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Manawydan uab Llŷr:
A Tale of the Norman Occupation of Deheubarth

Byron Huws

As they were sitting there they heard a tumultuous noise, and with the intensity of the noise there fell a blanket of mist so that they could not see each other. And after the mist, everywhere became bright. When they looked to where they had once seen the flocks and herds and dwelling-places, they could now see nothing at all, neither building nor beast, neither smoke nor fire, neither man nor dwelling-place, only the court buildings empty, desolate, uninhabited, without people, without animals in them; their own companions had disappeared, with nothing known of their whereabouts – only the four of them remained.¹

With these words the storyteller introduces the matter of the Manawydan tale. This ‘enchantment’ is the catastrophe Manawydan and his companions have to deal with. In this article, I will argue that the author has drawn the enchantment from a real event, and, as the tale unfolds, draws on a historical narrative and identifiable characters from Deheubarth (south Wales) in the first half of the twelfth century. Though the tale is not a history nor even historical fiction, I want to suggest that its author has drawn the central event and its outcome from the aftermath of the insurgence of land-grabbing Norman armies into his beloved Dyfed in this period. This paper does not seek to explain the whole tale in historical terms, only that of the struggle of the two main protagonists, Manawydan and the enchanter.

‘Mi a dodeis yr hut ar seith cantref Dyuet’
‘I will put the spell over the seven cantrefs of Dyfed’

The central theme of the tale is the ‘enchantment’ of Dyfed and how Manawydan, one of the ‘Three Undemanding Chieftains’, and his companions deal with it. The author of the third branch eloquently describes in the above quote the shock of the ‘enchantment’ which suddenly strikes Dyfed just when everything has reached the promise of contentment in the lives of Manawydan and his companions. Having returned to Dyfed after their exploits in the second branch, Manawydan and Pryderi were expecting to settle down with their respective wives, Rhiannon, Pryderi’s

1 A critical summary of current thinking from different perspectives on the corpus of tales can be found in the introduction to the latest translation of the tales, *The Mabinogion*, trans. by Sioned Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). All quotes from the tales have been taken from this translation of the *Mabinogion*. Quotes from the Welsh are taken from *Manawydan uab Llŷr*, ed. by Ian Hughes (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2007). For another discussion of critical approaches to the Four Branches, see Andrew Breeze, *The Origins of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2009).

mother, and Cigfa, where they 'had never seen a place more pleasant to live in, nor better hunting ground, nor land more abundant in honey and fish [...] and they feasted and relaxed'.²

The explanation will come later in the tale as to why their compatriots, servants, cattle, all the homes, everything bar their own court and its supplies, have suddenly vanished, and only the wild flora and fauna remain. Though the game, the fish and the fruits are as abundant as before, all their people, and all their animals, together with their farms and settlements have all disappeared.

To summarize the tale briefly, over the next seven years Manawydan and his companions first try to make a go of it alone in Dyfed but are forced to try their luck working in English towns. Having 'lost' Pryderi and Rhiannon in an 'enchanted' castle during an earlier brief return to Dyfed, Manawydan and Cigfa finally return permanently to Dyfed to try and make a living at farming. But soon their crops are attacked by destructive thieving mice. Manawydan then discovers that a 'bishop' is responsible who is forced to admit ' [...] *mi a dodeis yr hut ar seith cantref Dyuet*,³: it was he who put an enchantment on the seven cantrefs of Dyfed. After Manawydan gains a decisive advantage over the 'bishop' and forces him to concede, he gets the enchantment lifted, brings to an end the 'bishop's' destructive activities, and secures the release of his missing companions from the castle and the return of all the people, their animals and their settlements which all now reappear. And everything in the author's beloved Dyfed is rosy again.

It is the central event of the tale, the 'enchantment' of Dyfed, that strikes this writer as the real event, notwithstanding its dramatic magical cloak, the event that unlocks the historical basis of this tale and must thus be apparent in the historical record. This is briefly summarized as follows.

Heu, scelerum cumulus gentis inique
'Alas, the heap of crimes of this evil race'

A seminal year in the Norman conquest of Deheubarth comes with the assassination of Hywel ap Goronwy in 1106, 'through treachery by the French who were in Rhyd-y-gors [castle]'.⁴ A treaty between Hywel and the Norman king of England, Henry I (d. 1135), made only four years previously, giving to Henry control of Deheubarth on a line west of the lower Tywi river, in fact the seven cantrefs of Dyfed, and to Hywel control east of the lower Tywi, essentially Ystrad Tywi, Cydweli and Gŵyr (Gower), was now just waste parchment. The assassination made the way clear for the Normans to rejuvenate their conquest of the old kingdom of Deheubarth. Not since two Norman armies had forced their way into Deheubarth at the start of the conquest in 1093 had the Normans been given a better opportunity to smash the

² *Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p. 36.

³ *Manawydan*, ed. Hughes, p. 10.

⁴ *Brut y Tywysogion, or, The Chronicle of the Princes. Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), pp. 49–51.

Welsh opposition.⁵

The brutal efficiency of the Normans had already been witnessed by the author of the Latin *Vita Davidis*, 'Life of St David', Rhigyfarch ap Sulien (d. 1097/9), who, in a scorching condemnation of the Normans in a poem, the *Lament*, written about three years into the war listed the 'heap of crimes of this evil race [...] the enemies of God'.⁶ Royal licences to annex Hywel's territory were now passed around by Henry. Henry Beaumont (d. 1119), Earl of Warwick, was given the commote of Gŵyr, and his highly favoured minister Roger d'Avranches (d. 1139), Bishop of Salisbury, was given the neighbouring commotes of Cydweli and Carnwallon, creating the lordships of Gŵyr and Cydweli respectively, together with a new strategic royal domain centred on Carmarthen. With the removal of Hywel and the coming of the royal counsellors, and with established bases in Dyfed, the opportunity for further domination by the Normans was at hand.

In the entry for 1108, two years into this renewed Norman effort, *Brut y Tywysogion*, 'Chronicle of the Princes', tells us that 'a folk of strange origin and customs [...] were sent by king Henry to the land of Dyfed. And that folk seized the whole cantref of Rhos near the estuary of the river called Cleddyf, and drove away all the inhabitants from the land'.⁷ The Welsh annalist was not the only one to note this event. What might be termed the 'Dyfed clearances' were mentioned by William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 'Deeds of the Kings of the English', who otherwise spent very little time discussing matters of Welsh interest. But out of three such references from the time of William the Conqueror, the Malmesbury monk is twice concerned with this event. John of Worcester also records the event in his chronicle, *Chronicon ex Chronicis*.⁸ Thus a contemporary English chronicle, an English history of the Norman kings written in the early twelfth century and a British annal of the late thirteenth century all specifically mention what on the face of it might seem a purely local event but was to each of them, as described below, a somewhat extraordinary one.

⁵ Much detailed coverage can be found in the following: J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales, from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912), pp. 411–446; R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales, 1063–1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 3–82; Ifor Rowlands, 'The Making of the March: Aspects of the Norman Settlement in Dyfed', in *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1980*, ed. by R. Allen Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1981), pp. 142–156.

⁶ Michael Lapidge, 'The Welsh-Latin Poetry of Sulien's Family', *Studia Celtica*, 8/9 (1973/4), 68–106 (pp. 89–93).

⁷ *Brut y Tywysogion, or, The Chronicle of the Princes: Peniarth MS 20 Version*, ed. and trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), p. 27.

⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. by R. A. B. Mynors, Rodney M. Thomson and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 553, 727; *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. by R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk, trans. by Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk, 3 vols (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1995–1998), III, 125–7.

An admirable plan

The assassination of Hywel marked a renewed resistance right across Deheubarth. As contemporary Anglo-Norman sources indicate, the Dyfed clearances were designed as part of a strategy, and a special part, to overcome continuing resistance. In his *Chronicle*, John of Worcester described how Henry removed the Flemings, 'who were living in Northumbria, together with all their chattels, and made them settle in the district which is called Rhos',⁹ and in his *Gesta*, William of Malmesbury, providing the clearest of motives for them, added, 'The Welsh were in constant revolt, and king Henry maintained pressure on them by frequent expeditions until they surrendered; also, in reliance on an admirable plan for reducing their ebullience, he removed into Wales all the Flemings who were living in England'.¹⁰ William is truly taken with the effectiveness and significance of this policy. In his only other comment, bar one, on anything pertaining to Wales and the Norman kings, in his chapter on William Rufus, he steps aside from his subject for a moment to compare the relative ineffectiveness of Rufus, 'who had small success against the Welsh', compared with his brother, Henry I: 'It was Henry [...] a man of outstanding intelligence, who discovered the art of undermining their schemes, by planting Flemings in their home-country to act as a barrier against them and contain them permanently.'¹¹

William of Malmesbury gives us a further measure of how significant a population movement this was. Any of the Norman feudal or borough plantations would have involved the transplant of alien settlers, but the Flemish involved in the Dyfed clearances 'were lying low in England, in such numbers as actually to seem a burden on the realm itself' and so Henry 'collected them all together, as though in some great midden, in the Welsh province of Rhos, with all their belongings and relatives, thereby simultaneously purging his kingdom and putting a brake on his headstrong and barbarous enemies'.¹²

From the *Brut* we get a Welsh perspective on the unique manner and scale of this settlement, for the Flemish 'occupied the whole cantref called Rhos [...] and drove away all the inhabitants from the land'.¹³ The Peniarth MS 20 version better communicates the outrage felt by the Welsh against the Flemish settlers who 'were sent to Rhos, driving thence the rightful inhabitants, who have lost their rightful land and their rightful place from that day to this'.¹⁴ When the *Brut* refers to *all* the Welsh being driven away, this was no mere rhetoric on the part of the chronicler. The transplantation of 'the most famous and identifiable of the colonists brought in by the Normans, warriors and peasants by turn [...] deadly enemies of

9 *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, trans. Bray and McGurk, pp. 126–7.

10 *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. Mynors et al., p. 727.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 553.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 727.

13 *Brut y Tywysogyon, Red Book Version*, ed. Jones, p. 53.

14 *Brut y Tywysogyon, Peniarth 20 Version*, ed. Jones, p. 53.

the Welsh [...] permanently transformed the [racial and linguistic] character of parts of western Dyfed'.¹⁵

Having examined the manner and extent of the plantation in his paper on the Norman settlement in Dyfed, Ifor Rowlands concluded that virtually all the sources confirm that 'the Flemish settlement in Rhos and Daugleddau (in western Dyfed) was a deliberate act of policy by Henry I', and thus under royal control and supervision.¹⁶ And the Flemish were not just available as individual settlers, they came as fully-functioning colonizing groups, with lords, knights, artisans, farmers and families ready to settle. In various parts of Deheubarth, Flemish settlers joined their English, Breton and Norman contemporaries as feudal tenants throughout the occupied territories, or as burgesses in the new towns beginning to spring up, as at Roger d'Avranches' *caput honoris*, his major seat, at *Cadweli* (Cydweli), founded in 1106,¹⁷ but the evidence for the two cantrefs of western Dyfed shows 'the probability that many of these Flemish settlers came to Dyfed [...] under their own leaders', contracting directly with the king or his agent to bring in their groups.¹⁸ The records show that some of these leaders held compact estates from the king and took their place in the local baronage.

Whatever was the nature of settlement in the rest of Deheubarth, and certainly there were clearances to create the new boroughs and 'Englishries' springing up across the whole territory, in the two cantrefs of Rhos and Daugleddau the clearances were of a different order. Contemporary accounts and the subsequent linguistic and place-name evidence clearly indicate a singularly radical event. The *Brut* chronicler, writing c. 1300, could not have imagined that the effects of what we might now call ethnic cleansing would still be echoing 700 years after his time, linguistically and genealogically. Only recently, a member of a south Pembrokeshire community (south-western Dyfed), interviewed for the BBC, said that language policies to reverse the decline of Welsh by promoting a greater use of the language in schools and public authorities across the country should take account of the fact that his local community had never spoken Welsh in the first place – not since 1108 at any rate, and, with regard to any Flemish ancestors of his, never at all.¹⁹

Are the Dyfed clearances the 'enchantment' of the tale of *Manawydan*? Both the fictional and the historical events share common features. Most obviously, they both occur in Dyfed, they both involve the disappearance of the Welsh people

15 Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change*, pp. 98–9.

16 Rowlands, 'Making of the March', p. 147.

17 Edward J Kealey, *Roger of Salisbury, Viceroy of England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 232; *Sherborne Cartulary* (British Library Add. MS 46487), folio 14-15v (dated c. 1150). See *Charters of Sherborne*, ed. by Mary Ann O'Donovan (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press and British Academy, 1988).

18 Rowlands, 'Making of the March', p. 148.

19 *The Politics Show, Wales*, BBC One, broadcast 9 November 2008. See also the online news story by Mark Hannaby, 'Town Wants Welsh Language Opt-Out', 9 November 2008 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/7717042.stm>> [accessed 30 November 2010].

from Dyfed, excepting the four protagonists, and they are both on a catastrophic scale. Both events happen suddenly and uniquely. As far as the historical record goes, Rowlands could find only one other comparable 'clearance' in the British Isles around this period, and that occurred in Scotland, shortly after the Dyfed clearances; since this clearance also involved Flemish settlers, it may have been a copy-cat event.²⁰ And of course Manawydan is utterly baffled by what has happened. In both the fictional and historical Dyfed, *all* the people in the particular area are 'disappeared', a feature which is stressed in both the tale and the historical accounts. A particular difference is that the historical clearances at their most catastrophic affected mainly the two western cantrefs, whereas the tale speaks of the seven cantrefs of Dyfed being affected. The conquest over time flowed over most of Dyfed with different tactics employed by the Normans in different areas. In some parts, Welsh lords were even allowed to keep their lands, though on the conquerors' feudal terms (see below). The tale's author, one might assume, has chosen to depict the worst of the occupiers' tactics, and, for the Welsh, the most unforgettable, and applied them to the entire seven cantrefs.

In this 'enchanted' land, in a neatly expressive dramatic trick by the tale's author, Manawydan apparently cannot see anyone or anything which is not Welsh, so he cannot see the Flemish and Norman occupiers and anything they have possessed, the farms and domestic animals and so forth, and since the Welsh have been driven away or enslaved, he cannot see anything at all except what is wild, apart from his companions and his own deserted hall of course. It is for the author's dramatic purposes that Manawydan and his companions are there at all, as witnesses to the disappearances. As the tale's author later establishes for the listener or reader, it is human agency, an 'enchanter', who is responsible for the disaster. And in the historical record, as described below, not only are there Norman agents to match the 'enchanter' of the tale, they are also identifiable.

The immediate consequence of the 'enchantment' is that Manawydan and his companions are now living effectively on their own diminishing reserves and foraging from the wild. Essentially, the four companions are now doing as the dispossessed and exiled of Rhos and Daugleddau, in particular, and the enslaved or dispossessed in the rest of occupied Dyfed had to do to survive in Deheubarth and abroad, even, as the four are forced eventually to do, to go and find work in the English towns.

'Kyrchwn Loygyr, a cheisswn greft y caffom yn ymborth'
'Let us set out for England, and find a craft that will help us'

The tale, as this writer contends, now continues to follow an historical narrative. As the 'enchantment' continues, Manawydan and his party survive by one means or another to the next crucial event dealt with in the tale, the confrontation with the

20 Rowlands, 'Making of the March', p. 146.

'bishop' and the ending of the 'enchantment'. But before we get there, the tale takes us on a journey to some of the border English towns, beginning with Hereford, the 'mother' of Breteuil-style liberties for many a Norman borough, including some of those established in Deheubarth after 1106.²¹

Directly following the 'enchantment', the tale informs us that Manawydan and party live off their remaining provisions, but after a couple of years, 'at last they grew tired. "God knows, we cannot live like this," says Manawydan,²² and they are forced to find other ways of making a living. 'Let us go to England and seek a craft by which we may make our living,' concludes Manawydan.²³ This must surely be the first reference in Welsh literature, with an astonishingly modern ring, to what is now an age-old poser, a rite-of-passage even, and sometimes a humiliation, for many Welsh men and women having to contemplate their future.

The tale's author now has a deal of satirical humour, if somewhat black, especially at the expense of Manawydan himself, which if nothing else shows how much this tale is a local Welsh one. The artisan listeners to the tale especially must have enjoyed the ease with which a great lord could turn himself into a master craftsman overnight. For Manawydan is now one of the 'Three Golden Shoemakers'²⁴ who takes on the English competition in a variety of trades, consistently wiping the floor with them, as the author delightedly tells us, with the tale's artisan listeners no doubt concurring, in whichever town they happen to be. In Hereford, at their first trade, 'as long as that work could be had from Manawydan, neither pommels nor saddles were purchased from any other saddler throughout all Hereford. All the saddlers realized they were losing their profits [...]',²⁵ and resolved to kill Manawydan and Pryderi. The story then relates how they have to move from one town to the next and effortlessly change their trades as they seek to escape the prejudice and death threats that inevitably follow. Pryderi is all for killing their persecutors but the realistic Manawydan counsels that the king 'would get to hear of it, and his men, and we would be ruined.'²⁶ Eventually, tiring of all this envy and threat, they go back to Dyfed where, alas, the enchantment remains in full force.

The tale is clearly at home in the historical reality of that great medieval innovation, the borough. As Ned Sturzer points out, the Manawydan tale is not only unique in the *Mabinogi* cycle in its references to specialized trades and guilds and the paraphernalia of borough life, but such things do not even begin to develop before the twelfth century.²⁷ It appears the author is acutely aware of the realities for alien artisans in the new boroughs. One of the common liberties

21 Ralph A. Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered in Medieval Wales* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1994), p. 163.

22 *Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p. 37.

23 Ibid., p. 37; and section title from *Manawydan*, ed. Hughes, p. 3.

24 *Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p. 56.

25 Ibid., p. 37.

26 Ibid., p. 38.

27 Ned Sturzer, 'Inconsistencies and Infelicities in the Welsh Tales: Their Implications', *Studia Celtica*, 37 (2003), 127-42 (p. 139).

of the borough is a variation on the theme of the right to dwell permanently if residence had not been challenged for a period of time – a potent reason for the long-term residence of ‘enemy’ refugees to be challenged, never mind any competitive threat they may represent.²⁸ As the Norman wars of conquest raged back and forth across Deheubarth after 1093, and especially in the period of the clearances after 1106, whole communities were being displaced and having to find any kind of alternative living they could. Opportunities for Welsh artisans in the new plantation boroughs in Deheubarth itself of course were nil, reserved as they were for the settler Flemish, English and Normans.²⁹ It must be seriously doubted whether the author could have written so easily about ‘finding work in the English towns’, whether any storyteller could, before the early twelfth century, or could have found an audience in Deheubarth which would have had any kind of shared cultural experience of and interest in such places before then. Those that had the opportunity may well have gone to find temporary work in English boroughs such as Hereford, and for the first time in socially significant numbers. Or to put that on its head, it might well be the evidence of the tale, if written in the early twelfth century, that is telling us exactly that.

‘Oy a Arglwyd Duw [...] pwy yssyd yn gorfen uyn diua i?’
‘Alas, lord God, [...] who is trying to destroy me completely?’

The sojourn of Manawydan’s party in England now comes to an end and the tale moves toward the confrontation with the ‘bishop’. In fact, the party are now down to just two, Manawydan and Pryderi’s wife Cigfa. During an earlier brief return to Dyfed, Pryderi and Rhiannon had gone missing after both had entered a ‘huge towering fort’ when it had magically appeared and as quickly disappeared again, and Manawydan and Cigfa had then returned to the English towns. Seven years in all, then, after the ‘enchantment’, Manawydan and Cigfa return permanently to Dyfed, determined to make a success of farming this time. Manawydan has brought wheat seeds back with him, and he quickly becomes a champion grower of wheat; one cannot help but wonder if a lost version ever had him down as one of the ‘Three Golden Wheat Growers’? Is the author now playing to the farmers in the audience? But when Manawydan prepares to reap the first of his three fields he finds the whole lot gone, picked clean. “‘Oh Lord God”, he said, “who is trying to destroy me completely? I know this much: whoever began this destruction is now bringing it to an end, and has destroyed the land along with me””.³⁰ Finally the patient, enduring, ‘undemanding’ Manawydan is now coming to the end of his patience. On the third attempt by an unknown party to destroy his fields, he finally captures one of the thieves – a mouse.

As Manawydan sets about hanging the thief, he is surprised by a cleric. Why so?

28 M. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages: Town Plantation in England, Wales and Gascony* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), p. 208.

29 Kealey, *Roger of Salisbury*, p. 232; Sherborne Cartulary (BL Add.MS 46487), folio 14-15v.

30 *Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p. 42; and section title from *Manawydan*, ed. Hughes, p. 7.

“‘Because” (as he tells the cleric) “for the last seven years I have not seen a single person here””,³¹ that is, since the enchantment. He offers Manawydan a pound (a rather large sum in the early twelfth century) for the mouse, to save Manawydan from such a menial task, he says. Manawydan dismisses him. Next, a priest comes along with exactly the same dialogue, offering serious money, three pounds. But justice for Manawydan (and presumably the audience) is more important. Next, a full-blown bishop, complete with baggage train. He offers seven pounds for the mouse. When Manawydan refuses, he is offered twenty four pounds, a colossal sum of money comparable to a baron’s annual income,³² and in ready money to boot. When twice as much is also refused, the bishop adds his whole baggage train to the offer as well, and when Manawydan has duly refused yet again, the bishop then asks Manawydan for his price. The main negotiations begin.

In return for the release of the mouse (who turns out to be the bishop’s wife), Manawydan wants the release of Pryderi and Rhiannon. The bishop grants it. He now wants the ending of the enchantment and the return of the *status quo ante*. All is agreed. And then the ‘bishop’ reveals that he is Llwyd Cilcoed who created the magical ‘huge towering fort’ (discussed below) into which Pryderi and Rhiannon disappeared, and that he is the one who has been organizing the raids against Manawydan by transforming his men and his wife into mice for the purpose.

Sicut perambulavi eam
‘As I myself have walked’

If this tale were expressing the real world of the Norman occupation of Deheubarth one might put all this in another way. This wealthy ‘bishop’ can offer a king’s ransom and has the power to have prisoners released from custody at will, to put a stop to punitive raids against Welsh territory, to return lands to their previous owners and, grandly, even to end the Norman occupation of Deheubarth. That the author has chosen to disguise the enchanter as a bishop is, in the view of this writer, a crucial piece of the evidence for this tale being one which draws on an historical narrative. The ‘bishop’ of the tale, as the one who master-minded the ‘enchantment’ and who agrees to Manawydan’s demands to end it, must, in the real world, if this writer’s contention is correct, be based on a high-ranking Norman who in the minds of the Welsh is seen as capable of master-minding and/or executing king Henry’s military and settlement policy in Deheubarth, and in particular the Dyfed clearances, a revolutionary piece of social engineering requiring, as we have seen, political and logistical coordination at royal council level.

And what could the identity be of such a man in the real world of the early twelfth-century occupation of Deheubarth, in the period from when the

31 *Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p. 43.

32 The lordship of Pembroke was worth £100 to king Henry in 1130. See Rowlands, ‘Making of the March’, p. 152.

clearances take place? Not Llwyd Cilcoed, the revealed 'enchanter' in the story, a name which is picked out of the tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen*³³ or from a common genealogical source by the author, with no known historical pedigree, and clearly no Norman. It is the clear and otherwise unexplained reference to a 'bishop', complete with his ecclesiastical minions and baggage train, which may carry the real inspiration for Manawydan's antagonist, or else this character is indeed without any historical basis and the whole reference to a 'bishop' is rather pointless. What has to be found then is a historical figure who can be easily identified by the contemporary audience as the 'bishop'.

There are two major contenders. The first is Roger d'Avranches, the Bishop of Salisbury and a royal counsellor from 1102 and, in the course of a thirty-five-year career in Henry's service, a man who became the leading member of his *curia regis*, rising to become his *Regni Angliae Procurator*, his Viceroy of England, and, as attested by William of Malmesbury, the second most powerful man in the kingdom after the king,³⁴ and fabulously rich to boot. In 1106, he is a *curialis*, in Deheubarth creating his new lordship of Cydweli (see above), replacing the assassinated Hywel ap Goronwy in that part of the latter's territory. Is he then the right man in the right place at the right time to mastermind the Norman reorganization of Deheubarth and bargain with 'Manawydan'?

Roger has all the qualifications for being the 'bishop' and, as the marcher lord of Cydweli, he has a direct personal interest in Deheubarth. '*Sicut perambulavi eam*,' writes Roger in his charter granting land, 'as I myself have walked' in his newly-seized territory from his *caput honoris* at Cydweli to his favourite abbey of Sherborne.³⁵ He is not only an ecclesiastical baron now, but a baron, and a Marcher baron at that, in his own right. If we have to find a high royal council member actually on the ground there in Deheubarth capable of organizing the Dyfed clearances, organized as they were by the state, as Ifor Rowlands concluded, and the man who could deal with Manawydan as one lord to another, and throw colossal sums of money about for ransom, who else is a better candidate? The double reference by William of Malmesbury to the 'admirable plan' of the Flemish plantation, noted above, is surely revealing. The Bishop of Salisbury effectively annexed the monk William's abbey of Malmesbury in 1118, and if Roger was indeed the architect of the Flemish plantation would he not have impressed upon his resident historian of Norman kingship the extraordinary brilliance of his 'admirable plan' if he himself had devised and executed it?³⁶

There is an intriguing aside here. Bishop Roger was a serial and lavish builder

33 *Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p. 187.

34 Kealey, *Roger of Salisbury*, p. 33. According to Kealey, Roger must have accepted direction of the government in late 1108 or early 1109.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 231. Translation is the present writer's version.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

of stone castles and palaces. He was renowned for it across Europe.³⁷ If Roger is indulging himself with militarily sophisticated stone castles in the relatively calm military waters of England, how much of an incentive would he need to build in stone in a war zone?³⁸ The 'bishop's' castle in the tale, into which Pryderi and Rhiannon had entered, is 'a huge, towering fort, newly built, in a place where they had never seen either stone or building'.³⁹ Did the author in fact mean a stone castle? It has been suspected *prima facie* by historical inference, but not yet supported by any archaeological evidence, that the lord of Cydweli's castle was planned as a stone fortress from its very beginning in 1106, or not long after. Did the tale's author, if he had Roger in mind for his 'bishop', also remember this about him too?⁴⁰

But there is a second bishop in the real world of Deheubarth who also fits the bill as the Norman adversary of Manawydan, at least for part of the story. He is Bishop Bernard, another powerful *curialis*, the first Norman bishop of St David's, appointed in 1115 in the teeth of local opposition from the clergy of the Welsh see, and, until his shoe-horning into the bishopric, chaplain to Henry's regent wife Matilda. In a recent, as yet unpublished, Ph.D. thesis, Edward Knight concludes that as Henry's reign progressed Bernard became 'the second most important court bishop after Roger of Salisbury'.⁴¹ Though he does not come into Deheubarth until his elevation in 1115, and thus cannot be charged with the Dyfed clearances of 1108, he is at St David's to at least 1119, during which period the greatest threat of the period to Norman rule takes place.

Bernard is sent by Henry to Deheubarth expressly to rebrand and reorganize the subversive Welsh see of Menevia (see below) into the loyal Norman see of St David's and to act for the *curia regis* in a rapidly deteriorating military situation. And evidence that he is not there for spiritual purposes alone is offered by Giraldus Cambrensis, who tells us that Bernard offered his knights three times the going rate of land for military service.⁴² Knight also provides a convincing argument that Bernard was 'administrating the key royal honour of Carmarthen on behalf of the king',⁴³ and as such was in the right place to organize the military defence of

37 R. A. Stalley, 'A Twelfth-Century Patron of Architecture: A Study of the Buildings Erected by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd series, 34 (1971), 62–83 (p. 62). Though there are no architectural accounts of Cydweli castle in the chronicles, we do have their comments on Roger's four other castles. Henry of Huntingdon described Roger's Devizes castle as 'the most splendid in Europe', a place where, as William of Malmesbury adds, 'he had raised masses of masonry, surmounted by towers'.

38 Stalley, 'Twelfth-Century Patron of Architecture', p. 67.

39 *Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p. 39.

40 J. R. Kenyon, *Kidwelly Castle*, 4th edn (Cardiff: Cadw, 2002), p. 6.

41 Edward Knight, 'The Life and Career of Bishop Bernard of St David's (1100–1148)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Swansea University, 2006), p. 64 and chapter 2 in its entirety.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 74; Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera*, ed. by J. S. Brewer, J. F. Dimock and G. F. Warner (London, Rolls Series, 1861–91), III: *De Jure et Statu Menevensis Ecclesiae*, ed. by J. S. Brewer (1863), pp. 153, 154.

43 Knight, 'Life and Career of Bishop Bernard', pp. 75–8. Knight makes the strongest possible case for Bernard's curial responsibilities in Deheubarth.

Deheubarth against a Welsh uprising from 1115 (seven years after the clearances) and its negotiated aftermath the following year. And as we shall see below, there are other reasons why Bernard can also be considered as the 'bishop' in the tale.

Lleufer a chadernit ac aduwynnder y Deheuwyrr
'The light and strength and excellence of the men of the South'

We have the 'enchantment' and now we may have a 'bishop'. So, if the 'bishop' is a memory of either or both of Roger and Bernard in the real world, and the 'enchantment' of Dyfed is the 'Dyfed clearances' and the wider occupation, then who is Manawydan? Finding a Manawydan in the historical record might substantially strengthen the argument of this paper for the tale having a historical basis.

The next stage in the historical narrative after the assassination of Hywel in 1106 comprises, as suggested above, a relentless effort by the Normans to establish their hegemony, if not their occupation, over the whole of Deheubarth. Though the sources very largely dry up, references to the Dyfed clearances and the later picture that emerges when the *Brut* again describes in any detail the situation in Deheubarth, from 1115,⁴⁴ indicate that strenuous efforts were made by the Normans to encourage collaboration under Norman overlordship, offering the usual feudal autonomy to local Welsh *uchelwyr* who take their turn standing castle-guard at the royal fortress of Carmarthen and other sites,⁴⁵ seize new lands, establish boroughs and maintain the presence of high-level *curiales* and royal agents on the ground as necessary. The evidence points to active and determined efforts by the Norman regime to overcome continued Welsh resistance. And into this mix comes a young man who has been away from his native land for exactly twenty years. He was spirited away to safety as a child when two Norman armies had first invaded his father's kingdom.

Gruffudd ap Rhys ap Tewdwr Mawr returns from exile in Ireland in 1113 to what is, after twenty years, an utterly transformed Deheubarth. Now probably in his mid-twenties, for the next two years he appears to all intents and purposes to have accepted Norman rule in Deheubarth; one might even suggest the heir to the throne of Deheubarth is an 'undemanding' sort of young man. He first stays in Dyfed with his elder sister Nest,⁴⁶ grandmother of Giraldus Cambrensis, ex-concubine of Henry I, and at this time married to Gerald de Windsor, the king's seneschal of his lands in Pembroke.⁴⁷ Nest, with her high, not to mention intimate, connections with the Norman establishment is as likely as not to have been party

44 *Brut y Tywysogyon*, Red Book Version, ed. Jones, pp. 83–101. The Welsh chronicler goes into recording hyperdrive in the entries for 1115 and 1116.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 87–9.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

47 Kari Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales: Seductress of the English* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), pp. 144–5.

to the arrangements for the somewhat delicate matter of the return to Dyfed of the rightful king of Deheubarth. He is a guest of the Normans as much as that of his compatriots. No threat was perceived then by the Norman establishment, it appears, from this quarter, and in the person of Nest's husband, Gerald de Windsor, the hero of the defence of Pembroke castle against Hywel ap Goronwy back in 1096, the Normans had plenty of time to assess Gruffudd at close quarters.

But in 1115, Norman prospects in Deheubarth rapidly start to unravel. It is the year when tensions, ever at snapping point, between the Welsh and the Normans are strained further by the imposition of a Norman appointee to the vacant bishopric of Menevia (St David's), a centre of anti-Norman sentiment as forcefully expressed by Rhygyfarch ap Sulien in his *Lament* and a very good reason why king Henry would want to have his own man in there. The *Brut* records how Gerald de Windsor 'ravaged the bounds of Menevia'⁴⁸ back in 1097, not least, one suspects, in response to what Rhygyfarch's bitter censures were doing for the resistance. And the Dyfed clearances were not likely to have dimmed the Welsh hatred for 'the vile Norman [...] and the heap of crimes of this evil race'.⁴⁹

In this tense atmosphere, with Bernard's elevation possibly the spark, Gruffudd is persuaded, if he needed any persuasion, to lead an uprising: 'At last [Gruffudd] was accused before the king, and it was alleged that the minds of all the Britons were with him, scorning the royal power of king Henry.'⁵⁰ Gruffudd avoided the Normans' clutches and eventually he '[...] came to Ystrad Tywi. And when news of that had been heard and many gathered to him, he made violent attacks upon the Flemings and the French' in the autumn of 1115.⁵¹ Throughout the following year, joined now by 'many young hotheads from all sides, lured by desire for booty or by an urge to restore and renew the Brittanic kingdom',⁵² he leads a major rebellion against Norman rule right across Deheubarth, leaving a great swathe of his enemy's building projects in Deheubarth in ashes from Aberystwyth to Abertawe and from Llandovery to Narberth, stretching the hold of the Normans over Deheubarth perhaps to breaking point. And Gruffudd's adversary is Bishop Bernard.⁵³ The first whole-life biographer of Bishop Bernard strongly suggests that in this close-fought campaign the bishop used all his weapons to hand, including his ultimate spiritual

48 *Brut y Tywysogyon*, Red Book Version, ed. Jones, p. 37.

49 Lapidge, 'The Welsh-Latin Poetry of Sulien's Family', pp. 89–93. In the same mss as the *Lament of Rhygyfarch* (c. 1094–5) there is a four-line verse about thieving mice (p. 74) which Lapidge assumes was written in the same period by Rhygyfarch himself. Is it too great a stretch for this notable critic of the Normans to have his humorous verse taken up by the author of the *Mabinogi* when looking for metaphors in an anti-Norman fable?

50 *Brut y Tywysogyon*, Red Book Version, ed. Jones, p. 83.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 85. It is surely of note here that the first attacks of Gruffudd are directed against the beneficiaries of the 'Dyfed clearances'.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 87. 'Hotheads' is Thomas Jones' translation of the Welsh *ynfydion*, literally 'imbeciles', though 'zealots' might be another rendering given the higher calling of 'restoring the Brittanic kingdom'. For a fuller discussion of this, see Robert Babcock, 'Imbeciles and Normans: The 'Ynfydion' of Gruffudd ap Rhys Reconsidered', *Haskins Society Journal*, 5 (1992), 1–9.

53 Knight, 'Life and Career of Bishop Bernard', pp. 76–7.

sanction of excommunication.⁵⁴ Bernard eventually manages to force Gruffudd into a negotiated peace after the latter's defeat at the siege of Aberystwyth late in 1116.⁵⁵ Gruffudd, it appears, then accepts the territory of Caio in upland Ystrad Tywi under Norman overlordship (see below).

What is noteworthy is that, like Gruffudd, Manawydan also returns from 'exile' and is almost immediately engaged in a struggle with a bishop and his thieving mice which eventually leads to a negotiated peace. The confrontation between Gruffudd and Bernard took place seven years after the clearances, as does Manawydan's with the 'bishop' after the enchantment. And, like Manawydan, Gruffudd's enemy has otherworldly powers too. However, there are some problems to resolve. Neither Norman bishop is present in Deheubarth in both 1108 and 1115/16, a matter dealt with below, and secondly there is no correspondence between the deal struck by Gruffudd and Bernard, which does not include even a single cantref of Dyfed, and the triumphant defeat of the 'bishop' by Manawydan in the tale. The seven years between events, otherwise promising for this writer's theory, does not fit. Though this writer does not claim the tale to be history, nevertheless there must be sufficient concordance with the historical narrative to say that this work is inspired or informed by the crucial events and its leading characters. There must be a sequence of events, a historical narrative, which chimes with the matter of the tale, that is, a disaster in Dyfed which is resolved in favour of the Welsh. Clearly, then, the decisive negotiations that chime with those in the tale must be found elsewhere, as must the meaning, if any, of the seven years.

'We have not always been your friends or offered you loyalty'

The agreement which ends the 1116 rising allows Gruffudd to rule with some measure of autonomy in Caio for the next eleven years, and then, according to the *Brut*, he is 'expelled from the portion of land which the king had given to him, after he had been innocently accused by the French who were dwelling along with him'.⁵⁶ It is not clear if he then negotiates his return or becomes a fugitive in the headwaters of the Tywi, Teifi and Usk (north-eastern Deheubarth), or, as some have suggested, chooses exile in Ireland. What is clear is that after the death of Henry in December 1135 he is again actively resisting Norman rule in Deheubarth. He attacks Cardigan at least twice and this time is cooperating with a resurgent Gwynedd under the sons of Gruffudd ap Cynan, Owain and Cadwaladr.⁵⁷

Under the new king Stephen, Norman England's response is patchy and largely

- 54 In correspondence, Edward Knight kindly elaborated his belief in the very strong probability that Bernard actually excommunicated the 'rebels' during the rising of 1115–16.
 55 Lloyd, *History of Wales*, p. 435.
 56 *Brut y Tywysogyon, Red Book Version*, ed. Jones, p. 111.
 57 For excellent coverage of this period see David Crouch, 'The March and the Welsh Kings', in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. by Edmund King (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1994), chapter 8; Knight, 'Life and Career of Bishop Bernard', chapter 5.

ineffective. By the end of 1136, two Norman armies from Gŵyr and Dyfed have been destroyed, Gŵyr overrun and Norman Dyfed directly threatened by a Welsh army for the first time since 1116. In the following year, the Norman position deteriorates even further as Owain and Cadwaladr reach and destroy Carmarthen. In 1137, however, Gruffudd ap Rhys, 'the light and strength and excellence of the men of the South',⁵⁸ dies and is replaced by his eldest son Anarawd. There is no sign yet, before his death, of the kind of negotiations we are looking.

The game being played is not simply a military one but of course a political one. The Normans are entrenched in a swathe of castles and harbours across southern and western Deheubarth, but in the developing civil war after the death of Henry, between king Stephen and the Angevin empress Matilda, Henry's daughter, support from England for the increasingly beleaguered Normans and Flemish in Wales is patchy or even non-existent. There is of course our powerful *curialis* based at Pebediog, the secular territory of the bishopric of St David's, Bernard's principal territory. He must certainly have been worried about the threat that now bore down. Not only had he been shoehorned into the see in the face of outraged Welsh opposition, he had been Henry's royal council agent for the suppression of the 1116 rising. However, as long as he remained a supporter of Stephen and a full-time attender of his court, any actual presence by Bernard in Deheubarth was impractical. In his absence, his chapter at St David's prudently, and for the local clerics more willingly no doubt, accepted Anarawd's protection for the see.

Things change in 1140 when Bernard, former chaplain to empress Matilda's mother and a natural Angevin supporter, finally breaks with Stephen and heads back to his substantial power base in distant St David's.⁵⁹ In the interests of the Angevin cause, and naturally in his own interests in the middle of a rising threatening his episcopal land-ownings, negotiations are opened between himself and the Welsh leaders of Deheubarth and Gwynedd, namely Anarawd and the brothers Owain and Cadwaladr respectively. We can assume that the bishop firstly sent a priest to sound out the Welsh. The latter are amenable to dialogue and call a meeting in November 1140 at Aberdyfi.⁶⁰ An agreement between Bernard and the Welsh of Deheubarth and Gwynedd is reached. Evidently with peace comes a guarantee of protection for Bernard, and, one can surmise, for the lands of Angevin barons in Deheubarth. David Crouch notes that 'the culmination of the partnership between Welsh and Marchers (presumably the Angevin ones) came in 1141', when large numbers of the former joined the Angevin army at the battle of Lincoln.⁶¹ For the Welsh, there is a strong assumption that the treaty brought Angevin promises to recognise in some form their territorial independence and Angevin support for the

- 58 *Brut y Tywysogyon, Red Book Version*, ed. Jones, p. 117.
 59 For a comprehensive analysis of Bernard's break and his motives for engaging in talks with the Welsh of Deheubarth and Gwynedd, see Knight, 'Life and Career of Bishop Bernard', pp. 219–229.
 60 *Acts of the Welsh Rulers: 1120–1283*, ed. by Huw Pryce with the assistance of Charles Insley (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), p. 322.
 61 Crouch, 'The March and the Welsh Kings', p. 277.

cause of archbishopric status for St David's. Bernard did indeed make strenuous efforts to gain metropolitan status for St David's from the Pope but in the end had to settle for two pilgrimages to his see being equivalent to one to Rome.

Bernard had pulled off a coup with this deal.⁶² The lands of Angevin supporters were now protected by, not from, the resurgent Welsh fighting in the old Britannic cause,⁶³ whereas there was no Welsh protection for the lands of Stephen's supporters. 'We have not always been your friends or shown you loyalty,' writes king Owain ap Gruffudd ap Cynan, on behalf of his brother Cadwaladr and his fellow king Anarawd ap Gruffudd ap Rhys of Deheubarth to Bernard, inviting the latter to the treaty meeting at Aberdyfi in 1140.⁶⁴ Now Anarawd and Bernard were allies.

O geissaw atgyweiraw neu atnewydu Bryttannawl deyrnas
'An urge to restore and to renew the Brittannic kingdom'

Could this second set of negotiations fit the case? Leaving aside for the moment the obvious problems with different 'Manawydans' involved, as with the bishops thus far, can these negotiations themselves show sufficient concordance with the tale? Manawydan is triumphant over the bishop to his utter satisfaction.

If Bernard had pulled off a coup for his side, the Welsh of Deheubarth had in a few short years after the death of Henry reversed an almost unstoppable Norman tide and were now reaching deep into all parts of Deheubarth and of course Dyfed. Bernard's Pebediog was now under Anarawd's personal protection. The Norman hold in some of the coastal parts of Deheubarth would never be shifted but if there was a time when the 'urge to restore and to renew the Brittannic kingdom'⁶⁵ was strongest, this period, for the Welsh of Deheubarth, must be a contender. Since the coming of Roger in 1106, the resistance had never been able to overcome their enemies, but finally, one might say, the unfinished rising of 1116 had been completed, and with great success. Perhaps this is the true meaning of the seven years between the disaster and its resolution, a huge tribute to Gruffudd, 'the light, the strength, the excellence of the men of the South', the first leader to renew the struggle after 1108, the one who like Manawydan first confronted the 'bishop'. Though the two commotes of Rhos and Daugleddau, the heart of the clearances, would never again come under Welsh rule, for a few years after 1140 everything may have seemed possible, and very soon at that. As Knight has suggested, Bernard's negotiating genius may have been to make the Welsh believe that under the Angevins this was certain to happen. When the first Angevein king finally ascended to the throne, he dispelled that notion with a belligerent royal expedition. But that was in the future.

To conclude the argument, the tale draws its inspiration from a catastrophic

62 Knight, 'Life and Career of Bishop Bernard', p. 237.

63 *Brut y Tywysogyon, Red Book Version*, ed. Jones, p. 87.

64 Knight, 'Life and Career of Bishop Bernard', pp. 230–31, and the title for this section.

65 *Brut y Tywysogyon, Red Book Version*, ed. Jones, pp. 86–7.

period in Deheubarth's history, from the Dyfed clearances of 1108, the 'enchantment', to the 1140 treaty between Anarawd and Bernard, the defeat of the 'bishop'. From the ethnic cleansing of the Dyfed commotes of Rhos and Daugleddau to a triumphant Anarawd dictating terms to his greatest enemy, the tale mirrors this historical narrative, depicted as the cruel enchantment of the author's beloved Dyfed by the 'bishop' and the successful struggle by Manawydan to defeat him and come to a peace. The sojourns to the English boroughs strongly suggest a date for the setting of the tale as no earlier than the twelfth century. Choosing, for reasons known only to its author, to present a tale with a single pair of main antagonists, the author draws the character of Manawydan's enemy from the two main instigators of Norman policy of the period, both conveniently bishops, Roger, the instrument of the clearances and Bernard, after much pressing, in the end the peacemaker. Manawydan is a character drawn from the struggle of Gruffudd to avenge his people, a struggle to which his son Anarawd brought a huge measure of success. Though the tale of Manawydan is not a history of the period, this paper suggests that its author understood this historical narrative and distilled that knowledge into a stirring, darkly comic and even satirical tale of the Welsh struggle to free themselves from oppression.⁶⁶

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