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Reading Medieval Wales: David Powel's *Historie of Cambria* (1584) and its readers

Dr Kathryn Hurlock
Manchester Metropolitan University

In 1584, David Powel (1522-98) published the *Historie of Cambria, now called Wales*. This work was the first printed history of Wales, and it was written in English so that it could reach a broad audience. Powel's book was based on a work begun by the Welsh MP, antiquarian, and writer Humphrey Llwyd (*d.* 1568), from the Welsh chronicles and other sources.¹ Powel added to the work from additional sources, such as the unidentified 'records in the Tower' that he was given access to by Lord Burghley. Powel's *Historie* largely followed the work of Llwyd for the history of Wales up to 1282, when Edward I conquered what was left of independent Wales, correcting as and when he saw fit, and then continued it to cover the post-conquest English princes of Wales, and the Tudor kings and queens. In so doing, Powel merged Welsh history into a wider British history so that the two were indivisible by the sixteenth century. The result was one of the most important early modern books on Welsh history, and it remained the standard text (running through several reprints) certainly until the nineteenth century, and arguably until the publication of J. E. Lloyd's *History of Wales* in 1911.² The *Historie of Cambria* forms the focus of this current chapter, which looks firstly at the reasons for the publication of the *Historie* in 1584. It will then consider the readers' responses as written in copies of this work between its publication in 1584 and the end of the seventeenth century. It will consider how readers interpreted the work, and in particular focus on readers with a close association with Wales and their responses to claims about how and why the Welsh should be ruled by the English.³ This is the first time that responses to the earliest printed history of Wales have been analysed, and as such this chapter sheds new light on responses to the history Powel sought to record, and ideas about the impact of the history of Wales on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century perceptions of Wales and the Welsh Marches.

The impetus for Powel's *Historie* came from his patron, Henry Sidney (1529-86), Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales, who was interested in Welsh history and collected many sources relating to it. One of the key themes of the work – rule – was intended by Sidney to show how the unruly Welsh could, and should, be governed by the English. This was a theme close to Sidney's heart, as in his capacity as Lord President, a role he held from 1560 until his death in 1586, the matter of effectively ruling Wales was one which had a particular relevance for him, the Council having judicial powers to exercise crown authority in Wales and the Marches.⁴ Moreover, it flattered Sidney: the Welsh, if well governed, were a peaceful people and, as Wales was largely peaceful in the late sixteenth

¹ Humphrey Llwyd, *Cronica Walliae*, Ieuan M. Williams and J. Beverley Smith (eds.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016).

² J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Norman Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912); Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, "'An account obtained from authentic documents': Jane Williams (Ysgafell) as a Historian", in Neil Evans and Huw Pryce (eds.), *Writing a Small Nation's Past: Wales in Comparative Perspective, 1850-1950* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 83-84.

³ The copies held by Sion College Library and Lambeth Palace Library, for example, show no engagement with, or particular interest in, the subject of the books. Lambeth Palace Library B45.4/L77; Lambeth Palace Library [ZZ] 1584.23.

⁴ Philip Schwyzer, "'A happy place of government': Sir Henry Sidney, Wales, and the *Historie of Cambria* (1584)", *Sidney Journal* 29 (2011), pp. 209-17.

century, Henry Sidney must naturally have been a good ruler.⁵ This latter point was a particularly important one for him to make, as in the years before the work was published his influence over the Council was waning. In part this was because Sidney was often absent from the Council on business in Ireland, but also because he faced strong opposition from other council members like Bishop John Whitgift and Sir James Croft. He was therefore keen to make the point that the fact that the Welsh remained peaceable during these times reflected the strength of his personal control, using it as a ‘poster-child for successful Anglo-British imperialism’.⁶ In the opening description of Wales and the Welsh included in the *Historie* but actually written by Sir John Price (*d.* 1555), secretary of the Council in the Marches from 1540 until his death, Price stated:

there was never anything so beneficial to the common people of Wales as the uniting of that country to the crown and the kingdom of England, whereby not only the malady and hurt of the dissention that often happened between the princes of the country, while they ruled, is now taken away, but also a uniformity of government established.⁷

Another of Sidney’s concerns, and one that no doubt drove his patronage of Powel, was to establish an historical precedent for the authority and remit of the Council in the Marches, as when it had been established to rule over Wales and the March by Edward IV in 1471 on behalf of his infant son, the reach of its influence, in terms of geographical spread and legal organisation, was ill defined.⁸ Sidney sought to establish control of four English counties under his remit – Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Gloucestershire – parts of which were west of the River Severn and could hardly be considered part of the Welsh March, but were within the eastern limit of the Council’s authority as claimed by Sidney.⁹ He had already lost control of Bristol and Cheshire, and Worcester had tried to rebel against the idea of the Council’s control in 1574, so he was keen to show historical precedent for the extent of the Council’s control.¹⁰ In order to bolster Sidney’s position over Wales and the March, the *Historie* also gave him Welsh descent from Gruffydd ap Cynan (*d.* 1137), prince of Gwynedd, in order to cast him in the role of protector of Wales, something for which

⁵ For the state of Wales, see Penry Williams, ‘The Welsh Borderland under Queen Elizabeth’, *Welsh History Review* 1 (1960), pp. 19-36.

⁶ Willy Madley and Philip Schwyzer, ‘The Sidneys and Wales’, in Margaret P. Hannay, Michael G. Brennan, Mary Ellen Lamb (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Sidneys, 1500-1700: volume 1, Lives* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p. 192; Philip Schwyzer, ‘“A happy place of government”: Sir Henry Sidney, Wales, and the *Historie of Cambria* (1584)’, *Sidney Journal* 29 (2011), p. 215.

⁷ Powel, *Historie of Cambria*, preface. Price was a keen collector of monastic manuscripts and in his will, made in 1555, asked his son Richard to publish some of the medieval writers in his library. F. C. Morgan, ‘The Will of Sir John Price of Hereford, 1555’, *National Library of Wales Journal* 9.2 (1955), 255-61.

⁸ Its remit was extended in 1473, but was still unclear. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward IV and Henry VI, 1467-77* (London: H. M. S. O., 1900), pp. 283, 365, 366; Penry Williams, *The Council of the Marches of Wales Under Elizabeth I* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958), p. 27.

⁹ Philip Schwyzer, ‘A map of Greater Cambria’, in Andrew Gordon and Bernard Klein (eds.), *Literature, Mapping and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 35-44. The counties were still struggling to extricate themselves from the authority of the Council in the first decades of the seventeenth century. See R. E. Ham, ‘The Four Shire Controversy’, *Welsh History Review* 8 (1977), pp. 386-99.

¹⁰ Jason Nice, *Sacred History and National Identity: comparisons between early modern Wales and Brittany* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), p. 75; Schwyzer, ‘“A happy place of government”’, p. 215.

Gruffydd was famed as he resisted Anglo-Norman interference in Gwynedd.¹¹ Schwyzer comments:

It is legitimate to speculate that the *History of Cambria* [sic] helped shape the political future, providing an historical underpinning for the Council's jurisdiction in the Marches and thereby contributing to its successful preservation.¹²

As if to underscore the work's aim to be a definitive history of Wales, and thus lend its claims authority, the text was illustrated with wood-cuts depicting the various Welsh princes reused from the 1577 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* which, as the title indicates, did not treat Wales separately.¹³ J. E. Lloyd and Victor Scholderer believed that they were used because it was more economical than creating new images because the publisher had taken over the stock used to print Holinshed's work, but Schwyzer argued that they were chosen to make a deliberate statement. He argues that Powel, and Llwyd before him, was aiming to write a history not just for the Welsh, but for the British, that is all of the people of Britain, and as a result these images were chosen as they 'underwrote the work's claim to the status of national history'.¹⁴ Indeed, the *Historie of Cambria* offered the missing Welsh information from Holinshed's *Chronicles*, thus completing the history of Britain.¹⁵

Grace Jones argues otherwise. She believes that Powel's work contributes to an historical narrative that gives Wales and the Welsh a separate identity from England in the sixteenth century.¹⁶ Rather than demonstrating the Tudor right to rule, and the idea of absorption and continuance, she believes that Powel was resisting Tudor efforts at control; this, of course, would have been in direct opposition to the aim of his patron, Sir Henry Sidney. Sidney's interest in the authority of the Council and history of the Marches was not just confined to this work, as in c. 1570 he also commissioned an armorial roll of eleven of the owners of its seat, Ludlow Castle, down to the time of (and including) Elizabeth I, showing the arms of the President of the Council down to his own time, as well as members of the Council.¹⁷ It was based on a heraldic display which he had previously commissioned for the castle chapel.¹⁸ What Jones' disagreement shows, however, is the ways in which the book could be read in different ways, and its political messages interpreted in order to support conflicting ideas.

¹¹ Nice, *Sacred History*, p. 93; C. P. Lewis, 'Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Normans', in K. L. Maund (ed.) *Gruffudd ap Cynan: A Collaborative Biography* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), pp. 61-78.

¹² Humphrey Llwyd, *The Breviary of Britain*, with selections from the *History of Cambria*, Philip Schwyzer (ed.), (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2011), p. 22.

¹³ R. Holinshed, *The Firste volume of the chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London, 1577)

¹⁴ John Edward Lloyd and Victor Scholderer, 'Powel's "Historie" 1584', *National Library of Wales Journal* 3 (1943), pp. 15-18; Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 40.

¹⁵ Llwyd, *The Breviary of Britain* p. 24.

¹⁶ Grace Jones, 'Early Modern Welsh Nationalism and British History', in Stewart Mottram and Sarah Prescott (eds.), *Writing Wales, from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), p. 22.

¹⁷ I am grateful to Hugh Wood and Richard Hurlock for bringing the Ludlow Castle Heraldic Rolls to my attention when it was acquired by the Mortimer Society, and for sending me images for analysis in advance of its gifting to Ludlow Museum.

¹⁸ Robert Commaunder's 'Book of Heraldry', BL Egerton 2642. Commaunder was chaplain to Sir Henry Sidney.

The *Historie* covered other aspects of Welsh history which supported the political outlook of the Tudor regime. The link between Welsh royal genealogy and that of England's rulers, for example, chimed with what the Tudor monarchs themselves sought to promote: Henry VII's interest in his Welsh ancestry is well documented, and David Powel was aware of the outcome of the king's commission to examine the pedigree of Henry's father Owen Tudor.¹⁹ Powel's work also incorporated an account of the winning of Glamorgan at the end of the eleventh century, written by Sir Edward Stradling (*d.* 1609) of St Donat's, the greatest Welsh bibliophile of the time. It is perhaps not surprising that a damaged copy of the *Historie* survives from the Stradling family library at St Donat's Castle, signed by Thomas Stradling (*d.* 1738).²⁰ Edward Stradling's account was used by sixteenth-century men who wanted to trace their ancestry to Wales, most notably William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who wrote to Edward asking him to provide a pedigree which (erroneously) traced him back to one of the conquerors of Glamorgan.²¹ Associations with Welsh lineage had become fashionable in the sixteenth century as the Tudors claimed descent from the princes of Wales, and men like Lord Burghley were keen to show that they too shared this Welsh heritage. Powel's work was also responsible for disseminating the tale of Prince Madoc's alleged discovery of America in 1170, which had no earlier roots than Llwyd's *Cronica Walliae* of 1559.²² The story gave historical foundation to Welsh rule over territory in America and, since the Tudor kings and queens of England claimed Welsh descent, they could claim to be inheritors of lands in the New World. Indeed, in the same year that Powel's work was published, the English explorer Richard Hakluyt (*d.* 1616) used the story of Madoc to justify the expansion of English interests in New Spain.²³

Powel appears to have had his own motives for agreeing to write the work, one of which was the rehabilitation of the image of the Welsh as portrayed in medieval sources, which he suggested had misled the English in their views of his compatriots. Indeed, he may not have fully appreciated Sidney's 'more pragmatic agendas', believing that he was only interested in Welsh history for its own sake.²⁴ This was part of the wider aims he had in publishing at this time, as in the following year he produced the first printed Latin edition of Gerald of Wales' (*c.* 1146-1223) *Itinerarium Kambriae* and his *Descriptio Kambriae*, editing out the more negative descriptions of the Welsh.²⁵ In doing so he was helping to rectify the injustice identified by Humphrey Llwyd that 'the inhabitants of England, favouring their countrymen and friends, reported not the best of Welshmen'.²⁶ In his account of the lineage

¹⁹ Sidney Anglo, 'The British history in Early Tudor Propaganda, with an appendix of Manuscript Pedigrees of the Kings of England, Henry VI to Henry VIII', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 44 (1961), p. 24.

²⁰ G. Thomas had reconstructed the Stradling library at St Donat's from works known to have belonged to the Stradling family, as the library was broken up and sold after the death of Thomas Stradling in 1738. This copy of the *Historie of Cambria* was not included in his list: G. Thomas, 'The Stradling Library at St Donats, Glamorgan', *National Library of Wales Journal* 24 (1986), pp. 402-19.

²¹ Rice Merrick, *Morganiae archaeographia: a book of the antiquities of Glamorganshire*, Brian Ll. James (ed.), (South Wales Record Society, Volume 1, 1983), p. 150; Peter Roberts, 'Tudor Wales, national identity and the British inheritance', in Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (eds.), *British Consciousness and Identity: the Making of Britain, 1533-1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 27-8.

²² Llwyd, *Chronica Walliae*, p. 168.

²³ Richard Hakluyt, *Discourse on Western Planting, written in the year 1584*, Leonard Woods and Charles Deane, (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1877) p. 118-19; see also Gwyn A. Williams, *Madoc: the Making of a Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 40; Llwyd, *Chronica Walliae*, pp. 167-68.

²⁴ Schwyzer, 'A Happy Place of Government', p. 213.

²⁵ Llwyd, *The Breviary of Britain*, p. 149.

²⁶ Llwyd, *The Breviary of Britain*, p. 70.

of various Welsh princes, he highlighted the strength of Welsh rule and the ability of the Welsh to rule themselves, a claim at odds with Henry Sidney's thinking. Elsewhere though, the *Historie's* discussion of the English treatment of the conquered Welsh arguably provided its sixteenth and seventeenth century readers with 'a model of how the English should deal in Ireland'.²⁷

The idea that Wales had been absorbed successfully by the English state by the seventeenth century was reflected in the lack of the emergence of any political tradition that could be called distinctly Welsh. It can also be seen in the ownership records and surviving marginalia from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in several copies of the *Historie*, most of which were owned by individuals interested in the history of Wales and the Welsh March. The level of annotation and marginalia varies in each one. Most contain comments on Welsh history, genealogy and heraldry; some include large pieces of text taken from medieval chronicles, poems, or laments; one includes a laundry list and another a thirteenth century didactic treatise on philology stitched into the binding; whilst in several the blank armorial shields have been decorated.²⁸ The marginalia in Powel's work are interesting for what they tell us about early modern responses to the version of history he presented. As the comments and marks made in the copies of his book were responding to its contents, and in many cases those copies were intended to be lent out, it can also indicate debates the annotators perhaps wished to stimulate, and the ideas that they either wanted to reinforce or challenge. Writing directly on the text meant, after all, that the ideas of the reader would be permanently associated *with* the text.²⁹ Annotators must have written for someone's benefit – their own (perhaps as a mnemonic enterprise, bringing in information from other texts they owned or borrowed), the author's (even if long dead), or another reader's, so the comments they provide suggest ways in which they wanted others to engage with and understand Powel's words.

If Powel's work was intended to promote the idea of English rule in Wales, then it certainly drew the attention of several readers to the idea. Powel's *Historie* was used by Edmund Spenser as a source for his *Faerie Queene*, and his annotated copy of the book is held by the John Rylands Library in Manchester.³⁰ In Spenser's own work he used the biography of Griffith ap Conan (Gruffydd ap Cynan) 'for the pre-shadowing of the Tudors' similar restoration' of British (that is Welsh) rule prophesied by Merlin.³¹ In addition to using Gruffydd, he utilised the biographies of Rhodri Mawr (*d.* 878), king of Gwynedd, and Hywel Dda (*d.* 948), king of Deheubarth, to 'correspond to three themes which are significant to the British past and his Elizabethan present: defence of Britain, lawmaking, and continuation of the Trojan bloodline'.³²

On the top of the frontispiece of his edition, Jasper Gryffyth (*c.* 1560-1614), a Welsh clergyman and collector of books and manuscripts, wrote in Greek: 'It seems that the goodness of a citizen is in his ability to rule and be ruled well'.³³ In choosing this quote

²⁷ Llwyd, *The Breviary of Britain*, pp. 29-30.

²⁸ The treatise can be found in the copy owned by Jasper Gryffyth, National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW) Peniarth PB4.

²⁹ H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 81, 88.

³⁰ John Rylands' Library, Manchester 6124.

³¹ X. Cong, 'Spencer's Welsh Kings', *Notes & Queries* 65 (2018), p. 36.

³² R. B. Gottfried, 'Spenser and the *Historie of Cambria*', *Modern Language Notes* 72 (1957), pp. 9-10.

³³ I would like to thank Dr Owen Rees for identifying and translating the text for me. Aristotle, *Politics* 3.1277a.

Gryffyth was commenting on two aspects of the *Historie*: that Henry Sidney was a good ruler, and that the Welsh were at their best when they were firmly ruled by the English. The theme of English rule in Wales and the March was commented on by others. In his copy of the *Historie*, William Maurice of Llansilin (c.1619-80), highlighted the opening statement about English rule which had originally been written by Sir John Prise, secretary of the Council, rather than by Powel.³⁴ So too did the annotator of the copy once owned by Thomas, Viscount Bulkeley of Cashel in Co. Tipperary, which perhaps came from the library of his father Richard Bulkeley (1533-1621) of Beaumaris in Anglesey, whose annotations these appear to be. Richard was knighted in 1577 on the eve of his second marriage, and rose through the ranks of the local gentry, acting as constable and mayor of Beaumaris, then MP and High Sheriff for Anglesey. Nia Powell described him as ‘the wealthiest gentleman in north Wales’.³⁵ In 1602, Elizabeth I elevated him to membership of the Council in the Marches, so the arguments of the *Historie* would have been familiar to him. Sir Richard has been portrayed in the past as a champion of Welsh national rights, but the reality is probably that he was a man who served his own interests first and foremost with an eye on his own advancement: this was a man who tried to frame his step-mother for murder, disinherit his own son for marrying a cottager’s daughter, and regularly intimidated juries and witnesses.³⁶ His approach to his compatriots was, if his marginalia is anything to go by, wholly pragmatic. In one passage where Powel justifies English rule of the Welsh, Bulkeley comments that this was ‘by cause [because] they wolde nott be obedyente’, while in another section where Powel asked what right the early Anglo-Norman settlers had to lands in Wales, he argued ‘no more than the Brittaines had’.³⁷ At the end of Powel’s account of native Welsh rule, the same hand observes that rebellions in Wales ‘might have been followed unto the time of H4 [Henry IV] but bycause they were not done by a prince, they wolde not recon hit done by Brittaines’. The Welsh may have tried to rebel, but without united and princely leadership, this was not seen as a ‘Welsh’ rebellion.³⁸

Jasper Gryffyth heavily annotated his copy of the *Historie* in English, Greek, Latin and Welsh, as he did in many other works that he owned or borrowed, and what comes across in both his collecting habits and the annotations he made was that he was interested primarily in Welsh history, Welsh law, and Welsh poetry.³⁹ Ovenden, in his study of Gryffyth, commented that his books must ‘have been carefully read, to judge by his marginalia and underlinings’, and concluded that Gryffyth ‘stands as an example of the rediscovery of both the Celtic past, and of the growing sense of Welsh national identity’.⁴⁰ In his library his copy of Powel’s *Historie* sat alongside a Latin version of the medieval Welsh laws, the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, a Welsh version of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, and transcripts from the mid-fourteenth century *White Book of Rhydderch*, some of the most important works from medieval Wales.⁴¹

³⁴ NLW 4760B, ‘To the Reader’.

³⁵ Nia M. W. Powell, ‘Bulkeley, Sir Richard (c.1540-1621)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3896>, accessed 13 June 2019]

³⁶ Penry Williams, *The Council of the Marches of Wales under Elizabeth I* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958), pp. 239, 309-10.

³⁷ NLW MS19106B, opening address.

³⁸ NLW MS 19016B p. 375.

³⁹ Richard Ovenden, ‘Jasper Gryffyth and his books’, *The British Library Journal* (1994), p. 112.

⁴⁰ Ovenden, ‘Jasper Gryffyth’, pp. 115, 119.

⁴¹ Ovenden, ‘Jasper Gryffyth’, p. 113.

Jasper Gryffyth saved his most detailed comments in the *Historie* for the law. On the passage describing Edward I's time in Wales in the early 1280s, Gryffyth added the comment that 'there was a commission to Thomas bishop of St Davids, Reginald Grey and Walter Hopton to inquire & certified by whom laws and customes they were governed'.⁴² This investigation into Welsh law was aimed at showing that the application of Welsh law was not universal, as Edward's rival Llywelyn ap Gruffydd (*d.* 1282) claimed, and that royal justice and jury justice had both been used in Wales. In ordering the commission, King Edward was trying to show that Welsh law was flawed, and by implication that the Welsh would benefit from English law, and thus English rule.⁴³ This was a sentiment which would have fit Henry Sidney's thinking well. One of the roles of the Council was to apply English law in Wales and the March. The legal jurisdiction of English laws in Wales had a long and disputed history, and even in the early seventeenth century the 'authority and jurisdiction' of the Council was 'not certainly known'.⁴⁴ The idea that the Council provided legal redress for those who wanted it was supported by another reader of Powel's text, the Welsh antiquarian George Owen Harry (*c.* 1553-*c.*1614) from Whitchurch in Pembrokeshire, who used Powel as a source for his own writing.⁴⁵ He was a supporter of the idea of the Council in the Marches and the authority it could provide, commenting that the 'oppressed poor' flocked to have their grievances heard there.⁴⁶ He knew the remit of the Council because he owned a copy of the Queen's instructions to the Lord President of the Council, issued in 1586, and wrote about its role in his study of Pembrokeshire.⁴⁷ In this belief he was in tune with, and may have been influenced by, his patron and namesake, George Owen, who in 1594 wrote a work called the *Dialogue of the Government of Wales* in which he mourned the 'lamentable estate of that poor afflicted nation' before the Tudors came and brought the 'happy reforming' of rule.⁴⁸

The fusion of English and Welsh rule under the Tudors sought precedents in the Welsh past. In John Richardson's copy of the *Historie*, signed by him in 1629, the marginalia accompanying the creation of King Egbert shows an interest in Powel's comment that Egbert threw down 'the brazen image of Cadwalhon king of Brytaine [...] forbidding this land to be called Brytain ane more, but England'. Here the origins of the fusing together of Welsh and English history can easily be seen.⁴⁹ In another copy of the *Historie*, one of three held in Cardiff University's Special Collections, one reader drew attention to the passage describing the reign of Athelstan, and in particular to his entry into Wales with an army where he 'brought the kings of the countrie to subjection' and received a yearly tribute.⁵⁰ In another passage where Powel tells his readers that no Englishman held office under William the Conqueror, and to be called an Englishman then was shameful, someone has written a

⁴² NLW Peniarth PB4, p. 337.

⁴³ R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales, 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 346.

⁴⁴ Owen, *Penbrokeshire* III, p. 23.

⁴⁵ B. G. Charles, *George Owen of Henllys: A Welsh Elizabethan* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales Press, 1973), p. p. 143.

⁴⁶ John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 265.

⁴⁷ NLW, MS 2377; George Owen, *The Description of Penbrokeshire* H. Owen (ed.), vol. III (London: Chas Clark, 1906), pp. 21-4.

⁴⁸ Preface, *The Dialogue of the Government of Wales (1594): Updated Text and Commentary* John Gwynfor Jones (ed.), (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010).

⁴⁹ Chetham's Library U.2.40 pp. 25, 27. The book is also signed by Ambrose Richardson in 1636, and by Richard Lea and David M. (both undated, but probably seventeenth century).

⁵⁰ Cardiff University Library Special Collections, WG 30 (1584) [Vaughan/Collins book], p. 50.

comment warning Englishmen to be ‘ashamed’ of their ‘pride’, presumably a comment aimed at Englishmen who thought themselves superior to the Welsh.⁵¹

In Jasper Gryffyth’s copy of the *Historie* he made notes on heraldry and genealogy. So too did the members of the Bulkeley family (judging from the of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century hands adding to the text), who regularly commented on the Welsh genealogies or traced them in the margins. The interest of these readers in genealogy was part of a wider Welsh curiosity in tracing genealogies in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As the *Historie* was essentially a genealogical list of rulers, it is unsurprising that several readers engaged with it purely because of what it could tell them about genealogical matters. One of the copies held in *Chetham’s Library* belonged to John Richardson, whose name appears on the frontispiece with the date 1629, as well as elsewhere in the text, and later to Ambrose Richardson, whose hand is dated to 1636. They were probably local to Cheshire or Northern Wales, but the annotation in these works suggests that at least one of them was interested in the genealogy of the Gray lordship in Powys.⁵²

In one case, the response to the genealogical material was more pertinent to the contents and aims of the *Historie*. George Owen Harry’s overriding interest in the book, for example, stemmed from his fascination with Welsh history, genealogy, and heraldry. Its genealogical aspects would have aided him in the genealogy he published in 1604 of James I – *The Genealogy of the High and Mighty Monarch, James... with his lineall descent from Noah, by divers direct lynes to Brutus...and from him to Cadwalader, the last king of the British blood; and from thence sundry ways to his Majesty*. This work traced the king’s lineage back to Welsh origins to show the legitimacy of his rule over all of Britain.⁵³ He produced this work informed by Powel’s *Historie*, which he appears to have read in 1584 and again in 1592.⁵⁴ George Owen Harry also challenged Powel’s objection to Edward I’s creation of his son as the first English prince of Wales in an attempt to prompt the then-monarch, James I, to bestow the title on his son Henry.⁵⁵ He also corrected what he thought were genealogical errors which had a bearing on the claim to England’s throne. In the *Historie*, for example, Powel claimed that Llywelyn ap Iorwerth’s legitimate grandson Roger Mortimer (*d.* 1282) was ‘right inheriter [sic] by the order of law’ in preference to his illegitimate grandson, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd (*d.* 1282). George Owen Harry had underlined this text, and written next to it: ‘it is not true as you may see by the pedigree above’.⁵⁶ The pedigree in question suggests that Llywelyn ap Iorwerth had married Llywelyn ap Gruffydd’s grandmother, Tanglwst, making him legitimate. Overleaf, another comment challenges the statement that Roger Mortimer should have inherited the principality of Gwynedd, noting ‘it is very strange that Dr Powel should be soe much mistaken about Llm ap Iorw & his marriages.’⁵⁷ Indeed, the whole emphasis on Powel’s work is on the supremacy of Gwynedd’s power in Welsh history because of the ancestral link to the kings and queens of England, something which William Maurice recognised, warning the reader: ‘Mark how

⁵¹ Cardiff University Library Special Collections, WG 30 (1584) [Vaughan/Collins book], pp. 117, 255.

⁵² Chetham’s Library U.2.40, p. 208.

⁵³ George Owen Harry, *The Genealogy of the High and Mighty Monarch, James, by the Grace of God King of Great Brittain, & c. with his lineall descent from Noah, by divers direct lynes to Brutus, first inhabiter of this Ile of Brittain: and from him to Cadwalader, the last King of the British blood; and from thence, sundry ways to his Majesty* (London, 1604)

⁵⁴ NLW 23278B, p. 402.

⁵⁵ Charles, *George Owen of Henllys*, p. 116.

⁵⁶ NLW 23278B, p. 314.

⁵⁷ NLW 23278B, p. 315.

partially ye translator paraphraseth the text for Northwales & their Superemacie the originall containing no such amplification [sic]', and directs the reader instead to the *Brut y Tywysogyon* which he has copied alongside the printed text as a corrective.⁵⁸

Powel's decision to make the claim regarding Roger's inheritance related to the politics of mid-fifteenth century England, when Roger's descendent Anne Mortimer (*d.* 1411), great-granddaughter of Edward III's son Lionel, duke of Clarence (*d.* 1368), married Richard of Cambridge.⁵⁹ Their son Richard of York (*d.* 1460) inherited the Mortimer claim to the throne of England upon the death of his uncle Edmund Mortimer in 1425, leading to dynastic conflict in the 1450s and the accession of his sons, Edward IV and Richard III, England's only Yorkist kings. Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth of York, married Henry VII, helping to support his rule in England, and was grandmother to Elizabeth I.⁶⁰ Powell claimed that Roger Mortimer had been the real heir of the rulers of Gwynedd because one of their descendants was Elizabeth of York, and through her the Tudors could reinforce their claim to rule over Wales. It is also possible that Powel aimed to justify the English conquest of Wales, as if Llywelyn ap Gruffydd had taken what was rightfully Roger Mortimer's, so Edward I had been right to invade and conquer Wales in the early 1280s. Henry Sidney was clearly keen to highlight the claim which could be made through the Mortimer family, as in 1584 the heraldic roll he commissioned traced this same line of inheritance.

Arguments over the jurisdiction of the Council were observed in relation to the Welsh border by George Owen Harry. In Powel's account the settlement of Welshmen between the rivers Severn and Wye, and the subsequent expulsion of these Welshmen in favour of Saxons by King Offa (*fl.* 709) is recorded for the eighth century. To keep the Welshmen out of this area, Offa then built a 'great and famous ditch', in Powel's words.⁶¹ This was Offa's Dyke, an earthwork stretching from Prestatyn in North Wales to Sedbury near Chepstow, down the eastern border of Wales. Henry Sidney was trying to include the area taken by Offa from the Welsh in the jurisdiction of the Council, so attitudes to the validity of the Dyke as a border are pertinent to ideas about control of Wales. It was clearly seen as a dividing line at this time, as in 1617 when William Vaughan, brother of the then President of the Council in the Marches, founded a colony for Welshmen in Newfoundland he celebrated the idea that this new settlement meant unity: 'I rejoyce', he said, 'that the memorial of Offa's Dyke is extinguished with love and charity'.⁶² That said, in his copy, next to the discussion of the Dyke, George Owen Harry wrote that 'the old bounds seen by this & others was beyond Offa's ditch & that was called the March', thus supporting Sidney's claim to rule a wider swathe of lands.⁶³

Not all of the comments made on Powel's work related to passages justifying English rule over Wales, and at times readers were in tune with Powel's interest in rehabilitating the Welsh. On several occasions, Welsh readers were sympathetic to their historical compatriots,

⁵⁸ NLW NLW 4760B, no pagination. The *Brut* is the Welsh-language chronicle of Wales up to the time of its conquest which Llwyd used as a source base for his original work. *Brut y Tywysogyon: Chronicle of the Princes, Peniarth MS 20 Version* ed. and trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952, repr. 2015).

⁵⁹ P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411-1460* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p. 16.

⁶⁰ For the variant lines descended from Edward III, see Michael Bennett, 'Edward III's entail and the Succession to the Crown, 1376-1471', *English Historical Review* 113 (1998), pp. 580-609.

⁶¹ Powel, *Historie of Cambria*, p. 20

⁶² Gwynfor Evans, *Land of My Fathers*, p. 318.

⁶³ NLW MS 23278B, p. 20. In another copy William Maurice also noted the creation of Offa's Dyke, and Lord Bulkeley commented on it, probably because it was a landscape feature he was aware of. NLW 4760B, p. 5.

no more so than in the work owned by the antiquarian William Maurice of Llansilin. Maurice had a deep interest in Welsh poetry, and transcribed many works of law, history and literature. He had a collection of over 100 manuscripts and read many more – Daniel Huws described him as ‘the best-read Welsh antiquary of his generation’.⁶⁴ He highlighted where Powel complained that medieval writers ‘wrote everything to their [the Welsh] discredit, injury and wrong’.⁶⁵ Later in the text in a discussion of King Arthur, Powel criticised the writing of Polydore Vergil and William Paruus and complained of their ‘cankered minds’, next to which Maurice wrote ‘The Anti. Brittanical. Hist. whipped’.⁶⁶ Though William Maurice could see the need for strong rule in Wales, he defended Welsh history and interests, highlighting how the Welsh had been capable of their own good governance in 1020/22 when there was ‘Prosperitie & Tranquility in Wales’, and inserted several extracts from Welsh-language and Latin chronicles and other works on the history of the conquest, highlighting again where Llywelyn ap Iorwerth had ‘banished all the English’.⁶⁷ After this Powel concluded his section on the native rulers of Wales with the comment ‘thus endeth the Histories of the Brytish’, Maurice wrote ‘*Tantae molis erat Gentem delere (or fraenare) Britannum*’ – so vast was the task to curb the nation of Britain, echoing the famous line for the Aeneid and the Roman race.⁶⁸

George Owen Harry’s interest in heraldry included painting an armorial achievement for his patron in 1586, and producing a Pembrokeshire armorial in 1602, one of the first in Wales.⁶⁹ He was also specifically interested in proving his descent from the first Norman lords of Cemais, a motive which drove his interest in Pembrokeshire genealogy.⁷⁰ In his copy of the *Historie* he added in heraldry for various figures, some in colour in the block-printed images, others drawn in the margins. This addition of heraldry, real or imagined, was quite a popular habit in copies of Powel’s work, as in Jasper Gryffyth’s copy and the copy owned first by Thomas Chaloner and then Randle Holme, a copy which both men autographed⁷¹ Thomas Chaloner of Chester (*d.* 1598) was a painter, poet, and antiquary who was a deputy of the College of Arms for several years. His apprentice from 1587 was Randle Holme I (*d.* 1655), who became his Deputy Herald in 1606, and later married Chaloner’s widow, taking over his business as a herald-painter and genealogist.⁷² In addition to their names, this copy also has the signature of Francis Bassano, who bought the business after the death of the

⁶⁴ Daniel Huws, ‘Maurice, William (1619/20-1680)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18388>, accessed 13 June 2019].

⁶⁵ NLW 4760B, opening pages.

⁶⁶ NLW 4760B, p. 239.

⁶⁷ NLW 4760B, pp. 84, 279.

⁶⁸ NLW 4760B, p. 375: ‘*Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*’ (It was such a massive task to establish the Roman race). Vergil, *Aeneid*, I. 33.

⁶⁹ E. D. Jones, ‘George Owen Harry (*c.* 1553-1614)’, *The Pembrokeshire Historian: Journal of the Pembrokeshire Local History Society* 6 (1979), 72-3; Chetham’s Library Manuscripts/1/453, Short Pedigrees of noblemen, knights, esquires, gentlemen and women of Pembrokeshire 1592-1612. Printed in Edward Laws, *The History of Little England Beyond Wales and the Non-Kymric colony settled in Pembrokeshire* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), pp. 423-46.

⁷⁰ Francis Jones, ‘An Approach to Welsh Genealogy’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion* (1948-49), p. 379.

⁷¹ NLW Peniarth PB4, pp. 7, 14, 17, 24, 28, 46, 59, 67, 72, 103, 112, 115, 120, 227, 246, 314, 335, 376, 384-5, 388-90, 392-4. Cardiff University Library Special Collections WG30 (1584) [Salisbury Library Copy]. This volume came from the library of Enoch Robert Gibbon Salisbury (1819-1890), which formed the core of the University Library; Bodleian Library, Buxton 132.

⁷² J. P. Earwaker (ed.), ‘The Four Randle Holmes of Chester, Antiquaries, Heralds and Genealogists’, *Journal of the Chester Archaeological and Historic Society* NS, 4, (1890/1), p. 115.

fourth Randle Holme in 1707.⁷³ In their copy various coats of arms have been coloured to reflect arms attributed in works like *Heraldry and Chivalry* (1795) to the individuals in question, though in reality these were later inventions. For example, the azure and cross of Cadwaldr (which also appears for the arms of Esylht ferch Conan and quartered for Rhodri Mawr, Esylht's grandson), the three lions of Gruffydd ap Cynan used by members of this line, and the arms of the three thirteenth-century princes of Gwynedd based on the royal arms of England.⁷⁴

The *Historie of Cambria* went through several reprints over the following centuries, but with the end of the Council in the Marches in 1689 a lot of its political message was lost. As a foundational history for defining the medieval Welsh past it had a long – perhaps too long – reach, and was modified from time to time to enhance the arguments put forward in 1584. Its effectiveness in making the arguments sought by Henry Sidney is another matter. Did those who read the *Historie of Cambria* agree with the idea that Wales was better off ruled by the English via the Council in the Marches? Did it make the case that the English monarchy had a claim through descent to rule in Wales, or that the authority of the Council should extend over the four disputed counties? Did Powel succeed in rehabilitating the reputation of the Welsh? Henry Sidney's tenure as President ended with his death in 1586, never having achieved what he felt was due recognition for his efforts in administering law 'cheaply and rapidly' in Wales and governing Ireland on behalf of the queen.⁷⁵

Whether Sir Henry Sidney or David Powel achieved their aims depended largely on who was reading the text, and in this the *Historie's* readers fell into three clear categories. Several readers took a genuine interest in the work for its contemporary political message. Jasper Gruffyth commented at the very start of his copy on the importance of good rule and a willingness to be ruled in his definition in a good citizen. He quoted Aristotle's *Politics*, and seemed to appreciate the role of the Council in the Welsh Marches in trying to give access to, and to deliver, justice. He also highlighted the inconsistencies in Welsh law and its application under native Welsh rule. George Owen Harry supported the legitimacy of English rule in Wales, and took an interest in the genealogical aspects of the work, in part because of their relevance to the Tudor, and then Stuart, claim to rule in Wales. This can be seen in his comments on the descent and claim of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, and no doubt fed in to his later work on James I. Sir Richard Bulkeley was of a similar mind, no doubt because though he was a Welshman, the authority he gained from his appointment by Elizabeth I to a range of roles in Anglesey and the Marches gave him almost free rein to abuse as he pleased. It was the argument that the Welsh needed to be controlled by strong English rulers which caught his attention, perhaps because (as his comment on the lack of princely leaders for rebellions against the English suggests) he felt that the Welsh lacked native leadership of any merit.

Several readers read and used Powel's work for the genealogical information it recorded, sometimes in only a very specific context such as with the interest shown in the earls of Chester in the edition held by John Rylands, or in the descent of the Gray family.

⁷³ David Mills, *Recycling the Cycle: the City of Chester and Its Whitsun Plays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 195;

⁷⁴ *Heraldry and Chivalry* (Worcester: Holl and Brandish, 1795), p. 61; J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffydd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), pp. 274, 494; Huw Pryce, 'Welsh Rulers and European Change', in *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies* ed. Huw Pryce and John Watts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 40.

⁷⁵ Davies, *History of Wales*, p. 265.

This is hardly surprising given the flourishing of interest in Welsh genealogy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Fewer readers engaged directly with aspects of the text rehabilitating the Welsh character, or defending them. William Maurice was one who did, showing that he both understood the Welsh had been unfairly denigrated in the past, and that the glory of figures like King Arthur had been denied or appropriated by the English. He appears to have been suspicious of the way in which Powel used his source material, particularly in relation to glorifying Gwynedd's princes, and spent considerable time annotating page after page of this copy with extracts from the *Brut*. His commentary comes across as the most pro-Welsh, and his final comment on the loss of Welsh independence read like a lament that it took so much to conquer the nation of his birth.

Henry Sidney's greatest impact on the reading of medieval Wales was in the commissioning of the *Historie of Cambria*. His intended messages may not have had much effect, but the work itself was enduringly popular, being revised by William Wynne in 1697, and then printed again in 1811 and 1832. The mixed reading of Powel's *Historie*, particularly among the Welsh, no doubt came from the conflict between the aims of Powel and Sidney, as it is a sometimes conflicted work and was arguably, in the words of Highley, 'a dissident account of English state-building on the margins of the nation'.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Christopher Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 71-76.