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Anarawd *ap* Rhodri

(d. 916)

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Anarawd *ap* Rhodri (d. 916), king in Wales, was the son of Rhodri Mawr and Angharad ferch Meurig of Ceredigion. With the division of political power in north Wales on Rhodri's death at English hands in 878, later medieval sources credited Anarawd with either Powys or (more accurately) Gwynedd. He is often regarded as the eldest of Rhodri's male offspring, and therefore the natural heir to the regions of Gwynedd and Anglesey. The contemporary reference in the 'Nennian' recension of the *Historia Brittonum* calls Anarawd 'rex Monie' ('King of Anglesey') about 907–8. Whether his power extended eastwards into Powys (which may have come under Rhodri's control in 854–5) and southwards into Ceredigion (likewise in 872) is not clear.

In 881 the sons of Rhodri Mawr fought the battle of Conwy, also known as the 'avenging of Rhodri', which implies both that it was directed against the same (English) foe who slew Rhodri and that Anarawd and his brothers were victorious. Later Welsh genealogies state that the battle was fought against 'Edryd Long Hair, king of England', possibly Æthelred, ealdorman of Mercia. The sons of Rhodri Mawr did not content themselves with fighting the English but also continued their father's policy of expansion within Wales. In his *Life of King Alfred* Asser states that predatory attacks by Anarawd and his brother had forced Hyfaidd ap Bleddri of Dyfed and Elise ap Tewdwr of Brycheiniog to seek the protection of the West Saxon king. This is thought to have occurred by the mid-890s, when Anarawd also formed an alliance with Guthfrith I, ruler of the Scandinavian kingdom of York. This Scandinavian alliance lasted until about 893 when Anarawd, allegedly having obtained no benefit from it, sought out Alfred in person. To secure their consequent alliance Alfred stood sponsor to Anarawd at confirmation while, according to Asser, Anarawd subjected himself 'with all his people' to Alfred's lordship.

In 895 it was with English (though not necessarily West Saxon) help that Anarawd raided Ceredigion and Ystrad Tywi. The nature of this raid is unclear. Ceredigion had probably been under the control of Gwynedd since 872 and is often attributed to Anarawd's brother Cadell at this point. Perhaps Cadell (or another brother) had rejected Anarawd's alliance with Wessex, causing both allies to take aggressive action against him. Alternatively it has been suggested that Ceredigion had come under Scandinavian control, though there

is no evidence to substantiate this. In 892, according to Welsh chronicles, vikings from Ireland had 'come to Gwynedd' and two years later, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, vikings had entered Wales from the Wirral but 'were unable to stay there'. However, there is no need to link either of these events to Anarawd's attack in 895. Anarawd's kingdom suffered further Scandinavian raids. In 903 the viking Ingimund (probably from Dublin) arrived on Anglesey where he took control of the area called Maes Yswaelion, in the east of the island. He was eventually beaten by the Welsh, probably under Anarawd's leadership, and moved eastwards to Chester. Anarawd's brother Merfyn was killed by vikings or 'by his own people' (perhaps Anarawd) in 904 and Cadell died in 911, though whether Anarawd benefited politically from these fraternal deaths is not apparent. He ruled for a further five years, dying in 916, as far as we can tell from natural causes. His two known sons were Idwal Foel and Elise; Welsh genealogies also name a more shadowy Meurig. Idwal Foel succeeded Anarawd in the kingship of Gwynedd.

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