

## ***Dubno-* and *Dumno-* in ancient proper names**

A whole range of ancient peoples used to be casually labelled as “Celtic” where it might be more prudent nowadays just to call them northern Indo-European. So an Old Irish word [domun](#) ‘world, the earth’ has been invoked as the key to understanding ancient personal names containing elements *dubno-* or *dumno-* (Uhlich, 1995; Evans, 1967: 84-6, 196-7).

This viewpoint was used by Rivet and Smith (1979) to explain four ancient geographical names in Britain: [Δουμνα νησος](#) (isle of Stroma), [Δαμνονιον ακρογ](#) (Lizard peninsula), [Δαμνονιοι](#) (Caledonian people), and [Dumnonii](#) (West Country people). We think there are better explanations for all four names, which do not require emendation of the attested spellings. Hence this discussion of the available linguistic and epigraphic evidence.

Delamarre (1999) developed an idea (originally due to Meid) of an early Indo-European world view that distinguished three areas: (1) deep and dark underground; (2) the world of the living; and (3) the heavens above, full of light. They would be represented by three theophoric names, respectively *Dumnorix*, *Biturix*, and *Albiorix*. This is an interesting idea, but ...

*Dumnorix* and similar names look suspiciously like versions of ‘dark’, copiously represented by modern personal names such as Bronwen, Ciaran, Duncan, Gethin, Maurice, Melania, etc. And *Albiorix* evokes classic heroes with fair hair, such as Homer’s *Achilles*, Irish legends’ *Baedan*, or the *Flavius* dynasty in Rome. *Biturix* as a personal name probably came from the *Bituriges*, a tribe around modern Bourges, which had two divisions, the *Cubi* and the *Vivisci*, so they were probably the ‘divided people’, named from PIE [\\*bheid-](#), as in OE *bitan* ‘to bite, cut’.

It is uncontroversial that there was a PIE root [\\*dheub\(h\)-](#) ‘deep, hollow’, but it is debatable if that was the source of words meaning ‘dark’, as in Old Irish *dub* or modern Welsh *du*. Another PIE root is in the running: [\\*dheu-](#) ‘to fume, rise in a cloud’, with extended form [\\*dheubh-](#), which led in English to deaf and dove, and with a nasalised vowel to dumb.

Just to complicate matters, there is also PIE [\\*dhē-](#) ‘to set, put’ (contracted from earlier [\\*dheh<sub>1</sub>-](#)), with an O-grade form [\\*dhō-](#) that led to Latin *abdomen*, Russian *дума* ‘council’, and to Old English *dom* in kingdom and Domesday Book, etc, as discussed [here](#) or [here](#). Think also of Latin [dominus](#) ‘master, ruler’ and Greek [δαμναω](#), [δαμαζω](#) ‘overpower’, and wonder why the first element of king [Togodumnus](#) looks so like the Germanic word for leader seen in Herzog.

There is no single, common Indo-European word for ‘black’. Each language family has its own words for various degrees of darkness, but it is likely that [θυμιαω](#) ‘to burn with smoke’, and its cognate Latin [fumus](#) and Russian [дым](#) ‘smoke’, continue one common root meaning ‘dark’. And for M evolving into B the classic example is that PIE [\\*merg-](#) ‘boundary’ (as in margin or Mercia) is said to be the origin of *brogi-* in ancient names and of Irish [bruig](#).

What about the historical record? **DUBNOREIX** (or [Dubnorex](#)) appears on [coins](#) of the Aeduans (with **DUBNOCOV** on the other side). Probably he was the same as the Aeduan cavalry leader **Dumnorix** mentioned by Caesar. See Evans (1967: 85-6) for the textual variants.

The following list of epigraphic mentions of *dubn* and *dumn* is taken from the [Clauss-Slaby](#) database, with a few tweaks, but it may still not be 100% exhaustive. Most of the associated name elements are reasonably translated by Delamarre (2003), who cites non-Celtic parallels fairly even-handedly, but does not always spell out how much “Gaulish” was actually Germanic!

Simplex names such as *Dubna*, or lightly extended ones, such as *Dubnacus* or *Eridubnus*, perfectly fit the simple idea of darkness, in complexion, hair, or brand image – one might reasonably liken *Dubnoreix* to the Black Prince. On the whole, this list is rather an anticlimax. There seems to be no need to invoke either religious symbolism or specifically Celtic roots in trying to explain *Dumn-* or *Damn-* in early British geographical names.

*Imperator Caesar Caius Vibius Afinius Gallus Veldumnianus Volusianus Pius Felix Invictus Augustus* was emperor AD 251-253. Another *Veldumnianus* was consul in 272. On more than 80 surviving inscriptions. This was a time when Rome was still pagan and emperors [came and went](#) like ninepins

Athens, Greece: ... per legatos M(arcum) Servilium [M(arcum)] Tutilium Paulum et L(ucium) **Vedumnium** Aulum.

Amiens, Belgica: Pro salute et Victoria{e} Aug(usti) Apollini et **Veriogodumno** tribunalia dua Setubogius Esuggi f(ilius) d(e) s(uo) d(edit) [inscription](#)

Nagyteteny, Pannonia inf: DM M(arcus) Ulp(ius) Italicus an(norum) XL et Ael(ia) P(ubli) fil(ia) **Verodumna** an(norum) XXX h(ic) s(iti) s(unt) Ulp(i) Veranus Proculus Verina fil(ii) et h(eredes) f(aciendum) c(uraverunt)

Two mentions of *Dumnonii* on Hadrian's Wall: Civitas **Dumn(on)i(orum)** at Carvoran and Civitas **Dumnoni(orum)** at Thirlwall Castle.

The [Rerum gestarum divi Augusti](#) at Ankara mentions Britann[orum] **Dumnobella[unus]** et Tin[commius], while that at Antioch mentions [3 Britannor]um **D[um]nobellaunus** [3] [3 Marcom]an[oru]m Sue[bo]rum

Limoges, Aquitania: Postumus **Dumnorigis** f(ilius) verg(obretus) aquam Martiam decam noctiacis Granni .....

Perigueux, Aquitania: ]T[1]P() L[3 Petru]cor(iorum) A(ulus) Pomp(eius) **Dumnom...** f(ilius) ] [3 t]rib(unus) mil(itum) leg(ionis) [3]ae praef(ectus) fabr(um) amphit[heatrum] [cum] ornament[is omnibu]s d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) d(edit) A(ulus) Pomp(eius) A(uli) Pomp(ei) Ter[tulli f(ilius) 3] [3]S perficien[dum curavit] idemq(ue) dedicavit. Amphitheatre builder's [inscription](#) Possibly the same as **Dumnomotus** Losetucari f(ilius) who left an inscription at *Mediolanum* (modern Saintes) in Aquitania

Bari, Italy: Hoc [tumulo requ]iescit corpus **Dumnane** filia Muscati et mater eius **Dumnana** ..... Christian [inscription](#) AD 500 to 700

Rom, Aquitania: Hic Daveldes et **Dumnolentus** Merovingian tombstone near Poitiers

M(arcus) Aur(elius) Aelianus h(ic) s(itus) e(st) an(norum) XX M(arcus) Aur(elius) Mogetmarus vet(eranus) al(ae) I Thr(acum) et Aur(elia) **Dumnomara** fil(io) pient(issimo) et sibi vivi po suerun(t)

Klosterneuburg, Pannonia: Dis I M M(arcus) Ulp(ius) [Ni]grinus M(arci) [Ulp(i)] Uxsperi(!) ve[te]rani fil(ius) v[ix(it)] an(nos) X h(ic) s(itus) es[t] pater f(aciendum) c(uravit) et Picarus **Dum[n]adicia(e)** l(ibertus) Secund[us]

Langres, Belgica: .....nepoti meo et Macrino Regini f(ilio) et Sabino **Dumnedor**[3] f(ilio) et Prisco l(iberto) .. beneficiary of a will

Yarrow, Britannia: ] hic Memor iacet [3]prin[6] **Dumnoceni** hic iacet [3] in tumulo duo fili(i) Liberali [ Sarmizegetusa, Dacia: Invi[cto 3] pro salute et memoria Sex(ti) V[aleri 3 dec(urionis) col(oniae)] Dac(icae) Sarmiz(etegusae) et M(arco) Valerio **Dum[no 3]** Sex(tus) Val[erius] Fronto [3]

Aigaliers, Narbonensis: D M T(iti) Soli **Dumniae** Privati fil(ii)

Koln Germania inf: Ara Agrippinensium Aemilio Saeni f(ilio) mil(iti) ex classe G(ermanica) P(ia) F(ideli) pl(eromatis) Euhodi n(auarchi) civi **Dumnonio** an(norum) [

Pompei, Italy: [3 quis]quis es I[3]udei **Dumnos**[3] [qu]isquis es nolis Cu[3] quod tu facere NOI[

Budapest, Pannonia: Nertus **Dumnotali** f(ilius) veteranus ala Hisp(anorum) I sesquip(licarius) Lingauster ann(orum) LX stip(endiorum) XXXVI h(ic) s(itus) e(st) Valens frater h(eres) t(itulum) m(emoriae) p(osuit) F

Bantia, Apulia & Calabria: **condumnari** mentioned on in a screeed of Latin, with U where E would be expected

Chichester, Britannia: [N]eptuno et Minervae templum [pr]o salute do[mus] divinae [ex] auctoritat[e] Ti(beri)] Claud(i) **##gidubni** r[eg(is) M]agni Brit(anniae) [colle]gium fabror(um) et qui in eo [sun]t d(e) s(uo) d(ederunt) donante aream [Pud]ente Pudentini fil(io) [inscription](#) notorious for doubt over Cogi- or Togi-

Fontenay-le-Comte, Aquitania: **Dubna**

Saintes, Aquitania: **Dubna**

Celje, Noricum: .... Ausco Muscionis filia an(norum) XXX **Dubnae** f(iliae) an(norum) XXXX .....

Seggauberg, Noricum: ]EN[3] CN II F[3] **Dubnae** con(iugi) op(timae) an(norum) XL Candius fra[ter] [fe]cit [ Seggauberg, Noricum: Lucconi Suri [f(ilio)] an(norum) LXX et **Dubnae** [3] f(iliae) con(iugi) opt(imae) et [3] L]ucconis f(ilio) an(norum) XL [3]ani f(iliae) con(iugi)

Thionville, Belgica: Coinnagi Titalvis f(ilius) et **Dubnae** Viredonis f(iliae) uxori viv(u)s sibi [f(ecit)] h(oc) m(onumentum) h(eredem) n(on) s(equetur)

Gabrje, Noricum: Mogio Tritouti l(ibertus) v(ivus) f(ecit) s(ibi) e(t) s(uis) **Dubnia** Mogionis f(ilia) an(norum) XX  
HSE Vetra Mogi(onis?) annor[um]

Catterick, Britannia: **Dubnus**

Monthureux-sur-Saone Leuci. Belgica: Sex(to) Iu(v)ent(o) Senoviri **Dubnotali** f(iliio Iul(ia) Litumara Litavicii  
f(ilia) mater faciendum curavit [epitaph](#)

Trier, Belgica: **Dubniccus** f(ecit) [pot?](#)

Saint-Alban-du-Rhone, Narbonensis: **Dubnacus** Cobrovilli f(ilius) fecit viv(u)s sibi et Bitunae Troucetis f(iliae)  
coniugi sua(e) Nama(e) Veruci filiae Caupius vir dat

Bad Deutsch-Altenburg, Pannonia: Intincu **Dubnaci**

Le Puy-en-Velay, Aquitania: **Dubnoco** Ve

**Dagodubnus** was a [potter](#) active at Rheinzabern in eastern Gaul in AD 100s attested at least 9x

**Eridubnos** (sometimes written IIRIDUBNOS) was a [potter](#) active in west Gaul between the Loire and Seine. Attested  
at least 8x

Orleans, Lugu (2x): **Dubnedu(s)**

Molsheim, Germania sup: D(is) M(anibus) Calio **Caliodubni** filio Nemodlianus(s) [stone](#)

Champoulet, Lugudunensis In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) deo Merc(urio) **Dubnocaratiaco** ex stip(endio) eius  
sub c(ura) Sedati Valloicis plus 3 others very similar appellation of gods discussed [here](#). NB cf *Caratacus!*

Lyon, Lugu: Iovi O(ptimo) M(aximo) sa[crum] quod Ti(berius) Claud(ius) Caesar Aug(ustus) est Imperator  
M(arcus) Caprius Luc[3]u[s] Ti(berius) **Dubnatus** Aed[3] [stone](#)

Saintes, Aquitania: C(aio) Iulio **Congonnetodubni** f(ilio) Volt(inia) Victori [Agedomo]patis nepoti p[r]aefecto  
fabrum tribuno militum cohor[t(is) I Belgarum sacerdoti] Romae et Aug[us]ti ad Confluentem C(aius) Iulius  
Volt(inia) fi[lius] plus 3 more very similar. This tribune of a cohort of Belgae on an [inscription](#) was possibly  
same as [Conconnetodumno](#) in *Bello Gallico*.

Budapest, Pannonia: M(arcus) Cocceius Moesicus an(norum) XV h(ic) s(itus) e(st) M(arcus) Cocceius Matumari  
f(ilius) Florus princeps Cocceia **Oxidubna** Quintionis f(ilia) coniux filio et sibi vivi p(osuerunt) [stone](#)

Velenca, Pannonia inf: P() Nesergouna an(norum) LX HSE P() **Dubnomara** f(ilia) et [3 U]lpianus(?) [stone](#)

Roma: Saturninus **Dubnorigis** f(ilius) in fr(onte) p(edes) X in agr(o) p(edes) XIII [stone](#)

## References

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