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The cover illustration is of St Mary's (formerly St Leonard's) Church, Magor, from the *Gwentia* collection of watercolours held by the Society of Antiquaries of London, as painted about 1845. (*Plate:* Mr George McHardy, F.S.A).

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# EDITORIAL

With Vol. XVIII, *The Monmouthshire Antiquary* reverts to being a conventional issue containing contributions on a variety of subjects. Those that are published this year, include two papers given at a very successful half-day school on 'Women Leaders in Medieval Usk', organised by the Friends of Usk Castle; detailed research into the life and career of Nathaniel Wells of Piercefield, newly-discovered to have overcome the obstacles of being both Black and the son of a slave; and an article of supreme importance to anyone interested in church architecture in Gwent, which describes and analyses the watercolours contained in *Gwentia Eccles. Antiq.*, which were painted just before the great wave of church restoration and re-building which swept across England and Wales, not just Monmouthshire.

In this volume, the 'Reviews' section is particularly strong and a new section entitled 'Short Notes' has been introduced, which gives scholars the opportunity to report briefly on finds and the results of excavations and research. The Association is most grateful to all its contributors for maintaining the excellent standards of scholarship and writing that the readership of *The Monmouthshire Antiquary* has come to expect.

Another innovation has been the establishment of an Editorial Sub-Committee, which *inter alia* assists and advises the Honorary Editor 'particularly in respect of encouraging the submission of articles, where appropriate evaluating articles submitted for publication ... and in the selection of articles for publication'. Consisting of the Revd Dr David Williams (Honorary Assistant Editor), Mr Richard Brewer, Dr Raymond Howell, Mr Richard Hutchings and Mrs Gwenllian Jones, members of the sub-committee have given invaluable support, both moral and practical, to the Honorary Editor.

Without additional funding, an issue of the size of Vol. XVIII would not be possible. The Association has been awarded modest grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund (Awards for all Wales) and Monmouthshire County Council (Welsh Church Act Fund) for Vol. XVIII as a whole, whilst the Marc Fitch Fund has given a contribution towards 'Elizabeth de Burgh and Usk Castle' and Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, has supported the publication of the colour photographs accompanying the article on *Gwentia Eccles. Antiq.*, as part of the Civic Initiatives (Heritage) Grant Scheme. In addition, the author of 'The Administration of the Lordship of Monmouth under Henry VII' has most kindly underwritten the cost of publishing the footnotes to his article. All this financial assistance is most gratefully acknowledged.

Finally, intending contributors to *The Monmouthshire Antiquary* are requested to obtain from the Honorary Editor, a copy of the *Guidelines for Contributors* before submitting an article or short note.

**Annette M. Burton,**
**Honorary Editor**

# WOMEN OF HOLINESS AND POWER: THE CULTS OF ST RADEGUND AND ST MARY MAGDALENE AT USK

*By Madeleine Gray*

In an earlier number of *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, Geoff Mein mentioned the chapel of St Radegund in the outer enclosure of the community of Benedictine women at Usk, identified its possible location and suggested a means whereby the cult of this obscure Merovingian saint could have reached Usk from the region around Poitiers in central France.[1] The married St Radegund was at first sight an unlikely saint for a community of nuns, though perhaps not as unlikely as the other dedicatory saint of a chapel in the monastic enclosure, St Mary Magdalene. Taken together, the evidence for devotion to these two saints may tell us something about the distinctive nature of the religious community at Usk and its relationship with a succession of powerful women at the castle.

The cult of St Radegund had a limited currency in England and Wales. Five English parish churches were dedicated to her and she had a chapel in the old St Paul's Cathedral, as well as in Gloucester, Lichfield and Exeter Cathedrals. The Premonstratensian abbey of St Radegund's near Dover was founded in her honour in 1193. The only religious house for women which was dedicated to her was the Benedictine convent in Cambridge which was eventually suppressed in 1496 for the foundation of Jesus College.[2] There were far more churches dedicated to her in her native Poitou and elsewhere in France and Germany. She was one of a group of Merovingian holy women, many of them of royal or aristocratic lineage, whose influence helped in the integration of Franks and Gauls into a Christian kingdom.[3]

Radegund was fortunate in her biographers. Her life was written by Baudonivia, one of her nuns, and by her close friend and spiritual adviser Venantius Fortunatus. Fortunatus was one of the leading hymn-writers of his era and two of his hymns, *Vexilla regis prodeunt* (translated by J.M. Neale as 'The royal banners forward go') and *Pange lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis* ('Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle') are still found in modern hymn books. Fortunatus wrote both these hymns at Radegund's behest when she secured a relic of the True Cross and installed it with all due ceremony in her abbey at Poitiers.

However, Radegund's route to the religious life was not an easy one and it is her earlier career which makes her such an interesting choice for celebration by communities of nuns. She was born in about 525, a princess of the Thuringian royal house. Her family fell out with Clothar, the warlike and aggressive king of the Franks. He killed most of them and took Radegund (who was still a child) as part of the spoils of war. Eventually, when she reached maturity, he married

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[1] Mein, A.G., 'St Mary's Priory Church at Usk: some recent work and some new theories', *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, 16 (2000) 55-72, esp. 68-72.

[2] For details, see Gray, Arthur and Brittain, Frederick, *A History of Jesus College, Cambridge* (Silent Books, Cambridge, rev. edit., 1979).

[3] The lives of a number of these women are edited and analysed in McNamara, Jo Ann *et al*, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1992).

her. Although he was technically a Christian, he had already been married several times, some of them simultaneously, and it is difficult to disentangle his wives from his concubines.

Clothar's marriage to Radegund was, not unexpectedly, far from happy. There were no children and at least one of his concubines is known to have borne him an acknowledged child while he was married to Radegund. She retreated into a life of piety, attending feasts but saving her food for the poor, nursing sick beggars, pleading for mercy for condemned prisoners, leaving the marital bed to pray on the cold stone floor. Eventually, she left Clothar when he killed her only surviving brother.

However, Clothar seems to have been fond of her: and she spoke warmly of his generosity to her abbey at Poitiers, though she was not prepared to live with him. About eight years after she left him, he went to Tours to do penance for the murder of his son, Chramn, who he had ordered to be burned along with Chramn's wife and children. Chramn had burned Tours the previous year and Clothar made reparation for his own sins by rebuilding the church of St Martin there. While he was at Tours, he seems to have considered asking Radegund to return to him, possibly in the hope that he would be able to amend his life and please her. She was horrified at the idea and fled from her villa at Saix, where she had been living in seclusion, to take refuge in Poitiers. Clothar accepted the situation and helped her to found and endow a convent there. Venantius Fortunatus stresses the drama of her escape from him and his subsequent attempts to reclaim her, but also describes how Clothar 'compensated her with gifts for the wrong he did her with his tongue'.[4]

Although she founded the abbey at Poitiers and dictated its very austere lifestyle, she never became abbess. Instead, she deliberately humbled herself to perform the most menial tasks, cleaning out privies, ministering to the sick, washing sores, even caring for lepers. She retained (or regained) a sense of humour. Fortunatus describes her response to an attendant who criticised her for kissing lepers and

> presumed to chide her softly: 'Most holy lady, when you have embraced lepers, who will kiss you?' Pleasantly, she answered: 'Really, if you won't kiss me, it's no concern of mine.'[5]

At first, Radegund seems to have consciously chosen the active religious life. Fortunatus described her as 'busy as a new Martha' in her care of sick paupers.[6] Eventually, though, she moved on to a life of complete enclosure as an anchoress, walled up in a cell but still able to dispense spiritual advice. Both Fortunatus and Baudonivia emphasise the completeness of her withdrawal from the world and her extreme self-denial. Some of the penitential practices described by Fortunatus are bizarre to modern eyes. According to his account, she once spent the forty days of Lent tightly chained with three iron bands (the number may have a spiritual significance) which cut her flesh until she bled profusely. At other times she scarred herself with heated brass and live coals.

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[4] *Ibid.* 74.
[5] *Ibid.* 78.
[6] *Ibid.* 77.

These strange stories of self-punishment may derive from Fortunatus's wish to place her among the heroic figures of the early church. The age of persecution over, the cult of martyrs was being replaced to some extent by the cults of self-abnegating, self-punishing saints. However, Jo Ann McNamara suggests that they may be connected with her final bargain with Clothar. His support for her community may have been contingent on her support for his absolution: and her extreme self-punishment may have been a form of vicarious penance.[7]

Fortunatus was equally determined to represent the life of Radegund's community at Poitiers as one of extreme asceticism. Reading between the lines of the poetry he wrote there, though, we get a very different picture of a place of learning and culture as well as piety. An illuminated manuscript of Fortunatus's biography of her dating from the later part of the eleventh century depicts her in her cell holding the book which the nuns subsequently treasured as a relic. They also treasured another object associated with her, a spindle. These two personal items neatly bracket two of the crucial aspects of Radegund's sanctity, her learning and her devotion to manual work.[8]

There is little or nothing in Fortunatus's biography about the political situation in the Frankish kingdom after Clothar's death: he implies that Radegund's life as an enclosed nun was free of all such distractions. Reading between the lines of Baudonivia's account, however, we can see that Radegund remained very much in touch with public life. Without giving any details of specific conflicts, Baudonivia praises Radegund's skill as a mediator and peacemaker:

> She was always solicitous for peace and worked diligently for the welfare of the fatherland .... Whenever she heard of bitterness arising among [the different kingdoms], trembling, she sent such letters to one and then to the other pleading that they should not make war among themselves nor take up arms lest the land perish. And likewise, she sent to their noble followers to give the kings salutary counsel, so that their power might work to the welfare of the people and the land .... So, through her intercession, there was peace among the kings .... Aware of her mediation, everyone rejoiced, blessing the name of the Lord![9]

Radegund's status as an enclosed nun paradoxically increased her power and her scope for independent and fruitful action. Again, the illuminated manuscript of the late eleventh century demonstrates this aspect of her cult. In it, Radegund is repeatedly depicted as enclosed in her cell but reaching out to perform miracles of healing and reconciliation.

How, then, did the cult of this holy woman from Merovingian France reach Wales? She was venerated in England by the middle of the ninth century, when her name occurs in a calendar written by a priest of Winchester. Her cult spread through England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries under the influence of the Plantagenet rulers, who had a family connection with

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[7] *Ibid.* 81.

[8] Carrasco, Magdalena, 'Sanctity and Experience in Pictorial Hagiography' in Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate and Szell, Timea (eds.), *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1991) 50-65.

[9] McNamara, *Sainted Women* 93.

Poitou.[10] It had reached Wales by the late eleventh century, when it appears in the martyrology of Rhigyfarch of St David's in about 1080.[11]

Geoff Mein makes the illuminating suggestion that the cult of St Radegund at Usk priory may have been an aspect of the already close connection between Usk castle and the priory. Usk priory was founded by the de Clare family in the twelfth or early thirteenth century. The date of foundation and even the identity of the founder are still matters for debate. The same uncertainty over exact dates of foundation and endowment prevails in the case of a number of English houses for religious women founded at about the same time as Usk. This has led Sharon Elkins and others to suggest that many of these foundations may have originated in informal groupings of female hermits or recluses which eventually, voluntarily or under pressure, adopted a rule.[12]

The generosity of the de Clare family to the priory, the only foundation for Benedictine nuns in Wales, might lead us to suspect that any such informal community must have included women of the family and may even have been established by them. Parts of the the priory church at Usk date from the early twelfth century,[13] but the earliest documentary evidence for the formal existence of a Benedictine priory dates from the early thirteenth century.[14] It is therefore possible that what happened in Usk was that a group of devout women living near the borough church was endowed with lands by an early member of the de Clare family and was eventually formally constituted as a Benedictine priory. They continued to share the church with the townspeople and a separate people's aisle was added to the church in the thirteenth century - which might even give us a rough date for the formal enclosure of the women's community.

The closest link between the de Clare family and Radegund's home area of Poitou lies through Alicia de la Marche, first wife of Gilbert de Clare, 'Gilbert the Red'. Her family estates were in Poitou, their *caput* near to Poitiers where Radegund's relics lay in the church dedicated to her near her convent of Holy Cross. The marriage between Alicia and Gilbert was not a happy one; she bore him no sons and he eventually divorced her to marry Edward I's daughter Joan of Acre. Geoff Mein suggests that Gilbert's powerful mother Matilda and the nuns of Usk may both

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[10] Brittain, F. (ed.), *The Lyfe of Saynt Radegunde, edited from the copy in Jesus College Library* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1926) x-xii. As Brittain notes (xi), the early calendars commemorate Radegund on 11 Feb., not 13 Aug., which eventually became her feast day. It is not known which day was celebrated at Usk.

[11] Lawlor, H.J., *The Psalter and Martyrology of Ricemarch I* (Bradshaw Society, 1914) xxi, xxxiii.

[12] Elkins, S., *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1988) 45-52; Bolton, Brenda M., 'Daughters of Rome' and Lowe, K.J.P., 'Female strategies for success in a male-ordered world: the Benedictine convent of Le Murate in Florence in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries' in Sheils, W.J. and Wood, Diana (eds.), *Women in the Church* (Studies in Church History 27, 1990).

[13] Newman, John, *The Buildings of Wales: Gwent/Monmouthshire* (Penguin Books/University of Wales Press, London, 2000) 586.

[14] Cowley, F.G., *The Monastic Order in South Wales, 1066-1349* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1977) 38; though see also Williams, David H., 'Usk Nunnery', *Mon. Antiq.*, 4 (1980) 44, which suggests an earlier date for its foundation. It is this uncertainty about the date which is in itself significant.

have offered Alicia sympathy and that she may in gratitude have given a relic of the saint to the priory church.

There was however a wider significance to the cults of married saints, which were increasing in popularity in the later medieval period. Several of the Merovingian holy women were married, but the ideal of female sanctity in the earlier Middle Ages remained the virgin. By the time of Alicia's contacts with Usk, however, there was an increasing number of married female saints and their veneration had spread across Europe. Most of them were, like Radegund, royal or aristocratic figures: women like Elizabeth of Hungary and Brigid of Sweden, the founder of the Bridgettine order. The veneration of these married saints was not unproblematic. Virtually all of them only became holy in widowhood: marriage and sexual activity were still seen as exclusive of sanctity.

The only significant exception to this is St Anne, the mythical mother of the Virgin Mary, who according to medieval legend subsequently had two other daughters by two different husbands. These married saints thus provided rôle models for the increasing number of women trying to live a religious life in the community, but it was a model which was still constrained by the profound unease of the medieval church on the subject of female sexuality. In order to be holy, the married woman had to renounce sexual relations, either living chaste within marriage or living apart from her husband: and most of these married female saints eventually became members of religious orders.

Female sanctity as exemplified by the holy and royal wife also has to be seen as part of the political process. Like the Virgin Mary at the Last Judgement, the queen and the wife or mother of the lord was seen as an appropriate source of mercy.[15] A ruler, whether a Merovingian king or a marcher lord, had to be seen as tough, stern and merciless. This was a political necessity: but it might also be necessary at times to be able to show mercy. The pleas of a wife or mother could give the lord an excuse to be merciful where necessary without detracting from his own image of power. Fortunatus's life of Radegund describes her husband's irritation at her penitential lifestyle. Nevertheless, he still listened to her petitions: Fortunatus describes her ceaseless campaigning for mercy for condemned criminals 'until the king's anger ceased and the voice of salvation flowed where the sentence of death had issued before'.[16]

This role of the merciful peacemaker became a traditional role for royal women of the Merovingian period and played an important part in amalgamating Franks and Gauls into a new political unit. The royal women could also take over from their husbands the duty to fulfil the other Christian virtues of personal austerity and charity - to the poor and to the church. Clothar had for political reasons to plunder his enemies and give to his allies; Radegund, in her obsessive self-denial and generosity to the poor, could complement and compensate for his activities.[17]

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[15] Parsons, John Carmi, 'The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England' in Carpenter, Jennifer and MacLean, Sally-Beth (eds.), *Power of the Weak: studies on medieval women* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1995) 147-77.

[16] McNamara, *Sainted Women* 74.

[17] *Ibid.* 6.

Poverty and humility were not necessarily part of the image of the saint in early medieval France. Women like Radegund were women of power, who dealt as equals and even superiors with the leading churchmen of their day and functioned as a civilising and integrating influence.

The nuns of Usk had another endowed chapel in their precinct with an even more unusual saint for a community of celibate women. Mary of Magdala or Mary Magdalene is named in the Bible as the woman from whom Christ cast out seven devils (Luke 8.2). It was she who accompanied the Virgin Mary and Mary Cleophas at the Crucifixion and first saw Christ after the Resurrection. In medieval tradition, she was identified with Mary of Bethany, Mary the sister of Martha, who sat at Christ's feet and heard his words and later anointed him with spikenard and wiped his feet with her hair (Luke 10.39; Mark 14.3; John 11.2, 12.3). She in turn was conflated with the anonymous penitent woman who, in an alternative version of the anointing story in an earlier chapter of Luke's Gospel, anointed Christ at the house of Simon the Pharisee and washed his feet with her tears (7.37-50). She was forgiven 'because she loved much' and from this stemmed the assumption that her sins were of a sexual nature.[18] The medieval legend, based on apocryphal gospel texts, continued her story after the Resurrection with a tradition that she was present at Pentecost and received the gifts of the Spirit, travelled to southern Gaul as a missionary and eventually became an ascetic hermit.[19]

The medieval tradition of this composite figure identified as Mary Magdalene therefore made available to all women a powerful image of repentance and subsequent holiness. There was even a German order of nuns called the 'Magdalenes', originally intended as an order for reformed prostitutes but eventually recruited from other women as well and reflecting the later medieval cult of the married and holy woman.[20] Like Radegund, Mary Magdalene's power can be seen to stem from her humility and self-abasement, but in the case of Mary Magdalene her previous history of sinfulness emphasises rather than detracts from her power. It was because she was sinful that she was specifically called by Christ, who said that he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. There are other links between the two women: Giselle de Nie suggests that Radegund based her penitential practices on those traditionally associated with Mary Magdalene and Mary's *alter ego* Thaïs, another repentant prostitute whose life was probably a pious invention based on Mary's.[21]

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[18] Mulder-Bakker, Hanneka, *Sanctity and Motherhood: essays on holy mothers in the Middle Ages* (Garland Publishing, New York and London, 1995) 247-51.

[19] The story is given in its fullest form in Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, Jacobus de Voragine, Ryan, W.G. (trans.), *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993) and summarised in the Welsh *Buchedd Mair Fadlen* (Jones, D.J., 'Buchedd Mair Fadlen a'r *Legenda Aurea*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 4 (1929) 325-39. For a discussion, see Jansen, K.L., 'Maria Magdalena: *Apostolorum Apostola*' in Kienzle, Beverley Mayne and Walker, Pamela J., *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1988) 57-96.

[20] Mecham, June, pers. comm. See the discussion on the medieval religion mailbase, http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/medieval-religion/1999-11.

[21] In Mulder-Bakker, *Sanctity and Motherhood* 137-8.

However, there were other, more direct sources for Mary Magdalene's power. Her anointing of Christ's feet and her readiness to anoint his dead body with sweet spices linked her with the anointing in the sacraments of baptism and Extreme Unction. Her presence at the tomb and the fact that she was the first person to see the risen Christ qualified her as the *apostola apostolorum*. This was embroidered on in the apocryphal gospels (exemplified most fully in the fragmentary *Gospel of Mary*) and the later traditions which presented Mary Magdalene as a prophetic church leader.[22] All these readings are represented in the wall painting of Mary Magdalene on the north wall of the chancel in Llantwit Major (Glamorgan). She holds a jar of ointment in her right hand, denoting both penitence and sacramental anointing, while her left hand is raised in a commanding gesture, denoting preaching and witness.

A development of this medieval tradition linked Mary Magdalene even more closely with the central sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the story that Mary was betrothed to St John the Evangelist and that it was at their wedding feast that Christ performed his first miracle, turning water into wine and prefiguring the miracle of the Eucharist in which bread and wine were changed in substance into flesh and blood. According to this tradition, John then decided to follow Christ and to live in chastity and it was this which drove Mary to a life of immorality.[23] The tradition of Mary's betrothal to John appears in the surviving texts of *Buchedd Mair Fadlen*, though the episode at the wedding feast is not specifically mentioned. This legend may however explain Mary Magdalene's presence on the canopy of honour over the high altar at Gyffin, near Conwy in north Wales. Here she is accompanied by the Evangelists (who testified to both stories), a group of apostles including Andrew and Philip (who were present at another eucharistic prefiguring, the Feeding of the Five Thousand), St Brigid of Sweden (to whom the famous Fifteen Prayers on the Eucharist and Christ's wounds were attributed) and the Virgin Mary (who bore Christ in her body as the priest bears him at the altar).

The medieval view of Mary Magdalene was thus profoundly ambivalent. On the one hand, she was presented in hagiography and homily as a preacher and doctor of the church: she and the Virgin Mary were the only female saints on whose feasts the Creed was sung.[24] The sample sermon which the prior of Lilleshall, John Mirk, wrote for her feast day's sermon in the *Festial* describes her announcement of the Resurrection and her retirement into ascetic contemplation in the wilderness, but her time as a preacher forms the bulk of the sermon.[25] However, at the same time, other sermons attacked women who dared to preach and teach, even in the seclusion of a religious order. This standpoint too was based partly on the Biblical account of the Resurrection and Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene. His command to her not to touch him was read as a

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[22] King, Karen L., 'Prophetic Power and women's authority: the case of the *Gospel of St Mary* (Magdalene)' in Kienzle and Walker, *Women Preachers and Prophets* 21-41.

[23] Mulder-Bakker, *Sanctity and Motherhood* 248.

[24] Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena'.

[25] Mirk, John, *Festial*, Erbe, Theodore (ed.), (Early English Text Society, London, 1905) 203-8. The first part of Mirk's *Festial* is known to have been translated into Welsh. The surviving manuscript of the translation breaks off after the sermon for Pentecost and the sermon for the feast of St Mary Magdalene is therefore missing. It is, however, possible that the manuscript is simply incomplete and that the whole work was at one time available in Welsh.

warning that women should not touch the things which pertained to the church.[26] Mirk, however, rejected both this interpretation and the Biblical narrative itself, claiming that Christ 'suffyrd her to towch hym and kys hys fete'.[27]

The chapel and statue of Mary Magdalene were a focal point of pilgrimage for the region around Usk in the later Middle Ages. An anonymous early sixteenth-century poem, *Mair fadlen mawr yw dwrthie*, was written to the saint at her shrine there. Cast in the form of a dialogue between the pilgrim and the statue, it addresses Mary as 'Mary Magdalene, bride of John ... merciful Mary Magdalene ... Mary Magdalene of Bethany ... Mary Magdalene, fair maid'. The poet asks for advice on relieving poverty of the body and spiritual need. The saint advises him to be just and charitable, to offer regular masses and to pray regularly. Unfortunately, the poem gives no hint as to the appearance of the statue.[28]

As well as the wall painting at Llantwit Major with its combination of Mary the penitent, Mary the anointer and Mary the preacher, we have one other possible depiction in stained glass in north Wales of Mary as a beautiful young woman. Mostyn Lewis suggests that the delicately-featured head of a young female saint in the north window of the chancel at Treuddyn (Flint) is remarkably like the Mary Magdalene at Grappenhall (Cheshire) and may be identified with her.[29] The depiction of the saint on the canopy of honour at Gyffin is badly faded and has been ruthlessly overpainted: the figure can only be identified by the jar of ointment. We can probably assume that the chapel to St Radegund contained an image to the saint, but again we have no idea which aspect of her life it represented - the queen, the penitent or the learned anchoress and founder of a religious community.

Taken together, the cult of these two saints in a celibate female community is unusual and instructive. On the one hand, they represent two powerful women who used their power while ostensibly rejecting it. In a way their extremes of humility actually emphasise their inherent power by the lengths to which they have to go to render themselves powerless. On the other hand, they are presented as being obliged to give up the sexual dimension of their lives and atoning for their past experiences in extreme penitential practice in order to attain sanctity.

The location of their two chapels may give us an indication of the significance of their cults. Geoff Mein has tried to locate the chapel of St Mary Magdalene in the church which the nuns shared with the townspeople. There is, however, no evidence for a chantry or other chapel dedicated to her in the chantry certificates. Both the description of the chapel in *Valor Ecclesiasticus* and the references in post-Dissolution grants and surveys suggest that it was another separate building. The nuns received a small income from offerings to the two chapels, suggesting that they were readily accessible to the public. The most likely location for both is thus in

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[26] Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena'.

[27] Mirk, *Festial* 204.

[28] Cardiff Library MS 6. For the full text of the poem, see Jones, G. Hartwell, *Celtic Britain and the Pilgrim Movement* (The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, London, 1912).

[29] Lewis, Mostyn, *Stained Glass in North Wales up to 1850* (John Sherratt and Son, Altrincham, 1970) 90-1 and plate 2.

the outer enclosure, into which lay people could have access. While Hillier and Hanson's theories of the syntax of space have been criticised as overly simplistic,[30] their basic concepts of depth and accessibility as indicators of the relative status and importance of different spaces are still useful. If the chapels to non-virginal saints are in the outer enclosure, they are open to the world and the worshipper has to go past or through them to reach the interior holy space, nearer the high altar. Here were the shrines and statues of virginal saints like the legendary St Elvetha, one of the martyred virgin daughters of Brychan Brycheiniog, and the Blessed Virgin Mary herself. Might this not imply that the married life can be a way to holiness, but that true sanctity lies in the virginal state of the celibate nun?

Our instinct nowadays is to see this as a profoundly misogynistic and repressive doctrine. However, the cult of the virgin saints can also have a feminist reading. Many of them are described as defying all the conventional sources of authority - their fathers, local rulers, even the emperor himself. It is their dedication to chastity which enables them to defy and ultimately to reject male control of their lives. St Katherine defied the emperor of Rome, refused his offer of marriage and out-argued the forty philosophers he sent to refute her. When Christina of Tyre's tongue was chopped up, she spat out the bits (blinding the judge who had ordered her to be tortured) and went on arguing. These are not mild, submissive young maidens; they are stroppy proto-feminists who insist on the right to set their own agenda - women who 'stand up and say No'.

This brings us neatly back to our original subject of women as leaders in medieval Usk. There is definitely room in the evidence for women of power, in spiritual life as well as in the world. The nuns' choice of Mary Magdalene and St Radegund as saints for public devotion may tell us a lot about their ideas on the status of women of religion in society, as well as illuminating relations between castle and priory and the influence of the de Clare women and their successors on the religious life of the town.

***Acknowledgement***

This article is based on a lecture given to the Friends of Usk Castle as part of a half-day school on 'Women Leaders in Medieval Usk'. I am grateful to John Groves and the Friends for organising the event and giving me a chance to explore my ideas about St Radegund.

[30] Hillier, B. and Hanson, J. (eds.), *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988); for a critique, see, e.g. Graves, C. Pamela, *The Form and Fabric of Belief: an archaeology of the lay experience of religion in medieval Norfolk and Devon* (BAR, Oxford, 2000) 10-11.

# ELIZABETH DE BURGH AND USK CASTLE

*By Jennifer C. Ward*

The lords of Usk castle in the Middle Ages were among the most powerful nobles of England and Wales, including as they did Earl Richard Strongbow, William Marshal and his sons, the last three of the Clare earls of Gloucester, Lionel duke of Clarence and the Mortimers. Medieval lordship was primarily associated with noblemen, but there were frequent occasions when a daughter and heiress took an estate by marriage to another family and when widows held the lands as part of their dower. During the fourteenth century, between 1317 and her death in 1360, the lordship of Usk was held by the Clare heiress, Elizabeth de Burgh, at first as the wife of Roger Damory between 1317 and 1322 and then in her own right as a widow. Although it was taken for granted that the husband of an heiress would exercise complete control over her lands, the widow had the right to pursue her own territorial policies and to make her own decisions.[1] The surviving estate and household records for Elizabeth de Burgh make it clear that she was a vigorous administrator.

Elizabeth was the youngest daughter of Gilbert de Clare, earl of Gloucester and Hertford and was probably born in 1295. After her father's death at the end of that year, her mother, Joan of Acre, who was a daughter of Edward I, continued to hold all the Clare estates, as she had been jointly enfeoffed with her husband at the time of her marriage in 1290.[2] Joan and Gilbert had one son and three daughters. The son, Gilbert, succeeded his father and was slain at Bannockburn in 1314, leaving his three sisters as his heirs. Elizabeth was probably brought up in her mother's household and, as was usual among the nobility, she married for the first time at the age of about thirteen, in 1308, her husband being the heir of Richard de Burgh, earl of Ulster; she kept the Burgh surname throughout her life, adding to it the title, lady of Clare.

Discussion in this paper will centre on two periods of Elizabeth's life when she was closely involved with Usk, the years 1317-27 and the late 1340s. There is a strong contrast between the two periods. 1317 saw the partition of the Clare inheritance and was followed by Elizabeth's struggle with her brother-in-law, Hugh le Despenser the younger, who wanted to lay his hands on all the Clare lordships in South Wales and on other lands as well. It was a time of rebellion, warfare and ultimately the deposition of Edward II in 1327. The late 1340s exemplify Elizabeth's widowhood when her life centred peacefully on her household, family and estates; these years were also marked by the first outbreak of the Black Death, but there is little trace of this in the surviving records concerning Elizabeth.

The troubles of 1317-27 stemmed directly from Earl Gilbert's death and the partition of his lands. Gilbert left no children and, although his widow claimed to be pregnant, no child was born. The pregnancy, however, provided Edward II with an excuse to postpone the partition; he had already faced serious opposition from his barons and, as Gilbert was the wealthiest magnate outside the royal family, the division of his lands was likely to cause further trouble. At the time of his death, Gilbert probably had an income of over £6,000 a year; this figure for the valuation of his estates is given in the partition and may have been somewhat inflated by the bad harvests and

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[1] Ward, J.C., *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1992) 2-3, 34.

[2] Altschul, M., *A Baronial Family in Medieval England: the Clares, 1217-1314* (Baltimore, 1965) 148-9.

famine of 1315-17.[3] His heirs were his three sisters: Eleanor, married to Hugh le Despenser the younger; Margaret, the widow of Piers Gaveston; and Elizabeth who had been widowed in 1313. The remarriage of the two widows was likely to cause further political problems.

Elizabeth returned from Ireland early in 1316, and soon afterwards eloped from Bristol castle with Theobald de Verdun, to the king's fury. The king must have been relieved when Theobald died a few months later. Elizabeth had one son by her first marriage who was heir to the earldom of Ulster and she and Theobald had a daughter, Isabella, born at the nunnery of Amesbury on 21 March 1317.[4] Not more than six weeks later, the two widowed Clare sisters were safely married to court favourites, Margaret to Hugh Audley and Elizabeth to Roger Damory.[5] The partition was finalised later in the year, Elizabeth and Damory receiving much of the honour of Clare in Eastern England, the Dorset lands and the lordship of Usk.[6] For Damory, the marriage made his fortune, but the division of estates left the way open for Despenser to pursue his ambitions in South Wales and, as he emerged as Edward II's favourite in the years after 1317, he had royal support for what he did.

Elizabeth and Damory received very little of their Welsh inheritance in 1317, as most of the lordship of Usk was held by Earl Gilbert's widow as dower; they were only granted two-thirds of the small manor of Llangwm.[7] On her death, on 2 July 1320, they moved swiftly to secure the lordship and became immediately embroiled in Welsh politics.[8] Despenser's ambitions were already apparent, as Hugh Audley and Margaret had never been able to secure their share of Newport and Gwynllwg. Damory and Elizabeth took up residence at Usk castle. Building work had been in progress before the countess's death, which may have been started, or at least planned, before Earl Gilbert's death. The receiver's account roll for 1318-19 refers to the building of a new hall in the castle. The receiver, William Keys, who held office in 1314-15, spent £62 2s. 10d. on the work and John Gough, in office in 1318-19, spent a further £35 13s. 8½d. to complete it. A plasterer was paid £0 6s. 8d. for his work on the chimney or louver of the new hall. Work was

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[3] Holmes, G.A., *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1957) 36.

[4] *Rotuli Parliamentorum, I*, (6 vols., London, 1783) 352-3; Caley, J., Ellis, H. and Bandinel, B. (eds.), *Monasticon Anglicanum, V*, (6 vols., London, 1817-30) 661. Elizabeth's aunt Mary, daughter of Edward I, was a nun at Amesbury between 1285 and 1332.

[5] *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1313-1317* (London, 1898) 644; Phillips, J.R.S., *Aymer de Valence Earl of Pembroke 1307-1324* (Oxford, 1972) 132.

[6] *Rotuli Parliamentorum, I*, (6 vols., London, 1783) 355; *Calendar of Chancery Warrants, 1244-1326* (London, 1927) 470; *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1313-1317* (London, 1898) 660-1, 666; *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1313-1318* (London, 1893) 414-15, 583; *Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1307-19* (London, 1912) 350-1. The pourparty of each heir was listed in the Public Record Office, London (henceforward PRO) C 47/9/23-5. These rolls also contain the division of the dower lands of Earl Gilbert's widow, Matilda de Burgh, who died in 1320; this division may have been made in 1317, in advance of her death, or the rolls may date from 1320.

[7] PRO C 47/9/25, m.2.

[8] The countess's death on 2 July 1320 is confirmed by the accounts of the receiver of Usk and the reeve of the manor of Usk (PRO SC 6/927/27-8) which run from 3 July to Michaelmas 1320, signifying a change of lord on 3 July.

carried out on the chapel in 1315-16 which, together with general repairs, cost £7 17s. 9½d. This hall and chapel were probably on the north-west side of the inner ward which has been dated architecturally to the first part of the fourteenth century.[9]

Damory and Elizabeth carried out general repairs to the castle and put new windows in the hall and chamber, but their main concern was to prepare Usk castle for attack. The accounts refer to the building of two drawbridges, a new entry to the castle from the town and the reconstruction of two watch-towers. The moats were filled with water and the castle stocked with armour, arrows, crossbow-bolts and catapults. Altogether, £59 17s. 8d. was spent on the castle and an additional £4 19s. 6d. on armaments and water-defences. Some building work was also carried out on the castles at Caerleon and Llangibby (then known as Tregrug). Victuals were commandeered and not paid for until Elizabeth settled the debts in 1329-31.[10]

The Marchers rose in revolt against Despenser in 1321.[11] Gwynllwg and Glamorgan were overrun and Damory appointed custodian of Cardiff castle. The king was powerless to suppress the revolt and reluctantly agreed to banish the Despensers in August. However, their return in December marked the beginning of a royal campaign to crush the rebels, culminating in Edward's victory at Boroughbridge, Yorkshire, on 16 March 1322. Damory spent the winter fighting in the West; he was taken prisoner when Tutbury castle surrendered on 10 March. By then, he was mortally wounded and he may have died before he was condemned to death as a traitor three days later; Elizabeth always commemorated his anniversary on 12 March and the chronicler, Henry Knighton, commented that he died in his bed at Tutbury.[12]

By the time of Damory's death, Elizabeth was a prisoner; she had been captured at Usk with her daughter and wet-nurse in January.[13] As the widow of a traitor, with three young children and no family support, she was extremely vulnerable in the years that followed. According to the treatise formerly attributed to Bracton, treason was so serious an offence that the traitor should be punished by death, the forfeiture of all his goods and the disinheritance of his heirs for ever; they were not to succeed to either their paternal or maternal inheritance. The 'statute' *De*

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[9] PRO SC 6/927/15, 17, 24; no accounts survive from Earl Gilbert's tenure of the lordship; the receiver was the principal financial officer of the lordship. The Latin term, *fumerellum*, used in SC 6/927/24, denotes either chimney or louver. See Knight, J.K., 'Usk Casle and its Affinities' in Apted, M.R., Gilyard-Beer, R. and Saunders, A.D. (eds.), *Ancient Monuments and their Interpretation. Essays presented to A.J. Taylor* (Chichester, 1977) 147-8.

[10] PRO SC 6/927/29, m.1d.; SC 6/921/2, m.1; SC 6/925/18, m.3; SC 6/928/7, m.1d.; SC 6/928/9, m.3. A royal order for the arrest of London merchants who sold arms to Damory and others, was issued on 4 March 1322; *Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1319-27* (London, 1913) 103.

[11] Conway Davies, J., 'The Despenser War in Glamorgan', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3rd series, 9 (1915) 48-60.

[12] PRO E 101/93/4, m.14; E 101/93/12, m.3; Palgrave, F. (ed.), *Parliamentary Writs and Writs of Military Summons, II, Part 2*, (2 vols., Record Commission, London, 1827-34), 179, 181, 261; Denholm-Young, N. (ed.), *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (London, 1957) 122-3; Lumby, J.R. (ed.), *Chronicon Henrici Knighton, I*, (2 vols., Rolls Series, London, 1889-95) 427; Haskins, G.L., 'A Chronicle of the Civil Wars of Edward II', *Speculum*, 14 (1939) 80; Sayles, G., 'The Formal Judgments on the Traitors of 1322', *Speculum*, 16 (1941) 58-9.

[13] PRO SC 6/927/31; it is likely that this is a reference to the daughter she had with Damory.

*Donis* of 1285 stated that entailed estates were not liable to forfeiture, nor were the wife's inheritance and jointure, although the widow could not claim these until after the death of her husband; dower was liable to forfeiture.[14] As most of her lands belonged to her own Clare inheritance, or to jointure or dower from her first two marriages, or to manors held jointly with Damory, Elizabeth should have been able to secure her lands. However, she herself had been involved in the Marcher rebellion and, more important, the younger Despenser had his eyes fixed on the lordship of Usk. He was a dangerous enemy and all-powerful at court. The law of treason under Edward II was enforced harshly and some widows of rebels lost inheritance and jointure as well as rights of dower.[15]

A considerable amount is known about Elizabeth's difficulties in the 1320s because of a secret protest against the Despensers which she drew up in May, 1326. This gave a detailed account of her dealings with her brother-in-law and can be corroborated by the official records.[16] What comes out strongly is her conviction that Damory had died in a just cause and her determination to stand up for her children, her inheritance and her rights. The king clearly regarded her as dangerous. She was sent from Usk to the abbey of Barking, a few miles outside London and was kept there for several months with her children. The abbess had instructions not to let her out of the gate and Elizabeth was ordered not to leave the abbey, nor to marry anyone without the king's special permission.[17] All her lands and possessions, including her jewels and plate, were taken into the king's hands. While she was at Barking, the king sent her three letters of credit, on the condition that she made an exchange of Usk for Gower with the younger Despenser. This was an unequal exchange, the value of Usk in 1317 being set at over £700, about one-third of the value of her share of the Clare lands and at least twice the value of Gower. The king promised that he would restore her inheritance, dower and other possessions to her if she agreed. If she refused, none of her lands would be restored to her in the king's lifetime. In the circumstances, she was forced to accept the exchange. She feared for her life and for that of her son and heir William de Burgh.[18] She must have known that other rebels had been brutally treated. The exchange went ahead - but Despenser gave orders that Gower was to be stripped of its assets before it was handed over to Elizabeth.[19]

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[14] Woodbine, G.E. (ed.), *Bracton De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae, II*, (4 vols., New Haven, 1915-42) 334-7; Douglas, D.C., (ed.), *English Historical Documents, III*, 12 vols., Rothwell, H. (ed.), *1189-1327* (London, 1975) 428-9.

[15] Fryde, N., *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II* (Cambridge, 1979) 78-9.

[16] British Library, London, Harleian MS 1240, ff. 86v.-87r. The protest is printed in Holmes, G.A., 'A Protest against the Despensers, 1326', *Speculum*, 30 (1955) 207-12 and translated in Ward, J. (ed. and trans.), *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry 1066-1500* (Manchester, 1995) 116-19.

[17] *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1318-23* (London, 1895) 428. Unless otherwise referenced, details on the period to 1327 have been taken from Elizabeth's protest.

[18] *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1327-30* (London, 1891) 32.

[19] Smith, J. Beverley and Pugh, T.B., 'The Lordship of Gower and Kilvey in the Middle Ages', *Glamorgan County History, III* (6 vols., Cardiff, 1936-88), Pugh, T.B. (ed.), *The Middle Ages* 246-7; Clark, G.T. (ed.), *Cartae et Alia Munimenta quae ad Dominium de Glamorgancia Pertinent, III* (6 vols., Cardiff, 1910) 1100-4; *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1300-26* (London, 1908) 449; *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1321-24* (London, 1904) 176; *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1318-23* (London, 1895) 578, 603-4; PRO E 101/332/27, m.5; PRO SC 6/927/32.

Elizabeth continued to be regarded as suspect by Edward II and Despenser. She was summoned to spend Christmas, 1322, with the king at York. There she was kept virtually under guard and separated from her council and household. She again had to quitclaim her rights to Usk.[20] She also was ordered to seal a letter stating that she would incur forfeiture of her lands and goods if she harboured any of Edward's opponents, married without his permission, or alienated any property without his consent.[21] She protested, so some of her councillors were put in prison 'for a long time'. She left court without sealing the letter, but was pursued and ordered to return to York. An order to take her castles into the king's hands was made on 7 January 1323, as she had departed without permission.[22] She was told that, if she failed to seal the letter, she would lose all that she had and never hold 'a foot of land' of the king. In face of this threat, she put her seal on the letter.

Elizabeth probably realised that she would not be allowed to hold Gower for long. William de Braose, its rightful lord, recovered it from her in 1324 and granted it to the elder Despenser who granted it to his son. Elizabeth resorted to petitions to parliament, but could get no remedy.[23] However, she said in her protest that in 1326 the younger Despenser offered her landed compensation for Gower, although the yearly value of this was less than half that of Gower. She did not want to accept it, but feared that she might have to. She did not want to be numbered among the king's enemies, but to save herself and her family.

In view of her experiences and her landed and financial losses, it is not surprising that Elizabeth welcomed Queen Isabella's invasion in the autumn of 1326. She probably knew of the queen's plans before she landed in Suffolk on 24 September. Yet, in the early days of the invasion, she considered it essential to remain on good terms with the king and she was sending messengers to Edward through September and early October.[24] Again, she was fearful for her position should the invasion fail and Despenser remain in power. However, by the middle of October, it was clear that the invasion was successful and William de la Beche and Robert de Cheddeworth were referred to in the household rolls as going to the queen and to Wales for the prosecution of Despenser.[25] Elizabeth's first thought was the recovery of Usk. According to the Usk receiver's account for 1326-27, £12 was paid in wages to 132 Welshmen who were in the company led by Elizabeth's officials, serving for ten days in Glamorgan against Despenser. A payment of £19 9s. to divers Welshmen at Monmouth helping the king and Despenser was crossed out in the document and disallowed. Usk and Caerleon castles were occupied by Elizabeth's men and repairs put in hand on the lady's chamber in Usk castle. Elizabeth and her household were at Usk by mid-November and remained there in 1327. The Christmas celebration of 1326 must have been a joy-

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[20] PRO E 101/332/27, m.5.

[21] Richardson, H.G. and Sayles, G. (eds.), *Rotuli Parliamentorum Anglie Hactenus Inediti, 1279-1373*, Camden Society, 3rd series, 51 (London, 1935) 177-8; *Rotuli Parliamentorum, II*, (6 vols., London, 1783) 440.

[22] *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1318-23* (London, 1895) 624.

[23] PRO KB 27/259, m. 115; E 101/332/27, m.6; Clark, G.T. (ed.), *Cartae et Alia Munimenta, III*, 1127-30; Rose, G. and Illingworth, W. (eds.), *Placitorum in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi Asservatorum Abbreviatio*, (Record Commission, London, 1811) 350.

[24] PRO E 101/91/12, m.1d., 2d., 3d.

[25] PRO E 101/91/11; E 101/91/12, m.2d., 3, 3d.

ous occasion and the kitchen roll records a great feast on 25 December. Elizabeth's re-occupation was ratified by Edward III in February 1327 and she was once again legally lady of Usk.[26]

The events of 1317-27 bring out Elizabeth's courage, tenacity and determination to safeguard her lands and family in spite of the odds stacked against her. She was one of a large number of noble men and women who lost out to the Despensers, supported the queen's invasion and recovered estates and status under Edward III. Events show that even without a husband, Elizabeth could play an active part in affairs and participate in war and rebellion. She must have been familiar with the contemporary device of the Wheel of Fortune and few people experienced as many and as rapid changes of fortune as she did by the time she was in her early thirties.

In contrast, her life under Edward III can be described as uneventful. She was in the king's favour, had legal title to her lands and inheritance and enjoyed life as a member of the higher nobility. She never remarried after 1322 and so lived as a widow for nearly forty years. The period provides the opportunity to see Usk in a more peaceful guise. She resided there from time to time down to 1350 and, as at her other residences, engaged on building work on the castle. In addition to the work already done by her and Damory, new chambers were being constructed in 1341-42, at a cost of £25 2s. 6d. and in 1348-49 work was in progress on the new chambers next to the new tower against the park, at a cost of £16 9s. 11¼d. A bell-tower was also built, costing 25s. 4d. It is likely that these chambers were near the hall and chapel which had been built earlier in the century. Some work was also carried out at Llangibby castle in 1341-42, although the early fourteenth century plan for a massive castle never materialised.[27]

Elizabeth's residence at Usk from at least October 1348, until April 1350, throws light on her lifestyle and activities. Most of the time was spent at Usk, although Elizabeth had short stays at Llangibby in July and September 1349 and met the king at Hereford in October. For these excursions, she only took part of her household, leaving the rest at Usk. Members of the household went to her other manors from time to time, for hunting and business. Occasionally, members of her family resided with her at Usk. Her grand-daughter, Elizabeth, countess of Athol, was there in October 1349 and Gilbert Despenser was mentioned with a hunting party at Caerleon in September 1349 and at Trelech in December.[28] It was usual for children of the nobility to leave their parents and to join other households for their upbringing and education.

Wherever she was living, Elizabeth offered hospitality to Churchmen, relations, friends and neighbours, as well as to people with whom she was doing business. Usk was no exception and there was a steady stream of visitors. The visits were short, usually lasting for two or three days. Some of the visitors she only saw when she was at Usk, such as the abbot of Evesham who was there in October 1348, Roger Mortimer, there in April 1349 and Lady Talbot, there in February 1350, whose husband was lord of Castle Goodrich. On occasion, Elizabeth may have

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[26] *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1327-30* (London, 1891) 32; PRO SC 6/928/2; PRO E 101/91/14, 15. PRO E 101/91/14 is a kitchen roll, recording the daily consumption of food and drink by the household. The heading of the roll is missing and the first two membranes are damaged, but the practice of giving the day of the week as well as the date, makes it clear that the roll dates from Michaelmas 1326 to Michaelmas 1327.

[27] PRO SC 6/928/11, m.1d.; SC 6/928/16, m.1d.; Knight, J.K., 'Usk Castle and its Affinities', 147-9.

[28] PRO E 101/93/2, 4.

been anxious to get to know a new figure in the area; John Paschal became bishop of Llandaff in 1347 and visited her in December 1348 and March 1349. William Montague did homage to the king for the earldom of Salisbury in July 1349 and visited Elizabeth in September, along with his sister, Lady Despenser, who had been widowed earlier in the year. In fact, Lady Despenser made three visits in the summer of 1349 and a further visit in January 1350. Some of the visitors, like Lady Despenser, were members of Elizabeth's extended family. Another kinswoman was her niece, Lady Stafford and she and her husband made separate visits in August 1349 and January 1350; they were also frequent visitors when Elizabeth was at Clare and Bardfield, in Eastern England. Elizabeth's greatest friend, Marie de St Pol, countess of Pembroke, made frequent visits wherever Elizabeth was residing and was at Usk four times between October 1348 and April 1350. The friendship dated back to the 1320s when Marie faced serious problems with the Despensers over her lands after she was widowed in 1324. Lastly, Elizabeth entertained local people, such as the prioress and nuns of Usk convent on 22 November 1349.[29]

No information is available on the entertainment offered to visitors, but the provision of food was lavish and generous. This can be traced through the household accounts which entered the number of dishes prepared each day. When Lady Stafford and Lady Despenser were entertained on 16 and 17 August 1349, seventy-four and eighty-one dishes respectively were served, the numbers falling after they left to fifty-four and forty-five dishes on 18 and 19 August. It is not possible to calculate the total number of diners. The dishes, or messes as they were called, were served in courses and often shared among four people. They provide only an approximate guide to the number of those present.

Whether there were visitors or not, the pattern of meals and provisioning was based very much on the Church calendar, with its feasts and fasts. Every Friday was a fast day, when the eating of meat was forbidden and there was usually at least one other fast day in the week. Lent was a season for fasting, with dairy produce and eggs being forbidden as well as meat. In contrast, Sundays and the great feast days of the Church were times of celebration. Two days every year in particular were singled out in Elizabeth's household for almsgiving. On All Souls Day, 2 November 1348, 3,660 loaves and 6,480 herring were dispensed to the poor; and on Roger Damory's anniversary, St Gregory's Day, 12 March 1350, 1,210 loaves and 2,140 herring were distributed.[30]

Three principal feasts were celebrated in Elizabeth's household. The twelve days of Christmas were a festive season, but the highest expenditure came on Christmas Day. In 1348, £7 10s. 9½d. was spent on provisions, in contrast to £3 16s. on Christmas Eve and £3 8s. 11d. on 26 December; 145 dishes were served and 262 loaves and 75 gallons of ale were issued. Expenditure on Easter Sunday and Corpus Christi, 1349, was between £5 and £6, with the level of provisioning being comparable to Christmas Day; Corpus Christi was a relatively new feast, having been promulgated in 1311, but it rapidly proved popular. Expenditure on Ascension Day, Whitsunday and Trinity Sunday, 1349, was less, about £3 6s. being spent on each occasion.[31]

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] PRO E 101/93/2.

Whether it was a feast or fast day, feeding Elizabeth's household and visitors can be likened to institutional provisioning. The household was essentially hierarchical and Elizabeth, her guests and principal officials would be given a greater variety of food than the grooms and pages. Taking Sunday, 11 April 1350, the day before the household left Usk, 470 loaves were issued, together with six sextars and three pitchers of wine (for the more important people) and 170 gallons of ale. The kitchen used two and a half quarters of beef, two sides of bacon, one buck, one and a half beef carcasses, two and a quarter pigs, one sheep and three calves. The heron, eight capons, sixteen hens, two pullets, six piglets, fourteen does and twenty-three doves would have been used to prepare dishes for the top members of the household. In its preparations, the kitchen used 360 eggs and two gallons of milk.[32] Vegetables, fruit and spices were never included in the daily accounts, but were certainly used in food preparation.

Where did Elizabeth get her provisions and what impact did the household have on the local economy? Wherever possible, food supplies were obtained from the lady's manors. All food processing took place in the household. Extra supplies always had to be bought and officials had to weigh up the best source of supply, transport costs and the reliability of suppliers. Water transport was cheaper than road, but was not always available. Looking at the wardrobe and household account of 1349-50, many of Elizabeth's Welsh manors (Llangibby, Llantrisant, Troy, Trelech and Usk) were supplying wheat and oats; the oats' supply was vital for the horses on which the household relied for transport. The manors could not, however, meet all household needs and so purchases were made in Usk, Monmouth and Hereford and from Sir Ralph Bluet at Raglan. Malt barley (for ale) was purchased in the Tewkesbury area in November 1349 and February 1350, in considerable quantities and brought by boat to Brethelly and then carted to Usk, the first consignment also including two barrels of 500 stockfish and 5,000 herrings. The official, John de Rushton, was away from the household for thirty-seven and thirty-one days respectively when arranging these purchases. Oxen and pigs came from the manors or were purchased locally; in fact, Usk supplied the household with oxen when it was in Eastern England. In 1349-50, Usk also supplied the household with partridges, salmon and lampreys and vinegar.[33]

Local markets therefore benefited from the presence of the household, but the main purchases of fish, wine and spices were made in larger centres. Bristol was especially important and the officials made several trips to buy wine there in the autumn of 1349. John de Horsele, for instance, bought one tun and one pipe of red wine there on 21 November for £9 16s. 8d; the officials' expenses and transport cost across the Bristol Channel to Brethelly added a further 7s. 2d. Hugh Pulleter made purchases of salt, white herring and stockfish at Bristol. Occasionally, fish was purchased in Chepstow. John de Horsele made purchases of dried fruit, dates and olive oil in Bristol, at a cost of £7 15s. 4d.[34]

For certain provisions the household ventured much further afield and here it is likely that it was felt that the reliability of the suppliers outweighed the transport costs. The bulk of the spice

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[32] PRO E 101/93/4.

[33] PRO E 101/93/6, m.1, 3, 4, 5. Brethelly (modern name Bertholey) was probably the highest tidal point on the River Usk and therefore the place nearest to the town that seaborne traffic could reach. There was a ferry across the river at this point. I would like to thank Geoff Mein for this information.

[34] PRO E 101/93/6, m.4, 5, 6.

order for the year, amounting in total to nearly £120, was obtained from Bartholomew Thomasin, a London grocer who was a naturalised Italian; he had supplied Elizabeth for many years and also supplied Edward III. Oysters were purchased in Clare and sent to Usk. John de Bradefeld was sent to Yarmouth in November to buy red herring which was carted overland to Tewkesbury and then presumably to Usk by water; the purchase took John away from the household for forty-six days.[35] Provisioning the household was a complex and time-consuming business and, as far as can be seen from the accounts, arrangements seem to have worked smoothly.

On Monday, 12 April 1350, Elizabeth left Usk castle for the last time (as far as we know). She reached Clare on Wednesday 28 April.[36] This journey was a major exercise in logistics. Local transport was used, but we know that John Gough had also scoured Eastern England to find horses to take to Wales. Before the journey, on Thursday 8 April, there were forty-two horses, five hacks, ten beasts and sixteen oxen in the stables; by Sunday 11 April, there were 107 horses, twenty-one hacks and sixteen oxen. There were slight variations in numbers over the journey, but it took about this number to transport the lady and her household back to Clare. Elizabeth and her ladies travelled in two chariots, each drawn by five horses harnessed in line; an illustration of this type of carriage is to be found in the Luttrell Psalter. The total number of people making the journey is not known, but the account for the stables always recorded about two valets, sixty grooms and eighteen pages. Some of the waggons were only used for part of the journey; forty-six oxen and five waggons, for instance, went as far as Newent and then returned to Tintern and Usk. As well as organising transport, the officials had to ensure that they took or would be able to buy enough provisions for the journey. They were sometimes sent ahead to prepare for the next night, as when Simon of the Kitchen went ahead to Ross-on-Wye and Adam, groom of the Poultry, was sent ahead to Newent and then to Tewkesbury. There must have been a great feeling of relief when the travellers finally reached Clare.

Why did Elizabeth not return to Usk after 1350? She was then about fifty-five years old and possibly felt that the journey was too much to undertake. The return to Clare had taken seventeen days, with one weekend spent at Tewkesbury and another at Chicksand in Bedfordshire. (In contrast, a group of her officials took a week to reach Usk in December/January, 1328-29.[37]) Moreover, in the 1350s, Elizabeth spent an increasing amount of time in London, which was becoming an increasingly important centre for court and government and she built her own house in the outer precinct of the Minoresses' convent outside Aldgate.[38] It is possible that she was seriously ill in September 1355, when she drew up her will.[39]

Usk and its lordship were, however, still fully integrated in her administration and estates. In 1350-51, the lordship supplied the household with oxen, cows and pigs, salmon, lampreys and a porpoise, conger eels, cod and ling, herons and sparrow-hawks and blue cloth, russet and blan-

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[35] *Ibid.* m.6, 5.
[36] PRO E 101/93/4.
[37] PRO E 101/91/20.
[38] Ward, J.C., 'Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare (d. 1360)' in Barron, C.M. and Sutton, A.F. (eds.), *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500* (London, 1994) 37-47; PRO E 101/93/12.
[39] Nichols, J., *A Collection of All the Wills of the Kings and Queens of England* 25, 28, 32.

ket; cash was also transported under escort from Usk to Clare.[40] There was always frequent contact between Usk and the lady's officials in the eastern counties. The lady was kept informed of business meetings with neighbouring lords, such as the countess of Norfolk who held Chepstow. Each autumn, regular contact was maintained with the auditors of the accounts. Grooms were sent off with letters to the lady on a variety of matters; in 1342-43, these included a royal writ about the selection of men for service on the king's expedition to Brittany and news of a porpoise which had been caught in the water of Usk.[41]

Usk was not forgotten in Elizabeth's will. Henry Motelot, receiver of the lordship from at least 1341, was bequeathed six silver basins, a silver plate with a foot, a maser whose cover was decorated in silver-gilt and a red and tawny vestment. Officials in charge of the manors were left sums of money of £2 or £3. Tintern abbey was to receive one white vestment and two cloths of gold, while the nuns of Usk were left £6 13s. 4d. and two cloths of gold.[42] In fact, Elizabeth made bequests to all the religious houses with which she was connected and this reflects her strong religious devotion; her main bequests went to Clare Hall at Cambridge and the London house of the Minoresses.

It is rare to have as much information on a medieval noblewoman as we have on Elizabeth de Burgh and this is the result of the survival of a large number of her household accounts and estate documents. In her dealings with Usk, we can see what could be achieved by a noblewoman in the fourteenth century. Certainly she suffered at the hands of the Despensers, but, once Edward III was king, she lived the life of a member of the higher nobility, administering her estates, exercising local patronage, protecting and furthering the interests of religious establishments and dispensing hospitality to friends, kin and neighbours. Altogether she lived a rich and varied life.

***Acknowledgements***

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[40] PRO E 101/93/8, m.2; Ward, J. (ed. and trans.), *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry* 164-5.
[41] PRO SC 6/928/12, m.1d.; SC 6/928/13, m.1d., 2d.; SC 6/928/15, m.1d.
[42] Nichols, J., *A Collection of All the Wills of the Kings and Queens of England* 25, 28, 32.

# THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORDSHIP OF MONMOUTH UNDER HENRY VII

*By W.R.B. Robinson*

The early Tudor records of the lordship of Monmouth are better preserved than those of any of the other marcher lordships that became 'parts and members' of the new county of Monmouthshire in 1536. The survival of these records is attributable to their preservation in the archives of the duchy of Lancaster, whose possessions had included Monmouth and its associated lordships since the creation of John of Gaunt as duke of Lancaster in 1362. When Gaunt's son, Henry of Bolingbroke, became king of England as Henry IV in 1399, the duchy lands became a separately administered part of the Crown possessions[1] and their separate status was confirmed by an Act passed by Henry VII's first Parliament in 1486, vesting the duchy in the king and his heirs.[2]

Most of the surviving early Tudor records relating to the lordship of Monmouth and its 'members' – the associated lordships of White Castle, Grosmont, Skenfrith and Hadnock – are financial documents. They comprise mainly the accounts of the local officers or 'ministers' who collected the king's revenues from the borough of Monmouth and individual lordships and those of the receiver of the whole lordship who took charge of the revenues paid to him by the local ministers and delivered them to the receiver general of the duchy or his deputy at Westminster.[3] Besides accounts for the lordship of Monmouth, the duchy archives include rolls, books and other documents relating to the central administration of the duchy which record legal proceedings and administrative orders relating to the lordship. The surviving documentation relating to the lordship of Monmouth is accordingly substantial, but it is deficient in one important respect, since it does not apparently include records of any court sessions held in Monmouth and its associated lordships. Consequently, little information is available about the routine operation of the courts and the state of law and order.

Henry VII became king of England on the death of Richard III at the battle of Bosworth on 22 August 1485. The news of King Richard's death apparently prompted some of the duchy tenants in the lordship of Monmouth to take advantage of the interval that would elapse before Henry VII's officers could take possession of the lordship, to despoil some duchy property. The tenants and occupiers of some duchy lands in Grosmont were later recorded as refusing to pay money due from them because the lands had been 'destroyed' at the time of the disturbance of the country before Henry VII's entry.[4] The tenants and residents of Monmouth and its associated lordships formally acknowledged the new king's entry into possession of the lordships on 24 September 1485, when their attendance was 'taken' in the king's name by Jankin ap Hoell, Thomas ap Thomelyn and other royal commissioners assigned for that purpose.[5] After Henry VII's accession, all grants of lands and offices made by Richard III, were deemed to be invalid

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[1] For the legal and administrative provisions for the duchy lands made in 1399 see Somerville, R., *History of the Duchy of Lancaster 1265-1603* (London, 1953) hereafter Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, chap. 8.

[2] *Ibid.* 261.

[3] These ministers' and receivers' accounts are listed in Public Record Office, hereafter PRO, *List of Original Ministers Accounts, Part 2* (London, 1910) 103-4.

[4] PRO DL 29/616/9889, account of William Herbert, receiver of Monmouth, 1485-86, 'Super section'.

[5] PRO DL 29/957/9571, ministers' accounts for Monmouth, 1484-85, general heading.

unless they were confirmed by the new king[6] and during the early months of Henry VII's reign, the more important offices of the lordship of Monmouth were filled by a series of new appointments made under the duchy seal.[7]

The first of these new appointments was that of Richard Greenway on 22 September 1485, to the receivership of the lordships, an office previously held by Nicholas Spicer, one of Richard III's esquires of the body, who had been prominent in his service in South Wales.[8] Greenway had previously held the receivership in the 1470s, but it is doubtful whether Henry VII's grant of the office to him took effect. On 27 November 1485, he was appointed to the minor office of master forester of Hadnock[9] and two days later, the receivership and approvership of Monmouth and its associated lordships was granted to William Herbert of Troy, who was to play a major role in their administration until his death in 1524.[10]

An illegitimate son of William Herbert (d. 1469), earl of Pembroke, Herbert had been granted the manors of Troy and Wonastow by that earl's heir, William (d. 1490), earl of Huntingdon, initially in 1483 by a lease for life and in January 1485, by an outright grant.[11] His activities were by no means confined to the lordship and neighbourhood of Monmouth, and his status as one of the most influential men in early Tudor Gwent deserves wider recognition. There is no evidence that he held office in the lordship of Monmouth before 1485, but Henry VII's grant of the receivership gave him much greater authority than any of the other officers appointed there in the early months of Henry VII's reign, apart from the steward. On 9 October 1485, Nicholas Williams, later prominent in South Wales as a lawyer,[12] was appointed master serjeant of the Vale of Monmouth for life[13] and on 20 January 1486, Thomas Tomlyn and Philip Gwilym were joint-

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[6] Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 261-2; *Rotuli Parliamentorum, Volume 6*, (6 vols., London, n.d., index, 1832) 336-84, esp. 337.

[7] Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 647-54 gives chronological lists of the principal officers of the lordship of Monmouth and its subordinate lordships, with dates of appointment and reference to sources.

[8] *Ibid.* 650-1; Horrox, Rosemary, *Richard III: A Study of Service* (Cambridge, 1989) 248-9.

[9] PRO DL 41/21 f. 216v.

[10] Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 651. The document there cited as recording sureties for the receivership, PRO DL 41/34/1, has now been re-numbered as DL 41/838. For Herbert's early career, see Appendix 1 below. Besides the receivership, Herbert also held the chancellorship of Monmouth (Gwent Record Office D43/5103, deed of 10 Feb. 1493 and later deeds; PRO DL 37/62 m.25, order of 2 July 1495.

[11] For these grants, see Appendix 1. The manors of Little Troy and Wonastow had formerly been held by Thomas Herbert (d. 1469), brother of William Herbert (d. 1469), earl of Pembroke (National Library of Wales, hereafter NLW, Badminton Deeds and Documents no. 347). For Thomas Herbert, see Thomas, D.H., *The Herberts of Raglan and the Battle of Edgecote 1469* (Freezywater Publications, Enfield, 1994) 87-92.

[12] PRO DL 42/21 f.216v. Nicholas Williams was described as of London in county Middlesex, gentleman, when he entered into a bond for £40 in 1 Henry VII in respect of the office (PRO DL 41/838 f.145). One of the two London men bound with him was a notary and Williams was probably residing in London as a young student of the law. He was admitted to Lincoln's Inn on 12 Feb. 1507 and died between 6 and 12 June 1534 (Baildon, W.P. (comp.), *Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn: Admissions 1420-1893 and Chapel* Registers, *Volume 1*, (2 vols., London, 1896) 32; PRO PROB 11/25 f.99).

[13] PRO DL 42/21 f.216v. The lordship of Monmouth was divided into two parts, one being the Vale, comprising Monmouth, Dixton, Rockfield, Wonastow, Llangattock Vibon Avel, St Maughan's and Welsh Bicknor and the other, the Three Castles (Bradney, A.J., *A History of Monmouthshire from the coming of the*

ly appointed to the office of beadle of Monmouth Castle and the castles of White Castle, Skenfrith and Grosmont.[14]

The most senior office in the lordship of Monmouth was the stewardship. Richard III had granted that office for life to John Huddlestone (d. 1512), one of his Northern adherents who had settled in Gloucestershire and whose rewards from Richard III included an annuity of one hundred marks [£66 13s. 4d.] from the revenues of Monmouth.[15] After Bosworth, Huddlestone's association with the lordship of Monmouth ceased, but it was not until 2 December 1485, that Henry VII made an appointment to the vacant stewardship. He then granted the office for life to his uncle, Jasper Tudor, duke of Bedford and earl of Pembroke,[16] who was also granted the offices of constable and 'janitor' [gate-keeper] of Monmouth Castle and the constableships of the Three Castles (White Castle, Grosmont and Skenfrith).[17] This appointment was soon followed by two further grants which established Jasper Tudor as the predominant magnate in South Wales. On 13 December 1485, he was appointed justiciar of the principality of South Wales for life[18] and on 2 March 1486, the king granted him extensive lands in England and Wales in tail male, which were clearly intended to support his ducal status.[19] These included Glamorgan and Morgannwg and the lordship of Abergavenny, which adjoined the western boundary of the lordship of Monmouth.[20]

In view of Jasper Tudor's eminence, he was certainly not expected to exercise the routine duties of the stewardship of Monmouth in person. That was clearly recognised in a royal order issued in November 1486, instructing William Herbert as receiver of the lordship and Jankyn ap Howell Philpot, deputy steward there, to levy certain sums of money 'for so moche as the high

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*Normans into Wales down to the present time* (4 vols., London, 1904-33) hereafter cited as Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire, Volume 1, Part 1, The Hundred of Skenfrith* xii. For a map, see Kissack, K., *The Lordship, Parish and Borough of Monmouth* (Hereford, 1996) 52.

[14] PRO DL 42/21 f.217. Thomas Tomlyn was paid wages of 1d. a day in respect of the office until at least Mich. 1505. He may have died in the 1505-06 accounting year, as on 15 March 1507, Philip Morgan was appointed as beadle (PRO DL 29/617/9904, 9906; DL 42/21 f.219; he was described as of Skenfrith in 1485-6 (DL 41/838 f.135).

[15] Horrox, Rosemary, *Richard III: A Study of Service* (Cambridge, 1989) 200, 258, 282-3; Horrox, R. and Hammond, P.W. (eds.), *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433, Volume 1*, (4 vols., Gloucester, 1979-83) 153.

[16] Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 648. For Jasper Tudor's career, see Cokayne, G.E. (comp.), *The Complete Peerage* (13 vols. in 14, London, 1910-59) hereafter G.E.C., *Complete Peerage, Volume 2*, 73; *Volume 10*, 397-9; and Thomas, R.S., 'The political career, estates and "connection" of Jasper Tudor, earl of Pembroke and duke of Bedford (d. 1495)' (University of Wales, Swansea, Ph.D. thesis, 1971).

[17] PRO DL 42/21 f.216; DL 29/616/9889, receiver's account for 1485-86, fees section, gives 1 Dec. 1485 as the date of his appointment to the stewardship and the other offices and records his fee as £28 18s. 4d.

[18] Griffiths, R.A. and Thomas, R.S., *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages: The Structure and Personnel of Government I, South Wales, 1277-1536* (Cardiff, 1972) hereafter cited as Griffiths and Thomas, *Principality of Wales* 162.

[19] *Cal. of Patent Rolls 1485-1494* 64. For Jasper Tudor's acquisition of lands in Wales and his role after Henry VII's accession, see Pugh, T.B., 'The Ending of the Middle Ages' in Pugh, T.B. (ed.), *Glamorgan County History: Volume 3: The Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 1971) 556-7.

[20] For Jasper Tudor's marcher lordships, see n. 29 below.

stuard may not singlerly geve his attendaunce him[self] but trustith in your truth and dilgence'.[21] The responsibility of Jankyn [John] ap Howell for undertaking the routine duties of the stewardship as Jasper Tudor's deputy, was made clear in a royal instruction of January 1486, charging the subordinate officers of the lordship and of some associated duchy lands in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire to assist Jasper Tudor and John ap Howell as joint stewards.[22] John ap Howell's participation in the government of the lordship continued for over twenty years, but he had apparently ceased to be deputy steward by February 1498, when William Rudhall was so described.[23]

Although Jasper Tudor was not involved in the routine duties of the stewardship of Monmouth, his tenure of the office was not merely a remunerative sinecure. It gave him authority to intervene in the affairs of the lordship at any time, for instance by mustering armed men for the king's service. Although few details of Jasper Tudor's itinerary and activities are available, early in 1486 he was clearly entrusted by the king with responsibility for enforcing obedience to royal rule in South Wales, which he visited in February and March of that year.[24] His itinerary at that time may have included Monmouth, as on 9 March, he and three other peers, four knights and five men of lesser status, were appointed as itinerant justices in the lordship.[25] No record of their sessions has been found, but on 26 May 1486, the king signed a warrant at Bristol for the payment of one hundred marks to Jasper Tudor from the revenues of Monmouth for his costs and expenses in the king's service, which may indicate that he and his fellow justices had visited the lordship.[26]

Besides upholding royal authority in South Wales by visits in 1486 and on a few later occasions,[27] Jasper Tudor clearly exercised great authority throughout the Marches from 1486 onwards by virtue of his position as the greatest landowner and royal office holder in Wales. In March 1490, his role in the government of Wales was formally recognised in a series of indentures concluded between Henry VII and the lords or stewards of marcher lordships, requiring them

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[21] PRO DL 37/62 m.2r.

[22] *Ibid.* m.1d., transcribed in Campbell, W., *Materials for a History of the Reign of Henry VII* (2 vols., Rolls Series, 1873-77) hereafter cited as Campbell, *Materials*, *Volume 1*, 603-4. John ap Howell ap Phylpot, gentleman, was described as of Garway in 1 Henry VII (PRO DL 41/838 f.135).

[23] PRO DL 37/62, m.31d., instruction to Rudhall and John (Jenkyn) ap Powell, gentleman, to enquire into the decrease of revenues from the lordship of Monmouth.

[24] In Feb. 1486, he was reported as going into Wales 'to se that country' (Stapleton, T. (ed.), *Plumpton Correspondence* (Camden Society, 1839) 50; for a reference to his being in South Wales in March 1486, see Thomas, R.S., thesis quoted in n.16 above, 277, citing Staffordshire Record Office D641/1/2/193 m. 9d.).

[25] PRO DL 37/62 m.3, summarised in Campbell, *Materials*, *Volume 1*, 378.

[26] PRO DL 29/616/9889, receiver's account for 1485-86, 'payments by warrant'.

[27] Thomas, R.S., thesis cited in n.16 above, 349, mentions his attending the Great Sessions at Carmarthen on 2 and 8 Aug. 1491, at Carmarthen again on 17 Sept. 1492 and Cardigan on 24 Sept. 1492 (PRO SC 6 Henry VII/1615 m.9; 1616 mm. 2,3 and 8). Evidence that rebels in Wales in 1486 were unwilling to accept Henry VII's rule is provided by a grant of lands in Herefordshire seized into the king's hands by reason of the rebellion of Thomas Hunteley and his adherence to the rebels of Wales (*Cal. Fine Rolls, 1485-1509* no. 138).

to ensure that good government was maintained in the lordships under their control.[28] Among other things, these indentures provided that men from these lordships could seek redress for their grievances from Prince Arthur and his Council, or in his absence, from the duke of Bedford and the duke's Council. Jasper Tudor himself also entered into an indenture with the king on 1 March 1490, as marcher lord of Pembroke, Glamorgan, Newport, Abergavenny, Caldicot and Magor and one of its conditions was that before the following Whitsun, the duke should cause the officers in his lordships to put all men under surety for their good behaviour.[29] He was probably also required at this time to impose a similar obligation on the officers of the lordship of Monmouth, but there is no evidence of this, or of his intervention in the government of the lordship in the late 1480s or early 1490s. It is unlikely that he visited Wales in the last few years of his life and although his name appears at the head of a commission issued early in 1494, appointing itinerant justices to hold the Great Sessions in the duchy lordships of Monmouth, Ebbw [near Newport] and Kidwelly, he was not one of the three itinerant justices named as having visited Monmouth in the following two years.[30]

Although Jasper Tudor may have taken little part in government in the last few years of his life, his death on 21 December 1495, deprived Henry VII of the support of the only great nobleman whose influence extended throughout the Marches of Wales. The authority given in March 1490, to Arthur, Prince of Wales and his Council to receive complaints from aggrieved persons in the Marches, had been followed in March 1493, by important commissions granting the prince and his councillors, headed by Jasper Tudor, a wide jurisdiction over criminal offences and other matters throughout Wales and the Marches and the neighbouring English counties.[31] On 26 April 1493, Prince Arthur, together with Jasper Tudor and many prominent members of his Council, held sessions of the peace and oyer and terminer at Hereford. Thereafter, the prince and his Council held other judicial sessions in the English border counties, but no evidence of Jasper Tudor's subsequent attendance has been found.[32]

Nevertheless the lords and stewards of marcher lordships retained the primary responsibility for the administration of justice in the Marches, and following Jasper Tudor's death without legitimate children in December 1495, the decisions which Henry VII had to take for the disposal of his uncle's marcher lordships and offices had important implications for the government of Wales. The king decided to retain Jasper Tudor's marcher lordships in his own hands and acted

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[28] For these indentures, see Pugh, T.B., *The Marcher Lordships of South Wales 1415-1536: Select Documents* (Cardiff, 1963) 257. For the text of the indenture of March 1490, between Henry VII and Ralph Hakeluyt, steward of the lordships of Clifford, Winforton and Glasbury, see *ibid.* 278-81.

[29] Henry VII's indenture with Jasper Tudor and the condition cited above are discussed in *ibid.* 29. For this indenture, see Appendix II below.

[30] PRO DL 5/3 f.95v. 'my lord of Bedford' is the only commissioner named. The entry referring to the commission is undated, but was made in Hilary term 1494. The commission for Monmouth and Ebbw was delivered to William Herbert as receiver.

[31] *Cal. Patent Rolls 1485-94* 438-9, 441.

[32] PRO KB 9/402 no. 20; KB 9/412 no. 6. Prince Arthur was present at a meeting of his Council at Hereford on 31 Jan. 1494 (NLW MS 6200 no. 66). The Council, attended by William Smith, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and five others, including Roger Bodenham, but not the prince, were again present at Hereford on 8 March 1494, when they ordered the parties to a dispute concerning land in Usk to accept the arbitration of Sir Walter Herbert and Sir Thomas Morgan (NLW Llangibby Castle Collection no. B637a).

quickly to fill the vacancy in the justiciarship of the Principality of South Wales arising from Jasper Tudor's death, by appointing Sir Rhys ap Thomas to that office.[33] However, the king was not disposed to act with comparable speed in choosing Jasper Tudor's successor as steward of Monmouth. In a letter to his officers, tenants, farmers, true liegemen and subjects within the lordship of Monmouth, dated 21 February 1496, Henry VII informed them that as the stewardship had come into his disposition by his uncle's death, it was expedient for him to appoint a new steward 'wherefore as yet we take deliberacion and advisement'.[34] In the meantime, he had appointed William Rudhall[35] to exercise the office until he made other provision, and the officers and others were charged to assist and obey Rudhall in all things.[36]

It was not until four months later, that the king proceeded to fill the vacancy in the stewardship. The delay may have arisen while negotiations took place with the two candidates for the office, to which the king's trusted servant Sir Reginald Bray and John, Lord Grey of Wilton, were jointly appointed during pleasure on 30 June 1496.[37] As chancellor of the duchy, Bray was well placed to advance his claims to the office.[38] His heavy involvement in the king's business at Westminster and in the Home Counties, certainly precluded his undertaking the routine business of the stewardship, but he would have welcomed the increase in his income arising from his share in the fees and emoluments of the office in order to finance additions to his rapidly expanding landed estate.[39] Very little is known about the career of John Grey, Lord Grey of Wilton, who took his title from Wilton Castle near Ross on Wye.[40] Although Monmouth was readily accessible from Wilton, Lord Grey, like Bray, no doubt left the routine holding of courts to the deputy steward, but Henry VII may have thought that his local influence would be available to support the deputy steward if needed. In the event, Lord Grey's joint tenure of the stewardship lasted less than three years, as he died on 3 April 1499, leaving Bray as sole occupant of the office until his death on 5 August 1503.

Bray's successor in the stewardship of Monmouth was Sir Charles Somerset, who was appointed during pleasure on 10 October 1503.[41] Somerset was an illegitimate son of Henry

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[33] Griffiths and Thomas, *Principality of Wales* 162.

[34] PRO DL 37/62 m.26r.

[35] For the career of William Rudhall or Rudhale (d. 1530), appointed serjeant at law, 1521, see Wedgwood, J.C., *History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the Commons House 1439-1509* (London, 1936) hereafter cited as Wedgwood, *History of Parliament* 729-30 and n. 57 below.

[36] PRO DL 37/62 m.26r.

[37] Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 648, but the date of death of John, Lord Grey was 3 April 1499, not 6 March 1498.

[38] For Bray's career, see Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 392 and Wedgwood, *History of Parliament* 104-5. For Bray's visits to the young Henry Tudor at Raglan in 1467 see Guth, J. De Lloyd, 'Climbing the Civil-Service Pole during Civil War: Sir Reynold Bray (*c.* 1440-1503)' in Michalove, Sharon D. and Compton Reeves, A., (eds.), *Estrangement, Enterprise and Education in Fifteenth-Century England* (Stroud, 1998) 60.

[39] Condon, Margaret, 'From Caitiff and Villain to Pater Patriae: Reynold Bray and the Profits of Office' in Hicks, M. (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990) 137-68.

[40] For his career, see G.E.C., *Complete Peerage, Volume 6*, 180-1.

[41] Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 648-9. For Somerset's career, see G.E.C., *Complete Peerage, Volume 12, Part 2*, 846-50; Robinson, W.R.B., 'The Earls of Worcester and their Estates, 1526-1642' (Oxford B. Litt. thesis, 1958) and 'Additional Notes', 1999 (Bodleian Library, Oxford); *idem*, 'Early Tudor Policy towards

Beaufort (d. 1464), duke of Somerset and a second cousin of Henry VII. He had been one of the future king's companions in France and on his journey to Milford Haven and the battle of Bosworth, and consequently became one of Henry VII's most trusted servants and councillors. His marriage, on 2 June 1492, in the king's presence, to Elizabeth Herbert, the only daughter and heir of William Herbert (d. 1490), earl of Huntingdon, undoubtedly had the king's approval.[42] Following his marriage, Somerset gained possession of a substantial part of the lands that William, earl of Huntingdon had held and following the death of the latter's brother, Sir Walter Herbert, in 1507, he secured further lands in South Wales that had belonged to the Herbert earldom, including the lordship of Chepstow.

In March 1496, Henry VII granted Sir Charles Somerset a lease of Glamorgan and in December 1498, a further lease, jointly with John, Lord Grey of Wilton, of the lordships of Pencelli, Cantrefselyf and Alexanderstown,[43] but his first grants of major royal offices in marcher lordships were those of the stewardships of Ewyas Lacy and Monmouth, in September and October 1503.[44] These were followed in 1504, by two further grants of offices in marcher lordships, reflecting a clear policy by Henry VII of establishing him as the leading magnate in South and Central Wales.[45] This policy was continued by further grants after Henry VIII's accession and in 1514, Somerset, who had been recognised as a member of the peerage with the title of Lord Herbert by February 1504, was created earl of Worcester. Despite the extent of his Welsh lands and offices, he very seldom visited Wales, being much employed by Henry VII and Henry VIII at court and overseas.

The appointment of non resident noblemen or royal councillors as stewards of Monmouth, throughout the early Tudor period, enhanced the importance of the receivership, which the locally resident William Herbert of Troy exercised in person. As Henry VII's reign advanced, his administrative abilities were recognised by several appointments in the lordship of Monmouth and elsewhere. In November 1492, he was appointed serjeant of the Vale of Monmouth following the surrender of that office by Nicholas Williams[46] and in February 1496, he was appointed with his half-brother, Sir Walter Herbert, to enter the lordships of Caldicot, Shirenewton and Magor on behalf of the Crown following Jasper Tudor's death.[47] A few weeks later, he and three others were appointed to inquire into 'decays' [losses of revenue] in the lordship of Monmouth[48] and from 1496, he occupied the office of janitor of Monmouth Castle and the constableships of White Castle, Grosmont and Skenfrith, which Jasper Tudor had previously held.[49] Besides his fees from

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Wales: The Acquisition of Offices in Wales by Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, hereafter *B.B.C.S.*, 20 (1962-4), hereafter Robinson, 'Early Tudor Policy', 421-38.

[42] For his marriage, see British Library Add. MSS no. 7099, f.5; no. 38, 133, f.132v. and for the date of death of William, earl of Huntingdon, see Robinson, W.R.B., 'The Welsh Estates of Charles, Earl of Worcester in 1520', *B.B.C.S.*, 24 (1970-2) 410-11.

[43] Pugh, T.B., 'The Ending of the Middle Ages, 1485-1536'in Pugh, T.B. (ed.), *Glamorgan County History: Volume 3: The Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 1971) 558; PRO DL 42/21 f.219.

[44] *Cal. Patent Rolls 1494-1509*, 331; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 648-9.

[45] Robinson, 'Early Tudor Policy'.

[46] PRO DL 42/21 f.217.

[47] PRO DL 37/62 m.26.

[48] PRO DL 37/62 m.26v.

[49] PRO DL 29/617/9898, 'Et debet' section.

offices, Herbert's rewards included grants of leases. In November 1485, shortly before he was appointed receiver of Monmouth, he and John ap Howell ap Philpot were jointly granted a lease of a weir and fishery on the Wye[50] and in 1489, he was granted a lease of the valuable demesne lands of Grosmont, together with a grain mill and fulling mill.[51] In 1502, his prominent position in Gwent was recognised when Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth stayed at his house at Troy in the course of their journey to Sir Walter Herbert at Raglan Castle. The king held a meeting of his Council at Troy on 15 August and the royal visit there was long remembered. The king's little, inner and great chambers and the queen's little and great chambers were still mentioned in an inventory of the house made in 1557.[52]

It seems highly likely that in 1502, the king and queen also visited Monmouth, which the king no doubt recalled from visits there while he lived in the Herbert household at Raglan as a boy in the 1460s.[53] The king apparently took a favourable view of the town. On 24 September 1503, when he and his Council made ordinances at Warwick Castle for the administration of the revenues of Henry, Prince of Wales, Monmouth was named together with Chester, Shrewsbury, Ludlow and Hereford, as one of the five places which the prince's Council was to visit every year to administer justice – an ambitious programme that was apparently never put into practice.[54] William Herbert's own authority in the lordship of Monmouth had been enhanced earlier in 1503, when on 25 March, he and William Rudhall had been jointly appointed to the deputy stewardship, which apparently Rudhall had previously held alone since 1498.[55] Rudhall had been attorney general to Prince Arthur until the prince's death in April 1502 and his highly successful legal career must have entailed long absences from his residence at Rudhall near Ross on Wye.[56] Accordingly, most of the duties of the deputy stewardship were probably undertaken by Herbert, with whom Rudhall was apparently on friendly terms.[57] By a further grant of March 1503, Herbert's local influence was further extended when he was granted the receivership of some duchy manors in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire during pleasure.[58]

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[50] Campbell, *Materials, Volume 1*, 587.

[51] PRO DL 42/21 f.222.

[52] Hill, L.M. (ed.), *The Ancient State Authoritie, and Proceedings of the Court of Requests by Sir Julius Caesar* (Cambridge, 1975) 67. For the meeting of the kings's Council at Raglan on 19 Aug., see *ibid.* and for the queen's presence at Raglan on 19 and 24 Aug. 1502, see Nicolas, N.H. (ed.), *Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York* (London, 1830) 41-3. The references to the royal chambers in Troy House are in PRO DL 3/69 R3f.

[53] In Feb. 1462, William, Lord Herbert, created earl of Pembroke in 1468, was granted the wardship of the young Henry Tudor, who thereafter remained in the Herbert household until 1469. For a visit to Raglan by his mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, in Sept. 1467, see Jones, M.K. and Underwood, M.G., *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992) 48.

[54] Bodleian Library, Oxford Rawlinson MS no. B146 ff.228-31.

[55] PRO DL 42/21 f.218v. Earlier in 1503, the duchy Council had ordered that Herbert was to have five marks from the joint fee of £9 6s. 8d. and Rudhall 'part as he had before' (PRO DL 5/3 f.210v.). Payment of the fee of £9 6. 8d. is recorded in Herbert's account for 1502-3, but not in later accounts (PRO DL 29/617/9901, allowances). In Feb. 1498, Rudhall was described as deputy steward, but Jenkyn (John) ap Howell was not so described (PRO DL 37/62 m.31d.).

[56] For his career, see n. 35 above.

[57] Rudhall was present when Herbert made his will at Troy on 15 March 1524 (PRO PROB 11/12, will-register Bodfelde ff.144-144v.).

[58] PRO DL 42/21 f.207; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 638.

The regard which the senior officers of the duchy had for Herbert's services, is clearly seen when his career is compared with those of other local officers of the duchy in South Wales. The performance of receivers was kept under particularly close scrutiny and those who failed to account satisfactorily for the money due from them, were not allowed to remain long in office. This is shown by the experience of Sir John Morgan (d. *circa* 1493) of Tredegar, who in 1485 had been appointed for life, steward and receiver of the small duchy lordship of Greenfield or Ebboth (Ebbw) near Newport.[59] In May 1491, Sir John was reminded that he should have paid the issues of that lordship to Herbert as receiver of Monmouth and was ordered to pay them to Herbert in full.[60] When in the following November, Morgan was still failing to make proper payments, the inhabitants of Greenfield were ordered to pay their rents direct to Herbert, who was formally appointed receiver of the lordship in April 1492.[61]

Other instances of the rapid replacement of defaulting accounting officers of the duchy lands in South Wales occurred later in Henry VII's reign. In 1505, the receiver of Kidwelly was discharged at the time of the audit[62] and in 1506, the 'farmers' of duchy lands in Kidwelly and Ogmore lost possession of these lands for failing to pay the rent.[63] The senior officers of the duchy had no reason to take disciplinary action of this kind against William Herbert, as his accounts show that throughout his tenure of the receivership, he delivered the money due from him to the receiver general of the duchy, or his deputy, promptly and without accumulating significant arrears.[64] This entailed early every year, travelling to London or Westminster, or sometimes arranging for someone to do so on his behalf, with the revenues from the lordship for the accounting year ending at the previous Michaelmas.[65] The annual sums so delivered usually ranged from about £200 to £250, although lower and higher sums are occasionally recorded.[66]

No analysis has been made of the various sources of revenue recorded in the accounts of the 'ministers' or subordinate officers of the lordship of Monmouth who accounted to Herbert, but rents from land and property comprised much the greatest part of these revenues. The revenues raised from the lordship as a whole were, however, significantly augmented in most years by

[59] Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 646. For the date of Sir John Morgan's death, see Robinson, W.R.B., 'Knighted Welsh Landowners 1485-1558: Corrigenda', *Welsh History Review*, 19 (1998-99) 522, but the reference given there to his having received wages for going to France in 1492 was based on a misidentification and should be deleted.

[60] PRO DL 37/62 m.13.

[61] PRO DL 37/62 m.14; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster* 646.

[62] PRO DL 37/62 m.57d.

[63] *Ibid.* m.64.

[64] For references to Herbert's accounts as receiver, the earliest being for 1-2 Henry VII and the last for 14-15 Henry VIII, see above, n. 3.

[65] The entries in Herbert's accounts recording these deliveries, usually cite the dates of 'bills' acknowledging their receipt by the receiver general. On 21 Nov. 1488, the duchy auditors were notified that the king had pardoned John ap Philpot, the collector of rents of the lordship of Skenfrith, the sum of £8, part of £19 13s. 4d. of the issues of the lordship of the year ending Mich. 1487, of which he had been robbed by the way when bringing the issues to the City of London (PRO DL 37/62 m. 5d., calendared in Campbell, *Materials, Volume 2*, 362, where the date is given as 16 Nov.). The £8 pardoned to John ap Philpot 'Coyte' was deducted from the total due from the lordship in Herbert's account for 1487-8 (PRO DL 29/616/9892, allowances).

[66] £180, £288 and £195 were delivered in respect of 1486-7, 1518-9 and 1522-3 (PRO DL 29/616/9890, 618/9927, 618/9935).

annual instalments of certain large sums, fixed by custom at round totals, which the inhabitants were periodically obliged to pay. Such payments were customary in marcher lordships and the earliest recorded in Herbert's accounts, is the 'tallage of recognition' of one hundred marks paid following the entry of Henry VII's officers to take possession of the lordship in his name.[67] Similar payments were paid following Henry VIII's accession.[68] The residents of the lordship probably paid a similar sum for the knighting of the king's first born son, Prince Arthur, in 1489, although Herbert's accounts for the years 1489 to 1494 do not survive. Later accounts record payments of instalments of the 'aid' of one hundred marks for the marriage of Henry VII's elder daughter, Princess Margaret, to James IV of Scotland in 1503.[69]

Substantial though these 'feudal' aids were, they were less onerous than the tallages of the Great Sessions which the inhabitants paid in annual instalments following the periodic visits of the itinerant justices of the duchy to hold sessions in eyre in the lordship. The introduction of these sessions into the marcher lordships of South Wales in the later medieval period has been described elsewhere, as has the practice of the inhabitants of granting the marcher lord a large sum for the sessions to be dissolved before many cases came to judgement.[70] In the lordship of Monmouth, the fine or tallage, payable in instalments, granted by the inhabitants for the dissolution of the Great Sessions was £120 in 1494 and £100 for later dissolutions. About half of the surviving receivers' accounts for Monmouth between 1485 and the late 1530s, record some payment in respect of these tallages, which were in effect a form of taxation. Although no court rolls recording the proceedings of the Great Sessions in the lordship of Monmouth have survived, notes of the commissions appointing the itinerant justices who were to hold them and in a few cases, the full texts of such commissions, are recorded in the central records of the duchy. The names of some of the itinerant justices who visited Monmouth are provided by entries in the receivers' accounts relating to receipts from tallages or payments of expenses, but these do not name all the justices present on these occasions.

As noted above, the first commission issued in Henry VII's reign appointing itinerant justices in the lordships of Monmouth and Ebbw was issued in March 1486, but no specific references to these justices occur in William Herbert's accounts for that or the following few years.[71] A further commission appointing itinerant justices for Monmouth, Ebbw and elsewhere was issued early in 1494, but the only itinerant justice named in the brief record of that appointment was Jasper Tudor.[72] Jasper Tudor was not, however, one of the three itinerant justices named in Herbert's account for 1494-5, which records the receipt of forty pounds as part of the fine of £120 granted by the tenants and residents of the lordship of Monmouth and its members for the dissolution of

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[67] Herbert's accounts for 1486-7 and 1487-8 (PRO DL 29/616/9890, 9892).

[68] Herbert's accounts for 1509-10 and 1510-11 (PRO DL 29/617/9911, 9913). The burgesses of Monmouth were excused half their annual fee farm rent of £27 due to the king at Easter 1509 before Henry VIII's entry into the lordship because the tallage of recognition of 100 marks had been fully paid (PRO DL 29/599/9595, bailiff's account for 1511-12, allowances).

[69] Herbert's accounts for 1503-4 and 1504-5 (PRO DL 617/9903, 9906).

[70] Pugh, T.B. (ed.), *The Marcher Lordships of South Wales 1415-1536: Select Documents*, (Cardiff, 1963) 3-48.

[71] *Ibid.*; PRO DL 29/616/9889-90.

[72] PRO DL 5/3 f. 95v., undated entry among those for Hilary term, 1498.

the Great Sessions held there on 6 August in the preceding year [1494], before Sir Walter Herbert, Thomas Englefield, Roger Bodenham and their unnamed fellow justices.[73] The presence of Sir Walter Herbert at Monmouth on this occasion, is evidence of his predominance in Gwent in these years as the only locally resident magnate. In contrast, Thomas Englefield (d. 1514) of Englefield in Berkshire, was a prominent lawyer with no local associations whose appointment as an itinerant justice was attributable to his membership of Prince Arthur's Council.[74] He continued to enjoy royal favour for many years, becoming Speaker of the House of Commons in 1497 and 1510 and a knight of the Bath in 1501. Roger Bodenham (d. 1514) was a Herefordshire esquire who had been steward of Monmouth for a few months in 1479. After 1485, he served regularly as justice of the peace for Herefordshire and as sheriff of the county in 1489-90. He appears as a member of the Council in the Marches in 1494 and in the latter part of Henry VIII's reign, was appointed an itinerant justice in Usk and other Gwent lordships. Sir Walter Herbert and his fellow itinerant justices were paid the sum of £8 11s. 1½d. [£8 - 55p] from the revenues of the lordship for their expenses, the only payment of this kind included in the surviving receiver's accounts for Henry VII's reign.

The next visit of the itinerant justices to Monmouth took place on 16 August 1500, when the two justices mentioned were the bishop of Bangor and William Rudhall.[75] The reference to the presence at Monmouth of the bishop of Bangor, whose name is not given, is puzzling. In August 1500, the bishop of Bangor was Thomas Pigot, the abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Chertsey in Surrey, who although provided to his bishopric in May 1500, continued to hold his abbacy until his death in 1504.[76] He probably resided mainly at Chertsey after 1500 and is not recorded as having visited Wales or the Marches. The reference to the bishop of Bangor in Herbert's account may have been a scribal error for the bishop of Llandaff, who appears in a later list of itinerant justices for Monmouth,[77] a mistake perhaps attributable to a duchy clerk when making a fair copy of a draft account submitted by Herbert. The earliest post 1500 reference to itinerant justices again names only two of those present at Monmouth,[78] although brief records of

[73] PRO DL 29/616/9896. Herbert's account for 1495-96 is missing and that for 1496-97 gives the date of the dissolution of the Great Sessions as 6 Aug. 10 Henry VII, i.e. 1495, but the date cited in the 1494-95 account, which also records the expenses paid to the justices, is probably correct.

[74] For Englefield, see Wedgwood, *History of Parliament* 301; Roskell, J.S., *The Commons and their Speakers in English Parliaments 1376-1523* (Manchester, 1965) 305-6 and 310-11; and Bindoff, S.T. (ed.), *The House of Commons 1509-1558, Volume 2*, (The History of Parliament Trust, 3 vols., London, 1982) 103-4. For Bodenham, see Pugh, T.B., op. cit. 288 and Reeves, A.C., 'The Great Sessions in the Lordship of Newport in 1503', *B.B.C.S.*, 26 (1974-76) 323, 329-30. He was a signatory of the order of 8 March 1494, cited in n. 32 above.

[75] PRO DL 29/617/9898.

[76] For Pigot, see Emden, A.B., *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500, Volume 3*, (3 vols., Oxford, 1957-59) 1529 and *Victoria County History, Surrey, Volume 2*, 61-2.

[77] PRO DL 5/3, f.223 briefly notes an order to Herbert dated 15 May 1504, to summon sessions for Monmouth, Kidwelly and Ogmore to be held on 27, 9 and 19 Aug. respectively. PRO DL 37/62 m.55d. also records an order to Herbert dated 15 May 1504, to summon the sessions for Monmouth, but gives 22 July as the date for those sessions. The commissioners listed under the Monmouth heading in PRO DL 5/3 f.223 were evidently those for Kidwelly, as they include Thomas, prior of Carmarthen, Sir Rhys ap Thomas and Geoffrey Rede, but an undated cancelled entry on f.222v., names the seven commissioners for Monmouth as the bishop of Llandaff, Sir Charles Somerset, Morgan Kidwelly, William Greville, William Herbert of Troy, William Rudhall and Walter Rowdon.

[78] PRO DL 29/617/9906, account for 1506-7.

the commissions for Monmouth issued in May 1504 and Trinity Term, 1505, supply the names of others then appointed.[79] Those named as being at Monmouth on 12 August 1505, were Sir Charles Somerset (Lord Herbert) and William Greville (d. 1513), serjeant at law, who were mentioned in Herbert's account for 1506-07 with other unnamed justices as having held the Great Sessions there. This reference, the last of those relating to the visits of the itinerant justices included in Herbert's accounts for Henry VII's reign, is of particular interest because it provides the only dated evidence for Sir Charles Somerset's presence in Wales after he accompanied Henry Tudor on his journey to Bosworth in 1485.

The loss of all court rolls recording the proceedings of the Great Sessions at Monmouth inevitably curtails any comments about their impact on the town and lordship. It seems clear that the most important local men and many less prominent people assembled for the Great Sessions, as before every visit of the itinerant justices, the duchy Council routinely ordered that all officers and tenants of the lordship should be commanded to give attendance.[80] Most of the itinerant justices present at the Great Sessions were probably from South Wales or the adjacent English counties, but they were occasionally joined by men whose interests centred mainly on the capital or the Court. The commissions appointing itinerant justices usually included a senior lawyer and the attendance of even one lawyer of high professional standing no doubt helped to ensure that the proceedings of the sessions conformed to English judicial practice. The presence of a robed lawyer among the justices would have also enhanced the impact of the sessions as a public spectacle, as would certainly that of Sir Charles Somerset, Lord Herbert, in 1505. As the sessions were terminated when the representatives of the inhabitants agreed to pay the customary tallage for their dissolution, their formal proceedings cannot have contributed greatly to the determination of criminal or civil cases, although the evidence for the Great Sessions held in other marcher lordships, suggests that at least a few cases were usually determined before the proceedings were brought to a close.[81] The sessions may also have been the occasion for the promulgation of ordinances for the government of the lordship and may have provided the inhabitants with opportunities for raising communal concerns and grievances.

As periods of some years elapsed between the visits of the itinerant justices, most criminal cases and civil lawsuits must have been heard in other courts, but little can be said about these as no court rolls for the lordship survive. The royal charter granted to Monmouth borough in 1447, provided that the mayor and two annually-elected bailiffs were to be justices of the peace with power to impose fines on felons and that the burgesses were not to be compelled to answer for

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[79] For the commissions issued in May 1504, see n. 77 above and for those issued in 1505, see PRO DL 5/3 f.239v., which names the commissioners as the bishop of Lincoln [i.e. William Smith, president of the Council in the Marches], Sir Charles Somerset, Sir Walter Herbert, William Greville, William Herbert of Troy, Rudhall and Rowdon.

[80] E.g. PRO DL 37/62, m.55d., order by the duchy Council dated 15 May 1504, commanding William Herbert of Troy to warn all officers and tenants of the lordship of Monmouth to attend the sessions.

[81] Before the Great Sessions held at Newport in 1476 were dissolved, three pleas for debt were heard and in three cases, those accused of felony who appeared were acquitted (Pugh, T.B. (ed.), *The Marcher Lordships of South Wales 1414-1536: Select Documents* (Cardiff, 1963) 26-7). Before the Great Sessions held at Brecon in 1503 were dissolved, eight civil suits were heard but only three were concluded and there is no indication that any of the eighteen persons indicted for felony were punished (*Ibid.* 32,34).

any offences or to any personal or land pleas in any court except in the borough hundred court or before the itinerant justices or chief steward.[82] The borough's power to fine felons was rarely exercised and the only instance of its use is apparently that recorded in the accounts for 1511-2 when twenty shillings was received from David ap Rees for a fine for suspicion of felony made before the mayor and bailiffs.[83] The charter provision exempting the burgesses from external jurisdiction except that of the itinerant justices and steward, implies that some felonies ('pleas of the Crown') arising in Monmouth borough could be heard in the steward's court, but no record of proceedings in the steward's court apparently survives. Consequently, it is uncertain whether the same court had jurisdiction over the entire lordship and its members, or whether the steward or his deputy held separate courts for the borough and for each of the member lordships. Herbert's accounts throw no light on this. Hallmoots were evidently held in Skenfrith, White Castle and Grosmont,[84] where the court house was re-roofed in 1487-8,[85] but the jurisdiction of these courts was presumably no greater than that of similar courts in England. Unlike some receivers' accounts for other marcher lordships, Herbert's accounts do not record payments for the execution of felons or fines from felons who purchased pardons to avoid execution. Although there is no doubt that felons were tried and executed in the lordship of Monmouth in the early Tudor period, confirmatory evidence is remarkably scanty. Herbert's account for 1510-1, records payments for the repair of gallows at Grosmont and at Llantilio,[86] which indicates that even if felons were convicted at Monmouth, they were probably executed in the locality where their felonies had been committed, no doubt as a deterrent to others. Besides felonies, lawsuits concerning title to land were presumably heard in the steward's court, as in other marcher lordships.

Although Herbert's accounts throw little light on court proceedings, they record occasional payments to ensure the custody of prisoners. In 1486-7, the sum of ten shillings was spent on five pairs of shackles or stocks for the safe custody of felons, two for Monmouth Castle and three for Grosmont Castle[87] and in 1500-1, a further 14s. 1d. was spent on shackles and irons for the two castles.[88] Expenditure on these items and on general castle repairs, did not always succeed in preventing prisoners from escaping. In 1486, Herbert and Jankyn ap Howell Philpot were ordered to see to the levying of certain penalties, including those charged upon William Sergeant, late mayor of Monmouth, for the delivery (presumably meaning the escape) of certain felons out of Monmouth Castle.[89] Some years later, the escape of another prisoner came to the notice of the duchy Council. In July 1495, Herbert was ordered to commission the mayor and bailiffs to inquire

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[82] The text of the charter is enrolled in PRO DL 35/15 no. 27. Its provisions are summarised in Kissack, K., *Medieval Monmouth* (Newport, 1974) 60-1. The charter refers to the courts in which the burgesses could not be compelled to appear as those of Grosmont, White Castle, Skenfrith and the foreign court of Monmouth.

[83] PRO DL 29/599/9597, bailiffs' account; DL 29/618/9915.

[84] E.g. the perquisites of the 'court and hallmoot' at Skenfrith, White Castle and Grosmont amounted to 3s. 6d., 20s. 4d. and 32s. respectively in 1511-12 (PRO DL 29/599/9597).

[85] PRO DL 29/616/9892, repairs. In 1514-15, a further 8s. 5d. was spent on repairs to the court house at Grosmont (PRO DL 29/618/9920).

[86] PRO DL 29/617/9913, repairs. The payments were for 'novifactur' ij par califurc', apud Grossemonte j par xxd et Llanteilio j par xxd'. A 'pair of gallows' was one gallows.

[87] PRO DL 29/616/9890, purchase of irons. The account refers to five 'par' compeditorum', which may mean shackles or less probably, stocks.

[88] PRO DL 29/617/9899, repairs.

[89] PRO DL 37/62 m.2d.

into the offences done by Thomas ap John of Llanddewi Velfrey, who had broken out of prison in Monmouth Castle where he had been committed for the treason of money making, but had later been recaptured and committed to gaol in Monmouth town.[90] As the offender was recaptured, the bailiffs in 1495 did not incur the financial penalties charged upon their successors in office early in Henry VIII's reign for failing to prevent two prisoners to escape from their custody.

Castle repairs involved much greater expenditure than purchase of shackles and irons. In 1486-7, a total of £7 10s. 6d. was spent on repairs to Monmouth Castle and the following year, twenty shillings was spent on the drawbridge at the entrance to Grosmont Castle.[91] In 1496-97, the sum of 41s. 4½d. was spent on general repairs to Grosmont Castle and in 1500-1, 37s. 8d. on repairs to Monmouth Castle.[92] The most interesting item of expenditure on castle repairs was the sum of six pounds recorded in Herbert's account for 1502-3, as having been spent on Grosmont Castle on the order of Sir Reginald Bray, who died on 5 August 1503.[93] Although Bray was the high steward of the lordship, it is surprising that a royal councillor as heavily involved as he was with important royal business, should have authorised this item of local expenditure. Perhaps he was prompted to do so by the king himself following the royal visit to Raglan in August 1502. Henry Tudor had probably visited Grosmont occasionally in the 1460s when living in the Herbert household and although it seems unlikely that he visited Grosmont Castle while staying at Raglan in 1502, he may have been informed that it was in need of repair. In 1506-7, a further sum of twenty shillings was spent on the bridge at Grosmont Castle and in most years in this period, some maintenance work was undertaken on Monmouth Castle.[94] In contrast, no payments were made for repairing Skenfrith Castle or White Castle, which must have become increasingly dilapidated.

The duchy of Lancaster archives cited in the present article will provide the main evidence for a future article on the administration of the lordship of Monmouth under Henry VIII.

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[90] *Ibid.* m.25d.

[91] PRO DL 29/616/9890, 9892.

[92] PRO DL 29/617/9898. The 37s. 8d. was spent on cutting timber and carrying it to the castle.

[93] PRO DL 29/617/9901, fees section. The marginal note relating to Bray's fee records it as £6 which was assigned 'upon the repair of the castle of Grosmont by order of Reginald Bray, knight, upon the account of the last preceding year', i.e. 1501-2. Herbert's account for 1501-2, which might have given more detail, does not survive. Bray's order for the allocation of part of his fee to pay for building expenses is surprising. It is unclear why Bray's fee is shown in the marginal note as only £6, as the entry against which the note appears shows his annual fee as £15 6s. 8d., although it may have been reduced because he did not live to complete the accounting year.

[94] PRO DL 29/617/9906.

***Appendix I: The Early Career of William Herbert of Troy***

The early life and career of William Herbert of Troy is ill recorded. He was described in a heraldic visitation of South Wales made in 1531, as 'bastard sonne to the Erle of Pembrooke', i.e. William Herbert, the first earl of the Herbert creation, who was executed after the battle of Edgecote in 1469.[95] The name of his mother is not recorded. He was described as William Herbert, esquire, late of Pembroke in the county of Pembroke, in a deed of 14 March 1483, by which his half-brother, William, earl of Huntingdon, devised to him during his life all the earl's lands in Troy, Wonastow and St Maughan's, together with lands in the lordship of Abergavenny. This deed is cited in a tripartite indenture of 17 March 1483, between the earl, William Herbert and two others, which also cites another deed of 14 March 1483, by which the earl granted William Herbert a life annuity of ten pounds from the lordship of Dingestow.[96] The association of William Herbert of Troy with Pembroke is confirmed by a grant recorded on the Pardon Rolls in 1509, describing him as of both places.[97]

Herbert's association with Pembroke began after his father, summoned to Parliament as Lord Herbert of Raglan in July 1461, took possession of Pembroke Castle, previously held by Jasper Tudor, earl of Pembroke, on 30 September 1461. His account for the year ended Michaelmas 1462, describes him as William Herbert, esquire, treasurer of Pembroke in the time of William, Lord Herbert, lord there and records his fee of twenty marks as treasurer and another of twenty marks as steward.[98] He continued to hold office as treasurer at least until May 1467, but probably lost that office on the death of his father in 1469;[99] after 1467, no later accounts for the lordship of Pembroke apparently survive until 1500.

Substantial evidence for William Herbert's continued association with Pembroke in the 1470s is given in Griffiths and Thomas, *Principality of Wales*.[100] He held the stewardship of Stakpole Elidor near Pembroke from 1472-3 to 1507-8 by life grant of its lord, Henry Vernon (d. 1515) of Haddon[101] and is described as 'William Herbert of Pembroke the bastard' in a recognizance which he entered into on 4 February 1476 with his half-brothers, William (d. 1490), then earl of Pembroke, Sir Walter Herbert and others.[102]

Herbert was probably of or near full age when appointed as treasurer and steward of Pembroke in 1461, which suggests that he was born no later than *circa* 1440. He would therefore

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[95] Siddons, W.P. (ed.), *Visitations by the Heralds in Wales* (Harleian Society, New Series, 1996) 39.

[96] NLW Badminton Group III deposit, Box 8, unlisted deeds in bundle Eb3 no. 1 (2); William, earl of Huntingdon's deed of 9 Jan. 1485, granting Herbert the manors of Troy and Wonastow is Badminton Deeds and Documents no. 798; no. 347 is a deed dated 20 Aug. 1490, whereby Sir Walter Herbert (d. 1507) quit-claimed Herbert of all his (Sir Walter's) rights in the manors of Little Troy, Wonastow and St Maughan's.

[97] *Letter and Papers ... Henry VIII*, hereafter *LP*, *Volume 1, Part 1*, no. 438 (2) m.11.

[98] NLW Badminton Manorial no. 1564.

[99] *Ibid.* nos 1501-2.

[100] 186. For full reference, see n. 18.

[101] Wright, Susan M., *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Derbyshire Record Society, 8, 1983) 81, 250.

[102] Hunnisett, R.F. and Post, J.B. (eds.), *Medieval Legal Records edited in memory of C.A.F. Meekings* (London, 1978) 439.

have been many years older than his legitimate half-brother, William (d. 1490), earl of Pembroke to 1479 and then of Huntingdon, and in his mid eighties by the time of his death in 1524. Despite the difficulty of distinguishing between him and other Welsh gentlemen named William Herbert, there seems no doubt that the esquire of that name who was treasurer of Pembroke in 1461 became the esquire of Troy after 1483. His marriage to his first wife, Margery, who is mentioned in his will, had probably taken place some years earlier.[103] He directed in his will that he was to be buried in the parish church of Monmouth in a tomb with images of his first and second wives, which suggests that Margery died after he took up residence at Troy. He did not marry his second wife, Blanche Whitney, born Milbourne, until after 1500.

William Herbert of Troy benefited from the favour which Richard III extended to William, earl of Huntingdon and the Herbert family after the execution of Henry, duke of Buckingham and other rebels in the autumn of 1483,[104] but I have found no evidence that Richard III made Huntingdon steward of the duchy lands in South Wales.[105] He was almost certainly the William Herbert to whom Richard III granted the manor of Tockington near Thornbury in 1484, for his service against the rebels,[106] as Hugh (or Howell) Jenkyn Watkyn, who may have been a servant or associate of Herbert, was described in 1509, as lately of Troy and Tockington.[107] He was probably also the squire of king's body to whom Richard III granted an annuity of forty (or fifty) marks to be paid from the lordship of Monmouth.[108] B.L., Harley 433 records this as forty marks, but a copy of the grant made under the seal of the duchy of Lancaster on 28 February 1484, records it as fifty marks.[109] Richard III also appointed him for life to the office of master forester of Wyeswood, Trellech and Penallt,[110] an office subsequently granted to him by Henry VII by letters patent dated 6 October 1485.[111]

William Herbert of Troy may have been granted other offices in the lordships of Usk, Caerleon and Trellech in the early years of Henry VII's reign, but no financial accounts for those lordships survive for the period from Henry VII's accession until 11 August 1490, when the king granted them for life to his uncle, John, Viscount Welles, or for the years from that date until the death of Lord Welles on 9 February 1499.[112] The earliest evidence for Herbert's tenure of offices there is provided by the heading of a 'view of account' for the lordships for the year ended Michaelmas 1502, which shows the receiver as William Herbert, esquire and by a reference a few lines later, to the 'aforesaid William Herbert' as accounting for an annual rent of £7 12s. 0d. as farmer of the demesne lands of the lordship of Troy.[113] These references enable the receiver to be

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[103] PRO PROB 11/21, will-register Bodfelde f.144.

[104] Horrox, Rosemary, *Richard III: A Study of Service* (Cambridge, 1989) 207-9.

[105] *Ibid.* 208.

[106] *Cal. Patent Rolls1476-85* 470; Horrox, R. and Hammond, P.W. (eds.), *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433, Volume 1*, (4 vols., Gloucester, 1979-83) hereafter *B.L.H.MS 433* 143.

[107] *LP, Volume 1, Part 1*, no. 438 (2), m. 10.

[108] *B.L.H.MS 433* 95.

[109] PRO DL 42/20 f.17.

[110] *B.L.H.MS 433* 190.

[111] PRO SC 6 Henry VIII/345 m.133; *Rotuli Parliamentorum, Volume 6*, (6 vols., Record Commission, n.d.) 370.

[112] *Cal. Patent Rolls 1485-1494* 316; G.E.C., *Complete Peerage, Volume 12, Part 2* 449.

[113] PRO E 315/83 f.24.

identified as William Herbert of Troy, who as William Herbert, esquire, accounted for the same rent of £7 12s. 0d. and two shillings of new increase for the demesne lands of Troy in 1514-5, and on 16 November 1519, Sir William Herbert of Troy, clearly the same man, was granted a twenty-one year lease of the demesne lands of 'Magna Troy', i.e. Mitchel Troy, at the same rent of £7 12s. 0d. with two shillings increase.[114] The lands in Troy which Herbert had been granted by William, earl of Huntingdon were those referred to in his will of 15 March 1524 as 'Litill Troye' or Troy Parva.[115] Herbert's grant of the receivership, which like most receiverships was probably held during the king's pleasure, may have been made shortly after Henry VII's accession.

By 12 April 1504, Herbert had surrendered the receivership of Usk, Caerleon and Trellech, as Thomas ap Robert was described as receiver general of the lordships on that date.[116] In 1516, the wages formerly paid to Herbert as master forester of Wyeswood were disallowed on the grounds that Henry VII, by whom they had been granted, had only held the lordships in the right of his wife, Queen Elizabeth, and in July 1517 a royal warrant was issued for their payment to Thomas ap Robert.[117] The replacement of Herbert as the recipient of the wages for the master forestership is unlikely to reflect royal disfavour, as the office had been granted to Thomas ap Robert's grandfather in 1435, and the warrant of 1517 restored this hereditary office to his family.

Although Herbert may have held office in the duchy lordships of Caldicot, Magor and Redwick during Henry VII's reign, the earliest reference to his holding office in these lordships relates to 1520, when Nicholas Williams held the court of Magor and Redwick as his lieutenant.[118] A deed of 1520 also provides the earliest evidence of Herbert's tenure of the stewardship of Raglan, which he had apparently held by successive grants of William, earl of Huntingdon, Sir Walter Herbert and the latter's widow, Lady Anne Stafford and her second husband, George, Lord Hastings, who held Raglan and other lands as her jointure until they leased them in 1520 to Henry Somerset, Lord Herbert.[119] Herbert continued to serve as steward of Raglan after 1520, being so described in February 1521.[120] Herbert may also have held other offices after 1490 in the lordships formerly held by William, earl of Huntingdon, but no early Tudor receiver's accounts for these lordships survive before 1519. Accounts for the year ended Michaelmas 1520, for the lordships of Chepstow, Tidenham and other lands which had descended on the death of Sir Walter Herbert in 1507 to Sir Charles Somerset, created earl of Worcester in 1514, show Herbert as steward and receiver of those lordships, as receiver of the lordship of Caldicot which Somerset held as Crown lessee and as receiver of Wyesham, from which he drew an annuity of 53s. 4d.[121]

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[114] PRO SC 6 Henry VIII/2484 m.1d.; *LP Volume III, Part 1*, no. 529 (16).

[115] PRO PROB 11/21 f.144.

[116] *Cal. Close Rolls 1500-1509* no. 377 (i); Robinson, W.R.B., 'Royal Service in Gwent under the Early Tudors: the Career of Thomas ap Robert of Pant Glas', *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, 7 (1991) 58.

[117] *Ibid.* 59.

[118] PRO DL 41/22 f.122.

[119] PRO C 54/387 no. 29.

[120] NLW Badminton Deeds and Documents no. 1781.

[121] PRO SC 6 Henry VIII/7148, transcribed in Robinson, W.R.B., 'The Welsh Estates of Charles, Earl of Worcester in 1520', *B.B.C.S.*, 24 (1970-1) 384-411.

***Appendix II: The indenture of 1 March 1490 between Henry VII and Jasper, duke of Bedford, for the government of the duke's marcher lordships***

This indenture[122] provides valuable evidence for Henry VII's policy towards Wales in the early years of his reign and is apparently the only strictly contemporary source for Jasper Tudor's tenure of the lordship of Caldicot. It was in PRO Class Augmentations Miscellanea in 1963, with the reference E 314/15/37, but cannot now (1999) be traced, as no detailed list was made of the E 314 documents when they were given new bundle numbers in the 1980s.

The terms of the indenture with Jasper Tudor were generally similar to those in the indenture with Ralph Hakeluyt (see n. 28 above), but as the original document is now missing, the following differences may be noted (spelling modernised). In the opening paragraph, Jasper Tudor is described as the king's right entirely beloved uncle, the duke of Bedford, lord of the county of Pembroke and of the lordships of Abergavennysland, Caldicot, Magor, Newport, Wentloog, Glamorgan and Morgannwg. The next six paragraphs correspond with those in the Hakeluyt indenture, hereafter H, but with 'duke' instead of 'steward'. The next paragraph begins 'Item, the said duke shall command his steward and officers' and the following paragraph begins 'Item, the said duke shall cause his stewards and officers', also continuing as in H. The next paragraph begins 'Item, the said duke granteth that he shall give no liveries', continuing as in H and ending after 'Marches of the same, but as the law will suffer', omitting the undertaking in H not to take bribes etc. The indenture omits the next two paragraphs in H (prohibiting the steward or his deputy from taking fines for felonies without the consent of the receiver and requiring the steward to ensure that the receiver should receive all revenues without interruption and to imprison all accounting officers who did not pay the revenues due from them). The next paragraph begins 'Item the said duke promiseth and granteth that he', continuing as in H and the following paragraph corresponds with H down to 'reason and conscience', but with 'duke or his officers' instead of 'steward or his deputies'. The final paragraph has 'duke' instead of 'steward' and 'him and his servants' instead of 'him, his deputies and servants'.

[122] See n. 28 and 29 and associated text.

# A NOTE ON THE FOUR VOLUMES OF *GWENTIA ECCLES. ANTIQ.* IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON

*By George McHardy*

Three years ago, I was engaged in cataloguing four thin, well rubbed, purplish quarter-bound volumes of drawings from among the rich collections of the Society of Antiquaries of London. Until then, the drawings had never been fully catalogued and their existence had been known to only a few Welsh scholars. One of these was Mr Donald Moore, who mentioned them some twenty years ago to the Reverend Dr David H. Williams, and I am grateful to Dr Williams for his help at various stages during the cataloguing and for having (when Editor) invited me to write this short note for the journal. I am grateful, too, to others for their observations on different aspects of the volumes as my work was in progress. I cannot hope to bring to the subject their great knowledge and expertise; all I can here do is set out what the contents of the volumes themselves tell and the results of my five days' travelling comparing about fifty (wholly arbitrarily chosen) of the watercolours against their present-day sites.

The four volumes, each measuring 460 x 340 mm (18 x 13½ in.), are entitled on the spine *Gwentia Eccles. Antiq.* Except *Gwentia III*, which contains fifty-two pages, each volume has fifty-one pages and together the four volumes contain, mostly affixed one item to each rough, grey page, 172 watercolours (*Gwentia I* – 38; *Gwentia II* – 52; *Gwentia III* – 54, and *Gwentia IV* – 28), each about 195/210 x 250/270 mm (7¾/8¼ x 9¾/10½ in.) in size. Besides the watercolours, *Gwentia I* contains two prints and *Gwentia IV* – towards the back – twenty-one more illustrations as well as four other items. Many of these illustrations are prints of castles or engravings taken from W. Coxe, *Historical tour in Monmouthshire* (1801). All these miscellaneous items may be later additions to the collection. Certainly, the alphabetical order by place name breaks down with those at the back of *Gwentia IV*, but even in this volume some of the illustrations are interspersed among the watercolours. In any case, since all these items are quite distinct from the watercolours in medium and character, they will not here be further considered.

The watercolours include Harold's stones at Trelech *(Gwentia IV,* 20*)*, the cromlech at Newchurch *(Gwentia IV,* 21 and 22*)*, and the Buckstone at Staunton in the Forest of Dean *(Gwentia IV*, 23 and 24*)*. Otherwise, the watercolours almost all show churches, all those of the Celtic kingdom of Gwent between Usk and Wye and westwards, even where they had fallen into ruin (Plate 16). The churches are seen only from the outside, eighty-two (57.7%) from the south-east, forty-two (29.5%) from the south-west, eleven (7.7%) from the north-east, and seven (4.9%) from the north-west. Rarely are there anything like landscape views; the churches seem often to stand as though models, curiously isolated from such minimum sense of location as they are given. Apart from the fonts at Betws Newydd *(Gwentia I*, 6; Plate 3*)*, Llanfihangel Gobion *(Gwentia II*, 45*)*, Rogiet *(Gwentia III*, 42*)*, Trelech *(Gwentia IV*, 4*)* and Redwick *(Gwentia IV,* 18*)* and two monuments, one in the church at Llanmartin *(Gwentia IV,* 19*)*, the other in the churchyard at Trelech *(Gwentia IV*, 3*)*, there are no furnishings of any kind. And certainly there are no plans, sections, details of piers, mouldings, piscinae, towers, etc. So, unless the drawings are part only of what was a much larger collection, there is evidently no idea of amassing material against, say, the elucidation of the development of medieval architecture in Gwent – or generally. The

watercolours are not a collection compiled for study, not illustrations made for the advancement of knowledge.

On the other hand, they are expression of that utility which Eastlake, writing in 1835, wondered whether the arts should not also be considered as possessing.[1] Spiritual values and decorative beauty might make landscape painting, but in topography they are an obstruction to truth. The antiquary wants no aesthetic experience: he needs the certainty that the visual record can give and no descriptive account ever can. The *Gwentia* watercolours give every appearance of being precisely that, record drawings pure and simple.

All of them are – or were – inscribed in pen or pencil and sometimes in both. Many of the inscriptions have been to a greater or lesser extent erased and are now only partly or hardly at all legible, so that it is impossible to say whether they are all in the same hand or even contemporary with the watercolours. Nor is it possible to say by whom the drawings were mounted in the volumes or when. Whoever it was, arranged the watercolours over the four volumes in a single sequence in approximately alphabetical order of place name and affixed a title label in pen beneath each drawing, as shown in Plate 9. Two of the labels *(Gwentia II*, 4 and 8; Plate 15*)* are in a kind of black letter.

It is, incidentally, interesting to note that the labels give the place names in almost pedantic, antiquarian Welsh versions (for example, *Gwentia I*, 9 with its 'Bishton *alias* Llan-gadwaladwr' or *Gwentia III*, 17 with its 'Mamhilad *recte* Mam-eliod') whereas the place names given on the watercolours themselves seem usually to have been given the local pronunciation of the name, even when that is technically incorrect – Dingestow *(Gwentia I*, 26*)* with its 'Dynystow' and Panteg *(Gwentia III*, 31*)* with its 'Panteague' are examples.[2] Occasionally, the labels bear more than just the name of the place (as also do in fact even more occasionally the watercolours themselves) and that of *Gwentia II*, 25, 'Taken down and rebuilt 1853', perhaps suggests that the drawings were mounted in the volumes some time after 1853.

Not one of the watercolours themselves is dated. Most of them are so firmly fixed down to the page that it has been impossible to see whether there are any inscriptions or clues on the verso or dates in a watermark; certainly, those few drawings that can be lifted show no such. At least the inscription on one drawing (Tredunnock; *Gwentia IV*, 9) must be later than 1797, because only in that year did Capel Hanbury of Pontypool (1776–1861) assume by royal licence the additional name of Leigh.[3] More helpful, perhaps, is the inclusion among the watercolours of one of Welsh Bicknor *(Gwentia IV*, 16*)*, which ceased to be in Monmouthshire in 1845, of another *(Gwentia I*, 26; its label, incidentally, specifically dated 1845) showing the church of Dingestow before the addition of the tower by T.W. Wyatt in 1846,[4] and of one of Skenfrith *(Gwentia III*, 45

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[1] Eastlake, C.L. 'How to observe' (1835), in his *Contributions to the literature of the fine arts*, ed. with Memoir by Lady Eastlake (London, 1870).

[2] I owe this observation to Mr Jeremy Knight, F.S.A., in a letter to me; responsibility for the illustrations of his point, however, is entirely my own.

[3] Bradney, J.A., *A history of Monmouthshire, Volume 1, Part 2, The Hundred of Abergavenny*, (London, 1906) 438.

[4] Newman, J., *Gwent/Monmouthshire* (Penguin Books/University of Wales Press, 2000) 211.

verso; Plate 30) showing also, up on the hill behind, Coedanghred Catholic church, whose foundation stone was laid in August 1844 and which was solemnly dedicated in September 1846.[5]

Otherwise, the clues to the date of the watercolours are all to be found on the labels and here the 'Taken down in 1846 immediately after/this sketch was taken' (Trefethin old church; *Gwentia IV,* 5) and the 'Taken down and rebuilt in 1846 soon after this was taken' (Tintern Parva old church; *Gwentia IV*, 7) suggest that the drawings must be of about 1845–1846. All this evidence on drawings and on labels, slight though it may be, accords nicely with an announcement in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*[6] that the drawings that 'one of the most enlightened antiquaries and encouragers of archaeology in Monmouthshire' had commissioned of every church and chapel in the county had been 'finished in May last'.

Where the drawings can be checked against other dated material, the evidence seems to confirm a date for the watercolours of about 1845–1846 and certainly does not contradict it. Shown on the hill behind Llandogo old church *(Gwentia II,* 24; Plate 12) is Llandogo Priory (now the Priory Nursing Home) and that house is dated 1840 on an outside chimney breast.[7] The less than completely new Tintern Parva church, erroneously called on the label 'New Church at Llandogo' *(Gwentia IV,* 28), was largely rebuilt in 1846.[8] Of Dixton, which he visited on 27 September 1847, Sir Stephen Glynne in his notes[9] says – admittedly in relation perhaps only to the interior of the church rather than to the entire building – that 'the whole has been recently restored ... The crosses at the gables have been renewed', whereas the watercolour *(Gwentia I,* 27) shows the roofs without gable crosses. Again, Malpas church is shown roofed but with much greenery smothering most of its north side *(Gwentia III,* 13; Plate 24) and all the south side of its chancel *(Gwentia III,* 14; Plate 25). When Glynne visited Malpas on 7 May 1849, the church was 'in process of destruction [with] the nave ... unroofed and ruinated, but the chancel ... not yet destroyed'.[10] The reconstruction of the church in that same year was one of John Prichard's first jobs.[11]

As to the watercolours themselves, they might at first sight be thought to be the work of two different artists. Drawings like those, for example, of Tintern *(Gwentia I,* 19), Llanellen *(Gwentia II,* 50) or Magor *(Gwentia III,* 15; Plate 22) are markedly harsher and darker in appearance than those, say, of Caerwent *(Gwentia I,* 20; Plate 5), Llanellen *(Gwentia II,* 51) or Magor *(Gwentia III,* 16). As compared with these softer, gentler paintings, the harsh paintings not only have significantly more outlines gone over in pencil (superimposed on the watercolour) but also have those outlines gone over in very much softer pencil, so that the watercolours seem decidedly heavy in their outlines, more violent in their contrasts, less bright in their colours and altogether darker and more sombre. The effect of such heavy going over in soft pencil of the outlines in some of the watercolours, but not in others, perhaps fosters an idea that there are certainly two styles of painting, two different hands at work. But, in fact, there is among the paintings a general similar-

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[5] Williams, Rev. D.H., *pers. comm.* 15 May 1998.
[6] *Arch. Camb.* 1 (1846) 467.
[7] Personal observation.
[8] Newman, *op. cit.* 558.
[9] *Arch. Camb.* 6th Ser., 2 (1902) 87–88.
[10] *Ibid.* 92–94.
[11] Newman, *op. cit.* 57.

ity in the overall colour tones, in the techniques used and, yes, in their very limitations that suggests that, if indeed there is more than a single artist at work, they at any rate had a common painting instructor.

The painter of the watercolours, like the provenance of the four *Gwentia* volumes, is unknown. Among the Society's holdings is a large collection of material relating to Monmouthshire[12] compiled by the Monmouthshire antiquary, Thomas Wakeman (*c.*1788–1868) and added to by Octavius Morgan, F.S.A. (1803–1888), to whom the collection passed. His nephew, Henry S. Milman, F.S.A., in 1891 presented the entire collection to the Society.[13] It is not known whether the gift included the *Gwentia* volumes. The '12/12/–' inscribed in pencil on the inside front cover of *Gwentia I* might either be the price for making up the blank volumes or, possibly more likely since that seems a little high, a price for the four volumes of watercolours. Either way, the inscription tells nothing of whether or not the volumes were part of Milman's gift.

Nonetheless, perhaps partly because of an unproved association of the volumes with the names of Thomas Wakeman and Octavius Morgan, it has been suggested that Mrs Elizabeth Harcourt Mitchell was the unknown painter. She was originally of the Rolls family of the Hendre, Monmouth,[14] and certainly illustrated several papers by Wakeman and Morgan published by the Monmouthshire and Caerleon Antiquarian Association in the 1860s.[15] About 1865 she produced for the Association a lithograph of Llanthony Priory;[16] inscribed *Plate 1*, it was perhaps part of a small collection. Further, she of course illustrated her own book on *The crosses of Monmouthshire* (1893).[17] More obviously comparable with the *Gwentia* drawings are those of Llanfaenor old and new churches that she (presumably) made for an article she wrote on 'Church restoration in Monmouthshire'.[18] But not only do all these illustrations suggest that Mrs Mitchell was a more accomplished artist than the author of the *Gwentia* watercolours but also, and more pertinently, she would have been only thirteen years old when, in 1846, the survey was completed of the churches and chapels in Monmouthshire commissioned by the unknown encourager of archaeology.

Certainly the unknown artist was an amateur in painting and, perhaps, in archaeology also. He – or she – had so slight a comprehension of perspective that it is sometimes all but impossible to interpret a drawing if the actual building is not known. This is especially true in the case of churches with a complex history or plan. An extreme example is to be found in one of the two drawings of Skenfrith. The church there has a gabled nave and gabled north and south aisles, with lower gabled chancel extending east of the nave and the aisles.[19] In the drawing *(Gwentia III*, 46; Plate 31*)*, however, the church appears to have a gabled nave with lower gabled chancel and what one takes to be a yet lower gabled chancel south chapel (with or without an aisle behind that); there is no trace of a north chapel or aisle and it seems uncertain whether the chancel extends

[12] MS 790.

[13] *Proc. Soc. Antiq.* 2nd Ser., 13 (1889–1891) 300.

[14] See the pedigree in Bradney, *op. cit. Volume I, Part I, The Hundred of Skenfrith* (1904) 49.

[15] E.g. Morgan, O. and Wakeman, J., *Notes on Penhow Castle* (Newport, 1867), Plates I and II.

[16] Wiles, E., 'Publications of the Caerleon Antiquarian Association [etc.]', *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, 13 (1997) 60.

[17] Published by Mullock and Sons, Newport.

[18] *The Church Builder 1* (1862) 17–20.

[19] Newman, *op. cit.* 531–32.

beyond the east wall of the chancel south chapel/aisle. That, at any rate, is how one might interpret the drawing ... until it is noticed that the tracery of an east window to the 'nave' appears above the roof of the 'chancel'.

Magor *(Gwentia III,* 15; Plate 22*)* offers another example: the west wall of the north aisle looks in fact as though it might be the westernmost bay of the north wall of the nave *(*cf. Plate 23*)*. At St Maughans *(Gwentia III,* 10*)* the south aisle is shown as though it were the nave rising high above and behind the tower. And numerous other, perhaps less important, examples of the artist's lack of skill as a painter can be adduced, as, for example, when he seeks to represent elevationally the font at Betws Newydd *(Gwentia I,* 6; cf. Plates 3 and 4*)*.

Nor was the painter able to portray the churches in their surroundings. These rarely convince and it is only when drawing is compared with site that the variation in treatment of the setting is appreciated. Some drawings are found (allowing for alterations to the church and a greater maturity of the trees) to be plausible in their sense of location. At Llangwm Uchaf *(Gwentia II,* 6*)*, for example, one feels sure that the artist, to get his view, sat beyond the brook that runs to the south of the church. Some such drawings even, it seems, attempt to record the monuments in the churchyard: at Llanllywel (Llanllowell; *Gwentia II,* 15; Plate 18), for example, the two big tombs (one within railings) near the porch are shown (cf. Plate 19), though to what extent the gravestones are faithfully recorded here – or anywhere else – it is now impossible to say.

Other drawings fail completely to portray the setting of the church – and that not because of subsequent building developments. At Llandogo *(Gwentia II,* 24; Plate 12*)* no impression is given either of how high Llandogo Priory stands on its hill above the church or of how far distant it is from it. And in most cases it can be assumed that the artist has used an extremely wide angle of vision – if only to squeeze in the remains of the churchyard cross, which he seems always to have liked to show. In several cases the angle of view is so wide, distorted even, as quite to falsify the setting of the church. There is no way in which the church and the Priory gatehouse can both be seen at Usk as they are shown in *Gwentia IV,* 11 any more than there is the church, the castle, the River Monnow and Coedanghred church up on its hill behind, as shown at Skenfrith *(Gwentia III,* 45 verso; Plate 30*)*.

The painter of the *Gwentia* watercolours was perhaps, at best, an amateur in archaeology also. So far as it is possible to compare his drawings with one another, he certainly does not appear to be an archaeologist bent upon recording the churches accurately. Omitting Malpas *(Gwentia III,* 13 and 14; Plates 24 and 25*)* and Magor *(Gwentia III,* 15 and 16; Plate 22*)* because they are each shown from different viewpoints and therefore not easy to compare, there are seven pairs of drawings where comparisons can reasonably be made. In the case of Llansantffraed, one drawing *(Gwentia II,* 2*)* shows the nave window as having three lights rather than the two of the other *(Gwentia III,* 1*)*, and there are similar differences in the number of lights in different windows – as well as various other differences – at Llanellen *(Gwentia II,* 50 and 51*)*, Rockfield *(Gwentia III,* 44 verso and 45; Plate 28*)* and Skenfrith *(Gwentia III,* 45 verso [Plate 30] and 46 [Plate 31]*)*. At Llantrisant one drawing *(Gwentia II,* 13 verso; Plate 20*)* seems to have fenestration markedly different (including intersecting-Y rather than Perpendicular tracery) from that in the other *(Gwentia II,* 14; Plate 21*)*.

Llangybi and Llangwm Uchaf each show other types of difference. The former is shown in *Gwentia II*, 19 with a chancel very much shorter than in *Gwentia II*, 20 where, interestingly, pencil lines seem perhaps to indicate its true proportion in relation to the nave. Llangwm Uchaf is shown in one drawing *(Gwentia II*, 5 verso*)* with a low-pitched chancel roof, that is, perhaps, cheaply repaired, and in the other *(Gwentia II*, 6*)* with the roof properly made up, so that the drawings might be the 'before' and 'after' of an apparently otherwise unknown repair job. But the watercolours can show, on the other hand, surprising cases of very careful observation. At Llantrisant *(Gwentia II*, 13 verso and 14; Plates 20 and 21*)*, the rood-stair projection at the east end of the south wall of the nave is noted and at Llanfaches (Llanvaches; *Gwentia II*, 33*)* the truncated south-east stair turret of the tower, while all three drawings carefully record the churches' battered walls.

If the *Gwentia* watercolours are both the work of an amateur painter and lacking in close observation, that is not to say they are of but slight interest or value. Quite the contrary. In their very innocence the drawings are a portrayal not only of the churches of Gwent but of the state also of local knowledge about them at the time, a time when interest in the Middle Ages was growing hugely in popularity. That interest was not, however, growing only in popularity. Antiquarianism had for some fifty years and more been adopting a more scientifically rigorous, archaeological approach.[20] It is interesting to see that it was, as seems probable, an enlightened antiquary and encourager of archaeology (the description given of him in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* is itself illuminating) that encouraged this complete depiction of a single building type in a particular area at a single moment in time. Nor is that all. By the beginning of the 19th century many Anglican churches were, as is well known, very neglected and in urgent need of repair.[21] But, in the late 1830s and for a variety of reasons, things began to change,[22] and the watercolours provide a unique record of the state of the churches of Gwent on the eve of the great repair movement that was so soon to sweep across the whole country.

Within ten years of the painting of the watercolours, no fewer than eight medieval churches in Gwent were pulled down and completely rebuilt, nine were much rebuilt and seven were restored, altered or enlarged.[23] In the course of all such work, much archaeological evidence was

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[20] The key figures in the development of the architectural record from late 18th-century picturesque topography to archaeological accuracy are John Carter (1748–1817), John Britton (1771–1857) and A.C. Pugin (1769–1832). For an early assessment of their importance, see Eastlake, C.L., *A history of the Gothic Revival* (London, 1872) 103–8, 80–90, and 88–89 and 145–46 respectively.

[21] See, for example, Brooks, A. and Saint, A., *The Victorian church* (Manchester University Press, 1995) 124.

[22] The development of industry and the consequent huge increase in population, industrial unrest and rebellion even, the revival of Welsh nationalism and culture, the rapid expansion of Protestant Nonconformity, not to mention Catholic Emancipation, and – to a very much lesser extent – the Tractarian and Camdenian Movements, these were the principal engines for change. For the crisis facing the Anglican Church of the time generally, see Chadwick, O., *The Victorian church, Part One* (London, 1966) 7–100.

[23] These figures derive from my reading of Newman, *op. cit.* It is possible to adhere quite strictly to the dates 1846–1856, but the categories – especially the second and the third – are dependent on my interpretation of the text. So, for the record, my count is: *1.* Blaina (Aberystruth), Coedkernew, Goetre, Llanddewi Fach, Llangwm Isaf, Llanishen, Malpas and Risca; *2.* Caerleon, Llanellen, Llanfaches, Panteg, Penteri (Penterry), St Bride's Netherwent, Shirenewton, Tintern Parva and Trefethin; *3.* Dingestow, Gwernesney, Llanarth, Llanfihangel Tor-y-mynydd, Llangatwg Feibion Afel (Llangattock Vibon Avel), Llansantffraed and

destroyed, and we can perhaps see in the label to Llandevaud *(Gwentia II,* 28*)*, 'A modern vandalism on the ruins of the old chapel', a cry of anguish at the unnecessary damage being done to Gwent's heritage, whether through sheer ignorance or want of proper understanding of medieval architecture. So the watercolours set out, as it were, Gwent's ecclesiastical architectural heritage and seek not only to dispel ignorance and promote a deeper appreciation of Gwent's medieval architecture but also to protect that heritage from further injury.

The watercolours are of value, too, in throwing light on the repairs and alterations subsequently made to the churches. It is interesting to see how often the changes seem reasonably faithfully to follow what the drawings show. Prichard's work of 1850–1851 at Llanellen *(Gwentia II,* 50 and 51*)*,[24] as well as J.P. Seddon's reconstruction of Llanddewi Fach *(Gwentia II,* 9; Plate 10*)* in 1856–1857[25] and E.A. Lansdowne's of Llandegfedd *(Gwentia II,* 10*)* in 1876–1876,[26] all seem broadly to accord with what the watercolours of the churches show. Llanhennock *(Gwentia II,* 5*)* shows the huge buttresses that presumably necessitated Prichard and Seddon's rebuilding of the nave in 1862–1863,[27] while the extraordinary shape of the east window at Dixton *(Gwentia I,* 27*)* perhaps explains why the enormous north-east and south-east buttresses now to be seen there were built.

The watercolours of Llansantffraed *(Gwentia II,* 2, and *III,* 1*)* and the evidence of the porch itself suggest that Prichard and Seddon removed the south porch to the west end, so that the church should have a west porch (as do, for example, Betws Newydd,[28] Kemeys Commander[29] and others in the vicinity of Usk) and the drawing of Kilgwrrwg *(Gwentia I,* 38*)* shows that Prichard's porch of 1871[30] replaced one already there. Finally, the drawings sometimes provide the only illustration of a building since demolished. The drawing of Bassaleg *(Gwentia I,* 10; Plate 2*)* shows the free-standing 'small ... chapel of plain character' recorded by Sir Stephen Glynne in 1836 as having stood to the south of the south aisle.[31] Of that chapel not a trace is now to be seen. The drawing of Monkswood *(Gwentia III,* 19*)* seems to be the only representation of the medieval church there before that built on roughly the same site by E.H. Lingen Barker in 1882–1884.[32]

*All the photographs were taken by the author, and those (the great majority) from the Gwentia volumes were taken, and are here reproduced, by courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of London.*

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Wolvesnewton. It may be that the effects of the great rationalisation of the wealth and organisation of the Anglican church in the 1830s took time to be felt in Wales and that the age of church building and repair there did not really take off until, say, the mid-1850s. Nonetheless, the figures, though perhaps imprecise, do suggest that the *Gwentia* survey was made not a moment too soon: within ten years of completion of the drawings, the ecclesiastical heritage of Gwent was already clearly under threat.

[24] Newman, *op. cit.* 277.

[25] *Ibid.* 268.

[26] *Ibid.* 271.

[27] *Ibid.* 319.

[28] *Ibid.* 119 – 20.

[29] *Ibid.* 259.

[30] *Ibid.* 262.

[31] *Arch. Camb.* 6th Ser. 2 (1902) 83 – 84.

[32] Newman, *op. cit.* 392 – 93.

***List of Contents of the Gwentia Eccles. Antiq. Volumes***

1. All places are in Monmouthshire unless otherwise stated.
2. Welsh spellings follow those given in Melville Richards, *Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units* (University of Wales Press, 1969).
3. Where the place name now in common use differs substantially from the older form, or from the correct Welsh form, both appear.
4. Items that are not watercolours are shown in brackets.
5. The full reference would in all cases be: *Gwentia*, followed by the volume number in Roman style, comma, and then the page number. To save space, the word *Gwentia* is here omitted.

III, 7; (Llanfaenor) (II, 25).
Llangeview (Llangyfiw) II, 8.
Llangovan (Llangofen) II, 23.
Llangua (Llangiwa) III, 6.
Llangwm Isaf (Warthacwm) II, 7.
Llangwm Uchaf II, 5 verso; II, 6.
Llangybi (Llangibby) II, 19; II, 20.
Llangynog (Llangunnog), see Llanfihangel tor-y-Mynydd.
Llanhennock (Llanhenwg) II, 5.
Llanhilleth (Llanhiledd) II, 36.
Llanishen (Llanisien) II, 17.
Llanllywel (Llanllowell) II, 15.
Llanmartin (Llanfarthin) II, 27; IV, 19.
Llanover (Llanofer Fawr) II, 43.
Llansantffraed (Llansanffraid) II, 2; III, 1.
Llansoy (Llan-soe) II, 18.
Llantarnam (Llanfihangel Llantarnam) II, 1; II, 3.
Llanthony II, 41; (IV, 38[b]).
Llantilio Crossenny III, 4; (IV, 34, 35).
Llantilio Pertholey II, 40; (Bettws/Betws, 3 miles N. of Abergavenny) I, 14.
Llantrisant (Llantrissent/Llantrisaint Fawr) II, 13 verso; II, 14; (Bertholey/Bertholau) I, 7.
Llanvaches (Llanfaches) II, 33.
Llanvair Discoed, see Llanfair Discoed.
Llanvapley (Llanfable) II, 37.
Llanvetherine (Llanwytherin) II, 39.
Llanwenarth II, 49.
Llanwern II, 29.
Lower Machen III, 22.

Magor (Magwyr) III, 15; III, 16.
Malpas III, 13; III, 14.
Mamhilad (Mamheilad) III, 17.
Marshfield III, 11; (Castleton) I, 24.
Mathern (Matharn) III, 24; III, 25; (IV, 37).
Michaelston/(Llanfihangel)-y-Fedw III, 3.
Mitchel Troy (Llanfihangel Troddi) III, 18.
Monkswood III, 19.
Monmouth (Trefynwy) III, 9; (IV, 38[f]); (Overmonnow) (III, 20); III, 21; (IV, 25); (IV, 26[b]); IV, 38[c]).
Mounton (Monkton) III, 23.
Mynyddislwyn III, 12.

Nash (Ecclesia de Fraxino) III, 26.
Newchurch (Yr Eglwys Newydd ar y Cefn) III, 27; IV, 21; IV, 22; (IV, 32).
Newport (Casnewydd-ar-Wysg) III, 47; (IV, 30).

Oldcastle (Hengastell) III, 28.
Overmonnow, see Monmouth.

Panteg (Pant-teg) III, 31.
Penallt III, 29.
Penhow (Pen-hw) III, 37; (IV, 26[f]).
Penrhos III, 32.
Penterry (Penteri) III, 36.
Pen-y-clawdd III, 30.
Peterstone (Llanbedr Gwynllŵg) III, 33.
Portskewett (Porth Sgiwed) III, 35; (Sudbrook) IV, 1.

Raglan (Rhaglan) III, 43.
Redwick III, 39; IV, 18.
Risca (Rhisga) III, 44.
Rockfield III, 44 verso; III, 45.
Rogiet (Roggiet) III, 41; III, 42.
Runston (Keyneston), see St Pierre.

St Arvans III, 49.
St Bride's, Netherwent III, 50.
St Bride's, Wentloog III, 51.
St Maughan's (Llanfocha) III, 10.
St Mellons (Llaneirwg; Glamorgan) III, 48.
St Pierre (Sain Pŷr) (IV, 39[a]); (IV, 39[b]); (Runston *al.* Keyneston) III, 40.
Shirenewton III, 52.
Skenfrith (Ynysgynwraidd) III, 45 verso; III, 46.
Staunton (Gloucs.) IV, 23; IV, 24.
Sudbrook, see Portskewett.

Tintern Parva IV, 7; IV, 28.
Tredunnock (Tredynog) IV, 9.
Trefethin (Trevethin) IV, 5; IV, 27.
Tregare (Tre-gaer) IV, 10.
Trelech (Trelleck) IV, 2; IV, 3; IV, 4; IV, 20.
Trelech Grange (Trylec Lann Mainuon) IV, 6.
Trevethin, see Trefethin.
Trostre IV, 8.

Undy (Gwndy) IV, 12.
Usk (Bryn Buga) IV, 11; (IV, 26[a]); (IV, 31).

Welsh Bicknor (Herefs.) IV, 16.
Whitson IV, 15.
Wilcrick (Chwilgrug) IV, 13.
Wolvesnewton (Drenewydd-dan-y-gaer) IV, 14.
Wonastow IV, 17; (IV, 40).

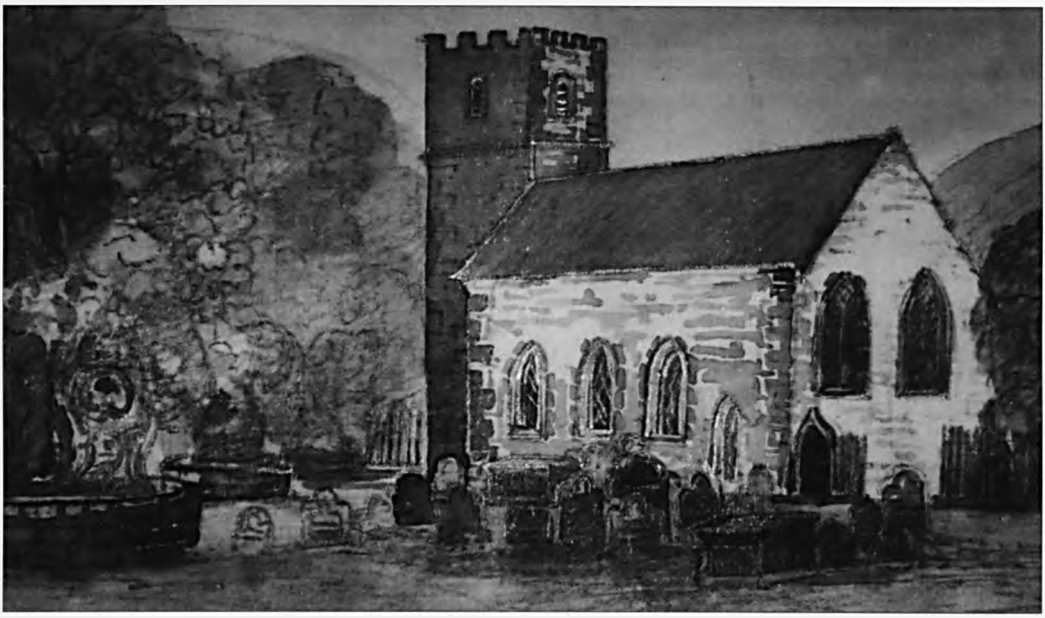

*Plate 1.* **Aberystruth: Old church** (*Gwentia I*, 2).
Rebuilt in 1854–56, demolished *c.*1967.

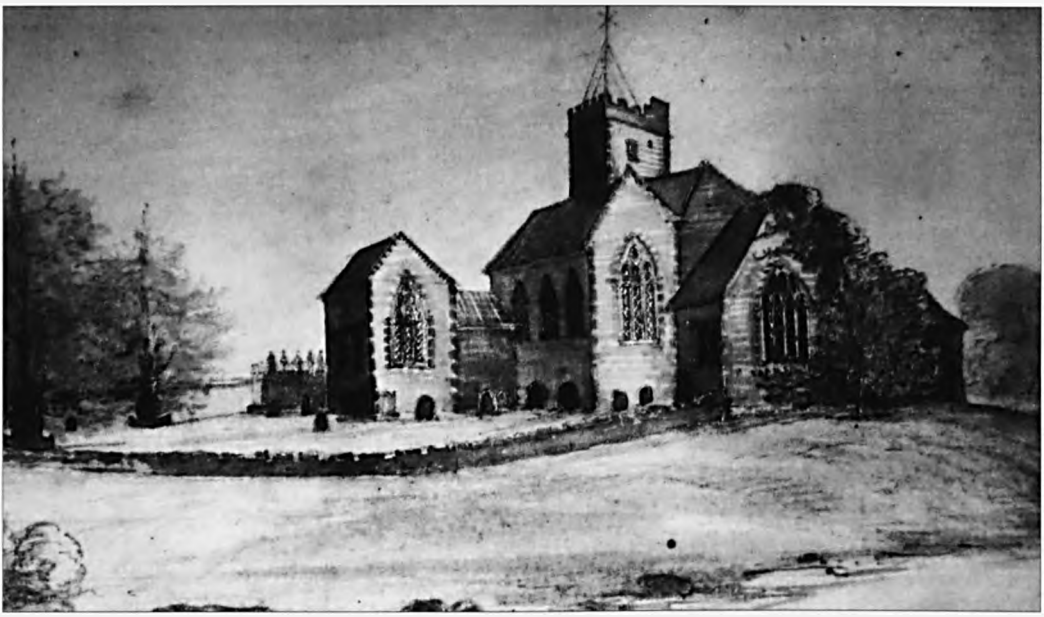

*Plate 2.* **Bassaleg: Church of St Basil** (*Gwentia I*, 10).
The free-standing medieval chapel has long since disappeared.

*Plate 3.* **Betws Newydd**: the Norman font of the church (*Gwentia I*, 6).

*Plate 4.* **Betws Newydd**: the Norman font (as it is today).

*Plate 5.* **Caerwent: Church of St Stephen and St Tathan** (*Gwentia I*, 20)
Chancel restored in 1893–1894, south aisle and south vestry added in 1910–1912.

*Plate 6.* **Chapel Hill: Church of St Mary** (*Gwentia I*, 18).
Rebuilt in 1866–1868, unroofed and in decay since 1973.
Tintern Abbey stands to the left.

*Plate 7.* **Christchurch, Newport: Church of the Holy Trinity** (*Gwentia* I, 21).
Restored, after fires, in 1877 and again in 1953–1955.

*Plate 8.* **Coedkernew: Church of All Saints** (*Gwentia 1*, 25).
Rebuilt in 1853–1954, and now converted into a house.


*Plate 9.* **Kemeys Inferior: Church of All Saints** (*Gwentia 1*, 36). Dismantled in 1960–1962.
The drawing is cropped at the top to show the type of title label that is beneath the drawings.

*Plate 10.* **Llanddewi Fach: Church of St David** (*Gwentia II*, 9).
Reconstructed in 1856–1857, now disused.

*Plate 11.* **Llanddewi Skirrid: Church of St David** (*Gwentia II*, 35).
Rebuilt, save for the tower, in 1879.

*Plate 12.* **Llandogo: Old church** (*Gwentia II*, 24).
Completely rebuilt in 1859–1861.
To the left, the Priory Nursing Home.

*Plate 13.* **Llanfair Discoed: Church of St Mary** (*Gwentia II*, 34).
Almost completely rebuilt in 1882–1883. To the left, Castell Llanfair.

*Plate 14.* **Llanfapley: Church of St Mable** (*Gwentia II*, 37).
A church that largely escaped Victorian restoration.


*Plate 15.* **Llangeview: Church of St David** (*Gwentia II*, 8).
Shows one of two examples where the title label beneath the drawings is in a kind of black letter.

*Plate 16.* **Llangwm Isaf: Old church** (*Gwentia II*, 7).
Rebuilt in 1849–1851.

*Plate 17.* **Llanishen: Old church** (*Gwentia II*, 17).
Rebuilt in 1852–1854.

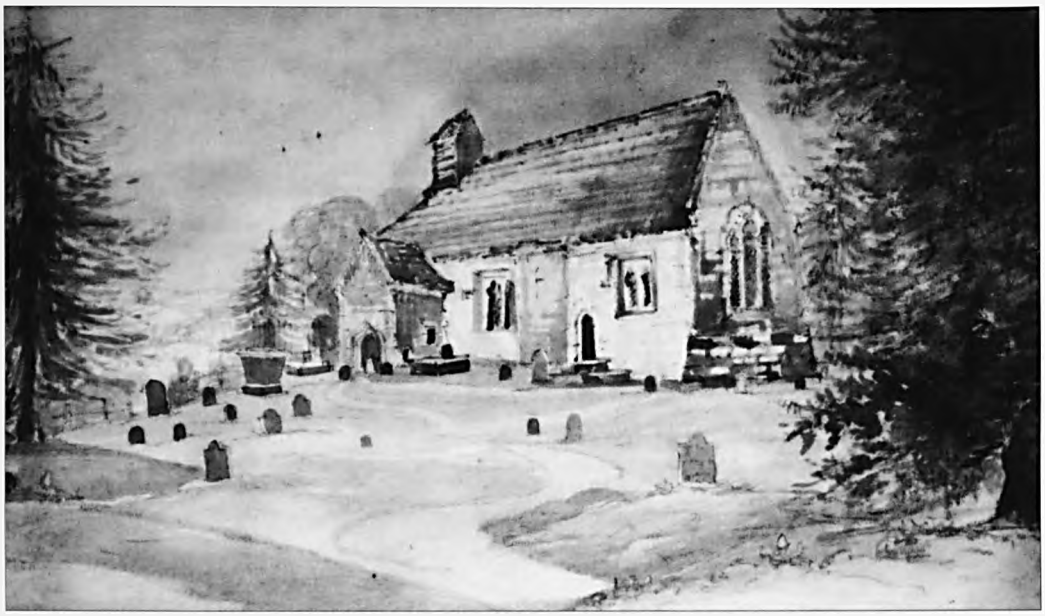

*Plate 18.* **Llanllywel: Church of St Llywel** (*Gwentia II*, 15).
North wall rebuilt in 1871–1872.

*Plate 19.* **Llanllywel: Church of St Llywel** (as it is today).

*Plate 20.* **Llantrisant: Church of St Peter, St Paul and St John** (*Gwentia II*, 13 verso). Restored in 1880–1881.

*Plate 21.* **Llantrisant: Church of St Peter, St Paul and St John** (*Gwentia II*, 14).

*Plate 22.* **Magor: Church of St Mary** (*Gwentia III*, 15).
External stonework restored in 1861–1868.

*Plate 23.* **Magor: Church of St Mary** (as it is today).

*Plate 24.* **Malpas: Church of St Mary** (*Gwentia III*, 13).
Rebuilt in 1849–1850 as 'an elaborated copy' of the medieval chapel (Newman, *op. cit.* 375).

*Plate 25.* **Malpas: Church of St Mary** (*Gwentia III*, 14).

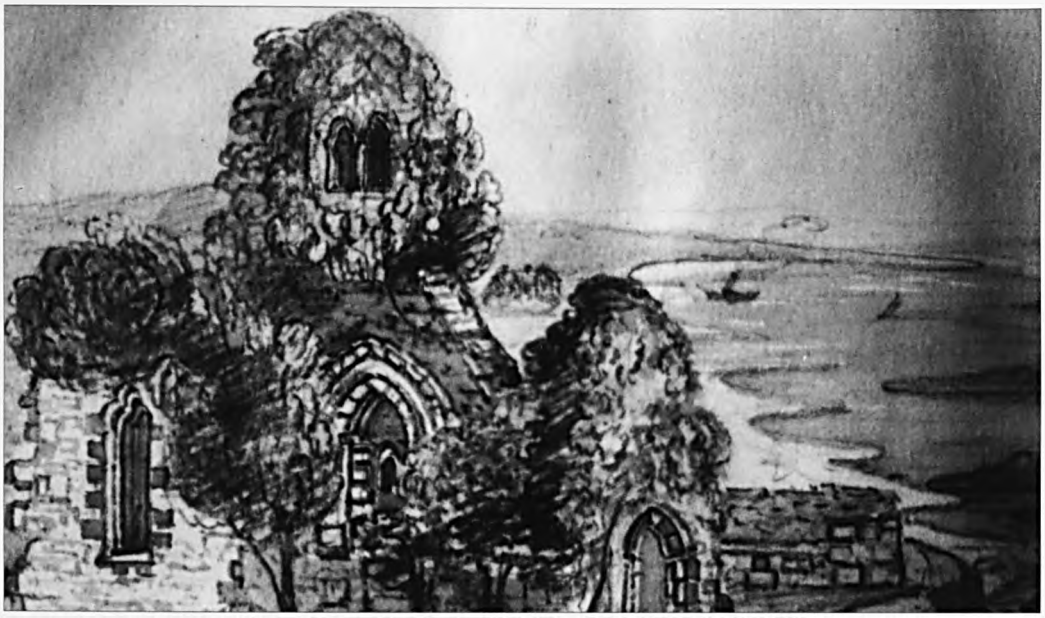

*Plate 26.* **Portskewett: Church of the Holy Trinity, Sudbrook** (*Gwentia IV*, 1).
In ruins by 1720.

*Plate 27.* **Risca: Church of St Mary** (*Gwentia III*, 44).
Demolished in 1852, when the new church was erected.

*Plate* 28. **Rockfield: Old church** (*Gwentia III*, 45).
Completely rebuilt, save for the tower, in 1859–1860.

*Plate 29.* **St Bride's, Netherwent: Church of St Bridget** (*Gwentia III*, 50).
Nave and north porch rebuilt in 1848.

*Plate 30.* **Skenfrith: Church of St Bridget** (*Gwentia III*, 45 verso).
Nave and chancel roofs renewed in 1896.
To the left, Skenfrith Castle; Coedanghred church on the hill behind.

*Plate 31.* **Skenfrith: Church of St Bridget** (*Gwentia III*, 46).

# THE GENTRY OF GWENT AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE AFTER THE ACTS OF UNION

*By J. Gwynfor Jones*

In view of the revival in the fortunes of the Welsh language in Gwent in recent years, the history of its survival over the centuries is both stimulating and rewarding. This region, situated on the south-eastern border between England and Wales, in the early centuries during the Roman occupation formed part of the region inhabited by the aggressive and warlike Silurian tribe.[1] Until the Act of Union in 1536, it formed part of the Marches and was divided into lordships. In that year, however, Gwent was created as the new shire of Monmouthshire and in the Tudor legal and administrative system was attached directly to central institutions in London.[2] In 1543, the new shire was placed outside the authority of the Courts of Great Sessions, the judicial structure of higher courts imposed on Wales. Although strong foreign influences had permanently affected the development of that part of south-east Wales, as elsewhere on the border, especially from the Norman conquest and settlement onwards, the Gwent region, outside the Norman territories, remained essentially Welsh in its administrative structure throughout the Middle Ages, based on the two *cantrefi* of Gwent Uwch Coed and Gwent Is Coed. Tudor reforms attached the shire judicially to the central government in London and territorially transferred some of the eastern parts of the old province to Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, namely Archenfield (Ergyng) and Ewias Lacy.[3] Although the vague title 'Wales and Monmouthshire' survived for centuries to reflect the ambiguity in the relationship between Wales and the shire resulting from the Acts of Union, surviving cultural sources reveal that large parts of Monmouthshire were essentially Welsh in several respects and that was particularly the case in the western uplands of the shire contiguous with the old cantref of Gwynllwg.

When the Act of Union was passed in 1536, the new shire of Monmouth, with the old Roman town of that name which became its shire-town, was formed from the two ancient *cantrefs* which retained their traditional social and cultural affinities and to which was attached the *cantref* of Gwynllwg between the Rhymni and Usk rivers, a region which, in the Middle Ages, formed part of the old kingdom of Morgannwg. In addition to Gwynllwg, the lordships and townships brought together to form the shire were Monmouth, Chepstow, Mathern, Llanfihangel (Rogiet), Magor, Goldcliffe, Newport, Llanwern, Caerllion, Usk, Treleck, Tintern, Skenfrith, Grosmont, Whitecastle, Raglan, Caldicot, Biston, Abergavenny, Penrhos, Greenfield, Machen and Llanddewi

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[1] The substance of this article was delivered as a lecture to the Islwyn Society at the Glyn Hywel Centre, Cwmfelinfach on Saturday 11 Sept. 1999, under the chairmanship of the late Dr Roderick Bowen, QC. I am indebted to Mr B. Ll. James for reading an earlier version of this article and for his useful suggestions. Also, I wish to thank Miss Eirian E. Edwards, who in 1966, was awarded her University of Wales M.A. degree for her study of bardic patronage in Glamorgan and Gwent, for allowing me to read her thesis from which I derived much benefit. For detailed studies of the early history of Gwent, see Bradney, J.A., *A History of Monmouthshire from the coming of the Normans into Wales down to the Present Time* (4 vols., London,1904-33) and Gray, M. (ed.), *The Lordship of Newport, Volume 5* (South Wales Record Society/National Library of Wales, Cardiff/Aberystwyth, 1993); Clark, A., *The Story of Monmouthshire, Volume 1* (Llandybie, 1962); and Howell, R., *A History of Gwent* (Llandysul, 1988).

[2] St. 27 Henry VIII c. 26; Bowen, I. (ed.), *The Statutes of Wales* (London, 1908) 77-9.

[3] *Ibid.* 83-5; Howell, B., *Law and Disorder in Tudor Monmouthshire* (Cardiff, 1995) xviii-xxiii.

Nant Hoddni (corrupted to Llanthony).[4] In the sixteenth century, it is calculated from limited official sources that Monmouthshire had a population of between approximately 25,000 and 30,000, a sizeable majority of which, particularly in the central and hinterland rural areas, was Welsh in speech and sentiment and their inhabitants aware of their identity and traditions. The more anglicised areas were situated along the eastern rim of the shire, especially down the Wye valley from the northern Hereford border to Monmouth, along the Wye valley to Chepstow and south to the Caldicot border area. These sections of the shire were more directly influenced by English social and cultural habits and customs. The upland zone, notably the Gwent valleys, shared the same physical features as those of the highland hinterland of Wales. They were areas conditioned by the way of life adhered to by conservative communities that had inhabited them over the centuries. The ancient Silures themselves were reputed to be stubbornly independent, hostile and fiercely opposed to the extension of Roman power into their province. Even though much of their territory was overrun and possessed by aliens, particularly after the Norman invasions of the latter years of the eleventh and early years of the twelfth centuries, their descendants, the early Welsh, preserved many of their racial and cultural characteristics.[5]

In the Tudor century, a significant change occurred in the composition of the Gwent region. By the time the administrative changes of 1536-43 had become operative, many new and powerful families had emerged, namely the gentry (*uchelwyr*, reputably those of high birth), the privileged landed families who represented the most influential and prominent sections of the community excepting those promoted to the aristocracy, such as the Herberts and their descendants, the Somersets of Raglan, Chepstow and Troy, later to become earls of Worcester.[6] These gentryfolk, constituting the prosperous middle layers of the social structure, most of them having descended from Welsh forebears who were heads of kindred families in earlier centuries, were the agencies by means of which the Tudor order of government was established in Wales and secured the loyalties of the Welsh people to that dynasty and eventually to the new Protestant order imposed on the realm in the reign of Elizabeth I. It is not an exaggeration to say that, in the period between the Acts of Union and the nineteenth century - a period of over three and a half centuries - the history of the *uchelwyr* is one of the most dominant themes in the social and economic development of the shire down to the age of industrialisation, chiefly because it was they, although historians' opinions of their role as landed gentry vary, who dominated social, administrative and political life as natural leaders of their localities.[7]

The responsibilities entrusted to the gentry in Wales before and more so after the Acts of Union, enabled them to assume a prominent role in Welsh society and their influence was felt as much in Monmouthshire as elsewhere. Owing to the essentially Welsh background enjoyed by

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[4] Rees, W., *The Union of England and Wales* (Cardiff, 1948) 57.

[5] For material on the aspects of the controversy concerning the status of Monmouthshire, see Davies, D.J. and Davies, N., *Is Monmouthshire in Wales?* (Griffithstown, 1943); Thomas, C., *Monmouthshire in Wales* (Cardiff, 1958).

[6] Lloyd, J.E. and Jenkins, R.T, (eds.), *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (London, 1959) 350-2; for a detailed examination of the political affiliations of the early Herberts, see Thomas, D.H., 'The Herberts of Raglan as Supporters of the House of York in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century' (unpublished University of Wales M.A. thesis, 1968).

[7] For gentry activity see Williams, G., *Renewal and Reformation Wales: c. 1415-1642* (Oxford, 1993) 410-22; Jones, J.G., *The Welsh Gentry 1536-1640: Images of Status, Honour and Authority* (Cardiff, 1998) 1-59.

most of the families, with antecedents, in many cases, extending far back to the heads of prominent royal or free kindred families in the early medieval past, they were expected to preserve their people's cultural heritage as well as govern on behalf of the Crown, serve in the royal armies and function as officials in courts of law. And that is what the majority of them regarded as being their main occupation. In their writings, a school of 'nationalist' historians from the 1930s onwards, Saunders Lewis, Gwynfor Evans, W. Ambrose Bebb, Ceinwen Thomas and A. O. H. Jarman being the most prominent among them, believed that the gentry had betrayed that heritage and, owing principally to the so-called 'Language clause' in the first Act of Union, which made English the official language of Wales, had forsaken their mother tongue and its cultural associations.[8]

At this stage there is need to pause and look again more rationally at the situation concerning uniformity of language in administrative and legal affairs and offer re-interpretations, particularly in view of recent research and the undeserved bad press that the Welsh gentry, including those of Monmouthshire, have suffered in this respect. It is proposed to examine the role of the Welsh image projected among the gentry, most of whom were literate in English and Welsh and some even in Latin, in view of the fact that there is need to restore the balance and assess the degree to which privileged families considered it an asset to continue to associate themselves with the cultural interests of their forebears.[9] In this context it is necessary to examine briefly three main categories of activity which will broaden and extend discussion of this theme generally down to the middle years of the seventeenth century and the outbreak of Civil War.

A small but informative group of sources are available to reveal how close the links between Monmouthshire gentry and clergy and the Welsh language were in the Tudor and early Stuart periods. They relate mainly to (i) the Welsh background of Gwent society and the extent of gentry patronage of the bardic order; (ii) their connections with the religious world and the new Protestant order in Elizabeth's reign; and (iii) their identity and attachment to neighbourhood in the areas which they inhabited and where they were actively engaged in public and private affairs.

Three points need to be observed at the outset; first, that the *uchelwyr* of Gwent were members of established families. Although a large proportion of younger sons were forced by circumstances to go over Offa's Dyke for their education and livelihood (and often their wives!) and to fend for themselves, the *plasty* (mansion house) was increasingly considered to be the pivot of activity for most of estate owners in that period and they often travelled to the border towns and to Bristol or London to attend to their public and private affairs, particularly in matters relating to law, trade and commerce.[10]

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[8] Evans, G., *Land of my Fathers* (Swansea, 1974) 294-316; Lewis, S., 'The fate of the language', trans. by Williams, G.A. in Jones, A.R. and Thomas, G. (eds.), *Presenting Saunders Lewis* (Cardiff, 1973) 127-9; Thomas, C., 'From the fall of Llywelyn to the Tudor period' and Jarman, A.O.H., 'Wales a Part of England, 1485-1800' in Lloyd, D.M. (ed.), *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism* (Cardiff, 1950) 76-8, 79-89; Bebb, W.A., *Y Ddeddf Uno, 1536 (Y Cefndir a'r Canlyniadau)* (Caernarfon, 1937) 84-101.

[9] Williams, G., *Religion, Language and Nationality in Wales: Historical Essays* (Cardiff, 1979) 160-3; Davies, C., *Latin Writers of the Renaissance* (Cardiff, 1981) 16-25, 40-53; *idem*, *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition* (Cardiff, 1995) chap. 3, 53-84.

[10] Davies, C., 'The Welsh in Tudor England' in *Religion, Language and Nationality in Wales* (Cardiff, 1979) 171-99; Dodd, A.H., *Studies in Stuart Wales* (Cardiff, 1952) 9-11.

Second, the majority resided in areas that were traditionally Welsh in speech and sentiment and the evidence of place-names, for example, reveals that many of them were derived from the Welsh language: Dintarn (or Tyndyrn) Uchaf a Dintarn (or Tyndyrn) Isaf (Upper and Lower Tintern); Y Drenewydd Gelli-farch (Shirenewton), Magwyr (Magor), Llanfihangel Torymynydd, Llanfihangel Troddi (Mitchel Troy), Llangatwg Feibion Afel, Llaneuddogwy (Llandogo), Llanddewi Nant Hoddni (Llanthony), Llanwynnell (Wolvesnewton), Ystrad Hafren (Tidenham), Porth Ysgewin (Portskewett) and Llanddewi Rhydderch. Excepting Tidenham, all these places are cited in the eastern parts of the shire which had become anglicised over the centuries.[11]

Third, it is important to note that, despite the constant inflow of English settlers, especially in the urban and eastern border areas, the Welsh language in its Gwentian dialect, 'y Wenhwyseg', in the sixteenth century was a living language among local residents in the rural areas generally and that the shire community generally, in character and outlook, revealed more the social characteristics of the predominantly Welsh regions in Glamorgan and other parts of south-west Wales rather than those of adjoining English shires.

Ample proof also exists that Welsh-speaking communities had settled in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, which is again clearly observed in place-names such as Little Dewchurch (Llanddewi), Llanwarne (Llan-wern Teilo a Dyfrig), Llandinabo (Llanwnabwy), St Weonards (Llansainwenarth), Hentland (Henllan Dyfrig a Theilo) and Llanveynoe (Llanfeuno), all of them, except the last named, in Archenfield (Ergyng) which was, like Ewyas (Ewias Lacy), a part of Gwent before 1536.[12] Percy Enderbie, the Lincolnshire historian and antiquary, makes the point clearly in *Cambria Triumphans* in 1661 when he declared that 'the Welsh tongue is commonly used and spoken England-ward beyond these old meares [namely the frontiers of Welsh shires] a great way, as in Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, and a great part of Shropshire'.[13]

When these factors are considered it is obvious that Monmouthshire was, for the most part, a Welsh shire which had preserved its own native customs and traditions. One of the traditions which it shared with all other regions of Wales, was the bardic system, a professional institution with its origins in the courts of ancient Welsh kings who officially appointed bards to eulogise them and their successors in grandiloquent style in strict-metres. By the later Middle Ages several licensed poets, who had accomplished themselves in the bardic schools which they attended, sang to individual members of emerging gentry families, normally praising their lineage, military prowess, hospitality and leadership in their communities. Although this system thrived chiefly in north, mid and west Wales, the itineraries of some bards in Glamorgan and Gwent, before and after the Acts of Union, such as Llywelyn ap Rhisiart (or Lewys Morgannwg), Llywelyn Siôn and Dafydd Benwyn, are quite notable. Several manuscripts survive, chiefly in Cardiff City Library and the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, which contain genealogical details and large collections of eulogies and elegies to Glamorgan and Gwent patrons, all of which record vital information about the background of families and individuals who governed in what was essentially a strictly hierarchical society. Foremost in this respect was the famous Dafydd ap Gwilym,

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[11] Williams, G.J., *The Welsh Tradition of Gwent* (Cardiff, 1948) 4-5.

[12] Richards, M., *Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units* (Cardiff, 1969) *sub nomine*.

[13] Enderbie, P., *Cambria Triumphans* (London, 1661) 209. See also 216.

reputedly Wales's finest medieval poet, who sang lavishly to Ifor Hael (Ifor ap Llywelyn or 'Ifor the Generous') of Gwernyclepa, Basaleg, in Gwynllwg in the mid-fourteenth century.[14] Similarly, some of the Herberts of Raglan, a century later, were applauded in fine verse by Guto'r Glyn, and it was Sir William Herbert, first earl of Pembroke, a Gwent man, a firm Yorkist supporter and one of Edward IV's principal counsellors, who earned the highest accolade:

> Duw a'th ddonies, daith uniawn,
> Digon i ddynion o ddawn.
> Prifei sêl y parfis wyd,
> Perl mewn dadl parlment ydwyd.
> Ystiwart dros y Deau,
> Iustus doeth, eiste' sy dau.
> Cedwid Duw ceidwad Dwywent,
> Cymru walch, Cymro o Went.[15]
>
> [God endowed you rightfully and plentifully as a skilled person. You are the Privy Seal of the parvis, a pearl in parliamentary debate, a steward for the southern parts and a wise justice. May God preserve the Custodian of two Gwents, a Welsh hawk and a Gwent Welshman.]

In the Tudor century, members of families such as those who sprang from the famous Morgans of Tredegar, Newport,[16] were amongst eminent patrons who had settled at Machen, Pen-coed (Llanfarthin), Llantarnam (Llanfihangel Nant Teyrnon), Penllwyn-sarff (Mynyddislwyn), Glanrhymni and Rhosnewydd (Bedwellte).[17] In addition, the Williamses of Llangybi, the Kemeyses of Cefnmabli, the Rossers of Wern-ddu (Llandeilo Bertholau) and the Lewis of Y Fan and Rhiw'rperrai, in Glamorgan, on the shire's western borders welcomed bards and the number of Monmouthshire gentry of this *genre* is indeed impressive.[18] Poems in strict-metre exist in praise of Gwent itself, such as the *cywydd moliant* to the three Gwent regions by Tomas Derllys (*c.* 1480), presumably a Carmarthenshire bard[19] and a *cywydd ymryson* (contest/polemic ode) by Dafydd Benwyn, a prolific bard from Llangeinwyr in Glamorgan, praising the three shires of Brecknock, Morgannwg and Monmouth.[20]

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[14] Parry, T. (ed.), *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff, 1952) 13-30 and nos. 5-11.

[15] Williams, J. Ll. and Williams, I. (eds.), *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, 47 (Cardiff, 1939) 126. For further studies of Sir William Herbert see Evans, H.T., *Wales and the Wars of the Roses* (Cambridge, 1915, reproduction by Sutton of Stroud, 1998) 5, 6, 45-9, 70-2; Thomas, D.H., *The Herberts of Raglan and the Battle of Edgecote, 1469* (Freewater Publications, Enfield, 1994, reproduced from the author's University of Wales M.A. dissertation, 1967) 13 *et seq.*

[16] Jones, J.G., *The Morgan Family of Tredegar: Its Origins, Growth and Advancement c. 1340-1674* (Newport, 1995); Pickford, J.A.F., *Between Mountain and Marsh in the Hundred of Wentloog* (Newport, 1946).

[17] Clark, G.T. (ed.), *Limbus Patrum Morganiae et Glamorganiae* (London, 1888) 34, 44-8; Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire, Volume 3, Part 1, The Hundred of Usk (Part 1)* (Academy Books, London, 1993) 96-102.

[18] *Ibid.* 412; Cardiff City Library MS 2.277, 49 (Dafydd Benwyn's ode to Wiliam ap Siôn of Gwern-ddu).

[19] NLW Llanstephan MS 134, 384.

[20] University of Oxford Jesus MS 13, 65b.

In Monmouthshire, Maenyrch was the chief forefather of several gentry families who patronised the bards.[21] For example, the Parcletis family of Llanofer Fawr, descended from that line and eulogies were composed in the fifteenth century to the descendants of Rhys Goch ap Maenyrch in Llangofan, Rhaglan, Llangybi, Llantrisant Fawr and also in the residences at Pen-crug (Llanhenwg), Pen-rhos Fwrdios (Caerllion) and Rhyd-y-meirch in Llanofer Fawr. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Dafydd Benwyn sang to several *uchelwyr* who were prominent in public life in the shire, especially the heads of the famous Morgan family and its many branches, descendants of Cadifor Fawr of Dyfed, and he sang eulogies to William Morgan of Llantarnam, an influential Catholic gentry leader in the Newport area, Edward Morgan of Bedwellte, Rowland Morgan of Machen (and his wife Blanche, daughter of John Thomas of Lan-arth near Abergavenny (Y Fenni)) and William and Miles Morgan of Tredegar (Tredegyr).[22] He also composed a grandiloquent elegy (awdl-farwnad) to honour Sir William Herbert of St Julian's (Sain Silian), Newport, who married Jane, coheiress of Sir William Griffith of Penrhyn in Caernarfonshire and to his son Sir William Herbert, as well as an elegy to George Herbert of Y Castell Newydd ar Wysg (Casnewydd/Newport) and an elegy to Roger Williams of Llangibby (Llangybi), the founder of the prominent family situated between Caerleon (Caerllion-ar-Wysg) and Usk (Brynbuga).[23]

There is nothing that is really remarkable in these poems; indeed, they are of poorer quality than several similar eulogies composed by bards such as Wiliam Llŷn and Siôn Tudur in north Wales, and distinctly reveal the continual decline of the bardic order in south-east Wales. Nonetheless, the majestic eulogy by Dafydd Benwyn to the Morgan family of Gwent, although cramped in style and content, illustrated the family's illustrious reputation in the Elizabethan age and, in a broader context, the patronage generously distributed to the bards by reputable heads of households.[24]

One notable clergyman and bard was William Evans (d.1589-90), who held the posts of chancellor and treasurer of Llandaff cathedral between 1550 and 1590.[25] He was a native of Llangatwg Feibion Afel in north-east Monmouthshire and a highly respected and prominent person in his community. Like Siôn ap Ieuan, one of his predecessors as treasurer of Llandaff, he was well-versed in the bardic tradition. His bounteous hospitality to the bards led Dafydd Benwyn to describe Evans as the 'Ifor Hael of Llandaff'[26] and Maredudd ap Rhosier (reputably Evans's household poet), Hopcyn Tomas Phylip, Tomas Brwynllys, Wiliam Dyfi, Meurig Dafydd, Sils ap Siôn and Siôn Mawddwy from Merioneth also composed a number of poems in his honour.[27] Sils ap Siôn, a Glamorgan bard and genealogist, recorded that William Evans was associated with an

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[21] Siddons, M.P., *The Development of Welsh Heraldry, Volume 2* (National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1993) 360.

[22] For the texts (which are unreliable) see Kyrle Fletcher, J., *The Gwentian Poems of Dafydd Benwyn* (Newport, 1909).

[23] *Ibid.* 22-4.

[24] *Morgan Family of Tredegar* 18-22.

[25] Williams, G.J., *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morganwg* (Cardiff, 1948) 88-90; Browne Willis, *A Survey of the Cathedral Church of Llandaff* (London, 1719) 23, 85; Lewis, C.W., 'The literary history of Glamorgan from 1550 to 1770' in Williams, G. (ed.), *Glamorgan County History: Volume 4, Early Modern Glamorgan* (Cardiff, 1974) 546, 547, 549.

[26] Lewis, op. cit. 547; NLW Llanstephan MS 164, 92.

[27] Lewis, op. cit. 544; *DWB* 255.

*eisteddfod* (an assembly of bards and minstrels) at Llandaff (*c.* 1564), presumably the only one to be held in Morgannwg before the eighteenth century.[28] It is also reported that a company of poets met together 'to compose poetry for the mastery' ('i gany ar wawd am y vaistrola[eth]') in the presence of Mr William Evans, chancellor of Llandaff, and Thomas Lewis of Llandaff (son of Edward Lewis, who lived in Llandaff), both of them adjudicators. He is also reputed to have established a bardic chair in 1558 and to have held *eisteddfodau* annually on Whit Mondays.[29] Meurig Dafydd, a gentleman-poet from Llanisien, near Cardiff, also enjoyed hospitality in the houses of Tredegar, Llantarnam, Gwerngochen (Llandeilo Bertholau), Kemeys (Glanrhymni), Rhiw'rperrai and Y Fan, Llangybi, Machen, Pen-coed and Sain Silian.[30] Moreover Lewis Morgannwg, the most noteworthy of sixteenth-century Glamorgan poets and others of his *milieu* in subsequent generations, sang to aristocrats such as the Herberts, earls of Pembroke of the second creation, Henry Somerset, second earl of Worcester, William Somerset, third earl, and Edward Somerset, fourth earl.[31]

It is evident that although there were fewer Monmouthshire gentry patrons than elsewhere in Wales and that the standard of the verse was deteriorating, a sizeable group among them eagerly maintained the bardic tradition in Gwent. Siôn Mawddwy was involved in a dispute in verse with Meurig Dafydd defending his right to visit gentry family homes in Glamorgan and Gwent and receive their patronage, arguing that the hospitality which both might enjoy would have been worth their while.[32] The fact that some members of these houses had married into well-to-do English families and had strong English connections did not seem to deter them from offering their patronage. This is a social feature that needs to be heeded when assessing the quality of the craft and the character of Welsh cultural achievement generally in the post-Tudor settlement era. Other features of the cultural *genre* will be discussed when the third and last of the themes is considered.

The second theme is equally important in any discussion of the Welsh connections of the Gwent gentry, namely the gentry's relationships with the new Protestant faith planted in Wales, as in England, after the Elizabethan Church Settlement in 1559. In a region like Gwent, where Roman Catholicism remained strong among privileged and peasant families alike and consequently became a cause of grave concern for the new Protestant leaders, it is interesting to discover what evidence is available, particularly in Welsh literature of the period, to reveal that the Monmouthshire gentry were loyal to the New Faith. It must be borne in mind that many of the clergy were descendants of modest and ancient gentry families and the most high-ranking among them were powerful figures in religious circles.

Central to this theme is the translation of the Bible into Welsh in 1588 by William Morgan, who, at the time, was vicar of Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant in the diocese of St Asaph.[33] On that occasion Thomas Jones (or Johns), a staunch Protestant and politically-conscious priest, composed a poem to express his gratitude for the Bible, one of the few poems in free-metres to sur-

[28] See NLW MSS 13062, 491; 13068, 40a, 42b.

[29] NLW MS 13068, 566; Llanover MS B6, 40; Lewis, op. cit. 547.

[30] NLW MS 13066, 18, 27, 39, 43, 71, 75, 102, 113.

[31] NLW MS 13068, 68a; Cardiff MS 2, 277, 399.

[32] Lewis, 'literary history' 549-50.

[33] Much material has appeared in recent years on William Morgan, but see Thomas, I., *William Morgan and his Bible* (Cardiff, 1988) esp. 85-6.

vive on that theme. He was the vicar of Llanfair Cilgedin, Llanofer Fawr, but there is slight confusion as to his real identity because he described himself also as the priest of Llandeilo Bertholau. However, in that poem he set out to praise the translation and its contribution to instruct the nation in the tenets of the 'true faith' (as he called Protestantism). Interestingly, he appealed to parishioners to sell their shirts so that they could buy Morgan's Bible and that was about half a century before Rhys Prichard, vicar of Llanymddyfri, better known as 'the Old Vicar', did so when encouraging his flock to buy the 'five-shilling Bible' of 1630:

> Mae'r Bibl Bach yn awr yn gyson
> Yn iaith dy fam, i'w gael er coron;
> Gwerth dy grys cyn bod heb hwnnw,
> Mae'n well na thref dy dad i'th gadw.[34]
>
> [The Bible is now regularly available in your mother tongue available for a crown; Sell your shirt before being without this; it is better than your father's inheritance to maintain you.]

Thomas Jones's lines are similar in content:

> Ilymar gemm sy wrtho hyn, gwyn fyd y dyn ay pryno,
> Ilymar pwrcas gore ar gant, y ddaw y feddiant kymro.
>
> Ilymar kledday mawr y fri, mae christ yn erchi keiso,
> er mwyn pryny hyn rhag trais, gwerth di dy bais y kymro.[35]
>
> [This is itself the gem; blessed be the man who buys it. This is the best purchase of a hundred that comes into a Welshman's possession. This the highly prestigious sword Christ begs you to obtain; to purchase it you Welshman sell your shirt].

As well as this poem, Thomas Jones, a little earlier in the same year perhaps, composed a lengthy free-metre poem again to celebrate the English navy's victory over the Spanish Armada in the summer of 1588.[36] Although the translation of the scriptures, with regard to the survival of culture, religion and national awareness in Wales, was evidently the more important achievement of the two, nevertheless, the defeat of the Armada should not be undermined. In this context the Spanish invasion posed a very serious threat to the realm's security and religious uniformity in view of the war between England and Spain in 1585 and widespread Roman Catholic opposition to the queen and the Protestant state. This was a factor to which Morgan referred in the opening section of his Latin dedication of the Bible to Elizabeth:

> ... et pax, quâ prae vicinis fruitur almâ, eiusque nunquam satis admiranda protectio, quâ et hostes nuper fugavit atroces, et multa ac magna pericula semper evasit faelicissime ...[37]

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[34] Jones, R.B., *'A Lanterne to their Feete': Rhys Prichard 1579-1644 Vicar of Llandovery* (Llandovery, 1994) 59; Lloyd, N. (ed.), *Cerddi'r Ficer: Detholiad o Gerddi Rhys Prichard* (Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, 1994) 62.

[35] Parry-Williams, T.H. (ed.), *Canu Rhydd Cynnar*, 95 (Cardiff, 1932) 369.

[36] *Hen Gerddi Gwleidyddol, 1588-1660* (Cymdeithas Llên Cymru, Cardiff, 1901) 7-11.

[37] *Y Beibl Cysegr-lan, sef yr Hen Destament, a'r Newydd* (London, 1558), Dedication to the Queen [1]; Evans, A.O., *A Memorandum on the Legality of the Welsh Bible and the Welsh Version of the Book of Common Prayer* (Cardiff, 1925) 128-9.

> [... and the peace which, in greater degree than your neighbours, you propitiously enjoy; and the source of the same, never to be too highly admired, in that cruel enemies were recently put to flight, and a way of safety was always happily found out of many and great dangers ...]

It is important to note as well that William Morgan was elevated bishop of Llandaff in 1595 and that he resided in the Bishop's Palace at Mathern, near Chepstow.[38] While he was there he was addressed fervently in verse by Huw Machno, Siôn Mawddwy and Lewis Dwnn.[39] William Bleddyn, one of his predecessors at Llandaff, was a Welsh-speaking cleric and a native of Shirenewton, who also resided at the palace.[40] He was the subject of eulogy by Dafydd Benwyn who composed tributes to him and his first wife Anne (niece of Thomas Young, bishop of St David's (1559-61) and archbishop of York (1561-8))[41] and he himself composed an *englyn* (four-lined stanza in strict metre) in praise of the poet and genealogist Lewis Dwnn.[42]

At Llandaff, William Morgan obtained the services of Dr John Davies of Llanferres, Denbighshire (better known as rector of Mallwyd, Merioneth), a brilliant young scholar whom Dr Ceri Davies, our principal authority on him, described as the one 'who revealed the full expanse of the resources of humanist learning at its best'.[43] It is possible that he assisted the bishop to revise the Book of Common Prayer and New Testament in 1599. The 'epistles and gospels' contained in the Book of Common Prayer that year became the basis of the corresponding parts in the revised Bible of 1620 (known as Parry's Bible after Richard Parry, bishop of St. Asaph). In his preface to *Antiquae Linguae Britannicae...Rudimenta* (1621), his Welsh grammar in Latin, he stated that he had been an unworthy assistant in the translation of the Bible into Welsh:

> Cum igitur in huius linguae studio ultra triginta annos, vacantibus horis, sim versatus, quibus+ utrique SS. Bibliorum interpreti Br. indignus fui administer, & in Walliae plaga Septentrionali, Australi, Media sum commoratus ... :
>
> [In the right-hand margin appears the following: + W. Morgano SS.ThD. Cantabrigiensi, episcopo primum Landavensi, deinde Asaphensi; et Ric. Parraeo, SS.ThD. Oxon., Episcopo nunc Asaphensi.][44]

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[38] Jones, J.G., 'William Morgan, translator of the Bible and bishop of Llandaff', *Gwent Local History*, 66 (1989) 37-48. A wooden statue of William Morgan holding his Bible, along with three other worthies associated with the religious life of Gwent, is carved on the reredos in Mathern parish church, dating from the time of Joshua Hughes, bishop of Llandaff (1905-31). Jones, J.G., op.cit. 37; Davies, E.T., *A History of the Parish of Mathern* (Chepstow, 1950) 14.

[39] Gruffydd, R.G., *'The Translating of the Bible into the Welsh Tongue' by William Morgan in 1588* (London, 1988) 51-61.

[40] *DWB* 42; Thomas, L., *The Reformation in the Old Diocese of Llandaff* (Cardiff, 1930) 132-3.

[41] Jesus MSS 31.21a; Cardiff MS 2.177; Bradney, J.A., *A History of Monmouthshire, Volume 4, Part 1, The Hundred of Caldicot (Part 1)* (London, 1933) 66. See also Cardiff MS 2.277, 198 (Cywydd Marwnad mab Esgob Llandaf, 1571).

[42] NLW MS 5270, 98b.

[43] Davies, C., 'Dysg ddyneiddiol cyfieithwyr y Beibl', in *Llên Cymru*, 16 (1-2) (1989) 19.

[44] Davies, J., *Antiquae Linguae Britannicae ... Rudimenta* (London, 1621), (Scolar Press, Menston, 1968) preface [23]. I wish to thank Mr Tom Dawkes, Academic Specialists Team Leader, Arts and Social Sciences Library, University of Cardiff, for his valuable assistance in translating texts applying to references 44 and 45.

> [Since then I have been occupied in the study of this language in leisure hours for more than 30 years, in which to both+ Welsh interpreters of the holy books I was an unworthy assistant and dwelt in the northern, southern and mid regions of Wales ... (In the right-hand margin appears the following:+ W. Morgan STD Cantab., bishop first of Llandaff, then of St Asaph; and Ric. Parry, STD Oxon., now bishop of St Asaph.)]

In the *Antiquae Linguae Britannicae ... et Linguae Latinae, Dictionarium Duplex* (1632), his Welsh-Latin and Latin-Welsh Dictionary, he described Morgan as a Gamaliel by whose feet he had been educated, which probably refers to the close cultural ties between the two in the diocese of Llandaff:

> Quare ab annis jam plus minus 60, eorum satisfacturi voto, Dictionarium Brit. parturierunt multi, insignes quidem illi magnique viri, Guilielmus Morganus SS.Th.D. Cantabrigiensis, Sacrae Scripturae in Linguam Brit. interpres fidelissimus, Ecclesiae primum Landavensis, dein Asaphensis praesul vigilantissimus, cujus mihi semper dulcissimum in ore versatur nomen, ut ad cujus Gamalielis pedes sum educatus ... [45]

> [So for about 60 years to satisfy their desire many have brought forth a British dictionary, illustrious and great men: William Morgan STD of Cambridge, Holy Scripture's most faithful interpreter in the British tongue, first of the church at Llandaff, then at St Asaph a most watchful guard, whose name always was sweet in my mouth, as at the feet of a Gamaliel I had been educated ...]

In this biblical context it is worth bearing in mind that James Rhys Parry ('Eos Ewyas', as he was known) produced metrical versions of some of the Psalms in Welsh.[46] He was a gentleman from Llanfihangel Esgle in Ewias Lacy in Herefordshire, on the border with Monmouthshire and had connections with William Morgan and Edmwnd Prys (archdeacon of Merioneth and the famous versifier of the Psalms into Welsh in 1621). It is possible that it was during Morgan's residence at Mathern (1595-1601) that Parry completed the work and it is known that he was rewarded with seven pieces of gold by the bishop for accomplishing the task.[47] His son, George Parry, vicar of Dingestow in Monmouthshire, prebendary of St Dubricius and canon of Llandaff (1662), also produced strict and free metre versions of some Psalms and, unlike others, also supplied Latin versions which he placed alongside those in Welsh.[48] Although the family connections of both father and son were primarily based in Herefordshire and Brecknockshire, there is a distinct Monmouthshire connection as well, chiefly through the father's contacts with Morgan and the son's living at Dingestow. All this goes to show that the Welsh language was still actively spoken in the western parts of Herefordshire in the late sixteenth century.

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[45] *Idem, Antiquae Linguae Britannicae ... et Linguae Latinae, Dictionarium Duplex* (London, 1632), (Scolar Press, Menston) preface [1]. Davies proceeds to mention other worthy scholars, namely Dr David Powel of Ruabon, Dr John David Rees, Henry Perry, Henry Salesbury and Thomas Wiliems.

[46] Davies, W. Ll., 'Welsh metrical versions of the Psalms', *The Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, 2 (1923) 276-301.

[47] *Ibid.* 287-8.

[48] Browne Willis 97.

When the statute of 1563 (St. 5 Elizabeth I c.28) was passed to provide the translation of the Bible and Common Prayer into Welsh, it was specifically authorised that the four Welsh bishops, together with John Scory, bishop of Hereford, were to supervise the work.[49] Scory was no Welshman and could not have assisted much in that respect, but parts of the western districts of his diocese - in Archenfield and Ewias in particular - were still Welsh in speech and sentiment and local parish churches needed the Welsh version of the scriptures and Common Prayer to serve Welsh-speaking parishioners. This suggests that Welsh clergy also held livings in those parts of that diocese but how these religious works were used in parish churches where the congregation was linguistically divided is not known. Worthy of note in this context also is Edward James, priest and translator who, although a native of Glamorgan, was appointed vicar of Caerllïon-ar-Wysg in 1595 and served as priest in Y Drenewydd Gelli-farch and Llangatwg Dyffryn Wysg before being moved to Llangatwg Feibion Afel in 1599.[50] He was promoted chancellor of Llandaff in 1606, the year when he published his translation into Welsh of *The Book of Homilies* (1547), entitled *Llyfr yr Homilïau* for use in parish churches. The title-page adds the following words: 'Pregethau a osodwyd allan trwy awdurdod i'w darllein ymhob Eglwys blwyf a phob capel er adailadaeth i'r bobl annyscedig' [51] ('Sermons which have been set out by authority to be read in each parish Church and chapel for the regeneration of the uneducated people'). Its prime purpose was to teach peasant folk the tenets of the Protestant faith:

> fel y galle yr offeiriaid a'r curadiaid annyscedig, y rhai ni fedrent yn amgen etto wrth adrodd datcan a darllen yr homiliau hyn, bregethu i'w pobl wir athrawaeth, ac fel y galle bawb o'r bobl wrth wrando, ddyscu'n inion ac yn iawn anrhydeddu ac addoli'r holl-alluog Dduw a'i wasanaethu'n ddiwyd.[52]
>
> [... so that the uneducated priests and curates, those who cannot yet otherwise by reciting, declaring and reading these homilies, preach true doctrine to their people and so that all the people, by listening, can learn exactly and truly honour and worship the Almighty and serve him diligently.]

It may well have been William Morgan's influence when bishop of Llandaff that induced James to undertake this important work based on the language of the Bible. Since very few clergy in Wales could preach in Welsh, it was absolutely necessary to provide such a collection of homilies for the benefit of the lower orders so that the principles of the faith might be more easily disseminated and understood in remote parishes.

Another priest who translated a religious work into Welsh was John Edwards (Siôn Treredyn) born, according to his own words, at Caldicot (Cil-y-coed), on the banks of the Severn in the south-eastern part of Monmouthshire. He became rector of Llanfarthin nearby in 1626 and afterwards vicar of Wilcrick (Chwilgrug), Tredunnock (Tredynog or Treredynog) and Magor (Magwyr). What is interesting about him, from the religious standpoint, is that he ventured, in 1651, to translate into Welsh Edward Fisher's anti-Puritan book *Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), entitled *Madruddyn y Difinyddiaeth Diweddaraf*.[53] Although he admitted that his Welsh

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[49] Bowen, I., (ed.), *The Statutes of Wales* (London, 1908) 150.

[50] *DWB* 422; Williams, G., 'Edward James a Llyfr yr Homilïau' in *Grym Tafodau Tân: Ysgrifau Hanesyddol ar Grefydd a Diwylliant* (Llandysul, 1984) 180-98.

[51] *Llyfr yr Homilïau* (London, 1606).

[52] *Ibid.* A2[b].

[53] Gruffydd, W.J., *Llenyddiaeth Cymru: Rhyddiaith o 1540 hyd 1660* (Wrexham, 1926) 128-31.

style was not of the quality found in the works of some other translators, because he had been born in an area where the use of the Welsh language was not widespread and where, as he put it, English was more commonly used, the work of this translator should not be undermined. Indeed, he was one among a number of translators of theological books into Welsh in the seventeenth century who contributed significantly to strengthen Protestantism in Wales although the degree of their influence was probably very limited. Despite his shortcomings and his own awareness of his inadequacies, John Edwards, therefore, was indeed in the line of other translators of religious prose such as Rowland Vaughan of Caer-gai, Merioneth, Robert Llwyd, vicar of Chirk, Denbighshire and Dr John Davies of Mallwyd.

The third and last theme to be considered is probably the most speculative, namely the degree to which the gentry of Gwent considered themselves to be Welsh in view of the evidence supplied by contemporary literature. It certainly can be said that the decline in patronage in this region, as elsewhere, had taken its toll by the middle years of the seventeenth century. John Edwards presented his translation of Fisher's work to named Monmouthshire gentry, pleading with them to revive their interest in their native culture. His comments were directed specifically at the Herberts of Raglan, the Morgans of Tredegar and their satellites, the Williamses of Llangybi and the Kemeyses of Cefnmabli, all of them, except the last, being descendants of families which had, in varying degrees in the past, been engaged in preserving that heritage.[54] Edwards harshly reprimanded the literate and privileged sector of Gwent society immediately after the Civil Wars:

> Eithr o holl wledydd y byd, hyd y gwn i, nid oes un genedl mor ddigariad a mor elyniaethus i'w iaith ei hunan ag yw'r Cymro ... Canys, felly y gwelwn ni beunydd, hwy nag yr elo na Chymro na Chymraes i Lundain, neu i Gaerloyw neu i fan arall o Loegr a dysgu rhyw ychydig o Saesneg, hwy a wadant eu gwlad a'u iaith eu hunain.[55]
>
> [Of all the countries of the world (as far as I know) there is not one nation so unaffectionate and so opposed to its own language as the Welshman ... because, as we daily see, as soon as those Welshmen and women go to London or Gloucester or any other place in England and learn a little English, they deny their own country and language.]

And he continued:

> Ac o'r Cymry cartrefol, ie, ym mhlith y pendefigion ysgolheigaidd, ie, ymysg y Dysgawdwyr Eglwysig, braidd un o bymtheg a fedr ddarllen ac ysgrifennu Cymraeg.[56]
>
> [And of those homekeeping Welshmen, yes among the scholarly noblemen, yes among ecclesiastical teachers, barely one among fifteen can read and write Welsh.]

These extracts are important for several reasons; the author is aware of the negligent attitude among some literate Welshmen towards their native culture and their aptness to forsake their native tongue once they crossed the border. He calculated (on what grounds is not known) that only one in every fifteen among scholars could read and write Welsh, which, when taken in its broadest context, accounted for the small market in Welsh printed books. He stressed very seri-

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[54] Lewis, H. (ed.), *Hen Gyflwyniadau* (Cardiff, 1948) 25.

[55] *Ibid.* 26-7; See also *Llenyddiaeth Cymru: Rhyddiaith o 1540 hyd 1660* 129-30.

[56] *Hen Gyflwyniadau*, loc. cit.; *Llenyddiaeth Cymru: Rhyddiaith o 1540 hyd 1660* 130.

ous problems which impeded the publication of books, particularly those aimed at improving the moral standard of the Welsh people. In that context, John Edwards was aware of the problems of Wales, namely widespread illiteracy, ignorance and insufficient support by gentry families to foster the cultural life of their nation, issues which the Roman Catholic scholars, Gruffydd Robert and Dr John Davies (Siôn Dafydd Rhys), had raised in the previous century.

Edwards's preface is instructive in that its comments on cultural affairs in Gwent, or indeed, in the Wales of his age, broadly, seemed to be accurate. He, of course, had a religious motive for making known his opinions, but his words do also throw a significant light on the condition of the language and of literacy generally among prominent Monmouthshire gentry as well as others of their status and leanings elsewhere in Wales. The attractions of major towns such as London and Bristol were certainly a major factor in the lives of gentry in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, William Jones, a Newport burgess, desired his children to be 'browght up accordyng to the manerez and conditionez of the norture of Inglonde' and he sent them to Bristol to be educated, presumably because Newport was too Welsh for him![57] Moreover, Newport, despite its growing commerical connections with Bristol and the west country, became more Welsh in character after the Act of Union, principally because the town, like others in Wales, was demilitarised following the withdrawal of garrisons and the equality of status accorded the Welsh native inhabitants in 1536 and before, which enabled more of them to settle in the town. Similarly, the borough of Abergavenny, close to the border, was regarded as 'another Bristowe' but where 'the main or principall language was the Welsh or British tongue'.[58] A prominent inhabitant of that town also, therefore, sent his son to London to perfect his English so that he could speak it 'without corruption from his mother tongue, which doth commonly infect men of our country, that they cannot speak English but that they are discovered by their vitious pronounciations or idiotisms'. This response is symptomatic of a mentality that was to become more common among Welsh people, particularly those of some standing in their community.[59] If that situation existed in Abergavenny then the situation in other Gwent towns, as elsewhere on the Welsh borders, would certainly have been even less to this burgess's liking!

Although, by the very nature of social change, increasing forces of anglicisation strongly combated the surviving native traditions, including the language itself, that trend should not be overstated.[60] In fact, interesting comparisons can be made at this stage. It is considered that, in the sixteenth century, Sir William Herbert, first earl of Pembroke of the second creation, was more proficient in his native tongue than he was in English, a fact which, judging from his movements and activities at home and abroad, seemed not to have deterred him from achieving power, authority and a considerable amount of respect in the realm. Wiliam Llŷn, the famous north Wales poet,

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[57] Owen, G.D., *Elizabethan Wales: The Social Scene* (Cardiff, 1961) 43; Lewis, E.A. (ed.), *An Inventory of the Early Chancery Proceedings Concerning Wales* (Cardiff, 1937) 222; 'Memoirs of Father Augustine Baker and other documents relating to the English Benedictines', McCann, J. and Connolly, H. (eds.), *Catholic Record Society Publications*, 33 (1933) 56.

[58] Owen, op. cit. 53.

[59] *Ibid.* 93-4.

[60] Davies, C., *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition* 58-70; Lewis, C.W., 'The decline of professional poetry' in Gruffydd, R.G. (ed.), *A Guide to Welsh Literature, Volume 3, c. 1530-1700* (Cardiff, 1997) 523-7.

in a couplet in his elegy summed up his eagerness to speak Welsh with his compatriots at Court and praised his distinct awareness of native culture:

> Doedai ef, a didifar,
> Gymraeg wrth Gymro a'i gâr.[61]
>
> [Unrepentingly, he would speak Welsh to a Welshman and his kin.]

The famous lexicographer 'Sir' Thomas Wiliems of Trefriw in the Conwy valley also thought highly of Herbert and praised his determination to speak Welsh with any of his compatriots in the royal court, a characteristic which seemed to have become common knowledge among litterateurs in Wales.[62] He continued by reprimanding those who deliberately abandoned their cultural heritage:

> ... [yr] addurnedicaf Wiliam Jarll penvro, dyfnddwys, gwiwlan a Fyddlonaf gynghorwr cynniver vrenhinoedd a brenhinesae Lloegr, a llygat holl Gymru, yr hwnn ny phlychiai arno ag ny 'mattaliai 'mysc goreugwyr y Deyrnas, adrodd iaith ei vam yn vlaenllym, groewber, gyssongroew, ag yn fraethlym, vlaendost a geryddai r Cymro murseneidd, pefriaith, mindlws, a ddywetei estroniaith wrth ei gyt Gymro.
>
> [... the most decorated William, earl of Pembroke, profound, worthy and most faithful counsellor of so many kings and queens of England and the eye of all Wales, who did not hesitate and restrain himself among the most eminent in the kingdom from speaking his mother tongue sharply, clearly, constantly and worthily and he pointedly chastised the prudish Welshmen, sparkling and affected, who speaks a foreign language to his fellow Welshmen.]

Gruffydd Robert, the Catholic scholar who published his Welsh Grammar published in Milan in 1567 entitled *Dosbarth Byrr ar y rhann gyntaf i ramadeg Cymraeg*, dedicated the work to Sir William Herbert, kinsman of his namesake, first earl of Pembroke, mentioned above, whom he regarded as a learned Welshman, steeped in the native culture.

> Canys e wyr holl Gymru a Lloegr faint eich serch i'r Frutaniaeth, pryd na ddoedech wrth Gymro ond Cymraeg, ie, ymysg penaduriaid y deyrnas ... Hyn a wnaeth i'ch anrhydedd chwithau, fod cymaint ei gariad yng Nghymru, am eich bod mor gariadus i'r Gymraeg, ac yn ei medru mor hyfedr.[63]
>
> [... because all Wales and great England know of your love for the British tongue when you would speak to a Welshman nothing but Welsh, yes, among notables of the realm ... It was that which made your honour so well esteemed in Wales because the Welsh language is so well beloved by you, who knows it so expertly.]

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[61] Jones, J. (ed.), *Cynfeirdd Lleyn, 1500-1800* (Pwllheli, 1905) 123; Stephens, R., 'Gwaith Wiliam Llŷn', (unpublished University of Wales Ph.D. dissertation, 1983) II, CXVI, 399.

[62] Hughes, G.H. (ed.), *Rhagymadroddion 1547-1659* (Cardiff, 1951) 114.

[63] Robert, Gruffydd, *Dosbarth Byrr ar y Rhann Gyntaf i Ramadeg Cymraeg* (1567). Dedication to Sir William Herbert. See Williams, G.J., *Gramadeg Gruffydd Robert* (Cardiff, 1939) [6-7]. Modernised version.

In his preface Robert described the pitiable efforts of those, once they had seen the steeples of Shrewsbury and the Severn river, insisted on speaking English and forsook their native tongue.[64] Such action, in his opinion, was sheer arrogance and vanity:

> Canys chwi a gewch rai yn gyttrym ag y gwelant afon Hafren, ne glochdai ymwithig, a chlowed sais yn doedyd unwaith good morow, a ddechreuant ollwng i cymraeg tros gof, ai doedyd yn fawr i lle-diaith: i cymraeg a fydd saesnigaidd, ai saesneg (duw a wyr) yn rhy gymreigaidd. A hyn sy'n dyfod naill ai o wir pholder, yntau o goeg falchder a gorwagrwydd.[65]
>
> [For you will find some men, as soon as they see the river Severn or the steeples of Shrewsbury and hear the Englishman but once say 'good morrow', they shall begin to put their Welsh out of mind and to speak it in most corrupt fashion. Their Welsh will be of an English cut and their English (God knows) too much after the Welsh fashion. And this cometh either of very foolishness or of a saucy pride and vanity.]

Doubtless this Catholic scholar was satirizing a practice that was becoming more common and of serious concern to the *intelligentsia* because cultural abandonment by the natural leaders of their native community was detrimental to the survival of the Welsh language and the patronage that sustained it.

'Sir' Thomas Wiliems, however, like Gruffydd Robert, saw some hope in the devotion of individuals among the privileged order to their ancestors' cultural connections. For example, he applauded the interest taken by Edward Somerset, fourth earl of Worcester and 'earl marshal' at James I's coronation, in Welsh culture. In his preface to his Latin-Welsh Dictionary (*Trysawr yr iaith Latin a r Gymraec, ne'r geiriadur cywoethocaf a helaethaf or wir ddiletiaith Vrytanaec...* (from 1604), he lavishly praised this magnate as 'y goreu-gwr teilwng o vowrglod...pengwastrawst meirch ein mawreddoc vrenhin Jaco...' ['the best and worthy man of high renown ... chief equerry of our illustrious king James's horses'].[66] He increased the family's prestige in Wales and was described as an ardent supporter of the Welsh language which, seemingly, he spoke fluently: 'Ni rusia ddywedyd Cymraec, a'i hymgeleddu, a'i mawrhau yn anwylgu Frytanaidd' ('He would not be deterred from speaking, cherishing and exalting it as a dearly loved British [language]').[67] That could not be said, however, about his immediate descendants for, in subsequent generations, the Welsh connection in the family became less apparent and the language gradually lost in its appeal, as commonly occurred among late seventeenth-century owners of powerful estates in south-east Wales and elsewhere.

The Lewis family of Y Fan near Caerphilly, however, employed tutors to teach their children French, Latin and Welsh towards the end of the sixteenth century[68] and, in the same period, the heir to the Cefnmabli estate was given a tutor to teach him Welsh.[69] In a religious context, the language was maintained in the Gwent countryside by Jesuit priests and their associates. At

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[64] *Ibid.* See also *Rhagymadroddion* 47; Parry, T., *A History of Welsh Literature*, trans. Bell, H.I. (Oxford, 1955) 211.

[65] *Rhagymadroddion* 47.

[66] *Ibid.* 115.

[67] *Ibid.* 115.

[68] NLW Bute Box 132, Parcel C.

[69] *Ibid.*

Raglan and the College of St Xavier at Y Cwm in the parish of Llanrothal (Llanridol), Herefordshire, a number of Welsh-speaking priests congregated with the intention of restoring the Old Faith in the region and in Wales generally, such as Father John Hughes (Hugh Owen the younger of Gwenynog, Anglesey), for example, who translated parts of the gospels and catechisms fluently into Welsh entitled *Allwydd neu Agoriad Paradwys i'r Cymry*, a work published in Liège in 1670.[70]

It was he also who, in 1684, edited and published a translation by his father, Hugh Owen, of Thomas á Kempis's *De Imitatio Christi* (*c.*1615-42), entitled *Dilyniad Crist*. His father, Hugh Owen senior, left Anglesey in 1621 and joined Henry Somerset, Lord Herbert, in London, moving with him to Raglan in 1627. There is no evidence to show the impact of these works on an illiterate peasant folk, but the fact that such a talented Welsh scholar as Father John Hughes, a long-term resident at Raglan, suggests that he may have used his ability to speak Welsh fluently to missionise among Welsh-speaking communities in the rural areas of Gwent and beyond. It is remarkable that, in the 1620s, an illiterate peasant called Rosser (Rhosier), a servant of David Morgan, an Abergavenny papist and strong opponent of Sir William Morgan of Tredegar (steward of Abergavenny) and his followers, was able to compose Welsh free-metre and recite parts of the scriptures in that language.[71]

A Catholic partisan of this kind might quite easily have been able to advance the Old Faith and spread religious propaganda in the Gwent hinterland although there is no evidence that he ever did so. It would be rewarding to have more evidence about the impact of Roman Catholicism on the survival of the Welsh language in south-east Wales and indeed other parts of the Welsh border, in the seventeenth century. It is an exciting field of research when it is considered that the Old Faith continued to have a strong hold on whole communities in that region in the seventeenth century.

The corpus of strict-metre poetry in honour of Monmouthshire gentry, particularly in the sixteenth century, reveals that some considerable interest was shown on the part of the gentry in Welsh culture. In view of the increasing anglicisation among these families, however, it is a matter of speculation how much of the content was truly understood and appreciated by the recipients, a point that could also apply to some other areas in Wales. What is evident, however, is that bardic practitioners composed these odes, rendered them orally in the various households and obtained remuneration from seemingly supportive heads of families, more often than not in periods of serious financial inflation. Some incentive was given occasionally to individuals who had close connections with Gwent to learn the Welsh language so as to further their knowledge of its history and antiquities. The most prominent among them doubtless was Percy Enderbie, the author of *Cambria Triumphans* (1661). He married Winifred, the sister of Sir Edward Morgan of Llantarnam, created second baronet in 1642, who established the Welsh section of the Society of Jesus at Y Cwm in 1635, lived for years in Wales, learnt the language and became immensely interested in it and its history. An ambition which he did not fulfil was to write the history of Monmouthshire, but *Cambria Triumphans* is an important work intended to prove the Welsh

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[70] *DWB* 380.

[71] Owen, G.D., *Wales in the Reign of James I* (London, 1988) 108 (n. 95); PRO Star Chamber 8 James I 207/30. See Edwards, I. ab Owen (ed.), *A Catalogue of Star Chamber Proceedings relating to Wales* (Cardiff, 1929) 193.

descent of the Stuart royal line.[72] It was written at Llantarnam and, in his preface, Enderbie states that he obtained much of the material for it in his brother-in-law's library which apparently housed a rich collection of Welsh books:

> ... my long continuance and aboad in that Country, which hath rendered me in a manner a Native; the civilities of the gentry prick me forwards, and the help of a good library of Sir Edward Morgans of Lantarnam, encouraged me to bring the *Embrion* to its full maturity.[73]

The work itself is valuable because it highlights the importance of ancient royal British forms of government and contains information on the easternmost areas of Wales where Welsh was still a spoken language in the seventeenth century. Enderbie's view of Wales and its history seemed to be far more optimistic than that of his contemporaries among historians and academics for, although he had 'extracted many drams of hony' from their works, he sought to add 'much lustre to the almost perisht Brittish glory' and 'present unto the World in a whole Mass, that many may undeceive themselves, and rectifie there misled judgments, who apprehend the thirteen Counties of Wales, to produce nothing but Barreness'.[74]

With regard to strict-metre poetry in the early modern period, it would not be amiss to say that no bard of quality emerged in Gwent who could compare with the prominent exponents of the craft in north and other parts of Wales, whose compositions to the gentry of Gwynedd, the north-eastern and western parts of Wales, were far more refined in structure and presentation. When the geographical position and social and economic pressures which Monmouthshire endured are considered that verdict is comprehensible. Despite the flattering tone and the frequent and meaningless interjected or parenthetical phrases (*sangiadau*) in these compositions, it was felt that traditional eulogy was fully justified. The twin features, kin and descent, were emphasised together with the other innate virtues, especially military valour, noble householdership and hospitality, which were exactly the same features accorded to patrons in areas strongly supportive of Welsh tradition. Sir William Herbert was praised by his great admirer 'Sir' Thomas Wiliems, chiefly because he was a Welshman who had, as lord president of the Council in the Marches at Ludlow on two occasions (1550-53; 1555-58), the power to lift the reputation of Wales in English circles and to emphasise the common identities of the enlightened Welsh public figure and the English establishment which he served.[75]

Dafydd Benwyn's poems are similar in content and sentiment; for in them the magnanimity of Welsh *uchelwyr* is interpreted in the context of their contribution and links with government in the realm and native regions. Family connections would account for that aspect but what is remarkable is not so much the survival of bardic tradition in Gwent as much as that the bards attributed to the *uchelwyr* there the same virtues enjoyed by less well-endowed gentry in areas where the economy was weak. Lewis Morgannwg, Dafydd Benwyn and others, on a smaller scale it is true, realised that basic images, however unrefined their presentation, were as meaningful in relation to Gwent *uchelwyr*. Having said that, it is only fair to add that, in Dafydd Benwyn's

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[72] *DWB* 216.

[73] *Cambria Triumphans*, To the Reader, 1.

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Rhagymadroddion* 114; Williams, P., *The Council in the Marches of Wales under Elizabeth I* (Cardiff, 1958) xiv, 36-8, 234-6.

poems, are discovered an abundance of local place-names as well as valuable details about pedigrees which are themselves significant sources for historians and antiquaries alike.

Besides the survival of a Welsh-speaking peasantry it is also significant, as the above-mentioned factors reveal, that the Welsh language was evident in the public life of a small group of well-meaning gentry. When an attempt, therefore, is made to review the degree to which Monmouthshire in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries contributed to the survival of Welsh cultural activity, certain facts need to be borne in mind. First, the shire, although it was formed out of a number of marcher lordships, was basically a Welsh entity and, like other areas in the Principality, structured on the ancient Welsh administrative unit known as the commote. Second, the social and economic development of the Welsh gentry order in the shire was largely established on the same foundations as were those in other parts of Wales. Third, the social structure of Monmouthshire was similar to that of Brecknockshire, Radnorshire and other new shires formed out of marcher territory on the border. Taking these facts into consideration, it is obviously the case that the judicial and administrative structure of the shire after 1536, attached as it was to central machinery at Westminster and lying outside the jurisdiction of the Welsh Great Sessions system, was essentially a policy of convenience to Thomas Cromwell, the architect of the Act of Union and his agents, much in the same way as the new shire of Flint in the north-east had been to the administrators of Edward I in 1284, when it was placed under the jurisdiction of the justice of Chester.[76]

In this context, and in view of its provincial unity, the contribution of the Gwent gentry to the preservation of the Welsh language and its literature needs to be interpreted more positively. The bards were fully aware of the Welsh qualities of gentry leadership in the shire and, despite the marked decline in poetic values and the pressures placed upon them in border areas, a strong feeling of national identity persisted. As Professor G.J. Williams and Dr Siân Rhiannon Williams, among others, have revealed when dealing with the later history of the shire, despite the odds Welsh consciousness survived in dispersed communities, particularly in the hinterland.[77]

Although a sizeable proportion of Gwent *uchelwyr*, especially those from the eastern areas, had estranged themselves from the native cultural scene by the latter half of the seventeenth century, the survival of the literary heritage testifies to the fact that the Welsh language, as a means of communication for the bards, litterateurs and peasantry, still remained a means of communication in a critical period before and after the Acts of Union. That, in itself, is fundamentally important to understand and appreciate what was taking place in the cultural history of the shire in a period of significant social and economic transformation. It succeeded in maintaining its own because the brand of culture associated with it adhered positively and uninterruptedly to the conventions that characterised Welsh gentry life in its last century before new social and industrial factors created a dynamic new community in the Gwent uplands.

Since the poetry highlights prominent features of members of well-established families who governed their communities, principally the branches of the Morgans of Tredegar, it would

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[76] Williams, G., *Renewal and Reformation: Wales, c. 1415-1642* (Cardiff, 1990) 31-2; Davies, R.R., *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford, 1992) 364.

[77] Williams, G.J., *The Welsh Tradition of Gwent*; Williams, S.R., *Oes y Byd i'r Iaith Gymraeg: Y Gymraeg yn Ardal Ddiwydiannol Sir Fynwy yn y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg* (Cardiff, 1992).

be appropriate to draw attention to the content of part of a *cywydd* by Dafydd Benwyn in honour of William Morgan of Llanfihangel Nant Teyrnon, the head of a cadet family who purchased the lands of the Cistercian abbey which had existed there since 1179. It is resplendent eulogy which contains old stereotype conventions and immutable praise but which also, in the context of the theme of this discussion, clearly demonstrates, as do other similar poems by the same bard, that Morgan was regarded as a true Gwent Welshman and an *uchelwr* who claimed noble descent from Ifor Hael.[78] Consequently, he deserved to be applauded as a 'Brython' of ancient lineage, and was hailed a 'mur' ('wall, fortification') - a familiar metaphor often used in compositions of this kind meaning a firm defender and leader. He, says the bard, was the steadfast 'mur' in Gwent designated to do no less than protect and defend the best interests of the Welsh heritage within his patrimony. The poem in its entirety serves to reveal human qualities which the patron shared with the hardiest and most tenacious of gentry leaders in other parts of Wales in the Tudor age:

> Cymru drwy frig Gwent o'i fron,
> Carw a llywiawdwr Caerllïon ...
> Gorau wyt oll y gŵr da,
> Gorau ond un ac ira;
> Y mae lle bo gwehelyth
> Mae'i wedd lle bo bonedd byth;
> Brytwn wyt, brau atyn ŵr,
> Bryd odiaith, brau o Dewdwr ...
> Mur ydwyt, mawr a adwaen,
> Os hyn yw'r peth, synnwyr pen;
> A thebyg, glān di anael
> O fawr hap i Ifor Hael.[79]
>
> [A Welshman through the whole of Gwent, the stag and leader of Caerllïon ... You are the best, good man, the best and most invigorating; he remains where lineage lies; he appears where gentility for ever resides. You are a Briton, a rare man of exquisite complexion; a fair descendant of Tewdwr ... You are a large rampart, a sober and judicious person, whom I know; and likewise pure and untainted and destined to be like Ifor Hael.]

[78] Cardiff MS 2.227, 74; *The Gwentian Poems of Dafydd Benwyn* 20-1.
[79] Cardiff MS 2.227, 74. Modernised version.

# A MONMOUTHSHIRE POLITICIAN OF CHARACTER: CHARLES VAN (d. 1778) OF LLANWERN

*By Peter D.G. Thomas*

The Van family purchased the Monmouthshire estate of Llanwern in 1630, but the family played a very minor part in the county political scene before Charles Van (d. 1778) developed ideas above his station. Llanwern would support a squire, but not pretensions to a seat in Parliament. No Van had hitherto aspired to more than a consultative role at county meetings, and those were usually formal occasions: effective control was exercised by the dukes of Beaufort by virtue of their Raglan estate, by the Morgans of Tredegar and, for much of the eighteenth century, by the Hanbury family of Pontypool.

Charles Van's date of birth is unknown, but he was presumably at least in his twenties when in September 1754, he married Catherine, a daughter of Thomas Morgan, Judge Advocate General for the army and uncle of William Morgan of Tredegar, whose estates he was to inherit in 1763. Van himself inherited Llanwern in 1765 from his father, also Charles, who had married a Bristol heiress, Elizabeth Samson of Henbury. Van now sought to cut a figure in Monmouthshire. It was he who rebuilt Llanwern House, and above all, marriage into the powerful Tredegar family fired his ambition to become an MP. His first venture was in the neighbouring county of Glamorgan.

The death of shire MP Charles Edwin on 29 June 1756 precipitated a by-election there. First in the field was Thomas Mathews of Llandaff Court, son of the Admiral Thomas Mathews who in 1745 had secured a dubious by-election victory in the county when standing on the Whig interest against the hitherto dominant Tory families, none of whom in 1756 had a candidate to propose.[1] Mathews was 'a most disagreeable man and far from being popular', according to Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, a Monmouthshire squire, currently British ambassador to Russia, who was 'sure Mr Mathews would not carry his election'.[2] Charles Van thought he saw his chance of a Parliamentary seat, and had the temerity to stand against the advice of William Morgan of Tredegar. Sir Charles, in distant St Petersburg, was astonished to hear of Van's candidature, but did not deem it hopeless.[3]

> Nothing has surprised me more than the flights of young Mr Van. It is the mother, of whom he is the picture, that works within him. Good God! If old Van was to hear that his son stood for a county, and kept thirteen bay coach horses, he would rise out of his grave to disinherit him. Major Mathews is certainly an unpopular and disagreeable man, and if Mr Van spends his money freely, I should not despair of his election.

Monmouthshire MP, Capel Hanbury, brother of Sir Charles and electoral ally of Tredegar, gave Van his full support, and the Morgan family presumably did likewise. At the poll in December, Mathews triumphed by 954 votes to 212, but Charles Van, in a petition submitted to

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[1] For that contest, see Thomas, P.D.G., 'Glamorgan Politics 1700-1750', *Morgannwg*, 6 (1962) 71-6.

[2] *The Works of the Right Honourable Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, K.B., Volume 3* (3 vols., London, 1822) 98.

[3] *Ibid.* 104.

the House of Commons on 20 January 1757, tried to explain away his bad result by the claim that he had 'declined polling a great number of voters' because of his intention to petition against Mathews on the ground that he lacked the statutory qualification for a county MP of a landed estate worth £600 a year. Van's petition made this improbable claim, that the owner of Llandaff Court did not possess such a landed income, but he withdrew the petition on 15 February, before the case was heard.[4]

Van's ventures into Monmouthshire politics were equally wrong-headed. In 1763, public feeling in the county was aroused by a cider tax imposed by the ministry of Lord Bute. Monmouthshire indeed, was the only one of the seven cider-producing counties not to petition Parliament, but Van was nevertheless foolish to rush to the defence of the tax. Writing as 'Agricola' in the 2 May 1763 issue of the *Gloucester Journal*, which served as Monmouthshire's newspaper in the absence of a local one, Van denounced as unreasonable both the tumultuous clamour of the cider-makers and their desire to be exempt from taxation. His behaviour was remembered against him when Capel Hanbury died on 7 December 1765 and Van announced his candidacy for the shire vacancy. A notice in the *Gloucester Journal* of 16 December reminded its readers of Van's role in the cider controversy, and it was in vain that Van, in the same newspaper a fortnight later, said that his sole motive had been to prevent riots and that he too had aimed for a repeal of the tax, a claim that contradicted his support of it two years before. His own father-in -law Thomas Morgan, now possessed of Tredegar, refused to back him against Capel Hanbury's son, John, an overwhelmingly popular candidate, and Van withdrew his candidature.[5]

Van seemingly did not grasp the power structure of Monmouthshire politics, that Tredegar and Pontypool shared the two seats in an alliance, and that any Tredegar attempt to secure the second seat for himself would be unavailing. Undeterred by this by-election rebuff, Van on 10 June 1767 issued a notice of candidature with respect to the general election due by March 1768. Blind to political reality, he complained in another notice of 9 December of 'the strong association which is formed against me', evidently that of Tredegar and Pontypool.[6] The Morgan family did not give their in-law any encouragement, and Thomas Morgan junior, eldest son of the master of Tredegar, and John Hanbury issued a joint address, asking their friends to attend a county meeting at Usk on 6 January 1768.[7] They were subsequently elected without opposition.

Luck, the fortune wheel of mortality, now came to Van's aid. Thomas Morgan of Tredegar died in 1769, to be replaced by his second son, Charles, as MP for Breconshire. However, when the younger Thomas Morgan died in 1771, at the age of forty-three, the youngest of the three Morgan brothers, John, had to vacate his Brecon borough seat to defend the traditional Morgan county seat in Monmouthshire in a fierce by-election contest against a candidate of the duke of Beaufort.[8] He succeeded, but there was now no Morgan candidate for Brecon, a pocket borough of Tredegar. This was an opportunity for Charles and John Morgan to accommodate the ambitious and troublesome Charles Van. Van, however, faced competition for the seat from another Morgan brother-in-law,

[4] *Journals of the House of Commons*, 27, 659-60, 709.

[5] National Library of Wales Tredegar MSS 66/6-7.

[6] *Gloucester Journal*, 22 June and 14 Dec. 1767.

[7] *Ibid.*, 21 Dec. 1767.

[8] For this contest, see Thomas, P.D.G., 'The Monmouthshire election of 1771', *Historical Research*, 72 (1999) 44-57.

Charles Gould, a Londoner who in 1758 had married their other sister, Jane, and had succeeded their father, Thomas, as Judge Advocate General in 1769, having served as his deputy since 1753. Gould, to avoid family discord, generously waived his claim to the by-election seat, because, as he later told Charles Morgan, Van was 'bent upon obtaining it'.[9] Van did not respond in the same spirit, as John Morgan recalled in 1774: 'Mr Van was far from being civil in his first election, for then Mr Gould wrote him a very handsome letter which he did not even condescend to answer'.[10] At the by-election on 31 January 1772 Van was returned at a cost to Tredegar of £78.[11]

John Morgan's comment was made at the general election of 1774. Gould reminded Charles Morgan then that he would also like the Brecon seat, and said that he had hoped that Van would have been a candidate for Bristol, which port he had recently championed in Parliament.[12] Van rightly assumed that he would have no chance at Bristol, where Edmund Burke was elected in a bitter contest. Van was returned again for Brecon on 24 October, the combined cost of this and Charles Morgan's election for Breconshire two day later being £293.[13] Gould had disclaimed any wish to supplant Van, but was annoyed that no civility was paid to him for not pushing his pretensions.[14]

At Westminster, Charles Van followed the lead of his Morgan brothers-in-law by supporting the ministry of Lord North.[15] Unlike most squires, Van was not a man to be overawed by the House of Commons. During his six years as MP he was a regular speaker, on a variety of topics. When in 1773, there was a proposal to arraign Lord Clive for alleged corruption in India, Van on 19 April implicitly pre-judged the issue when he urged 'Bring the offender [*sic*] to a fair and decisive trial'.[16] In subsequent speeches, Van complained that country gentlemen had suffered from the operation of a coinage Act of 1773, and urged that other ports as well as London should be allowed to export corn to the West Indies. He favoured mercy when on 14 February 1774 printer Henry Woodfall was brought before the House for an alleged libel on the Speaker.[17] On 2 March 1774 Van displayed class prejudice when he opposed legislation to prevent the return of paupers to their parish of birth, as stipulated under the poor law, until they became a charge on their parish of residence. Van's argument was that crime would be encouraged by such leniency.[18] On all of these occasions, Van was in the minority, but on 30 April 1776, calling it 'a black bill', he did help to defeat a measure intended to curb the plunder of shipwrecks by making the hundred of the county pay compensation for such an outrage.[19]

It was not in debate on such minor matters that Van attracted most attention at Westminster and beyond. He made notable debating contributions on two major political issues of the day,

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[9] NLW Tredegar MSS 53/54.
[10] *Ibid.* 53/36.
[11] *Ibid.* 228.
[12] *Ibid.* 53/74.
[13] *Ibid.* 228.
[14] *Ibid.* 53/34, 35, 36, 77.
[15] British Library Ms. Facs. 340 (3), ff.8, 13, 48, 51.
[16] BL Egerton MSS 247, 98-9.
[17] BL Egerton MSS 251, 39-41, 101, 219.
[18] BL Egerton MSS 253, 85-7. These Egerton volumes form part of the parliamentary diary of Henry Cavendish.
[19] J. Almon, *The Parliamentary Register ... 1774 to 1780, Volume 3* (17 vols., 1775-80) 502.

John Wilkes and the American Revolution; and on both he adopted a more extreme position than the North ministry he supported. Radical John Wilkes was Van's *bête noir*. Wilkes, then MP for Middlesex, had in 1769 been expelled from the House of Commons on the basis of a resolution that he had been guilty of obscene libels as well as seditious ones. When the topic of his expulsion was indirectly raised in the House on 15 February 1774, Van gave vent to his strong feelings on the matter. Wilkes, he declared, had been guilty of 'blasphemy', indicted, convicted and imprisoned for it. 'Upon that ground such a person is unworthy to sit in this House. Therefore I will always vote against the admission of such a person, let who will elect him'. Van was sufficiently roused to make three speeches that day.[20]

At the general election that year, Wilkes was returned for Middlesex. As soon as the new Parliament met, it was therefore rumoured that Van would move his expulsion, 'which will distress, and may produce an odd scene', noted political commentator Horace Walpole.[21] Such a motion would have been unconstitutional, and Van may have been dissuaded from putting it by the North ministry, which, far from acting against Wilkes, was awaiting with trepidation his intention to declare unlawful his 1769 disqualification from sitting. When Wilkes made that motion on 22 February 1775, Van rejoined that Wilkes ought to be satisfied that he had obtained a seat after being guilty of blasphemy. Wilkes called Van to order and had the expulsion resolution read out, which did not include the word 'blasphemy'. 'This occasioned much laughter', noted reporter John Almon. When Wilkes called on Van to retract what he had said, Van, unabashed as ever, replied that although 'he had mistaken the precise word, yet impious and profane were pretty nearly the same thing'.[22] Horace Walpole penned this account of an incident that caught contemporary attention:[23]

> Vann, a strange man, urged the imputation of blasphemy against Wilkes, having in a bravado the last winter vowed to do so. Wilkes called for the words of the resolution, in which impiety not blasphemy, was expressed. 'A puppy!', cried Wilkes to those near him. 'Does he think I don't know what is blasphemy better than he?'

America, not Wilkes, was the dominant political question of the 1770s, and it was here that Charles Van may be said to have made his own tiny contribution to world history. His first speech on America came on 26 January 1774, in a debate on army estimates. News had just arrived of the Boston Tea Party, and Van argued that Britain should not have to bear the defence costs of a 'people almost in a state of rebellion'.[24] It was his next speech, in debate on 23 March on the Boston Port Bill, that earned Van notoriety across the Atlantic. That measure proposed the closure of Boston harbour until compensation was paid for the tea, but Van did not think this anything like severe enough. '*Delenda est Carthago*' he said, quoting what the elder Cato was reputed to have urged in the Roman Senate during the Third Punic War between Rome and Carthage.

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[20] BL Egerton MSS 251, 289-94.

[21] Toynbee, Mrs P. (ed.), *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Orford, Volume 9* (16 vols., Oxford, 1905) 105-6.

[22] Almon, *Parliamentary Register, Volume 1* 230.

[23] Stewart, A.F. (ed.), *The Last Journals of Horace Walpole, during the reign of George III from 1771-1783, Volume 1* (2 vols., London, 1910) 438.

[24] Simmons, R.C. and Thomas, P.D.G. (eds.), *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783, Volume 4* (6 vols., New York, 1982-6) 6.

'Make it a mark that shall never be restored ... Impress the Americans. "That was the town". ... Demolish it. That is my opinion. *Delenda est Carthago* [Carthage must be destroyed]'. That was Van's language as captured by Parliamentary diarist Henry Cavendish. The Latin phrase was noted by another diarist, Matthew Brickdale, who summarised Van as saying, 'I think Boston ought to be exemplarily punished'. More significantly, it was also reported in the press. The *London Evening Post* of 26 March quoted it and followed with this attribution, 'I am of opinion you will never meet with that proper obedience to the laws of this country, until you have destroyed that nest of locusts'.[25] Van was merely a government backbencher, literally so: he was noted as sitting under the gallery. But his fiery speech was a gift to colonial propagandists, who made it notorious in America as supposedly characteristic of the ministry's hard-line attitude. So did a Monmouthshire squire contribute his mite to the making of great events.

Van's extremist reputation was seemingly confirmed by his next speech, on 15 April, when he suggested that in the event of resistance to British measures the woods of Massachusetts should be set on fire. The aim, however, was not to strike terror into the colonists, but, as a military tactic, to deprive any rebels of such protective shelter, a method used by the 'ancient Britons', so Van claimed.[26] In the opening debate of the next session, on 5 December 1774, it was reported that 'Mr Van spoke strongly for the most firm and decisive measures', and on 20 February 1775, he was one of the ministry's supporters who opposed Lord North's conciliatory policy of an offer to allow the colonists to tax themselves.[27] No further speeches on America by Van are reported before 1778, deep into the American War, when what proved to be his last two Parliamentary orations were both full of wit. On 4 February, 'Mr Van in a long speech caused much mirth ... and entertained the House with a long comparison between Britain and Rome, America and Carthage'. His main target was the Parliamentary opposition, 'rank idiots', whose fate would be that of Hannibal. For 24 February, it was simply reported that 'Mr Van closed the debate, and kept the House in a continual laugh during the whole course of his speech'.[28]

Charles Van died only a few weeks later, on 3 April 1778, bequeathing the Llanwern estate to his only son, Thomas. When he died in 1794, Llanwern passed to the eldest of his four sisters, Katherine, who in 1780, had married a Denbighshire squire, Robert Salusbury. In ironic contrast to Charles Van's difficulties in obtaining a Parliamentary seat, his son-in-law, also seated at Llanwern, was an MP for thirty years, for Monmouthshire and Brecon Borough, sitting on the Tredegar interest.

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[25] Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings and Debates, Volume 4* 102, 106-7, 112.
[26] *Ibid.* 172-3, 177-8.
[27] *Ibid., Volume 5* 242, 451.
[28] Almon, *Parliamentary Register, Volume 8* 343, 403.

# NATHANIEL WELLS OF PIERCEFIELD AND ST KITTS: FROM SLAVE TO SHERIFF

*By J.A.H. Evans*

In January 1818, Nathaniel Wells, a former slave, made a formal avowal of his allegiance to King George III. He swore that:

> I from my heart abjure as imperious and heretical that damnable doctrine and position that princes excommunicated or deprived by the pope or any authority from the See of Rome may be deposed or murthered by their subjects or any other whatsoever .... [1]

The Oath of Supremacy having being taken, Mr Plumer Kipling of Whitehall issued instructions to Sir Charles Morgan of Tredegar, George Buckle of Chepstow and others, that any two of them should witness Nathaniel Wells signing his writ of appointment as sheriff of Monmouthshire.[2] This was done sometime before 2 February 1818 and Nathaniel Wells, the son of the late William Wells of St Kitts and his house slave, Juggy, in replacing Robert Thompson of Tintern Abbey, appears to have made history by becoming the first Black sheriff in Britain.[3] His life and family history show that the experience of Blacks under slavery was more complex and diverse than is generally assumed. This article attempts to explore the early days of the young Nathaniel Wells in St Kitts and the environment in which he grew up and his subsequent elevation to the landed gentry as a rich young man in the Chepstow area, using a variety of contemporary sources with a Welsh and St Kitts connection.

By any standards, Nathaniel's rise from the son of a slave woman to sheriff, had been a great one. His father, William Wells, had been born in Cardiff on 17 March 1730. He was one of the four sons of the Reverend Nathaniel Wells and his first wife. The Reverend Nathaniel Wells was an early Methodist sympathiser, who was the curate of both Cardiff and Penarth before becoming rector of St Andrews and Llandough in Cardiff.[4] His second wife was Nancy Mathews, the daughter of James Mathews of Llantrisant near Cardiff. After the death of his first wife, Nancy had become a servant to Mr Wells, but she became pregnant by him and he was forced to marry her. They went on to have several children together, three of whom, all sons, were alive when she died aged around fifty-two years of age. She was buried at eight o'clock at night on 15 November 1767 at Llandaff. She was described at the time of her death as suffering from 'three weeks sickness the last time, but had been since last autumn in a lingering ague, and some say she dy'd of jealousy and over much drinking. A proud, spiteful sort of a woman'.[5]

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[1] Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) C 202/206/1A.

[2] PRO C 202/206/1A, 24 Jan. 1818. Plumer Kipling, Whitehall, to Sir Charles Morgan, George Buckle etc.

[3] *Gloucester Journal*, 2 Feb. 1818. No earlier example of a Black sheriff has been found.

[4] See Tilney, C., 'Nathaniel Wells and The Wesleyan Choice', *Bathafarn*, 17 (1960) 27-33; Guy, J.R., *The Diocese of Llandaff in 1763. The Primary Visitation of Bishop Ewer*, (Cardiff, 1991) 163-4; and Denning, R.T.W. (ed.), from a transcript by Davies, J.B. and Rhys, G.H., *The Diary of William Thomas, 1762-1795, of Michaelston-super-Ely, near St Fagans, Glamorgan* (Cardiff, 1995). (Hereafter, referred to as *The Diary of William Thomas*). Thomas despised the Revd Nathaniel Wells and his diaries record several unflattering references to Wells and his family.

[5] *The Diary of William Thomas* 197, 15 Nov. 1767.

William Wells may have been present at the funeral, for he had just arrived back in Cardiff from St Kitts on 10 October 1767. He may have been coming back to help his father sort out his affairs. His uncle, the Reverend Miles Wells, a fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, who had been living with his father and stepmother because of his mental instability, had died the year before. This and the impending death of his stepmother, would have meant that his father would have been left alone with his seven or eight year-old son, Miles.[6]

At the time of his return to Cardiff, William Wells had been living in St Kitts in the West Indies for about eighteen years. He was already a rich man worth an estimated £60,000. His return was seen as a cause for celebration and the bells in Cardiff had rung to welcome him home.[7] He had been only about nineteen years of age when he emigrated to St. Kitts with his younger brother, Nathaniel,[8] in around 1749, leaving their brothers Robert and Cradock and their half-brothers behind.[9] There seem to have been several connections existing between the Cardiff area and St Kitts. Tobacco imported from the island by the Spencer Family of Aberthaw was impounded by John Byrd, the customs collector in south-east Wales, in the1630s.[10] Later, in 1763, John Roberts, known as Doctor Roberts from Cowbridge, died there aged about forty. He appears to have been a slaver, having made about thirteen voyages to Guinea with Captain Washbut of the *Thetis* snow of Bristol. He came to the attention of the diarist, William Thomas, for his ill-treatment of a ship's carpenter named John Barker who was apparently known to Thomas. He described Roberts as 'that wicked man who ... used him as barbarous as Indians'.[11]

In emigrating to the island at such a relatively young age, William and Nathaniel appear to have been following an accepted way of obtaining a foothold in the sugar trade. Planters were looking for single young men to employ as junior agents or managers. They were cheaper to employ than family men: 'They well knew that exclusive of the extra consumption of a family in the plantation provisions ... there were many other ways by which it would become more burthensome than finding of a single man'. Within four or five years, a new manager could find himself in charge of dealing with merchants and tradesmen and had gained personal experience in

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[6] *Ibid.* 161, 14 April 1766.

[7] *Ibid.* 194, 10 Oct. 1767.

[8] Baptised 11 Feb. 1732.

[9] *The Diary of William Thomas* 194, 10 Oct. 1767.

[10] Roberts, S.K. (ed.), *The Letter-Book of John Byrd, Customs Collector in South-East Wales 1648-80* (Cardiff, 1999) xvii, xxi, xxv.

[11] *The Diary of William Thomas* 82, 29 Aug. 1763. Captain Washbut was Captain Wapshutt of the *Thetis*, see Richardson, D. (ed.), *Bristol, Africa and the eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 3* (Bristol Record Society's Publications, vol. 42, Bristol, 1991) 88. (Hereafter referred to as Richardson, D., *18th Century Slave Trade*). The *Thetis*, Robert Wapshutt (master), 60 tons with no guns, left Bristol in 1755 with twenty-two crew and arrived in Antigua having lost nine men. Four of them had turned pirate. There were other families named Wells already on St Kitts, one of which appears possibly to have been related to the Wells family of Cardiff. *The Unfortunate Shipwright: or, Cruel Captain, Being a faithful narrative of the unparallel'd sufferings of Robert Barker, late carpenter on board the Thetis Snow, of Bristol, in a voyage to the coast of Guinea and Antigua* was 'Printed for, and sold by the Sufferer' in London, *c.* 1760.

buying and handling slaves.[12] It was the ideal preparation for anyone wishing to become a plantation owner in his own right.

There is some evidence that William worked as part of a small partnership in his first few years on the island. He was a subscriber to Samuel Baker's map of St Christopher and Nevis in 1753, but he does not appear as a landowner on the survey.[13] William was recorded as buying slaves at Charleston, the capital of the nearby island of Nevis, from Henry Laurens. Laurens was selling slaves at the time from the *Orrel*, owned by John Knight of Liverpool. Other purchasers at the time show the diversity and involvement of other traders from Britain or of British descent. They included Peter Furnell of Jamaica; Gedney Clarke, collector of customs at Barbados; Devonshire, Reed and Lloyd of Bristol, who appear to have been buying slaves for resale in North America; the art collector, Augustus Boyd of London; and the two leading slave owners from Lancashire, the brothers John and Robert Thompson.[14]

William seems to have suffered problems in his first few years on the island. On 28 January 1754, John Baker, a barrister of the Middle Temple and solicitor general of the Leeward Islands, cast doubt on William Wells's commercial competence. He witnessed Wells selling slaves: 'Mr Wells etc., Negro sale – some Ibbo Negroes sold at £32 sterling – what madness! Better looking, seasoned Negroes at the same time sold for £50 currency, etc., at least 55'.[15]

In the same year, he seems to have had more problems. The *Earl of Radnor*, in which Henry Laurens was again involved, arrived at St Kitts. Its slaves were offered to Wells, Wharton and Doran, but they were so sickly and unable to work that the firm could not sell them even 'at so low a limit as £21 per head'.[16] Such slaves were usually abandoned on the island and written off as a financial loss. James Morley, a gunner in the slave trade in the 1760s, witnessed seeing such slaves 'lying about the beach at St Kitts, in the market place, and in the different parts of the town, in a very bad condition, and apparently nobody to take care of them'.[17]

Despite what others apparently thought about his ability, William Wells began to establish himself and it was around this time that he got married. He was about twenty-four years of age and his wife, Elizabeth, was approximately thirty-seven. She is usually identified as the daughter of the Hon. Richard Rowland, who referred to his granddaughters Anne and Elizabeth Wells in

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[12] National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW) *Bodrhyddan Correspondence, vol. 1, The West Indies* 152. For a brief description of this collection, see *Guide to the Department of Manuscripts and Records. The National Library of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1994) 55.

[13] PRO CO 700, St Christopher and Nevis5. Map of St Christopher and Nevis, 1753, surveyed by Samuel Baker, Lieutenant in His Majesty's Navy.

[14] Thomas, H., *The Slave Trade. The history of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870* (London, 1997) 269, quoting Philipp, Hamer *et al.*, *The Letters and Papers of Henry Laurens* (Columbia, S.C., 1964) 14, 3/2, 202, 321. (Hereafter referred to as Thomas, H., *The Slave Trade*).

[15] Yorke, P.C. (ed.), *The Diary of John Baker, Barrister of the Middle Temple and Solicitor General of the Leeward Islands* (London, 1931) 74. Ibos were from south-east Nigeria.

[16] Richardson, D., *18th Century Slave Trade* 68. Quotes Laurens, vol. 1, 257.

[17] Thomas, H., *The Slave Trade* 437. Quotes *Reports and Parliamentary Papers 1790*, vol. 72, 160. The evidence of James Morley.

his will of 1761.[18] However, their first child's name, William Fenton Wells, may indicate that she was the Elizabeth Fenton who, as a seventeen year-old heiress, married a Nicholas Taylor at Basseterre in 1734.[19] Their son died in 1754, their nine month-old daughter, Anstance, was buried in the May of the following year.[20] Elizabeth Wells died aged forty-two on 29 June 1759 and was buried the same day.[21] Only one of William and Elizabeth's children, a daughter also named Elizabeth, survived into adulthood.[22]

In 1765, William purchased his first plantation, Vambells, from Ralph Payne and Clara Adye.[23] At the same time, his brother Nathaniel appears to have become more involved in the merchandising of the sugar produce in Britain. By the mid-1760s, he was married to Phebe and was trading as a merchant in London. He had enough money by February 1766, to afford an address in Bedford Row, Great James Street, in Holborn.[24]

As William became more established on St Kitts, he became more involved with the politics of the island. In 1769, there was a dispute over voting rights in the St Kitts Assembly, which culminated in the speaker having several council members imprisoned for four days for disobeying his orders. In June 1771, this dispute seems to have prompted the Board of Trade in London to recommend that William Wells and Stephen Payne Gallway be appointed to the Council of St Christopher. All Assembly members had by law to be White, male and Christian as well as have wealth of at least £40 and at least forty acres of land. To ensure that they were familiar with the problems and governance of the island, they had to have either been born there or have lived there for at least twenty-one years.[25]

These racial qualifications for political office would have caused problems for all of William's male children from this period onwards. It was common for Whites on the island to have children by their slaves. At least one agent on St Kitts and the neighbouring island of Nevis, with Welsh connections, had a deep affection for the slave mother of his children and some contempt for white women. He expressed the view that women on St Kitts 'stop at no expense, which as they conceive it may entitle them to that characteristic', in a long passage stating that White women in the West Indies were feckless and spendthrifts.[26] Relationships between master and

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[18] Oliver, V.L., *Monumental Inscriptions of the West Indies* (Dorchester, 1927) 142. Monumental Inscriptions in St Kitts.

[19] *Ibid.* 129; Oliver, V.L., *Carribeana*, 7 (2000) 69. Sir Joseph Bradney identifies her as a Taylor. See Bradney, J.A., *A History of Monmouthshire, Volume 4, Part 1, The Hundred of Caldicot (Part 1)*, (4 vols., London, 1904-33), 40. Wm. Fenton's land is shown on Baker's 1753 map, in the parish of St Paul's, Cappesterre, next to Sandy Point.

[20] Anstance was a name connected with the Wells family of Cardiff. An Anstance Wells, the mother of a William Wells, died in Cardiff in 1705, see NLW LL/1705/32.

[21] Oliver, V.L., *Monumental Inscriptions of the West Indies* 142, Basseterre Cemetery.

[22] PRO PROB 11/1253 ff. 273r.-5r. The will of William Wells.

[23] St Kitts Archive, register p. 375.

[24] PRO PROB 11/1218 ff. 100-2. The will of Nathaniel Wells.

[25] PRO PC 10/60/9. Board of Trade representation of 7 June 1771, recommending the appointment of Stephen Payne Gallway and William Wells to the council of St Christopher. This document is missing from the relevant bundle, as is the petition of J. Gardiner of St Kitts, 1 Nov. 1770.

[26] NLW *Bodrhyddan Correspondence, vol. 1, The West Indies* 152-3.

slave could vary between deep affection and extreme brutality. William Wells appears to have had some affection for some of his slave women with whom he had relationships. By 1766, he had a daughter Betsy whose mother was Perron, a 'Negro woman', presumably one of William's house-slaves.[27] Betsy was apparently the first of at least six children born to William and various of his slaves. His second recorded son, also named William, was born on 1 March 1775, another daughter, Grace, was born 2 January 1777 and Nathaniel, who was to become his heir, was born on 10 September 1779. Nathaniel's mother was a slave named Juggy.[28] She may also have been the mother of the other two children.

There appears to have been many problems in the business of breeding slaves on St Kitts. The 'irregular lives the women lead, and promiscuous intercourse with men' were two main reasons given for the lack of success. Women kept for breeding were usually reasonably well looked after during their pregnancy, simply because it was much less expensive than buying-in new slaves from Africa. Children bred in this way seemed to have a very high level of infant mortality. Many of them died before they were nine days old and were consequently never entered onto the register of slaves kept by the planters.[29] There were varying attitudes to children born to planters, or their agents and slave women. Many children were kept as slaves and worked in the fields while other, more preferred children, could be kept around the house with their mothers as house-slaves. A few of these favoured children could find their mothers and themselves being granted manumission.[30]

It is not known how William regarded his children born to slave mothers, but the first of them, including Nathaniel, were kept as slaves for the first few years of their lives. By 1783, perhaps prompted by fears for himself and his property engendered by the French Invasion of St Kitts, he publicly acknowledged that the children were his. He took the highly unusual step of having William, Grace and Nathaniel baptised on 3 March 1783 at Trinity Church, Palmetto and in doing so appears to have pronounced them free from slavery.[31]

At least two other children were born to William Wells by slaves, the fair-skinned Ann, born sometime around 1780-81, whose mother was a 'Mulatto slave' named Sue Wells and Mary Ann, whose mother, Sarah, was also probably a slave. William had another daughter named

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[27] PRO PROB 11/1218 ff. 100-2. The will of Nathaniel Wells. The name Perron is difficult to read; it may be Parnel. Nathaniel bequeathed £50 to Betsy. His will was made twenty-six years before his death and was not signed or witnessed, but probate was still granted.

[28] PRO PROB 11/1253 ff. 273r.-5r. The will of William Wells.

[29] NLW *Bodrhyddan Correspondence, vol. 1, St Christopher's*, 16 March 1791.

[30] See NLW *Bodrhyddan Correspondence, vol. 1, The West Indies* 155, for slave children born to men with Welsh connections. John Queely, the agent to the Bodrhyddan estate, had six children by a slave called Catto on St Kitts, ranging in age from the eldest, his nine year-old daughter, to the youngest, aged eighteen months. Queely wanted manumission for all of them. See also 191, 25 Jan. 1777, where Queely, now convinced that he was dying of large ulcerous growths, reminds the recipient that his children and their mother were still slaves and pleads for their freedom before he is either too ill or dead.

[31] Oliver, V.L., *Monumental Inscriptions of the West Indies* 142. All three are described as the children of the Hon. William Wells. The Church would have frowned upon Christians being chattels; therefore the act of christening his children, would have effectively freed them.

Elizabeth, who married John Taylor of Nevis.[32] She was almost certainly his daughter from his marriage to Elizabeth. She was described in his will as his natural daughter, but by the time he made his will in 1789, he had accepted all his offspring beneficiaries, as his natural children.

It was around the same time, or just before, that William had sent his son, Nathaniel, to London for his education and his health. Hurricanes and disease were common on St Kitts. Just after his son had left, his father lived through a series of misfortunes. In May 1793, smallpox was again on the island. Three months later, on 12 August, a hurricane hit the island causing considerable damage and sinking the *African Queen* with a loss of hands. The ship may have had a connection with the Wells brothers, as it had originally been named the *Wells* and had been built on the plantations as a slave ship. Yet another outbreak of disease hit the island in December 1793, when St Kitts was subject to an epidemic of 'fever of a highly malignant kind and numbers have fallen a sacrifice to it'. The disease, probably yellow fever, had been brought to Grenada by a ship owned by the Sierra Leone Company, which had newly arrived from Africa. It badly affected the Army and Navy on St Kitts and the rest of the Leeward Islands.[33] In Britain, the news of the fever and of 'men dying as fast as possible' deterred recruitment to the Armed Forces.[34]

The young Nathaniel's guardians in London were his uncle, Nathaniel, and his wife, Phebe. They were still living at Bedford Row, Great James Street in Holborn and Nathaniel attended school in nearby Newington. His father intended that he should eventually proceed to Oxford University.[35] His uncle, Nathaniel, died in 1792, but it appears that for at least the next two years, the young Nathaniel was looked after in London by his aunt, Phebe, while he continued his education. Two years after the death of Nathaniel's uncle, his father, by now a very wealthy man, died of dropsy around 11 April 1794.[36] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, described his death as:

> In the West Indies, William Wells, esq., only brother of the Rev Robert Wells, Rector of Penmaen, Glamorgan. In the series of more than 48 years by a sedulous attention to commerce (the nature of which few men understood better) he acquired an immense fortune in money and landed property in the island of St Christopher's.[37]

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[32] This may be the same Mr Taylor described in NLW *Bodryddan Correspondence, vol. 1, The West Indies* 173, 28 May 1775: 'I shall soon take Mr Taylor (who is a St Kitt's' man and a good planter) to view every part of the estate'. The writer wanted the Bodryddan agent, Queely, removed because he was 'too slow and inactive an old fashioned planter' and replaced by Taylor.

[33] NLW *Bodryddan Correspondence, vol. 1, The West Indies*, 29 May, 23 Aug., 7 Sept. and 17 Dec. 1793. Richardson, D., *18th Century Slave Trade* 186: Ship the *Wells*, constructed at plantations in 1764, 100 tons with 6 guns, captain Thomas Stroud, was renamed the *African Queen*.

[34] *The Times*, 15 Aug., 5 Oct. and 7 Nov. 1794. *The Gentleman's Magazine* is littered with references to the deaths of army and naval officers in the West Indies around this time.

[35] PRO PROB 11/1253, ff. 273r.-5r. The will of William Wells.

[36] There is some confusion over the date of his death. Oliver, V.L., *Caribbeana*, 7 (2000) 52 states 'Mr Wm. Wells from his Estate called Vambells' was buried 11 April 1794, quoting the register of St Thomas, Middle Island. The *Cayon Diary* 142, states that 'William Wells died 10 June 1974 aged 70, dropsy'. The *Diary of William Thomas* 436, 26 Sept. 1794, commented: 'Lately dy'd in the West Indies, William Wells, Esqr., only brother of the Rev'd Robert Wells, rector of Penmaen in Gower, Glamorganshire, and son from his first wife to the Rev'd Nathaniel Wells, late rector of St Andrews, etc. of 60 years of age or more'.

[37] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, (1794) 963.

William's last wish was to be buried in the churchyard in Basseterre in the same grave as his 'dear wife Elizabeth' and his son and daughter 'over whose grave there is a marble stone in the said churchyard', but this seems to have been ignored and he was buried at St Thomas, Middle Island.[38] In his will, dated 10 July 1789, he granted manumission to his house-women Hannah, Cotto, Kate and Juggy, the mother of his now favourite son, Nathaniel. In addition to releasing them from slavery, he gave Juggy and Hannah the annual sum of £60. Hannah, who although a slave herself, had her own personal slave, for she was bequeathed 'her own Negro woman present and all her children'. Cotto and Kate were left £20 each. Sue Wells was granted freedom but was left just £20 sterling per annum despite having his name and being the mother of one of his favourite daughters. To certain of his selected men slaves, 'my mulatto man Simon, to my house-boy Ffill and Christian and Toaster my two drivers', he gave freedom and £20. All the bequests were to be paid half yearly for as long as they lived.

Of his daughters, Elizabeth was left £150 sterling per year and the sum of £2,500. Her husband John Taylor, of the Island of Nevis, was bequeathed £5,000 as an afterthought. Her half-sister, Mary Ann, was left £1,000 and £140 a year and Ann, the daughter of Sue Wells, was left the same annuity but was to be given £3,500, to be paid when she reached the age of twenty-one. There is no mention of Grace, or of his son, William. They appear to either have died young, or even possibly lived their lives as slaves.

William made a big distinction between his natural brothers and his half-brother. He left £5,000 each to his brothers, the Reverend Robert Wells of Penmaen, and Nathaniel. The latter's son, Burlam, was left 300 guineas a year. He was far less generous to his half-brother Miles, the son of his father and his second wife Nancy, his former serving maid. Miles had been born ten or eleven years after William had left for St Kitts and he would hardly have known him. He left him the much lesser sum of £80 per annum.[39] He may or may not have been aware of Miles's poor financial status and dubious reputation in Cardiff; in any event, Miles predeceased him. He died penniless in Cardiff gaol. William Thomas wrote in his journal for 18 June 1790: 'Was buried in these days in Cardiff from the jail, where he was for debt, Miles Wells ... Of about 30 years of age, a rakish sort of a man, spent all, run to debt, and rags in jail.[40]

Apart from a bequest of 1,000 guineas to his friend Henry Barkley, William left the rest of his considerable estate 'unto my natural and dear son Nathaniel Wells whose mother is my woman Juggy'. He was to receive his inheritance on attaining the age of twenty-one on 10 September 1800. William's will states that his son was in the guardianship of his brother, Nathaniel, but his brother had died in 1792, so he was apparently being looked after by his aunt, Phebe, at the time of William's death. William's executors took over the legal responsibility for his upbringing. They were his only surviving brother the Reverend Robert Wells and Henry Barkley, John Julius and Doctor Adam Sprott; the last three were all presumably of St Kitts. They had the guardianship of all the underage children and were responsible for the execution of all William Wells's bequests until the young Nathaniel reached the age of majority. It would appear that since the young

[38] The gravestone still exists in Basseterre Cemetery, but there is no indication that William Wells was ever buried there. (Sheppard-Aldecoa, Mrs Erica, *pers. comm.*).

[39] PRO PROB 11/1253, ff. 273r.-5r. The will of William Wells.

[40] *The Diary of William Thomas* 389, 18 June 1790.

Nathaniel was living in this country, that his uncle, Robert, took full responsibility for his guardianship.

From the above, it appears that *The Gentleman's Magazine*'s report on William Wells's wealth at the time of his death, was accurate. He had amassed a considerable fortune. He was the sole owner of three plantations. He had money loaned at interest on St Kitts and money invested in 4% stock. In his will, he had estimated that his son would inherit at least £120,000. This sum, the lump sums to be paid to beneficiaries and the money invested to enable the payment of the annuities, would mean that the total of his fortune would have been in the region of £200,000. This was the sum calculated by those who knew him on the island.[41]

Little is known of the young Nathaniel between the death of his father and reaching his majority in 1800, except that he did not go to Oxford University. When he became twenty-one, he found that claiming his inheritance was not as straightforward as it should have been. His father's will had been proved on 10 July 1794 before John Stanley, the president of the council of St Kitts and commander in chief of the Leeward Islands. It had been certified by the public registrar of the islands on 27 August, before being sent to London, where it was finally proved and probate granted on 2 December 1794. None of this seems to have deterred Nathaniel's uncle, the Reverend Robert Wells, from disputing its legality. Despite the three processes that the will had gone through, he still claimed that probate had not been properly granted and, by implication, that he should have been his brother's main beneficiary. The young Nathaniel gave him a settlement of £10,000, on condition that he did not continue to contest Nathaniel's right to inherit.[42]

On receiving his vast inheritance, Nathaniel Wells moved to Bath and then back to London, where he took up residence in Portman Square, off Baker Street. Around 9 June 1801, he married the twenty year-old Harriet Este, who lived in nearby St George Row, off Hanover Square.[43] She was the only daughter of Charles and Cordelia Este. Her father had been a former chaplain to King George II and was 'well known in the newspaper world'; he owned a half-share in *The World*. His uncle, Charles, was bishop of Ossory.[44]

It was not until 1802, that Nathaniel Wells formed his first association with Monmouthshire. On 28 and 29 July 1802, he acquired the Piercefield estate at Chepstow. The house itself had been completed only two years before and had cost at least £30,000 to build.[45] Wells may have been aware of the estate before he came to settle permanently in this country. His father would almost certainly have known Valentine Morris, the governor of St Vincent and owner of the Piercefield estate up until 1784. If Nathaniel was not aware of Piercefield, then he was

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[41] *Cayon Diary* 142. William Wells died ... worth around £200,000.

[42] St Kitts Archive, 42-5. Signed before W. Grove, Portreeve, Swansea, 10 Feb. 1801, registered 14 Aug. 1801. There appears to be little grounds for the Revd Robert Wells's action except greed. He died four years later and was buried on 5 March 1804, at the church of St John the Baptist, Penmaen.

[43] Gwent Record Office, Piercefield Estate Archive, 16th-19th cents., D412/54. (Hereafter, Gwent Record Office is referred to as GRO).

[44] *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Charles Este, bishop of Ossory; Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire, Volume 4, Part 1, The Hundred of Caldicot (Part 1)* 40; and GRO D412/77.

[45] Chepstow Museum Collection. Piercefield, conditions and particulars of sale, 1819.

probably acquainted with Mark Wood, the then owner, whose town house in Portland Place, Marylebone, was relatively close to Wells's residence.

Wood, a Scot originally from Perthshire, was a man of similar wealth to Wells, for he was also reputed to be worth around £200,000. He had spent much of his time in the East India Company and had risen to the position of surveyor general of Bengal in 1786 and later became chief engineer until his return to Britain in 1793. He bought the Piercefield estate and took up residence there and in London. He maintained his links with the East India Company by acquiring four votes for the directorate by investing heavily in company stock. His Scottish and East India connections had brought Wood into contact with Henry Dundas, then secretary for war. He helped to promote Wood's political aspirations and in 1794, he was returned to Parliament for Milborne Port (Somerset) through the influence of Dundas and Pitt. In 1796, he became MP for Newark in Nottinghamshire with the patronage of the Duchess of Newcastle. To his embarrassment and chagrin, he fell out of favour with her and was not chosen to represent the seat in 1800. He got around this setback by buying the estates of Upper and Lower Gatton (Surrey) and returning himself for the seat. He needed to raise the purchase price of £90,000 cash which he, a well-known anti-abolitionist, did by selling his Piercefield estate to the twenty-two year-old, Black, former slave, Nathaniel Wells.[46]

Nathaniel and his wife changed address temporarily to Pall Mall before moving to Monmouthshire, but were resident at Piercefield by April 1803. The topographical artist, Joseph Farington, met Colonel Mark Wood and made the following diary entry for 24 April 1803:

> Col. Wood is abt 60 years of age. He was at the head of engineers in India, where he has resided 25 years. He has been in England 10 or 11 years. He has 4 children, 2 boys and 2 girls. He was reckoned to have brought from India £200,000. Several years ago he purchased Piercefield near Chepstow, which he sold to Mr Wells, a West Indian of large fortune, a man of very gentlemanly manners, but so much a man of colour as to be little removed from a Negro. He married a daughter of the Reverend Mr Este, a man well known in the newspaper world.[47]

In the autumn of that year, Farington visited Piercefield. He toured the estate on Tuesday 20 September and got caught in a shower. He took shelter in the lodge at the gate to the grounds, where the woman gatekeeper 'spoke most highly of the charitable and good disposition of Mr & Mrs Wells, and of Miss Wells, his sister'. He noted 'Mr Wells is a Creole of a very deep Colour but Miss Wells is fair'. The gatekeeper informed him that Mr Wells usually allowed people to visit the grounds on Tuesdays and Fridays, but also allowed visits at other times as long as they had received prior permission. He took great exception to those who wandered the grounds unannounced or without signing the visitors' book, which he kept at the lodge.[48]

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[46] Thorne, R.G. (ed.), *The History of Parliament & The House of Commons. Vol. 5, 1790-1820* (1986); Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire, Volume 4, Part 1, The Hundred of Caldicot (Part 1)* 38; and GRO D412/45.

[47] Garlick, K. and Macintyre, A. (eds.), *The Diary of Joseph Farington, (April 1803-Dec. 1804), Vol. 6* (London, 1979) 2017, Sunday 24 April 1803. Mr Este owned half of the newspaper, *The World*.

[48] Newby, E., *The Diary of Joseph Farington. Index* (London, 1998) Appendix, 1044. His sister was probably Ann, the daughter of Sue Wells.

It was also in 1803, that Nathaniel and Harriet's first son, William Meyrick, was christened in St Arvans church, on 16 December. The following year, with his wife expecting their second child, Nathaniel began to make financial arrangements for his offspring. Under the terms of his first marriage settlement, dated 8 June 1801, he had provided for £15,000 of 4% Consolidated Annuities for his wife in the event of his death.[49] In September 1804, he signed another marriage settlement, which would provide a sum of £10,000 for each of his children who survived him.

His Vambells plantation in St Kitts was included in the settlement. It was, like his other two estates, Fahies (with Ortons) and Trent, a sugar plantation. The inventory included 146 slaves, some of whose names demonstrated Wells's South Wales and Cardiff connections. Among typical slave names such as Congo Jack, Polydore, Scipio, Creole Molly, etc., appear names such as Cardiff, Llandaff, Milford and Tom Welch. More surprisingly, appear the names of slaves who seem to be his mother Juggy, his step-mothers Hannah and Cotto and what appears to be the name of at least one of his sisters or half-sisters, Grace.[50] It seems unlikely that the plantation would have had slaves with identical names. It is possible that the inventory was out of date but, if so, it was ten years since his father's death and the granting of manumission to Juggy, Hannah and Cotto and the list contains the names of eight newly-born children and five new slaves. Perhaps manumission was delayed because of the Reverend Robert Wells's challenge to his brother's will but for a short time, Nathaniel Wells was the legal owner of his own mother.

Juggy was free by 1802; she had taken the name Joardine Wells and was living in her own house in College Street, Basseterre. She had two slaves of her own, Cuffy and Venus and had not forgotten her rich son living in Britain. She made her will in that year, leaving all that she possessed to her sister and her heirs. Her sister is named as Katherine Bowrey and she appears to be the Kate granted manumission along with Joardine (Juggy) in William Wells's will. If her sister's family predeceased him, then Nathaniel was to become her beneficiary. It is not known if she had much contact with Nathaniel ever again, but she probably did for, in 1802, one of the first acts that he carried out when his inheritance was finally his, was to free a series of slaves including Tom, Big Sarah and Peter Bowrey. The last named was his aunt, Katherine's, partner. In 1806, Joardine Wells made her son one of the executors of her will, which again suggests at least some communication with him. She died in 1811.[51]

At Piercefield, Nathaniel and Harriet went on to have another four boys and four girls before Harriet's death on 23 August 1820. At least one child, Grace Emily Georgiana, was christened in the parish of St George's in the Field, London, and not in St Arvans until after her mother's death, seven years later. So there remains a possibility that there were more births elsewhere where the child did not survive.[52]

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[49] GRO D412/43, 8 June 1801, marriage settlement of Nathaniel Wells and Harriet Este.

[50] GRO D412/52 & 53, marriage settlement dated 13 and 14 Sept. 1804.

[51] St Kitts Archive, no. 15.381. Will of Joardine Wells, 5 Dec. 1802 and codicil, 15 May 1806. Registered, 12 Sept. 1811.

[52] St Arvans parish registers. She was christened on 8 Oct. 1821 at St Arvans, but had been baptised previously on 7 Feb. 1814, in the parish of St George's in the Field, London.

In 1823, Nathaniel remarried. His new bride was Miss Esther Owen, twenty year-old daughter of the Reverend John Henry Owen, rector of Paglesham in Essex and his wife, Charlotte.[53] Nathaniel and Esther had eight daughters and three sons between 1824 and 1839, five of whom died in infancy. One of Esther's sisters was believed, almost certainly erroneously, to have married the eldest son of William Wilberforce.[54]

In Monmouthshire, Nathaniel Wells seems to have taken a full and participatory part in local affairs. He became a churchwarden for St Arvans on 9 April 1804 and remained as such for the next forty years. He sometimes acted as chairman and was responsible for signing the church accounts. He paid for a new tower and entrance to be built in 1823, while he and the duke of Beaufort shared the cost of erecting a new gallery.[55] He was an active member of the Chepstow Hunt. In 1832, he was named as one of the committee, hunting alongside such other Monmouthshire notables as Lord Granville Somerset, the duke of Beaufort, Capel Leigh, John Buckle, John Moggeridge and William Curre.[56]

His involvement with civic affairs and duties commenced in 1806, when he was appointed a justice of the peace. His appointment as sheriff took place twelve years later, in 1818.[57] The latter appointment was announced to the public early in February and in March, he published the proclamation for the first assizes that he was to attend as sheriff.[58] However, the achievement that he appears to have been most proud of, was appointment as a deputy lieutenant for the county.[59]

All of this was achieved while continuing to run his plantations in St Kitts in ever more difficult circumstances. The Napoleonic Wars had continued to disrupt the sugar trade. In 1805, the French warship *Imperiale*, claimed to be the most powerful warship ever built up until that period, attacked St Kitts after visiting the sister island of Nevis and threatening to destroy the capital Charlestown unless a ransom was paid. In July 1806, Jerome Bonaparte commanded a squadron which carried out the last French raid on the neighbouring island of Nevis.[60]

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[53] *DNB*; Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire, Volume 4, Part 1, The Hundred of Caldicot (Part 1)* 40; and GRO D412/78.

[54] The current version of the *DNB* asserts that a daughter of John Henry Owen was married to William Wilberforce's eldest son. I have not been able to verify this. The new version of the *DNB* will contain articles on Wilberforce's three other sons.

[55] St Arvans parish registers.

[56] GRO Evans & Evill (solicitors, Chepstow), D25/1545. There are numerous references to Nathaniel Wells and the Piercefield estate in this collection.

[57] PRO C 202/194/8, appointment as justice of the peace; PRO C 202/206/1A, appointment as sheriff. An account of Nathaniel Wells of Piercefield being appointed as a master extraordinary in Chancery in 1810, is incorrect. The appointment refers to a Nathaniel Wells of Wiltshire. See PRO C 202/198/12.

[58] *Gloucester Journal*, 2 Feb. and 23 March 1818.

[59] From the memorial inscription to Nathaniel Wells in St Arvans church. The Lieutenancy records for the period are missing.

[60] Hubbard, Vincent K., *Swords, Ships & Sugar. History of Nevis to 1900* (Oregon, 1998) 129.

There must have been pressure on Wells, but the Abolition of Slavery Act, 1807, did not prevent him from continuing to keep slaves in St Kitts, though his slaves would have been well aware of what was going on in the abolitionist movement in Britain. As far back as 1792, reports were coming out of St Kitts that:

> There is not a word said in Parliament on the subject but what is conveyed to the ears of slaves, either by those among them who can read & write or by the free Coloured people; & it is not in our power to prevent it.[61]

It may have been that his slaves had high hopes that the young Nathaniel, whom many would have known personally, would free them as he had his mother and aunt. For most of them, it was not to be, though some were granted manumission on an irregular basis.

Wells may well have had sympathy with slaves, whose fate he could so easily have shared, but he appears to have needed the income from his plantations to keep up his lifestyle in Britain. He also seems to have involved his father-in-law, the Reverend Charles Este, in his business affairs. Joseph Farington met him in London in July 1810, when 'Rev'd Mr Este ... told us he had lately been in the West Indies to make some arrangements on the estates of his son-in-law Mr Wells'.[62] However, Wells's business problems increased. The sugar plantations were suffering from over-planting and the difficulty in raising slaves. Also, competition had arisen in Europe. In 1805, a blockade following Nelson's victory at Trafalgar, cut off sugar supplies to Europe. Napoleon responded to this in 1811, by offering incentives for the production in Europe of sugar from sugar-beet, on a commercial scale. As a result of this, a technique was developed. Domestic European production cut the demand for sugar from St Kitts and by the early 1820s, many plantations were closing or being sold off at very low prices. In 1825, Wells sold Vambells to John B. Waterson, esquire, when it consisted of 498 acres, with an inventory of 120 slaves. Between 1825 and 1827, Wells also disposed of his estate at Trinity, Palmetto Point, for £3,400. It consisted of 120 acres with sixty slaves.[63] By 1828, he was left with only one plantation consisting of just over 151 acres of sugar cane and about ninety-six acres of slave huts and uncultivated land in the parish of St Paul's, Cappesterre.[64]

Slavery was abolished in the colonies in 1833, but it was translated into a form of enforced 'apprenticeship' and owners kept their slaves for another four years, during which the owners, not the slaves, received reparation. They were recompensed under the West India Compensation Act, 3 & 4 Wm. IV, c.73, for the loss of their 'property'. Nathaniel Wells was compensated by the National Debt Office and the Treasury for his remaining eighty-six slaves on his Fahie and Ortons plantation.[65]

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[61] NLW *Bodryddan Correspondence, vol. 1, The West Indies, St Kitts*, 20 July 1972.

[62] Cave, Kathryn (ed.), *The Diary of Joseph Farington, (July 1809-Dec. 1810), Vol. 10* (London, 1982) 3686, Friday 6 July 1810.

[63] St Kitts Archive, reg. no. 17696, Wells to Waterson, 31 May 1825.

[64] PRO CO 700 St Christopher and Nevis8, William McMahon's map of St Christopher, 1828.

[65] PRO NDO 4/11, National Debt Office, Abolition of Slavery Act, Register of Compensation paid to Slave Owners, 1835-1837, St Kitts; PRO T 71/1384, Compensation and Lists of Amended Awards, St Christopher (Slaves) for 1837-1841; and PRO T 71/1449, Commissioners' Hearings Notes for St Christopher (Slaves).

Wells's fortunes were also suffering in Monmouthshire. He seems to have discovered that the house at Piercefield was suffering from dry rot within a few years of moving in. He unsuccessfully attempted to sell Piercefield in 1819, then estimated to be worth around £3,500 per annum.[66] He again failed to sell it in 1825, but did manage to lease it. By 1833, Wells and his wife, Esther, had moved out of the house at Piercefield and were living at Oak Cottage.[67] They appear to have moved away from the area in around 1844 or 1845, sometime after his resignation as a churchwarden. He was living at 9 Park Street, Bath in 1852, when his daughter, Caroline Angelina Wells, who had just celebrated her thirty-sixth birthday, died on 4 May 1852 of a congestive lung disease, probably tuberculosis, from which she had suffered for several years.[68] Two weeks later, at the age of seventy-two, Nathaniel died of a fever.[69] They were both buried in Walcot Cemetery, Bath. There appear to have been very few newspaper announcements of Nathaniel Wells's death and no obituaries have been traced in the Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire or Somerset newspapers. This seems remarkable for someone who led such an eventful life.

His death brought difficulties for his widow and heirs, for his will was complicated by the need to raise the £10,000 for each of his surviving children, or their heirs, from his first marriage. He left all the furniture at Piercefield to his widow, Esther, but bequeathed all his paintings, books and estate maps to his eldest surviving son. In the event, the Reverend John Tighe Wells of Newman Street, off Oxford Street, London, was the only surviving son from the first marriage. Nathaniel had also committed himself to providing heavily for the children of his second marriage. They were to get £10,000 each if they survived to the age of twenty-one, or before for his daughters who married. Money was also owed, to his sister, the late Mrs Ann Heashaw's, estate.

The total of the monetary sums bequeathed was in excess of £110,000. To raise the sums required to pay the bequests, the Piercefield estate and all the land that Wells had acquired in Gloucester, were to be sold, with the house at Piercefield being demolished if the trustees thought this would make the property more saleable.[70] There was an attempt to sell the 'distinguished domain of Piercefield with elegant modern mansion' in 1854, but the sale was only partly successful. The value of the income from the estate had fallen from the estimated £3,500 per annum in 1819 to £2,500 per annum.[71] By 1860, the Reverend John Tighe Wells had apparently disposed of the estate in its entirety, so that the division of the inheritance could take place.[72]

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[66] Chepstow Museum Collection. Piercefield, conditions and particulars of sale, 1819.

[67] Waters, I., *The Unfortunate Valentine Morris* (Chepstow, 1964) 77; St Arvans parish registers.

[68] The family record in GRO D412/72, states that she died on 30 April 1852, but *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *Part 1* (1852) 638, the *Bath Chronicle* on 13 May 1852 and her death certificate, all state that she died on 4 May. She was buried on 10 May 1852, in Walcot Cemetery, Bath. The burial register and death certificate both state erroneously that she was thirty-five.

[69] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *Part 2* (1852) 107: 'Died 13 May at Bath, aged 72, Nathaniel Wells, of Piercefield, esq.'; and the *Bath Chronicle*, 20 May 1852. He was buried on 20 May in Walcot Cemetery, Bath. His death certificate states that he died of synochus.

[70] PRO PROB 11/2157. Will of Nathaniel Wells.

[71] Chepstow Museum Collection. Piercefield, conditions and particulars of sale, 1854.

[72] GRO D412/77 & 78.

Of Nathaniel Wells's children, Nathaniel Armstrong Wells moved to Caen in Normandy and became an author, publishing *Picturesque Antiquities of Spain* in 1846, the year of his death. His son, also Nathaniel Armstrong, went to Queens' College, Cambridge, in 1865 and became firstly a curate at Tavistock, Devon, then vicar of Great Longston, Derbyshire.[73] Henrietta Maria married James Barnard Bryan and moved to Hobart, Australia. Charles Rush Wells attended Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, before becoming vicar of Nicholaston, Glamorgan. Later, he appears to have moved to Brighton, where his widow, Vincentia Money Wells, was living in 1854.[74] John Tighe Wells attended University College, Oxford, between 1827 and 1830, before becoming vicar of Newman Street, Oxford Street, Middlesex.[75] Harriet Claxton married the Reverend Cuthbert Frederick Beresford Earle of Newton, Wiltshire.[76] Grace Emily Georgiana married George Watkins, a surgeon of Bridge Street, Chepstow in 1836, dying in 1841. Esther, Catherine, Cecilia and Matilda, all sisters from the second marriage, were living together in Brighton in 1881.[77] Nathaniel's widow, Esther, survived him by another nineteen years. She was living at Furze Hill near Newbury in Berkshire in the 1860s and died on 1 June 1871.[78] Her death is commemorated with Nathaniel's in St Arvans church.

Nathaniel Wells could so easily, like almost all others born in his situation, have spent all his days working on one of his father's plantations. Instead, he had become one of the richest young men in South Wales, owning one of the most prestigious and picturesque estates, not just in Monmouthshire, but in Britain. It appears that his colour was hardly remarked upon at the time in this country. He was seen as different, but not as inferior, by his peers. This may not have been the way that people on St Kitts saw him. His slaves would have been only too acutely aware of his background, his colour and his favourable treatment of his relatives and their loved ones. The planters would almost certainly have seen him as a threat to their institutionalised White way of life. They tolerated small numbers of free Blacks and Creoles on the island, but such people would have had limited property holdings, limited wealth and no prospect of constitutional, political power. Nathaniel Wells was different; he was well educated, gentlemanly and, for periods in his life, far wealthier than all but the tiniest handful of them, and in Monmouthshire had attained royal and politically bestowed office. For a time, he was the living proof that a Black slave was not the inferior sub-human that their anti-abolitionist propaganda would have people in this country believe.

It may have been that Wells saw the maintenance of his slave plantations on St Kitts as the only way of supporting his wealth and status in this country. But, just perhaps, he may have maintained a paternalistic and benign attitude to his slaves. He may have thought, as some anti-abolitionists did, that in an ever-worsening trading situation, his slaves might have been genuinely

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[73] Foster, J., *Alumni Oxonienses, 1715-1886* (1887) and Waters, I., *Piercefield on the Banks of the River Wye* (Chepstow, 1975) 22-3.

[74] GRO D412/72 and Venn, J.A., *Alumni Cantabrigienses, part II 1752-1900, Volume 6*: Charles Rush Wells, Corpus Christi, 9 May 1826 matriculated Michs 1826. BA 1830.

[75] GRO D412/72 and Foster, J., *Alumni Oxonienses, 1715-1886* (1887).

[76] *Bridgwater and Somersetshire Herald*, 2 March 1831 and St Arvans parish registers.

[77] 1881 Census.

[78] GRO D412/56.

worse off if granted freedom, rather than remaining in his keeping and guardianship. Whether this was true or not, the impetus for abolition in Britain in the early 1800s became a powerful, forceful and a successful political movement backed by a ground-swell of public opinion.[79] In such a climate, it is likely that he would have faced increasing resentment from abolitionists because of his slave holdings. As public attitudes changed towards the end of his life, the rise of mid-Victorian racism may well have meant that he was looked down upon because of his colour. Though his wealth may have protected him, it his highly likely that the longer he lived in this country, the less accepted he would have become. This may explain the lack of comment in local newspapers at the time of his death and it may also be the reason why his mother's name is left blank in Bradney's *History of Monmouthshire*.

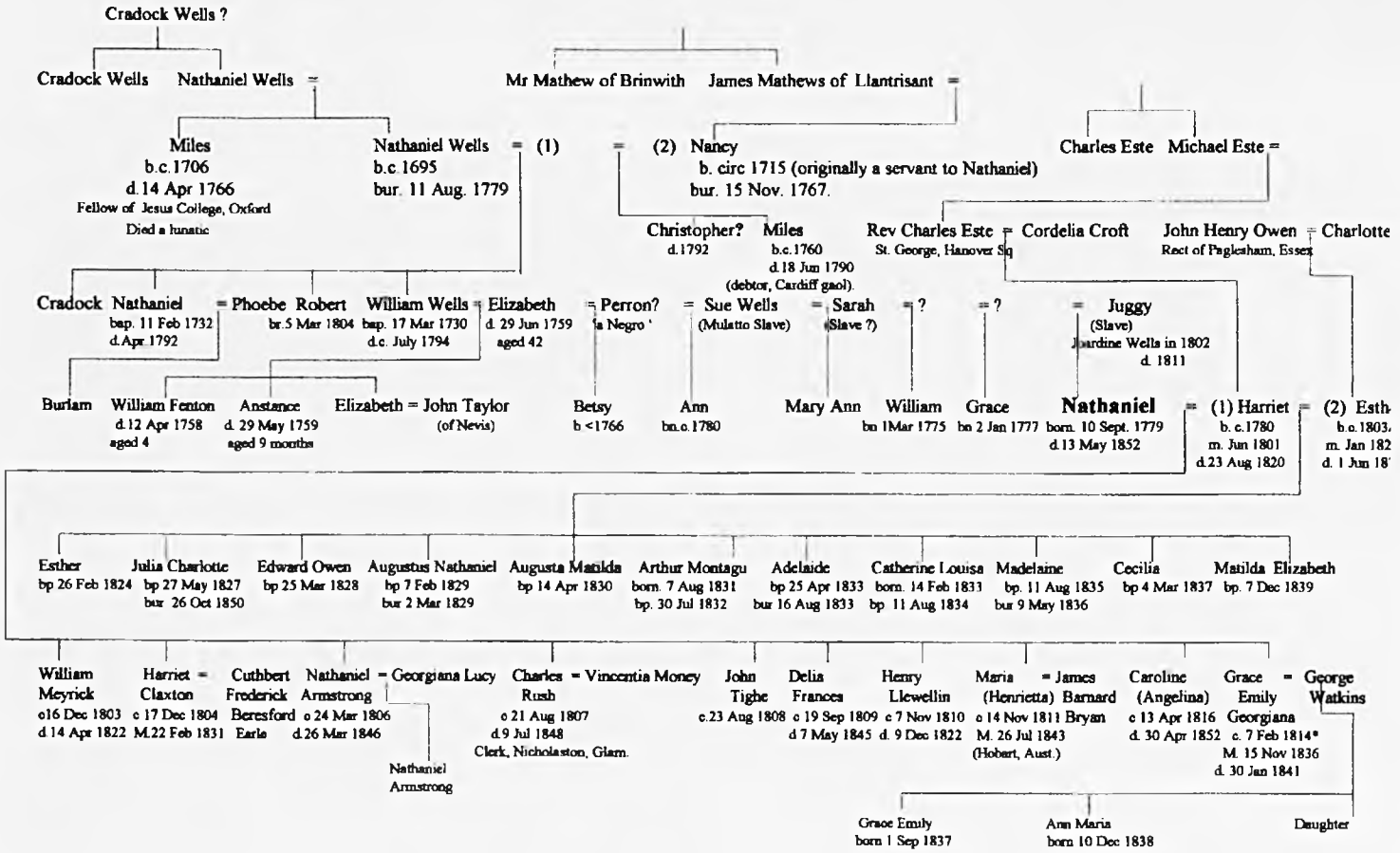
His name is still commemorated on a single memorial in St Arvans church, in a way that he would have wanted. It reads: 'Sacred to the memory of Nathaniel Wells of Piercefield, Esq., a magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of Monmouth'.

***Acknowledgements***

I would like to thank Ms A. Rainsbury and Mrs Erica Sheppard-Aldecoa of Chepstow Museum, Mrs V. O' Flaherty of the National Archives of St Kitts and Mr D. Broome of BBC Wales, for their help in the preparation of this article.

[79] One of the earliest manifestations of an abolitionist movement in Gwent took place in Usk in March 1792, when a public meeting petitioned the House of Commons. The petition begins 'Impressed with a lively concern for the unparalleled miseries of our fellow creatures the Africans and with a just abhorrence of the cause of their miseries – the slave trade…'. See NLW Tredegar 64/346.

## Nathaniel Wells of Piercefield



# SHORT NOTES

### *Trelech, a decayed medieval town*

Although the recent foot and mouth outbreak forced cessation of planned geophysical surveys in Trelech, careful co-ordination with relevant agencies and landowners enabled the Trelech excavation programme to continue in 2001. Work resumed in the field west of St Nicholas's church to investigate apparently large rectangular structures indicated by a resistivity survey conducted in 1999. The work, undertaken as a University of Wales Newport training excavation, confirmed substantial stone-built medieval structures aligned along a well-defined cobbled medieval road. The partially excavated central building in this range was particularly large with metre thick stone walls in places surviving to eight and nine courses. The west face of the building extended for approximately fifteen metres. Two of three trenches opened (15m by 4m and a 15m by 3m extension of a re-opened 5m by 3m trench first dug in 2000) concentrated on the structures lining the road. These excavations confirmed the buildings as well as demonstrating a system of side streets/alleys running between buildings at right angles from the main road. A third trench (6m by 6m) provided evidence of smithing in a medieval context.

Finds included an extensive ceramic assemblage, a large (150cm in length) key and lock plate, an engraved gilt-bronze medieval mount and other metal fittings and an intricately decorated lead ampulla. On stylistic grounds, the ampulla, a 'pilgrim's flask', is thirteenth century in date. This is consistent with other dating evidence which suggests that occupation of the site began in the thirteenth century with subsequent activity in some areas, particularly in the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries. These results combined with a growing body of geophysical evidence gained from surveys conducted in 1999 and 2000, have contributed substantially to our understanding of the plan of what was, in the late thirteenth century, one of the largest towns in Wales.

**Ray Howell**

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### *Lodge Wood Camp, an Iron Age Hill-fort*

Lodge Wood Camp hill-fort, north-west of Caerleon, overlooks the mouth of the Usk. A triple-banked enclosure with out-works defines an area of about 2.2 hectares; a smaller oval enclosure (100m by 50m) lies within the western third of the interior. A grant from the Charles Williams Trust enabled a team from University of Wales Newport to investigate the site in the summer of 2000. Excavation of a 106 square metre area within the western interior revealed a sequence beginning with the cutting of a substantial quarry hollow which was subsequently filled, presumably to provide a level surface. Cut into this surface were post-holes, one group of seven defining a small sub-rectangular building. A second phase ditch was also deliberately backfilled; the fill contained a La Tene 1 iron brooch and sherds of middle Iron Age pottery. To the east, rock-cut scoops provided platforms for a series of timber structures. Furnace base and metal-working slag here was associated with middle Iron Age ceramics. Later narrow terraces produced some late Roman pottery and small post-holes which seem to relate to re-occupation of the site.

A 2m wide cutting was taken through the inner bank and ditch, the latter being a V-profiled feature, 5.7m wide and 2.2m deep. A large collapse deposit of stone rubble from the rampart may represent deliberate slighting. A stone-revetted timber-laced rampart represented the first phase of the defences. A second phase survived as a thin rubble spread overlying soil which had formed after the collapse of the primary rampart and could represent late Roman/post-Roman activity. A 10m by 3m trench investigated the northern half of the entrance and established a sequence of construction. In the later phases, the entrance was infilled with dumps of earth and stone and supported on the outer face by stone revetting. This was subsequently cut through; no artefactual material was present and it may be appropriate to attribute this recutting to a 'materially impoverished' phase which could relate to re-occupation in the late Roman/post-Roman period.

**Ray Howell and Joshua Pollard**

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***A Pebble Hammer from Tre-rhew Brook, near Little Berth-Glyd Farm, Llantilio Crossenny, near Abergavenny***

The pebble hammer was found in the Tre-rhew Brook close to Little Berth-Glyd Farm (S0 3915 1785) by Mrs M. Gummery in 1961 and presented to Abergavenny Museum (Acc. No. A.20.1961). The exact location of the find was unknown until recently; it had been listed as found near Llantilio Crossenny.[1]

The pebble hammer is ovoid in shape, 9.00 by 8.00 by 4.70cm and weighs 500g. It is made from a fairly coarse sandstone (quartz/felspar) pebble with a weathered brown tinge to the outer rolled surface. It has the distinct hour-glass or countersunk perforation. The diameter of the cups at its widest is 4.50cm and the narrowest part of the hour-glass perforation is 2.00cm *(Fig. 1)*. There is a large chip out of one of the longer sides, together with some battering along the outermost circumference. There appear to be some slightly larger initial peck marks on the outer rim of the hour-glass perforation suggesting that these may have been an initial aid to the making of the perforation. This pebble hammer appears to be similar to those found from the Bunter pebble beds of the Triassic Age which outcrops over a wide area of the Midlands especially around Malvern and on the edges of the Welsh Marches.

An early date in the Mesolithic may be indicated for this pebble hammer, for the find spot was associated with Mesolithic flint core fragment.[2] The prehistoric evidence in this area is limited, but this find may suggest that the area was being used during the Mesolithic, for there are ample streams and former lake sites.

**Graham Makepeace**

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[1] I am indebted to Mr Frank Olding, former Curator of Abergavenny Museum, now of CADW, for all his support and help; to Mr S. Probert (Little Pant Farm) for showing me the site of the find; and to Emma-Katie Burns, Curator of Archaeology, Shropshire County Council, for illustrating the pebble.

[2] Personal information of author.

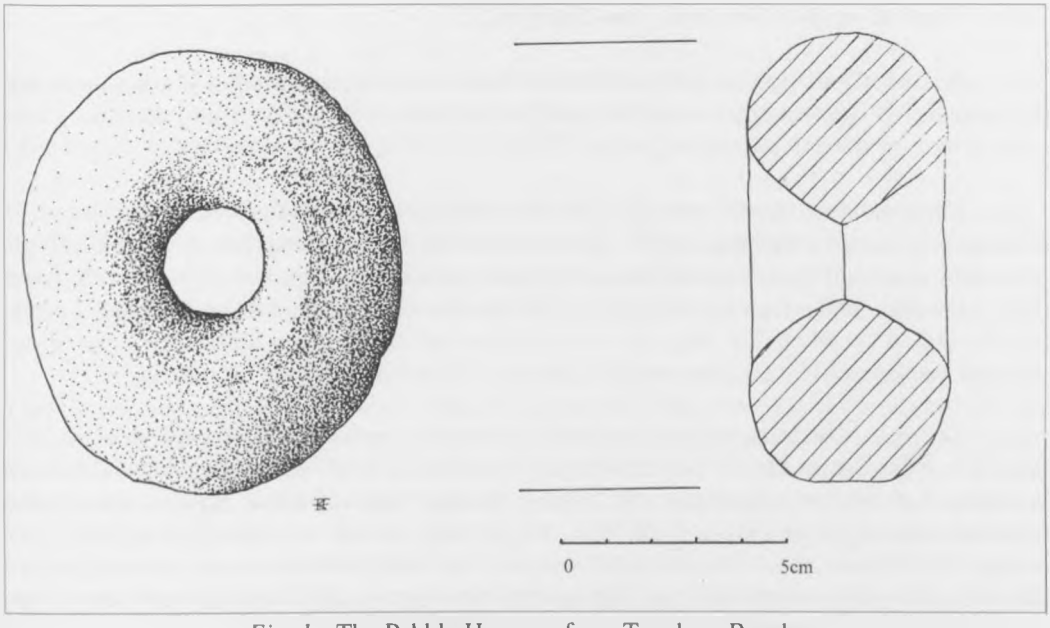


*Fig. 1:* The Pebble Hammer from Tre-rhew Brook.

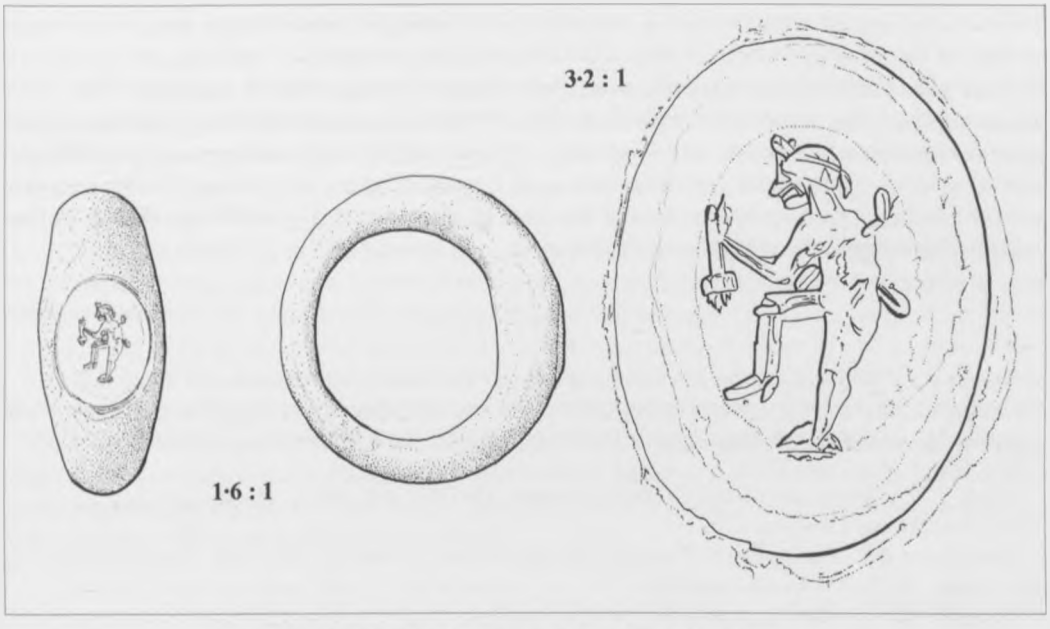


*Fig. 2:* The Silver Finger Ring from Caerleon.
(Drawing by Tony Daly, National Museum of Wales).

***Silver Finger Ring with Gemstone from Caerleon***

A silver signet ring, set with an intaglio *(Fig. 2)*, was reported to the Roman Legionary Museum by Mr P. Green in January 2001. Mr Green's father had discovered the ring in the 1980s during work on the golf course at Caerleon (NGR ST 335902), to the south-west of the fortress.

The ring has a rounded hoop which flattens slightly at the shoulders. It is one of a type of Roman ring classified as Henig Type II.[1] The nicolo intaglio, which comprises an upper blue layer on a dark ground, is oval in shape with a flat upper surface and a bevelled edge. It is engraved with a dancing satyr (one leg bent) who is holding a bunch of grapes in one hand and a crook (*lagobolon*) in the other. The satyr also has an equine tail, rather schematically rendered. Ring: Internal diameters 17 by 19.5mm, weight 13g. Gem: 9 by 11.5mm.

The style of satyr engraving is a common type and a number of parallels can be noted. Six examples from British sites, which depict a satyr in a similar pose with a raised leg and holding a bunch of grapes and a *lagobolon*, are listed by Henig.[2] The Snettisham jeweller's hoard also contains a number of specimens of the type, two of which are still set within their original silver rings.[3] The addition of a tail to the satyr appears to be slightly less common, with only two of those cited showing evidence of this.[4] Eight gemstones depicting satyrs have been recovered from Caerleon, seven of which come from the Fortress Baths[5] and one from the civilian settlement.[6] These, however, are of a different type; four depicting a satyr holding an animal skin (*nebris*), while one shows him holding a bowl, another a mask and two an infant.

The coin evidence from the Snettisham hoard suggests an accumulation between the late first and mid second century AD.[7] A production date during this period may, therefore, be suggested for the paralleled Caerleon ring. This date range is supported by the dating put forward by Henig for the examples in his corpus, which have also been noted above as parallels.[8] The cut of the gemstone bears comparison with those from Snettisham which suggests it may have been manufactured in a Romano-British workshop. Bacchus and his associates were popular themes among soldiers with general associations of good fortune, drinking and revelling.[9] Although discovered in the civilian settlement area of the fortress, therefore, it is possible that the signet ring belonged to a legionary soldier from the fortress.

**Julie Reynolds**

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[1] Henig, M., *A Corpus of Roman Gemstones from British Sites*, BAR British Series 8 (Oxford, 1978) 36.
[2] Ibid. 207-8, pl. vi, nos. 172-7.
[3] Johns, C., *The Snettisham Jeweller's Hoard* (London, 1997) 91, nos. 181-2; 96, nos. 226-7.
[4] Ibid. no. 226 and Henig no. 176.
[5] Zienkiewicz, J.D., *The Legionary Fortress Baths at Caerleon. Volume II. The Finds.* (Cardiff, 1986) 131, pl. vii, nos. 15-17; 137, pl. xiv, nos. 62-5.
[6] Henig op. cit. (n.1) 205, pl. v, no. 154.
[7] Johns op. cit. (n. 3).
[8] Henig op. cit. (n.1).
[9] Zienkiewicz, J.D., *Roman Gems from Caerleon* (Cardiff, 1987) 10.

# REVIEWS

**Annette M. Burton, Doreen Heath and David H. Williams, *The Story of Trelleck Grange*, privately printed, 2001; ISBN: 0 990439 94 7; 170 x 240 mm; 48pp., 34 figs. (21 in colour); £5.**

In the summer of 2000, Annette Burton and the Cardiff University Centre for Lifelong Learning organised a day school on the history of Trelech Grange. This was a follow-up to Mrs Burton's series of evening classes on the parishes and communities of the area around Llanishen. The talks which were given at the day school have now been published in this well-produced booklet.

The fact that the booklet is based on a series of lectures means that it does not try to offer a broad overview of the history of the parish and community. However, the four topics chosen for detailed study - the monastic grange, the 1765 plans of the Beaufort estates there, the parish and its church and the end of the era of great landowning estates - are set in a wider context of local developments. David Williams's chapter on the grange, for example, gives a brief description of the geology and prehistory of the area and makes it clear that it had a long history of settlement before the estate was given to the Cistercian monks of Tintern in the twelfth century. This does of course raise the question of what happened to the lay inhabitants of the area. Were they evicted (as the monks of Margam did with the people of Llanfeuthin and Llangewydd) or did they remain as tenants and labourers (against the statutes of the Order but probably fairly common). The studies of the 1765 plans and the church are used to provide a study of the local community in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The chapter on the end of the great estates summarises the census returns for the nineteenth-century farms and includes some surprising information on migration into the area from west Wales.

The booklet is rounded off with Doreen Heath's recollections of her own life in Trelech Grange and her family's traditions of the last days of the Crompton-Roberts estate there. This kind of oral history is an increasingly important source for the history of the twentieth century: we need to record more of it.

Detailed though it is, this booklet also raises a number of issues for further study. There are references which will excite the research interests of several members of the Antiquarians. Old roads, wayside crosses - watch this space for further developments.

All in all, this is an excellent piece of close-focus local research which sets the distinctive history of Trelech Grange in a broader context while retaining a clear eye for the fascinating detail of the individual community. It is also a fine example of the potential which modern technology offers for the publication of local history. More booklets like this one - not necessarily complete parish histories but studies of specific aspects of the past of a community - would be a considerable addition to the recorded history of Gwent.

**Madeleine Gray**

**Cof Cenedl XVI Ysgrifau ar Hanes Cymru. Golygydd: Geraint H. Jenkins, Gwasg Gomer, 2001; ISBN: 1 85902 96 5 5; 210 x 147 mm; 190 tud., 36 llun.; £7.95.**

Ar gefn clawr yr unfed gyfrol ar bymtheg o ysgrifau ar Hanes Cymru, darllenwn mai bwriad a nod y gyfres yw 'dyfnhau a grymuso ymwybyddiaeth y Cymry Cymraeg o'n tras a'n hetifeddiaeth'. Digon apelgar felly i Gymraes sydd yn ymwneud a Hanes yn ddyddiol. Casgliad o chwe ysgrif sydd yn trafod agweddau gwahanol iawn ar hanes Cymru ar bynciau amrywiol megis llenyddiaeth a diwylliant, crefydd ac addysg merched a chadwraeth iaith a thirlun o'r bedwaredd ganrif ar ddeg i'r ugeinfed ganrif ydy *Cof Cenedl*. Erbyn ini orffen ei darllen, 'roeddwn yn Gymraes a oedd yn gyfoethocach ei gwybodaeth a'i hymwybyddiaeth o linynnau allweddol yn hanes ei chenedl.

Dadansoddi tri o gywyddau'r bardd Guto Glyn i Hywel ap Ieuan Fychan o Foeliwrch gwna Bleddyn Owen Hughes yn ysgrif gyntaf. Ymdrinir a'r berthynas rhwng y beirdd a'u noddwyr ac ar bwysigrwydd canu'r beirdd i'r gymdeithas yr adeg honno a oedd yn ceisio dod i delerau ag ansefydlogrwydd wedi'r gwrthryfel. A Nesta Lloyd ati i drafod hynafiaethwyr Cymru'r ail ganrif ar bymtheg yn gelfydd a bywiog yn ei chyfraniad. Sonia am ymdrechion yr hynafiaethwyr i gasglu a diogelu llawysgrifau hanesyddol bwysig. Arwynebol byddai'n gwybodaeth heddiw am lenyddiaeth gynnar Cymru am gyfieithau Hywel Dda ac am gerddi'r Gogynfeirdd heb y dystioleath gwerthfawr sydd wedi goroesi. Yn ddiddorol i ddarllenwyr y papur hon efallai ydy'r ffaith ei bod yn talu teyrnged i'r hyn a wnaeth Sieffre o Fynny am gyflwyno hanes y genedl i'r pobl.

Symudwn ymlaen yn y drydedd ysgrif at bapurau gŵr allweddol i fudiad Methodistaidd y ddeunawfed ganrif, Howell Harris. Fel un a 'meddwl anorchfygol; ni chymerai yn hawdd ei blygu', mae Geraint Tudur yn trafod y toreth o ddeunydd, yn ddyddiaduron, yn llythyron ac yn amrywiol bapurau y gŵr hynod hwn. Mae'n olrhain hanes y trefnu a dadansoddi gasgliad gwerthfawr Trefeca a hynny'n fanwl a hynod diddorol. Trafod gyrfa llwyddianus yr addysgwraig Elizabeth Phillipa Hughes gwna W.Gareth Evans. Ynddi, clywn hanes y ferch o Gaerfyrddin a benodwyd yn brifathrawes gyntaf Coleg Hyfforddi Athrawesau yng Nghaergrawnt yn 35 mlwydd oed. Disgrifia'r awdur hi, yn gwbl addas fel 'cyw o frid prin iawn' ac fe olrheinir hanes ei bywyd yn fanwl ac yn awdurdodol.

Yn ei ysgrif 'Brwydr Butlins: Tirlun, Iaith a moesoldeb ym Mhen Llyn 1938–47' mae Prys Gruffudd yn delio a chanlyniadau sefydlu gwersyll ar fywyd Cymreig yr ardal ac yn trafod diffyg dealltwriaeth Billy Butlin a'i gwmni o'r wlad, ei hiaith a'i phobl. I orffen y gyfrol, mae Owen Roberts yn cofio Tryweryn. Agora ei ysgrif trwy nodi na chafwyd astudiaeth trylwyr, amlochrog a gwrthrychol o ddigwyddiad a oedd mor dyngedfennol yn hanes datblygiad gwleidyddol Cymru yr ugeinfed ganrif. A ymlaen i drafod effaith yr argyfwng ar wleidyddiaeth yr amgylchedd yng Nghymru a hynny mewn modd trylwyr, amlochrog a gwrthrychol.

Mae'r Golygydd, Geraint H Jenkins yn dyfynnu Norman Davies ar ddechrau'r llyfr. Teimlodd bod 'rhaid i bob hanesydd ddweud ei stori yn argyhoeddidol, neu gael ei annwybyddu'. Pleser yw gallu cyhoeddi nad cyfrol i'w anwybyddu ydy *Cof Cenedl* XVI.

**Bethan Lewis**

**F. Olding, *The prehistoric landscapes of the eastern Black Mountains*, BAR British Series 297, Archaeopress, Oxford, 2000; ISBN 1 84171 057 1; 296 x 208 mm; 117pp., 51 figs.; £22.**

Frank Olding's study is a readable and authoritative synthesis of the prehistoric data from those areas of Monmouthshire and Herefordshire making up the eastern part of the Black Mountains. It is designed to treat the study-area as a unit and provide a coherent inventory of archaeological material split between different modern counties, nations and Royal Commissions. Laudably, the volume also has more ambitious aims:

> This study has identified the evidence for land use, settlement, economy and ritual activities of the area during prehistory and has identified both the density and chronological depth of prehistoric human activity. It has also attempted to identify distinct Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age territories (Olding 2000, v).

The book fulfils these aims admirably. It is a localised, embedded landscape study, drawing on wider research on the prehistory of north-west Europe to illuminate the local data and using the local evidence and wider parallels to construct a persuasive account of human activity in the Black Mountains from the upper Palaeolithic until the end of the Iron Age.

In the light of this work and other similar regional studies such as Barker's (1992) work on the chambered cairns of south-west Wales, it may now be possible to begin to develop models of prehistoric society, subsistence strategies and ritual which draw more directly upon localised evidence and have a greater chronological resolution. Many of our paradigms, particularly in earlier prehistory, still postulate slowly changing and widespread trends, which can have the effect of obscuring more local and short-lived developments.

As a landscape history and as a detailed and well-referenced inventory, this book is an invaluable addition to the study of the prehistory of Wales and the Marches. However, it is severely compromised by the poor quality of the illustrations. The many maps are an integral part of the discussion and almost without exception, they are well below publication standard. The drawing style and line weights chosen make it difficult to distinguish the different classes of data and the maps have been reproduced at such a large scale that the shaky penmanship and over-bold edgings are cruelly exposed. The many individual site plans are, if anything, slightly worse. The scales and drawing styles are varied in what seems to be a random manner. Rather uninformative hachure plans of badly denuded long mounds float sideways over a whole A4 page while much more detailed hill-fort plans ('after' various sources) are packed into much smaller spaces. It is a pity that such a solid work should have been allowed to go to press with such feeble illustrations.

In a more positive vein, the concluding section is a creditable attempt to write a history of the area, drawing on the landscape evidence collected in the preceding chapters to build a localised narrative of interactions between shifting territories. The nature of archaeological evidence means that any such narrative will always be of a provisional nature but this final section does give us a solid account on which to base future investigations. Even the distribution maps are reproduced in this section at a rather more forgiving scale and are consequently slightly more readable. The volume closes with another of its many strengths, the detailed and accessible inventory. *The prehistoric landscapes of the eastern Black Mountains* is in many respects a model

example of this kind of regional study; detailed, well-integrated, readable and useful. It represents an important contribution to the study of the archaeology of the area.

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**Rick Peterson**

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**Williams, David H. and Kissack, Keith E. eds., *Monmouth Priory: A History of the Benedictine Priory of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Florent at Monmouth*, Vicar and Parochial Church Council of Monmouth, 2001; ISBN: 0 900439 93 9; 240 x 170 mm; 72pp., 46 figs. and plates; £5.**

For the Normans who moved ever deeper into Wales in the late eleventh century, every emphasis was on the virtues of the new. They found a church which to them appeared archaic, isolated, bristling with bizarre custom and a long way removed from mainstream European developments. To reform such a curious medley of spiritual practices was a religious duty, the seizure of its attendant property fully justified. With characteristic greed and thoroughness, the conquerors set about their task. And nowhere is the rapid introduction of a colonialist flavour to the ecclesiastical landscape of post-conquest Wales better demonstrated than through the earliest Norman monastic plantations. In the half century after Hastings, a whole clutch of Benedictine and Cluniac priories came into being across the newly established lordships of the southern and western seaboards. Generally these plantations stood in the shadow of the founder's castle, on the fringes of a nascent borough, each one representing what Professor Rees Davies has called 'the spiritual arm of a military conquest'.

In some cases, these new priories were initially attached to a mother abbey in England, as was the case with Monmouthshire's Basaleg and Malpas, and also at Brecon, Ewenny and Kidwelly. No less common, however, was for the founder to set up a small dependency of a parent abbey in France, creating what came to be recognized as 'alien priories'. Not that this whole pattern was exclusive to Wales of course; it was found sprinkled in no small measure over the English shires. Yet the concentration of such monastic settlement in medieval Monmouthshire to the east of the river Usk is somehow especially notable. The group comprised: Chepstow (*c.* 1067–71) and Llangua (by 1074), dependent upon William fitz Osbern's earlier foundations at Cormeilles and Lire (Eure) in Normandy; Hamelin of Ballon's priory at Abergavenny (*c.* 1087–1100), attached to the abbey of St Vincent outside the city walls at Le Mans (Sarthe); Goldcliff (1113) established by Robert of Chandos as a dependency of the great reformed abbey at Bec-Hellouin (Eure); and, not least, Monmouth Priory, founded sometime between 1074 and 1086 by Gwethenoc (or Wihenoc), the Breton lord of Monmouth, who chose the abbey of Saint-Florent at Samur (Maine-et-Loire) as the parent house.

The process by which each foundation became a fully established conventual priory, with a recognised complement of brethren and an appropriate complex of monastic buildings, was

gradual and is now almost always difficult to trace from surviving sources. At Monmouth, to begin with the monks of Saint-Florent were encouraged to worship in the existing church of St Cadog, located near the founder's castle. But in 1101 or 1102, a significant step was taken in the development of the house when the priory church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Florent by Bishop Hervey of Bangor, in the presence of the founder, Abbot William of Saint-Florent, Abbot Serlo of Gloucester and several lords of the March. Thereafter, monastic life at Monmouth Priory was to continue through to its suppression in the late 1530s. For more than four hundred years the Benedictine brothers occupied the eastern half of the priory church, with their claustral buildings located to the north. The nave, meanwhile, always served the urban parish. At the dissolution, as was so often the case, the monastic part of the building was despoiled and allowed to fall into ruin, whereas the parochial nave was retained for the use of the townspeople.

Further significant vicissitudes were to befall St Mary's in the centuries to follow. By 1732, the church was said to be 'ruinous and decayed', and the whole (bar the fourteenth-century west tower) was razed to the ground, including those still upstanding fragments of the crossing and east end. The medieval building was replaced by a church of proto-neo-classical design, a work by Francis Smith ('Smith of Warwick'). In turn, this Georgian edifice was found to be too small, and in 1879 a parish meeting resolved to take action. Smith's 'deplorably bad' church was to be dismantled, though the medieval west tower was once again spared. In its place, the structure which has come down to us is the Gothic revival church designed by G. E. Street, first dedicated in 1882.

To mark the 900th anniversary of the 1101 (or 1102) dedication of the priory church, the Vicar and Parochial Church Council of Monmouth have published this very welcome little publication — one which represents excellent value at its modest price. To put the booklet together, the parish could not have chosen its editors any better: David Williams brings his rich interest in matters monastic, and Keith Kissack is of course the historian we shall ever associate with the town of Monmouth. So what aspects of St Mary's history and buildings have they selected for us?

The booklet is loosely arranged in eight sections of varying length and substance. It opens with two items offered by way of prologue: a summary of some of the recent archaeological findings on 'Monmouth up to the Coming of the Normans', by Stephen H. Clarke, and a single-page essay on 'Geoffrey of Monmouth' by Julian Harrison. Next come the accounts of various aspects of the medieval priory, beginning with 'The Early Years of the Priory' by R. W. D. Fenn. The first of the principal essays is a joint contribution from the editors covering the 'Conventual History', with a postscript on 'The Known Seals of Monmouth Priory' by Dr Williams. 'The Priory Buildings' are covered by Sian Rees, and there is a section devoted to 'The Decorated Tiles of the Priory' by J. M. Lewis. The booklet concludes with a short note on 'The Schools in The Priory' by Mr Kissack.

I enjoyed reading the whole thing, and I commend it to all those with any interest in medieval Monmouthshire or medieval monasticism. Stephen Clarke's contribution to the archaeology of his county town is very well known and here he offers up further tasty morsels, including the intriguing possibility of a burial associated with the pre-Conquest church of St Cadog. However, his piece would have been rendered much more comprehensible to those unfamiliar with the town's archaeological topography had it been accompanied with at least a single plan. And where does the interested reader look for more information? (We long, by the way, for a

comprehensive summary of the Monmouthshire Archaeological Society's excellent work).

Dr Fenn (following S. M. Harris in 1953) emphasises the Breton origins of the founder of the priory and suggests the Benedictine community maintained an interest in the saints of 'the Welsh Church', arguing for a degree of continuity — about which I do myself wonder. In their much longer section on the conventual history of the priory, the editors are able to do fair justice to their subject, drawing together all the fragments of evidence and presenting us with a balanced and interesting account. We are given, too, an introduction to priory's economic history, typical of Dr Williams's work on the Cistercian houses of Wales. In her section on the buildings, Dr Sian Rees does well to fill twenty pages or so on the basis of the fourteenth-century tower, fragments of the Norman west front and a west nave respond, a few disarticulated elements of the claustral ranges, and the Thomas Dineley sketch of the church in 1684. I might not agree with all of her suggestions or conclusions (and I was left with a feeling we might be seeking to impose too much of an idealised monastic plan on to what may, or may not, have been present at Monmouth), but this is a very worthy account of the surviving fabric of the medieval priory. The piece on the decorated tiles by John Lewis is particularly helpful, complementing as it does the information appearing in the author's magisterial corpus on Welsh tiles, published three years ago. Mr Kissack's brief account of the schools in The Priory is the only section with any bearing on the post-monastic history of the site.

Clearly, this publication sets out to provide an account of the *medieval* priory, with very little said on the history and architecture of St Mary's after 1540. The policy may have been dictated in part by the anniversary which the booklet celebrates (a monastic one), or possibly by financial constraints, or by the feeling that the Georgian church, for example, is already covered by Professor Andor Gomme in the pages of this journal. I cannot help wondering, nevertheless, if there was not an opportunity lost here. It comes across strongly in the section on buildings, struggling (as we must) with the fragments, but then overlooking two further phases of ecclesiastical construction on the site, about which we could say a great deal more with purpose and authority. Something to consider for a second edition perhaps?

One does hate to carp, but it is disappointing to see such an informative collection of short essays packaged in a way which fails to meet sound publishing practice. For example, we find one title on the cover and a second on the title page (should one combine for bibliographical purposes?). There is no clearly attributed editorship: one has to assume it is the D.H.W. and K.E.K who have signed the acknowledgements, which (incidentally) is the only place we also track down an assumed date of publication. The lack of a contents page is particularly unfortunate, as is the way we are left to stumble across the various section headings through the pages. Important though these things are (if a scholarly work is to be taken seriously in all quarters), they are but quibbles. This is an enjoyable and useful publication, which deserves to be widely known and read.

**David M. Robinson**

**William Manning, *Roman Wales. A Pocket Guide*, University of Wales Press/Western Mail, Cardiff, 2001; ISBN: 0 7083 1675 1; 125 x 190 mm; ix + 129pp., 10 col. pl., numerous b. & w. and figs.; £6.99.**

'I have written you a long letter, because I do not have time to write you a short one'. So wrote a French *philosophe* and anyone who has tried to compress information into a handy size will appreciate both his problem and that faced by the authors of these 'pocket guides'. Even if the format can be described as deceptively small - at less than A5 it allows a fairly small print size and thus as much text as many larger volumes - nevertheless the problems of compression are considerable.

The contents are divided in a way which perhaps betrays the writer's academic background. If planning twelve lectures on Roman Wales, this is exactly the sort of balance one would seek to achieve. Discussion of the pre-Roman background is followed by three chapters on the conquest and consolidation, supplemented by two on forts and fortresses (with the fortress of Caerleon receiving separate treatment). The book then turns to civilian matters (civil government, the cities, the countryside) and what might be termed the socio-economic (religion, trade and industry) before rounding off the Roman history of Wales with a look at late Roman Wales.

The result is an excellent summary of our current knowledge of Roman Wales. In a short review one can do no more than highlight a few aspects. As one would expect, both from the available evidence and from the author's excavations at Usk, the book is particularly strong on the conquest period. The map on page 15 demonstrates very forcibly the valley-blocking tactics of the Neronian period. For the Flavian period, control of lines of communication are particularly important. It is a pity that there are no roads on the map on page 27 to reinforce this point, one of remarkably few instances where the size of the pages hinders the explanation. In civilian matters, the north-south divide is made very obvious in the chapter on the countryside and one wonders just what part the civilian settlements around forts played, particularly in central Wales where, as page 75 shows, we know of little else.

Summaries such as this can concentrate the mind, not only on what we do know, but on what we do not. One has only to look at the space allotted to each section of this book to see how our knowledge declines towards the later period. It is no criticism of the book to say that our knowledge, for instance, of the late Roman defences of Wales makes little overall sense, concentrated as it is on sites in the south-east and north-west. One trusts that a new generation, perhaps fired by succinct surveys such as this, will acknowledge the problems and seek out the sites which surely must be there.

A feature of the 'pocket guide' series is their use of highlighted boxes of about half page size, which provide the opportunity to develop specific themes mentioned in the text, rather after the manner of a lecturer answering questions. Thus the chapter on cities includes 'boxes' on city administration, the Caerwent Paulinus stone, the Caerwent excavations, the Caerwent Romano-Celtic temple and town defences. As in the lecture-questions analogy, it is a scheme which requires restraint on the part of the author and careful selection of the 'questions'. It could so easily be annoying, but works admirably here.

Too often, the publishers of summary works omit bibliographies. Fortunately, this is not the case here. Inevitably, the format means that books rather than journal articles are selected for the bibliography and the opportunity taken to point readers towards more extensive reading lists if they wish to pursue specific details. Possibly some mention might have been made of county periodicals and of the places where summaries of new work can be found, but anyone who has put together a select bibliography will know that the problem is what to leave out, not what to put in.

The volume is attractively presented with a centre section of ten colour pictures and numerous black and white pictures, maps and diagrams. These include some impressive reconstructions by Howard Mason and by Martin Dugdale, not all of which were previously widely available. The more observant may notice that the Caerleon ivory mask has been reversed between the front cover (the correct version) and the central colour plate. The colour plate of the Caerwent forum excavations has also suffered a reversal and one of the volume's few typographical errors (the date is presumably 1989). The appearance of two blank sheets at the end of the volume invites suggestions for their filling; a list of illustrations and figures would have been useful. These are, however, very minor matters and easily put right in later editions. Field trials, admittedly of a limited nature, suggest that it makes a present which is appreciated by the recipient. It is a book which certainly deserves to sell widely and one hopes that it will be updated at regular intervals.

**Peter Webster**

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**Williams, David H., *The Welsh Cistercians,* Gracewing Press, Leominster, 2001; ISBN: 0 85244 354 4; 170 x 245 mm; 352 pp., 16 pl., 25 maps and 129 figs.; £20.**

I know of relatively few scholars so utterly single-minded in devotion to their subject of study as Dr David H. Williams. For about forty years, he has immersed himself with exceptional dedication and assiduity in his study of his beloved Cistercian Order and especially its fortunes in Wales. He has not only visited and studied their sites with immense care and affection, but has also published a large number of seminal and authoritative books and articles. Nor has he been content with academic learning only; in order to fit himself completely for his task he has lived life according to the monastic rule within the walls of more than one contemporary Cistercian house like Caldey, so as to recapture at first hand the monastic spirit. He came to the conclusion a short while ago that the time was ripe for a new book on the Cistercians – updated, revised and re-cast. The volume under review is the splendid outcome of that decision.

It is particularly appropriate that it should have been written to commemorate the death of Stephen W. Williams (1837-99) and dedicated to the memory of that fine scholar, whom Dr David Williams justly denominates as 'The Father of Cistercian Archaeology in Wales'. David Williams himself shares many of his predecessor's qualities: impeccable scholarship; a remarkable grasp of topography; and mastery of the geographical survey and the illustrative map and diagram. He is in many respects Stephen Williams re-born; and if the latter was 'the Father of Cistercian Archaeology', then David is its unquestioned contemporary prince.

Monks made a huge contribution to the life of medieval Wales and none more so than the Cistercian Order. The Welsh houses that stand out above all others in our memory are those of the 'White Monks': Strata Florida, Conway, Valle Crucis, Tintern, Margam, Whitland and the rest. For 400 years, that Order eclipsed all others in the enduring mark it left on Welsh life; small wonder that one eminent Welsh poet, Guto'r Glyn, should have hailed the monks of Valle Crucis as 'the harbingers of Heaven itself'! The Cistercians had, for centuries, set their countrymen an example in religion and worship, culture and education, architecture and art, economic initiative and social provision. True, they had more than their fair share of ups and downs: wars, rebellions, plagues, slumps and declining zeal and numbers. Yet they had survived this multitude of trials and tribulations with astonishing resilience.

All these aspects are meticulously brought to the fore by David Williams. Where he is especially strong, it seems to me, is in his depiction of the topography of the Cistercian houses and their unerring capacity for the exploitation to the full of the economic potential of their sites: plough-lands, pasture, livestock, wool, woodland, minerals, fisheries; all were used effectively to contribute to the Cistercian economy and its trade, at home and abroad, to the intent that the religious and social ends of the monasteries might be achieved. We might, perhaps, expect from an expert historical geographer like Dr Williams a galaxy of maps that are as numerous and revealing as the 150 or so included in this volume. The ones that I thought to be unusually valuable were the magnificent series of sixteen, most of them based on Ordnance Survey originals, illustrating Cistercian possessions in all parts of Wales.

Having unfolded the merits of the Cistercians in Wales as brilliantly as the author has done, it comes as no surprise to discover that he cannot but deeply regret the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII between 1536 and 1540. He argues the case for their reformation not their suppression; and an eminently civilised and fair-minded one that is. The difficulty was, however, that the lay contemporaries of the last generation of the monks did not appear to have shared it, not only King Henry and his leading advisers, but most prominent laymen as well. Even those families that were to remain loyal to the Roman Catholic Church throughout the sixteenth century, like the Edwardses of Chirk, the Carnes of Ewenni and the Morgans of Llantarnam, did not forbear from participating in the dissolution and benefiting from it. If they'd had the good fortune to read David Williams's book, they might have thought differently!

The author and his publishers have once more put us heavily in their debt. It is to be hoped that all those who have the slightest interest in monastic life will take the opportunity of reading, enjoying and benefiting from this book as greatly as I have done.

**Glanmor Williams**

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

***John A.H. Evans*** who has lived all his life in Blaenavon, worked in IT, in manufacturing, before taking an M.A. in local history at Cardiff University in 1994. His main interests are in the growth of industry in Gwent. The research for his article on Nathaniel Wells was the basis for a programme entitled 'Blacker than Black', broadcast on Radio 4 in October 2001 as part of Black Culture week; it was re-broadcast on BBC Radio Wales in January 2002.

***Madeleine Gray*** lectures in history at the University of Wales College, Newport. She edited the final volume of Sir Joseph Bradney's *A History of Monmouthshire, The Hundred of Newport* for the South Wales Record Society (1993), is one of the editors of the forthcoming *Gwent County History*, and is currently preparing a book on the iconography of late medieval religion in Wales.

***Raymond Howell*** is senior lecturer in history and head of history at University of Wales College, Newport, where he lectures on Celtic Roman studies as well as medieval archaeology and history. For over a decade, he has conducted annual research excavations in Trelech, a decayed medieval urban site. Dr Howell's latest book, co-authored with Professor Miranda Green, is *Celtic Wales*, published by the University of Wales Press in 2000.

***J. Gwynfor Jones*** is professor of Welsh history in the School of History and Archaeology, University of Cardiff. He specialises in early Welsh gentry society and his many publications include *The Morgan Family of Tredegar: it's Origins, Growth and Advancement, c. 1340-1674* (1995); *The Welsh Gentry, 1536-1640: Images of Status, Honour and Authority* (1998); and *Conflict, Continuity and Change in Wales c. 1500-1603: Essays and Studies* (1999).

***Bethan Lewis*** graduated from the University of Wales with a degree in history and postgraduate certificate in education. Since 1994, she has been employed by the National Museums & Galleries of Wales, and her present post is curator of the Roman Legionary Museum at Caerleon.

***Graham A. Makepeace*** is an independent field archaeologist working in south-east Wales carrying out upland surveys, watching briefs and evaluations. He is currently researching the prehistory of south-east Wales. He has published numerous papers (prehistory – medieval) in the *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*.

***George McHardy*** after eight years in India as a chamber of commerce executive and a spell as secretary to a scientific learned society, was for twelve years an Inspector of Ancient Monuments in the Department of the Environment. A Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, he has made a thorough study of the *Gwentia* collection of Monmouthshire church watercolours that the Society holds.

***Rick Peterson***, after a period working in contract archaeology, obtained his Ph. D. in 2000 at the University of Southampton for his thesis entitled *The Construction and Use of Neolithic Pottery from Wales*. Dr Peterson is currently employed as a research assistant in the University of Wales College, Newport, working on the later Neolithic landscape of the Avebury region in Wiltshire, as part of the A.H.R.B. funded Longstones project.

***Joshua Pollard*** joined the University of Wales College, Newport, in 1998, as a lecturer in archaeology and prehistory, having previously gained his Ph. D. at Cardiff and having been a research fellow at Newcastle University and an assistant lecturer at Queen's University, Belfast. The British Neolithic provides the focus for much of Dr Pollard's research, and he is currently co-directing a project examining the late Neolithic monuments of the Avebury region.

***Julie Reynolds*** is a curatorial officer at the Roman Legionary Museum, Caerleon. She gained her B.A. degree in archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College, London and has worked on a number of Romano-British sites, including Caerwent.

***David M. Robinson*** has a particular interest in the Cistercian architecture of Wales. On the staff of Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments from 1985 to 1999, Dr Robinson did a signal service to Welsh learning in his editorship of the new series of Cadw guidebooks, as well as editing a seminal work, *The Cistercian Abbeys of Britain* (1998). Dr Robinson is currently employed by English Heritage as Head of the Historical Analysis and Research Team.

***W. Rhys B. Robinson*** was born in Chepstow, later reading Modern History at Oxford. In 1954 he entered the Civil Service, retiring in 1989 as an Under Secretary. A Fellow of both the Society of Antiquaries and of the Royal Historical Society, he has published many articles in learned journals, a particular interest being the nobility and gentry of late medieval and Tudor Wales.

***Peter D. G. Thomas*** is emeritus professor of history at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Born in Bangor, and educated at the University College of North Wales and at London University, Professor Thomas has taught at Glasgow University as well as Aberystwyth and is the author of nine books, including *Politics in Eighteenth-Century Wales*. He is a contributor to the forthcoming *Gwent County History*.

***Jennifer C. Ward*** retired from Goldsmiths College, University of London, in 1999, as senior lecturer in medieval history. She has published *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1992) and has edited *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry 1066-1500* (Manchester Medieval Sources series, 1995). Her other interests relate to baronial, urban and women's history, especially relating to East Anglia.

***Peter Webster*** studied at the University of Manchester and the London Institute of Archaeology. He has been on the staff of Cardiff University since 1969, being at present co-ordinating lecturer (archaeology and ancient history, art and architecture) in the Centre for Lifelong Learning. He has excavated extensively on Roman and medieval sites in western Britain, but is best known for his work on Roman pottery, particularly that found in Wales.

***Sir Glanmor Williams*** was professor of history at University College, Swansea, from 1957 to 1982. Knighted in 1995 for his many services to Welsh archaeology and history, his publications include *The Welsh Church* (1962), *Welsh Reformation Essays* (1967), *Religion, Language and Nationality in Wales* (1979) and *Welsh Reformation Essays* (1997). Members will recall that Sir Glanmor participated in the Association's Civil War Conference in 1996.

# FIELD EXCURSIONS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES, 2001

***Day Outing: 2 June, to Bristol***

Our day in Bristol was to be, in part, a further exploration of the Poyntz family of Acton Court, which we visited the previous year with Mr Mike Ponsford (see *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, XVII (2001) 69). Unfortunately, we were unable to see the exciting finds from Acton Court, now in Bristol City Museum. However, at the Mayor's Chapel, part of which dates back to 1220, when the hospital of St Mark was founded by the Berkeley family, Mr Ponsford showed us the magnificent Poyntz chapel, dating from before 1520, with its remarkable monuments, some of which date from the thirteenth century. Our visit was memorable too for the halting performance of an organist practising for an imminent christening ceremony. We visited next the splendid cathedral, founded in 1140 as the church of an Augustinian abbey, again by the Berkeley family, which still retains its richly decorated Norman chapter house and is the major example of a 'hall church' in Britain.

After lunch, we made our way past the Georgian Exchange and the famous Nails, to Castle Park, where the Anglo-Saxon town of *Bricgstoc* (the place of the bridge) and its harbour grew up on the bend of the river. Mr Ponsford took us around the extensive excavated remains of the Norman castle, which overlay the earlier settlement and guarded the river crossing. Amazingly, the King's Chambers survive, as, until fairly recently, they were incorporated into a high street chain store.

***Day Outing: 15 September, to Gower***

Our guide on this typical Gower day, bright, bracing and slightly chilly, was our chairman, Mr Jeremy Knight. We were met at Port Eynon by Mr Charles Hill of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, who showed us the Salt House, the only remaining example of an early salt-works in Wales, in production around 1550 to 1650. Situated on a low cliff, with an associated quay on the shore below, it had been excavated and conserved by the Trust because of the ever-present threat of marine erosion.

At Rhossili, we saw the Viel, the ancient field system, which is still farmed, and the site of the abandoned and sanded medieval settlement. We walked the cliffs to look at Old Castle, a promontory fort much destroyed by quarrying. After an ample lunch at the King's Head in Llangennith, highly recommended by our chairman (the ham was memorable!), most of us managed to cross the road to the church of St Cenydd, the largest in Gower, reputedly on the site of a Celtic monastery founded in the sixth century by St Cenydd. A highly decorated Celtic cross in the church is said to be his sepulchral slab, but is actually of a later date.

At Llanmadoc, a tiny church overlooking the north Gower coast, we saw three early memorial stones, dating from the fifth to ninth centuries. Our final stop was at Maen Ceti, also known as Arthur's Stone, on the northern slope of Cefn Bryn, one of several megalithic tombs to be found in Gower.

*Evening Visits*

Because of the foot and mouth epidemic, some visits had to be postponed until 2002, but the replacements proved popular and were well-attended. At Troy House, outside Monmouth, we were very disappointed to be denied entrance at the last moment. The early seventeenth-century house, built for Sir Charles Somerset, contains decorated plaster ceilings and a noteworthy open well staircase. For many years, the house was a school and now, empty and neglected, gives cause for serious concern. However, we enjoyed a splendid walk with our member, Steve Clarke, around the lower end of Monmouth and the extra-mural medieval industrial settlement. In June, we had a private tour of Caldicot Castle with the curator, Anne Rainsbury, whose knowledge of the castle is immense. A medieval re-enactment group had stayed on especially to demonstrate for us their archery skills and their chatter and colourful costumes brought the castle to life.

At the National Museums & Galleries of Wales's Collections Centre of the Department of Industry at Nantgarw, Dr David Jenkins showed us a wonderful collection of artefacts, machinery, vehicles and even a train, which are at present homeless after the site of the Industrial and Maritime Museum was sold in Cardiff Bay. In August, we visited Kemeys House, near Caerleon, the 'ancient seat' of the Kemys family and one-time home of our president, Mr Ian Burge. The owners, Mr and Mrs Eifion Owen, showed us around this extremely interesting house, which dates from the early thirteenth century, and afterwards served a light buffet with wine in the great hall.

The final visit of the season was to Tredegar House, to tour the extensive areas below stairs which housed the family's wine cellar and to which the beer produced in the brewhouse was pumped, pausing for a glass of wine in the servants' hall, before we mounted the back stairs to the, seemingly, miles of attic corridors and the servants' bedrooms. Here, too, were relics of a more recent past, when the most spacious rooms had been used by the Borough Architects' Department when Newport Council had first acquired the house. On the way down, we saw all the rooms in between as well, which made us feel more like family than visitors!

*Annual General Meeting: 31 March 2001*

After the business meeting, an illustrated lecture on 'Tintern Abbey Church: 700 years completed and 100 years conserved' was delivered by Mr R.C. Turner, Inspector of Ancient Monuments with Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments.

*Annual October Lecture: 27 October 2001*

The annual public lecture was delivered by Professor Ralph Griffiths, Professor of Medieval History at the University of Wales Swansea, to a large and appreciative audience at the Endowed School, Caerleon. His subject was 'Harry of Monmouth: Henry V of England'. The lecture was arranged in conjunction with the Gwent County History Association, to promote awareness of its forthcoming publication of a major history of the county.

**Gwenllian V. Jones**