# The hidden evidence of early medieval ecclesiastical wealth in Wales (AD 600–1080)

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*An analysis of early medieval churches in Wales has highlighted the complexities associated with identifying wealth in Welsh churches at this time. Compared with other areas of Europe during the early medieval period, Wales appears economically underdeveloped and sparsely populated. It has been considered that the area was engaged in limited commercial exchange, had a limited use of coin and did not include any towns. However, reassessment of the archaeological material and documentary sources indicates that various expressions of wealth can be identified, while what counted as 'wealth' may have been peculiarly specific to the Welsh context. Therefore, it is suggested that the significance of the available evidence when approached holistically indicates complex processes which suggest that materials may have been lost, wealth misinterpreted, that Wales was culturally disinclined to invest in lasting forms of wealth or that Wales was relatively poorer that its neighbours.*

## SOURCES

The question of why there is so little physical evidence today of the ecclesiastical wealth of pre-Norman Wales begins and ends with a society which is complex and difficult to interpret. There are few Welsh ecclesiastical sites with pre-Norman architectural remains. Sites of high status can be identified through the continuing importance of a particular saint's cult as well as subsequent status in the high-medieval period. There are few surviving artefacts from the early medieval period in Wales: the evidence is limited to handbells, coinage and some metalworking. However, literary evidence may shed light on artefacts now lost. Manuscripts and high-quality sculpted stones also give rare glimpses into this emerging society. Furthermore, there is the implied evidence of wealth through raiding. The Church's relationship with its patrons, such as the various Welsh kings, also affected its importance.

This study is focused primarily on south-east Wales, as an area which has received relatively little attention in recent studies, although due to the paucity of evidence, artefacts from other areas of Wales will also be considered. Most of the surviving Welsh historical material from this period can be found in south-east Wales. However, the chronological and geographical spread of sources makes a detailed account of the accumulation and loss of wealth by individual churches in this period almost impossible. Llandaff could be the sole exception owing to the large amount of written material in the *Liber Landavensis* (Evans and Rhys 1893). There are various risks associated with this written evidence. John Reuben Davies has argued that the material from the Book of Llandaff and it's charters could be understood as the 'embodiment of Bishop Urban's hypothetically fixed vision of his diocese', and therefore should be taken rationally (Pryce 1992a, 23; Davies 2003, 75). The preservation and continuous study of the *Liber Landavensis* has resulted in this site overshadowing other sources of evidence in south-east Wales. These alternative sources will also be considered here.

When reviewing previous studies in this area, the most specific interpretation of ecclesiastical wealth in Wales is an article by Huw Pryce (1992a). Within this study Pryce catalogued the relevant finds and
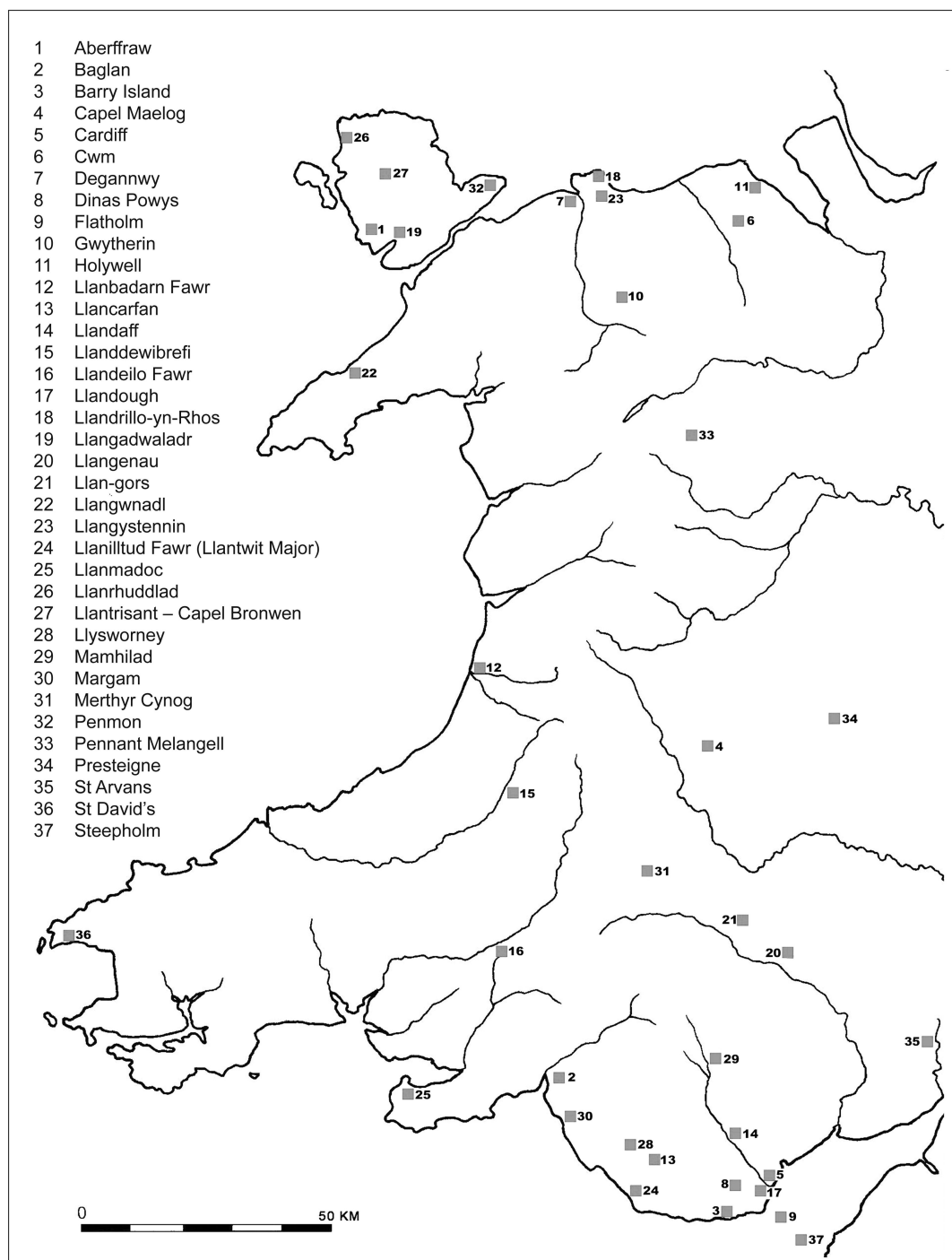
1    Aberffraw
2    Baglan
3    Barry Island
4    Capel Maelog
5    Cardiff
6    Cwm
7    Degannwy
8    Dinas Powys
9    Flatholm
10   Gwytherin
11   Holywell
12   Llanbadarn Fawr
13   Llancarfan
14   Llandaff
15   Llanddewibrefi
16   Llandeilo Fawr
17   Llandough
18   Llandrillo-yn-Rhos
19   Llangadwaladr
20   Llangenau
21   Llan-gors
22   Llangwnadl
23   Llangystennin
24   Llanilltud Fawr (Llantwit Major)
25   Llanmadoc
26   Llanrhuddlad
27   Llantrisant – Capel Bronwen
28   Llysworney
29   Mamhilad
30   Margam
31   Merthyr Cynog
32   Penmon
33   Pennant Melangell
34   Presteigne
35   St Arvans
36   St David's
37   Steepholm

0                    50 KM

Fig. 1.  Places mentioned in the text.

historical references to landownership and wealth. He discussed various theories as to why the early Welsh Church looks impoverished compared with its neighbours. Fleming highlights the barer nature of Welsh ecclesiastical treasuries and attributes this to the custom of extravagant almsgiving, suggesting that 'its practice was as conspicuous as the bestowing of precious objects' (Fleming 2010, 311).

The work of Wendy Davies has also been significantly drawn upon by various scholars. She has written extensively regarding the Llandaff Charters, Lichfield Gospels and other historical sources, considering land-ownership, land use and social organisation and change within early medieval Wales (Davies 1978a–b; 1979a–b; 1982a–b; 1990; 1995; 1998). In the wider traditions of research, Jeremy Knight has written much on Wales, especially south-east Wales, in the post-Roman period, including publications on the Llancarfan Charters, the Llandough and Barry Island excavations, and interpretations of the archaeology combined with the historical evidence in Glamorgan and Gwent (Knight 1976–78; 1984a–b; 1993; 2005; 2006).

The early inscribed stone evidence has stimulated many studies, the most influential catalogue being V. E. Nash-Williams's *Early Christian Monuments of Wales* published in 1950, which focused on an art-historical and epigraphic analysis. The more recent three-volume *Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales* has been compiled by Nancy Edwards, Mark Redknap and John Lewis (Edwards 2007; Redknap and Lewis 2007; Edwards forthcoming), which takes a contextual approach. These publications provide a well-referenced catalogue and interpretation of the stones of south Wales, although a similar record has yet to be published for north Wales (Edwards forthcoming).

## PRINCIPAL SITES AND CHURCHES

The fragmented kingdoms of early medieval Wales played an important role in providing secular patronage to the Church, as can be seen through historical and archaeological evidence. For instance, Lifris' *Life of St Cadog* claimed that the church of Llancarfan was granted the privilege of burying the kings, leaders and nobles of the kingdom of Gwynllŵg,[1] and refers to the provision of funeral vigils for laymen who bequeathed goods to the church (Pryce 1992b, 45).[2]

A Roman villa at Llandough was succeeded by a cemetery. A total of 1,026 early medieval burials were investigated during excavations conducted between 1979 and 1994. A few graves also contained residual sherds of sixth-century Mediterranean amphorae (Insular Bii or Late Roman I), which were identical to sherds found at the important secular ruling site of Dinas Powys. The rulers at Dinas Powys may have been engaged in the gift-giving of wine or oil to the abbot and monks of Llandough (Knight 2006, 16). The possibility of an early origin for the monastery at Llandough may also be supported by the record of the death of its founder, St Docheu or Dochdwy, in the Irish *Annals of Ulster sub anno* 473 on 1 January '*Quies Docci episcopo sancti Britonum abbatis*'. Knight suggests that if this date is reliable, the implication of a mid-fifth-century monastery and episcopal see sited on a recently abandoned (or even still functional?) Roman villa would be highly significant. However, the use of an *anno domini* date is unreliable (the *Anno Domini* dating system was devised in 525, and not used in Western Europe until the eighth century), and this entry does not occur in other versions of the Irish annals, making it unlikely that it appeared in the ancestral *Chronicle of Ireland* (Knight 1984b, 377–8; Knight 2005, 101).

Saint Illtud's monastery of Llantwit Major (Llanilltud Fawr) appears to have been a royal monastery connected with the royal manor of Llysworney, the *llys* of the cantref of Gorfynydd. In medieval times Llantwit and Llysworney formed a single large parish (Knight 1984b, 365, 375; for more about the relationship between cantrefs and ecclesiastical territories see Jenkins 1988). The connection between Llantwit Major and the rulers of Glywysing is further substantiated by the cross erected there by king

Hywel ap Rhys in memory of his father (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 220; Redknap and Lewis 2007, no. G63; known as the Houelt stone) and a second inscription commemorating King Iudhail, 'Iuthahelo Rex', who is probably Iudheal ab Athrwys (Fig. 2; Nash-Williams 1950, no. 223; Redknap and Lewis 2007, no. G65). This might suggest that the monastery of Llanilltud Fawr had been founded on a large royal estate. This pattern of monasteries founded by kings and nobles on their estates can also be found throughout much of Western Europe at this time (Knight 1984b, 376). Within Wales, Llangadwaladr and the royal seat at Aberffraw in Anglesey is possibly a further example (Jones 1976, 19–24).

The crannog of Llan-gors appears to have be paired (under royal patronage) with an ecclesiastical centre (*clas*). Llan-gors is the only crannog in Wales, and Redknap suggests that the decision to build a crannog may have been influenced by contact between Wales and Ireland via ecclesiastics (Redknap 2007, 62).[3]



Fig. 2.  The Iuthahelo (left) and Houelt (right) stones from Llantwit Major:
*Photograph: author.*

The churches themselves appear not to have been built of stone before the twelfth century, the church of Presteigne being the only known pre-Norman stone church in Wales. It is however possible that early stone churches have been obscured by later building on the same site. Documentary sources refer to timber buildings, rather than stone: St Cadog's monks went to fetch new timber for their monastery; the timber roofs of Llancarfan were visible from a distance; and St Cadog collected timber to build an oratory on the banks of the river Neath (Davies 1982a, 25; Redknap 1991, 17).[4]

From the twelfth century, by contrast there was widespread building of churches in stone. This occurred on sites not already associated with a church, such as Barry Island, and Capel Maelog near Llandrindod Wells (Britnell 1990), and on sites with existing timber churches. The early twelfth-century stone church on Burry Holmes, off the Gower coast, replaced a small wooden structure as indicated by four corner postholes (3.35 × 3.05m) which was believed by the excavator to date from the late eleventh century (Pryce 1992a, 27; Hague 1973, 29–32; RCAHMW 1976, 14–5). Other scholars, however, have questioned the identification of an earlier timber church here, suggesting instead that the four corner posts are remains of an earlier settlement (Mark Redknap, pers. comm.)

## MATERIAL WEALTH ASSOCIATED WITH WELSH CHURCHES

A shrine containing the corporeal remains of a saintly founder, or secondary relics (those regarded as possessions of the saint), were an important asset for a church. The remains represented a saint's continuing presence and protection, as well as an important source of prestige and offerings, which would result physically in the growth of a large cemetery around the saint's church and shrine. According to Knight archaeological evidence indicates that the grave shrine would provide the primary focus of an enclosed cemetery and that the church was a later addition (Edwards 2002, 226; Knight 1984b, 368; this is also comparable with developed cemeteries first discussed by Charles Thomas 1971, 50–1).

A shrine itself could take the form of a portable shrine of wood or metal, often in a gabled 'house-shaped' form also found in Irish stone oratories such as Colum Cille's house in Kells (Fig. 3); of a static open-air grave-shrine standing within the cemetery, perhaps marked by a cross slab or a stone-kerbed mound; or of a static grave in the floor of a chapel or *eglwys y bedd* ('church of the grave/mortuary chapel'). Knight defines an *eglwys y bedd* as a grave chapel, either freestanding or attached to the west end of the main church and containing the grave of the church's patron (Knight 1976–78, 57; 1984b, 368).

The chances of a grave shrine surviving into modern times are remote, but we do occasionally find indications of such a feature. The extensive cemetery found on three sides of St Barruc's chapel on Barry Island was argued by the excavator to have been too substantial to have served only the inhabitants of this small island (Storrie 1895; cf. Fox 1936, 19, 21–2; Knight 1976–78, 34, 36–7). If correct, this could demonstrate a continuing local reverence for the alleged bones of St Barruc. Giraldus Cambrensis recorded that when the Romanesque chapel was built (around 1140?) the remains of St Barruc were transferred to a *feretrum* or shrine.[5] Excavation revealed an altar with a relic cavity at the west end of the nave. The south side of the Romanesque chancel was disturbed, and the backfill contained ashlar, which Knight suggests was possibly from the shrine, representing translation when the square-ended chancel was incorporated. The second phase of the chancel also contained part of a stone relic container (Knight 2006, 18). Giraldus' words imply that the remains were previously in a structure which someone with his Cambro-Anglo-Norman frame of reference would not see as a conventional shrine, perhaps an open-air grave-shrine standing in the cemetery (Knight 1976–78, 33, 57; 1984b, 369). A similar example can be seen in the early grave of St Melangell at Pennant Melangell, Powys (Radford and Hemp 1959, 81–113; Britnell 1994, 52–66). At Llanvithyn House, Llanfeuthyn, later a grange of Margam Abbey, a chapel was

Fig. 3.  Colum Cille's House in Kells. *Photograph: author*.

built in honour of St Meuthyn, in the old cemetery ('*Vetere cimiterio*') in 1186–1218 (Lewis and Knight, 1973, 147–53; Knight 1984b, 369).

Significantly St Barruc's chapel is omitted from the three valuations of parish churches and chapelries which survive for the diocese of Llandaff: the Norwich Taxation of 1254, the *Taxatio* of 1291 and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535. Nor is there reference to it in a list of Synodals of *circa* 1348. This indicates that the shrine of St Barruc was a free chapel, not associated with any parish church or religious establishment. The clergy who served it evidently derived their income from the offerings of pilgrims (Knight 1976–78, 33) although they presumably farmed the land on the island as well. St Barruc's Chapel was eventually abandoned in the sixteenth century. It was not maintained nor is it in continuing use now, perhaps because it did not develop its own corporate identity.

The remains of a saint were regarded as significantly precious, as noted on an inscribed stone found at Llantrisant, Capel Bronwen, Anglesey (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 33). The inscription commemorating the very holy wife of Bivatisus (?) *sacerdos* (probably a bishop) includes the wording, AVRO E[T(?)]/LAPIDIBVS '[which is better than] gold and precious stones' or '[in] gold from stones' (Edwards 2002, 229; Nash-Williams 1950, 63).[6] Edwards suggests this echoes a phrase used in the Greek *Passio* of Polycarp which refers to the precious remains of the saint (Edwards 2002, 229).

Hagiographical writings were also an important source used to prove a saint's sanctity by demonstrating miracles worked, with the purpose of enhancing the reputation of the founder-saint to

attract interest, and significantly, an inflow of pilgrims and wealth (O'Croinín 1995, 210). However, Nancy Edwards has demonstrated that, unlike Ireland and Scotland, Wales showed a reluctance to translate the corporeal relics of its early saints. In some instances, ecclesiastical communities did not know where they were buried. For example St Padarn was alleged to have been buried in Brittany,[7] while St David is vaguely described as 'being buried in the grounds of his own monastery' (*in sua sepelitur ciuitate*) (Edwards 2002, 237).[8] As demonstrated above, 'special graves' appear to influence the siting of later churches. During the Norman period substantial above-ground stone shrines, as at Pennant Melangell and Barry Island, were introduced (Edwards 2002, 238).

Portable house-shaped shrines ranged in size from a gabled coffin (requiring two men to carry it, suitable for a complete skeleton), to a casket holding a small bone. The *feretrum* or *arca* of St Cadog at Llancarfan seems to have been of the former type, like the shrine of St Manchan from Lemanaghan (Co. Offaly), now at Boher church (Kendrick and Senior 1937, 105–18). Both the shrines of St Cadog and St Manchan were provided with rings for carrying. Written evidence, such as the *Vita Cadoci* (Wade-Evans 1944, 24–140), suggests that shrines were carried in procession to oath takings, tribute collections, or to greet important personages.

A recently discovered Irish-style gilt bronze medallion from a field near Din Lligwy, Isle of Anglesey, is thought to have been secured to the metal facing plates and wooden core of a house-shaped shrine. Its decoration is closely paralleled by circular mounts on the larger Lough Erne (Co. Fermanagh) house-shaped shrine, dated to the late eighth or early ninth century (Fig. 4; Redknap 2007, 54; Youngs 1989, no. 130a).

Two elements from a small reliquary shrine which shows a distinctively Irish style were found during excavations at Llan-gors crannog, Breconshire (Fig. 5; Redknap 2007, 55). The fragments include the unleaded bronze upper part of a carrying hinge found underwater on the west side of the crannog, decorated with a translucent blue glass stud, flanked by small circles of enamel, originally red in colour. Explanations discussing the occurrence of a fragment of reliquary shrine on this secular site include the *commotatio* or taking of such reliquaries on circuits, safekeeping during an unsettled period, its circulation or discarding as plunder resulting from Viking activity, or its incorporation into a workshop destined to be recycled (Redknap 2007, 63). Unlike the large shrines such as the *Eglwys y Bedd*, which are static within their areas and may be visited by pilgrims, smaller shrines taken on circuits are more



Fig. 4. Copper-alloy harness mount from Din Lligwy (diameter 26mm).
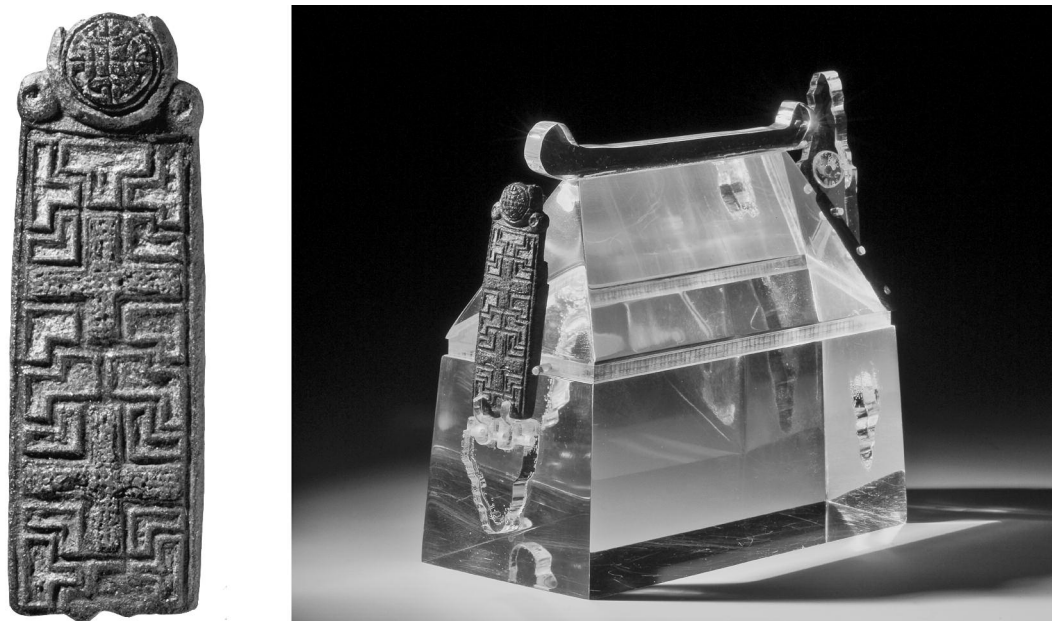*Courtesy of Amgueddfa Cymru / National Museum Wales.*

Fig. 5.  The Llan-gors reliquary shrine fragment (left, height 55mm), and reconstruction (right).
*Courtesy of Amgueddfa Cymru / National Museum Wales.*

reminiscent of the later medieval kings travelling to different parts of their country. Wendy Davies however, suggests that the petty Welsh kings of the early medieval period did not travel around too much (Davies 1978b, 8–9).

The unique attributes of an early British or Irish bishop were his crozier and his handbell. Sixty such bells are known from Ireland. In Wales, only seven handbells made of iron and copper alloy have been found, although a few more are known of (Knight 1984b, 370; Pryce 1992a, 22, 25; Redknap 1991, 79; cf. Fisher 1926; Fox 1946, 121–2). They are rarely decorated and are difficult to date (Redknap 1991, 79). The three bells from north Wales are all of cast bronze (Class 2 in Bourke's classification of early Irish bells), in one case with a zoomorphic handle; however those from south Wales are of riveted sheet iron plated with bronze (Bourke's Class 1; Bourke 1980, 52).

The cast-bronze handbell with a zoomorphic handle was found in St Gwynhoedl's church, Llangwnadl, Gwynedd and has been dated to between the ninth and tenth centuries. This bell is considered of high quality casting (Fig. 6; Jones 1891, 339; Allen 1912, 210; Redknap 1991, 79; Mark Redknap, pers. comm.). The other two cast-bronze handbells from north Wales are also dated to the ninth–tenth centuries, and were found in Llanrhuddlad, Anglesey and St Cystennin, Llangystennin, Gwynedd (Jones 1891, 327, 340; RCAHMW 1937, 109, pl. 57). The bells from Llanrhuddlad and Llangystennin were cast in solid bronze making them among the largest surviving casts from the period.

In south Wales an iron plated handbell known as St Ceneu's bell of unknown date was found in Llangenau, Powys, and is currently in the National Museum of Wales. An unpublished handbell of unknown date was found in Newcastle Bridgend, Glamorgan (for a list of Welsh handbells see Fox 1946, 121–2). Knight states that the Newcastle Bridgend bell is a modern cow bell and should not be included (inf. Mr J. M. Lewis; Knight 1984b, 370), but adds a bell from Llanmadoc (Gower) which was ploughed up shortly before 1877 in a field called Parc-yr-odyn ('Field of the Kiln') at Cwm Ivy, not far from the

Fig. 6.  St Gwynhoedl's bell from Llangwnadl church (height 171mm), with detail of handle.
*Courtesy of Amgueddfa Cymru / National Museum Wales.*

church with its important group of early Christian stones (Nash-Williams 1950, nos 215, 216, 217; Redknap and Lewis 2007, nos G55, G56, G57). It was preserved at Penrice Castle and when found it retained traces of gilding over the iron shell (Knight 1984b, 370; cf. Davies 1879, 66).

The distribution of the two types is similar in Ireland, where Class 2 has a markedly more northern distribution. Handbells have also been found in Scotland and outliers as far away as Switzerland, where the Class 1 bell of St Columbanus is preserved at St Gall. Bourke would date the Irish bells to AD 700–900, but Knight suggests that they continued to be used, if not made, much later (Knight 1984b, 370; Bourke 1980, 61).

St Arvans (Monmouthshire) has been described as an *ecclesia* due to the existence of a tenth-century cross slab there. The recent discovery of an eighth-century enamelled hanging bowl escutcheon and a possible seventh-century mount in the form of an encircled *chi-rho* indicates a materially wealthy Christian presence in the vicinity of the church from the seventh century (Redknap 2007, 29). The original function of hanging bowls has been the subject of some debate. Suggestions include drinking vessels hung at springs, bowls for hand-washing before and during a feast, ritual welcome, bridal gifts and bowls hanging as church lamps (Youngs 1989, 22; Brenan 1991). This latter theory, as well as its ecclesiastical context, is why the hanging bowl fragment from St Arvans is included here. The majority of hanging bowls have been recovered from furnished early Anglo-Saxon burials in eastern and southern England. Brenan dates their manufacture to AD 550–700, although Geake argues that since they are often found in burials datable to the seventh/eighth centuries they may date from this later period (Brenan 1991, 65–75; Geake 1997, 85–7).

Considering possible contexts for the St Arvans mount, Redknap suggests the use of the church as a focus for fairs and associations with feasts and saint's days, although precise details of its loss and context remain unknown (Redknap 2007, 36–7). The gilt copper-alloy mount in the form of a *chi-rho*

monogrammatic cross is thought to have been attached to another material, possibly leather or wood, and may have adorned a book cover or casket (Redknap 2007, 44).

Another fragment of metalwork with overt Christian symbolism is the arm of a small equal-armed cross pendant also found at St Arvans. The style of decoration on the cross arm includes plain edge moulding filled with interlace. The style also occurs on Welsh sculpture, such as the tenth-century cross from St Arvans itself (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 292; Redknap and Lewis 2007, no. MN5). Therefore Redknap has regarded the possibility of manufacture for this cross in Wales (or Ireland) as feasible (Redknap 2007, 51).

A copper-alloy strap-union was discovered at the *llys* of Llysworney (Glamorgan). Observation has shown that the attachment lugs, which would have originally projected out from the back, appear to have been filed down. Redknap suggests that this decorative item may have been converted at a later date into a cruciform pendant, though no method of suspension is evident from the three surviving arms (Redknap 2007, 42). This strap was adapted as a Christian piece.

Mention should also be made of the gold enamelled ring found on Llysfaen Common near Llandrillo-yn-Rhos which apparently belonged to Alhstan, Bishop of Sherborne in the ninth century. How this came to be there is unknown: it may simply have been lost by the bishop, or it could have been given to a Welsh cleric or laymen (Davies 1982a, 48; Pryce 1992a, 31).

There are also a large number of inscribed stones and stone sculpture in Wales, often associated with churches. Pryce suggests that the standing stone sculpture dating from the ninth to eleventh centuries from Wales does not match, in style, design and accomplishment, that found in Ireland from the same period (Pryce 1992a, 22; cf. Redknap 1991, 73). However, individual cases do suggest competence: the late tenth-early eleventh-century cross at Llandaff (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 205; Redknap and Lewis 2007, no. G36) belongs to a group of elaborate composite pillar-crosses in Glamorgan which also includes the Irbic cross at Llandough (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 206; Redknap and Lewis 2007, no. G42) and the unfinished cross from Llancarfan (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 204; Redknap and Lewis 2007, no. G35), all of which are made from Sutton Stone, a rare Carboniferous limestone found on the coastline of Ogmore-by-Sea and Southern Down in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Redknap suggests that the appearance of these large, elaborate, freestanding monuments dating from the ninth century onwards, often associated with early ecclesiastical sites, indicates the existence of workshops or schools of craftsmen. He suggests that localised styles can be distinguishable. Workshops can be identified from the group of stones at St David's (Pembrokeshire); also the Llandough, Llandaff and Llancarfan crosses are close enough in style to suggest they are the work of a master craftsman's workshop. This indicates that these workshops were under the patronage of sufficiently wealthy monasteries and churches (Redknap 1991, 69; 2006, 29; 2007, 27).

LOST AND HIDDEN WEALTH

The limited preservation of portable objects such as shrines, bells, croziers and manuscripts has affected our perception of the wealth of early medieval Welsh churches. Unlike the early Anglo-Saxon practice of burying grave-goods which left objects undisturbed for centuries, Christian artefacts in Wales were more vulnerable to the disturbances of the 'land of the living' (Dodwell 1982, 4). These disturbances often included rebuilding, which was particularly intensive under the Normans; resulting in the demolition of architecture, wall-paintings and sculpture (Dodwell 1982, 6). The preference or necessity of building early Welsh churches in timber meant the buildings were particularly susceptible to fire. There are a few references in the Welsh written records detailing fires. Many record attacks on monasteries and churches

which resulted in fires. Two references from the ninth century record fires caused by lightning at the fortress of Degannwy (Conwy),[9] and at unspecified locations.[10] In both examples the extent of the damage is not recorded. Instances of fire are also more fully recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Between the years 1116 and 1123 the chronicle records fires at three important ecclesiastical centres; Peterborough,[11] Gloucester,[12] and Lincoln.[13]

Anglo-Saxon metalwork might have been intentionally melted down in answer to financial needs (Dodwell 1982, 7); and it is not inconceivable that a similar situation could have occurred in Wales. During the Reformation relics were destroyed in many parts of Western Britain and Ireland: for example, the *Bacall-Iosa* ('Staff of Jesus'), St Patrick's reputed staff carried by the archbishops of Armagh, was burnt in Christchurch Cathedral (Dublin) in 1537–38 by Archbishop Brown. But in Ireland the covert continuation of Roman Catholicism undoubtedly aided the survival of relics, assisted in part due to growing antiquarian interest by men such as George Petrie (1790–1866). In Wales, Protestantism and later nonconformity took a greater toll. In the nineteenth century, the sexton of the church at Gwytherin (Denbighshire) sawed pieces off the shine of Gwenfrewi (Winifride) and sold them to visitors for a shilling (Edwards 2002, 244–5; Edwards and Gray Hulse 1992, 92).

The manuscript evidence tells a similar story to that of the shrines, bells and croziers. There are fewer than a dozen surviving early medieval manuscripts from Wales, only three of which are illuminated (Pryce 1992a, 22). As highlighted by Sims-Williams, a romantic view held by some scholars is that Celtic countries such as Wales were once as rich in historical records as England and the Continent. Anecdotes were then cited to explain the disappearance of these manuscripts: for instance the burning of Welsh books in the Tower of London conducted by Ysgolan (Sims-Williams 1998, 15). Other theories centre on the idea that the 'Celtic' culture was peculiarly oral despite the epigraphical evidence to the contrary, such as inscribed stones and existing manuscripts (Sims-Williams 1998, 16).

The adverse effects of poor storage conditions coupled with damp and peat-smoke may have attributed to the poor survival of Welsh manuscripts (for the effects of damp and peat-smoke see Black 1989, 164–5). The tendency for 'Celtic' monasteries to be laicized or change hands may also have led to poor survival (Sims-Williams 1998, 20).

The Lichfield Gospels are an eighth-century book of unknown provenance which has been kept at Lichfield since at least the eleventh century. Marginal texts record that the book was present at Llandeilo Fawr, in the north of Ystrad Tywi, in the early ninth century. This gift was made by Gelli ab Arthudd who purchased it from one Cingal for his best horse. The book later travelled to England as a gift from King Hywel Dda to King Athelstan of Wessex and Mercia, who subsequently gave it to the bishop of Lichfield. The decoration style and quality of the book have been compared with that of the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Book of Kells (Pryce 1992a, 26; Redknap 1991, 81; cf. Jenkins and Owen 1983; Henderson 1987, 122–9; Brown 2003, 174–5, 190, 236, 265, 273–4, 277, 298, 315, 332, 350).

It is possible that the Lichfield Gospels were illuminated in England. Some scholars have regarded their presence in Wales as a result of theft or misplacement. Pryce, however, warns against ruling out an Irish or Welsh provenance (Pryce 1992a, 26; Jenkins and Owen 1983, 41–8; Henderson 1987, 128–9).

One of the few surviving pre-Conquest Welsh manuscripts is Rhygyfarch's Psalter (the Psalter of Ricemarcus). This manuscript was produced in the monastic scriptorium of Llanbadarn Fawr (Ceredigion). The school of Llanbadarn was founded by Sulien, who was born in Wales *c.* 1011, and taught a style of decoration he had learnt during several years in Ireland. It was written by the scribe Ithael and decorated using imitations from Irish book ornament by Ieuan (Sulien's son), *c.* 1080–81 (Redknap 1991, 81). This manuscript may only have survived because it was taken to Dublin at a very early, albeit unknown, date. Conway concludes that the Llanbadarn Fawr script shows a distinction recognisable in Rhygyfarch's Psalter and Ieuan's copy of Augustine's '*De Trinitate*' (Corpus Christi College, Dublin MS 199) which can

be compared with products of Irish centres. However, as there is little comparative Welsh material the decoration of the Llanbadarn manuscripts cannot be defined specifically as Welsh. Conway warns that this decoration should not to be taken to represent anything more than the customs of one particular part of Wales (Conway 1997, 9; 26).

Other manuscripts have been lost. We do not know what happened to the Gospels allegedly written by Gildas, which were encased in gold and silver, and, according to Caradog of Llancarfan, were still in Llancarfan church in the 1120s or 1130s (Knight 1976–78, 32; Pryce 1992a, 26).

There is also a lack of evidence from texts of canon and secular law, although some of the Welsh law books, which were first compiled in their present form in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, may be based on sources from the pre-Norman period (Pryce 1992a, 22). The earliest surviving Welsh lawbook written in Welsh is the Iorwerth Redaction compiled in Gwynedd in the mid-thirteenth century. Scholars suggest that the surviving Welsh law books may derive from earlier texts, and their nature and content has been assessed in relationship with Hywel Dda who is associated with instigating legal reform in Wales (*c.* 950). This has been used to advocate the existence of pre-Norman law books in Wales (Pryce 2000, 39; 42; 63).

Other written materials which may circumspectly be said to be Welsh include Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae*, if written in Wales (Winterbottom 1978), *Orationes Moncani* (although this survives in an eighth-century Mercian manuscript, it may tentatively be included since the author's name Moucan ('Meugan') is Welsh), the *Historia Brittonum*, *Asser's Life of Alfred* (Stevenson 1904), the *Annales Cambriae* and Harleian Genealogies, and the Saint's Lives by Rhygyfarch and Lifris (Sims-Williams 1998, 23; Pryce 1992a, 22; Davies 1982a, 198–218). The chances of survival were small; all extant Welsh manuscripts written prior to 1100 have been preserved outside Wales, principally in England (Pryce 1992a, 26; cf. Lindsey 1912; for a full list of manuscripts which have influenced Welsh writing in the early medieval period see Sims-Williams 1998, 23). The picture given by surviving Welsh manuscripts may also be skewed by the selective way in which the Anglo-Saxons imported Welsh books. Sims-Williams suggests that those with ecclesiastical and school texts would have had a greater interest than those with a purely Welsh historical, legal or vernacular subject: 'the fewer Welsh peculiarities . . . the better' (Sims-Williams 1998, 21). This situation may have been duplicated elsewhere, for instance, of the manuscripts from the Continent, Bernhard Bischoff suggested that less than one-seventh survives of even the carefully conserved ninth-century Carolingian manuscript collections (Sims-Williams 1998, 21; cf. McKitterick 1989, 163).

Nonetheless, from the twelfth century there is contemporary written evidence suggesting relics were still popular. Giraldus Cambrensis wrote that, like the Irish and the Scots, Welsh people 'have such a reverence for portable bells, staffs crooked at the top and encased in gold and silver or bronze and other similar relics of the saints, that they are more afraid of swearing oaths upon them and then breaking their word than they are upon the Gospels' (Pryce 1992a, 25–6; cf. Dimock 1868, 27).

Other bells, croziers and enshrined gospel-books associated with saints which are now lost are mentioned in the hagiography or recorded by antiquarians (Pryce 1992a, 25; Knight 1984; cf. Evans and Rhys 1893, 135–6, 137; Wade-Evans 1944, 110–2, 126, 228–32, 238). Edward Lhuyd (1670–1709), Henry Rowlands (1655–1723) and Richard Fenton (1747–1821) recorded a variety of ecclesiastical metalwork; for instance the head of St Baglan's crozier survived until the late seventeenth century, when it was described as 'a sacred relick which had wonderful effects on the sick.' It was perhaps similar to a series of Irish brass crozier heads of the eleventh-twelfth centuries, though there is no proof of its early medieval origin (Edwards 2002, 253–4; Pryce 1992a, 26; cf. Redknap 1991, 79; Knight 1984b, 371; Fisher 1926, 332–3; for a detailed analysis on the dating of croziers see Johnson 2000). In 1690 Lhuyd sketched the casket shrine from the church of St Gwenfrewi (Winifride) at Gwytherin (Fig. 7). This was
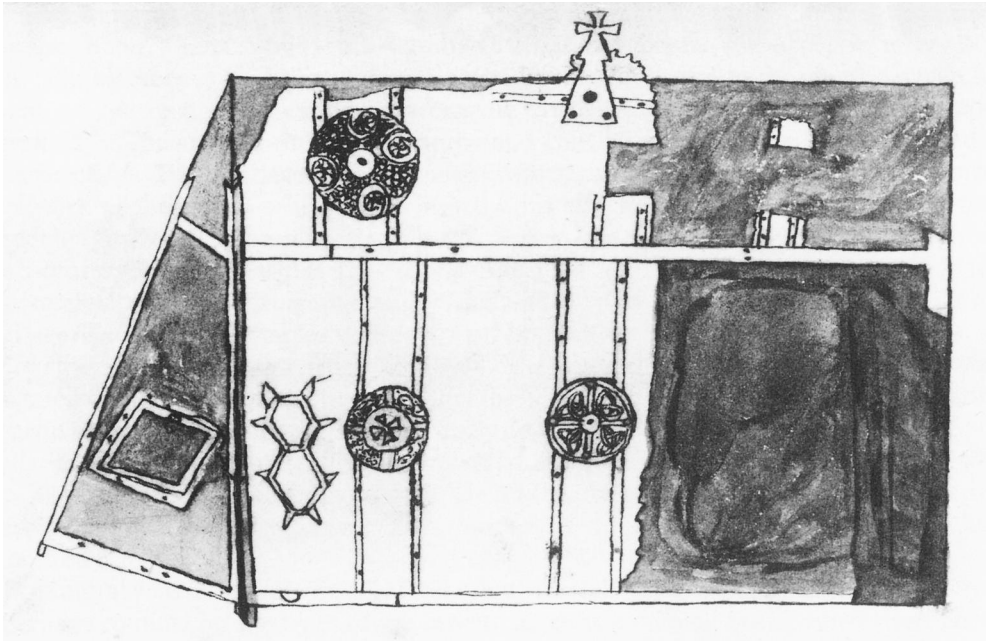
Fig. 7.  Sketch by Edward Lhuyd of the Gwytherin casket *c.* 1690 (MS. Rawl. B. 464, fo. 29$^r$).
*Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.*

probably a house-shaped reliquary plated in silver, and similar in form to St Manchan's shrine. The drawings show designs comparable to a series of mounts from Whitby Abbey and Hartlepool, and consequently they have been considered to be of Anglo-Saxon rather than Irish design (Redknap 2007, 55; 1991, 79; Edwards 2002, 250; Butler and Graham-Campbell 1980). It had been assumed that this artefact was no longer extant but in 1991 a fragment was found in the Roman Catholic presbytery adjacent to St Winefride's (Gwenfrewi's) Well at Holywell (Flintshire). A second smaller fragment was found in Cheadle, Stoke-on-Trent in 1997 (Edwards 2002, 250; Edwards and Gray Hulse 1997).

Baglan may have retained the brass head of its patron's crozier, as well as his Life up to 1690, when it was recorded by Anthony Thomas, a correspondent of Edward Lhuyd. Baglan's Life told how he had been given the crozier by St Illtud, who had shown him in a miracle where to site his church. Knight suggests that the crozier head may have been similar to those found in Ireland dated from the eleventh-twelfth centuries (Knight 1984b, 373).

Giraldus Cambrensis describes the staff of Saint Curig from the church of St Germanus in Gwrtheyrnion as renowned for curing glandular swellings and tumours. It was said to be encased in gold and silver, the top of which was in the rough shape of a cross (Redknap 1991, 79, cf. Dimock 1868, 17–18). Giraldus also describes seeing 'St Cynog's torque' at Merthyr Cynog. This artefact was used for oath swearing, and was described as gold-coloured made in four welded sections, divided in the middle by 'a dog's head which stands erect with its teeth bared.' Redknap suggests that this description is reminiscent of the copper-alloy door rings with animal-head mounts of Irish type dating to the eighth/ninth centuries (Redknap 1991, 79).

The *Vita Cadoci* describes St Cadog's bell preserved at Llancarfan into the twelfth century as the work of Gildas (Wade-Evans 1944, 24–140). It was made of sheet iron, and described as '*varia*' or mottled,

perhaps in reference to a worn bronze plating. There are various myths surrounding the bell, which justified its prestige and importance; the bell was said to have been blessed by Pope Alexander II in Rome, to have twice spoken with human speech, and to have raised the dead (Knight 1976–78, 32; 1984b, 370). Like the shrines, handbells were used for oath takings. One family group is accused in the *Vita Cadoci* of having taken a lying oath on it in a matter relating to the inheritance of property, presumably to the detriment of Llancarfan. Handbells could also have been used with other relics to greet important visitors (Knight 1984b, 370).[14] Bells were carried before the bier at funerals; this might provide the context for the claim that St Cadog's bell had twice raised a man from the dead. Two men ringing handbells before the bier of Edward the Confessor appear on the Bayeux Tapestry (Wilson 1985, pl. 29; Knight 1984b, 370).

Llantwit Major also owned a bell allegedly made by Gildas. It had been carried off in an English raid in the time of king Edgar (AD 943–975) and, though recovered, it suffered a fracture.[15] Three bells were found also on the unenclosed hillside near the church of Cwm (Denbighshire) called 'Cloch Felen y Cwm', 'Cloch Wen Abergele' and 'Cloch Las Llanddulas' (Redknap 1991, 79).

RAIDING AND ROBBERY

Wealth is implied by the accounts of raids on churches. Many of the charters in *Liber Llandavensis* begin with lengthy narrative sections which explain the background and motive for the grant. These narratives often have a formulaic element such as a recurring theme. One theme commonly used revolves around the evil deeds of a Welsh ruler, often against the Church, the Church's censure of his sins, his subsequent repentance, and penance which results in a gift of land (Davies 1996–97, 388). John Reuben Davies has noted the prevalence of accounts which describe conflict with the Church such as acts of violence, theft, and misconduct committed against ecclesiastical buildings and persons, and arguments appear over property, the theft of food-rents and the violation of sanctuary (Davies 1996–97, 388). As noted by several commentators, the selection of the material is biased towards the Church (Davies 1978b, 15; Davies 1996–97, 388–9).

The veracity of the narrations, on which these theories have been based, has been called into question. Sims-Williams is dubious as to whether the *Liber Landavensis* can credibly be used as an indicator of social and economic changes. He asks whether the impression of increasing violence against the Church in the tenth and eleventh centuries is the result of charter writers being more prone to recording it, or perhaps the Church became less tolerant of the violence inflicted against it. He suggests that references which occur in the charters' narrative sections may well have been elaborated and are the result of increasing inventiveness of twelfth-century charter writers.[16]

Kari Maund has argued that the narrations contain repetitive cliché-elements, which she has classified into story-types and suggests that this creates an obvious pattern. She has also concluded that the narrations originate from the twelfth century, as Llandaff, under the leadership of Bishop Urban, adapted to Norman settlement and the increasing pressures from Canterbury and St David's. Maund argues that the narrations do not constitute evidence for the periods before the twelfth century (Maund 1997, 173). As John Reuben Davies states, however, there are other approaches to a discussion of the attacks and plundering of ecclesiastical sites (Davies 1996–97, 391).

The first known reference to conflict involving the Welsh Church is related in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which recorded (more than a century after the event) that about twelve hundred of the monks of the monastery at Bangor Is-coed perished at the hands of the pagan Northumbrian king, Æthelfrith, at the battle of Chester in 616. Bede is our only source for this story, and John Reuben Davies

considers the absence of another reference for the slaughter of the monks remarkable (Davies 1996–97, 395; cf. Colgrave and Mynors 1979, 140–1).

A different type of source is noted by Edward Lhuyd. An inscription at Llanddewibrefi, Ceredigion, records a possible raid on the church as early as the first half of the seventh century, and a likely interpretation is that the stone commemorates a person who was killed while defending the church against attack (Gruffydd and Owen 1956–58; cf. 1996–97, 397; Pryce 1992a, 23; Nash-Williams 1950, no. 116; Edwards 2007, no. CD9). The reading given in the recent Corpus of Inscribed Stones (vol. 2, CD9) is as follows:

(HICIAIETI)DNERTFILIVSIA(COBIQVI)OCCISV(SF)VITPROPTER(PREDAMSANCTIDAVID)
‘Here lies Idnert son of Iacobus who was slain on account of the plundering of St David’

The A-text of the *Annales Cambriae* record that in 645 the region of Dyfed was struck and St David’s was burnt;[17] however, there is no indication as to who carried out the attack (Davies 1996–97, 397). The next contemporary record we have is the *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Jones 1955) which informs us that St David’s was burnt in the year 810.[18] This may have been the work of Vikings in the Irish Sea zone, but Asser also tells us that Hyfaidd ap Bledri (d. 893), king of Dyfed, made many assaults on St David’s in the late ninth century (Davies 1996–97, 397–8; Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 94–6; Stevenson 1904, 65–6).

The accounts of violence against the Church do include many Scandinavian attacks, which are clearly attributed from the mid-ninth century and continued predominately in the tenth century, and throughout the eleventh. This suggests that the churches continued to be a source of wealth to plunder (Davies 1996–97, 397; Pryce 1992a, 25; Davies 1990, 35; Knight 1984b, 367). The raids came mainly from the sea, and focused on the south-western and north-western peninsulas and Anglesey, occasionally going elsewhere (Davies 1990, 50). However, this picture may be biased by a lack of contemporary records from other areas in Wales, since Viking attacks are also illustrated close to the border in areas such as Gloucester and Chester (Hill 1981, 36–41).

St David’s was the only site to have been attacked more than once (although Llanbadarn Fawr was also raided by Gruffudd ap Llywelyn in 1039). Pryce suggests that this may give a misleading impression of damage, and may merely reflect that the *Annales Cambriae* were written at St David’s. The nature of the evidence is very difficult and there are often gaps in the *Annales* (Pryce 1992a, 25; cf. Davies 1990, 50–1). However, if other sites such as Penmon, which were much further away, could have been recorded once, then surely if there had been other raids these would have been recorded too. This implies that St David’s had considerable powers of recovery and possibly substantial resources, although, the short term consequences of the attacks could have proved to be quite debilitating; for instance, two bishops at St David’s were killed due to Viking attack in 999 and 1080 (Pryce 1992a, 25).

Pryce suggests that the paucity of records indicating attacks on Welsh churches (other than St David’s) may be interpreted as evidence of their poverty. Equally those churches situated at a distance from the Irish Sea, such as those of Morgannwg, were less likely to become targets since the raiders usually seem to have operated from Ireland (Pryce 1992a, 25; cf. Davies 1982a, 116–17). However, the use of the islands of the Severn channel by bands of Viking raiders is confirmed by both Welsh and English sources. In 915, a Viking host from Brittany, which had ravaged south Wales and Archenfield, was blockaded on the Holms by Edward the Elder (Knight 1976–78, 32). Within the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Manuscripts B, C and D state the Danes were on ‘Steapan Reolice’ (Steepholm). Manuscript A dates the event to 917 and states they were on ‘Bradan Relice’ (? Flatholm). The Anglo-Saxon names using ‘Reolice’ (‘a monastery, holy place, place where relics are kept’) are also important evidence for the monastic usage of the two islands (Knight 1976–78, 63, note 18).

The brevity of the descriptions also makes it difficult to determine the exact nature of the attacks on Welsh churches. The evidence is usually little more than 'such and such a place was ravaged by so and so' and the identity of the attacker is not always given (Davies 1996–97, 402). Neither are we told much about the motives of the attack. John Reuben Davies (1996–97, 402) asks whether the motives were political, for material gain, or both. Only once is it stated what the Vikings stole in Wales; in 1089 it is recorded in the *Annales Cambriae* that the shrine was stolen from St David's and despoiled of its gold and silver.[19] As mentioned, a Viking raid in Gwent forced the monks of Llancarfan to flee with the shrine of St Cadog in 1022; and a bell reputedly made by Gildas was stolen in an English raid on Llantwit Major (Pryce 1992, 25; cf. Williams 1860, 28–9; Redknap 1991, 79).

The *Vita Sancti Gundleii* (Wade-Evans 1944, 172–92) contains three references to the plundering and robbing of the church of St Gwynllyw. Precious articles which were kept there for safety are reported as stolen,[20] and Ednywain of Gwynedd broke into St Gwynllyw's church and stole the chalice and vestments (Davies 1996–97, 402–3).[21] Food and drink were also reportedly stolen from St Cadog's church on two occasions.[22]

When Morgannwg was ravaged by Eilaf, a thane (*comes*)[23] of king Cnut, in 1022, the monks of Llancarfan fled to the monastery of Mamhilad, near Pontypool in Gwent with the shrine. There they met a party of Eilaf's Vikings and Saxons (*Dacorum* [sic] *atque Anglorum*) one of whom broke off its gilt finial (*pinnaculum*) with an axe (Knight 1976–78, 58; 1984b, 369, cf. Redknap 1991, 79).[24]

From the late ninth century, references illustrate raids by native kings on churches (Davies 1978a, 133; Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 94–6). The exact nature of the resources is not specified; however, they almost certainly included drink and food. References include lay persons devouring the bishop's *conuiuium* (this could be translated as the bishop's food surpluses) (*Liber Landavensis* 237b, 267, 272; Pryce 1992a, 25; Davies 1978a, 133).

However, the evidence from the *Liber Landavensis* is dubious, and other sources must be used to identify attacks on Welsh churches. What is clear from the evidence is that ecclesiastical communities and settlements were significant landowners, and contained repositories of food and other valuable goods. This made them targets for raiders, including foreign and native leaders (Davies 1996–97, 405). Other sources, such as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, also clearly illustrate that Viking attacks affected many other parts of Britain from 789 onwards (Richards 1991, 15–29; Graham-Campbell 1980, 26–30).

A problem of bias should also be recognised. Chroniclers frequently recorded attacks made on churches; however, whether churches were raided more often than secular sites is unknown. Excavation at Llanbedrgoch on Anglesey uncovered evidence of violence, possibly due to foreign raids (Redknap 2000, 72–3), and the Anglo Saxon Chronicle records an attack on Llan-gors crannog (Swanton 2000, 100; Redknap 1991, 24).[25]

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of political and institutional emergence (discussed by Wickham 2005) depended on control of land. Ecclesiastical wealth in early medieval Wales derived primarily from a combination of demesne exploitation and food renders, a consequence of lay and especially royal generosity. It appears that from the eighth and ninth centuries onwards, a small number of Welsh churches were well endowed, having received grants over many generations. However, the question of wealth remains; why is there so little physical evidence today of the other forms of ecclesiastical wealth of pre-Norman Wales? (Pryce 1992a, 30).

A comparison can be made with Iceland which was settled in the ninth century. The economics of both areas in these periods were dominated by agriculture. Consequently economic values would reside

primarily in land, livestock, agricultural produce and tools (Byock 2001, 68; 252). Both areas were peripheral to zones in which precious metals and coinage were made use of as circulating forms of currency, but both Wales and Iceland were close to and in contact with these monetized zones. In comparison with Wales, we should note the limited monetization of the Western parts of England evident before the tenth century.

Both Wales and Iceland had to participate in trade in order to obtain international goods and currency. By implication then both areas were engaged in the production of goods or surpluses sought after by their neighbours. For instance Wales certainly had the capacity to produce fine pieces of metalwork. Examples are found in the workshop debris at Dinas Powys indicating the production of mobile objects for personal adornment such as penannular brooches. Finds of raw materials include glass rods used in the manufacture of *millefori* enamel (Redknap 1991, 29). The evidence of imported pottery and some glass ware (studied particularly by Ewan Campbell, 1991) shows that some trade was going on up to the early eighth century, and that the dispersal of these goods within Wales was done on a redistributive basis (handed out as gifts and rewards by the social elite evident through the relationship between Dinas Powys and Llandough), rather than by simple marketing from trading centres (see also Byock 2001, 67; 263). Both historical and archaeological sources suggest that external trading links were extremely peripheral to Wales in the later early medieval period (although such evidence does exist archaeologically at St Arvan's and Llanbedrgoch, and there are historical references to traders, and ships landing at Uskmouth).

Both medieval Wales and medieval Iceland *had* to become involved with monetized economies to an increasing degree. This was partly the result of what we can call 'imperial' pressures on the areas, and a reaction by which they appropriated the material culture of the external and dominant elite. It was also simply a practical reflex of the general growth of the European market, which amongst other things created a demand for produce that could come from both Wales and Iceland. We really ought to see the high-medieval developments which brought Wales and Iceland into a generalised European economy, even if they were still rather on the fringes, as being the outcome of a continuous process from the Viking period and early Middle Ages.

However, the primary economies of these areas were not merely subsistence economies. Both Welsh and Icelandic societies were socially hierarchical and materially redistributive. Literary sources *constantly* refer to precious items there: these were items that were exceptional, and treasured, but kept in public view and in the public mind, for example the small reliquary shrine found at Llan-gors crannog. Another example being a torque belonging to St Kynauc (Canuc or Cynog) described by Gerald of Wales (*c.* 1180) clasped in the middle with a head like a dog's. They seem to have been circulation, in that we often hear about them when they change hands, but the final stage of circulation is often deliberate destruction, either because an owner sacrifices the object in some way, or because it is seized in an act of conquest. For instance, St Kynauc's torque is thought to have been smelted in Dinefwr (C. Thomas, unpublished typescript). In Iceland, in 870, we hear in Edmund's saga that there were important ecclesiastical objects that had travelled from Ireland to Iceland (Grølie 2006, 4):

> At that time Iceland was covered in woods between the mountains and the sea shore. There were Christians here, whom the Northmen call 'Papar', but they later went away, because they did not wish to stay here with heatherns; and they left behind them Irish books and bells and staffs. From this is could be seen that they were Irishmen.

Because of the nature of the economies, we must not underestimate the symbolic importance of both land and buildings. The attitude to relics in early medieval Wales is consistent with this value system. The raising of inscribed stones can be seen in the same light, as the stones both come from the land and mark

territories. It would also be unwise to judge the architectural simplicity so far evident in early medieval Wales as indicative of poverty (Pryce 1992a, 77). Resources may simply have been invested in the construction of fine timber churches and in their embellishment with wood carving and metalwork surrounded by stone sculpture, an example of which can be seen through the 'temple' in the Book of Kells temptation scene (folio 202).

Few examples of Welsh metalwork and manuscripts survive, and discussions of their stylistic range and affinities have tended to look outside Wales for parallels, often suggesting manufacture beyond its borders (Redknap 2007, 30). There does not appear to be a Welsh stylistic range. Stylistic influences were coming in from Ireland, the Continent and the Anglo-Saxons, therefore it is difficult to recognise Welsh objects, especially if they are no longer in Wales. Early medieval Wales was at least a place to plunder, resulting in objects and books being scattered outside Wales (Davies 1990, 90–1).

Therefore, the modern scholar is faced with a series of alternative views of the wealth of the early medieval Welsh churches. One is that both the Welsh Church and Welsh society in the early Middle Ages were indeed poor compared not only with England but also with Ireland, and the few scraps of metal found that are left are pretty much representative both qualitatively and quantitatively of all there ever was. Another is that the early medieval Welsh church was not as poor as we might think because the material has been systematically lost either by removal from Wales through raiding and looting, or within Wales through the melting down and recycling of precious metals. It is often difficult to distinguish Anglo-Saxon and Irish ecclesiastical art from one another, and the likely stylistic influence of these models on Wales would make the identification of any Welsh items outside of Wales almost impossible for us. The third serious possibility is that both the Welsh society and the Welsh church had such a different economic basis from England and Ireland that we still have to answer the question of what would have counted as wealth in Wales on their terms. Historically, we know that Wales was occupied and organized in the early Middle Ages, and that its society was structured into a series of polities with hierarchies within which power and influence were realities—variously desired, envied or guarded. With those went control of material resources, but it is by no means certain that the relationship between secular society and its power-structures and the early medieval Welsh Church would have resulted in a situation where there was both the capacity and the cultural inclination to invest in the production of fine ecclesiastical wealth. This careful review of the fragmentary but not inconsistent evidence from south-east Wales suggests that all of the above were probably true to some extent, and define a framework within which we might now look to see how the relative influence of each factor may have varied from context to context and from period to period.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## NOTES

1.　　Although the boundaries of Gwynllŵg are shadowy, it is equated with Wentlooge and the area between Cardiff and Newport and its hinterland. The Life of Cadog (*Vita Cadoci* 28) and

Wade-Evans's translation reads (Wade Evans 1944, 90–1): '*Quinimmo priuilegium tibimet istud concedo, quatinus a fonte, qui Brittannice Fennunn han uocatur, id est, a ueteri fonte, donec ad ingressum fluminis Nadauan peruenitur, omnes reges et comites, optimates quoque, tribunos atque domesticos in cenobii tui cimiterio de Lanncaruan sepeliantur.*' ('Moreover I concede to thee this privilege, that from the spring, which in British is called Ffynnon Hen, that is, from the old well, till one is come to the entrance of the river Naddawan, all kings and counts, also nobles, leaders and household inmates be buried in the cemetery of thy monastery of Llancarfan.')

2. *Vita Cadoci* 50, 51, 52 (Wade Evans 1944, 122–3).

3. Similar links between high status ecclesiastical sites and secular sites can be seen at: Coygan Camp, Carmarthenshire, 2.5km from Llansadyrnin church (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 166; Edwards 2007, no. CM 32); Tenby Castle, Pembrokeshire, 2.5km from Penally; Deganwy Castle; Caernarvonshire, 4km from Bodafon (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 83); Aberffraw, Anglesey, 3km from Llangadwaladr (Knight 2006, 19, note 16).

4. *Vita Cadoci* 12 (Wade Evans 1944, 52–3); *Vita Cadoci* 21 (Wade Evans 1944, 66–7); *Vita Cadoci* 8 (Wade Evans 1944, 44–45).

5. *Itinerarium Kambriae* I vii (Dimock 1868, 66): '*insula modica, in Sabrini maris litore sita, quam accolade Barri vocatur; a nomine Sancti Barroci loci eiusdem dum cultoris, sub dicta, cujus et reliquiae in capella ibidem sita, hederae nexibus amlexata in feretrim translatae continentur.*'

6. Although 'precious stones' could fit in this context, gems are more often denoted by the term '*gemma*' (John Hines, pers. comm.).

7. *Vita Paterni* 23–9 (Wade Evans 1944, 262–7).

8. *Vita Sancti Dauid* 65 (James 1967, 168).

9. AD 812 (Jones 1955, 6–7; cf. Morris 1980, 47, 88): *Ac y llosget Deganwy o dan myllt* ('And Degannwy was burnt by fire and lightening').

10. AD 814 (Jones 1955, 6–7; cf. Morris 1980, 47, 88): '*Ac yna y bu daran vawr ac a wnaeth llawer o loscuaeu*' ('And then there was great thunder which caused many fires').

11. Swanton 2002, 247: 'In this same year [AD 1116] all the minster of Peterborough burned, and all the buildings except the chapter-house and the dormitory; and besides, the most part of the town also all burned'.

12. Swanton 2002, 250: 'In the preceding spring [AD 1122] the town of Gloucester burned down. Then when the monks were singing their mass and the deacon had begun the gospel…the fire came in the upper part of the steeple and burned down all the treasures which were inside there except for a few books and three chasubles'.

13. Swanton 2002, 253: 'This same year [AD 1123], before the bishop of Lincoln came to his bishopric, almost the whole town of Lincoln burned down, and such great damage was done there that no-one could describe it to another.'

14. *Vita Cadoci* 27 (Wade Evans 1944, 84–7); *Vita Cadoci* 34, (Wade Evans 1944, 96–7); *Vita Cadoci* 44 (Wade Evans 1944, 114–17).

15. *Vita Iltuti* 19 (Wade Evans 1944, 220–3); *Vita Iltuti* 25 (Wade Evans 1944, 228–33).

16. See review article by P. Sims-Williams of Evans and Rhys's *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, Wendy Davies's *An Early Welsh Microcosm; Studies in the Llandaff Charter* and T*he Llandaff Charters in Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), 124–9.

17. AD 645 (Morris 1980, 48, 86): '*Percussio Demeticae regionis, quando coenobium David incensum est*' ('The hammering of the region of Dyfed, when the monastery of David was burnt').

18. AD 810 (Jones 1955, 6–7; cf. Morris 1980, 47, 88): '*Deg mlyned ac wythcant oed oet Crist pan duawd y lleuat duw Nadolyc. Ac y llosget Mynyw. Ac y bu varwolaeth yr anifeileit ar hyt ynys*

*Brydein.*' ('Eight hundred and ten was the year of Christ when the moon darkened on Christmas day. And Menevia was burnt. And there was a mortality of animals throughout the island of Britain.')

19.   AD 1089 (Jones 1955, 32–3): '*Ac yna y ducpwyt yscrin Dewi yn lledrat o'r eglwys ac* [Peniarth MS. 18.1] *y yspeilwyt ynn llwyr [yn ymyl] y dinas. Ac yna y cryna]wd y dayar ynn diru[awr yn holl Ynys Prydiem]* ('And then the shrine of David was taken by stealth from the church and was completely despoiled near the city. And then the earth quaked mightily throughout the island of Britain.')

20.   *Vita Gundleii* 12 (Wade Evans 1944, 184–5).

21.   *Vita Gundleii* 13 (Wade Evans 1944, 186–7).

22.   *Vita Cadoci* 16 (Wade Evans 1944, 58–9; Vita Cadoci 19 (Wade Evans 1944, 62–3).

23.   Wade-Evans (1944, 111) translates *comes* as 'sheriff'.

24.   *Vita Cadoci* 40 (Wade Evans 1944, 110–13).

25.   AD 916 (Swanton 2000, 100): 'And three days later Æthelflæd sent an army into Wales and broke down Brecon Mere, and there took the wife of the king as one of thirty-four'.


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