

Transition and Transformation: the Benedictine Houses

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As the Norman conquest and settlement of Wales proceeded westwards, the impact made by the newcomers was not just military and political. As in England they began to found monastic houses, but in Wales an added dimension was that the introduction of Benedictine monasticism brought a form of religious life familiar to the conquerors if not to the conquered. The establishment of Benedictine houses, all of them dependent on English, French or Norman houses, was a part of the process of the transfer of political power and, indeed, of the imposition of alien rule.¹ Some seventeen priories and cells came into existence as the result of the importation of Benedictine monasticism, largely from the Continent. Not all foundations stood the test of time. The cell of Llanbadarn Fawr, formed from the church and endowments of the important *clas* church there, was established as a dependency of Gloucester Abbey by the lords of Clare after their push west across the mountains of mid Wales into Ceredigion, but it survived only until 1136; from then Llanbadarn assumed the status of a collegiate church. Carmarthen, founded as a dependency of Battle Abbey by the bishop of St Davids, was soon transformed by that same bishop into an Augustinian house. Llandovery was established some time before 1126 by Richard fitz Pons in the church of his castle there, but dissolved c.1185. Other Benedictine dependent priories or cells were longer lived, and in eight of them full conventual life flourished.²

The temptation to try to assign a ‘foundation date’ to any monastic house can be fraught with difficulties and disguises the lengthy nature of the process which led to any one settlement. The confident dates assigned to Cistercian foundations are the product of the order’s desire for a neat pattern that would allow for seniority and precedence at the annual General Chapter, and they mark what might have been taken as the beginning of conventual life – in itself just the end of a process of negotiation between founder/patron and mother house, about the choice and preparation of the site, the provision of resources and the sequence of building.³ The chronology of foundation of the Benedictine priories of south Wales is even more problematic, given the scarcity of documentary evidence and the whole question of the changing status, purpose and perceived function of these houses. The dates of foundation suggested in the appendix are, therefore, based either on the period in which the founder was known to have been active in Wales (for instance, Abergavenny), or on the date by which a priory is known to have been in existence (as Monmouth, by 1086), or on the basis of charters which are almost certainly later confirmations. Even then, the transition from monastic cell (a very small number of monks placed there to administer economic assets) to a priory which sustained full conventual life is a shadowy business. Nevertheless, it seems clear from the chronology that can be established that the foundation of a Benedictine cell or priory was a part of the process of the transformation of political power and authority within south Wales. William fitz Osbern, given such wide powers in Herefordshire and the southern Welsh borders around 1069, lost no time in planning a strategic push into Wales, with the construction of a line of castles from Wigmore to Chepstow.⁴ His foundation of a priory at the latter apparently followed within two years. The Breton Wihenoc, who held Monmouth castle for William I, brought monks to the town before 1086 from St Florent de Saumur (Anjou), where he was later to become a monk.⁵

The link between the seizure and consolidation of political power and the foundation of monastic houses is reinforced by the location of the new religious establishments within the landscape, and in particular their relationship to castles, boroughs and lines of communication. Carmarthen, Llandovery and Brecon were linked by a Roman road; indeed, five roads radiated from Brecon.⁶ It has been

conjectured that a route way may have led from Abergavenny to Monmouth, and Monmouth was certainly linked by road to Caerleon. But it is the connection with castles that is most striking, as at Chepstow Priory, which, at roughly 250 metres away, lay 'sufficiently far away from the castle so as not to affect the defensive potential of the site, but sufficiently close to come under the mantle of protection which the castle offered'.⁷

The early Norman push into south-east Wales reached its western limit around Bridgend, where a group of castles were built to mark the presence of the conquerors: Coity, Ogmores and Bridgend (Newcastle).⁸ The construction of the first motte at Ogmores, which lies on a flat plain guarding a crossing of the River Ewenni, was the work of William de Londres, probably c.1100, while his son, Maurice, added the great stone tower. Bridgend may have been constructed by Robert fitz Hamo by around 1106.⁹ The priory of Ewenny, probably founded by William de Londres, lay roughly equidistant from the two castles; while clearly associated with the founder's stronghold the topographical relationship between castle and priory was different from that at Monmouth and Abergavenny. It was William's son, Maurice de Londres, who in 1141 granted Ewenny to Gloucester Abbey 'ita ut conventus monachorum fiat' (so that a convent of monks may be created).¹⁰ The phrase seems designed to suggest a significant phase in the development of the monastery, possibly implying the beginning of full conventual life, yet the church there was evidently dedicated before that gift, for the ceremony was attended by Bishop Urban of Llandaff, who died in 1133 or 1134.¹¹

A clear synergy between these two – and, indeed, a third – symbols of conquest can be seen at Brecon. It was during the 1080s that Brecon's founder, Bernard of Neufmarché, began the conquest of Brycheiniog, a process that was all but complete by 1093. At Easter of that year Rhys ap Tewdwr, 'the last king of Deheubarth . . . arguably . . . the last Welsh king in all of Wales to rule in a wholly native manner', was killed, and his death cemented Bernard's power.¹² R. R. Davies suggested that Rhys was killed near the Usk 'not far from a new forward position that the Normans were establishing at Brecon'.¹³ And it was, indeed, at Brecon, where Bernard was probably building a castle at the time of Rhys's death, that he founded a priory and moreover established a borough. The foundation charters for the

priory – clearly issued at a later date – show that the three aspects of transformation were closely linked. The endowments were generous and not limited to Wales, but included four churches in England and tithes. These two charters represent a mature reflection on what was an appropriate endowment. Moreover, they suggest the involvement of the Benedictine monks in the economic transformation of Brecon which would have accompanied the establishment of the borough.

Tradition – though not enshrined in Bernard's charters – adds two details to the story of the foundation of Brecon to explain the choice of the mother house of St Martin at Battle. The late twelfth-century chronicle of Battle Abbey, compiled to assist the legal claims of the Sussex monks, tells how after his conquest of Brycheiniog Bernard was persuaded by a monk of Battle, Roger, 'who had by chance been staying with him', to give to Battle 'a certain possession called the "old town" and the church near it, of St John the Evangelist', situated outside the wall of his castle of Brecon in Wales.¹⁴ The second legend is that the site of the priory was near to the spot where Rhys ap Tewdwr fell. These are attractive legends, but may be just that. The presence in Wales of a monk of Battle Abbey, though possible, sounds too convenient. Moreover, the marking of the spot where a vanquished enemy fell, though doubtless a good potential piece of propaganda, bears too much similarity to the story of Battle itself, the conqueror's own abbey, the high altar of which was said to mark the spot where the last Anglo-Saxon king, Harold, was cut down. The likely interpretation is that Bernard was a man with the imagination to seek to enshrine his own reputation as a conqueror of Wales by emulation of William as conqueror of England, by drawing monks from Battle Abbey and making Brecon a dependency of it. Whether his imagination stretched to building the priory over an iconic spot of Rhys's death, or whether this represents a myth, we cannot know. But the broader significance of his choice cannot be denied.

All these Benedictine houses were dependent priories – it was only those on the borders, like Chester and Shrewsbury that achieved independence from a superior monastic house, or mother house.¹⁵ It is clear that a determining factor in the choice of mother house was the familial or tenurial connections of the founder, and it should be remembered that most of the founders of Benedictine priories in Wales came with impeccable credentials as patrons in their patrimonial

lands. Chepstow was founded by William fitz Osbern from his own recent foundation (c.1060) at Cormeilles (Normandy). For Pembroke (c.1098) Arnulf of Montgomery drew monks from the family monastery of Séez, which had supplied the founder monks of his father's abbey on the Welsh borders at Shrewsbury. Hamelin de Ballon, in Maine, went to St Vincent du Mans, the chief monastery of the *comté* for his colony. The words of Orderic Vitalis in recording the foundation of Shrewsbury by Roger of Montgomery, namely, that he 'gave many gifts to . . . churches from the honors that he had acquired and not inherited from his father', that is, those he had seized or been granted through conquest, could be applied to the founders of the Welsh Benedictine priories.¹⁶ In addition to their lands and family connections in France and Normandy some also enjoyed personal or political affiliation with the English monasteries to which they turned for colonies to staff their new houses. Thus Cownie notes the Welsh endowments lavished on Gloucester Abbey by Bernard of Neufmarché and Robert fitz Hamo, but it was also highly favoured by Gilbert fitz Richard de Clare, who granted it the churches of both Cardigan and Llanbadarn Fawr. However, both of the latter failed to thrive as Benedictine priories largely because of the resurgence of Welsh political power in the years after the death of Henry I. A question that remains unanswered is why the Welsh houses remained – admittedly like many in England – dependencies of French, Norman or English houses, and did not rise to be abbeys. Was this related to their size and status, which in themselves may have been determined by issues of recruitment, endowment or communication? Or was the maintenance of constitutional links with houses that lay outside Wales a deliberate stratagem of continued political repression?

Whatever the answer, the building of stone priories to accompany stone castles, as symbols of conquest and the transformation of power and authority, is clear. Questions still remain about the interaction of those who occupied castle and priory, and about the nature of encounter within the sacred and secular space. Nevertheless it is clear that the monastic revolution was part of a political process that ushered out the old – the *clas* church – and welcomed the new – Benedictine observance, practice, organisation and networks.¹⁷ The presence of the Black monks, in nearby priories and in castle chapels, with the recognisable pattern of prayer, manual work and *lectio divina*, and a

liturgy which embraced prayers for founders and benefactors, was symbolic in another way, in that it provided the Norman and Breton incomers, settling in an alien land, with an alien culture and language, with something familiar, which linked them with their Continental homeland, as well as the institutions they had known there and with which they felt affinity. In a conquered land, issues of identity and belonging would have been ever more important. Moreover, the suppression of the *clas* church would have broken the chains of family inheritance which were not only frowned on by the emerging papal reform programme, but might have formed pockets of ideological resistance to the conquerors, through such means as the keeping alive of local cults.

Whether the Benedictines were agents in transformation and transition can be explored further in relation to sites. Were the sites they chose dictated by the location of castles alone, or did they also seek to appropriate earlier medieval Welsh sites of spiritual significance? The establishment of a Benedictine community at Llanbadarn Fawr marks an attempt – ultimately unsuccessful – to transform and modernize an ancient and major *clas* church. The first site occupied by the monks of Saumur who came to Monmouth was a pre-Norman church. Edith Evans has drawn attention to the pre-Norman precursor of the short-lived Benedictine, later Augustinian, house at Carmarthen, that is, the church or monastery of Llandeulyddog, to the important sculptural fragments at Ewenny, which are indicative of an earlier ecclesiastical site, and to possible pre-conquest churches at Brecon, Abergavenny, Cardiff, Chepstow, Llangenydd and Llandovery.¹⁸ Whether the strategy of the Normans was to disperse the possessions of the *clasau*, or to maintain, or to recreate them, would bear further investigation. We also need to know a great deal more archaeologically about the transition from *clas* to Benedictine monastery before we can be sure that the physical change was brutal and clear cut or more subtly nuanced in its approach: were the boundaries of the former sacred spaces respected and did the new buildings have any relationship with their predecessors? We still know surprisingly little about such fundamental questions.

When we come to discuss the nature of the early endowments of the priories we find that the picture is distorted by the survival of documentary evidence – Brecon is far better served than any other.¹⁹

However, what the evidence seems to show is a dominance of *spiritualia* in the endowment of the southern Welsh houses. This in itself may represent a form of transformation and transition, and the significance of the grant of churches to monasteries is an aspect of the monastic settlement of south Wales that has been little studied. Without further amplification in charters it can be difficult to assess the level of involvement in parochial affairs that the grant of a church to a monastic house actually entailed: it could range from a pension, to the rights of advowson (presentation of an incumbent), to full appropriation, with the options of performance of *cura animarum* by a member of the community, or the appointment of a stipendiary chaplain or vicar. Appropriation brought with it all the financial advantages (including tithes) as well as all the pastoral obligations. Churches loom large among the endowments of Brecon. Bishop Bernard of St Davids confirmed to the priory all the churches and tithes granted by Bernard de Neufmarché and his men, and added his own grant of the chapel of St Eiluned in the parish of St John.²⁰ The grant of the *church* of St John to the *priory* of St John seems to indicate the absorption of an existing church into the monastery, with parochial responsibility, possibly through the use of part of the priory church by the parishioners.²¹ The monks evidently went to some lengths to prove their claim to another church, that of Llangors, about 5 miles east of Brecon. This the bishop conceded to them after they had established legal title to it against the monks (unnamed) who, without the bishop's assent, had annexed or encroached in it; he affirmed that the *locus* of St Paulinus was within the parish of the church. The meaning of *locus* – in its most basic form simply 'place' – seems to carry more significance and may have the connotation of shrine or cult; it undoubtedly refers to the early medieval church or monastery dedicated to the Celtic saint Paulinus.²² As with the chapel of St Eiluned, the monks of Brecon seem to have invested in staking a claim to a native cult. In addition to being the site of a pre-Norman church or monastery, Llangors was a secular site, a *crannog*, associated with the kings of Brycheiniog.²³ The grant and confirmation to Brecon, with the approbation and even encouragement of the bishops of St Davids, suggest the use of the Benedictine priory as a transformative force within the Welsh parochial system, bringing ancient churches into the orbit of the monastic order.

By the end of the twelfth century the monks of Brecon had added to the number of their churches those of Hay-on-Wye, Llanigon, Llansanffraid, Llanelu, Cathedin and Llanddewi'r cwm (Builth), and are recorded as acting as patrons by appointing incumbents; however, they went on to obtain licence to appropriate several churches, converting them *in proprios usus* and thus strengthening their control of the parish.²⁴ The monks of Ewenny received from Maurice de Londres all the churches of his barony ('omnes ecclesias de baronia mea').²⁵ This in itself may be a reflection of an earlier clas *parochia* or *territorium*, itself based on a pre-Norman lordship. Wihenoc's endowment of Monmouth, as well as the church of St Cadoc, included eleven churches and chapels.²⁶ Moreover, in 1144 the bishop of Hereford confirmed grants of numerous churches by Wihenoc (Guienoc), confirmed by his nephew and successor, William fitz Baderon.²⁷ The influence of both Brecon and Monmouth in terms of their *spiritualia* had a different focus to the churches granted to Ewenny by Maurice, which in geographical and tenurial terms reflected a secular lordship around the ancient church of Ewenny. Instead of pushing Norman influence westwards, further into Wales, the majority of the churches of Monmouth and Brecon lay to the east, in Herefordshire and the Forest of Dean. In the case of these two priories the result of appropriation was to tie the priory into a spiritual and territorial hinterland.

The endowment of Benedictine houses with *spiritualia*, that is, churches and tithes, was far from being unique to Wales. The dynamic behind such grants may in part have been economic: as a way to build up the assets of a mother house which in some cases was situated at a considerable distance from the priory there would have been much to have been said for the accumulation of tithes and pensions derived from churches, which might be more easily administered than lands. However, this general pattern of endowment also betrays the influence of reform driven by the papacy to eradicate – or more realistically to diminish – the rights of lay people in churches at all levels. As David Knowles put it so many years ago,

probably many, if not the majority, of those [small priories and cells] established in England before c. 1100 were due to a desire on the part of the owner of the land to establish monks in his church in the room of an English priest, whom he might condemn as married or ignorant;

at the same time he would rid himself of the responsibility of 'owning' a church.²⁸

His remarks could equally apply to Wales, where the episcopal and parochial system was still inchoate. We cannot know the full extent of the influence on the founders of the Benedictine priories of south Wales of the bishops appointed by the Normans. However, they did act to confirm foundations, and one of them, Roger of Salisbury, established a cell at Kidwelly near his castle there. It is possible that the stimulus for the endowment taking the form it did was the desire of the incoming Norman bishops to promote a regular parochial organisation beyond the marches of England and Wales. Questions can be asked – though not easily answered – about how monks and parishioners interacted within the monastic space represented by their appropriated churches. What were the levels of encounter and interaction between the monks and those who provided them with their livelihood in terms of tithes, mortuary fees, and so on? This in turn raises questions about ritual, time and the organisation of the liturgical as well as the agrarian year.

The daily life of the monks in the priories of south Wales revolved around the Rule of St Benedict, and the Rule of St Benedict was a universal code. It defined those monks. But monasteries also existed within and were an integral part of the wider communities in which they were located and of the networks of association established through patronage. How far was there a cultural dimension to the sacred space of these houses? Did the brothers of Monmouth, for instance, think of themselves as monks of Monmouth or of the French mother house of St Florent? Were the monks of Chepstow conscious of being Welsh, or French? How was their identity defined within the distance between them and their mother house, to which they were bound by ties of authority and power? Were they bound by cultural and linguistic similarities or separated by their differences? What was the nature, and frequency, of travel and communication between them? Such questions are difficult to answer, particularly over the long period of over four hundred years in which the priories were in existence. Some answers may lie in the written record. Reference has already been made to the 1144 confirmation by Bishop Robert de Bethune of Hereford of a string of churches granted to Monmouth. Robert confirmed what

Wihenoc, lord of Monmouth, granted to ‘God and the monks under the jurisdiction (*obediencia*) of St Mary of Monmouth, which is known to be under the jurisdiction (*obediencia*) of the privilege (*iuris*) of St Florent of Saumur’. The witnesses to Wihenoc’s grant are recorded here as Rado the monk, brother of Wihenoc, and David the monk, known as Taxius. Rado may have been a monk of St Florent, or one of the founder monks of Monmouth: either way, his presence as a witness to his brother’s charter argues for a strong family bond between mother and daughter house. Bishop Robert’s act was approved by the chapter of Hereford Cathedral, but also sealed with the seal of St Florent. Moreover, both this and one other charter survive as originals among the archives of St Florent.²⁹ Although the poor survival of originals makes generalization impossible, such evidence suggests tight administrative control from the mother house. This is reinforced by the evidence from the later Middle Ages of visitation from the centre, as well as control over the appointment and removal of superiors.³⁰

It may be that the answer to some of these questions lies not in the written record but in the archaeological landscape and architectural remains. The best survivals from among the Benedictine houses of south Wales are Chepstow and Ewenny, though, as David Robinson has pointed out, Monmouth, where the Romanesque church has been extensively altered through rebuilding, deserves attention. Here, he suggests, parts of the west front and of an *ex situ* capital suggest affinities with the Hereford school of sculpture.³¹ Malcolm Thurlby has reminded us that at Chepstow it is difficult to determine how soon the church was begun after the foundation as only the nave remains of the priory church, and this was, moreover, remodelled in the nineteenth century.³² However, it is known originally to have been vaulted. Thurlby argues for a number of parallels for various aspects of design and decoration at Chepstow: in the West Country school of architecture, as found at the Benedictine abbeys of Chester and Shrewsbury, on the Welsh borders, and at the former bishop’s palace at Hereford, dating from the time of Bishop Robert Losinga (1079–95), for instance. More significant may be analogies with the church of St Germain at Pont Audemer (Eure), which lies less than 12 miles from the mother house of Chepstow at Cormeilles.³³ As both Thurlby and Robinson have indicated, there are numerous other parallels and, although the date of construction at Chepstow is uncertain, they do

not rule out an early date.³⁴ If it was indeed begun by William fitz Osbern (d. 1071) then the now missing vaults would have been among the earliest high vaults in Britain – which says much of the care lavished by the founder on his priory and the status accorded to it.³⁵ Another important aspect of Chepstow is the curious topography of the monastic enclosure which seems to take up a large proportion of the walled area of the town, ‘over half the area within the Port Wall’.³⁶ The church itself is set not at the centre of this enclosure, but on its western edge with direct access through the west door to the urban space beyond. This west door is set, indeed, directly facing the similarly decorated eastern door of the great Norman tower of Chepstow, a castle which was as much about the ceremonies of power as it was a fortification or dwelling.³⁷

As we have seen, the community at Ewenny probably owed its origins to a grant by William de Londres, but it was in 1141 that his son, Maurice, consolidated grants made thus far ‘so that a convent of monks may be created’ (*fat*). The questions, therefore, are these: does the grant of 1141 mark the elevation of the community to the status of conventual priory? And, if so, did the building of the church accompany the foundation of the community by William de Londres, or the grant to Gloucester by his son? Various opinions have been offered, all of which have been conveniently summarised by Thurlby.³⁸ He has argued that the plan of the church, while not precisely paralleled elsewhere, ‘has much in common with Romanesque priory churches in Wales and England’, and the examples he gives are widely dispersed geographically. But it is not surprising that the presbytery vault may have been modelled on that of the mother house of Gloucester, with possible affinities to Tewkesbury. His conclusion was that this is the ‘best-preserved example of a Norman priory church in south Wales’ and that it was the result of a single building campaign undertaken by William de Londres for the Benedictine monks; as he died in 1131, the work must have been well underway by the time his son granted the monastery as a dependency to Gloucester Abbey (see figure 4). The date of 1141, while significant in some ways, that is, in terms of the formal affiliation to Gloucester, may have been less so in terms of the building and of the status of Ewenny which it proclaimed in the locality. As at Chepstow, the self image of the priories, and of their founders, was one of power and confidence, and affinity with

the wider Norman world. Indeed, it may be argued that the provision of two finely built priory churches linked intimately with castles at the eastern and western extremities of the Glamorgan conquests may have been a conscious act of design emphasising the performances and rituals of authority, both secular and ecclesiastical.



Figure 4: Ewenny Priory church.

A reassessment of the role of the Benedictines in south Wales would suggest that they may be seen as agents of transformation as well as radical change: in the choice of sites, which might perpetuate sites of cultural and religious significance, and in the association of parish churches, some with pre-Norman antecedents, with the new monasteries. It has been perhaps too readily assumed that daughter houses such as the Welsh Benedictine priories of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which were founded in a conquered land, were and remained ways of exploiting a native population and its resources for the benefit of distant mother houses and patrons who were only interested in making their mark on a conquered land through the creation of sacred space there. Relations between mother and daughter house and between founder and community would undoubtedly have been influenced by a number of factors: the distance between mother and daughter house,

for instance, and the changing status and breadth of connections of founders. How deeply embedded a founding family might become in the locality is provided by the de Londres patrons of Ewenny, where the descendants of William de Londres, who accompanied Robert fitz Hamo in his push into south Wales from the Gloucester area, invested much, both materially and spiritually, into their new house on conquered soil. Those founders and patrons who enjoyed a higher status in society and in the world of Anglo-Norman politics could choose a range of beneficiaries for their monastic patronage, and had more than one monastery to perpetuate their memory. But for some, monastic patronage within Wales brought assimilation into Welsh society rather than conflict.

Appendix: Benedictine Foundations in South Wales

(Where appropriate these are grouped under the mother house, rather than chronologically (which is often problematic) or alphabetically.)

(i) Dependencies of French and Norman houses

Chepstow	Cormeilles	before 1071
Monmouth	Saumur, St Florent	before 1086
Abergavenny	St Vincent du Mans	1087 x 1100
Pembroke	Séez	before 1098
Goldcliff	Bec	1113
Llangenydd	St Taurin, Evreux	1106 x 1115
Llangua	Lyre	before 1183

(ii) Dependencies of English houses

Brecon	Battle	c.1100
Carmarthen	Battle	c.1110
Cardiff	Tewkesbury	before 1106
Cardigan	Gloucester	1110 x 1115
		(Chertsey from 1165)
Llanbadarn Fawr	Gloucester	1116 x 1117

Ewenny	Gloucester	before 1131
Llandovery	Great Malvern	1100 x 1126
Kidwelly	Sherborne	c.1110
Bassaleg	Glastonbury	before 1107

(iii) Nunnery

Usk	before 1135
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Notes

- ¹ For a general discussion see Cowley, *MOSW*, pp. 9–17.
- ² For dates of foundation and dissolution, see *MRH*, pp. 52–82. See also appendix to this chapter.
- ³ For some of these problems with chronology see, for example, J. Burton and J. Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 22–8.
- ⁴ See, for instance, R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-Existence, and Change. Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 25–9.
- ⁵ As Cowley has pointed out (*MOSW*, p. 15), the abbey of St Florent was originally founded near the borders of Brittany, where the traditions of the Welsh saints were strong, and these associations remained even after the abbey relocated to Anjou. He concludes from this that the colonising monks from Saumur may have been familiar with the ‘ecclesiastical traditions of the area in which they settled’. On St Florent’s daughter houses in England see J. Martindale, ‘Monasteries and castles: the priories of St-Florent in England after 1066’, in C. Hicks (ed.), *England in the Eleventh Century*, Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1992), pp. 135–56.
- ⁶ See C. J. Arnold and J. L. Davies, *Roman and Early Medieval Wales* (Stroud: History Press, 2000), pp. 16, 20; H. James, *Roman West Wales* (Carmarthen: Rampart Press, 1982), pp. 4–9. From Sennybridge the Roman road left the course of the current A40 to climb Mynydd Trecastle and run down into Llandovery. For the importance of lines of communication and travel, see below, pp. 133–45.
- ⁷ R. Shoesmith and J. R. L. Allen, ‘Introduction’, in R. Turner and A. Johnson (eds), *Chepstow Castle*, pp. 1–14 (p. 7). Professor David

Austin has drawn to my attention to the extent of the land holding of the priory within Chepstow.

- ⁸ J. R. Kenyon, *The Medieval Castles of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), pp. 4, 97–8, 118–21, 129–30.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 97–8.
- ¹⁰ *Mon. Ang.*, I, p. 546; W. H. Hart (ed.), *Historia et cartularium monasterii sancti Petri Gloucestriae*, 3 vols, RS (London, 1863–67), I, pp. 75–6. J. Conway Davies, ‘Ewenny Priory: some recently-found records’, *NLWJ*, 3 (1943–4), 107–37. Maurice’s grant was confirmed by Earl Robert of Gloucester (d. 1147) and witnessed by Bishop Uchtred of Llandaff: R. B. Patterson (ed.), *Earldom of Gloucester Charters* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), pp. 73–4, no. 68.
- ¹¹ M. Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales* (Little Logaston: Logaston Press, 2006), p. 92; Z. N. Brooke and A. Morey (eds), *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 82, no. 45. Gilbert, as abbot of Gloucester (1139–48), the mother house of Ewenny, referred to the dedication of Ewenny in the time of Urban, predecessor of the current bishop. For the circumstances in which this document was written see below.
- ¹² K. Maund, *The Welsh Kings: Warriors, Warlords and Princes* (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), p. 136. For discussion of Rhys and his significance see *ibid.*, pp. 109–11, 136–8.
- ¹³ Davies, *Conquest, Co-Existence, and Change*, p. 29.
- ¹⁴ E. Searle (ed. and trans.), *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, OMT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 86–9.
- ¹⁵ Whether a new monastery remained a dependency of another, or achieved independent status, is not always a discernible process, and may not always have been the choice of the founder. Shrewsbury is problematic – not least because of the suspect nature of many of its early charters. It seems that the monks may have achieved the status of abbey through freeing themselves from dependency on Séz only after a struggle, with the Norman house attempting to maintain control. Such problems were enhanced by the political fortunes and misfortunes of patrons – in Shrewsbury’s case the death of one son of the founder and the political disgrace of another. For the charters see U. Rees (ed.), *The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey*, 2 vols (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1975), I, pp. xiii–xxi, and nos 1–3, 5.
- ¹⁶ *OV*, III (1972), 143.
- ¹⁷ On church institutions in Wales before the coming of the Normans see, for instance, W. Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 141–68.

- ¹⁸ See E. Evans, 'Continuity and renewal of monastic landholdings in Wales before and after the Anglo-Norman conquest', in N. Edwards (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches: Proceedings of a Conference on the Early Medieval Celtic Churches, September 2004* (Leeds: Maney, 2009), pp. 85–103 (pp. 88, 91–4).
- ¹⁹ The cartulary of Brecon survives in an eighteenth-century transcript and was published in *Cart. Brecon*.
- ²⁰ Barrow, *Acta*, no. 4. The chapel of St Eiluned was dedicated by Bernard's successor, Bishop David fitz Gerald, in 1152, and assigned as a daughter church of St John, Brecon. He also granted forty days' penance to those visiting Brecon for the saint's feast and threatened excommunication to any who disturbed travellers on the road. This was at the request of Prior Ralph of Brecon: *ibid.*, no. 24.
- ²¹ M. Heale, *The Dependent Priors of Medieval English Monasteries* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), pp. 301–4, finds evidence of the sharing of the monastic and the parish church at Brecon, Cardigan, Ewenny, Goldcliff and Pembroke.
- ²² Barrow, *Acta*, no. 5. The act was addressed to Earl Roger of Hereford, who succeeded his father, Miles, in 1143. The bishop was, therefore, seeking the assistance of the secular authority to support his decision. Barrow's interpretation of 'locus autem ille Sancti Paulini in propria parochia ecclesie de Llangors est' is that 'the site of St Paulinus is in the parish of Llangors'.
- ²³ See W. Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 97, and maps on pp. 97, 142, 144.
- ²⁴ Barrow, *Acta*, nos 25 and 26, are confirmations of grants of churches, the latter specifying possession of the churches of Hay and Llan-sanfraid after the death of the current incumbents, which suggests a preparation for appropriation; no. 27 shows the prior of Brecon presenting the incumbent of Llangors, with detailed provision for his custody and education; nos 50, 51, and 52 are licences from the bishop for full appropriation (early thirteenth century), while nos 73, 75, and 76 record the institution of vicarages in the churches of Talgarth and Llangors. This set of documents provides an excellent example of the growing rights of a religious house in its parish churches.
- ²⁵ Including St Brides Major, Colwinston, Pembrey, Llandyfodwg and St Ishmaels, which were appropriated by 1291: Davies, 'Ewenny Priory', facsimile facing p. 109, and p. 129; Cowley, *MOSW*, pp. 277–8.
- ²⁶ *Mon. Ang.*, IV, p. 596, no. I.
- ²⁷ J. Barrow (ed.), *English Episcopal Acta, VII: Hereford 1079–1234* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1993), no. 47.

- ²⁸ D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: a Study of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 940–1216*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 597.
- ²⁹ See Barrow, *Hereford Acta*, nos 45, 47. See also no. 106A.
- ³⁰ See, for instance, the visitation of Goldcliff and other dependencies by the abbot of Bec in 1200, the appointment of a monk of St Florent in 1264 to take charge of financial affairs at Monmouth and the allegations that the prior of Abergavenny fled to France in 1343 with the monastery's jewels and money: R. Graham, 'Four alien priories in Monmouthshire', *JBAA*, 35 (1929–30), 102–21 (107, 108, 113).
- ³¹ Robinson, *Cistercians*, p. 41.
- ³² Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture*, pp. 20–40.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.
- ³⁴ Robinson, *Cistercians*, pp. 40–1.
- ³⁵ R. Shoesmith, 'Chepstow Town, Priory and Port Wall', in Turner and Johnson (eds), *Chepstow Castle*, pp. 199–212, draws attention to the 'magnificent west doorway, the massive squared piers and the triforium . . .' which 'still give a vivid impression of the aspirations of the Norman founder and his builders' (p. 202).
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203 and fig. 2. I am most grateful to Professor David Austin for stimulating discussion about Chepstow.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- ³⁸ *Romanesque Architecture*, pp. 92–104, and M. Thurlby, 'The Romanesque priory church of St Michael of Ewenny', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 47 (1988), 281–94; see also Robinson, *Cistercians*, p. 40. On the parochial use of Ewenny, see Heale, *Dependent Priories*, pp. 211–13.

