

KATHLEEN HUGHES MEMORIAL LECTURES
ON MEDIAEVAL WELSH HISTORY

1

Saint David
of
Wales

DAVID N. DUMVILLE



HUGHES HALL
AND
DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE, AND CELTIC
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Hughes Hall was founded in 1885 as the Cambridge Training College (CTC) for graduate women schoolteachers. It is therefore Cambridge's oldest Graduate College, consisting currently of around 50 Fellows and some 250 student members, now of both sexes, who study for doctoral or M.Phil. degrees or for the postgraduate diplomas and certificates offered by the University. We also have an increasing number of mature undergraduates in a variety of subjects. As a result, the academic community of Hughes Hall is now extremely diverse, including students of 45 nationalities and representing almost all the disciplines of the University. Enquiries about entry as a student are always welcome and should be addressed initially to the Admissions Tutor, Hughes Hall, Cambridge, GB-CB1 2EW (<http://www.hughes.cam.ac.uk/>).

An important step in this transformation came with the granting of Cambridge degrees to women in 1948: the CTC was then given the status of a 'Recognised Institution', the crucial first move towards integration with the University proper. The College took the name of CTC's charismatic first Principal, the celebrated women's educationalist Elizabeth Phillips Hughes. Apart from Miss Hughes's Welsh heritage, there is no known connexion between the College and the scholar now commemorated in this series of lectures.

Kathleen Winifred Hughes (1926-77) was the first and only Nora Chadwick Reader in Celtic Studies in the University of Cambridge. Previously (1958-76) she had held the Lectureship in the Early History and Culture of the British Isles which had been created for Nora Chadwick in 1950. She was a Fellow of Newnham College (and Director of Studies in both History and Anglo-Saxon), 1955-77. Her responsibilities in the Department of Anglo-Saxon & Kindred Studies, subsequently the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic, were in the fields of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh history of the early and central middle ages. Her achievements in respect of Gaelic history have been widely celebrated, notably in the memorial volume *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe*, published in 1982. The Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures both acknowledge her achievement in respect of Welsh history and seek to provide an annual forum for advancing the subject. Each year's lecture will be published as a pamphlet by the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic on behalf of Hughes Hall.

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PREFACE

The Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lecture in Mediaeval Welsh History was initiated as an annual event by Hughes Hall as the result of an anonymous benefaction in her memory and to mark the establishment of the Welsh Assembly. This benefaction came to the College as a result of an initiative taken by our Fellow, Dr Michael J. Franklin, Director of Studies in History and in Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic.

Our inaugural lecture was given by Professor David Dumville of Girton College, who was a pupil of Kathleen Hughes and is her successor – responsible for Brittonic and Gaelic history – in the University’s Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic. We could not resist holding the first lecture on St David’s Day, 2000, and Professor Dumville concluded that this effectively decided the title of his lecture. The event was enjoyable and successful, as well as being extremely well attended.

Each lecture will be published, both on the College’s web-site (<http://www.hughes.cam.ac.uk/>) and as a printed pamphlet, to coincide with the following year’s lecture. Hughes Hall is grateful to the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic for acting as hard-copy publisher. On 30 April, 2001, our Lecturer will be Dr David Stephenson of Cambridge Seminars, speaking on ‘The Aberconwy Chronicle’. In 2002 the Hughes Memorial Lecture will be given by Professor Rees Davies of All Souls’ College and the University of Oxford. As President, I am most grateful to our Hughes Memorial Lecture Advisory Committee – consisting of Dr Franklin, Professor Dumville, and Professor Patrick Sims-Williams (University of Wales, Aberystwyth) – for nominating distinguished scholars to be asked to be our Lecturers.

Hughes Hall hopes that this new academic initiative will make a significant scholarly contribution to the study of Welsh history and that the series will continue for many years. I am pleased to have been able to welcome it to the College’s calendar.

Peter Richards
President
Hughes Hall

The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic offers programmes of study, at both undergraduate and graduate level, on the pre-Norman culture of the British Isles in its various aspects: historical, literary, linguistic, palaeographical, archaeological. The Department also serves as a focal point for scholars visiting Cambridge from various parts of the world, who are attracted to Cambridge by the University Library (one of the largest anywhere), the collections of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic manuscripts in the University Library and various college-libraries, the Fitzwilliam Museum, or the rich collection of Anglo-Saxon artefacts in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. It is possible for the Department to host a small number of Visiting Scholars each year.

Information on any aspect of the Department's activities can be obtained by writing to: The Head, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic, University of Cambridge, 9 West Road, Cambridge, GB-CB3 9DP.

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SAINT DAVID OF WALES

President and Fellows of Hughes Hall, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to deliver this first lecture in memory of my teacher and friend Kathleen Hughes who was also my predecessor as the University Teaching Officer in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic charged with instruction on the history of the Celtic-speaking peoples in the middle ages.¹ Kathleen died in April 1977, nigh on a quarter-century ago, and this inaugural event gives an opportunity to reflect on her intellectual heritage. She was and is best known, of course, for her work on pre-Conquest Ireland,² a subject for which she became the principal ambassador in Britain over the course of her twenty-year Cambridge career, cut short – alas! – at the age of fifty. She was, and her reputation remains, highly regarded in Ireland, itself quite a notable achievement. Her books remain in constant use by teachers and researchers – even though in some respects scholarship has moved on – because of the outstanding clarity and honesty with which she wrote.

But Kathleen was much more than an Irish historian. From the beginning of her career to the end, the history of mediaeval Wales was never far from her interests. Her early work on the cult of St Finnian of Clonard had a Welsh dimension because of exchanges between the churches of Clonard (Co. Meath) and Llancarfan (Glamorgan).³ At the outset of her career in what was then the Department of Anglo-Saxon and Kindred Studies she

¹ Her inaugural lecture as Chadwick Reader in Celtic Studies was published as *The Early Celtic Idea of History and the Modern Historian* (Cambridge 1977).

² Her books on the subject are *The Church in Early Irish Society* (London 1966); *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (London 1972); *Church and Society in Ireland A.D. 400-1200* (London 1987); and with Ann Hamlin, *The Modern Traveller to the Early Irish Church* (London 1977; rev. imp., Dublin 1997). See also *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe. Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, edd. Dorothy Whitelock *et al.* (Cambridge 1982).

³ *Church and Society*, chapters II-VII. Cf. Christopher N.L. Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border in the Central Middle Ages* (Woodbridge 1986).

published a fundamental paper on the Welsh hagiographical collection known as *Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium*, ‘The Lives of the Holy Men of the Welsh’,⁴ of which I shall have more to say in this lecture. And in her forties she devoted considerable attention to the complex of Cambro-Latin and Welsh vernacular chronicles on which we rely for our chronological framework of Welsh history to the end of the thirteenth century: a masterly Sir John Rhŷs Memorial Lecture to the British Academy in 1973 forms the centrepiece of her published work on this subject.⁵

Kathleen’s teaching was legendary for clarity and enthusiasm. As I can testify, she was encouraging, outstandingly generous, and inspiring. Although she increasingly devoted attention to Scottish history in her very last years,⁶ she had always seen Welsh and Irish history, and their interaction with a wider European history, at the core of her vision of Celtic history. For whatever reasons, it has always proved more difficult to sell Welsh history to English audiences than to persuade them of the interest of Irish questions. It is therefore particularly welcome and appropriate that this annual memorial lecture, and the resulting series of pamphlets, should be devoted to the promotion of mediaeval Welsh history. I also know that Kathleen would have taken great pride in the fact that the majority of British scholars now writing on the history of pre-Norman and Norman Wales – and indeed a majority of those teaching the subject in the University of Wales itself – are graduates of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic. Kathleen Hughes’s insistence on the importance of Welsh history as a component of the history of the British Isles is what has led to this state of affairs. In particular she built on the substantial advance made over the previous generation in the more heavily populated field of Anglo-Saxon England, encouraged in this by her

⁴ First published in 1958, this article was reissued with minor revisions in her book *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages. Studies in Scottish and Welsh Sources* (Woodbridge 1980), pp. 53-66.

⁵ First published in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 59 (1973) 233-58, this paper was also reissued in *Celtic Britain*, pp. 67-85; cf. pp. 86-100 for a more detailed study of the A-text of *Annales Cambriae*.

⁶ See *Celtic Britain*, chapters I-III.

two friends and senior colleagues Peter Hunter Blair and Dorothy Whitelock,⁷ the former espousing a humane and inspired scholarship and the latter, a close confidante of Kathleen's for twenty years, being the foremost exponent in our studies of what I have elsewhere described as 'punishingly exact standards'.⁸

Had Kathleen Hughes lived out a normal life-span, she would have retired in September 1993, and one can only speculate on the achievement which we might today have been honouring in those circumstances. Nevertheless, she left us a considerable legacy and we can best celebrate that by extending its bounds – in the present context by seeking to enlarge our understanding of the history of mediaeval Wales. It is a happy circumstance that we are meeting for the purpose in a college called Hughes Hall!

SAINT DAVID

On the feast-day of the national patronal saint of Wales, Dewi sant, St David, one can hardly do better than to revisit his life, church, and cult to seek a better grasp of his importance both for his own day and of his memory and cult for successive generations over the last fourteen centuries. For David died somewhere within hailing distance of A.D. 600: the date was revised, probably more than once, by mediaeval scholars, 589 and 601 being the best known choices.⁹ However, the cult of St David has probably been

⁷ See especially Peter Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede* (London 1970; rev. imp., Cambridge 1990), and *Anglo-Saxon Northumbria* (London 1984); Dorothy Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (Harmondsworth 1952 and successive editions), *From Bede to Alfred — Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Literature and History* (London 1980), and *History, Law and Literature in 10th-11th Century England* (London 1981). See also *England before the Conquest. Studies in Primary Sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, edd. Peter Clemoes & Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge 1971).

⁸ D.N. Dumville, 'Kathleen Winifred Hughes 1926-1977', *Studia Celtica* 14/15 (1979/80) 387-91, at p. 389.

⁹ For discussion of the dates, see M. Miller, 'Date-guessing and Dyfed', *Studia Celtica* 12/13 (1977/8) 33-61, at pp. 41-50. For the earlier death-date, see *Chronicum Scotorum*, ed. & transl. William M. Hennessy (London 1866), pp. 62/3, s.a. Kl.iiii.5, *Dauid Cille Muine*; *The Annals of Inisfallen*, ed. & transl. Seán Mac Airt (Dublin 1951), pp. 78/9, s.a. [589].2, *Quies Dauid Cille Muine*; 'The Annals of Roscrea', edd. D. Gleeson & S. Mac Airt, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 59 C (1957-9) 137-80, at p. 149, §71, *Dauid*

continuous since his death, and in those circumstances we may feel moderately confident that – in whatever year he died – the day was indeed 1st March.¹⁰

I mentioned earlier a Welsh collection of saints' Lives called by its compiler, at Monmouth around 1200, *Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium*.¹¹ In spite of its title, the collection ends with accounts of two Irish holy men – Aed or Maedóc of Ferns and Brendan the Navigator – , and indeed Ireland looms large throughout. The compiler was celebrating what has long been called 'The Age of the Saints',¹² a phase (of the earliest middle ages) recognised as

Cille Muine; The Annals of Tigernach, ed. & transl. Whitley Stokes (2nd edn, 2 vols, Felinfach 1993), I.118, s.a. K.iiii.3, *Dabid Cille Muni*. This distribution ensures that the entry was (at a date apparently corresponding to 589) in these chronicles' lost common ancestor, 'The Chronicle of Clonmacnoise', created in 911×954: see Kathryn Grabowski & D. Dumville, *Chronicles and Annals of Mediaeval Ireland and Wales. The Clonmacnoise-group Texts* (Woodbridge 1984); for links between Clonmacnoise and St Davids at that time, see *ibid.*, chapter IV. For the later date, see *Annales Cambriae* (A), s.a. 157 [=A.D. 601], ed. E. Phillimore, 'The *Annales Cambriae* and Old-Welsh genealogies from *Harleian MS. 3859*', *Y Cymmrodor* 9 (1888) 141-83, at p. 156: 'Sinodus Urbis Legion. Gregorius obiit in Christo. Daudid episcopus †moni iudeorum† (*leg. Moniu Desorum?*)'. Association with the death of Pope Gregory I would place David's death in 604; but that precise date was not well known in the middle ages. Bede, for example, placed it in 605: *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, edd. & transll. Bertram Colgrave & R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1969), pp. 122/3 (II.1), 562/3 (V.24). In a group of late additions (concerning St David) made to his Chronicle in 1133×1143 by John of Worcester, David's death is likewise placed at 605 (in the same annal as Gregory's): *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, II, edd. & transll. R.R. Darlington *et al.* (Oxford 1995), pp. 76-9 (cf. pp. lxxix-lxxx). For further discussion of the implications of the life-span of 147 years given to David in hagiography, see below, nn. 39, 111-15.

¹⁰ For a full collection of the testimonies, see S. Baring-Gould & J. Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints* (4 vols, London 1907-13), II.285-322. According to the hagiography, the day was also a Tuesday, which has produced a series of possible dates from the early sixth century to the early seventh. The feast of his alleged mother, St Nonn, is found in Wales on 2 and 3 March, and we may be confident that its proximity to that of St David indicates a likely artificiality of origin: *ibid.*, IV.22-5, and Gilbert H. Doble & C. Henderson, *Saint Nonna, Patron of Altarnon and Pelynt* (Liskeard 1928).

¹¹ See above, n. 4. This is London, British Library, MS. Cotton Vespasian A.xiv, fos 1-105. See Richard Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives. An Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford 1991), pp. 26, 223-7, 288-9, 295-6.

¹² This was the subject of my O'Donnell Lecture in Celtic Studies in the University of Wales, 1983. Cf. also D.N. Dumville, 'The origins and early history of Insular monasticism', *Bulletin of the Institute of Oriental and Occidental Studies, Kansai University* 30 (1997) 85-107.

encompassing geographically not just Wales but the entire Insular Celtic world, from the south of Brittany to the north of Scotland and from the West of Ireland to Offa's Dyke.¹³ That Insular pan-Celtic focus, important as it was both in the hagiography and in some of the realities of ecclesiastical life from the mid-fifth to the mid-seventh century,¹⁴ gave rise, however, in the late nineteenth century to the lamentable concept of 'the Celtic Church',¹⁵ a proto-Protestant religious unity of thought and organisation,¹⁶ which Kathleen Hughes was responsible for demolishing in some of her last work¹⁷ but which has unhappily acquired a 'New-Age' afterlife which poses a significant challenge to scholars of this period.¹⁸

'The Age of the Saints' was an era which was already in substantial measure beyond the reach of history in the late seventh century. The fifth and sixth centuries, and much of the seventh century too, had passed beyond the memory of the generation which followed the great plagues of the 660s and 680s, just as that of the 540s had obliterated knowledge of the sub-Roman century. Here indeed are those Dark Ages which end Antiquity and open the

¹³ Nor should one forget Britoña in Galicia as a further Insular Celtic outpost of this period: E.A. Thompson, 'Britonia', in *Christianity in Britain 300-700*, edd. M.W. Barley & R.P.C. Hanson (Leicester 1968), pp. 201-5.

¹⁴ We must note in the present context the spread of the cult of St David from southwestern Wales into Cornwall (and Devon) and Brittany, presumptively before the ninth century and perhaps much earlier. See E.G. Bowen, *The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in Wales* (2nd edn, Cardiff 1956), pp. 50-65 (and especially the maps on pp. 52, 59), and *Dewi Sant—Saint David* (Cardiff 1983); for the Irish dimension of the hagiography and cult of St David, see E.G. Bowen, 'The geography of early monasticism in Ireland', *Studia Celtica* 7 (1972) 30-44 (note especially the map on p. 33).

¹⁵ F.E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church* (Oxford 1881; 2nd edn, by Jane Stevenson, Woodbridge 1987); J.W. Willis Bund, *The Celtic Church in Wales* (London 1897); Heinrich Zimmer, *The Celtic Church in Britain and Ireland* (London 1902).

¹⁶ Cf. G. Williams, 'Some Protestant views of early British Church history', *History*, new series, 38 (1953) 219-33.

¹⁷ 'The Celtic Church: is this a valid concept?', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 1 (1981) 1-20 (the O'Donnell Lecture in Celtic Studies, University of Oxford, 1974/5), reprinted in her *Church and Society*, chapter XVIII.

¹⁸ For some recent discussion, see P. Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and celtoscepticism', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 36 (1998) 1-35; Thomas O'Loughlin, *Celtic Theology* (London 2000); Donald E. Meek, *The Quest for Celtic Christianity* (Edinburgh 2000).

Middle Ages in the British Isles – dark not because (as some who have misunderstood the phrase complain) they were barbaric and horrible to live in (although no doubt they were) but because they have passed largely beyond historical record and had already done so before 700. Whatever the continuities through this period may have been, historical record was not one of them.¹⁹ We can see, however dimly, that ‘the Age of the Saints’ was a period of Church-history dominated by ecclesiastical founders who were in substantial measure monastic founders. In the generation before 500, Patrick, the British apostle of Ireland, was, while not a monk himself, profoundly sympathetic to monasticism, as his surviving letters attest.²⁰ In the generation after 500 we encounter another remarkable British churchman and author in Gildas, a secular cleric also deeply sympathetic to monasticism but one who, around the middle of the century, became a monk, probably an abbot and perhaps a church-founder, and who was remembered for several centuries thereafter as an authority on monasticism and Church-order.²¹ What seems to have happened is that in the mid-sixth century in Britain and Ireland, and probably in the British colonies in Brittany, there was a surge of enthusiasm for the monastic life, with large numbers of people seeking an alternative to the secular life-style. The Insular Celtic world was by no means unique in this development: the rise of the holy man has in the last thirty years become one of the enduring historiographic images of

¹⁹ For recent discussions of continuities, see K.R. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity 300-800* (Leicester 1994), and David Howlett, *Cambro-Latin Compositions, their Competence and Craftsmanship* (Dublin 1998).

²⁰ For Patrick’s two open letters, *Confessio* and *Contra Coroticum*, see *St. Patrick*, ed. & transl. A.B.E. Hood (Chichester 1978), and *Liber Epistolarum Sancti Patricii Episcopi*, ed. & transl. D.R. Howlett (Blackrock 1994). For discussion of Patrick’s attitude to monasticism see Dumville, ‘The origins’, pp. 91-4.

²¹ *Gildas*, ed. & transl. Hugh Williams (London 1899-1901); *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. & transl. Michael Winterbottom (Chichester 1978). See further *Gildas: New Approaches*, edd. Michael Lapidge & D. Dumville (Woodbridge 1984), and Dumville, ‘The origins’, pp. 94-104. See also Neil Wright, *History and Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval West — Studies in Intertextuality* (Aldershot 1995), chapters I-VI and XIV.

late Antiquity.²² The holy man or woman was not always a solitary, however. The monastic movement of the eastern Mediterranean basin had also left models of communal, or coenobitic, life.²³ Monastic thought became well diffused in the West, but nowhere did it leave such a profound and enduring effect on the structures and outlook of early mediaeval Latin Christianity as it did in the British Isles. If we are to find any kind of apt comparison, we must look to the new monastic movement of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries – or even to its extension, the Friars.²⁴

For all their importance in Insular history, this age and in particular this movement are at best protohistoric – and their archaeology has proved equally problematic.²⁵ Lack of institutional continuity in the plague-years was no doubt partly responsible, but we may suspect that both the ethos and the highly fissile nature of the Insular monastic movement were inimical to historiography.²⁶

²² See particularly the work of Peter Brown: *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA 1978); *The Cult of the Saints, its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, IL 1981); *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 1982); *Authority and the Sacred. Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge 1995). See also Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford 1978); Susanna Elm, *‘Virgins of God’. The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1994); David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford 1995).

²³ Among recent works see Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: the Making of a Community in Fourth-century Egypt* (Berkeley, CA 1985), and John Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ — The Monasteries of Palestine 314-631* (Oxford 1994).

²⁴ For introductions to these phenomena, see Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge 1996), and *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli sociorum S. Francisci*, ed. & transl. Rosalind B. Brooke (Oxford 1970; rev. imp., 1990). See also Jacques Dubois, *Les ordres monastiques* (Paris 1985), and J.H. Van Engen, ‘The “crisis of cenobitism” reconsidered: Benedictine monasticism in the years 1050-1150’, *Speculum* 61 (1986) 269-304.

²⁵ Charles Thomas, *The Early Christian Archaeology of North Britain* (London 1971); Harold Mytum, *The Origins of Early Christian Ireland* (London 1992); Charles Thomas, *And shall these Mute Stones speak? Post-Roman Inscriptions in Western Britain* (Cardiff 1994).

²⁶ It is perhaps worth comparing the process by which the sayings and history of the Desert Fathers of the Near East came to be conceptualised and written, and the chronology of this in relation to the dates of the Fathers themselves. For an introduction to some of these problems, see three volumes of English translation: *The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers: Apophthegmata Patrum from the Anonymous Series*, transl. Benedicta Ward (Oxford 1975); *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: the Alphabetical Collection*, transl.

When a sustained desire for record arose, beginning in the late 680s and 690s, fact and old writings were both at a considerable premium.²⁷

In general, then, individual figures of that era are unapproachable, intangible, perhaps even unreal. The subsequent Lives of the Saints are *sui generis*, works of fiction or pseudohistory, highly conventional both in general and within their more local contexts. The Lives of Welsh saints are, as we have them, largely works of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries,²⁸ when the Norman presence on Welsh soil brought a remarkable ecclesiastical response – literary, historiographic, constitutional, and political – which renders that era one of particular interest.²⁹

Some caveats need to be entered to the proposition which I have just advanced, that the Lives of Welsh saints are generally 500-600 years later than the ecclesiastics whom they celebrate. First, some of these saints appear in Breton or Irish guises, or make cameo-appearances in the Lives of Breton or Irish saints, and in those ways writing about them can sometimes be carried back as far as the ninth century.³⁰ Secondly, a Welsh pseudohistory of the early ninth century contains a chapter on a miracle associated with St Illtud: it reappears in the twelfth-century Life, and the likelihood

Benedicta Ward (Kalamazoo, MI 1975); *The Lives of the Desert Fathers: the Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, transl. Norman Russell & B. Ward (Kalamazoo, MI 1980).

²⁷ As witness the hagiography of St Patrick, for example: *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, edd. & transl. Ludwig Bieler & F. Kelly (Dublin 1979).

²⁸ *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae*, ed. & transl. A.W. Wade-Evans (Cardiff 1944), to be taken with *The Life of St. David*, transl. A.W. Wade-Evans (London 1923); *The Text of the Book of Llan Dâv from the Gwysaney Manuscript*, edd. J.G. Evans & J. Rhys (Oxford 1893; rev. imp., Aberystwyth 1979).

²⁹ Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border*; for hagiography and crisis, see J.M.H. Smith, 'Oral and written: saints, miracles, and relics in Brittany, c. 850-1250', *Speculum* 65 (1990) 309-43.

³⁰ For discussion see G.H. Doble, *Lives of the Welsh Saints* (2nd edn, Cardiff 1984), who gave full attention to the Breton and Cornish dimensions. In the case of St Garmon of Llanarmon-yn-Iâl, the saint appears in the guise of St Germanus of Auxerre: for discussion, see Baring-Gould and Fisher, *Lives*, III.52-81 (three entries).

is that both authors drew on an earlier, subsequently lost, Life of St Illtud.³¹

The hagiography of David has received much, yet by no means enough, attention. We are in the unusual position of having a named author, Rhygyfarch ap Sulien, who died in 1099,³² and yet in the even more embarrassing situation of possessing two Lives which have been published as his work. One, a longer, Life is contained uniquely among *Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium*.³³ The other survives in many manuscripts and was the received text of the Life of St David in the later middle ages.³⁴ Scholars have attributed now one, now the other, Life to Rhygyfarch,³⁵ but I am not sure that I can credit either attribution: this is not the occasion on which to attempt a detailed textual comparison, but my suspicion is that each derives independently from Rhygyfarch's work which has not yet been discovered in or reconstructed into its pristine form.

³¹ *Historia Brittonum*, §71: ed. Edmond Faral, *La légende arthurienne* (3 vols, Paris 1929), III.60; transl. A.W. Wade-Evans, *Nennius's "History of the Britons"* (London 1938), pp. 118-19. Cf. *Vitae*, ed. & transl. Wade-Evans, pp. 224-7 (§22).

³² See, for example, his obituary in the earlier version of the Middle-Welsh chronicle *Brut y Tywysogyon*, 'The Chronicle of the Kings'. 'Yn y vlwydyn honno y bu varw Rychemarch doeth vab Sulgenius esgob drwy diruawr gwyn gan bawb kanys oed doethaf o holl genedyl y Brytannyeid; ac na bu kynn noc ef y gyffelib na gwedy ef y gyfryw nac yny oes y gymar, heb dyc neb arnaw namyn y dad ehun; a sef y bu varw y dryded vlwydyn a deugein o'y oet.' 'In that year died Rhygyfarch the Wise, son of Bishop Sulien, greatly lamented by all, for he was the most learned of the whole British people; and there had not been before him his equal nor [would there be] his like after him nor [was there] in his lifetime his peer; and he had not received instruction from anyone except his own father; and he died in the forty-third year of his age.' Text and translation adapted from *Brut y Tywysogyon Peniarth MS. 20*, ed. Thomas Jones (Cardiff 1941), pp. 29-30, and *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the Princes, Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, transl. Thomas Jones (Cardiff 1952), p. 21. For his father, Bishop Sulien (†1091), see below, n. 105.

³³ The most convenient edition and translation are those by A.W. Wade-Evans, 'Rhygyfarch's Life of Saint David', *Y Cymmrodor* 24 (1913) 1-73. See also *Life*, transl. Wade-Evans, and *Vitae*, ed. & transl. Wade-Evans, pp. 150-70 (text only).

³⁴ *Rhygyfarch's Life of St. David. The Basic Mid Twelfth-century Latin Text*, ed. J.W. James (Cardiff 1967).

³⁵ For the most recent comments, giving priority to the text in *Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium*, see Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540* (Turnhout 1997), p. 458 (no. 1281), 'Rhygyfarch ap Sulien (1056-1099)'.

Rhygyfarch himself tells us in an epilogue (or what authors are increasingly calling a ‘postface’)³⁶ that³⁷

Sed hec, ut diximus, ex plurimis pauca omnibus ad exemplum et patris gloriam in unum collegimus, que in uetustissimis patrię, maxime ipsius ciuitatis, sparsim inuenta scriptis, que, assidua tinearum edacitate ac annosis eui terebraminibus per horas et cardines corrosa, ac ex antiquo seniorum stilo conscripta, nunc usque supersunt. In unum cumulata, ueluti ex florifero diuersarum herbarum orto, quasi subtilissime apis rostro sugens, ad tanti patris gloriam et aliorum utilitatem, ne pereant, collegi.

‘these few things out of many, as we have said, we have collected together into one place for example to all and for the glory of the father. They have been found scattered in very old writings of the country, especially of his own city, which have survived until now, written according to the old style of the ancients, though corroded by the constant devourings of moths and the yearly borings of ages through times and seasons. Having brought them together into one place, sucking most discriminatingly as it were with the mouth of a bee in a flowery garden of diverse plants, I have collected them to the glory of so great a father and for the benefit of others, lest they should perish.’

No detailed analysis of the Davidic hagiography has yet been conducted to determine the sources employed, in spite of investigations of particular points. David’s reputed life-span of 147 years places him among the longer-lived Celtic saints, easily seeing off Patrick’s maximum of 132 years,³⁸ but these were mere youngsters by comparison with various Old-Testament patriarchs! The span does, however, point to serious problems with David’s chronology and has given rise to much unhelpful speculation.³⁹ In

³⁶ §§66-67 (Wade-Evans, ‘Rhygyvarch’s Life’, pp. 27, 71-2).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 71-2 (§66).

³⁸ See further David N. Dumville, *Histories and Pseudo-histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot 1990), essay XI, pp. 30-3; David N. Dumville *et al.*, *Saint Patrick, A.D. 493-1993* (Woodbridge 1993), pp. 31-2, 47-8, 225, 229-30, 232, 234 (cf. 279-88 on St Patrick and St David). Cf. J. Hennig, ‘The literary tradition of Moses in Ireland’, *Traditio* 7 (1949-51) 233-61.

³⁹ For the record, I offer two examples by A.W. Wade-Evans, one from each end of his literary output. (1) ‘Note on St. David’s chronology’, *Y Cymmrodor* 22 (1910) 144-9 — ‘the year 462 as that of St. David’s birth is practically certain’ (clarified as 1.9.461-31.8.462) (p. 145); ‘St. David ... died on Tuesday, March 1st, 505, in the 44th year of his age’ (p. 149). (2) ‘The death-years of Dewi Sant and Saint Dubricius’, *Anglo-Welsh Review* 10, no. 26 ([1960]) 63-4 — ‘I have no hesitation in stating that as Dewi Sant was born in 462, so he died on Tuesday morning, March 1st, 544, age 82 years’.

spite of this, among Rhygyfarch's sources was information which enables us, by good fortune, to approach David the person, one of a mere handful of early British ecclesiastics so favoured by the lapse of a millennium and a half since their heyday.

The two other Britons of the sixth century whom we can hear and interrogate directly are Gildas,⁴⁰ whom I have already mentioned, and his correspondent Uinniau, apparently a British bishop in the Irish mission-field.⁴¹ Their correspondence, attested a generation later in a letter of the Irish abbot Columbanus,⁴² and preserved in fragments in an eighth-century Irish canon-law collection,⁴³ is what allows us to approach the authentic David.

Gildas is known as a vigorous controversialist. In his great work *De excidio Britanniae*, 'On the Ruin of Britain', his targets were the secular and ecclesiastical rulers of his day, almost all of whom he regarded as unworthy and corrupt. In two later works, the letter to Uinniau and his 'Preface on Penance',⁴⁴ perhaps the preface to a monastic rule, we see him as a monastic leader and legislator, Gildas having presumably in the meantime achieved his intention (stated in his book 'On the Ruin of Britain') to join the monastic movement.⁴⁵ Now there was a new target for his invective, within

⁴⁰ See above, n. 21.

⁴¹ On Uinniau, who has become a rather controversial figure in recent years, see P. Ó Riain, 'St. Finbarr: a study in a cult', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 82 (1977) 63-82, and his papers cited in n.182, below; D. Dumville, 'Gildas and Uinniau', in *Gildas: New Approaches*, edd. Lapidge & Dumville, pp. 207-14; D.N. Dumville, 'St. Finnian of Movilla: Briton, Gael, Ghost?', in *Down — History and Society*, ed. Lindsay Proudfoot (Dublin 1997), pp. 71-84; P. Ó Riain, 'Finnio and Winniau: a return to the subject', in *Ildánach ildírech. A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana*, edd. John Carey et al. (Andover, MA 1999), pp. 187-202. Cf. also, for the larger context, T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Britons in Ireland, c. 550-800', *ibid.*, pp. 15-26, and Dumville et al., *Saint Patrick*, pp. 133-45.

⁴² *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. & transl. G.S.M. Walker (Dublin 1957), pp. 2-13, at 8/9 (*Epistolae*, I.7, datable 595×604).

⁴³ *Gildas*, ed. & transl. Williams, pp. 255-71; *Gildas*, ed. & transl. Winterbottom, pp. 80-2, 143-5, 154-5. For this identification, see especially R. Sharpe, 'Gildas as a Father of the Church', in *Gildas: New Approaches*, edd. Lapidge & Dumville, pp. 193-205.

⁴⁴ *Gildas*, ed. & transl. Williams, pp. 272-85; *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Ludwig Bieler & D.A. Binchy (Dublin 1963), pp. 3, 12-13, 21-2, 23-4, 26, 60-5, 240-2; *Gildas*, ed. & transl. Winterbottom, pp. 83-6, 146-7.

⁴⁵ Cf. Dumville, 'The origins', pp. 94-104.

the world of Insular monasticism: this time his withering rhetoric was directed at radical ascetics.

John Morris pointed out in 1966 that, thanks to Gildas, we can at least partially recover and validate the monastic rule of David.⁴⁶ In §§21-31 of the longer text of the Latin Life of St David, we find David's rule of monastic life stated.⁴⁷ It embodies phrases which are also found, half a millennium earlier, in Gildas's letter to Uinniau.⁴⁸ The only convincing explanation appears to be, as Morris saw, that both authors were quoting from David's Rule, now lost but recoverable in some measure through Rhygyfarch's narrative reporting of it. On the face of it, then, one of Rhygyfarch's 'scattered ... very old writings of the country, especially of his own city' was the founder's rule.⁴⁹ Let us get a sense of its flavour, as he reported it.⁵⁰

talem cenobialis propositi feruore rigorem sanctus decreuit pater ut monachorum quisque, cotidiano desudans operi, manuum labore suam in commune transigeret uitam, qui enim non laborat, ait apostolus, non manducet; noscens enim quod secreta quies uitiorum fomes et mater esset, monachorum humeros diuinis fatigationibus subiugauit; nam qui sub otii quiete tempora mentesque summittunt, instabilem accidie spiritum libidinisque stimulos sine quiete parturiunt.

Igitur inpensiori studio, pede manumque laborant; iugum ponunt in humeris; suffossoria uangasque inuicto brachio terre defigunt; sarculos serrasque ad succidendum sanctis ferunt manibus; cuncta congregationis necessaria propriis expendunt uiribus. Possessiones respuunt, iniquorum dona reprobant, diuitias detestantur; boum nulla ad arandum cura introducitur; quisque sibi et fratribus diuitie, quisque et bos. Acto opere, nullum audiebatur murmur, nullum preter necessarium habebatur colloquium, sed quisque, aut orando aut recte cogitando, iniunctum peragebat opus.

⁴⁶ 'The dates of the Celtic saints', *Journal of Theological Studies*, new series, 17 (1966) 342-91, at pp. 349-50 and 384-5, reprinted in his *Arthurian Sources* (6 vols, Chichester 1995), VI.95-144, at pp. 102-3 and 137-8.

⁴⁷ Wade-Evans, 'Rhygyvarch's Life', pp. 13-15, 48-51.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 48-9 (§22); cf. Gildas, Letter to Uinniau, §4 (*Gildas*, ed. & transl. Williams, pp. 262/3; *Gildas*, ed. & transl. Winterbottom, pp. 81, 144).

⁴⁹ *Vita Sancti Daud*, §66 (Wade-Evans, 'Rhygyvarch's Life', pp. 27, 71); cf. n. 37, above.

⁵⁰ *Vita Sancti Daud*, §§21-22 (Wade-Evans, 'Rhygyvarch's Life', pp. 13, 48-9).

‘The holy father ardently determined on such rigour of monastic life that every monk should toil at daily labour and spend his life in common, working with his hands; for he who labours not, says the apostle, let him not eat. For, knowing that lazy repose was the fomenter and mother of vices, he subjected the shoulders of the monks to divine fatigues. For those who submit time and thought to easeful rest generate an unstable spirit of depression and restless incitements to lust.

‘Therefore with greater assiduity they labour with hand and foot; they lay the yoke on their shoulders; with unwearied arm they fasten in the earth their mattocks and hoes; they bear in their holy hands hoes and saws for cutting; they provide with their own labour all the necessities of the community. They refuse possessions, they reject the gifts of the unjust, they detest riches. No care of oxen for ploughing is introduced. Each is rich to himself and to the brethren, and each is an ox. When the work was done, no complaint was heard, no conversation was held beyond what was necessary. But each did the task enjoined, either in prayer or holy meditation.’

And so on and so on. After nine more chapters, the account ends:⁵¹

Sicque incepit, peregit, finiuit. Reliqua autem eius disciplinę rigoris, quamuis ad imitandum necessaria, proposita compendii breuitas uetat nos exponere. Sed Egyptios monacos imitatus, similem eis duxit uitam.

‘Thus he began, continued, and ended. The rest of his severe living, though necessary for imitation, the proposed brevity of this compendium forbids us from relating. But, imitating the Egyptian monks, he led a life similar to them.’

Now let us hear from Gildas.⁵²

Abstinentia corporalium ciborum absque caritate inutilis est. Meliores sunt ergo qui non magno opere ieiunant nec supra modum a creatura Dei se abstinent, cor autem intrinsecus nitidum coram Deo sollicite seruantes, a quo sciunt exitum uitae, quam illi qui carnem non edunt nec cibis saecularibus delectantur, neque uehicularibus equisque uehantur, et pro his quasi superiores ceteris se putantes; quibus mors intrauit per fenestras eleuationis.

‘Abstinence from fleshly foods, without love, is profitless. The better people (*meliores*) are those who fast without ostentation and do not immoderately scorn what God has created, not those who refuse to eat meat or to ride in

⁵¹ *Vita Sancti David*, §31 (Wade-Evans, ‘Rhygyvarch’s Life’, pp. 15, 51).

⁵² Letter to Uinniau, §2 (*Gildas*, ed. & transl. Williams, pp. 258/9; *Gildas*, ed. & transl. Winterbottom, pp. 80, 143).

carriages or on horseback and who think themselves thereby superior. For death comes upon them through the windows of pride.’

Or again:⁵³

de monachis qui ueniunt de loco uiliore ad perfectiorem — quorum abbas ita degenerauit ab opere Dei ut mereatur ad mensam sanctorum non recipi, sed et fornicationis crimine, non suspicionis sed mali euidentis, onerari —, suscipite sine ullo scrupulo monachos tales ad uos de flamma inferni confugientes, nequaquam eorum consulto abate. Illos uero quorum abbatem de mensa sanctorum propter infamiam non arcemus, non debemus illo nolente suscipere. Quanto magis uenientes a sanctis abbatibus et nullo alio modo suspectis nisi quod habent pecora et uehicula uel pro consuetudine patriae uel sua infirmitate, quae minus laedunt habentes, si cum humilitate et patientia, quam aratra trahentes et suffossoria figentes terrae cum praesumptione et superbia.

‘Those who come from a viler monastery to a more perfect — from one whose abbot has so far degenerated from God’s work that he deserves not to be received at the table of the holy but rather to be accused of the crime of fornication, not as a matter of suspicion but of patent evil —, such monks receive to you without scruple as men fleeing from the flame of hell ... Those, however, whose abbot we do not exclude from the table of the holy because of evil report, we ought not to receive against his will. How much more ought we not to receive those coming from abbots who are holy and in no other way suspect save that they possess cattle and carriages, either because of the custom of their country or because of their own weakness. For these things do less injury to their owners, if they are used with humility and patience, than dragging ploughs and fixing mattocks in the earth with prejudice and pride.’

There is more, but these two sections, ending with the presumed quotation from David’s Rule, are sufficient to give the flavour of the dispute between those of greater and lesser asceticism. It is a story as old as monasticism itself, but here in an Insular context. What is clear is that there was controversy and bad feeling within the monastic movement, with Gildas being the moderate and David the radical. The monastic movement had its various strands: between them a lack of charity and too much pride seem to have occasioned distress and harsh words.

⁵³ Letter to Uinniau, §4 (*Gildas*, ed. & transl. Williams, pp. 262/3; *Gildas*, ed. & transl. Winterbottom, pp. 81, 144).

What Rhygyfarch and his like seem to have lacked was Gildas's letter to Uinniau, which would have clarified the history. But there is a small collection of four short texts of sixth-century British origin,⁵⁴ which now survives in two Breton manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries⁵⁵ but to which Rhygyfarch may have had access two centuries later in southwestern Wales. The evidence for that is the proceedings of the 'Synod of the Grove of Victory', a short set of *acta*,⁵⁶ referred to in the Life of St David.⁵⁷ And it is noteworthy that another of this group of four texts is called 'Some Excerpts from a Book of David', a series of sixteen penitential canons,⁵⁸ a text whose full source we might expect to have been known at St Davids.

⁵⁴ *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Bieler & Binchy, pp. 60-73, 240-2 (for discussion of the textual history, see *ibid.*, pp. 3, 12-13, 21-2, 23-4, 26).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 12-13, 21-2 (listed as B and C by Bieler): Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS. latin 3182, pp. 280-3; Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS. 625 (576), fos 52r-54v.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-9, 242.

⁵⁷ §55: Wade-Evans, 'Rhygyvarch's Life', pp. 24, 65-6.

⁵⁸ *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche*, ed. F.W.H. Wasserschleben (Halle a.S. 1851), pp. 101-2; *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Bieler & Binchy, pp. 70-3, 242.

 INCIPIVNT EXCERPTA QVEDAM DE LIBRO DAVIDIS

<1> Sacerdotes in templo Dei ministraturi gule gratia uinum aut siceram⁵⁹ per negligentiam et non per ignorantiam⁶⁰ bibentes .iiii. diebus peniteant; si autem per contemptum arguentium,⁶¹ .xl..

<2> Inebriati autem per ignorantiam, .xv. diebus; si per negligentiam, .xl.; si per contemptum, .iii. .x<1>^{mis}..

<3> Qui cogit aliquem humanitatis gratia ut ebrietur, similiter ut ebrius peniteat.

<4> Qui uero effectu hodie⁶² seu luxuriae ut turpiter confundat uel irrideat ad ebrietatem⁶³ alios cogit, si non satis <fec>erit,⁶⁴ sic peniteat ut homicida animarum.

<5> Cum muliere disponsata Christo maritoe siue cum iumento⁶⁵ uel cum masculo fornicantes, de reliquo mortui mundo Deo uiuant.

<6> Qui autem cum uirgine uel uidua necdum disponsata peccauerit, dotem det parentibus eius et anno uno peniteat. Si non habuerit dotem, .iii. annis peniteat.

⁵⁹ C; *ciceram* B.

⁶⁰ C; *pignorantiam* B.

⁶¹ B; not in C.

⁶² B; *ho* C.

⁶³ B; *ebrietatem* C.

⁶⁴ Bieler; *penituerit* BC.

⁶⁵ B; *in iumento* C.

HERE BEGIN SOME EXCERPTS FROM A BOOK OF DAVID

1 Priests about to minister in the temple of God, who through greed drink wine or strong drink negligently, not ignorantly, shall do penance for four days; but if they do so out of contempt of those who censure them, forty days.

2 Those who become drunk through ignorance, fifteen days; through negligence, forty days; through contempt, three forty-day periods.

3 One who compels another to get drunk for the sake of good fellowship shall do the same penance as the drunken man.

4 But one who under the influence of hatred or of wantonness compels others to drunkenness that he may basely put them to confusion or ridicule, if he has not apologised, shall do penance as a slayer of souls.

5 Those who commit fornication with a woman vowed to Christ or to a husband, or with a beast, or with a male, for the remainder [of their lives] dead to the world shall live for God.

6 But one who sins with a virgin or a widow not yet betrothed, shall pay the bride-price to her relatives and do penance for a year. If he has not the bride-price, he shall do penance for three years.

<7> Episcopus homicidium uoluntate faciens uel quamlibet fornicationem dolumue .xiii. annis peniteat; presbiter autem .vii. cum pane et aqua et <s>erculo⁶⁶ in die Dominica uel sabati;⁶⁷ diaconus autem⁶⁸ .vi.; sine gradu monachus .iiii. — nisi infirmitas inpediat⁶⁹ illos.⁷⁰

<8> Qui in sompnis⁷¹ cum uoluntate pollutus est, surgat canatque .vii. psalmos et in die⁷² illo in pane et aqua uiuat; sin⁷³ autem, .xxx. psalmos canat.

<9> Volens⁷⁴ in sompnis peccare sed non potuit, .xv. psalmos;⁷⁵ si autem peccauit sed non pollutus est,⁷⁶ .xxiiii.; si sine uoluntate pollutus est, .xvi..⁷⁷

<10> Antiqui decreuere sancti ut episcopus pro capitalibus peccatis .xxiiii. annis peniteat; presbiter .xii.; diaconus .vii.; sic uirgo lectorque et relegiosus,⁷⁸ ebibatus autem .iiii..

⁶⁶ Binchy; *ferculo* BC. The same word occurs in *Praefatio Gildae de Poenitentia*, §1 (*The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Bieler & Binchy, p. 60); Binchy suggested that what was needed was a latinisation of Old Irish *sercol*; for further discussion, see *ibid.*, p. 241, n. 3, and *Dictionary of the Irish Language based mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials. Compact Edition*, gen. ed. E.G. Quin (Dublin 1983), p. 538, S-190/55-70. The questions when this hypothetical Hiberno-Latinism was created and how widely it was diffused remain to be answered. See further J. Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien* (Dublin 1959-), S-92, s.v. **sercoll**.

⁶⁷ C; *sabbati* B.

⁶⁸ C; not in B.

⁶⁹ B; *inpediat* C.

⁷⁰ BC; *illis* C*.

⁷¹ B; *somnis* C.

⁷² B; *`aqua´ die* C.

⁷³ B; *si* C.

⁷⁴ C; *uolens `autem´* B.

⁷⁵ B; *salpmos* C.

⁷⁶ B; not in C.

⁷⁷ C; *.xv.* B.

⁷⁸ B; *relegiosus* C.

7 A bishop who wilfully commits a killing or any kind of fornication or fraud shall do penance for thirteen years; but a priest seven years on bread and water and relish on Sunday or Saturday; a deacon, six years; a monk not in holy orders, four years – unless they are hindered by infirmity.

8 He who has wilfully become polluted in sleep shall get up and sing seven psalms and live on bread and water for that day; but if he does not do this, he shall sing thirty psalms.

9 If he desired to sin in sleep but could not, fifteen psalms; if, however, he sinned but was not polluted, twenty-four. If he was unintentionally polluted, sixteen.

10 The saints of old decreed that for capital sins a bishop should do penance for twenty-four years; a priest, for twelve; a deacon, for seven; a virgin, a reader, and a monk, the same; but a layman, for four years.

<11> Nunc autem presbiteri ruentis poenitentia est diaconique et⁷⁹ subdiaconi⁸⁰ uirginisque⁸¹ et cuiuslibet hominis hominem ad mortem tradentis et cum pecodibus⁸² uel cum sua sorore uel cum mariti uxore fornicantis et uenenis hominem occidere uolentis triennium: primo anno super terra,⁸³ secundo lapidi capud inponendum, tertio super axem iaceat; solo pane et aqua et sale et leguminis talimpulo⁸⁴ uescatur. Ceterique malint .xxx. triduanos cum⁸⁵ cybo lectoque supradicto uel cum superpositionibus⁸⁶ a nona⁸⁷ ad nonam usque⁸⁸ alteram. Alia est paenitentia .iii. annis, sed himina de ceruissa uel lacte cum pane saleque altera e duabus noctibus cum prandii⁸⁹ ratione,⁹⁰ et ordine .xii. horis noctium⁹¹ dierumque Deum suplicare⁹² debent.

<12> Hinc autem presbitero offerre sacrificium uel diacono tenere calicem non licet aut in sublimiorem gradum ascendere.

<13> Usuram accipiens perdat ea quae accipit.

<14> Praeda uel fraude uescit, semiannus.⁹³

<15> Uirgini osculum in secreto praebens, triduanum peniteat.

<16> In aecclesia⁹⁴ mendacium⁹⁵ iurans, quadruplum pro quo iurauerat reddat.

⁷⁹ B; not in C.

⁸⁰ B; not in C.

⁸¹ B; not in C.

⁸² C; *peçodibus* B.

⁸³ B; *terram* C.

⁸⁴ BC; *talimpolo* B*.

⁸⁵ Bieler; *triduanos uel cum superpositionibus cum* BC. Cf. n. 86, below.

⁸⁶ *uel cum superpositionibus* Bieler; not here in BC. Cf. n. 85, above.

⁸⁷ *a nona* Bieler; *annona* BC.

⁸⁸ C; *usque `ad`* B.

⁸⁹ B; *prandi* C.

⁹⁰ Wassersleben; *natione* BC.

⁹¹ C; *noxium `uel` c* B.

⁹² B; *supplicare* C.

⁹³ *semiannus `id est peniteat`* BC.

⁹⁴ C; *ecclesia* B.

⁹⁵ BC; *mendatium* C*.

11 Now, however, the penance of a priest, a deacon, a subdeacon or a virgin who falls, as well as of anyone who puts a man to death, who commits fornication with beasts or with his sister or with another's wife, or who plans to kill a man with poisons, is three years. During the first year he shall lie on the ground; during the second his head is to be laid on a stone; during the third, on a board; and he shall eat only bread and water and salt and some pease porage. Others might prefer thirty periods of three days, with food and bed as aforesaid, or with special fasts from nones to the next nones. Another penance is for three years, but with a half-pint of beer or milk with bread and salt every second night with a ration of dinner; and they ought to supplicate God regularly in the twelve hours of the nights and of the days.

12 But thenceforth it is not permitted for a priest to offer the sacrifice or for a deacon to hold the chalice or to rise to higher rank.

13 He who receives interest shall lose what he has received.

14 He who enjoys the fruits of robbery or fraud, half a year.

15 He who kisses a virgin in secret shall do penance for three days.

16 He who takes a false oath in the church shall restore four times that for which he made the oath.

A third member of the group, however, is a ‘Preface of Gildas on Penance’, a series of twenty-seven penitential canons attributed to David’s detractor yet showing many points of resemblance to the comparable text attributed to David.⁹⁶

We have, then, enough material, if only just enough, to enable us to assess the ethos of Davidic monasticism. It was strict-régime asceticism, with vegetarianism at its centre, but was decidedly communal. Hard physical work (with no assistance from beasts of burden) seems to have been its hallmark, with much of the rest of the monk’s day devoted to more overtly religious activity. To some in the Church, and perhaps particularly those others in monastic life, this could seem excessive or dangerous. The impression conveyed by Gildas’s letter to Uinniau is that David’s radical asceticism came accompanied by a ‘holier-than-thou’ approach to colleagues (or competitors?) in the monastic movement, which accordingly attracted bitter criticism which we encounter in Gildas’s inimitably penetrating rhetoric. But the plain implication of the exchange between Gildas and Uinniau, as also that between Columbanus and Gregory the Great a generation later, where Columbanus referred to his monastic predecessors’ correspondence,⁹⁷ is that severe asceticism was successful in attracting significant numbers of recruits, some (at least) of whom were monks from houses under less harsh rules.

There is some evidence for the survival of the Davidic ethos at his principal foundation of Mynyw, St Davids, through the earlier middle ages. Not necessarily incompatible with this is the ninth-century evidence which suggests that the church of St Davids was then a family-corporation of hereditary character.⁹⁸ Similarly, the evidence for attacks on the churches of David — found already in the mid-seventh century and attested further in the mid- to late

⁹⁶ Cf. n. 44, above.

⁹⁷ Cf. n. 43, above.

⁹⁸ This is drawn from Asser, *Vita Ælfredi regis*, §79: *Asser’s Life of King Alfred*, ed. William Henry Stevenson (Oxford 1904; rev. imp., by D. Whitelock, 1959), pp. 63-6 (cf. pp. lxxv-lxxviii, 312-16, for discussion); *Alfred the Great. Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, transl. Simon Keynes & M. Lapidge (Harmondsworth 1983), pp. 27, 48-54, 260-2.

ninth century — may suggest that his foundations became centres of wealth and power:⁹⁹ likewise, that *need* not imply decadence. From the earliest records, David was presented as a bishop as well as abbot and monk, and his church remained episcopal. Bishop Asser seems to have been an adherent of a monastic rule: he commented with some wonder at the absence of regular monasticism from Wessex (and perhaps other parts of England) in the late ninth century.¹⁰⁰

An ecclesiastical corporation run by a family which renewed itself from generation to generation did not necessarily mean that the clerical office-bearers were married (or otherwise non-celibate). Nevertheless, there is some suspicion that, by the end of the tenth century, the old standards were ceasing to be maintained and that fleshly activities were invading David's house. Our first testimony comes only from Gerald of Wales, and the lapse of two centuries from the event commemorated means that his witness is hardly admissible.¹⁰¹ In his *Itinerarium Kambriae*, 'Journey round Wales' (an account of a preaching tour in 1188 published soon afterwards),¹⁰² Gerald enumerated the successive bishops of

⁹⁹ J.R. Davies, 'Church, property, and conflict in Wales, AD 600-1100', *Welsh History Review* 18 (1996/7) 387-406, especially pp. 397-8. Cf. D.N. Dumville, 'The "six" sons of Rhodri Mawr: a problem in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 4 (1982) 5-18, at pp. 15-16, reprinted in his *Britons and Anglo-Saxons in the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot 1993), essay XV.

¹⁰⁰ *Vita Ælfredi regis* §93: *Asser's Life*, ed. Stevenson, pp. 80-1, and cf. pp. 332-4; transl. Keynes & Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p. 103, and cf. pp. 271-2 (n. 230). See also David N. Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge 1992), pp. 189-90.

¹⁰¹ John Edward Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (3rd edn, 2 vols, London 1939), I.352, took Gerald's testimony at face-value, dramatically closing his first volume with this episode.

¹⁰² *Itinerarium Kambriae*, in *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, edd. J.S. Brewer *et al.* (8 vols, London 1861-91), VI.1-152; transl. Lewis Thorpe, *Gerald of Wales: The Journey through Wales and The Description of Wales* (Harmondsworth 1978), pp. 63-209 (cf. 24-46). For an attractive introduction, see Charles Kightly *et al.*, *A Mirror of Medieval Wales — Gerald of Wales and his Journey of 1188* (Cardiff 1988).

St Davids,¹⁰³ pausing at the name of Morgenau, who had been killed by vikings in 999, to give this anecdote:¹⁰⁴

Morgeneu qui primus inter episcopos Meneuiaie carnes comedit, et ibidem a pirates interfectus est; unde et eadem nocte quam duxit extremam apparuit cuidam episcopo in Hibernia, ostendens uulnera sua et dicens, “Quia carnes comedi, caro factus sum”.

‘Morgenau ... was the first bishop of St Davids to eat meat. He was killed by pirates in his own city. On the very night when he was killed, he showed himself in a vision to a bishop in Ireland, pointed to his wounds and said, “Because I ate flesh, I am become carrion”.’

Nevertheless, by the later eleventh century there were bishops of St Davids who enjoyed other carnal activities. First Sulien (1072-8, 1080-5) and then Abraham were married, and we know something of their progeny. Sulien’s sons were noted for their abilities in ecclesiastical life, whether in Latin learning, in calligraphy and manuscript-illumination, or in administration: we have already met Rhygyfarch ap Sulien, hagiographer of St David.¹⁰⁵ Bishop Abraham (1078-80) had at least the two sons who are commemorated in a monumental stone inscription at St Davids:¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ *Itinerarium Cambriae*, II.1: *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, edd. Brewer *et al.*, VI.101-10; *Gerald of Wales*, transl. Thorpe, pp. 159-69.

¹⁰⁴ *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, edd. Brewer *et al.*, VI.104; *Gerald of Wales*, transl. Thorpe, p. 163. If Morgenau was indeed the successor of Bishop Eneurys, who died (according to *Annales Cambriae* and *Brut y Tywysogyon*) in 945, he had enjoyed an exceptionally long episcopate. Eneurys was the last-named bishop of St Davids before Morgenau in the chronicles (and perhaps therefore in Gerald’s list). The death of a Bishop Rhydderch (with no see named) was recorded for 964 in the same sources: it is not impossible that he belonged to St Davids.

¹⁰⁵ See above, n. 32. For comprehensive coverage see M. Lapidge, ‘The Welsh-Latin poetry of Sulien’s family’, *Studia Celtica* 8/9 (1973/4) 68-106; cf. James Conway Davies, *Episcopal Acts and Cognate Documents relating to Welsh Dioceses 1066-1272* (2 vols, Cardiff 1946/8), II.493-506.

¹⁰⁶ V.E. Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (Cardiff 1950), pp. 210-11 (no. 382). I assume that *fili* is to be taken literally. Nash-Williams’s dating is illogical (p. 211): ‘Bishop Abraham, whose sons are commemorated here, was Bishop of St. Davids from 1078 until his death during a Viking raid in 1080. The stone therefore dates between these years.’ Only the earlier terminus can stand: a later terminus is irrecoverable from the evidence available. Cf. his earlier treatment: ‘Some dated monuments of the “Dark Ages” in Wales’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 93 (1938) 31-56, at pp. 54-6.

PONTIFICIS ABRAHAM FILII HIC
HED ET ISAC QUIESCUNT.

‘Hed and Isac, sons of Bishop Abraham, rest here.’

Abraham too met death by viking, in his case after a brief episcopate;¹⁰⁷ in this crisis, Sulien was recalled. Vegetarianism and virginity may not therefore have been at optimum Davidic levels at Mynyw in the century before Norman conquest. If the story told of Bishop Morgenau by Gerald has any history to it,¹⁰⁸ one might care to think that the very criticism in respect of his carnivorousness may indicate that there had been those who maintained the ideal.

In hagiography and poetry David was known as a water-man: in Latin he was *aquaticus*, in Welsh *dyfrwr*.¹⁰⁹ While some Celtic saints are famous for their ability to walk on water (especially between Ireland and Wales), this was not (it seems) St David’s claim to fame; rather, he took water instead of liquor, no doubt a significant manifestation of asceticism when we remember that mediaeval monastic life in many times and places was accompanied by substantial intakes of that which causes ‘forgetfulness of God’

¹⁰⁷ Abraham’s killing by vikings is recorded only in the ‘Chronicle of St Davids’ (*Annales Cambriae* [C]): ‘Meneuia a gentilibus uastata est, et Abraham a gentilibus occiditur’. The versions of *Brut y Tywysogyon* record merely that he died.

¹⁰⁸ Gerald could have invented the story but he would have needed to know that Morgenau ate meat!

¹⁰⁹ This description is first encountered in Brittany in 884, in the Life of St Paulus Aurelianus of Saint-Pol-de-Léon by Wrmonoc of Landevennec, but it seems unlikely to have originated there and then. In chapter III (§8), on the *condiscipuli in scola* of Paulus Aurelianus, we read: ‘Sanctumque Deuium, qui pro eo quod propter ar(c)tissimam uitae (eius) in Christo conuersationem et sui a Deo iudice laboris firmissimam retributionis spem in pane et aqua uixerit, cognomento dicebatur Aquaticus’. For the two editions of this text (whose variations I have indicated with round brackets), see [B.] Plaine, ‘Vita Sancti Pauli episcopi Leonensis in Britannia Minori auctore Wormonoco’, *Analecta Bollandiana* 1 (1882) 208-58, at p. 215, and C. Cuissard, ‘Vie de Saint Paul de Léon en Bretagne d’après un manuscrit de Fleury-sur-Loire conservé à la Bibliothèque publique d’Orléans’, *Revue celtique* 5 (1881-3) 413-60, at p. 421. For this view of St David at Mynyw, see *Vita Sancti David*, §§2 (‘Piscis uero aquaticam eius uitam sonat; sicut enim piscis aqua uiuit, ita iste, uinum et siceram et omne quod inebriare potest respuens, beatam Deo uitam in pane tantum et aqua duxit; inde etiam Dauid aquaticae uite cognominatur.’) and 42 (‘Verum pene tertia pars uel quarta Hibernie seruit Dauid Aquilento ...’): Wade-Evans, ‘Rhygyvarch’s Life’, pp. 5 and 19 (translation on pp. 30 and 56-7).

(to quote an eighth-century Irish ascetic) — to keep out the cold, no doubt!¹¹⁰

The teetotal ethos did not prevent the rules of historical amnesia from operating at St Davids, however. If one asks when the saint lived and just who he was, one is rapidly caught in the mists of historiography and genealogy used in the service of transient political need. According to Irish chronicles, whose evidence seems to belong to the tenth century, St David died in 589.¹¹¹ This is credible but untestable in detail. In any event, that seems likely to have been the official view in the tenth century.¹¹² David may by then have been deemed to have lived for 147 years,¹¹³ but the death-date was revised no later than the twelfth century and placed in the period 601×606;¹¹⁴ acceptance of 601 is, as far as I can see, a late nineteenth-century phenomenon.¹¹⁵ We are already across the line from history into hagiological legend and that position is intensified when we contemplate David's genealogy.

THE CULTS OF SS. DAVID, NONN, AND SANT

All holy families had remarkable procreative tendencies in the middle ages! *The Holy Family* itself is the prime example.¹¹⁶ St Patrick's expanding family I have dealt with in another

¹¹⁰ On monastic drink, see (for example) C.E. Hohler, 'Some service-books of the later Saxon Church', in *Tenth-century Studies*, ed. David Parsons (Chichester 1975), pp. 60-83 and 217-27, at 71-2, 222-3 (nn. 41-5). On forgetfulness, see *bráon dermaid Dé*, 'the moisture of forgetfulness of God', a reference to beer in the ninth-century ascetic tract *Teagasg Maoil Ruain*, 'The Teaching of Mael Ruain', in *The Rule of Tallaght*, ed. & transl. Edward Gwynn (Dublin 1927), pp. 2-63 at 24/5 (§40).

¹¹¹ See above, n. 9.

¹¹² For discussion, see Miller, 'Date-guessing and Dyfed', p. 48, and Dumville *et al.*, *Saint Patrick*, p. 288 and n. 32.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 287-8 (and p. 288, n. 35).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 287-8.

¹¹⁵ It followed the first publication in 1888 of *Annales Cambriae* (A): Phillimore, 'The *Annales Cambriae*', p. 156, showing A.D. 601 as the computed date of the text's *annus* 157.

¹¹⁶ For the beginnings, see A. Meyer & W. Bauer, 'The relatives of Jesus', in *New Testament Apocrypha*, transl. Edgar Hennecke *et al.* (2 vols, London 1963/5), I.418-32.

context.¹¹⁷ St David's family is not extreme in its size, but it did gain some notable affiliations. And St David's parents, as presented to us both in narrative hagiography and in saintly genealogy, are an altogether remarkable couple, a representative of a distinctly Celtic type of saintly progenitors whose story it is perhaps remarkable to find surviving through and beyond the middle ages. They too became subjects of christian cult.

David's parents have the names Sant and Nonn, in Latin *Sanctus* and *Nonnita*, 'saint' and 'nun'.¹¹⁸ St Sanctus presumably therefore became 'Sant sant' in Welsh, a doubly saintly figure! Before one becomes unduly excited about the nature of holy living in the sixth century, let me warn that there are some twists and turns to this. They are not *quite* the cardboard cut-outs one might expect. Sant was a king of Ceredigion, to the north-east of Dyfed. One day when travelling (for no specified reason) in Dyfed he came across a beautiful virgin, Nonn/Nonnita, whom he violated. St David was the result. The texts which present the rape-scene show no compunction about it.¹¹⁹ Indeed, in the late mediaeval Breton mystery play of St Nonn (who had — and has — a flourishing cult in Brittany), *Buhez Santes Nonn*, she is raped on stage — controversial modern playwrights are way behind the times, it seems — whereupon Sant at once goes into a lengthy soliloquy bewailing what he has done.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Dumville *et al.*, *Saint Patrick*, pp. 89-92.

¹¹⁸ That the name *Nonnita* is attested on a sub-Roman inscription at Cuby in Cornwall does not in any way validate either the genealogy of or the story of the procreation of St David. For the inscription see *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, ed. R.A.S. Macalister (2 vols, Dublin 1945/9), I.438-40 (no. 461). Cf. J. Rhys, 'The origin of the Welsh englyn and kindred metres', *Y Cymmrodor* 18 (1905) 1-185, at pp. 18-21; Thomas, *And shall these Mute Stones speak?*, pp. 283-4 (and 301, n. 29). A name *Sanctus* is not so attested, however. On the cult of St Nonn in Cornwall, see Doble & Henderson, *Saint Nonna*.

¹¹⁹ *Vita Sancti David*, §§2, 4, 68 (Wade-Evans, 'Rhygyvarch's Life', pp. 4-5, 6, 28; translation on pp. 29-31, 33-4, 73).

¹²⁰ Edited and translated by E. Ernault, 'Vie de sainte Nonne', *Revue celtique* 8 (1887) 230-301 and 405-91. I am indebted to Oliver Padel for drawing to my attention the interest of this version. On the geographical extent of the cult of St Nonn, see Baring-Gould & Fisher, *The Lives*, IV.22-5. For liturgical lections on St Nonn (Nonita) in London, British Library, MS. Royal 13.C.i, a mid-fifteenth-century manuscript of the antiquary William

An ingenious Celtic mind, somewhere in the early middle ages, seems to have realised that, if one desired a saint of the best quality, then short of replicating the experience of the Virgin Mary rape of a holy virgin was the next best method of achieving what was for the mother a blameless conception. And in a society where status, particularly inherited status, was all, to make a king the rapist was to guarantee the best blood-line. This arrangement, with participants of varying names, was popular with mediaeval Celtic hagiographers. The hagiographer of David (presumptively Rhygyfarch) made sure that comparisons with Christ were sustained: the king of Dyfed, described as a tyrant who held power in the area, was warned by *magi* that a boy-child would be born in his territory who would rule all.¹²¹

We have by no means finished with Sant. He is represented to be the son of Ceredig, the royal eponym of Ceredigion (Cardigan).¹²² The chronology is somewhat difficult,¹²³ but that is the least of our problems. It is not clear why a king of Ceredigion had to be David's father, given that David's cult-centre is in western Dyfed.¹²⁴ Furthermore, Ceredig is represented as son of Cunedda, the quasi-eponym of the kingdom of Gwynedd in North Wales.¹²⁵ We may be more or less certain that this pedigree cannot be much older than the ninth century, when first Ceredigion and then Dyfed

Worcestre, see George F. Warner & J.P. Gilson, *British Museum Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections* (4 vols, London 1921), II.101-2 (item 17); I owe my knowledge of these to Michael Curley.

¹²¹ *Vita Sancti David*, §6 (Wade-Evans, 'Rhygyvarch's Life', pp. 7-8, 36-8).

¹²² *Vita Sancti David*, §68 (Wade-Evans, 'Rhygyvarch's Life', pp. 28, 73); there are corresponding pedigrees in Welsh genealogical literature, for which see *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, ed. P.C. Bartrum (Cardiff 1966), p. 212.

¹²³ Dumville *et al.*, *Saint Patrick*, pp. 107-15.

¹²⁴ This may, on the one hand, have to do with Henfynyw and Llan-non being in Ceredigion (cf. n. 127, below), or, on the other (or additionally), be associable with Bishop Sulien and Rhygyfarch, whose hereditary seat was also in Ceredigion.

¹²⁵ On the possible political relevance of this see Miller, 'Date-guessing and Dyfed', pp. 55-60, and M. Miller, 'The foundation-legend of Gwynedd in the Latin texts', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 27 (1976-8) 515-32, at pp. 524-5. On Cunedda's saintly family, see Molly Miller, *The Saints of Gwynedd* (Woodbridge 1979), especially pp. 101-21. Further on Cunedda, see D.N. Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain: history and legend', *History*, new series, 62 (1977) 173-92, especially pp. 179-83, reprinted in his *Histories and Pseudo-histories*, essay I.

were annexed to an expanding kingdom of Gwynedd.¹²⁶ And if we were to allow genealogy to become allegory, we could see Sant's rape of Nonn as the violation of Dyfed (and by extension its Church) by the forces of Venedotian royalty. But that would be to overlook evidence that the cults of David and Nonn were once based in Ceredigion, at Henfynyw and Llan-non respectively.¹²⁷

All in all, the story of David's conception is an elaborate series of fictions. Those used to these categories of mediaeval literature will register no surprise, but others might feel moved to call for DNA-testing. It seems that we must include the bishop of St Davids among their number.

In 1997 an article in 'The Grauniad' by one Maev Kennedy, Heritage Correspondent, was headlined 'Scientists to test bones of St David'. As one might expect, almost every sentence of the report contains an error, and I am very grateful to Dr Paul Pettitt, of the Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit at the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art in the University of Oxford, for straightening out the story.

When the age of the Turin Shroud was to be tested, the Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit at Oxford was chosen. Its fame in ecclesiastical circles thus assured, it was approached by the bishop of St Davids to test bones from his cathedral. The shrine of St David was stolen and despoiled in 1089.¹²⁸ Reportedly they

¹²⁶ On the expansionist activities of the Second Dynasty of Gwynedd, see Lloyd, *A History*, I.320-38; Dumville, 'The "six" sons'; D.E. Thornton, 'Kings, chronicles, and genealogies: reconstructing mediaeval Ce(n)ltic dynasties', in *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: the Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century*, ed. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (Woodbridge 1997), pp. 23-40 at 37-40; K.L. Maund, 'Dynastic segmentation and Gwynedd c. 950 - c. 1000', *Studia Celtica* 32 (1998) 155-67; Kari Maund, *The Welsh Kings* (Stroud 2000), pp. 37-50, 150-1.

¹²⁷ Bowen, *The Settlements*, p. 59, and *Dewi Sant*, pp. 20-3. See also E.G. Bowen, *Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands* (2nd edn, Cardiff 1977), p. 183, and *The St. David of History. Dewi Sant: Our Founder Saint* (St Davids 1982), pp. 11-14. For places called Llan-non, see *A Gazetteer of Welsh Place-names*, ed. Elwyn Davies (3rd edn, Cardiff 1967), p. 68.

¹²⁸ 'y ducpwynt yscrin Dewi yn lledrat o'r eglwys ac y yspeilwynt ynn llwyr yn ymyl y dinas', 'the shrine of David was taken by stealth from the church and was completely despoiled near the city': *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the Princes. Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. & transl. Thomas Jones (2nd edn, Cardiff 1973), pp. 32/3.

could not be found when they were the object of some curiosity in the twelfth century:¹²⁹ the saint was allegedly recognised by the papacy, and Bishop Bernard (1115-48), the first Norman to hold that see, was highly active in promoting its status.¹³⁰ The relics were moved and hidden at the Reformation. In the nineteenth century a casket containing three femora was found in the chancel. The question was posed whether these might be relics of St David or belong rather to the twelfth century. The answer provided by AMS Radiocarbon is that one bone belonged to the nineteenth century, the others to the twelfth. It has been suggested (with more hope than probability, no doubt) that the twelfth-century femora (those ‘of an unusually tall man, who ate a lot of fish’)¹³¹ are the remains of St Caradog, hermit of Haroldston East, near

¹²⁹ *The Early History of Glastonbury*, ed. & transl. John Scott (Woodbridge 1981), pp. 64/5: *De antiquitate Glastoniensis ecclesie* (a text written by William of Malmesbury but surviving only in an interpolated version: cf. *ibid.*, p. 193, n. 43), §16, reporting Bishop Bernard’s failed attempts to find the relics. For what may be William’s original version, see *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings*, edd. & transl. R.A.B. Mynors *et al.* (2 vols, Oxford 1998/9), I.810/11.

¹³⁰ On Bernard, see J.C. Davies, *Episcopal Acts*, I.128-45, 190-208; R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change. Wales, 1063-1415* (Oxford 1987), pp. 179-94; *St Davids Episcopal Acta, 1085-1280*, ed. Julia Barrow (Cardiff 1998), pp. 2-4, 35-50. The papal canonisation of St David is problematic, however: for R.R. Davies, *Conquest*, p. 184, Bernard ‘possibly arranged for papal confirmation of his status as a saint in 1123’; for David Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge 1990), p. 72, ‘In 1119 Bernard secured from the papacy the formal canonisation of St David: if that is too strong a claim for the very slight evidence to bear, at least his cult was given formal recognition’, and for Barrow, *St Davids Episcopal Acta*, pp. 3-4, ‘Bernard used one of his visits to the curia to seek papal approval of the cult of St David in 1119’. J.C. Davies, *Episcopal Acts*, I.136, n. 887, was more circumspect: ‘The consecration of St. David, which is supposed to have taken place in the time of Calixtus II, 1119-24 ..., may also be attributed to Bernard’s efforts’. That the ‘canonisation’ cannot be traced back even into the sixteenth century seems to be made clear in *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, edd. Arthur West Haddan & W. Stubbs (3 vols, Oxford 1869-78), I.316, n. a: ‘Godwin is the earliest traceable authority for the formal canonization of S. David, probably at this same time; and if by Calixtus II. (as Godwin says), then certainly 1119×1124. But it is strange, if he was really canonized in form, that no Bull, and not even an allusion to the subject, should occur in the S. David’s Statutes,’ See Francis Godwin, *De Præsulibus Angliæ Commentarius* (London 1616), p. 601 (in the second edition, by William Richardson, Cambridge 1743, p. 573, or II.153 of the two-volume edition): ‘In Ecclesia sua sepultus est, et post annos quingentos Sanctorum Catalogo ascriptus per Calixtum secundum Papam’.

¹³¹ Anon., ‘Holy relics analysed’, *Oxford Today* 9, no. 3 (Trinity Term, 1997).

Haverfordwest, who died on 13 April, 1124, and was interred in the left aisle of the cathedral, beside the altar of St Stephen the Protomartyr.¹³² In any event, these datings have effectively rendered futile the reported proposal to bring the relics of St Nonn from Brittany to Oxford for dating and DNA-testing.

MYNYW, ST DAVIDS

There is a possibility that Mynyw was a christian religious centre before the time of St David. An early-christian monument at a nearby farm bears an inscription which has been thought datable around A.D. 500: it reads RINACI / PINACI NOMENA, 'The relics of R / P'.¹³³ Especially if the cults of David and Nonn once centred on Ceredigion (on Henfynyw and Llan-non),¹³⁴ Mynyw itself may only by degrees have become the chief cult-site of David.

An increasingly controversial inscription from Llanddewibrefi in Ceredigion,¹³⁵ from a church long associated with St David and allegedly the scene of his triumphant presence at a synod,¹³⁶ has been attributed now to the sixth century,¹³⁷ now to the seventh,¹³⁸

¹³² The most substantial testimony to St Caradog is provided, more than sixty years after his death, by Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, I.11: *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, edd. Brewer *et al.*, VI.85-7; *Gerald of Wales*, transl. Thorpe, pp. 144-5 (with nn. 228-9). Gerald wrote a now lost Life of the saint. For discussion of his cult, see Rice Rees, *An Essay on the Welsh Saints or the Primitive Christians usually considered to have been the Founders of Churches in Wales* (London 1836), p. 305; Baring-Gould & Fisher, *The Lives*, II.75-8; Lloyd, *A History*, II.592; R.R. Davies, *Conquest*, pp. 176, 180-1, 184.

¹³³ Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments*, p. 205 (no. 370); cf. *Corpus*, ed. Macalister, I.425 (no. 448). Thomas, *And shall these Mute Stones speak?*, pp. 92, 203-5, has dated this inscription to the sixth century and taken the disputed reading to be RINACI. For earlier discussion, see J. Rhys, 'Epigraphic notes', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 5th series, 13 (1896) 98-128, at pp. 104-7, and H. d'Arbois de Jubainville, 'Périodiques', *Revue celtique* 17 (1896) 303-18, at p. 312 (comparing the Middle-Irish masculine personal name Rinnach).

¹³⁴ See above, nn. 124 and 127.

¹³⁵ Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments*, p. 98 (no. 116); *Corpus*, ed. Macalister, I.335-6 (no. 350).

¹³⁶ *Vita Sancti Daidid*, §§49-54 (Wade-Evans, 'Rhygyvarch's Life', pp. 21-4, 61-5).

¹³⁷ Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments*, p. 98 (no. 116); Thomas, *And shall these Mute Stones speak?*, p. 100.

¹³⁸ Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh 1953), pp. 158-62, 346 n. 2, 620, 710; G. Gruffydd & H.P. Owen, 'The earliest mention of

and most recently to the beginning of the ninth.¹³⁹ This is what it said (before it was shattered):¹⁴⁰

HIC IACET IDNERT FILIVS IACOBI
QVI OCCISUS FVIT PROPTER PREDAM
SANCTI DAVID.

‘Here lies Idnerth son of Iago who has been killed on account of a depredation of St David.’

This indicates a problem which the churches of St David (as others in Wales) had to deal with throughout the earlier middle ages — violence perpetrated by native rulers. The first notice of St Davids in the A-text of *Annales Cambriae* records an attack on Dyfed and the burning of David’s monastery in 645: neither the source nor, therefore, the worth of this isolated statement of Dimetian history is known; but it is in line with earlier and later record.¹⁴¹

We find the bishop of St Davids as a power in the land in Dyfed. A brief but important early mediaeval text called ‘The Seven Bishop-houses of Dyfed’, is preserved in six versions (four Latin, two Middle Welsh) of *Cyfraith Hywel*, ‘The Law of Hywel’ or native Welsh law, representing a text of the later twelfth century. This tract’s information appears to relate to a situation which may have come to an end around 900. It appears to show that in Dyfed each *cantref* — the major administrative division once ruled by a local petty king — had had its own bishop.¹⁴² This may explain

St. David?’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 17 (1956-8) 185-93, and ‘The earliest mention of St. David?: an addendum’, *ibid.*, 19 (1960-2) 231-2; K. Jackson, ‘The Idnert inscription: date, and significance of Id-’, *ibid.*, pp. 232-4.

¹³⁹ C. Thomas, ‘The Llanddewi-brefi “Idnert” stone’, *Peritia* 10 (1996) 136-83 (giving, by a complex series of arithmetical arguments, a date 806).

¹⁴⁰ For a reproduction from a letter of Edward Lhuyd (1699), see Gruffydd & Owen, ‘The earliest mention of St. David?: an addendum’, p. 231.

¹⁴¹ *Annales Cambriae* (A), s.a. 201 = A.D. 645: ‘Percusio demeticæ regionis, quando cenobium Daud incensum est’ (ed. Phillimore, ‘The *Annales Cambriae*’, p. 158). Cf. *Annales Cambriae* (A), s.a. 366 = A.D. 810 (neither date is absolutely certain, because of textual dislocation): *Combustio Miniu* (ed. Phillimore, ‘The *Annales Cambriae*’, p. 163). The Welsh records in *Annales Cambriae* are not contemporary before the late eighth century, at the very earliest. On the whole context of violence, cf. J.R. Davies, ‘Church, property, and conflict’, especially pp. 396-402.

¹⁴² For all this, see T.M. Charles-Edwards, ‘The Seven Bishop-houses of Dyfed’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 24 (1970-2) 247-62.

why we find a mid-ninth-century ecclesiastical ruler of the region called ‘archbishop’.¹⁴³ It may also explain why, with the rise of two new royal dynasties in ninth-century Dyfed, St Davids was repeatedly targeted with violence by those seeking to enhance their own standing.¹⁴⁴

Most of our knowledge of St Davids from about 800 to about 1100 comes from the house-chronicle and its derivatives. This gives us a more or less complete sequence of the bishops of St Davids throughout the period. Chronicling in fact continued there until the late thirteenth century. Kathleen Hughes hinted that Bishop Asser (†909) himself had been a chronicler.¹⁴⁵

From the ninth century, and particularly its second half, another threat presented itself in Wales, which was to become particularly troublesome to the church of Mynyw, namely vikings.¹⁴⁶ These were principally based in Dublin, although their other ports in Ireland, as well as the Isle of Mann and the Western Isles of Scotland, were important in this regard from time to time as sources of viking-attacks.¹⁴⁷ That the contemporary chronicles of

¹⁴³ This is Nobis (Modern Welsh *Nyfys?), bishop of St Davids (831 or) 840-73 according to *Annales Cambriae* (A) (Phillimore, ‘The *Annales Cambriae*’, pp. 164, 166), who was described by Asser, *Vita Ælfredi regis*, §79 (*Asser’s Life*, ed. Stevenson, pp. 65-6 and cf. pp. lxxi, 316; *Alfred the Great*, transl. Keynes & Lapidge, pp. 94-6, and cf. pp. 52, 262). If the bishop of St Davids bore rule over bishops of the individual *cantrefi* of Dyfed, *archiepiscopus* would by no means be an unreasonable title for the ‘over-bishop’ to bear. It may also explain why Asser, if he was not bishop of St Davids when he came into the part-time service of Alfred (king of Wessex) in 885, a disputed point, could still have been a bishop — a sub-bishop of a Dimetian *cantref*. For discussion of Asser’s status, see Keynes & Lapidge, *ibid.*, pp. 49-50, 51-3, 240 (n. 55), 263-5 (nn. 189-95).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Dark, *Civitas*, pp. 220-3, on wealth and patronage; see also J.R. Davies, ‘Church, property, and conflict’, especially pp. 397-8.

¹⁴⁵ Hughes, *Celtic Britain*, pp. 67-100; on Asser, see p. 68, n. 13, and p. 87.

¹⁴⁶ *Annales Cambriae* (A), s.a. 406 = A.D. 850, ‘Cinnen a gentilibus iugulatur’ (ed. Phillimore, ‘The *Annales Cambriae*’, p. 165), provides the first Welsh notice.

¹⁴⁷ On this era see P.H. Sawyer, ‘The vikings and the Irish Sea’, in *The Irish Sea Province in Archaeology and History*, ed. Donald Moore (Cardiff 1970), pp. 86-92; H.R. Loyn, *The Vikings in Wales* (London 1976); D. Ó Corráin, ‘Ireland, Wales, Man, and the Hebrides’, in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, ed. Peter Sawyer (Oxford 1997), pp. 83-109; J. Graham-Campbell, ‘The early Viking Age in the Irish Sea area’, in *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, edd. Howard B. Clarke *et al.* (Dublin 1998), pp. 104-30.

England, Ireland, and Wales present a far from complete picture of viking-activities in this period becomes apparent in this case from information supplied by Bishop Asser in his biography of Alfred, king of Wessex. With reference to a viking-assault on Devon in 878, otherwise recorded in ‘The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’, Asser added that its leader, ‘the brother of Ívarr and Hálfðan’ — in other words a member of the family which controlled Dublin and York,¹⁴⁸ ‘had sailed with twenty-three ships from Dyfed (where he had spent the winter), after slaughtering many of the christians there’.¹⁴⁹

It was in the Second Viking-Age, beginning in Wales soon after the middle of the tenth century,¹⁵⁰ that St Davids seems to have suffered most from vikings: we know of vikings’ attacks on it in 982, 988, and in 999 when Bishop Morgenau was killed by them. The eleventh century also saw a long succession of such assaults, with the killing of Bishop Abraham in 1080 representing another particularly cruel blow.¹⁵¹ The last viking-attack on Mynyw

¹⁴⁸ Charles Haliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin* (2nd edn, Dublin 1884); Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin* (2 vols, Dublin 1975/9).

¹⁴⁸ Charles Haliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin* (2nd edn, Dublin 1884); Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin* (2 vols, Dublin 1975/9).

¹⁴⁹ Asser, *Vita Ælfredi regis*, §54 (*Asser’s Life*, ed. Stevenson, p. 43 and cf. p. 261; *Alfred the Great*, transll. Keynes & Lapidge, p. 83 and cf. p. 248, n. 99). *Annales Cambriae* (A), s.a. 450 = A.D. 894, *rectius* 895, ‘Anaraut cum Anglis uenit uastare Cereticiaun et Strat T<i>ui’ (ed. Phillimore, ‘The *Annales Cambriae*’, pp. 166-7), is of uncertain significance but may represent a joint Anglo-Saxon and Venedotian response to viking-activity in Seisyllwg: cf. Dumville, ‘The “six” sons’, pp. 9 and 15-16. In 914, according to the ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ (ABCD), a substantial viking-army came from Brittany to Britain, ravaged western England and Wales, eventually (in the autumn) passing through Dyfed on the way to Ireland: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, transll. Dorothy Whitelock *et al.* (London 1961; rev. imp., 1965), p. 63; this finds no record in Welsh chronicles.

¹⁵⁰ The first evidence comes from *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Red Book of Hergest version) for 954, ed. & transl. Jones, pp. 12/13, where it is recorded that Hirfawr and Anarawd, sons of Gwriad, ‘were killed by the Gentiles (*y Pobloed*)’. For 961, both versions of *Brut y Tywysogyon* record that ‘the sons/descendants of Amlaíb (*meibon Abloec*) ravaged Holyhead (Caer Gybi) and Llŷn’. Thereafter a stream of entries records vikings’ attacks in Wales.

¹⁵¹ For viking-activity in eleventh-century Wales, see K.L. Maund, *Ireland, Wales, and England in the Eleventh Century* (Woodbridge 1991), pp. 156-82, and J.R. Davies, ‘Church, property, and conflict’, pp. 398-402. Cf. Wendy Davies, *Patterns of Power in Early Wales* (Oxford 1990), pp. 48-60.

recorded in Welsh chronicles belongs to 1091,¹⁵² shortly before Dyfed and Ceredigion fell to the Normans (1093).¹⁵³ Vikings by no means presented the only source of trouble to Dyfed and Mynyw in the later tenth and eleventh centuries, as a reading of Welsh chronicles shows: internal political disputes, assaults from other Welsh kingdoms, and invasions from England all added to the stresses with which the churches of St David had to contend.¹⁵⁴ The geographical position of Mynyw seems to have left it highly exposed to the attentions of raiders from the sea (most of whom probably came from Ireland) once the Viking-Age was under way. It was only the Norman grip on southwestern Wales and changing political circumstances in Ireland which would bring relief from that particular affliction.¹⁵⁵

The Normans, however, brought their own brand of troubles to St Davids. In 1081, the year after the killing of Bishop Abraham, the new world came thither in the person of King William the Conqueror whose purpose, according to the unanimous testimony of the Welsh chronicles (all ultimately dependent on a contemporary annalist at Mynyw itself), was prayer.¹⁵⁶ An English observer recorded a rather different priority: 'In this year the King led an army into Wales and there liberated many hundreds of men'.¹⁵⁷ Neither viewpoint is easily explained. We may be certain that the

¹⁵² After the record of the death of Sulien, formerly bishop of St Davids, we read in *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Red Book of Hergest version), ed. & transl. Jones, pp. 32/3, 'And then Mynyw was destroyed by the Gentiles of the Isles (*y Kenedloed yr Ynyssed*)'.

¹⁵³ *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, III, ed. & transl. P. McGurk (Oxford 1998), pp. 64/5 (A.D. 1093): 'Res, Walanorum rex, in ipsa ebdomada pascali, iuxta castellum quod Brecehenieau nominatur, in pugna occisus est. Ab illo die regnare in Walonia reges desiere.' ('Rhys, king of the Welsh, was killed in battle in Easter-week near the castle of Brecknock. From that day kings ceased to rule in Wales.') The closing sentiment is echoed in both versions of *Brut y Tywysogyon* for 1093: 'Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth, was killed by the French who were inhabiting Brycheiniog. And then fell the kingdom of the Britons' (Red Book of Hergest version, ed. & transl. Jones, pp. 32/3).

¹⁵⁴ J.R. Davies, 'Church, property, and conflict', pp. 398-402.

¹⁵⁵ For the region's twelfth-century history, see R.R. Davies, *Conquest*, pp. 42-3, 45-6, 50-1, 52-5, 56-81, 216-28; cf. Lloyd, *A History*, II.392-9, 400-11, 423-46, 500-5, 536-72.

¹⁵⁶ The year had begun otherwise: *ibid.*, II.393.

¹⁵⁷ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, transl. Whitelock *et al.*, p. 160 (1081 E). Lloyd, *A History*, II.393-4, took this in the context of evidence for King Rhys being reduced to tribute.

bishop of St Davids — once again Sulien of Llanbadarn — was troubled. His learned son Rhygyfarch wrote an extensive Life of the patron-saint of Mynyw.¹⁵⁸ Formally, the only terminus for the Life's composition is 1099, the date of Rhygyfarch's death. But historians have had little doubt that the events of 1081 provided the impetus: hagiography has proved a good indicator of crisis. Perhaps the work was complete by the time of Sulien's second retirement from the bishopric (1085).¹⁵⁹ That the Normans had claimed a stake in St Davids before 1087 is indicated by the minting of coins there in the name of King William I.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps in 1081 he had prayed for money from heaven! At all events, in 1093 Deheubarth (and Dyfed as part of it) fell to Norman arms. While Bishop Wilffre (1085-1115)¹⁶¹ held on to his position, he experienced an uncomfortable relationship with his new masters from Anglo-Norman England,¹⁶² and on his death he was replaced by a Norman favourite of King Henry I.¹⁶³

DEWI SANT AS NATIONAL PATRON-SAINT

What we have seen so far is that St David's cult expanded, but not extensively, in Wales before the Norman era. He was a southern,

¹⁵⁸ Cf. nn. 32-5, above.

¹⁵⁹ The fullest recent discussion is that in *The Welsh Life of St David*, ed. D. Simon Evans (Cardiff 1988), pp. xx-xlii. See also Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border*, pp. 16-49; cf. 70-94.

¹⁶⁰ George Zarnecki *et al.*, *English Romanesque Art 1066-1200* (London 1984), p. 328 (no. 399; cf. no. 398); illustration on p. 325.

¹⁶¹ His name is presumably a borrowing from Old English *Wilfrið*, as (Modern) Welsh *Wilffre(dd)*. (One may compare the cases of Herewald, bishop of Glamorgan, 1056-1104, and his son Lifris [Old English *Leofric*] of Llancarfan.) There is no suggestion that Bishop Wilffre was English, and the occurrence of these English names among eleventh-century Welsh ecclesiastics has not been satisfactorily explained.

¹⁶² Lloyd, *A History*, II.407-8, 451-2.

¹⁶³ *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, III, ed. & transl. McGurk, III.136/7 (A.D. 1115): 'Wilfridus episcopus de Sancto Dauid in Walonia obiit: usque ad illum episcopi extitere Brytonici' ('Wilfrid/Wilffre, bishop of St Davids in Wales, died: up to him the bishops had been Welshmen'). Later in the same annal, we read: 'Bernardus regine cancellarius ad ecclesiam sancti Dauid in Walonia, .xiii. kal. Octobris sabbato presul eligitur ...'. On Bernard see J.C. Davies, *Episcopal Acts*, I.128-45, 190-208.

indeed a southwestern, Welsh saint.¹⁶⁴ Yet today (and for a long time since) he is the patron-saint of Wales. How did this come about? There are perhaps two answers.

St Davids was certainly one of the major episcopal churches of Wales in the tenth century (and remained so thereafter).¹⁶⁵ When the kingdom of Deheubarth (literally the right-hand, or southern, part of Wales, though in practice the south-west) was created in the first half of the tenth century, perhaps soon after 900,¹⁶⁶ Ceredigion again came into the orbit of Dyfed and St Davids, perhaps bringing the latter back into closer contact with the old cult-sites of Dewi and Nonn in Ceredigion.¹⁶⁷ We have seen the same relationship of the two regions yet more intensely in the late eleventh century when Sulien of Llanbadarn Fawr became bishop of St Davids and his son Rhygyfarch the hagiographer of David.¹⁶⁸

Although the kingdom of Deheubarth comprised Ceredigion and Ystrad Tywi (together known as Seisyllwg) as well as Dyfed,¹⁶⁹ its rulers were members of the Second Dynasty of Gwynedd, the northern kingdom, a dynasty which had expanded its power in Wales at a terrifying rate in the mid- and later ninth century.¹⁷⁰ Their rule in the South-west lasted throughout the tenth century and was sometimes extended into their notional patrimony, Gwynedd

¹⁶⁴ For maps showing the distribution of his cult, cf. n. 14, above. For a survey of its development, see G. Williams, 'The tradition of St. David in Wales', in *Links with the Past. Swansea and Brecon Historical Essays*, edd. Owain W. Jones & D. Walker (Llandybië 1974), pp. 1-20.

¹⁶⁵ It is apparent that for the author of *Annales Cambriae* (A), a text of the mid-tenth century, Mynyw was one of the four major bishoprics of Wales: Miller, 'Date-guessing and Dyfed', pp. 41-50. For evidence, provided by Class-III stone monuments, for the patronage and wealth of Welsh churches in this period, see Dark, *Civitas*, pp. 221-3.

¹⁶⁶ The preliminaries may be provided by *Annales Cambriae* (A), s.a. 450 = A.D. 894, *rectius* 895; see above, n. 149. It is possible that the event is represented *ibid.*, s.a. 462 = A.D. 906, *Gueith Dinmeir et Miniu fracta est*.

¹⁶⁷ On these, see above, nn. 124, 127.

¹⁶⁸ See above, nn. 32 and 105. It is possible that a ninth-century parallel to Sulien's move from Llanbadarn to Mynyw may be provided by the case of Nobis, bishop of Teilo (at Llandeilo Fawr), who might be identical with Asser's kinsman, Archbishop Nobis: see n. 143, above.

¹⁶⁹ For a different view of its original size, see Maund, *The Welsh Kings*, pp. 44-5.

¹⁷⁰ Asser (*Vita Ælfredi regis*, §80) is the principal witness to the terror which the sons of Rhodri, king of Gwynedd, inspired: see Dumville, 'The "six" sons', for discussion.

itself.¹⁷¹ This southern branch of the dynasty may have provided a conduit for the cult to travel northwards. But if it did, there is precious little evidence for it.¹⁷²

Perhaps a more plausible context is provided by the claim launched by Bishop Bernard (1115-48), in the governmental confusion (and opportunity) of the ‘Anarchy’ of King Stephen’s reign, that St Davids be made the metropolitan-see of Wales.¹⁷³ This was not especially popular with his fellow-bishops, especially as he himself was a Norman, indeed *the* first Norman bishop of St Davids.¹⁷⁴ But the idea was not lost on the chapter of St Davids

¹⁷¹ See n. 126, above. See also D.E. Thornton, ‘Maredudd ab Owain (d. 999): the most famous king of the Welsh’, *Welsh History Review* 18 (1996/7) 567-91, and ‘Who was Rhain the Irishman?’, *Studia Celtica* 34 (2000) 131-48.

¹⁷² In the tenth-century political poem *Armes Prydein Vawr*, David still appears very much as a Southern figure: *Armes Prydein. The Prophecy of Britain from the Book of Taliesin*, edd. & transll. Ifor Williams & R. Bromwich (Dublin 1972), pp. 4/5 (line 51), 8/9 (line 105), 10/11 (lines 129, 140), 14/15 (line 196); cf. pp. 37, 56, 71, and xxv. For discussion of dating, see D.N. Dumville, ‘Brittany and “Armes Prydein Vawr”’, *Études celtiques* 20 (1983) 145-58, reprinted in his *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, essay XVI. For further discussion of lines 139-40, ‘why have they trampled on the privileges of our saints? Why have they destroyed the rights of Dewi?’, see further Huw Pryce, *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales* (Oxford 1993), p. 238(-9), n. 19.

¹⁷³ The standard discussion is that of J.C. Davies, *Episcopal Acts*, I.128-45, 190-208; cf. Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border*, pp. 16-49, especially 28-30, 48-9. See further M. Richter, ‘Professions of obedience and the metropolitan claim of St Davids’, *National Library of Wales Journal* 15 (1967/8) 197-214, and ‘Canterbury’s primacy in Wales and the first stage of Bishop Bernard’s opposition’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22 (1971) 177-89. The documentation requires a thorough reconsideration, however.

¹⁷⁴ This is stressed in the three vernacular versions of *Annales Cambriae*, namely *Brut y Tywysogyon* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* (and in the Latin ‘Chronicle of St Davids’, viz *Annales Cambriae* [C]). It is striking to contrast the treatment of Bernard in the annals for 1115 and 1148, recording respectively his succession and his death: (1115) ‘And after him [Wilffre] there came a man from Normandy, who was called Bernard, who was raised to be bishop in Mynyw by King Henry against the will and in despite of all the clergy of the Britons’, and (1148) ‘In that year Bernard, bishop of Mynyw, died in the thirty-third year of his episcopate, a man wondrous for his renown and godly in his sanctity, after immense labours on land and sea to obtain for the church of Mynyw its ancient liberty’: *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Red Book of Hergest version), ed. & transl. Jones, pp. 82/3 and 126/7.

and it rumbled on through the twelfth century and just into the thirteenth.¹⁷⁵

What motivated Bishop Bernard is far from clear. But it cannot be coincidence that his claim emerged in the wake of the publication of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, 'The History of the Kings of Britain',¹⁷⁶ that most fraudulent and yet brilliant of Britain's mediaeval histories, the first and last 'Oxford History of Britain', and in the wake of the perhaps related cartulary of the see of Llandaf, itself surely the most well-researched and ingenious documentary fraud of the British middle ages.¹⁷⁷ Geoffrey had mischievously created (or at least popularised) an archbishopric of St Davids,¹⁷⁸ and Bishop Bernard, if he acted on Geoffrey's inspiration, would not have been the only eminent twelfth-century Briton to have done so. For ever after, David was 'archbishop'.

Along the way, however, the archiepiscopal claim captivated the young Gerald de Barri, 'Gerald of Wales' as he is better known,

¹⁷⁵ See further Michael Richter, *Giraldus Cambrensis. The Growth of the Welsh Nation* (2nd edn, Aberystwyth 1976); cf. *The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis*, transl. H.E. Butler (London, 1937).

¹⁷⁶ *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Neil Wright, I (Cambridge 1985); transl. Lewis Thorpe, *Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain* (Harmondsworth 1966). There are fundamental discussions of Geoffrey's work by J.S.P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley, CA 1950); Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border*; Michael J. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York 1994).

¹⁷⁷ *The Text of the Book of Llan Dâv*, edd. Evans & Rhys. For discussion, see especially J.C. Davies, *Episcopal Acts*, II.101-28, 145-90, and II.607-34; Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border*, especially pp. 16-49; Patrick Sims-Williams, *Britain and Early Christian Europe — Studies in Early Medieval History and Culture* (Aldershot 1995), essay VI; J.R. Davies, 'The Book of Llandaf: a twelfth-century perspective', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 21 (1998) 31-46. Further publication by the two last authors is imminent.

¹⁷⁸ Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border*, pp. 16-49. It is to be noted that, in Geoffrey's work, David is the paternal uncle (*auunculus*) of King Arthur, who appointed him archbishop of the City of the Legions (§§157-8; IX.15); after Arthur's 'death' in 542 (§178; XI.2), David died of a sudden illness while visiting his own abbey in *Meneuia ciuitate*, 'which he loved more than all the other monasteries of his diocese, for St Patrick, who prophesied David's own birth, had founded it' (§179; XI.3): *The Historia*, ed. Wright, I.112, 132, and *Geoffrey*, transl. Thorpe, pp. 230, 262. On Patrick, Mynyw, and St David, see Dumville *et al.*, *Saint Patrick*, pp. 279-88.

who had become an archdeacon in the diocese of St Davids. He launched two attempts, in the 1170s and 1190s, to secure the bishopric and turn it into a metropolitan-see. He failed twice, but not before he had twice carried the cause to Rome. At this time, and in his long retirement (he died in 1223), this ‘supreme egotist of the twelfth century’ (as he has been called — and that’s saying something: think of the competition!)¹⁷⁹ poured out literary, historical, and autobiographical writing championing the cause.¹⁸⁰ It was never achieved in the middle ages, but when Wales came eventually to have its national Church, St Davids enjoyed at least preëminence.

In sum, if we look over our journey of the past hour, we have travelled from the protohistoric ‘Age of the Saints’ in which we did manage to see something of St David and his ethos, through a patchy chronological landscape in which St Davids was always — whenever visible, that is — an important church and one which enjoyed some learned bishops. Throughout the middle ages hagiographers perpetuated, if uncomprehendingly, the sixth-century conflict with St Gildas. A story was circulated in which Gildas found himself unable to preach in a church in which the pregnant Nonn was present. Gildas was silenced by the presence of a future bishop.¹⁸¹ Who had the last laugh? Gildas still has an avid readership, some who laugh and some who tremble at his invective. David’s writings are largely lost. Yet on paper at least David has

¹⁷⁹ C. Dunn, ‘Ireland and the twelfth-century renaissance’, *University of Toronto Quarterly* 24 (1954/5) 70-86, at p. 86. Cf. Y. Wada, ‘Gerald on Gerald: self-presentation by Giraldus Cambrensis’, *Anglo-Norman Studies* 20 (1997) 223-46.

¹⁸⁰ See especially *The Autobiography*, transl. Butler.

¹⁸¹ *Vita Sancti Daudid*, §5 (Wade-Evans, ‘Rhygyvarch’s Life’, pp. 6-7, 34-6). The story is also told (probably in derivation from the story about Gildas and David) in the Life of the Irish St Ailbe of Emly (§19), but with the dumb priest not named: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae partim hactenus ineditae*, ed. Charles Plummer (2 vols, Oxford 1910; rev. imp., 1968), I.53; cf. *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex Codice olim Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*, ed. W.W. Heist (Bruxelles 1965), p. 123 (§21). In the Life of St Illtud found in *Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium* (cf. nn. 4, 11, above), we find Gildas and Dewi as fellow-pupils of Illtud (§11) and hear of a bell made by ‘Gildas the historian’ for Bishop Dewi *ob memoriam preterite societatis et dilectionis*, ‘in memory of past fellowship and love’, but which David redirected to Illtud (§19): *Vitae*, ed. & transl. Wade-Evans, pp. 208/9, 220-3.

been *archbishop* for the better part of a millennium and is now a national patron-saint. Gildas's cult migrated to Brittany.¹⁸²

The story goes that St Patrick wanted to settle at Mynyw. An angel appeared and told him to get on his saintly bike, that the place was reserved for St David who would be born thirty years later. St Patrick was sent to Ireland.¹⁸³ Who got the better deal? The Irish no doubt have one answer and the Welsh another. But on St David's Day, this Englishman knows which side his bread is buttered!¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² For the important Latin Life of St Gildas written in Brittany, see *Gildas*, ed. & transl. Williams, pp. 317-89; for the brief life written by the twelfth-century hagiographer Caradog of Llancarfan, see *ibid.*, pp. 390-413. For an important attempt to pursue traces of Gildas's cult in Wales, see P. Ó Riain, 'Gildas: a solution to his enigmatic name?', in *Irlande et Bretagne. Vingt siècles d'histoire*, edd. Catherine Laurent & H. Davis (Rennes 1994), pp. 32-9; see also his earlier paper, 'The Irish element in Welsh hagiographical tradition', in *Irish Antiquity. Essays and Studies presented to Professor M.J. O'Kelly*, ed. Donnchadh Ó Corráin (Cork 1981), pp. 291-303, at 296-7, 301-2.

¹⁸³ Dumville *et al.*, *Saint Patrick*, pp. 279-88.

¹⁸⁴ For the first known St David's Day party in the University of Cambridge, in 1839, with 'speeches and praising Wales to infinity', when 'there really was no kind of panegyric which some orator or other did not lavish on ... our country', accompanied by 'the Hughes[es], or the Infant Harpists, there by way of music', see Rowland Williams, *The Life and Letters of Rowland Williams, D.D., with Extracts from his Note Books* (2 vols, London 1874), I.41. For help with my oration, I am grateful to Mary-Ann Constantine and David Parsons in Aberystwyth, to Oliver Padel in Cambridge, and to Lesley Abrams, Martin Biddle, and Paul Pettitt in Oxford. For the invitation and much kind hospitality I am indebted to the President and Fellows of Hughes Hall, Cambridge.