MAREDDUDD AB OWAIN (d. 999):
THE MOST FAMOUS KING OF THE WELSH

Maredudd ab Owain dominated the Welsh political scene in the last
decade and a half of the tenth century and, as far as can be determined,
extended his influence over the greater part of Wales, with the apparent
exception of the kingdoms of the south-east. However, despite his
evident contemporary importance, Maredudd remains a relatively
obscure figure: in contrast to his more renowned grandfather, Hywel
dda, or his ancestor, Rhodri Mawr, Maredudd’s name and deeds will
not be readily familiar, except to those with a special interest in early
medieval Welsh history. Thus, for instance, J. E. Lloyd (who of course
was not unaware of Maredudd’s historical significance) dealt with
Maredudd in a single paragraph in his History of Wales but devoted over
ten pages to Hywel; and generally historians have followed his example
in paying little attention to Maredudd.1 These statements are to some
extent misleading. The medieval Welsh chroniclers clearly recognized
Maredudd’s importance and they described him as y dotuorussaf vrenhin
y Brytanyeit, ‘the most famous [or ‘praiseworthy’] king of the Britons’.2

1 J. E. Lloyd, A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian
Conquest (3rd edn, 2 vols, London, 1939), pp. 333–43 (Hywel), 346 (Maredudd);
Lloyd had previously written an article on Maredudd ab Owain for the Dictionary
of National Biography, XII, 1015. The most recent treatment of Maredudd is the
scattered passages in K. L. Maund, Ireland, Wales, and England in the Eleventh
article on Maredudd in the NewDNB is forthcoming.

2 Brut y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes. [R[ed] B[ook of Hergest
Version]., ed. and trans. Thomas Jones (2nd edn, Cardiff, 1973), s.a. [999]; Brut y
Tywysogion. Peniarth MS. 20, ed. idem (Cardiff, 1941), and Brut y Tywysogion or
998 = 999; Brut y Tywysogion or The Kings of the Saxons. BM Cotton MS.
Cleopatra B.v and The Black Book of Basingwerk NLW MS. 7006], ed. and trans.
dem (Cardiff, 1971), s.a. 998 = 999. The Latin chronicles merely describe Maredudd as
rex.
Furthermore, as should be evident from the narrative below, the chronicles contain a relatively large number of references to Maredudd for the comparatively short period of time during which he was politically active, which contrast with the two brief notices of Hywel Dda. In this light, it is perhaps interesting to note that the greater part of Lloyd’s discussion of Hywel is concerned with his regular visits to the English court (pp. 335–7) and his alleged promulgation of Welsh laws (pp. 338–42). The interpretation of these two activities has come under more recent revision: on the one hand, historians are now less inclined to accept blindly the claim made in the prologues to the laws that Hywel was responsible for their promulgation while, on the other, it has been argued that his visits to England were made under compulsion from the more powerful English kings. Indeed, the fact that Maredudd does not appear to have been so compelled may be a reflection either of the strength of his own position or of the relatively weaker position of the contemporary Æthelred ‘the Unready’ vis-à-vis the likes of Athelstan. Furthermore, the period during which Maredudd’s rule extended to both north and south Wales (possibly 988–99) was longer than that of Hywel (943–9/50) — though, as we shall see below, his power in both areas did not go unchallenged and some historians have disputed his control of the north in particular. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is re-consider Maredudd ab Owain in order, to some extent, to redress the balance of assessment. Such an analysis must, to a large extent, remain fragmented and involve a degree of speculation: despite the relatively large number of notices of Maredudd in the chronicles, in absolute terms we have very little information about him. Furthermore, what we do have is mostly brief and vague. In some instances, individuals cannot be readily identified, which affects how we interpret their relations with Maredudd. Also, in cases where more than one event is recorded for a given year, there is always the temptation to suggest a causal or other connection between them; but this can be misleading as a year was certainly a long time in medieval Welsh politics and there need be no direct link between such events.

3 On these two points, for example, see David Kirby, ‘Hywel Dda: anglophil?’, Welsh History Review, 8 (1976/77), 1–13; Huw Pryce, ‘The prologues to the Welsh lawbooks’, Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, 33 (1986), 151–87.
We begin by considering the genealogical background of Maredudd ab Owain. Maredudd was the son of Owain ap Hywel, who had ruled the kingdom of Dyfed (or perhaps more properly by this period, Deheubarth)\(^4\) from the early 950s until his death in 988. Owain’s father, Hywel Dda — who had married into the Dimetian ruling line and subsequently became established there — had asserted his power over Gwynedd and other parts of north Wales on the death of Idwal Foel in 942/3, but Owain and his brothers had failed to retain these northern regions following their father’s death in 949/50. As we shall see, Maredudd’s own interest in the north must therefore be set against the background of the events of the early 950s. According to late and unreliable genealogies, Maredudd’s mother was Angharad ferch Llywelyn ap Merfyn ap Rhodri Mawr.\(^5\) However, this link with Merfyn ap Rhodri Mawr has been regarded as a means of justifying retrospectively the Powysian associations of Maredudd’s descendant Bleddyn ap Cynfyn,\(^6\) and may therefore have no historical significance for Maredudd himself. Our knowledge of Maredudd’s offspring is limited essentially to his daughters, Angharad and Lleucu, and his subsequent genealogical significance rests primarily on them.\(^7\) Angharad’s two sons, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ap Seisyll (d. 1063) and the aforementioned Bleddyn ap Cynfyn (d. 1075), were both eleventh-century Welsh dynasts of importance, though any genealogical basis of their power (through the female line) — and indeed these very genealogical connections themselves — are not beyond suspicion. As a major ruler in his day whose own direct male descendants were of no importance, Maredudd would naturally have been a prime target for genealogical grafting by aspirant dynasts or (retrospectively) by their descendants. However, Angharad is also named in the vernacular chronicles, so it is

\(\text{\textsuperscript{4}}\) I use Deheubarth (\textit{dextra\textit{lis} pars 
\textit{Britanniae}) here in the later medieval sense of the south-west regions of Dyfed, Ceredigion and Ystrad Tywi, rather than south Wales as a whole: see Lloyd, \textit{HW}, I, 256; II, 501.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\) \textit{E\textup{arly W\textup{elsh} G\textup{enealogical T\textup{racts}}, ed. P. C. Bartum (Cardiff, 1966), p. 141; Lewis Dwnn, \textit{Heraldic Visitations of Wales, ed. S. R. Meyrick (2 vols, Llandovery, 1846), II, 53, 99.}


\(\text{\textsuperscript{7}}\) Maund, \textit{Ireland}, pp. 18–19.
more likely that her unions were historical.⁸ In addition, Lleucu ferch Maredudd is said to have been, through her own daughter Angharad ferch Llawr, the ancestress of Hywel ap Goronwy, who achieved some prominence from 1102 until his death in 1106.

Maredudd had at least one son, Cadwallon, who predeceased his father and is not known to have had any sons himself.⁹ Indeed, this lack of politically potent direct male heirs has no doubt contributed to Maredudd's relative obscurity. It is not impossible that he had at least two other sons but the evidence for both is untrustworthy. For example, according to some late and unreliable genealogies, he had a son named Rhys who was father of Aron Fraich Hir, but he may well have been the creation of later genealogists.¹⁰ Of more interest is the Reyn Scottus or Rein Yscot, 'Rhin the Irishman', who according to the Welsh chronicles appeared (presumably from Ireland) in 1022 claiming to be Maredudd's son and succeeded in establishing himself in Deheubarth, apparently with the approval of the southern Welsh, until he was defeated at Abergwili by Llywelyn ap Seisyll of Gwynedd later in the same year.¹¹ The vernacular Brutiau give longer and 'more literary' accounts of Rhain's deeds than do their Latin counterparts and are even more explicit in rejecting his claim to be a son of Maredudd ab Owain. In turn, modern historians have generally dismissed the claim, but it certainly merits some detailed consideration.¹² For a reconstruction of the genealogy of Maredudd's immediate relatives (including his

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⁸ ByT (RB), s.a. 1113 = 1116; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 1113 = 1116; ByS, s.a. 1113 = 1116. Note also P. C. Bartrum, 'Rhandiroedd Powys', National Library of Wales Journal, 18 (1973/4), 231-7 (p. 232).

⁹ For Maredudd's children, see Bartrum, EWGT, pp. 47, 101.


¹¹ AC (B); AC (C); ByT (RB) [1022]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 1020 = 1022; ByS, s.a. 1020 = 1022.

¹² For some discussion, see Thomas Jones, 'Historical writing in medieval Welsh', Scottish Studies, 12 (1968), 15-27 (pp. 25-7); and more recently, Seán Duffy, 'Ostmen, Irish and Welsh in the eleventh century', Peritia: Journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland, 9 (1995), 378-96 (pp. 382-3). I hope to re-consider the origins of Rhain in detail elsewhere.
The genealogy of Maredudd ab Owain and related dynasts named in this paper
(Dubious identifications indicated by ?)
alleged offspring) and of his north Welsh rivals mentioned in the following discussion, see the diagram supplied after the Appendix.  

Before surveying what is known of the life and reign of Maredudd ab Owain, it is worth considering briefly why the thirteenth-century Welsh chroniclers described him as ‘the most famous king of the Britons’. Maredudd is particularly notable in perhaps two regards. First, there is the fact that, like his grandfather Hywel Dda, his rule extended into both north and south Wales. However, while Maredudd may have controlled Gwynedd and dependant northern regions from 986 and Deheubarth from 988 until his death in 999, some scholars have suggested that his control of the north only lasted for a few years at most. The terse nature of the chronicle sources means that, to some extent, both interpretations are possible and neither is entirely impossible. We shall review the relevant material in detail below. Maredudd was also notable for his dealings with the Vikings who dominated the Irish Sea region during the late tenth century. Viking activity during this period was extensive, and the roll-call of ecclesiastical sites within Maredudd’s territories which were sacked is impressive. In 987 Anglesey was severely hit and captives taken and it was raided again in 993. In 988 the Vikings sacked St Davids, St Dogmaels (=Llandudnoch), Llanbadarn and possibly also Llanrhystud, as well as Llanilith and Llanarfan which lay outside Maredudd’s territories. St Davids was also raided in 992 and again in 999, when Bishop Morgenau is said to have been killed. Maredudd’s reaction to such extensive pirate activity varied: in 987 he was forced to flee

14 A[nnales] C[ambriae], ed. John Williams (Rolls Series, 20, London, 1860), MSS. B and C, s.a. [993]; ByT (RB) [993]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 992 = 993; ByS, s.a. 992 = 993.
15 AC (B); AC (C); ByT (RB) [988]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 987 = 988; ByS, s.a. 987 = 988. Llanrhystud is added by David Powel, Historie of Cambria, now called Wales (London, 1584), p. 71.
16 AC (B); AC (C); ByT (RB) [999]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 989 = 999; ByS, s.a. 989 = 999. On Morgenau, see also Giraldi Cambrensis Opera, eds. J. S. Brewer et al. (8 vols, Rolls Series, 21, London, 1861–91), VI: Itinerarium Kambriae et Descriptio Kambriae, ed. James F. Dimock, p. 104.
southwards from the attack on Anglesey, but two years later appears to have ransomed those captured in that raid. In 992 he went so far as to enlist Viking help in a raid on Glamorgan, and as such is the first known Welsh ruler to have employed Norsemen as mercenaries. Although this use of hired Scandinavian muscle in internal Welsh affairs might appear somewhat myopic, it could otherwise have been a practical recognition of the predominant presence of the Hiberno-Scandinavians in the Irish Sea area at this point. However, while Maredudd’s relations with the Vikings are of interest to modern historians, they hardly seem grounds for warm praise from later medieval chroniclers.

In attempting to assess the achievements of Maredudd ab Owain, we must begin by looking at those of his brother Einion. It is interesting that both Maredudd and Einion were politically active prior to their father’s death in 988 — in Einion’s case at least seventeen years earlier. Einion occurs in the chronicles from 970 until he was killed in 984, while Maredudd makes his first appearance in 986. The reason for this is probably Owain’s old age; since we know that his mother, Elen ferch Llywarch, had died in 929, Owain must have been at least sixty on his death and was probably somewhat older than this. His sons could therefore have been of relatively mature age by the 970s — certainly by the 980s — and they were doubtless eager to prove themselves as worthy descendants of Rhodri Mawr and Hywel Dda. Owain himself is conspicuous by his absence from the annalistic records from 960 until the notice of his death in 988, and it might be speculated that Einion and later Maredudd were acting as representatives of their infirm father during the 970s and ‘80s, or even that they were seeking to create their own independent power-bases because Owain’s longevity continued to deprive them of the Dimetian inheritance. It is possibly relevant that the chronological periods of the brothers’ activity do not overlap: Maredudd does not appear until after the death of Einion, perhaps implying that Einion was the elder. Furthermore, Einion’s recorded activities were concentrated against the neighbouring kingdoms of south-east Wales, whereas Maredudd’s actions prior to 988 were directed to establishing himself in north Wales.

18 AC (A); AC (B); AC (C); ByT (RB); s.a. 920 = 929; ByT (Pen. 20) [929]; ByS, s.a. 926 = 929.
As stated above, Einion ab Owain is first mentioned in the chronicles for the year 970 when he launched a raid on Gower, and he repeated this action in 977. It is assumed that this region was under the control of Morgannwg at this point; if it was under Dimetian hegemony, Einion would have been attacking his father’s territory. Owain had himself attacked Morgannwg in 960 by wasting the cantref of Gorfynydd (Gwrinydd) and Einion may have been continuing this policy of aggression against the neighbouring kingdom in the 970s. Maredudd, as we shall see below, also subsequently raided Morgannwg. How long Gower remained outside Dimetian control is not clear, but at least by the early 990s it was counted as part of Maredudd’s territory. On the other hand, Einion may not have been attacking Gower from Dyfed, but rather from the north in Brycheiniog: the annalistic account of a raid against him in 983 by Hywel ab Ieuaf, king of Gwynedd, and English allies refers to *Brecheinioc et totam regionem Einaun filii Owini*. That Einion was in control of Brycheiniog at this point is not impossible since (judging from the genealogical and annalistic evidence) the ruling line of that kingdom had disappeared by the middle of the tenth century. Of course, it is equally possible that Brycheiniog was specified in the annal for 983 precisely because it was not part of Einion’s *regio*, that is, Hywel had raided ‘Brycheiniog and in addition all the territory of Einion ab Owain’. This reference to the existence of Einion’s *regio* prior to his father’s demise is perhaps the best indication that he had sought to create his own power-base rather than merely conquer lands in Owain’s name. His interest in the kingdoms of the south-east was perhaps his downfall, for the chronicles state that Einion ab Owain was slain in 984 by the nobles of Gwent (*uchelwyr* or *gwyrr goreu*), though the exact significance of this event remains obscure.

19 *AC* (B); *AC* (C); *ByT* (RB) [970], [977]; *ByT* (Pen. 20), s.a. 968 = 970, 976 = 977; *ByS*, s.a. 968 = 970, 976 = 977. On Einion, see also Maund, *Ireland*, pp. 14–17.

20 *AC* (C); *ByT* (Pen. 20), s.a. 958 = 960; *ByS*, s.a. 959 = 961. The forms of the place-name given are respectively *Goher*, *Y Gorwydd*, and *Gorynydd*.

21 *AC* (B); *AC* (C); *ByT* (RB) [983]; *ByT* (Pen. 20), s.a. 982 = 983; *ByS*, s.a. 982 = 983.

22 *AC* (B); *ByT* (RB) [984]; *ByT* (Pen. 20), s.a. 983 = 984; *ByS*, s.a. 983 = 984. That he was killed by the nobles and not by a local king may or may not be significant: on the obscure political arrangements in the south-east during this period, see below, n. 61.
With the demise of his (elder?) brother, Maredudd was able to assume a more active political role. However, as already noted, his father's continued unwillingness to pass on the Dimetian mantle perhaps explains why he chose to look elsewhere, even beyond Einion's easterly concerns.

That Maredudd should seek power in north Wales is not necessarily too surprising and may represent an attempt to reverse the failure of his father and uncles in the 950s to retain the northern territories of Hywel Dda. Furthermore, he was facilitated (and perhaps even inspired) in these aims by political instability in Gwynedd. The death of the aforementioned Hywel ab Ieuaf in 985 had encouraged a number of rival claimants to contend for the kingship: of these, the main contender was Hywel's brother Cadwallon ab Ieuaf who, in the same year, is said to have slain Ionafal ap Meurig. The latter may have been a son of Meurig ab Idwal Foel who had been blinded in 974 and, if so, he was a kinsman and possible rival for the kingship. At this stage, we hear nothing of Ionafal’s brothers who, as the meibion Meurig, would later become a serious problem for Maredudd in the north. The chronicles seem to describe two events for the year 986. On the one hand, a figure called either Maig ab Ieuaf or (probably less correctly) Meurig ab Idwal was slain and, as we shall see, one text states that this was achieved at Maredudd's instigation. According to the genealogical sources, Maig was a brother of Cadwallon and the late Hywel. On the other hand, Maredudd achieved his coup de grace by slaying Cadwallon and seizing his regnum. However, such a summary of 986 fails to take into account the divergences between the extant chronicle versions (though they clearly refer to the same events), and it is necessary to consider them in detail here in order to determine the role played by Maredudd. The four surviving versions read as follows:

AC (B): Meuric filius Idwal occisus est. Maredut filius Owini occidit Catwalaun filium Idwal, regnumque ejus scilicet Wenedociam possedit.

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23 ByT (RB) [985]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 984 = 985; ByS, s.a. 984 = 985.
24 So thought Powel, Historie, p. 67; also Dwnn, Heraldic Visitations, II, 10.
25 So argues Maund, Ireland, p. 58; the other name-form may be a confusion with the Meurig ab Idwal who had been blinded in 974. However, Thomas Jones thought Maig was incorrect here: Brut y Tywysogion. Peniarth 20Version, trans. Jones, p. 145.
ByT (Pen 20): y llas Meyc vab Yeuaf. A Maredud ap Ywein a ladowd Kadwallawn vab Yeuaf drwy vwdgolynaeth a chael medyant y gyfoeth, sefoedd hwnnw Gwyned a Mon a daw drwy swlta swl mawr.

(Maig ab Ieuaf was slain. And Maredudd ab Owain slew Cadwallon ab Ieuaf in victorious battle and gained possession of his territory, that is, Gwynedd and Anglesey, which he subdued with great treasure.)

ByT (RB): Catwallaun ap Jeuaf drwy vudugolynaeth a weresgynawd y gyuoeth, nyt amgen noc ynys Von; a Meironyd a holl wladoed Gwyned o diruawr ystryw a challder a darystygawd.

(Cadwallon ab Ieuaf gained possession of his territory, that is, the island of Anglesey; and through great craft and cunning he subdued Meirionydd and all the lands of Gwynedd.)

ByS: y llas Meyc vab Jeuaf a Chatwallaun vab Jeuaf y gan Moredud vab Owyn, ac a wledychaut ev kyvoethu, nyt amgen, Gwyned a Mon, ac a’y darystynghs wynt yn drethaul ydaw.

(Maredudd ab Ieuaf and Cadwallon ab Ieuaf were slain by Maredudd ab Owain, and he ruled their territories, namely, Gwynedd and Anglesey, and subdued them under tribute to him.)

These texts differ about certain specific details — the name Maig versus Meurig; Idwal versus Ieuaf; and the territories involved — but the most divergent text is that of the Red Book Brut. Here Cadwallon is said to have been the victor; he is said to have subdued his territories through craft and cunning as opposed to under tribute; both Maig and Maredudd are omitted; and Meirionydd is added to the list of territories. While it is possible that Cadwallon did successfully press his claim to the kingship of Gwynedd in 986 and that the Red Book preserves a unique account of this, it is more likely that this text represents a garbled version of Maredudd’s victory over Cadwallon recounted in the other versions. For example, if we follow the Red Book and remove the references to Maig and Maredudd from the single Latin version, we are left with the following statement:

... Catwalaun fil’ Idwal regnum(que) ejus scilicet Wenedociam possedit ...
This could easily be understood to mean that Cadwallon was the subject of the verb *possedit*. Some such deficient text may therefore underlie the account in the Red Book. In fact, it is possible that Cadwallon had established himself in the previous year, when he is said to have slain his kinsman Ionafal ap Meurig. Of the other discrepancies, Jones suggested that the reference to ‘craft and cunning’ may have arisen from a mis-reading of *census* (tribute) as *sensus*.

The position of Maig ab Ieuaf in these events is not clear: three texts agree that he was slain in 986, but only *Brenhinoedd y Sæson* credits Maredudd ab Owain with his killing, as well as that of Cadwallon, and continues that he took possession of ‘their’ (*ev*) territories. However, the other texts do not connect the deaths of Maig and Cadwallon, and it is equally possible that Maig met his fate at the hands of someone other than Maredudd — perhaps even his brother Cadwallon who, we know, was not unprepared to kill kinsmen to further his own political claims. The third possibility is, of course, that Maig’s assassin was neither Maredudd nor Cadwallon. Whatever the exact turn of events in 985–6, some points become apparent: there was violent political instability in north Wales at this time, resulting in one or more intra-dynastic killings; and Maredudd ab Owain, a member of the southern dynasty of Deheubarth, seems to have successfully exploited this instability to his own advantage.

The exact nature of Maredudd’s rule in the north is a matter of some uncertainty. For instance, the reference to ‘tribute’ in 986 might suggest that he did not rule directly, though this is not necessarily the correct interpretation. Furthermore, it is not clear how long Maredudd remained dominant in north Wales — a problem which is compounded by the brevity of the chronicles. In his *History of Wales*, Lloyd, for example, argued that, despite a series of challenges to his power there, Maredudd maintained his position in north Wales until his own death thirteen years later. There is no explicit statement in the medieval sources to contradict convincingly Lloyd’s position, but, as we shall see

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26 Ibid., p. 143.

below, a number of annals suggest alternative interpretations.28 Initially, Maredudd’s position in the north was no doubt precarious and we know that not all his northern rivals had been killed in 985–86. This relative weakness of his power is perhaps reflected in the events of the following year, when the Hiberno-Scandinavian king of the Isles, Gofraid mac Arailt, with the ‘Black Host’ (probably for the Irish Dub Gall, ‘Black Foreigner’) raided Anglesey and, according to the Welsh chronicles, took 2,000 captives.29 The Annals of Ulster may allude to this incident when describing for 987 the Cath Manand or ‘Battle of Manu’ by Mac Arailt and the Danair (lit. Danes) in which 1,000 men were slain.30 The raid was clearly not insignificant, for Maredudd is said to have fled with the survivors southwards to his father’s territory of Ceredigion and Dyfed. How long he then remained in south Wales is not made clear. According to the B-text of Annales Cambriae, in 989 Maredudd redemit captivos a Gentilibus Nigris by paying a penny per head:31 this may refer to those captured two years before, in which case Maredudd could have re-established himself in the north by this point at least. In making this connection, we must assume that the Vikings had kept the captives for between one and two years and had not otherwise disposed of them, for example, as slaves.32 However, the C-text of the Annales and the three vernacular chronicles do not describe the payment as a ransom, but state that it was a tax or tribute (censum; treth, teyrnget) and make no mention of the captives.33 As such, the

29 AC (B); ByT (RB) [987]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 986 = 987; ByS, s.a. 986 = 987. On this Gofraid, see my forthcoming paper ‘Edgar and the eight kings, 973’.
30 The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)], eds. and trans. Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill, I (Dublin, 1983), s.a. 986 = 987.1. The name Manu, i.e., Man, may be an error for Môn here.
31 The two Latin texts use the term nummus, ‘small coin’, which was translated as ceinawc or kainawc in the Brutiau. It is unlikely that the coins in question were of Welsh manufacture as there is no evidence of minting of coinage or of its specific use as hard currency in pre-Norman Wales: see Wendy Davies, Wales in the Early Middle Ages (Leicester, 1982), pp. 54–5.
32 On the slave trade in this period, see Poul Holm, ‘The slave trade of Dublin, ninth to twelfth centuries’, Peritia, 5 (1986), 317–45.
33 AC (C); ByT (RB) [989]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 988 = 989; ByS, s.a. 988 = 989.
implications would be different, with the payment perhaps being similar to the danegeld and other payments made by the English kings to buy peace in the ninth and later centuries. The Welsh chronicles also state that in 989, Glún Iarainn mac Amlaib, king of Dublin, was slain, though no link need be made with Maredudd’s ransom-payment. However, perhaps more significantly, the Irish annals record that the aforementioned Gofraid mac Arailt was also killed (either in or by the Dál Riata) in the same year: this might indicate that instability following Gofraid’s death facilitated Maredudd’s position regarding the hostages or may of course be entirely coincidental.

The implications of these developments for Welsh affairs are similarly uncertain. It is possible that they mark the end of Maredudd’s direct rule in north Wales, though he may have held ‘an overlordship of sorts’ while an anonymous descendant of Idwal Foel retained some degree of power there. Certainly, the chronicles do not refer to Maredudd active in Gwynedd again until 994 and even then there is some doubt (see below); but this silence need not imply that Maredudd was not represented in some form in north Wales during the intervening period.

Powel, possibly misreading his source, states that the payment was known as ‘The tribute of the blacke armie’: Historie, p. 71.

Most secondary accounts seem to follow AC (B) however: HW, I, 346; B. G. Charles, Old Norse Relations with Wales (Cardiff, 1934), p. 35; A. H. Williams, An Introduction to the History of Wales (2 vols, Cardiff, 1941–8), I, 153; H. R Loy, The Vikings in Wales (London, 1976), p. 6; and idem, The Vikings in Britain, p. 70; Maund, Ireland, p. 58. On the other hand, Wendy Davies regards it as a tribute to keep the Vikings at bay: Wales, p. 116.


AU, s.a. 988 = 989.4; AT [989]; CS [987]; AC\l, s.a. 982.

Maund, Ireland, pp. 18, 57–9. Lloyd had earlier followed such an interpretation in his article on Maredudd in the DNB, XII, 1015, but, as seen above, he had come to think otherwise by the time he wrote HW.
Indeed, that he redeemed the captives of 987 (if this is the correct version of events) might imply his continued interest in north Wales as these captives were perhaps natives of Anglesey. We shall return to the question of Maredudd’s position in the north below, but in the meantime shall follow him southwards.

One possible reason for the obscurity of the developments in north Wales at this point may be the greater importance for Maredudd of those in Deheubarth; and it should not be forgotten that the extant chronicles were maintained at southern Welsh monasteries. In 987, the long life and reign of Owain ap Hywel Dda were about to draw to a close, and Maredudd no doubt planned to ensure that he would become his father’s successor. His brother Einion had been killed in 984 and the main genealogical sources do not credit Owain with any other living sons.38 Some late genealogies also name Iestyn ab Owain, whose own son Rhydderch (d. 1033) was an important ruler in south-east Wales, but we have no independent means of verifying the link with Owain.39 However, the annals record for 987 the blinding of Llywarch ab Owain, though they omit to state by whom.40 As with Iestyn, late genealogical tradition included this Llywarch among the sons of Owain ap Hywel Dda and in this case the name (as with Rhain ab Maredudd discussed above) would certainly fit into the Dimetian dynastic naming strategy.41 It is tempting to attribute the blinding of Llywarch to (his brother?) Maredudd in the light of the latter’s bid for their aging father’s kingship. We know that at some point in that year Maredudd was forced southwards by Gofraid mac Arailt into Ceredigion and Dyfed and would therefore have been well placed to deal with any potential dynastic rivals. Furthermore, a blind Llywarch would hardly

38 Cadwallon ab Owain (d. 966) was perhaps a further son of Owain ap Hywel; if so, he predeceased his father.
39 For a discussion of Rhydderch ab Iestyn’s dubious ancestry, see Maund, *Ireland*, pp. 20–2.
40 *ByT* (RB) [987]; *ByT* (Pen. 20), s.a. 986 = 987; *ByS*, s.a. 986 = 987. Powel states that Llywarch was in fact blinded by Gofraid mac Arailt during the 987 raid on Anglesey, but this is not implied by the medieval sources and may be a false connection on Powel’s part (*Historie*, p. 69).
41 Dwnn, *Heraldic Visitations*, II, 10; and thus, for instance, H. F. J. Vaughan, ‘Welsh pedigrees’, *Y Cymroddor*, 10 (1890), 72–156 (p. 213). For the names Llywarch and Rhain, see my forthcoming paper ‘Predatory nomenclature and dynastic expansion in early medieval Wales’.
have been fit for the kingship. Whatever the logistics, when Owain did finally die in 988, Maredudd probably succeeded him, though it ought to be stressed that no statement to that effect is to be found in the medieval sources. Indeed, as in north Wales, his position in Deheubarth was not entirely safe from rival kinsmen: his brother Einion had left a number of sons, including the Edwin who was to challenge Maredudd for the southern kingship in the following decade. In fact, an earlier challenge to Maredudd may be reflected in the enigmatic notice for 990 that one Owain ap Dyfnwal was slain in that year — by whom and where being omitted. The identity of this Owain is unclear — he may even have been a member of the ruling line of Strathclyde! — but it is worth recalling that Maredudd’s grandfather had a son called Dyfnwal (d. 953) who could be the father of Owain, thus making him a first cousin of Maredudd (see diagram above). It is possible therefore (though beyond absolute proof) that this Owain ap Dyfnwal was a rival of his cousin for the kingship of Deheubarth (perhaps as early as 988) and met with the inevitable fate.

The chronicles record for 991 that Maredudd wasted ‘Maes Hyfaidd’ which is probably to be identified with Maesgwyf, that is, New Radnor. The purpose and nature of this raid are not immediately apparent from the brief annalistic accounts. However, if the location is correctly identified, then it may not have been directed against a native Welsh ruler (kinsman or otherwise) but rather against Mercian English

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42 AC (B); AC (C); ByT (RB) [988]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 987 = 988; ByS, s.a. 987 = 988.

43 The Latin texts variously refer to Edwin as Owein and Guyn (Gwyn). These forms probably arose from misreadings of the form ‘Etgun’; Lloyd, HW, I, 337, n. 61; Maund, Ireland, p. 17. Possible Old Welsh spellings of Owain include Eugein, Euguen, Iguein, and Yugein.

44 AC (B); ByT (RB) [990]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 989 = 990; ByS, s.a. 989 = 990.

45 So thinks Bartrum in his Welsh Genealogies, A.D. 300–1500 (8 vols [Cardiff], 1974), I, 42.

46 AC (B); AC (C); ByT (RB) [991]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 990 = 991; ByS, s.a. 990 = 991. The forms given include Maes Hewed, Maes Hweid, and Maes Hweid. See Powel, Historie, p. 71; The Mynsyrian Archæology of Wales: collected out of Ancient Manuscripts, eds. Owen Jones et al. (2nd edn, Denbigh, 1870), p. 692; B. G. Charles, Non-Celtic Place-Names in Wales (London Medæval Studies Monograph, I, London, 1938), pp. 176–7; Lloyd, HW, I, 346 and n. 87; also note Melville Richards, Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units (Cardiff, 1969), pp. 152, 166.
who, judging from toponymic evidence, were settled west of Offa's Dyke in Radnorshire by this time. Maredudd was possibly flexing his recently-extended political muscle by challenging his English neighbours. If so, then it appears to have been an error of judgement on his part, for in the following year his nephew Edwin ab Einion was able to draw on English support when launching an attack against Maredudd. It has been suggested that Edwin received English help due to the relative strength of his claim to the kingship of Deheubarth, but on further analysis the whole episode becomes more complex. Edwin's English ally is said to have been a dux variously named Edelisi, Eyllfi, Edelphi, Edelffi and Ecs Vawr (Powel adding Adelf). These forms may reflect the Old English name Æthsige (which I shall follow here) or less likely Ælfsgie or Æthelwulf. The English involvement in this attack on Maredudd may have been a direct response to his raid on New Radnor in the previous year, in which case this Æthsige may have been a leader of local importance among the Mercians west of the Dyke. Alternatively, Simon Keynes has suggested that Æthsige could represent an otherwise unknown figure who held some responsibility in Mercia during the vacancy in the ealdordom between the banishment of Ealdorman Ælfric in 985 and the appointment of Eadric Streona in 1007. However, there are also a few contemporaneous candidates for identification named in English sources. For example, we know that a thegn called Æthsige was important at the court of Æthelred, particularly from 984 until 994 (when he appears to have fallen from grace); but his principal lands were in Kent, which would hardly encourage a concern in Welsh

48 AC (B); AC (C); ByT (RB), s.a. 990 = 992; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 991 = 992; ByS, s.a. 991 = 992.
49 Maund, Ireland, pp. 42–3.
affairs.\textsuperscript{52} Another Æthelsige — who may or may not be identical with his Kentish namesake — held land in Gloucestershire in the early 990s which could have given him an interest in neighbouring Wales, though he hardly seems to merit the title \textit{dux}.\textsuperscript{53} However, without being certain of the identity of Edwin’s ally, the exact interpretation of this instance of Anglo-Welsh relations cannot be readily determined. For instance, if the \textit{dux} was indeed the more important ‘Kentish’ Æthelsige, then the allegiance may have had the support of King Æthelred; on the other hand, if the ally was a local notable (such as the Gloucestershire Æthelsige), then royal involvement need not be implied. Further analysis reveals that Edwin’s own English connections were not insignificant, as I hope to demonstrate below.

Edwin’s raid of 992 is said to have been directed against \textit{dextralium Britonum [. . .] regiones Maredut: for dextralium Britonum} we should read ‘Deheubarth’, and the chronicles proceed to list Ceredigion, Dyfed, Gower and Kidwelly as the \textit{regiones Maredut}.\textsuperscript{54} It is perhaps worth stressing that, while this list of ‘Maredudd’s territories’ has a definite south-western Welsh bias, it need not imply that they constituted the full extent of his territorial power at this point or that he held no power in north Wales.\textsuperscript{55} As a southern dynast himself, Edwin would naturally have directed his attack against his uncle’s base in Deheubarth, where he may have hoped to destabilise and even replace him. The vernacular texts add that Edwin took hostages from Maredudd’s territory, but the fact that he is not mentioned again in the annals suggests that his efforts were ultimately fruitless. David Powel, it might be added, states

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\item \textsuperscript{52} For this Æthelsige, see Simon Keynes, \textit{The Diplomas of King Æthelred ‘The Unready’ (978–1016): A Study in their Use as Historical Evidence} (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 184–5.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid. We know that this Æthelsige had lost his land by 995 when it was regranted by the king: P. H. Sawyer, \textit{Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography} (London, 1968), no. 886. In an English context, the title \textit{dux} could represent ealdorman (for which there is no suitable candidate at this point); but as the word occurs in a later Welsh account its precise meaning — beyond that of ‘leader’ — is not clear. I am grateful to Simon Keynes for discussing this material with me.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Powel would add St Davids to the list, but this is probably a confusion with a separate record of a Viking raid against that site in the same year which is obscurely phrased in the \textit{Brutiaud}; also, \textit{Mywyrian Archaiology}, eds. Jones et al., p. 693.
\item \textsuperscript{55} As suggests Maund, \textit{Ireland}, p. 18.
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that 'at last Meredyth and Edwyn fell at an agreement, and were made freends'; but there is no indication of this in the medieval texts, and Powel may have inferred that such an accord was reached because Edwin disappears subsequently from the Welsh chronicles.\textsuperscript{56} In fact, it is possible to reconstruct the fate of Edwin: an Old English document dated 1016–1035 describes a dispute over Herefordshire lands at Wellington and Cradley (in Cutsthorn and Winstree hundreds respectively) between a man called \textit{Eadwine Eanwene sunu} (now generally agreed to reflect 'Edwin Einion's son') and his anonymous English mother.\textsuperscript{57} The latter claimed her son had no right to the lands in question and stated that on her death they should pass to her kinswoman, Leofflæd, wife of Thorkell the White. Thorkell, it is said, took certain measures to ensure his wife's inheritance and he does indeed appear as the holder of Wellington \textit{tempore regis Edwardi} in Domesday Book.\textsuperscript{58} The lands disputed in this document, we might note, are in the same region as most of the Domesday holdings of Gruffudd ap Maredudd, a descendant of our Edwin ab Einion.\textsuperscript{59} Furthermore, a thegn called \textit{Æthelsige} the Red is mentioned in the text and may be added to our list of possible candidates for Edwin's ally \textit{dux Edelisi} in 992. These are compelling grounds for identifying \textit{Eadwine Eanwene sunu} with Edwin ab Einion. It is possible, for example, to envisage his father Einion — based, as we have seen, in Brycheiniog in the early 980s — forming a union with an Anglo-Saxon noblewoman

\textsuperscript{56} Given the enmity between the two men, it is perhaps ironic that Edwin gave the name Maredudd to one of his own sons.


\textsuperscript{59} For a fuller account of Gruffudd, see my forthcoming paper 'Some Welshmen in Domesday Book and beyond'. Thorkell and Leofflæd were important predecessors of Hugh Lasne in Herefordshire, as well as in Shropshire and Gloucestershire; and, we might recall, Gruffudd held Kenchester in Herefordshire from this Hugh.
from neighbouring Herefordshire and their son Edwin launching his bid for power against Maredudd in 992 from England and with English help.\textsuperscript{60} Indeed, the relative proximity of these Herefordshire holdings and the English settlements in Radnorshire could well be further grounds for causally linking the events of 991 and 992. On the failure of his power-bid, Edwin may have returned to England and maintained himself on his English lands: some of which at least he claimed through his mother, and some of which were perhaps subsequently among the lands of his descendant, Gruffudd ap Maredudd.

Edwin’s raid of 992 was not the only event affecting Maredudd ab Owain to occur in that year for the chronicles record that he took offensive action against Glamorgan (i.e., Morgannwg).\textsuperscript{61} The exact nature of his actions in this year are obscured by the fact that the three vernacular accounts (the \textit{Annales} being silent at this point) give very different renderings of what had presumably been related (lost) Latin exemplars. Each will be given below to demonstrate the problem. The Red Book \textit{Brut} states:

\begin{quote}
A Maredud a huryawd y Kenedloed a dothoedynt yn y ewyllys gyf ac ef, ac a difleithawd Gwlat Vorgan.
\end{quote}

(And Maredudd hired the Gentiles who had come into his power along with him, and he ravaged Glamorgan.)

\textsuperscript{60} The fact that the personal name of Edwin ab Einion was etymologically of English origin (OE \textit{Eadwine}) is not necessarily significant here since it had already been borne by at least one earlier member of the ruling line of Deheubarth (a son of Hywel Dda): see my ‘Predatory nomenclature’ (forthcoming).

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{ByT} (RB), s.a. 990 = 992; \textit{ByT} (Pen. 20), s.a. 991 = 992; \textit{ByS}, s.a. 991 = 992. It is not possible to be sure who was ruling Morgannwg and neighbouring Gwent at this point. Morgan Hen had died in 974, and one Llandaff charter (dated by Davies c. 975) entitles his son Idwallon as king. The next members of this dynasty witnessed in the sources are Idwallon’s nephews Rhys and Hywel ab Owain, active in the 1020s and ‘30s. The reference in two forged chronicles by Edward Williams to an Ithel ap Morgan as king of Morgannwg in the period under consideration is best ignored: \textit{Mynyrian Archaeology}, eds. Jones et al., pp. 692–3, 718; note also my comments in ‘Edgar’ (forthcoming). For Gwent, Davies would date the intrusion of Nowy ap Gwriad to c. 950–60, with his son Arthfael flourishing about 980 and his grandsons Gruffudd and Rhodri ab Elise about 1005. Again the situation in the late 980s and 990s is not clear. See Wendy Davies, \textit{An Early Welsh Microcosm. Studies in The Llandaff Charters} (London, 1978), esp. pp. 19, 71.
The Peniarth 20 Brut is in basic agreement, but contains additional information:

A Maredud a diffeithyawd Gwlad Vorgant drwy logi Kenedloed ac y adbrynnu y rei daledigyawn.

(And Maredudd ravaged Glamorgan by hiring Gentiles and ransoming captives.)

Finally, Brenhinoedd y Seson omits all reference to Viking mercenaries and captives, and rather synchronizes the raid with the attack by Edwin ab Einion and the English thus:

Ac yn dyuo o dyfeithiav Gwlat Vorgant, y doeth Moredud yn eu hewyllys.

(And coming from ravaging Glamorgan, Maredudd came into their power.)

It is indeed difficult to disentangle these variants, especially as the Latin texts provide no help. Both versions of Brut y Trywysogion refer to the hiring of Vikings. On the other hand, it is the Red Book version and Brenhinoedd y Seson which mention the entry into euyyllys ('will', 'power') in contrast to the notice of ransoming captives in the Peniarth 20 Brut, but they disagree as to who came under whose power. In fact, the only element common to all three accounts is the statement that Maredudd had raided Glamorgan.

The employment by Maredudd ab Owain of Vikings when making this attack on Glamorgan would (if accurately translated in the two Brutiau) constitute the first known use of such mercenaries by a Welsh ruler. These may have been the Hiberno-Scandinavians with whom he had had dealings in 987–9, though obviously there is no way of being certain of their identity. The raid on Glamorgan could (like that on New Radnor in the previous year) be evidence of Maredudd's growing confidence of his position within Wales, but should also be compared with the earlier actions of his father and brother against that kingdom. The annals do not necessarily imply that this raid was in any way connected to the attack by Edwin ab Einion against Maredudd in that
year (ByS implies the two events were roughly simultaneous): although it has been suggested that Edwin was himself based in or allied with Glamorgan, making his uncle’s attack a reprisal,62 we have already seen that his base was probably on the other side of the English border. Finally, 992 also witnessed the death of Maredudd’s son Cadwallon, who, as we have seen, is the only son named in the earlier sources; again, the chronicles do not imply that there was any causal link between Cadwallon’s demise and the other events recorded for that year.

What can be reconstructed for the remaining seven years of Maredudd’s life is almost entirely taken up (seemingly) with north Welsh affairs. During the middle years of the 990s, Maredudd faced a series of challenges from the sons of the Meurig ab Idwal who had been blinded in 974. They are consistently referred to as filii Meuruc or meibion Meuryc in the chronicles, and we only know the name of one of them, Idwal, who was perhaps the most senior. As discussed above, Ionaflat, another possible son of Meurig, had unsuccessfully contended for the Venedotian kingship in 985 when he was slain by his kinsman Cadwallon ab Ieuaf. The sons of Meurig achieved a certain amount of success against Maredudd, but the exact extent of this success is a matter of some controversy. We have no further record of their activities following the death of Idwal ap Meurig in 996, which may suggest that he was the leading light among their number. Ultimately, however, the line of Meurig was successful in Gwynedd, first in the person of Idwal’s son Iago (d. 1039), and later and more significantly in Iago’s illustrious grandson, Gruffudd ap Cynan, and his descendants.

The vernacular chronicles record two events for the year 993, neither of which is given in the extant texts of Annales Cambriae; and furthermore the Brutiau do not agree as to the relative order of these events. First, the Red Book Brut and Brenhinoedd y Sæson describe an attack (cyrch) or besieging (gwarchadw) of Gwynedd by the sons of Meurig ab Idwal.63 The Peniarth MS 20 Brut, on the other hand, states that ‘hostages from among the sons of Meurig’ (o veibyon Meuryc

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62 Maund, Ireland, pp. 42–3, 107–8, 159; and A. H. Williams even went so far as to entitle Edwin ‘ruler of Glamorgan’ (An Introduction, I, 151).

63 ByT (RB) [993]; ByS, s.a. 992 = 993.
wystlon) were in Gwynedd. Thomas Jones argued that the former translations were the more correct, and that the Pen. 20 reading possibly arose from some confusion over forms of the words obsideo (to besiege) and obsides (pl. of obses, hostage). If this suggestion is correct, then it determines our interpretation of the involvement of the meibion Meurig in Gwynedd. Secondly, the chronicles record that Anglesey was ravaged on Ascension Thursday, with the Red Book Brut adding that Vikings were the perpetrators. There is no need to link these two events, but David Powel thought that it was Maredudd’s neglect of his northern territories (as illustrated by the Viking raid on Anglesey) which encouraged the inhabitants (of Gwynedd? Anglesey?) to accept Idwal ap Meurig as their ruler, which in turn determines Powel’s interpretation of the events of the next year. However, it would seem that the involvement of Idwal and his brothers in Gwynedd in 993 was of a less friendly nature: like that of Edwin ab Einion in 992, their raid was probably directed against someone who controlled what they regarded as their rightful kingdom. Given that they were to fight against Maredudd ab Owain in the following year and that he had earlier controlled Gwynedd, it seems reasonable to assume that the someone in question was also Maredudd in 993.

In 994 the sons of Meurig are said to have encountered and defeated Maredudd at a site near Llangwm. The three vernacular accounts add that Maredudd’s nephew (and presumed ally?), Tewdwr ab Einion, was slain at this battle, though the Annales make no link between the encounter and Tewdwr’s demise. Lloyd thought that this battle represented an attempt by Idwal ap Meurig and his brothers to oust Maredudd from Gwynedd; though, despite their victory, it is not clear

64 ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 992 = 993.
66 AC (B); AC (C); ByT (RB) [993]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 992 = 993; ByS s.a. 992 = 993. Maund speculates as to whether this raid was led by the Ímar who was expelled from Dublin in that year (Ireland, p. 159); also Al, s.a. 993.6; AFM, s.a. 992. The identity of this Ímar is not clear, though he may conceivably have been Ímar of Waterford (d. 1000).
67 Powel, Historie, p. 71.
68 AC (B); AC (C); ByT (RB) [994]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 993 = 994; ByS, s.a. 993 = 994. Forms of the placename include Languin and Llangwm. ByS omits to name the location of the battle.
whether they succeeded in doing so. Powel, on the other hand, having already established Idwal in north Wales in 992, regarded the encounter as a fruitless attempt by Maredudd to regain Gwynedd from him.\(^{69}\) These two interpretations of course depend in part on the site of the battle being in north Wales, namely the Llangwm in the cantref of Dinmael. As Kari Maund has pointed out, however, there are at least five other locations of that name in Wales, none of which is in the north: two in Dyfed, one in Gwent, and two (different) mentioned in the Book of Llandaff, presumably therefore also in the south-east.\(^{70}\) An encounter near a Dimetian Llangwm would suggest a daring raid by the sons of Meurig into the very heart of Maredudd’s territories, while it would perhaps be a little unlikely that the two sides would meet in the south-east (unless the sons of Meurig had sought refuge there). Obviously, the possible permutations of these isolated and obscure facts are boundless, but on balance I would favour the ‘traditional’ northern Llangwm as the site of the encounter: the raid or besieging of 993 implies that Idwal and his brothers were not in control of Gwynedd in that year and it is not unlikely that they would attempt to secure the kingdom again. That the 994 encounter represents such an attempt is not impossible, and since Maredudd was their foe in 994, it seems probable that he had been so in 993 too. Such arguments are by no means conclusive and are to some extent circular, but it is possible that Maredudd, who had ruled Gwynedd in 986–7, did so c. 993–4, and therefore may well have done so during the intervening years. Furthermore, it is not clear that Maredudd’s rule in north Wales was brought to an end by the defeat near Llangwm in 994. Even if Idwal was established in Gwynedd by the events of that year, his death in 996 probably excluded his branch of the northern dynasty from the kingship until the following generation. The chronicles state that Idwal was slain (occisus est), and, although Powel identified Svein Forkbeard as the murderer (probably incorrectly),\(^{71}\) it is not impossible that Maredudd was somehow involved.

\(^{69}\) Powel, Historie, p. 72.


\(^{71}\) Powel, Historie, pp. 72–3. The medieval Welsh chronicles record that Svein had raided the Isle of Man in the previous year, which was probably Powel’s inspiration here.
Finally, the Welsh chronicles also record that in 994 there was a great fames (or newyn) in the regnum (or kyuoeth) of Maredudd ab Owain. 72 This famine was perhaps related to the mortality which is recorded for 993 in the Irish annals. 73 The reference to Maredudd’s regnum is particularly interesting. If this ‘kingdom’ was indeed limited to the south-western quarter of Wales, then one must assume that the famine was an isolated phenomenon, limited to that part of Wales; but the possible Irish parallels indicate that it was more widespread. The phrase regnum Maredut may be taken therefore to mean the greater part of Wales so that the chronicles refer to a famine throughout Wales. Again, the arguments are by no means water-tight: the so-called ‘Annals of St Davids’ (which underlies the extant accounts) could here be recording the local manifestation (in Maredudd's regnum) of a wider phenomenon, just as the ‘Clonmacnoise-group’ of Irish chronicles simply recorded the local mortality for 993.

Maredudd ab Owain died in 999, having followed an active political career of at least thirteen years (986–99). The chronicles do not state that his death occurred at the hands of a rival, so we may assume that he died of natural causes. Whilst he died only eleven years after his father, Owain ap Hywel, it is likely (given Owain’s apparent longevity) that Maredudd was himself of a relatively advanced age on his own demise. As we have seen, Maredudd’s sphere of interest encompassed both north and south Wales; and although the exact nature of his rule in the north is a matter of some debate, he clearly was the predominant Welsh dynast of his time — the man whom rivals felt compelled to overthrow if they were to further their own political aspirations. Indeed, even if the ‘pretender’ Rhain Scottus was not a son of Maredudd, the fact that he claimed to be so (and not the son of another member of the dynasty) is perhaps indicative of Maredudd’s importance in contemporary eyes. However, despite this evident importance, it is somewhat ironic that from a modern perspective Maredudd ab Owain is certainly not ‘the most famous king of the Britons’: that this accolade should go to his grandfather Hywel Dda presents a further irony, as the latter’s historical reputation rests essentially on his dubious connection with

72 AC (B); ByT (RB) [994]; ByT (Pen. 20), s.a. 993 = 994; ByS, s.a. 993 = 994. There were famines in Wales also in 987 and 989.
73 AU, s.a. 992 = 993.7; CS [991]; AClon, s.a. 986.
medieval Welsh law. These facts demonstrate how much our interpretation of early Welsh political history has been coloured by later medieval filters (legal, genealogical, and other), and only by returning to the extant annalistic accounts can we hope to gain a more accurate (though by no means complete) understanding of such important figures as Maredudd ab Owain.

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