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Cadwaladr *ap* Cadwallon [*called* Cadwaladr Fendigaid]

(d. 664/682)

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Cadwaladr *ap* Cadwallon [*called* Cadwaladr Fendigaid] (d. 664/682), king of Gwynedd, was son of Cadwallon *ap* Cadfan of Gwynedd; the claim in late sources that his mother was a daughter of Pybba of Mercia is based on Geoffrey of Monmouth and is probably unhistorical. Cadwaladr ruled Gwynedd in north-west Wales during the middle decades of the seventh century, but his precise regnal years are difficult to determine. His father, Cadwallon, was slain in 631 or 634 and according to the *Historia Brittonum* Cadwaladr ruled after him. However, the same text also states that the king of Gwynedd at the time of the battle of 'Winwaed' in 655 was Cadfael, nicknamed Cadomedd: he cannot be located in the genealogies of Gwynedd and later tradition regarded him as a usurper. Therefore Cadwaladr may not have succeeded his father immediately, but had done so on Cadfael's death at some point after 655. The termination of his own reign is also problematic. The Welsh chronicles state that Cadwaladr died of plague in 682, and other sources mention a mortality at about this time. However, the *Historia Brittonum* states that Cadwaladr succumbed to plague during the reign of Oswiu of Northumbria, thus before 671. Consequently, his demise is often attributed to the plague of 664, which is mentioned in both English and Irish sources.

No genuine deeds of Cadwaladr during his reign are known, but he is notable in a number of regards. His cognomen Bendigaid (lenited to Fendigaid) or 'the Blessed' may reflect his religious nature (he is allegedly founder of the church at Llangadwaladr on Anglesey, for example) or may refer to his function in later Welsh tradition as the last 'king of the Britons' and as messianic hero of the Welsh. The claim that he was the last king of the Britons and that his successors were merely princes, no doubt propagated by Geoffrey of Monmouth, perhaps stems from the fact that he is the last-named king of Gwynedd in the aforementioned *Historia Brittonum*. The legend, current as early as the tenth century, that he and Cynan Meriadoc of Brittany were messianic saviours of the Britons from English dominion may also stem from the structure of the *Historia*. Later sources claim that Cadwaladr was succeeded by his son Idwal Iwrch, but this is not certain.

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