearance, and known there by the name of "glastum:" with it both matrons and girls among the people of **Britain** are in the habit of staining the body all over, when taking part in the performance of certain sacred rites; rivalling hereby the swarthy hue of the ÆthiopianIs, they go in a state of nature.

BOOK XXXVII CHAP. 11.--AMBER: THE MANY FALSEHOODS THAT HAVE BEEN TOLD ABOUT IT.

Sotacus expresses a belief that amber exudes from certain stones in **Britannia**, to which he gives the name of "electrides."

NEAR BRITAIN

BOOK IV CHAP. 31. GALLIA BELGICA.

The whole of Gaul that is comprehended under the one general name of Comata , is divided into three races of people, which are more especially kept distinct from each other by the following rivers. From the Scaldis to the Sequana it is Belgic Gaul; from the Sequana to the Garumna it is Celtic Gaul or Lugdunensis ; and from the Garumna to the

promontory of the Pyrenæan range it is Aquitanian Gaul, formerly called Aremorica . Agrippa makes the entire length of the coast of Gaul to be 1800 miles, measured from the Rhine to the Pyrenees: and its length, from the ocean to the mountains of Gebenna and Jura, excluding there from Gallia Narbonensis, he computes at 420 miles, the breadth being 318.

Beginning at the Scaldis, the parts beyond are inhabited by the Toxandri, who are divided into various peoples with many names; after whom come the Menapii , the Morini , the Oromarsaci , who are adjacent to the burgh which is known as Gesoriacum , the **Britanni** , the Ambiani , the Bel-lovaci , the Hassi , and, more in the interior, the Catoslugi , the Atrebates , the Nervii , a free people, the Veromandui , the Suæuconi , the Suessiones , a free people, the Ulmanetes , a free people, the Tungri , the Sunuci , the Frisiabones , the Betasi , the Leuci , a free people, the Treveri , who were formerly free, and the Lingones , a federal state, the federal Remi , the Mediomatrici , the Sequani , the Raurici , and the Helvetii . The Roman colonies are Equestris and Rauriaca . The nations of Germany which dwell in this province, near the sources of the Rhine, are the Nemetes , the Triboci , and the Vangiones ; nearer again , the Ubii , the Colony of Agrippina, the Cugerni , the Batavi , and the peoples whom we have already mentioned as dwelling on the islands of the Rhine.

CHAP. 32. GALLIA LUGDUNENSIS.

That part of Gaul which is known as Lugdunensis contains the Lexovii , the Velloccasses , the Galeti , the Veneti , the Abrincatui , the Ossismi , and the celebrated river Ligeris , as also a most remarkable peninsula, which extends into the ocean at the extremity of the territory of the Ossismi, the circumference of which is 62510 miles, and its breadth at the neck 12511 . Beyond this are the Nannetes , and in the interior are the Ædui , a federal people, the Carnuti , a federal people, the Boii , the Senones , the Aulerici, both those surnamed Eburovices and those called Cenomanni , the Meldi , a free people, the Parisii , the Tricasses , the Andecavi , the Viducasses , the Bodiocasses , the Venelli , the Cariosvelites , the Diablinti , the Rhedones , the Turones , the Atesui , and the Secusiani , a free people, in whose territory is the colony of Lugdunum .

BOOK IV CHAP. 28.--GERMANY.

The whole of the shores of this sea as far as the Scaldis , a river of Germany, is inhabited by nations, the dimensions of whose respective territories it is quite impossible to state, so immensely do the authors differ who have touched upon this subject. The Greek

writers and some of our own countrymen have stated the coast of Germany to be 2500 miles in extent, while Agrippa, comprising Rhætia and Noricum in his estimate, makes the length to be 6862 miles, and the breadth 1483 . The breadth of Rhætia alone however very nearly exceeds that number of miles, and indeed we ought to state that it was only subjugated at about the period of the death of that general; while as for Germany, the whole of it was not thoroughly known to us for many years after his time. If I may be allowed to form a conjecture, the margin of the coast will be found to be not far short of the estimate of the Greek writers, while the distance in a straight line will nearly correspond with that mentioned by Agrippa.

There are five German races; the Vandili , parts of whom are the Burgundiones , the Varini , the Carini , and the Gutones : the Ingævones, forming a second race, a portion of whom are the Cimbri , the Teutoni , and the tribes of the Chauci . The Istævones , who join up to the Rhine, and to whom the Cimbri belong, are the third race; while the Hermiones, forming a fourth, dwell in the interior, and include the Suevi , the Hermunduri , the Chatti , and the Cherusci : the fifth race is that of the Peucini , who are also the Basternæ, adjoining the Daci previously mentioned. The more famous rivers that flow into the ocean are the Guttalus , the Vistillus or Vistula, the Albis , the Visurgis , the Amisius , the Rhine, and the Mosa . In the interior is the long extent of the Hercynian range, which in grandeur is inferior to none.

BOOK IV CHAP. 29. NINETY-SIX ISLANDS OF THE GALLIC OCEAN.

In the Rhine itself, nearly 100 miles in length, is the most famous island of the **Batavi** and the Canninefates, as also other islands of the Frisii , the Chauci, the Frisiabones , the Sturii , and the Marsacii, which lie between Helium and Flevum . These are the names of the mouths into which the Rhine divides itself, discharging its waters on the north into the lakes there, and on the west into the river Mosa. At the middle mouth which lies between these two, the river, having but a very small channel, preserves its own name.

BOOK IV CHAP. 36.--THE ISLANDS IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN.

Opposite to Celtiberia are a number of islands, by the Greeks called Cassiterides , in consequence of their abounding in tin: and, facing the Promontory of the Arrotrebæ, are the six Islands of the Gods, which some persons have called the Fortunate Islands . At the very commencement of Bætica, and twenty-five miles from the mouth of the Straits of Gades, is the island of Gadis, twelve miles long and three broad, as Polybius states in his writings. At its nearest part, it is less than 700 feet distant from the mainland, while in the

remaining portion it is distant more than seven miles. Its circuit is fifteen miles, and it has on it a city which enjoys the rights of Roman citizens, and whose people are called the Augustani of the city of Julia Gaditana. On the side which looks towards Spain, at about 100 paces distance, is another long island, three miles wide, on which the original city of Gades stood. By Ephorus and Philistides it is called Erythia, by Timæus and Silenus Aphrodisias, and by the natives the Isle of Juno. Timæus says, that the larger island used to be called Cotinusa, from its olives; the Romans call it Tartessos; the Carthaginians Gadir, that word in the Punic language signifying a hedge. It was called Erythia because the Tyrians, the original ancestors of the Carthaginians, were said to have come from the Erythræn, or Red Sea. In this island Geryon is by some thought to have dwelt, whose herds were carried off by Hercules. Other persons again think, that his island is another one, opposite to Lusitania, and that it was there formerly called by that name.

BOOK III CHAP. 1. THE BOUNDARIES AND GULFS OF EUROPE FIRST SET FORTH IN A GENERAL WAY.

I shall first then speak of Europe, the foster-mother of that people which has conquered all other nations, and itself by far the most beautiful portion of the earth. Indeed, many persons have, not without reason, considered it, not as a third part only of the earth, but as equal to all the rest, looking upon the whole of our globe as divided into two parts only, by a line drawn from the river Tanais to the Straits of Gades. The ocean, after pouring the waters of the Atlantic through the inlet which I have here described, and, in its eager progress, overwhelming all the lands which have had to dread its approach, skirts with its winding course the shores of those parts which offer a more effectual resistance, hollowing out the coast of Europe especially into numerous bays, among which there are four Gulfs that are more particularly remarkable. The first of these begins at Calpe, which I have previously mentioned, the most distant mountain of Spain; and bends, describing an immense curve, as far as Locri and the Promontory of Bruttium.

BOOK IV CHAP. 26.--SCYTHIA.

Leaving the Ister, we come to the towns of Cremniscos, Æpolium, the mountains of Macrocremnus, and the famous river Tyra, which gives name to a town on the spot where Ophiusa is said formerly to have stood. The Tyragetæ inhabit a large island situate in this river, which is distant from Pseudostomos, a mouth of the Ister, so called, 130 miles. We then come to the Axiacæ, who take their name from the river Axiaces, and beyond them, the Crobyzi, the river Rhodes, the Sagarian Gulf, and the port of Ordesos. At a distance

of 120 miles from the Tyra is the river Borysthenes , with a lake and a people of similar name, as also a town in the interior, at a distance of fifteen miles from the sea, the ancient names of which were Olbiopolis and Miletopolis. Again, on the shore is the port of the Achæi, and the island of Achilles , famous for the tomb there of that hero, and, at a distance of 125 miles from it, a peninsula which stretches forth in the shape of a sword, in an oblique direction, and is called, from having been his place of exercise, Dromos Achilleos : the length of this, according to Agrippa, is eighty miles. The Taurian Scythians and the Siraci occupy all this tract of country.

At this spot begins a well-wooded district , which has given to the sea that washes its banks the name of the Hylæan Sea; its inhabitants are called Enœchadlæ . Beyond them is the river Pantieapes , which separates the Nomades and the Georgi, and after it the Acesinus . Some authors say that the Panticapes flows into the Borysthenes below Olbia . Others, who are more correct, say that it is the Hypanis : so great is the mistake made by those who have placed it in Asia.

The sea runs in here and forms a large gulf , until there is only an intervening space of five miles between it and the Lake Mæotis, its margin forming the sea-line of extensive tracts of land, and numerous nations; it is known as the Gulf of Carcinites. Here we find the river Pacyris , the towns of Navarum and Carcine , and behind it Lake Buges , which discharges itself by a channel into the sea. This Buges is separated by a ridge of rocks from Coretus, a gulf in the Lake Mæotis; it receives the rivers Buges , Gerrus , and Hypacaris , which approach it from regions that lie in various directions. For the Gerrus separates the Basilidæ from the Nomades, the Hypacaris flows through the Nomades and the Hylæi, by an artificial channel into Lake Buges, and by its natural one into the Gulf of Coretus: this region bears the name of Scythia Sindice.

At the river Carcinites, Scythia Taurica begins, which was once covered by the sea, where we now see level plains extended on every side: beyond this the land rises into mountains of great elevation. The peoples here are thirty in number, of which twenty-three dwell in the interior, six of the cities being inhabited by the Orgocyni, the Characeni , the Lagyrani, the Tractari, the Arsilachitæ, and the Caliordi. The Scythotauri possess the range of mountains: on the west they are bounded by the Chersonesus, and on the east by the Scythian Satarchæ . On the shore, after we leave Carcinites, we find the following towns; Taphræ , situate on the very isthmus of the peninsula, and then Heraclea Chersonesus , to which its freedom has been granted by the Romans. This place was formerly called Megarice, being the most polished city throughout all these regions, in consequence of its strict preservation of Grecian manners and customs. A wall, five miles

in length, surrounds it. Next to this comes the Promontory of Parthenium , the city of the Tauri, Placia, the port of the Symboli , and the Promontory of Criumetopon , opposite to Carambis , a promontory of Asia, which runs out in the middle of the Euxine, leaving an intervening space between them of 170 miles, which circumstance it is in especial that gives to this sea the form of a Scythian bow. After leaving this headland we come to a great number of harbours and lakes of the Tauri . The town of Theodosia is distant from Criumetopon 125 miles, and from Chersonesus 165. Beyond it there were, in former times, the towns of Cytæ, Zephyrium, Acræ, Nymphæum, and Dia. Panticapæum , a city of the Milesians, by far the strongest of them all, is still in existence; it lies at the entrance of the Bosphorus, and is distant from Theodosia eighty-seven miles and a half, and from the town of Cimmerium, which lies on the other side of the Strait, as we have previously stated, two miles and a half. Such is the width here of the channel which separates Asia from Europe, and which too, from being generally quite frozen over, allows of a passage on foot. The width of the Cimmerian Bosphorus is twelve miles and a half: it contains the towns of Hermisium , Myrmecium, and, in the interior of it, the island of Alopece. From the spot called Taphræ , at the extremity of the isthmus, to the mouth of the Bosphorus, along the line of the Lake Mæotis, is a distance of 260 miles.

Leaving Taphræ, and going along the mainland, we find in the interior the Achetæ , in whose country the Hypanis has its rise, as also the Neurœ, in whose district the Borysthenes has its source, the Geloni , the Thyssagetæ, the Budini, the Basilidæ, and the Agathyrsi with their azure-coloured hair. Above them are the Nomades, and then a nation of Anthropophagi or cannibals. On leaving Lake Buges, above the Lake Mæotis we come to the Sauromatæ and the Essedones . Along the coast, as far as the river Tanais , are the Mæotæ, from whom the lake derives its name, and the last of all, in the rear of them, the Arimaspi. We then come to the Riphæan mountains, and the region known by the name of Pterophoros , because of the perpetual fall of snow there, the flakes of which resemble feathers; a part of the world which has been condemned by the decree of nature to lie immersed in thick darkness; suited for nothing but the generation of cold, and to be the asylum of the chilling blasts of the northern winds.

Behind these mountains, and beyond the region of the northern winds, there dwells, if we choose to believe it, a happy race, known as the Hyperborei , a race that lives to an extreme old age, and which has been the subject of many marvellous stories . At this spot are supposed to be the hinges upon which the world revolves, and the extreme limits of the revolutions of the stars. Here we find light for six months together, given by the sun in one continuous day, who does not, however, as some ignorant persons have asserted,

conceal himself from the vernal equinox to autumn. On the contrary, to these people there is but one rising of the sun for the year, and that at the summer solstice, and but one setting, at the winter solstice. This region, warmed by the rays of the sun, is of a most delightful temperature, and exempt from every noxious blast. The abodes of the natives are the woods and groves; the gods receive their worship singly and in groups, while all discord and every kind of sickness are things utterly unknown. Death comes upon them only when satiated with life; after a career of feasting, in an old age sated with every luxury, they leap from a certain rock there into the sea; and this they deem the most desirable mode of ending existence. Some writers have placed these people, not in Europe, but at the very verge of the shores of Asia, because we find there a people called the Attacori, who greatly resemble them and occupy a very similar locality. Other writers again have placed them midway between the two suns, at the spot where it sets to the Antipodes and rises to us; a thing however that cannot possibly be, in consequence of the vast tract of sea which there intervenes. Those writers who place them nowhere but under a day which lasts for six months, state that in the morning they sow, at mid-day they reap, at sunset they gather in the fruits of the trees, and during the night conceal themselves in caves. Nor are we at liberty to entertain any doubts as to the existence of this race; so many authors are there who assert that they were in the habit of sending their first-fruits to Delos to present them to Apollo, whom in especial they worship. Virgins used to carry them, who for many years were held in high veneration, and received the rites of hospitality from the nations that lay on the route; until at last, in consequence of repeated violations of good faith, the Hyperboreans came to the determination to deposit these offerings upon the frontiers of the people who adjoined them, and they in their turn were to convey them on to their neighbours, and so from one to the other, till they should have arrived at Delos. However, this custom, even, in time fell into disuse.

The length of Sarmatia, Scythia, and Taurica, and of the whole of the region which extends from the river Borysthenes, is, according to Agrippa, 980 miles, and its breadth 717. I am of opinion, however, that in this part of the earth all estimates of measurement are exceedingly doubtful.