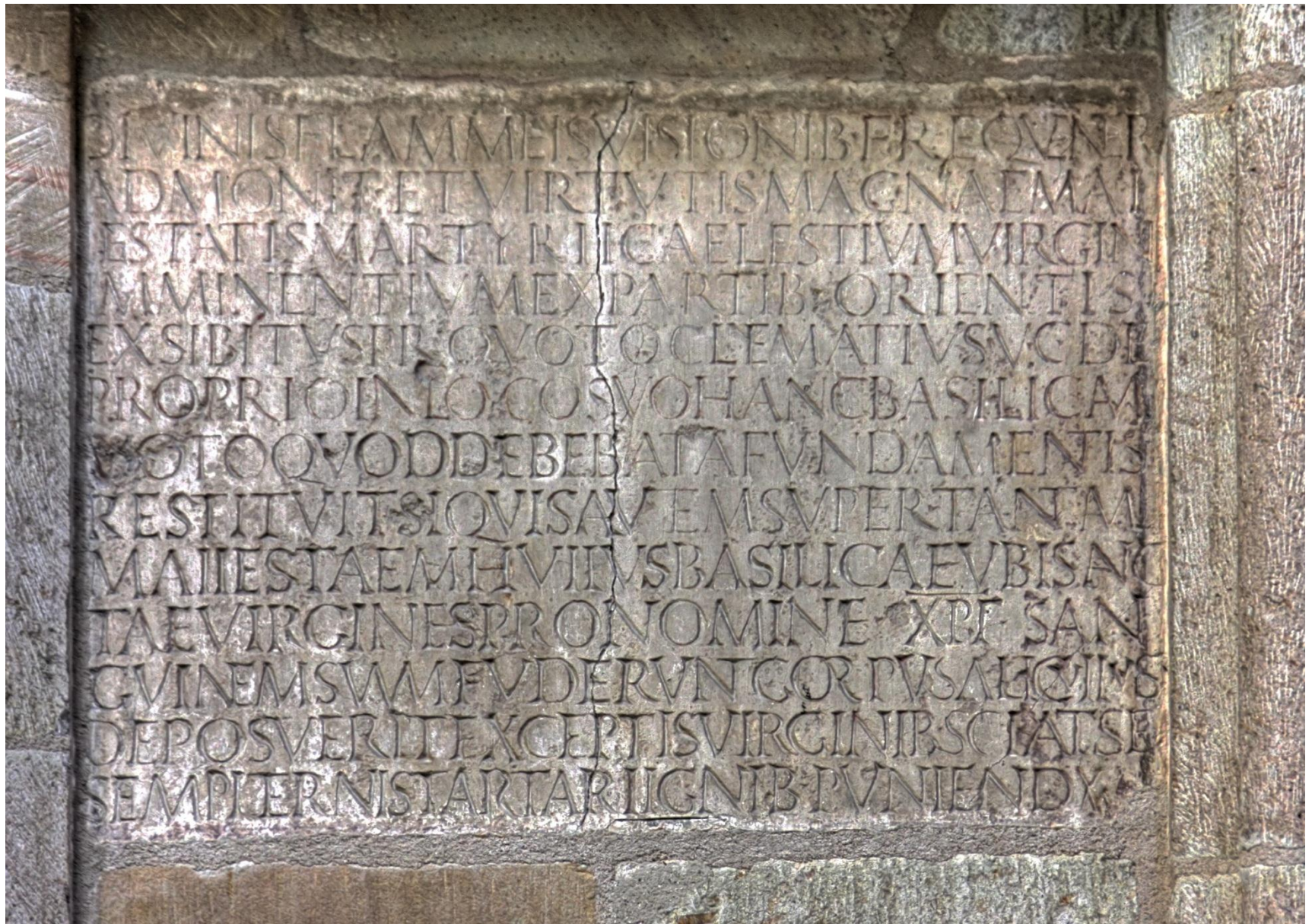


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The Welsh Life of Ursula and her Cult
in Medieval Wales



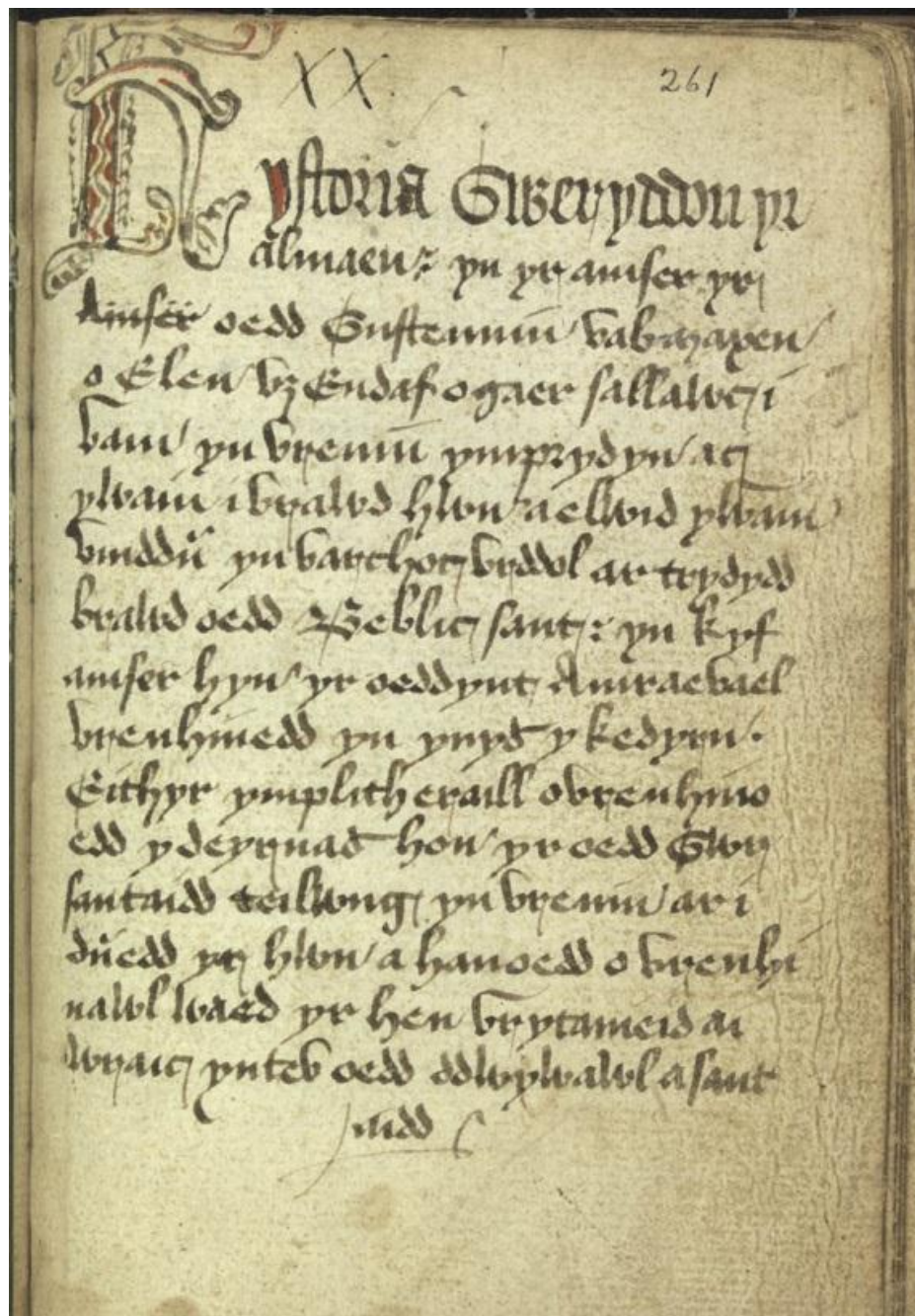
Clematius Inscription, south wall of choir, Church of the 11,000 Virgins,
Cologne ©Raimond Spekking/CC-BY-SA-3.0 (via Wikimedia Commons)

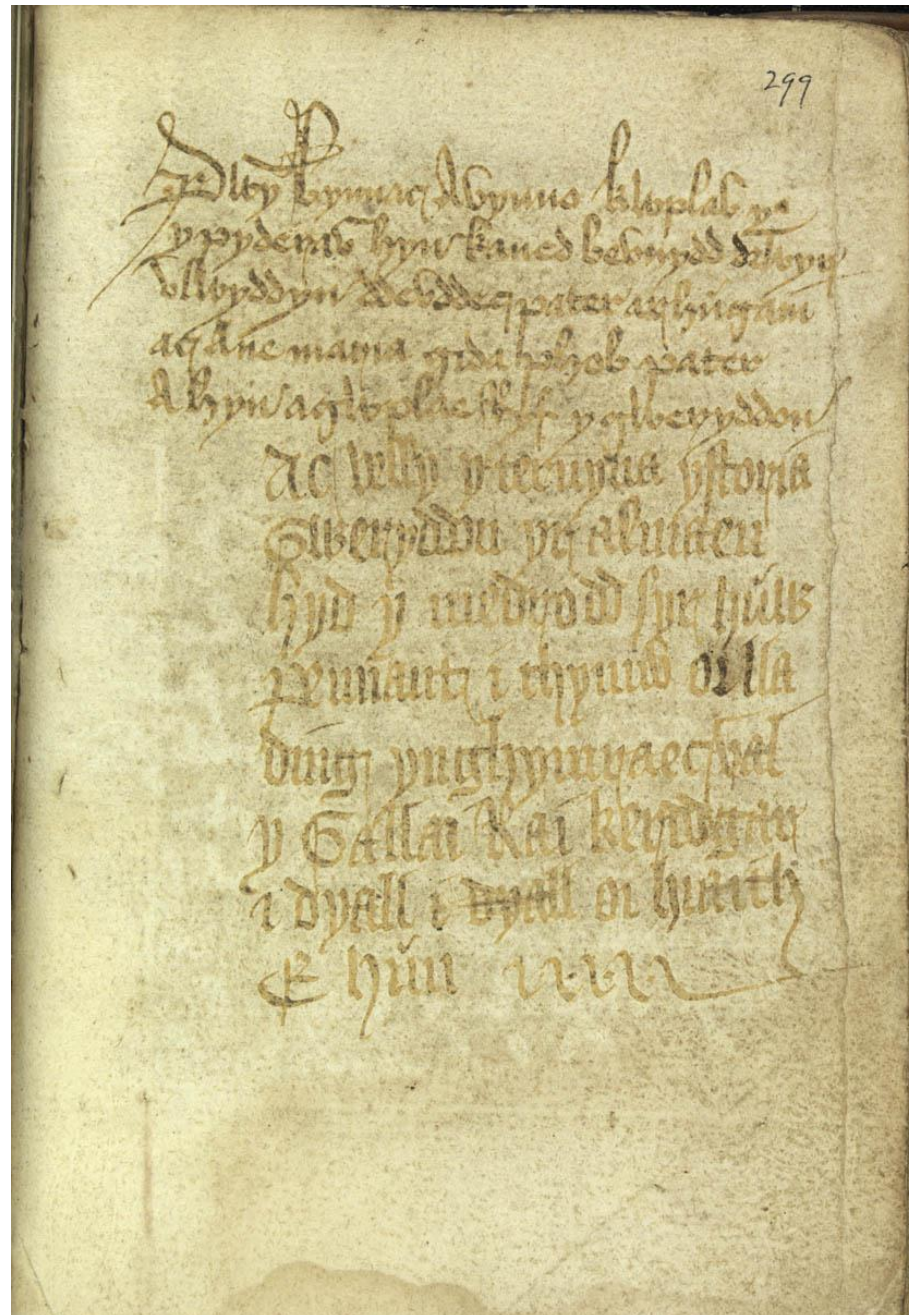


‘Beth a ddywedwn am Vrsula Santes a Chymbraes, a hitheu yn ferch i Frenhin y Cymbry a ddioddefodd farwolaeth er cadw ei morwyndod ag vnmil ar ddeg o forynion yn santesol yn dioddef gyda hi? A’r cwbl a ddoethant o wlad y Cymbry.’ Anon. c. 1583

Y Drych Kristnogawl, ed. Geraint Bowen (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), p. 2

[What shall we say about Ursula – saint and Welsh woman – the daughter of a king of the Welsh people who suffered martyrdom in order to preserve her virginity and the 11,000 saintly virgins who suffered with her? And they all came from the land of the Welsh.] trans. Jane Cartwright





Yn yr amser yr oedd Gustennin vab Maxen o Elen v[erch] Eudaf o Gaer Sallawc i vam yn vrenin ym Prydyn ac Ywain i vrawd, hwn a elwid Ywain Vinddu, yn varchoc vrddol a'r trydydd brawd oedd Beblic Sant: yn kyfamser hyn yr oeddynt amraevael vrenhinedd yn Ynys y Kedyrn. Eithyr ymplith eraill o vrenhinoedd y deyrnas hon yr oedd gwr sanctaidd, teilwng yn vrenin ar i duedd, yr hwn a hanoedd o vrenhinawl waed yr hen Vrytanieid

[...] Sef yn y kyfamser hwnnw yr oedd pygan yn vrenin yn Lloegyr a mab oedd i hwnnw yn oedran gwreika.

During the time that Constantine, the son of Maxen and Elen ferch Eudaf of Caersallog [Caernarfon] his mother, was king in Britain and Owain his brother, who was called Owain Finddu (a knight) and the third brother was St Peblig, there were many kings in the Island of the Mighty. Amongst the other kings of this kingdom there was a holy deserving man who was king and he descended from the royal blood of the Ancient Britons [Ursula's unnamed father]

[...] At the same time, a pagan was king in England and he had a son of marriageable age.



Martyrdom of St Ursula, Master of the pursed lips, Nuremberg 1510
(Germanic National Museum in Nuremberg)



Ef a las yn y maes o blant bychain mwy no phum cant, heb gyfrif y rai oeddynt ymoliav i mammav. Val y maent i heskyn heddyw yw dangos, rai ohonvnt kyn bychaned val y tybygir nad oeddynt tri misyriad ymoliav i mamav pan las hwynt.

(More than 500 children were killed on the field, not counting those who were in their mothers' bellies. As demonstrated by their bones today, some of them were so small that it is thought that they could not have been more than three months in their mothers' stomachs when they were killed).



Morwyn hefyd hon a elwid Cristina a'r gwaed heddyw ynghylch i mwnwgl val pe bai y newydd dorri.

(Also a maiden called Cristina and the blood around her neck today as though it had just been cut.)

Morwyn hefyd hon a elwid Clemencia hon a ddrylliesid i phen eithyr bod y gwaed gwedy ysgrowlingo y gwallt yn kynnal yr esgyrn ynghyd.

(Also a maiden called Clemencia whose head had been severed, although the blood had matted in her hair and held the bones together.)

Merch arall Katrin y gelwid a'r saeth yn i phen a gwallt mawr ar i phen (Another girl called Catrin with an arrow in her head and lots of hair.)

Skulls, Golden Chamber, Cologne (Kevin Lakhani)



Revelations of Elizabeth of Schönau (1129-65)

Latin version attributed to Hermann Joseph (born c. 1150)

Sanctilogium Angliae, Walliae, Scotiae et Hiberniae, attributed to John of Tynemouth (c. 1360)

London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius E1

156 Lives (including many Welsh saints e.g. Gwynllyw, Cadog, Cybi, David Padarn, Gwenfrewy) – arranged according to calendar

[Gwenfrewy's Life mentions that Holywell is near Basingwerk.]

Nova Legenda Anglie

(London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1516) – arranged according to alphabet
Uses Hermann Joseph's twelfth-century Latin version of the Life of Ursula

'quia predictae terre Hibernie, Scotie et Wallie de iure subici debent et obediens esse tenentur huic regno Angliae'

Lyf of Saynt Vrsula

translated by William Hatfield from Latin into Middle English at the behest of Margaret Beaufort

(London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1509?)

Llangwryfon, aerial photograph

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Samuel Rush Meyrick, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Cardigan*
(Rhayadr: Stephen Collard, repr. 2000), Fig. 5







George Eyre Evans, *Cardiganshire* (Aberystwyth: The Welsh Gazette, 1903)

First let me tell you in the few brief and pithy words in which it was told some seventy years ago, by an aged Shepherd on Mynydd bach. “You see it was like this, Melga was king of the Picts, and Guanius was king of the Huns, and they got hold of a ship load of these here Welsh girls, who were wrecked near their lands, and they two men killed them all!”

But can we not locate the massacre here in our loved Ceredigion, and on the banks of the brooks Baedog and Wyre? Why let Germany have all the credit of being the scene of our noble Welsh girls’ triumphant last stand? May not the vessels which ‘tis said sailed from river Thames, instead of being wrecked on the Armorican Coast, have been driven ashore at Llansanffraed? Who shall say it no?