

KATHLEEN HUGHES MEMORIAL LECTURES 17

DAVID N. PARSONS

WARNING: MAY CONTAIN SAINTS.  
PLACE-NAMES AS EVIDENCE FOR THE  
CHURCH IN EARLY WALES



DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE AND CELTIC  
&  
HUGHES HALL

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Kathleen Winifred Hughes (1926-77) was the first 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, and 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 achievements and seek to provide an annual forum for advancing the subject. The lecture is hosted in Hughes Hall in conjunction with the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic. The lecture is published as a pamphlet each year by the Department.

Hughes Hall was founded in 1885 to take women graduating from the universities and give them a one year training to become teachers. Originally called the Cambridge Training College (CTC) it was re-named in 1948 in honour of its first Principal, Elizabeth Phillips Hughes, who had been one of the early students of Newnham College and became a respected leader in the theory and practice of education. E. P. Hughes came from Wales and was a proponent of the language and culture of Wales. But, apart from this Welsh heritage, there is no known connection between the College and the scholar now commemorated in this series of lectures. Hughes Hall became a full college of the university in 2006. Enquiries about entry as a student are always welcome. Information can be found on the college website at <http://www.hughes.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate-admissions/>

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Warning: may contain saints. Place-names as evidence for the church in early  
Wales

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WARNING: MAY CONTAIN SAINTS.  
PLACE-NAMES AS EVIDENCE FOR THE CHURCH  
IN EARLY WALES

In Wales the role of the medieval church in shaping society remains evident and present in the twenty-first century in a way that it does not in England. The reason is place-names. All across Wales the visitor with just a little background knowledge will recognise that the signposts signify the concerns of the church: the near-ubiquitous names beginning *Llan-* establish the pattern, examples like St Asaph or St Davids reinforce the point, names in *eglwys* and *merthyr* belong here too. It is possible to find comparable place-names in England, like Westminster and St Albans, but nowhere, outside western regions of strong Welsh influence in the Middle Ages, do such ‘ecclesiastical names’ cluster in the same way that they pepper the map of almost all parts of Wales.

In the broader context of the British Isles, and to some extent of western Europe more generally, it may well be England that is out of line, not Wales. Secular and ecclesiastical concerns were widely interrelated, and the parish unit that became fundamental to the church often also had secular administrative significance: it may seem natural that such units should frequently come to be known by church-related names. In the Celtic world ecclesiastical names are very common. Why they should be significantly less common in England is fascinating, but the subject of a different investigation.<sup>1</sup>

My focus in this lecture is Wales, and what all these place-names can tell us about the early church in western Britain. For all of the institution’s pervasive importance, solid information about many aspects of the medieval Welsh church is slight, especially in the formative centuries that followed the Roman period. Historians and archaeologists have just about enough material to frame various parts of the debate – concerning the significance of changes in burial practice over time, for instance, or the extent to which churches can be characterised as ‘monastic’ or ‘secular’ – but most conclusions are inevitably tentative.<sup>2</sup> Some fundamental

<sup>1</sup> For a short discussion offering some suggested answers see O. J. Padel, ‘Local saints and place-names in Cornwall’, in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 303–60, at 303–06.

<sup>2</sup> On burial practice see, e.g., H. James, ‘Early medieval cemeteries in Wales’, in N. Edwards and A. Lane (eds), *The Early Church in Wales and the West* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 90–104; D. Petts, *The Early Medieval Church in Wales* (Stroud, 2009), pp. 109–31;

questions, regarding the number and density of the church buildings that would have been found in pre-Norman Wales, for instance, remain deeply uncertain because of the limited evidence provided by material remains and early documentation.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand there is an abundance of ecclesiastical place-names, many of which are likely to date from the obscure centuries before 1100. The aim of this lecture is to assess what these names add to our knowledge, or might add to our knowledge. I am talking in the early stages of what I hope will become a substantial research project, so this is a lecture primarily concerned with the history and potential of the subject, rather than one which sets out the results of new research.

The topic has not of course been wholly overlooked, but it is my contention that it has not yet been fully exploited. Much of the previous work in this field was done in the shadow of interpretative models that held sway for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but are no longer considered useful. ‘The Celtic Church’ and ‘the Age of the Saints’ are problematic concepts as many scholars of the last two generations – beginning with Kathleen Hughes – have pointed out,<sup>4</sup> yet most published discussions of Welsh ecclesiastical place-names share their assumptions, while many shorter entries in reference works do little to combat their typically ‘positivist’ approach, according to which, for instance, stray personal names are identified and assigned dates on the strength of late and untrustworthy sources.

Since these views have so coloured previous work it will be worth examining them, at least in outline, by beginning in the nineteenth century with an influential publication which demonstrably helped send much later thinking and writing in directions that now look mistaken. Paradoxically,

T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 598–602. On the nature of church institutions see, e.g., W. Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1982), pp. 141–68; H. Pryce, ‘Pastoral care in early medieval Wales’, in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds), *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 41–62, at 48–61.

<sup>3</sup> Archaeological evidence for pre-1100 church buildings is exiguous: see Petts, *Early Medieval Church*, pp. 55–58, for two possible wooden structures in Glamorgan (see also n. 96 below) and one stone wall in Presteigne church. Documentation is richer but very largely skewed towards the south-east, a Romanized area that may well not have been typical of most of the country: Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 141–46; Pryce, ‘Pastoral care’, pp. 57–62; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 608–14.

<sup>4</sup> K. Hughes, ‘The Celtic Church: is this a valid concept?’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 1 (1981), 1–20; W. Davies, ‘The myth of the Celtic Church’, in Edwards and Lane (eds.), *Early Church in Wales*, pp. 12–21; R. Sharpe, ‘Martyrs and local saints in late Antique Britain’, in Thacker and Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints*, pp. 75–154, esp. 94–102; cf. I. Bradley, *Celtic Christianity: Making mMths and Chasing Dreams* (Edinburgh, 1999), pp. 225–29.

the same publication also contains an approach which has been largely overlooked but which, I would suggest, might have led place-name study in different directions had it been pursued.

The monograph in question was written by the young Reverend Rice Rees, professor of Welsh in Lampeter. It was originally penned as an entry in a competition for the National Eisteddfod held in Cardiff in 1834; having won that competition, it was published in enlarged form two years later under the title *An Essay on the Welsh Saints, or the Primitive Christians usually considered to have been the Founders of Churches in Wales*.<sup>5</sup> We shall come back to the choice of words. In this work, Rees gave a detailed account of the history of the Welsh church from the introduction of the faith during the Roman period until the end of the seventh century. He ranged widely over historical and literary sources, and made extensive use of the evidence of place-names and church dedications. Much of what he presented as fact is nowadays indefensible: we have already noted the paucity of contemporary sources for Rees's period, and his narrative is duly woven from the range of later medieval texts that promise to transmit earlier Welsh traditions. It would not be fair to say that he was wholly uncritical of these sources as historical records, but his criticism is largely limited to a single principle: Welsh-language texts can generally be trusted, Latin-language texts are likely to mislead.<sup>6</sup> Modern scholarship is – generally – more nuanced.

<sup>5</sup> Published in London, 1836. The dedication and the preface, p. v, make the Cardiff Eisteddfod background clear: the standard biographical entries on Rees are in error in attributing it to the 1835 Carmarthen meeting: J. E. Lloyd, 'Rees, Rice (1804–1839), historian', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-23287>>, retrieved 2 Aug 2018; S. Jones, 'Rees, Rice (1804–1839), cleric and scholar', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (1959). <<https://biography.wales/article/s-REES-RIC-1804>>, retrieved 2 Aug 2018. It is rather alarming, in the light of my further comments, that the latter still claims that the volume 'remains the standard authority on this subject'.

<sup>6</sup> Compare 'The Welsh authorities, upon which the greatest reliance has been placed, are the catalogues or genealogies ...' with 'The Romish legends will be used but sparingly, and only when their statements are within the verge of probability' (*Essay*, pp. 73, 75). There was, it is true, some apparent rationale in putting more faith in the genre of genealogical texts than in that of narrative saints' Lives, but the language of record was itself a major factor, as will be explained below. It is particularly unfortunate that much of the medieval Welsh-language material valued by Rees later proved to have been concocted by Iolo Morganwg a few decades earlier (G. J. Williams, *Iolo Morganwg* (Caerdydd, 1956), 309–19; D. N. Parsons, *Martyrs and Memorials: Merthyr Place-Names and the Church in Early Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2013), p. 64, n. 192).

Rees's prejudice in this respect was a symptom of his wider philosophy. He was a proud Welshman, but much more significantly, he was a proud Welsh protestant clergyman. The medieval church and its saints might seem a challenging topic for such men. During the Reformation some of his predecessors had railed against the popular worship of Welsh 'gods' and 'idols' like Derfel Gadarn of Llandderfel and Cynog of Merthyr Cynog,<sup>7</sup> and to live, work and pray surrounded by the memory of such 'superstitions' could have been a very uncomfortable situation for a nineteenth-century Anglican. Yet Welsh protestants had long since found an accommodation,<sup>8</sup> and Rees's historical *Essay* is actually in many respects a work of religious polemic, drawing any Roman Catholic sting from the familiar names by means of two linked arguments. First, that the British church predated and was independent of the growth of superstition in the Roman variety, and second that the so-called saints of that church were the primitive Christians who founded the churches with whom their names became lastingly associated:

A vast number of churches are called after the names of native saints, and therefore may be considered as so many undoubted monuments of existence of those persons; but Welsh tradition proceeds further and asserts, that the churches were so called, not so much because they were dedicated to the saints, as because they were founded by them [...] They were founded at a time when the Britons were not in communion with the Church of Rome, and before the practice of dedicating to saints according to the usual mode had become customary.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> T. Wright (ed.), *Three Chapters of Letters Relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries* (London, 1843), p. 208; A. Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 94–97, 104–06. In an extreme case in 1538 a recusant friar was burnt as a heretic alongside the wooden statue of Derfel: Wright, *Three Chapters*, pp. 189–91; A. Dillon, 'John Forest and Derfel Gadarn: a double execution', *Recusant History* 28 (2006), 1–21.

<sup>8</sup> The roots of Rees's arguments for the pre-Roman 'purity' of British Christianity can be traced back to soon after the Reformation and the 'Epistol at y Cembru' ('Epistle to the Welsh') by Richard Davies, bishop of St Davids, published in 1567; for this and subsequent thinking see G. Williams, 'Some protestant views of early British church history', in his *Welsh Reformation Essays* (Cardiff, 1967), pp. 207–19; L. Bowen, 'The battle of Britain: history and Reformation in early modern Wales', in T. O'hAnnrachain and R. Armstrong (eds.), *Christianities in the Early Modern Celtic World* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 135–50. Bradley, *Celtic Christianity*, pp. 91–100, sets the protestant reception in a broader British and Irish context.

<sup>9</sup> *Essay*, pp. xii–xiii. Rees set out his argument at length in the preface, pp. v–xiv, before going on to demonstrate its truth in the main body of the book.



Dedication to patron saints was, Rees believed, a foreign mode of consecration – it was the later inward spread of Roman Catholicism that brought the practice to Wales and in due course led to widespread reinterpretation: ‘It remained for subsequent generations to regard the founder in the character of patron saint’.<sup>10</sup>

From these central points flow explanations of various other aspects of Rees’s book. His period, ‘the Age of the Saints’ (though for obvious reasons he did not use that term), extended to 700 A.D. because he found evidence of the rot setting in, the beginnings of the in-creep of superstition, from early in the eighth century.<sup>11</sup> His preference for Welsh-language sources over Latin springs from a conviction that one represents the survival of ancient native tradition, while the other reflects the work of Roman Catholic monks.<sup>12</sup>

All of these views are nowadays unacceptable in the terms in which they were presented, but the legacy is complicated and does not always clearly reveal its origins.<sup>13</sup> Rees was not solely responsible for the notion of ‘Celtic Christianity’ which dominated scholarly thinking into the second half of the twentieth century, but he certainly helped shaped it.<sup>14</sup> His work on saints

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

<sup>11</sup> In the Welsh Chronicles he found an early eighth-century annal recording the consecration of a church of Michael (Mihangel), which he thought must have been noteworthy to the chroniclers because it was the first such dedication in Wales (*Essay*, p. 67); in fact the annal derives from the Latin (!) chronicle known as the *Annales Cambriae* (D. N. Dumville (ed.), *Annales Cambriae, A.D. 682–954: texts A–C in parallel* (Cambridge, 2002), s.a. 718), and is likely to concern a foundation outside Wales, probably Mont Saint-Michel, Normandy (T. Jones (trans.), *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the Princes: Peniarth MS. 20 version* (Cardiff, 1952), p. 131, n. on line 26); the scribe of the B text of the *Annales* thought it referred to another internationally famous pilgrimage site, Monte Sant’Angelo, Gargano.

<sup>12</sup> ‘The information to be derived respecting the Britons of the fifth and two following centuries may, therefore, be divided into the bardic and the legendary. The latter kind, which was preserved by the monks or clergy, was written principally in Latin’ (*Essay*, p. vii); ‘Such marvellous relations [i.e. miracle stories] as exist were nearly all of them written in Latin, and from the silence of the Welsh Bards upon the subject it may be presumed they were better known abroad than at home. It will be allowed that these legends were the productions of the monks, if they were not of foreign manufacture (*ibid.*, p. 72).

<sup>13</sup> Similarly, with more detail, J. R. Davies, ‘The saints of south Wales and the Welsh church’, in Thacker and Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints*, pp. 361–95, at 362–65.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the list of publications, headed by F. E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church* (Oxford, 1881), cited by Davies, ‘The saints of south Wales’, p. 362, n. 5; also Bradley, *Celtic Christianity*, pp. 119–56.

was taken up, expanded and subjected to a certain amount of light criticism by Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher in their monumental *Lives of the British Saints* published in the years before the First World War;<sup>15</sup> his full list of parish-churches and dedications was revised by Arthur Wade-Evans in the same period, as ‘Parochiale Wallicanum’.<sup>16</sup> Though over a century old, these publications in some respects have not yet been superseded as works of reference, but they are works of their own era, and they continue to embody much of Rees’s work and views from the previous century. Twenty-first century investigators need to beware.

One of the numerous ways in which Rees’s prejudice had profound effects on later historians has been explored by John Reuben Davies.<sup>17</sup> Rees argued that the country’s Catholic conquerors were dismissive of native saints, and he proved the point by adducing a list of seventeen churches in which the incomers changed the dedicatee to a universal saint.<sup>18</sup> Davies shows how influential this observation was on later Welsh scholarship: it was substantially echoed not only by J. E. Lloyd at the beginning of the twentieth century,<sup>19</sup> but also by Rees Davies towards its end.<sup>20</sup> And secondly he shows how the evidence for the claim falls away when it is examined: most of the changed dedications that Rees listed can be shown to long post-date the arrival of the Catholic Norman conquerors, or are in other ways fake news. Conversely all sorts of evidence, including the late eleventh- and twelfth-century flowering of Latin hagiography promoting the native saints of Wales, indicates that the Anglo-Norman church in Wales was ‘contributing to, rather than detracting from, the hagiology and *cultus* of local saints’ in the country.<sup>21</sup>

All this said, I have not only begun this lecture with Rees’s *Essay* in order to show how it sent Welsh scholarship down some questionable paths. The author managed for the first time to gather together in one place a great deal of important material, and – in at least one respect – he introduced a method of study which, it seems to me, is of great interest and deserves more development than it has received in the almost two centuries that have

<sup>15</sup> S. Baring-Gould and J. Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints*, 4 vols (London, 1907–13).

<sup>16</sup> A. W. Wade-Evans, ‘Parochiale Wallicanum’, *Y Cymmrodor* 22 (1910), 22–124.

<sup>17</sup> J. R. Davies, ‘The cult of saints in the early Welsh March’, in S. Duffy and S. Foran (eds.), *The English Isles: Cultural Transmission and Political Conflict in Britain and Ireland, 1100–1500* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 37–55.

<sup>18</sup> Rees, *Essay*, pp. 70–71.

<sup>19</sup> J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, 2 vols (London, 1911), II, 458–9.

<sup>20</sup> R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales, 1063–1415* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 181–2.

<sup>21</sup> Davies, ‘The cult of saints’, p. 51.

since elapsed. He did not simply list material, he sought patterns in the evidence of ecclesiastical place-names and church dedications (the distinction between names and dedications we shall come back to in due course), and developed arguments from the analysis. Whilst – it will by now be no surprise to learn – Rees’s reasoning will not entirely stand up to modern scrutiny, the analytical technique was ahead of its time.

The theme, near the beginning of the *Essay*, was to show that universal ‘Catholic’ saints became important in Wales later than the native saints (or founders). In order to demonstrate this Rees set out the evidence for the three most common dedications in Wales, to Mary, Michael and David (including place-names of the type, respectively, Llanfair, Llanfihangel and Llanddewi).<sup>22</sup> He subjected this evidence to three types of analysis. First, he described the churches’ geographical distribution, and discussed the historical contexts into which the overall patterns might best fit. Second, he considered the more closely local circumstances of the dedications, observing for instance that Mary-churches were often associated with Anglo-Norman planted towns and castles, and with post-Conquest monastic foundations (especially those of the Cistercians). Third, he examined his material in light of early modern evidence for ecclesiastical structures, arguing that the hierarchical organisation of parishes and chapels might be taken as a significant indicator of early arrangements.

The results of this analysis led Rees to argue that the veneration of Mary in Wales was principally a late, post-Conquest, development; that the cult of Michael took root significantly earlier, back in the pre-Norman period; and that David belonged to a stratum that was demonstrably earlier again. As might be expected from what has been said, he concluded that David churches were fundamentally different from those of the universal saints, in that the great majority would have been David’s personal foundations – this deduction rests mainly on the fact that the dedication, though widespread, is limited to the southern half of Wales, plausibly (in his view) the zone of one individual’s influence.

Once more, the nineteenth-century pioneer’s conclusions are not straightforwardly acceptable to the modern researcher. As will be discussed further below, there are other approaches to explaining the limited geographical distribution of many local saints (and David, with over fifty churches from Pembrokeshire to Herefordshire, was a challenging example for Rees to choose first). With regard to the relative chronology of the cults of Mary and Michael, it might be suggested that while the data shows that Mary was particularly popular for a longer period than Michael – a

<sup>22</sup> Rees, *Essay*, pp. 27–56.

conclusion suggested by other kinds evidence<sup>23</sup> – it does not so clearly show that her veneration began later than his, though it may indeed suggest it. Some discussion of this point, and some further observations on the patterns of dedication to international saints, are taken up further below in the Appendix (pp. 27–33).

The important point to stress here is that Rees hit on the simple idea that it may be possible to detect correlations between names/dedications and other kinds of information that might give some purchase on chronological and historical questions. Such work is worth pursuing, not least because this kind of approach has proven fruitful in related fields. In Anglo-Scandinavian England, for instance, it is an accepted fact that different categories of place-name are characteristic of different gradations of settlement – established by analysis of parochial status, medieval taxable value, soil-type and so on.<sup>24</sup> This does not mean, of course, that historians and linguists agree on the significance of the facts so assembled, but they do help structure the debate. In Cornwall Oliver Padel has gone some way towards this kind of analysis of Brittonic ecclesiastical naming by examining formative elements in the light of the names given to parishes.<sup>25</sup> In Wales there has been relatively little of this kind of work, especially in connection with this dominant type of ecclesiastical place-name, and my contention is that it would be worth doing. The task will not be straightforward, however, since available place-name collections are very uneven in their coverage. Moreover, any measurement against ecclesiastical arrangements of the twelfth century onwards will need to take into account both the challenges of reading back into the pre-Norman past

<sup>23</sup> G. Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 2nd edn (Cardiff, 1976), pp. 481–87; J. Cartwright, *Y Forwyn Fair, Santesau a Lleianod: Agweddau ar Wryfyddod a Diweirdeb yng Nghymru'r Oesoedd Canol* (Cardiff, 1999), pp. 19–24.

<sup>24</sup> The approach is set out in three pioneering studies by Kenneth Cameron, reprinted together in K. Cameron (ed.), *Place-Name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements* (Nottingham, 1975), pp. 115–71; for discussion of the historiography, with extensive bibliography, see L. Abrams and D. N. Parsons, 'Place-names and the history of Scandinavian settlement in England', in J. Hines *et al.* (eds), *Land, Sea and Home* (Leeds, 2004), pp. 379–431; see also P. Cullen, R. Jones and D. N. Parsons, *Thorps in a Changing Landscape* (University of Hertfordshire, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> O. J. Padel, 'Cornish names of parish churches', *Cornish Studies* 4/5 (1976–7), 15–27; *idem*, 'Local saints', pp. 307–09; *idem*, 'Brittonic lann in place-names', forthcoming in S. Bassett and A. J. Spedding (eds.), *Names, Texts and Landscapes in the Middle Ages: a Memorial Volume for Duncan Probert* (provisional title).

a reorganised parochial system, and the uneven study of such early records as are available.<sup>26</sup>

I would argue that, since Rees, scholars professing an interest in the early period have instead done a great deal of what Rees does in the bulk of his book, which is to scour later medieval hagiographical texts for nuggets of early medieval history. There is a range of prose Lives of Saints, poetry addressed to saints, and genealogical listings of saints, all produced, in their surviving forms, in the post-Conquest period, half a millennium or more after the period they invoke.<sup>27</sup> Though these texts offer immensely interesting and valuable evidence for the beliefs and attitudes of the periods in which they were composed, the extent to which the information they preserve is traditional and ancient is unknown and essentially untestable, except in so far as it correlates with other hagiographical sources of similarly late date. For the researcher into place-names this presents a dilemma. Take the example of Tysilio, whose cult was centred on Meifod in Powys, where – we are told – he was a member of the royal line. He is said to have led his people into the battle of Maes Cogwy, Bede's Maserfelth (traditionally identified with Oswestry), a battle that took place in 642.<sup>28</sup> No Life of Tysilio survives, but there is a long twelfth-century poem on him, by Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr,<sup>29</sup> and narratives survived in Brittany which point to a lost Welsh text that helps supply some of the gaps

<sup>26</sup> For a full discussion of the challenges of understanding the early medieval church, and for a hugely valuable reconstruction of the early post-Conquest ecclesiastical arrangements in one county, see H. Pryce, 'The medieval church', in J. B. Smith and Ll. B. Smith (eds.), *History of Merioneth. II. The Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2001), pp. 254–96. Also J. B. Smith, 'Appendix 2: parishes and townships in medieval Merioneth: the list and maps', in *ibid*, pp. 717–26. Comparable work remains to be done in most parts of Wales.

<sup>27</sup> Key texts include those published in A. W. Wade-Evans (ed.), *Vitae sanctorum Britanniae et genealogiae* (Cardiff, 1944) and P. C. Bartrum (ed.), *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff, 1966); for a flavour of the verse see B. J. Lewis (ed.), *Medieval Welsh Poems to Saints and Shrines* (Dublin, 2015). The whole corpus of texts, Welsh and Latin, is currently being re-edited and published online at <[www.seintiaucymru.ac.uk](http://www.seintiaucymru.ac.uk)>.

<sup>28</sup> For the battle and the names see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 391–92; he accepts the identification with Oswestry which in some quarters remains controversial.

<sup>29</sup> N. A. Jones and A. P. Owen (eds.), *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr*, 2 vols (Caerdydd, 1991–95), 1, 15–50; N. A. Jones and M. E. Owen, 'Twelfth-century Welsh hagiography: the Gogynfeirdd poems to saints', in J. Cartwright (ed.), *Celtic Hagiography and Saints' Cults* (Cardiff, 2003), pp. 45–76, at 48–51, 59–61.

left by Cynddelw's allusive verse.<sup>30</sup> In essence we hear of Tysilio spending his time in the Powys region where names and dedications persist, until, alarmed by the over-amorous attentions of his recently widowed sister-in-law, he flees to an island retreat in the Menai. This is clearly a reference to the church of Llandysilio which stands on a tidal island by the Menai Bridge to this day. Yet the sources have nothing to say about the two place-names that appear to bear versions of the identical name in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire.<sup>31</sup> Should we accept the connections that we are given by what survives of medieval tradition, and doubt whether the south-western names belong to the same saint? Or should we resist the limits imposed by texts and prioritise the distribution map? In that case a sceptic might concentrate on the geographically cohesive material and wonder whether the Menai location was speculatively worked into the story by an author (of the lost Life?) for whom Anglesey, but not the south-west, was familiar territory?<sup>32</sup> An optimist, on the other hand, might seek theories as to why Tysilio of Powys's influence spread to the opposite corners of the country.<sup>33</sup>

One scholar of the twentieth century who tended to take an optimistic line in this way, working with medieval tradition but often allowing the geography of cults to trump it, was E. G. Bowen, professor of geography in Aberystwyth.<sup>34</sup> Bowen's work did go some way towards the kind of analysis called for above: he examined the overall distribution, local situation (including altitude and surface geology) and morphology of many settlements bearing ecclesiastical place-names, and there is much in his

<sup>30</sup> G. H. Doble, *Saint Sulian and Saint Tysilio* (Guildford and Esher, 1936); Jones and A. P. Owen, *Gwaith Cynddelw*, I, 15–16; Jones and M. E. Owen, 'Twelfth-century Welsh hagiography', pp. 50–51.

<sup>31</sup> For Llandysiliogogo, Ceredigion, see I. Wmffre, *The Place-Names of Cardiganshire*, 3 vols (Oxford, 2004), I, 315–16; *gogo(f)* 'cave' is a late addition to the original name. For Llandysilio, Pembrokeshire, see B. G. Charles, *The Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, 2 vols (Aberystwyth, 1992), II, 408. Charles implies that early forms of the Pembrokeshire name in *-silian / -silion* may indicate a different saint; Wmffre's discussion illustrates how difficult it is to keep apart the various forms of Sulien, Tysul and Tysilio.

<sup>32</sup> Note that Jones and M. E. Owen, 'Twelfth-century Welsh hagiography', pp. 59–60, would place Cynddelw's composition in Gwynedd after the death of Madog ap Maredudd of Powys and the subsequent division of his kingdom. Ann Parry Owen, in her forthcoming edition prepared for the 'Seintiau' project (n. 27 above), disputes this.

<sup>33</sup> Wmffre, *Place-names of Cardiganshire*, I, 228, speculates that the Ceredigion dedication may reflect occupation of the area by the ruling house of Powys in the early twelfth century.

<sup>34</sup> Especially in the two monographs *The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in Wales* (Cardiff, 1954; 2nd edn 1956) and *Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands* (Cardiff, 1969).

work that could be taken up and built upon by modern landscape archaeologists. Unfortunately, however, all of his discussions were bounded by an interpretative framework that tied him to an improbable view of the evidence he was examining. Above all he followed Rice Rees in the assumption that every indication of a saint – in a place-name, a church dedication or a holy well – could be treated as a footprint left by that saint, and that the modern distribution patterns were therefore guides to the Dark-Age movements of individuals. Thus his solution to the problem of Tysilio dedications was to observe that ‘St. Tysilio besides being a local saint of Powys had on some occasion, like so many of his contemporaries, journeyed along the thalassic [i.e. coastal] route’,<sup>35</sup> with implied reference to the ‘western seaways’ that in Bowen’s opinion facilitated the journeys of so many of the Celtic saints between Wales, Ireland, Cornwall and Brittany. Place-names and dedications were to be seen as the archaeological traces of an individual’s movements.<sup>36</sup>

By the end of the twentieth century, however, Bowen’s work was subject to strident criticism, above all on chronological grounds.<sup>37</sup> None of the material that he mapped was contemporary with the period that he hoped it illustrated, of course, and scholars have been able to suggest other, later medieval, contexts in which place-name and dedication patterns might be better examined. More fundamentally, Bowen did not present dated source-material for any of his distributions, and he mixed together – as had Rees before him – place-names and church dedications. The latter, in particular, are often only attested very late – many are first recorded in the *Parochiale Anglicanum* of Browne Willis, published in 1733, which was the

<sup>35</sup> *The Settlements*, p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> It should be noted that in his later work Bowen modified his claims to some extent in response to criticism. In the preface to *Saints, Seaways and Settlements* he wrote that he was ‘not concerned with the fact that a particular dedication to St. David, or to any other Celtic Saint, was established by a visit of the Saint in question (or one of his immediate followers) to the site that now bears his name, but with the fact that the distribution of dedications to a particular Saint marks his or her “patria” – a specific territory in which a revival of the Saint’s cult might have taken place many times and over many centuries’. The text that follows, however, does not sit entirely well with this ‘retraction’: see, for example, his detailed account of the routes taken by the family of Gildas in their journeys across Cornwall and Brittany, *ibid.*, pp. 172–75.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. Sharpe, ‘Martyrs and local saints’, pp. 95–98; Davies, ‘The saints of south Wales’, pp. 363–65. As Davies observes, objection to Bowen’s use of church dedications in this way goes back to O. Chadwick, ‘The evidence of dedications in the early history of the Welsh church’, in N. K. Chadwick (ed.), *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 173–88.

first methodical collection of dedications across Wales.<sup>38</sup> Earlier records are scattered and somewhat haphazard, and have not yet been an object of collection and study. Modern scholars are not surprisingly uneasy about using such source-material for the medieval period, especially when it can sometimes be shown to mislead, as in the case of Rees's claims about altered dedications described above.

Place-names, however, provide firmer ground, at least in the sense that they tend to be recorded much earlier than church dedications. The two, of course, go hand in hand in many cases, providing that we cautiously substitute 'associated with' for 'dedicated to', as indeed Rice Rees might have insisted. A thirteenth-century record of a church at Llanfwrog indicates an association with a man called Mwrog;<sup>39</sup> probably by then the church was already dedicated to a Saint Mwrog, as it was by the eighteenth century,<sup>40</sup> but in the earlier phase that should not simply be assumed, as the earliest evidence for *llan* place-names, discussed further below, will demonstrate.

In recent decades scholars have, in general, finally shaken themselves free of most of the assumptions about the Age of the Saints and Celtic Christianity that guided their predecessors. The potential value of place-names as evidence for the early church in Wales is still acknowledged, but now needs to be set in a context that is defensible in its own terms. Two papers from the turn of the millennium might be seen as pointing the way towards fresh discussion of the material. The first, which concerned itself mainly with the largest cults in southern Wales, was by John Reuben Davies, and it built on arguments made by Wendy Davies towards the end of the 1970s.<sup>41</sup> This began with the numerous churches dedicated to Teilo

<sup>38</sup> Browne Willis, *Parochiale Anglicanum: or, the Names of All the Churches and Chapels within the Dioceses of Canterbury [...] St. Davids, Landaff, Bangor, and St. Asaph* (London, 1733). For the nature and limitations of this work, particularly as it applied to Devon and Cornwall but with a wider relevance, see N. Orme, *English Church Dedications, with a Survey of Cornwall and Devon* (Exeter, 1996). In his 'Parochial queries in order to a geographical dictionary, & natural history, &c., of Wales' the antiquary Edward Lhuyd, in the 1690s, asked local residents *inter alia* about the dedication of the parish church, but surviving responses are patchy across the country, and often failed to answer that question: see R. H. Morris (ed.), *Parochialia, being a Summary of Answers to 'Parochial queries ...' issued by Edward Lhwyd*, 3 vols (London, 1909–11), a collection of texts in grave need of a new edition.

<sup>39</sup> H. W. Owen and R. Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales* (Llandysul, 2007), p. 252.

<sup>40</sup> Browne Willis, *Parochiale Anglicanum*, p. 214.

<sup>41</sup> Davies, 'The saints of south Wales', pp. 366–69; W. Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm: Studies in the Llandaff Charters* (London, 1978), pp. 140–44.



and called Llandeilo which are scattered across the south and south-west of Wales. Various indications demonstrated that the likely explanation for these was that these were the dispersed possessions of an ecclesiastical estate dependent on a principal church which was originally at Llandeilo Fawr, but by the end of the eleventh century had removed to Llandaf. John Davies argued that Llanddewi churches were likely to have had a similar relationship to St Davids, Llangadog churches to Llancarfan, the cult centre of St Cadog, and so on. He sought the context for these large ecclesiastical estates in developments around the ninth century, buttressing his argument by a comparison with Ireland where Christianity had been introduced from Britain or Wales in the early post-Roman centuries. *Lan-*, cognate of *Llan-*, is a minority element in the place-names of Ireland.<sup>42</sup> In Ireland sources survive from much earlier than in Wales, and Tírechán's *Collectanea* gives an enviably direct window onto seventh-century ecclesiastical naming.<sup>43</sup> In this text *Lann*-names are combined with topographical elements rather than with personal names. This prompted Davies – and Thomas Charles-Edwards has since made a similar argument<sup>44</sup> – to suggest that *llan* + saint was not the common pattern when missionaries from Britain were working in Ireland, and thus that this type of name, all-pervasive as it became, was a secondary, retrospective, phenomenon in Wales that barely belonged to the Age of the Saints itself. Davies concluded, with greater subtlety than I have summarised here, that 'names of the type "*llan* + saint" were at the height of their productive cycle during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries'.<sup>45</sup> The phenomenon of local saints' cults at an early date was older and underlay the situation, but the spread of the larger cults, and the *llan*-names, was placed into contexts of royal patronage and monastic revival between the eighth and tenth centuries.<sup>46</sup>

The second influential paper that I want to notice here is one that is ostensibly not about Wales, but Cornwall. Yet the relevance of Oliver Padel's survey of local saints in the place-names of that county is hard to

<sup>42</sup> Davies, 'The saints of south Wales', pp. 391–94; L. Mac Mathúna, 'Observations on Irish lann "(piece of) land, (church) building" and compounds', *Ériu* 48 (1997), 153–60.

<sup>43</sup> L. Bieler (ed.), *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979), 122–63.

<sup>44</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, p. 599.

<sup>45</sup> Davies, 'The saints of south Wales', p. 394.

<sup>46</sup> Both Davies ('The saints of south Wales', p. 393) and Charles-Edwards (*Wales and the Britons*, pp. 598–602) also suggest a link between an expansion in *llan* place-names and archaeologically visible changes in burial practice around the eighth and ninth centuries, when ecclesiastical cemeteries became the focus of lay burial (see above n. 2 for references to the archaeological literature).

overlook.<sup>47</sup> Padel drew parallels with Wales throughout, and his analysis deserves detailed consideration in the Welsh context. In Cornwall local saints are as common as they are across Wales (if not even more common), and there is less evidence for the development of the kind of ‘super-cults’ that Davies focused on. One of the features of these local cults that Padel highlighted involved the siting of so many of the churches in relatively isolated positions, away from secular centres, a marked characteristic also in Wales.<sup>48</sup> A second key feature that he identified is the remarkable doubling-up of local saints, where the place-name contains one obscure personal name and the church is dedicated to another.<sup>49</sup> This situation does not seem to be common in Wales, though that may in part reflect a loss of early church dedications consequent on the late collection of the evidence, as previously discussed.<sup>50</sup> Padel brought the discussion of the Cornish phenomenon back to Wales, however, by raising questions about the ultimate identity of some of the ‘saints’ incorporated in the ecclesiastical place-names, and drawing on some Welsh evidence for suggestions that the names may in fact be those of lay founders or early priests.<sup>51</sup> We shall look more closely at this material shortly.

It could be thought that these two insightful contributions were in conflict. Padel’s picture is a rather traditional one of holy men retreating to the edge of society to found churches or monasteries, albeit with the twist that the eponymous founders may be something other than the traditionally understood saints. Davies’s, on the other, rather more radically challenges the idea that the Age of the Saints is directly visible on the map at all. In fact the visions could be broadly complementary, if viewed regionally and chronologically. If the large ecclesiastical estates of southern Wales did not develop, or developed in a different way in Cornwall (and, indeed, in

<sup>47</sup> Padel, ‘Local saints’.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 308–09; Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 143; cf. the onomastic distinctions noted by M. Richards, ‘Ecclesiastical and secular in medieval Welsh settlement’, *Studia Celtica* 3 (1968), 9–18.

<sup>49</sup> Padel, ‘Local saints’, pp. 311–12.

<sup>50</sup> I would distinguish between the presence of two *obscure* personal names and the situation where one more familiar saint has taken the place of a local one, as for instance in the dedication of Llanfaches (formerly Merthyr Maches) to Dyfrig (Parsons, *Martyrs and Memorials*, p. 89m n. 345) or Merthyr Mawr (formerly Merthyr Myfor) to Teilo (*ibid.*, p. 91). Padel notes hagiographical attempts to rationalise ‘rival’ founders at Padstow (‘Local saints’, pp. 311–12), and something similar may be going on, for instance, in the accounts of Tysilio which have him take the place of his teacher Gwyddfarch, said to have been abbot of Meifod before him (Jones and Owen, *Gwaith Cynddelw*, I, 15).

<sup>51</sup> ‘Local saints’, p. 312.

northern Wales<sup>52</sup>), then the place-name patterns are coherent, with the predominance of very localised and restricted cults potentially reflecting an earlier situation than that which was to develop around the churches of Teilo, Cadog and David. The important point here – whatever the merits of the suggestions – is that both hypotheses arise from consideration of the names, sites and historical context without guidance from later medieval traditions of uncertain authority.

In distrusting the historical value of the hagiographical and genealogical texts of the end of the eleventh century and later, it must be remembered that there is a small body of relevant material which can be dated to the pre-Conquest period and which secures the historicity of some key people and cults. The Breton *Vita Prima Sancti Samsonis* may have been written as early as c. 700, and seems to depend on a chain of eye-witness testimony to Samson's career which began in south Wales.<sup>53</sup> The text confirms the early significance in south Wales of a bishop Dubricius / Dyfrig, and an abbot Eltutus / Illtud; Samson himself, probably the bishop of that name of who attended a council in Paris 556 × 573, is presented as having travelled from Wales, through Cornwall, to Brittany, founding *monasteria* at points on the way (a feature which clearly encouraged traditional scholarly interpretations of early saints' cults, and may be a trifle uncomfortable for modern sceptics!).<sup>54</sup> An even earlier text, headed *Excerpta quedam de libro Davidis*, is putatively of the sixth century and appears to illustrate David's approach to ascetic monasticism,<sup>55</sup> while further references from Brittany and Ireland confirm that David, along with others including Beuno and Deiniol, were certainly venerated as saints by the ninth century.<sup>56</sup> Some of the earliest surviving traces of hagiography within Wales – relating to

<sup>52</sup> It is striking that the extensive ecclesiastical interests of Clynnog Fawr, the cult centre of Beuno, do not involve numerous instances of *Llanfeuno*: only Llanveynoe in Herefordshire (perhaps significantly at the southern limit of the distribution) bears that name; cf. P. Sims-Williams, *Buchedd Beuno: the Middle Welsh Life of St Beuno* (Dublin, 2018), pp. 37–76.

<sup>53</sup> P. Flobert, *La vie ancienne de Saint Samson de Dol* (Paris, 1997); for various discussions of the date and context of the work, see L. Olson (ed.), *St Samson of Dol and the Earliest History of Brittany, Cornwall and Wales* (Woodbridge, 2017).

<sup>54</sup> On the application of the adjective *sanctus* 'holy' or 'saint' to these men, see Davies, 'The saints of south Wales', p. 370, n. 47.

<sup>55</sup> D. N. Dumville, *St David of Wales*, Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures on Medieval Welsh History I (Cambridge, 2001), reprinted in his *Celtic Essays, 2001–2007*, 2 vols (Aberdeen, 2007), I, 35–71, at 47–53; Davies, 'The saints of south Wales', p. 376.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 377, 385.

Germanus, Paulinus and Illtud – are to be found in the *Historia Brittonum* of the same century.<sup>57</sup>

Early clues to the identity and context of some of the eponyms of place-names in *llan* are found in two sources that have been reassessed in relatively recent years, and it is worth reviewing this evidence in some detail. The Book of Llandaf is a twelfth-century compilation ‘forged’ in support of the church of Llandaf’s anachronistic claims to status and territory.<sup>58</sup> The charters that make up an important part of this case were altered in favour of these claims, but have been convincingly shown on the whole to have an authentic basis.<sup>59</sup> The earliest group takes us back to the sixth or seventh centuries and includes a few texts, all of them relating to the territory of Ergyng in modern Herefordshire, which hint at the origins of names in *llan*.<sup>60</sup> One involves the establishment of the church of *Lann Guorboe*, generally identified with Garway, under the priest *Guoruo*, whose name is evidently commemorated in the place-name.<sup>61</sup> Remarkably

<sup>57</sup> B. Guy, ‘The *Life* of St Dyfrig and the lost charters of Moccas (Mochros), Herefordshire’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 75 (Summer 2018), 1–37, at 2–4. Guy makes a good case that a *Life* of Dyfrig may also have been composed as early as the ninth century (*ibid.*, pp. 36–37).

<sup>58</sup> Printed in J. Gwenogvryn Evans and J. Rhys, *The Text of the Book of Llan Dâv* (Oxford, 1893) [conventionally abbreviated *LL*]; images online at <[www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/manuscripts/the-middle-ages/the-book-of-llandaff](http://www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/manuscripts/the-middle-ages/the-book-of-llandaff)>. For the manuscript see D. Huws, ‘The making of *Liber Landavensis*’, in his *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff and Aberystwyth, 2000), pp. 123–56. For a cogent suggestion as to its date and origins J. R. Davies, ‘*Liber Landavensis*: its date and the identity of its editor’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 35 (Summer 1998), 1–11’.

<sup>59</sup> W. Davies, *The Llandaff Charters* (Aberystwyth, 1979), modified by P. Sims-Williams’s review in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 23 (1982), pp. 124–29. Subsequent independent work on the orthography of the witness lists (by J. T. Koch, ‘When was Welsh literature first written down?’, *Studia Celtica* 20/21 (1985/6), 43–66, and P. Sims-Williams, ‘The emergence of Old Welsh, Cornish and Breton orthography, 600–800: the evidence of Archaic Old Welsh’, *BBCS* 38 (1991), 20–86) has gone a long way to confirming Davies’s hypothesis. See further the summary and bibliography in Guy, ‘The *Life* of St Dyfrig’, pp. 1–2.

<sup>60</sup> This earliest sequence was dated *c.* 575 – *c.* 625 by Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, pp. 92, 105; Sims-Williams, review of *ibid.*, pp. 126–27, and Guy, ‘The *Life* of St Dyfrig’, pp. 28–29, prefer a range some fifty years or so later.

<sup>61</sup> *LL*, charter 162a; Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, p. 103. It should be noted that in the body of the charter the granted land is not named – *Lann Guorboe* appears in the rubric, which may well be a twelfth-century addition. On the other hand, abbots of *Lann Guorboe* are named in the witness lists of another charter in sequence I (*LL*, charter 163b) and so there is some support for the name at an early date. Identification with Garway is usually accepted (e.g. by J. B. Coe, ‘The place-names of the Book of

not only does the record give us this detail, but it also specifies that the church was dedicated to the Holy Trinity: the bishop (or possibly the king who granted the land to the bishop) *fundavit locum in honore sancte trinitatis, et ibi Guoruoe sacerdotem suum posuit*. Thus one of our (putatively) earliest records of the Welsh Church specifies a ‘Catholic’ type of dedication and identifies the eponym of a *llan* place-name as the priest placed in charge at its foundation. Although he knew the Book of Llandaf, and was indeed engaged on an edition of it at the time of his premature death,<sup>62</sup> Rice Rees did not confront the challenge offered by the first point; with regard to the second, he would doubtless have felt vindicated that *Guoruoe* was not at that point considered a saint, although nor, it appears, was he exactly the founder.

A comparable case is that of *Lann Iunabui*, probably to be identified with surviving Llandinabo.<sup>63</sup> Here the church’s foundation was not described in the document; rather it was granted as a going concern. One of the clerical witnesses to the transaction was *Iunabui presbiter*; he appears likely to be the current incumbent, and was perhaps the first holder of that position, giving name to the foundation in the same way as did *Guoruoe*. In Inabwy’s case other charters give a little more information about the individual involved: he is said to have been a cousin of the King Peibio who made the grant, and he rose to the position of bishop later in his career.<sup>64</sup> The form of the place-name Llandinabo is notable: the *-d-* is evidenced regularly from the thirteenth century onwards and could represent the ‘honorific’ prefix *Ty-* attached to the names of many Welsh saints, including of course the Tysilio discussed above.<sup>65</sup> If so it would be a visible marker of the ‘promotion’ of Inabwy from churchman to saint in local perception. On the other hand, alternative explanations of the *-d-* are possible and perhaps more likely.<sup>66</sup>

Llandaf’, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Aberystwyth, 2001), p. 427) but has been questioned by B. Coplestone-Crow, *Herefordshire Place-Names*, 2nd edn (Little Logaston, 2009), pp. 92, 104.

<sup>62</sup> See the *Dictionary of Welsh biography* entry cited in n. 5 above.

<sup>63</sup> *LL*, charter 73a. Again, Llandinabo is the usual identification (Coe, ‘The place-names’, p. 500) but Coplestone-Crow, *Herefordshire Place-Names*, pp. 52, 145, finds reason to dissent.

<sup>64</sup> Guy, ‘The *Life* of St Dyfrig’, p. 24.

<sup>65</sup> H. Lewis, ‘The honorific prefixes *To-* and *Mo-*’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 20 (1936), 138–43.

<sup>66</sup> Coe, ‘The place-names’, p. 501, suggests it may be a remnant of the etymological final *-d* of *llan* (< *land-*), while John Freeman, English Place-Name Society editor for Herefordshire, suggests (pers. comm.) that it may alternatively be a stop inserted between nasal continuants.

A third case is found in the charter in which Inabwy's relationship with King Peibio is mentioned. It involves the grant of *Mainaur Garth Benni*, generally identified with Welsh Bicknor, and apparently alternatively known as *Lann Custenhinngarthbenni*.<sup>67</sup> This, at least, is the rubric added to the charter in the twelfth-century compilation, and it receives some support from two versions of an independent list of churches in Ergyng which also contains a place called *Lann Custenhin*.<sup>68</sup> The church at Welsh Bicknor is recorded as *Ecclesia Sancti Custenin* in 1144.<sup>69</sup> It is then intriguing that the name Cystennin, or Constantine, is mentioned twice in body of the charter. *Custenhin* is the first lay witness after Peibio, while a king Constantine appears in a clause delimiting the boundaries of the estate, which extends to 'the spear of king Constantine, his [i.e. Peibio's] father-in-law (*socer*) across the river Wye'. Nothing more is known of this Constantine. Davies thought that mention of his spear (*iaculum*) was an allusion to Constantine the Great, and that the text may be unreliable: 'It reads like a foundation tradition, embellished with speculation on the name Constantine'.<sup>70</sup> It would be easy to envisage that this speculation might have been suggested by the name *Lann Custenhin*, though the place-name is not found in the body of the charter as transmitted. Taking the text at face value, the *llan* name here may, as at *Lann Iunabui*, allude to a member of Peibio's extended family, in this case apparently a senior royal. Perhaps Constantine founded the church on land that was later ceded to Peibio?

Generally antedating even the earliest Llandaf material are the 'Type I' inscribed memorial stones of the fifth to early seventh centuries,<sup>71</sup> some of

<sup>67</sup> *LL*, charter 72a. Once more, for the usual identification see Coe, 'The place-names', pp. 300, 414, 422, while Coplestone-Crow, *Herefordshire Place-Names*, p. 41, has another idea. In each of these cases, it might be emphasised, Coplestone-Crow's alternative suggestions are in other parts of Ergyng: there is no question of the general locality.

<sup>68</sup> *LL*, pp. 275–76; Coe, 'The place-names', p. 414.

<sup>69</sup> Coplestone-Crow, *Herefordshire Place-Names*, p. 41.

<sup>70</sup> Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, p. 93; also p. 130, n. 4. *Iaculum* should perhaps be interpreted otherwise: the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, s.v. *jaculum*, assigns the sense 'casting-net' to this example, and although this does not obviously fit the context, some related sense such as 'fishing grounds' might. G. H. Doble (*Lives of the Welsh Saints*, ed. by D. S. Evans (Cardiff, 1971), p. 77) proposed 'ferry' which gives good sense but is not supported by the standard dictionaries. The related *traiectus* 'crossing place' might perhaps be compared, however. My thanks to Paul Russell for discussing this problem with me.

<sup>71</sup> The linguistic aspects of the inscriptions are all subject to modern reassessment by Patrick Sims-Williams in *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales* (Cardiff): I *South-east Wales*, by M. Redknapp and J. M. Lewis (2007), II *South-west Wales*, by N. Edwards (2007); III, *North Wales*, by N. Edwards

which similarly offer hints – no more – of connections with the local ecclesiastical place-names. Exceptional in various respects is the famous CATAMANUS REX stone at Llangadwaladr, Anglesey, which commemorates a king Cadfan who died *c.* 625 and was the grandfather of Cadwaladr, ruler of Gwynedd in the second half of the seventh century.<sup>72</sup> On the basis of this inscription, and the site's proximity to Aberffraw – known to be the chief court of Gwynedd later in the Middle Ages – the church is considered likely to have been the royal burial place of the rulers of Gwynedd at this period.<sup>73</sup> The implication that it is the grandson, king Cadwaladr, whose name appears in the enduring place-name is interesting, especially in light of the *Lann Custenhin* just discussed, which may offer a roughly contemporary royal parallel from the opposite corner of Wales.

A second widely accepted association between inscription and place-name also comes from Anglesey: a stone bearing the name of one SATVRNINVS was dug up in the churchyard at Llansadwrn.<sup>74</sup> Latin *Saturninus* (> Welsh *Sadyrnin*) is a diminutive of *Saturnus* (> Welsh *Sadwrn*), and it has been suggested that both here are likely to denote the same man, although the possibility that Saturninus was a relative or follower of Saturnus cannot be wholly excluded.<sup>75</sup> The inscription is dated to the sixth century on epigraphical grounds; it is fragmentary but the stone appears to commemorate both the man and his unnamed wife: he is described as *beatus* 'blessed', and she possibly as *sancta* 'holy'. In the opinion of Nancy Edwards, the memorial stone itself may have been the focus for the later cult of Sadwrn.<sup>76</sup>

A third possible instance from Anglesey is intriguing. A stone from Llanfaelog parish bears a short Roman-letter text MAILISI, accompanied by an apparently equivalent ogam sequence MA ... S[U].<sup>77</sup> These have been interpreted as the Irish personal name *Máel Ísu* ('tonsured one of Jesus'), with Latinised genitive *Mailisi*. As Patrick Sims-Williams put it: 'If there

(2013). See also P. Sims-Williams, *The Celtic Inscriptions of Britain: Phonology and Chronology*, c. 400–1200 (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> *A Corpus*, III, 180–83, no. AN26.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>74</sup> *A Corpus*, III, 206–09, no. AN45.

<sup>75</sup> G. T. Jones and T. Roberts, *Enwau Lleoedd Môn / The Place-Names of Anglesey* (Bangor, 1996), pp. 21, 109, are adamant that the two names should not be conflated, though they appear to accept that there is some, at least indirect, connection between the inscription and the place-name.

<sup>76</sup> *A Corpus*, III, 208; cf. N. Edwards, 'Celtic saints and early medieval archaeology', in Thacker and Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints*, pp. 225–65, at 229.

<sup>77</sup> *A Corpus*, III, 162–65, no. AN13.

is a connection between MAILISI and the name *Llanfaelog*, one must assume that the Irish name *Máel Ísu* was assimilated to the well-known Welsh name *Maelog*; the latter may have been employed here as a hypocoristic form of *Máel Ísu*.<sup>78</sup> Such an assimilation cannot be proved, and the stone has no close connection to the parish church as at Llansadwrn: it was found built into a barn half a mile to the south. There is, however, an interesting parallel of sorts with a pair of inscriptions from Carmarthenshire in the south of Wales, where two stones record versions of the same names as CVNIGNI and CVNEGNI.<sup>79</sup> Sims-Williams argues that this is for the Irish name *Co(i)nín*, and that it is likely to be the ancestor of the Welsh *Cynin* and a variant *Cynein*. He also notes three possible connections with local nomenclature in Carmarthenshire. The stone which seems to mark the man's burial site was found at Llanfihangel Croesfeini, a chapel which lies at the head of a stream known as the Nant Cynnen, itself perhaps involving a form of *Cynein*.<sup>80</sup> The second stone commemorates, in roman-script Latin and ogam Irish, the daughter of a man with the same name, and was found in the church of Eglwys Gymyn, some thirteen miles south-west of the first. The place-name appears to contain Welsh *cymyn* 'legacy', but Sims-Williams notes that this may involve a rationalisation of the personal name: he cites a rather garbled form (*Eglusgluneyn*) from the papal *Taxatio* of c. 1291 in support of the possibility, but there is now a new edition of this text which offers earlier and better readings, including *Eglesgunneyn* and *Eglusguneyn*, exactly the form required for the variant *Cynein*.<sup>81</sup> Four miles north of Eglwys Gymyn, and situated therefore roughly between the two

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>79</sup> *A Corpus*, II, 214–17, no. CM7 (Eglwys Gymin); *ibid.*, 271–74, no. CM37 (Llanfihangel Croesfeini).

<sup>80</sup> *A Corpus*, II, 273.

<sup>81</sup> *A Corpus*, II, 216. The better forms are to be found on the online edition of the *Taxatio*, at <[www.dhi.ac.uk/taxatio/benkey?benkey=DA.CM.CM.03](http://www.dhi.ac.uk/taxatio/benkey?benkey=DA.CM.CM.03)>. *Eglusgunneyn* comes from Lichfield Dean and Chapter Library, MS 23, p. 171v, and *Eglusgunneyn* from Lincolnshire Archives Office, Lincoln Dean and Chapter Muniments, A1/II, p. 198, both near contemporary manuscripts unlike the copy used for the unsatisfactory edition of 1802. For a description of the source and the online edition see J. H. Denton, 'Towards a new edition of the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae auctoritate P. Nicholai IV circa A.D. 1291*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 79 (1997), 67–79; also the discussion in Parsons, *Martyrs and Memorials*, p. 103; a large range of variant spellings has been added to the database since that was written in 2013.



inscribed stones, is the church of Llangynin,<sup>82</sup> plausibly the cult-centre of a ‘saint’ *Cyn(e)in*.<sup>83</sup>

The implications of the fifth- to seventh-century witnesses from the Book of Llandaf and the memorial stones are various. There are clear suggestions that men whose names appear in the *llan* place-names may sometimes have been priests who ministered at churches on the sites at an early stage. Others so named seem to have been kings or to have had royal connections. It is not clear precisely what relationship Cadwaladr and Constantine had to the *llan* sites which appear to bear their names: they may perhaps have endowed the churches. In the case of Llandinabo, the eponym seems to have been both a priest and a member of the ruling family.

In the cases of Llansadwrn, Llanfaelog and Llangynin (with its associated sites) there is no evidence of the status of the eponymous men, beyond the observation that if they are indeed commemorated on the memorial stones then they are likely to belong to the wealthier, more powerful ranks of society since early literacy may well have been restricted in this way. It is interesting that Sadyrnin was married, while Cynin had a daughter. A particularly noteworthy aspect of the group is the linguistic make-up of the personal names. *Sadwrn* and *Sadyrnin* are Latin in origin; *Cyn(e)in* appears to be Irish, and the argument that Welsh *Maelog* at Llanfaelog may be a substitution for, or development of, the Irish *Máel Ísu* of the inscription, is appealing. Connecting the epigraphy and place-names in this way involves a degree of philological approximation, since in each case it would seem to be a variant or recast version of the personal name that survived. In these circumstances certainty is not possible, but the suggestions have the merit of helping to link the memorial inscriptions with the ecclesiastical place-names, potentially the two richest indications of Christianity in early Wales. Patrick Sims-Williams’s survey of the inscriptions emphasised that the contribution of Latin and Irish to the

<sup>82</sup> See Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary*, p. 265, giving forms of Llangynin back to 1325. The entry mentions the *Cunigni* inscription, but confuses matters by referring to an ‘Eglwysgynyn church’ as if it were a current name: Eglwys Gymin is treated (p. 95) under the modern map-form Common Church (which shows another ‘rationalisation’ of an older name), but this entry makes no mention of Cynin, Eglwysgynyn or the inscription.

<sup>83</sup> One further inscribed stone should perhaps be noted here: an inscription from Llannor on the Llŷn peninsular reads VENDESETLI and answers to the developed Welsh name *Gwynhoedl* (*A Corpus*, III, 290–93, no. CN30). The same personal name is found in Llangwnnadr nine miles to the west, and there may conceivably be a connection. The place-name is, however, not originally an ecclesiastical type: the generic element began as *nant* ‘valley, stream’, Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary*, p. 263.

personal names of that corpus was significant: he calculated that some 23% of personal names on fifth- and sixth-century stones from Wales were Latin.<sup>84</sup> He also concluded that in the same period Irish influence, either in the form of ogam script or etymologically in the language of the personal names, or both, was pervasive, with Irish appearing in some 70% of texts in which Welsh and Irish can be distinguished.<sup>85</sup> As Sims-Williams emphasised, this is not a demographic statistic but rather one that relates to the tradition of raising memorial stones, a tradition which was clearly particularly embraced by the Irish settlers in Wales. Nonetheless, the inscriptions indicate that a good number of relatively high-status Christians in the post-Roman west were of Irish origin, and there is then something of a mismatch with the *llan*-names, since relatively few eponyms of that group are clearly Irish in origin.<sup>86</sup> In the Llanfaelog and Eglwys Gymyn inscriptions, however, there may be hints as to how an originally Irish name may conceivably have been recast into Welsh during the centuries that followed the decline of Irish influence. If such transitions took place commonly, then a significant continuity between the early Christians of the inscriptions and the early Christians of the place-names may have been obscured.

The Latin element represented by Saturn(in)us and Constantine is also interesting in this regard. One might think that such Latin names would generally be easier to identify than Irish ones, which are often very similar to Welsh cognates. The Latin element in the corpus of *llan* place-names is controversial, however. Melville Richards was adamant that it was negligible. Commenting on the saints' names listed by Baring-Gould and Fisher, he suggested that Latin names made up 'a mere handful ... some of which are suspect',<sup>87</sup> drawing from the facts as he saw them the conclusion that 'it is very obvious that the early Church in Wales was the work of native Welshman'.<sup>88</sup> Again, this sets up an interesting and challenging contrast with the early memorial stones. Is it possible that the Latin-named people of post-Roman Wales, like the Irish, were for some reason more

<sup>84</sup> P. Sims-Williams, 'The five languages of Wales in the pre-Norman inscriptions', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 44 (Winter 2002), 1–36, at 19.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>86</sup> There are, however, various exceptions like Llangolman, Pembrokeshire (Charles, *Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, 1, 83) and Llangwyfan, Denbighshire (Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary*, p. 263).

<sup>87</sup> M. Richards, 'Places and persons of the early Welsh church' *Welsh History Review* 5 (1970–1), 333–49, at 342.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343, Note the interesting implication that those who bore Latin names are not regarded as native Welshmen.

characteristic of the group who raised memorial inscriptions than of the wider Christian population?

Two alternative explanations come to mind. One is that Richards may well have underestimated the contribution of Latin to the name-stock of the early ‘saints’. Faced with a choice between Latin and British etymologies, he came down on the side of the Welsh without hesitation, dismissing for instance the equation of Peblig (Llanbeblig) with Publicius or Rhystud (Llanrhystud) with Restitutus, in favour of Celtic etymologies which may seem less probable to other scholars.<sup>89</sup> His list of twelve names (‘Afan, Cystennin, Dunawd, Eder, Elian(?), Ilar, Ilid, Stinan, Marchell, Padarn, Padrig, Peulin, Sadwrn, Sadyrnin’) also omits likely instances like Iestyn from Iustinus (Llaniestyn) and Celer from Celer(us) (Llangeler).<sup>90</sup> He did not discuss Elen from Helena, ultimately Greek but clearly a Romano-Christian introduction (Llanelen).<sup>91</sup> Combined with the ‘Biblical’ names which Richards placed in a separate category (Aaron, Andreas, Asaph, Dewi, Deiniol and Sawyl (< Samuel)), this group already feels more than negligible, and can probably be further extended. As yet, however, neither Richards nor anyone else has set out a corpus of the ecclesiastical place-names, with their early forms, which would allow a full investigation of the personal names found within it, so that true comparisons with other sources like the early inscriptions are not readily made.

Such an examination will undoubtedly still leave Latin names in a minority, but the inscriptions surely suggest a different line of interpretation to that proposed by Richards. Llangadwaladr seems to have been named no earlier than the second half of the seventh century, while the group of early Llandaf charters that we examined may well also date from after 600.<sup>92</sup> The epigraphical evidence that Sims-Williams presented showed a sharp reduction in Latin and Irish names after the sixth century,<sup>93</sup> and so it must be possible that the predominance of Welsh personal names in *llan* place-names reflects the period in which many of these place-names were coined

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349. Sims-Williams, *Celtic Inscriptions*, p. 102, derives Peblig from Vulgar Latin Poblucius; he discusses Restitutus > Rhystud *ibid.*, p. 104, n. 559.

<sup>90</sup> On Iestyn see Sims-Williams, *Celtic Inscriptions*, p. 228, n. 1428. Llangeler was originally Merthyr Celer: see the discussion of the personal name in Parsons, *Martyrs and Memorials*, pp. 61–62.

<sup>91</sup> An instance in Monmouthshire is recorded by Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary*, p. 237; for another in Glamorgan see R. Morgan, *Place-Names of Glamorgan* (Cardiff, 2018), p. 120 (also below, n. 96).

<sup>92</sup> See above, n. 60.

<sup>93</sup> Sims-Williams, ‘The five languages’, pp. 19 (on Latin) and 31 (on Irish).

rather than proving that the origins of the church were somehow ‘native Welsh’ and not ‘Roman’.

Richards was working within a framework of Celtic Christianity in which continuity from Roman Britain had been rejected in favour of a reintroduction of the faith from western Gaul,<sup>94</sup> and this doubtless influenced his attitude to potential Latin etymologies. The modern preference is firmly for continuity, and in this context we might be tempted to work with the grain of early inscriptions tentatively to seek chronological strata within the ecclesiastical place-names.<sup>95</sup> If ‘Roman’ names are proportionally likely to be early, this may be significant information, especially when they appear at sites for which an early date is suspected on other grounds. Examples might include Llanbeblig, the parish church of Roman Segontium (Caernarfon), and Llanelen in Gower, Glamorgan, where a possible wooden church has been identified, with archaeological hints of a sixth- to eighth-century date.<sup>96</sup>

This leads us back to the thorny question of dating place-names. We have seen an argument that *llan* + ‘saint’ is relatively late, and so might wonder whether personal names of early type in such place-names could be retrospective coinages, arising for example from the later establishment of a *llan* (?church) at a site (?cemetery) that was already associated with the individual – compare Edwards’s suggestion that Llansadwrn may have been established around the special grave of Sadyrnin.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, the argument that Irish usage can be used to date Welsh practice in this respect is not wholly convincing, when one considers, for instance, that the earliest stratum of Llandaf charters offers several instances of the construction (including besides *Lann Iunabui* and *Lann Guorboe* examples such as *Lann Suluiu* and *Lanndewi*<sup>98</sup>), or that the handful of *llan*-names

<sup>94</sup> This view was championed by V. E. Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (Cardiff, 1950) and supported by Bowen. For modern criticism see Sharpe, ‘Martyrs and local saints’, pp. 95–98; cf. Parsons, *Martyrs and Memorials*, p. 42.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>96</sup> For the latter see Petts, *Early Medieval Church*, pp. 55–56; N. Edwards, ‘Perspectives on conversion in Wales’, in R. Flechner and M. Ní Mhaonaigh (eds.), *The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World* (Turnhout, 2016), pp. 93–107, at 96.

<sup>97</sup> Note also the suggestion by Pryce, ‘The medieval church’, p. 261, that some churches ‘may have been founded in the twelfth century on subsidiary cult sites, especially early medieval cemeteries’.

<sup>98</sup> *LL*, charters 160 (Llancillo: Coe, ‘The place-names’, p. 489) and 163b (probably Much Dewchurch: Coe, ‘The place-names’, p. 416). The latter must raise questions, at least, about the general applicability of the thesis discussed above that would link together repeated attributions to well-known saints as indicative of developments in the later pre-

attested within England, in areas where new Brittonic names seem most unlikely to have been coined beyond the seventh century, also evidence this type.<sup>99</sup>

In a previous article I have tried to make some headway with the systematic study of an ecclesiastical place-naming element, *merthyr*, which may, by various tests, have a claim to a particularly early date.<sup>100</sup> In this lecture most of my examples have been instances of *llan*, the dominant ecclesiastical generic in Wales, but it would be illuminating to subject all the relevant terms – which include *eglwys* ‘church’, *betws* ‘chapel’ and less common terms like *\*aradur* ‘oratory’ and *mystwyr*, a derivative of Latin *monasterium*<sup>101</sup> – to equivalent analysis in terms of the nature and language of their qualifiers, their historical status as church sites, and their archaeological profiles. I have suggested that such systematic study, set in the context of such early evidence as we possess, is the best way to approach this material, which promises so much in an area where so little is securely known.

I have also argued that there is still a need in this field of study to counter the legacy of a century and more of misleading models, and to question the trust that has frequently been placed in the hagiographical traditions of the later middle ages. Taking apart the old and building up the new may produce valuable new results. The role of individuals with Irish and Latin names, for instance, may have been underestimated, and would clearly be of great significance culturally and chronologically. On the other hand, such work may produce results that sometimes echo rather closely the conclusions embraced by previous generations of scholars. Several of the seventh-century witnesses, for instance, prove to have connections with local royalty which is the usual tale of the hagiographers. In the case of

Norman period. This instance is potentially so early, and so far from the apparent south-western heartland of the cult of St David, that it seems rather unlikely to reflect the sort of ecclesiastical expansion described by J. R. Davies above. Perhaps we simply have to do here with coincidental naming, and it is striking that a Dewi appears among early Eryng witnesses. The supposition that Herefordshire and Monmouthshire dedications to David were independent of the famous patron is found already in Wade-Evans, ‘Parochiale Wallicanum’, p. 118.

<sup>99</sup> V. Watts, *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 358, s.n. Landkey; M. A. O’Donovan, *Charters of Sherborne*, Anglo-Saxon Charters 3 (Oxford, 1988), pp. 83–88. The dating of the group is discussed by Padel, ‘Brittonic *lann* in place-names’.

<sup>100</sup> Parsons, *Martyrs and Memorials*.

<sup>101</sup> For all these terms see G. O. Pierce, ‘The evidence of place-names’, in G. Williams (ed.), *Glamorgan County History. II. Early Glamorgan: Pre-history and Early History* (Cardiff, 1984), pp. 456–92, at 485–86.

*merthyr* it was suggested that the element may have significant place-name parallels not only in Brittany, Cornwall and Ireland, but also in south-western France, implying the kind of introduction via the ‘western seaways’ that would have been embraced by Nash-Williams and Bowen (though without the implication that this represented a re-conversion of western Britain). There should be no objection to reaching such conclusions if they are grounded on more secure foundations than formerly. There is no suggestion that later tradition *cannot* preserve accurate echoes of the past, but it is important that such non-contemporary evidence is tested and not accepted without question.

Kathleen Hughes was a scholar who concerned herself with the church(es) of the Celtic-speaking world, and who launched one of the ground-breaking assaults on the cloudy thinking which had characterised understanding of Celtic Christianity. She published penetrating studies of key primary texts that are central to an understanding of society and Christianity in early Wales, including the *Annales Cambriae* and the collection of Cambro-Latin saints’ Lives in the British Library manuscript Cotton Vespasian A. xiv. I am honoured to have given this lecture in her memory, and hope that she would have approved of the approach to the study of place-names that is promoted here.

APPENDIX:  
MAPPING INTERNATIONAL SAINTS IN WALES

As part of the ‘Seintiau’ project mentioned above (n. 27), church dedications and ecclesiastical place-names incorporating saints’ names (or supposed saints’ names) are being collected, documented and mapped. Like Rice Rees, but rather few of those who came after him, we have concerned ourselves with both international and native saints, and the maps that follow give four examples of the former, including the two most common dedicatees in Wales, Mary and Michael. Where Rees simply took his information from the then current version of Browne Willis’s researches,<sup>102</sup> our material is sourced and dated, with an attempt to seek out the earliest record of each association/dedication. As described above, this is a very provisional survey, especially for the churches which do not incorporate the saint in the place-name, since this material has never been systematically collected. On Maps 1–4 a broad distinction is marked between evidence recorded before and after 1600. Some of the later group may have been subject to the kind of distortion that followed the upheavals of the Reformation, as Orme described,<sup>103</sup> and some will relate to modern foundations; others, however, doubtless preserve medieval dedications that simply happen not (yet) to have been noted in earlier documentation.

The potential that this kind of evidence can offer to historical interpretation is shown by Maps 3–4, recording dedications to Andrew and Martin, which are clearly restricted to the March and areas of early Anglo-Norman conquest. By contrast, Maps 1–2, illustrating (and in some cases correcting) the patterns described by Rice Rees for Michael and Mary, are complex and challenging. They probably reflect devotional patterns established over many centuries, especially in the case of Mary whose late-medieval cult in Wales was particularly strong.<sup>104</sup> The distribution seems to suggest nothing very clear about the period of initial introduction, though

<sup>102</sup> Rees seems to have used J. Ecton, *Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum*, 2nd edn revised by B. Willis (London, 1754). In adding dedications to Ecton’s lists Willis took the opportunity to revise some of the attributions he had published in 1733 (above, n. 38). It should be noted that such discrepancies arise not infrequently in the material: the summary maps do not mark the uncertainty that attends some individual cases.

<sup>103</sup> Orme, *English Church Dedications*. Post-Reformation alterations to dedications do not only involve the replacement of local saints by international ones. Magor in Monmouthshire was recorded as Mary by Willis (in both 1733 and 1754), a dedication which survives, but from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries it was dedicated to Leonard: R. Morgan, *Place-Names of Gwent* (Llanrwst, 2005), p. 146.

<sup>104</sup> Above, n. 23.

Rees argued that significant distinctions could be traced. He suggested that the great majority of Mary dedications were to be found in the east and south, the areas earliest conquered, whereas the Michael churches ‘do not crowd the English districts, but are dispersed over the country with greater regularity’.<sup>105</sup> Michael is certainly more prominent in the west Welsh strongholds from Carmarthenshire in the south to Caernarfonshire in the north, but the density of dedications to both saints in Anglesey, which also remained in Welsh hands until the Edwardian conquest of the 1280s, rather complicates the picture.

Beyond the simple distribution, however, Rees was able to add a number of telling points in support of his claim that dedications to Michael were as a class older than those in favour of Mary, and went back to the pre-Conquest period. As noted above, he examined the ecclesiastical status of the churches, and their relationship to known post-Conquest developments and foundations. Specifically, in the case of Michael he suggested that only two churches were urban, as compared with nearly thirty Mary dedications. He argued that Michael churches were more likely to be parochial, and to have more substantial parishes, with a higher number of subordinate chapels, than those dedicated to Mary. He found that some 31% of Mary churches were chapels, while the figure for Michael was lower at 22%. Whilst all these figures need modern reassessment in detail, it is likely that they are broadly trustworthy. Examination of the Anglesey churches, on the basis of the listings in Willis’s *Pariochiale Anglicanum* and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535,<sup>106</sup> suggests that if anything Rees underestimated his figures. He found ten dedications to Mary, of which no fewer than nine belonged to chapels and are therefore potentially secondary to earlier arrangements: I count eleven dedications and ten chapels.<sup>107</sup> Of the six churches dedicated to Michael, five (rather than Rees’s four) were likewise chapels.<sup>108</sup> Though in this case the contrast between the dedications to the two saints is not marked, the number of chapels involved here might help account for Anglesey’s strong representation on Maps 1 and 2. In Carmarthenshire the dedications were subjected to re-examination by W. N. Yates in the 1970s:<sup>109</sup> while some of his figures seem a little out of line

<sup>105</sup> Rees, *Essay*, pp. 32–3, 40.

<sup>106</sup> *Valor Ecclesiasticus, tempus Henr. VIII*, 6 vols (London, 1810–34).

<sup>107</sup> Rees missed Llanfair-yn-neubwll, a chapel of Rhoscolyn parish.

<sup>108</sup> Rees listed Penrhos, or Penrhosllugwy, as a parish, but Willis recorded it as a chapel of Llaneugrad.

<sup>109</sup> W. N. Yates, ‘Non-Celtic pre-Reformation church dedications in Carmarthenshire’, *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary* 8 (1972), 49–62; *idem.*, ‘The “Age of the Saints” in Carmarthenshire: a study of church dedications’, *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary* 9



and might themselves be usefully revisited, his conclusions that Mary churches were mostly small chapels, but that Michael was the dedicatee of a string of parish churches in the northern half of the county, appear consistent with Rees's suggestions.<sup>110</sup>

What Rees did not do, as we have noted, is examine the dates of attestation of his evidence, though had he done so he would have been generally encouraged. Of ten dedications to Mary attested before 1200, nine are clearly in areas of Anglo-Norman influence and most relate to towns (Monmouth, Cardiff, Kidwelly, Cardigan) or monastic foundations (Margam, St Dogmaels). Only Llanfair near Harlech in Merionethshire, visited by Giraldus Cambrensis in 1188, falls in 'Welsh Wales'. It might be tempting to associate it with the castle at Harlech, but it is recorded too early for that: Pryce argues, partly but not solely on the basis of the dedication, that Llanfair was carved in the twelfth century out of a large earlier unit dependent on Llandanwg.<sup>111</sup> Potentially the very earliest reference to a Mary dedication comes from a Llandaf charter attributed by Davies to the early tenth century.<sup>112</sup> She followed earlier scholars in identifying *Llanfair Pen-rhos* with Monmouth, but Coe points out that this is very uncertain,<sup>113</sup> and indeed it would conflict with the charter chronology since St Mary's in Monmouth is believed to be a Norman foundation. Though the site therefore remains unidentified, there is here a hint of a pre-Norman dedication to Mary in southern, probably south-eastern Wales.

Pre-1200 evidence for Michael is similarly largely concentrated in the south, with outliers in (eastern) mid-Wales at Trefeglwys in Montgomeryshire and Llanfihangel Nant Melan in Radnorshire. In this case the testimony of the Book of Llandaf is particularly striking: some ten distinct instances of 'Michael names' in the forms *Llanfihangel* or *Ecclesia Sancti Michaelis* are recorded in the core of the book, written in the late

(1973), 53–81; cf. also *idem.*, 'The distribution and proportion of Celtic and non-Celtic church dedications in Wales', *Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales* 23 (1973), 5–17. These potentially useful studies are rather vitiated by Yates's approach to chronological questions: in 'The distribution and proportion', p. 10, n. 8, he explained that in his counting he deliberately excluded earlier dedications now replaced, which significantly affects his figures and renders their historical value uncertain.

<sup>110</sup> 'Non-Celtic pre-Reformation church dedications', pp. 52–53.

<sup>111</sup> Pryce, 'The medieval church', p. 267.

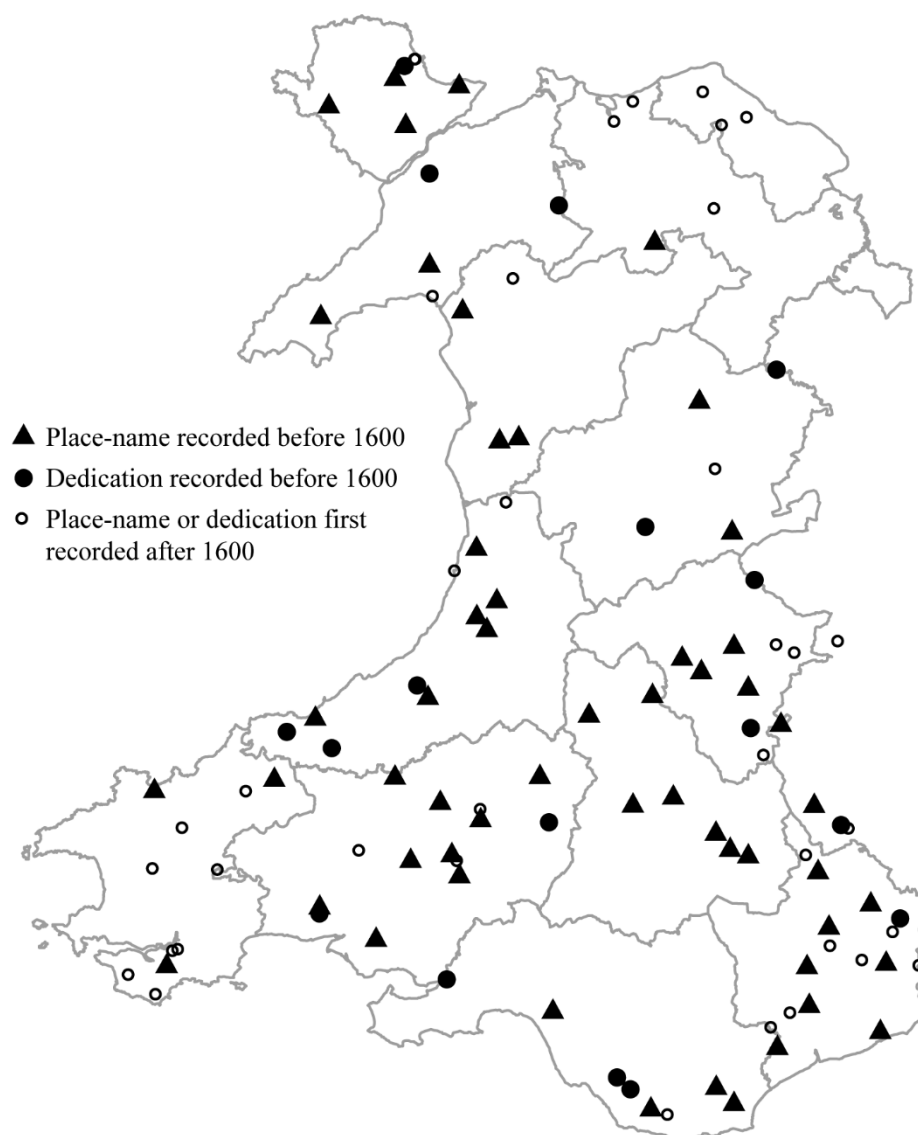
<sup>112</sup> *LL*, charter 231; Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, p. 191. The text of the charter reads *ecclesiam sanctę marię*, the rubric *Lann meiripenn Rós*.

<sup>113</sup> Coe, 'The place-names', p. 436.

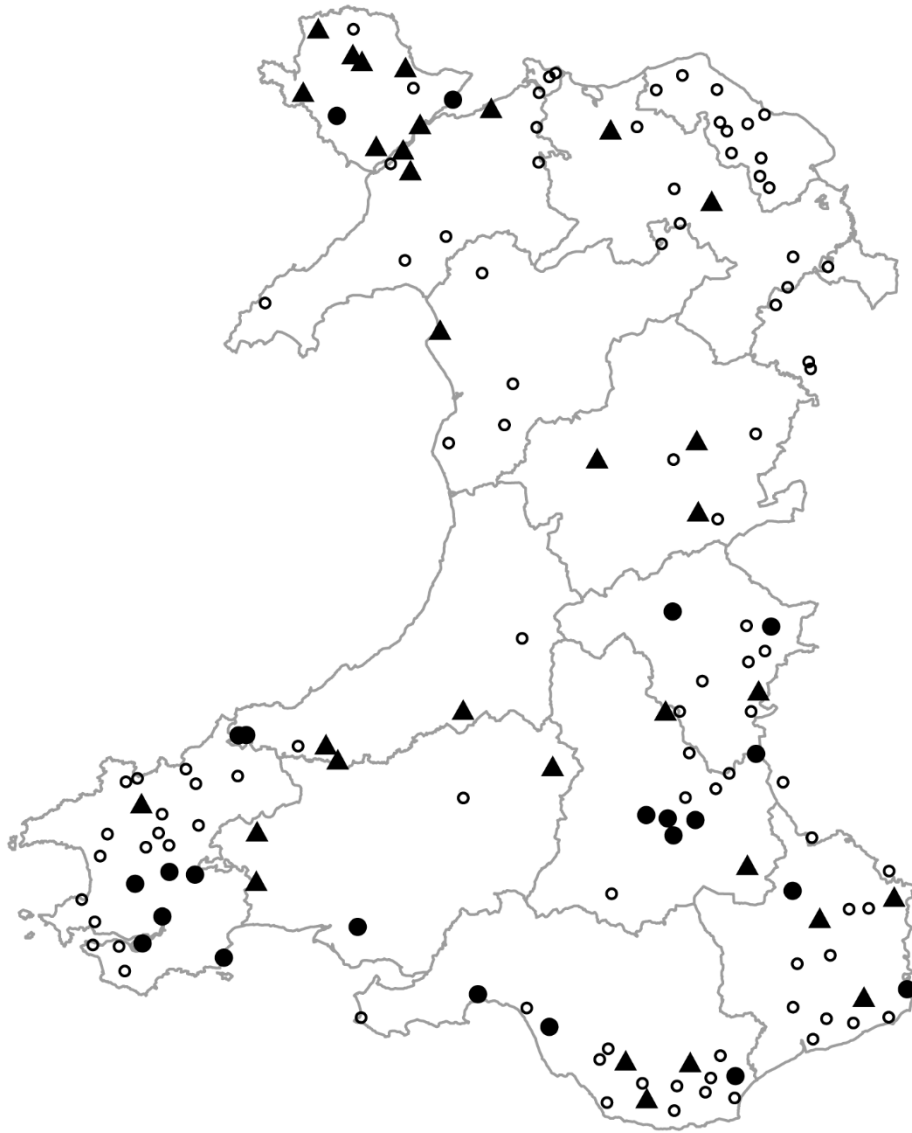
1120s, with a further five appearing in fourteenth-century additions.<sup>114</sup> Of the first group, three are found in charters putatively of the late tenth century.<sup>115</sup> It is fascinating that these are later than the earliest Mary dedication in the same book, and it may be significant for such a common name that none is found earlier in the charter sequence. On the other hand, the sheer number of Michael dedications in south-east Wales before 1130, in no case obviously referring to a post-Conquest establishment, is impressive.

<sup>114</sup> See the lists, with discussion of identifications, in Coe, 'The place-names', pp. 250–51, 394, 438–45, 510–12.

<sup>115</sup> *LL*, charters 240 (two instances), 244; Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, pp. 194, 125.



Map 1. Michael / Mihangel churches in Wales.



Map 2. Mary / Mair churches in Wales. (Key as in Map 1)



Map 3. Andrew churches in Wales. (Key as in Map 1)



Map 4. Martin churches in Wales. (Key as in Map 1)

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