

THE  
HISTORIE OF CAMBRIA,  
NOW CALLED  
W A L E S:  
A PART OF THE MOST FAMOUS  
Y L A N D O F B R Y T A I N E,

WRITTEN IN THE BRYTISH LANGUAGE  
ABOUE TWO HUNDRETH YEARES PAST.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY

H. LHOYD, GENTLEMAN.

CORRECTED, AUGMENTED, AND CONTINUED OUT OF RECORDS  
AND BEST APPROOUED AUTHORS,

BY

D A U I D P O W E L,

DOCTOR IN DIUINITIE.

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Cvm Priuilegio.

[ 1584. ]

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After the title page we have:

- Pages v-vii. The Epistle Dedicatorie. To the Right worshipfull Sir Philip Sydney, Knight, by David Powell.
- Pages ix-xvi. To the Reader.

A

## DESCRIPTION OF CAMBRIA

NOW CALLED

W A L E S :

DRAWNE FIRST BY SIR IOHN PRISE, KNIGHT; AND AFTERWARD AUGMENTED AND  
MADE PERFECT

BY HUMFREY LHOYD, GENTLEMEN.

**F**OR as much as it is necessarie for the vnderstanding of this historie, to knowe the perfect description of the countrie of Wales, to the end the acts atchiued and doone in the same may be the better knowne; I thought good somewhat to trauell therein, and so to laie downe the same as it was in those daies, and as it is now: that the reader by conference of both times may the better vnderstand this worke. Therefore after the three sonnes of Brutus had diuided the whole Ile of Brytaine into three parts; that part conteined within the French seas, with the riuers of Seauerne (called in Brytish Hafren) Dee and Humber, fell to the eldest sonne Locrinus, which was after his name called Lhoyger, which name it hath in the Brytish toong to this daie, and in English now it is called England, and is augmented Northward to the riuier Tweed. The second sonne Albanactus had all the land Northward from Humber to the sea Orkney, called in the Brytish toong Mor Werydh, and in Latine Mare Caledonicum. The third sonne Camber had to his part all that which remained vndiuided, lieng within the Spanish and Irish seas, and separated from England, with the riuers Seauerne and Dee, and this part was after his name called Cambria, and the inhabitants thereof Cambry, *Cambria.* and their language Camberaec, and so are at this daie. So that they haue kept the same countrie and language this 2690. and odde yeares, without commixtion with anie other nation, especiallie in Northwales, as it shall hereafter appeare.

c

And

And because the name of this countrie is changed, or rather mistaken by the inhabitants of England, and not by them called Cambry, but Wales: I thinke it necessarie to declare the occasion thereof, which is, that where the Saxons a people of Germanie were the first that after the Brytaines inhabited and ruled the greatest part of this Ile. and droue the Brytains to that corner, which according to the maner of their countrie they called Wales, and the people Welshmen, and the toong Welsh, that is to saie Strange, or not of them vnderstanded. For at this daie the inhabitants of the lowe countries call their next neighbours language of Henegaw, or other that speake French, Walsh, as a language to them vnknowne. Likewise the dwellers of Tyroll and other the higher countries of Germanie doo name the Italian their next neighbour a Welshman, and his language Walsh. And this is an euident prooffe, that they which harped vpon a Queene Gwalaes, and of a Prince Wala (of whom neither Brytish, Latine, nor English historie maketh mention) were fowlie deceiued: and so likewise was a great historiographer of late daies, which saith, that it was called Walia, quasi Italia, because the rest of the Romans which remained in the Ile were driuen thither. Neither is this anie new inuention, although Polydore Virgil with an Italian brag dooth glorie himselfe to be the first that espied it out, for diuers ancient writers doo alledge the same cause of the name of Wales, of whom Syluester Giraldus is one, who wrote in the time of Henrie the second after the conquest, before 380. yeares passed: which is an euident token, that the said Polydore did either neuer see nor read the ancient histories of this realme, or dissembleth the same to the aduancement and praise of himselfe and his countrie: which to the learned and indifferent reader shall appeare to be the onelie occasion he tooke that worke in hand, for all his booke redoundeth onlie to the praise and honour of the Romans, as well spirituall as temporall, and to blase forth their acts and deeds within this realme: and vpon the other part dooth either openlie slaunder, or els priuilie extenuate, or shamefullie denie the martiall prowesse and noble acts, as well of Saxons, Danes, and Normans, as of the Brytains, all inhabitors of this Ile. Which thing he that list to prooue, let him read and conferre Cæsars Commentaries, Cornelius Tacitus, Herodianus, and other ancient writers, as well in Latine as in Greeke, with his worke. As for the ancient writers of the Brytish historie, as the Brytish chronicle, the historie of Gildas, Ponticus Verunnius, yea the golden worke of Matthew Paris moonke of Saint Albion, which wrote from VWilliam Bastard, to the last yeares of Henrie the third; I dare well saie he neuer sawe them, they be in diuers places to be had, so that the truth may be easilie prooued. To make an end I saie,

saie, that he being first a straunger borne, and also ignorant as well in the histories of this realme, as of those toongs and languages wherina the same were written, could neuer set foorth the true and perfect Chronicle of the same. But he hauing a good grace and a pleasant stile in the Latine toong, and finding himselfe in a countrie where euerie man either lacked knowledge or spirit to set forth the historie of their owne countrie, tooke this enterprise in hand, to their great shame, and no lesse dispraise, bicause he a blind leader shall drawe a great number of vndiscreet and rash folowers, as well Geographers and Cosmographers, as Chroniclers and Historiographers, to the darke pit of ignorance, where I leaue them at this time, remitting the reader to the apologie of Sir Iohn Pryse knight, and his Brytish historie, written by him of purpose against the enuious reports and slaunderous taunts of the said Polydor, where he shall see a great number of his errors confuted at large. And to returne to my former matter of the name of Wales, which name Wales. to be giuen of late by a straunge nation may be otherwise prooued: for the Welshmen themselues doo not vnderstand what these words VVales and Welsh doo signifie, nor know anie other name of their countrie or themselues but Cambry, nor of their language but Cambraec, which is as much to saie as Cambers language or speech. So likewise they know not what England or English meaneth, but commonlie they call the countrie Lhoyger, the Englishmen Sayson, and the English toong Saysonaec. Which is an euident token that this is A Loerino.  
A Saxonib. the same language which the Brytaines spake at the beginning: for the works of Merdhyn and of Taliessin, who wrote about 1000. yeares past, are almost the same words which they vse at this daie, or at the least easie to be vnderstanded of euerie one which knoweth perfectlie the Welsh toong, especiallie in Northwales.

Beside this, where at this daie, there doo remaine three remnants of the Brytaines, diuided euerie one from other, with the seas which are in Wales, Cornwall (called in Brytish Cerniw) and little Brytaine, yet almost all the particular words of these three people are all one, although in pronounciation and writing of the sentences they differ somewhat, which is no maruell, seeing that the pronounciation in one realme is often so diuers, that the one can scant vnderstand the other. But it is rather a wonder, that the Welshmen being separated from the Cornish, well nigh these 900. yeares, and the Brytaines from either of them 290. yeares before that, and hauing small traffike or concourse together sithence that time, haue still kept their owne Brytish toong. They are not therefore to be credited which denie the Welsh to be the old Brytish toong.

And

And here I cannot passe ouer what one of these fine Chroniclers wrote of late, of the name of **Brytaine**, affirming that it should be so called of **Brytaine** in **France**, as the elder of that name. But surelie he had either neuer seene **Ptolomie** nor **Cæsar**, nor anie other ancient writer, or read them with small iudgement and memorie. For there he might haue learned, that when this land was called **Brytaine**, the other was called **Armorica**, and how in **Maximus** time, **Conan Meriadoc** was the first that gaue it that name, and inhabited it with **Brytaines** out of this Ile. Other deriuations of these words **Brytania**, and **Albion**, out of **Greeke** and **Latine**, I am ashamed to rehearse; for vnto such errors doo they commonlie fall, that either puffed vp with vaine glorie of their owne wits, or pinched with despise and enuie at other mens works; or blinded with ignorance, do go about to write and set foorth anie historie or chronicle. But passing ouer this matter vntill an other time, I will returne to the description of **Wales**, which (as I said) was of old time compassed almost about with the **Irish seas**, and the riuers **Dee** and **Seauerne**, although afterwards the **Saxons** wan by force from the **Brytaines** all the plaine and champion cuntry ouer the riuers, and speciallie **Offa** king of **Mercia**, who made a ditch of a great breadth and depth, to be a meare betwixt his kingdome and **Wales**, which ditch began at the riuer **Dee**, by **Bassingwerke** betweene **Chester** and **Ruthlan**, and ran along the hils sides to the south sea a little from **Bristowe**, reaching aboue a hundreth miles in length, and is in manie places to be seene at this daie, bearing the name of **Clawdh Offa**, that is to saie, **Offas ditch**, and the cuntry betweene it and **England** is commonlie called in **Welsh** **Y Mars**, although the greatest part of it be now inhabited by **Welshmen**, namlie in **Northwales**, which yet keepeth the ancient limits to the riuer **Dee**, and in some places ouer it. Other (as **Syluester Giraldus**) make the riuer **VVy**, called in **Welsh** **Gwy**, to be the meare betweene **England** and **Wales** on the South part called **Southwales**; who measureth the breadth of **Wales**, from **Salowe** or **Willoweford** called **Rhyd yr helig** vpon **VVy**, to **Saint Dauids** in **Mencuia** 100. miles, and the length from **Caerlhcon** vpon **Vsce** in **Gwentland**, to **Holihead** called **Caergybi** in **Anglisey**, in **Welsh** called **Môn**, aboue 100. miles, and these be the common meares at this daie, although the **Welsh** toong is commonlie vsed and spoken **Englandward**, beyond these old meares a great waie, as in **Herefordshire**, **Glocestershire**, and a great part of **Shropshire**. And thus for the generall description of **Wales**, which afterward about the yeare of **Christ 870.** **Rodericus Magnus**, king of **Wales**, diuided it into three territories which they called kingdomes, which remained vntill of late daies.

These

*Rob. Cœnal.  
li. 2. Per. 2.*

*The meares  
and bounds  
of Wales.*

These three were, Gwynedh, in English Northwales, Deheubarth, in English Southwales, and Powys land; in euerie of the which he ordeined a princelie seat or court for the Prince to remaine at most commonlie: as in Gwynedh (which some old writers call Venedotia for Gwynethia) Aberffraw in the Ile of Môn or Anglesey. *Aberffraw.* In Deheubarth called in Latine Demetia Caermardhyn, from whence it was afterward remoued to Dineuowr, eight miles thence. *Dineuowr.* In Powys Pengwern, called Y Mwythic, and in English Sherewesburie, from whence it was remoued to Mathraual in Powys land. *Mathraual.* And bicause this historie dooth as well intreate of warres betwixt these three prouinces, as betwixt them and the Saxons, Normanes and Flemings: I thinke it good to set foorth the particular description of euerie part by it selfe. *Northwales.* And first of Northwales as the cheefest part, which he gaue his eldest sonne, ordeining that either of the other two should paie him yearlie 200. pound of tribute, as it appeareth in the lawes of Howel Dha, which are to be had in Welsh, and also in Latine. Therefore Gwyneth (called Northwales) had vpon the Northside the sea, from the riuier Dee at Basingwerke to Aberdyui, and vpon the West and Southwest the riuier Dyui which diuideth it from Southwales, and in some places from Powys land. And on the South and East it is diuided from Powys sometimes with mountaines, and sometimes with riuers, till it come to the riuier Dec againe. *Môn.* This land was of old time diuided to foure parts, of which the cheefest was Môn, in English called Anglesey, where the Princes cheefe house was at Aberffraw, which is an Iland separated from the maine land, with an arme of the sea called Mænai, and had in it selfe three Cantreds or hundreds, which were subdiuided to sixe comots, as Cantref Aberffraw, to comot Lhion, and comot Malhtraeth, Cantref Cemais, to the comots Talebolion and Twr Celyn. Cantref Rossyr to the comots Tindaethwy and Mænai. And at this daie there is a trimme towne in that Ile called Beumarish, and a common passage to Ireland at Caergbi, called in English Holyhead. But here I cannot winke at that notable error of Polydor, which (after his accustomed fashion) denieth this Ile to be called Môn, but Anglesia, or Anglorum insula, bicause it is called in English Anglesey, and giueth this name Môn to Man, and so hath lost the names of both Iles: which ignorance and forgetfulnes might be forgiuen him, if he had not drawne a great number to this error with him, which in their charters doo dailie wrong name these Iles, which may be easilie prooued. First, bicause the inhabitants of the Ile doo know none other name but Môn: and it is called through all Wales, Tîr Môn, that is to saie, the land of Môn vnto this day.

day. So that neither by memorie of man, neither by anie monument in writing in the Brytish toong can it appeare, that euer it had anie other name but Môn, yet there be manifest monuments for these 1000. yeares. It is also growne to a prouerbe through Wales, for the fertilitie of the ground, Môn mam Gynry, that is to saie, Môn mother of Wales.

The ancient historie of Cornelius Tacitus (which belike age had beaten out of Polydors head) saith, that the soldiours of Paulinus Suetonius, and afterward of Iulius Agricola, after they had passed through Northwales, then came ouer against Môn, where they did swim ouer an arme of the sea of 200. pases, and so by force wanne the Ile. Now whether is it more reasonable thus to swimme ouer 200. pases, or 20. miles? I know there is no man that beleueeth Polydor in this point: let all men therefore by this iudge the rest. As for that which he saith of the great woods, it is nothing: for both the Romanes, and after when the Christian faith tooke place in this realme, the Christians did fall and roote them out, for the idolatrie and absurd religion which was vsed there: that the king of Man sent for timber to Môn: read the life of Hugh Earle of Chester; which also is euident by the great beeches and other trees found in the earth at these daies. His other reason is, because it is called Anglesey in the English toong: so is Lhyoger England, and Cambry Wales, are those therefore the old names? No surelie. And what if the inhabitants called it so? (as they did not) had it not a name before the Angles wanne it? Yes I warrant you, but he had forgotten that. Now to the name of Man, it was euer, or at the least these 1000. yeares named in Brytish Manaw, of which commeth the English name Man. The inhabitants thereof call it so, and no nation about it did euer call it Môn, no nor any writer but Polydor, which was too yong a godfather to name so old a child. For Gildas who wrote aboue 900. yeares passed, whose writings Polydor neuer sawe, but vnrulie fathers vpon him his owne deuise; Giraldus in his description of Ireland to Henrie the second, Henrie Huntington, dooth plainlie call Man in Latine Eubonia, adding thereto either Manaw or Man, for the better vnderstanding of the name: will you beleuee them or Polydor? Other arguments there are which I will passe ouer, till I haue more leasure and occasion to write of this matter.

*Aruon.*

The second part of Northwales was called Aruon, which is as much to saie; as ouer against Môn: and had in it foure Cantreds, and ten comots.

Cantref

(The criticism of Polydore Vergil ends here, but the Description of Cambria continues up to page xxxvi)



## The beginning of the Principality and government of Wales

At this point the history begins, and describes the following kings. The dates given below are, in most cases, the approximate years when they began to reign. More precise dates are associated with specific events described in the text. The word "ap" means "son of".

Cadwalader.	Went to Brittany in 680 because of the plague and famine that had decimated Wales.
Ivor	Began to reign in 688 and together with his cousin Ynyr he fought against the Saxons. Geoffrey of Monmouth's "History of the Kings of Britain" ends at this point.
Roderike Molwynoc	720
Conan Tindaethwy	755
Mervyn Vrych, and his wife Esylht	819
Roderike the Great	843
Anarawd	877
Edwal Voel	913
Howel Dha	940
Ievaf and Iago, sons of Edwal Voel	948
Howel ap Ievaf	972
Cadwalhon ap Ievaf	984
Meredyth ap Owen	986
Edwal ap Meyric	992
Aedan ap Blegored	998
Lhwelyn ap Sitsylht	1015
Iago ap Edwal	1020
Gruffyth ap Lhwelyn	1037
Blethyn and Rywalhon	1071
Trahaern ap Caradoc	1073
Gruffyth ap Conan	1078
Owen Gwyneth	1137
Dauid ap Owen	1169
Lhwelyn ap Iorwerth	1194
Dauid ap Lhwelyn	1240
Lhwelyn ap Gruffyth	Reigned from 1246 to 1282. His reign ended when Wales was brought under the domination of England, during the reign of Edward I. The British (Welsh) nation had continued for 2418 years since the arrival of Brutus in 1136 BC. The chapter ends with the line:  Thus endeth the Historie of the Brytish Princes.

The history continues with the Princes of Wales, of the English royal family, mostly using records collected from the Tower.

King Edward I never had the trust of the Welsh people, so he sent for Queen Elianor, and brought her to Caernarvon while she was pregnant. She gave birth to a son and they called him Edward, so he became Prince of Wales, born in Caernarvon. The list of Princes of Wales continues up to the end of the Tudor period.

The tradition of appointing a Prince of Wales is maintained to this day, as a replacement for the deposed Welsh monarchy.