

**ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE, AND CELTIC
ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT**

D561/12

Wednesday 2 November 2016

60 minutes

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SECTION 2

Candidate number	A						Centre number						
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Date of birth		d	d			m	m			y	y	y	y
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First name(s)	
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Surname / Family name	
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INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Please read these instructions carefully, but do not open the question paper until you are told that you may do so. This paper is Section 2 of 2.

There are two questions in this paper, of which you should answer **one**.

You should write your answer in the space provided in this question paper. Please complete this section in **black pen**.

You can use the blank inside front and back covers for rough working or notes, but no extra paper is allowed. Only answers in the space indicated in the paper will be marked.

Dictionaries may NOT be used.

Please wait to be told you may begin before turning this page.

This question paper consists of 12 printed pages and 4 blank pages.

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The text below has been translated from Latin. It comes from Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae* ('On the Ruin of Britain'), which begins by describing the sins of the Britons,¹ and their consequences, from the Roman era until the time of writing (probably the sixth century AD). Gildas then proceeds to criticise the sins of kings and churchmen in his own day. There is no expectation that you will have seen the text before, or that you will know about its context.

Read the passage and write an essay in the space provided in response to **one** of the following:

1. **How might a historian make use of this account as a source for the history of post-Roman Britain?**
2. **Discuss the uses that a literary scholar could make of this account.**

Your answer will be assessed taking into account your ability to construct a reasoned argument, using relevant evidence as appropriate from the text, footnotes and introductory information.

Candidates attempting **Question 1** might include, among other things, consideration of the author's perspective, and how that may have affected his presentation of events. Candidates attempting **Question 2** might include, among other things, discussion of the form and structure of the text, and its themes.

Gildas,² *On the Ruin of Britain*, chs 26–7

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From then on³ victory went now to our countrymen,⁴ now to their enemies: so that in this people the Lord could make trial (as he tends to) of his latter-day Israel to see whether it loves him or not. This lasted right up till the year of the siege of Badon Hill,⁵ pretty well the last defeat of the villains, and certainly not the least. That was the year of my birth; as I know, one month of the forty-fourth year since then has already passed.

But the cities of our land are not populated even now as they once were; right to the present they are deserted, in ruins and unkempt. External wars may have stopped, but not civil ones. For the remembrance of so desperate a blow to the island and of such unlooked for recovery stuck in the minds of those who had witnessed both wonders. That was why kings, public and private persons, priests and churchmen kept to their own stations. But they died, and an age succeeded them that was ignorant of that storm and has experience only of the calm of the present. All the controls of truth and justice have been shaken and overthrown, leaving no trace, not even a memory, among the orders that I have mentioned: with the exception of a few, a very few. A great multitude has been lost, as people daily rush headlong to hell; and the rest are counted so small a number that, as they lie in her lap, the holy Church in a sense does not see them, though they are the only true sons she has left. By their holy prayers they support my weakness from total collapse, like posts and columns of salvation; and no one should suppose that I am carping at their worthy lives, which all men admire and which

¹ The Britons were Brittonic-speakers (speakers of languages akin to Welsh), who dominated most of Britain before the emergence of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

² Gildas was a renowned churchman and scholar who dwelt in Britain, most probably in the sixth century.

³ The preceding chapter describes a British military victory, which occurred during protracted warfare between Britons and Saxons.

⁴ This is a reference to the Britons.

⁵ The date and location of the battle of Badon Hill is not known, but it is traditionally placed at the start of the sixth century AD.

God loves, if I speak freely, even sorrowfully, of those which are slaves of the belly, slaves, too, not of Christ, who is God blessed for ever, but of the devil: if, forced to it by an accumulation of evil, I employ lament rather than analysis. Indeed, why should their own countrymen conceal what surrounding nations are aware of and reprove?

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Britain has kings, but they are tyrants; she has judges, but they are wicked. They often plunder and terrorise the innocent; they defend and protect the guilty and thieving; they have many wives – whores and adulteresses; they constantly swear false oaths; they make vows but almost at once tell lies; they wage wars, civil and unjust; they chase thieves all over the country but love and even reward the thieves who sit with them at table; they distribute alms profusely but pile up an immense mountain of crime for all to see; they take their seats as judges but rarely seek out the rules of right judgement; they despise the harmless and humble but exalt to the stars, so far as they can, their military companions, bloody, proud and murderous men, adulterers and enemies of God – if chance, as they say, so allows: men who should have been rooted out vigorously, name and all; they keep many prisoners in their jails, who are more often loaded with chafing chains because of intrigue than because they deserve punishment. They hang around the altars swearing oaths, then shortly afterwards scorn them as though they were dirty stones.

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