

CORRIGENDA

For what stands before the bracket read what stands after it.

Page 3, line 31. Ethelredian] Ethelredan

Page 4, note 3. note 15 below] note 1, p.14 below

Page 15, line 19. Urness] Urnes

Page 23, line 3. upper and lower case] upper-and-lower case

End-paper, Map 2. ANGLESEY] Anglesey

MILFORD] Milford

THE VIKINGS IN WALES

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THE VIKINGS IN WALES

FIRST I WISH TO THANK THE PROVOST OF UNIVERSITY College London and the College Committee for their kind invitation to deliver the Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture. I am deeply conscious of the honour they have done me.

My chosen title is 'The Vikings in Wales', a general title but one that gives opportunity to discuss two problems that haunt all of us interested in Scandinavian expansion in the early Middle Ages: the problem of chronology and the deeper problem of the existence or nature of settlement. These matters are never easy, though palpably easier in some areas than in others. Wales lies probably in the middle range of difficulty, straightforward in some respects, very difficult and obscure indeed in others. We are freed from one common worry. There is no absence of material, not even a grave shortage given the limitations of the period. A native chronicle tradition is preserved by the mid-tenth century in the form of the St David's *Annales Cambriae*, and helps to give a reasonable written outline of activities. Lives of saints preserve some valuable material. From outside Wales the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Irish annals, and—at a later period—the whole mainstream of Anglo-Norman historiographical writing show spasmodic but energetic interest in Welsh affairs. The *Life of Gruffydd ap Cynan* stands alone and is unique in importance for the insight it gives into affairs in Wales and Ireland in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Later, the Norse writers of sagas often showed great interest in and knowledge of Welsh affairs, though not all references to *Bretland* can be taken as authentic, nor indeed necessarily as always signifying Wales. It is true that no contemporary historian or chronicler made it his business to shape a coherent story out of narrative events after the fashion of the Alfredian or Ethelredian chronicler in England, and in itself this lack may be significant. There was no dramatic crisis and confrontation powerful enough to prompt such literary effort, only a set of nagging and troublesome incidents, coupled with a lot of dull plodding routine both in peace and in war, along the seaways of the West.

For modern secondary writings we have much to rely on, certainly from the days of Sir John Lloyd. The fundamental studies of Dr B. G. Charles in the 1930s (and later) have cleared much antiquarian lumber from the scene and give us the basic place-name framework without which modern investigation would be impossible.¹ Dr Nash Williams in 1950 performed a similar task for one important segment of archaeological evidence in his *Early Christian Monuments of Wales*.² A further overlapping generation of scholars are making their contributions, Mr Blunt, Professor Dolley, and their fellow-workers to the numismatic scene,³ an active group centred around the International Congress of Celtic Scholars to the literary, linguistic, and historical scene.⁴ At an important meeting of that Congress in 1959 the groundwork was laid for a modern synthesis. The late Professor Melville Richards sharpened our knowledge of place-names and talked of Norse trading stations in Wales. Professor Kenneth Jackson discussed a Scandinavian occupation that constituted in the south something more lasting than Viking summer bases, and Professor Binchy commented on the curious modernisation and flexibility of tenth-century Welsh legal institutions, a direct product in a subtle way of Scandinavian pressures which forced an accord on the Welsh and the English.

Already in the proceedings of the 1959 Congress some of the main difficulties begin to appear. The sheer variety of disciplines at work and of types of evidence inevitably breeds some obscurity and leads to some loss of precision in time. It is only slowly that through all the perplexities that surround the question of the Viking presence in Wales a firmer chronological pattern is beginning to emerge.

If we take the first Viking Age as lasting from about A.D. 800 to about 950, the picture is relatively clear. There were spasmodic, sporadic attacks on the north and on the south of Wales as the Vikings established themselves in Ireland (from the 830s), in the

¹ B. G. Charles, *Old Norse Relations with Wales* (1934), and *Non-Celtic Place-Names in Wales* (1938).

² V. E. Nash Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (1950).

³ See, for example, the works cited in note 15 below.

⁴ *Proceedings of the International Congress of Celtic Studies*, July 1959 (1962).

Sudreys and Man (certainly from the 850s), in the Wirral (in the early years of the tenth century), and generally throughout north-west England in the first half of the tenth century. These attacks were sporadic and if a single term has to be found to describe them, 'backwash' is the term that I would use. The main Scandinavian efforts were not directed against Wales. Attacks tended to be incidental and were often delivered on recoil. It seems unlikely that, with possible exceptions in Pembrokeshire, any serious secondary effort was launched against Wales. There are obvious reasons why this should be so. Scandinavian resources were limited. Their most prominent political skills were exercised in two principal directions, the taking-in of new land either with little human opposition or after securing firm political control, and the establishing of fortified markets. Wales was not particularly amenable to such efforts, and Wales came substantially at the end of the long colonising trek down the western shores of Britain. What is more, Scandinavian aggressors had met early on sharp and successful resistance from the Welsh. In A.D. 855 the Welsh prince, Rhodri Mawr, defeated and killed the Danish leader, Gorm. Rhodri's own reign, after a defeat at the hands of the Danes in Anglesey, ended in disaster, but his successors eventually cooperated with the West Saxons and benefited from English victory. In the great crisis of 878 Ealdorman Odda's victory at Countisbury Hill was, as Asser tells us, against a Viking force which had wintered in Pembrokeshire after they had made there a huge slaughter of Christian peoples. The boundary along Watling Street and the River Lea was as important for the Welsh as for the English. The Scandinavians were contained. The disaster at Dublin in 902 fits as neatly into this scheme as the defeat of the great horde by Alfred in 896.

In the first half of the tenth century circumstances were different. Hywel Dda continued and intensified the policy of active co-operation with the House of Wessex. His subscriptions to charters of Athelstan and Eadred, from 928 to 949, consistently at the head of the list of Welsh princes who witnessed the land-grants, and his reputation as a lawgiver are symbols of the basic political conditions. If the coin commonly attributed to him, struck by Gillys, a moneyer of apparent Hiberno-Norse name and Chester

connections, was indeed his, it contributes another pointer in the same direction, but the attribution is no longer certain and secure. Another element brought hope of peaceful conditions to the Welsh. The Scandinavians themselves were busy elsewhere. They were not idle in Normandy and the Danelaw. Above all in importance for the Welsh story this was the time for the completion of the settlement in north-west England. It was now that the link between Dublin, Man, and York was securely forged. The forty years' rest enjoyed by Ireland from 873 to 913 was over, and was succeeded from the Welsh point of view by their own forty years of rest, the reign of Hywel Dda, when there was a definite lull in Scandinavian raids on Welsh territory, 914-954, a virtual blank in the written record.

The second Viking Age, from about 950 to the late eleventh century, was not quite so straightforward for Wales. After the expulsion of Eirik Bloodaxe at York in 954 there came a renewal of attack. Edgar's peace, for all the ceremonial rowing on the Dee, did not extend consistently to Wales and after Edgar's death Wales suffered severely. From 961 to the end of the century there are numerous references to raids on religious centres—Holyhead, Anglesey, Towyn, Anglesey again, Clynnog Fawr, St David's. Both Anglesey and St Davids, especially the latter, suffered heavily from ravaging in 999¹, and in 989 Maredudd ab Owain is said to have redeemed captive Welshmen from slavery at a penny a head. Again there appears to have been some relief, some lull at least after 1014 until the 1040s and the reign of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn (1039-1063)—significantly perhaps one of the few prominent Welsh kings to extend his rule convincingly over the eastern reaches of the Bristol Channel, over Morgannwg and Gwent. Heavily attested Scandinavian presence in the Severn Sea then re-appears but is different in nature, closely associated with political happenings that fade into the Norman Conquest and especially with the fortunes of the House of Godwin. This is all part of a complicated story of the securing of the Severn estuary and effective control of the Wye from Hereford to Chepstow by the English king and his earls, a story in which Harold Godwinsson himself played the decisive part. After the quarrel of Godwin and

¹ *Annales Cambriae*, ed. J. W. ab Ithel (Rolls Series, 1860), 19-22.

his sons with Edward the Confessor and the subsequent encounter at Beverstone in 1051, it was from Bristol that Harold and Leofwine made their escape to Ireland, in a ship which their elder brother Sweyn had made ready for himself. And again after Hastings it was to the Severn Sea that Gytha, Harold's mother, travelled—accompanied by many good men's wives—to the safety of Flat Holm (still *Bradán Relice* in the Chronicle) on her way to refuge at St Omer.¹

The Norman Conquest itself brought agitation rather than peace to the shores of Wales both south and north, and Scandinavians played a fair part in the agitation. St David's was ravaged in 1080 and the following generations experienced a last stage in the Welsh-Scandinavian saga that perhaps even now has been inadequately explored. The North Welsh king, Gruffydd ap Cynan (1055-1137—king sporadically in Gwynedd and continuously from 1109 to 1137) was at the centre of the stage. Norse and Hiberno-Norse fleets were prominent in Welsh politics. The Norwegian king, Magnus Bareleg himself, on his 1098 expedition to Anglesey, brought Scandinavia briefly to the heart of English politics, and it was the *Life of Gruffydd ap Cynan* which told how Earl Hugh of Shrewsbury and Robert of Rhuddlan were killed, Hugh by Magnus himself. The Norwegians fought valiantly against the Normans, 'and the French fell from their horses like fruit from their branches'.² Many see sheer poetry in this dramatic confrontation of the Northern and the feudal world.

It may truly be said that the chronology begins to shape. The Welsh coasts, the Welsh rivers, the Welsh churches, the Welsh islands, were subject to attack and ravaging as were the other coasts of Britain: and the Welsh experiences were long and prolonged over three centuries. The sub-periods, too, begin to sort themselves out. From the mid-ninth century to 914 was a period of raids with a record of overwintering in bases in Pembrokeshire in the crisis of the Alfredian wars. In 914 a great naval force, led by the earls Hroald and Ohtor came north from Brittany. They ravaged freely along the Welsh coast, captured Cyfeiliog, bishop of Llandaff, described as bishop of Archenfield,

¹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. D. Whitelock (1961), 148, s.a. 1067.

² *The History of Gruffydd ap Cynan*, ed. A. Jones (1910), 146-7.

and received £40 ransom for him, significantly from Edward the Elder. Attempts to ravage deep into the English countryside failed and so did a raid inland towards Archenfield: the men from Gloucester and Hereford and the nearest boroughs met the raiding party and put it to flight. The Chronicle entry which tells us in great detail of the lack of success of this giant raid pays tribute, possibly conscious tribute, to the success of the burghal policy of Alfred and his son Edward. Hroald's raid closed a first phase, a sub-period as it were, in the Viking story. As far as Wales was concerned the raiding heyday reached its climax in 914 and was followed by a lull until the mid-tenth century. Raids again became the order of the day, at times with a savage intensity, in the second half of the tenth century and in some measure until the end of the Ethelredan wars in 1014-15. With the Scandinavian dynasty of Cnut and his sons (1016-42) there was another curious lull in the record of raiding. In the reign of Edward the Confessor Welsh affairs merged into the background to the Norman Conquest, but from 1080 to 1160 Wales, and particularly North Wales, was brought into close contact with the Irish-Scandinavian world as part of an involved political, commercial, and military set-up with a central point of interest at Dublin.

The basic chronological pattern is therefore becoming clear and capable of more refinement. What of the settlement pattern? The first promising body of information is to be found in the place-names which seem to offer material that is capable of interpretation in terms of human institutions. What do they amount to on the Welsh scene? The most lively situation is disclosed on the South Welsh coast. Many small islands bear unmistakable Scandinavian names: Ramsey, Emsger, Skomer, Skokholm, Grassholm, Midland and Gateholm in a heavy concentration off the west coast of Pembrokeshire. Caldy takes us to the south coast—with a sidelong glance towards Lundy—and so into the Bristol Channel. A scatter of headland and small islet names urges us deeper into the Channel between Cardiff and Weston to Flat Holm and Steep Holm, which were still good West-Saxon *Bradán Relice* and *Steapan Relice* to the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers from the early tenth century to a period after the Norman Conquest. From the sea many of the salient points on the north shores of the Bristol

Channel received their permanent names from men who knew a Scandinavian tongue. Scandinavian influence is certain or likely also at many settlement sites on or near the coast, and indeed at one or two places deep inland in Pembrokeshire (as far as one can get deep inland in Pembrokeshire): Goultrop, Hasguard, Steynton, the Skers and Stacks, Yerboston, Haroldston, Colby and Scollock, and most impressive of all, Milford and Fishguard themselves. They add colour to the place-name map of Pembrokeshire, and are not exclusively within what we have come to regard as the natural linguistic division, the 'landsker' between the Welsh and the English, roughly stamped across the shire by the line of castles from Roch to Wiston, to Llawhaden and Narberth, astonishingly persistent and consistent back to the eleventh- and twelfth-century Anglo-Flemish world. Scandinavian names in South Wales are not confined to Pembrokeshire. Further east, in Gower and Morgannwg, we find Burry Holm, Sker and Tusker. In Cardiff itself there is the street-name Womanby (Hundmanby) and in the hinterland Lamby and Hornby. Over all this territory we tread with care in form and in time. Hubberton near Angle in Pembrokeshire may well be what it appears to be—Hubba's *tūn*; Hubberston is not—early forms show it to be Hubert's *tūn*. Worm's Head could be Scandinavian, but is just as likely to be West Saxon. Flat Holm and Steep Holm are authentic, but not *Caer þyfi* for Cardiff, or *Wedalr* for Wedal.¹ We have suffered much in the past from the myth of the respectability of Scandinavian ancestry. Yet, even when the proper critical approach has removed many of the possible Scandinavian names, the overall effect is impressive. Scandinavian seamen were active in the Bristol Channel. They made a strong enough impression to leave their names on most of the principal navigation points on the north shore of the Channel, and it is probable that they were the first to open up the trade route from Ireland deep into the Severn estuary to regular and continuous port-to-port navigation. The

¹ Melville Richards, 'Norse Place-Names in Wales', *Proceedings of the International Congress of Celtic Studies* (1962), 58-9, makes the important point that the Scandinavian place-names in Wales 'have no phonological or semantic relation whatsoever with the Welsh names which they have in some cases supplanted'. This is in marked contrast to many English or Anglicised forms.

timing of the enterprise remains a problem. When did they do so? Was it the Vikings of the first Viking Age, or the Irish-Scandinavian Ostmen of Dublin as late as the twelfth century in Cardiff, Swansea, Milford, Haverford and the islands?

In North Wales a similar puzzling place-name structure faces us, though the evidence is more scanty. The one outstanding place-name is Anglesey, the southern of the two Menevian islands whose fortunes however were not linked as closely as might be with its partner the Isle of Man. The twelfth century thought of it as the isle of the English, but at some significant point of time the Scandinavian sailors knew it as 'Ōngul's isle'. Anglesey is special but the other forms are very much a mirror of the situation in the south: Bardsey through Piscar, the Skerries, Priestholm and Orme's Head, a similar concentration on navigation points bringing in Scandinavian forms to English nomenclature, though not of course to Welsh. The name becomes Bardsey not Ynys Enlli, Anglesey not Môn Mam Cymru, Orme's Head not Pen y Gogarth or Cyngreawdr Fynydd. For settlement there is little more than a cluster in Flint at places such as Kelston, Axton, or possibly Linacre, though across the Dee in the Wirral and Lancashire is another and very different story. The agitated movements of the armies in the 890s in the direction of Chester, the exploits of Ingemund on the Clwyd in 903, the refortification of Chester and the subsequent building of more *burhs* to protect the north-west tell us of Scandinavian influence and pressure on North-east Wales as well as on Mercia. With the presence of Scandinavians continuous, the Isle of Man in easy sailing distance and the route to Dublin fully open, the North Wales coastline was thoroughly familiar to Scandinavians throughout the Viking period. There were ugly incidents. We have probably underestimated the devastation of Cheshire in 980 by a northern naval force. As far as Wales is concerned, for topographical as well as for political reasons there was less likelihood of settlement in the North than in the South—except for Anglesey. The link with Chester and the north-west of England seems the key factor in accounting for Scandinavian elements in North Welsh place-names, especially the link from Dublin to Chester.

Place-names take us some way towards a reasonable discussion

of the problem of settlement. The Pembrokeshire evidence is the most puzzling and potentially the most constructive. Do other sources help us at all in the search for some trace of serious settlement?

The literary evidence, which has to be handled critically and with great care, comes principally from the sagas and from Lives of Welsh saints. The best known—certainly to this audience—is the ‘Bretland’ element in the saga of the Jómsvikings.¹ The central interest in the saga, put down in polished form about A.D. 1200, concerns the foundation of a Viking settlement in the Baltic, the training of the Viking crews, their attitudes to death and to suffering. An important element in the plot—not a mere episode or series of episodes but something of the texture of the story itself—is the Welsh interest. Pálna-Tóki went raiding to Bretland intending to ravage Earl Stefnir’s lands. Instead he married Stefnir’s wise and handsome daughter Álof. He was created earl. He was given half the kingdom and offered reversion of the other half. He came into contact with Bjørn *hinn brezki*, Bjørn the Welshman. And when Pálna-Tóki and Álof went back to Fyn in spring Bjørn was left in charge of their interests. A generation later, after the succession of his fosterson Sveinn Forkbeard (in the 980s), Pálna-Tóki returned to Bretland. He made a dramatic reintervention in Danish affairs, killed the old king secretly, and was forced back to Bretland again where his wife Álof now died. We are then told that he was no longer content to stay in Bretland, that he put Bjørn in charge there, made ready thirty ships and went raiding. He harried around Scotland and Ireland, and the Welsh interest recurs. On his deathbed Pálna-Tóki commended half of Bretland to his young kinsman Vagn, to share with Bjørn. In the fearsome beheading scene, the climax of the saga, Bjørn, now an old man with white hair, saves Vagn’s life and makes the accord that redeems the rest of the Jómsvikings; and Bjørn himself went home to Bretland and ruled there while he lived and was reckoned a mighty warrior.

Now, the saga of the Jómsvikings needs delicate handling. It has taken two solid generations from Lauritz Weibull’s massive

¹ *The Saga of the Jomsvikings*, ed. N. F. Blake (1962).

onslaught to make it even fringe-respectable.¹ The possibility exists, strong and not to be avoided, that to the saga-writer Bretland was a convenient device, a distant land about which not too much was known, and from which could be garnered the essential ingredients of wife, treasure, prospects, inheritance, and—most vital of all—faithful and wily ally and continuity man in the person of Björn. In a sense Bretland is Bohemia or Camelot to the late twelfth-century saga writer. Other sagas, notably *Njála* and *Orkneyinga Saga*, tell of the familiarity of the Norsemen with Wales and the Welsh coast. Such is commonplace. It would betray staggering ignorance on their part if they were not. Doubts persist and should not be denied when we comment on *Jómsvíkinga Saga*. Yet it may not be without interest that in the reign of Henry II or Richard I, long after the Norman Conquest, Scandinavian writers could find it useful to postulate the existence of an established Scandinavian colony in Wales some time in the early or mid-tenth century.

From the Welsh side, alas, the most interesting literary evidence does not tell of settlement, merely of activity, and it is late, clustering into the second half of the eleventh century. Gruffydd ap Llywelyn's charter in the *Liber Landavensis* extols the bravery of Gruffydd against the barbarous English and the western Irish, against the native inhabitants of the country and the Danish seamen, and against the inhabitants of the Orkney islands.² The best continuous account of a Viking raid comes a generation later from *The Life of St Gwynllyw* which tells of a Viking expedition from the Northern Isles, led by the North Welsh king, Gruffydd ap Cynan, in the reign of William, the old king of England.³ The attack was made on modern Newport way up the Severn estuary. The church of St Woolos was despoiled. The raiders returned rejoicing to Barry Island, not reckoning with the supernatural

¹ For recent discussion see *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 5 (1972), where there is full comment on the work of Lauritz Weibull.

² *Liber Landavensis*, ed. W. J. Rees (1840), 258 and 540: *contra barbaros Anglos . . . contra Hibernienses occidentales . . . contra indigenas bellicosos . . . contra Danos marinos, tum contra insularum Orcadum habitatores*.

³ *Lives of the Cambro-British Saints*, ed. W. J. Rees (1854), 458-60. Also B. G. Charles, *Old Norse Relations with Wales* (1934), 26-8.

proWess of St Gwynllyw who appeared in the guise of a terrible horseman; a furious gale sprang up which shattered navigation instruments and brought utter disaster. King Gruffydd who had only been present and who did not pillage was one of the lucky survivors. His own *Vita*, an important source for Scandinavian contacts, as we have already seen, takes us full into the Irish-Scandinavian Celtic Sea world of the twelfth century. This was a world already well accustomed to the trader and rudimentary commerce, a world where, as the *Vita* tells us, disputes over tolls and dues at harbours were commonplace. Extra point and piquancy were given to the stories of St Gwynllyw and Gruffydd and South Wales by the discovery during the excavations for Alexandra Dock at Newport in 1878 of a vessel which may have been a Viking ship. It was found about twelve feet below the surface, between the mouths of the Usk and the Ebbw, was reckoned to have been about 70 feet long initially, clinker-built, no pitch, of Dantzic oak. Gokstad was hot news fresh in men's minds when the discovery was made and reported, but the place was right.¹

Literary sources confirm raiding and trading in the Severn Sea. They do not help greatly with problems of settlement. There are some odd survivals in the sub-literary field, possible Scandinavian names in Carmarthenshire genealogies, early records of Brycheiniog that jumble up folk-memories of Irish invasions of the fourth and fifth centuries with hints of Viking presence in the tenth and eleventh, reference in the *Mabinogion* and the triads.² It is all elusive.

Only from coinage and stone sculpture do we begin to get a little hard evidence. Coinage provides useful insight into the life of many medieval communities, but from Wales specific coin evidence helps only a little. Hywel's experimental coin, if experiment it was, and indeed if Hywel Dda's it was, remains on present evidence isolated. As far as we can see, the Welsh did not strike coins during the Viking Age. Coin hoards and isolated finds are a

¹ Octavius Morgan 'Ancient Danish Vessel discovered at the Mouth of the Usk', *Monmouthshire and Caerleon Antiquarian Association* (1882), 23-6.

² B. G. Charles, *Old Norse Relations with Wales* (1934), 78-88; G. P. Jones, 'The Scandinavian Settlement in Ystrad Tywi', *Y Cymmrodor* (1925), 117-56, and 'Brychan', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (1926), 363-76.

different matter. Both Professor Dolley and Mr Blunt have helped to clarify the position over recent years, and other scholars such as Miss Pirie and Mr Jeremy Knight have also contributed.¹ The distribution of both hoards and coins is, as one might expect, solidly littoral. No Viking Age coin has yet been found in Wales far from the coast. The sorry remnants of the hoard from Laugharne churchyard are enough to suggest, as Professor Dolley points out, a deposited gift of Edgar's last coinage—Reform Type—possibly presented to a Welsh prince after the ceremonies on the Dee. At Penrice 30 coins of Helmet Type of Ethelred II and at Drwsdangoed near Pwllheli 18 pence of Cnut were hidden, the former soon after 1005, the latter soon after 1020, in a period of quiet in our record of raiding. Most interesting is the earliest (apart from the Pennard deposit of three coins in the late 840s), the so-called Bangor A hoard. Thirteen coins were discovered, five Kufic dated securely to not later than 912-13, and eight British. Of the British coins three are straightforward Edward the Elder (but no Athelstan), three (two and a fragment) are St Peter's coins from York, one is Northumbrian, probably pre-St Peter, and the last a rare sample of Sihtric Caoch, ruler in York 921-6. The hoard was deposited *c.* 925-30, again in a period of quiet in the record, but its importance for our investigations is obvious. Already at this early stage a typical Norse hoard (though small) of mixed Kufic, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian York coins is found along your traders' route from north-west England to Ireland or to the Isle of Man. Isolated coin finds underpin the general thesis, at Caerwent, at St David's, and at Caergybi (Holyhead), and link convincingly with the post-Conquest finds at Milford Haven and Llantrithyd. Merchants and traders leave their traces along the coastal routes. The Penrice hoard (1005-10)

¹ Aileen Fox in *100 years of Welsh Archaeology* (Cambrian Archaeological Association Centenary Volume 1846-1946), ed. V. E. Nash Williams, 118-22. C. E. Blunt, 'Saxon Coins from Southampton and Bangor', *British Numismatic Journal* (= *BNJ*; 1954), 256-62. R. H. M. Dolley (with Miss E. J. Pirie), 'Two Unpublished English Finds of Eleventh-Century Pence', *Numismatic Chronicle* (1959), 187-92. Idem, 'The Repercussions on Chester's Prosperity of the Viking Descent on Cheshire in 980', *BNJ* (1964), 39-44. Idem (with J. Knight), 'Some Single Finds of Tenth- and Eleventh-Century English Coins from Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (1970), 75-82.

left coins from a wide range of mints, especially the West Country, but *not* from Bristol. The inferences from these finds are considerable, again indicating movement, probably trade, but not necessarily adding to our picture of settlement.

The art historian advances the argument a shade more positively. The labours of the late Dr Nash Williams enabled us all to examine the bulk of the early Christian monuments of Wales, to distinguish the special contributions of the Llantwit, Merthyr Mawr and Margam school and also to recognise those features in stone sculpture further west which owe much directly to Scandinavian inspiration.¹ Work from Penally, the two fine crosses at Nevern and Carew, and fragments from St David's suggest a tradition of sculpture in a milieu we think of as Scandinavian or Anglo-Scandinavian or Hiberno-Norse. Similar traces may also be distinguished back east in the slab-cross at Laugharne in Carmarthenshire, and even deeper into Breconshire at Llanddewi'r Cwm. Some have tried to link the hunting-scenes on the Margam great slab-cross, and even the splendid Kilpeck school of the mid-twelfth century—'the last flickering traces of the true Urness style', as Professor Wilson reminds us.² It is all necessarily a little intangible and the leads tend to take us to the Isle of Man and Ireland (or even to the Danelaw) which makes cultural and political sense but adds only a mite to the problem of settlement. We can say bluntly however that the erection of crosses such as the splendid pillar-cross of Nevern and the magnificent slab-cross at Carew is plainly more likely, again in a period of lull in our raiding record, if contact were direct and continuous, with Ireland and Man through a Hiberno-Norse settlement in Milford Haven.

Where else can we look? The history of fortifications may ultimately help us a little. There is a mysterious passage in *The History of Gruffydd ap Cynan* which tells that Gruffydd was descended through his mother from Olaf, king of the city of Dublin, and a fifth part of Ireland and the Isle of Man. Moreover, we learn he was king over many other islands, Denmark, Galloway, the Rinns, Anglesey and Gwynedd, where Olaf built a strong

¹ V. E. Nash Williams, *Early Christian Monuments*, especially the notes on Carew, Nevern, Penally, and the discussion of the Llantwit-Margam School.

² David Wilson and Ole Klindt-Jensen, *Viking Art* (1966), 160.

castle with its mound and ditch still visible and called the castle of King Olaf. The Olaf is Olaf Sihtricsson, the castle Bon-y-Dom, and the mention of a mound mysterious and presumably twelfth-century.¹ Just as at an earlier period *raths* and *roaths* were common to Ireland and South Wales, so may newer techniques in fortifying lords' households be attributable to Viking pressures. It is at least worth considering the preponderance of ringworks over mottes in the first century of feudal Morgannwg and Gower.²

From inside the Welsh world itself there is little that can help. The language evidence is negative—a great contrast to the Scottish and Irish situation. There are no syntactic or morphological changes that can be attributed to the Norsemen. Vocabulary—even if one adds more and now obsolete terms from Middle Welsh—is scarcely affected. *Iarll* (earl) and *gardd* (garden or enclosure) are almost the only accredited examples in Modern Welsh and they could easily have been transmitted through Anglo-Scandinavian or early Middle English. The obsolete words *carl*, *hafr*, *ysgrefan* suffer from the same defect.³ There is no institutional evidence of the type so familiar to us in the English Danelaw. From George Owen of Henllys in the sixteenth century to a group of able modern scholars in the 1970s the agrarian history of Pembrokeshire has been closely scrutinised. It could be that the great complexity of solid English and Flemish settlement under Norman protection has muddied the trail impossibly. For the results are undoubtedly negative. No trace of the Dane has been found in agrarian life. The one positive gleam of hope in recent investigations has come from the necessarily experimental and tentative, yet valuable, work that has been done on rare blood-groups. It is at least worthy of note that a preponderance of the relatively rare blood-group A occurs in what appears to be significant statistical numbers in South Pembrokeshire—a characteristic shared by the western fjords of Norway: it is com-

¹ *The History of Gruffydd ap Cynan* (1910), 104-5: Gwynedd where Olaf built 'castell cadarn ae dom ae fos' which was still called 'castell avloed vrenhin'.

² D. J. Cathcart King and Leslie Alcock, 'Ringworks of England and Wales', *Château Gaillard, Études de castellogie médiévale* III, ed. A. J. Taylor (1969), 90-127.

³ T. H. Parry-Williams. *The English Element in Welsh* (1923), 12. I am grateful to my colleague, Professor C. W. Lewis, for help with this language problem.

forting to think that the fishermen of Marloes may have preserved some trace of Stavanger origins over thirty generations and more.¹ And yet we should not be too negative. Let us at least try to present a reasonable model in connection with our problems of settlement and chronology.

Settlement is itself, of course, a complicated concept. It can involve, not necessarily in continuous development on one site, at least three separate processes. The first phase would be the setting up of staging posts, temporary or permanent, on islands or islets such as Skomer or Gateholm, Caldy or Burry Holm, Flat Holm or even Sully, or on fortified or fortifiable sites close to the quay and the ships. In the second phase this would lead to the effective opening of permanent trading routes with consequent naming of harbours as well as navigation points, and in favourable circumstances there would follow a third phase of full permanent agrarian settlement. In Wales the evidence is strong enough to suggest the establishment of staging posts in North and South, coupled eventually and certainly in the South with the beginning of continuous harbour life at Milford Haven and at natural points along the Bristol Channel on the route from Dublin and Wexford and Waterford deep into the Severn estuary to Swansea and Cardiff and Newport. This would accord well with Scandinavian practice. Any move from raiding to permanent chaffering and bargaining involved a degree of comparative comfort and planning. The cold realities of operating sea-traffic in northern waters applied: shelter, fitting and refitting, provisioning took their due toll.

¹ I. M. Watkins, 'Blood Groups in Wales and the Marches', *Man* (1952), 83-6. Watkins comments also on the high proportion of A-gene frequency in selected tests in the City of Chester and points to some local statistical variants of interest at Rhyl, Prestatyn, and in the Conway valley around Llanrwst and Trefriw. Also 'ABO Blood Groups and Racial Characteristics in Rural Wales', *Heredity* 10 (1956), 161-93, and (with A. E. Mourant) 'Blood Group, Anthropology and Language in Wales and the Western Countries', *Heredity* 6 (1952), 13-36. I am grateful to my colleague, Mrs Margaret Williams, for calling my attention to these references, to A. E. Mourant's work on *The Distribution of Human Blood-groups* (1954), and to Mourant's work (with others) on *The A B O Blood-groups—comprehensive tables and map of world distribution* (1958). For discussion of possible Scandinavian settlement in Pembrokeshire, see also W. T. W. Potts, 'History and blood groups in the British Isles', in *Medieval Settlement* (ed. P. H. Sawyer, 1976), 251-2.

The second phase in Welsh affairs consequent, but by no means immediately, upon the first was, so it seems, the effective opening of permanent trading bases along the complete route from Ireland to Chester and from Ireland to Bristol. Such activity, where the advantage was obvious to the Welsh princes, would not involve hostility and warfare of the type to reach the records. And here, if I may introduce a vital element at a late phase in the argument, we have in Bristol a chronological *crux*. For we face genuine difficulties and discrepancies in chronology. There is a high probability that this opening up of a permanent route occurred in the North in the first half of the tenth century direct to Chester. The mint at Chester, as Mr Blunt has shown us, was already the most important of the regional mints by the reign of Athelstan and it remained important apart from a temporary and probably significant eclipse of a generation or so after 980. It was with the full opening up of the route that the naming of navigation points, fortified quaysides, harbours and staging posts would be made completely familiar to the Anglo-Scandinavian world. At the two ends of the run, at Dublin and at Chester, Môn would become Anglesey and Ynys Enlli Bardsey, just as in time in the South at Bristol Skomer and Skokholm would be accepted, coming more trippingly off the tongue in the Anglo-Scandinavian world of Cnut and his sons than their Welsh equivalents. Again one must emphasise that it was in England rather than in the Welsh hinterland that the names would be accepted as the routes were opened to regular and continuous navigation.

As for the hinterland itself, where one must look for the third phase of settlement, the establishment of permanent agrarian communities linked to the maritime bases, there is little evidence except in Pembrokeshire with its vital importance for the sea-routes from Ireland, and in or near the fortified harbours of Swansea and Cardiff.

Consideration of the possible nature of settlement brings us back to the problem of chronology and to the possibility that there may be a marked difference between North and South Wales in this vital respect. For the permanent opening of continuous routes, that is to say our suggested second phase, seemed to be achieved at different periods and with different effects upon

the native communities. A simple linguistic point in connection with place-names illustrates the difference between North and South. In the North the native Welsh names of islands, headlands and navigation points that have also received Scandinavian names are much better known to this day than the corresponding native Welsh names in the South. Intensity of survival of the Welsh tongue in the North does not offer a complete explanation; the Welsh of Deheubarth is not to be despised. An early phase one, linked with the rise of Chester in the first half of the tenth century, would account for the basic place-name pattern in the North. The importance of Chester, the direct nature of the route from Dublin, and the presence of successful Scandinavian settlements in the Isle of Man, north-west England and the Wirral, lessened the need for substantial ancillary bases in support of the continuous route. Facilities at Holyhead and possibly at Bangor and one or two other strategic points were all that was necessary, though attempts were clearly made from time to time to establish more, especially in Anglesey. For the South problems are more intricate. Interest in Pembrokeshire is certain, as early as the Alfredian period, but it is not easy to construct a convincing chronological model. It is nevertheless likely that a firm phase one in the process of settlement, in the form of the establishment of staging posts and fortified quays, was achieved by the time of our lull in the record of raiding, c. 914-54. The giant raid into Archenfield in 914 was followed by an accord and agreement with Edward the Elder. The establishment of a permanent headquarters in Milford Haven at this point is altogether plausible, a staging post primarily for traffic in the Celtic Sea. Native princes would find it convenient. The grim needs of the slave trade would demand such a centre. A prince as powerful as Hywel Dda would need to have a recognised and contained permanent trading base. In a limited sense phase two may have operated in the South, in Pembrokeshire; but it was limited. The full opening up of the Severn Sea to continuous navigation was delayed. We look again to the rise of Bristol. The Vikings starved on Flatholm in 914, staying there until they were very meatless, as the Chronicle tells us. I suspect that it was the turbulence of the reign of Ethelred followed by the peace of Cnut which brought them back to the eastern Severn Sea in force.

During that difficult half-century, 990–1040, as we know from our Norman history, there was something of an economic boom in parts of north-west Europe. The prosperity of Rouen and the creation of Caen were matched by similar signs of activity in Dublin and Bristol. Recent work at Bristol has shown that this was the critical period for its creation as an urban centre—still somewhat brash and novel at the time of Domesday Book when the render of Bristol was returned as a conjoint assessment with the adjacent royal manor of Barton in the Hundred of *Edredestane*.¹ The creation of the mint at Dublin has been shown by Professor Dolley to date from about A.D. 995. The origins of the mint at Bristol is looked for about A.D. 1020 at the latest.² We might be unwise not to make the direct association, chronological and racial, between the growth of Bristol and the permanent opening of the estuary that from the eighteenth century at least bears its name—the Bristol Channel. From A.D. 1000 or so, of course, the trade and economic movement was continuous right through to the capture of Waterford by Strongbow in 1171.

For North Wales the pattern was clearly different. We are nearer areas of heavy Scandinavian settlement. The contrast between Chester and Bristol is marked. The development of Chester—that is to say, the historical medieval urban development—began earlier, nearly a century earlier, and was continuous apart possibly from a bleak period about 980. In the north-west, Anglesey presents the main problem. Attempts at political conquest were made and failed. Seen from the sea-route Anglesey was vital as a staging post on the way to Chester. Seen from the north it was the second Menevian island, a possible extension from the settlement on Man if resources were available. Twelfth-century authorities described it as under the influence of Norwegian kings. Political domination was possible, was tried, and failed. Welsh resurgence prevented it initially and the Scandinavian Welshman, Gruffydd ap Cynan, contained it later. The structure of the island

¹ *The Atlas of Historic Towns* II, ed. Mrs Lobel (1975): Bristol (by Professor Eleanor Carus-Wilson and Mrs Lobel).

² R. H. M. Dolley, *The Hiberno-Norse Coins in the British Museum* (1966), 36; L. V. Grinsell, *The Bristol Mint* (1972).

remained essentially untouched, Welsh, central indeed to native Welsh political development and aspirations. To the north-east of Wales Ingemund's expedition in the early years of the tenth century planted a strong Scandinavian presence in the Wirral. It is likely that Scandinavian enterprise thereafter concentrated principally on Chester itself, with some overspill of agrarian settlement in the Wirral and in Cheshire—ultimately under the patronage of the Mercian earls. Moneyers' names at Chester in the reign of Ethelred exhibit the proportion of Scandinavian names one would expect from a mixed community, some of which are Danish and some markedly Hiberno-Norse. We must dismiss the notion of permanent hostility, permanent warring camps. A Scandinavian merchant captain who knew his way about the Irish Sea could be useful to a Mercian earl. When Wulfstan, archbishop of York and bishop of Worcester, railed in 1014 against those who sold poor and innocent men to foreigners—against those who sold too many Christian men out of this country—we ask who were the slaves and where the slave-port. His successor and namesake at Worcester, St Wulfstan, towards the end of the eleventh century knew that for him the centre of the infamous trade was Bristol.

I come back to my original brief, the Vikings in Wales. I tried the word 'backwash' initially. The word 'peripheral' now comes firmly to mind. What have Bristol and Chester to do with Wales? The answer is simple, trite, but essential to understanding of the whole enterprise and the range of regular movement. Wales lay on the way—the permanent way—from the active fortified markets of Ireland to the north-west, to the Dublin-Man-York world in the first half of the tenth century, and to the south-west, to the England of Cnut and his sons in the first half of the eleventh. In Pembrokeshire Scandinavian influence, impenetrably mixed with Norman, English and Flemish influence, could indeed have made some social impact in depth. In parts of Gower and on the Glamorgan coast, possibly later, the same is true. In Gwynedd, particularly in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, Irish-Scandinavian political influence was powerful. But on the structure of Welsh institutional life, language, vocabulary, social custom and political habit the Scandinavians made no positive impact at

all. Only as a means of drawing the Welsh communities together in accord at a critical time with their fellow-Christian West Saxons and Mercians do we trace some effect at least on the flexibility of Welsh law.

To finish, if I may, on a lighter note. In a famous passage in his description of Wales Giraldus Cambrensis attributed the choral ability of the men of Wales and of those from 'the northern district of Britain beyond the Humber and on the borders of Yorkshire' (distinguished ancestors of the Huddersfield and of the Treorchy Male Voice Choir) to a common experience.

As the English in general do not adopt this mode of singing, but only those of the northern counties, I believe that it was from the Danes and Norwegians by whom these parts of the island were more frequently invaded, and held longer under their dominion, that the natives contracted their mode of singing as well as of speaking.¹

Giraldus knew his Pembrokeshire but, alas, for Wales at large the evidence seems against him. We give proper weight to the part played by Scandinavian sailors in opening up the Severn Sea to permanent and continuous regular use. We acknowledge the weight of the Dublin-Man-Chester run. But of the major political communities within these islands the Welsh on the whole suffered least and received least from the Men of the North.

¹ Gustave Reese, *Music in the Middle Ages* (1941), 387; I am grateful to my student, Miss Drazek, for drawing my attention to the implications of this passage.

MAP 1. Wales in the eleventh century.

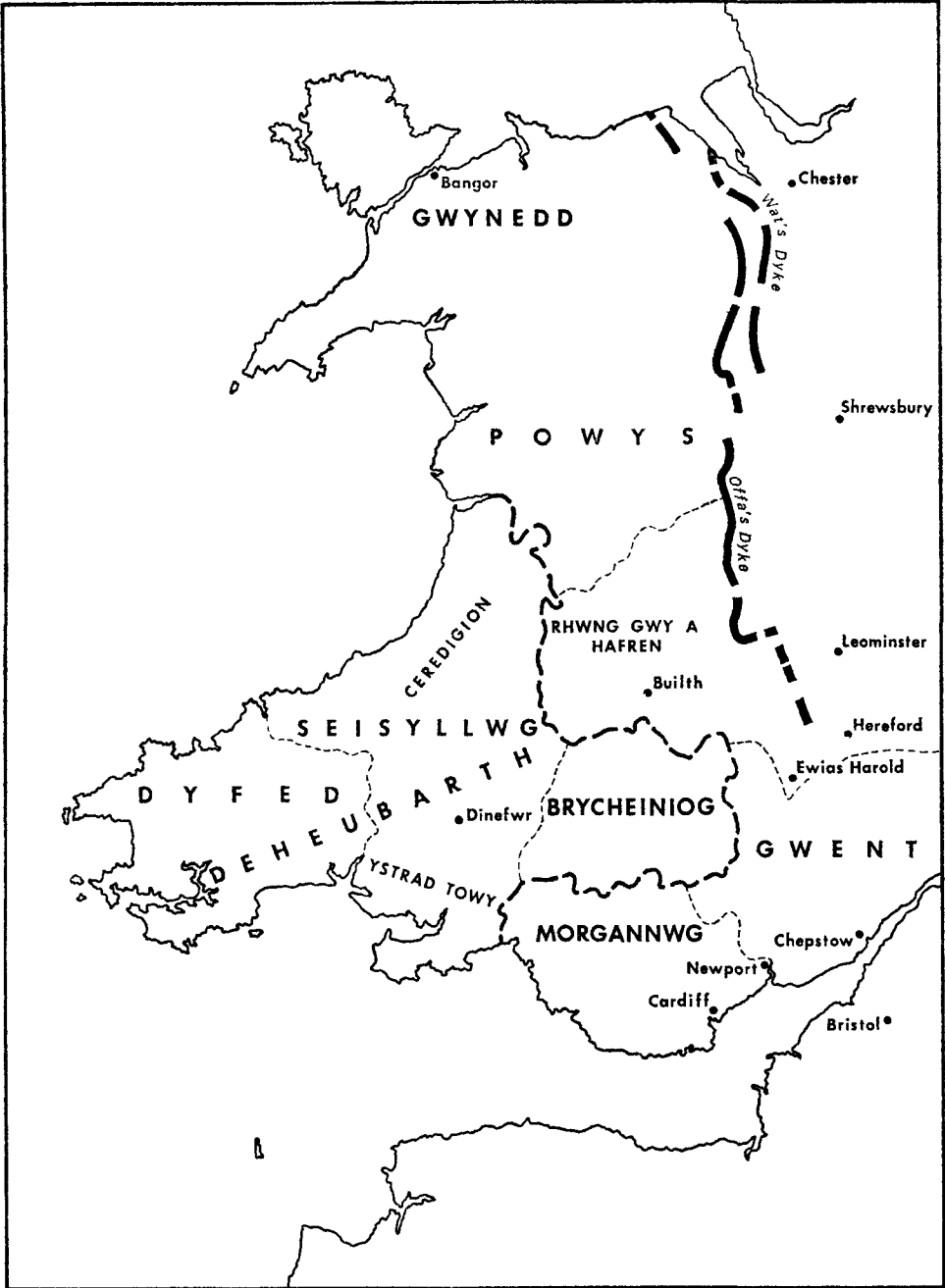
MAP 2. The Vikings in Wales: names and places.

Names in upper and lower case Roman are of Scandinavian origin.

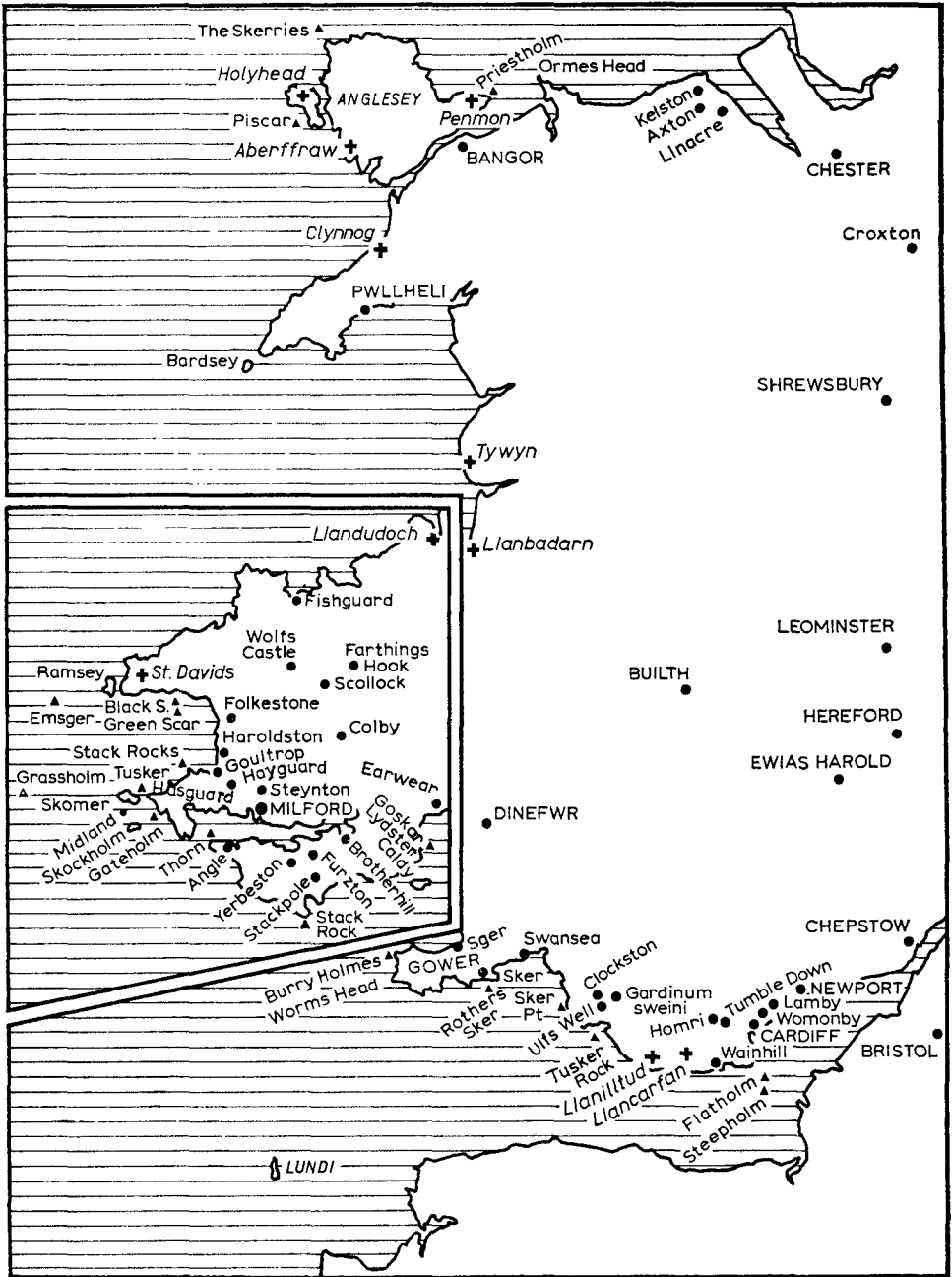
Names in italic are of churches attacked by Vikings.

Other names are inserted for orientation.

Based on a map published by Melville Richards in *Proceedings of the International Congress of Celtic Studies: Dublin 1959* (1962), end paper.



Map 1



Map 2