

BRIDGING THE GAP: MARRIAGES BETWEEN WELSH AND ANGLO-NORMAN ARISTOCRACIES, 1066-1282

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Wales and England in the High Middle Ages could not have been more different. Each had its own languages, laws, and customs, and each saw the other as hostile and foreign. This is clearly reflected in the literature of the time, as the English and Anglo-Norman writers complained of Welsh barbarism, and the Welsh in turn complained of Anglo-Norman oppression. These two peoples were forced together directly after the Norman conquest of England in 1066, when the Normans began to aggressively act on their territorial ambitions throughout the entire island of Britain, so the Welsh and the Normans had to find ways to cope with each other in a way that was beneficial for both parties. One method that was frequently used as a political tool by both domains was marriage between their respective aristocratic families; these marriages were utilized by the Welsh in their attempts to preserve their political identity and independence against the incursions of the Anglo-Normans, and the Anglo-Normans used the marriages to gain land and influence in Wales. In other words, these marriages were meant to bridge the gap between the two people during a time when the Welsh were trying to affirm their political independence and when the Anglo-Normans were attempting to assert their own dominance in Wales.

Even though the Welsh were not often unified under a single political leader, they had laws, customs, and a language that distinguished them from the Anglo-Normans and that gave them a sense of unity. The Welsh were fully aware of their identity and had an acute sense of unity as a people despite their political fragmentations and local divisions; even outsiders referred to the Welsh as one country and acknowledged that they had their own unique language, laws, judgments, and customs.¹ The Welsh were also united by a conviction to defend the Welsh frontier at all costs, by a common mythology and literary tradition, and

by the name they adopted for themselves, *Cymry*, which highlighted their awareness of themselves as fellow countrymen.² Their common literary tradition is especially telling of their unity because Welsh poets and story-tellers drew on their uniform literary language and common mythology in order to express love for a beloved country.³ In his poem "From Exile," Dafydd Benfras (d. 1257) expressed his joy upon his return to his homeland: "To a Wales made one, contented and fair...where Welsh freely flows!"⁴

The medieval Welsh literary tradition also reflected the tensions between the Welsh and Anglo-Normans. In Welsh poetry, authors frequently expressed a desire to drive foreigners from their land, and from the early Middle Ages, there is evidence in Welsh literature of strong resentment for the foreigner, such as in the anonymous *Armes Prydain Fawr* (*The Great Prophecy of Britain*, tenth century). The poet includes a scathing attack of the English rule in Britain and the treachery of the English while prophesying an alliance of the Welsh, the Irish, and the men of Anglesey, Pictland, and Cornwall that will be led by the ancient heroes Cynan and Cadwaladr to drive the English out of their land.⁵ The theme of resentment towards the foreigner is continued in the poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as in Gwalchmai ap Meilyr's "Exultation" (1130-1180), which states that "They tremble, the English, before my blade" and "Gwalchmai I am called, foe of the Saxons... Against England a champion will not hide."⁶ It may seem strange that Gwalchmai refers to the Welsh fighting the Saxons, as the Welsh at this time were fighting the Anglo-Norman lords, but this phrasing was rhetorical device used by the poets of the time – called the *Gogynfeirdd* or *Beirdd Y Tywysogion* (Less Early Poets or Poets of the Princes), these poets incorporated ancient heroes and stories into their works, using their more glorious past to honor

the rulers of the present (who were also the poets' patrons).⁷ Thus, when Gwalchmai said that he was fighting the Saxons, he was using a historical occurrence that reflected the present Welsh struggle against the Anglo-Normans to express Welsh resentment against Anglo-Norman oppression. The major Welsh chronicle of the Middle Ages, *Brut Y Tywysogion* (*Chronicle of the Princes*, thirteenth century), also voices Welsh aggression against the Anglo-Normans throughout the work, saying that the Welsh were "unable to suffer [the Norman's] tyranny," and frequently states that the Welsh believed that the Normans wanted to "destroy all of the Britons [Welsh]."⁸

Anglo-Norman literature reciprocates these negative feelings, as it often depicts the Welsh as a barbarous group on the periphery of English society that was in constant rebellion and that should be subjugated by the kings of England. William of Malmesbury, an English Benedictine monk, frequently referred to the rebellious habits of the Welsh in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (*The History of the English Kings*), and how English kings such as Harold "reduced the whole of that barbarous country [Wales] to the status of a province owing allegiance to the king," and later said that King William I "had all the Welsh as tributaries."⁹ Similarly, the author of the *Gesta Stephani* stated that the peripheral Wales "breeds men of an animal type...volatile always in breaking their word," and said the Normans "perserveringly civilized [Wales]."¹⁰ These authors do acknowledge that the Welsh were hardy and persistent fighters, but this is only a negative aspect of their warlike nature, and was not viewed in a positive light. Walter Map, a Welshman by birth, but heavily influenced by his Anglo-Norman education and career in England, made satire out of the rage of the Welsh, telling his audience: "See how foolish and unreasonable is the wrath of these Welsh, and how swift they are to shed blood," and noted "the fierceness of their assault and the keenness of their resistance."¹¹ However, there is one exception to these voices of hostility: Matthew Paris. In his *Chronica Majora*, he recognizes that the Welsh were unwilling to accept English rule, that they were being "miserably oppressed," and that "their time-honored aristocratic pride fell into decline,"¹² a rare sympathetic voice from the English perspective. Unfortunately, we can only guess as to why he felt this way, but his account demonstrates that not all Anglo-Normans viewed the Welsh in a negative way, which may

have been why they were willing to make marital alliances with each other.

From an examination of these attitudes, it is surprising that the Welsh and Anglo-Normans would want to make marital alliances with each other. Wales could have made alliances with countries such as Ireland, who had their own similar battles against the Anglo-Normans, but the Welsh chose instead to make alliances with the people they professed to hate. Welsh historians such as R.R. Davies often comment upon the brilliant negotiations of Welshmen like Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, who made multiple marital alliances with the Anglo-Normans; Davies often states that Llywelyn knew just how to manipulate the politics of his time and location in order to successfully keep the Anglo-Normans at bay and create a (mostly) unified Welsh political body. Llywelyn may have forgone creating an alliance with Ireland (he abandoned plans to marry the daughter of the Irish king of Man) because he predicted that more advantages would come from a marriage alliance with his domineering neighbors. Such unions would allow him to better assert his supremacy over the other Welsh lords and princes by drawing power from the English crown and would create amicable relations with the people that were attempting to overthrow his power. Other Welsh lords may have seen similar advantages when arranging their own marriages with the Anglo-Norman aristocracy; Ireland might not have seemed like a viable option because of its political turmoil. This may have weakened Ireland in the eyes of the Welsh, so the Welsh might not have wanted to make alliances with a country that lacked the necessary strength to help them beat back the Anglo-Normans. Even though the Welsh ruler Gruffudd ap Cynan (d. 1137) was actually born in Ireland of an Irish-Scandinavian mother and used Irish troops to try and take back Gwynedd, this appears to be one of the last major cooperations between the Welsh and the Irish in the Middle Ages.¹³ Additionally, when Owain Gwynedd (d. 1170) married Cristin, the daughter of Gronw ab Owain of Ireland, Cristin and her children were viewed with contempt by the Welsh.¹⁴ Thus, the Welsh decided to make marital alliances with their Anglo-Norman neighbors.

This being said, the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans both expressed their views towards marriage in their respective literary traditions. These literature sources were works of fiction and were often highly stylized and exaggerated, so they do not truly represent how marriage was contracted,

but they can at least give strong hints as to how people of the time viewed marriage. Welsh poetry in the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries did not define or discuss marriage, but did have works dedicated to women, such as Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd's "In Praise of Fair Women." This and other poems with similar themes exalt the beauty and grace of women and their unattainable nature.¹⁵ Also, because Hywel did not mention marrying any of these women, it may indicate an acceptance of extramarital affairs in Welsh society. Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr (The Great Poet) also dedicated poems to women, such as "To A Girl" and "A Love Poem for Efa", in which he tells how he was rejected by many beautiful Welsh women.¹⁶ These poems all demonstrate that Welsh women were able, to some extent, choose the men they associated themselves with, in marriage or otherwise. These poems also briefly mention the lineages of the men's prospective women, which shows how the Welsh put great stock in arranging marriages with people of noble and worthy families. Welsh prose also reflects this concern, such as in *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, which were mythological stories that included frequent references to marriage.¹⁷ For instance, in the tale of Culhwch and Olwen, the protagonist Culhwch needs to prove his worth to the father of the woman he wants to have for his wife,¹⁸ which demonstrates that the prospective husband needed the father's permission to marry the daughter, and also that the worth of the prospective partners was taken into consideration before the marriage was contracted.

Anglo-Norman literature from this time displayed a similar concern about the practicality of marriage. Neil Cartlidge, a prominent scholar of medieval literature, argued that the authors of this time sought to define marriage as a contract between two individuals and emphasized the fundamental place of marriage in the social order.¹⁹ For example, in *Le Petit Plet* by Chardri, the younger man in the story said that men should exercise caution when choosing a wife and to not be blinded by a prospective bride's wealth, which demonstrates Anglo-Norman society's perception of marriage as business-like and the necessity of marriage as a functional unit of society.²⁰ Similarly, the *Chanson de Saint Alexis* (found in the St. Alban's Psalter) presented marriage as a business arrangement and emphasized the importance of the bond between husband and wife.²¹ Because marriage was so fundamental to the social order, works such as the

anonymous debate poem *The Owl and the Nightingale* condemned adultery because it endangered the important inter-familial ties that a marriage created – the nightingale stated a person should not come in between a man and his wife because it was an offense to the social order.²² Furthermore, the bird denounces clandestine marriage because the practice gave unmarried women a convenient way to save themselves from shame if they were caught having a love affair with an unmarried man, thereby damaging carefully constructed marriage plans and eradicating any pre-determined advantages that could have come from the marriage.²³

With these practical uses of marriage in mind, the Welsh and the Anglo-Norman aristocracies decided to make marriage alliances between their families. While there is some evidence of the benefits that came from these partnerships, the exact reasons for their unions can only be estimated due to the lack of sources. Nevertheless, it appears that the first phase of these marriages began in the late eleventh century, during which time Normans (mainly from the Welsh march) contracted marriages with Welsh aristocracy to gain additional land and influence in territory they wanted to rule. The Welsh agreed to the alliances because these marriages brought influence and powerful alliances in England and in the march of Wales, and allowed them to more fully secure their land holdings in the volatile march. Wales at this time did not possess much military or political strength because their political unity had fragmented with the death of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ("King of all Wales") in 1063, making them more vulnerable to the Anglo-Normans' aggressive territorial ambitions.²⁴ Therefore, the weakened Welsh used the marriage alliances to help them cope with their hostile Anglo-Norman neighbors. One such union was between Nest ferch Gruffudd ap Llewelyn and Osbern Fitz Richard Fitz Scrop, lord of Richard's Castle and Byton in Shropshire (see Chart 1).²⁵ Osbern was one of the first Normans to come to the Welsh march, so a marriage with the daughter of the man who had been the "King of All Wales" most likely appeared advantageous to him. From this union, he could inherit land that Gruffudd once held to extend his reach farther into Wales and hopefully ensure peaceful relations with this Welsh family in the future. Additionally, one of their daughters married Bernard Neufmarche, another marcher baron, probably for similar reasons.

Another Nest, the daughter of Rhys ap

Tewdwr, was married to Gerald of Windsor, the first constable of the castle at Pembroke, and a close companion of marcher lord Arnulf Montgomery (see Chart 2).²⁶ Rhys ap Tewdwr, called "King of Deheubarth," was one of the most powerful Welsh leaders of his time until his death in 1093, so a marriage alliance with Gerald meant that each family could draw on each other's strengths in their respective territories, and they theoretically would have to worry about one less family attacking their lands. Additionally, Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, a prince of Powys, married the daughter of Picot de Sai, who held lands in Shropshire and was a vassal of the earl of Shrewsbury in the late eleventh century (see Chart 3).²⁷ Cadwgan at this time was fighting his brothers for their share of his father's inheritance, so this marriage eradicated one less ambitious marcher baron for Cadwgan to be concerned about while he battled his brothers, and was advantageous for the Sai family because they would be able to gain land in Wales through this connection. However, as the Anglo-Normans were the dominant power in Wales during this time, this set of marriages provided more benefits for the Anglo-Normans in terms of land, and the Welsh agreed to the marriages because they saw these new partnerships as a means of survival in the face of Anglo-Norman domination, utilizing any advantage they could find in order to protect their territory. However, the marriages did not necessarily prevent conflict, as the Welsh/English border continued to fluctuate into the twelfth century.

The weakened state of the Welsh at this time also gave rise to a new period of Welsh literature that paralleled Wales' need for marital alliances; almost no literature was produced from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries because the political strength of the Welsh was greatly reduced at this time.²⁸ As the *Gogynfeirdd* were closely connected to Welsh rulers, the weakness of Welsh leaders meant that the poets did not have many outstanding leaders to glorify or write about since their homeland and leaders were being veritably crushed by Anglo-Norman invaders (and as noted above, much of what they did produce was included strong themes of resentment towards the Anglo-Normans). Thus, the political strength of the Welsh was directly related to the production of their literature as well as to their utilization of political marriages with the Anglo-Norman aristocracy.

The next phase of Welsh and Anglo-Norman marriages began with the death of King Henry I

in 1135, which plunged England into the chaos of a succession dispute and civil war. Because the Anglo-Normans were now more concerned about their existing holdings in England than expansion into Wales, the Welsh were able to recover much of their former independence and territory as the Normans withdrew from Wales. This process included a change in marital strategies, and the Welsh made alliances with other Welsh nobles instead of with Anglo-Norman lords. For example, the powerful Lord Rhys of Deheubarth (d. 1197), made many marriage alliances with with the families of Gwynedd in order to consolidate and fortify his existing powers and land holdings in Deheubarth.²⁹ Similarly, the Anglo-Norman marcher lords sought marriage alliances among other marcher families in order to consolidate and fortify their existing land holdings in the march rather than in Wales.³⁰ This phase of Welsh history also had a parallel development in Welsh literature, as the Welsh had gained back much of their former political strength and because their leaders were gaining power, there was a revival of poetry because the *Gogynfeirdd* now had more material to build into their poetry. As a result, there were many more poems written and preserved in manuscripts from this time.³¹

However, the literature of the next phase of Welsh history, beginning with the ascension of King Henry II to the English throne in 1154 and the restoration of order in England, had a grimmer outlook, and much less poetry was produced.³² Because the English state was now politically stable, there was a resurgence of Anglo-Norman aggression in Wales, and because the Welsh most likely realized that it would be more difficult to stop Anglo-Norman advances this time, there was an underlying unease expressed in the poets' works.³³ This new period of literature paralleled the final (and longest) phase of marriages between Wales and England. Breaking with the previous phase's tradition of marrying with other Welsh families, the ruling houses of Wales began to marry into Anglo-Norman families again; however, these marriages were made with different goals in mind for both the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans. The Welsh now had increased political and military power that enabled them to more successfully resist Anglo-Norman incursions. Because the Anglo-Normans were rising in power as well, the Welsh used these marriage alliances to counteract and absorb the new stronger Anglo-Norman advances. The Anglo-Normans complied with the Welsh if they saw land and influence

benefits in the marriage for themselves, but were also able to control the formation of some of these marriages for the same purposes.

The first of these marriages were arranged for the children of the Lord Rhys, who had previously made numerous alliances with other Welsh families, but was now changing tactics; his son Gruffudd was married to Matilda de Braose sometime between 1154 and 1189, and his daughters were married to leading Norman lords of Cemais in Dyfed (marcher territory) (see Chart 2).³⁴ Lord Rhys, having a strong foothold in Deheubarth and calling himself the "prince of the Southern Welsh," arranged these marriages to extend his influence beyond Wales into marcher territory and to secure the eastern flank of his kingdom.³⁵ However, these alliances did not bring permanent security, as Deheubarth lost much of its power and influence after the death of Lord Rhys, power that his children were not able to fully recover due to the rise of Gwynedd's hegemony. For instance, one of Lord Rhys' grandsons, Maelgwn Fychan, was even forced to marry the daughter of marcher lord Gilbert Marshal, who took advantage of the weakness of Deheubarth in order to gain more territory and influence for himself.³⁶ Deheubarth also saw a decrease of significant marriages between their ruling family and the Anglo-Normans, as there were only a few unions contracted with the Braose, Hastings, and Clare families of the march in the thirteenth century.

The region of Powys had a similar situation to Deheubarth's later years of weakness; the heirs of its ruling family were constantly fighting over their father's lands, and they were politically the weakest area in Wales. Even Powys' strongest ruler, Gwenwynwyn ap Owain Cyfeilog of Southern Powys, was either a pawn of King John or of the house of Gwynedd.³⁷ Thus, the ruling families of Powys were less attractive marriage partners, but Powys' natural assets still drew in the Anglo-Normans for marital alliances. Powys had access to the markets of Chester and Shropshire and its land served as a buffer between the march and Gwynedd, which the Anglo-Normans hoped to benefit from through marriages with the nobility of Powys.³⁸ The families of Powys also had their own reasons for marrying into Anglo-Norman families: they recognized that they needed to survive the incursions of Anglo-Normans and other Welsh families, so Powys' rulers decided to join the side that they most likely perceived as the stronger power, the Anglo-Normans (they even went so

far as to mimic Anglo-Norman customs).³⁹ When King John allied with Gwenwynwyn of Southern Powys against Gwynedd in the late twelfth century, Gwenwynwyn married Margaret Corbet (see Chart 3), demonstrating that he had abandoned his aggressions towards the march by his new union with the Anglo-Normans.⁴⁰ Gwenwynwyn acted as an intermediary in the negotiations between Wales and England until about 1200, when he fell from royal favor.⁴¹ Thus, any benefits he gained from his marriage with the Anglo-Norman aristocracy were as temporary as his alliance with King John.

Later marriages in Southern Powys dealt with gaining alliances against a particular marcher family, the Corbets. Gwenwynwyn had married Margaret Corbet, but his son Gruffudd married Hawisa Lestrangle circa 1242 (see Chart 3), which aligned him against the Corbets, who had a land dispute with the Lestranges and with Gruffudd himself.⁴² Gruffudd then married his daughter to an enemy of the Corbets, Fulk Fitz Warin's son, from which Gruffudd gained the allegiance of the Fitz Warin family against the Corbets.⁴³ However, when King Henry III gave a portion of Gruffudd's territory to the Corbets, and then ordered Gruffudd to join forces with the Lestranges, Corbets, and other marchers, Gruffudd switched his loyalties to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd and subsequently plundered the Corbet's lands.⁴⁴ These actions demonstrate how Gruffudd used his marriage with the Lestrangle family in his land dispute against the Corbets in order to preserve the land that should have been passed down to him by his father, but also shows that the marriage alliance with the Lestranges did not help him retain his land as he had anticipated. Similarly, Gruffudd Maelor of Bromfield and Northern Powys married Emma Audley (see Chart 3), whose family was engaged in constant hostilities with Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, so this marriage was most likely made to support the claims of the family of Northern Powys over the claims of the family of Southern Powys.⁴⁵

The regions of Powys and Deheubarth pale in comparison to the political maneuvering of Gwynedd in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Gwynedd's marriages with Anglo-Normans were revived with the union of Owain Gwynedd's brother Cadwaladr and a Norman lady (most likely of the Clare family) in the late twelfth century (see Chart 4), which was created to help secure Gwynedd's influence in Ceredigion where the Clare

family held some power.⁴⁶ The next marriage was contracted as a result of the good behavior of Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd; by refraining from taking advantage of the instability of King Henry II's reign in 1172-73, Henry II allowed Dafydd to marry his half-sister Emma of Anjou in 1174, which came with the lordship of Ellesmere and gave Dafydd substantial prestige.⁴⁷ However, despite his royal connections, Dafydd was eventually overpowered by his nephew, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1197, so the benefits of his union again were transient.

With his growing power, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was able to forge his own connections with the royalty of England beginning with his marriage to Joan, the illegitimate daughter of King John in 1205 (see Chart 4). This maneuver served Llywelyn's ultimate goal of controlling the entirety of Wales because the union brought him the manors of Ellesmere and Shropshire and gave him amplified influence in the royal court of England.⁴⁸ It also helped to legitimize his own power because he was the only Welsh ruler at the time to have marital connections with the royal English family, giving him an advantage over his rivals. John most likely believed that this connection could give him more control over the man who was trying to completely free Wales from English control. This goal was partially realized when Joan took actions to benefit her father, such as when she allegedly warned John about a rebellious conspiracy among his barons in which Llywelyn was involved (1212),⁴⁹ but she also proved useful for her husband. In 1211 the Welsh chronicle records that Llywelyn sent Joan to King John "to make peace between [Llywelyn] and the king on whatsoever terms she could."⁵⁰ However, the marriage did not create a cessation of hostilities between England and Wales, and Llywelyn and John were constantly at odds with each other, so the only permanent benefits derived from the marriage were those of land acquisitions.

Llywelyn continued his policy of marriages with Anglo-Normans and married all of his legitimate children into marcher families (Braose, Mortimer, Clifford, Lacy) to gain support of the marcher lords and to better secure his own position in Wales. Some of these marriages provided military aid for Llywelyn, such as the marriage of his daughter Gwladys to Reginald de Braose (see Chart 4), who gave Llywelyn military support against King John in 1215, but this alliance did not last; two years later, Reginald gave his allegiance to King Henry III in exchange for the return of his family lands.

Llywelyn's son and heir Dafydd also married into the Braose family through his union with Isabella de Braose in the early 1230s, which Llywelyn hoped would create peace and stability with the Braose family in order to more fully secure a peaceful succession in Gwynedd, but the union also came with the added land benefits of the lordship of Builth for Dafydd.⁵¹

However, Gwynedd's supremacy dwindled with the death of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, and his son Dafydd was not able to fully recover his father's dominance despite the measures that Llywelyn had gone through to secure a stable succession. Gwynedd would not recover the superiority it once held over Wales until the rise of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's grandson, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. As the prince of Wales (*princeps Wallie*), Llywelyn was constantly battling the English crown for independent political control of Wales, a goal that greatly influenced his political and marital decisions. He sought to marry Eleanor de Montfort, daughter of the late Simon de Montfort (see Chart 4), who had led the baronial revolt against King Henry III from 1264 until his defeat and death in 1265. Llywelyn had been Montfort's ally in the baronial revolt, during which time the agreement of the future marriage of Llywelyn and Eleanor was most likely made, and even though Simon was killed, Llywelyn still wanted to make an alliance with Simon's family because Simon had opposed what he and Llywelyn both saw as the tyrannous practices of England's royalty. Thus, Llywelyn hoped that this marriage could help him escape being subjected to the English king, especially since England had recently imposed humiliations on the Welsh.⁵² Eleanor was also the niece of King Henry III, which fulfilled Llywelyn's desire to marry someone connected to the king of England as Llywelyn's grandfather had done with Joan, for the union's political benefits.⁵³ There had also been a recent attempt on Llywelyn's life by his brother Dafydd and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Southern Powys, and Llywelyn had also failed to do homage to King Edward I multiple times in the 1270s, which provoked Edward into renewing the English military campaign against the Welsh in 1277. Therefore, Llywelyn felt threatened enough to make arrangements to more fully stabilize his position in Wales. The Montfort family no doubt saw this marriage as an opportunity to slight the English king for the brutal slaying of Simon de Montfort.

However, King Edward I wanted to prevent

the creation of this alliance because he knew it would be a great danger to his power if Llywelyn and the Montforts regained their strength, so Edward had Eleanor and her brother captured on their way from France to Wales in 1275 and kept them captive until 1278, all the while steadily depriving Welsh rulers of their authority with the campaign mentioned above. After Llywelyn agreed to a cessation of hostilities with Edward, Edward allowed the couple to marry, but made it clear that he was the dominant force behind the marriage. The wedding took place on the feast of St. Edward in an English cathedral (Worcester), and Edward gave the bride away as well as paying for the entire affair, making sure that Llywelyn knew his position as vassal of the king.⁵⁴ Whatever Llywelyn's intentions were for this marriage, it appeared that the union would bring no immediate benefits to Wales in terms of gaining independence from the English crown.

Unfortunately for Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was killed in December of 1282, and Edward I swiftly asserted his control in the power vacuum left by Llywelyn's death, making sure to imprison or kill the remaining members of the house of Gwynedd that could have started a rebellion to undermine his power, truly crushing any independence that the Welsh had from Anglo-Norman control. This sparked a brief revival Welsh poetry – two laments written by *Gogynfeirdd* express the sorrow of losing the last independent ruler of Wales and the subsequent takeover by the English king. Gruffudd ab Yr Ynad Coch in his "Lament"

says "Mine now to rage against Saxons who've wronged me, Mine for this death bitterly to mourn, Mine, with good cause, to cry protest to God who has left me without him..." and calls Llywelyn "A lord all-triumphant...No Saxon dared touch him, a Lord of all Wales."⁵⁵ Similarly, Bleddyn Fardd in his "Elegy" says that "Great Wales has lost her most manly of princes...Man who was killed for us, who ruled over all, Man who ruled Wales..."⁵⁶

Even though the Welsh attempted to assert their political independence from England through marriages with the nobility and royalty of England, the marriages brought no permanent advantages to the Welsh. Some of these marital alliances temporarily allowed the Welsh to consolidate their power in Wales and to gain land in the march, but loyalties always shifted if either party found a more advantageous arrangement, destroying whatever benefits or security that may have come from the marriages. Other such marriages did not give the Welsh any advantages at all, such as in Powys, where the families were the pawns of the more powerful houses of Wales and England. In addition, the amount of force that England was using to penetrate into Welsh territory directly affected to the amount of marriages that were created between the two regions. This political fluctuation was reflected in the varying production of High Medieval Welsh literature because the poetry was inextricably linked to the success and failures of Welsh leaders. Therefore, as evidenced by these marital alliances and medieval Welsh literature, the political situation in Wales was at the mercy of the politics of England, a reality that even marital alliances could not change.

Marriage Charts

Chart 1 – Miscellaneous

Gruffudd ap Llywelyn

Nest = Osbern Fitz Richard Fitz Scrop

Nest = Bernard Neufmarche

Chart 2 – Deheubarth

Rhys ap Tewdwr

Nest = Gerald of Windsor

The Lord Rhys

Gruffudd = Matilda de Braose

Maelgwn Fychan = dau. of Gilbert Marshal

Chart 3 – Powys

Cadwgan ap Bleddyn = unnamed dau. of Picot de Sai

Gwenwynwyn ap Owain Cyfeilog of Southern Powys = Margaret Corbet

Gruffudd = Hawisa Lestrangle

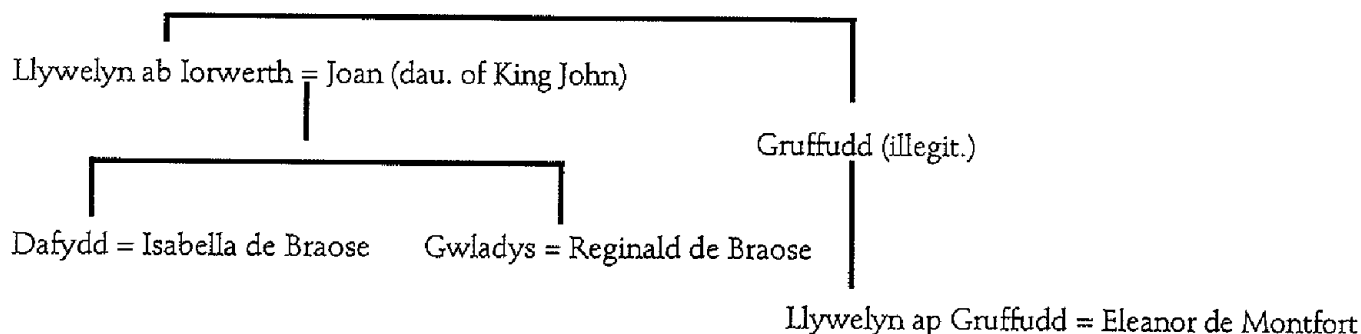
unnamed dau. = son of Fulk Fitz Warin

Gruffudd Maelor of Bromfield and Northern Powys = Emma Audley

Chart 4 – Gwynedd

Cadwaladr (brother of Owain Gwynedd) = unnamed Anglo-Norman lady

Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd = Emma of Anjou (sister of King Henry II)



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