

INTRODUCTION

LANGUISHING IN THE FOOTNOTES: WOMEN AND WELSH MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

The era known as the high Middle Ages, in particular the thirteenth century, was an epochal period for Wales. While the high Middle Ages was a period of cultural transformation in all of western Europe, in Wales it was also a time of great upheaval and complete change, which was to have a greater impact on Welsh society than was experienced by most other medieval societies. In fact, for some, the effects of this upheaval and change in Wales may be described as catastrophic. The thirteenth century has been called the ‘age of the Welsh Princes’. Under the leadership of the rulers of the house of Gwynedd, the Welsh achieved some measure of independence from their English overlords during this century. For a time the native Welsh princes were able to mitigate their characteristic unrelenting internal conflict and factionalism and unite against their Anglo-Norman oppressors.¹ Fundamental changes which were to have an overwhelming effect on Wales took place in England during this period. For example, the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries saw the gradual introduction of the English common law into England, much of which is still in use to this day. The ascension to the English throne in 1272 of Edward I, who unlike his two predecessors was a strong king, was another factor in this upheaval and change which took place in Wales.

¹ K. Stokes, *The Myth of Wales: Constructions of Ethnicity 1100-1300* (Monash: Monash Publications in History: 27, 1999), p.15.

The thirteenth century witnessed the rise to power in Gwynedd of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (later known as Llywelyn Fawr) and his grandson, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, who both ruled much of Wales until its final conquest by the Anglo-Normans, a process which had taken more than two hundred years to complete. The narrative of the history of this period is dramatic, comprised as it is of wars, of heroic deeds, of conquests, bravery and betrayal. In fact the history of Wales in the thirteenth century, as constructed by modern historians, reads like a ‘boys’ own adventure story’. Dynasties rise and fall and the overall impression is of feudal knights galloping about the countryside and of armies and military campaigns. One is struck by the fact, though, that with one or two rare exceptions, women seem to be totally absent from the scene. In a book published in 1998, Robin Frame, while lamenting the fact that the history of Ireland in the thirteenth century has been largely neglected by scholars, has stated that although ‘... Welsh medieval history shares many themes, including conquest and colonization, with Irish; during the last two generations it [Welsh history] has attracted some of the ablest historians, not just in Wales but in Britain generally.’² Among the reasons given by Frame for the fact that Welsh medieval history has received greater attention by historians is the push by the two Llywelyns of Gwynedd for supremacy over the other Welsh rulers and in effect, their efforts to establish a united Wales. Whatever the reason for the increased interest by twentieth-century historians in medieval Welsh history, the fact remains that when these histories have been written, Welsh women were largely ignored, and did not really form part of the history. When they appear at all, they have usually been relegated to the footnotes to the text in modern historical accounts of the period.

In his comprehensive history, R.R. Davies acknowledged that he believed that ‘women’s position in Welsh medieval society was not necessarily as inferior or submissive as the legal

² R. Frame, *Ireland and Britain 1170-1450* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1998), p.1.

texts suggest' and that 'on the contrary, they often acted on their own initiative – for example, founding churches, commissioning translations of devotional works into Welsh, and that through marriage-alliances women played a prominent part in binding families together'.³ Unfortunately, apart from a few footnotes or asides, he failed to actually include women in the 465 pages of this book. This thesis argues that the daughters, wives and mothers of the perpetrators of the action in the history of Wales played a significant part in the outcomes and it is essential they be recognised. It is gratifying to note that the recent mammoth work of J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, does actually include Welsh noblewomen in the text.

A full understanding of Welsh medieval history in the thirteenth century demands recognition of the experience of women, particularly Welsh noblewomen, in that history. Women would have constituted at least fifty per cent of the population of Wales, and the figure was probably higher than fifty per cent when one considers the dangers inherent in this militarist society.⁴ Their absence from the historical narrative is a glaring oversight. In this thesis I have endeavoured to correct this anomaly in the fascinating history of Wales at this particular period. It has been my aim to trace some coeval Welsh noblewomen with a view to documenting their lives and setting down the contribution they made to the events unfolding in Wales during this often turbulent era. Through the process of scanning the footnotes of the narratives of modern historians and closely researching printed primary sources I have become acquainted with the lives of several interesting, and I believe outstanding, Welsh noblewomen and the role they played in the society

³ R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp.128-29.

⁴ R.R. Davies has said that because of a lack of information we may only guess at the population of Wales in the thirteenth century, but he states that Keith Williams-Jones's estimate of 300,000 for the whole of Wales at the end of the thirteenth century 'might not be too wide of the mark'. Compare perhaps one million for Scotland and between four and six million for England at the same date. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, p.147.

of their day. Even though they have been entirely left out of the historical texts so far, they must now be included in the historical discourse. My aim therefore has been to rescue these women from the footnotes and place them firmly into the history of medieval Wales where they belong.

History, until quite recently, was largely written by men, and in the words of Gerda Lerner ‘men have defined their experience as history and have left women out’.⁵ As she also states, ‘women have been ... excluded from political power and ... from military decision-making’,⁶ so it is not surprising that when Welsh political history in the medieval period was written from a male perspective in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it took the form of a narrative of male-centred exploits. Men were just as defined by family relationships in the Middle Ages as women. However, it is only men who are portrayed in the political histories as the agents of politically significant action. We are able to look at the men as part of a social and economic network but the women also were significant because of who their father, mother, sisters and brothers were, and whom they married. They also were performers of action.

The insertion of women into history has been a highly visible activity for writers of the medieval history of other parts of western Europe for at least the last three decades.⁷ No such scholarly

⁵ G. Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.158.

⁶ Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, p.154.

⁷ For examples see S.M. Stuard, ed., *Women in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), S.M. Stuard, ed., *Women in Medieval History and Historiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), J. Kirshner and S.F. Wemple, eds., *Women of the Medieval World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), J.C. Parsons, ‘Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power: Some Plantagenet Evidence, 1150-1500’ in J.C. Parsons, ed., *Medieval Queenship* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1994), J.C. Ward, ‘The English Noblewoman and Her Family in the Later Middle Ages’ in C. Meek and K. Simms, eds., *The Fragility of Her Sex? Medieval Irishwomen in Their European Context* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), J.A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), T. Evergates, ed., *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), J.C. Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe, 1200-1500* (Harlow: Longman/Pearson Education Limited, 2003), L.E. Mitchell, *Portraits of*

endeavours have been forthcoming concerning Wales. Such work is long overdue about this small corner of western Europe. In 1986 Deirdre Beddoes stated that ‘in Wales, as elsewhere, the writing and study of history has for a very long time omitted women’. She observed that ‘things are changing now’, but also that ‘there is a long way to go,’ and I must agree with her that in the twenty-first century there is still an exceedingly long way to go.⁸

The publication of *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* in the year 2000 was an attempt to redress the gender balance in Early Modern Welsh history. In his introduction to this book Michael Roberts acknowledges the need of Welsh historians to re-examine the part played ‘by ideas about cultural continuity and a traditional way of life’. Moreover, he also states that an emphasis on women and gender ‘needs to be part of their contribution’.⁹ He notes that this need applies ‘perhaps especially’ to Wales’s more distant past, which would include the thirteenth century. I had been researching medieval Welsh noblewomen for many years and commenced researching this thesis in 1999, and read Michael Roberts’ comments with interest.

Unfortunately the only signs of any attempt to include women in Welsh history in the thirteenth century are the few instances which I quote in this thesis, where Welsh historians actually mention Welsh noblewomen in their texts. While I am pleased to note that R.R. Davies had begun to acknowledge the existence of medieval Welsh noblewomen in the thirteenth century,

Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England 1225-1350 (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

⁸ D. Beddoes, ‘Images of Welsh Women’ in T. Curtis, ed., *Wales: The Imagined Nation, Studies in Cultural and National Identity* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986), p.229.

⁹ M. Roberts, ‘Introduction’ in M. Roberts and S. Clarke, eds., *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.5.

more needs to be done than, for example, his cursory addition of women in his recent paper published in 2004.¹⁰ Welsh historians bemoan the dearth of sources for the thirteenth century, but seem overwhelmed by the quantity of material available from the fourteenth century and beyond. Llinos Beverley Smith claims that ‘gender alone is a very blunt instrument with which to dissect the history of women in late medieval Wales’.¹¹ It is, however, my view that nothing less than a blunt instrument will suffice to extract and examine the extant evidence about the role of Welsh noblewomen from what was arguably the most fascinating period in Welsh medieval history - the thirteenth century. This thesis is certainly timely. Wales has been slow to produce this work and my project advances this goal. The gendering of history will mean that women will be automatically included in the narratives, and it will not be necessary to ‘add women and stir’.¹² In the meantime, my project will hopefully address the imbalance for the thirteenth century.

Noblewomen in Wales in the thirteenth century were not mere ciphers who were manipulated by male family members and other noblemen for political gain in order to advance family holdings and prestige. Reinterpretation of Welsh historical documents reveals that Welsh noblewomen themselves initiated some of the action. Like their contemporaries in other parts of Britain and Europe, these women played an active rather than passive role in determining outcomes for their

¹⁰ R.R. Davies, ‘The Identity of ‘Wales’ in the Thirteenth Century’ in R.R. Davies and Geraint H. Jenkins, eds., *From Medieval to Modern Wales, Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004). See, for example, p.45 ‘men and women’, p.51 ‘men (and women)’ and p.62 ‘men and women’, although I think this last reference is to men and women historians, rather than the men and women of thirteenth-century Wales.

¹¹ L.B. Smith, ‘Towards a History of Women in Late Medieval Wales’ in *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales*, p.15.

¹² M.C. Erler and M Kowalski ‘Introduction, ‘A New Economy of Power Relations: Female Agency in the Middle Ages’ in M.C. Erler and M. Kowalski, eds., *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p.9.

families.¹³ Neither could they be described as mere observers. Women and men together ‘made’ the history of Wales in the thirteenth century. As was the case in other western European countries in the Middle Ages, women were not invisible, and in notable cases, neither were they marginal. If an historian approaches the printed record without gender blindness, many Welsh noblewomen of the thirteenth century are found there.

Modern historians have used surviving documentary evidence which concerns thirteenth-century Welsh noblewomen when gathering corroboration in support of arguments relating to political outcomes. Unfortunately, even when the documents themselves appear to have been written and/or sealed by the women concerned, the emphasis placed by historians when considering these data is not directly on the women involved at all, but on the effect that the documents have on their own theories and what the motivations were of the men who may have been involved, directly or indirectly, in the dissemination of these documents. As a result of this, there has been a minimisation of the role played by the women in the events leading up to the production of the documents. Rather than exploring whether the women themselves may have initiated the action which culminated in production of the documents, the women are usually sidelined and even ignored, and there is certainly no discussion of the outcomes as far as the lives of the women are concerned.

Male historians have traditionally not been interested in the possibility of female initiative in the past. In order to examine the contribution made by the women involved in these events and

¹³ For discussion of the activities of aristocratic women in France and England, see T. Evergates, ‘Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne’ in T. Evergates, ed., *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), J.C. Ward, ‘The English Noblewoman and Her Family in the Later Middle Ages’ in C. Meek and K. Simms, eds., *The Fragility of Her Sex?* and S. Johns, ‘The Wives

incidents, it is necessary to reconstruct, in interpretive discourses, the events leading up to the preparation of the document concerned. Although historians have adopted what they see as the motivations of the men who participated in the preparation of the documents, in order to advance their own theories, another equally valid view of motivation for the same event may be arrived at which supports a quite different theory. Clearly, to assess whether women may have initiated action, motivation must be re-examined for other possible interpretations.

Much has been written about why women are virtually invisible in the written history of Western Europe in the Middle Ages, and some modern historians are actively working to 'fill the gaps' with works dealing specifically with women's history. In her essay 'Medievalism and Feminism'¹⁴ Judith Bennett discusses the position taken in feminist scholarship and reactions to this aspect of medieval studies. I am not concerned in this work with the reasons for this historiographic problem, the so-called 'Silences of the Middle Ages'.¹⁵ Rather it has been my intention to research the presence of women in the 'footnotes' and the limited number of references to women which do appear in chronicles and histories of Wales, with a view to tracing the lives of women who inhabited Wales in the thirteenth century, about whom there is some information extant. I have endeavoured to discover how these women lived and by examining the available evidence, to consider the contribution they made to their communities and to the outcomes of the various changes and upheavals of their time.

and Widows of the Earls of Chester, 1100-1252: the Charter Evidence', *Haskins Society Journal*, 7, (1995), pp.117-132.

¹⁴ J.M. Bennett, 'Medievalism and Feminism', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), pp.309-331.

¹⁵ C. Klapisch-Zuber, ed., *A History of Women in the West, II. Silences of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992).

One important aspect of the study of Welsh noblewomen during the thirteenth century is the fact that they were crucial to the conquerors' aims of turning power into authority.¹⁶ For almost two centuries the Normans had used English and Welsh noblewomen in their determination to legitimise the conquest of Britain. The naked physical force of the conquest was being legitimised into the power of authority by the marriage of Norman lords to English, Welsh and Scottish noblewomen. By marriages to heiresses, the conquerors and their children became the legitimate inheritors of the conquered lands.¹⁷ Whereas this process was largely completed in England by the twelfth century, I would suggest that in Wales this 'legitimisation' was still happening two hundred years after the initial invasion by the Normans. A.J. Roderick has shown in his study that marriages between members of the Welsh native nobility and the Normans were a feature of the early years of the conquest. He gives as examples the marriages of Nest, the daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (d.1063) to Osbern Fitz Richard, lord of Byton and Richard's Castle in Shropshire, whose daughter Nest married Bernard de Neufmarché, lord of Brecon. Their daughter Sibyl in turn married Miles of Gloucester, lord of Brecon and later earl of Hereford. Another example is Nest, the daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr (d.1093) who married Gerald of Windsor, and their daughter Angharad who married William de Barri and whose younger son was Gerald of Wales.¹⁸ Indeed, from the Anglo-Norman viewpoint, the marriages of Llywelyn Fawr and his children to Normans early in the thirteenth century were in fact part of

¹⁶ 'If power is the exercise of constraint and compulsion against the will of an individual or group, authority is a sub-type of power in which people willingly exercise commands because they see the exercise of power as legitimate.' See N. Abercrombie, S. Hill and B.S. Turner, eds., *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, Second Edition (London: Penguin, 1988), p.16.

¹⁷ E. Searle, 'Women and the Legitimisation of Succession at the Norman Conquest' in R. Allen Brown, ed., *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies*, III, 1980 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1981), pp.160-70.

¹⁸ A.J. Roderick, 'Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282', *The Welsh History Review*, 4 (1968-69), pp.3-8.

this legitimisation. Even the marriage of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to Eleanor de Montfort in 1278 may be seen in this light.

As previously mentioned, from the early days of the conquest of Wales, Norman lords married Welsh noblewomen and Welsh lords married Norman noblewomen, so that mixed marriages were a feature of the frontier society of Wales in the Middle Ages. With the exception of one son and one daughter, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in the thirteenth century arranged legitimate marriages to Anglo-Normans for nearly all of his known legitimate and illegitimate children, so that he actively sought and derived great advantage from the marriages of his children into the Anglo-Norman power bloc. Indeed his own marriage to Joan, the illegitimate daughter of King John, had brought him considerable advantage. According to R.R. Davies, ‘royal support enhanced his [Llywelyn’s] standing and allowed him to extend his mastery beyond Gwynedd into native Wales as a whole.’¹⁹ Although in each case the political advantage of these marriages was shortlived, it was nevertheless the primary reason for the choice of marriage partner in each case. Llywelyn Fawr’s agency in arranging these marriages emphasises the importance of noblewomen in the political process and thus the history of Wales. J.J. Crump has recently referred to Llywelyn’s ‘effectively manipulating the kinship bonds of the members of his own family ... to extend his influence over many of the most powerful families in England and Wales.’²⁰ This thesis shows the extent of the kinship bonds of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth through marriages of his daughters and granddaughters to both English and Welsh noblemen.

¹⁹Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, p.241.

²⁰ J.J. Crump, ‘Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose: a Letter from Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to Stephen de Segrave’, *Historical Research*, vol 73, No. 181 (2000), p.198.

As a consequence of this policy of intermarriage between Normans and the Welsh, one must address the question of what exactly constitutes a Welsh noblewoman in the thirteenth century. Must she have been born in Wales, lived in Wales, had a Welsh name and spoken Welsh? Unfortunately it is not possible to know with any degree of certainty what language these women spoke, but it is possible, given certain criteria, to postulate that some of them, possibly all, would have spoken Welsh, as well as French and even English.²¹ Some of the women in this thesis have Welsh names, for example Angharad, Gwladus, Gwenllian and Senana, but names like Margaret, Maud and Helen, although not originally Welsh names, would have been in use in Wales for hundreds of years. Some of the women were born in Wales to Welsh families, others were born in Wales to Norman or Anglo-Norman families and married into either Welsh or Norman or Anglo-Norman families, and yet another group were born outside Wales and then married into Welsh families. Some of the women lived in Wales, some lived outside Wales and some probably moved from one area to the other. One might consider Gwenllian ferch Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to be a ‘true’ Welsh woman. Gwenllian was an illegitimate daughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, whose mother is said to have been Tangwystl ferch Llywarch Goch,²² a native Welsh woman. Gwenllian was born in Wales and presumably spoke Welsh. As part of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth’s policy of arranging politically advantageous marriages for his children, Gwenllian was married to a Norman lord, William de Lacy, possibly in 1222, and appears to have spent

²¹ See R.R. Davies ‘Race Relations in Post-Conquest Wales: Confrontation and Compromise’ *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1975), pp.34-35. ‘The addition of Welsh to the list of languages of their subjects in itself posed no problems of assimilation’ for the kings of England and ‘linguistic intolerance, at least at an official level, barely existed.’ In the thirteenth century ‘English was not as yet the language of the English ruling class. The king and his nobles still generally wrote and spoke in Norman French.’ Concerning the translation of *Ancrene Wisse* Dobson argues that it was commissioned for Eleanor de Braose, but I believe it could also have just as easily been intended for her new sister-in-law, Gwladus Ddu. E.J. Dobson, *The Origins of Ancrene Wisse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp.307-8.

²² Roderick, ‘Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282’, p.17.

most of her life living in Ireland.²³ Interestingly, as my work stems from an interest in Celtic Studies, William de Lacy's mother was Irish, the daughter of Rory O'Connor, the last high king of Ireland. Does the fact that Gwennlian was born in Wales of Welsh parents and spoke Welsh make her a Welsh woman, even although she lived what was a very long life for the Middle Ages in another country? (Gwennlian is thought to have possibly been eighty years of age when she died.) These criteria might preclude Maud Clifford from being classed as a Welsh woman. Maud was a granddaughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, but her mother had married a Norman lord as did Maud herself. Maud does, however, appear to have lived most of her life in Wales and very probably spoke Welsh. She may also be viewed in the public record as siding with the Welsh against the Anglo-Normans. Both Gwennlian de Lacy and Maud Clifford held lands in Wales for most of their lives.

Considering the large numbers of marriage alliances which had been taking place between the Welsh and Norman aristocracies over the two hundred years of the conquest of Wales, the parameters for studying elite Welsh women must have some flexibility as regards definition. The definition of 'Welsh' by the thirteenth century is by no means clear. An example of the somewhat vague and confused nature of the term would be Rhys ap Gruffudd (d.1222) and Owain ap Gruffudd (d.1235) who were grandsons of Rhys ap Gruffudd (the Lord Rhys) of Deheubarth. They appear in the histories as two Welshmen and probably thought of themselves as Welsh, although their mother was Matilda de Braose, the daughter of a Norman baron. I have therefore included in this study women who although they probably did not necessarily regard themselves as Welsh, may be referred to as Welsh women by virtue of having either been born in

²³ J.E. Lloyd, 'Who was Gwennlian de Lacy?', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, vol. XIX, Sixth Series (1919), pp.292-98.

Wales or having come to reside in Wales following marriage to Welsh or Norman lords with primary interests in Wales, and because they form part of the political and social history of Wales.²⁴

I had originally planned to attempt a prosopographical approach to this thesis, but once I began it was clear that such an approach was rendered unnecessary due to the excellent collections of early Welsh genealogies which exist, as well as the outstanding work of P.C. Bartrum in the twentieth century. Prosopography offers medievalist historians a valuable resource ‘to recover the history of larger groups of women, not just the well-documented and elite members of society.’²⁵ I have found, however, that for Welsh noblewomen of the thirteenth century enough evidence may be found in Welsh genealogical charts, printed legal records and chronicles of the period, plus the footnotes of narratives of the medieval history of Wales written by modern historians, to enable commencement of writing their history. One of the most important documentary sources of information about women in medieval Wales is the collection of genealogies surviving from the medieval period.²⁶ Modern historians tend to look mainly at descent through patrilineal lines when drawing genealogical charts to support arguments. For example, J. Beverley Smith gives the lineages of Gwynedd, Powys and Deheubarth along male lines in his recent work on Llywelyn ap Gruffudd; Kari Maund’s recent publication features several genealogical charts following patrilineal lines, and R.R. Davies showed the native

²⁴ I disagree with Linda Mitchell’s assertion that Hawise, the daughter of Owain ap Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys was ‘no more Welsh, in reality, than her mother or grandmother: the product of the inter-marriage of Corbets and Lestranges, ...’. The Welsh had been intermarrying with Normans and Anglo-Normans since the eleventh century. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p.69.

²⁵ Erler and Kowalski, *Gendering the Master Narrative*, p.12.

²⁶ P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies AD300-1400*, 4 vols. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974).

dynasties of Deheubarth, Powys and Gwynedd in the same way.²⁷ This thesis presents evidence to show that this concentration on patrilineal lines is misleading. The interpretation needs to be modified to take into account family connections through females which feature in earlier Welsh genealogical records. It seems fairly clear from Peter Bartrum's work that wherever he knows the names and descent of female family members they are included and cross-referenced, thus giving to them the appearance of the same worth, or consequence, as family members who are men and boys. Enough names have come down to us of female family members and their descent that we can infer that early genealogists considered them to be worth recording.²⁸ If the early writers had not left the materials they did, Bartrum could not have completed the work which he has done so thoroughly.

A number of women have been omitted from Welsh genealogies by medieval and modern historians. Notable absences are Margaret of Bromfield, the sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (d.1282)²⁹ and Efa ferch Owain ap Maredudd of Ceredigion. These omissions make tracing these women more difficult, but while they have been previously left out of the genealogies, it is possible to find them in other documents and records, and insert them into the charts where appropriate. I do not believe that the omission of the names of female family members from the genealogy charts compiled by P.C. Bartrum was intentional, any more than was the omission of

²⁷ J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp.607-9, K. Maund, *The Welsh Kings* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2000), pp.75, 111, 114 and Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, pp.128-29.

²⁸ See for example some of the material described by P.C. Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966). (Many mothers and daughters are mentioned, see for example mothers names given in pp.95-100 and 'Merched Brychan' or 'The Daughters of Brychan', pp.82-3.)

²⁹ The recent publication by J. Beverley Smith of *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* does include references to Margaret.

the names of male members of the society. These omissions came about because the information was not available to the compiler. The Welsh considered a person's ancestry to be of prime importance, and the prominence of one's ancestors was of as much consequence on the female side as it was on the male. Gerald of Wales said of the Welsh that they valued 'distinguished birth and noble descent more than anything else in the world'.³⁰ He also explained their disregard of what he termed 'the crime of incest', by marrying women related to them within the prohibited degrees, 'both the lower classes and the better educated people', as due to 'their great respect for noble descent, which means so much to them'.³¹

It has been said that in the thirteenth century 'in some ways, medieval women actually enjoyed more opportunities for achievement and status than did females in later centuries',³² and I believe that this was the case for noblewomen in Wales in the thirteenth century. Linda Mitchell has argued convincingly that in the thirteenth century English medieval noblewomen had been able to take advantage of opportunities which presented themselves during the reigns of Henry III and Edward I to gain access to status and power which had not previously been available to them. These opportunities were brought about mainly by the expansion, improvement and increasing complexity during this century of the laws of the twelfth century.³³ She postulates that the reigns of Edward II and Edward III did not afford these same opportunities and that the fourteenth century 'may have witnessed a gradual but deliberate hardening of gender categories that had a deleterious effect on women's access to power'.³⁴ My study of the thirteenth century

³⁰ *Gerald of Wales, The Journey Through Wales/The Description of Wales*, L. Thorpe, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1978), Book I, Ch. 17, p.251.

³¹ *Gerald of Wales, The Description of Wales*, Book II, Ch.6, pp.262-63.

³² M.N. Williams and A. Echols, *Between Pit and Pedestal: Women in the Middle Ages* (Lawrenceville: Princeton Academic Press, 1994), p.235.

³³ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, pp.125-130.

³⁴ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p.133

in Wales has led me to the same conclusions as Linda Mitchell, with respect to the availability of access to status and power for noblewomen living in Wales during the reigns of Henry III and Edward I. Although the conditions for women were similar in Wales to those pertaining in England in the thirteenth century, it was the final conquest in 1282-3 itself that brought an abrupt end to any embryonic 'women's rights' which had begun to emerge in Wales, which can be compared to the gradual process in England in the reigns of Edward II and Edward III. During the thirteenth century the Welsh rulers were adopting many of the customs of the Anglo-Normans, for example giving their noblewomen access to dower lands and bestowing lands on daughters as part of marriage contracts.

Most of the large historical narratives of Welsh medieval history have concentrated on the thirteenth century. When writing of this century, however, many Welsh historians tend to be dismissive of the possibility of Welsh women holding land, by briefly referring to the fact that under Welsh native law, women could not hold land. They usually cite the articles in *The Welsh Law of Women*, published in 1980. But this thesis challenges this view and will show that virtually every available reference to Welsh women in the printed legal record of Wales in the thirteenth century is decisively concerned with the ownership of land by each Welsh woman in question.

Another point which has been argued by Linda Mitchell for English noblewomen, and which I believe also applied to Welsh noblewomen in the thirteenth century, is the proposition that 'widowed dowagers of stature transcended the gendered system that expected their

subordination'.³⁵ Mitchell also argues that 'in relationships between husband and wife, mother and son, father and daughter in which the 'traditional' gender ideals were not present, conventional gender-based disabilities were overlooked for pragmatic ends'.³⁶ This study will certainly show that the women who wielded the most power in Wales were widows. In fact, it was widows who comprised the majority of the women studied who showed agency and had some measure of personal success. Even widows who remarried appear to have retained the power and status which was theirs from the first marriage. The only woman in my study who is shown to have acted on her own initiative while still a married woman and not yet a widow is Senana, the wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn. As her husband was imprisoned and looked likely to remain so for a long time, Senana may just as well have felt herself a widow when she took the action she did. The early age of first marriage of most of these women, while they were virtually still children, would probably have been one reason why they did not leave evidence of agency before they became widows, because they would have been too young.

Like other western European noblewomen, Welsh noblewomen operated in the sphere of 'dynastic familial power'³⁷ where there was scope for women to exercise power. Women did not wield physical power in the way that men did, nor for the most part, political power in the public domain. They were, however, certainly not without access to other forms of power, in the private sphere. Through the family, women were able to exercise respectable forms of power such as influence, and through family networking they could take advantage of opportunities for individual agency. The instability of the thirteenth century, culminating in the Montfortians

³⁵ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p.133.

³⁶ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p.135.

³⁷ P. Stafford and A.B. Mulder-Bakker, eds., *Gendering the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), p.3.

virtually taking over government in England, created a hiatus which allowed the native Welsh rulers to regain control of much of Wales, and this same hiatus provided a window of opportunity for noblewomen in Wales to access power. For Welsh noblewomen there were different factors to be considered than for noblewomen from other countries. In the thirteenth century Welsh noblewomen were operating between two societies. They had their own long and stable legacy of Welsh native laws, for example, which defined their position within the Welsh community. Native Welshwomen enjoyed their own 'Welsh Laws of Women'. (Chapter 6.) At the same time they were coping with a colonising power, which brought with it a very different system and values, to say nothing of language. Welsh noblewomen moved between these two different societies and like their English sisters in the thirteenth century, they took advantage of whatever opportunities for agency and access to power presented themselves. As this thesis will show, Welsh noblewomen also acted in the public political sphere on several occasions. Some examples of such women are the following: Senana, the wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn who approached the English king to try and obtain his help for the release of her husband from his half-brother's prison; Margaret, the sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd whose insistence on her land rights compromised Llywelyn's determination to retain Welsh native law; Maud Clifford, a granddaughter of Llywelyn the Great and a baroness of Henry III, who approached the Archbishop of Canterbury to try and arrange a Christian burial for Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, whom he had excommunicated. These instances are some of the occasions when Welsh noblewomen may be seen as active in the political sphere.

Welsh noblewomen in the thirteenth century contributed substantially to the successes and failures of the political manoeuvring of their male counterparts. There can be no doubt that

Welsh noblewomen were highly regarded for their noble lineages, and it is likely that the system of networking within Welsh noble families was much more complicated than we are able to see from written evidence. Through marriage they provided heirs and often brought with them landed wealth which in turn created political stability. They also contributed other wealth by way of movable goods. According to Welsh native law the land of the patrimony was definitely subject to inheritance through males, but land is of no real value without the means of production. These Welsh noblewomen owned livestock - cows, pigs, sheep, horses, and so on. Wales was basically a rural society and the Welsh economy was a mixed agricultural subsistence economy. In this economy 'cattle were the most important form of stock,'³⁸ i.e. movable goods. According to Welsh law once again, if a marriage lasted for seven years, a wife was entitled to a half share of the movable goods of the marriage. Therefore it seems probable that many of these women would have been in a position to exercise direct power over half of the means of production of the Welsh families concerned.

From the available evidence, it is apparent that life for many 'Welsh' noblewomen living in the thirteenth century was not without incident. Indeed although one would possibly not characterise the lives of these women as resembling an 'adventure', they certainly faced danger and even violence at times. Abduction, capture and imprisonment were not uncommon. Three of the women studied in this thesis were either forcibly abducted or captured and then imprisoned. The mothers among them faced an ever-present threat of danger to their infants, particularly sons, whenever questions of right of succession were being considered. The infant sons of one woman in this study were apparently disposed of because of the threat they posed as heirs. The infant daughter of another woman was placed in a nunnery shortly after her birth, for

³⁸ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, p.156.

the same reason. If the lives of the noblemen in this period resembled a ‘boys’ own adventure story’, then correspondingly the lives of the noblewomen were also fraught with risks and dangers.

The following chapters examine these issues in specific detail, using available evidence. In order to make the study coherent to a reader, I have grouped the majority of the Welsh noblewomen together in chapters where there is a common theme in their lives, although it is my hope that the distinctive character of each of these women will emerge. Senana, the daughter of Caradog ap Thomas, a native Welsh noblewoman who petitioned the king for the release of her husband and sons from prison occupies a chapter of her own, as she stands apart. The five daughters of Llywelyn Fawr, Gwenllian, Gwladus Ddu, Margaret, Elen and Angharad, form one chapter. Although much has been written about his sons, this is not the case with his daughters, who should also be recognised. Two chapters examine individually the lives of two of Llywelyn’s granddaughters, Margaret of Bromfield and Maud Clifford. Although from very different backgrounds, these two Welsh noblewomen were extremely prominent and interesting in their own right. A further chapter discusses Anglo-Norman women who were married to Welsh noblemen. One chapter in this work is devoted to the Welsh Laws of Women which formed part of the ancient oral Welsh native laws of Hywel Dda and which were redacted in the thirteenth century. Some of these native laws were still in use in parts of Wales up until the fifteenth century and in a work about Welsh noblewomen they provide some background and insight. Another chapter examines the lives of a small group of Welsh nuns from the thirteenth century about whom some evidence is available in the public record, including the daughters of conquered Welsh princes who were placed into nunneries following the deaths of their fathers in

battle. Because the majority of the women in the earlier chapters were centred around north Wales, the final chapter considers a group of native Welsh noblewomen from central and more southern parts of Wales about whom I gained some knowledge during my research. My study, however, does not include those areas of southern Wales where Norman conquest and settlement had become firmly established by the twelfth century, such as Pembroke, Haverford, Gower, Glamorgan and so on.

Some of the chapters in this thesis could be used as a source for case studies of the women concerned, but I prefer to present them as additions for inclusion in the narrative of Welsh medieval history. As in other western European countries, these noblewomen in Wales in the Middle Ages were certainly not invisible and for the most part they were not marginalised. The so-called ‘Silences of the Middle Ages’ came about because those who were writing the histories – usually men – did not see women as suitable subjects for study, and therefore women were overlooked by historians. Despite accidents such as the destruction of much valuable information at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII, enough material remains in the printed record of England, Wales and Ireland in the thirteenth century for detailed study of some of the women who were present in Wales in the thirteenth century.

When we consider the thirteenth-century Welsh nobility and their relations with other contemporary aristocrats elsewhere in Britain from an inclusive standpoint, we must consider all of them, not just their male members. Indeed what we are examining here is a gendered governing class. Key Welsh noblewomen such as those discussed in this thesis were an essential part of it, albeit not as powerful or as prevalent as their male counterparts, but although they did

not engage in combat, they were still every bit as vital to political outcomes. In relation to medieval English women, Barbara Hanawalt has asked the question ‘was it only the individual, forceful women who were able to manipulate disadvantageous situations to their own profit?’³⁹ From my survey of Welsh noblewomen, I would answer this question in the affirmative in relation to the public political arena for Wales, but as far as exerting influence in the private familial sphere, many more of these noblewomen would have made their presence felt even more decisively.

For the most part writers of Welsh medieval history, early and modern, have written for and about the nobility and not the ordinary common people, so that this present work concentrates on noblewomen, of necessity rather than by choice. Historiography – the methodology used to look at the past – is of necessity coloured by our own contemporary experience – by the times in which we live. Our value judgments determine our interpretation of the information we find. My own interpretation of my findings must be qualified by my own belief systems, by my modern (*sic*) or twenty-first-century view of the world, in the same way that the writings of historians living in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constructed their own view of the world. My own obvious bias is that of a twenty-first-century Australian woman who remembers very well, with great admiration and affection, her Welsh-speaking great-grandmother, Jane Williams. She emigrated to Australia in the early twentieth century and lived to a very great age. She and other female Welsh relatives whom I know must inform my work.

³⁹ B.A. Hanawalt, ‘Golden Ages for the History of Medieval English Women’ in S.M. Stuard, ed., *Women in Medieval History and Historiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), p.18.

It is my hope that other scholars who share an interest in these women may find this information useful as a starting point for further research.

NEGOTIATING BEHIND THE SCENES:

SENANA FERCH CARADOG

Despite a life of disappointment and adversity, Senana ferch Caradog ap Thomas ap Rhodri ab Owain Gwynedd emerges from the pages of Welsh medieval history as a strong, courageous and determined woman who was not afraid to act on her own behalf at the highest level, when she saw an opportunity to redeem the unfortunate situation involving her Welsh husband and her family. While the majority of other notable women in this study were widows, Senana was not. However, when she appeared on the political stage, in another sense she was, because her husband was imprisoned for much of their married life. She was denied the support and companionship of her husband for at least five or six years before his death, but she had the courage to approach the English king, on her own initiative, in order to try and arrange for the release of her husband and her eldest son. Initially she was successful in her approach, and the king had a charter drawn up for an agreement between the crown and Senana, setting out the terms for the release of her husband and son. Senana agreed to this charter and personally signed and sealed it. Senana's husband Gruffudd was held in captivity by his half-brother Dafydd, and as we shall see, although Senana was successful in her bid to get her husband and son released from one prison, he was unfortunately not set free, but instead was transferred to another prison, namely honourable confinement in the Tower of London as a prisoner of Henry III.

Modern historians have dealt with Senana in a variety of ways. J.E. Lloyd mentioned Senana in a footnote, as the mother of Dafydd the son of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn,¹ and R.R. Davies mentions her in his text as an example of the use of cattle as payment to the king.² J. Beverley Smith in his latest work does discuss Senana, specifically because of her significant position as the mother of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.³ In view of the aims of this present work, and when considering the omissions of earlier historians, it was gratifying for me to see the beginnings of change in the historiography which has hitherto rendered women more invisible than is warranted by the available sources. David Stephenson has recently said that Senana was ‘very active’ when negotiating for the release of her husband from captivity.⁴ Similarly, David Walker has also referred to the ‘great skill’ with which Senana first presented her case to Henry III, which led to the formulation of the charter she signed in order that her husband might receive justice.⁵ While this beginning of change is welcome, this chapter will suggest that these changes should go much further to acknowledge noblewomen as central actors in the unfolding of events which make up the history of Wales in the thirteenth century. Without their actions, events would have transpired in quite a different manner.

Like so many other women in this study, Senana was descended from a noble lineage. She was the daughter of Caradog ap Thomas, who like her husband Gruffudd was descended from the common ancestors Owain Gwynedd and Gruffudd ap Cynan, who were both great Welsh rulers

¹ J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (London: 1911), p.708, **footnote 82.**

² R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.156.

³ J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998).

⁴ D. Stephenson, ‘The Laws of Court: Past Reality or Present Ideal?’ in T.M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell, eds., *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.402.

⁵ D. Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.104.

of Gwynedd in the twelfth century. Bartrum notes that Senana was unknown to the early Welsh genealogists.⁶ Gruffudd, her husband, was the eldest son of Llywelyn Fawr (Llywelyn ab Iorwerth) who lived from 1173-1240AD and ruled much of Wales from 1218 until his death in 1240. Although Gruffudd was Llywelyn's eldest son, he was unfortunately illegitimate. Llywelyn had already fathered a son and daughter to a woman named Tangwystl ferch Llywarch Goch before he married Joan, the illegitimate daughter of King John in 1205.⁷ Despite the Welsh tradition that, provided the father acknowledged paternity, all sons should inherit equally, whether legitimate or not, Llywelyn took steps before his death to declare his legitimate son Dafydd his heir, to the exclusion of Gruffudd. According to David Walker 'Llywelyn negotiated for the recognition of Dafydd as his successor over a period of eighteen years'.⁸ As a consequence of this, Gruffudd was to spend a large proportion of his life in prison, firstly because he would not accept that his brother was to be his father's successor, and secondly because he was a threat to Dafydd. He had earlier become a hostage for his father to King John in 1211, and he was released in 1215 as one of the conditions of Magna Carta.⁹ Gruffudd was understandably less than enthusiastic about being replaced as his father's heir by Dafydd, and he rebelled against his father more than once. His father gave him land in Meirionydd and Ardudwy, but these lands were taken back from him by Llywelyn because of his rebelliousness. The *Brut* for 1221 describes Gruffudd's behaviour and the fact that his father had taken from him the cantref of Meirionydd and the commote of Ardudwy.¹⁰

⁶ P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies AD300-1400*, vol. 3 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), p.447.

⁷ For Tangwystl Chapter 6, 'The Welsh Laws of Women', p.197 and for Gwenllian Chapter 2 'The Daughters of Llywelyn Fawr'.

⁸ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p.103.

⁹ J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta* (Cambridge: 1965), p.469. 'Item 58. We will restore at once the son of Llywelyn ...'.

¹⁰ *Brut Y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 2nd edition, T. Jones, ed. and trans. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), p.221.

Llywelyn was ambivalent about his son Gruffudd. On the one hand he valued him and found him a useful warband leader. At the same time his considerable abilities as a warrior were a threat to his father's plans for Wales, which devolved around his legitimate son, who was only a child. In 1223 Gruffudd was sent by his father with an army to oppose the earl of Pembroke, William Marshal who was heading towards Carmarthen, and he is described in the chronicle as 'fearless'. He seems to have been of great assistance to his father later in this campaign against William Marshal.¹¹ By 1228, however, he had been imprisoned by his father for his rebelliousness and remained there for six years. The *Brut* tells us that he was released in 1234 after being in prison for six years.¹² Presumably it was during the thirteen years between 1215 and 1228 when Gruffudd enjoyed his freedom that he managed to marry and produce his two elder sons, Owain and Llywelyn.¹³ After his release in 1234, by way of apanage, he was given land in Llŷn by Llywelyn, and also he held Ceri, Cyfeiliog, Mawddwy, Mochnant and Caereinion in southern Powys.¹⁴

Gruffudd once more proved to be recalcitrant and at the time of Llywelyn's death, Gruffudd and his eldest son Owain were prisoners in Cricieth castle.¹⁵ Llywelyn had suffered a stroke in 1237 and Dafydd is said to have removed Gruffudd from Powys and then to have imprisoned him. In 1239 he and his son were incarcerated in Cricieth castle by Dafydd ap Llywelyn.¹⁶ Following his father's death, Gruffudd was to continue a prisoner in Cricieth Castle under his brother Dafydd's rule. Matthew Paris tells us that following the death of Llywelyn Fawr on April 11,

¹¹ *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, pp.225-27.

¹² *Brut Y Tywysogyon Red Book of Hergest Version*, p.233.

¹³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.39. Smith suggests the birth of Owain and Llywelyn as 'fairly early in the 1220's'.

¹⁴ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p.103.

¹⁵ A.D. Carr, *Medieval Wales* (New York: St Martin's Press Inc., 1995), p.58.

¹⁶ *Brut Y Tywysogyon, Red Book of Hergest Version*, pp.235-7

1240 open hostility existed between Dafydd and Gruffudd and that Dafydd tricked Gruffudd into attending a council of peace and seized and imprisoned him.¹⁷ Evidently Gruffudd's eldest son must have accompanied him because he also was imprisoned with his father, possibly because as another eldest son he was also a potential heir to Gwynedd.

Senana is thought to have had four sons, Owain, Llywelyn, Dafydd and Rhodri and at least two daughters, Gwladus and Margaret. Life for Senana appears to have become particularly difficult. She had married a man who was the heir to the royal house of Gwynedd, and her expectations must have been completely dashed when Llywelyn Fawr summarily disinherited Gruffudd. She probably encouraged Gruffudd when he rebelled against his father and also when he prepared to challenge his half-brother for the title of prince of North Wales. Unfortunately Gruffudd ended up in prison once again and she was left with her six children and no husband, and probably limited prospects for her family. There is no evidence that Senana would have been able to visit Gruffudd and Owain in Cricieth Castle, although it is a possibility, but she certainly would have been able to visit him in the Tower. As J. Beverley Smith has said, she may have been able to tell Gruffudd on one of these visits that their son Dafydd had 'secured a small part of the territory which the king, despite his promise to Gruffudd, still denied him'.¹⁸

At the end of April, 1241 Senana approached the king in an effort to secure the release of her husband and their eldest son. The *Curia Regis Roll* No. 1595 reveals that Senana appeared in the king's court and stated that Gruffudd her husband, should be a 'tenant of the crown, but he was

¹⁷ *Matthew Paris's English History from the year 1235 to 1273*, J.A. Giles, ed. & trans. (London, 1852), p.260.

¹⁸ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, p.41.

kept in captivity contrary to all justice.’¹⁹ We do not know whether Senana took this action of her own volition, or whether she was possibly acting for her husband. In any event, her noble status and genealogical and marital connections gave her the authority to act. Like Llywelyn’s wife Joan, Senana came forward as an historical actor in the hiatus created by the tension between the Welsh and the Anglo-Norman conquest. According to the *Curia Regis Roll*, Senana came before the king at Westminster five weeks from Easter and petitioned that her husband Gruffudd had been seized and held captive by his brother Dafydd, and was detained in his prison against all justice. In this appearance Senana stated that her husband was prepared to do whatever he ought to do by way of pledges to prove that he would do what was required of him as the king’s man, and would willingly and freely stand in the king’s court to answer those who wished to speak against him. Further, he would find surety through pledges that the king’s peace would not be disturbed through him, and he would remain the king’s man, as he ought to be.²⁰

In an apparent coincidence, Aynnanus Wokehem, Dafydd ap Llywelyn’s attorney or representative and his associate(s) were present in the court at the same time. They stated that they did not come from their lord, neither was their lord called on account of this matter. But they said they heard well what the aforementioned woman said, *set bene audiverunt quod predicta domina ... dixit*, and they would present her complaint to their lord and ask him that he

¹⁹ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, Vol. XVI, 1237-1242, ed. L.C. Hector (London: 1978) p. 311, ‘Suan uxor Griffini filii Lewelini venit apud Westmonasterium coram rege a die Pasce in quinque septimanas et peccit quod dominus rex deliberare faceret predictum Griffinum virum suum, qui homo domini regis et fidelis esse debet et quem David filius Lewelini frater ejus injuste cepit et captum in prisiona sua detinet contra justiciam ...’. Smith *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, p.32

²⁰ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. XVI, p.311, ‘desicut idem Griffinus paratus est per se et per bonos obsides quos inveniet domino regi ad faciendum domino regi quicquid ei facere deberet sicut homo suus et libenter stabit recto in curia domini regis omnibus qui versus eum loqui voluerint et bonam securitatem invenit per obsides et alio modo, secundum quod dominus rex providerit, quod pax domini regis non sit per hominem domini regis, qui esse debet, ut dicitur.’

show him [Gruffudd] justice.²¹ From this it is clear that Senana was herself present in court and she made her petition in person and not through an attorney. Whether or not Senana wanted Dafydd to know about her approach to the king, he now knew. It is not clear whether the presence of Dafydd's attorneys was a coincidence or not. The next item heard on the same day was a petition by Gwenllian, Gruffudd's sister, who claimed that Dafydd ap Llywelyn had taken by force and unjustly held four manors with appurtinences which her father, Llywelyn Fawr, had given her and for which she held charters. The document states that the aforementioned Aynnanus and others, *Et predictus Aynnanus et alii*, came and said that their lord does not have a day now for responding to her, etc. It seems likely that Aynnanus was in court to answer Gwenllian's petition on Dafydd's behalf, but as a consequence, overheard Senana's case which was apparently the previous one on the list. Through lack of evidence we will probably never know for certain.²² I have also mentioned elsewhere in this work that I believe Gwenllian may have accompanied Senana to London for these hearings. (For Gwenllian Chapter 2.) Gwenllian, like Gruffudd, was an illegitimate child of Llywelyn Fawr, and they both shared the same mother. Dafydd's actions in summarily imprisoning Gruffudd and seizing Gwenllian's lands probably meant that these two women joined forces. In fact there are indicators that they were acting together as part of the system of family networking. In the first place there is the evidence of the two consecutive matters on the same manuscript record of the proceedings. In the second place, Aynnanus, when he was in court on Dafydd's behalf to answer Gwenllian's complaint, said that he had overheard Senana.

²¹ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. XVI, p.311.

²² *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. XVI, p.311.

This action by Senana would not have pleased Dafydd, the new ruler of Gwynedd, and he would have been more displeased that she was successful in her endeavour. Dafydd had been named by his father as the legal successor to his principality, and Henry III had by this time ratified his accession, albeit to a much reduced territory than the one his father had ruled. Nevertheless Senana's agency in taking herself all the way to Westminster to appear in the king's court is a notable action for a medieval Welsh noblewoman.

An agreement was made four months later at Shrewsbury on August 12, 1241 between Senana and Henry III which stated that Senana undertook 'on behalf of Griffin, her husband, to give to the king six hundred marks in order that the king may deliver the said Griffin and Owen, his son, from prison ...'.²³ The agreement also stipulated the payment of a further three hundred marks per year in money and goods if Gruffudd were successful in recovering that portion of his inheritance which had been denied him. This would refer to the half share in the patrimony, to which under Welsh native law Gruffudd, as the acknowledged son of Llywelyn Fawr, would have been entitled. Senana further undertook responsibility for Gruffudd and his heirs that they would keep the peace with Dafydd ap Llywelyn, concerning his share of the patrimony, and agreed to give to the king Dafydd and Rhodri, her two younger sons, as hostages, as a guarantee of Gruffudd keeping the agreement.²⁴

Senana's agreement with Henry III is regarded as significant by some modern historians, but that significance is qualified by the area of interest of the particular historian, and in terms of the major events it usually relegates women to continuing footnote importance, if that. For example,

²³ *Calendar of Charter Rolls of Henry III, 1226-1257* (London: 1972), p.262.

²⁴ *Calendar of Charter Rolls of Henry III, 1226-1257*, p.262.

the charter was noticed by R.R. Davies as part of a point he was making about cattle being the ‘most important form of stock and movable wealth’ in the economy of thirteenth-century Wales. He used as an example the fine Senana agreed to pay yearly to the king if Gruffudd were successful in recovering his portion of his father’s inheritance, which was to be one-third each in money, in oxen and cows, and in horses.²⁵ These comments concerning the importance of stock in the local economy are quite valid and important. However, at the same time the gender blindness causes an equally important set of questions to be silenced. For example, a question about whether these items of ‘movable wealth’ would have been owned equally by Senana and Gruffudd might be considered within a discourse concerning the items of money, oxen, cows and horses. Under Welsh native law, providing her marriage to Gruffudd lasted for seven years, which it had, they shared the common pool of matrimonial property, excluding land of course. The agreed payment of six hundred marks to secure Gruffudd’s release was a very large sum. Presumably it would have come from the matrimonial pool. However, as Senana was in effect ransoming her husband, it would seem appropriate that the sum of money involved should be paid firstly from Gruffudd's own wealth before Senana became obliged to contribute.

It is important to notice here that there were two conditions which governed the payment of the six hundred marks. The first was for Gruffudd’s release from prison provided he abided by the judgment of the king’s court, ‘whether lawfully he ought to be detained in prison’. The second condition was that the king was to see that he received justice ‘according to Welsh law’, relating to his portion of his father’s inheritance, of which he was dispossessed by his brother, Dafydd. Senana would have benefitted equally from both the release from prison of her husband and son,

²⁵ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change*, p.156.

and from Gruffudd receiving a greater share of his father's inheritance. Senana was a woman who was aware of her own interests and actively pursued them. This would have enhanced her own power and autonomy as a Welsh noblewoman.

Yet J. Beverley Smith's account of Senana's agreement is so subdued, partial and in fact gender blind, that her significance is lost on many levels. For him, Senana's agreement is noteworthy firstly because Senana was the mother of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the subject of his book, but also it reveals what he sees as an attempt by Gruffudd ap Llywelyn to not only try and gain his freedom, but also a share of his inheritance. He also sees the agreement as the king declaring his wish to divide Gwynedd into two parts.²⁶ These of course are valid and useful observations concerning medieval Welsh history. However, for this writer the further significance of Senana's charter lies in the fact that it concerns a medieval Welsh noblewoman with quite an impressive lineage, who had made an agreement with the king of England in an attempt to free her husband and son, who had endured many years in prison. The document appears to me to be unique in thirteenth-century Wales. Its importance lies in its significance as part of social history, as distinct from its value in political history.

However, in addition, and even in J. Beverley Smith's own sphere of interest, it could be argued that this particular incident represents agency by a woman in the public political sphere, rather than the private sphere within the family. Senana, a native Welsh noblewoman, who lived in north Wales, transported herself to London and is recorded as a suppliant in the king of England's court. I would suggest that the matter upon which she wished to receive judgment and

²⁶ Smith *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.33.

ultimately, justice, is not what one would strictly term a ‘private family matter’. This is a ‘public political’ situation, involving two polities – England and Wales. Llywelyn Fawr was the ruler of most of Wales when he died. Judgment favourable to Senana and her husband would mean serious political problems in Wales with Dafydd, the legitimate ruler. This document is an occasion when a medieval Welsh noblewoman is shown to be the perpetrator of a significant political action. However, until quite recently, most historians have chosen to interpret the charter in terms of its significance in support of their theories, with little or no mention of Senana.

Gwyn A. Williams has quite rightly said that this agreement effected a ‘dangerous intrusion by the Crown into the internal affairs of Gwynedd.’²⁷ At the same time, by viewing this document only in terms of its indirect effects on the prevailing political events of the time, modern historians have minimised the role of Senana. The implication here is that Senana was being manipulated by Henry III for his own objectives in systematically weakening the position of Dafydd ap Llywelyn. There can be no doubt that once Senana had approached the subject of her husband’s rights to a share of his father’s inheritance under Welsh law, this gave Henry III the opportunity to manipulate the situation for his own interests. But whatever the outcome, it was Senana who made the first move. This shows that the noblewoman who made the agreement must have occupied an important role on the political playing field at the time. There is a case for consideration of the woman as an integral part of the history as it unfolded. Regardless of whether ultimately the king manipulated the situation to suit his own ends, it was Senana herself who initiated the course of action by approaching the English king in April 1241; he did not

²⁷ G.A. Williams, ‘The succession to Gwynedd 1238-47’ in *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 20 (1962-4) p.400.

approach her. That four months later Henry III was able to manipulate the situation by use of this charter has no bearing on the fact that Senana was the prime mover in this particular incident. Senana was not just an instrument to be used by others, she was a member of the *dramatis personae* of this drama and the ramifications of the subsequent tragedy would have affected her directly.

The political machinations which were enacted at this time in relation to Wales did not take place in isolation. As with all human agency, the actions of one person directly influence the actions or reactions of another. Whether Senana was acting of her own volition or in concert with others is not known nor is it relevant to the points I am making in this thesis. Welsh noblewomen did take action when they saw fit.

For this writer it appears equally important that Senana could be seen as trying to secure the benefits of her husband's inheritance for herself and for her sons. When she married Gruffudd her expectation would probably have been that as the eldest son of the ruler of Gwynedd, Gruffudd would inherit, or at least share in the patrimony. After he was summarily disinherited by his father, what were Senana's prospects? She was descended from an equally distinguished lineage, in fact she was closely related, and marriage to Gruffudd was probably considered a good match by Welsh standards. Traditionally, illegitimacy was no barrier to inheriting either the patrimony or the leadership under Welsh native law. But suddenly she was cut out – her husband was imprisoned for years. In fact he seems to have spent much of his adult life in prison. Where would that leave Senana and her sons? For Senana this agreement was probably an attempt to salvage a portion of what she had expected to receive when she first married.

In return for the release of her husband and eldest son, Senana agreed to hand over Dafydd and Rhodri, her two youngest sons as hostages, with the proviso that if Gruffudd and Owain died before they were freed, one of the other two sons would 'be restored to her, and the other remain as hostage'. It should be noted that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Senana's second son, is at no time referred to in this agreement.²⁸ The agreement was certainly heavily weighted in favour of the crown, but Senana agreed to it. Gruffudd and Senana by August 1241 were probably desperate, and might have agreed to anything in order to secure Gruffudd's freedom. One senses also that the inclusion of the clause which stated that in the event of the deaths of Gruffudd and Owain prior to their release, Senana would be allowed to keep at least one son, might have been an afterthought to ameliorate a particularly heartless condition.

Senana swore on the gospels to observe all the conditions of the agreement and it was stated that she had 'submitted herself ... to the spiritual censure of the bishops of Hereford and Coventry' in the event of any breach of the agreement and the document was sealed with her own and her husband's seals. As a native Welsh woman, it is interesting to note that Senana swore on the gospels. Huw Pryce has drawn attention to the fact that 'by the thirteenth century the practice of swearing judicial oaths on relics had given way to swearing on the gospels' but in Wales, according to the Welsh lawbooks, 'oaths were normally only valid if sworn on a relic'.²⁹ Gerald of Wales said that 'the common people, and the clergy, ... in Wales, have such a reverence for ... relics of the saints that they are more afraid of swearing oaths upon them and then breaking

²⁸ J. Beverley Smith comments on the absence of any mention of Llywelyn in the charter, Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.35-36.

²⁹ Huw Pryce, *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.41.

their word than they are upon the Gospels.’³⁰ In view of the position of the Welsh lawbooks in relation to oaths, it is possible that for Senana her oath may not have had the same binding strength as an oath sworn on a relic. Since the agreement was made between Senana and the English king, swearing on the gospels would by this time have been the usual practice.

Like other medieval noblewomen, Senana would have been responsible for the running of her husband’s household while he was in prison. As Gruffudd seems to have been evicted from his lands prior to each of the latter periods of confinement, it is not clear what this would have entailed. Considering her own noble lineage, presumably Senana’s own family may have helped her. Also Gruffudd is known to have had a sizeable following of Welsh noblemen who were not enthusiastic about Dafydd’s rule, nor Gruffudd’s disinheritance.³¹ Smith mentions that Senana’s brother Einion ap Caradog is associated with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in his ‘early political initiatives’.³² Senana would undoubtedly have received assistance from other native Welsh noble families. She possessed her own seal for the purpose of sealing documents because when she signed the charter it stated that she sealed it with her own seal and that of her husband.

The next and final section will discuss Senana’s ability to secure the support of influential noblemen. The charter of August 12, 1241 states that ‘moreover she has found the following pledges’. This suggests that Senana obviously knew she would have been able to acquire the

³⁰ *Gerald of Wales, The Journey Through Wales*, Book I, Chapter 2, p.87. See also R.C. Stacey, *The Road to Judgment: From Custom to Court in Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp.217-18. ‘Relics were as necessary to the legal process as were judges themselves.’

³¹ See for example Gwyn A. Williams’ reference to ‘the emergence of a hostile pro-Gruffydd party’ in ‘The Succession to Gwynedd, 1238-47’, p.403. Other references in Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p.105, Carr, *Medieval Wales*, p.60 and P.I. Lynch, ‘Court Poetry, Power and Politics’ in T.M. Charles-Edwards, ed., *The Welsh King and His Court*, pp.176-77.

³² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.44-45.

pledges of significant noblemen because in her initial approach in March 1241 she volunteered to find pledges and sureties. Interesting names among those who gave pledges for Senana concerning this document, from the point of view of the aims for this current work, are Ralph de Mortimer and Walter de Clifford who were the husbands of Gwladus Ddu and Margaret, half-sisters of Gruffudd. Llywelyn ab Iorwerth fathered an illegitimate daughter named Angharad who married Maelgwn Fychan of Deheubarth,³³ and therefore ‘Maelgun son of Maelgun’ named in the charter was probably another brother-in-law of Senana. Also named were Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield and two of his brothers.³⁴ Senana’s daughter Margaret would later marry Gruffudd’s son. (For Margaret Chapter 3.) Even the Maredudd ap Robert named was probably the father of Owain ap Maredudd of Cydwain who was to marry Margred ferch Maelgwn Fychan, a granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr.³⁵ Clearly there is quite a family connection here suggesting the presence of significant family networks which impinge on politics. Indeed, of the noblemen who gave pledges for Senana, only Roger de Monte Alto, steward of Chester and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys were outside the group of present and future members of the family circle of Llywelyn Fawr. For J. Beverley Smith the significance of the names of those who provided pledges to the charter lies in the fact that those men agreed to join the king in ‘doing justice to Gruffudd ap Llywelyn’ at the expense of his brother Dafydd.³⁶ Gwyn A. Williams referred to the ‘number and quality of the Welsh lords who were induced to

³³ See Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies AD300-1400*, vol. 3, p.446. Also Chapter 2, ‘The Daughters of Llywelyn Fawr’.

³⁴ Four of the pledges are listed in the *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence concerning Wales*, and they are almost identical in wording, for example they all state: ‘Sciatis quod ego me constitui plegium Senane uxoris Griffini filli Lewelini quondam principis Norwallie et manucepi pro ea erga dominum meum Henricum regem Anglie illustrem quod omnia que conuencionauit eidem comino meo nomine prefati viri sui pro liberacione sua et Oweyni fillii sui a carcere in quo Dauid frater eius eos detinet et pro porcione que ipsum Griffinum ...and so on’. See nos. 10, 17, 18 and 51.

³⁵ Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. 3, p.854. For Margred ferch Maelgwn Chapter 8, p.257.

³⁶ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.34.

support Gruffydd ap Llywelyn'.³⁷ Certainly this may very well be the case, but I am not sure that any proof exists that these noblemen had been influenced by the king to support Senana. These were very powerful and influential men and some were related by marriage to Senana, so if one views the document from a different angle, for example from the point of view of family connection, their significance changes. Senana could be seen as having powerful allies who were prepared to stand pledges for her. Pledging oneself for the security of a contract in the legal system of the Middle Ages was a serious undertaking. Smith believes that Ralph Mortimer, Gwladus's husband, 'may have played a key role in formulating the agreement' between Senana and the king when he agreed to sign a pledge for Senana. His reason for believing this concerns the Mortimer claims to Gwerthrynion and Maelienydd.³⁸ It is always possible, given the close family connections here, that Senana may have arranged with her brothers-in-law and other interested parties to take the action she did with their knowledge and support. J.J. Crump, however, goes so far as to say that 'it is doubtful that Ralph Mortimer agreed to stand as surety for Senana because of any particular family feeling'.³⁹ Nevertheless, the argument of this thesis is that whatever the outcome and however things were ultimately resolved, Senana herself took the first step.

A week after the agreement was signed, *The Calendar of Patent Rolls* for August 29, 1241 records that Dafydd had agreed that he would release Gruffudd and Owain to the king for his judgment as to whether Gruffudd should be imprisoned and also would abide by the judgment of

³⁷ Williams, 'The succession to Gwynedd', p.400.

³⁸ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.42.

³⁹ J.J. Crump, 'The Mortimer Family and the Making of the March' in M. Prestwich, R.H. Britnell & R. Frame, eds. *Thirteenth Century England VI, Proceedings of the Durham Conference, 1995* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), p.126.

the king's court concerning Gruffudd's portion of their father's inheritance, 'according to the custom of the Welsh'. An addendum to the document confirmed that Gruffudd had been handed over to the king.⁴⁰ Unfortunately although Gruffudd was released from Dafydd's prison, it seems that the king decided it was wiser to keep him in prison and he was moved into the Tower of London. J.E. Lloyd mentions that Gruffudd was allowed the companionship of his wife while in prison,⁴¹ so presumably Senana must have lived for two or three years either in or close to the Tower of London. In fact it would appear that Gruffudd and Senana must have had some sort of conjugal visiting rights during Gruffudd's various terms of imprisonment, because it is doubtful that Gruffudd would have had his freedom for the length of time it would have required for him to have fathered his children over the years. Dafydd was only an infant at the time Senana was trying to arrange Gruffudd's release, and only six years old when his father died in 1244.⁴² Rhodri was even younger. Senana's daughter Margaret was probably also very young when Gruffudd died.

There is some confusion among scholars as to the exact periods of Gruffudd's incarceration, but the following is a reasonable summary. Gruffudd had been imprisoned as a hostage by King John from 1211 until he was released as a condition of Magna Carta in 1215.⁴³ He was later confined by his father from 1228 until 1234 and then returned to custody in Cricieth Castle in 1239 until 1241, transferring to the Tower of London until his death in 1244. In fact Gruffudd was a prisoner for at least fifteen years of his life. During the reign of Henry III the Tower of

⁴⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1232-1247*, vol. 3 (London: 1971), p.264.

⁴¹ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, vol. II, p.700.

⁴² R. Maud, 'David, the Last Prince of Wales' in *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, I (1968), p.52

⁴³ Item 58 of Magna Carta states: 'We will restore at once the son of Llywelyn and all the hostages from Wales and the charters delivered to us as security for peace.' Holt, *Magna Carta*, Appendix 6, p.469.

London became a major royal palace and by the time of Gruffudd's confinement there, many additions and improvements to the Tower had been carried out.⁴⁴ It is thought that Gruffudd's incarceration took the form of an 'honourable confinement' and according to Derek Wilson, Gruffudd 'was installed in the state apartments of the White Tower in September, 1241' and 'he received visits from his wife'.⁴⁵

It is not known whether Senana had indeed paid the 600 marks when Gruffudd was released into the custody of the king by Dafydd. Since Gruffudd died before he was released from prison the proposed negotiation for his share of the patrimony did not take place and his financial position presumably remained as it was prior to the commencement of Senana's attempt to obtain his release. Senana did receive financial assistance from the crown because as early as October 24, 1241 she was paid ten marks 'of the king's gift'.⁴⁶ Smith mentions records of other payments to her as well in *Issues of the Exchequer* and *Cheshire Pipe Rolls*.⁴⁷ Perhaps she was receiving financial assistance because of her husband's continued incarceration. Technically, the king did obtain Gruffudd's release from Dafydd's custody. On August 29, 1241 Dafydd agreed to release to the king Gruffudd and Owain plus the other Welsh prisoners being held with them. The charter states that it will be the judgment of the king's court whether Gruffudd 'ought to be kept captive' and whether he should have a portion of his father's land.⁴⁸ Unfortunately there seems to have been no attempt to give Gruffudd the promised judgment of the king's court and he was just kept in confinement. Tragically for Senana, on April 30, 1244 it was reported that Gruffudd

⁴⁴ D. Wilson, *The Tower 1078-1978*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), pp.19-23.

⁴⁵ Wilson, *The Tower 1078-1978*, p.27.

⁴⁶ *Calendar of Liberate Rolls of Henry III*, vol. II (London: 1930), p.81.

⁴⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.41, **footnote 17**.

⁴⁸ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1232-1247*, vol. 3, p.264.

had unfortunately broken his neck and was killed when he fell from the Tower while trying to escape. Several documents record Gruffudd's confinement and also his death.⁴⁹

Despite the importance of the charter quoted above, Senana leaves little other trace in the public record. A letter from Owain and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to Henry III, dated between October 1249 and June 1250, mentions certain dower lands which their mother had held for some time,⁵⁰ so she certainly had some dower property and she would also presumably have retained the movable goods which she would have received under native Welsh law on her marriage. Once again, Senana is an example of a Welsh noblewoman of the thirteenth century who, in spite of the restrictions imposed on women by native Welsh law, was in fact dowered by a Welsh nobleman. She would have held these dower lands from 1244 when her husband died, and although John de Grey, Justice of Chester, was making what Owain and Llywelyn termed 'frivolous objections' which involved their mother's dower lands, she probably retained these lands until her death. This letter provides another example which concerns interpretation of documents by historians. The document may be utilised in at least two different ways. For J. Beverley Smith this letter is merely evidence that Senana was indeed the mother of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.⁵¹ By contrast, for this current work, this letter is evidence that like most of the other women in this study, Senana held dower lands in Wales, despite Welsh native law.

⁴⁹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1232-1247*, vol. 3, p.424.

⁵⁰ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence concerning Wales*, J.G. Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), pp.32-3. See also *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III*, W.W. Shirley, ed. (London: RS, 1862-6), pp.64-6. '... nisi Maredudd filius Ricardi de Heyn haberet quasdam terras quas mater nostra habuerat pro dote longo tempore, ...'

⁵¹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.38, **footnote 6**.

Senana was active in taking responsibility for, and caring for her family while her husband was incarcerated, and she continued with her duties after his death. She would have had to assume part of the masculine obligations in her husband's absence. She is said to have been present when her son Dafydd was invested as lord of the commote of Cymydmaen on July 11, 1252. He would have been aged about fourteen years and considered to be of age under Welsh law.⁵² Her position should certainly have improved with the rise to power of her second son, and the last great ruler of native Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. When Dafydd ap Llywelyn died in 1246, his nephews Owain and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd joined forces against Henry III to try and regain their patrimony. The result was the treaty of Woodstock in 1247 by which Owain and Llywelyn were to share what remained of a much reduced territory in Gwynedd. This was the beginning of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's rise to power. In June 1255, Llywelyn defeated his brother Owain at the battle of Bryn Derwin. By 1267 he had reached the pinnacle of his achievements as the undisputed ruler of native Wales. In fact he was referred to by the English ruler as 'Prince of Wales', a term which had never been legally acknowledged before this time.⁵³

The exact date of her death is unknown, but Senana was buried in Llanfaes in 1263.⁵⁴ The year 1263 was significant in Welsh history. At the end of March, 1263, Dafydd ap Gruffudd took a step which A.D. Carr describes as 'surprising', in that he deserted his brother Llywelyn and went over to the English side and submitted to the lord Edward.⁵⁵ His mother was very closely

⁵² A.D. Carr, 'The Last and Weakest of his Line: Dafydd ap Gruffydd, the Last Prince of Wales', in *The Welsh History Review*, vol. 19, No. 3 (June 1999), p.376. See also Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.68-9.

⁵³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.180.

⁵⁴ Information contained in leaflet issued by Gwynedd County Council 'Princes of Gwynedd: The Môn Trail', 1996.

⁵⁵ Carr, 'The Last and Weakest of his Line', p.381.

involved with Dafydd in matters in general, possibly because he was so young when his father died, but she seems to have acted as his protector, a masculine-like obligation. In 1252 Senana was with Dafydd who was lord of Cymydmaen in Llŷn, and she witnessed with him an agreement made between the abbot and convent of Enlli and the canons of Aberdaron and the men of the *abadaeth*.⁵⁶ While discussing Richard, the bishop of Bangor, J. Beverley Smith has stated that he ‘along with Senana was with Dafydd ap Gruffudd in 1252’, citing the *Record of Caernarvon* p.252 as his source.⁵⁷ Senana also probably accompanied Dafydd when he travelled to London to swear fealty to the king,⁵⁸ and seems to have been present with him on important occasions. It is interesting to speculate on whether the fact of his mother’s death in 1263 had any bearing on Dafydd defecting to the English side by the end of March, 1263.⁵⁹ Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had defeated his brothers Owain and Dafydd at the battle of Bryn Derwin in 1255, and established ‘his mastery over Gwynedd Uwch Conwy in its entirety’.⁶⁰ He imprisoned both of them, but Dafydd was later released. Owain, who was the eldest brother and thereby a threat to Llywelyn’s supremacy, was to remain in prison for the next twenty-two years. Llywelyn seems not to have regarded Dafydd as a threat and he remained free. Dafydd was also regarded as Llywelyn’s heir because Llywelyn had not married nor generated an heir. Smith seems unable to account for Dafydd’s motives for defecting in 1263, any more than he is able to explain the motives for his treachery and subsequent defection in 1274.⁶¹ The evidence of this thesis shows

⁵⁶ Carr, ‘The Last and Weakest of his Line’, p.376.

⁵⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.57, **footnote 83**.

⁵⁸ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1251-1253* (London: 1927), p.419.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.154, n.54.

⁶⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.73.

⁶¹ See Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.154, n.54 and p.374.

that Senana was a staunch upholder of the rights of her native Welsh family. Perhaps Senana's continued presence and influence had ensured his loyalty to his brother, Llywelyn, or it may be that Dafydd had been protected by Senana and possibly she had been able to prevent his imprisonment by Llywelyn. With the death of his mother, perhaps Dafydd felt safer under the protection of the crown. He had experienced prison and would not have relished the same fate as Owain. We will probably never know the reason, and perhaps it was a coincidence that his mother's death occurred in the same year.

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was at his most successful during the latter period of Senana's life from about 1258 to 1263, so that despite the perceived difficulties and disappointments which dogged most of her life, the last five years at least must have held their compensations. Perhaps fortunately for her, she did not live to witness the downfall of Llywelyn in 1282, nor the gruesome execution of Dafydd by Edward I in 1283. Senana's two daughters, Gwladus and Margaret, married native Welsh rulers, and they are discussed elsewhere in this thesis. (For Gwladus ferch Gruffudd Chapter 8, Margaret of Bromfield Chapter 3.)

THE DAUGHTERS OF LLYWELYN FAWR¹

This chapter concentrates on one particular group of women who were the five daughters of the Welsh ruler, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, known as Llywelyn Fawr, who lived from 1173 to 1240AD. I have tried to piece together the available biographical and political information and form a picture of the lives of these women. Llywelyn Fawr's two sons, Gruffudd and Dafydd, were not the outstanding success their father had been. This is not an uncommon story, as throughout history the sons of strong rulers are very often not as successful as their fathers. On the other hand, Llywelyn Fawr's five daughters may be regarded as having made a strong and sustained contribution to Welsh medieval history. They were mainly active in the private familial area, but at times their actions may be seen as public and political. Although much has been written about Llywelyn's two sons this is not the case with his daughters, and this thesis has tried to redress this omission.

Llywelyn was very successful in asserting his dominance in Wales in the early thirteenth century. In fact the Welsh historian R.R.Davies has said that 'his superiority within native Wales from 1218 to 1240 was geographically more extensive and more fully articulated than that enjoyed by any other Welsh prince since the coming of the Normans.'² Llywelyn Fawr's success was due to his military capabilities and his shrewd leadership, but he also made politically advantageous marriages for himself and for his children. Llywelyn himself married

¹ This chapter formed the basis for a paper which I presented at the Fourth Australian Conference of Celtic Studies, 30 June – 3 July, 2001, and which was published in the Proceedings of the conference in 2003. See G. Richards, 'The Daughters of Llywelyn Fawr' in P. O'Neill, ed., *Nation and Federation in the Celtic World* (Sydney: Sydney Series in Celtic Studies 6, Celtic Studies Foundation, University of Sydney, 2003), pp.22-34.

² R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change, Wales 1063-1475* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.244.

Joan, the illegitimate daughter of King John in 1205 which increased his prestige and power. He had already fathered a son and at least one daughter from a previous liaison with a Welsh woman known as Tangwystl and his marriage to Joan resulted in the birth of one legitimate son and possibly three legitimate daughters. There is some disagreement among scholars as to whether Joan was in fact the mother of all three daughters. Also, according to Peter Bartrum's *Welsh Genealogies*, a comprehensive set of volumes containing all the known genealogical charts from AD300 to 1400, Llywelyn fathered at least one other illegitimate daughter, however Bartrum does not give her mother's name.³

R.R. Davies did discuss the fact that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth arranged marriages for his children, but I find it significant that while he did not mention the daughters by name, he referred to the sons by name. He talked about 'Gruffudd, his son by a pre-marital liaison' and 'his only legitimate son, Dafydd'. On the other hand, when Davies discussed the daughters, he talked of Llywelyn 'marrying one of his daughters to the earl's nephew and heir', 'one of his daughters was married to Reginald Braose and on his death to Ralph Mortimer', 'a second daughter was married successively to John Braose ... and Walter Clifford' and 'a third daughter was wed into the Lacy family'.⁴ Clearly the women were not considered important enough to name. As the daughters of Llywelyn Fawr, these women were considered important enough in the eyes of genealogists and chroniclers as they are named in the genealogy charts and some are mentioned in the chronicles. These women are worthy of inclusion in Welsh history and are therefore presented individually, by name.

³ P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies AD300-1400* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), vol. 3, p.446.

⁴ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change*, p.248.

GWENLLIAN

Gwenllian was the illegitimate daughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Tangwystl ferch Llywarch Goch. She was referred to by Davies as the ‘third daughter who was wed into the Lacy family’. One source suggests that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was married to Tangwystl who was the daughter of Llywarch Goch, Lord of Rhos, and that his marriage to Joan was his second marriage.⁵ I am unable to confirm this, and I feel that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth’s subsequent absolute determination to make his legitimate son Dafydd his heir, probably proves that Gwenllian was illegitimate as was her brother Gruffudd, Llywelyn’s eldest son. Gwenllian de Lacy, as she is always known, is mentioned many times in the various legal rolls and documents for Britain in the thirteenth century. J.E. Lloyd wrote a very interesting paper titled ‘Who was Gwenllian de Lacy?’⁶ in which he explained who she was and accounted for a few anomalies which have appeared in references to Gwenllian. Gwenllian was presumably born some time before Llywelyn’s marriage to Joan in 1205 and, by medieval standards, she lived a very long life because she seems to have died somewhere between 1280 and 1282. This would make her in her seventies or possibly even eighty years of age when she died. Gwenllian is visible in the legal record on August 30, 1280 when the king notified his bailiffs of Ireland to appoint attorneys to act for ‘Wanteliana de Lacy’ in plaints and pleas for a year in Irish courts,⁷ but by 1282 she was dead, because a letter from Theobald de Verdun to the Bishop of Bath and Wells dated soon after

⁵ *The Roll of the House of Lacy*, Collected and compiled by De Lacy-Bellingari (Baltimore: 1928), p.63. For Tangwystl, Gwenllian’s mother, Chapter 6, p.197.

⁶ J.E. Lloyd, ‘Who was Gwenllian de Lacy?’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, vol. XIX, (1919), pp.292-98.

⁷ *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, 1252-1284*, vol II, H.S. Sweetman, ed. (London: 1877), p.277.

October 23, 1282, discusses a dispute over who was the rightful heir to Gwenllian's dower property in Ireland now that she had died.⁸

Although Gwenllian was born in Wales of Welsh parents, she seems to have spent most of her adult life in Ireland. We do not know the exact date, but some time around 1222 Llywelyn ab Iorwerth arranged the marriage of Gwenllian to William de Lacy. He was the son of Hugh de Lacy, the Earl of Ulster,⁹ by his Irish second wife, Rose, the daughter of King Rory O'Connor of Connacht.¹⁰ According to Robin Frame, William de Lacy 'exploited his native Irish connections in an attempt to carve out a lordship for himself on the borders of Meath and Connacht.'¹¹ Robin Frame also makes the curious comment that we should not view William de Lacy 'as a mongrel tethered in the Celtic fringe' and explains his significant connections with the important baronial Lacy family. He also makes the point that 'Llywelyn ab Iorwerth did not throw his daughters away on Welshmen, let alone Irishmen; he used them to seal alliances with major baronial families'.¹² In other words, he married them into the ruling Anglo-Norman families.

Unfortunately, I believe Robin Frame may be mistaken here, because as we shall see, another of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's illegitimate daughters did marry a Welshman.

On her marriage Gwenllian received from her father Welsh lands in the Perfeddwlad district in modern day Denbighshire, in Tegeingl and Dyffryn Clwyd and possibly in Rhufoniog.¹³ She

⁸ *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, 1252-1284*, vol II, p.455.

⁹ Lloyd, 'Who was Gwenllian de Lacy?', p.293.

¹⁰ R. Frame, *Ireland and Britain 1170-1450*, (London: The Hambledon Press, 1998), p.37.

¹¹ Frame, *Ireland and Britain 1170-1450*, p.37.

¹² Frame, *Ireland and Britain 1170-1450*, p.37.

¹³ Lloyd, 'Who was Gwenllian de Lacy?', p.295.

still held these lands at her death because on November 14, 1281 Reginald de Grey was appointed Justice of Chester and received custody of the 'lands and tenements late of Wentheliana de Lacy' which were valued at £32.0.3½d.¹⁴ After her husband's death in 1233, Gwenllian also received dower lands in Ballymagarvey, County Meath in Ireland and 'she held the whole demesne with the services of the free tenants for her life'.¹⁵ Gwenllian seems to have produced at least one son, Sir Nicholas de Lacy. *The Roll of the House of Lacy* mentions that 'Nicholas seems to have been born at Carrickfergus Castle', that 'it is very likely that William de Lacy of Castlemahon in West Limerick was a brother of Nicholas' and that there were 'perhaps others'.¹⁶ Ballymagarvey House in County Meath was still in existence in 2000, and was at that time a horse stud, situated on the N2, the Dublin-Derry Road, approximately 25 miles from Dublin. A turret on the left of the house was part of a very old house which could possibly date from the thirteenth

century. The old church and cemetery at Ballymagarvey, which still remain, date from the thirteenth century.¹⁷

It is interesting to try to imagine the sort of life Gwenllian would have experienced. She was the daughter of the foremost ruler in Wales in his time but it is not known whether she would have been brought up by her father's family, although she would have been in a privileged

¹⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Edward I, 1272-1281* (London: Kraus reprint, 1971), p.464.

¹⁵ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Edward I*, vol. II (London: Kraus reprint, 1973), p.264.

¹⁶ *The Roll of the House of Lacy*, p.82.

position. Her father had arranged a politically advantageous marriage for her, probably more with a view to his own advantage than hers, but nevertheless in the elite feudal society of the thirteenth century a suitable marriage would have been as desirable to the woman as it was to her parents.¹⁸

The de Lacy family in Ireland were against the crown in the early thirteenth century, firstly King John and then Henry III, and William de Lacy was visible in the various letters and legal documents of the time. For example on February 10, 1215, having been in custody, William was released on the surety of his brother Walter de Lacy and others, that ‘William shall become the king’s liege man, faithfully serve the king all the days of his life, and never part with his land in Ireland, save at the king’s pleasure.’¹⁹ An interesting name among those standing surety for William is that of Walter de Clifford, who was later to marry Gwenllian’s half-sister Margaret. William does not appear to have respected this pledge for long as on July 2, 1217, another document shows that Walter de Lacy ‘has given security that he will make amends for the excesses of William de Lascy towards the King.’²⁰ *The Annals of Clonmacnoise* for the year 1215 mention that

William sonne of Hugh Delacye came from England and tooke upon him the kingdome of Meath and government thereof. Whereupon there arose great contention and warrs between the English of the south of Ireland in generall and him, whereby many Damages and losses of preys and spoyles were sustained by either party.²¹

¹⁷ I visited Ballymagarvey again in September 2004 and the buildings had been completely demolished, except for the thirteenth-century tower. It appeared to be part of a rebuilding program, hopefully including restoration of the tower. The church and cemetery still remain.

¹⁸ Henrietta Leyser refers to the ‘expectations of young girls that husbands would be found for them who would bring both them and their families income and honour’. H. Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1995), p.118.

¹⁹ *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, vol I, p.84.

²⁰ *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, vol I, p.118.

²¹ *The Annals of Clonmacnoise*, D. Murphy, ed. (Dublin: University Press, 1896), p.228.

This would explain the ‘excesses towards the King’ for which William de Lacy needed to make amends.

Presumably Gwennlian moved to Ireland upon her marriage around 1222, so she would probably have been living in County Meath at Ballymagarvey. William de Lacy was also active in counties Cavan, Leitrim and Longford in 1224 and according to Jocelyn Otway-Ruthven he was in charge in this area and Cathal Crovderg O’Connor was complaining to the king, who was by this time Henry III, about ‘William de Lacy as “Cathal’s enemy and kinsman of the king’s enemy”’.²² The political advantage for Llywelyn ab Iorwerth by marrying Gwennlian to William de Lacy was of course that it suited his own position against the crown to have an ally in Ireland.

Unfortunately for William de Lacy, on June 19, 1224, William Marshal, the Earl of Pembroke arrived in Ireland, was appointed Justiciar, and proceeded to attack the de Lacys. In a letter from the Marshal to the king, he described his campaign and mentioned that he took the castle of William de Lacy and took into custody his wife, who the Marshal stated was the daughter of Llywelyn, the sister of Gruffydd from father and mother,²³ which confirms exactly the identity of Gwennlian de Lacy. William Marshal seems to have taken the trouble to make a point here of precisely who his prisoner was and her relationship with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, and this is no doubt due to the Marshal’s own problems with his lands in Wales which Llywelyn ab Iorwerth had recently tried to appropriate as part of his expansion. Robin Frame feels that in stressing that Gwennlian, as Gruffudd’s full sister, was not a legitimate daughter of Llywelyn and Joan,

²² A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1980), p.90.

²³ *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland vol I*, pp.182-84.

William Marshal was assuring Henry III that his prisoner was not the king's kinswoman.²⁴ Interestingly, the letter reports that the wife and mother of William de Lacy were taken from a castle at Crannog O'Reilly. Gwennlian therefore seems to have been living for a period in a crannog which belonged to the O'Reilly family.²⁵ The letter which was dated August 5, 1224 stated that William's wife was still in custody, and I am not able to find out for how much longer she remained so, but it must have been at least two months. The stronghold of the O'Reillys was on an island in Lake Oughter, County Cavan. The remains of the castle tower dating from the thirteenth century may still be viewed from the shore of Lake Oughter.²⁶

The letter from William Marshal to Henry III of 1224 makes quite interesting reading. Apparently at one point, after William de Lacy escaped, he 'killed his horse with his own hand, abandoned his arms, fled into a moor, and was obliged to throw himself on the mercy of the Irish.' O'Reilly himself seems to have assisted William Marshal's men to take the castle at Crannog O'Reilly.²⁷

William de Lacy later became a loyal supporter of Henry III because 'he served the king in Brittany in 1230 and in Wales in 1231, and was in receipt of fees and gifts in England and Ireland that connect him with the royal household'.²⁸ The Close Rolls of Henry III show that in 1227 the king granted him £20 a year 'for his maintenance on the king's service' and in 1229

²⁴ R. Frame, *Ireland and Britain, 1170-1450*, p.159.

²⁵ A crannog is a stockaded island, in a lake, constructed of *crann*, trees. See *The Annals of Loch Cé*, p.260.

²⁶ The present writer visited Lough Oughter, County Cavan, which is said to be the site of the O'Reilly castle, in September, 2004. The remains of the castle are visible today.

²⁷ *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, vol I*, pp.182-4.

²⁸ Frame, *Ireland and Britain, 1170-1450*, p.37.

this annual fee is mentioned once more in the Close Rolls.²⁹ He died in 1233 because *The Annals of Clonmacnoise* for 1233 record that

William Delacy, chiefest champion in these parts of Europe, and the hardiest and strongest hand of any Englishman from the Nicene seas to this place, or Irishman, was hurt in a skirmish in the Brenie, came to his house, and there died of the wounde.³⁰

Gwenllian was married to William de Lacy for approximately eleven years but after his death she remained a widow for the rest of her life because there is no record of her remarrying. She was, however, visible in the legal records asserting her rights with regard to her property in Wales and her other business affairs. Gwenllian took an action against her half-brother, Dafydd ap Llywelyn, for the return of four of her villis which she said he had taken from her and held them unjustly. In 1241 Dafydd, who was Llywelyn Fawr's heir, had succeeded his father as ruler of Gwynedd, although the area over which he ruled had been much reduced by the actions of Henry III. At this hearing Gwenllian stated that the villis in question, which comprised 'Aberwhyler, Penpedow, Ystrad Melened and Tretowr' had been given to her by her father, and she still held them through her charter.³¹ J.E. Lloyd also discussed in his paper the whereabouts of Gwenllian's villis in Wales. He mentioned the township of Penbedw in Tegeingl, but could not account for villis in Rhos or Dyffryn Clwyd. He did suggest that '*Llys Gwenllian*', in the commote of 'Cymeirch' in Rhufoniog may have been one of her villis.³²

I note that more recently *Llys Gwenllian* is mentioned by Glanville Jones in his article titled *Llys* and *Maerdref* as part of his discussion of the archaeological site of the *Llys* at Ystrad Owain,

²⁹ *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, vol I*, pp.230, 256.

³⁰ *The Annals of Clonmacnoise*, p.234. Gwenllian was married to a notable man.

³¹ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. xvi, 1237-1242, L.C. Hector, ed. (London: 1978), p.311. 'que Lewelinus pater ejus eidem Wentiliane dedit per cartam suam, quan inde habet, ...'.

which is the site which Lloyd referred to as Gwenllian's possible home.³³ Jones has a reference to Lloyd's paper, but he has drawn no conclusions. The use of the Welsh word *Llys*, which means 'court' implies power associated with a person of secular importance. That a place-name element would be combined with the name of a woman in the thirteenth century indicates a certain amount of importance associated with Gwenllian.

Other names of places mentioned by Lloyd as possibly belonging to Gwenllian are Maesmynan and Blorant which form the township of Aberwheeler.³⁴ Aberwheeler was one of the vills which Dafydd had taken from her, mentioned above. From the foregoing it seems likely that Gwenllian was in possession of the manors of Aberwheeler, Penpedow and Tretower, and it is probable that the 'Estradmelened' mentioned in the *Curia Regis Rolls* refers to the royal manor of Ceinmeirch, known as Ystrad Owain, mentioned by both J.E. Lloyd and G.R.J. Jones.

Gwenllian probably appeared in person at her appeal because no attorneys are mentioned. Dafydd was represented by Aynnanus and his associate(s) who stated that Dafydd did not have a day at this point to reply to her petition, but that they would show her petition to their lord and ask him to show her justice.³⁵ Gwenllian may have travelled to London on this occasion for this appearance in the king's court in the company of her sister-in-law Senana, who was her brother Gruffudd's wife. From the evidence of the *Curia Regis Roll* it seems that Aynnanus, referred to above, was in court representing Dafydd at the action by Gwenllian, and overheard the previous

³² Lloyd, 'Who was Gwenllian de Lacy?', p.298

³³ G.R.J. Jones, *Llys and Maerdref* in T.M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell, eds., *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp.304-306.

³⁴ Lloyd, 'Who was Gwenllian de Lacy?', p.298. Cf. A.H. Williams, *An Introduction to the History of Wales*, vol. II, *The Middle Ages: I* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1969), p.170.

³⁵ *Curia Regis Roll of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. XVI, 1237-1242, L.C. Hector, ed. (London: 1978), p.311. 'set libenter ostendent illam domino suo et illum rogabant quid [sic] exhibeat ei inde justiciam.'

petition on the list which was presented by Senana, who was trying to arrange for the release of Gruffudd from Dafydd's prison. (For Senana Chapter 1.) Aynnanus stated that he and his companions had not come on behalf of their lord [Dafydd] to the presence of the king for the aforementioned case, neither on account of this was their lord called, but they heard well what the aforementioned woman [Senana] had said and that they would freely present her complaint to their lord, and so on.³⁶ These women were sisters-in-law. Both women appeared consecutively, on the same day, on matters concerning Dafydd ap Llywelyn, who had disinherited and imprisoned the man who was Gwenllian's brother and Senana's husband. They had a great deal in common and they probably accompanied one another to Westminster. Thus we have two native Welsh noblewomen of the Middle Ages exercising power through networking within the family.

Gwenllian de Lacy had travelled from Ireland to Wales and then to London for her court appearance in 1241. In June 1278 Gwenllian was granted permission by the crown to bring for profit from Ireland into Wales and England, corn, victuals and other goods. For this purpose she was granted protection for one year for herself, 'her men, lands, and chattels in Ireland and elsewhere',³⁷ and probably again travelled to Wales. Gwenllian also nominated two attorneys to act for her in Ireland from August 30, 1280 until November 1, 1281.³⁸ J.E. Lloyd believed that the reason Gwenllian appointed attorneys to act for her in Ireland in 1280 and 1281 was that she expected to be in residence in Wales.³⁹ From the available evidence, it seems likely therefore

³⁶ *Curia Regis Rolls of Henry III*, vol. XVI, p.311. 'set bene audiverunt quod predicta domina ... dixit, et querelam suam libenter ostendent domino suo et illum rogabunt quod exhibeat ei justiciam.'

³⁷ *Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland*, vol. II, p.277. See also *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Edward I, 1272-1281*, p.268.

³⁸ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Edward I, 1273-1281* (London: Kraus reprint, 1971), p.396.

³⁹ Lloyd, 'Who Was Gwenllian de Lacy?', p.295.

that Gwenllian travelled between Ireland and Wales a number of times during her lifetime, and it also seems likely that she was in residence in Wales on occasions.

When one considers prevailing contemporary standards, to have retained custody of and maintained both the property which had been bestowed on her at her marriage and her dower property in Ireland, for a period of approximately fifty years of widowhood was an outstanding achievement for a medieval noblewoman. A landowning widow was considered a desirable commodity in the Middle Ages especially with the introduction of male primogeniture, which was the method of inheritance brought to Britain by the Normans.⁴⁰ Primogeniture saw the inheritance of land by the eldest son of the family and this meant that many younger sons of noble families were obliged to seek the means of their future support outside their families. Marriage to an heiress or a rich widow was a desirable possibility, but Gwenllian apparently was able to avoid remarriage. That Gwenllian remained a widow is surprising. Possibly it suited those in power for her to remain so. Gwenllian held lands in both Ireland and Wales. Perhaps it suited Llywelyn that Gwenllian remained unmarried. Gwenllian's marriage to William de Lacy would not have pleased Henry III, and it was possibly also in his interests that she remained unmarried. We will probably never know. On the other hand, three of Llywelyn Fawr's other daughters also were married to Norman lords, and although they too outlived their first husbands, unlike Gwenllian, all three remarried, once again in each case to Norman lords.

⁴⁰ For discussion of the introduction of primogeniture to Europe see F. & J. Gies, *Marriage and Family in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), esp. pp.132, 195.

GWLADUS DDU

Gwladus Ddu is one Welsh noblewoman who usually merits more than a footnote by Welsh historians, and when it comes to any mention of her by contemporary and later chroniclers and poets in the various histories, she is almost always referred to by name. Even some modern day historians refer to Gwladus Ddu by name.⁴¹ The Welsh word ‘*du*’ means black and as part of a name, usually describes a person who has dark hair, skin or eyes. Indeed J.E. Lloyd referred to Gwladus as ‘the dark-eyed Gwladus’⁴² but I do not know whether he actually knew she had dark eyes or whether this was speculation perhaps because this description denoted dark eyes in Wales in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As previously stated, Llywelyn Fawr possibly fathered three legitimate daughters by his wife Joan, and for some time I had thought that the eldest of these daughters was Gwladus Ddu. Peter Bartrum’s genealogy chart, however, shows Gwladus as an illegitimate daughter, of Tangwystl.⁴³ In view of the use made of Gwladus’s descent from Joan by genealogists and poets in the fourteenth century, to be discussed below, it seems likely that Gwladus was the daughter of Joan.

A marriage for Gwladus was arranged by her father to Reginald de Braose, a Norman baron, in 1215 and it is likely that Gwladus was still a child at this time. This marriage lasted for thirteen years until Reginald de Braose died in 1228. No children were born to Gwladus from this marriage and she may have been about twenty when she became a widow. Gwladus is thought to have accompanied her brother Dafydd when he travelled to London in 1229 to do homage for

⁴¹ R.R. Davies did discuss Gwladus in a later work when he explained how the Mortimer supporters based the claim by Edmund Mortimer to the throne of England on descent through Gwladus in the fourteenth century. See R.R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.178-79.

⁴² J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, vol. II (London: 1911), p.645.

the lands he would receive on his father's death.⁴⁴ If this can be confirmed, it is an instance of a Welsh noblewoman travelling from Wales to London in the company of her brother. Perhaps she was visiting the English court, or there may have been another reason, such as her value as a marriageable widow. One can only speculate about the reason for the visit; perhaps social, perhaps political, or both. Presumably if her mother were the daughter of King John, Gwladus would have had some personal close links with the English court, added to which would be her responsibilities as the widow of an Anglo-Norman baron.

Gwladus is visible in the legal historical records as being actively involved in litigation and with the administration of her estates. In March 1230, as widow of Reginald de Braose, she appointed attorneys against William de Braose, her stepson, and also against Hugh of Croft III and others.⁴⁵ Again as the widow of Reginald de Braose Gwladus complained against Humphrey de Bohun, earl of Hereford, concerning her dower of the lands and tenements of her husband. Gwladus was granted her third part of the property and also damages.⁴⁶

After three years of widowhood, Gwladus married another marcher baron, Ralph Mortimer, in 1230. This marriage, which lasted for sixteen years, produced at least three children (probably four), the most notable of whom was Roger Mortimer of Wigmore. Genealogies usually show the children of Gwladus and Ralph Mortimer as Roger, the heir, a daughter Joan and Hugh, but the *Fundationis et Fundatorum Historia* of Wigmore Abbey in *Monasticon Anglicanum* mentions another son '*Petrum Johannem fratrem ordinis Minorum, domus sive contentus*

⁴³ P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. 3, p.446.

⁴⁴ J.J. Crump 'The Mortimer Family and the Making of the March' in M. Prestwich, R.H. Britnell & R. Frame, eds., *Thirteenth Century England VI, Proceedings of the Durham Conference 1995* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), p.124. *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 2, 1225-1232* (London: Kraus reprint, 1971), p.263.

Salopie.⁴⁷ (Peter John brother of the order of Minorites, a house or enclosed order in Shropshire). So it seems as though Gwladus in fact had four children, one of whom entered the church.

The 'Black Book of Wigmore' for Presteigne contains two undated deeds in the name of Gwladus. These were drawn up presumably when she was either wife or widow of Ralph Mortimer, her second husband. The first is a grant to 'Lady Gladys Mortimer of the homage and service of William de la Rode' and the second is for the 'sale and quitclaim ... to lady Gladys Mortimer of the homage of Walter etc. ... of the manor of Presteigne.' The annual rent for the first of these two deeds was 'one certain rose on the feast of St John the Baptist',⁴⁸ which was a not unusual token rent in the Middle Ages.

In 1242, Ralph and Gwladus together appointed Roger of Hosefeud or Philip son of Alan to act in their place against the earl of Hereford concerning pleas of land and dower.⁴⁹ In 1246, though, as mentioned above, Gwladus was the widow of Ralph Mortimer, and the king ordered the earl of Hereford to give Gwladus seisin of her dower from Reginald de Braose.⁵⁰ In this same document the king granted Gwladus the manors of Stretfield and Chaumers, etc.⁵¹ An assignment of dower for Gwladus was also ordered of the escheator, Henry de Wingham, of the lands she held from Ralph Mortimer.⁵²

⁴⁵ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1227-31* (London: Kraus reprint, 1970), pp.389-90.

⁴⁶ *Welsh Assize Roll, 1277-84*, J. Conway Davies, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1940) pp.23-4.

⁴⁷ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, VI, I, W. Dugdale, ed. (2nd edn., 1817-30), p.350. See also R.W. Eytton *Antiquities of Shropshire*, vol. III (London: John Russell Smith, 1854), pp.38 & 44.

⁴⁸ R. Nicol, 'The Black Book of Wigmore' (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Sydney, 1974), pp. 187-88.

⁴⁹ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 1243-1245, Vol. XVIII* (London: 1978), p.62.

⁵⁰ *Calendar of Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 1242-1247* (London: Kraus Reprint, 1970), p.453.

⁵¹ *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1242-1247*, pp.452-453.

⁵² *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1242-1247*, p.484 & 486.

The Welsh chroniclers noted that Gwladus Ddu died in 1251 at Windsor.⁵³ She had been a widow since Ralph Mortimer's death in 1246. It is interesting to speculate as to why Gwladus should have been in Windsor when she died. The king granted Gwladus her dower property of the manor of Stretfield and part of the honour of Bisleg, Gloucestershire, soon after Ralph's death,⁵⁴ so presumably Gwladus was living in England and not Wales, after her son Roger, now lord of Wigmore, had married Maud de Braose in 1247.

Gwladus Ddu is certainly the exception for a Welsh noblewoman when it comes to references to her in genealogies, chronicles and poetry. In the fourteenth century, Edmund Mortimer was said to have reinforced his claim to the English throne in the event of the failure of heirs of the Black Prince with evidence of his descent, through Gwladus Ddu, from Welsh princes and Geoffrey of Monmouth's kings of Britain.⁵⁵ Mary Giffin's study of the Wigmore Manuscript shows the use of legends for political purposes in England from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. It contains a genealogy of the Mortimer family which was apparently prepared to advance their claim to the throne in the fourteenth century. Giffin says, 'a beautifully rubricated genealogy of Gwladusa makes clear her descent from Cadwalader, Arthur and Brutus'.⁵⁶ *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377-1421* mentions the descent of Roger Mortimer, the earl of March, 1394-8, from 'Gladws Duy, the daughter of Llewellyn ap Iorwerth Drwyndwn prince of North Wales ...', going back to

⁵³ *Brut Y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes. Peniarth Ms. 20 version*, T. Jones, ed. & trans. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), p.109.

⁵⁴ L.E. Mitchell, 'Noble Widowhood in the Thirteenth Century, Three Generations of Mortimer Widows, 1246-1334' in L. Mirrer, ed., *Upon my Husband's Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p.176.

⁵⁵ G.A. Holmes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p.18.

⁵⁶ M.E. Giffin, 'Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus in the Wigmore Manuscript', *Speculum* vol. XVI (1941), p.111.

‘Adam the first creature’. The editor and translator of *The Chronicle of Adam Usk* says that the genealogy of Roger Mortimer is based on ancient Welsh traditions as preserved in works such as *The Life of Gruffydd ap Cynan* and the Wigmore chronicle.⁵⁷ Adam of Usk also mentioned Roger Mortimer’s descent from Gwladus Ddu through her mother Joan to the ‘first conqueror of Normandy’ and referred to her ‘glorious descent from the noble kings of Britain, Italy, Troy, England, France, and Spain’.⁵⁸ This emphasis on Gwladus’s ‘glorious descent’ further strengthens the argument that she was indeed the daughter of Joan and not illegitimate as indicated by Bartrum.

The Welsh bard Guto’r Glyn, writing in the fifteenth century, referred to Gwladus by name in his praise *cywydd* to Edward IV ‘*I’r Brennin Edward*’. The following lines exhort Edward Mortimer to

Turn your power to your grandmother’s race
From the wine-giving king of Castile;
Dark Gwladys you are called by your style ...⁵⁹

Clearly, Gwladus was considered by some to have impeccable credentials. Another poem by Guto’r Glyn ‘*I Wiliam Talbod*’ makes mention of the significance of descent from Gwladus Ddu.⁶⁰

The question of the identity of Gwladus’s mother must be addressed. Clearly from the foregoing, the Welsh bards, the Mortimer family and the chronicler Adam of Usk all believed

⁵⁷ *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377-1421*, C. Given-Wilson, ed. and trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp.40-1.

⁵⁸ *The Chronicle of Adam Usk*, p.43.

⁵⁹ *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, Collected by J.L. Williams, I. Williams, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1939), p.157.

⁶⁰ *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, p.77.

she was the daughter of Joan. There was no doubt that Gwladus was Llywelyn's daughter, and her grand descent from the kings of Britain was claimed. While Gwladus's paternal ancestry might have been thought sufficient to make these claims in the fifteenth century, in the poem to Edward IV, Adam of Usk writing in the late fourteenth century specifically stated that she was descended through her mother Joan from 'the first conqueror of Normandy' and so on. Clearly, for the Mortimers, it was Gwladus's descent from Joan, the daughter of King John, which counted.

From the very little evidence available, it is difficult to build a profile of the everyday life of a woman like Gwladus, but if her mother were Joan, who was the daughter of King John and therefore a granddaughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, presumably she would have been well educated for a woman of this time. It is reasonable to assume that Joan would have been brought up in an environment which for the time would have been conducive to some education and culture, and that her daughters would have had similar advantages. Presumably Gwladus would have spoken both Welsh and French, perhaps some English. The Welsh courts encouraged cultural pursuits and the bards were very important members of the royal household. J.E. Lloyd has said that

the age of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was one of brilliant literary achievement in Wales. Ten bards are known from this period including Cynddelw, Llywarch ap Llywelyn and Dafydd Benfras. As well as the work of known authors, much anonymous literature, both in verse and in prose, undoubtedly came into being during this productive age. The earliest known manuscript of *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* was written in the age of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth.⁶¹

Gwladus would eventually become the subject of Welsh bardic poetry, but what would her experience have been of Welsh tradition, of Welsh cultural pursuits? E.J. Dobson speculated

⁶¹ J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales, vol II*, pp.691-2.

that Eleanor de Braose, the widow of Hugh Mortimer (d.1227), was the person for whom a French translation of *Ancrene Wisse*, an instructional book for women which is thought to have been associated with Wigmore Abbey, was commissioned. When Gwladus married Ralph Mortimer, who was Hugh Mortimer's heir, in 1230, she would have replaced Eleanor as the lady of Wigmore castle and Dobson uses the argument that 'no-one else except Eleanor's new sister-in-law Gwladys Ddu would have had such a claim for special consideration for a French translation at this time.' His argument against Gwladus is that she did not become an anchorite and her languages were presumably Welsh first and French second.⁶² Dobson's arguments with regard to Eleanor are probably quite reasonable, but Gwladus could have been quite fluent in French as her mother would have spoken French, which was the language of the court in the thirteenth century, and she was married at a very young age to one Norman baron and later to another. I am not arguing that the *Ancrene Wisse* was written for Gwladus, but I do not think she should have been precluded only on the grounds of French as a second language. Given the literary achievements of the thirteenth century in Wales and in Europe generally, it seems a fair assumption that Gwladus Ddu lived in a reasonably cultured atmosphere for its time, and insofar as women were encouraged at all in education and the arts, could have had access to what was available in the thirteenth century. Unfortunately this is speculation due to a lack of evidence.

ELEN

At about the time Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was arranging the marriage of Gwenllian to William de Lacy in 1222, he also arranged the marriage of another legitimate daughter Elen (or Helen) to John le Scot. Chris Given-Wilson and Alice Curteis mention Joan's marriage to Llywelyn ab

⁶² E.J. Dobson, *The Origins of Ancrene Wisse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp.307-8.

Iorwerth and state that ‘Joan’s own children were David and Ellen’ and that ‘Joan’s two stepdaughters were called Gladys and Margaret’.⁶³ The authors give no references for this statement so that it is not possible to know from where they obtained this information.

John le Scot was Earl of Huntingdon and Cambridge. Llywelyn’s motivation for arranging this marriage for Elen was that John le Scot was the nephew and heir of Ranulf, the earl of Chester, and the close proximity of Chester to north Wales made this alliance very important politically. The chronicle of Ranulf of Higden stressed the political significance of this marriage when it stated that John le Scot took as his wife the daughter of Llewelyn prince of Wales, ‘as for final concord between Llewelyn and his uncle Ranulf earl of Chester’.⁶⁴ On the occasion of the marriage Ranulf, the earl of Chester, gave John a grant of lands in Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire, as well as a thousand silver pounds and other considerations.⁶⁵ Indeed John le Scot duly became earl of Chester in 1232. The choice of John le Scot as a husband for Elen may have also been motivated by the fact that at the time he was ‘heir-presumptive’ to King Alexander II of Scotland.⁶⁶ Strategically therefore, this marriage was a very important arrangement for Llywelyn. The records show that John le Scot died in 1237 without issue, so that Elen had no children from her first marriage, and because John le Scot died without an heir,

⁶³ C. Given-Wilson and A. Curteis, *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p.129.

⁶⁴ *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, J.R. Lumby, ed., vol.VIII (London: 1882), pp.200-202, ‘Johannes filius David comitis de Scotia duxit in uxorem filiam Lewelini principis Walliae tanquam pro finali concordia inter ipsum Lewelinum et avunculum suum Ranulphum comitem Cestrensem.’

⁶⁵ J.W. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester: A Relic of the Conquest* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1983), p.82.

⁶⁶ M. Brown, ‘Henry the Peaceable: Henry III, Alexander III and Royal Lordship in the British Isles, 1249-1272’ in B.K.J. Weiler, ed. with I.W. Rowlands, *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III (1216-1272)* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), p.62, n.4.

his lands reverted to the crown.⁶⁷ As we shall see, however, Elen received dower lands after his death.

Elen remarried shortly after her first husband's death in 1237. According to Matthew Paris Elen poisoned her first husband.⁶⁸ The *Dunstable Analyst* for 1237 stated that the daughter of Llywelyn had married Robert de Quincy and that this had angered her father (*Lewelinus indignatus est.*)⁶⁹ There is no way of corroborating that Elen poisoned her first husband, but it is certainly an intriguing idea. Robert de Quincy was a younger son of the earl of Winchester and the wife of his eldest brother was a sister of John le Scot's mother.⁷⁰ A.J. Roderick, in his paper outlining the political significance of the marriages between members of the principal Welsh ruling families between 1066 and 1282, postulated that since Elen 'must have met Robert during her first husband's lifetime,' and in light of her father's disapproval, this may have been a rare occasion of emotional attachment. He also raised the question of whether this might have been 'rebellion against being used as a political pawn.'⁷¹ No doubt Elen's remarriage was not in her father's interests and that was the reason why he was angry.

Elen received dower lands upon the death of her first husband and evidence of this appears in the various legal printed records. *The Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III* of 1222 and 1223

⁶⁷ A.H. Williams, *An Introduction to the History of Wales*, vol. II, The Middle Ages (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1969), p.81.

⁶⁸ *Matthew Paris, Chronica Majora*, vol. III, 1216-1239, H.R. Luard, ed. (London: 1876), p.394. 'Et circa illos dies come's Cestriae Johannes, cognomento Scotus, uxore sua, filia Leolini, machinante, potionatus diem clausit extremum.'

⁶⁹ *Annales Prioratus de Dunstaplia, Annales Monastici, Vol. III*, H.R. Luard, ed. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1866) p.146.

⁷⁰ G.E. Cokayne, ed., *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, XII:2* (London: 1950), p.751.

⁷¹ A.J. Roderick, 'Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282', *The Welsh History Review*, 4 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1968-9), p.18.

mention Elen several times in connection with litigation concerning Giles de Erdington and the manor of Wellington.⁷² According to R.W. Eyton, Ostricius, who was Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's clerk, defended Elen's title and 'called the King's Council to warranty' and it appears that although the matter continued for some years it was finally resolved in Giles de Erdington's favour before 1229.⁷³ Again Elen was mentioned as the wife of Robert de Quincy in the *Curia Regis Rolls* of 1242 trying to recover her dower lands, in an action against Isabella de Bruce, who was the wife of Robert de Bruce. The king had ordered that Isabella de Bruce make satisfaction to Robert de Quincy and his wife concerning the dower which Elen ought to hold from the lands which belonged to John le Scot, Elen's previous husband, the former earl of Chester, and for which lands the king had made an exchange for Isabella. Evidently Isabella had not done as ordered, and ignored the summons. The king then commanded that 'the third part of Writel and of Hatfeld' Regis be siezed etc.'⁷⁴

Elen apparently died in 1253 because the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* for 1253 refers to the partitioning of Elen's dower lands from her marriage to John le Scot between the earl's heirs, Sir John Baliol, Robert de Bruce and Henry de Hastings.⁷⁵ She held a third part of the manor of Tygden in dower as the countess of Chester,⁷⁶ and was also mentioned several times in the Close Rolls for 1253 in relation to disposal of her lands 'post mortem'.⁷⁷

⁷² *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 1223* (London: 1955), pp.227 & 428, Also *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 1222* (London: 1971), p.280 .

⁷³ R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire* (London: John Russell Smith, 1854), vol. III, p.29, vol. IX, p.43.

⁷⁴ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, vol. XVI, 1237-1242* (London: 1978), pp.379-80. 'Dominus rex mandavit Isabelle de Brus quod satisfaceret Roberto de Quency et uxori ejus de dote predictae uxoris ipsius R. quam habere debet de terris que fuerunt J. quondam comitis Cestr' quondam viri sui, ...'

⁷⁵ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, vol. I, Henry III* (London: 1904), p.82. '... quod Elena quondam comitissa Cestrie tenuit terciam partem ...'

⁷⁶ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1251-1253* (London: 1927), p.423.

Robert de Quincy died in 1257. According to Sidney Painter, he and Elen had two daughters, Joan and Hawise.⁷⁸ Joan, who was probably named after her grandmother, married Humphrey de Bohun, son of the earl of Hereford. Elen's daughters are mentioned in the legal record following the battle of Evesham and the restoration of Henry III. Joan's husband, Humphrey de Bohun, the earl of Hereford, had supported Simon de Montfort in the rebellion and his lands were forfeit.⁷⁹ In 1264 Joan was aged nineteen and her sister Hawise was fourteen.

We know that Elen was definitely Joan's daughter. When Elen married John le Scot, it suited Llywelyn's purposes because John was the heir of the earl of Chester, who was an ally. Elen duly became the countess of Chester, which would have been a position of some status. This marriage probably did not please Henry III. John le Scot was also for a time the heir of King Alexander II of Scotland, and it is unlikely that the crown would have wished for an alliance between Wales and Scotland, even if Elen were Henry's niece. Llywelyn may have had other plans for Elen, which her marriage to Robert de Quincy negated. It is also possible that Henry would have had no objections to this second marriage, as it removed Elen's usefulness to Llywelyn. We will probably never know.

MARGARET

Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's fourth daughter was Margaret, who was probably born somewhere between 1208 and 1212. Margaret was married to John de Braose in 1219. He was the nephew of Reginald de Braose, Gwladus's first husband. By 1219 Llywelyn and his son-in-law Reginald were no longer allies, and it is thought that Llywelyn had arranged this marriage of Margaret to

⁷⁷ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1251-1253* (London: 1927), pp.410-414.

⁷⁸ S. Painter 'The House of Quency', *Medievalia et Humanistica XI* (Boulder Colorado: 1957), p.6.

John in order to harass Reginald.⁸⁰ This marriage lasted thirteen years, as John de Braose died in 1232. He was killed in a fall from his horse. The *Brut* tells us that ‘John de Breos died of a cruel death, mangled by his horse.’⁸¹ There were no children from this marriage and Margaret was granted her dower promptly after her husband’s death.⁸²

Margaret next married Walter Clifford of Llandovery soon after her first husband died.⁸³ This marriage lasted for 31 years until 1263 when Walter Clifford died. (For Walter Clifford Chapter 4.) Walter Clifford joined the rebellion of 1233-34 against the crown and there is some confusion amongst historians as to what his motivation was for taking this action. Nicholas Vincent is at a loss to understand why Clifford should have joined the rebellion of Richard Marshall, as he did not seem to have the same grievances as other participants. He postulates that as Clifford was ‘later to marry Margaret’ that he may have had a ‘prior association’ with her and that this may have led him to join the rebels who were allied with her father when he of course took the opportunity presented by the rebellion to make territorial gains.⁸⁴ As I will mention elsewhere, R.F. Walker has also commented on the lack of a sufficient reason for Walter Clifford to join Richard Marshal.⁸⁵ The Calendar of *Patent Rolls* has an entry dated 16 July, 1232 which refers to the ‘recent’ death of John de Braose.⁸⁶ A.J. Roderick stated that Margaret remarried ‘soon after’ his death. Walter Clifford had therefore probably married Margaret in 1232 and that would explain his joining the rebellion on the side of his father-in-law

⁷⁹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1258-1266* (London: 1910), p.504.

⁸⁰ J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, p. 658.

⁸¹ *Brut Y Tywysogion: Red Book of Hergest Version*, p.231.

⁸² *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1225-1232*, p.491.

⁸³ A.J. Roderick, ‘Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282’, p.17.

⁸⁴ N. Vincent, *Peter des Roches: An alien in English politics, 1205-1238* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.380-81.

⁸⁵ R.F. Walker, ‘The Supporters of Richard Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, in the Rebellion of 1233-1234’, *The Welsh History Review*, 17 (1994-95), pp.41-65, esp. pp.42-44 and pp.54-55. Also Chapter 4, p.114.

in 1233. For Llywelyn this marriage of his daughter to Walter Clifford represented an important alliance with a marcher baron at a time when Llywelyn was consolidating his influence in the south-eastern march, which was always a strategically important border area between England and Wales.

Michael Sheehan includes an extract from a charter made by Margaret dated December 16, 1263 in his 1963 study of *The Will in Medieval England*.⁸⁷ The charter comes under the heading of ‘Selected documents concerning the bequest of property,’ and is an example of an irrevocable bequest. Margaret made this charter shortly after her second husband’s death. The document stated that Margaret bestowed her heart for burial in Aconbury Priory church near Hereford. It also contains an irrevocable bequest to the house of fifteen marks and funeral expenses. The rationale given by Margaret in this charter to explain the irrevocability of the bequest was in case of forgetfulness (*si forte per oblivionem*) or for any other reason, she contravened the donation. There are several interesting pieces of information contained in this charter. Firstly, Margaret stated that the alms, and the funeral expenses for completing the rites concerning the burial of her heart, were to be taken from ‘the goods which belong to me’.⁸⁸ Secondly, Margaret must have made a will, as she refers to the fact that these arrangements were to be carried out ‘according to the discreet prudence of my executors established in my last will’. So it would seem that Margaret was to pay for the funeral rites for the burial of her heart from her ‘movable goods’, but more importantly we have a Welsh noblewoman who made a will. Strangely,

⁸⁶ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1225-1232*, vol. II (London: Kraus Reprint, 1971), p.490.

⁸⁷ M. Sheehan, *The Will In Medieval England* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1963), Appendix B. The full text of the charter is found under Priory of Aconbury in *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. VI, pp.490-91.

⁸⁸ M.M. Sheehan, *The Will in Medieval England*, Appendix B. ‘Et cum dicto corde meo in elemosinam, quindecim marcas sterlingorum eidem domui celerius persolvendas una cum aliis expensis, de bonis que me

although this particular document is the first item in Appendix B to Sheehan's work of 'Selected Documents Concerning the Bequest of Property', I can find no reference either to Margaret or her charter in the whole book. Perhaps he felt it required no explanation for anticipated users of the material, but it is disappointing from the viewpoint of research into the life of the woman who originated the bequest. This document also provides another example for this thesis of the different ways one may look at a document. For Sheehan it was apparently merely an example of an irrevocable bequest, whereas for this writer it provides a small piece of evidence of a personal nature about Margaret. It is also evidence of one thirteenth-century Welsh noblewoman who apparently had a will, and also shows her connection with the Priory church of Acornbury in Hereford.

Sir Walter Clifford and Margaret had only one child, a daughter named Maud, who found a significant place among the footnotes to the narrative of Welsh history of the Middle Ages. (For Maud Chapter 4.) Margaret herself was still alive in 1271 because a writ dated 26 July, 1272 mentioned the manor of Culmetone which Margaret had recovered on the 28 August, 1271. This writ mentions Sir Roger Clifford the elder, who had apparently taken the manor and held it until 1270, and a Sir Roger Clifford the younger, who had then taken possession until it was recovered by Margaret in 1271.⁸⁹ Sir Roger Clifford the elder was a nephew of Sir Walter Clifford and Sir Roger Clifford the younger was his (Sir Roger's) son.⁹⁰

contingunt honorabiliter ad exequias circa predictum cor meum sepeliendum perficiendas, secundum discretam prudentiam executorum meorum in ultima voluntate mea constituendorum.'

⁸⁹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous, 1216-1422* (London: 1916-68), p.132.

⁹⁰ R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, vol. V, p.147.

Margaret de Clifford is also mentioned in the *Calendar of Welsh Rolls* for June 16, 1278. The king had appointed Walter de Hopton, Gronw ap Heilyn, Hywel ap Meurig and Rhys ap Gruffudd to hear and determine all suits and pleas etc. in the marches and in Wales and ‘to do justice according to the laws and customs of those parts’. Among others he ordered the bailiffs of Margaret de Clifford in Cantref Selyf to come before the justices. This may possibly be a clerical error, because Margaret’s daughter Maud was in possession of Cantref Selyf in 1263 following her father’s death.⁹¹ It should therefore probably read ‘the bailiffs of Maud de Clifford in Cantref Selyf’.⁹² It is entirely possible that Margaret still lived in Cantref Selyf, even if it was now owned by Maud. Margaret is mentioned again in the Assize Roll in 1278, at Essoins taken before Walter de Hopton. ‘Hugh Turbervill against Margaret de Clifford for covenant and trespass by Roger de Pedwardin.’ This plea is followed by ‘Roger Pychard against ‘the same’ [Margaret de Clifford] by Llywelyn ap Philip.’ Originally I thought this too must be an error and that Maud should be mentioned instead. However, the next item on the list is ‘Robert Maynard, attorney of Matilda, wife of John Giffard, against Morgan ap Maredudd in a plea of land by William apine.’ Margaret may indeed have still been alive in 1278. If she were born between 1208 and 1212 as I have suggested, this would make her possibly in her late sixties in 1278. I do not know the exact date of her death, but once again she lived a long life for a medieval woman.

ANGHARAD

Angharad was not mentioned by R.R. Davies at all, nor did J.E. Lloyd have any reference for her. Peter Bartrum places her in the genealogy chart for Llywelyn ab Iorwerth as an illegitimate

⁹¹ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence*, p.17.

⁹² *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.167. The editor of the *Welsh Assize Roll* also mentions this entry. p.88.

daughter and he shows her as married to Maelgwn Ieuanc or Fychan, of Deheubarth.⁹³ This conflicts with a story by R.R. Davies that Maelgwn Fychan was compelled by Gilbert Marshal to take his daughter in marriage in the early 1240s.⁹⁴ Gwyn A. Williams mentioned this same incident in a paper titled ‘The succession to Gwynedd 1238-47’, but his version was that Maelgwn Fychan was forced ‘to pledge his son’s marriage to the earl’s daughter’.⁹⁵ If it were indeed the son, and not Maelgwn Fychan himself who was compelled to marry the earl’s daughter, then Angharad was probably married to Maelgwn Fychan. A family connection with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth is feasible, because in 1233 Maelgwn Fychan joined Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and the earl of Pembroke when they laid seige to Carmarthen.⁹⁶ Maelgwn Fychan, who died in 1257, was the son of Maelgwn ap Rhys ap Gruffudd (the Lord Rhys) of Deheubarth, and as a direct descendant of a Welsh ruling house would have been eminently suitable as a husband for a daughter of the ruler of Gwynedd. We must also consider that if the information in Bartrum is correct and Angharad was indeed Llywelyn ab Iorwerth’s daughter and did marry Maelgwn Fychan, then Robin Frame is incorrect when he asserts that Llywelyn ab Iorwerth did not marry his daughters to Welshmen.⁹⁷

There is a reference to Angharad as the daughter of Llywelyn in *Littere Wallie*. A letter said to be dated February 24, 1259 from Rhys Fychan, son of Rhys ap Maelgwn which gave sureties for £60 to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was for villas which had belonged to Angharad the daughter of

⁹³ Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. 3, p.446.

⁹⁴ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, p.226 & 301.

⁹⁵ G.A. Williams ‘The Succession to Gwynedd 1238-47’ in *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 20, (1962-4), pp.393-413.

⁹⁶ *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, p.233 and also *Peniarth MS. Version*, p.103.

⁹⁷ See p.49 of this chapter.

Llywelyn.⁹⁸ Angharad and Maelgwn Fychan had a son named Rhys (d.1255) and a grandson named Rhys Fychan (d.1302) and there is a strong case that this reference in *Littere Wallie* is to Angharad the daughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. This being the case, we have here another Welsh noblewoman who held land. I do not know the date of Angharad's death, but her husband died in 1257. As the above letter was dated 1259, the vills therefore could have been either given to her as part of a marriage contract, or she may have received dower on the death of her husband. J. Beverley Smith also refers to Angharad the daughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in a footnote to his paper titled 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales: a Grant of the Commote of Anhuniog, 1273'⁹⁹ in a discussion concerning her granddaughter, also named Angharad. (For Angharad Chapter 8.)

The political advantage derived as a result of the arranged marriages of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's daughters to Anglo-Normans was shortlived in each instance. There can be no doubt that such advantage was the primary reason for each alliance, and although the gain was of short duration, the result was probably accepted as fairly standard at this time in history. These marriages were important from the points of view of Llywelyn, of Henry III and of the marcher families. For Henry III, the reigning Angevin king, he was determined to rule all of England and Wales and the marriages were part of what might be called the 'legitimisation of the conquest'. Such marriages into ruling marcher families were part of this continuing trend since the coming of the conquerors. As Wales was not finally conquered until 1283, these marriages of the daughters of the ruling house of Gwynedd to Anglo-Norman barons were part of the more peaceful means of

⁹⁸ *Littere Wallie preserved in Liber A in the Public Record Office*, J.G. Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1940), p.26. '... pro uillis que fuerunt bone memorie Angarad filie Lewelini,'.

⁹⁹ J.B. Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales: a Grant of the Commote of Anhuniog, 1273', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, Vol. XXX (1983), p.351, **footnote 5**.

gaining legitimate control through inheritance of the lands of Wales. From the point of view of the marcher families the marriages helped with the process of building their power bases any way they could. For a marcher family like the Mortimers, the marriage of Ralph Mortimer to Gwladus Ddu gave the Mortimers a firm foothold in a strategic area of the march which enabled them to build on this to become a leading baronial family for centuries to come. In fact Gwladus's grandson Roger became, for a short period in the fourteenth century, the ruler of England.

In conclusion it appears that Gwenllian, Gwladus, Elen, Margaret and Angharad lived long and seemingly full lives which included at times protecting and furthering the interests of their families. Another interesting aspect of their lives is the longevity of these women and the fact that for the most part they outlived all of their husbands. The children of all of these women became established in the Anglo-Norman power bloc and eventually part of the English nobility. Through Llywelyn's own adventure into marriage into the Anglo-Norman world, those grandchildren who resulted from the mixed marriage became great-grandchildren of King John. Although the information at first seems hidden, it can be found. The activity of looking at history without gender blindness will mean that these and other Welsh noblewomen will take their rightful place in the narrative of the history of Wales in the thirteenth century.

MARGARET OF BROMFIELD¹

Margaret of Bromfield was overlooked altogether by early and modern historians until quite recently. She was the daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Senana ferch Caradog, his wife. This means that she was a granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr and a sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (d.1282), both of whom ruled much of Wales for the greater part of the thirteenth century. In view of her noble lineage, Margaret was married to Madog ap Gruffudd, who succeeded his father as ruler of northern Powys in 1269, until his own death in 1277.

Unfortunately there is no mention of Margaret in one of the most important documentary sources of information about women in medieval Wales, namely Peter Bartrum's *Welsh Genealogies AD300-1400*,² nor is she mentioned by great Welsh historians such as J.E. Lloyd and R.R. Davies. Even J.Y.W. Lloyd in his history of the nobility of Powys Fadog (northern Powys) stated that he was not able to discover whom Prince Madog married, although he knew that her name was Margaret.³

Margaret does emerge on numerous occasions from the pages of the public record concerning Wales in the thirteenth century, and some years ago I became intrigued as to the identity of this seemingly forthright, and even at times insistent, Welsh medieval noblewoman. In fact she is conspicuous on no less than twenty-three occasions in extant printed court records and correspondence concerning Wales, relating to what she saw as her own entitlements and those of her children, following the death of her husband. Margaret of Bromfield is an exemplar of how Welsh noblewomen were able to negotiate with powerful men in order to retain their inheritance.

¹ My paper with this title was published in the third edition of the on-line history journal *Eras*, at Monash University, Melbourne in 2003. (www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras)

² P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies AD300-1400* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974).

Examination of the documents available reveals her to be the sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. I note that J. Beverley Smith has reached this same conclusion in his recent mammoth work.⁴ She is mentioned briefly in his text, but is more fully discussed by him in the footnotes. He also makes the point, with which I do not agree, see below, that the evidence for Margaret as the sister of Llywelyn is not as certain as the evidence he cites to identify Senana as the mother of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. My emphasis in predicating Margaret's identity as the sister of the last great ruler of Wales relates to the fact that in medieval Wales one's genealogy was of the utmost importance. Your status or who you were depended on your ancestry – who your father and grandfather were governed your standing in Welsh society.⁵ This emphasis on the importance of ancestry is well documented by historians, for example R.R. Davies has stated that from at least the twelfth century Wales was 'a genealogically obsessed country'.⁶ In her recent article Llinos Beverley Smith delineates very succinctly the situation which pertained for women in the period from the conquest of 1282 through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although she is concerned with the late Middle Ages, she states that 'in earlier times, a person's honour or worth ... was directly linked to his or her status' and stresses that even in the late Middle Ages a woman's 'own lineage and pedigree were clearly important matters of pride and even of practical consequence to her own issue'.⁷

³ J.Y.W. Lloyd, *The History of the Princes, the Lords Marcher, and the Ancient Nobility of Powys Fadog* (London: 1881), pp.174-75.

⁴ J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp.14, 38-9, 308, 423. See also reference to 'Madog's widow Margaret, sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd' in M. Rogers, 'The Welsh Marcher Lordship of Bromfield and Yale, 1282-1485', 1992 (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth), p.17.

⁵ Gerald of Wales, who wrote *The Description of Wales* at the close of the twelfth century, said that 'the Welsh value distinguished birth and noble descent more than anything else in the world.' Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, L. Thorpe, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p.251.

⁶ R.R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.129.

⁷ L.B. Smith, 'Towards a History of Women in Late Medieval Wales' in M. Roberts and S. Clarke, eds. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2000), p.16. Smith gives a

The first mention of Margaret in the public record as Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's sister was in 1258 when Henry III was concerned that Llywelyn was proposing to give in marriage 'Margaret his sister in a place in which damage may arise to the king'. In this document dated April 2, Richard de Clare, earl of Gloucester was commanded by Henry III 'to be diligent in getting her into his power and when he has got her, in keeping her safely.'⁸ While we do not know the date of Margaret's marriage to Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys, nor do we certainly know to whom Henry III was referring when he was trying to prevent this proposed marriage of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's sister Margaret in 1258,⁹ it is likely that this match between the Gruffudd ap Madog's son and Margaret was what Henry III was anxious to prevent. In 1257 Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had made peace with Gruffudd ap Madog¹⁰ and peace continued between the ruler of Gwynedd and the ruler of Powys Fadog until 1276. For Llywelyn ap Gruffudd a political marriage between his sister and the heir to the ruler of northern Powys (Madog ap Gruffudd) would have been to his advantage and could cause 'damage' to the king, because such a marriage would help cement the newly established peaceful relationship between the houses of Gwynedd and northern Powys. It was not in the interests of the English crown to promote co-operation and agreement between native Welsh rulers.

very thorough outline of how the various bodies of law and Welsh local custom operated in Wales in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and how Welsh women 'secured important advancements'. See esp. pp.14-18 and p.36.

⁸ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III*, 4, 1247-1258 (London: 1971), p.660.

⁹ A.J. Roderick has suggested that an error was made in the manuscript and that this entry refers to a proposed marriage between Llywelyn's sister Gwladus and Rhys Fychan of Deheubarth. This is, of course, possible and it assumes no knowledge of Margaret. Since Llywelyn did have a sister named Margaret I think Roderick was mistaken. A.J. Roderick, 'Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282', *The Welsh History Review*, 4 (1968-69), p.18.

¹⁰ *Brut Y Tywysogyon, Peniarth Ms. 20 Version*, T. Jones, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), p.111.

The ruler of northern Powys had paid allegiance to the crown for years. The letter from the king showed how concerned he was that a marriage between Margaret and Madog ap Gruffudd did not take place. It would mean that northern Powys would adhere to Llywelyn and not to the crown as had been the situation over many years. Henry did not just tell Richard de Clare to try and prevent the marriage. He in effect said that he should abduct Margaret and lock her up to make sure the marriage did not go ahead. He was encouraging de Clare in a deliberate violent action against Margaret. Henry was right to be concerned. That this happened in 1258 is very significant in Welsh history. In 1257 Gruffudd ap Madog of northern Powys ‘withdrew from his direct dependence on Henry III’ and gave his allegiance to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. David Walker says this was ‘a valuable reinforcement of Llywelyn’s power, and made possible the renewal of an aggressive policy against southern Powys, leading to the exile of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn’.¹¹ Llywelyn had been making overtures to Gruffudd ap Madog since 1250. David Walker believes that Llywelyn may have been ‘making sure of an ally in his own interest’,¹² and it seems likely that this was the beginning of a compact between them which eventually was to include the marriage of Llywelyn’s sister to Gruffudd ap Madog’s heir. This confraternity with the house of northern Powys was crucial to Llywelyn’s rise to power and by 1258 he reached the peak of his leadership in Wales.

It is not known whether Richard de Clare, earl of Gloucester managed to ‘get Margaret into his power’ and keep her ‘safely’. In fact it is more than likely that he did not. The year 1258 was one of crisis for Richard de Clare. According to Michael Altschul, Richard de Clare and his successor ‘regarded themselves primarily as lords of the march rather than English earls... and

¹¹ D. Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.114.

¹² Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p.112.

Cardiff ... was the focus of their attention and the real source of their power'.¹³ In 1258 Richard de Clare's authority in Glamorgan was being threatened by the possibility of an invasion by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and 1258 saw the beginning of the baronial reform movement in opposition to Henry III. In fact it was on April 12 that the group of powerful barons including Richard de Clare and Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, swore an oath of mutual assistance in order for them to undertake their plan of reform.¹⁴ There is no evidence of Richard de Clare having taken Margaret into custody and it is possible on April 2, 1258, which was the date of Henry III's order for him to take Margaret for safe keeping, that de Clare had what he saw as more important matters on his mind. One of the complaints of this group of barons was of Henry III's 'abuse of the rights of wardship and marriage'¹⁵ so that it is conceivable that de Clare may not have obeyed the command. We will probably never know, but Margaret was certainly threatened with abduction by order of Henry III. Abduction was a not uncommon occurrence for noblewomen in the Middle Ages, although such abductions were usually designed to coerce the victim into marriage, not to prevent a marriage which was the case here.¹⁶

In any case, Margaret did marry Madog Fychan of Bromfield and a further piece of evidence which points to Margaret as Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's sister is his letter to Edward I, dated October 15 (probably 1279), in which he thanked Edward for 'granting to Llywelyn's nephews,

¹³ M. Altschul, *A Baronial Family in Medieval England: The Clares* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p.79-80.

¹⁴ Altschul, *The Clares*, 1965, pp.80-81.

¹⁵ Altschul, *The Clares*, 1965, p.80.

¹⁶ Margaret's cousin Maud Clifford, also a granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr, was abducted and eventually agreed to marry her abductor. (Chapter 4.)

the sons of Madog Fychan of Bromfield, their inheritance'.¹⁷ Yet another reference is in a letter dated October 22, 1284 which stated that the king had 'granted to Margaret, daughter of Griffin, for life the towns of Bodunan and Hyrdref, to hold in the same way as she previously held them in the time of Llewelyn 'son of Griffin'.¹⁸ Other references to her relationship with her brother may be noticed in documents dealing with litigation. An example is a claim by Margaret's brothers-in-law, Owain and Gruffudd, that Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had assigned to their brother Madog a greater share of the family hereditary lands than he should, because their brother had married 'the Prince's sister Margaret'.¹⁹ Finally a document dated April 5, 1299 for a grant of land which had belonged to Margaret, reveals that the land has come into the king's hands because of the death of Margaret who was 'sister of Llewellyn, then prince of Wales'.²⁰ From the evidence cited Margaret of Bromfield was indeed Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's sister.

Although we do not know the date of Margaret's marriage to Madog ap Gruffudd, presumably it was some time after April 1258. Margaret's father, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, died in 1244 as the result of a fall while trying to escape from the Tower of London, so that her date of birth must be prior to 1245. This would make her at least thirteen years of age at her marriage, possibly older. Madog ap Gruffudd himself died in 1277 which means if 1258 were the date of the marriage, it lasted for nineteen years. This would make Margaret at least 32 years old at the time of her husband's death. There is one anomaly about these dates and that concerns the two sons of the marriage of Margaret and Madog, namely Llywelyn and Gruffudd, who are regarded by historians as infants at the time of their father's death in 1277. They most certainly were not

¹⁷ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence concerning Wales*, J. Goronwy Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), p.93.

¹⁸ 'Calendar of Welsh Rolls', *Calendar of Chancery Rolls, Various, 1277-1326* (London: 1976), p.257.

¹⁹ *The Welsh Assize Roll, 1277-84*, J. Conway Davies ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1940), p.202.

of age, and are referred to as children in some recorded evidence, but it is interesting that as the offspring of a marriage of nineteen years, they were thought to be so young. One may only speculate, a dangerous occupation in historiography, that if Margaret married at around thirteen or fourteen she may not have borne children until later; perhaps she had one or more daughters as well as the sons who, not surprisingly, were not noticed by history, or perhaps the marriage did not take place in 1258, but was much later.

Margaret of Bromfield must have been a woman of courage, tenacity and determination in the face of adversity. From a very young age she experienced many set-backs. As the daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn she was probably only too well aware of her position as a child of ‘the rejected bastard son of the prince of Gwynedd’.²¹ Her mother had tried unsuccessfully to free her father and brother from prison and as previously mentioned, her father met his death trying to escape from the Tower of London in 1244. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had defeated his brothers Owain and Dafydd at Bryn Derwin in 1255 to become ruler of Gwynedd. Owain was now in a position similar to the one his father had been in before him. As the eldest son Owain represented a serious threat to his younger brother, and now ruler, Llywelyn. This meant that following his defeat, Owain was to endure a further twenty-two years of imprisonment.²² Although also Llywelyn ap Gruffudd’s sibling, as a woman Margaret did not pose the threat to him which his brothers represented in terms of their rights as heirs to Gwynedd because under Welsh native law women could not inherit land. She could, however, be useful to Llywelyn who could gain political benefit through her marriage to a desirable ally. Margaret’s marriage to the heir of the prince of northern Powys suggests that Llywelyn did indeed take advantage of

²⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Edward I, AD1292-1301* (London: 1895) p.405.

²¹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.14.

Margaret to gain him a political ally. In 1258 Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was in a very strong position and it was at this time that the majority of the native Welsh magnates swore allegiance to Llywelyn and also in March 1258 he first used the title ‘prince of Wales’.²³

The rise to power of her brother would probably have greatly improved Margaret’s life and prospects. Her marriage to Madog ap Gruffudd, who became ruler of northern Powys, would have granted her some prestige. Madog ap Gruffudd’s

father had supported Llywelyn ap Gruffudd from 1250, and Madog continued to do so when he succeeded his father in 1269, until 1276.²⁴ Margaret’s privileged position as sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, who according to R.R. Davies was ‘undoubted master of native Wales from early 1258 until his death in 1282’,²⁵ would presumably have improved her status and afforded her some influence which she had not previously enjoyed. It is precisely this close family connection to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd which may account for her complex relationship with Edward I and the later high degree of animosity which she apparently experienced from him during the war of 1282, as well as for the inevitable early demise of her two sons, who through her could have been regarded by the king as potential heirs to the house of Gwynedd.

The twenty or so years after her husband’s death in 1277 when Margaret pursued litigation for her rights reveal her alienating her brothers-in-law, her mother-in-law, Edward I, and at one point even Llywelyn ap Gruffudd himself. Clearly Margaret was not put off easily and her

²² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.72-4.

²³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.108-9. See also J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, vol. II (London: 1911), pp. 722-24.

determination is fascinating when one considers the way she seems to have confronted Edward I and although on the surface he appeared to take up her cause, she had limited success with her claims and petitions, but still she persisted. Perhaps her early years taught her to fight for her rights or perhaps she was just obstinate – we can never know. To have survived the legal processes for so long, Margaret must have had support, but I am unable to identify any source. Continued litigation would have involved payment of attorneys and financial support would have been vital. Although strictly speaking, under Welsh native law, Margaret was not entitled to dower, she would presumably have received a settlement of at least movable goods at her marriage which was the custom under native Welsh law, and would probably have included livestock which she would have retained. At her husband's death she would also have been entitled to half of the common pool of movable goods of the marriage.²⁶ Possibly she had a good relationship with her mother-in-law (see below), and also her relationship to the ruler of Gwynedd may have been a factor.

The war of 1277 saw Margaret's brother Llywelyn's position very much reduced. Following an attack on northern Powys by the earl of Warwick and his royal forces, Margaret's husband Madog ap Gruffudd was forced to submit to the king or be disinherited in favour of his brother Llywelyn, who had defected to Edward I earlier in 1276.²⁷ So strictly speaking, in light of her husband's submission, Margaret may be seen to have been allied with the king's forces. Perhaps Margaret had temporarily gained some favour with Edward I because of Madog's transfer of

²⁴ R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.235.

²⁵ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, p.317.

²⁶ According to Welsh native law, women could not inherit land nor could they receive land in dower, except in certain special circumstances. During the thirteenth century, despite the laws, women did own land and did receive dower in land. I have discussed this aspect fully in Chapter 6. Margaret's dower will be fully covered below.

allegiance, although apparently he had no choice but to submit. Madog ap Gruffudd died in 1277, presumably in battle, but I can find no record of the manner of his death.

The extent of Margaret's favour with Edward I appears to have fluctuated in the period between 1277 and 1297. Following the death of Margaret's husband in 1277, Edward I certainly appears to have intended for Margaret to have some control over the rearing and maintenance of her children. He ordered Roger Lestrangle to assign to Margaret the lands of which her husband was in possession at his death. She was to hold these lands for the use of Madog's children, provided she took an oath to return the lands and the children to the king when he demanded them.²⁸

Margaret was granted the custody but not the wardship of her sons. Edward I appointed Griffith son of Iorwerth as bailiff of the lands of Madog of Bromfield on December 10, 1277. He ordered him to deliver to Margaret the income from the lands for the maintenance of her children, 'she having taken oath before the king that she will restore to him at his order the two sons and heirs of Madoc, whom the king delivered to her to be nourished and kept'. The king took the homage of the children on the octaves of Martinmas (November 1277).²⁹ Gruffudd ab Iorwerth was a Welshman who had withdrawn his fealty from Llywelyn ap Gruffudd during the war of 1277 and transferred his allegiance to the king. There were serious defections of disenchanted or disenfranchised members of non-princely Welsh lineages during the war of 1277 and a Gruffudd ap Iorwerth who was descended from a prominent Anglesey lineage was among those who defected from the Welsh side to the service of Edward I. J. Beverley Smith concludes

²⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.423-4.

²⁸ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.162. (This letter seems to be incorrectly dated January 11, 1278. Chronologically it should have been dated around November, 1277.)

²⁹ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.161.

that this Gruffudd ap Iorwerth was probably the person who was bailiff of Maelor Saesneg in 1278.³⁰

The letter to Roger Lestrangle on 10 December, 1277, mentioned above, provided that any surplus from the income of the lands was to be expended for the advantage of the children ‘as shall seem most expedient by the counsel of A.[nian] bishop of St Asaph, the said Margaret, and the said Griffin,’ so that Margaret’s counsel was important for decisions concerning the surplus. While Gruffudd ap Iorwerth was to have custody of and receive the income from the lands, he was to ‘answer before the bishop and Margaret or another person to be appointed by the king, ...’.³¹ The tenants of the lands previously belonging to Madog were then notified on January 18, 1278 of the appointment of Gruffudd ap Iorwerth as bailiff, and informed that he would receive the income from the lands and ‘pay them to Margaret, late the wife of Madoc,’.³² Margaret of Bromfield must have been held in some esteem by Edward I. Providing ‘counsel’ was considered a very important service which the vassal rendered to the lord in the Middle Ages and therefore Margaret’s counsel when it came to decisions concerning the expenditure of any surplus from the income of her sons’ lands gave her a prominent role to be undertaken on the king’s behalf. The bailiff was also answerable to Margaret in some matters concerning the administration of the lands.

Matters did not proceed smoothly to the benefit of Margaret and her children, however, and we will now look at the disagreement and discord which Margaret experienced. A document dated

³⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.432-3 for discussion re the identity of Gruffudd ab Iorwerth. See also discussion of Gruffudd ab Iorwerth in D. Stephenson, *The Governance of Gwynedd* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1984), pp.105 and 146.

³¹ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.161.

January 4, 1278 reveals that the king ordered Roger Mortimer and Walter Hopton to hear four separate complaints by Margaret, two concerning the inheritance of the lands of her children which were being occupied unjustly by others and two relating to her own dower properties.³³ In the first complaint which concerned the children's inheritance Margaret stated that her brother-in-law Llywelyn Fychan 'unjustly occupies the land of Megheyn' (Mechain) and that 'the wardship of the land ought to be kept by her and approved men of the inheritance' until the children were of age. The second complaint was against Roger Lestrangle who was unjustly occupying the 'land of Maylorsesnek' (Maelor Saesneg) and the document was worded in similar terms to the complaint against Llywelyn Fychan. As mentioned previously, Edward had already ordered Roger Lestrangle in November, 1277 to assign to Margaret the lands of her deceased husband for the use of his heirs, her two sons. These lands included Maelor Saesneg (Bromfield). Roger Lestrangle is described by R.R. Davies as one of a group of 'high-handed and tyrannical officials' whose conduct after 1277 contributed to the rebellion of 1282.³⁴ Indeed Lestrangle seems to have been determined to acquire Maelor Saesneg because later in an undated letter, attributed by the editor to 1283, addressed to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Lestrangle was enlisting the aid of the bishop to acquire Penllyn and Edeirnon, but stated that 'he would prefer Maillor Ssaysnek'.³⁵ The king ordered that Roger (Mortimer) and Walter hear Margaret's complaints and cause justice to be done.³⁶

According to the editor of the *Welsh Assize Roll, 1277-1284*, the fifth assize dealt with the claims of Margaret's brothers-in-law Owain and Gruffudd to a reasonable part of their father's lands

³² *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.164.

³³ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, pp.170-71.

³⁴ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, p.348.

against Margaret's sons and their brother Llywelyn. They claimed that they had not consented to the manner in which their inherited property had been divided between the four brothers on the death of their father. They said that the prince of Wales had occupied their father's lands and that after his death the prince had assigned a larger share than was usual to their brother Madog, because he was married to the prince's sister. They believed that they were entitled to a further share of their brother's property following his death, before it was passed to his sons. An agreement was made for a new assignment of shares on February 9, 1278³⁷ and apparently her children were ultimately granted 'a third of the issues of the manor of Bromfield for their maintenance'.³⁸ Margaret's complaints about her own dower property will be discussed below.

The administration of the wardship of Margaret's children was unsatisfactory and the king wrote to Guncelin de Badelsmere, the justice of Chester in March 1279 ordering him to remove Gruffudd ab Iorwerth from his position as keeper of the wardship because he had 'displayed less diligence than he ought about the wardship'.³⁹ It is more than likely that Margaret had

complained to the king, although the king had said that he had learned of the situation 'upon the information of trustworthy men'. This letter ended with a wish that 'it may not be necessary for the king to be solicited further in this matter' which could indicate that the king was becoming annoyed by Margaret's persistence. It is more likely though, that the king was stating that he wished his order to be carried out immediately so that there would be no need for him to refer to the matter again. Another letter from the king dated July 27, 1279 to the 'freemen and all others

³⁵ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence concerning Wales*, p.124. The editor suggests a date of possibly summer-autumn 1283, but no later than March 1284.

³⁶ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.170

³⁷ *Welsh Assize Roll*, pp.202-3

of the cantred of Bromfield' stated that he had ordered Roger Lestrangle, who was constable of the castle of Dinas Brân to remove Gruffudd from his bailiwick 'because he had not behaved himself well in it'. He said that Roger would appoint another bailiff in Gruffudd's place 'by the counsel of the lady of Bromfield'.⁴⁰

Margaret was still regarded by Edward I as competent to provide counsel in the matter of the choice of a replacement for the bailiff of the cantref of Bromfield, even though he may have been tiring of the complaints. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd also wrote to Edward I, thanking him for granting his nephews their inheritance, but complaining about the administration of the lands and requesting removal of the bailiff.⁴¹ The letter was dated October 15, and the editor notes 'probably 1279'. If the editor is correct with the date of this letter, it would appear that the king's original orders for the removal of Gruffudd ab Iorwerth as bailiff of Bromfield were not carried out, which contrasts with the view of J. Beverley Smith, who believes that the bailiff was removed in July 1279.⁴²

A document from the king dated June 20, 1280, more than one year after the first complaint, addressed to Master Gruffudd ab Iorwerth, archdeacon of St Asaph, and Nicholas Bonel, stated that the king wished to be informed of how 'Griffin son of Jorwerth, his bailiff of that manor' (Bromfield) had accounted for the issues and expenses of the manor of Bromfield. The king said that he had ordered Gruffudd ap Iorwerth to appear before 'Master Griffin and Nicholas' with his

³⁸ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.183.

³⁹ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.180-81.

⁴⁰ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.178.

⁴¹ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence*, pp.93-4.

⁴² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.457, n.33.

‘rolls and everything else that concerns his account’.⁴³ In the light of both documents, it is likely that the bailiff had not been removed the year before, and that this was a follow-up. Edward I does seem to have responded to the complaints about the misbehaviour of the bailiff.

Margaret also appears in the court rolls in connection with her own dower rights during this period. One particular incident is of interest from the point of view of a narrative about the lives of thirteenth-century Welsh noblewomen, because it is one recorded instance of a dispute between two Welsh noblewomen about dower rights. It also is an example of the way Welsh inheritance laws were being rethought in the context of English law during the thirteenth century. In England under common law, a woman was entitled to dower of one-third of the lands held by her husband when he died, to revert to the heir when she herself died, and Henry III’s Charter of 1217 stated that widows were to be given their dowers freely, without delay or payment, and were not to be forced to marry against their will.⁴⁴ In Wales the position for women was very different because under native Welsh law, women could not inherit land nor could title to land be inherited through the female line.⁴⁵

The later Middle Ages saw the gradual adoption in many parts of Wales of English law and, ‘on the eve of the loss of its independence’ in the thirteenth century, in the words of Robin C. Stacey,

⁴³ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.183.

⁴⁴ Robert C. Stacey, *Politics, Policy and Finance under Henry III 1216-1245* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.5. For discussion of medieval dower, see also R.E. Archer ‘Rich Old Ladies: The Problem of Late Medieval Dowagers’ in T. Pollard, ed., *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984), pp.15-35.

⁴⁵ R.R. Davies, ‘The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage in Late Medieval Wales’ in D. Jenkins and M.E. Owen, eds., *The Welsh Law of Women* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), p.100. For discussion of the Welsh Laws of Women Chapter 6.

Wales was ‘a hodgepodge of competing claims and jurisdictions’.⁴⁶ Stacey further states that ‘even the most nationalist of Welsh princes frequently changed, or rejected outright, individual customs of the law they cited in support of their political ambitions.’⁴⁷ J. Beverley Smith’s study reveals two instances where Welsh noblemen made formal provision for dower for their wives, despite native Welsh custom. The charter which relates to Angharad, the wife of Owain ap Maredudd of Ceredigion was formally approved by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and the two charters which provided dower for Emma, the wife of Gruffudd ap Madog of Northern Powys, had been confirmed by his sons. Smith’s study argues that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd would also have approved these charters.⁴⁸ It seems Welsh native law and custom notwithstanding, some Welsh noblemen did dower their wives, and Madog ap Gruffudd, the son of Emma and Gruffudd ap Madog apparently also dowered his wife, Margaret.⁴⁹

Margaret’s mother-in-law, Emma, the widow of Gruffudd ap Madog claimed against Margaret the manor of Eyton which was one of the manors her husband had assigned to her in dower. Emma claimed that she had been in possession of the manor during her husband’s lifetime, but that on his death, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had occupied it in time of war and granted it to Madog ap Gruffudd, her son, who had given it to his wife Margaret as dower. Margaret in turn acknowledged that this was true, but she claimed that Emma ‘of her own free will in time of

⁴⁶ Robin C. Stacey, *The Road to Judgment: From Custom to Court in Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p.142.

⁴⁷ Robin C. Stacey, *The Road to Judgment*, p.180.

⁴⁸ J.B. Smith, ‘Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales: a Grant of the Commote of Anhuniog, 1273’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, vol. XXX (November 1983), pp.348-355.

⁴⁹ Llinos Beverley Smith also refers to this study in her recent paper as an example of how in the thirteenth century native arrangements for the assignment of land in dower were already being made. L.B. Smith, ‘Towards a History of Women in Late Medieval Wales’ in M. Roberts and S. Clarke, eds., *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.23.

peace,' restored the manor to Margaret's husband and quitclaimed it, so that she could not claim or challenge

any right in it. An inquiry was then to be made.⁵⁰ A schedule attached to the Assize Roll stated that 'afterwards' Margaret acknowledged Eyton to be Emma's and she restored and quitclaimed it to her. In return for this Emma granted Margaret the manor of Eyton for the whole of Emma's life for the payment of ten marks annually. If any default was made in the payment, Emma would resume the manor of Eyton to herself and if Margaret died during Emma's lifetime, the manor should also revert to Emma.⁵¹ Possibly Margaret had a change of heart but this claim appears to have been settled amicably. When the king ordered that the claim between Emma and Margaret be heard, he said that if it should be shown to belong to Emma, it should be taken into the king's hands and Emma recompensed with the rent charge from another manor in the king's lands in Chester, to wholly revert to the king when Emma died. On the other hand, if it were shown that the manor belonged to Margaret, 'the manor ought to remain to Margaret in dower in accordance with the law and custom of those parts,' provided that it revert to the king and his heirs after her death.⁵² Once again the king seems to have acted fairly towards Margaret here and possibly in her interests.

The initiation of this dispute and the outcome raise two interesting questions, although there are no recorded answers to these questions. Did Edward I act to make sure that Margaret could keep her home or did Emma and Margaret take the action they did to keep the property in the family? It is possible Margaret and Emma acted to forestall the inquiry which was to be made. If there

⁵⁰ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.245.

⁵¹ *Welsh Assize Roll*, pp.245-46.

were an inquiry and the manor was shown to belong to Emma, she would lose Eyton although the king would recompense her. If Margaret was shown to have the manor, she would have it for life but it would revert to the king when she died. By observing the formalities of restoring the manor to Emma and quitclaiming it, and thus avoiding an inquiry, Margaret retained possession, but Eyton would revert to Emma when Margaret died, and not to the king.⁵³

At the time she answered the claim by her mother-in-law, Margaret claimed half the land of Glyndyfrdwy as dower from her brother-in-law Gruffudd Fychan. She claimed dower rights in ‘Corveyn (Corwen), Carrau, Mistwer’, Bonun and Rechald’ which she said he detained from her unjustly.⁵⁴ According to J.Y.W. Lloyd ‘Corwen’ was a manor in Edeyrnion and ‘Carrog, Mwstwr and Bonwn’ were manors in Glyndyfrdwy.⁵⁵ She asserted that she was in possession until her husband’s death and that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had ‘occupied it in time of war, and bestowed it on Gruffudd.’⁵⁶ There was some confusion over this lawsuit and Gruffudd wrote to the king asking whether it should be heard before the king’s justices or whether it should be heard before Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, as Gruffudd stated that he held the land ‘by the king’s permission ... in chief of the said prince.’ In this letter Gruffudd makes the interesting comment that ‘he fears lest the said Margaret may influence the king against him.’⁵⁷ If Gruffudd Fychan was worried about the amount of influence Margaret may have with the king, it suggests that she was someone whose opinion was respected at the higher levels of the nobility. As has already been noticed, all the correspondence from the king to the administrators with regard to decisions

⁵² *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, pp.170-71.

⁵³ The editor of the *Welsh Assize Roll* states that although ‘inquiry was to be made ... no such inquisition was made.’ p.201.

⁵⁴ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.171.

⁵⁵ J.Y.W. Lloyd, *History of the Princes of Powys Fadog*, p.177. Corwen became a large market town, which still exists today.

⁵⁶ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.246

concerning the inheritance and rearing of Margaret's children require that her counsel on these matters be sought, so that at this period she still seems to have retained some status.

The litigation was referred to the court of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd by Edward I. The editor of the *Welsh Assize Roll, 1277-84* states that this was the only case referred for determination to the court of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.⁵⁸ Llywelyn ap Gruffudd wrote to the king on October 10, 1279 thanking him for transferring the case of Margaret of Bromfield against Gruffudd Fychan to his court. He said he had assigned September 28 for Margaret and Gruffudd to appear and that 'when the parties appeared, Margaret produced certain charters on the strength of which she demanded the lands.'⁵⁹ Examination of this letter reveals many points of interest about Margaret, both with regard to her own personal abilities and also the way others saw her and dealt with her. The first point which may be noticed from this letter is that it reinforces the observation above that Margaret was believed to have had some personal influence with the king. Gruffudd was in a hurry to have the matter resolved and Llywelyn referred to Gruffudd's 'urgency' in his letter. Although the letter which Gruffudd had written to the king was undated, the editor believes that its date was just prior to October 1279, as it concerned the same business as Llywelyn's letter. This is probably correct, since Llywelyn mentioned that he first heard the case on September 28.⁶⁰ Llywelyn closed his letter with a statement that he prayed that the king would uphold Llywelyn's process of law, regardless of any false account of others standing in the way. Like Gruffudd, he too was worried that Margaret may have influenced the king's decision in her favour.

⁵⁷ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence*, p.107.

⁵⁸ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.222.

⁵⁹ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence*, pp.85-86.

⁶⁰ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence*, p.107.

Llywelyn made much of the fact that he considered Margaret was poorly prepared legally and that as a consequence he was unable to proceed. One gains the impression from the letter that Margaret was appearing on her own behalf without the benefit of attorneys, and this would have been highly unusual. She seems to have produced the charters for the land, but evidently would not part with them nor have a copy made of them, as urgently required by Gruffudd. Possibly she did not trust them out of her own hands, but Llywelyn said that she utterly refused to do this even though she was warned three times that this was a requirement of the law, and he certainly appears to have been frustrated by her refusal to co-operate. Margaret must have believed she had a better chance of success by presenting her case to the king, but Gruffudd was anxious that Llywelyn should hear the case. It is interesting that this is the only case of its type which was heard before Llywelyn in these assizes. Perhaps Edward I felt that it should be kept within the family and that he wanted no part of it. One can only speculate.

Llywelyn claimed that Margaret was *minus instructa* (too little instructed) when she appeared, so he assigned her another day and place to hear the matter.⁶¹ Not only was Margaret claiming against her brother-in-law, but she apparently also incurred Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's displeasure over this litigation when she next appeared. He again wrote to the king on December 15, 1279 about this matter and although the letter is damaged and not clear, Llywelyn stated that even though Margaret was given the opportunity to appear, 'the said Margaret would not at that time act or set forth'. Llywelyn further claimed that 'although he could have proceeded against her and refused her a hearing later' he did assign another day and place to proceed. He said he was unable to dispense justice because of something Margaret had 'fraudulently and to Llywelyn's

prejudice procured by false statements'.⁶² In his letter Llywelyn appears to have been seeking the king's wishes concerning the matter.⁶³ J. Beverley Smith dates this letter December 1278, but I believe it follows the letter of October 10, 1279 rather than preceding it as he suggests.⁶⁴ As previously stated, it is not known whether Margaret had attorneys to appear for her, but in this last court appearance before Llywelyn ap Gruffudd she seems to have appeared in person. Llywelyn stated that when he 'enjoined Margaret by word of mouth that she should set forth her action against Gruffydd',⁶⁵ Margaret would not at that time act or set forth. If he were speaking to Margaret in person, she must have been appearing for herself.

Margaret's refusal to relinquish possession of her charters to the court for the purpose of making copies is intriguing. Llywelyn stated that she produced the charters, so they existed, but Margaret's emphatic refusal to hand them over is surprising. It is possible that she did not trust Llywelyn. Under Welsh native law women could not inherit land and Llywelyn was at this time resisting the erosion of Welsh laws and customs. Indeed he stated in his letter of December 15 that he was ready to do justice 'according to the laws and customs of the disputed lands', which would have meant no dower in land for Margaret. The tenor of the two letters from Llywelyn to Edward suggests that Llywelyn might have been biased towards a decision in favour of Gruffudd Fychan. He certainly seems to have become impatient with Margaret's stubbornness when she would not surrender the charters, although she still claimed the lands were hers.

⁶¹ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence*, pp.85-6.

⁶² Whatever it was Llywelyn was referring to has been obliterated on the damaged letter.

⁶³ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence*, pp.95-6.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.499, n.179.

⁶⁵ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence*, p.96.

Possibly Llywelyn was trying to maintain his lordship over this particular matter which pertained to Powys, even if it meant he would agree to his sister's dower reverting to her brother-in-law, a subordinate prince. Llywelyn had been happy to acquiesce in the non-Welsh custom of dowering Welsh noblemen's wives in the years when he was in a more powerful position,⁶⁶ but in 1279 he was in a very different situation and questions of the allegiance of native Welsh noblemen and the maintenance of Welsh law and custom may have influenced him to take quite a different view of Margaret's demands for her dower.

Margaret of Bromfield displayed a high degree of independence and determination when contrasted with the stereotype of a medieval noblewoman. She was quite active rather than playing a passive role in Welsh history. The Welsh are seen by modern historians as fighting for their independence in 1282 but that does not seem to have been Margaret's concern and she was determined to take her 'demands' to the king when she was unsuccessful in her brother's court. As J. Beverley Smith has stated, Llywelyn's problems did not arise from Edward wishing to 'encroach upon Llywelyn's jurisdiction', but rather 'from the inclination of the plaintiff [Margaret] to prosecute the action where it seemed best for her'.⁶⁷ This small incident may be seen as negative for the Welsh in terms of the events leading up to their conquest by Edward I, but as evidence as to whether Welsh noblewomen played any active part in their own history, this is direct action on Margaret's part.

⁶⁶ I argue elsewhere that Llywelyn's ratification of a charter for dower for Angharad, the wife of Owain ap Maredudd of Ceredigion, was not strictly speaking approval of dower. Chapter 8, pp.247-54.

⁶⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.499. This incident which concerned the question of Llywelyn's jurisdiction and resulted in the king transferring the hearing from his court to Llywelyn's is one of a number of such episodes which Smith believes were among the grievances Llywelyn cited in correspondence to Archbishop Pecham in an attempt to justify his involvement in the rebellion of 1282.

The litigation between Margaret and Gruffudd Fychan is a further example of an occasion where an historian uses a document initiated by a Welsh woman in his narrative, but instead of commenting on the actions of the woman herself in pursuing this lawsuit, the historian uses the document in support of other matters. In this case, J. Beverley Smith uses the Assize Roll report and correspondence between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Edward I to support his arguments concerning the causes of the rebellion of 1282.⁶⁸ A matter which is important enough to be included among the causes leading up to the final rebellion of the Welsh surely involves more comment on the participation of the woman involved. Margaret of Bromfield was certainly no shrinking violet, she was a person who not only fought for what she deemed to belong to her, but took her case to whichever court she felt she had the best chance of success, regardless of whether it might inconvenience her brother. She deserves more prominence in the narrative of this momentous occasion in Welsh medieval history than one or two dismissive phrases and a footnote.

I do not know the outcome of Margaret's claim to half of Glyndyfrdwy, but I believe she may have reached an amicable settlement with her brother-in-law Gruffudd because in a later petition Margaret mentioned that she had good charters from Gruffudd for Corvain (Corwen)⁶⁹ which she had earlier claimed in dower and which was in Edeirnion (Glyndyfrdwy). In a similar case in England in 1279 Eleanor de Ferrers, the widow of Robert de Ferrers, earl of Derby, made many claims for dower, one of which was against Edmund of Lancaster. She was unsuccessful, but two years after her claim he made a grant to her of the fee farm rent of Godmanchester in

⁶⁸ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.499.

⁶⁹ *Calendar of Ancient Petitions*, p.288.

Huntingdonshire.⁷⁰ Paula Dobrowolski believes this may indicate ‘some feeling of moral obligation’ on his part. As Dobrowolski states ‘it was unusual for a magnate of Edmund’s standing to part with anything unless there was a good reason for doing so’, and I feel that similarly, Gruffudd may have felt some moral obligation to his brother’s widow, and of course the towns would revert to him when she died.

Margaret may also at this time have been the beneficiary of the income from at least two other villis because much later in 1284 she was to receive the grant of the two ‘towns’ of ‘Bodunan and Hyrdref for life ... to hold in the same way as she previously held them in the time of Llewelyn son of Griffin.’⁷¹ Boduan and Hirdref were two bond villis in Caernarvonshire on the Llŷn peninsular. So in 1279 Margaret was apparently living at the manor of Eyton which she was renting from Emma for ten marks per year,⁷² receiving the income from at least three villis (Corwen, Boduan and Hirdref) and she presumably still had custody of her children who would have been living with her. As she was responsible to see that they were ‘nourished and kept’ she would have had access to some of the income from their lands. She seems not to have been on good terms with at least two of her husband’s brothers, although it is possible that she had a good relationship with her mother-in-law and certainly settled the claim over Eyton amicably and sensibly. The period from 1277 to 1282 was a particularly volatile time in Wales but Margaret seems to have managed surprisingly well in the circumstances, possibly due to the amiable settlement just mentioned.

⁷⁰ P. Dobrowolski, ‘Women and their Dower in the Long Thirteenth Century 1265-1329’ in M. Prestwich, R.H. Britnell and R. Frame, eds., *Thirteenth Century England VI, Proceedings of the Durham Conference 1995* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), pp.159-60.

⁷¹ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.290.

From here on, however, Margaret experienced a change of fortune. Over the succeeding fifteen-year period we witness the systematic gradual disintegration of Margaret's position. The war of 1282 saw a change in Margaret's circumstances. Her two young sons mysteriously disappeared following the final defeat of the Welsh in 1282. Their fate is not known, but as previously stated, in view of Margaret's family relationship to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the boys could have been regarded by the crown as potential heirs to the house of Gwynedd. Historians from the sixteenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries claim that the children were murdered at the instigation of John de Warenne. This claim is not supported by evidence, although their sudden disappearance is suspicious.⁷³ I am inclined to believe that they died or were killed during or after the war, because up until 1280 Margaret was concerned with her sons' inheritance, but from 1282 on although she was still just as vocal about her own dower rights, she made no mention of her sons. In June, 1282, the men of Bromfield and Yale submitted to the king's will,⁷⁴ and on October 7 that same year John de Warenne, the earl of Surrey, was granted all the land of Bromfield, 'which Griffin and Llewelyn, sons of Madoc Vaghan, held at the beginning of the said war'.⁷⁵

Following Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's death in 1282, Edward I was determined to destroy the royal line of Gwynedd. Llywelyn's own daughter Gwenllian was placed in a nunnery for life as were the daughters of his brother Dafydd. Dafydd's two young sons, Llywelyn and Owain, were kept in Bristol Castle. Llywelyn died there in 1287 and Owain 'endured prolonged imprisonment',

⁷² *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.245.

⁷³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.520. See also *The First Extent of Bromfield and Yale AD 1315*, T.P. Ellis, ed. (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1924), p.4.

⁷⁴ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.226.

⁷⁵ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.240.

including at one stage being locked in a cage at night, and J. Beverley Smith recounts a very sad tale.⁷⁶

Margaret was certainly a persistent litigant in the extant court records and correspondence concerning Wales in the thirteenth century and it is reasonable to assume that there were other instances than the twenty-three occasions currently accessible in the printed record. In fact Margaret apparently incurred the antagonism of Edward I by her insistence on her rights. In an undated petition Margaret asked the king for justice because the earl de Warenne had taken possession of the manor of Eyton and three vills which she held from her brother-in-law Gruffudd Fychan, and was ‘wrongfully’ holding them.⁷⁷ Margaret claimed that she had ‘good charter’ for a vill which she held from the king and also ‘good charters’ for two vills which she held of her brother-in-law Gruffudd, one of which was Corwen, which Margaret previously held in dower.

An endorsement to the petition stated that ‘This woman offended against the King to such an extent that the King is not held to do her favour ...’.⁷⁸ The suggested date of this petition is 1278, but I believe this may be incorrect because the king did not grant the lands in Bromfield and Yale to John de Warenne until October 7, 1282.⁷⁹ The editor of the *Calendar of Ancient Petitions* believes that Edward I’s hostility towards Margaret was ‘scarcely veiled by his gift to her later of but five marks out of charity’.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.579.

⁷⁷ *Calendar of Ancient Petitions*, p.287.

⁷⁸ *Calendar of Ancient Petitions*, p.287.

⁷⁹ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.240.

Why was the king so hostile? Was it really her indomitable pursuit of her own and her children's rights? The endorsement on the petition is intriguing. The king had dealt with her fairly over the five years since the war of 1277 and her husband's death but now he was taking her lands away. We can only speculate as to what Margaret did to 'offend' the king because this is the only mention of her in these terms. The princes of northern Powys appear to have suffered defeat by Edward's forces in June 1282. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd Fychan, Margaret's brother-in-law, was one of the princes who launched the first attack in the rebellion of 1282.⁸¹ Margaret's sons are thought to have died between the outbreak of the war and October when their lands were granted to Warenne.⁸² The endorsement on the petition says 'the King gave the land by grace towards the Earl' so whatever Margaret did to offend the king would almost certainly have been connected to her recent catastrophic losses, but we will never know. By October 1282 Edward I certainly had no sympathy for the Welsh, and one can only imagine what Margaret's position must have become. She was not only mourning her children, she seems also to have lost her home and income as well. Her brother Llywelyn would be killed in December 1282.

An entry in the *Close Rolls* for May 11, 1284 states that Margaret came into Chancery at Aberconway and demanded Eyton and Suulli against John de Warenne as dower and on the same day, demanded against Gruffudd Fychan, Corwen and Hafod Cilymaenllwyd in dower.⁸³ Eighteen months after the conquest by Edward I Margaret was still apparently making demands, although there was no mention of her children. Two grants were subsequently made by Edward I to Margaret. The first dated May 30, 1284 from Caernarfon was an order for Margaret, as the

⁸⁰ *Calendar of Ancient Petitions*, p.288.

⁸¹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.519.

⁸² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.520, n.40.

⁸³ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Edward I, 1279-1288* (London: Kraus reprint, 1970), p.297.

widow of Madog of Bromfield, to be paid five marks yearly ‘out of charity’,⁸⁴ and was possibly as a direct result of her appearance at Aberconway. The second, dated October 22, 1284 also from Caernarfon stated that the king had ‘granted to Margaret, daughter of Griffin, for life the towns of Bodunan and Hyrdref, to hold in the same way as she previously held them in the time of Llewelyn son of Griffin.’⁸⁵ According to T. Jones Pierce these two vills were part of the estates of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and after his death came into the possession of the crown. Edward I visited his new acquisitions during 1284⁸⁶ and on October 22, 1284 he confirmed Margaret as holding the vills of Boduan and Hirdref for life, in the same way as she had previously held them. In 1284 these vills were being farmed at £1 and £5 respectively,⁸⁷ and presumably Margaret would have been in receipt of the income from these two towns, as well as the five marks from the exchequer of Caernarfon. A letter from William de Grandison to the Bishop of Bath, Chancellor, suggested date May 1290 – Oct 1292 reporting payments, listed ‘Margaret of Bromfeld receives 5 marks per annum by the king’s gift: for her fee for 5 years, £16 13s 4d.’⁸⁸ By 1297, however, Edward I wrote to the chamberlain because Margaret was complaining of receiving only two and a half marks of the five marks paid to her yearly.⁸⁹

Margaret is mentioned for one last time on April 5, 1299 when the king granted land worth £15 in ‘Bodeuean in Thlen’ which had belonged to Margaret, to Morgan son of Mereduc. The land had come into the king’s hands because of the death of Margaret, who he says was ‘sister of

⁸⁴ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.285.

⁸⁵ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, p.290.

⁸⁶ T. Jones Pierce, ‘A Caernarvonshire Manorial Borough’, in J. Beverley Smith, ed., *Medieval Welsh Society* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1972), pp.144-45.

⁸⁷ T. Jones Pierce, ‘The Growth of Commutation in Gwynedd During the Thirteenth Century’ in *Medieval Welsh Society*, p.125, n.14.

⁸⁸ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence*, p.118.

⁸⁹ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Edward I*, IV, 1296-1302 (London: Kraus reprint, 1970), p.44.

Llewellyn, then prince of Wales'.⁹⁰ The exact date of her death is not known, but it must have been somewhere between July 1297 and April 1299. She was probably between 55 and 60 years of age when she died, and she lived a long and very full life. As the wife and then widow of a Welsh prince, and the mother of sons, she was quite forthright in claiming her own and her children's rights in the hostile environment of the final submission of the Welsh. Edward I has the reputation for being ruthless in his dealings with the Welsh, and although there is some evidence to suggest that he may not have been altogether happy about Margaret's behaviour at times, he seems to have considered her complaints and dealt with her fairly. Following the final conquest of the Welsh Edward even seems to have recovered from whatever offence Margaret committed and granted her some income.

Unlike many other noble widows, Margaret did not remarry. The only additional information we have for her is that she had a sister named Gwladus who the *Brut* tells us was the daughter of Gruffudd and the wife of Rhys Fychan (d.1271), and that she died in 1261.⁹¹ Rhys Fychan was the son of Rhys Mechyll of Deheubarth and a great-grandson of the Lord Rhys, so that like her sister Margaret, Gwladus had been married to a member of the native Welsh nobility. J. Beverley Smith mentions Gwladus in his footnote on Margaret.⁹² Another sister named Catrin appears in Bartrum's genealogies, but she is not mentioned in the public record. J.Y.W. Lloyd refers to a 'Princess Catherine' who he says was 'sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd', and presumably this information was found in the ancient genealogies.⁹³

⁹⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Edward I, AD1292-1301*, (London: 1895) p.405.

⁹¹ *Brut Y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes, Peniarth Ms. 20 Version*, T. Jones, ed., (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), p.112. For discussion of Gwladus Chapter 8, p.259-60.

⁹² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.38-9, **footnote 7**.

It could be argued that apart from familial power, Margaret attempted to exert public power in the political sphere in Wales in the thirteenth century. On Palm Sunday in 1282 Dafydd ap Gruffudd led an uprising of the Welsh which signalled the beginning of the final war in the conquest of Wales by the Normans. Archbishop Pecham wrote to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and attempted to broker a peace between the Welsh and the English. In his letter of reply Llywelyn stated that the Welsh would 'accept no terms which did not make provision for their ancient customs and liberties.'⁹⁴ A list of *gravamina* or grievances accompanied the letter to the Archbishop. Article No. 6 of the *gravamina* is translated as follows:

Where it is in the peace that Griffith Vychan should do homage to the king for the land in Yale, and to the Prince for the land in Edeirnion, the king's justices brought the lady of Maylor into all the said lands of Edeirnion, the knowledge of which cause only pertained to the Prince and not to the said Justices: and yet for peace sake, the Prince did tolerate all this, being at all times ready to minister justice to the said lady.⁹⁵

Margaret's actions were certainly public and political. The fact that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd named this specific matter in the *gravamina* shows how offended he was by the whole incident. The *gravamina* represented the grievances which were the cause of the outbreak of war, and unless Edward I was prepared to make good these grievances, there would be no peace. Edward was interested only in the final defeat of the Welsh and this he accomplished in 1283. Margaret's insistence on her rights may be seen as one reason for the rebellion of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and history will probably judge her actions as negative for the Welsh cause. Whether her actions were negative or positive for the Welsh makes no difference to this thesis.

⁹³ J.Y.W. Lloyd, *History of the Princes of Powys Fadog*, p.313.

⁹⁴ D.L. Douie, *Archbishop Pecham* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p.239.

There is a certain irony in the fact that Margaret's assertion of her land rights should be listed by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd as one of the reasons he would go to war. In 1258 when Llywelyn had reached the summit of his power in Wales, it was his use of Margaret in a marriage designed to cement his alliance with the ruler of northern Powys which helped make possible his rise to power. When she was a child, she had quietly acquiesced to Llywelyn's plans for her, but it was a different matter when she was an experienced, mature widow. Margaret of Bromfield was certainly an important figure in the events of Welsh political history as they unfolded in the late thirteenth century.

Margaret of Bromfield was one Welsh noblewoman from the thirteenth century who has left her mark on the public record. She was a granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr, and it is fitting that she emerges from the pages of the legal record as a determined and courageous woman who despite facing seemingly overwhelming personal tragedy managed to confront Edward I and survive, with her dignity intact. Although she has not been noticed by historians until very recently, perhaps she can now tell her story from the narrative of Welsh medieval history instead of just languishing among the footnotes like so many of her contemporaries.

On a visit to the ruins of Valle Crucis Abbey in north Wales in 2004, I noticed a sepulchral slab which had been built in to form a lintel above the fireplace in the upper floor of the monastery. The slab is damaged, but part of the inscription reads *HIC IACET: MARVRET: F(ilia)* - Here lies Margaret, daughter of An information booklet available to tourists gives the probable

⁹⁵ *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckham, Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, vol. II, C.T. Martin, ed., (London: 1884), p.442.

date of the slab as early fourteenth century. Margaret the widow of Madog ap Gruffudd, Prince of Powys, died somewhere between July 1297 and April, 1299, and there is a possibility that this could be her sepulchral stone. Margaret was not a usual name in northern Powys at this time and as the sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and widow of the last prince of Powys Fadog I feel that this identification is a real possibility. G. Vernon Price mentioned this stone in his book *Valle Crucis Abbey*, and he gave the date as either late twelfth or early thirteenth century, and suggested Owain Brogyntyn's second wife as the Margaret commemorated in the inscription.⁹⁶ I think in view of the more recent later date that it is more likely to commemorate Margaret of Bromfield who may be considered a person of greater consequence than, for example, the second wife of Owain Brogyntyn. Due to lack of evidence we will never know, but it is an intriguing idea.

⁹⁶ G. Vernon Price, *Valle Crucis Abbey*, (Liverpool: The Brython Press, 1952), p.150.

ABDUCTION AND RAPE OF THE KING'S BARONESS: MAUD CLIFFORD

A footnote on page 428 of F.M. Powicke's *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307* refers to 'Maud, the daughter of Walter Clifford by a daughter of Llywelyn the Great' who, we are told, 'was a very important lady'.¹ Her importance in the context of Powicke's work is associated with the fact that her first husband had been William Longspée III, and that Maud had interceded with Archbishop Pecham to secure Christian burial for her cousin, the prince of Wales. Maud Clifford was a 'very important lady' and she was also an extremely interesting woman about whom enough information exists in the various printed legal and historical documents to construct a biography or history of her life. In the eyes of some historians Maud's importance may have centred on the status and wealth of her father and husband, but from my point of view Maud's importance lies in the fact that she may be seen in several recorded legal documents as a woman of status and wealth in her own right and not as someone's daughter or wife. For example, she is referred to on two occasions as the king's baroness (*baronissa nostra*) and in another document as 'Maud Lungspe in Cantrescelif' (Cantref Selyf).² Both of these references are to Maud as heir to her father's barony of Clifford. As a baroness of independent means Maud took over the responsibility for payment of her father's debts, she defended her legal rights in the court system of the day, and as a marcher baroness she seems to have sided with the Welsh on more than one occasion. Maud Clifford is an example of a Welsh noblewoman who was part of the public political scene in thirteenth-century England and Wales.

¹ F.M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), p.428, **footnote 1**.

Maud was the daughter of Margaret Clifford, who in her turn was the daughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (d.1240). As a granddaughter of Llywelyn the Great, Maud could with some credibility be designated a Welsh noblewoman, although it is not known whether she spoke Welsh and she did not have a Welsh name, but then neither did her mother. She seems to have lived for most of her life in or near Wales though, and there is evidence that she may have sided with the Welsh against the king and, as previously stated, that she interceded with the Archbishop of Canterbury, albeit apparently unsuccessfully, to try and arrange a Christian burial for Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, her cousin. For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, Maud is considered a Welsh noblewoman.

An examination of the life of Maud Clifford tells us much about women in her position. I intend to discuss Maud's status as a financially independent woman and examine her relationship with Henry III and the significance of her marriages in the context of her wealth. At the same time, I will explore her ability to act with some autonomy, firstly in relation to the Welsh and later with regard to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, despite her position as the wife of one of Edward I's favoured knights.

In this first section I will discuss Maud's achievement of financial independence. Maud was probably brought up in Bronllys and Clifford, in the Wye Valley on the Welsh marches, as her father was Walter Clifford

of Llandovery. Walter Clifford was a household knight of King John and supported the minority government of Henry III. Walter succeeded to the barony of Clifford in the Welsh

² For discussion concerning Cantref Selyf and Maud Clifford see **footnotes 63, 64, 65** in J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p.356.

march, near Herefordshire, upon the death of his father in June 1220.³ Maud's family arranged her marriage to William Longspée III, son of the earl of Salisbury, in 1244. A licence for matrimony to be contracted between one of the sons of William Longspée and Maud, daughter and heir of Walter de Clifford was issued on April 30, 1244.⁴ Since her parents married in about 1233 Maud was probably no older than ten years when she married and may possibly have been even younger.⁵ William Longspée III, died in early 1257, from injuries he received in a tournament on June 4, 1256.⁶ Maud and William Longspée had only one child, a daughter named Margaret. Presumably William Longspée was not expected to recover from his injuries and in December 1256, shortly before his death, he made arrangements for a suitable marriage for his daughter. He had agreed on a covenant with Edmund de Lacy, the earl of Lincoln, for a marriage between his first-born daughter and heir, Margaret, and Henry, the firstborn son and heir of Edmund de Lacy. There was also provision in the covenant that if Henry were to die before the marriage had taken place then John, Edmund de Lacy's younger son would marry Margaret. A note in the margin of the document stated that William Longspée III was now dead and Maud was commanded to deliver Margaret 'to the keeping of Edmund to be kept and married'.⁷

The placing of an under-age heir or heiress into the custody of the family of their intended spouse was common in the medieval period. If R.W. Eyton is correct, and Maud's marriage was

³ S.D. Church, *The Household Knights of King John* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1999), p.126.

⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1232-1247* (London: Kraus reprint, 1971), p.424.

⁵ According to R.W. Eyton, Walter de Clifford granted the Manor of Culmington to Maud and her husband in 1254 in 'frank-marriage'. Eyton has postulated that as Maud had been under-age in 1244, the marriage was not consummated until 1254 hence the granting of the manor at this time. He has further stated that the value of the 'whole settlement' on Maud by her father was valued at £200 per annum. R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, V, (London: 1854), p.182.

⁶ G.E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England*, V. Gibbs, H.A. Doubleday, D. Warrand, G. White, et al, eds. (London: The St Catherine Press, 1910-1959), Vol. XI, p.384.

not consummated until 1254,⁸ then Margaret would have been a child of only about two or three when she went to live with the de Lacy family. According to Linda E. Mitchell, who has recently published a study exploring family, marriage and politics in England from 1225-1350, the marriage between Margaret Longspée and Henry de Lacy ‘linked two of the most important non-royal earldoms in the kingdom.’⁹ I will comment further on the marriage of Maud’s daughter Margaret later in this chapter.

Maud was probably in her early twenties when she became a widow. She was granted her dower property after the death of her husband and was to continue to live as a widow for fourteen years, a very long time for a wealthy widow to remain unmarried.¹⁰ Thus it is clear that Maud had indeed become an independent woman. On January 6, 1257, ‘Geoffrey de Lezignan, the king’s brother’, was granted ‘the marriage of Maud, late the wife of William Lungespe, with the forfeiture due to the king if she marry without his brother’s licence.’¹¹ Maud’s importance as an heiress may be seen in a patent on January 8 which reveals that the king had originally given the marriage of Maud to Robert Walerand, his steward, but that he had taken it back and given it to his half-brother, Geoffrey de Lusignan.¹² Henry had also granted the wardship of the person and lands of Maud’s daughter Margaret to his consort, Eleanor.¹³ Margaret was the sole heir of William Longspée, and Henry III was well-known for advancing the interests of members of his

⁷ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1247-1258* (London: Kraus reprint, 1971), p.534.

⁸ See note 5 above.

⁹ L.E. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England 1225-1350* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p.106.

¹⁰ Scott Waugh says that Maud remained a widow for seventeen years, but I believe he is mistaken. See S.L. Waugh, *The Lordship of England: Royal Wardships and Marriages in English Society and Politics 1217-1327* (Princeton: University Press, 1988), 219.

¹¹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1266-1272* (London: Kraus reprint, 1971), p.536.

¹² *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1266-1272*, p.537.

¹³ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1266-1272*, p.538.

own and his wife's families.¹⁴ David Carpenter has stated that one reason Henry III failed to get his Lusignan half-brothers accepted in England was that he was 'over-indulgent towards them'.¹⁵

As the only child of Walter and Margaret Clifford, Maud was sole heir to her father's barony when he died in December, 1263. Maud's father had apparently experienced financial difficulties, and on May 19, 1263 the king stated that he would 'betake himself to Maud Lungespe' and that she would pay all the debts due from Walter to the king at the Exchequer, 'at the same terms as were granted to him' (Walter Clifford). The barons of the Exchequer were ordered to carry out Henry's wishes.¹⁶ Matthew Paris had a story about Walter Clifford in which he claimed that in 1250 Clifford was found to be in contempt of the king and was obliged to submit to the king's mercy, barely escaping death or disinheritance. Apparently he forced one of the king's messengers, who was delivering royal letters to him, to eat the letters including the wax seal. Matthew Paris stated that as a result of his actions Clifford 'lost all the money he had or could have, namely one thousand marks'.¹⁷ It is therefore not surprising that he should have had financial difficulties.

It is known that Walter Clifford, who was a marcher baron, was not always of the king's party. Indeed the reason Llywelyn Fawr had married his own daughter to Clifford was because he was an ally of Llywelyn's at that time. In fact Walter Clifford had joined Richard Marshal and other earls and barons in the rebellion of 1233-34 against the crown. Walter had married Llywelyn ab

¹⁴ McFarlane, K.B., 'Had Edward I a 'Policy' towards the Earls?', *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p.249-50. See also D.A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), pp.98-9 and 262-65.

¹⁵ D.A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III*, pp.98-9.

¹⁶ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1258-1266*, (London, 1910), p.260.

¹⁷ *Chronicle of Matthew Paris: Monastic Life in the Thirteenth Century*, R. Vaughan, ed. and trans. (Gloucester: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1984), p.200.

Iorwerth's daughter shortly after the death of her first husband in 1232. During this rebellion Richard Marshal concluded an alliance with Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and the Welsh, and as was usual during times of political turmoil in England, the Welsh made significant territorial gains. Walter Clifford was forced to surrender to Henry at Bronllys Castle on September 17, 1233.¹⁸ R.F. Walker has commented on the fact that Walter Clifford had 'long been active in war and peace in Wales', and also that he was the only marcher baron to join Marshal. He is unable to explain why Clifford would have joined Richard Marshal without a connection to the Marshal family and says that he may have joined him 'simply because he thought his cause was just'. I feel he was probably influenced by the fact that he had just married the Welsh leader's daughter.

As a single woman of independent means Maud was called upon to pay her father's debts. It was common practice for the heir to pay his father's debts, but Walter Clifford was still alive in May 1263 and therefore Maud had not yet come into her inheritance. He was killed in December of that year, possibly in the Barons' war. An under-age heir could not be forced to pay his or her father's debts until he came of age. Maud was probably in her late twenties at this time, and presumably 'of age'. A woman contributing to financial stability in this way is notable. It was quite a significant responsibility for a medieval noblewoman, but one which the king felt Maud had the ability to undertake. She had been a widow for about six years at this time.

When one considers her significant dower property and her exclusive inheritance of her father's barony, Maud had become a very wealthy woman, and a desirable prospect on the medieval

¹⁸ For discussion of the rebellion of 1233-1234 see R.F. Walker, 'The Supporters of Richard Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, in the Rebellion of 1233-1234', *Welsh History Review*, 17 (1994-95), pp.41-65, esp. pp.42-44 and

‘marriage market’. The majority of medieval noblewomen in Western Europe at this time were married at a young age, in many cases to older noblemen. Many of them became widows at an early age, and would usually remarry, especially if they were wealthy widows. In fact many medieval noblewomen had more than two husbands. Maud conformed to the expectations of the society in which she lived in that she was married at a young age to an older man, and she became a widow while still very young. Where Maud’s life deviates from the norm relates to the fact that she remained a widow for such a long time, and retained her independent status.

Maud is mentioned on numerous occasions in the legal record of the thirteenth century. She pursued and defended a number of legal claims concerning her properties during her time as a widow. For example, in 1266 Maud named her attorney in a plea of land against a John de Braose. This John de Braose was possibly a descendant of Maud’s mother’s first husband. (Chapter 2, p.68.) Her case appears to have been successful.¹⁹ In 1267 Maud claimed ‘Royal privileges for the Clee Forest’ and ‘she and her officers resisted an encroachment on those privileges when attempted by the Lord of Aston Botterell.’²⁰ Both of these properties she inherited from her father. R.W. Eyton has also referred to the proposal of the Abbot of Shrewsbury to sue Maud for disseizing him of a tenement in Loughton. Eyton believed that the dispute ‘probably resulted in the Charter whereby within the next four years, Maud confirmed

pp.54-55 and M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307*, pp.51-60.

¹⁹ R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities*, vol. V, p.165. Cf. *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1264-1268* (London: 1937), p.524.

²⁰ R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities*, vol. I, p.226 and vol. V, p.199.

her father's grants to Shrewsbury Abbey'.²¹ Maud also gave to the abbot and canons of the church of St Mary, Barlings her manor of Cavenby²² so that she was a patron of the church.

Thus we can see from the foregoing that Maud enjoyed quite a degree of autonomy. Her marriage to an Anglo-Norman nobleman had greatly added to her noble status and the deaths of both her husband and her father brought her financial independence. The next section will examine Maud's relationship with Henry III, her second marriage, in the context of her wealth, and also the question of whether she was raped as well as abducted.

While I believe that Maud may have been living in Wales at some period during her long widowhood,²³ it is in fact known that she was living at her dower manor of Canford in Dorset in 1270. Maud's time of independence as a wealthy widow who was able to make her own decisions, came to an abrupt end in late September 1270, when she was forcibly abducted from her manor of Canford in Dorset by John Giffard of Brimpsfield in Gloucestershire. John Giffard had sided with Simon de Montfort early in the Barons' War of 1264-7, but by 1265 he had transferred his allegiance back to the royal side. In fact, he along with Roger Mortimer and others were responsible for the successful scheme to free the lord Edward on May 28, 1265, an action which culminated in the ultimate success of the royalist side.²⁴

Henry III wrote to John Giffard on October 5, 1270, stating that he had heard from Maud Longspée that she had been forcibly taken by night from her manor of Canford, on the

²¹ R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities*, vol. V, pp.166 & 205, for the Charter see *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol.III, vol. VI, Part II, W. Dugdale, ed. (London, 1817-30, 2nd edition), pp.520-21.

²² For the Charter see *Monasticon Anglicanum*, pp.619-620. Also mentioned in the *Calendar of Charter Rolls, Henry III-Edward I, 1257-1300*, vol. II, (London: Kraus reprint 1972) , p.392.

Wednesday after the Feast of St Michael (September 29), by John Giffard and a large number of armed men, and was being held against her will at Giffard's castle at Brimpsfield.²⁵ The tone of this letter is one of anger and disappointment at Giffard's behaviour. Henry ordered Giffard to appear before his court on the eighth day after the Feast of St Edward (October 21), to respond to the charge, or in the event that the charge was untrue, to swear his innocence. The king threatened Giffard that failure to appear and answer the charge could result in 'forfeiture of all lands and tenements which you hold in our kingdom'.²⁶

Henry also sent a reply to Maud on October 5 concerning her complaint, and gave her the opportunity to appear on the same day as Giffard was to appear, if she wished, and if it would help her, in order to explain and prosecute the transgression by Giffard.²⁷ Henry III sent 'John de Cokeford, our justiciar and William de Faukenham, marshall of our hospice' to talk to Maud about her complaint, warning Giffard that neither he nor his men were to impede them in their task. He assured Maud in his letter to her that if Giffard did not free her, the king would 'make him make such amends as the enormity of the same requires'.²⁸ Henry appears to have said all

²³ See pp.130-31 below.

²⁴ M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century 1216-1307*, p.199.

²⁵ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1268-1272* (London: Kraus reprint, 1970), p.294. 'Ex gravi querimonia dilecte et fidelis nostre M. Lungesp' intelleximus quod vos cum magna multitudine armatorum et vi ad domum suam apud Kaneford die Mercurii proxima post festum Sancti Michaelis noctanter venistis, et ipsam invitam et contra voluntatem suam rapuistis, ac captam tenetis in pacis nostre lesionem et nostri contemptum manifestum, ...'

²⁶ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1268-1272*, p.294. 'Et hec sicut honorem vestrum diligitis et indignacionem nostram vitare volueritis et super forisfacturam omnium terrarum et tenementorum que in regno nostro tenetis nullo modo omittatis.'

²⁷ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1268-1272*, p. 295 'et mandatum est eidem etc. quid sit in octabis etc. si voluerit ad transgressionem predictam exponendam et prosequendam si voluerit et sibi viderit expedire.'

²⁸ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1268-1272*, p.295. 'rex ipsum tales emendas inde fieri faciet quales requirit enormitas eorundem.'

the right things which one would expect ‘since the same [Maud] is our baroness,’ and ‘... we ought not to be lacking in justice’.²⁹

The importance of Maud in the view of Henry III may be noticed by the fact that he referred to her in his letter to Giffard as *baronissa nostra* and in the later entry in the *Patent Rolls* as ‘the king’s baroness’. Henry was emphasising her consequence as his baroness, and thus the seriousness of the offence against her. It could even be the case that Maud was the first woman to be referred to as *baronissa nostra*. The medieval Latin word *baronissa*, meaning ‘a woman possessing a barony’ was first used in the thirteenth century³⁰ and the first mention of *baronissa* has been narrowed down to 1258.³¹ 1258 was the year after Maud became the widow of William Longspée III, but was prior to her inheriting her father’s barony. The use by Henry of *baronissa* in this context certainly stresses her prominence in the eyes of the king.

Another factor which must not be overlooked in Maud’s dealings with Henry III is her close family relationship to Henry. For the purposes of this study I have foregrounded Maud’s Welsh ancestry, but it must be remembered that Maud’s grandmother was Joan, the illegitimate daughter of King John, who had married Llywelyn Fawr. Henry III was the son of King John, so that Maud was the granddaughter of his half-sister.

Giffard did not release Maud and an entry in the *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III* on March 10, 1271, at least five months after Maud’s abduction, gives details of the actions taken by Henry

²⁹ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1268-1272*, p.294. ‘Et quia ipsa baronissa nostra est, cui in suis querimoniis sicut nec aliis fidelibus regni nostri in justicia deesse non possumus, sicut nec debimus, ...’

³⁰ J.F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), p.86.

and the results. According to the entry, after the king had ‘several times commanded the said John to come to his court to purge his innocence or to cause her [Maud] to be delivered without delay,’³² Giffard did come before the king ‘ready to show that he did not abduct her against her will’. Apparently the king was not happy with this and ‘sent certain of his lieges to the spot where the said Maud dwells, to certify touching her will, of which the king is not fully certified’. Giffard had offered to pay a fine of 300 marks to recompense the king for what was owing to him for Maud’s marriage, but the entry states it would be ‘on condition that if she be contented with the marriage contracted, as it is said, between them’.³³ The entry further stated that ‘if she be not content’ and wished to make a complaint then the fine would be ‘considered to be void’ and John would stand trial and ‘do and receive what by law and the custom of the realm ought to be done’. According to this same entry in the *Patent Rolls* Maud was unable to appear before the king at that time because she was ‘so inflicted by infirmity’. Nor surprising one would think, having been abducted against her will and detained until she agreed to marry Giffard. Possibly John de Cokeford and William de Faukenham had reported back to Henry that this was the case.

Although we do not know the date of Maud’s marriage to Giffard, it is possible that by March 10, 1271, the date of this entry in the *Patent Rolls*, the marriage may have been a *fait accompli*, very probably by force. Henry was sending a further two officials to Maud at Brimpsfield, namely Nicholas de Yattindene and Peter de Chaumpvent who were to visit Maud personally and confirm ‘the full truth of the matter’ and what her wishes were concerning the marriage. They were also to appoint her a day ‘after she has recovered from her infirmity to appear before

³¹ R.E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List From British and Irish Sources* (London: The British Academy, Oxford University Press, 1965), p.45.

³² *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1266-1272*, p.520.

³³ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1266-1272*, p.521.

the king and certify him personally in this behalf.³⁴ The calibre of the officials whom the king sent to inquire into Maud's predicament deserve comment. All four were highly placed senior officials, commensurate one would think with Maud's status as a baroness, and suitable persons for such investigation. I can find no written record of the outcome of any of these enquiries, but Maud did marry Giffard and it was probably some time in 1271.

J. Beverley Smith states that the date of Maud's marriage to Giffard is uncertain, but that Giffard had become the lord of the fee of Cantref Selyf in the right of Maud by 1277.³⁵ Giffard certainly had more influence in royal circles than did Maud and one suspects that given Giffard's position as a favourite with the royal household, his adventure in obtaining wealth and status through a questionable marriage to an heiress may not have received any more than a cursory admonition.

Despite being abducted by a large number of armed men and then being held against her will in Giffard's castle, Maud was successful in informing the king of her plight on at least two occasions. This certainly shows Maud was capable of taking action to try and get assistance in her predicament. The first message would certainly have required agency on Maud's part. On the second occasion, when Henry became aware that she was still being held and also that she was too ill to appear in court, the information probably came from the first two officials sent by Henry to ascertain Maud's position. Even though Maud was ultimately unsuccessful in obtaining her release from Giffard, she had managed to notify Henry. This action was probably the only possible means available to her of obtaining help, and could have been very difficult for

³⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1266-1272*, p.521.

³⁵ J. Beverley Smith *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p.356.

her to accomplish, in the circumstances. It shows that she was not prepared to just capitulate and play a submissive role.

We now need to examine the controversial issue of whether Giffard not only abducted Maud, but did indeed rape her. Perhaps this is the reason she was ‘so afflicted by infirmity’ and unable to appear before Henry. Indeed the developments in relation to abduction and rape in the thirteenth century played a part in the evolving concept of rape in this culture, and provided the groundwork for embryonic women’s rights in relation to their bodies. Henry III used *rapuistis*³⁶ and *rapuerat*³⁷ on both occasions when he wrote to Giffard, and Linda Mitchell has drawn attention to the fact that *rapta* may mean rape as well as abduction.³⁸ While Barbara Toner says that ‘the court records suggest that the word *raptus* was used to mean seizure or abduction’, she does, however, refer to the sexual element inherent in the offence.³⁹ Maud had at least three daughters by Giffard. It is entirely possible that Maud was raped and had become pregnant, and for this reason agreed to marry Giffard. The records show that in 1299 Katherine, the eldest of Maud’s daughters by Giffard, was aged 27, which means she was born in 1272. The entry in the *Patent Rolls* was dated March 10, 1271, so that the marriage did not take place until some time after this date. (Maud’s other daughters were Eleanor aged 24 and Maud aged 22, who both remained unmarried in 1299.⁴⁰)

³⁶ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1268-1272*, p.294.

³⁷ *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae, et Acta Publica.*, T. Rymer, ed. (Record Commission, 1816-69), p.488.

³⁸ L.E. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage and Politics in England 1225-1350*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p.109.

³⁹ B. Toner, *The Facts of Rape* (London: Hutchinson, 1977), p.90.

⁴⁰ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Edward I*, vol III (London: 1973), p.419-420.

Giffard's actions in detaining Maud deserve further discussion. I feel it is too easy and dismissive just to say, as one historian has put it, 'in the event the marriage stood'.⁴¹ Another historian derisively described Maud as 'a woman in weak health, and probably elderly',⁴² and in doing this reflected his own biases against women. If this historian had been interested in Maud as a subject for study, he might have found, as I did, that Maud was probably no older than 37 when she was abducted. She was also able to bear three daughters to her second husband. Maud was not elderly, and her ill health probably had more to do with her abduction than to 'weak health'. Maud was not the first widow to be placed under pressure of this kind to marry. Sue Sheridan Walker has studied the statutes which were introduced during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries for the punishment of convicted 'ravishers' and the actual practice as it pertained in this period. A number of women 'allowed themselves to be abducted in order to affirm their own choice of a husband and force their families to accept the relationship',⁴³ but this was certainly not the case with Maud Clifford. She protested to the king on at least two occasions, and although he wrote to Maud acknowledging her distress and the seriousness of her complaint, promising to take action, he seems to have done nothing except threaten Giffard, albeit in the strongest terms.

It is possible that Henry may have been responding to some of the legislative reforms to which he had been forced to acquiesce during his reign. Henry III's reign was troubled by a number of outbreaks of civil disobedience and ultimately outright rebellion, promoted by disaffected barons

⁴¹ P. Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England 1000-1500* (Gloucester: Sutton Publishing, 1998), p.129.

⁴² J.H. Ramsay, *The Dawn of the Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908), p.274.

⁴³ S.S. Walker 'Punishing convicted ravishers: statutory strictures and actual practice in thirteenth and fourteenth-century England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 13 (1987) p.237.

and other magnates who were pursuing legal reforms and recovery of perceived infringements of their rights. The first of these reforms was the Statute of Merton, which was introduced in 1236.⁴⁴ An example of one of the provisions of the Statute of Merton which concerned women was that all widows who had been forced to take legal action to claim their dower and had won the case, 'should receive the proceeds of their dower from the day of their husband's death to the day on which they had judgment of the king's court'.⁴⁵ This Statute was followed by the Statute of Marlborough in 1267 and then the first Statute of Westminster in 1275.⁴⁶ One historian has suggested that the abduction of Maud was a symptom of the prevailing lawlessness in England in 1270, in the wake of the barons' wars. He remarked that 'a strong government was much needed', 'the country was still in a very disorderly state' and that 'great men despised the law'.⁴⁷

Even though penalties for abduction and rape existed in the emerging secular common law at this time, such penalties were only brought when recovery of a family's property was involved.

According to Barbara Hanawalt, 'in the medieval legal mentality, crimes against persons were less serious than crimes against property'.⁴⁸ Medieval canon law competed with secular law for jurisdiction over cases involving offences of abduction and rape.⁴⁹ James A. Brundage has outlined how 'the crime of *raptus* came back into currency in European law'⁵⁰ and he has traced the method by which medieval canonists, using the *Decretum* of Gratian which appeared in

⁴⁴ R.C. Stacey, *Politics, Policy, and Finance under Henry III 1216-1245* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.105.

⁴⁵ F.M. Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward: The Community of the Realm in the Thirteenth Century*, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), p.149.

⁴⁶ Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century*, p.69.

⁴⁷ Ramsay, *The Dawn of the Constitution*, p.274.

⁴⁸ B.A. Hanawalt, *Crime and Conflict in English Communities, 1300-1348* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.4.

⁴⁹ Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307*, pp.70-71.

⁵⁰ J.A. Brundage, *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1993), p.64.

1140, shaped the canon law on rape and seduction up to 1500, and indeed the law from which ‘our own notions of rape and seduction derive’.⁵¹ By 1270 when Maud was abducted therefore, medieval canon law was well on the way to becoming ‘a well-organized legal system’.⁵² According to this ecclesiastical canon law, rape must involve the use of ‘violence, abduction, coitus and it must be accomplished without the free consent of one partner’.⁵³ There can be no doubt from the printed evidence that Maud was most certainly abducted and that the manner of her abduction by Giffard and ‘a great multitude and strength of armed men’ would have constituted violent force in the eyes of the medieval canonists.⁵⁴ She most certainly did not give her consent, as witnessed by Henry’s reply to her plea for help and his acknowledgement that she was too ill to take advantage of the opportunity to appear before him. While I am unable to prove that coitus took place before marriage, I am convinced that it was entirely probable, and that the other three conditions required for a case of rape were certainly proven. The foregoing of course related to canon law, and in this case John Giffard and Maud were commanded to appear before the king’s court and be dealt with by secular law.

I am unable to give a reason for the dichotomy between Henry’s two actions in the matter; between his apparent concern for Maud and his serious threats to Giffard on the one hand, and his entirely opposite action in letting Giffard off with a fine, presumably to be paid to Geoffrey de Lusignan. It is possible, as previously suggested, that the reason Henry was using such serious and stern language may have been to placate those of his barons and others, including the

⁵¹ J.A. Brundage, ‘Rape and Seduction in the Medieval Canon Law’ in V.L. Bullough and J. Brundage, eds., *Sexual Practices & the Medieval Church* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1982), pp.141-48.

⁵² Brundage, *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, pp.62-64.

⁵³ Brundage, *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, p.67.

⁵⁴ J.A. Brundage states that ‘the common opinion of canonists was that moderate force was all that was required’. He also states that ‘the attacker did not have to have his sword at your throat’ ... and that ‘the sight of

church, in the realm who were concerned to introduce judicial reforms.⁵⁵ In reality, however, he may have only been paying lip-service to the serious nature of the offence. Barbara Toner has stated that the penalty for conviction in the case of a charge of rape, when the victim was a virgin, was castration and loss of life. However, the legal historian John Post has not found a single instance of conviction for rape on the appeal of a woman in his studies of trials of the thirteenth century.⁵⁶ It therefore seems unlikely that Giffard would have been convicted, even if a case of rape had been brought and proven against him under secular law.

The first Statute of Westminster of 1275, introduced by Edward I, stated that ‘such as are found culpable shall have two years imprisonment and after shall be fined at the King’s pleasure.’⁵⁷ This was followed by the second Statute of Westminster in 1285 and the seizing of the husband’s or father’s property became the principal focus of the statute. In fact, according to John Post, ‘the Statutes of Westminster turned the law of rape into a law of elopement and abduction, which inhibited the purposes of the woman herself ...’⁵⁸ Unfortunately, it seems that in a case like Maud’s, whatever the laws may have stated, in reality there was no protection for the widow. In view of the foregoing it therefore seems unlikely that the king ever intended to prosecute Giffard. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is also possible that Giffard had in fact allowed delivery of Maud’s messages of distress to Henry because he knew they would not result

a group of armed men under the command of the attacker might be held to constitute violent force, even if no physical assault occurred.’ Brundage, ‘Rape and Seduction in the Medieval Canon Law’, p.143.

⁵⁵ An example would be Robert Grosseteste, the Bishop of Lincoln who earlier in 1236 ‘fought against the decision of the barons and judges to maintain the common law of England against the common law of the Church, when they refused to admit that subsequent marriage legitimated bastards.’ See Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307*, 1998, p.453.

⁵⁶ Toner, *The Facts of Rape*, p.90. Cf. Gravdal, K., *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), esp. ‘Introduction: The Archaeology of Rape’, pp.1-9.

⁵⁷ B. Toner, *The Facts of Rape*, p.91.

⁵⁸ J.B. Post, ‘Ravishment of Women and the Statutes of Westminster’ in J.H. Baker ed., *Legal Records and the Historian* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), p.160.

in any action. Unfortunately because of a lack of evidence, we will never know and as P. Coss has said, ‘in the event the marriage stood’.

This conclusion notwithstanding, it is clear that the king did state that if Maud was not ‘content’ John would be required to ‘stand trial touching his said trespass’.⁵⁹ Henry did not just underscore Giffard’s crude assertion of personal power by force; for whatever reason, he chose to acknowledge the rights of Maud as not merely a chattel. Henry III had earlier acknowledged that Giffard had abducted Maud against her will, then he ordered Giffard to free her ‘without delay’, and threatened him with ‘forfeiture of all his lands and tenements’ if he failed to do so. He was to appear before the king on ‘the eighth day after the feast of St Edward next’, which he also failed to do. Henry’s actions present us with a paradox. On the one hand we have Henry’s sympathy and protestations of giving Maud justice, including careful inquiry by sending a justiciar and other prominent individuals to seek the truth, and on the other hand, despite Giffard ignoring all his commands, Henry now accepted this fine of 300 marks. He seems to have felt that either the marriage to Maud was a *fait accompli*, or that in order to protect her good name Maud would have no choice other than to agree to the marriage. He was content to assert his royal authority through the payment of a fine rather than seeking ‘justice’ for ‘our baroness’ and redress for what he called ‘the breach of our peace and plain contempt of us’.⁶⁰

It is known that Giffard became a royal favourite after he rejoined the royal side against Simon de Montfort in 1265 and his subsequent receipt of royal favour in later years would suggest that despite the perceived seriousness of the threats made by Henry to Giffard, he had been less than

⁵⁹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1266-1272*, p.521.

⁶⁰ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1268-1272*, p.294. See above n. 25.

enthusiastic when he investigated Maud's abduction. Indeed in the letter of protest to Giffard concerning his 'transgression', Henry said rather mournfully, 'would that it not be so'.⁶¹ I would suggest that the king was displaying a degree of fatherly affection towards John Giffard who had by now become a royal favourite. Henry was also nearing the end of his reign and his life (he died in 1272) and Giffard had become one of his valued knights. He was possibly not averse to the idea of Maud as a suitable prize for Giffard even though Giffard had taken matters into his own hands and abducted her instead of taking steps to marry her by lawful means. Apart from Giffard's acquisitiveness, the desirability of legally taking more Welsh lands into 'reliable Anglo-Norman hands' via Maud's remarriage to an Anglo-Norman baron must have been a consideration. It is therefore always possible that the king was prepared to consent to Giffard's marriage to Maud, but in the thirteenth century the church required the consent of both partners to a marriage, and Giffard may have known that Maud would not agree to marry him. Abduction was one method used by men like Giffard to secure a wealthy wife and to overcome the absence of the widow's consent. The king's interest probably centred mainly on the monetary value of the marriage plus access to her Welsh lands, and while some widows paid a fine to the king in order to marry whomever they wished, noblemen like Giffard were similarly able to appease the king by the payment of a large fine.⁶²

This marriage increased Giffard's personal baronial power and authority considerably. It made him a marcher lord at Clifford and Llandovery in right of his wife. He was later made lord of Builth where he had succeeded Roger Lestrangle as royal castellan.⁶³ Maud was in possession of

⁶¹ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1268-1272*, p.294. 'quod absit, ...'

⁶² For discussion of marriages of widows and wards see S.L. Waugh, *The Lordship of England: Royal Wardships and Marriages in English Society and Politics 1217-1327*, esp. pp.207-220.

⁶³ Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century*, p. 428.

the significant properties of Clifford and Llandovery when she married Giffard, and when combined with her dower holdings as the widow of William Longspée the third, she was certainly a great prize for an ambitious Anglo-Norman nobleman like John Giffard who had territorial ambitions in the south of Wales. It could also be said that the abduction and rape of Maud not only enhanced the power of an English baron, but also of King Henry III. The Anglo-Normans were still establishing their legitimacy as rulers in Wales in the thirteenth century. The marriage of Maud may have been part of Henry III's continuing assertion of the legitimisation of the conquest, and the establishment of Giffard in south Wales would have been vital to his goal of a final conquest in Wales. Giffard used power by force and physical violence to gain his territorial aims. Henry III on the other hand adopted a more conciliatory approach. Indeed immediately following the final conquest of Wales in 1282/83, Giffard became lord of a large proportion of south Wales. Those areas were the more strategic and vital parts of Wales during the wars between the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans for most of the thirteenth century. Since no aid was forthcoming from Henry, Maud was obliged to acquiesce.

Although the record shows that Giffard took Maud and detained her against her will, she did ultimately marry him, however unwilling she may have been. If the marriage took place in 1271, Maud would have been aged about 37 at the time of her marriage to Giffard. Maud's first marriage was doubtless arranged for the advantage her family would gain from her marrying one of the sons of the earl of Salisbury. With her husband's early death, Maud did not become the countess of Salisbury, but she probably regarded her first marriage as a successful liaison, since she enjoyed at least fourteen years as a wealthy widow who seems to have been able to make her own decisions. It would be interesting to know how she felt about her new husband, variously

described by male historians as a ‘young spark’,⁶⁴ ‘the royal protégé’,⁶⁵ and more recently as ‘a swashbuckling character’.⁶⁶ John Giffard would have been aged about 40 years in 1271.⁶⁷ He was said to have been present at the battle in which Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was killed in 1282. J.E. Morris has stated that ‘the chroniclers give the honour to young Edmund Mortimer and John Giffard, and the peculiar favour which the king showed to Giffard points to him as the author of the victory’.⁶⁸ R.R. Davies has also stated that following the defeat of the Welsh in 1282, ‘in south Wales the major beneficiary of the king's munificence was John Giffard of Brimpsfield ...’⁶⁹ Giffard was certainly in the ascendant.

The importance of abduction and rape in relation to baronial power in the central events of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is shown when one considers that Maud's granddaughter, Alice, countess of Lincoln, was later to suffer the same fate as Maud when she too was abducted from the manor of Canford in Dorset by John de Warenne. Historians are agreed that Alice was raped by her abductor. Alice had inherited the manor from her mother, Margaret de Lacy, Maud's daughter by William Longspée. According to Linda Mitchell, Canford was a hunting lodge and possibly it did not provide enough protection against those bent on abduction and rape.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century*, p.172.

⁶⁵ R.R.Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.337 & 381.

⁶⁶ Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England 1000-1500*, p.116.

⁶⁷ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry III*, vol. I (London: 1904), pp.298-99. See also Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England 1000-1500*, p.117.

⁶⁸ J.E. Morris ‘Two Documents Relating to the Conquest of Wales’, *English Historical Review*, vol. XIV, (1899), p.506.

⁶⁹ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, p.363.

⁷⁰ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p.108.

From a reading of the printed record, John Giffard was not a particularly likeable character when it came to his treatment of women. There is evidence that he had little respect for women.

Giffard also had experienced an arranged marriage when he was a child of about ten or eleven, and his bride, Aubéree de Camville, who was also a child, came to live with his family. Giffard later repudiated the marriage, but various inquiries which were held would support the fact that he was indeed married and also had a daughter from this marriage.⁷¹ A witness at one such inquiry said that ‘he often heard the said John declaiming against the said marriage and especially in the hall of Rockhampton [the Giffard family home] ... before those lying round, that no one of the race of Le Longespey would adhere to any wife to whom he happened to be married in his boyhood, etc.’⁷²

The discussion will now turn to Maud’s relationship with the Welsh, in view of her position as the widow of an Anglo-Norman nobleman and the king’s baroness. Although William Longspée’s lands were extensive, and Maud’s dower properties were scattered, following her first husband’s death it is possible that Maud was living in Wales again on Welsh lands she had inherited from her father. A letter from John de Grey to Henry III, dated shortly after March 3, 1263, shows the men of ‘Maud Lungspe in Cantrescelif’ as among the marchers listed as having withdrawn from the king’s fealty and siding with the ‘king’s Welsh enemies’, namely the army of her cousin Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. In fact the letter states that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had taken homage and fealty ‘from all of them’. The letter is referring to the defence of Hereford, specifically the skirmish at Abergavenny.⁷³ In 1263 Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was in a very strong

⁷¹ Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England 1000-1500*, pp.116-120.

⁷² *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry III*, vol. I, p.299.

⁷³ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, J. Goronwy Edwards ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), pp.17-18.

position strategically, and his forces attacked the lordship of Abergavenny. As the letter from John de Grey discloses, on his route to Abergavenny Llywelyn had attacked and taken the homage of the Welsh in the lands of Humphrey de Bohun in Brecon and among others, the lands of Maud Longspée in Cantref Selyf, which was also in Brecon. The Welsh army was forced to retreat from Abergavenny, but Llywelyn ap Gruffudd did not retreat from Cantref Selyf until 1277.⁷⁴ It is not certainly known whether Maud was indeed living in Cantref Selyf at some time during the period of her widowhood from 1257 to 1270, but it is interesting to postulate that if she were, one reason why she remained a widow for so long could be that she enjoyed Llywelyn's protection while he remained in control in the region. (Maud's father had died in December 1263, so that she would have been without his protection after that date.)

Maud was mentioned again in the Patent Rolls on August 9, 1265 when she was granted protection by the king 'until Easter', i.e. March 28, 1266.⁷⁵ Significantly, August 4, 1265 was the date of the battle of Evesham in the Barons' war, in which the rebels, under the leadership of Simon de Montfort, were defeated and the royalists regained power. The five days following the battle would have been a particularly hazardous period, as would the next nine months while the country settled back down after the turbulent years surrounding the barons' wars.

Unfortunately, within a few weeks of Evesham, in the words of C.H. Knowles, 'more than a thousand estates and properties had been seized or looted by loyalists in an orgy of vengeance'⁷⁶, and it was not before 1270 that peace was finally restored to England. As a baroness of the march, Maud would certainly have needed the king's protection. She may have

⁷⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.356.

⁷⁵ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1258-1266*, p.436.

⁷⁶ C.H. Knowles, 'The Resettlement of England After the Barons' War, 1264-67', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol 32, (1982), p.25-6.

needed it to prevent an attack on her possessions in Cantref Selyf, especially since her men had transferred their loyalties to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd during the war. Certainly if she wished to travel from one of her properties to another some sort of protection would have been essential at this time. Similar protection was recorded on this date for a variety of different categories of people including an abbot, a rector and noblemen like Hugh Mortimer and Ideo Campo-Bello, so that protection was probably vital to avoid being mistaken by the king's men as being involved with those on the rebel side. It seems likely that the mention of Maud's name here is not coincidental, but was part of the restoration of the king's authority being undertaken in this area. Recorded on the same piece of parchment was the king's notification that he had 'taken the burgesses of Hereford' back into his grace notwithstanding their disloyalty during the recent conflict.⁷⁷

Two entries in the *Close Rolls* for 1267 and 1268 reveal Henry III continuing to look out for Maud's interests. The first, dated 1267, is a letter addressed to the itinerant justiciars conducting a common summons in Wiltshire warranting 'our beloved noble Matilda Longspée', so that she may suffer neither default nor liability in the event of her absence from the summons.⁷⁸ A similar letter in 1268 excused Maud from the common summons in Norfolk and Dorset.⁷⁹ If my supposition is correct, and Maud had remained under Llywelyn's protection until 1265, then Maud seems to have been able to negotiate successfully between the Welsh and the English in the troubled times between 1263 and 1265, and was firmly back under Henry's protection in

⁷⁷ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1258-1266*, p.436.

⁷⁸ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1264-1268*, p.502. 'dilecta nobis Matillis Lungespeye non ponatur in defaultam nec in aliquo sit perdens, quia absenciam suam quo ad hoc hac vice ei warantizamus.'

⁷⁹ *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1264-1268*, p.523.

1267 and 1268. It may also go some way to explain why she remained a widow for as long as she did. The discussion will now turn to Maud's continued exercise of her independence.

Although Maud had been coerced into marriage, she was still able to act independently from her second husband because she later interceded with Archbishop Peckham by letter in an attempt to secure Christian burial for her cousin, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. When he was killed in 1282, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was under a ban of excommunication which had been pronounced by the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁸⁰ We do not have Maud's letter to the Archbishop, but a copy of his reply to her letter is extant in his register.⁸¹ In a letter to Edward I dated 17 December, 1282, Peckham mentioned that he had been entreated by 'Dame Maude Lungespeye' to absolve Llywelyn, so that he might be buried in consecrated ground, but he had replied that he could do nothing unless it could be proved that Llywelyn had shown signs of true repentance before his death.⁸² Although modern historians do make reference to Maud's overtures to Archbishop Peckham, the emphasis is placed not on Maud's role, but rather as part of the discussion of others who were involved in the events. Yet it was she who initiated the action by writing to the Archbishop and it was to Maud that he replied. The letters are used to construct their view of the circumstances surrounding the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. In doing this Maud's role comes close to being made invisible in written history, but significantly, not in the documents themselves on which it is based. Maud's relationship to Llywelyn is merely acknowledged by modern historians, but without discussion. Some historians note that she is the wife of John

⁸⁰ See R. Morris 'The Burial of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Series VI, xi, (1911), p.36-37.

⁸¹ *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannes Peckham Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, vol. II, C.T. Martin, ed. (London: 1884), pp.488-89.

⁸² *Epistolae Johannis Peckham*, pp.489-90.

Giffard, others refer to her only as ‘Maud Longespée’ or ‘Maud Clifford’, or both but there is no discussion about her role at all.⁸³ I think it is highly significant that Maud was the wife of John Giffard and a cousin of both Roger and Edmund de Mortimer who were all involved, either directly or indirectly, in the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. Maud’s husband was intimately involved with those who killed her cousin. J. Beverley Smith has mentioned in his text that Maud’s ‘estate of Cantref Selyf was not far from the place where Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was killed’ and in a footnote he gives details of Maud’s ancestry and marriages.⁸⁴

When one considers Maud’s position as the wife of John Giffard, a particular favourite of Edward I and one of his foremost commanders in the final war against the Welsh, her attempt to obtain a Christian burial for Llywelyn, the leader of the Welsh, shows independence and determination on her part and one would think also, some degree of risk of seriously displeasing the king. Edward I’s resolve to achieve the complete and final subjugation of the Welsh, and of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in particular, is well documented. Edward I certainly knew of Maud’s approach to Archbishop Peckham because the Archbishop had advised him of her request in the letter already mentioned dated 17 December, 1282.⁸⁵ It is therefore interesting to speculate on Maud’s motivation for seeking absolution for Llywelyn, if indeed there is any other reason than a simple request on behalf of a relative. This seems unlikely, because Maud’s action must have annoyed Edward I.

⁸³ See Morris ‘The Burial of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd’, pp.36-39, Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century*, p.428, Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.567, **footnote 1**.

⁸⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.567-68, **footnote 197**, see also p.356, **footnote 65**.

⁸⁵ *Epistolae Johannis Peckham*, pp.489-90

Maud's request seems also to have been supported in part by Edmund and Roger Mortimer. The former had informed Archbishop Pecham that his men had reported to him that Llywelyn had called for a priest before he died. Roger Mortimer had supplied the vestments for a monk who had sung mass for Llywelyn before the battle. Edmund and Roger Mortimer were the sons of Roger Mortimer (d.1282), who was Maud's cousin and a grandson of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. (Roger Mortimer (d.1282) was the son of Gwladus Ddu.) Like Maud Giffard and Roger Mortimer (d.1282), the Welsh leader Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was also a grandchild of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. This being said, it is also the case that family relationships were certainly complicated for these people. There were so many instances of enmity between the closest of family members in this part of the world in the thirteenth century that no conclusion may be safely drawn about whether the fact of a family relationship would have influenced people's actions one way or another. Excommunication was a not uncommon threat used by the church in times of war in order to broker a peace. In Archbishop Pecham's eyes the Welsh were rebels and he had acceded to Edward's request that Llywelyn be excommunicated.

It is quite likely that as family members and also as military opponents, the Mortimers would have respected Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, both as a military leader and as having come from the same noble lineage. They would have most probably been as concerned for his immortal soul as would Maud. The parties concerned would also have understood that Llywelyn's excommunication was political in nature and this could explain their efforts to obtain a Christian burial for him.

When Maud's intervention on behalf of Llywelyn is mentioned by most historians, her relationship as his 'cousin' is always alluded to. But I do not know that this fact deserves the significance it receives, and indeed as J.B. Smith has pointed out, she was a 'second' not a 'first' cousin.⁸⁶ Perhaps Maud's reasons should be more closely examined. Another possibility for Maud's actions in trying to arrange absolution for Llywelyn ap Gruffudd could be that she was a seriously devout woman and saw this as her duty. It is also likely that she may have had contact with her Welsh family over the course of her life as a marcher baroness. Maud's mother was still alive in 1278⁸⁷ and it is entirely possible that she may have remained in contact with her and other members of her family of origin.

Maud probably died in 1283 because in that year the Worcester annalist reported that John Giffard founded Gloucester College, Oxford and mentioned the wish for the blessing for the souls of Giffard and 'Matildis de Longespeye' his wife in perpetuity.⁸⁸ An entry in the *Calendar of Close Rolls of Edward I* for October 1, 1284 refers to Maud as the 'late wife' of John Giffard, so presumably she had died before this date. John Giffard was granted dispensation on the grounds of consanguinity and given permission by the Pope to marry Margaret Neville in 1286.⁸⁹ John Giffard himself died in 1299 and Maud and he are both mentioned in the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* for June 1299.⁹⁰ John Giffard's heir was his son, John who was aged twelve at his father's death and was therefore not Maud's child.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 1998, p.568.

⁸⁷ See my Chapter 'The Daughters of Llywelyn Fawr', p.72-73.

⁸⁸ *Annales de Wigornia: Annales Monastici IV*, H.R. Luard, ed., (London: 1869), p.488.

⁸⁹ *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae, et Acta Publica*, vol. I, p.663.

⁹⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Edward I, 1292-1301*, p. 423.

⁹¹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Edward I*, vol. III, (London: 1973), pp.418-19.

The lands which John Giffard had held ‘by the courtesy of England of the inheritance of Maud Lungespeye, sometime his wife’ are listed in the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* for 1299. Maud’s daughters, Margaret countess of Lincoln, Katherine the wife of Nicholas de Audley, Eleanor Giffard and Maud Giffard are named as her heirs of her properties in Shropshire, and of the castle and lands of Clifford in Hereford.⁹²

Maud and her husband John Giffard are conspicuous on numerous occasions in the legal records of the period in relation to litigation concerning land holdings and other rights. One particularly interesting case was mentioned in the *Welsh Assize Roll, 1277-84*, and concerned the castle of Llandovery and the commotes of Hirfryn and Perfedd, property Giffard held entirely because of his marriage to Maud. The editor of the *Welsh Assize Roll* stated that ‘the whole course of the proceedings are so significant that they merit detailed consideration’.⁹³ This litigation concerned a claim against Rhys Fychan who had gained possession of the castle during Llywelyn ap Gruffudd’s rise to power. The case commenced on January 13, 1279 and with many delays caused by failures to appear by plaintiffs, claimants, juries, and arguments concerning whether it should be heard under Welsh or English law, was still not satisfactorily concluded in April 1282. With the outbreak of the Welsh war in 1282, the king temporarily committed the custody of the castle to John Giffard and in June, following the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the castle was granted to Giffard along with other grants as reward for services in the war.⁹⁴ Once again a Welsh noblewoman was at the centre of a very significant event in the narrative of Welsh medieval history.

⁹² *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. III, p.419-420.

⁹³ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.163.

Maud Clifford was indeed ‘a very important lady’ as F.M. Powicke has said, but Maud’s importance was based on more than the status and wealth of her husband and father. She played an active role in the political machinations of her day and despite being coerced into a second marriage to a ruthless adventurer, she seems to have been able to make the most of her situation and to have lived a reasonably long and worthwhile life. It could be said that as a Welsh noblewoman she made a contribution to Welsh medieval history, and despite Giffard’s acquisitiveness, was able to ensure that her daughters inherited some of her own lands. More than Maud’s contribution to Welsh medieval history though, is what a study of Maud’s life tells us about women in her position. Maud Clifford-Longspée-Giffard was certainly not invisible in the denouement of political events in the thirteenth century, neither was she marginalised. The parameters of her life were both normative and individual. In many ways her life conformed to her society’s expectations, but she also had the capacity for independent action when she deemed it necessary.

⁹⁴ *Welsh Assize Roll*, See Introduction, pp.163-73 and numerous references in Pleas pp.261-339.

LEGITIMISING THE CONQUEST OF WALES: ANGLO-NORMAN NOBLEWOMEN WHO MARRIED WELSH NOBLEMEN

During the thirteenth century a number of aristocratic Anglo-Norman noblewomen married Welsh noblemen. As has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, these marriages were vital to the Norman conquerors themselves. In the first place it was an essential part of the baronial and monarchical struggle to subdue Wales. Their rule could be consolidated more permanently if authority was established rather than relying on naked force, which would need to be demonstrated continually. This also made their successors legitimate and less likely to be challenged. (See Introduction, p.9.) Secondly, these aristocratic marriages were just as vital to the Welsh in their struggle against the conquerors. For example, the marriage of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (Llywelyn Fawr) to Joan, the illegitimate daughter of King John ‘served to elevate his status above that of other Welsh lords, both in Gwynedd and beyond’¹ and aided him in his goal to become the virtual ruler of most of Wales for the rest of his life. At the same time Llywelyn Fawr’s children from his marriage to Joan would become grandchildren of the king of England, so that these marriages benefited both the Welsh and the Anglo- Normans.

Although the Norman conquest of Wales began in the eleventh century, power vacillated back and forth between strong native Welsh rulers and the Anglo-Normans for two hundred years,

¹ Huw Pryce, ‘Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations: Llywelyn the Great and Henry III’ in B.K.U. Weiler, ed. with I.W. Rowlands, *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III (1216-1272)* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002), p.14.

which meant that this process of ‘legitimation’, which was completed fairly quickly in England, actively continued in Wales for two hundred years. For example, in the twelfth century, Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd, who was Llywelyn Fawr’s uncle, had married Emma of Anjou, the illegitimate half-sister of Henry II. For Henry it was a bid to secure peace in Wales at a difficult time, and Dafydd was seeking to gain an external ally in his endeavours to help secure his position in Gwynedd.² As Kari Maund has pointed out, the ‘complex networks of kinship, blood-ties and alliance’ which typified the society of the march of Wales by the thirteenth century, were partly due to the marriages of Welsh rulers into the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Norman nobility.³

Among the most well-known of these Anglo-Norman noblewomen were the wives of the two great Welsh rulers of the thirteenth century. These were Joan, who as mentioned married Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, and Eleanor de Montfort who married Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the last native Welsh ruler. Other Anglo-Norman women who married leading Welsh noblemen during this century include Emma Audley, who married Gruffudd ap Madog, prince of northern Powys. Dafydd ap Llywelyn of Gwynedd, the son of Llywelyn Fawr, took Isabella de Braose to be his wife. Elizabeth de Ferrers was the wife of Dafydd ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd and Hawise le Strange married Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys. Joan and Eleanor de Montfort had prominent positions as wives of the two foremost Welsh leaders of the thirteenth century. Because of their prominence their stories will be the central subject of this chapter. Isabella de Braose is featured elsewhere in my chapter on Welsh nuns (Chapter 7). The remaining part of

² Kari Maund, *The Welsh Kings* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2000), p.115, R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change, Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.239 and Pryce, ‘Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations’, p. 20.

³ Maund, *The Welsh Kings*, p.117.

the chapter will briefly consider the lives of Emma and Elizabeth. I have not written about Hawise le Strange because once again she has received notice by modern historians, mainly at times of a derogatory nature, and does not really fall within the parameters of this thesis. In fact, Linda E. Mitchell has devoted a large portion of her chapter titled ‘Welshness, Englishness and the Problem of Dowagers and Heiresses in Wales: The Lestrangle Family’s Marital Adventures in Powys’ to Hawise and her family in her recent book.⁴

JOAN (SIWAN)

Joan, or Siwan as she was known in Welsh, was a very interesting woman and unlike other women in this thesis, she has been recognised by modern Welsh historians over the years. This being the case, she could be said to fall somewhat outside the scope of this thesis as well as Hawise le Strange, but some aspects of her life would repay further analysis and for that reason she is included. For example, no-one has really explored in detail Joan’s one extant letter to Henry III nor has Joan been studied from a gendered perspective. Despite an overall thrust toward male-centred history, Joan’s contribution to Llywelyn’s success has not escaped modern historians, who have included her in almost every discussion of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, not only because she was the wife of a great Welsh ruler, but also because she was a daughter of the English king. Indeed her inclusion reflects the bias of historians towards the English monarchy, but there are sound reasons to regard Joan as central to the narrative of Welsh history, and therefore she has not just been relegated a footnote. We do not have a great deal of evidence for Joan, but we have references to her intercessions with the king, and her one extant letter is one place where we can examine what she actually said.

⁴ Linda E. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England 1225-1350* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan), 2003, pp.57-77.

Joan was the illegitimate daughter of King John, and is thought to have been the daughter of an English noblewoman. Historians who have studied King John comment on his extra-marital adventures with wives of his noblemen, and using the evidence of chroniclers have advanced some theories as to who her mother was, but nothing certain is known.⁵ As King John's daughter, Joan was also a granddaughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, and it is possible that Joan may have had some contact with her grandmother because Eleanor is known to have assisted her son John early in his rule.⁶ Huw Pryce has recently asserted that aristocratic marriages form an important backdrop to understanding Anglo-Welsh relations. He discusses the marriage between Llywelyn and Joan and the importance it had in strengthening Llywelyn's power. He also makes the point that by gaining the support of the English crown, it was unlikely Llywelyn had to deal with the crown giving support to his rivals.⁷

Joan married Llywelyn in 1204 or 1205, and brought valuable and significant property in the form of manors and lordships under his control. As part of their marriage contract, Llywelyn ab

⁵ For example, C. Given-Wilson estimates the number of John's 'royal' mistresses to have been at least a dozen. He believes that while John had several known bastard sons, Joan was his only known illegitimate daughter. He gives Joan's mother's identity as Clementia, but knows nothing about her apart from her name. C. Given-Wilson and A. Curteis, *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul plc., 1984), p.128. An early publication suggested Joan may have been the 'granddaughter or niece of the Earl of Ferrers', see E.B. D'Auvergne, *John, King of England* (London: Grayson and Grayson, 1934), pp.185 & 289, and W.L. Warren gives Joan as a daughter of 'Clementina', who he asserts was 'presumably lowborn', *King John* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961), p.189. Joan's ability to make repeated successful approaches to her father may possibly indicate that she was the daughter of a noblewoman, perhaps a favourite of John. John also named his legitimate daughter Joan. She was born in 1211 and was later to marry King Alexander II of Scotland. See M. Howell, 'Royal Women of England and France in the Mid-Thirteenth Century: A Gendered Perspective', in B.K.U. Weiler, ed., with I.W. Rowlands, *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III (1216-1272)* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002), pp. 164 & 167.

⁶ M.W. Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life: A Small Sound of the Trumpet* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), p.26. See also D.D.R. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), pp.86-94.

⁷ Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', pp.13-16.

Iorwerth received the lordship of Ellesmere in Shropshire on the border of Wales on 16 April, 1205.⁸ It is probable that Joan would have been about twelve years old at her marriage, but she could have been older. Llywelyn also received the manors of Suckley in Worcestershire and Bidford in Warwickshire, and their daughter Elen received these manors as a marriage portion on her marriage in 1222.⁹ The accumulation of property was important in consolidating Llywelyn's interests and furthering his ambitions. Joan and Llywelyn had one son, Dafydd, and three daughters, Gwladus Ddu, Elen, and Margaret. Not satisfied to merely become the king of England's son-in-law, Llywelyn continued to wage war on the other Welsh rulers in order to enlarge his territory. These endeavours were so strenuous and successful that they threatened the interests of the crown, which did not lie in the emergence of a strong Welsh principality. In 1211, King John launched two military campaigns against Llywelyn. John's first campaign had to turn back due to insufficient provisioning, but his second campaign successfully drove further into Gwynedd than any other previous Anglo-Norman attack. Llywelyn was in a dire position and was forced to sue for peace. Again Joan's political resources and strengths in terms of patrilineal connection proved crucial to her Welsh husband. The *Brut Y Tywysogion* states that in 1211, 'Llywelyn, being unable to suffer the oppression of the king, by counsel of his leading men, sent to the king his wife, who was daughter to the king, to make peace between him and the king on whatsoever terms she could.'¹⁰ Joan is thought to have been successful in this attempt because Llywelyn was forced to submit unconditionally to John, who 'imposed humiliating terms' on Llywelyn. Historians agree that Joan's personal approach to the king 'mitigated' these

⁸ *Rotuli Chartarum, 1199-1216*, T.D. Hardy, ed. (London: RC, 1837), p.147. See also *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, Monachi Cestriensis, Lib. VII*, J.R. Lumby, ed. (London, 1882), p.186.

⁹ Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', p.21. (For Elen Chapter 2.)

¹⁰ *Brut Y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes: Red Book of Hergest Version*, T. Jones, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), pp.191-3. *Brut Y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes: Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, T. Jones, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), pp.101-102.

harsh terms.¹¹ Llywelyn was obliged to cede to the crown the valuable territory of the Perfeddwlad, situated east of the Conway, and hand over twenty Welsh hostages, including his own eldest son, Gruffudd. He was also obliged to pay a huge sum in horses and cattle.

The peace was not to last, however, because of King John's oppressive practices, and in 1212 the Welsh, with Llywelyn as their leader, resumed hostilities against the crown and Llywelyn was able to re-establish himself in the Perfeddwlad. In retaliation against the Welsh, John had twenty-eight Welsh hostages, who were the sons of Welsh leaders, hung.¹² Llywelyn's own son Gruffudd, who was a hostage, was not among those executed. John then set out on another campaign against the Welsh with the intention of crushing them once and for all. Again Joan was a central actor in the nature of this campaign and how it unfolded. Historians regard Joan as having a close relationship with her father. She is believed to have warned her father of a conspiracy among his barons to betray him to his foes or make him a prisoner during this Welsh campaign. Upon hearing of the conspiracy to assassinate him or take him prisoner, John cancelled the proposed campaign and returned to London. J.E. Lloyd attributes Joan's motives for warning King John as much to her thoughts for the safety of her husband as to thoughts for the king's safety.¹³ It could be said that her clever intervention prevented war. Whether she was concerned more for the safety of her father or her husband, her actions suggest she was an intermediary and moderator between the two political and cultural groups and helped

¹¹ R.V. Turner, *King John* (London: Longman Group, 1994), p.130. See also J.B. Smith, 'Magna Carta and the Charters of the Welsh Princes', in *English Historical Review* (London: Longman Group, 1984), p.344.

¹² I.W. Rowlands, 'King John and Wales' in S.D. Church, ed., *King John: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge: 1999), p.281. See also K. Norgate, *John Lackland* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1902), p.160, Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, pp.295-96 and Turner, *King John*, p.139.

¹³ J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, vol. II (London: 1911), p.639. See also K. Norgate, *John Lackland*, p.169, Warren, *King John*, p.200 and J.A.P. Jones, *King John and Magna Carta* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1971), p.32.

determine not only the actual extent of the penetration of the Normans into Wales, and the survival of the Welsh political group, but also the nature of that survival.

One of Joan's successes in interceding with her father in political matters in relation to Wales concerned the freeing of some other Welsh hostages held by her father. King John did not enjoy a good reputation when it came to his treatment of hostages. On several occasions he is known to have summarily killed hostages.¹⁴ The taking of hostages as surety for the keeping of the peace and good behaviour of those concerned was very common in the Middle Ages,¹⁵ but it must have been particularly frightening to have become a hostage of King John. The death of hostages was a not unusual occurrence, but as S. Duffy has stated, King John had a 'reputation as an untrustworthy custodian of important guests'.¹⁶ On 18 December, 1214 King John ordered Engelard de Cigogné to set free three of the Welsh hostages who were Llywelyn's men, 'at the request of our daughter the wife of Llywelyn'.¹⁷ Joan's success in securing the release of Welsh hostages is noteworthy, particularly in view of John's reputation. It may be that Llywelyn had hoped Joan would be able to secure the release of his son Gruffudd, but he was not in fact released until the following year, his release being one of the articles of Magna Carta.¹⁸

¹⁴ Rowlands, 'King John and Wales' p.281-2.

¹⁵ For discussion of sureties in early Irish and Welsh law see R.C. Stacey, *The Road to Judgment: From Custom to Court in Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 1994.

¹⁶ S. Duffy, 'King John's expedition to Ireland, 1210', *Irish Historical Studies*, 30 (Antrim: May 1996), pp.17-21. See also *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History*, vol. II, J.A. Giles, trans. (London: 1849), pp.257-58. King John was said to have been responsible for the death of his nephew Arthur, and it was reported that twenty-two of Arthur's colleagues who had been captured by John were 'starved to death at Corfe castle'. Jones, *King John and Magna Carta*, p.8.

¹⁷ *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae, & Acta Publica*, T. Rymer, ed. (London: 1816-69), p.126.

¹⁸ Jones, *King John and Magna Carta*, p.137. Article 58 of Magna Carta stated 'We will restore at once the son of Llywelyn and all the hostages from Wales ...'.

In 1222 Llywelyn broke with Welsh tradition by seeking the Pope's approval to declare his legitimate son his heir, to the detriment of his first-born illegitimate son. Even though under Welsh native law illegitimacy did not carry the stigma it did under other systems of law, Llywelyn decided it was important that his wife should also be considered legitimate by birth in the eyes of the church. He approached the Pope in 1226 to have Joan declared legitimate.¹⁹ Llywelyn's actions in breaking with tradition and declaring Dafydd to be his heir did not meet with the approval of all of the native Welsh rulers, and Gruffudd was thought to be the rightful successor to Gwynedd in some quarters.²⁰

In addition to providing Llywelyn with a legitimate heir, the marriage between Joan and Llywelyn is considered by historians to have been a success because she proved to be an asset as an intermediary and interceded on his behalf with her father, and as the daughter of an Angevin king she added to Llywelyn's prestige. But her presence was more decisive than this. After her father's death, as the half-sister of the English king, Joan received further gifts of land. In 1225 Henry III granted to Joan the manor of Rothley in Leicestershire and in 1226 she received the manor of Conover in Shropshire.²¹ According to R.W. Eyton Joan held the Manor of Conover until Easter 1231 when it returned to the king's hands, no doubt as a result of hostilities between

¹⁹ The Pope agreed to both of these requests and I have discussed this subject at length in Chapter 6 'The Welsh Laws of Women', pp.180-81.

²⁰ Peredur Lynch cites poems by Llywarch ap Llywelyn and Einion ap Madog ap Rhahawd which suggest that 'they considered Gruffudd to be Llywelyn's rightful successor'. P.I. Lynch, 'Court Poetry, Power and Politics' in T.M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell, eds., *The Welsh King and His Court* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.176. See also Gwyn A. Williams, 'The succession to Gwynedd 1238-47', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 20, (1962-4), p.403 where Williams refers to 'the emergence of a hostile pro-Gruffudd party.'

²¹ *Foedera*, p. 184.

Llywelyn and the English crown at that time. Llywelyn also lost Ellesmere to the crown in 1231.²²

However, after 24 years of marriage, Joan and Llywelyn's relationship came under pressure when the young marcher lord, William de Braose, who had been captured and imprisoned by Llywelyn in 1228, seems to have become enamoured with Joan. In return for his release, de Braose had agreed never again to take up arms against Llywelyn, to pay a ransom of £2,000 and give his eldest daughter, Isabella, in marriage to Llywelyn's son Dafydd, with the lordship of Builth by way of *maritagium*.²³ In April, 1230, de Braose returned to Llywelyn's court 'to continue the negotiations for his ransom',²⁴ and he was discovered in Llywelyn's chamber with Joan. Llywelyn was understandably outraged at this discovery and both Joan and de Braose were imprisoned. De Braose was summarily hanged one month later as a common thief. It is thought that Joan was to remain in prison for at least a year. The Welsh chronicles did not record the marriage of Llywelyn and Joan, but both the Peniarth 20 and Red Book of Hergest versions of the *Brut Y Tywysogion* for 1230 note that 'in that year William de Breos the Younger, lord of Brycheiniog, was hanged by the Lord Llywelyn in Gwynedd, after he had been caught in Llywelyn's chamber with the king of England's daughter, Llywelyn's wife'.²⁵ The Welsh chroniclers completely ignored the marriage of the Welsh leader to the daughter of the king of England, but they gave full particulars of Llywelyn's betrayal. Not only was Joan Llywelyn's wife, she was also 'the king of England's daughter' – by inference a daughter of the

²² R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, Vol. VI (London: 1854), pp.12-14.

²³ For a recent discussion of the events surrounding this incident in the history of Wales see J.J. Crump, 'Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose: a Letter from Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to Stephen de Segrave', *Historical Research*, Vol. 73, No. 181 (June 2000), pp.197-212.

²⁴ D. Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.96.

²⁵ *Brut Y Tywysogion, Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, T. Jones, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), pp.101-102, *Brut Y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, p.229.

conqueror, the enemy. Possibly the Welsh were unhappy about Llywelyn taking a foreign wife. As well, even though the Welsh did not have the same view of illegitimacy as that, for example, which prevailed in England, the Welsh would have known how the church in England felt about illegitimacy, and may have been insulted by the offer of an illegitimate bride for the Welsh leader. There is almost a note of glee in the report of the chronicles, as though what they had expected had come to pass. The incident was only mentioned in passing by the English authorities and life seems to have resumed as before. Joan and Llywelyn were eventually reconciled, and she continued to be of service to Llywelyn in her capacity as the half-sister of Henry III. I have discussed this illicit affair and the outcome elsewhere in this thesis, in the context of the Welsh laws (Chapter 6.)

As stated previously, owing to her prominence as the daughter and sister of English kings, unlike most of the women in this thesis, Joan has not been overlooked by modern historians and she is part of the narrative of Welsh history. That Joan was considered a high-status noblewoman in Wales following her marriage to Llywelyn is confirmed by the fact that the Iorwerth Redaction of the Welsh law texts reveals ‘a growth in the importance of the queen in Gwynedd’. David Stephenson attributes this to ‘the prominence at the court of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Joan’.²⁶ Whether the Welsh themselves held her in high esteem, however, is another question. Those Welsh leaders who had suffered adversely from Llywelyn’s rise to power, which was aided by his marriage to Joan, would be unlikely to esteem her very highly. While commenting on the increased role of the queen in the *Iorwerth* version of the Welsh laws, Robin Chapman Stacey qualifies what she has to say about Joan’s increased role. She believes that Joan was probably ‘a

²⁶ D. Stephenson, ‘The Laws of Court: Past Reality or Present Ideal?’ in *The Welsh King and His Court*, pp.401-402.

very controversial figure' in the eyes of many of the Welsh, not only because of her well-known affair with de Braose, but also for precisely the reason that made her such a valuable asset to Llywelyn, her relationship to the English crown.²⁷ As Stacey says, the redactor of *Ior* makes it clear that 'Joan was to enjoy the luxuries and expanded household befitting the consort of a powerful Welsh prince, but she was not to meddle in his public affairs.' This suggests that a noblewoman like Joan, in the hiatus created by the invasion and response to it, accrued power at this time, albeit an ambiguous power, but there was a reluctance to formally (or publicly) acknowledge her authority. Not only was this true at the time, but it is unfortunately mirrored in the historiography as well. In reality Joan was repeatedly expected to intervene and 'meddle in his public affairs' when the political situation for Llywelyn became dire, or he needed her help. The wording of the entries in the *Bruts* when Joan first interceded with her father shows that it was not just Llywelyn who expected Joan to approach her father. The entries state that Llywelyn sent Joan to King John 'by the counsel of his leading men'.²⁸ Joan was useful when it suited the Welsh, even if they did not approve of her marriage to Llywelyn.

Another example of Joan's role as an intermediary between her husband's court and the English king is provided by Joan's only extant letter, addressed to Henry III, in which she defended her husband's cleric, Instructus, against reports of disloyalty to the king.²⁹ This letter is mentioned in passing by historians in connection with Welsh/English tensions, and Huw Pryce has recently discussed, in particular, Joan's use in this letter of the title *domina Walliae* or Lady of Wales.³⁰

²⁷ R.C. Stacey, 'King, Queen and *Edling* in the Laws of Court' in *The Welsh King and His Court*, pp.53-62.

²⁸ For reference see note 12 above.

²⁹ *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III*, Vol. I, 1216-1235, W.W. Shirley, ed. (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862), pp. 487-88.

³⁰ Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', pp.19-20.

This is certainly an interesting and valid point for discussion and as Pryce has pointed out the usage is unusual since Llywelyn did not employ the title Prince of Wales himself. If one looks at the letter more closely, the whole thing is a very interesting piece of diplomacy and may be an exemplar of the intelligent and educated way Joan operated. In this letter Joan told Henry that she was saddened, and she spoke of her ‘unexpressable anxiety,’ that their enemies had managed to sow discord between Henry and Llywelyn.³¹ Joan assured Henry that Instructus was not acting against Henry when he was also working for Llywelyn, and that he had the capacity to act for both the king and Llywelyn.³² Joan was obviously aware of the delicate position of Instructus and the letter shows her understanding of the subtle requirements needed by the cleric when serving both sides. She very carefully explained that if he did not help Llywelyn as well as Henry, he was not doing his job. In other words if he did not conduct the affairs of Llywelyn to the best of his ability, while at the same time doing his utmost on Henry’s behalf, he would have been negligent in his duties. She said that if he were negligent in carrying out his duties then no-one could trust him. Joan was assuring Henry that Instructus could be trusted. In fact Joan said that she did not think the king had a more faithful cleric in England.

The letter was not only a defence of Instructus, it was also an attempt to repair a rift between Henry and Llywelyn, brought about by what Joan saw as an attempt by some of Llywelyn’s enemies, as Joan says, to ‘sow discord’ between them. The letter is very personal in tone, even emotional. She was pleading with Henry ‘as if on bended knees and flooding tears’.³³ The final

³¹ ‘quod tanta anxietate contristor quod nequaquam possem exprimere, eo quod inimici nostri, immo et vestri, praevaluerunt seminare discordias inter vos et dominum meum.’

³² ‘nec ideo minus fidelis est vobis, si fideliter agit negotia domini sui, quia eodem modo se habet in agendis vestris coram domino suo; nec vos nec aliquis in ipso posset confidere, si domini sui tepide vel negligentem negotia tractaret.’

³³ ‘tanquam flexis genibus et fuis lacrymis, ...’.

sentence too is of a personal nature and put very strongly. She is saying that if he has ever believed her about anything in the past, then he should have faith in her about this matter. At the same time the letter also seems to convey a veiled threat that if Henry did not trust Llywelyn and allowed his new 'friends' to influence him, then it would be 'most dangerous to lose true friends and have enemies for friends'.³⁴ The high degree of sophisticated comprehension of Instructus's position which is conveyed by the letter may offer some insight into the reason Joan had been so successful at other times, when this is combined with her close relationship to the crown. Certainly Instructus himself would have been closely involved with the writing of the letter and may have suggested much of the content, but it is nevertheless very personal in tone. The letter is undated, but it is thought to be before 1231, because Instructus was apparently replaced in that year by Master David, archdeacon of St Asaph.³⁵ It would seem, therefore, that Joan was probably unsuccessful in her efforts on this occasion. If this letter existed, presumably there was other correspondence which may have indicated even further autonomous political activity on Joan's part.

Recent historians have questioned whether Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was in fact the great ruler that the earlier historians believed him to be. For example, as far back as 1964, Gwyn A. Williams was critical of the way J.E. Lloyd had acclaimed the achievements of Llywelyn, and spoke of the precariousness of his power and the ease with which 'the splendid edifice of Llywelyn ... crumbled to nothing in little over a year'.³⁶ J. Beverley Smith is qualified in his praise of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and while he lauds him for his military leadership and cunning, he also

³⁴ '... veros amicos amittere et inimicos pro amicis habere.'

³⁵ D. Stephenson, *The Governance of Gwynedd* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1984), p.225.

³⁶ Williams, 'The succession to Gwynedd', pp.393-97.

accuses him of hesitancy and wariness, which Smith says robbed him of his ultimate objective of handing over a united kingdom of Wales to his legitimate heir.³⁷ At the same time, as has been shown, one may detect an increasing recognition by historians of Joan's role in the political scene. This historical revisionism concerning Llywelyn Fawr makes room for the long overdue insertion of a noblewoman such as Joan into the historical narrative. For example, Huw Pryce goes as far as to regard Llywelyn's marital alliance with Joan, along with the emphasis on the legitimacy of their son, Dafydd, as the two central elements in the significant cultural and political shift wrought by Llywelyn.³⁸ Culturally the marriage to Joan brought 'greater contact with the Anglo-French aristocratic world and the acceptance of some of its values'. Politically, the marriage to the outsider, Joan, who was close to the king of England, in Pryce's words 'represents the most explicit articulation of her husband's aspirations to Wales-wide authority'.³⁹

Within these revisionist writings on Llywelyn, there is no doubt that Pryce's treatment of Joan is a marked advance on that of earlier historians. However, in terms of the preoccupations of this thesis, historiography of the period continues to represent a limited male-centred approach, albeit a more complex view. He does acknowledge her political and cultural importance, but his idea of 'political and cultural' is narrow. He only includes Welsh noblewomen in his narrative if they directly and visibly impinge on noblemen. For Pryce, Joan is worthy of some detailed mention because she furthers or diminishes the political and cultural aspirations of the main male protagonists. There is no emphasis on Joan in her own right, and the world from her vantage

³⁷ J.B. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 19-27.

³⁸ Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', p.23.

³⁹ Pryce, 'Negotiating Anglo-Welsh Relations', p.20.

point, as part of, almost one could say in modern parlance, ‘a team’ with Llywelyn. Pryce writes about the complex texture of Anglo-Welsh relations, but this complexity is far broader than a series of skirmishes between noblemen, because the society was broader than this.

The *Brut* tells us that Joan died at Llywelyn’s court at Aber in February 1237 and was buried at Llanfaes. It is believed that Joan and Llywelyn had long been reconciled after the affair with de Braose, because when she died Llywelyn had a monastery for the Barefooted Friars built at Llanfaes in her honour.⁴⁰ Joan’s effigy at left may have been a likeness.

Joan was certainly an interesting woman. The various aspects of her life, of which we have scant evidence, would have undoubtedly been a lot more complicated and extensive in terms of the advantage Llywelyn gained from this marriage than we know. Kari Maund believes that the reason for Llywelyn’s success when dealing with English court politics and with the marcher lords may have been due to the likelihood that he was brought up and educated outside Wales, on the border. He would therefore have been aware of the advantages to be gained from taking an Anglo-Norman wife.⁴¹ Another historian is of the opinion that Joan and Llywelyn conspired together to entrap William de Braose in a compromising position with Joan, in order to bring about his downfall.⁴² This is quite possible and might explain why Llywelyn and Joan appeared to be reconciled not long after the incident and why Joan was to continue to be a valuable asset to Llywelyn until her death in 1239. It is also likely that when Joan warned her father of the assassination attempt, this had probably been done with Llywelyn’s knowledge in order to

⁴⁰ *Brut Y Tywysogion, Peniarth Version*, 1952, p.104, *Red Book of Hergest Version*, 1955, p.235.

⁴¹ Maund, *The Welsh Kings*, p.116.

⁴² Given-Wilson and Curteis, *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England*, p. 129.

induce John to withdraw his troops and give up his plans to attack Wales, because the result of Joan's intervention was to Llywelyn's advantage. We will never know exactly what happened, but in light of the number of times Joan successfully interceded with the crown, and the obvious skill which she possessed in negotiating, it seems that she did fulfil the role Llywelyn envisioned for her when he married her, probably in more ways than we have the evidence for.

The discourse will now turn to Eleanor de Montfort, the wife of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. She too had significant genealogical connections to the Norman kings of England, but as the wife of a great Welsh ruler, she is considered in this thesis to be a Welsh noblewoman.

ELEANOR DE MONTFORT

Despite her noble lineage and her marriage to the foremost Welsh ruler of her time, Eleanor de Montfort's life was fairly short and tragic. She was the daughter of Simon de Montfort, the Earl of Leicester and his wife Countess Eleanor, who was the youngest legitimate daughter of King John and a sister of Henry III. This relationship meant that the young Eleanor had close ties with the aristocracy in England. Earl Simon was a French nobleman who had come to England in 1230 to claim the family inheritance of the honour of Leicester. He soon became a favourite of Henry III, and in 1238 he married Henry's sister Eleanor. He later joined with the barons in the demands that the king should have English nobles as his advisors, rather than 'foreign relations and adventurers'.⁴³ At first he acted as a 'mediator for the king',⁴⁴ but eventually became very involved in the baronial movement for reform. Simon was a capable soldier and he ultimately became the leader of the barons in the civil war in England against Henry III and his son, later

⁴³ M.W. Labarge, *Simon de Montfort*, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1962), p.73.

⁴⁴ Labarge, *Simon de Montfort*, p.74.

Edward I. This included the capture and imprisonment of both Henry III and his son by Simon's forces.

During this time of turmoil in England, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, prince of Wales, took advantage of Henry III's difficulties with the barons, and made great territorial gains, and by 1267 he had reached the pinnacle of his power in Wales. He was able to bring under his control much of Wales, including Gwynedd, Powys and the old kingdom of Deheubarth. He also sided with Earl Simon's forces during the rebellion and it appears as a result of this that Simon de Montfort offered to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd the hand of his daughter Eleanor in marriage.⁴⁵ It is thought that they were betrothed in 1265 during the time of the civil war in England.⁴⁶ Eleanor would have been about thirteen years old at this time, as it was thought she was born in 1252, but she may have been younger.⁴⁷

Eventually Edward escaped from his captors, the royalist side gained the upper hand in the civil war, and Simon de Montfort was killed at Evesham in 1265. Following her husband's death, countess Eleanor tried to contact her brother, Henry III, and sought to make a reconciliation with him, but he refused to have any further contact with her. She was, however, able to negotiate with Edward for the 'return to grace and favour of most of her household', but she herself was forced to leave England.⁴⁸ Countess Eleanor went into exile in France, accompanied by her daughter Eleanor. They spent the next ten years in exile in the Dominican convent in Montargis, and Countess Eleanor died in April, 1275. Young Eleanor's ten years in exile in a Dominican

⁴⁵ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.395.

⁴⁶ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.394-95. See esp. p.394, n.16 for comparisons between historians and chroniclers.

⁴⁷ Cf. J.R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, reprint 2001), p.44.

convent in France was probably not without some interesting moments, but it was Edward I's obstruction of her homecoming in 1275 which is the main focus of this section. The fact that Montargis was a Dominican house may have had some bearing on later developments, as Dominican friars were amongst Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's trusted couriers and messengers.

According to J. Beverley Smith, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd decided to go ahead with his marriage to Eleanor de Montfort immediately after he uncovered a plot to assassinate him in 1274. This plot was hatched between Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys and Dafydd ap Gruffudd, Llywelyn's brother, and heir. In order to escape Llywelyn's wrath, Dafydd sought and obtained refuge in England. Smith argues that when Dafydd transferred his allegiance to the English king, Llywelyn realised that he no longer had a viable heir, and decided he should go ahead with his previously mooted marriage to Eleanor de Montfort with a view to creating an 'heir of his body'. The timing of events seems to confirm Smith's theory. Eleanor is thought to have been married by proxy in 1275, at age 23, prior to her mother's death in April of that year. Countess Eleanor was very probably personally involved in the arrangements to forward her daughter's marriage to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. She was certainly very active during her ten years of exile in 'pursuing her interests and interminable legal battles' as she had been in the past.⁴⁹ Although she and her family were not welcome in England, the French king did help her.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ M.W. Labarge, *A Baronial Household of the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1965), p.51.

⁴⁹ Labarge, *Simon de Montfort*, p.264.

⁵⁰ Labarge, *Simon de Montfort*, pp.264-65.

Smith gives a detailed account of the marriage by proxy of Eleanor to Llywelyn, of Eleanor's capture and imprisonment while travelling to Wales and her eventual marriage at Worcester.⁵¹ Edward I was understandably against this marriage between the daughter of his former enemy and his very troublesome vassal, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. By this time Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had also failed, on a number of occasions, to obey a summons to pay homage to Edward. Edward therefore saw the marriage to the daughter of Simon de Montfort as a threat to the security of his realm. It is believed that Edward I suspected that there had been a renewal of scheming between Llywelyn and the de Montforts and when Eleanor set out to join Llywelyn at the end of 1275 in the company of her brother Amaury, Edward seems to have been aware of this plan to bring Eleanor to Wales. In any event he was very conscious of any threat by the de Montforts and had arranged for a watch on the coast in case any of the de Montforts had the temerity to try to return to England. His concern had been increased by the fact that de Montfort's sons, Simon and Guy, had murdered Edward's cousin, Henry of Almain, in a most despicable manner in southern Italy.⁵² Edward was determined that no de Montfort would again set foot in his kingdom.

Eleanor was unfortunately captured with her brother at sea on the journey from France to Wales by Edward I's men and she became Edward's prisoner. It was not until October 1278 that he finally agreed to allow her marriage to Llywelyn to go ahead. She would have been aged 23 when she set out from France, and 26 when she finally married. In a letter to Robert Kilwardby, then Archbishop of Canterbury, as part of an explanation for why he had abducted and was detaining Eleanor, Edward stated his belief that Eleanor thought that she could 'through the prince's power, spread the seed of malice which her father had conceived, something that she

⁵¹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.390-402, 410-11, 448-50.

⁵² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.391-92.

could not do on her own'.⁵³ So he was giving Eleanor agency for contriving to marry Llywelyn and come to Wales in order that with his aid she could resume the process (presumably of baronial reform) which her father had initiated in the years before his death, and cause disruption and dissent in his kingdom. That Edward should have thought Eleanor capable of taking direct action, instead of being merely a pawn in the planning of others, is significant to the arguments of this thesis. Eleanor may have possessed the similar spirited and independent nature of her mother. Edward would almost certainly have met the younger Eleanor when he visited her mother two years earlier in 1273. He had come to Paris and 'conveyed his wish to set aside all rancour against the countess, and he received her into his peace and allowed her the income which accrued to her from her English estates'.⁵⁴ If he had contact with the young Eleanor on this occasion he would have been able to assess what sort of woman she had become, and possibly this is the reason he felt that she was capable of planning mischief, or 'could spread the seed of malice'. In any event this is the feeling conveyed in his letter to the Archbishop.

The capture of Eleanor and her companions is an interesting event. Any successful manoeuvre of this kind in the Middle Ages would have been difficult and fraught with danger, especially for the abductees. There is some confusion in the records surrounding the precise location in which the abduction took place. The various chroniclers gave conflicting reports. It is thought that sailors from Bristol captured the two ships near the Isles of Scilly off the coast of Cornwall,

⁵³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.395. Smith gives the quotation in Latin in n.17. 'quod de tali coniunctur a principi posset antiquum malicie seminarium quod pater suus conceperat, quod per se spargere non poterat ... per huius principis potestatem'.

⁵⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.391.

acting under Edward I's instructions.⁵⁵ Smith cites payments of 220 marks to six named persons and the crews of four ships of Bristol. He also says that 'ships sailing from France would be more likely to set a course past the Isles of Scilly for the western promontories of Wales than enter the Bristol Channel, unless unfavourable winds had driven them off course'. The discovery of a de Montfort banner concealed in one of the ships which was bringing Eleanor to Wales seemed to confirm to Edward that Eleanor was planning more than just the consummation of her marriage.

J. Beverley Smith has shown that Llywelyn and Eleanor had in fact married by proxy before Eleanor departed for Wales. Smith cites a letter from Pope John in 1277 to Edward I requesting him to free Eleanor, in which the pope uses the Latin words *per verba de presenti*, 'by words of the present'.⁵⁶ He also states that these same words were translated from the Welsh chronicle *Brut Y Tywysogion* when it referred to the prince's marriage, *trwy eiriau cynddrychol*.⁵⁷ Llywelyn seems to have been careful to make sure Eleanor was safely married to him before she set out from Montargis. It is thought that Llywelyn knew Edward was having his messengers watched⁵⁸ and possibly it was felt there was less danger for Eleanor if she were to have been intercepted on her journey. As the wife of a nobleman, Eleanor's status would have been higher than as the unmarried daughter of a traitor. Llywelyn's messengers who accompanied Eleanor included two Dominican friars, and they would most probably have ensured that the marriage

⁵⁵ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.396.

⁵⁶ This letter is cited in *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland, Papal Letters, Vol. I, AD 1198-1304*, W.H. Bliss, ed. (London: 1893), p.452.

⁵⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.397. Smith also gives references which support the fact that 'canon law fully endorsed a marital bond made by the consent of the parties *per verba de presenti*' and that 'marriage *per verba de presenti* ... created a firm marriage bond'. See pp.397-98, n.27. The words *per verba de presenti* also confirm that this was indeed a marriage and not a betrothal, when the words *per verba de futuro*, a promise made for the future, would have been used.

⁵⁸ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.393 and n.8.

per verba de presenti was transacted in the proper manner. It is also possible that Eleanor and her mother may have insisted she be safely married before she left, possibly for reasons of her safety if she were captured. We will probably never know.

Eleanor de Montfort's life was a strange mixture of tragic events over which she would have had no control. As the daughter of a great Anglo-Norman magnate, Eleanor would have come from a comfortable, cultured background, but, as previously stated, when she was aged thirteen her father was killed and she and her mother retreated into exile to the Dominican nunnery at Montargis in France, which was a de Montfort foundation.⁵⁹ Among noble families in the Middle Ages, a good marriage was as important to the girl as it was to her parents. Eleanor probably experienced disappointment and possibly a degree of shame at the indefinite postponement of her proposed marriage to Llywelyn. Life within a convent would certainly have differed from the life she had experienced in England as the daughter of the Earl and Countess of Leicester. She was accustomed to a lifestyle where a certain amount of luxury would have been the norm. Countess Eleanor's first husband was the wealthy William Marshal, earl of Pembroke (d.1231), and although she experienced many difficulties and delays in obtaining access to all of her dower, she was a very wealthy woman.⁶⁰ After her first husband's death, her brother, Henry III, had given Eleanor the castle and manor of Odiham, and following her marriage to Simon de Montfort, while the couple still enjoyed the king's favour, he gave them the castle of Kenilworth. Items among Countess Eleanor's household expenses for the year 1265, prior to Simon de Montfort's death, include purchases for her daughter of expensive miniver (a white fur much used in the Middle Ages as trimming and lining) and a gilded plate,

⁵⁹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.390-1.

which would indicate that the young Eleanor was brought up to enjoy the finer trappings of a great magnate's household.⁶¹ This would mean that she would wish to take her rightful place in society as the wife of a nobleman as befitted her rank as a granddaughter of an Angevin king. Although her father was considered a traitor, the fact that Edward I had shown goodwill towards his aunt in Paris in 1273 must have given Eleanor some hope that her previously planned marriage to the Welsh prince could still be achieved.

Eleanor remained Edward's prisoner from the end of 1275 until after the Welsh war of 1277. She was first taken to Bristol Castle with her companions, but later transferred to Windsor Castle where she remained in 'honourable imprisonment'. Her brother Amaury was imprisoned in Corfe Castle and was to remain there until 1282. As J. Beverley Smith has stated, one chronicler, Walter of Guisborough, was later to refer to the capture and imprisonment of Eleanor 'as though it had been the main cause of the war of 1277'.⁶² As a result of this war Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had been dispossessed of most of the lands which he had held previously and Edward must have felt that the marriage to Eleanor no longer held the threat he previously feared. From Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's point of view, the war of 1277 represented his personal defeat and, for a time, the end of his determination to rule a united Wales.

Eleanor's capture and imprisonment by Edward may not have been the main cause of the war of 1277, but it was certainly a contributing factor. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's position had deteriorated in the ten years since 1267 and the Treaty of Montgomery, when Llywelyn officially

⁶⁰ LaBarge, *A Baronial Household of the Thirteenth Century*, p.14. See also Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, pp.49-55.

⁶¹ Labarge, *A Baronial Household of the Thirteenth Century*, pp.138 and 1199.

⁶² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.396.

became known as prince of Wales. Llywelyn's brother and heir, Dafydd, had transferred his allegiance to Edward following the failed attempt on Llywelyn's life as stated previously, and much of the territory Llywelyn had taken from the marcher barons during the time of unrest had been reclaimed. Llywelyn's marriage to Eleanor was seen by Edward as a renewal of the previous alliance with the de Montfort family to undermine his kingdom. Henry III had died at the end of 1272, and Edward I was a very different monarch. Llywelyn had failed to do homage to Henry III, and then to Edward I on a number of occasions (at least six), and it appears that by about 1274 Edward was looking for a reason to intervene in Wales and bring it under English power once and for all. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had certainly become recalcitrant in his behaviour towards Edward I, and war with Wales seemed imminent. The king and his council considered proposals from Llywelyn in November 1276. He offered to do homage to Edward at Oswestry or Montgomery if he could be assured of his personal safety, and he asked for two things. One was 'the king's confirmation of the peace of 1267' and the other was 'the release of his wife, Eleanor, so that she might join him.'⁶³ The king argued that Llywelyn had failed to 'fulfil, unconditionally and without prevarication, the service to the king which it was his duty to perform' and so on,⁶⁴ and Llywelyn was formally condemned. Llywelyn was proclaimed a rebel on 12 November, 1276 and he submitted to Edward I's terms on 9 November, 1277 after he had been territorially dispossessed and humiliated.

Edward must have felt there was no longer any danger to his realm once Llywelyn had been defeated, and he finally released Eleanor. After all, by 1278 Eleanor's brothers were no longer a threat. Simon died in 1271, Guy was imprisoned in Italy, and Amaury was still Edward's

⁶³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.406.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.407.

prisoner.⁶⁵ Significantly, Smith says that ‘not a single document makes any mention of the matter’ of Eleanor’s release.⁶⁶ An indication of Edward’s confidence that a conspiracy between Llywelyn and the de Montforts was no longer a threat may be seen when on January 4, 1278 the constable of Windsor Castle was directed by him to allow envoys sent by Llywelyn to talk with Eleanor, ‘secretly or openly’.⁶⁷ It was October, however, before the marriage between Llywelyn and Eleanor was consecrated. It therefore seems that Eleanor was confined by Edward from November 1275 until her marriage in October 1278. The wedding was a grand occasion at the cathedral church at Worcester, and Edward gave the bride in marriage. Edward also provided the feast. Edward’s queen, Eleanor of Provence, and Alexander of Scotland and his queen were among the guests.

In 1265 when they were betrothed, Llywelyn had been at the pinnacle of his achievements, but thirteen years later things were very different indeed. Life with Llywelyn would have been fairly tenuous as to the future, and this is reflected in the letters Eleanor wrote to Edward I. One letter from Llanfaes, dated July 8, possibly 1278, refers to Edward’s kindness to her at Worcester and asks him not to believe ‘sinister’ rumours about her and her husband. A second letter dated October 18, 1279 is a plea that the king will show mercy towards her brother Amaury, who had been imprisoned with Eleanor and whose case is about to be heard. Amaury had been released into the custody of the bishops in 1277 following requests from a number of other persons as well as Eleanor⁶⁸ and he was finally freed in 1282, provided he left the country. A third much longer letter dated February 2, 1282 commences on a personal note asking that the king will

⁶⁵ Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, p.371.

⁶⁶ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.446.

⁶⁷ *Calendar of Welsh Rolls, Calendar of Chancery Rolls Various 1277-1326*, (London: 1976), p.170.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.400.

‘send her some news of himself’, but she then makes a plea on behalf of her husband concerning harassment he has suffered. The second half of the letter deals with Eleanor’s concern for the men who were captured with her. Evidently a certain John Becard had been pardoned, not as a result of Eleanor’s own efforts but that of others, even though she states ‘she has often petitioned the king on their behalf, and has not been heard’. In spite of this Eleanor requests the pardon of three other men and it appears she was successful at least in this final petition because ten days later on February 12, 1282 a pardon was granted ‘at the instance of Eleanor, princess of Wales’ to these three men.⁶⁹ Even though she was a member of the de Montfort family and now married to the prince of Wales, Edward I did at least grant Eleanor’s requests for mercy towards her brother and the men with whom she was travelling when captured. She was unfortunately unsuccessful in her attempts to aid her husband.

The final war between Edward I and the Welsh commenced in 1282. Eleanor was pregnant and both she and Llywelyn would presumably have been optimistic that she would bear a son. Not only did Eleanor produce a daughter, but tragically she herself died in childbirth on 19 June, 1282. She would have been about thirty years of age. Llywelyn himself was killed in the war on 11 December, 1282.

According to J. Beverley Smith, the marriage between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Eleanor de Montfort ‘was a vital element in the making of the war which destroyed the principality of Wales’.⁷⁰ We need to query his assumption that by giving birth to a girl, Eleanor was somehow derelict in her ‘great responsibility’ for ‘the security of the lineage of Aberffraw’. Llywelyn ap

⁶⁹ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, J.G. Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), pp.75-77.

Gruffudd must take some responsibility for not generating a male heir of his body. When he was at the height of his powers in 1265, he would have been in his early to mid forties and should have been thinking seriously then of marrying and generating an heir, whether he married Eleanor or someone else. That he waited another ten years to do something about it, when in his early to mid-fifties, is really surprising.

There is no doubt that women played a significant part on the political playing field in the conflict between Wales and England in the thirteenth century, but commentators and historians have largely regarded their roles as passive. Margaret Wade Labarge has said that the first duty of a noble wife was to provide an heir. Eleanor's marriage was arranged for her, but in this instance, although at first she appears to have been a political pawn while still a child, when she was older it is possible that she demonstrated a remarkable degree of agency, especially given that her marriage had so displeased the king. It is not surprising therefore that she was apparently unable to influence him in favour of her husband.

Llywelyn and Eleanor's daughter, Gwenllian, was removed to Sempringham in Lincolnshire by the order of Edward I, where she lived out her life as a nun, dying at the age of 55 years. For discussion of Gwenllian see Chapter 7.

EMMA AUDLEY

Like many of the women in this thesis, Emma Audley was another thirteenth-century noblewoman living in Wales who outlived two husbands. Along with Joan and Eleanor she had strong genealogical links to powerful Anglo-Normans. She was the daughter of Henry de

⁷⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.449.

Audley, an Anglo-Norman magnate and she married an important Welsh nobleman. It seems that she was the widow of Henry Tuschet when she married Gruffudd ap Madog, prince of northern Powys, because the *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous* for 9 March, 1258 mentions a third part of Leye Cumbrey formerly ‘held by Griffin de Bromfeld as the dower of his wife of the inheritance of the heir of Henry Tuschet’.⁷¹

At some unknown date, Emma married Gruffudd ap Madog, prince of northern Powys and for the purposes of this work is regarded as a Welsh noblewoman.⁷² She is visible on several occasions in the legal records of the period concerning her landed property. In 1270 Gruffudd had enfeoffed Emma, for her life, with the manor of Overton in Maelor Saesneg by one charter, and by another charter he granted her the manor of Eyton. The dower provision he made for his wife was confirmed, following his death, by Gruffudd’s sons, Madog, Llywelyn, Owain and Gruffudd.⁷³ Gruffudd ap Madog died in 1271 and Emma was indeed in possession of the lands. An Inquisition in 1277 found that because Emma had been ‘in the faith of the king of England’, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had ‘ejected her from her lands, and gave them to Madog ap Gruffudd’, Emma’s eldest son.⁷⁴ The manor of Eyton was later to be the subject of a dispute between Emma and her daughter-in-law, Margaret, the widow of Madog ap Gruffudd, in 1279. Emma and Margaret eventually resolved the dispute amicably, and I have discussed this matter in detail in Chapter 3 ‘Margaret of Bromfield’.

⁷¹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, Vol. I (London: 1973), pp.83-84.

⁷² For definition of Welsh noblewoman, see Introduction, pp.11-12.

⁷³ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, p.330. See also J.Beverley Smith, ‘Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales: a Grant of the Commote of Anhuniog, 1273’, *BBCS*, Vol. XXX (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, November 1983), pp.348-355.

Emma was a Welsh noblewoman who was receiving the income from the fine of *amobr* ‘for all her lands’, which fine was payable to the lord by the father of a woman for the loss of her virginity.⁷⁵ An undated petition No. 13080, thought to be from 1278-1282, reveals Emma claiming *seisin* of lands in Cynllaith and Nanheudwy, with the rents therefrom, which she had held in dower after the death of her husband. Emma had later granted the lands to her son Llywelyn for the sum of £14 per year, on the condition that if Llywelyn died before his mother, the lands should return to Emma. Llywelyn had died in the recent war and Roger Mortimer had siezed the lands and rents. Emma was therefore claiming them back.⁷⁶

Here we have another Welsh noblewoman who was no mere cipher. She had class power as she was receiving income originally from her father’s estate, and the death of her first husband placed her in the position of accruing rents for herself and her children. She had sufficient education and presumably influence with the Anglo-Norman rulers to make a claim for the return of her land and rents following their seizure in the wars over Wales. This woman had a considerable degree of agency and used her economic autonomy to secure her interests as a woman who could survive well in turbulent times. The editor of the *Welsh Assize Roll* has commented on how successful she was in the courts. He stated that she ‘was a consistently successful litigant’ and that she was ‘a privileged person to be rewarded for her compliance’.⁷⁷ From my research elsewhere in this thesis, it is clear that native Welsh noblewomen did not fare

⁷⁴ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, p.330. For an early discussion of the inquisition held by Edward I and the charters see F. Seebohm, *The Tribal System in Wales* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904), pp.151-54.

⁷⁵ *Calendar of Ancient Petitions relating to Wales*, W. Rees, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975), p.441. For a discussion of the income from *amobr* see pp.242-43, which discloses another Welsh noblewoman who was receiving the income from *amobr*.

⁷⁶ *Calendar of Ancient Petitions*, p.441.

⁷⁷ *The Welsh Assize Roll 1277-84*, J.C. Davies, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1940), p.155.

very well at the Welsh assizes from 1277 to 1284,⁷⁸ but as an Anglo-Norman noblewoman, Emma was very successful.

ELIZABETH DE FERRERS

Dafydd ap Gruffudd, a younger brother of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, married Elizabeth de Ferrers between 1265 and 1268. Dafydd had deserted his brother Llywelyn and gone over to the English side in March 1263, so that this marriage was arranged while he was living in England.

Elizabeth was the daughter of William de Ferrers, fifth earl of Derby. She had been married to Sir William Marshal, who died in 1265, and had at least two sons by him.⁷⁹ As the daughter of one Anglo-Norman earl and the widow of another Anglo-Norman magnate, Elizabeth brought to the marriage dower lands in Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Gloucestershire.⁸⁰

A.D. Carr tells us that in 1278 Dafydd exchanged Elizabeth's manor of Folesham in Norfolk for the manor of Norton in Northamptonshire which was held by Elizabeth's son John Marshal.

Also in 1280 a share in all the masses and prayers of the abbey of Citeaux was granted to Dafydd and Elizabeth by the Cistercian chapter general as a result of a petition by them made through the abbot of Aberconway.⁸¹

Very little is known about Elizabeth de Ferrers, and I am unaware of what became of her after the execution of her husband. According to J. Beverley Smith, Dafydd ap Gruffudd was said by

⁷⁸ See Chapter 8, 'South and Central Wales – Native Welsh Noblewomen in the Historical and Literary Record'.

⁷⁹ A.D. Carr, 'The Last and Weakest of his Line: Dafydd ap Gruffydd, the Last Prince of Wales', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (June: 1999), pp.381-82.

⁸⁰ Carr, 'The Last and Weakest of his Line', p.382. For lands in Northampton and Lincolnshire, see also *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Edward I*, Vol. II (London: Kraus Reprint, 1973), pp.151 & 280.

⁸¹ Carr, 'The Last and Weakest of his Line', p.388, n.59.

the Hagnaby chronicler to have sent his wife with Roger Clifford to the king in an unsuccessful attempt to ask for mercy.⁸² Smith also notes that the London chronicler stated that when Dafydd ap Gruffudd was captured in June, 1283, his wife, two sons and seven daughters were also taken.⁸³ Following her husband's execution, Elizabeth's two young sons were imprisoned by Edward I and were to remain prisoners in Bristol Castle until they died, no doubt because of their potential as successors to the princes of Gwynedd. The two boys, named Llywelyn and Owain, were thought to both be under five years old when they were taken to Bristol Castle.⁸⁴ One can only guess as to how Elizabeth felt when her husband was hung, drawn and quartered, and her two infant boys were escorted to prison for life. Llywelyn lived for only three more years, as he died in prison on 12 March, 1287, probably under eight years of age. Owain was said to be still alive in the castle in 1325, which means he spent at least 42 years in prison. In 1305 it was thought that an attempt would be made to free Owain and a wooden cage, bound with iron, was constructed. He was to be kept in the cage at night to prevent an escape⁸⁵ so it seems that the English king was still concerned to ensure there could be no possibility of resurrecting claims for a Welsh principality.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the marriage of Joan to Llywelyn ab Iorwerth may be seen as a continuation of the policy of marriage into the native aristocracy by the conquerors as part of a continued effort to legitimise the conquest of Wales. As the century moved on, the

⁸² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, p.576, **footnote** 223.

⁸³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, p.578, **footnote** 230. See *Annales Londoniensis, Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, vol. I (London: 1882), p.90. 'David autem frater Leolini jam decollati cum uxore sua, ii. filiis una cum vii. filiabus in Wallia captus est;'

⁸⁴ *Accounts of the Constables of Bristol Castle in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries*, M. Sharp, ed. (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 34, 1982), xxx.

⁸⁵ See also H.M. Colvin, ed., *The History of the King's Works*, Vol. II, The Middle Ages (London: 1963), p.580.

marriages of women like Emma, Elizabeth and also Hawise le Strange could also be seen, from the view of the Normans, as part of this same policy. However, the marriage of Eleanor de Montfort to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the last native Prince of Wales, because of its background which was set against a scenario of rebellion against the crown by the English barons and the Welsh, must be viewed in a different light. Although a marriage between the daughter of the earl of Leicester and the prince of Wales would theoretically be part of such a legitimisation, in reality it was primarily seen as overwhelmingly more favourable to the Welsh than the English. Ironically also, Joan's marriage ultimately aided the Welsh, more than it did the English. In the end, although these marriages were useful to the Welsh in the short term, from the Anglo-Norman viewpoint the consolidation of their rule as heirs of the conquerors was incomplete. Thus the use of naked force was once again required by Edward I to achieve his goal of the final conquest of the Welsh in 1283.

THE WELSH LAWS OF WOMEN

‘And whereas heretofore women have not been endowed in Wales, the king granteth that they shall be endowed’ proclaimed clause XII of the Statute of Wales which was promulgated by Edward I in 1284 following the final defeat of the Welsh.¹ Previously under Welsh native law, women could not inherit land, nor could land be inherited through women and consequently, a Welsh widow could not inherit a third share of her husband’s lands in dower as was the case under English common law. I intend to argue that while the native Welsh laws ostensibly stood as barriers to women owning land and influencing political affairs in Wales in the thirteenth century, in actual fact even before 1284 many Welsh noblewomen owned land and received dower from their husbands, and so played an active part in the political affairs of Wales. I will explore the paradox that despite the above proclamation by Edward I, after 1284 the situation with regard to Welsh noblewomen owning land declined from what it was in the century leading up to the conquest.

This thesis will show that while there is evidence to support the persistence of many Welsh native laws in many areas of Wales from 1284 through until the Act of Union in 1536, in practice, by the thirteenth century, English laws and customs were gradually being adopted, especially among the Welsh nobility. Furthermore, I contend that during the greater part of the thirteenth century itself, up until the final conquest, these native laws were being actively rationalised and brought to a prominence that had not really been sustained continuously from

¹ I. Bowen, *The Statutes of Wales* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), p.24. For valuable analysis of the strengths and limitations of the Statute of Wales see L.B. Smith ‘The Statute of Wales, 1284’, *The Welsh History Review*, 10, (1980), pp.127-54.

the time of Hywel Dda when the laws are believed to have been collected and assembled. As part of a concerted effort to make Wales a separate state, thirteenth-century Welsh rulers manipulated and managed the native laws to suit this end. They were not bound by ancient law – this was the exercise by Welsh rulers of power over the law, as distinct from the exercise of power bound by law. In effect the ruling group could use what they pleased to establish the ‘state’.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the thirteenth century was a time of great change in Western Europe,² particularly in relation to the laws of the land. The common law of England had its genesis in the twelfth century and came firmly into being by the middle of the thirteenth century. The political climate in Wales during the thirteenth century also saw many changes, as during this century Wales was dominated by two strong Welsh rulers, both of whom sought to rule a united Wales or Welsh ‘nation’. Previously even strong Welsh rulers, although they may have increased the area over which they dominated, did not really seek to unite Wales. For example, another great Welsh leader, Rhys ap Gruffudd (the Lord Rhys), who presided over Deheubarth in the twelfth century, appeared content to be a vassal of Henry II. He was certainly a willing ally.³ Two of the Anglo-Norman rulers of the thirteenth century are considered to have been weak kings, who were ultimately faced with rebellion and political dissent. This uncertainty produced a climate in Wales where strong native rulers could expand and consolidate their position with regard to their ambitions to govern a Welsh nation, without interference from Anglo-Norman kings who had to deal with far greater problems in their own personal domain. While they

² See my ‘Introduction’, p.1.

³ D. Walker, *Medieval Wales*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.50.

remained vassals of the kings of England, both Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd were able to expand their domination of native rulers and make inroads into marcher lordships.

The legal environment for noblewomen in Wales at this time was also determined by the political ascendancy of their marriage-partners of similar hereditary rank. Politically advantageous marriages with the Anglo-Norman nobility had been common since the coming of the Normans, and were a feature of the rise of both Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. Indeed both of these rulers married Anglo-Normans. As a consequence, Welsh noblewomen who married Anglo-Norman lords received land in marriage settlements and in dower, which was the custom under English common law, despite the prohibition on women owning land under Welsh native law. Moreover, as we will see, even marriages between the noble Welsh sometimes included dower in land.

The first clause of the Statute of Wales, which was titled ‘Wales Annexed to Crown of England’, contained the following statement concerning the laws and customs which were currently in use in Wales in 1284:

we have ... abolished certain of them [the native Welsh laws], some thereof we have allowed and some we have corrected; and we have likewise commanded certain others to be ordained and added thereto⁴

Wales had gradually become a feudal society as a consequence of the coming of the Normans, who brought with them new laws and customs, but as may be deduced from the above statement, many of the ancient native Welsh laws and traditions continued to be applied and upheld. Indeed

⁴ Bowen, *The Statutes of Wales*, pp.2-3.

in small pockets of Wales they were still in use until the fifteenth century.⁵ Primogeniture for example, where the eldest male was the heir, was the form of inheritance brought to Britain by the Normans, but in Wales partible inheritance among male heirs was the custom and ‘title to land depended on membership of a patrilineage and was restricted to the male members of a four-generation agnatic group’.⁶ It should be noted, however, that dynastic succession in Wales was quite different from the inheritance of a patrimony and that, in principle, kingship could not be divided.⁷ For example the succession to the ruler of Gwynedd, or Powys, or Deheubarth, would fall to one man, usually the eldest son of the ruler. Another difference was that illegitimacy was no bar to either dynastic succession or inheritance of a patrimony.

The noblewomen in this study were at the uppermost level of Welsh society and in many cases would have ranked among the highest level of Anglo-Norman society as well. For example, the women studied include wives and daughters of Welsh princes, some of whom were closely related to the English kings. Consequently, a great deal of landed territory and power was at stake when it came to considerations of marriage among this group. Marriage contracts with Anglo-Norman noblewomen would have included dowry in the form of land and the acquisition of this land would have been the prime consideration in the choice of the marriage partner. If the bride were an heiress, the prospective husband could look forward to controlling his wife’s

⁵ R.R. Davies gives many examples of the Welsh adopting English land practices when it proved to their advantage, and conversely, of the English settlers adopting Welsh tenurial and inheritance customs when those practices suited them. Indeed according to R.R. Davies, a hybrid system of dividing land held by English tenure between male heirs in the Welsh way ‘survived in Pembrokeshire into the sixteenth century and beyond’. R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change Wales, 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.448-456.

⁶ R.R. Davies, ‘The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage in Late Medieval Wales’ in D. Jenkins and M.E. Owen, eds., *The Welsh Law of Women* (Cardiff: Uni of Wales Press, 1980), p.101.

⁷ P.I. Lynch, ‘Court Poetry, Power and Politics’ in T.M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell, eds., *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.175. In actual practice, however, disputes among family members over succession were common.

landed interests during the period of the union, as well as having it for their offspring. Similarly marriages were sought by Anglo-Norman lords among the Welsh noblewomen as a means of forming political alliances, and these would also have included marriage contracts involving landed territory. Noblewomen in both Welsh and Anglo-Norman societies would therefore have been highly valued and sought after as marriage partners and we must explore the legal position as it related to women holding land in this period in both Wales and in England.

The extant copies of the ancient Welsh native laws, the so-called law of Hywel Dda, which were redacted in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, contain specific 'Laws of Women' which outline the status of women and their place in Welsh society.⁸ A narrative of the history of noblewomen in Wales in the thirteenth century would therefore be incomplete without reference to the native Welsh Laws of Women, but whether in the thirteenth century these laws were commonly upheld in Wales as a whole is doubtful, and certainly unclear. The laws are believed to have been brought together during the hegemony of Hywel Dda who is said to have ruled all of Wales, except the south east, in the tenth century. Unfortunately there is no written record of the law as it was then, but rather the laws developed 'with increasing sophistication' from the time of Hywel Dda until the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.⁹ It is thought that all of the manuscripts which we now hold were written in Gwynedd which was a 'great centre of Welsh juristic learning in the thirteenth century'.¹⁰

⁸ For translation of the law see D. Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1986). The law is divided into three books. Book I deals with 'The Laws of Court', Book II 'The Laws of the Country' and Book III 'The Justices' Test Book'. 'The Laws of Women' are in Book I, pp.45-61. Other sections of interest are 'The Royal Family', 'The Queen's Officers', 'Women and Land', 'Aliens' and 'Family Law'. For specific and comprehensive studies of the 'Laws of Women' see D. Jenkins and M.E. Owen, eds., *The Welsh Law of Women* and for similarly detailed studies of 'The Laws of Court' see T.M. Charles-Edwards, M.E. Owen and P. Russell, eds., *The Welsh King and his Court*.

⁹ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, pp.xii-xviii.

¹⁰ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.xxvii.

There were several versions of the native Welsh laws and some of them are thought to have been of earlier provenance than the Iorwerth version, which is believed to have been compiled in the early thirteenth century.¹¹ According to Huw Pryce the compilations of the laws in all of the manuscripts which we now hold date from the early thirteenth century and he believes that the chronology of the three main law books was as follows. The earliest was the *Cyfnerth*, probably from Deheubarth in the late twelfth century, followed by the *Iorwerth* redaction which was compiled in Gwynedd in the earlier thirteenth century, thought to be during the time of Llywelyn Fawr (d.1240) and then came the *Blegywryd* version from Dyfed, with a production date roughly the same or a little later than the Iorwerth redaction, middle or second half of the thirteenth century.¹²

As R.R. Davies has said, native Welsh law was not a corpus of law issued by or in the name of a sovereign ruler and ‘enforced by the machinery of state authority’. It was customary law which was ‘an assemblage of legal lore transmitted largely by memory and arranged, glossed and expounded by a class of quasi-professional jurists’.¹³ The laws as they exist in their extant redactions, and as they are pertinent to the period of this study, i.e. the thirteenth century, were probably not all in use at any one specific time. Rather they are collections of laws which had developed before, during and after the rule of Hywel Dda up until the time they were redacted in

¹¹ For a brief description of each law book see T.M. Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), pp.20-21.

¹² Huw Pryce, *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp.3-8.

¹³ R.R. Davies, ‘Law and National Identity in Thirteenth-Century Wales’ in R.R. Davies et al, eds., *Welsh Society and Nationhood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1984), p.54.

the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Indeed the laws continued to be further developed up until the Act of Union of 1536 when all of Wales came under English law.¹⁴

This was not a formal set of laws and statutes which were designed to be enforced by the state. The extant law books were for the use of lawyers and others, who needed to know the traditional customs, rights and obligations of the people, and the prescribed compensation or punishment for offences, as well as guidance in the settlement of disputes. As R.R. Davies has pointed out, the law books were ‘lawyers’ manuals, not guidebooks for social observers’¹⁵ and we may only use the information gleaned from them to help us to understand certain situations. The law books do not provide evidence or proof to support the arguments of scholars, because it is believed that many of them were probably archaic and obsolete. It is also not known which laws were in fact in use in the thirteenth century, even though the laws were redacted in that century. The law books can, however, be used as a guide to support hypotheses as to what may have been behind certain decisions which were taken, and to explain certain outcomes. An example of this, from my own point of view in the context of writing this thesis, would be the question of who owned the movable goods, i.e. cattle and money, which Senana the wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn used as security in her attempt to free her husband. I theorise that as Gruffudd’s wife, under Welsh native law she would have movable goods in her own right and also after the expiration of seven years of marriage, she would share half of the household movable wealth.¹⁶ Other examples may

¹⁴ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.xvii.

¹⁵ Davies, ‘The Status of Women’, p.94.

¹⁶ See page 32 above.

be found throughout this thesis and one of the main reasons for including this chapter on the Welsh laws of women has been to provide background and rationale for some arguments.

The issue of whether or not the native laws were applied to Welsh noblewomen as well as to all other Welsh women must be addressed in this present study; however, I believe there can be no definite answer to this question. For the more prominent Welsh noblewomen, for example the wives of Welsh princes, it is also uncertain whether they would be subject to native Welsh laws in the same way in which these laws would have applied to other Welsh noblewomen. Certainly the original laws included the Welsh ‘king’ and ‘queen’¹⁷ but it also becomes necessary to look at the laws concerning ‘aliens’, as both of the Welsh princes of Gwynedd who were the foremost rulers in Wales in the thirteenth century, married Anglo-Norman noblewomen – in effect ‘aliens’. Anglo-Norman noblemen who married Welsh women would have also been termed *alltudion* or ‘aliens’ under Welsh native law.

During the thirteenth century both Llywelyn Fawr and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd were primarily concerned to rule a Welsh ‘nation’, or at least to gain independence from England, so that it is likely that they had wanted many of their native laws to remain. Indeed Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was determined to preserve the native laws and among the grievances outlined to Archbishop Pecham, when Pecham offered mediation in an effort to end the war of 1282, was that of ‘the undermining of native law and the disregard of established customs’.¹⁸ I would argue though that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd’s emphasis on retaining native Welsh law had more to do with his

¹⁷ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, pp.5-41 See also R.C. Stacey, ‘King, Queen, and Edling in the Laws of Court in *The Welsh King and his Court*, pp.29-62.

¹⁸ J.B. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p.534. See also Davies, ‘Law and National Identity in Thirteenth-Century Wales’, pp.51-69, esp. pp.59-67.

political ambitions than with any altruistic endeavours on behalf of his people. For example, it is thought that during the thirteenth century the propagandists of Gwynedd consciously manipulated Welsh law for those very political reasons. Peredur Lynch has stated that this was done in an effort to ‘elevate the status of Aberffraw and to provide pseudo-historical justification for the political ambitions of its princes’.¹⁹ This would explain the many contradictions in the stated aims of the two princes of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century and what the evidence shows actually took place. There are examples in other parts of Western Europe where early medieval laws were used as propaganda devices. Patrick Wormald shows that, for example, *Lex Salica* of the sixth century came to ‘identify the Franks as a people’ and that the people who followed Burgundian Law were known as Gunbadingi after its author King Gundobad (AD474-516), founder of Burgundian law-making.²⁰ I believe that it suited both Llywelyn Fawr and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to be seen as staunch champions of their unique and distinctive native Welsh laws and customs, but as we shall see, they were both extremely pragmatic when it came to their own personal interests, particularly that area of the laws concerning women and inheritance.

Earlier in the century Llywelyn Fawr had wholeheartedly adopted the Norman custom of primogeniture where the eldest legitimate son inherits, when it came to his choice of an heir. His actions suggest that he may have been interested only in those native Welsh laws which suited him, or that he was open to the appeal of Norman customs which accorded with his political ambitions. The available evidence discloses that in Wales and the march in the thirteenth century, for both the Welsh and Anglo-Normans, there was what might be called opportunistic

¹⁹ Lynch, ‘Court Poetry, Power and Politics’, p.188

²⁰ P. Wormald, ‘*Lex Scripta and Verbum Regis: Legislation and Germanic Kingship, from Euric to Cnut*’, in P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood, eds., *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1977), p.134.

borrowing of laws and customs on both sides.²¹ Llywelyn Fawr was determined that his own heir should be his younger legitimate son and not his illegitimate eldest son, because he petitioned Pope Honorius III, who in 1222 confirmed that Dafydd should succeed Llywelyn because he was his legitimate son, the eldest son of his legal wife. This was despite the perceived lack of discrimination against illegitimate offspring under Welsh law, especially when it came to questions of sons succeeding to the patrimony. Four years later Llywelyn again successfully approached the pope to have his wife Joan, the mother of his heir, who was herself the illegitimate daughter of King John, declared to be legitimate.²² I would suggest that Llywelyn's insistence on the legitimacy of his heir and his wife has more to do with status under English law than Welsh. It also demonstrates the key role of the noblewoman and implies a certain 'strength' in her position. Furthermore, it strengthens the argument that the native Welsh princes of Gwynedd favoured the adoption of common law practices and of compliance with ecclesiastical law when it came to legal marriage.

There is a further consideration in Llywelyn's approaches to the pope for legitimisation of his wife and son in 1222 and that is, in acceding to his request, the pope implicitly acknowledged that Llywelyn had no 'secular superior'. In 1202 Pope Innocent III had refused to legitimise the bastard children of Count William of Montpelier. The pope argued in the decretal *Per Venerabilem* that although he had recently legitimised two illegitimate children of the king of

²¹ Davies, 'Law and National Identity in Thirteenth-Century Wales', pp.60, 63. See also Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change*, p.21 and L.B. Smith, 'Towards a History of Women in Late Medieval Wales' in M. Roberts and S. Clarke, eds., *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.23. A.D. Carr has stated that 'the Normans had a particular talent for adopting the customs and habits of the people among whom they settled'. A.D. Carr, *Medieval Wales*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), p.37.

²² M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), p.393, n.1 For discussion see M. Richter 'David ap Llywelyn, the First Prince of Wales', *The Welsh History Review*, vol 5, No 3 (June 1971), pp.213-14.

France, ‘the king of France had no other superior to whom he could appeal in such a case, whereas the count had a superior lord; namely the king himself’.²³ His successor Honorius III found no difficulty legitimising Joan. Perhaps Llywelyn took advantage of the fact that Honorius III was ‘a mild and peace-loving pontiff’.²⁴ As Joan was the daughter of King John this may have followed the same rationale as the legitimisation of the children of King Philip of France. John could not have legitimised his own daughter, nor presumably could Henry III have legitimised his own sister. Llywelyn seems to have cleverly arranged tacit acknowledgement by the pope of Llywelyn’s powerful position of having no superior lord. For a Welsh prince concerned with ruling a united Wales, this was a shrewd political manoeuvre. The very act of approaching the pope directly was an assertion by Llywelyn of political independence.²⁵ It also shows that even though the illegitimacy of his legal wife and eldest son were permissible under Welsh native law, and in theory made no difference when it came to inheritance of the patrimony, Llywelyn must have felt he was vulnerable to rely on his native law alone. In order to ensure the security of his position, he deemed it necessary to comply with English common law and ecclesiastical law. Ultimately, of course, it made no difference when it came to the actual succession following his death.

Irrespective of the struggle by the Welsh princes for a ‘united’ Wales, by the thirteenth century much of Wales was becoming more and more subject to English common law. There were times when litigants appealed to the ancient Welsh laws, but these occasions were becoming less frequent. As previously stated, native laws became entrenched in small pockets in the north east

²³ B. Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 129.

²⁴ Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State*, pp.139-40.

²⁵ For further discussion see Richter, ‘David ap Llywelyn, The First Prince of Wales’, pp.213-14.

of Wales, and it appears to have suited both the English and Welsh for those laws to be enforced locally at times in the fourteenth and even fifteenth centuries.²⁶ For the greater part of Wales, however, English common law came gradually into use from the time of its beginnings in England in the twelfth century and was widely used in the marches and other areas, particularly in the south, by the thirteenth century.²⁷ R.R. Davies' paper 'The Law of the March' explains the intricacies of marcher law as it evolved from the beginning of the conquest in the eleventh century.²⁸ Davies stated that by the thirteenth century the common law of England had 'a firm foothold in the Welsh marches'.²⁹

The march of Wales was the description given to those areas which roughly formed the border between England and Wales during the medieval period. As the Welsh and Anglo-Norman forces gained, lost and regained control of certain areas during the two hundred years of the conquest, so the areas known as the march were in a continual state of flux, as to where their borders actually were, and to which lords the people owed allegiance. In the words of T.M. Charles-Edwards, this was 'a fluctuating political boundary'.³⁰ By their very nature as areas 'where the highland and lowland zones of Britain meet',³¹ the marches with their plains and river valleys attracted the English settlers who came and colonised Wales from the beginning of the Norman conquest of Wales in 1068. According to R.R. Davies the march was not only a

²⁶ For discussion of the continued use of Welsh native laws see R.R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1282-1400* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978), pp.448-456 and also Davies, 'The Status of Women', pp.100-103 .

²⁷ For a brief but concise outline of the development of the 'custom of the king's courts into the Common Law of England' over the period c.1160 – c.1240 see R. Frame, *The Political Development of the British Isles 1100-1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), esp. 'English government in England and Wales' pp.74-85.

²⁸ R.R. Davies 'The Law of the March', *The Welsh History Review*, vol.5 (June 1970), pp.1-30.

²⁹ Davies , 'The Law of the March', p.22.

³⁰ Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws*, p.11.

³¹ Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales*, p.302.

frontier, but also ‘formed a racial divide between English and Welsh’. As a consequence administrative divisions known as Englishries and Welshries were created in marcher lordships. Justice for Welsh people in the lordship was thus administered under Welsh native law and for those of English descent, under English common law.³² Welsh and English law therefore seem to have co-existed in most of Wales during the two hundred years of the conquest, and the marcher lords exploited Welsh law when it suited them in much the same way as the Welsh princes exploited both their native law and the English law, for political advantage and for material gain.

The differences in the administration of law for people of Welsh and English ancestry could be relevant to the Welsh noblewomen in this study because many of them were married to marcher lords, lived in the march or owned land on the border of Wales and England. Similarly, where the marriage partners of the Welsh nobility were of Anglo-Norman descent, in the eyes of the Welsh they would have been considered *alltudion* or ‘aliens’, and may have been subject to those aspects of Welsh native law which covered aliens. For example, the law states that the son of a Welsh woman who was legally given to an alien – in the context of this study legally married to an alien - is entitled to inherit land from his mother even though land could not usually be inherited through a woman.³³

When Edward I and his forces finally completed the conquest of Wales by 1284, the king issued the Statute of Wales in which he declared that the Welsh were allowed to keep some of their laws, although he had abolished or amended others. By granting in Clause XII that Welsh

³² Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales*, p.309.

³³ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.107.

women could in future be dowered like their English sisters, he was amending a perceived anomaly in Welsh native law, and this again demonstrates the importance of Welsh noblewomen, and of women in general. Clause XIII, however, which was entitled ‘Inheritance by the Law of Wales’, ordained the Welsh custom of ‘partible inheritance among heirs male’ with the amendment that bastards were not to inherit.³⁴ This same clause also allowed for females to inherit in the event of the absence of a male heir, with the final comment that ‘although this be contrary to the custom of Wales before used’.³⁵ The king was prepared to allow partible inheritance to stand, but as was the case under English common law, illegitimate sons could not inherit and females could now inherit the patrimony in the event of failure in the male line.

Lest I be accused of believing that ‘the emancipation of Welshwomen from the tenurial shackles of an outmoded and conservative inheritance law is attributed entirely to the liberating forces of English land law’³⁶ I feel I must stress that this is not what I am suggesting. My contention is that the Welsh themselves were making changes to the laws concerning inheritance through the thirteenth century up until 1282. The difficulty as I see it in aligning my argument with those of scholars who quote evidence from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is that following the defeat of the Welsh in the late thirteenth century, there were very few Welsh noblemen remaining of the status of those to whom I refer earlier in the thirteenth century. Following the conquest, the upper echelons of Welsh families were mainly comprised of the Welsh middle class, or *uchelwyr*, who had comparatively small land holdings and thus comparatively little

³⁴ Bowen, *The Statutes of Wales*, pp.25-26.

³⁵ Bowen, *The Statutes of Wales*, p.26.

³⁶ Smith, ‘Towards a History of Women in Late Medieval Wales’, p.23.

power when contrasted with the Welsh princes and noblemen of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Therefore even when women were increasingly able to own land, it was territorially of less importance than the holdings we are discussing in the thirteenth century. The thirteenth century up until 1282 was a time of reassertion of Welsh power, and consequently the territories under discussion were of greater importance strategically and in terms of the power assumed by the possession of the lands involved. The women in my study were the wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of rulers, not of members of the *uchelwyr* and for this reason I believe they were extremely important to political outcomes in Welsh medieval history.

The Welsh law books contain solutions for every conceivable situation and variation with which it was thought contemporary lawyers might have been expected to deal. Welsh native law, and in particular the law relating to women, is a very large and complex area of study. A body of work has been completed on the *Welsh Law of Women* by a group of eminent scholars and a recently published work *The Welsh King and his Court* provides more valuable analysis and discussion of the native Welsh laws, including timely work on the laws as they related to Welsh queens, or more precisely, consorts of Welsh princes. Robin Chapman Stacey has discussed the increased importance of the queen in the Welsh laws in the *Iorwerth* redaction. She convincingly argues that this change was directly connected to what may have been seen as Joan's considerable consequence, as the daughter of King John, in her role as Llywelyn Fawr's consort.³⁷ It is also gratifying in light of the subject of this present study to see that David Stephenson has commented that we cannot dismiss Joan as an 'exception to a general rule of passivity amongst the consorts of Welsh rulers'. Moreover, he cites the activities later in the

³⁷ Stacey 'King, Queen, and Edling in the Laws of Court', p.55-56 & 61-62.

century of Senana, the wife of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn and Eleanor de Montfort, the wife of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, to stress the point he is making about the role played by Welsh royal consorts. Emma and Margaret of Bromfield, who were consorts of successive princes of northern Powys during the thirteenth century, might also be included in a discussion of consorts of Welsh rulers in the thirteenth century. I have argued elsewhere in this thesis that like Joan, Senana, and Eleanor, both of these Welsh noblewomen from northern Powys, were very active in their own spheres of influence.³⁸

The following is a discussion of those aspects of Welsh native law which pertain to the women in this study. Under Welsh native law as it is laid down in the extant redactions, a girl remained under her father's protection and responsibility until she reached puberty between the ages of twelve and fourteen and a marriage was arranged for her. The marriage involved 'a complicated exchange of wealth in which the prime commodity to change hands was the girl herself'.³⁹ The girl's family would usually give a gift of money or movable goods with the girl as her dowry or *argyfrau*. Immediately upon her marriage a payment known as *amobr*, which was similar to *merchet* or *leyrwite*, became due and payable, usually by the girl's family, to the feudal lord. After the girl had shared her husband's bed for the first time and provided he was satisfied that his wife was a virgin, he would give her a gift known as *cowyll*, which is said to correspond to the morning-gift of Germanic society.⁴⁰ The value of the gift was evidently based on the status of the wife. D. Jenkins states that in the *Iorwerth* text the amount was £8 for a king's daughter,

³⁸ For Margaret Chapter 3 and for Emma Chapter 5, pp. 167-69.

³⁹ C. McAll, 'The Normal Paradigms of a Woman's Life in the Irish and Welsh Law Texts' in *The Welsh Law of Women*, pp.8-9.

⁴⁰ D. Jenkins, 'Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women' in *The Welsh Law of Women*, p.76.

£1 for a *gwrda*'s (nobleman) daughter and 80d. for a villein's daughter, although these amounts could change through a process of bargaining.⁴¹ In order for her to receive her *cowyll* the bride was obliged to specify what she wanted the *cowyll* to consist of before she left the marriage bed the morning following the marriage. Failure to make specific choices meant that she would forfeit exclusive rights to the *cowyll*, and the *cowyll* would become part of the common household pool of wealth.⁴²

Since according to native law no Welsh woman could inherit land, the gifts exchanged as *argyfrau* and *cowyll* usually took the form of movable commodities, such as household utensils and other portable items, and often included livestock. It should be noted that although women did not own land, they did own livestock, i.e. cattle, pigs and horses, and these animals would have been very valuable in this society. Vast landholdings would not be of much use without the means of production, namely cattle. Men needed women's *argyfrau*, especially when it included cattle, and this would have placed such women in a position of power in the relationship.

There are many variations in the redactions of the Welsh laws and while it is generally held that no woman could inherit land, nor could title to land be claimed through a woman, the laws relating to the Welsh king in the *Cyfnerth* version (Cyfn §73/2) state that land is paid as *cowyll* to a king's daughter.⁴³ This exception in the laws also provides evidence that in the thirteenth century Welsh noblewomen could and did own land. When Llywelyn ab Iorwerth gave land with his daughters for their marriages, under native law this was *argyfrau*. Welsh native law

⁴¹ Jenkins, 'Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women', p.76-77.

⁴² McAll, 'The Normal Paradigms of a Woman's Life in the Irish and Welsh Law Texts', p.10. See also Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.58.

⁴³ Jenkins, 'Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women', p.76 n.33.

apparently did not make an exception for royal *argyfrau* as it did for *cowyll*, so he was not following Welsh practice here.

There were many other entitlements and benefits, as well as forfeitures, which pertained to the practice of marriage in the Welsh Law of Women, some of which were designed to govern contingencies which might arise in the future of the union, such as separation before and after seven years, adultery by one or other partner, and so on. The Laws of Women commence with the rights of each partner in the event of separation.⁴⁴ There is a seeming irony here in the fact that the text foregrounds what happened in the event of the failure of a union, rather than stressing the entitlements which accrued for a successful partnership, but these are, after all, ‘lawyers manuals’ which would have been designed to deal with exceptions from the norm. At the expiration of seven years of marriage, the husband and wife were entitled to equal shares of the marriage wealth. The wife was entitled to a payment which was known as *agweddi* if she separated from her husband for a valid reason before the expiration of seven years, or if he abandoned her for an invalid reason during the same seven year period. If the marriage lasted for seven years then no *agweddi* was payable and the wife was entitled to a half share of the marriage-wealth even if they now separated or if the husband died.⁴⁵ T.M. Charles-Edwards equates *agweddi* with English dower (and the Irish *coibche*) because it was a payment from man to woman.⁴⁶ In a successful union, the *agweddi* presumably was never paid. This was different though from the English common law dower which stipulated that the husband bestowed on his

⁴⁴ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.45.

⁴⁵ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.46-7. For discussion see McAll, ‘The Normal Paradigms of a Woman’s Life’, p.16.

⁴⁶ T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.469.

wife one third of the lands which he held at the time of their marriage for her use if she survived him.⁴⁷

Some scholars have hypothesised that the legal status of Welsh women may have been higher than that of women in other early societies, for example in discussion as to the reason why there were so few nunneries in Wales in the Middle Ages.⁴⁸ It is possible to theorise, for example, that in a situation where the wealth in question was of equal value, if a Welsh woman were to receive half of the marriage-wealth at her husband's death and an English woman received one third of her husband's lands in dower at his death, then the Welsh woman might appear to be in a better position. Yet it is unlikely that a Welsh woman would be better off following the death of her husband after a marriage lasting at least seven years than a similar English woman, because although she would have received half of the marriage-wealth, the laws state 'when her husband dies, it is right for her not to start until the ninth day, and then after the last penny [is paid to her] let her go'.⁴⁹ But where was she to go? If she were fortunate she may have gained considerable wealth in movables, but she had neither land nor a home.

⁴⁷ *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Realm of England commonly called Glanvill*, G.D.G. Hall, ed. (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965), Book VI, pp.58-60.

⁴⁸ When searching for reasons for the scarcity of nunneries in Wales, F.G. Cowley states that in Wales 'the legal status of women was possibly higher than in England'. F.G. Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales, 1066-1349* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1977), p.37. Cf. T.P. Ellis who has said that 'in comparison with the status of women in other early laws, that of women in Wales was high'. T.P. Ellis, *Welsh Tribal Law and Custom in the Middle Ages*, Vol I, (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1982, reprint of Oxford edition 1926), p.386. (There is a problem with this theory in relation to the scarcity of nunneries, however, as this view would contradict the widely held opinion that generally in medieval Western Europe in periods when the status of women was high, it usually followed that a correspondingly strong provision was made for religious houses for women. See for example K.J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp.63-73.)

⁴⁹ Jenkins, *The Laws of Hywel Dda*, p.54.

Following the death of her husband the wife was allowed to stay in the home for nine days, but at the end of that time she was to take her half share of the household goods and animals and leave. As Dafydd Jenkins has said while ‘the English widow took her dower as an interest in land, ... she at least ensured that she had somewhere to lay her head’. The Welsh widow, who supposedly could not inherit land, had to rely on her children, if she had any, or perhaps her family of origin, to provide a home for her.⁵⁰ Hopefully because of the movable assets she could contribute she would be welcome. Provided the widow in question had been given to the man by her family with the gift of *argyfrau*, and then proved to be a virgin and received *cowyll*, she was entitled to retain what remained of both of these payments for herself and when added to the half-share of her husband’s wealth, excluding land, she may have been in a comfortable position financially. Another factor which may have influenced outcomes, but of which there would be no evidence, would be the effect of relationships within the family, such as affection for the woman by her family, for example, as mother or daughter. For the women in my study however, there are examples of sons contesting their mothers’ rights to dower lands so that family affection is not a reliable indicator.

For modern historians, one further factor which could contribute towards a theory of the higher legal status of Welsh women is the question of divorce. Although I have found no evidence of divorce among the women in this study, I am including the subject here as I feel it belongs with the discussion of the supposed higher status of Welsh women. When contrasted with ecclesiastical law, which prevailed in most of Western Europe and which allowed separation, usually annulment, only in exceptional circumstances, native Welsh laws apparently took a more relaxed view and did not see divorce as a rare outcome for a union. Indeed as I have mentioned

⁵⁰ Jenkins, ‘Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women’, pp.85-6.

above, the first item in the Welsh Laws of Women stated that if it happened that the couple separated after seven years of marriage it was ‘right for them to share everything in two halves’ and then proceeded to delineate the division of the marriage goods. The laws apparently sanctioned divorce in certain valid circumstances thereby giving rise to the view, in the eyes of modern historians, of higher legal status for Welsh women than for women in other Western European societies. It may be seen as allowing a woman a means of escape from an unhappy marriage. Of course men could divorce women more easily, but this work is concentrating on the rights of women. R.R. Davies has given examples of a number of recorded Welsh divorces in the fourteenth century so that it was certainly not uncommon.⁵¹ He has also stated that ‘divorces were not very difficult to come by and that they were regarded as the termination of a contract, not the annulment of a sacrament’⁵² which was the case under ecclesiastical and canon law. From the middle of the twelfth century the church throughout Western Europe ruled that a valid marriage was indissoluble. It should be remembered though, that it was not uncommon, from the twelfth century until Tudor times, among members of the nobility, or ‘the rich and powerful’, when they became dissatisfied with their marital arrangements, for one or both of the partners to seek impediments to the validity of their marriages. If such an impediment were discovered, it meant that the marriage would be deemed ‘never to have existed’.⁵³ As this present thesis is concerned with members of the nobility, the women in this study could very well have had access to the same processes for discovering grounds for annulment, should they have wished to do so.

⁵¹ Davies, ‘The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage’, 1980, pp.112-13.

⁵² Davies, ‘The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage’, 1980, p.113.

⁵³ For discussion of the history of divorce in England see O.R. McGregor, *Divorce in England* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1957), pp.1-5.

The Welsh laws mention several grounds whereby a woman could validly divorce her husband before the expiry of seven years and keep her *argyfrau*, *cowyll* and *agweddi*. These included the husband's impotence, if he was 'leprous' or had 'stinking breath' and if the wife discovered the husband on three occasions with another woman.⁵⁴ It is also thought that a couple could separate by mutual agreement and that the wife would retain her entitlements.⁵⁵ Both impotence and leprosy appear to be valid reasons for divorce and I would suggest that the term 'stinking breath' very probably related to a symptom of serious physical ill health. By today's standards this seems to be a very civilised and sensible way of dealing with failed marriages and could be seen as giving Welsh women a higher legal status.

There is another aspect of the laws which is relevant to a woman in my study, and that is the question of adultery by the wife. As we have seen, a wife could separate from her husband after she had found him a third time with another woman. For the first offence, the wife was entitled to monetary compensation of 'six score pence', the second time she was entitled to one pound and on the third occasion she was free to leave her husband 'without losing any of what is hers'.⁵⁶ On the other hand, any infidelity at all by a wife was considered a 'gross offence' and the offending man was required to pay compensation or *sarhaed* (insult payment) to the husband. The compensation for 'giving a kiss' was two-thirds of the *sarhaed*, for 'fondling' the full *sarhaed* was to be paid and if intercourse took place the *sarhaed* was to be augmented by one half.⁵⁷ One version of the laws also states that the husband may separate from his wife if 'she acts manifestly with another man' and that she may only keep 'the three things which are not

⁵⁴ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, pp.46 & 53.

⁵⁵ Jenkins, 'Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women', p.79.

⁵⁶ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.53.

⁵⁷ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.48.

taken from a wife', presumably her *argyfrau*, *cowyll* and possibly *agweddi*.⁵⁸ The husband was also entitled to beat his wife if he found her with another man, but if he did beat her he was not entitled to any compensation because 'there is no right to compensation and vengeance for the same offence'.⁵⁹

The one case of adultery among the women in this study was very publicly recorded and reported and concerned two individuals at the very highest level of the Welsh and Anglo-Norman nobility. The case was that of Joan, the wife of Llywelyn Fawr, who was said to have an adulterous relationship with the marcher baron, William de Braose. The introduction of certain amendments to the *Iorwerth* version of the laws, which were redacted during the reign of Llywelyn Fawr, is thought by modern scholars to be directly attributable to the status of Joan as the daughter of King John. It is postulated that because she was such a high profile figure the *Iorwerth* version was revised to give 'greater prominence to the queen and her household'.⁶⁰ If the laws of women were changed to benefit Joan's position, then perhaps she had indeed been punished under Welsh native law. Joan's lover was hanged and Joan herself was imprisoned by her husband for at least a year. Llywelyn's reaction seems extreme, but as we shall see, his actions were apparently vindicated, or at least overlooked by the crown.

Llywelyn had married Joan in 1205 and they were married for twenty-five years when the offence was committed in 1230. Nowhere in the native Welsh laws do I find death of the lover as the punishment for adultery, nor for that matter, imprisonment of the errant wife. Obviously

⁵⁸ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.48. For discussion of alternative interpretations of which possessions a separated wife could keep see Jenkins 'Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women', pp.81-83.

⁵⁹ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.53.

⁶⁰ Stacey, 'King, Queen and Edling in the Laws of Court' p.55.

Llywelyn sought ‘vengeance’ rather than an insult-payment. The enormity of the insult to Llywelyn was considered unconscionable by both Llywelyn and his men, and indeed he described the offence as causing him ‘opprobrium beyond measure’ when he defended his actions in hanging de Braose, to the king. He stated that his noblemen would countenance nothing less than the death of the lover and he had acted at once.⁶¹ No action was taken against Llywelyn by the crown and although Joan was imprisoned, she was eventually reconciled with Llywelyn. A very interesting clause in Law Book III, The Justices’ Test Book, under the heading ‘Homicide: Measure of Galanas and Sarhaed’⁶² gives three occasions where *sarhaed*, i.e. fine for injury, is payable to the King of Aberffraw. The first of these is ‘causing him shame in respect of his wife’, ‘or killing his messenger, or breaking his protection’.⁶³ Llywelyn, who incidentally used the title Prince of Aberffraw, gave as his reason for executing de Braose the enormity of the shame he experienced from the affair. The compensation given in the law book comprised a large quantity of gold and cattle for the three offences mentioned, but the shame in respect of the king’s wife was the more serious offence and was to be ‘augmented to be greater by a half’. Yet, as stated, Llywelyn chose vengeance.

I have no evidence for the payment of *sarhaed* or fine for injury to any of the women I have studied, but I notice that the book states the following:

In three ways every person in the world suffers *sarhaed*: by striking and battery, and by violence to him; and if it is a man, to lie with his wife is *sarhaed* to him; and though it be a woman, if she finds a woman with her husband, it is *sarhaed* to her; and so no-one escapes without a way to suffer *sarhaed*.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence concerning Wales*, J.G. Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), pp.51-52.

⁶² *Galanas* = compensation for murder, *sarhaed* = fine for injury.

⁶³ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.154.

⁶⁴ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.155.

Of interest also are the three occasions when *sarhaed* was due to the queen, which were ‘by breaking her protection, or by striking her, or by snatching something from her hand’. She was to receive a third of the king’s compensation, except for gold,⁶⁵ and so this would mean a third of the number of cattle which formed the insult payment due to the king. The queen’s compensation for injury may be equated with that of all other Welsh women according to these laws, because in common with all Welsh women the *sarhaed* of a king’s daughter is half her brother’s *sarhaed* until she marries and after she marries her *sarhaed* is a third of her husband’s.⁶⁶

The majority of the women in this present study, which concentrates on the thirteenth century, either held lands or expected to receive lands as part of marriage settlements or in dower. In their efforts to gain autonomy for Wales, both Llywelyn Fawr and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd were anxious to restore native Welsh law and custom, which involved the non-ownership of land by women, but when it came their own personal familial situation, English common law practices concerning bestowing of land were apparently more attractive. Llinos Beverley Smith believes that by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Welsh society which was ‘once resolutely patrilineal in its stance towards land slowly but inexorably came to accept the rights of women to a share of the patrimony’.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p.154.

⁶⁶ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, pp.154-55.

⁶⁷ Smith, ‘Towards a History of Women in Late Medieval Wales’, p.36.

Llywelyn ab Iorwerth gave his mistress Tangwystl, the mother of his illegitimate children Gruffudd and Gwenllian, a portion of land in Dincadfel, Llanafydd as a gage, which he had received from Hoedlyw ab Ithel. Tangwystl in turn is said to have ‘sold the land to Cynon ap Llywarch in whose family it remained’.⁶⁸ The reason for the gift of the land is not known. As pointed out before, the bestowing of land on a woman was contrary to Welsh native law but perhaps even though Tangwystl was not Llywelyn’s legal wife, she had received the land as *cowyll*. As Llywelyn’s concubine she would not have been entitled to dowry in land under English common law. On the other hand, perhaps it was a parting gift from Llywelyn when he married Joan. The liaison with Tangwystl must have continued for some time as she gave birth to two of Llywelyn’s children. A portion of land seems a suitable settlement in the circumstances, but this is speculation. Llywelyn ab Iorwerth also gave for the union of four of his daughters Welsh land as part of marriage settlements, and there is clear evidence that all of these daughters received dower in land upon the deaths of their husbands.⁶⁹ Llywelyn’s fifth daughter Angharad held landed property,⁷⁰ but I do not know whether her father settled this property on her at her marriage or whether she received the lands in dower following her husband’s death. I can find no evidence that she was dowered by her husband, who unlike the

⁶⁸ *Survey of the Honour of Denbigh, 1334*, P. Vinogradoff and F. Morgan, eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), pp.127-28. Hoedlyw ab Ithel mortgaged his rights to this land to Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, who in turn gave the mortgage to Tangwystl ferch Llywarch Goch. See also P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies AD300-1400*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), p.634. T.M. Charles Edwards comments on this transaction also, in *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp.435-7, and he states that ‘not all of this story can be true, for Cynon ap Llywarch lived at the end of the eleventh century not at the beginning of the thirteenth.’ He may be right, and as he suggests the name Cynon ap Llywarch may just stand for his lineage and that it may have been his descendants who bought the land. I note, however, that Tangwystl ferch Llywarch Goch had a brother named Cynon (ap Llywarch), and in view of the importance to the Welsh of keeping land in the family, it would have made better sense for her to have sold the mortgage to her brother.

⁶⁹ Details of the endowments of Llywelyn’s daughters may be found in my chapter 2, ‘The Daughters of Llywelyn Fawr’.

⁷⁰ See letter from Rhys Fychan ap Rhys ap Maelgwn which refers to the vill of Angharad the daughter of Llywelyn, dated 23 February, 1260 in *Littere Wallie*, J.G. Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1940), p.26.

husbands of her sisters, was a Welsh nobleman, but that does not mean that she did not receive dower, it may merely be that I have just not found any evidence.

Although the laws stated that women could not inherit land, nor was it possible to inherit land through a woman, under the heading ‘Women and Land’ the *Blegywryd* Redaction states that ‘if an owner of land has no other heir than a daughter, the daughter will be heir of all the land’.⁷¹ Huw Pryce believes that this ‘represents the intrusion of English law, upheld against local custom by the church of St Asaph in the late thirteenth century’ and that it was later confirmed by the Statute of Wales in 1284.⁷² At this point in the law book there is a section concerning the property rights of the sons of women who were conceived as the result of liaisons with aliens,⁷³ and as we shall see, this section would be relevant to many of the women in my study.

Most of the evidence cited in support of the argument that ‘land could only be inherited through males’ in Wales in the later Middle Ages comes from the north-east March, in particular the court rolls of Dyffryn Clwyd. Llinos Beverley Smith has stated that the ‘conclusions drawn on the basis of the experiences of the north-east march ... may not necessarily apply to the country in its entirety’.⁷⁴ R.R. Davies drew our attention to the resilience of Welsh law in the north-eastern march and to ‘the firm insistence that land could only be inherited by or through males’, but for the Welsh noblewomen in this study inheritance through females was possible, including women from the north-eastern march. Davies conceded that although in some areas such as

⁷¹ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, 1986, p.107.

⁷² Pryce, *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales*, pp.107-8.

⁷³ Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda*, 1986, p.107.

⁷⁴ Smith ‘Towards a History of Women in Late Medieval Wales’, p.16.

Dyffryn Clwyd the rules of inheritance by and through males was strictly adhered to, elsewhere the rules were often relaxed.⁷⁵

An example of where land was expected to be inherited through a female is the case of Gwenllian de Lacy, one of the daughters of Llywelyn Fawr. Curiously, in light of Davies' emphasis on the resilience of Welsh law in the north-eastern march, this land was in Dyffryn Clwyd. This particular case could be viewed both as an argument against the theory of the son of an alien inheriting through his mother under Welsh law, and as an argument for the view that land could be inherited through a woman. Dafydd ap Gruffudd (d.1283) was Gwenllian's nephew. His father Gruffudd and Gwenllian de Lacy were the son and daughter of Llywelyn Fawr and Llywelyn's mistress Tangwystl. Gwenllian was given the land in Dyffryn Clwyd by her father on her marriage to William de Lacy, an alien, and she had held the land for approximately sixty years. At her death, although she apparently had at least one son, Dafydd ap Gruffudd had expected to inherit the three townships which were held by his aunt. Dafydd did not inherit the lands as expected because the king had taken possession of them, and this particular issue was one of the grievances cited by Dafydd ap Gruffudd as among the reasons for the outbreak of the war of 1282, a significant political event.⁷⁶ Even though Gwenllian had at least one son, when she died it was not her son, by an alien, but her Welsh nephew, who expected to inherit her Welsh lands. Similarly, Roger Mortimer, the son of Gwladus ferch Llywelyn (d.1251), inherited the lands which Gwladus received from her father on her marriage to the Anglo-Norman lord Ralph Mortimer, and although this could be viewed as the son of an

⁷⁵ Davies 'The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage', p.101.

⁷⁶ A.D. Carr, "The Last and Weakest of His Line": Dafydd ap Gruffydd, the Last Prince of Wales', *The Welsh History Review*, vol. 19, No. 3 (June, 1999), p.390

alien inheriting his mother's lands, it had also been part of a marriage contract between an Anglo Norman lord and a Welsh noblewoman under English common law.⁷⁷

There were also instances where Welsh noblewomen received dower from their noble Welsh husbands. Maredudd ap Owain of Ceredigion who was a great-grandson of the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth had dowered his wife Ellen 'at the church door when he married her' and on August 27, 1246 Henry III ratified the 'assignment of that dower'.⁷⁸ The dower comprised 'Gwonhonith' (Gwynionydd), so that in native Wales in 1246 a Welsh nobleman of a prominent Welsh lineage did provide dower for his wife in land. Admittedly Ellen was the daughter of Sir Gilbert de Valle, an Anglo-Norman nobleman,⁷⁹ and also Maredudd ap Owain had transferred his allegiance from Dafydd ap Llywelyn to the king at the time the dower was ratified,⁸⁰ so that these two factors would almost certainly have influenced this transaction. A further example whereby a Welsh nobleman dowered his wife in the thirteenth century is the charter sealed by Owain ap Maredudd of Ceredigion, the son of Maredudd ap Owain mentioned above, on January 24, 1273 which provided dower of the commote of Anhuniog for Angharad his wife.⁸¹ At this time Ceredigion was under the control of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and he had confirmed the transaction by adding his seal to the document.⁸² It would seem that in those parts of Wales under Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's rule in 1273 Welsh noblewomen could hold land, despite the strictures of native Welsh Law and also in spite of Llywelyn's determination to retain those

⁷⁷ For Gwladus Ddu Chapter 2 'The Daughters of Llywelyn Fawr'.

⁷⁸ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, AD1232-1247* (London: 1906), p.487.

⁷⁹ P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies, AD300-1400* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), vol. 4, p.781.

⁸⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.55.

⁸¹ For discussion of this particular grant see J.B. Smith 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales: a Grant of the Commote of Anhuniog, 1273', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, Vol III (Nov. 1983), pp.348-355.

⁸² Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales', p.351 .

laws.⁸³ In January 1278, Edward I sent some of his nobles to inspect the lands which Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was proposing to assign in dower to Eleanor de Montfort, consequent upon their marriage,⁸⁴ so that Welsh native law notwithstanding, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd also dowered his own wife.

It is interesting to note that the sons of Maredudd ab Owain of Ceredigion, mentioned above, who were allies of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, also complained to Archbishop Peckham about the loss of their native laws. Gruffudd ap Maredudd and Cynan ap Maredudd complained that

All Christian men have their own laws and customs in their own lands; the Jews living among the English have their laws; they themselves [the Welsh] and their ancestors in their lands had their immutable laws and customs until the English deprived them of their laws after the last war.⁸⁵

This is similar to the wording of the letter Llywelyn ap Gruffudd sent to Archbishop Peckham.⁸⁶ I believe that the discontent of Gruffudd and Cynan ap Maredudd and their lamenting of lost native laws relates to the intrusive exercise of English royal control over their lands.⁸⁷ It is also of interest, however, that Angharad's grandsons, Owain and Thomas, were later to claim that Gruffudd and Cynan ap Maredudd had 'wrested the commote [Anhuniog] from their father during the conflict of the reign of Edward I'.⁸⁸ By seizing the commote which their brother had specified as dower for his wife, they show evidence that they were determined to stick strictly to

⁸³ I argue elsewhere in this thesis that this particular case of dower was not in fact dower, but replacement for *maritagium*. See Chapter 8 pp. 250-54.

⁸⁴ 'Calendar of Welsh Rolls', *Calendar of Chancery Rolls, Various*, (London, 1912), p.163.

⁸⁵ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.458 & 490, *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckham, Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis, ii*, C.T. Martin, ed. (London: RS 1882-86), pp.453-4. See also Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws*, pp.12-13.

⁸⁶ *Registrum Epistolae Peckham, ii*, p.442.

⁸⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.458.

⁸⁸ Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales', p.353.

the native Welsh laws when it came to women possessing rights in land, apart from the fact that they wanted it. I have dealt more fully with Angharad elsewhere in this thesis. (Chapter 8.)

The foregoing analysis has demonstrated that significant developments took place regarding the Welsh laws and the related issues surrounding the position of Welsh noblewomen in the wider context of a dynamic period in Welsh history. Firstly, it would appear that while the Welsh native laws may have been followed in some parts of Wales for some of the time in the thirteenth century, changes had been made to the laws themselves and Welsh and Norman rulers applied Welsh law when it suited them and English common law when that proved to their advantage, either personally or in terms of the political climate. It is equally apparent in this century that some Welsh rulers provided dowry in land to their daughters and a number of Welsh noblemen dowered their wives. Throughout these vicissitudes, Welsh noblewomen maintained their importance and status in the changing Welsh society. Through marriage, they helped provide political stability. They brought landed wealth and territory, as well as other wealth in the form of movable goods to the marriage and more importantly, they provided heirs for Welsh and Anglo-Norman noblemen.

Linda Mitchell has made similar claims in a recent work about the experience of English noblewomen in the thirteenth century. She argues that they were able to take advantage of increased legal status and access to power during the reigns of John, Henry III and Edward I by adapting to changing circumstances.⁸⁹ She has hypothesised also that the fourteenth century ‘may have witnessed a gradual but deliberate hardening of gender categories that had a

⁸⁹ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p.126-7.

deleterious effect on women's access to power'⁹⁰ and mentions the 'legal steps taken to limit women's access to property' which came about between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁹¹

I believe that many Welsh noblewomen were similarly able to benefit from the prevailing political circumstances during the reigns of these Plantagenet kings and took advantage of the access to landed wealth which presented itself. They experienced greater access to power and increased legal status than was to be available to the Welsh *uchelwyr* in the following centuries.

⁹⁰ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p.133.

⁹¹ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p.136.

CERTAIN WELSH NUNS

The position of women in religious life in Wales in the Middle Ages seems to have differed from that in the rest of western Europe. In western Europe aristocratic and middle class women entered nunneries in the medieval period for a variety of reasons. Some chose the contemplative life, others were placed in convents by family members, while there were some who endured a sort of 'honourable imprisonment' in nunneries, following the defeat of their fathers or husbands in wartime. Throughout the thirteenth century the church prized chastity above marriage, but this clashed with the secular need for heirs. 'The chastity of virgins, widows, and married women placed sexuality in a grey area between denial and control in order to procreate.'¹ Although virginity was valued as the ultimate state of perfection, the necessity for aristocratic families to produce heirs meant that in real terms, marriage was the desired state for an aristocratic woman in western Europe in the thirteenth century. For unmarried, widowed, illegitimate or even deformed or backward girls, nunneries were often used as an alternative to marriage. Berenice Kerr asserts that 'it was much cheaper for a father to provide for a daughter entering religion than to find a dowry for one seeking marriage'.² During the Middle Ages many nunneries were established in western Europe to meet the needs of aristocratic women outside marriage, but this does not appear to have been the case in Wales.

F.G. Cowley has commented on the fact that 'throughout the whole of the Middle Ages only four religious houses for women were established in Wales', which compares with 139 nunneries

¹ C. Casagrande, 'The Protected Woman' in Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, eds., *A History of Women in the West: II. Silences of the Middle Ages* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.80. This chapter by Casagrande (pp.70-104) contains helpful discussion of the church's attitude to chastity in the thirteenth century. See also Chapter 1 in the same volume by J. Dalarun 'The Clerical Gaze'. pp. 15-42.

established in England during the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth centuries alone.³ The reason for the small number of nunneries in Wales, compared with England, Ireland (over 40) and Scotland (at least fifteen), is not really understood.

When one looks at the evidence for religious houses for women in what are considered to be the other original 'Celtic' areas closely associated with Britain, namely Cornwall and Brittany, the information is surprisingly scarce which suggests little or no provision for women. There is very little evidence of the existence of religious houses for women in Cornwall in the early Middle Ages. Lynette Olson's work reveals evidence of only one possible monastery for women in pre-conquest Cornwall, that of St Sitofolla.⁴ Wendy Davies has commented on the lack of references to nuns in a collection of ninth-century material, which she states 'probably reflects the fact that there were few or none'. She further states that the 'absence of nuns is very unusual in Europe at this period'.⁵ Perhaps the reason for the apparent similar lack of provision for women outside marriage in these areas has something to do with a common connection between the Celtic origins of these areas in terms of traditional laws and practices which reflected a different perception of the role of women in the community from that which pertained in other areas of Western Europe in the early Middle Ages.

F.G. Cowley theorises that the legal status of women was possibly higher in Wales than in England,⁶ and that this might be a reason for the low number of religious houses for women. But

² B.M. Kerr, *Religious Life for Women c.1100-c.1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.101.

³ F.G.Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales, 1066-1349* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1977), pp.37-8.

⁴ Lynette Olson, *Early Monasteries in Cornwall* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), pp.20-28.

⁵ Wendy Davies, *Small Worlds: The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1988), pp.79-80.

⁶ Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales*, p.37.

there is no firm basis for presuming this, and indeed the reason is more likely to be concerned with Welsh cultural practice rather than legal status alone. Illegitimacy, for example, would probably not be a reason for placing a girl in a nunnery in medieval Wales. Under Welsh native law women do appear to have greater movable property rights than other western European women of the period, but at the same time, under these same laws, except in special circumstances, no Welsh woman is able to inherit land.⁷ It is possible, of course, that elite Welsh women, and possibly all Welsh free women, were more highly valued in their society or community especially as marriage partners, in particular because of the movable property they would bring to a marriage. Indeed R.R. Davies alludes to this paradoxical possibility when he refers to the absence in Wales of the heiresses and dowagers who inhabit the pages of medieval English history.⁸

Women in other parts of Western Europe founded nunneries themselves by providing the land on which to establish the nunnery. For example Leonor of Castile founded the female Cistercian abbey of Las Huelgas in Burgos at the end of the twelfth century and her daughter Blanche founded the female Cistercian abbey of Maubuisson in France in 1244.⁹ Since under Welsh native law no woman could inherit land, this might be one reason for the scarcity of nunneries. The Welsh Law of Women provided that if her husband died, the wife was entitled to half of the common pool of the chattels and movables of the marriage, which often included livestock. If we put ownership of land to one side, Welsh women may have indeed been better off financially

⁷ For discussion of property and inheritance rights of native Welsh women in the thirteenth century see D. Jenkins, 'Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women' in D. Jenkins and M.E. Owen, eds., *The Welsh Law of Women* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), pp. 69-114.

⁸ R.R. Davies, 'The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage' in D. Jenkins and M.E. Owen, *The Welsh Law of Women* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1980), p.101.

than women in other western medieval societies in that they may be able to support themselves in their widowhood and may not have such need of nunneries. (For discussion of the Welsh Law of Women, Chapter 6.) However, at the same time the perceived lack of ownership of land with which to either found or endow nunneries would be a factor.

Jane Cartwright has written about the scarcity of Welsh nunneries and nuns, and postulates the theory that 'private devotion rather than claustration was the mode of religious expression preferred for Welsh women'. She cites the relatively few wealthy women in the Welsh higher nobility with a consequent scarcity of the means for patronage of women's houses as one reason for the paucity of nuns, as well as a tendency for the medieval Welsh to see virginity in terms of its value as a 'saleable commodity' rather than for devotion to Christ. In other words, women were encouraged to marry.¹⁰

Another possible reason for the lack of Welsh houses for women, is the fact that the Welsh rulers favoured the Cistercian Order. Indeed, two of the three nunneries in Wales in the thirteenth century were Cistercian houses. This Order, which predominated in Wales in the thirteenth century, received women unenthusiastically. In fact the strong misogynist values of the Cistercian order may have been one of the reasons why so few nunneries existed in Wales at all.¹¹ As will be shown, the Cistercians were the favoured religious order of the Welsh, but at the same time they were much more misogynist than the Welsh society in which they were

⁹ M. Shadis, 'Piety, Politics, and Power: The Patronage of Leonor of England and Her Daughters Berenguela of León and Blanche of Castile' in J.H. McCash, ed., *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), p.203 & p.211.

¹⁰ J. Cartwright, 'The Desire to Corrupt: Convent and Community in Medieval Wales' in D. Watt, ed., *Medieval Women in their Communities* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1997), pp.20-48.

¹¹ For the classic discussion of the Cistercian Order, R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), pp.314-317.

located. This would mean that it is highly unlikely that they would encourage the setting up of nunneries, and also it is highly unlikely the Welsh would have encouraged their unmarried girls and women to enter such nunneries.

Whatever the reasons for the minimal provision of places for women in religious communities in Wales, however, there is also very little evidence in the public record concerning women who chose the contemplative life in Wales in the thirteenth century. The only women about whom we have reliable information are a group who were placed into religious communities upon the deaths of their husbands or fathers. Information concerning the fate of these particular women may be gleaned from several different contemporary chronicles and they are also mentioned in various royal letters and documents preserved in the public record.

One such woman was Isabella de Braose, the widow of Dafydd ap Llywelyn, prince of Wales, who died in 1246. She is believed to have entered a nunnery in the thirteenth century, following her husband's death. Llywelyn Fawr, who ruled much of Wales for almost half a century until his death in 1240, had married Joan, the illegitimate daughter of King John in 1205. They had one son, Dafydd, whom Llywelyn named as his heir. Llywelyn arranged the marriage of Dafydd to Isabella de Braose, and this was considered to be an advantageous match, indeed R.R. Davies describes this as 'the most spectacular marriage coup of all' when discussing the marriages arranged by Llywelyn for his children.¹² The Braose family had come into the march of Wales in the late eleventh century and had built a large empire for itself by 1200.¹³ Isabella's father

¹² R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.248.

¹³ R.R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282-1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 35.

was William de Braose, lord of Brecon, Builth and Abergavenny and her mother was Eva, one of the heiresses of William Marshal, the Earl of Pembroke, so that her family was at this time among the most powerful in the march. According to R.R. Davies, William de Braose was captured by Llywelyn during the war of 1228, and the marriage to Isabella was one of a series of concessions extracted from him by Llywelyn, which included the lordship of Builth as Isabella's marriage portion and also a promise that William 'would never again bear arms against the prince of Wales.'¹⁴ From Llywelyn Fawr's point of view, this marriage agreement which was concluded in 1229 and which included annexing Builth, was strategically vital to maintaining his territorial achievements.

All did not go smoothly to plan for Llywelyn though. In 1230, as we have seen, Llywelyn is said to have discovered his wife Joan in an affair with William de Braose, Isabella's father, and Llywelyn had de Braose publicly hanged, while Joan herself was imprisoned for about a year. Llywelyn then wrote to William de Braose's widow telling her that he had been unable to prevent his magnates making the judgement they did, but in spite of his actions he was still desirous that the wedding between his son and her daughter should proceed.¹⁵ The marriage did take place in 1230.

Up until quite recently historians have tended to agree that among other reasons, because the de Braose family was hated by the Welsh in southern Wales, the hanging of de Braose was treated as a purely private matter, which the crown overlooked. The hanging of de Braose was therefore seen to have passed without negative comment. A paper by J.J. Crump, however, reveals that,

¹⁴ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, p.248.

according to a newly translated draft of a letter from Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to Stephen de Segrave, Eva Marshal, de Braose's widow, did not just accept the fact of the hanging of her husband by Llywelyn. According to Llywelyn, she had her chaplain repeatedly excommunicate him.¹⁶ In this draft letter Llywelyn complains about Eva's actions and 'warns that such provocations could lead to war'.¹⁷ The situation therefore was not as quietly passed over as at first thought.

To the modern reader the fact that the marriage of Isabella to the son of the man who had just hanged her father went ahead, may seem incredible, but it must be remembered that marriage among the aristocracy in western Europe in the Middle Ages was first and foremost political in nature and not personal, so that this was not an unusual outcome. Marriages between members of the Welsh and Anglo-Norman nobility were a feature of the 200 years of the conquest of Wales and were invariably arranged to give legitimacy to the conquerors or with a view to cementing political alliances. Similarly, marriages between members of the native Welsh nobility very often were arranged with the political motive of one ruling family dominating another.¹⁸ The desired outcome was not always achieved, but the motive for the choice of marriage partner would have been almost invariably political.

¹⁵ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, J.G. Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), p.51.

¹⁶ J.J. Crump, 'Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose: a Letter from Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to Stephen de Segrave', *Historical Research*, vol. 73:181 (June 2000), p.201.

¹⁷ J.J. Crump, 'Repercussions of the Execution of William de Braose', p.212. 'preteia dicta domina Eva habet capilanum suum qui singulis dominicis diebus excomunicat nos nominatim et ... [mu]ltis nos provocant ad iram qui querentes occasionem movendi guerram quam vix sustiner[ent pro ...] super quam curam debent habere.'

¹⁸ A.J. Roderick, 'Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282', *The Welsh History Review*, 4 (1968-69), pp.3-20.

Isabella was the eldest of the four daughters of William de Braose and entitled to a share of his lands. She was a minor when she was betrothed to Dafydd ap Llywelyn¹⁹ and when they married in 1230 she was probably very young. From 1232 Isabella and Dafydd tried unsuccessfully to claim her portion of the inheritance and possibly she was now of age. The Patent Rolls for 1232 and 1242²⁰ mention the assignment of Isabella's claim but according to J.E. Lloyd her 'claim to Builth as her dowry was never conceded by the crown'.²¹ Although Isabella and Dafydd were married for sixteen years, they had no children. After Dafydd's death Isabella received the castle of Haverfordwest, with lands in Caerleon and Glamorgan from the estate of her mother Eva Marshal.

Following Dafydd's death, on February 25, 1246, Henry III commanded Brother Gregory, the abbot of Basingwerk monastery, to conduct Isabella personally from Diserth castle to 'live honourably' at Godstow nunnery, near Oxford.²² The constable of Diserth castle was ordered to free Isabella to the custody of the abbot and Isabella herself was ordered to enter the nunnery in the company of the abbot. In the same document the king asked the abbess to admit Isabella into her convent and 'hold her honourably until the king shall have ordered otherwise'.²³ In other words, Henry III made very certain that Isabella was taken under custody directly to Godstow nunnery. One politically disadvantageous marriage was enough.

¹⁹ I.J. Sanders, *English Baronies: A Study of Their Origin and Descent, 1086-1327* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p.21.

²⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1232-1247* (London: 1906), pp.3-4 & 276.

²¹ J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, II (London: 1911), p.705, **footnote** 69.

²² *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1242-1247* (London: 1970), p.415.

²³ *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1242-1247*, p.415. 'Mandatum est abbati de Basingewerk quod Isabellam que fuit uxor D. filii L. quondam principis Norwall', que est in castro de Dissard, quam Philippus le Bret constabularius ejusdem castri ei liberabit per preceptum regis, ad eo recipiat et ipsam in propria persona sua salvo conduci faciat usque Godestowe perhendinaturam ibidem cum abbatissa ejusdem domus, donec de statu suo rex aliter providerit.'

Isabella de Braose seems to have had a fairly difficult life. As a daughter of one of the most powerful Anglo-Norman marcher families she had been married to the son of the man who had recently hanged her father. Although Dafydd had been officially designated as Llywelyn's heir, with English royal approval, following Llywelyn's death in 1240 he found himself ruler of a much reduced area of Wales. Dafydd was to rule Gwynedd only. During the next six years he seems to have been thwarted by Henry III at every turn. Under Welsh native law, inheritance was patrilinear and not by primogeniture, which was the method of inheritance brought into Britain by the Normans. As stated, title to land was 'restricted to the male members of a four-generation agnatic group'.²⁴ In addition, under native Welsh law, provided the father acknowledged paternity, illegitimate as well as legitimate sons inherited equally. Dafydd now faced competition from his half-brother Gruffudd, whom he promptly incarcerated in Cricieth castle along with one of Gruffudd's sons. Henry III used the situation between the two brothers to his own advantage. Gruffudd's wife Senana approached the king with a proposal to free her husband and son and at first appeared successful, but Henry merely transferred Gruffudd to the Tower of London for safe-keeping. (For Senana Chapter 1.) The situation in Wales deteriorated and following Gruffudd's death in a fall from the tower, while trying to escape, Dafydd commenced a rebellion against the English. Dafydd died of natural causes in 1246, and as previously stated, no children were born to Dafydd and Isabella. The removal of Isabella by the king to Godstow nunnery may have only been an interim measure. She could have been removed for safe-keeping because she would have been a wealthy widow in her own right, a desirable commodity indeed. The Cartulary of Godstow Nunnery makes no mention of

Isabella,²⁵ and it is quite possible that she did not ultimately remain in the nunnery or take her vows. All I can safely say is that she did enter the nunnery at Godstow, but I have no evidence for how long she remained there.

The only other information concerning Isabella at this time is that protection was granted on August 18, 1246 for David son of Gervase ‘bringing the stock of Isabel late the wife of David son of Llewelin from Wales to the land of the earl of Gloucester’.²⁶ J.E. Lloyd believed that the transfer of the stock mentioned above was part of Isabella’s entitlements as a widow under Welsh law.²⁷ This is probably correct because Isabella did not receive title to the property which had constituted her marriage contract (Builth), and received no settlement of land until after her husband’s death. Isabella’s portion of her dead father’s lands was mentioned in entries in the *Patent Rolls of Henry III* on December 7, 1232 and again on March 13, 1242, but apparently never ratified.²⁸ The removal of the livestock belonging to Isabella is evidence of the importance attached to the movable goods women received under native Welsh law. Isabella had been married to Dafydd for over seven years when he died, and this most probably represented her half-share of the movables of the marriage. This is a case of the Anglo-Normans taking advantage of native Welsh law when it suited. (See Chapter 6.)

Some examples of Welsh women who endured an enforced contemplative life include Gwennlian, the daughter of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and Gwladus and her six sisters, the daughters of Dafydd ap Gruffudd, who were all placed into nunneries following the deaths of

²⁴ Davies, ‘The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage’, p.101.

²⁵ *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery, near Oxford (1450)*, A. Clark, ed. (London: Early English Text Society, 1905).

²⁶ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III AD1232-1247*, p.485.

their fathers. As previously mentioned, the legitimate son and heir of Llywelyn Fawr, Dafydd ap Llywelyn, died in 1246 without an heir of his own. Llywelyn's illegitimate son Gruffudd, however, had four sons, Owain, Llywelyn, Dafydd and Rhodri. Two of those sons, Llywelyn and Owain, subsequently competed for supremacy. Llywelyn asserted his power by defeating his brother Owain at Bryn Derwin in 1255, assuming the hegemony of Gwynedd.²⁹

Over the next twelve years Llywelyn ap Gruffudd gradually consolidated his position as the foremost ruler in Wales. He was successful in bringing under his authority many of the lesser Welsh magnates and also accumulated lands formerly held by Anglo-Norman marcher barons. He took advantage of the difficulties being experienced by the English crown during the barons' rebellion and assisted the English marcher lords during this period. The years from 1270 to 1282, which saw the ascendancy of Edward I, were marked with failures and defections on the Welsh side so that by 1282 Llywelyn and his brother Dafydd were in open rebellion against Edward I, who in his turn was determined to bring the whole of Wales finally under his control. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was killed in battle on 11 December, 1282. His brother Dafydd was captured in June 1283, and was tried and executed on 2 October 1283.³⁰ With the final conquest of Wales and the deaths of the last native princes of Wales, Edward I was intent on neutralising any resurrection of claims for future Welsh rulers. To this end he removed any male heirs and in order that no future aspirants could be born to direct female descendants, female offspring were to be confined to nunneries.

²⁷ Lloyd, *A History of Wales, II*, p.705, **footnote 69**.

²⁸ *Calendar of Patent Rolls Henry III, AD1232-1247*, pp.4 & 276.

²⁹ J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), pp.72-3.

This brings us to the subject of Edward's choice of nunneries for these girls. They were not placed in Welsh nunneries, but in nunneries of the Gilbertine Order, in North Lincoln. Brian Golding comments 'the saddest of all the inmates of Gilbertine priories were the daughters of enemies of the realm placed there for safe-keeping'.³¹ The *Brut* tells us that following the death of her father, Gwenllian, daughter of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd 'was taken into captivity in England: and before coming of age she was made a nun against her will'.³² We know the approximate date of Gwenllian's birth because her mother died while giving birth on June 19, 1282.³³ Uncharacteristically for women in this study, we also know the date of her death. Robert Manning, who was a contemporary of Gwenllian and her cousin Gwladus, wrote that Gwenllian died on June 7, 1337 and that Gwladus, who was a nun of Sixhills, had died the year before.³⁴

Dafydd ap Llywelyn is said to have had seven illegitimate daughters who were born before his marriage.³⁵ Dafydd married Elizabeth de Ferrers, an Anglo-Norman noblewoman, some time after 1265, and they had two sons, Llywelyn and Owain, who were also removed after the rebellion as a source of possible future resurrection of hopes for succession in Wales.

Apparently all seven of Dafydd's daughters, including Gwladus, were placed into Gilbertine

³⁰ For details concerning Llywelyn and Dafydd ap Gruffudd see Smith *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd* especially chapters 9 and 10, pp.451-581.

³¹ B. Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order, c.1130-c.1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.153.

³² *Brut Y Tywysogion: Red Book of Hergest Version* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), p.265. (The entry which mentions Gwenllian is dated 1275, but this does not imply that she was born in 1275, the chronicle seems to have been back-dated and Gwenllian's fate is mentioned as an after-thought.)

³³ *Chronicle of Florence of Worcester*, T. Forester, trans. (London: 1854), p.365. See also *Bartholomaei de Cotton Historia Anglicana*, H.R. Luard, ed. (London: 1859), p.162.

³⁴ 'Peter Langtoft's Chronicle II' in *The Works of Thomas Hearne MA, vol IV* (London: 1810) p.243.

³⁵ *Chronicles of the Reign of Edward I and Edward II vol. I, Annales Londoniensis* (London: 1882), p.90 mentions that two sons and seven daughters were taken with Dafydd when he was captured. 'David autem frater Leolini jam decollati cum uxore sua, ii. filiis cum vii. filiabus in Wallia est, ...' See also R. Maud, 'David, the Last Prince of Wales: The ten 'lost' months of Welsh history.' (*Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, I, 1968), p.61.

nunneries.³⁶ Very little is known of the other sisters, but they are thought to have been sent to Alvingham, which was in the same area as Sixhills and Sempringham³⁷ in North Lincolnshire. In the case of Llywelyn and Owain, the two small boys were incarcerated in Bristol Castle for the remainder of their days. They are discussed in Chapter 5.

Gwenllian was consigned to Sempringham immediately following Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's death in December 1282, when she would have been not much older than six months. Robert Manning says that she was brought to Sempringham in her cradle.³⁸ She remained in the nunnery for the rest of her life – she was aged 55 years when she died. This disposal of the children of Llywelyn and Dafydd ap Gruffudd was part of the determined effort of Edward I to extinguish the royal line of Gwynedd and as great-grand-daughters of Llywelyn Fawr, Gwenllian and Gwladus and her sisters all represented a threat. The fact that Gwenllian's mother was Eleanor de Montfort, the sister of Henry III who was Edward I's father, possibly increased any perceived threat from her in relation to future royal claims. There is a sense of 'never to be released' about the manner of Gwenllian's confinement to Sempringham. The use by the Welsh chronicler when recounting Gwenllian's fate of the expressions 'taken into captivity' and 'against her will'³⁹ suggest the confinement was thought of as not for the well-being of the child, but rather for the political interests of the crown. The impression conveyed is 'imprisonment' rather than 'refuge and nurture' which are implied by the king's letter to Thomas de Normanville in 1289 when he requested to be informed of their state and custody.⁴⁰

³⁶ Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, p.153.

³⁷ Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, p.153.

³⁸ 'Peter Langtoft's Chronicle II', p.243.

³⁹ *Brut Y Tywysogion: Red Book of Hergest Version*, p.265.

⁴⁰ *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae, & Acta Publica*, T. Rymer, ed., vol. I (London: Record Commission, 1816-69), p.712. 'Et, facta, tam super statu quam custodia earumdem, diligenti examinatione, nos inde, in proximo parlamento nostro, distinete & aperte, reddatis in omnibus certiores.'

The use by the Welsh chronicler of the expression ‘against her will’ contributes agency to Gwenllian as though she might have protested against her ultimate fate. Although Gwenllian would have been too young to have even known what was happening to her initially, it is probable that she would have later on become aware of what her destiny might have been had her father lived. It is unusual for chroniclers to sympathise in this way and the Welsh chronicler was possibly representing his own view of what this incarceration of Gwenllian meant.

A letter from Edward I dated November 11, 1283, addressed to the prior and prioress of Alvingham, requests them to admit to their order whichever of the children of Llywelyn and Dafydd ‘whom we dispose to name to you’.⁴¹ I feel this letter is very revealing if one considers the king’s careful choice of words. On the one hand he is implying that despite his reluctance to provide for the children of Llywelyn and Dafydd,⁴² he feels bound to do so from charitable instincts, and in the sight of God, because they are young girls who could in no way be blamed for recent events.⁴³ On the other hand, he is well aware that neglecting to do the ‘right thing’ may result in sympathy for their cause, including even further rebellion by the Welsh, and also he is ensuring their removal into safe custody.⁴⁴ As direct descendants of Welsh rulers, these girls would most certainly not have been neglected if they had not been ‘taken into care’ by Edward I. Doubtless they would have been brought up in Welsh homes, carefully and specifically with a mind to marrying them off when a propitious time came.

⁴¹ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. VI, ii, W. Dugdale, ed. (London: 1830-49), p.959. ‘quem vel quos vobis duxerimus nominandos, ...’

⁴² ‘et quorundum merita interius advertamus liberis Leulini filii Griffini, ... et Davidis fratris ejus,’

One must also consider that, while Gwennllian and the others were ‘honourably imprisoned’ by Edward I, he himself died in 1307 so that the long incarcerations were presided over by Edward II and Edward III as well. Although the reigns of Edward II and Edward III were significantly different from that of Edward I, there is no reason why the royal ‘prisoners’ should have been released during the later two reigns, and probably these women continued to constitute a perceived threat to the crown while they lived.

The choice of Sempringham and the other two houses as the final destination for these unwanted possible successors to Gwynedd is thought by some historians to be related to its geographically remote location from Wales.⁴⁵ Certainly the distance of the houses from Wales could have been one factor which influenced the choice, but I believe there were other reasons for the choice of these houses in North Lincolnshire. In the first place, Sempringham, Alvingham and Sixhills were all of the Gilbertine order, which was the one wholly English order, and founded specifically for women.⁴⁶ In the twelfth century, Gilbert of Sempringham devised a system in which resident male clerics directed and supervised an Order composed primarily of women. He felt that female religious and lay orders needed close and extensive supervision and guidance by literate, ordained men which would be provided by a double order.⁴⁷ Although originally intended as an order for women, the double establishments raised suspicions about the moral dangers and lay-brothers saw the close proximity of canons and nuns as a problem. Later

⁴³ ‘dominum tamen habentes prae oculis, ipsorum etiam compacientes sexui et aetati, ne forsitan innocentes et inscii, ...’

⁴⁴ ‘ini quitates et scelera impiorum luere videantur; ipsis, caritatis intuitu duximus, salubriter providere.’

⁴⁵ See discussion by Smith in *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.579-80 and 586. See also Golding *Gilbert of Sempringham*, p.153.

⁴⁶ H. Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1995), p.192.

⁴⁷ S.K. Elkins, ‘The Gilbertines’ in J.A. Nichols and L.T. Shank, eds. *Medieval Religious Women Vol I: Distant Echoes* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1984), p.172.

foundations of the Order were for canons only, and the Gilbertine double houses never spread far beyond the borders of Lincolnshire.⁴⁸ Gilbert of Sempringham, the founder of the Gilbertine order, had tried unsuccessfully to hand over the supervision of his order to the Cistercians, whose order he had tried to emulate. They had refused his request and *The Book of Saint Gilbert* tells us that ‘the lord Pope and the Cistercian abbots said that monks of their own Order were not permitted authority over the religious life of others, least of all that of nuns’.⁴⁹

Another factor might be that in 1223 Pope Honorius III had ‘prohibited the Gilbertine order from admitting any girl to its priories to be brought up or educated unless she intended to become a nun’.⁵⁰ Brian Golding states that most of the charters refer to the granting of land along with one or more sons or daughters and that the majority of admissions were children placed by their parents or other family members.⁵¹ Clearly, with a history from 1223 of receiving female oblates, that is, females dedicated to monastic or religious life, or otherwise destined to become nuns, Sempringham and the other Gilbertine houses of Sixhills and Alvingham would be ideal choices for these daughters ‘of rebels against royal authority to spend the remainder of their lives in mediocre comfort’,⁵² and even with male supervision.

The shortage of nunneries in Wales would almost certainly have had some bearing on the decision of where to place the women. Although there are sound arguments based on the distance of the nunneries from Wales, and that because Gilbertine houses remained exclusively

⁴⁸ S. Thompson, ‘Why English Nunneries Had No History: A Study of the Problems of the English Nunneries Founded after the Conquest’ in *Medieval Religious Women Vol I: Distant Echoes*, p.136.

⁴⁹ *The Book of Saint Gilbert*, R Foreville and G. Keir, eds. (Oxford: Oxford Medieval Texts, 1987), p.43.

⁵⁰ Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, p.140.

⁵¹ Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, p.140.

⁵² Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, p.152.

in England the risk of outside interference in the decision was unlikely,⁵³ the fact that there were in the period under discussion only three nunneries in the whole of Wales, all of them small, would have made it difficult to place eight women in nunneries within Wales at all.⁵⁴ One of the three nunneries was the Benedictine priory of Usk, founded by the Norman Clare family. Helen Fulton notes that in 1284 Archbishop Peckham visited the Benedictine nunnery at Usk, ‘which he found in a parlous state, both financially and spiritually’.⁵⁵ Although this nunnery was established by the Anglo-Normans, the condition described by the archbishop makes it an unlikely destination for Gwennlian and her cousins. Accommodation for eight girls was required, and would have been impossible for this small nunnery.

Added to the shortage and smallness of Welsh houses is the fact that the other two nunneries in Wales, Llanllŷr in Ceredigion and Llanllugan in Cydwain, were Cistercian houses. There are two reasons why Cistercian houses would be unlikely choices for the placement of the offspring of Welsh enemies of the crown. The first reason is that the houses in north and north west Wales were known to support the national aspirations of the Welsh princes and people, so that it is unlikely that the girls would be placed with the Cistercians.⁵⁶ Rhŷs W. Hays has observed that as the Cistercians came from France, they had no connection with the English oppressors and that many Cistercian practices were similar to ancient Celtic monasticism and therefore appealed to the Welsh. They became the principal monastic order in Wales and identified themselves with the Welsh political cause.⁵⁷ In fact Rhŷs Hays believes that the Cistercians’ preoccupation with the Welsh nationalist cause resulted in a lack of diversified interests, and was the reason for

⁵³ See note n.45 above.

⁵⁴ Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales*, p.38.

⁵⁵ Helen Fulton, ‘Medieval Welsh Poems to Nuns’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 21 (1991), p.97.

⁵⁶ D.H. Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians*, (Tenby: 1984), p.4

their almost complete failure to produce daughter houses outside Wales.⁵⁸ The second reason is that the early Cistercian Order was completely opposed to any contact with religious or secular women and had ‘vainly tried to stop incorporation of nunneries’. By the second half of the thirteenth century they had been forced to include communities of women within their Order, but according to Sally Thompson there is little to suggest that in England the Cistercian Order played a significant part in supporting nunneries in the twelfth century and first half of the thirteenth century.⁵⁹ Clearly, this would apply to Wales as well.

Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Dafydd his son were both buried at Aberconwy, a Cistercian abbey. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd’s headless body is also believed to have been buried at the Cistercian abbey of Cwm Hir. From surviving documentary evidence it is apparent that Cistercian abbots, priors and individual monks often witnessed deeds executed by the Welsh princes and nobility. It would therefore seem unlikely, considering the significant role played by Welsh Cistercian abbots in national politics during the long difficult period leading up to the Edwardian conquest,⁶⁰ that the surviving offspring of the last native princes of Wales would be placed in their care for safe-keeping against future aspirations regarding succession. They would be far safer in Gilbertine houses, set up specifically to receive girls who would become nuns.

Gwenllian appeared in the public record on several occasions during her lifetime. She was mentioned in 1289, as previously stated, when the king ordered Thomas de Normanville to visit

⁵⁷ R.W. Hays, ‘The Welsh Monasteries and the Edwardian Conquest’ in *Studies in Medieval Cistercian History*, (Massachusetts: Cistercian Publications, 1971), p.112.

⁵⁸ Hays, ‘The Welsh Monasteries’, p.116.

⁵⁹ Thompson, ‘Why English Nunneries Had No History’, p.134-36.

⁶⁰ Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians*, pp.35-40.

the nunneries and report on the status of the daughters of Llywelyn and Dafydd ap Gruffudd.⁶¹ Gwenllian would have been almost seven years old at this time. J. Beverley Smith states that this order noted that they had by then taken the veil.⁶² Seven would have been an unusually young age to take this final step. According to Lina Eckenstein, in the Order of St Gilbert of Sempringham ‘girls were admitted into the company of the nuns at the age of twelve, but several years passed before they could

be enrolled among the novices.’ It was at the age of twenty that the girls chose to join either the nuns or the lay sisters.⁶³ Clearly, in the case of Gwenllian, and probably her cousins, the rules may have been relaxed in order to accede to royal requirements, a not unusual situation in the Middle Ages. Edward I was anxious that the girls should be enclosed as soon as possible because in his letter to the prior and prioress dated November 1283 he stressed that he wanted their favourable reply to his request ‘this side of Christmas, or immediately in that feast’.⁶⁴

Although we hear little about Gwenllian, in an undated petition Gwenllian, ‘daughter of Llywelyn, formerly Prince of Wales, prays the King (thought to be Edward II) of his grace to remember her and aid her, since the King, his father, promised her, when she was put in the

⁶¹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Edward I, 1281-1292*, (London: 1893), pp.321-22, and *Foedera*, p.712.

⁶² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.580, **Footnote 242**.

⁶³ L. Eckenstein, *Woman Under Monasticism*, (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1963), p.217.

⁶⁴ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, Vol. VI., p.959. ‘... velitis admittere ad ordinem et habitum domus vestrae, et quid super hoc duxeritis faciendum, nobis citra festum Natalis Domini, vel saltem in ipso festo, per vestras literas rescribatis.’

house of Sempringham, £100 of land or rent; whereof he told Walter de Langeton, then Treasurer that he had given her £20 from the Exchequer yearly; and with this she has been provided.⁶⁵ Later in 1328 Gwenllian's pension of £20 was again discussed in a letter from Edward III.⁶⁶ As Helen Fulton has commented, women who entered nunneries were almost invariably noblewomen because it was necessary for them to contribute financially to the upkeep of the nunnery.⁶⁷ Gwenllian would have been concerned that she receive her income each year and possibly over the troubled years of the reign of Edward II she had financial difficulties. This is presumably the reason why she petitioned the king. According to Brian Golding, the crown allowed Sempringham a major acquisition of land in 1301 because the king had charged the priory with looking after Gwenllian,⁶⁸ so quite possibly this is the '£100 of land' referred to in the petition.

Gwenllian's petition was successful, because the *Memoranda Rolls 1326-1327* show the sum of £10 paid to Gwenllian 'nun of Sempyngham, of the 20l. a year granted to her for life'.⁶⁹ From what can only be considered an extremely weak position of enforced commitment to a religious house, Gwenllian was able to petition the king successfully concerning her financial entitlements. No doubt she would have been encouraged in this endeavour by the prior and prioress, who would also have been very anxious that she receive her financial support for the sake of the house. Gwenllian's success in petitioning the king must be considered an achievement for a person who was removed at the age of six months to a nunnery for life. We can never know, but

⁶⁵ *Calendar of Ancient Petitions relating to Wales*, W. Rees, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975), p.458.

⁶⁶ *Foedera*, p.738.

⁶⁷ Fulton, 'Medieval Welsh Poems to Nuns', p.96.

⁶⁸ Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order*, 175 and 306. See *Calendar of Patent Rolls Edward I, 1301-1307* (London: 1898), p.6.

⁶⁹ *Calendar of Memoranda Rolls 1326-1327* (London: 1969), p.311.

it is possible that by 1327 at the age of about 45 Gwenllian may have achieved a position of respect and influence within the community of Sempringham. Since she had known no other life, she may have been quite content. She was probably well looked after and protected and may also have received an education. Berenice Kerr says that some women in religious life made decisions involving money and property, often wielding more power than their married sisters.⁷⁰

Any discourse which traces the history of Welsh women in the thirteenth century must include those women who embraced the religious life, but unfortunately the evidence for such women is very elusive. The fact that only four houses for women were founded in Wales in the whole of the Middle Ages suggests that there were relatively few Welsh women enclosed in nunneries in Wales in the thirteenth century. Sally Thompson's article titled 'Why English Nunneries Had No History: A Study of the Problems of the English Nunneries Founded after the Conquest' explores the reasons for the paucity of sources and she makes the statement that 'the shortage of evidence is remarkable'.⁷¹ Among her findings she cites fire and flood, and also references to the nuns' ignorance of Latin in the thirteenth century and the effect that this lack of learning may have had on the keeping and survival of records.⁷² Thompson feels it is possible that the 'documents belonging to the nunneries were more endangered by the Dissolution in the sixteenth century than the archives of many mens' houses'.⁷³ According to Thompson at least 142 nunneries were in existence in England by 1250⁷⁴ so that if there is a 'remarkable' lack of evidence for a study of English nunneries founded after the Conquest, then the lack of evidence

⁷⁰ Kerr, *Religious Life for Women*, p.101.

⁷¹ Thompson, 'Why English Nunneries Had No History', p.131.

⁷² Thompson, 'Why English Nunneries Had No History', p.133.

⁷³ Thompson, 'Why English Nunneries Had No History', p.140.

⁷⁴ Thompson, 'Why English Nunneries Had No History', p.111.

concerning Welsh nunneries in the thirteenth century is not surprising, perhaps only disappointing.

Jane Cartwright finds the lack of provision for religious women in Wales ‘astonishing’. In her recent work ‘The Desire to Corrupt: Convent and Community in Medieval Wales’ she addresses the question of the paucity of opportunities for religious women in Wales.⁷⁵ She suggests three conceivable reasons for the scarcity of nunneries and therefore nuns. In the first instance she directs our attention to the payment which, according to Welsh law, was due to the lord when a woman married. This payment was in fact for the loss of the woman’s virginity, and in actual practice has been shown by R.R. Davies to have been payable more than once, for illicit sexual relations as well as loss of virginity. This being the case, it would be in the lord’s interests not to encourage young Welsh women to devote their lives to Christ and preserve their virginity. In Jane Cartwright’s words ‘virginity was both a precious and saleable commodity’. Her next suggestion is that there were comparably fewer wealthy Welsh noblewomen than there were wealthy English noblewomen, who are known to have founded medieval nunneries. Cartwright believes that Welsh noblewomen were more likely to have supported the local parish church than set up endowments for religious houses. She also alludes to the fact that under Welsh native law, Welsh women were not permitted to inherit or hold land, but were limited to acquiring wealth in the form of movable goods.⁷⁶ Another suggestion relates to the fact, already mentioned previously in this chapter, that the favoured religious order within Wales was the Cistercian order, which actively discouraged the building of nunneries. I would agree with Jane Cartwright

⁷⁵ Cartwright, ‘The Desire to Corrupt: Convent and Community in Medieval Wales’, pp.35-36.

⁷⁶ See my Chapter 6, ‘Welsh Laws of Women’, pp.187-88.

that for all the above reasons, ‘the monastic life was rarely a genuine vocation for Welsh women’.⁷⁷

Another reason, for which I do not have any thirteenth-century evidence, may have been that in Wales families with unmarried daughters were quite content to keep them at home. They possibly provided much needed help around the home and did not share the stigma which seems to have attached to unmarried girls in other western European societies. Llinos Beverley Smith has mentioned that in late medieval Wales ‘many families preferred to cherish their unmarried daughters at home, and rarely allowed them the freedom of servanthood or the public profile of the paid employee’.⁷⁸ If this were the case in the later period, it might also have been the case that Welsh nunneries were unnecessary in the thirteenth century because Welsh families cherished their unmarried daughters at home.

While all of the nine women mentioned in this chapter were probably born in Wales, at least eight of them lived most of their lives in England and Gwennllian, although she was the daughter of the last great native ruler of Wales was unlikely to have been able to speak Welsh. They were, however, eight daughters and one wife of three of the most prominent of the native Welsh rulers in the thirteenth century and deserve to be part of the narrative of Welsh medieval history.

⁷⁷ Cartwright, ‘The Desire to Corrupt’, p.39.

⁷⁸ L.B. Smith, ‘Towards a History of Women in Late Medieval Wales’, in M. Roberts and S. Clarke, eds., *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.38.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL WALES: NATIVE WELSH NOBLEWOMEN IN THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY RECORD

Unlike the second half of the twelfth century, during which time Wales was dominated by the rule of the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth in south and central Wales, thirteenth-century Wales was dominated by rulers from north Wales. Thus far this thesis has concentrated on Welsh noblewomen connected with the royal houses of north Wales, namely Gwynedd and northern Powys. To give the work balance, this chapter therefore highlights a number of Welsh noblewomen from other parts of Wales such as Ceredigion, Cydwain, Cantref Mawr, and so on, whom I encountered in the printed historical and literary record during my research. The first section will provide an overview of the ancestry of these women and their family connections. The second section sets forth, at length, the evidence from the historical legal record concerning Angharad, the daughter of Owain ap Maredudd (d.1261) of Cydwain, and her participation in major historical events. The third section will concentrate on evidence of the activities of additional thirteenth century native Welsh noblewomen which may be found in the literary record. Finally I intend to review my findings and conclusions. I have chosen to write about these women for two reasons. The first is to give some balance to the work in terms of geography by covering the other areas subject to native Welsh influence in the thirteenth century. The second and more important reason is because they are excellent examples of noblewomen who lived in other parts of Wales, and they help to inform the overall picture of life for Welsh noblewomen in the thirteenth century.

Most of the women are in some way associated with one another through family connections. This was an unexpected finding. Existing Welsh historiography assumes intermarriage between Welsh royal houses, but it does not reveal, without careful scrutiny, just how close these connections were. On reflection it is not surprising that members of the Welsh nobility would have intermarried with each other's lineages. In the event, the number of the Welsh noblewomen in this study who were found to be granddaughters or great-granddaughters of Llywelyn Fawr is noteworthy. As we shall also see, the Welsh clerics who chronicled events in the several versions of the *Brut Y Tywysogion* made note of the year in which a number of female members of the Welsh higher nobility died, suggesting that these chroniclers saw the wives, sisters and daughters of Welsh noblemen as persons of consequence.

As I have stated previously in this work, the Welsh were fundamentally concerned with the genealogy of their ancestors. For the Welsh it would have been a matter of great social and cultural significance in the thirteenth century for both men and women to be descended from Llywelyn Fawr. As a result of the cultural importance of this valued social lineage, marriage to close family members within this lineage was common. For example, Gerald of Wales stated that the Welsh had 'no hesitation or shame in marrying women related to them in the fourth or fifth degree, and sometimes even third cousins.' He also said that another reason they gave for marrying women of their own family was 'their great respect for noble descent, which means so much to them'.¹ Therefore for the Welsh in the thirteenth century these women claiming ancestry directly from Llywelyn Fawr of Gwynedd would have been very highly regarded as marriage partners.

¹ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales and Description of Wales*, L. Thorpe, trans., (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p.263.

ANGHARAD

Angharad ferch Owain ap Maredudd of Cydewain was one such woman. My research will show that she not only exemplifies the importance of Welsh noblewomen in the elaborate network of lineages which bound Wales together, but she was involved in central historical events of the period. Angharad may be found in the printed legal record as holding lands in Cydewain by the gift of her father, holding dower lands in Ceredigion and as having enfeoffed her grandmother of a manor in Cydewain. She held Dolforwyn, and was directly involved in negotiations with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd when he was building his castle at Dolforwyn. Building of this castle became a major frustration for Llywelyn and his defeat at Dolforwyn was among the major events which eventually led to his downfall and to the ultimate final conquest of the Welsh.

In the section which follows I propose firstly to discuss Angharad's ancestry which was so important in the unfolding series of events. Angharad was a great-granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr and married Owain ap Maredudd of Ceredigion (d.1275) who was a direct descendant of the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth. Thus her ancestry was a means of connecting the rulers of north and central Wales. Scholars have commented on the perceived anomaly in the compilation of the Hendregadredd Manuscript which is thought to have been compiled at Strata Florida in Ceredigion, in central Wales. The anomaly relates to the fact that the compiler of the collection in the Hendregadredd Manuscript chose more poems sung to the princes of Gwynedd than to the princes of Deheubarth, even though Ceredigion was originally part of the old kingdom of Deheubarth, and the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth is thought to have founded Strata Florida. They put forward the somewhat tenuous argument for this Venedotian influence the fact that the Lord Rhys's mother was Gwenllian, the daughter of Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd, and that he

married Gwenllian, daughter of Madog ap Maredudd of Powys. I will argue that it is more likely that Angharad's own nobility, which may be traced through her mother back to Llywelyn Fawr, influenced the compiler of the Hendregadredd Manuscript to choose more poems sung to the princes of Gwynedd than to the princes of Deheubarth. When I began looking at Angharad I had not realised that there was almost enough information about her to warrant a chapter of her own. Even though she occupies a greater share of this chapter than the other women under discussion, I feel that she belongs in this chapter because she is part of the history of central Wales, rather than north Wales.

This first section concerning Angharad will concentrate on her ancestry. I will examine in detail relevant evidence from J.E. Caerwyn Williams concerning the patronage of the Poets of the Princes. In doing this I will uncover not only Angharad's ancestry and its importance, but I will discuss the unwarranted patrilineal assumption in his handling of the available evidence. When commenting on the Hendragadredd Manuscript,² which includes a collection of poetry by Welsh court poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Caerwyn Williams has stated that he believes that the patron for whom the editor-scribe was working when he began this compilation was one of the Lord Rhys's descendants. This being the case, he is at a loss to understand why 'in the selection of poems, precedence was given to those sung to the princes of Gwynedd rather than to the princes of Deheubarth.'³ He has failed to take into account how important noble Welsh

² For details of the Hendragadredd Manuscript, see D. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press and the National Library of Wales, 2000), pp.193-226. The Hendragadredd Manuscript contains a compilation of the work of the Poets of the Princes. Indeed Daniel Huws credits this compiler and scribe with being responsible for 'creating our literary abstraction The Poets of the Princes', p.213. He states that 'his scribe was collecting the poetry of the Poets of the Princes, drawing his limit at 1282. The latest poem in his collection is the elegy of Bleddyn Fardd to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd', who was killed in 1282. p.204.

³ J.E. Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales: An Essay*, Welsh Studies Vol. 14, (Lampeter: The Edward Mellen Press, 1997), p.65.

women were in establishing connections to the highly valued ancestry. He advances the suggestion, as I have previously stated, that the patron, although a descendant of the Lord Rhys, may have been influenced by the fact that the mother of the Lord Rhys was Gwenllian, a daughter of Gruffudd ap Cynan of the house of Gwynedd and that Rhys had married another Gwenllian, daughter of Madog ap Maredudd of the house of Powys. He feels that this connection to these two royal houses would have influenced the choice by the patron for the collection of works of the poets of the princes. He adds to this reason the fact that the work covers a period, terminating in the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282, seen by many as the end of the period of the great rulers of Wales.⁴ I agree with the hypothesis that all these circumstances would have, in part, influenced the choice for the patron of poems which covered the three major royal houses of Wales, and not just Deheubarth.⁵

This being said, Caerwyn Williams goes on to explain that he believes it was a descendant of Maredudd ab Owain (d.1265) who ‘induced the editor-scribe to undertake this task’.⁶ He next discusses the children of Maredudd ab Owain, namely Efa about whom I have written below, and Gruffudd, who is thought to have requested translation of literary texts. He then mentions that ‘they had a brother Owain who died in 1275’, and that this Owain ‘had a son named Llywelyn who died in 1309’.⁷ For some reason the author only mentions Owain in passing, and seems to have completely overlooked the fact that this Owain inherited Ceredigion from his father, and that he had a wife named Angharad. Owain’s wife was a direct descendant of

⁴ Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, p.66.

⁵ See also Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p.213. Daniel Huws dates the first section of the manuscript which contains the poems under discussion as having been redacted ‘very soon after 1282’.

⁶ Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, p.66-67.

⁷ Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, p.66.

Llywelyn Fawr. This is clear in the fact that Angharad's mother was Margred, daughter of Maelgwn Fychan (a cousin of Maredudd ab Owain and direct descendant of the Lord Rhys) and Angharad, daughter of Llywelyn Fawr of Gwynedd. Although her mother had married a descendant of the Lord Rhys, Angharad's parents had named her after her grandmother to reflect the nobility now passed on to her by her mother. In fact, J. Beverley Smith mentions that Angharad's mother was a granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr in his paper 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales: a Grant of the Commote of Anhuniog, 1273'.⁸

According to J.E. Lloyd, in December 1215, in concert with the other Welsh princes, Llywelyn Fawr achieved such success in South Wales as to make 'him the real ruler of Deheubarth until the end of his life'. Llywelyn subsequently partitioned the lands of the Lord Rhys among his [Rhys's] descendants, and for example, he gave the bulk of Ceredigion to Rhys and Owain ap Gruffudd, Rhys's grandsons, while his son Maelgwn ap Rhys received Mabwynion and Gwynionydd, as well as other lands in Dyfed and Ystrad Tywi.⁹ I would therefore argue that because of the close alliance of Deheubarth with Llywelyn Fawr in the first part of the thirteenth century, the following reasoning may be added to the hypotheses above as to why the patron, a descendant of Maredudd ab Owain, gave precedence in his choice of poems to those sung to princes of Gwynedd, rather than to princes of Deheubarth. By including Welsh noblewomen more centrally in the historical record and by abandoning patrilineal assumptions imported from later historical periods, an even stronger case emerges for the choice of poems, to that stressed by scholars thus far. One may add two reasons, which centre on Angharad, to those given by

⁸ J. Beverley Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales: a Grant of the Commote of Anhuniog, 1273', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, Vol. XXX (November 1983), p.351, **footnote 5**.

⁹ J.E. Lloyd, *The Story of Ceredigion (400-1277)* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1937), pp.88-89.

scholars. The first is that the Angharad was the wife of the heir of Maredudd ab Owain, and she was a great-granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr, who during his rule had a close affinity with the descendants of the Lord Rhys. Secondly, Angharad was thus also a relative of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the prince of Wales who ruled most of Wales during her own lifetime, and this family connection to the ruler of Wales might go some way towards explaining a bias towards the princes of Gwynedd.¹⁰

Similarly, a case can be argued that Owain ap Maredudd and Angharad named their son Llywelyn, an unusual name for the royal house of Deheubarth, precisely because Angharad was a descendant of Llywelyn Fawr, and consequently a relative of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. J.E. Lloyd commented on the name Llywelyn as being ‘unusual in this family [descendants of the Lord Rhys], but most probably conferred ... out of compliment to the great lord of Gwynedd.’¹¹ He was in this case speaking about another descendant of the Lord Rhys, Llywelyn ap Rhys ap Maelgwn, grandson of Maelgwn Fychan and Angharad, daughter of Llywelyn Fawr, previously mentioned. This thesis argues that in these two instances the name Llywelyn was chosen because it was a family name on the distaff side in both of these families. Although Owain ap Maredudd and Rhys ap Maelgwn were descended from the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth, through marriage they had connections with the house of Gwynedd. It goes without saying that it would have represented a ‘compliment to the great lord of Gwynedd’, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, who from 1265 to 1277 ruled most of native Wales.

¹⁰ It may also be noted that Angharad’s great-grandfather, Maelgwn ap Rhys of Deheubarth (d.1231), who was illegitimate, had married his step-mother, Gwenllian ferch Madog ap Maredudd of Powys, widow of the Lord Rhys. See Genealogical Chart Table 1, p.279.

¹¹ Lloyd, *The Story of Ceredigion*, p.100.

As discussed above, Angharad married Owain ap Maredudd of Ceredigion (d.1275), a direct descendant of the Lord Rhys, and she had only one son by Owain ap Maredudd, namely, Llywelyn. This Llywelyn was said by J.E. Lloyd to be the only prince of Ceredigion to survive the wars and rebellions leading to the conquest of Wales. He became a ‘minor marcher lord’ and interestingly, Gwynionydd which had been held as dower by his step-grandmother, the second wife of Maredudd ab Owain, was one of the two commotes held by him.¹² These two commotes were finally passed on to Owain Glyn Dŵr.¹³

The next section will concentrate on Angharad and land ownership. Angharad had quite a long history in the legal record in relation to matters pertaining to claims for land. The discussion therefore examines her position with regard to land-holding, and looks at her various attempts to regain her perceived rights through the law courts of Edward I. In 1273 Owain (her husband) made provision for dower for Angharad at Llanbadarn Trefeglwys of the commote of Anhuniog. Owain had ultimately inherited Anhuniog through the good offices of Llywelyn Fawr. Following the division of the Lord Rhys’s lands mentioned above, Anhuniog had originally been held by Rhys’s grandson, Rhys ap Gruffudd. Rhys ap Gruffudd left no heir and when he died in 1222, Llywelyn Fawr divided Rhys’s lands between his brother Owain ap Gruffudd and his uncle, Maelgwn ap Rhys (Angharad’s great-grandfather). J.E. Lloyd stated that ownership of the province of Ceredigion remained with the descendants of these two men ‘for many

¹² Lloyd, *The Story of Ceredigion*, p.104. For discussion of the ratification of dower to Ellen, second wife of Maredudd ab Owain, see my Chapter 6, pp.200-201.

¹³ Lloyd, *The Story of Ceredigion*, pp.104-5. Much has been written about the ancestry of Owain Glyn Dŵr. He is said to have asserted his right to the inheritance of Wales in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries because of his descent on his father’s side from the princes of Powys and on his mother’s side from the princes of Deheubarth. His ancestry may also be traced on his mother’s side through the houses of Deheubarth and Gwynedd, via the marriage between Owain ap Maredudd of Ceredigion and Angharad ferch Owain ap Maredudd of Cydewain. See Genealogical Chart Table 2.

generations'.¹⁴ The charter granting Angharad the commote of Anhuniog was ratified by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and is discussed further in my chapter 'Welsh Laws of Women'.¹⁵ I will also refer to this charter later in this chapter.

Following the war of 1277 and the consequent defeat of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, which led to the treaty of Aberconway, Edward I ordered that a number of commissions be set up to 'hear and determine all suits and pleas both of lands and trespasses and wrongs in the marches and in Wales, and to do justice therein, according to the laws and customs of the parts in which the lands lay... etc.'¹⁶ Among those matters to be decided at these commissions was whether certain cases should be heard under English law or Welsh native law. These hearings, which included the claim by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to Arwystli and other vital matters, had an important influence on the final denouement of events in north Wales, and on the incidents which led to the final rebellion of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282. Three of the women about whom I write in this thesis were involved in significant matters heard by these commissions.¹⁷ In fact their court appearances must have occupied a considerable portion of the time of the justices hearing the assizes.¹⁸ On January 4, 1278, the king wrote to the bishop of Worcester 'and his fellows, justices of oyer and terminer in the marches of Wales and in the parts adjacent.' He ordered them to hear a complaint from Angharad, widow of Owain ap Maredudd, about her claim to the commote of Anhuniog, which was now in the king's hands. They were to hear the complaint and 'cause justice to be done to her in this matter ... according to the law and custom of those

¹⁴ Lloyd, *The Story of Ceredigion*, p.90.

¹⁵ See pages 199-200.

¹⁶ *Welsh Assize Roll, 1277-84*, J.C. Davies, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1940), p.86.

¹⁷ For details of Margaret ferch Gruffudd ap Llywelyn Chapter 3 and for Maud Clifford Chapter 4.

¹⁸ For example, Angharad's claims were heard on eight different occasions, Maud Clifford's on at least thirty occasions, and Margaret of Bromfield three times.

parts ...’¹⁹ I am not aware of the outcome of this claim by Angharad, but as we shall see, it is quite possible that her dower property was returned to her. If she had been successful in accessing her dower property, however, and if the case had been judged ‘according to the law and custom of those parts’, namely Ceredigion, it would mean that the ‘law and custom’ of Wales would have been overlooked.

Although I do not know the date, Angharad married again after Owain ap Maredudd’s death in 1275, and her second husband was Walter de Pedwardin, an Anglo-Norman nobleman. Pedwardin is in Hereford, so I presume Walter was a local and as Hereford is on the border of Wales, it is not surprising that he would seek a noble Welsh heiress as a wife. Walter de Pedwardin was appointed ‘justice of oyer and terminer in the marches’ on November 28, 1278, and was required to ‘cause full and speedy justice to be done of right and according to the law and custom of those parts’,²⁰ so that he was personally involved in the main commission on behalf of the king. On July 16, 1287 he may be seen again following the defeat of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and the rebellion of Rhys ap Maredudd, when Edward I granted him and the abbot of Cwmhir, ‘power to admit to his peace and will the men of Straudeuwy [Ystrad Tywi]’ who wished to be reconciled with the king.²¹ He was therefore also involved in the reconciliation with the Welsh after 1282. Angharad must have represented to Walter de Pedwardin a wealthy Welsh noblewoman, or at least a Welsh noblewoman with prospects. Her marriage to an Anglo-Norman (or English) nobleman put Angharad into a different category from the other women I am writing about in this chapter, who remained married to native Welsh noblemen. This factor

¹⁹ *Calendar of Various Chancery Rolls: Supplementary Close Rolls, Welsh Rolls, Scutage Rolls 1277-1326* (London: 1976), p.171.

²⁰ *Welsh Rolls*, p.177.

²¹ *Welsh Rolls*, p.307 and p.309.

may have influenced her actions, and the possible outcomes of her land claims, in that she may have been entitled to rights under English common law, but I have no direct evidence that this was the case. Even if she did have claims under English law, Angharad unfortunately seems to have been unsuccessful in the many attempts made by her to gain her perceived rights.

Angharad actually held the vill of Dolforwyn in Cydewain and this becomes significant in terms of the political history of Wales in this period. The vill of Dolforwyn was among the three separate claims Angharad made at the Welsh Assizes against the king at the Pleas before Ralph de Fremingham at Oswestry early in 1278. These three separate claims were firstly for lands which Angharad had received as gift from her father, secondly for what she saw as her right to the inheritance of Cydewain as her father's sole heir, and thirdly a claim for dower from her late husband. The first claim was for the three vills of Ucheldre, the manor of Bahaihlon and the vills of Dolforwyn and Aberbechan, in Cydewain, which Angharad asserted were of the gift of Owain ap Maredudd, her father. These vills may have been part of a marriage settlement when she married Owain of Ceredigion. J.B. Smith mentions Angharad's claiming Cydewain as Owain's heir and states that 'it is certain that Cydewain formed part of Llywelyn's territorial lordship by 1267; in 1273 he built the castle of Dolforwyn 'in his own territory' there.'²² Cydewain was in the central march, and was in a very strategic position. It overlooked the Severn Valley and it was vital to Llywelyn's plans. Dolforwyn was on the border of Powys Wenwynwyn and was close to Montgomery. It was also close to Arwystli. In 1257 Llywelyn had taken from the lord of Powys Wenwynwyn 'the greater part of his extensive lordship',²³ and

²² J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p.183, **footnote** 169.

²³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.158.

in terms of Llywelyn's successes leading to the Treaty of Montgomery in 1267, Cydwain and in particular, Dolforwyn, were of major importance. The position of Cydwain in the central march was strategically advantageous, not only because of its geographical situation, but because of its importance to Roger Mortimer's ambitions for his lordship in this area. The treaty of Montgomery was considered the high point of Llywelyn's career. Among other terms of the Treaty of Montgomery, Edward I granted Llywelyn and his heirs the principality of Wales, and said that he was to be known by the title of prince of Wales and so were his successors. Llywelyn was to receive the homage and fealty of all the other Welsh rulers, with the single exception of Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg.²⁴ The treaty outlined the area of Llywelyn's new principality, which he held of the crown, and Cydwain was now included among the lands he ruled directly. I will return to the question of Dolforwyn after I have completed discussion of Angharad's claims at the Assizes. These matters are very complex and I will endeavour to make them clear.

The second claim made by Angharad at the Assize at Oswestry was for 'the whole land of Cydwain as her right, as her father's heir' and the third was for the commote of Anhuniog which her late husband had given her in dower. They were given a day *coram rege*, a month from Easter. Angharad put in her place her husband, Sir Walter de Pedwardin, or Peter de Pedwardin.²⁵ I have not been able to establish the relationship of Peter de Pedwardin to Walter, but he may have been his brother or perhaps a son from a previous marriage.²⁶ Angharad was

²⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.180.

²⁵ *Welsh Assize Roll*, pp.241-42.

²⁶ R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, vol. XI (London: John Russell Smith, 1855) mentions Walter de Pedwardine in 1267 and 1269 in connection with a writ of 'right of common' against Brian de Brompton, p.328. He is again in a section entitled 'Upper and Lower Pedwardine' pp.330-331. Walter de Pedwardine is also mentioned in vol. IV, p.190, vol. VI, pp.89-90, and vol. VIII, pp.31-2, but the information is confusing and I am not sure whether the Walter de Pedwardine referred to is indeed Angharad's second husband. Further mention

not the only person claiming a hereditary right to Cydwain at these assizes. At the plea before Hopton at Oswestry, Friday before St James the Apostle, 1278, (29 April, 1278), one Owain ap Madog ap Gruffudd claimed the whole land of Cydwain, as his right, as the son of a bastard brother of Owain ap Maredudd. Presumably he felt he had a claim because under Welsh law women could not inherit land, and in the event that a man died without a male heir, collateral males in his family were inheritors before females. Illegitimacy was no bar to males when it came to inheritance under Welsh native law. Partible inheritance included all male heirs, legitimate and illegitimate alike.²⁷

Angharad's next step was to claim the wardship of her son and his lands. At the pleas at Builth on the Friday before Palm Sunday, April 8, 1278, before Walter de Hopton and Hywel ab Meurig, Angharad and Walter de Pedwardin claimed the wardship of Llywelyn ab Owain, Angharad's son, and of his lands which they claimed were in the king's hand. The king's representative denied that the king held the lands of Angharad's son in wardship, but said he held them as his 'pure demesne'. Walter and Angharad claimed that because of his age Llywelyn had come to the king's peace in the wardship of his mother and that this ought not to injure him. The justices could not fully agree on the premises and as time was short, they fixed a day *coram rege* a month from Easter to hear the case.²⁸ According to the editor of the *Welsh Assize Roll*, the Builth sitting seems to have been held 'for the sole purpose of a single plea by Walter de Pedwardin and Angharad, his wife, on the wardship of her son...'.²⁹ This could indicate that

of Pedwardine of Pedwardine, co. Hereford may be found in a late fourteenth century cartulary and refers to a 'descent, 1395, of the families of Pedwardine and Cronn', made by Robert Pedwardine. See G.R.C. Davies, *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain* (London: 1958), p.151.

²⁷ See my Chapter 6 'The Welsh Laws of Women', esp. p.175.

²⁸ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.243.

²⁹ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.159.

either Angharad or her husband, or both, were considered by the authorities to be persons of consequence. I do not know whether Angharad was successful in this matter. Her son, Llywelyn ab Owain ap Maredudd did, however, manage to hold the commotes of Mabwynion and Gwynionydd in Ceredigion until his death in 1309.³⁰

This was not the only claim by a Welsh noblewoman for the wardship of her sons and their lands at this time. After the death of Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys, Margaret of Bromfield, Madog's widow and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's sister, was granted the custody but not the wardship of her two young sons. On 10 December, 1278, the king ordered the bailiff of the lands of Madog of Bromfield to deliver to Margaret the income from these lands for the maintenance of her children.³¹ Thus we have two native Welsh noblewomen from two different parts of Wales claiming wardship of their sons and of the lands the sons would have inherited from their deceased fathers. Moreover, the two claims were made and dealt with in reasonably close succession. They provide further evidence that Welsh noblewomen were active in legal and social affairs in Wales. They had an active role to play in the aftermath of the war of 1277.

At this same hearing Angharad and her husband claimed against the king the three vills of Dolforwyn, Bahaithlon and Aberbechan and stated that Angharad's father had enfeoffed her of these vills and 'put her in full seisin, in which seisin she was until Llywelyn, Prince of Wales, in time of war ejected her by force and power etc.'³² The king's bailiff, Bogo de Knovill, replied that Angharad's father died in possession of these tenements, and that Angharad had never had

³⁰ Lloyd, *The Story of Ceredigion*, p.104.

³¹ Chapter 3, pp.86-88.

³² *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.255.

seisin by enfeoffment. Angharad and her husband argued that her father had enfeoffed her of the vill of Dolforwyn and Aberbechan and that she was in full *seisin*. They added that Julia, Owain's mother originally held the vill of Bahaithlon in dower, but she returned it to Owain, 'quit and entirely', and Owain then enfeoffed Angharad of the vill. The vill was at that time given to Julia to hold of Angharad for life, to revert to Angharad after the death of Julia.³³ If, as Angharad claimed, her father had enfeoffed her of the manors of Dolforwyn, Aberbechan and Bahaithlon, then Angharad had brought to her marriage to Owain a sizeable marriage portion.

The justices granted a day three weeks from Easter for the case to be heard in the king's court. At the next hearing Angharad and her husband seemed to change strategy, according to the Essoins taken at Westminster one month from Easter, May 1278. This time they were claiming that the land of Cydewain should descend to both Angharad and Owain ap Madog ap Gruffudd. They argued that as Owain ap Maredudd (Angharad's father) had no male heir, his illegitimate brother Gruffudd was his heir, and through him the right descended to his illegitimate son Madog and thus to Owain ap Madog ap Gruffudd, 'as son and heir, and to Angharad'.³⁴

Apparently they had no success at this hearing either and much later at the pleas before Hopton at Montgomery, Saturday after St Nicholas, 1279 (9 December 1279), Angharad and her husband claimed the cantref of Cydewain against the king, except the three vills of Dolforwyn,

³³ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.255. P.C. Bartrum does not give the name of the wife of Maredudd ap Robert of Cydewain, who died in 1244, but it seems that according to the *Welsh Assize Roll* her name was Julia. Although I do not know her ancestry, here we have another Welsh noblewoman of the thirteenth century who held land in dower. Julia is not a usual Welsh name, so perhaps she may not have been of Welsh ancestry after all. P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies, AD300-1400*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), vol. 3, p.454 and vol.4, p.781.

³⁴ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.256.

Bahaithlon and Aberbechan and except one carucate of land, with appurtenances.³⁵ The omission from this claim, over eighteen months later, of the lands which Angharad asserted her father had given her would tend to indicate that Angharad had indeed received at least temporary seisin of her own lands, or, as we shall see, that she may have exchanged these lands for ‘dower’ lands in Ceredigion.

Angharad based her claim to the cantref of Cydewain on the fact that she was ‘the nearest heir of Owain’. Roger Mortimer and Bogo de Knovill countered the claim of Angharad and her husband to Cydewain by arguing that according to Welsh law anyone with a claim to a right to a tenement must prosecute that claim within a year and a day, and that when they were asked if they wished to prosecute their right to Cydewain at Oswestry on Wednesday before St James the Apostle, 1278, Angharad and Walter had said ‘not there then’. Walter and Angharad argued that they were ‘not prevented by such time from prosecuting their right, but by supplication to the king, made from parliament to parliament, prosecuted their right’. Presumably they were proceeding under English law. They were given a day *coram rege* three weeks from Easter.

A further example of Angharad’s dogged pursuit of her claims, which also involved the contrast between Welsh and English law, was heard at the same assize. Angharad and her husband claimed against Roger Mortimer *leirwite* of the whole cantref of Cydewain. The *leirwite* was worth thirty shillings each year. They asserted that after Owain’s death and during the whole time of occupation by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd they continued their *seisin* in peace, and it was not until Edward took the cantref in time of war that they were disseised by Roger Mortimer.

³⁵ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.286. It should be noted that the roll refers to Walter as William de Pedwardin, but this is almost certainly an error.

Mortimer denied he did any wrong and said that the king gave him the cantref of Cydwain with all its appurtenances. Walter and Angharad asserted that Mortimer had unjustly dispossessed them. They appear to have been claiming that Angharad had been receiving the income in the form of *leirwite* from the date of Owain, her father's death. This probably means that they had divided up the revenues for Cydwain giving Angharad the *leirwite* dues. The term *leyerwite* or *legerwite* refers to a fine for fornication. According to Henrietta Leyser, *legerwite* 'literally lying down was a fine of Anglo-Saxon origin, in post-Conquest England it was a penalty for illicit sex, usually ... levied only on the woman'.³⁶ As Cydwain was in Wales and not England, it is probable that the fine being levied was in fact Welsh *amobr* which according to Welsh native law was a fine which was paid to the feudal lord by the girl's family for the loss of her virginity when she married. According to Dafydd Jenkins, the Norman marcher lords made the 'best of both worlds' by adding to the Welsh custom the English rule that payment was due also for any new marital or extra-marital relation, so that Welsh women had also to pay *amobr* if they remarried and for discovered illicit sex.³⁷ I have no way of discovering whether the *leirwite* Angharad had been receiving included only payment for loss of virginity on marriage, or whether dues were exacted in the case of further sexual partners, illicit or not.

As it is thought that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was probably established in Cydwain in 1261,³⁸ it is possible that Angharad in fact held Cydwain from Llywelyn following her father's death in 1261. However, as she claimed she was ejected from Cydwain by Llywelyn, it seems a more

³⁶ H. Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1995), p.120.

³⁷ For a detailed discussion of *amobr* see D. Jenkins, 'Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women', in D. Jenkins and M.E. Owen, eds., *The Welsh Law of Women* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), pp.73-5.

³⁸ See *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.45.

likely scenario that after she had relinquished her lands and received her replacement, Llywelyn allowed her to still receive the income from the *leirwite*. As Angharad and her husband claimed they were still in good *seisin* of the *leirwite* three weeks after Mortimer had been given *seisin* of the cantref, they were granted a day three weeks from Easter.³⁹ Edward I did in fact grant Cydewain to Roger Mortimer in 1279 as part of a series of territorial grants to his followers from lands forfeited by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and his supporters,⁴⁰ so that in reality neither Angharad nor Owain ap Madog ap Gruffudd had any hope of gaining possession of Cydewain.

These proceedings seemed to vacillate between Welsh and English law. This was a time of ambiguity and upheaval. Although the hearings involving Welsh land were meant to be heard under Welsh law, the prevailing uncertainty may have led to this situation. At the outset the king determined that these hearings were to be ‘according to the laws and customs of the parts in which the lands lay, or in which the trespasses and wrongs had been committed’.⁴¹ Cydewain was of course in Wales, and strictly speaking, under Welsh law women could not inherit land, but perhaps Angharad felt that her marriage to an Anglo-Norman would have given her some rights under English law. Under English common law, the eldest legitimate male heir would inherit before any females. Females only inherited if there were no male heirs. The editor of the *Welsh Assize Roll* stated that in all these cases ‘the reference *coram rege* was to the king in council or to the king in parliament ... and that the negative evidence is that none of them

³⁹ *Welsh Assize Roll*, pp.286-87.

⁴⁰ R.R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282-1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.26-7.

⁴¹ *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.86.

reached the *coram rege* bench'.⁴² I take this to mean that only cases which were heard at the *coram rege* bench could achieve a positive outcome.

Angharad may not have been successful in claiming her father's land as her inheritance. At the same time, despite the strictures of Welsh law, during her lifetime she did hold lands by gift of her father, her grandmother held lands in feoff from her, and she held 'dower' lands from her late husband, a Welsh nobleman, the charter for which was ratified by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. I have found no evidence of her death, but Angharad does not appear to have outlived her second husband. According to R.W. Eyton, a Writ of *Diem clausit* dated May 2, 1297 announced the death of Walter de Pedwardin. Eyton says that he left a widow, Elizabeth, who was his second wife. He had a son and heir named Roger de Pedwardine who was of full age at his father's death, but I do not know whether he was Angharad's son or the son of the second wife.⁴³ It is probable though that he was Angharad's son, because she was married to Walter de Pedwardin some time between 1275 and 1277, and this would mean that a son born of this marriage could have been of full age by 1297.

The importance of Angharad ferch Owain ap Maredudd of Cydewain in the narrative of Welsh history lies firstly in her place as ancestor and progenitor. She was descended from Llywelyn Fawr and her great-great-grandson was Owain Glyn Dŵr. Secondly, like Margaret ferch Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, she was directly involved in proceedings which were at the centre of the historical political events of the period and which in the end led to the final rebellion of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and the conquest of Wales in 1282-83. Both Angharad and Margaret of

⁴² *Welsh Assize Roll*, p.213-14.

⁴³ Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, Vol. XI, p.330.

Bromfield fought openly and tenaciously for their land rights, at a time when Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was arguing for the retention of Welsh native law, which in effect forbade women inheriting or indeed holding land. Notwithstanding the relaxed position he seems to have assumed in the past to questions of *maritagium* and dower, by the time these proceedings were conducted, namely 1277- 1282, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was adamant that Welsh native law should be retained. The actions of these two women in pursuing land rights in contravention of Welsh native law must have been seen as interfering with Llywelyn's plans for Wales.

I will now consider the charter for Angharad's so-called 'dower' of Anhuniog which I referred to at the beginning of this section on Angharad's landholding. J. Beverley Smith has discussed this charter and appended a copy of it to his paper titled 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales: a Grant of the Commote of Anhuniog, 1273.'⁴⁴ This thesis shows that the transfer of the commote of Anhuniog was not in fact dower. The arrangement made constituted compensation to Angharad for the loss of the vill of Dolforwyn which had been annexed by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd during his rise to power. At the assize at which Angharad argued for the return of the properties given to her by her father, mentioned above, she stated that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had 'in time of war ejected her by force and power, etc.'⁴⁵ Her father had died in 1261, and as previously stated, Llywelyn is thought to have been established in Cydwain by 1261. In 1273 Angharad's husband Owain is said to have arranged for Angharad to receive the commote of

⁴⁴ Smith, 'Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales', pp.348-355.

⁴⁵ *Welsh Assize Roll, 1277-84*, p.255.

Anhuniog in Ceredigion ‘in dower’. Llywelyn himself had agreed to and witnessed the charter, which was dated 24 January, 1273.⁴⁶

This charter confirming a grant of dower to a Welshwoman, witnessed by the prince of Wales, is very rare, and as J. Beverley Smith has said, this document is ‘something of a hybrid’.⁴⁷ In a footnote Smith mentions that we do not know whether the building of the castle at Dolforwyn was related to the seizure of Angharad’s *maritagium*, nor that ‘it was purely coincidental that the assignment of dower was made only a few months before the date of our first knowledge of the date castle-building at Dolforwyn.’⁴⁸ Llywelyn ap Gruffudd commenced building a castle at Dolforwyn in Cydewain on 3 April, 1273,⁴⁹ and I believe it is quite possible that Angharad may have received the commote of Anhuniog, in exchange for the vill of Dolforwyn, or for allowing Llywelyn to build his castle. J. Beverley Smith has commented that Llywelyn understood the strategic importance of this sector of the frontier and determined to build a castle in Cydewain ‘on an elevated site above the Severn a short distance from the ford of Montgomery.’⁵⁰ A visit to the ruins of Dolforwyn castle today shows the advantages of the chosen site. It commands a large vista which must have been extremely useful during time of war. One would have been able to see for miles around and have early warning of an approaching foe.

⁴⁶ Smith, ‘Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales’, p.355.

⁴⁷ Smith, ‘Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales’, p.350.

⁴⁸ Smith, Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales, p.350, **footnote** 1.

⁴⁹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, p.360, n.78.

⁵⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales*, p.361.

The building of this castle of Dolforwyn had significant ramifications for Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and royal opposition to it was an early means of angering and frustrating him. It was also one cause of the events which led to the final conquest of the Welsh. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd received a letter from the king dated 20 June, 1273, forbidding him from constructing a castle at Dolforwyn.⁵¹ The letter was written on the king's behalf, as he was in fact overseas at the time. J. Beverley Smith says that Llywelyn was 'particularly irritated' at receiving this letter. He is said to have kept the messenger waiting for several days for his reply, which letter Smith says 'stands among the most notable statements of his view of his status as prince of Wales.'⁵² In his reply, which was dated 11 July, 1273, Llywelyn stated that he had received the letter '... forbidding him to construct a castle on his own land ...', so that he was stressing the point in this letter that he owned the land upon which he had commenced to erect the castle. As Smith has said, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd 'had built the castle of Dolforwyn in an attempt to stabilize his position in this key strategic area, and his castle became the main objective of the royal forces summoned to this sector'⁵³ and 'the fall of Dolforwyn on 8 April, 1277 marked the end of Llywelyn's power in the march of Wales.'⁵⁴ Possession of the land upon which Dolforwyn castle was built was therefore a significant factor in the events of this period in medieval Wales. The fact that Angharad was claiming the cantref of Cydewain on 9 December, 1279, except the three vills of Dolforwyn, Bahaithlon and Aberbechan, and except one carucate of land, with appurtenances, referred to previously, suggests two possibilities. Either she had already been successful in reclaiming the three vills and the carucate of land, or this meant that these were the lands she had relinquished entirely to Llywelyn and in return for which she had received the

⁵¹ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence concerning Wales*, J.G. Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), p.86.

⁵² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.360.

⁵³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.415.

commote of Anhuniog in Ceredigion. As mentioned above, J. Beverley Smith noticed the closeness of the dates when Angharad received Anhuniog and when Llywelyn ap Gruffudd commenced building the castle of Dolforwyn, but he makes no other comment than it may not have been ‘purely coincidental’.

Whether the building of this castle was related to the seizure of Angharad’s *maritagium* or part of it, we cannot tell; nor can we tell whether it was purely coincidental that the assignment of dower was made only a few months before the date of our first knowledge of castle-building at Dolforwyn.⁵⁵

I will show that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that this was no coincidence. By 1273, Owain ap Maredudd of Ceredigion (Angharad’s husband) had, in company with the majority of the other Welsh rulers, paid homage to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd as prince of Wales. Unlike Cydwain, which was a relatively minor lordship, Ceredigion was a substantial lordship and it would have been in Llywelyn’s interests to ensure Owain’s continued support. The *Brut* tells us that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had in 1256 seized the lands which the lord Edward held in Ceredigion, and returned them to Maredudd ab Owain, Owain’s father. The following year Maredudd ab Owain had joined Llywelyn when he attacked Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys and took from him most of his lands.⁵⁶ Maredudd ab Owain died in 1265 and therefore Owain ap Maredudd would have inherited from his father a substantially larger Ceredigion because of Llywelyn’s rise to power. His father was Llywelyn’s ally and Owain ap Maredudd was continuing in his stead. Once Llywelyn was in power in this border area of the middle march, the erection of a castle at Dolforwyn would have been a necessity if he were to have any chance of withstanding an attack. This would have presented Owain with a dilemma. On the

⁵⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.418.

⁵⁵ Smith, ‘Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales’, p.350, **footnote 1**.

⁵⁶ *Brut Y Tywysogion, or The Chronicle of the Princes, Peniarth MS 20 Version*, T. Jones, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1952), pp.110-11.

one hand, he would almost certainly have agreed with Llywelyn's intention to build the castle at Dolforwyn. On the other hand, the seizure of his wife's own lands would not have pleased Owain, and I imagine Angharad would have been understandably irate.

For more than one reason therefore, I believe that Angharad was compensated for surrendering Dolforwyn. Firstly, at the date Llywelyn occupied Angharad's lands, or at least when he decided to build the castle in 1273, she had held those lands for at least twelve years, and possibly longer. The lands in Cydewain were probably part of a marriage settlement when Angharad married Owain ap Maredudd and they would have been quite valuable considering that this border area was part of the fertile plain, its strategic value and that there was also potential for building a fortress. Therefore I believe that although Owain ap Maredudd would willingly have aided Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in his plans for a Welsh Wales, it would have been easier for him to have countenanced the building of a castle in Ceredigion than to have his wife's *maritagium* in Cydewain requisitioned. Owain was already lord of Ceredigion; he did not need to be recompensed. But Angharad did.

The second reason I believe that the commote of Anhuniog was a replacement for lands in Cydewain is the wording of the charter. The language of the document in my opinion confirms precisely the nature of this transaction. It was not dower. The document stated that Owain ap Maredudd granted to Angharad the commote of Anhuniog *in liberum maritagium* (in free marriage). This form of wording was used under English common law when a man gave land with his daughter to her husband and this land was known as a marriage-portion.⁵⁷ The charter

⁵⁷ *Glanvill, The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of England*, G.D.G. Hall, ed. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), p.69.

therefore stated that the commote was given in free marriage. On the other hand, Smith states that ‘it is clear that the charter of 1273 bears the essential qualities of what was recognized in English common law as a nominated dower’.⁵⁸ Under English common law, at the time of their marriage a wife was entitled to a nominated property as her dower, or if the husband did not specifically nominate the dower then at his death she would receive one-third of the property held by her husband at the time of their marriage.⁵⁹ I agree that the land Angharad received was nominated property, but it was not dower, it was replacement dowry in the form of nominated land.

Angharad’s father had given her a marriage-portion of three villis in Cydewain, one of which incidentally her paternal grandmother held of Angharad by enfeoffment, and I believe that when Llywelyn ap Gruffudd occupied these lands, he was obliged to make some sort of arrangement for her to have a replacement. As Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was determined to see that Welsh native law should be retained, he may not have been enthusiastic about ratifying a charter which assigned land to a woman, but he was probably anxious to keep his Welsh allies content. By handing over Angharad’s lands in Cydewain to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Owain was also deprived of the benefit he would have been receiving from his wife’s marriage-portion. He would have gained nothing by this transaction. He was already lord of Anhuniog. Only the wife gains from this transaction. It seems therefore that this charter was purely compensation for what Angharad had lost.

⁵⁸ J.B. Smith, ‘Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales’, p.350.

⁵⁹ *Glanvill*, p.59.

Smith has argued that this *cynhysgaeth*, a Welsh term for *maritagium*, which usually involved movable property, ‘belongs to the sphere of dowry’, but that ‘the grant of Anhuniog belongs to the sphere of dower.’⁶⁰ But I think that the reason for the use of the phrase *in liberum maritagium* was precisely because this was not dower. This transaction was initiated to provide Angharad with a replacement of her dowry or *maritagium*. It took the form of a gift from husband to wife, but it was nevertheless in exchange for her surrendering Dolforwyn. It is the argument of this thesis that this is a case of a Welsh noblewoman refusing to give up land which she had held by gift of her father all these years. She first required something of equal value in return.

Angharad provides a prime example of the way historians have neglected the significance of Welsh noblewomen in relation to historical events in medieval Wales. Smith saw Angharad as a Welsh noblewoman who was dowered - unusual for a Welsh noblewoman in the thirteenth century. Using my earlier argument, by looking at Angharad independently as an individual, not as a bystander or as someone’s wife or daughter, I noticed that she appeared in the *Welsh Assize Roll* on at least eight separate occasions in relation to five different matters. I also noticed that she had held Dolforwyn, a place which was significant in Welsh history, for twelve years. I looked at the date of the charter granting her Anhuniog and noticed how close it was to the date of commencement of work on the castle at Dolforwyn. Unlike Smith, I saw this as significant, not just as a possible coincidence. When looked at more closely, the period which Smith calls ‘only a few months’ (between 24 January and 3 April, 1273) is in fact ten weeks, which shows how closely the commencement of the building of the castle of Dolforwyn followed the confirmation of the charter for Anhuniog.

⁶⁰ Smith, ‘Dower in Thirteenth-Century Wales, p.350.

The charter in question is an example of how the Welsh nobility during the thirteenth century were using English common law when it suited their particular requirements for power and resistance. This being the case, if one subscribed to the view that Anhuniog represented English common law dower, one could argue that it represented ‘reasonable lands in exchange’. Under the chapter ‘Pleas for dower’, Glanvil stated that if the heir cannot deliver a woman’s dower, ‘he must give her reasonable lands in exchange’.⁶¹ This particular section deals with the method to be followed in a case where a woman is claiming her dower from her husband’s heir, but because the land has been sold or otherwise disposed of, the heir is unable to now hand over the dower. Angharad was not claiming her dower from the heir in this case. However, it is the argument here that since Llywelyn had taken possession of Angharad’s lands and while he remained in power she could not expect to get them back, Anhuniog therefore represented ‘reasonable lands in exchange’, but not for dower.

In the years following the defeat and humiliation of Llywelyn in 1277, the actions of Angharad, and also Margaret of Bromfield, in coming to court and claiming their rights to Welsh land must have made it difficult for Llywelyn to argue his case for the retention of Welsh native law. It may have even weakened his case. Margaret’s court appearances were certainly commented upon by Llywelyn in his later list of grievances to Edward I and I believe that these claims by Angharad must have damaged his credibility. These relationships between women and land and questions of Welsh law and English law must have had an impact on Llywelyn’s position. This thesis argues that they contributed to Llywelyn’s decision to join the war of 1282 which resulted in his eventual downfall.

So far this chapter has canvassed the important sources of the power and authority of Angharad as an exemplar of women's participation in major historical events. The next section will continue the themes developed in relation to the literary record of women's participation and achievement. As we shall see, I believe it is quite likely that Angharad was a patron of Welsh literary art.

LITERARY EVIDENCE FOR WELSH NOBLEWOMEN

The primary concern of this section is the evidence which has been gained through Welsh literary sources, in this case poetry. Other evidence, however, from historical and other sources is included where this evidence corroborates or otherwise adds to the points being made.

Literary evidence is extremely valuable for historical research into most earlier societies, but it is especially important for Welsh medieval history. The Welsh bard or poet was a well-respected and highly valued member of the prince's household. Gerald of Wales said that 'the Welsh bards ... kept accurate copies of the genealogies of these princes in their old manuscripts ... written in Welsh' and that 'they would also recite them from memory ...'.⁶² Their praise poems and elegies proclaimed the various triumphs and successes of their patrons, and they also contain much other useful information, for example geographical details etc. Two examples of this which concern Welsh noblewomen from the poets mentioned in this thesis would be firstly, Llywarch ap Llywelyn (Prydydd Y Moch) when he described the southern areas of Wales where

⁶¹ *Glanvill*, p.65.

⁶² *Gerald of Wales, The Journey Through Wales/The Description of Wales*, L. Thorpe, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), p.223.

his love, Gwenllian, lived in Gwynllŵg (ll.27-29).⁶³ Another example is in Iorwerth Fychan's poem to Gwenllian where he mentioned the river Ffyddion (l.25) and that Gwenllian was from Meirionydd (l.49).⁶⁴ There are many examples of descriptions of the Welsh landscape. Gwyn A. Williams said of a poem by Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd, who wrote in the second half of the twelfth century (Hywel's *Gorhoffedd* or Boast of his Country) that 'the sharpness and clarity of the North Wales landscape has never been so well caught in words'.⁶⁵ J. Lloyd-Jones has also mentioned the historical value of the poetry of the *gogynfeirdd*, where, for example, in an elegy to his patron he alluded to the time of year he died.⁶⁶ The bards were therefore the keepers of the history of Wales and as such their surviving poetry is an important source for research material. Peredur Lynch's article titled 'Court Poetry, Power and Politics' explores the way the court poets interpreted and recorded the various political machinations they witnessed, and in his words they were 'informed observers of the political landscape of their age'.⁶⁷

Evidence that Welsh noblewomen were patrons of poets may be found in the poetry itself. An example is contained in Einion ap Gwalchmai's memorial ode to Nest. He tells us that he used to compose poems for her and that she would reward him. Line 30 from his *awdl* suggests this was the case - *Gwnad oet dal eur mal yr y moli ...* which J.E. Caerwyn Williams translates as:

'Usual was it to receive payment in fine gold for praising her ...'.⁶⁸

⁶³ J.P. Clancy, *Medieval Welsh Poems* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), p.156.

⁶⁴ *Llawysgrif Hendregadredd*, J. Morris-Jones and T.H. Parry-Williams, eds. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2nd Printing, 1971), p.290.

⁶⁵ G.A. Williams, *An Introduction to Welsh Poetry From the Beginnings to the Sixteenth Century* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1953), p.83.

⁶⁶ J. Lloyd-Jones, 'The Court Poets of the Welsh Princes', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XXXIV (1948), p.186.

⁶⁷ P.I. Lynch, 'Court Poetry, Power and Politics', in T.M. Charles-Edwards, M.E. Owen and P. Russell, eds., *The Welsh King and His Court* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.174.

Angharad's mother, Margaret, (daughter of Maelgwn Fychan, d.1257, and Angharad ferch Llywelyn Fawr) was great-grandmother to Owain Glyn Dŵr and also she was a granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr. The chroniclers at Strata Florida considered her important enough to record her death.⁶⁹ She died in 1255 and the chronicler noted that she was daughter of Maelgwn, wife of Owain ap Rhobert. According to P. Bartrum, Margaret was the wife of Owain ap Maredudd ap Rhobert, so that this entry in the chronicle appears to be slightly incorrect, as it left out one generation.⁷⁰

Angharad had first married into a family who may have been literary patrons. Her sister-in-law was Efa ferch Maredudd ab Owain of Ceredigion, and I believe Angharad herself was possibly a literary patron. Efa is mentioned frequently by modern historians as being one medieval Welshwoman who was literate, or to be more precise, who could read.⁷¹ It seems fairly certain that she was able to read and understand medieval Welsh, and as Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan remarks, is also 'one possible ... case of a woman patron commissioning a text from a male cleric'. This demonstrates that Welsh noblewomen were included in the cultural history of the period in their own right and as part of the cultural landscape, if largely omitted from the biased historiography that exists to date.

While reading the various versions of the discussion of Efa by modern writers, I find it interesting that R.R. Davies was 'reasonably certain' that Efa was literate and that J.E.C.

⁶⁸ Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, p.134.

⁶⁹ *Brut Y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes, Red Book of Hergest Version*, T. Jones, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), pp.246-47.

⁷⁰ Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. 4, pp.779 and 854. Bartrum refers to this missing generation on p.854.

⁷¹ Some examples in modern Welsh history texts would be R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change, Wales 1063-1416* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1987), pp.128 and 209. In fact Davies claims that 'Efa

Williams says ‘we can be sure [Brother Gruffudd Bola] would not have translated the *Quicunque Vult* for Efa nor troubled to explain to her the proper way to translate, had she not been literate.’ On the other hand, Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan states that while she feels that Efa ferch Maredudd is an ‘unambiguous case, in the thirteenth century, of a woman who could read Welsh, but not Latin, and who owned at least one text,’ she would not go as far as to say that Efa had commissioned the translation herself. Based on the available evidence, Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan is correct of course, and it is a pity that we do not have more to work with. This being said, I feel that one should not automatically jump to the conclusion that Efa did not request the translation herself, nor that the patron mentioned above of the compilation of poetry in the Hendregedd Manuscript was necessarily a man. Women literary patrons were fairly common in the Middle Ages and I see no reason why Welsh women would not have been patrons, particularly in a society in which bards were such revered individuals. I agree with J.E. Caerwyn Williams that in all likelihood, as Welsh noblewomen ‘became more literate and better educated, the poets found in them greater appreciation of their art and culture’.⁷² Indeed Caerwyn Williams has also alerted us to Dieter Kartschoke’s theory that ‘it was the daughters of the nobility who first learned to read and to become the first patrons of courtly literature.’⁷³ I had originally thought that Angharad, the sister-in-law of Efa might have been the literary patron who influenced the choice of poetry chosen by the compiler of the poems in the Hendregadredd Manuscript. However, her husband Owain died in 1275, which probably excludes him as the possible patron, and by 1278 Angharad was in court with her new Anglo-Norman husband

was the first Welshwoman of whose literacy we can be fairly confident.’ p.209. See also Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, pp.59-61.

⁷² Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, p.140.

⁷³ Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, p.60, n.132. See also D. Kartschoke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im frühen mittelalter* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1990), p.18. (Kartschoke mentions that noblewomen were those whom the vernacular writers had in mind when they recommended their books for private reading.)

claiming her land rights. If, as is believed, the Hendregadredd Manuscript originated in 1282 or shortly thereafter, my theory seems less likely, because Angharad's actions may have been seen by some as contrary to the interests of the Welsh, and in particular, detrimental to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's determination to retain Welsh native law. Even if she were not the patron of this particular work, it does not mean that she was not a literary patron. Medieval noblewomen were known to engage in patronage for religious reasons. They were concerned for their souls and the souls of their family members.

The basis of all the references to Efa is a paper by Lewis in 1930 giving details of the translation of the Athanasian Creed (or *Quicumque vult*) into Middle Welsh from Latin specifically for Efa.⁷⁴ Lewis stated that according to the colophon, the translation was done by a Brother Gruffudd Bola, and that in his dedication the translator addressed Efa ferch Maredudd and said that he had undertaken the work for her.⁷⁵ Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan gives a translation of the opening statement of the Welsh version of the Creed in English as follows:

Thus, since I understood that you, honoured Efa daughter of Maredudd, wished to have the Creed of St Athanasius in Welsh, I took upon myself a little labour to turn this Creed into a language that you can read and understand.⁷⁶

Efa is not mentioned by Bartrum, although he does give the children of Maredudd as Catrin, Gwladus, Gwenllian, Gruffudd, Owain, Cynan and Rhys.⁷⁷ Bartrum shows Maredudd as having three wives, two of whom were Welsh. One of the Welsh wives was Elinor, daughter of Maelgwn Fychan, and if she were Efa's mother, then Efa would once again have been a great-

⁷⁴ H. Lewis, 'Credo Athanasius Sant', BBCS, vol V (1930), pp.193-203.

⁷⁵ Lewis, 'Credo Athanasius Sant', p.193.

⁷⁶ C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'More written about than writing? Welsh women and the written word.', in H. Pryce, ed., *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.157.

⁷⁷ Bartrum, Vol. 4, p.781.

granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr. I can find no record of a marriage for Efa, but that does not mean she did not marry.

Another important family in south Wales was that of Rhys Fychan, who made a significant contribution to the unfolding of the history of Wales in the thirteenth century. When Llywelyn ap Gruffudd invaded Ystrad Tywi in 1256 and ejected Rhys Fychan from Dynefwr and Carreg Cennen, it was of no consequence to him that Rhys Fychan was married to his sister Gwladus ferch Gruffudd ap Llywelyn Fawr. Gwladus was, of course, a granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr. It is a paradox that in a society where ancestry was of the utmost importance, close family relationships meant very little when it came to matters which concerned ownership of land and territorial power. Wales was a society based on patrilineal descent, which saw brothers at war with one another in order to establish supremacy and hegemony upon the death of a father or other powerful family member. This does not mean, however, that Gwladus was not an important member of the lineage. Llywelyn himself had fought and defeated two of his brothers to establish himself as the ruler of Gwynedd and if his brother-in-law Rhys Fychan did not acquiesce in his plans, then he would not have hesitated to eject him from the strongholds of Dynefwr and Carreg Cennen. A.J. Roderick suggested that this marriage between Gwladus and Rhys Fychan was the one referred to in the Calendar of Patent Rolls of 1254 when Henry III was concerned that Llywelyn was planning a marriage of his sister ‘in a place in which damage may arise to the king’, but I think it was more likely that the king was referring to her sister Margaret’s marriage to Madog ap Gruffudd of northern Powys.⁷⁸ Gwladus had eight children, and as mentioned below, she had two daughters

⁷⁸ See my Chapter 3 ‘Margaret of Bromfield’, above p.79.

named Margaret, one of whom was the subject of a poem by Goronwy Foel. Gwladus died in 1261 and the Peniarth Version of the *Brut* recorded her death, as the wife of Rhys.⁷⁹

Margaret ferch Rhys Fychan, was the daughter of Gwladus ferch Gruffudd ap Llywelyn Fawr, mentioned above, and Rhys Fychan of Deheubarth. According to the genealogies Gwladus and Rhys Fychan in fact named two of their daughters Margaret.⁸⁰ Goronwy Foel wrote an ode in praise of Margaret the daughter of Rhys Fychan, but unfortunately it is not known to which Margaret the poem refers. Neither is anything else known about Goronwy Foel, except for this incomplete poem.⁸¹ The editors of *Gwaith Dafydd Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd Hanner Cyntaf y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg* (The Works of Dafydd Benfras and Other Poets of the First Half of the Thirteenth Century) make the point that one of the daughters named Margred was married to Madog Crupl ap Gruffudd ap Gruffudd Maelor II of Powys and that Madog the Cripple was great-grandfather to Owain Glyn Dŵr. The editors also add the fact that the girls' mother was Gwladus the daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn of Gwynedd.⁸² For what it is worth, when speaking of illustrious ancestors, I think the editors have overlooked the fact that the Margred who married Madog Crupl (either one) was a great-granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr and great-grandmother to Owain Glyn Dŵr.

I had hoped that when I found poems written about Welsh noblewomen which were written by poets known to have lived in the thirteenth century, they might tell me something about these

⁷⁹ *Brut Y Tywysogion, Peniarth Ms. 20 Version*, p.112.

⁸⁰ The Welsh did sometimes give more than one of their children, boys and girls, the same name, especially if a child died, or in the case of a child born to a second or subsequent wife. I am not sure, however, that in all cases where the same name is shown that it may not be just an error. For the genealogy of Rhys Fychan see Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. 4, p.783.

⁸¹ *Gwaith Dafydd Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd Hanner Cyntaf y Drydedd Ganrif ar ddeg*, N.G. Costigan (Bosco), et al, eds. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), p.337. (Translation of the Welsh is my own.)

women, if only by way of personal description. Unfortunately, as the editors note, the *awdl* or ode in praise of Margred is a conventional love poem, in the manner of the *Rhieingerdd* (or love poem) to Efa daughter of Madog ap Maredudd of Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr (III, poem 5), or the Ode of Prydydd y Moch to Gwenllian, daughter of Hywel ap Iorwerth of Gwynllŵg in south-east Wales (V, poem 14). Not only are there merely some seven lines of the poem extant, these seven lines do not give us any useful information about Margred herself. The ode of Prydydd y Moch to Gwenllian, in which a love-sick poet calls on his horse to take him to Gwenllian's house, is another case where one is hopeful of some insight into this woman. Bartrum's Genealogies show that one Hywel Caerllion (l.1172-1184) of Gwynllŵg, and his wife Gwerful ap Owain Cyfeiliog, had two daughters named Gwenllian. One was named Gwenllian and the other Gwenllian Fechan (the younger).⁸³ The poem was in fact to '*Gwenlliant Dec verch Hywel*' so that all we know about her is that the poet thought she was fair. It could mean that she had fair hair, but it probably means that the poet thought she was pretty. So although mentioned by name, these sources tell us little about the real women's lives. The authors of a recent article on Llywarch Brydydd y Moch have suggested that this poem may have first been sung at Gwenllian's wedding feast. They have also commented on the fact that Llywarch was the court poet to Rhodri ab Owain Gwynedd and on the possibility that both the Lord Rhys and Rhodri may have been present at the wedding feast.⁸⁴ As Llywarch was court poet to Rhodri between 1175-c.1187,⁸⁵ and if the poem was to the elder of the two Gwenllians, there may be some doubt as to whether she was still alive in the thirteenth century, but there is every possibility that she

⁸² *Gwaith Dafydd Benfras*, p.337.

⁸³ P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, Vol. 4, p.758.

⁸⁴ E. Feer and N.A. Jones, 'The poet and his patrons: the early career of Llywarch Brydydd y Moch' in H. Fulton, ed., *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), p.143.

⁸⁵ Feer and Jones, 'The poet and his patrons,' p.143, n.58.

was. Although far from invisible and marginal, these women were highly visible in the literary record, but often captured in conventional tropes.

In seeking to create further understanding of Welsh noblewomen, I was drawn to Daniel Huws' enticing comment in a footnote to his chapter on 'The Hendregadredd Manuscript' in a discussion of two *awdlau* of Iorwerth Fychan addressed to women. Huws says that the 'consensus of scholarly opinion' dates this Iorwerth to c.1300, but he comments on the unusually full name given to the poet in this manuscript, which brings him to consider the possibility that this Iorwerth Fychan was in fact a descendant of the lords of Arwystli and Cydewain. He postulates that Iorwerth Fychan may have been the son of Iorwerth ap Rhotbert, who according to an elegy by Llywelyn 'Prydydd y Moch' was a grandson of one 'Maredudd Mawr'. He says that if he were the son of Iorwerth ap Rhotbert, 'this identification would place him in the mid-thirteenth century', which would mean that he was writing about thirteenth-century noblewomen. Huws is suggesting that these are not conventional praise poems to a patron and that they might well be from an aristocratic poet, 'breaking new ground' and 'standing apart from the tradition',⁸⁶ which will be discussed below.

One of the poems by Iorwerth Fychan is addressed to 'Gwenlliant' and Huws feels that she was from Merioneth.⁸⁷ A Gwenllian (d.1254), daughter of Maelgwn Fychan, d.1257, and Angharad ferch Llywelyn Fawr, and sister of Margaret mentioned above, married Maredudd ap Llywelyn,

⁸⁶ Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p.206, **footnote** 19. See also J.E. Caerwyn Williams, *The Poets of the Welsh Princes*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), p.47.

⁸⁷ The poem does in fact mention 'Feirionnyd' in line 49 of the poem. *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill ail Hanner y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg*, R.M. Andrews et al, eds. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), p.327.

Lord of Merionydd and it is possible that she is the Gwenllian of this poem.⁸⁸ If this is the Gwenllian referred to, she was certainly an important woman in the eyes of her contemporaries, because the Red Book of Hergest version of the *Brut y Tywysogyon*, mentions the date of her death. This may possibly be due to the fact that she was a granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr. The chronicler stated that in 1254 Gwenllian, daughter of Maelgwn Ieuanc died at Llanfihangel Gelynrhod, and that she was buried in the chapter-house of the monks at Strata Florida. Significantly, this notice of her death gives the name of her father, and does not refer to her as someone's wife. (*Ac yna y bu varw Gwenllian, verch Vaelgwn Jeuanc ...*).⁸⁹ The entry for 1255 mentions the death of her husband, Maredudd ap Llywelyn of Meirionydd, 'leaving as his heir an only son by Gwenllian daughter of Maelgwn'. Once again the chronicler uses the patronymic when he refers to Gwenllian. Gwenllian's brother Rhys ap Maelgwn Ieuanc also died in 1255 and the chronicler reported that 'he was buried beside his sister in the chapter-house of the monks'.⁹⁰ So the monks at Strata Florida thought of Gwenllian (daughter of Maelgwn Fychan and Angharad ferch Llywelyn Fawr) as an important Welsh noblewoman worthy of mention in her own right. As I have discussed elsewhere in this thesis, noble descent was of paramount significance to the Welsh. One's ancestry was as important on the mother's side as it was on the father's. She was descended from the royal houses of Deheubarth and Gwynedd, and had married the lord of Meirionydd. Gwenllian therefore received due recognition at her death.

J.E. Caerwyn Williams says that he agrees with Daniel Huws that the two poems to Gweirful, and Gwenllian ferch Maelgwn Fychan, 'cannot have been regarded as important and cannot have

⁸⁸ P.C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. 3, p.445 and vol. 4, p.779.

⁸⁹ *Brut Y Tywysogyon, Red Book of Hergest Version*, pp.244-45. See Also *Annales Cambriae*, . Williams ab Ithel, ed. (London: Rolls Series, 1860), pp.88-9.

⁹⁰ *Brut Y Tywysogyon, Red Book of Hergest Version*, pp.245-47. See also *Annales Cambriae*, p.89.

been kept out of respect for their author unless he was ... of the same stock as the princes of Arwystli.’ This means that they agree that the poems were not important because of their subjects, Welsh noblewomen, but they were important because of the nobility of the poet. I would argue that a poem about Gwenllïan ferch Maelgwn Fychan may just have been considered important enough to be kept by the compiler of these poems about the houses of Deheubarth and Gwynedd.

These poems by Iorwerth Fychan are analysed in volume VII of the edited works of the Poets of the Princes published by the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. In her introduction to ‘Gwaith Iorwerth Fychan’, the editor, Christine James, tells us that we have hardly any certain knowledge about Iorwerth Fychan, and refers us to a paper by Daniel Huws titled ‘Llawysgrif Hendregadredd’ in *Cylchgrawn Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru*, XXII, 1981-2, in which he seems to have first postulated his theory about the noble lineage of Iorwerth Fychan.⁹¹ Christine James agrees that the nature of the poems of Iorwerth Fychan perfectly suits a poet of a nobleman who was able to afford to stand apart from the mainstream of the tradition of Welsh songs of praise, precisely as Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd did before him. The editor also mentions that the identification of Iorwerth ap Rhotbert, who was elegised by Prydydd y Moch is not without its problems. Even though we may not date a poem of the work of Prydydd y Moch after about 1220, because of the chief characteristics of versification, the editors would be inclined to date the poem of Iorwerth Fychan to c1300, which would probably be too late in the century for a son of Iorwerth ap Rhotbert. This may be so, but it certainly confirms for me that the subjects of the poems are indeed thirteenth-century noblewomen. James also states that apart from the reference to Elenid in the ode to Gweirful, there is not one suggestion in the work of Iorwerth Fychan of a connection between him and Arwystli; indeed, with the exception of the

mention of Fechydd, there is a much greater northern interest in this ode to Gwenllian. For example Derwennyd and Meirionnydd.⁹² Perhaps it is worth noting though that Arwystli was quite close to Meirionnydd. Since the subject of the poem moved to Meirionnydd, it does not seem unusual that there is such a great northern interest in this ode.

So far I have been discussing the relative lack of surviving evidence of distinctive personal details about the women who are the subjects of these poems. I will now look at the poems in the context of my basic thesis which is that Welsh noblewomen in the thirteenth century had access to greater power and influence than has been generally acknowledged by modern historians. These love poems addressed to women from the second half of the thirteenth century are considered by scholars to be different from the earlier court-poetry written by the *gogynfeirdd* from the early twelfth century up until this time. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the poets of the princes wrote formal praise poems to the wives and daughters of their patrons. These poems were known as *rhieingerddi*.⁹³ Examples are Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr's elegy to Efa, the daughter of Madog ap Maredudd and Einion ap Gwalchmai's ode to Nest. The poet praised the noblewoman and by doing this he was also praising her father or husband, and the dynasty to which they belonged. At the same time the poet was confirming his position in the household as a bard from the ancient and native tradition, a position of 'considerable influence and prestige'.⁹⁴ The poetry written to women in the second half of the thirteenth century, however, including the poems discussed above, for example Iorwerth Fychan's poems to Gwenlliant and Gweirful, shows signs of change from the native tradition, and as Huws has

⁹¹ *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd*, p.308.

⁹² *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd*, p.308.

⁹³ Caerwyn Williams, *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales*, pp.131-132.

⁹⁴ Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, p.77.

said these poets were ‘breaking new ground’ and ‘standing apart from the tradition’.⁹⁵ Helen Fulton also has stated that this group of praise-poems to women ‘marked the most innovative area of *gogynfeirdd* poetry’ and were to have a profound effect on the *cywyddwyr* love poetry of the next two centuries.⁹⁶ It is thought that there was a gradual introduction to Wales since the coming of the Normans of the ‘themes and techniques of Provençal verse’.⁹⁷ This may explain the Continental influences in the love-poetry of the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

According to Helen Fulton, however, praise of Welsh noblewomen was different from praise of Provençal noblewomen, because ‘in medieval Wales women did not generally hold land or money in their own right.’⁹⁸ She believes that unlike the poetry to noblewomen from Provence, who owned property and wealth, the poetry to Welsh noblewomen was ‘merely a displacement of the eulogies directed at the lord in whose court they lived.’⁹⁹ I would suggest that this was not necessarily the case. My thesis has shown that during the thirteenth century in Wales noblewomen were increasingly becoming holders of land and other forms of wealth. I would argue that the middle of the thirteenth century is the precise point at which one would notice a change in the way that Welsh poets would begin to address Welsh noblewomen in their own right. The majority of the Welsh noblewomen in this study owned land, and I believe they did indeed have ‘very real and significant power’. That this situation was to change for Welsh noblewomen with the final defeat of the Welsh in 1283 does not alter the fact that the thirteenth century in Wales saw Welsh noblewomen in a more powerful position with regard to land-owning than hithertofore. The *gogynfeirdd* who wrote about women in the second half of the

⁹⁵ Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p.206, n.19.

⁹⁶ Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, p.78.

⁹⁷ Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, p.76.

⁹⁸ Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, p.77.

thirteenth century may have seen Welsh noblewomen as having real and significant power in their own right and this reason, in addition to the exposure to French influences which permeated

Wales during the two hundred years of Norman rule, may have contributed to the changes noticed in the love-poetry of this period.

This does not alter the fact that the bard or poet was a very influential person among the ancient Celtic peoples, and bards continued their important functions within native Welsh families down to the thirteenth century and beyond. The Welsh laws emphasise the importance of the *pencerdd* or court poet and also the position of the *bardd teulu* or bard of the household.¹⁰⁰ During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the distinction between the two bards gradually disappeared, but the *gogynfeirdd* continued to perform their duties as keepers of the history of Wales by composing elegies and praise poems as they had always done from ancient times.¹⁰¹ With the gradual increase during the thirteenth century in the influence and political power of Welsh noblewomen, however, the *gogynfeirdd* began to look at them in a different way as subjects for their poetry.

Daniel Huws also discusses an *awdl* to Gwenllian ferch Cynan by Casnodyn. He is pondering Gwenllian's connection to the patron responsible for much of the compilation of the Hendregadredd Manuscript and mentions that she was a granddaughter of Maredudd ab Owain

⁹⁹ Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, p.77.

¹⁰⁰ D. Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1986). For the *pencerdd* see p.38 and for the *bardd teulu* see p.20.

¹⁰¹ Lloyd-Jones, 'The Court Poets of the Welsh Princes', pp.174-75.

of Ceredigion and that the suggested patron, Ieuan Llwyd, was a great-grandson of Maredudd ab Owain.¹⁰² P.C. Bartrum shows Gwenllian to be the daughter of Cynan of Caron (d.1295), a brother of Owain ap Maredudd, Angharad's husband, mentioned above,¹⁰³ and of Efa, also mentioned above, and a direct descendant of the Lord Rhys. For once in this chapter, she was not a granddaughter or great-granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr. Gwenllian was the wife of Sir Gruffudd Llwyd, and according to Bartrum, she had seven daughters and one son, named Ieuan.¹⁰⁴ Her father died in 1295, so that presumably she was born in the thirteenth century. This *awdl* to Gwenllian ferch Cynan, the wife of Sir Gruffudd Llwyd, has been dated to 1316-18, but it seems to me that this Gwenllian could be considered a thirteenth-century Welsh noblewoman, if she were a married woman in 1316-18.¹⁰⁵ Unless of course she was newly married in 1316 at the age of about fifteen, which is a possibility. Just because the poet who wrote about her is said to have flourished around 1330¹⁰⁶ it does not mean that she was necessarily a fourteenth-century Welsh noblewoman. According to J. Beverley Smith she had a son named Gruffudd who was 'maintained at court' within the period 1317-18.¹⁰⁷ As noted above, Bartrum shows Sir Gruffudd Llwyd and Gwenllian ferch Cynan as having seven daughters, but only one son named Ieuan. Ieuan had a son named Gruffudd, so perhaps it was Sir Gruffudd Llwyd's grandson who was maintained at court. It is also possible that a son named Gruffudd is missing from the genealogy.

¹⁰² Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p.216.

¹⁰³ Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, Vol. 4, p.781.

¹⁰⁴ Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, Vol. 4, p.684.

¹⁰⁵ Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p.206.

¹⁰⁶ Caerwyn Williams, *The Poets of the Welsh Princes*, p.80.

¹⁰⁷ J. Beverley Smith, 'Gruffydd Llwyd and the Celtic Alliance, 1315-18', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 26, (1974-6), p.467.

We have seen that Welsh noblewomen were probably literary patrons and they were also subjects for the poetry of the Poets of the Princes in the thirteenth century. Unfortunately not many poems about women have come down to us from the thirteenth century, but from the few examples we have it is possible to gain a fleeting glimpse of life for these noblewomen.

This chapter has examined the printed historical and literary record in relation to a number of Welsh noblewomen beyond north Wales. It has focused particularly on Angharad ferch Owain ap Maredudd of Cydewain, great-granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr. It presents a thesis that with alternative interpretations of events, women may be seen as pivotal to outcomes. The literary record suggests the presence and participation of many women in Welsh society who were not marginal to social and cultural life.

CONCLUSION

The narrative of the history of Wales in the thirteenth century has been diluted through seven hundred years of historical fact, fiction, gender bias and inaccuracy. There is no doubt, however, that Welsh noblewomen as well as noblemen played a vital part in that history as it unfolded. By using a different approach from that taken by historians in the past, when analysing the legal documents and chroniclers' reports which are available to us as evidence from this period, this thesis has shown that medieval Welsh noblewomen were in fact contributors to the private and political schemes, machinations and fortunes which formed this history. Their contribution did not merely consist of tacit support for their fathers, husbands and sons. These women themselves showed agency when their own rights and those of their families were threatened. On several occasions they may be said to have been pivotal to political events regarded as important in Welsh history.

This thesis disputes the widely accepted view that Welsh women could not, and as a consequence did not, hold land. Even though the evidence cited is small, many more elite and ordinary Welsh women probably held land in the thirteenth century. For the most part, when it comes to land-holding by women, the legal records reflect only litigation, and therefore underestimate the land-holding of women. There is no legal evidence for the majority of cases where land was held peacefully and harmoniously, because it was unnecessary. We have only evidence for those occasions when a dispute was involved. Of the women studied in this thesis an overwhelming majority held land, both as *maritagium* and as dower, despite the restrictions placed on land-holding by women in the Welsh native laws. The only exceptions among the Welsh noblewomen studied for whom there is not evidence of land-holding are those women

from the south of Wales, featured in Chapter Eight. However, this may merely reflect the fact that such evidence has not yet been found, and not that it does not exist. Moreover, although Llywelyn ap Gruffudd espoused his determination in the late thirteenth century to uphold Welsh native law, he had been content to take a more relaxed view of landholding by women earlier in his career when it suited his political ambitions.

During the reigns of King John and Henry III in the thirteenth century, England experienced a high degree of political turmoil, which allowed the native Welsh leaders to regain control of much of Wales. Like their English sisters, Welsh noblewomen were able to take advantage of opportunities to access power and increased status which resulted from the political upheaval in England in the thirteenth century. Unfortunately, however, following the conquest of Wales by Edward I in 1282/3 these same opportunities were not available to the Welsh *uchelwyr* in the centuries which followed.

Welsh noblewomen operated in the domestic sphere through family networking, and they also appeared on the political stage when their own or their family's interests were threatened. There is no doubt that when it came to marriages arranged for them among the Anglo-Norman marcher families, these very young Welsh noblewomen were political pawns. However, once they were established in these marriages, these Welsh noblewomen showed themselves to be successful negotiators. Those who became widows showed great independence and strength when dealing with the burgeoning English legal system. In many cases, even when faced with seemingly overwhelming opposition, they did not deviate from their aims. While on many occasions these outstanding Welsh noblewomen were unsuccessful in their endeavours, they certainly showed

great tenacity and courage in standing up to the conquerors. The determination of Margaret, the sister of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, for example, in continuing to press her demands in the face of opposition from not only Edward I, but also her brother, was remarkable.

The female descendants of Llywelyn Fawr were all notable Welsh noblewomen who were valued members of their society and were highly regarded as progenitors. This present work has shown that while Welsh society may have been patrilineal, descent through women was just as important as through men when it came to building a family power base. Moreover, inheritance of land through women was possible.

While very little evidence remains of Welsh women as the subjects of, and disseminators of, Welsh literature and poetry, this thesis shows that such material did exist. The apparent lack of evidence is misleading, in terms of women's contribution to the literature and poetry, as the collectors of this material would almost certainly have been clerics, who, as has been discussed, would have been primarily interested in preserving works which alluded to male members of Welsh medieval society. It is highly likely that much more poetry was written by and about Welsh noblewomen, but it was considered unimportant by collators of this material, and therefore it was not kept. The surviving evidence of the literacy of Welsh women also is meagre, but it has been shown that some women could read, and the proportion was probably much higher than it appears.

This thesis began noting the observations of historians such as Gerda Lerner that history has been largely written by men and left women out. However, while the last three decades have

witnessed prodigious activity in inserting women into the narrative of medieval European history, in the case of Wales, this scholarly endeavour remains largely absent from historiography. As long ago as 1986 Deirdre Beddoes could make the observation that ‘Welsh history, like English history, has been about chaps’.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, medieval Welsh history still remains a largely single sex image. This present work aimed to make a contribution towards changing this. It has documented the lives of coeval Welsh noblewomen such as Senana, Margaret of Bromfield, the daughters of Llywelyn Fawr, Maud Clifford, Angharad ferch Owain ap Maredudd of Cydwain and so on, showing the contribution they made to the events which unfolded in the turbulent era of the thirteenth century.

It is hoped that the approach taken, and the significant material discovered and showcased, will be part of a future research endeavour which can construct a more thoroughgoing account of the period with far less gender bias, so apparent at present. The narrative of the history of Wales in the thirteenth century would then record the history of a greater proportion of the members of Welsh society, not just its male members. There are promising indications in the revisionist history of Llywelyn Fawr that some changes in this direction are forthcoming. However, this needs to be supplemented by a redefinition that both men and women are part of the narrative frame that is worthy of description and explanation, and both constitute Welsh medieval history. While this thesis has largely addressed the omission of women from Welsh medieval history and the under-estimation of their contribution, research is only just beginning to consider other gender aspects, such as the way men’s actions are far from neutral and are influenced by gender

¹⁰⁸ D. Beddoes, ‘Images of Welsh Women’ in T. Conran, ed., *Wales: The Imagined Nation, Studies in Cultural and National Identity* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986), p.229.

values like changing and conflicting values about masculinity.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately Welsh historians have underestimated, to a marked degree, the presence and importance of Welsh women to their society. There needs to be a serious revision of the main assumptions of the historiography.

¹⁰⁹ This is now being explored for Early Modern Wales by Michael Roberts, 'More Prone to be Idle and Riotous than English'? Attitudes to Male Behaviour in Early Modern Wales' in M. Roberts and S. Clarke, eds., *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp.259-90.

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