

CHAPTER 1

Negotiating Behind the Scenes: Senana ferch Caradog

Despite a life of disappointment and adversity, Senana ferch Caradog ap Thomas ap Rhodri ab Owain Gwynedd emerges from the pages of Welsh medieval history as a strong, courageous and determined woman who was not afraid to act on her own behalf at the highest level, when she saw an opportunity to redeem the unfortunate situation involving her Welsh husband and her family. While the majority of other notable women in this book were widows, Senana was not. However, when she appeared on the political stage, in another sense she was, because her husband was imprisoned for much of their married life. She was denied the support and companionship of her husband for at least five or six years before his death, but she had the courage to approach the English king, on her own initiative, in order to try and arrange for the release of her husband and her eldest son. Initially she was successful in her approach, and the king had a charter drawn up for an agreement between the crown and Senana, setting out the terms for the release of her husband and son. Senana agreed to this charter and sealed it with her personal seal. Senana's husband Gruffudd was held in captivity by his half-brother Dafydd, and as we shall see, although Senana was successful in her bid to get her husband and son released from one prison, he was unfortunately not set free, but instead was transferred to another prison, namely honourable confinement in the Tower of London as a prisoner of Henry III.

Modern historians have dealt with Senana in a variety of ways. J.E. Lloyd mentioned Senana in a footnote, as the mother of Dafydd the son of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn,⁴⁵ and R.R. Davies mentioned the charter in his text as an example of

⁴⁵ J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, vol. II (London: 1911), p.708, footnote 82.

the use of cattle as payment to the king.⁴⁶ J. Beverley Smith in his latest work does discuss Senana, specifically because of her significant position as the mother of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.⁴⁷ In view of the aims of this present work, and when considering the omissions of earlier historians, it was gratifying for me to see the beginnings of change in the historiography which has hitherto rendered women more invisible than is warranted by the available sources. David Stephenson has recently said that Senana was 'very active' when negotiating for the release of her husband from captivity.⁴⁸ Similarly, David Walker has also referred to the 'great skill' with which Senana first presented her case to Henry III, which led to the formulation of the charter to which she agreed in order that her husband might receive justice.⁴⁹ While this beginning of change is welcome, I believe that these changes should go much further to acknowledge noblewomen as central actors in the unfolding of events which make up the history of Wales in the thirteenth century. Without their actions, events would have transpired in quite a different manner.

Like so many other women in this study, Senana was descended from a noble lineage. She was the daughter of Caradog ap Thomas, who like her husband Gruffudd was descended from the common ancestors Owain Gwynedd and Gruffudd ap Cynan, who were both great Welsh rulers of Gwynedd in the twelfth century. Bartrum noted that Senana was unknown to the early Welsh genealogists.⁵⁰ Gruffudd, her husband, was the eldest son of Llywelyn Fawr (Llywelyn ab Iorwerth) who lived from 1173-1240AD and ruled much of Wales from 1218 until his death in 1240. Although Gruffudd was Llywelyn's eldest son, he was unfortunately illegitimate. Llywelyn had already fathered a son and daughter to a woman named Tangwystl ferch Llywarch Goch before he married

⁴⁶ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence, and Change*, p.156.

⁴⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*.

⁴⁸ D. Stephenson, 'The Laws of Court: Past Reality or Present Ideal?' in T.M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell, eds., *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.402.

⁴⁹ D. Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.104.

⁵⁰ Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies AD300-1400*, vol. 3, p.447.

Joan, the illegitimate daughter of King John in 1205.⁵¹ Despite the Welsh tradition that, provided the father acknowledged paternity, all sons should inherit equally, whether legitimate or not, Llywelyn took steps before his death to declare his legitimate son Dafydd his heir, to the exclusion of Gruffudd. According to David Walker 'Llywelyn negotiated for the recognition of Dafydd as his successor over a period of eighteen years'.⁵² As a consequence of this, Gruffudd was to spend a large proportion of his life in prison, firstly because he would not accept that his brother was to be his father's successor, and secondly because he was a threat to Dafydd. He had earlier become a hostage for his father to King John in 1211, and he was released in 1215 as one of the conditions of Magna Carta.⁵³ Gruffudd was understandably less than enthusiastic about being replaced as his father's heir by Dafydd, and he rebelled against his father more than once. His father gave him land in Meirionydd and Ardudwy, but these lands were taken back from him by Llywelyn because of his rebelliousness. The *Brut* for 1221 describes Gruffudd's behaviour and the fact that his father had taken from him the cantref of Meirionydd and the commote of Ardudwy.⁵⁴

Llywelyn was ambivalent about his son Gruffudd. On the one hand he valued him and found him a useful warband leader. At the same time his considerable abilities as a warrior were a threat to his father's plans for Wales, which devolved around his legitimate son, who was only a child. In 1223 Gruffudd was sent by his father with an army to oppose the earl of Pembroke, William Marshal who was heading towards Carmarthen, and he is described in the chronicle as 'fearless'. He seems to have been of great assistance to his father later in this campaign against William Marshal.⁵⁵ By 1228, however, he had been imprisoned by his father for his rebelliousness and remained there for six

⁵¹ For Tangwystl Chapter 6, 'The Welsh Laws of Women', and for Gwenllïan Chapter 2 'The Daughters of Llywelyn Fawr'.

⁵² Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p.103.

⁵³ J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta* (Cambridge: 1965), p.469. 'Item 58. We will restore at once the son of Llywelyn ...'.

⁵⁴ *Brut y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes, Red Book of Hergest Version*, 2nd edition, T. Jones, ed. and trans. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), p.221.

years. The *Brut* tells us that he was released in 1234 after being in prison for six years.⁵⁶ Presumably it was during the thirteen years between 1215 and 1228 when Gruffudd enjoyed his freedom that he managed to marry and produce his two elder sons, Owain and Llywelyn.⁵⁷ After his release in 1234, by way of apanage, he was given land in Llŷn by Llywelyn, and also he held Ceri, Cyfeiliog, Mawddwy, Mochnant and Caereinion in southern Powys.⁵⁸

Gruffudd once more proved to be recalcitrant and at the time of Llywelyn's death, Gruffudd and his eldest son Owain were prisoners in Cricieth castle.⁵⁹ Llywelyn had suffered a stroke in 1237 and Dafydd is said to have removed Gruffudd from Powys and then to have imprisoned him. In 1239 he and his son were incarcerated in Cricieth castle by Dafydd ap Llywelyn.⁶⁰ Following his father's death, Gruffudd was to continue a prisoner in Cricieth Castle under his brother Dafydd's rule. Matthew Paris tells us that following the death of Llywelyn Fawr on April 11, 1240 open hostility existed between Dafydd and Gruffudd and that Dafydd tricked Gruffudd into attending a council of peace and seized and imprisoned him.⁶¹ Evidently Gruffudd's eldest son must have accompanied him because he also was imprisoned with his father, possibly because as another eldest son he was also a potential heir to Gwynedd. Senana is thought to have had four sons, Owain, Llywelyn, Dafydd and Rhodri and at least two daughters, Gwladus and Margaret. Life for Senana appears to have become particularly difficult. She had married a man who was the heir to the royal house of Gwynedd, and her expectations must have been completely dashed when Llywelyn Fawr summarily disinherited Gruffudd. She probably encouraged Gruffudd when he rebelled against his father and also when he prepared to

⁵⁵ *Brut y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest Version*, pp.225-27.

⁵⁶ *Brut Y Tywysogyon Red Book of Hergest Version*, p.233.

⁵⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.39. Smith suggests the birth of Owain and Llywelyn as 'fairly early in the 1220's'.

⁵⁸ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p.103.

⁵⁹ A.D. Carr, *Medieval Wales* (New York: St Martin's Press Inc., 1995), p.58.

⁶⁰ *Brut Y Tywysogyon, Red Book of Hergest Version*, pp.235-7.

⁶¹ *Matthew Paris's English History from the year 1235 to 1273*, J.A. Giles, ed. & trans. (London, 1852), p.260.

challenge his half-brother for the title of prince of North Wales. Unfortunately Gruffudd ended up in prison once again and she was left with five of her children and no husband, and probably limited prospects for her family. There is no evidence that Senana would have been able to visit Gruffudd and Owain in Cricieth Castle, although it is a possibility, but she certainly would have been able to visit him in the Tower. As J. Beverley Smith has said, she may have been able to tell Gruffudd on one of these visits that their son Dafydd had 'secured a small part of the territory which the king, despite his promise to Gruffudd, still denied him'.⁶²

At the end of April, 1241 Senana approached the king in an effort to secure the release of her husband and their eldest son. The *Curia Regis Roll* No. 1595 reveals that Senana appeared in the king's court and stated that Gruffudd her husband, should be a 'tenant of the crown, but he was kept in captivity contrary to all justice'.⁶³ We do not know whether Senana took this action of her own volition, or whether she was possibly acting for her husband. In any event, her noble status and genealogical and marital connections gave her the authority to act. Like Llywelyn's wife Joan, Senana came forward as an historical actor in the hiatus created by the tension between the Welsh and the Anglo-Norman conquest. According to the *Curia Regis Roll*, Senana came before the king at Westminster five weeks from Easter and petitioned that her husband Gruffudd had been seized and held captive by his brother Dafydd, and was detained in his prison against all justice. In this appearance Senana stated that her husband was prepared to do whatever he ought to do by way of pledges to prove that he would do what was required of him as the king's man, and would willingly and freely stand in the king's court to answer those who wished to speak against him.

⁶² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.41.

⁶³ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. XVI, 1237-1242, ed. L.C. Hector (London: 1978) p. 311, 'Suan uxor Griffini filii Lewelini venit apud Westmonasterium coram rege a die Pasce in quinque septimanas et peciit quod dominus rex deliberare faceret predictum Griffinum virum suum, qui homo domini regis et fidelis esse debet et quem David filius Lewelini frater ejus injuste cepit et captum in priona sua detinet contra justiciam ...'. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.32

Further, he would find surety through pledges that the king's peace would not be disturbed through him, and he would remain the king's man, as he ought to be.⁶⁴

In an apparent coincidence, Aynnanus Wokehem, Dafydd ap Llywelyn's attorney or representative and his associate(s) were present in the court at the same time. They stated that they did not come from their lord, neither was their lord called on account of this matter. But they said they heard well what the aforementioned woman said, *set bene audiverunt quod predicta domina ... dixit*, and they would present her complaint to their lord and ask him that he show him [Gruffudd] justice.⁶⁵ From this it is clear that Senana was herself present in court and she made her petition in person and not through an attorney. Whether or not Senana wanted Dafydd to know about her approach to the king, he now knew. It is not clear whether the presence of Dafydd's attorneys was a coincidence or not. The next item heard on the same day was a petition by Gwenllian, Gruffudd's sister, who claimed that Dafydd ap Llywelyn had taken by force and unjustly held four manors with appurtenances which her father, Llywelyn Fawr, had given her and for which she held charters. The document states that the aforementioned Aynnanus and others, *Et predictus Aynnanus et alii*, came and said that their lord does not have a day now for responding to her, etc. It seems likely that Aynnanus was in court to answer Gwenllian's petition on Dafydd's behalf, but as a consequence, overheard Senana's case which was apparently the previous one on the list. Through lack of evidence we will probably never know for certain.⁶⁶ I have also mentioned elsewhere in this book that I believe Gwenllian may have accompanied Senana to London for these hearings. (For Gwenllian Chapter 2.) Gwenllian, like Gruffudd, was an illegitimate child of Llywelyn Fawr, and they both shared the same mother. Dafydd's actions in summarily imprisoning

⁶⁴ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. XVI, p.311, 'desicut idem Griffinus paratus est per se et per bonos obsides quos inveniet domino regi ad faciendum domino regi quicquid ei facere deberet sicut homo suus et libenter stabit recto in curia domini regis omnibus qui versus eum loqui voluerint et bonam securitatem invenit per obsides et alio modo, secundum quod dominus rex providerit, quod pax domini regis non sit per hominem domini regis, qui esse debet, ut dicitur.'

⁶⁵ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. XVI, p.311.

⁶⁶ *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. XVI, p.311.

Gruffudd and seizing Gwenllian's lands probably meant that these two women joined forces. In fact there are indicators that they were acting together as part of the system of family networking. In the first place there is the evidence of the two consecutive matters on the same manuscript record of the proceedings. In the second place, Aynnanus, when he was in court on Dafydd's behalf to answer Gwenllian's complaint, said that he had overheard Senana.

This action by Senana would not have pleased Dafydd, the new ruler of Gwynedd, and he would have been more displeased that she was successful in her endeavour. Dafydd had been named by his father as the legal successor to his principality, and Henry III had by this time ratified his accession, albeit to a much reduced territory than the one his father had ruled. Nevertheless Senana's agency in taking herself all the way to Westminster to appear in the king's court is a notable action for a medieval Welsh noblewoman.

An agreement was made four months later at Shrewsbury on August 12, 1241 between Senana and Henry III which stated that Senana undertook 'on behalf of Griffin, her husband, to give to the king six hundred marks in order that the king may deliver the said Griffin and Owen, his son, from prison ...'.⁶⁷ The agreement also stipulated the payment of a further three hundred marks per year in money and goods if Gruffudd were successful in recovering that portion of his inheritance which had been denied him. This would refer to the half share in the patrimony, to which under Welsh native law Gruffudd, as the acknowledged son of Llywelyn Fawr, would have been entitled. Senana further undertook responsibility for Gruffudd and his heirs that they would keep the peace with Dafydd ap Llywelyn, concerning his share of the patrimony, and agreed to give to the king Dafydd and Rhodri, her two younger sons, as hostages, as a guarantee of Gruffudd keeping the agreement.⁶⁸

Senana's agreement with Henry III is regarded as significant by some modern historians, but that significance is qualified by the area of interest of the

⁶⁷ *Calendar of Charter Rolls of Henry III, 1226-1257* (London: 1972), p.262.

⁶⁸ *Calendar of Charter Rolls of Henry III, 1226-1257*, p.262.

particular historian, and in terms of the major events it usually relegates women to continuing footnote importance, if that. For example, the charter was noticed by R.R. Davies as part of a point he was making about cattle being the 'most important form of stock and movable wealth' in the economy of thirteenth-century Wales. He used as an example the fine Senana agreed to pay yearly to the king if Gruffudd were successful in recovering his portion of his father's inheritance, which was to be one-third each in money, in oxen and cows, and in horses.⁶⁹ These comments concerning the importance of stock in the local economy are quite valid and important. However, at the same time the gender blindness causes an equally important set of questions to be silenced. For example, a question about whether these items of 'movable wealth' would have been owned equally by Senana and Gruffudd might be considered within a discourse concerning the items of money, oxen, cows and horses. Under Welsh native law, providing her marriage to Gruffudd lasted for seven years, which it had, they shared the common pool of matrimonial property, excluding land of course. The agreed payment of six hundred marks to secure Gruffudd's release was a very large sum. Presumably it would have come from the matrimonial pool. However, as Senana was in effect ransoming her husband, it would seem appropriate that the sum of money involved should be paid firstly from Gruffudd's own wealth before Senana became obliged to contribute.

It is important to notice here that there were two conditions which governed the payment of the six hundred marks. The first was for Gruffudd's release from prison provided he abided by the judgment of the king's court, 'whether lawfully he ought to be detained in prison'. The second condition was that the king was to see that he received justice 'according to Welsh law', relating to his portion of his father's inheritance, of which he was dispossessed by his brother, Dafydd. Senana would have benefitted equally from both the release from prison of her husband and son, and from Gruffudd receiving a greater share of his father's inheritance. Senana was a woman who was aware of her own

interests and actively pursued them. This would have enhanced her own power and autonomy as a Welsh noblewoman.

Yet J. Beverley Smith's account of Senana's agreement is in fact gender blind, and her significance is lost on many levels. For him, Senana's agreement is noteworthy firstly because Senana was the mother of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the subject of his book, but also it reveals what he sees as an attempt by Gruffudd ap Llywelyn to not only try and gain his freedom, but also a share of his inheritance. He also sees the agreement as the king declaring his wish to divide Gwynedd into two parts.⁷⁰ These of course are valid and useful observations concerning medieval Welsh history. However, for this writer the further significance of Senana's charter lies in the fact that it concerns a medieval Welsh noblewoman with quite an impressive lineage, who had made an agreement with the king of England in an attempt to free her husband and son, who had endured many years in prison. The document appears to me to be unique in thirteenth-century Wales. Its importance lies in its significance as part of social history, as distinct from its value in political history.

However, in addition, and even in J. Beverley Smith's own sphere of interest, it could be argued that this particular incident represents agency by a woman in the public political sphere, rather than the private sphere within the family. Senana, a native Welsh noblewoman, who lived in north Wales, transported herself to London and is recorded as a suppliant in the king of England's court. I would suggest that the matter upon which she wished to receive judgment and ultimately, justice, is not what one would strictly term a 'private family matter'. This is a 'public political' situation, involving two polities – England and Wales. Llywelyn Fawr was the ruler of most of Wales when he died. Judgment favourable to Senana and her husband would mean serious political problems in Wales with Dafydd, the legitimate ruler. This document is an occasion when a medieval Welsh noblewoman is shown to be the perpetrator of a significant political action. However, until quite recently, most

⁶⁹ Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change*, p.156.

historians have chosen to interpret the charter in terms of its significance in support of their theories, with little or no mention of Senana.

Gwyn A. Williams quite rightly said that this agreement effected a 'dangerous intrusion by the Crown into the internal affairs of Gwynedd.'⁷¹ At the same time, by viewing this document only in terms of its indirect effects on the prevailing political events of the time, modern historians have minimised the role of Senana. The implication here is that Senana was being manipulated by Henry III for his own objectives in systematically weakening the position of Dafydd ap Llywelyn. There can be no doubt that once Senana had approached the subject of her husband's rights to a share of his father's inheritance under Welsh law, this gave Henry III the opportunity to manipulate the situation for his own interests. But whatever the outcome, it was Senana who made the first move. This shows that the noblewoman who made the agreement must have occupied an important role on the political playing field at the time. There is a case for consideration of the woman as an integral part of the history as it unfolded. Regardless of whether ultimately the king manipulated the situation to suit his own ends, it was Senana herself who initiated the course of action by approaching the English king in April 1241; he did not approach her. That four months later Henry III was able to manipulate the situation by use of this charter has no bearing on the fact that Senana was the prime mover in this particular incident. Senana was not just an instrument to be used by others, she was a member of the *dramatis personae* of this drama and the ramifications of the subsequent tragedy would have affected her directly.

The political machinations which were enacted at this time in relation to Wales did not take place in isolation. As with all human agency, the actions of one person directly influence the actions or reactions of another. Whether Senana was acting of her own volition or in concert with others is not known nor is it

relevant to the points I am making in this book. Welsh noblewomen did take action when they saw fit.

For this writer it appears equally important that Senana could be seen as trying to secure the benefits of her husband's inheritance for herself and for her sons. When she married Gruffudd her expectation would probably have been that as the eldest son of the ruler of Gwynedd, Gruffudd would inherit, or at least share in the patrimony. After he was summarily disinherited by his father, what were Senana's prospects? She was descended from an equally distinguished lineage, in fact she was closely related, and marriage to Gruffudd was probably considered a good match by Welsh standards. Traditionally, illegitimacy was no barrier to inheriting either the patrimony or the leadership under Welsh native law. But suddenly she was cut out – her husband was imprisoned for years. In fact he seems to have spent much of his adult life in prison. Where would that leave Senana and her sons? For Senana this agreement was probably an attempt to salvage a portion of what she had expected to receive when she first married.

In return for the release of her husband and eldest son, Senana agreed to hand over Dafydd and Rhodri, her two youngest sons as hostages, with the proviso that if Gruffudd and Owain died before they were freed, one of the other two sons would 'be restored to her, and the other remain as hostage'. It should be noted that Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Senana's second son, is at no time referred to in this agreement.⁷² The agreement was certainly heavily weighted in favour of the crown, but Senana agreed to it. Gruffudd and Senana by August 1241 were probably desperate, and might have agreed to anything in order to secure Gruffudd's freedom. One senses also that the inclusion of the clause which stated that in the event of the deaths of Gruffudd and Owain prior to their release, Senana would be allowed to keep at least one son, might have been an afterthought to ameliorate a particularly heartless condition.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.33.

⁷¹ G.A. Williams, 'The succession to Gwynedd 1238-47', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 20 (1962-4) p.400.

⁷² J. Beverley Smith comments on the absence of any mention of Llywelyn in the charter, Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.35-36.

Senana swore on the gospels to observe all the conditions of the agreement and it was stated that she had 'submitted herself ... to the spiritual censure of the bishops of Hereford and Coventry' in the event of any breach of the agreement and the document was sealed with her own and her husband's seals. As a native Welsh woman, it is interesting to note that Senana swore on the gospels. Huw Pryce has drawn attention to the fact that 'by the thirteenth century the practice of swearing judicial oaths on relics had given way to swearing on the gospels' but in Wales, according to the Welsh lawbooks, 'oaths were normally only valid if sworn on a relic'.⁷³ Gerald of Wales said that 'the common people, and the clergy, ... in Wales, have such a reverence for ... relics of the saints that they are more afraid of swearing oaths upon them and then breaking their word than they are upon the Gospels'.⁷⁴ In view of the position of the Welsh lawbooks in relation to oaths, it is possible that for Senana her oath may not have had the same binding strength as an oath sworn on a relic. Since the agreement was made between Senana and the English king, swearing on the gospels would by this time have been the usual practice.

Like other medieval noblewomen, Senana would have been responsible for the running of her husband's household while he was in prison. As Gruffudd seems to have been evicted from his lands prior to each of the latter periods of confinement, it is not clear what this would have entailed. Considering her own noble lineage, presumably Senana's own family may have helped her. Also Gruffudd is known to have had a sizeable following of Welsh noblemen who were not enthusiastic about Dafydd's rule, nor Gruffudd's disinheritance.⁷⁵

⁷³ Huw Pryce, *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.41.

⁷⁴ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales/The Description of Wales*, p.87. See also R.C. Stacey, *The Road to Judgment: From Custom to Court in Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp.217-18. 'Relics were as necessary to the legal process as were judges themselves.'

⁷⁵ See for example Gwyn A. Williams' reference to 'the emergence of a hostile pro-Gruffydd party' in 'The Succession to Gwynedd, 1238-47', p.403. Other references in Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p.105, Carr, *Medieval Wales*, p.60 and P.I. Lynch, 'Court Poetry, Power and Politics' in T.M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell, eds., *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp.176-77.

Smith mentions that Senana's brother Einion ap Caradog is associated with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in his 'early political initiatives'.⁷⁶ Senana would undoubtedly have received assistance from other native Welsh noble families. She possessed her own seal for the purpose of sealing documents because the charter states that it was sealed with her own seal and that of her husband.

The next and final section will discuss Senana's ability to secure the support of influential noblemen. The charter of August 12, 1241 states that 'moreover she has found the following pledges'. This suggests that Senana obviously knew she would have been able to acquire the pledges of significant noblemen because in her initial approach in March 1241 she volunteered to find pledges and sureties. Interesting names among those who gave pledges for Senana concerning this document, from the point of view of the aims for this current work, are Ralph de Mortimer and Walter de Clifford who were the husbands of Gwladus Ddu and Margaret, half-sisters of Gruffudd. Llywelyn Fawr fathered an illegitimate daughter named Angharad who married Maelgwn Fychan of Deheubarth,⁷⁷ and therefore 'Maelgun son of Maelgun' named in the charter was probably another brother-in-law of Senana. Also named were Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield and two of his brothers.⁷⁸ Senana's daughter Margaret would later marry Gruffudd's son. (For Margaret Chapter 3.) Even the Maredudd ap Robert named was probably the father of Owain ap Maredudd of Cydwain who was to marry Margred ferch Maelgwn Fychan, a granddaughter of Llywelyn Fawr.⁷⁹ Clearly there is quite a family connection here suggesting the presence of significant family networks which impinge on politics. Indeed, of the

⁷⁶ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.44-45.

⁷⁷ See Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. 3, p.446. Also Chapter 2, 'The Daughters of Llywelyn Fawr'.

⁷⁸ Four of the pledges are listed in *Littere Wallie*, and they are almost identical in wording, for example they all state: 'Sciatis quod ego me constitui plegium Senane uxoris Griffini filli Lewelini quondam principis Norwallie et manucepi pro ea erga dominum meum Henricum regem Anglie illustrem quod omnia que conuencionauit eidem comino meo nomine prefati viri sui pro liberacione sua et Oweyni fillii sui a carcere in quo David frater eius eos detinet et pro porcione que ipsum Griffinum ...and so on'. *Littere Wallie preserved in Liber A in the Public Record Office*, J.G. Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1940), nos. 10, 17, 18 and 51, pp.15, 19, 20 and 35.

noblemen who gave pledges for Senana, only Roger de Monte Alto, steward of Chester and Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys were outside the group of present and future members of the family circle of Llywelyn Fawr. For J. Beverley Smith the significance of the names of those who provided pledges to the charter lies in the fact that those men agreed to join the king in 'doing justice to Gruffudd ap Llywelyn' at the expense of his brother Dafydd.⁸⁰ Gwyn A. Williams referred to the 'number and quality of the Welsh lords who were induced to support Gruffydd ap Llywelyn'.⁸¹ Certainly this may very well be the case, but I am not sure that any proof exists that these noblemen had been influenced by the king to support Senana. These were very powerful and influential men and most were related by marriage to Senana, so if one views the document from a different angle, for example from the point of view of family connection, their significance changes. Senana could be seen as having powerful allies who were prepared to stand pledges for her. Pledging oneself for the security of a contract in the legal system of the Middle Ages was a serious undertaking. Smith believes that Ralph Mortimer, Gwladus's husband, 'may have played a key role in formulating the agreement' between Senana and the king when he agreed to sign a pledge for Senana. His reason for believing this concerns the Mortimer claims to Gwerthrynion and Maelienydd.⁸² It is always possible, given the close family connections here, that Senana may have arranged with her brothers-in-law and other interested parties to take the action she did with their knowledge and support. J.J. Crump, however, goes so far as to say that 'it is doubtful that Ralph Mortimer agreed to stand as surety for Senana because of any particular family feeling'.⁸³ Nevertheless, whatever the outcome and however things were ultimately resolved, Senana herself took the first step.

⁷⁹ Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, vol. 4, p.854. For Margred ferch Maelgwn Fychan Chapter 8.

⁸⁰ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.34.

⁸¹ Williams, 'The succession to Gwynedd 1238-47', p.400.

⁸² Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.42.

⁸³ J.J. Crump, 'The Mortimer Family and the Making of the March' in M. Prestwich, R.H. Britnell & R. Frame, eds. *Thirteenth Century England VI, Proceedings of the Durham Conference, 1995* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), p.126.

A week after the agreement was sealed, *The Calendar of Patent Rolls* for August 29, 1241 records that Dafydd had agreed that he would release Gruffudd and Owain to the king for his judgment as to whether Gruffudd should be imprisoned and also would abide by the judgment of the king's court concerning Gruffudd's portion of their father's inheritance, 'according to the custom of the Welsh'. An addendum to the document confirmed that Gruffudd had been handed over to the king.⁸⁴ Unfortunately although Gruffudd was released from Dafydd's prison, it seems that the king decided it was wiser to keep him in prison and he was moved into the Tower of London. J.E. Lloyd mentions that Gruffudd was allowed the companionship of his wife while in prison,⁸⁵ so presumably Senana must have lived for two or three years either in or close to the Tower of London. In fact it would appear that Gruffudd and Senana must have had some sort of conjugal visiting rights during Gruffudd's various terms of imprisonment, because it is doubtful that Gruffudd would have had his freedom for the length of time it would have required for him to have fathered his children over the years. Dafydd was only an infant at the time Senana was trying to arrange Gruffudd's release, and only six years old when his father died in 1244.⁸⁶ Rhodri was even younger. Senana's daughter Margaret was probably also very young when Gruffudd died.

There is some confusion among scholars as to the exact periods of Gruffudd's incarceration, but the following is a reasonable summary. Gruffudd had been imprisoned as a hostage by King John from 1211 until he was released as a condition of Magna Carta in 1215.⁸⁷ He was later confined by his father from 1228 until 1234 and then returned to custody in Cricieth Castle in 1239 until 1241, transferring to the Tower of London until his death in 1244. In fact

⁸⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1232-1247*, vol. 3 (London: 1971), p.264.

⁸⁵ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, vol. II, p.700.

⁸⁶ R. Maud, 'David, the Last Prince of Wales' in *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, I (1968), p.52

⁸⁷ Item 58 of Magna Carta states: 'We will restore at once the son of Llywelyn and all the hostages from Wales and the charters delivered to us as security for peace.' Holt, *Magna Carta*, Appendix 6, p.469.

Gruffudd was a prisoner for at least fifteen years of his life. During the reign of Henry III the Tower of London became a major royal palace and by the time of Gruffudd's confinement there, many additions and improvements to the Tower had been carried out.⁸⁸ It is thought that Gruffudd's incarceration took the form of an 'honourable confinement' and according to Derek Wilson, Gruffudd 'was installed in the state apartments of the White Tower in September, 1241' and 'he received visits from his wife'.⁸⁹

It is not known whether Senana had indeed paid the 600 marks when Gruffudd was released into the custody of the king by Dafydd. Since Gruffudd died before he was released from prison the proposed negotiation for his share of the patrimony did not take place and his financial position presumably remained as it was prior to the commencement of Senana's attempt to obtain his release. Senana did receive financial assistance from the crown because as early as October 24, 1241 she was paid ten marks 'of the king's gift'.⁹⁰ Smith mentions records of other payments to her as well in *Issues of the Exchequer* and *Cheshire Pipe Rolls*.⁹¹ Perhaps she was receiving financial assistance because of her husband's continued incarceration. Technically, the king did obtain Gruffudd's release from Dafydd's custody. On August 29, 1241 Dafydd agreed to release to the king Gruffudd and Owain plus the other Welsh prisoners being held with them. The charter states that it will be the judgment of the king's court whether Gruffudd 'ought to be kept captive' and whether he should have a portion of his father's land.⁹² Unfortunately there seems to have been no attempt to give Gruffudd the promised judgment of the king's court and he was just kept in confinement. Tragically for Senana, on April 30, 1244 it was reported that Gruffudd had unfortunately broken his neck and was killed when he fell from the

Tower while trying to escape. Several documents record Gruffudd's confinement and also his death.⁹³

Despite the importance of the charter quoted above, Senana leaves little other trace in the public record. A letter from Owain and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to Henry III, dated between October 1249 and June 1250, mentions certain dower lands which their mother had held for some time,⁹⁴ so she certainly had some dower property and she would also presumably have retained the movable goods which she would have received under native Welsh law on her marriage. Once again, Senana is an example of a Welsh noblewoman of the thirteenth century who, in spite of the restrictions imposed on women by native Welsh law, was in fact dowered by a Welsh nobleman. She would have held these dower lands from 1244 when her husband died, and although John de Grey, Justice of Chester, was making what Owain and Llywelyn termed 'frivolous objections' which involved their mother's dower lands, she probably retained these lands until her death. This letter provides another example which concerns interpretation of documents by historians. The document may be utilised in at least two different ways. For J. Beverley Smith this letter is merely evidence that Senana was indeed the mother of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.⁹⁵ By contrast, for this current work, this letter is evidence that like most of the other women in this book, Senana held dower lands in Wales, despite Welsh native law.

Senana was active in taking responsibility for, and caring for her family while her husband was incarcerated, and she continued with her duties after his death. She would have had to assume part of the masculine obligations in her husband's absence. She is said to have been present when her son Dafydd was invested as lord of the commote of Cymydmaen on July 11, 1252. He would have been aged about fourteen years and considered to be of age under Welsh

⁸⁸ D. Wilson, *The Tower 1078-1978*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), pp.19-23.

⁸⁹ Wilson, *The Tower 1078-1978*, p.27.

⁹⁰ *Calendar of Liberate Rolls of Henry III*, vol. II (London: 1930), p.81.

⁹¹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.41, footnote 17.

⁹² *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1232-1247*, vol. 3, p.264.

⁹³ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry III, 1232-1247*, vol. 3, p.424.

⁹⁴ *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence concerning Wales*, J.G. Edwards, ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), pp.32-3. See also *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III*, W.W. Shirley, ed. (London: RS, 1862-6), pp.64-6. '... nisi Maredudd filius Ricardi de Heyn haberet quasdam terras quas mater nostra habuerat pro dote longo tempore, ...'

⁹⁵ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.38, footnote 6.

law.⁹⁶ Her position should certainly have improved with the rise to power of her second son, and the last great ruler of native Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. When Dafydd ap Llywelyn died in 1246, his nephews Owain and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd joined forces against Henry III to try and regain their patrimony. The result was the treaty of Woodstock in 1247 by which Owain and Llywelyn were to share what remained of a much reduced territory in Gwynedd. This was the beginning of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's rise to power. In June 1255, Llywelyn defeated his brother Owain at the battle of Bryn Derwin. By 1267 he had reached the pinnacle of his achievements as the undisputed ruler of native Wales. In fact he was referred to by the English ruler as 'Prince of Wales', a term which had never been legally acknowledged before this time.⁹⁷

The exact date of her death is unknown, but Senana was buried in Llanfaes in 1263.⁹⁸ The year 1263 was significant in Welsh history. At the end of March, 1263, Dafydd ap Gruffudd took a step which A.D. Carr describes as 'surprising', in that he deserted his brother Llywelyn and went over to the English side and submitted to the lord Edward.⁹⁹ His mother was very closely involved with Dafydd in matters in general, possibly because he was so young when his father died, but she seems to have acted as his protector, a masculine-like obligation. In 1252 Senana was with Dafydd who was lord of Cymydmaen in Llŷn, and she witnessed with him an agreement made between the abbot and convent of Enlli and the canons of Aberdaron and the men of the *abadaeth*.¹⁰⁰ While discussing Richard, the bishop of Bangor, J. Beverley Smith has stated that he 'along with Senana was with Dafydd ap Gruffudd in 1252', citing the *Record of Caernarvon* p.252 as his source.¹⁰¹ Senana also probably accompanied Dafydd

⁹⁶ A.D. Carr, 'The Last and Weakest of his Line: Dafydd ap Gruffydd, the Last Prince of Wales', *The Welsh History Review*, vol. 19, No. 3 (June 1999), p.376. See also Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp.68-9.

⁹⁷ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.180.

⁹⁸ Information contained in leaflet issued by Gwynedd County Council 'Princes of Gwynedd: The Môn Trail', 1996.

⁹⁹ Carr, 'The Last and Weakest of his Line', p.381.

¹⁰⁰ Carr, 'The Last and Weakest of his Line', p.376.

¹⁰¹ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.57, footnote 83.

when he travelled to London to swear fealty to the king,¹⁰² and seems to have been present with him on important occasions. It is interesting to speculate on whether the fact of his mother's death in 1263 had any bearing on Dafydd defecting to the English side by the end of March, 1263.¹⁰³ When Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had defeated his brothers Owain and Dafydd at the battle of Bryn Derwin in 1255, and established 'his mastery over Gwynedd Uwch Conwy in its entirety',¹⁰⁴ He imprisoned both of them, but Dafydd was later released. Owain, who was the eldest brother and thereby a threat to Llywelyn's supremacy, was to remain in prison for the next twenty-two years. Llywelyn seems not to have regarded Dafydd as a threat and he remained free. Dafydd was also regarded as Llywelyn's heir because Llywelyn had not married nor generated an heir. Smith seems unable to account for Dafydd's motives for defecting in 1263, any more than he is able to explain the motives for his treachery and subsequent defection in 1274.¹⁰⁵ The evidence shows that Senana was a staunch upholder of the rights of her native Welsh family. Perhaps Senana's continued presence and influence had ensured his loyalty to his brother, Llywelyn, or it may be that Dafydd had been protected by Senana and possibly she had been able to prevent his imprisonment by Llywelyn. With the death of his mother, perhaps Dafydd felt safer under the protection of the crown. He had experienced prison and would not have relished the same fate as Owain. We will probably never know the reason, and perhaps it was a coincidence that his mother's death occurred in the same year.

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was at his most successful during the latter period of Senana's life from about 1258 to 1263, so that despite the perceived difficulties and disappointments which dogged most of her life, the last five years at least must have held their compensations. Perhaps fortunately for her, she did not live to witness the downfall of Llywelyn in 1282, nor the gruesome execution

¹⁰² *Calendar of Close Rolls of Henry III, 1251-1253* (London: 1927), p.419.

¹⁰³ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.154, n.54.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.73.

¹⁰⁵ See Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p.154, n.54 and p.374.

of Dafydd by Edward I in 1283. Senana's two daughters, Gwladus and Margaret, married native Welsh rulers, and they are discussed elsewhere in this book. (For Gwladus ferch Gruffudd Chapter 8, Margaret of Bromfield Chapter 3.)