
MEDIEVAL WALES

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CONTENTS

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<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>List of maps</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
1 Wales in the dark ages	1
2 The Normans in Wales	20
3 The marcher lordships	44
4 The church in Wales	67
5 Crisis of identity: towards a principality of Wales	90
6 The Edwardian conquest	111
7 Under the heel: Wales in the fourteenth century	139
8 Resurgence and decline: the fifteenth century	165
9 A new dawn? The coming of the Tudors	186
<i>Select bibliography</i>	192
<i>Index</i>	215

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FIGURES

•

1	The ruling dynasty of Gwynedd from the ninth to the early eleventh centuries	<i>page</i> 5
2	Three dynasties from south-east Wales: (a) Gwynllŵg, (b) Morgannwg, (c) Senghennydd	31
3	The family of de Braose	52
4	Cistercian monasteries: the family of Whitland	82
5	The princes of Powys from 1039 to 1160, and of southern Powys to 1286	91
6	The princes of northern Powys, 1160–1277	91
7	Rhys ap Gruffydd of Deheubarth and his descendants in the thirteenth century	98
8	The princes of Gwynedd and their descendants, 1039–1378	102

•

MAPS

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1	The main divisions of Wales	<i>page</i> 3
2	Political changes in Wales in the thirteenth century	127
3	The marcher lordships	140

I

WALES IN THE DARK AGES

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The transition from Roman Wales to medieval Wales shows some remarkable elements of continuity. Tribal chiefs, familiar to Roman military commanders, were the precursors of Welsh kings and princes, many of whom displayed the same qualities of courage and ruthlessness. The great estates of the Roman period are clearly to be discerned in the agrarian organisation of Wales in the dark ages, with their heavy dependence upon bondmen, slave labour and even with a physical structure not unlike the great *latifundia* of the empire. Historians concentrating on the period from the sixth century to the eleventh century have shown a curious lack of confidence in recent decades: they can explore technical problems to great advantage, but they are generally less willing to venture on a broad survey. In the universities of Wales, and notably of Cambridge, linguistic and literary studies are producing valuable reassessments of early sources and are achieving a sustained attack on critical problems. Perhaps because of the uncertainties which these studies have made apparent, and perhaps because this process of re-exploration is still far from complete, it is much more difficult to produce a detailed and authoritative survey of early medieval Welsh history. The broad sweep which Sir John Lloyd produced in 1911, a study which has been reissued four times in the last eighty years, is probably still the most widely read and influential book on the early history of Wales. Wendy Davies, writing in 1982, began her survey of early medieval Wales with the uncompromising claim: 'It is not possible to write a history of early Medieval Wales that will stand up to the require-

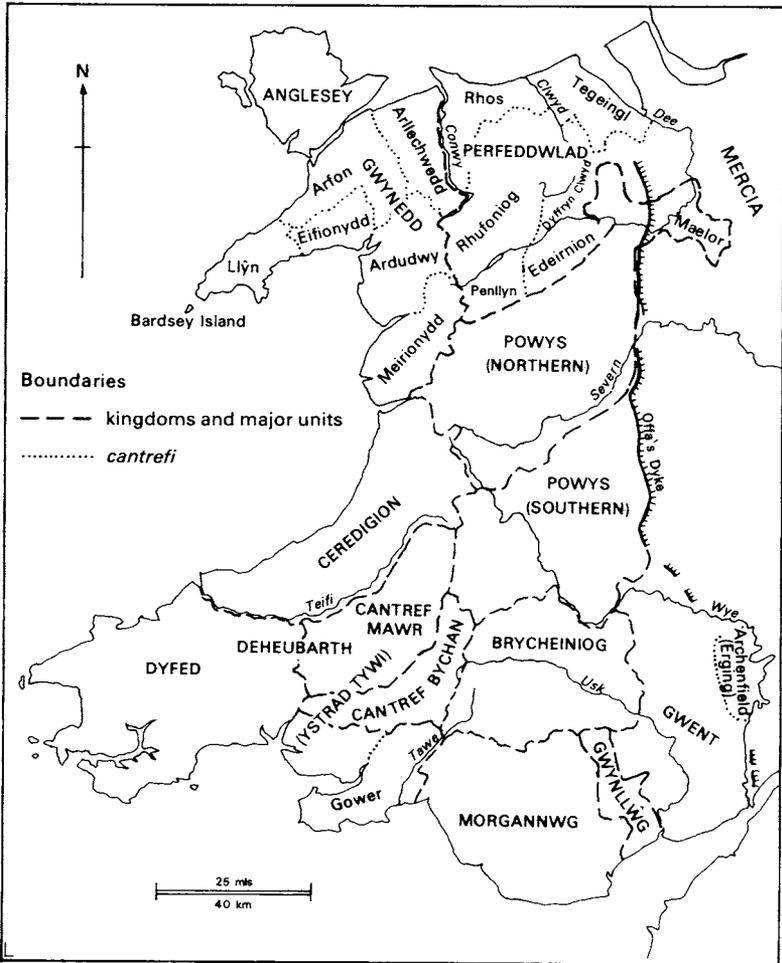
ments of modern scholarship.' With the tenth and eleventh centuries, greater assurance is possible, and from about 1100 a general survey can be written without frequent qualification and without the mental reservations which inadequate source materials inevitably impose upon a scholar.

Yet, without at least a framework of what happened in the dark ages, the course of Welsh history from about 1000 to about 1500 may not be intelligible. Three questions, in particular, need to be asked, and some attempt at reasonable answers, however brief, is essential. The first concerns kings and kingship. The second concerns the church. The third concerns the interaction between Welsh and English through the centuries.

Wales, like England in the dark ages, was a land of multiple kingship. The rugged terrain, with impenetrable mountain massifs and inhospitable upland ranges, broken by river valleys, did not make for a unified control or a unified development. The boundary with England was not marked by natural defences, and productive lowland areas as well as profitable upland pastures were open to frequent attacks. Not until Offa of Mercia built his dyke in the second half of the eighth century was there a linear frontier, and then that was designed to deter Welsh attacks and to control trade across the frontier. Small local communities acknowledged a ruler whose principal function might seem at times to wage war on his neighbours and to plunder their lands. In general, war made them defensive. The Welsh were the remnants of the British population which had been conquered by the Romans and, after their departure, by Germanic peoples emigrating from northern Europe into Britain. Anglo-Saxon codes of law and place-names suggest the survival of 'British' or 'Welsh' communities in the English kingdoms. Those who remained free from English control did so by seeking refuge in the west and finding it in Wales; by maintaining constant vigil against English encroachments, they defended a distinctive language and culture. The racial antipathy between English and Welsh goes far back into the past.

The principal divisions of Wales were the four major kingdoms, or principalities. Gwynedd was based on the Snowdonia massif and on Anglesey. Powys stretched from the borders of Mercia into central Wales. Dyfed, in the south-west, has been thought to represent the survival of very early traditions, some pre-Roman, some linked with the settlement of those who spoke the Goedelic form of Celtic. Deheubarth was a general name for the whole of south Wales,

but in later centuries, certainly by the eleventh century, it was a recognisable kingdom extending from Ceredigion on the west coast to Brycheiniog on the English border. As Dyfed declined, so Deheubarth absorbed parts of south-west Wales. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, under pressure of Norman attacks and settlement, that part of Deheubarth which remained independent grew smaller; the name implies a different range of territory in different periods.



Map 1 The main divisions of Wales

An early kingdom of Glywysing broke up into smaller units, the kingdom of Morgannwg, the *cantref* of Gwynllŵg, and the divisions of Gwent Uwchcoed (Upper Gwent) and Gwent Iscoed (Nether Gwent). Brycheiniog was an independent kingdom during the dark ages, though it came within the orbit of the later kingdom of Deheubarth. Two areas were disputed territory. In the north there was the land known as the Perfeddwlad, or the Middle Country, which was considered as the land between Gwynedd and Powys. It was made up of four *cantrefi*, Rhos, Rhufoniog, Dyffryn Clwyd and Tegeingl, and in common parlance it could often be called the Four Cantreds. In the south there was a small territory which was known in Old English as *Ircingafeld*; from the time of Domesday Book it has produced forms leading to the modern Archenfield in English – in Welsh, Erging. All these are derived from the British *Ariconium*. From the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries this territory was absorbed into Herefordshire. These are the territories which are secure; there are other kingdoms which disappeared or were absorbed into larger units, notably Buellt and Ceredigion.

It would be difficult to categorise the Welsh princes as a group, but certain characteristics may be identified. They were, in general, rulers of a single kingdom. An individual who established his authority over several areas, or over Wales as a whole, was an exceptional figure: there is no tradition comparable with Irish *rúiri* or the Anglo-Saxon *bretwalda*. The king was usually drawn from the royal kin, though some of the most vigorous rulers were intruders. Even when these are taken into account, there was a clear tendency to return to the ancient stock of the ruling dynasty. In early centuries much depended upon the reputation of an outstanding ruler. Gwynedd in the ninth century presents an interesting case history. The kingdom descended through Rhodri Molwynog to his son, Hywel, who died in 825. Gwriad, said to be a northern chieftain, believed to have come from Scotland, married Hywel's niece, a daughter of Cynan ap Rhodri, and their son, Merfyn Frych, became ruler of Gwynedd, certainly from 825 and perhaps as early as 816. The injection of new blood may well have been the decisive element. By marriage with Nest, sister of Cyngen, the last of his line to be king of Powys, Merfyn found the opportunity to gain control of a second kingdom. His son, Rhodri Mawr (the Great), inherited both kingdoms, and by another fortunate marriage with Angharad of Ceredigion, he acquired the western territories of Ceredigion and Ystrad Tywi. None of these marriages could create a hereditary claim, and each was probably valuable because it established the conditions in which

a successful bid for power could be made. Until his death in 878, Rhodri was acknowledged as ruler of more than half of Wales, and that more by diplomacy than by conquest. In his last years his power was challenged: in 877 Viking attacks made it necessary for him to seek refuge in Ireland, and a year later he was killed fighting a Saxon force. Scandinavian attacks and influence would remain a feature of Welsh history until the eleventh century; generally they were a scourge – the ‘black gentiles’ of the *Annales Cambriae*, a compilation of the earliest Welsh historical annals – but at times they could be allies. They gave their names to a number of places along the Welsh coasts and must have settled in some places long enough for them and their place-names to be taken for granted. Under Rhodri and his successors, a dynasty of kings of more than average distinction brought a semblance of unity to Wales and contributed a great deal to the historical traditions which would mould the Wales of a distant future.

For four generations Gwynedd remained with Rhodri and his direct heirs. His son, Anarawd, was succeeded by his son, Idwal Foel, and grandson, Iago, who was followed by his nephew, Hywel ab Idwal. When Hywel died in 985, he was succeeded by his brother, Cadwallon. From that point there is apparent confusion, but it

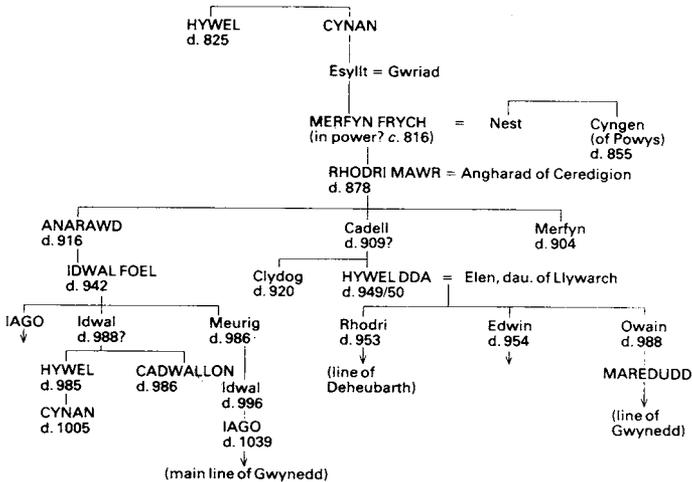


Figure 1 The ruling dynasty of Gwynedd from the ninth to the early eleventh centuries

Note: kings of Gwynedd are indicated in capitals.

seems that direct succession had given way to a more complex pattern, known technically as segmentation, in which cousins claimed the right to inherit as alternate branches of the family assumed power in succeeding generations. Something of the same pattern may be discerned in the southern territory of Glywysing. The greater the number of those who could claim an interest in the succession, the greater the fear of violence as a means of clearing the way and settling problems of power. Early entries in the Welsh *Annales* are brief in the extreme, but there are hints of ugly deeds. In 814, Griffri ap Cyngen was slain by the treachery of his brother; in 904, Merfyn ap Rhodri of Gwynedd was killed by his own men; in 969, Ieuf ab Idwal of Gwynedd was seized by his brother Iago, and imprisoned; in 974, Meurig ab Idwal was blinded. These are pointers to what was happening and to what would happen in the future. Rivals were eliminated: they were to be blinded, so that they could not be effective leaders in peace or commanders in war; they were castrated so that they could not sire rival candidates for power. As the sources become more informative, so the number of recorded acts of violence increases. It looks as if the first half of the twelfth century saw this violence reach its peak, but by then it was an established part of Welsh life. Walter Map, a man of the marches, wrote a satirical book, his *Courtiers' Trifles*, for the amusement of Henry II and his court, and, seeking to make fun of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn (the outstanding Welsh ruler of the eleventh century), he presented a picture of violence and a justification for it. One of Llywelyn's nephews had fled from him in fear, and later, when it was completely safe, he met the prince who asked him why he should run from his court, and promised him any sureties he might name for his safety. 'Then', said the boy, 'I name Hywel, whom you caused to be smothered in secret when he was on a mission for you; Rhydderch, whom you left-handedly received with a kiss and embrace and killed with a knife in your left hand; Tewdws (Theodosius), whom as he walked and talked with you, you tripped up with your foot and cast down the sheer rocks; and your nephew Meilin, whom you secretly captured by guile and let him die loaded with chains in your dungeon.' It was stirring stuff, and there may have been much truth in the story. The interesting feature of Walter Map's gossip is that he preserves what seems to be an authentic saying of the Welsh prince: 'I kill no one, but I blunt the horns of Wales, lest they hurt their mother.' When it came to blood-letting, Gruffydd ap Llywelyn was not alone. Perhaps Gerald of Wales had the answer. The habit in his day, he wrote, was to put sons out to fosterage, and the boys grew

up with strong ties of affection and loyalty to their foster-father and his sons. They had little contact with or affection for their siblings. It was an ancient practice.

It is unavoidable that for medieval chroniclers and modern historians interest should centre on those rulers who extended their power over much of Wales. They foreshadowed the attempts by the princes of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century to create a unified Welsh 'state', and they matched contemporary developments in England, and similar but later developments in Scotland. So, Rhodri Mawr (844–78) is presented as one who set a pattern for the future. He either ruled or, by his personal qualities, dominated much of Wales. His grandson, Hywel Dda (c. 909–49/50), had the good fortune to be ruler of three principalities with all the wider influence which that could give him. In the eleventh century, Gruffydd ap Llywelyn (1039–63) battled his way to a position of supremacy in Wales. Historians search for 'national' heroes. In the dark ages, Wales produced only heroes of Gwynedd, or Dyfed, of Deheubarth or Morgannwg.

The codification of Welsh law has been traditionally associated with Hywel Dda (the Good), who shared with his brother lands in Ceredigion and Ystrad Tywi after the death of their father, Cadell, about 909. He united their inheritance in 920, and acquired Gwynedd after the death of Idwal Foel in 942. He married Elen, daughter of Llywarch of Dyfed, and on Llywarch's death in 904 he took over the southern kingdom. In the perspective of the dark ages he was a powerful prince, and it may be that later generations borrowed his personal authority to buttress their own power. The law was Hywel's law, *cyfraith Hywel*; his name gave to the law an authority comparable with that given to the laws of Mercia by King Offa or the laws of Wessex (and a larger area of England) by King Alfred. From the twelfth century there seems to have been a cult of Hywel Dda, and increasingly Welsh medieval historians are moving to the view that he was regarded as a valuable focus for the reform and reorganisation of Welsh customary law, even though the period of active reform was probably the twelfth century.

The major problem is that, rich though the resources of the thirteenth century are, there is no pattern of development in Welsh law comparable to that which can be discerned in Anglo-Saxon law from the earliest codes of Wessex in the seventh century to the extensive code of Cnut in the eleventh century. A small number of later rulers were said to have added to or amended the laws of Hywel. Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, ruler of Gwynedd (1063–75), was said to have amended

the laws of his kingdom. Rhys ap Gruffydd of Deheubarth (1155–97) was credited with amending the law relating to property, and Dafydd ap Llywelyn of Gwynedd (1240–6) was said to have abolished the payment of *galanas*, that is blood-price or compensation for homicide. It is now believed that there was in circulation in the twelfth century a series of short tractates on law which may have been codified before 1197, and that these lie behind the major codifications of the thirteenth century. But it is also clear that customary law had been in the making for some centuries, and that it was administered and transmitted by practitioners who had used and respected a long oral tradition. It should be regarded as the product of a semi-professional group of lawmen: to see it as the work of any one legislator or ruler might be misleading. To ascribe the early codification to Hywel Dda had, and retains, considerable merit. He was a contemporary of Edward the Elder and Athelstan in England at a time when the extension of codified law was recognised as part of the function of kingship. He had the opportunity, rare before the eleventh century, to control Gwynedd (and, by assumption, Powys), the border territory of Ceredigion, and the kingdom of Dyfed. If it were possible to disentangle thirteenth-century practice from the custom and practice of earlier centuries, the links between the surviving codes of law and the distant past might be clarified. Hywel Dda's name added a venerable quality to medieval Welsh law. His contribution to the process of codification still eludes definition.

The roots of Christianity in Wales are to be found in Roman times, but the epoch which has marked the physical pattern and the emotional colouring of the church in Wales was the age of the saints. Missionaries, working in a hostile environment in the sixth and seventh centuries, sought to convert local chieftains to Christianity. Part of their strength lay in the rigours of self-discipline under which they lived, part lay in their undoubted courage, and part, perhaps much, lay in the devoted groups of disciples whom they inspired. Their cults attest to the range of country within which they and their followers worked. The pattern demonstrated in the range of ancient dedications is essentially one of local activity and local influence. In north Wales the cult of St Beuno was centred on Clynog Fawr and spread widely along the northern coastal lands and into Anglesey; he, or those who owed much to his teachings, took the faith to Deeside and to isolated pockets in eastern Wales. Deiniol, for whose cult the evidence is more limited, was associated with important

monastic churches at Bangor-in-Arfon and at Bangor-on-Dee (Bangor-is-coed), south-east of Wrexham, with its chapels at Marchwiell and Worthenbury. In the eastern parts of Powys the dominant cult was that of St Tysilio whose principal church was Meifod. In mid-Wales the cult of St Padarn spread from his church at Llanbadarn Fawr eastwards into Brycheiniog. South Wales demonstrates the extent to which cults could be intermingled. St Dyfrig's base was at Hentland, near Ross-on-Wye, and almost all the early Dyfrig dedications occur in a narrow and limited area of local settlement. St Illtud was associated especially with Llanilltud Fawr – the modern form is Llantwit Major – in another heavily Romanised area, southern Glamorgan. Dedications to St Illtud, and to St Cadog of Llancarfan, follow the network of Roman roads and Roman sites. Further west, the cult of St Teilo spread from his church of Llandeilo Fawr. But in south Wales the remarkable feature is the number of ancient dedications to St David – Dewi Sant – spreading from St David's itself. That suggests his own pre-eminence, and it points clearly to the devotion which his successors had for his memory.

These missionaries proved the value of a community living under discipline. Much of the material bearing upon them was produced in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The *Life* of St Cadog written by Lifris probably between 1070 and 1090 (and certainly before 1104), and the *Life* of St David written by Rhigyfarch about 1095, may contain memories and traditions preserved in their communities, but it is widely recognised that the monastic style of life which they describe and the virtues they admire reflect conditions in the writers' own day rather than in the age of the saints. Occasionally it is possible to go behind the evidence of the *Vitae* to earlier material. The *Life* of St Samson of Dol, which was probably written early in the seventh century, has much to say about Wales; St Dyfrig, St Illtud and the community at Llantwit Major all feature in the narrative. St David was named in an Irish martyrology produced about 800, and in a list of saints, again from Ireland, drawn up in the ninth or tenth centuries. In the *Life* of the Breton saint, Paul of Léon, written in 884, David was described as *aquaticus*, the waterman, the first indication of the asceticism which marked his life. Early in the tenth century, Asser mentioned the monastery and church of Dewi Sant, and in the tenth century the saint figured in an early prophetic poem, *Armes Prydein*, the *Prophecy of Britain*. At the very least, there is some justification for assuming that memories of St David's life survived, but not until the 1090s was anything of substance preserved in the written record.

To limit the discussion to the leading cults would be to oversimplify. There are churches dedicated to figures from the distant past, some historical, some legendary. Gwynedd place-names and dedications reflect the descendants of Cunedda, the early folk hero of north Wales, whose standing as a historical figure is a matter of controversy; to cite only two examples, Meirion links with Meirionydd, and with Llanfeirian; Edern with Edeirnon and the churches of Edern and Bodedern. All but one of Cunedda's eight sons were claimed as saints; at a much later date a ninth son was added to the family tree, presumably to meet current political needs, and it is difficult to determine how far the presence of the other names in the family tree is the product of imagination or wishful thinking. In the southern half of Wales, the Brychan whose name is preserved in, or derived from, Brycheiniog was placed in a dynasty which produced many saints. They form an interesting group, for they represent Irish settlers in Brycheiniog in the fifth century who, over two or three generations, were much concerned with the spread of Christianity in parts of south and mid-Wales. Firm claims about any single individual in the dynasty would be hard to establish, but that the family represents a genuine movement of settlement and missionary activity can scarcely be doubted. Irish Christians travelling into Wales left their mark on the church, introducing their own cults. St Ffraid, of Welsh place-names and dedications, is the Irish saint, Brigid, whose cult became very popular in Wales. The familiar Welsh name, Madog, conceals Mo-aid-og, one form of the name of the Irish saint, Aidan of Ferns. St Illtud's church seems at first sight to be divorced from the place-name *Llantwyt*, but the church was given the Goedelic (Irish) form of his name, *Llaniltwyt*, and the connection between the saint and the settlement is obvious.

One cult which demonstrates the nature of the problems to be solved is that of the Scottish missionary, Kentigern (Cyndeyrn), who died in 612. His cult was actively fostered in the twelfth century when two *Lives* were written, one of them by Jocelyn of Furness. Kentigern was said to have been driven from Strathclyde and to have found refuge in north Wales where he founded the church and bishopric of Llanelwy. When he returned to Scotland he was succeeded by Asa (Asaph), who gives the modern place-name. Later, Kentigern was active in north-east Scotland where early dedications point to foundations made by, or in honour of, him and his companions, and among them are dedications to St Nidan and St Ffinan. All this could be legend, rather than fact. Kentigern's name is associated with the medieval churches dedicated to St Asaph, but no

ancient dedication has been claimed for him. On the other hand, two churches in Anglesey, lying close together, are dedicated to St Nidan and St Ffinan, while Asaph was honoured not only at the cathedral which bears his name but at Llanasa and at a holy well in the area. So much for orthodoxy, depending heavily on twelfth-century material. The early genealogies identify Nidan and Asaph as men who, like Kentigern, come from the north; Ffinan may possibly be Irish or of local provenance. There is a case to argue that the cult of Kentigern was brought to Llanelwy much later, between 872 and 878, by immigrants from Strathclyde, and if that should be the explanation of his cult, the traditional reconstruction of the foundation of the church at Llanelwy is thrown open to question.

Sadly, the Welsh church developed in isolation. In 597 St Augustine and his companions arrived in Kent and began the conversion of the southern English. He was anxious to contact Christians in Wales, even though it meant entering a war-zone. Their discussions were hampered by suspicion; Augustine was not yet sufficiently secure to yield precedence or courtesy. The critical battle between continental and Celtic Christianity took place in Northumbria in 663 when the synod of Whitby recorded a victory for Roman ways. It is a mark of Welsh conservatism, and hostility to the English, that they delayed their decision for more than a century. The Irish church accepted the decision in 703; Iona, the centre of Celtic Christianity in the north, accepted it as inevitable in 716. The Welsh Christians waited until 768 before they finally gave way.

In a more settled age, after the missionary work had borne fruit, Christian life in Wales was organised largely through the *clas* church. The *clas* was a community made up of *claswyr* who shared the responsibility for worship and pastoral work. They also shared part of the economic benefits accruing to the church. Marriage was accepted as a norm, and a member of the *clas* could pass on to an heir his share of the church and its revenues. Llanbadarn Fawr and Llan-carfan were essentially family churches with a clear succession, while St David's retained this quality long after it had been transformed into a cathedral chapter. The standing of these greater Welsh churches was defined in early Welsh law. The head of the community was an abbot, but his community was made up of seculars (*canonwyr*). They had the ultimate power of deciding any disputes arising within the community. In function the *clas* was a mother church and could have a number of subsidiary chapels attached to it. In some cases the area for which a particular *clas* church was responsible could be identified easily. Many were associated with a single

commote: Aberdaron with Cymydmaen, Clynnog Fawr with Uwchgwyrfai, Llangollen with Nanheudwy, and Bangor-on-Dee and its chapels with the northern commotes of Maelor. Some were linked with the larger unit of a *cantref*: Llanbadarn Fawr with Penweddig, Towyn with Meirionydd. Meifod, with its dependent chapels, covered a wide range of southern Powys. Elsewhere there must be some doubt as to what territory the *clas* church might cover. Was there a clean division between Llangyfelach, in the northern section of the commote of Gower, and Bishopston (Llandeiloferwallt) in the south? How was influence in Rhos shared between Abergele and Llanelwy (St Asaph)?

There were obvious factors which marked out a small number of these churches. Llangadwaladr, in Anglesey, was built close to the *llys*, the court of the prince of Gwynedd at Aberffraw; its foundation is attributed to Cadwaladr ap Cadwallon, who died in 664 and whose name the church bears. Meifod, with its impressive *llan*, was the burial place of rulers of Powys Fadog in the twelfth century, a late survival of its long-standing importance. Its decline can be linked with the foundation of the Cistercian houses of Strata Marcella in 1170 and its daughter house at Valle Crucis in 1201. Bangor-in-Arfon became the cathedral church of the diocese covering Gwynedd, as St David's became the cathedral for the diocese covering south-west Wales. Llanbadarn Fawr and Llandeilo Fawr were both claimed as centres from which a bishop exercised his authority. So, too, was Llanelwy (St Asaph), though the continuous history of a bishopric there belongs to the twelfth century. All this derives from the fact that in a small number of major churches, the head of the community was a bishop-abbot. There was also a persisting tradition that the sphere of episcopal authority and the area of territorial princely power should remain closely linked.

With the exception of St David's and Llandaff there is remarkably little evidence for the early history of the Welsh dioceses. Historical annals produced at St David's in the middle of the tenth century include references to the foundations of Bangor and St Asaph, and by doing so imply that both bishoprics existed and were recognised *c.* 955. For Bangor, knowledge of the foundation of the church by St Deiniol was supplemented by references to the death in 809 of Elfodd, archbishop of Gwynedd, who is assumed to have worked from Bangor, and of Morlais, bishop of Bangor in 944. These references may be extended by claims voiced by the canons of St David's at a much later date that Joseph, bishop of St David's, had consecrated Morlais and his successor, Duvan, as bishops of Bangor, and

that Bishop Sulien had consecrated Revedun for that see. With such rare exceptions, the names of the bishops of Bangor before 1092 have not survived, but there is nothing to suggest that the appointment of Hervé to Bangor in 1092 represented a revival of the diocese; it looks much more like a normal vacancy and appointment in a long sequence of episcopal succession. For St Asaph, the record is much slihter: it was said that Bleuddydd, bishop of St David's, had consecrated a certain Melanus for St Asaph before 1073, and there are one or two further names which might possibly be associated with the diocese in earlier years. There is a clear statement that in the mid-1120s a bishopric existed between the dioceses of Chester and Bangor, but that there was no bishop there at that stage. The first appointment made under Norman influence was that of Bishop Richard in 1143.

At St David's enough material survived in the later twelfth century for Gerald of Wales to draw up a list of forty-four bishops, first of the diocese of Mynyw and then, after the cult of St David had developed, of St David's. The earliest record in local annals is the death of Bishop Sadyntfyw in 831, and there are references to the accession or death of six bishops between 840 and 999. Then, scattered references give way to more regular, though not complete, notices of the bishops. On the eve of the Norman incursions into south Wales, Bleuddydd was appointed as bishop of St David's, to be succeeded by Sulien, himself a scholarly figure and the father of scholars, who held the see from 1073 to 1078 and again from 1080 to 1085. It may be that he was too gentle a man for the hard conditions of his day. Even so, the influence which he and his sons, Rhigyfarch, Arthen, Daniel and John, exercised in Wales in the last decades of the eleventh century is, to say the least, quite remarkable. They sustained traditions of Welsh culture and memories of the Welsh past at a critical time and ensured that both would have an influence on the development of the diocese during the twelfth century. For his contemporaries in England, Sulien was a 'married' bishop with a family, an example of the type of churchman much out of favour with the reformers of the eleventh century, but to dismiss him in those terms was, and is, to understate his significance in the story of the Welsh church. Sulien's successor was Wilfrid, who was consecrated in 1085 and who ruled the diocese until 1115. They were difficult and momentous years, for he had to face the full force of Norman incursions, to work amicably with the invaders and with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in England, while his sympathies were manifestly with the Welsh leaders fighting to resist the Norman

advance. A change of bishop during these critical years might have been the cause of great weakness for the diocese, but St David's was able to reap the benefit of his long episcopate. The speed with which his successor, Bishop Bernard, was able to launch into constructive work, owes a considerable debt to the stability which Wilfrid had managed to maintain.

The diocese in south-east Wales is the most richly documented, but it presents difficult problems. In this part of Wales the Welsh church was most open to English influence, and the concept of a territorial diocese was established at a comparatively early date. A succession of bishops followed Dyfrig in Erging in the second half of the sixth century. At the same time, another bishop was working in Gwynllŵg. These two separate areas of episcopal authority were apparently combined early in the seventh century. From about 630 to about 700 the names of the bishops in this area have been lost, but from that time a continuous sequence can be drawn up. Where they worked, and which church they used as a base, remain obscure problems, but until the end of the tenth century it would be quite feasible to suggest the existence of a 'kingdom-bishopric' for Gwynllŵg. The association of Llandaff with this bishopric is a later development; so too, as it seems, was the extension of episcopal authority westwards into Morgannwg. Wendy Davies sees the episcopate of Bishop Joseph (1022-45) as a critical period in the development of this diocese. The whole question is bound up so closely with the policies of Bishop Urban (1107-34) that it ought to be discussed in that context. Joseph's successor was Herewald, consecrated by Joseph, bishop of St David's, in 1056, who held the diocese for half a century. His name suggests English affiliations, and the list of churches which he consecrated shows a heavy concentration in Erging, the most English area under his jurisdiction. At his best, he was an active and forward-looking diocesan. He was served by two archdeacons, one clearly based at Llandaff, the other, named in Domesday Book as a cleric of wealth and influence, had interests in Gwent. Herewald was aware of current development in the European church and was bringing new ideas on episcopal organisation into his Welsh diocese. He faced the first attacks of the Normans in Gwent, and he ensured that churches should be consecrated and endowed within his jurisdiction. When, in the 1090s a second wave of Norman incursions carried the invaders into Morgannwg, the bishop's problems increased, perhaps beyond the point where he could tackle them successfully. He had some twenty years ahead of him still, and the diocese suffered from the fact that his powers were failing. What strength remained was due to the oversight and energy