

Owain Glyndŵr and the Franco-Welsh alliance, 1405-1406 - a reappraisal

Dissertation by Oliver Townsley, 2018

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*Note on spelling* - This study uses the spelling 'Glyndŵr'. Variant spellings in citations, except in the titles of published works, have been replaced by this spelling for the sake of clarity. Place-names have also been replaced by their common, Anglicised, spelling.

## Introduction

### **Study focus and aims**

This study will focus on Owain Glyndŵr's revolt and the effects of his alliance with France between 1405-1406, and will attempt to reappraise the recent historiographical discussions on the successes and failures of the Franco-Welsh alliance. The previous narrative of Glyndŵr in 1405-1406 was of a determined rebel leader let down by his allies and suffering from increasing military setbacks. This narrative has recently been challenged by Gideon Brough who has argued that the Franco-Welsh alliance allowed Glyndŵr to achieve remarkable military success in 1405, which then enabled him to further his diplomatic and political objectives.

This revision of Glyndŵr's revolt in 1405-1406 would highlight the importance of the Franco-Welsh alliance in advancing the rebel's cause and would suggest that 1406 was the high-water mark of the rebellion. The aim of this study is to assess French influence in Glyndŵr's revolt between 1405-1406. A full analysis of the Franco-Welsh alliance cannot be given full justice here however, which is why this study will focus specifically on the Franco-Welsh campaign in 1405 and the Pennal Letter in 1406. These topics form a large part of Brough's revisionist case, but also reflect between them the military, political and diplomatic aspects of the Franco-Welsh alliance, so it makes sense to use them as a structure and focus. 'Chapter One - the 1405 Campaign' will focus on assessing the effectiveness of French military intervention in 1405 and consider what its shortcoming might suggest about French commitment to the rebel's cause. Chapter One will also feature a reappraisal of Brough's assertion that, as a result of French intervention, Glyndŵr was able to conclude a truce with Henry IV in 1405. 'Chapter Two - the Pennal Letter' will discuss the possible motivations behind the Pennal Letter in 1406 and consider the context in which it was written in order to assess what it might reveal about the balance of the Franco-Welsh alliance and particularly of the capabilities of its author, Owain Glyndŵr.

Firstly, the summer-1405 campaign by Franco-Welsh troops has proven particularly divisive amongst historians owing to the lack of corroborating primary evidence. This has left an incomplete narrative of the campaign which has enabled Brough to make assertions that perhaps stretch the evidence further than is justifiable. Historians of Glyndŵr, as well as of Henry IV, have produced different evidence to support their narratives of the 1405 campaign, yet few historians have considered how they weigh against each other. This study will attempt to consolidate some of these arguments and suggest a consensus that considers the differing primary evidence and reflects on its reliability and constancy.

Secondly, no study of the Franco-Welsh alliance can overlook the Pennal Declaration of 1406. As perhaps the most remarkable and enduring element of Glyndŵr's legacy, it has divided historical opinion. Reese Davies (1995) suggests that the demands made in its second half were entirely fantastical and comparable to the equally unrealistic Tripartite Indenture in 1405. Gideon Brough (2017), however, marks the Pennal letter as an achievable and unsurprising step towards building a state in Wales. This suggestion will be closely analysed and the assertion will be made that the Pennal Letter actually represents the desperate reliance that Glyndŵr placed on French intervention, and also that Glyndŵr had been politically naive to rely so heavily on such a fractious and noncommittal ally.

Broadly then, this study will attempt to address the following questions:

- 1) Can the Franco-Welsh campaign in 1405 be considered a success?
- 2) What does the Pennal Letter in 1406 reveal about the balance of the Franco-Welsh alliance and the capabilities of Glyndŵr?
- 3) How effective was the Franco-Welsh alliance in furthering the cause of Glyndŵr's revolt between 1405-1406?

Addressing these aspects of the Franco-Welsh alliance will provide an opportunity to assess whether or not the alliance was a successful and equitable partnership. Gideon Brough has had the most recent input into this discussion, and undoubtedly his assertions

will be addressed by other scholars in time. The intention here is to attempt to offer a small contribution to this freshly-opened historiographical debate.

### **Historiographical context and literary review**

This study hopes to add to a developing historiography and it is essential therefore to provide a brief sketch of the relative central arguments.

Reese Davies's work *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (1995) is considered the foremost scholarship in the field and his narrative of Glyndŵr's revolt has been largely adopted by most historians of the period. His is also the established consensus on Glyndŵr's successes and achievements, and Gideon Brough's revisionist case seems to contend with much of Davies's analysis.

In *The Rise and Fall of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (2017) Brough reconsiders the primary evidence on the 1405 campaign and this has led him to revise Glyndŵr's revolt in 1405-1406. This revisionist thread suggests that the peak of Glyndŵr's power was in 1406 with the Pen-nal Letter, that Brough argues is an example of Glyndŵr taking the first serious steps towards state-building in Wales. This analysis suggests that the Franco-Welsh alliance was crucial to Glyndŵr's success in 1405-1406, allowing him to force Henry IV to terms which then enabled him to begin to establish a Welsh state.

While Brough's argument, as a revision of Davies', shall run concurrently throughout this study, there is a range of other secondary scholarship that is relevant here. Geoffrey Hodges (1995) for example, publishing at the same time as Davies, focuses on the military campaigns of the rebels and offers a distinctly strategic overview of Glyndŵr's revolt, particularly of the 1405 campaign.

J E. Lloyd's *Owen Glendower* (1969) was the first book that opened the academic field on Glyndŵr. Davies comments that 'there is an enduring solidity about [Lloyd's] account of Owain Glyndŵr and his revolt' (1995, p.97) and it is true that his work is still relevant today. Lloyd seems unashamedly pro-Glyndŵr, however, and his relatively short work lacks the

sheer depth of research that Davies (1995) provides. It is therefore beginning to feel a little dated and is cited only sparingly.

A few central scholars on Henry IV shall also be cited here, providing a historical perspective on 1405-1406 from Henry IV's standpoint. Particularly Iain Mortimer (20017) and Chris Given-Wilson (2017), both considered premium medievalists, who present evidence that neither Davies nor Brough seems to consider. Aside from their own evidence, both seem to broadly concur with Davies' analysis of the 1405 campaign and rely heavily on his research and narrative.

### **Primary Evidence and Sources**

The patchwork of primary evidence relating to French involvement in Glyndŵr's revolt is noticeably incomplete, but what does exist is fairly easily accessible. The works of the main chroniclers can be found in print, especially the accounts of Saint-Denis and Monstrelet, who provide the primary narratives of the 1405 campaign and these form the foundation of most historians' assumed course of events. These are found in *Owain Glyndŵr: A Casebook* (2017), edited by Micheal Livingston and John K. Bollard. Also available in *Casebook* are the majority of the primary sources used in this study, such as the letters sent and received by Henry IV in the summer of 1405. It is therefore an invaluable resource to this study.

In regards to the primary chroniclers, the usual limitations apply; these accounts were usually written after the event, sometimes by many years, and they rarely provide a complete, or objective, picture. Even so, the contradictions between them provide the basis for much of the historiographical debate on the 1405-06 period in Wales and they shall be fundamental to this study.

Other primary sources to be considered are the official documentation and letters that have survived. In this area, sources originating from England seem to be more prevalent and readily available. *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England* are all available via the Open University online library and apart from serving as a database of parliamentary acts, they also

reveal what these parliaments discussed, and crucially to this study, what they did not. Glyn-dŵr's principle letters to Charles VI, particularly the Pennal Letter, can be found in Thomas Matthews's *Welsh Records in Paris* (Reese, ed., 2010) and these provide the foundation for studying the nature of the Franco-Welsh alliance.

## Chapter One - the 1405 Campaign

The French expedition to Wales in the summer of 1405 was probably the greatest achievement of Glyndŵr's alliance with Charles VI. Reese Davies argues that Glyndŵr sought, first and foremost, military aid, and that the campaign was therefore his chance to 'reap the fruits of his alliance with France' (1995, p.193). A close analysis of the successes of the Franco-Welsh campaign therefore allows a broader assessment to be made on the successes of the Franco-Welsh alliance. Given the subjectivity of 'success' it is important to lay out a critical formula for measuring the outcome of the campaign. One measure of its success would be the immediate impact of the campaign on Glyndŵr's enemies and a strategic assessment of what it accomplished between August and September 1405, and then the longer-term impact on the rebellion over the course of the next year. It would also be informative to consider what Glyndŵr hoped to achieve in 1405, and whether or not the Franco-Welsh campaign helped further the goals of his rebellion.

The immediate impact of the French invasion can be observed in a letter, sent to the sheriff of Hereford, calling for troops to be raised (Livingstone, ed., 2013). The letter is probably typical of a host of dispatches from the king to the lords of the Marches in early-August and the tone is distinctly urgent, calling upon the sheriff to immediately begin to raise 'each and every knight, esquire, yeoman and militiaman' that he can (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.121). It is particularly telling that this haste to assemble troops is in direct response to information 'recently received' (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.121). This information is probably from the letter sent by a spy in Glyndŵr's parliament in Harlech, dated July 30th (Livingstone, ed., 2013). Henry's letter is dated August 7th which means he must have started raising troops on the day, or the day after, receiving word of the French army's arrival. This was not a premeditated campaign, but a panicked reaction to the French invasion. It can be considered a success, therefore, that the French expedition forced Henry IV to begin the costly procedure

of raising troops, demonstrating that the French had the element of surprise. The letter, however, also suggests that although the news was enough to provoke a strong immediate reaction from the king, it was not enough to change the strategy of containment that the English seemed to be employing by 1405. Henry IV hints at no plan to march against the Franco-Welsh army, only to 'strongly resist' them if they 'enter into our kingdom of England [...] in a hostile manner' (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.121) suggesting that the muster of troops was essentially defensive in nature. This could be due to Henry's lack of funds and supplies for an aggressive campaign, a problem that would rise again for the king in late-August/September (Mortimer, 2007, p.304). It still seems reasonable to suggest that the immediate impact of the French invasion was a surprise for Henry IV, but was not enough to provoke a change in the English strategy of containment.

To assess the longer-term impact of the Franco-Welsh campaign, the *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England (Rolls)* provide an excellent insight into how official contemporaries in England reacted to it. The 1406 'Long Parliament' has been characterised as 'a classic *rex vs commons* contest' (Mortimer, 2007, p.306) and its members did not shy away from open criticism of the king. This hostile mood is critical to the analysis of its proceedings. Notable is the lack of any explicit mention of the French army; instead the broader rebellion in Wales is added to a list of foreign policy priorities alongside Calais, Guyenne, Scotland and Ireland (*Parliament Rolls*, Henry IV, March 1406). The only firm actions taken by the parliament are an ordinance to protect English shipping and a commitment from the king to expel Frenchmen from the realm (*Parliament Rolls*, Henry IV, March 1406). These decisions were not, however, in direct response to the Franco-Welsh alliance, and not even in response to the Welsh rebellion, but were long standing demands from Parliament (Given-Wilson, 2017, p.292). This leaves a suggestion that the Franco-Welsh campaign did not leave a lasting impact on the political elite in England, even less than a year later.

There is even evidence in the *Rolls* to suggest that parliament felt as though it was winning the war in Wales despite French intervention. Parliament declared that lords in Wales whose tenants joined the rebellion should be exempt from paying fines, but that the tenants

themselves should pay it, demonstrating that even while the rebellion was ongoing, plans were being made for recriminations in areas re-conquered from the rebels (*Parliament Rolls*, Henry IV, March 1406). Whether or not this confidence was misplaced in 1406, the *Rolls* do suggest that the Franco-Welsh campaign did little to reverse the fortunes of Glyndŵr in the eyes of his enemies and could not even be considered a symbolic victory against Henry IV. Even a substantial French army on English soil was not enough to warrant attention in a parliament that was all too happy to criticise their king.

This leaves the question of whether the Franco-Welsh campaign achieved any strategic success at all. Historians are broadly divided on the accomplishments of the expedition. Reese Davies cautiously concludes that the campaign was 'within its limits, quite impressive' (1995, p.194), particularly the capture of Carmarthen, which was the centre of English power in South Wales. Yet here, Davies, as well as Chris Given-Wilson (2013, p.242), is quick to highlight that this victory was more by negotiation than military strength (1995, p. 194). Geoffrey Hodges, who focused particularly on the military aspects of Glyndŵr's revolt, admits that 'the French had not been able to give Owain the help which he needed' in 1405 (1995, p.137). Even the generally pro-Welsh J. E. Lloyd highlights that the French army failed to reverse Glyndŵr's fortunes and that 'this failure was for all time' (1931, p.105).

This lack of consensus is due to a deficiency of primary evidence to support a concrete narrative of the campaign. The monk of Saint-Denis's *Chronicle of Charles VI* is one of the key chronicles for the Franco-Welsh campaign and his works are widely considered 'more detailed and likely more accurate' than many of its peers (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.369). His account is still hazy on certain details, however; for example, he puts the Welsh numbers at ten thousand, which is likely a drastic exaggeration, and he also claims that the French force left France 'around the middle of August' (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.155) when they had probably already arrived by then (Brough, 2017). Overall, his account is fairly damning of the Welsh efforts, accusing the Welsh soldiers of a 'shameful flight' (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.157) after the siege of Tenby whilst also accusing the French leaders who returned to France be-

fore their troops of having 'abandoned the men who had fought for their glory' (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.157). He also makes no mention of the incursion into England, only suggesting vaguely that the army marched 'some sixty leagues' into enemy territory (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.157). This is particularly surprising considering Saint-Denis, as the primary chronicler of Charles VI, could be expected to propagate the achievements of the French army.

Engurrand de Monstrelet offers a different appraisal of the Franco-Welsh campaign but is likewise inconsistent with details, for example, placing the French landing point at Haverfordwest, when it was almost certainly Milford Haven (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.389). However, Monstrelet stands out as the only source that details the Franco-Welsh army's penetration into England and the eight-day stand-off with Henry IV at Woodbury Hill. Monstrelet claims that the deadlock ended once Henry IV 'seeing that the enemy were not afraid of him, retreated in the evening to Worcester' (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.205). This presents a problem for historians: if the Franco-Welsh army did enter England and conducted a successful stand-off with Henry IV, it would certainly be a notable achievement. Historians cannot agree on the validity of the claim, however, and the best consensus is that some force, 'though probably not all of it' (Given-Wilson, 2016, p.242), likely entered England to plunder and raid, although the full army may not have been present.

The inconsistencies in the narrative of the 1405 campaign have left room for conjecture in recent scholarship. The most striking comes from Gideon Brough, whose asserts that the Franco-Welsh campaign was successful enough to allow Glyndŵr to conclude a truce with Henry IV (2017, p.8). It is clear, from a letter sent from one of Henry IV's spies (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.119), that Glyndŵr, was interested in seeking a truce with the king that year. If Brough's argument is correct, it would mean that the Franco-Welsh campaign achieved exactly what Glyndŵr wanted it to. This would make a compelling case for a re-evaluation of the Franco-Welsh campaign, and it is therefore critical to closely inspect the evidence that Brough presents.

Central to Brough's argument is Monstrelet's narrative that the Franco-Welsh army entered England and confronted Henry IV. Reese Davies argues, however, that the story 'savour[s] of the flight of literary fancy' (1995, p.194). Despite this, Brough still tries to present more concrete evidence for this narrative. Citing a spike in requests for tax exemption in Herefordshire and Worcestershire between 1405-07, Brough argues that 'the only candidate for this activity' is the Franco-Welsh army (2017, p.143). It is premature, however, to rule out the effects of smaller-scale cross-border raiding. Geoffrey Hodges points out that these counties had to send supplies to the English garrisons in Wales, and were the victims of a steady increase in Welsh raids on English towns (1995, p.107). Hodges presents evidence of Marcher lords seeking compensation for lands destroyed by Welsh raiding, some lords claiming that a third of their county had been destroyed (1995, p.112). While certainly an exaggeration, it does suggest that the effects of war-weariness in the Marches was significant by 1404-1405. This could very reasonably explain the spike in tax-exemption requests that Brough cites, and while it does not entirely rule out a large Franco-Welsh incursion, it does provide a sensible counter-argument. Without the force of the full Franco-Welsh army in England, it is difficult to imagine Glyndŵr having the power to force Henry IV to terms.

While Brough's argument is predicated on the account of Monstrelet, it is worth considering why Saint-Denis makes no mention of the Franco-Welsh excursion into England. As an almost-official chronicler of king Charles VI, he had access to important figures and official documents at the French court (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.368) and it seems reasonable, therefore, that he would have known of the full course, and key successes, of the French expedition. Considering this, it is highly surprising that he would gloss over such a potential triumph as a French army penetrating into England and conducting a stand-off with Henry IV.

There is, however, also a possibility that Saint-Denis may have deliberately understated the achievements of the Franco-Welsh campaign. Saint-Denis probably compiled his *Chronicle* around 1420, after the fall of the Duke of Orleans and the ascendancy of the Duke of Burgundy (Livingstone, ed., 2013, p.368). As Orleans was the main proponent of anti-English policy in France, including the Franco-Welsh campaign (Brough, 2017, p.139), his fall

might have made a potentially 'pro-Orleanist' chronicle dangerous in the shifting factionalism at the French court. Overall, few historians have highlighted the potential significance of this omission, and further understanding of it could be crucial to reassessing the achievements of the Franco-Welsh campaign.

Another element of Brough's argument is that between 1405-1406, Henry IV and Glyndŵr 'appear to have conducted themselves as if a truce were force' (2017, p.150). Specifically, Brough points out that Henry IV did not lead an expedition into Wales in late 1405 or early 1406. There are other explanations for Henry's relative inactivity, however, that Brough does not seem to consider. Ian Mortimer suggests that the king was suffering from a debilitating illness at the end of 1405 and that by 1406 his condition had worsened so that he postponed a session of parliament due to his inability to ride (2007, p.300). Mortimer further suggests that parliament could have been reacting to the possibility that the king would die imminently when they sought to curb his powers in the 1406 Parliament (Mortimer, p.306). His conclusion is that due to his illness, Henry IV seems to have suffered a crisis in confidence and perhaps had 'lost the will to fight' by 1406 (Mortimer, 2007, p.310)

It is also likely that Henry IV could not afford to lead a major expedition to Wales in 1406. Chris Given-Wilson points out that the entire of Henry's taxation grant from the 1404 Parliament had been spent by the summer of 1405 (2016, p.283) and he received no significant grant from the 1406 parliament. Ian Mortimer concludes that in 1406, Henry IV was once again trying to 'conduct a war with an empty treasury' (2007, p.305). This would reasonably account for Henry IV's lack of activity in Wales between 1405-1406.

While Glyndŵr may have sought a truce in 1405, it is difficult to see why Henry IV would have accepted one. The English had not suffered a dramatic enough defeat in Wales to warrant a truce and it seems increasingly unlikely, given the evidence, that the full Franco-Welsh army was present in England to force one. Without a significant breakthrough in the research, Brough's argument appears increasingly to be conjecture.

After analysis, it is hard to identify any tangible impact that the Franco-Welsh campaign had on Glyndŵr's rebellion. Its successes were limited to the South-West of Wales and were without any wider strategic benefit. Within a context of English successes in Wales in 1405 - at Grosmont, Usk and Anglesey - as well as the death of Glyndŵr's brother and the capture of his son, the 1405 campaign seems scant compensation. Brough's argument that it allowed Glyndŵr to secure a truce with Henry IV seems insubstantial enough to warrant a total reassessment of the campaign. As the climax of Glyndŵr's alliance with France, the ineffectiveness of the expedition perhaps demonstrates the overall fruitlessness of the Franco-Welsh alliance.

## Chapter Two - the Pennal Letter

The Pennal Letter, sent by Glyndŵr to Charles VI (Reese, ed., 2010) at some point in late 1406, is perhaps one of Glyndŵr's most enduring legacies. Particularly notable is the insight it provides into Glyndŵr's long-term ambitions for an independent Wales. It is also the letter by which Glyndŵr switched his spiritual allegiance to the French-backed Avignon Papacy, almost certainly at the request of Charles VI (Brough, 2017), in the midst of the Schism. Reese Davies (1995) argues that this was offered to placate the French in the hope of securing further commitment for the rebellion, while the requests for an independent Welsh church, with Welsh clergy and its own universities, were 'extraordinary ambitious' (1995, p.172). Gideon Brough (2017), however, suggests that it represented a realistic effort to lay the groundwork for genuine domestic reform and is proof of how the Franco-Welsh alliance helped advance the cause of Welsh independence (2017, p.171).

A close assessment of the nature of the Pennal Letter offers an opportunity to assess Glyndŵr's capabilities as a diplomat and statesman but crucially allows a broader assessment to be made on the balance, and success, of the Franco-Welsh alliance.

The majority of the Pennal Letter concerns the Schism and Glyndŵr's spiritual allegiance to Pope Benedict. It is probable that this recount of the causes of the Schism, and the injustice inflicted on Pope Benedict, was simply a diplomatic gesture. Reese Davies points out this long section of the letter simply 'repeats verbatim the arguments rehearsed by the French' (1995, p.170). Glyndŵr's spiritual allegiance, meanwhile, is arguably an easy thing to give away when the potential return on a renewed commitment from the French was so great. This would demonstrate Glyndŵr's keen diplomatic skill (Brough, 2017, p.168), successfully gauging his audience and offering them a substantial symbolic gesture in return for practical military aid. It is also arguable, however, that it reveals the reliance that Glyndŵr had on his

French allies. Glyndŵr had sought to exploit the ongoing Hundred Years War to cement an alliance with France in 1404, and his letters, the Pennal Letter included, demonstrate his desire to maintain it. Wales could offer France a means to attack England, but France had many other opportunities to do that: they were able to strike from Scotland, or into English-held parts of France (Davies, 1995). The balance is therefore tilted - Charles VI having nothing to lose by placating his Welsh allies, and for Glyndŵr, the French alliance was 'the lifeline to his future' (Davies, 1995, p.169).

This is particularly revealed in Glyndŵr's appeal for holy crusade against Henry IV. Brough is correct in pointing out that this was not an entirely extreme course of action - holy crusades were a widely adopted justification for war against even fellow Christians amongst Glyndŵr's contemporaries (2017, p.169). It is clear from the letter that Glyndŵr hoped to appeal to Charles VI's spirituality, offering 'to be united in spiritual things' as they were already in 'temporal matters' (Reese, ed., 2010, p.86). This demonstrates that Glyndŵr was 'willing to switch his ecclesiastical allegiance in order to fortify the French alliance' (Davies, 1995, p.169) by reminding Charles VI of his 'temporal' obligation as Glyndŵr's vassal lord since the 1404 alliance treaty. The significance of the plea, however, is in what it may reveal about the state of Glyndŵr's rebellion. In calling for a crusade, Glyndŵr was calling specifically for French military aid and presenting it as a spiritual obligation, this might reveal Glyndŵr's desperate lack of manpower by 1406 (Davies, 1995, p.195)). Glyndŵr deserves some credit for this diplomatic tact, appealing to the same sense of honour that prompted the 1405 expedition after the abortive 1404 campaign (Brough, 2017). Diplomatic guile aside, Glyndŵr's reliance on French military aid is arguably tacit recognition that Glyndŵr's rebellion would fail without a firm commitment from France.

This assessment broadly adheres to Reese Davies' consensus that the rebellion was waning by 1406. A closer examination of the situation at the French Court in 1406, however, suggests that reliance on French intervention demonstrates a measure of diplomatic naivety from Glyndŵr. As the *Parliament Rolls* reveal, Charles VI was already entertaining suggestions of an alliance with Henry IV to be sealed by marriage (*Parliament Rolls*, Henry IV, March 1406)

and this confirms Davies's analysis that Wales 'could never have been high on France's diplomatic or military agenda' (1995, p.195). It seems impossible that Glyndŵr was unaware, of the potential at least, that Henry IV and Charles VI were in negotiations, especially given that Glyndŵr had very capable diplomats well established at the French court (Brough, 2017). Furthermore he would certainly have been aware of the instability of the power balance in France at this time. Although the pro-Welsh Duke of Orleans headed the still-dominant faction at the French court in 1406, the mental and physical instability of Charles VI combined with the potential that the Burgundian faction could reverse the power balance, meant that Glyndŵr might have been politically naive to rely so heavily on a potentially tumultuous political situation. Gideon Brough does highlight that hindsight of the assassination of the Duke of Orleans, and the ensuing civil war in France 'obscures or corrupts as complicit all which happened before it' (2017, p.170). Despite this, the potential always existed that the ascendancy of the Duke of Orleans could be reversed. Reese Davies is correct to conclude that the Welsh were expendable allies to Charles VI (1995, p.196) and it is also right, therefore, that this fact should reflect on the political and diplomatic ability of Glyndŵr himself.

This assessment also has implications for the more famous section of the Pennal Letter - that which concerns the establishment of an independent Wales. The Pennal Letter contains Glyndŵr's appeal for the designation of St Davids as a metropolitan see independent from Canterbury, and the request for more Welshmen to be appointed to Welsh bishoprics (Reese, ed., 2010). Both of these requests were granted by Pope Benedict between 1406-1407 and this can be considered a notable success on Glyndŵr's part. It also demonstrates Glyndŵr's ability to use France as an intermediary with Pope Benedict. This allowed Glyndŵr to participate in wider European diplomacy whilst advancing the cause of Welsh independence.

It would be easy to overstate the significance of these achievements, however, and they should be considered in their broader context. With the Papal Schism still ongoing, and considering that Henry IV recognised the pope in Rome, Reese Davies is right in pointing out

that 'such a list of demands [...] could be readily conceded' (1995, p.170) by Pope Benedict. The Avignon pope had nothing to lose from acquiescing to Glyndŵr's demands, running no risk of alienating England, while extending the influence of his papacy to Wales. It is also worth highlighting the fluidity of events in Europe by 1406: the Schism could end at anytime, and it was far from certain who would win. Also, Pope Benedict appointed several Welshmen to Welsh bishoprics. John Trefor, Lewis Byford, Gruffydd Yonge and Adam Usk, were all appointed in June 1406, with others following in 1407 (Brough, 2017, p.170). This, alongside the designation of St David's as the metropolitan church in Wales, has lead Gideon Brough to conclude that Glyndŵr achieved a diplomatic coup via the Pennal Letter (2017, p.171). It is worth considering, however, that John Trefor had previously been appointed by the Roman Pope Boniface IX, but defected to Glyndŵr. Also, the Bishop of Bangor had not been able to enter his diocese since 1401 due to the rebellion (*Parliament Rolls*, Henry IV, March 1406). It is reasonable to argue, therefore, that the influence of Canterbury was already negligible in Wales by 1406, and that a large part of the Welsh senior clergy were already acting in total disregard of Canterbury. This might suggest that Pope Benedict's declarations, far from being a breakthrough for Welsh independence, were merely rhetorical affirmation of a situation that already existed *de facto* in Wales by 1406.

While the historical consensus is that the Pennal Letter represents Glyndŵr in his element - as a premium statesman and diplomat, it could be interpreted more as desperation, than diplomatic guile, and its contents do seem to reveal the imbalance in the Franco-Welsh alliance. Even its achievements might not be, upon analysis, as groundbreaking as Gideon Brough suggests (2017, p.173). It is also worth reiterating the case made in Chapter One, that it is unlikely that Glyndŵr and Henry IV conducted a truce in 1405. Since Gideon Brough's assessment of the Pennal Letter is predicated on this assumption, without the truce, it becomes difficult to imagine how Glyndŵr could have hoped to enact his ambitious domestic vision. This returns us to Reese Davies' original assessment, that without firm foreign intervention,

plans for an independent Wales 'would remain the fantasies of over-excitables clerics' (1995, p.173).

## Conclusion

Fully understanding the nature of the Franco-Welsh alliance reveals a great deal about the rebellion itself and particularly of its enigmatic leader. The alliance with France in 1404 could have transformed his struggle from a period of violent unrest in a rebellious corner of England into an international war for independence. Rhetoric and assurances aside, only firm military intervention from France, like that attempted in 1405, could realistically have offered Glyndŵr any chance of victory. Its failure to achieve anything demands a reappraisal of French commitment to the cause of Welsh independence. The assertion is made here that the failure of the Franco-Welsh alliance, is a failure, also, of Glyndŵr.

Contrary to the previous consensus, Gideon Brough's revisionist case for the 1405-1406 period is that:

'These must have been exciting times, the Welsh were in the process of resurrecting their own native church, they had contact with the pope unfettered by Canterbury, they held territory and castles, they were running their own political affairs and in contact with other powers, they had a firm alliance with France and there were possibly still French troops in Wales to offer support: all appeared to be going well.' (2017, p.171)

Some of the evidence upon which Brough's arguments are predicated, does not withstand closer scrutiny. The 1405 campaign seems increasingly like a symbolic gesture of support from France rather than a serious effort to bring the English to battle and force some kind of settlement. Even if it had, by 1407, political unrest in France had become a civil war and ruined once and for all the prospect of a sustainable Franco-Welsh alliance.

Glyndŵr may have been naive to depend on such an unpredictable political situation in the French court; but the Pennal Letter reveals the desperate effort Glyndŵr would put into

trying to secure French commitment. That serious aid was promised, but was never forthcoming, forces a reexamination of Glyndŵr's reputation as an astute diplomat and statesman.

Without a serious breakthrough in the research, then, Brough's revisionist argument is not enough to seriously contend with Reese Davies' analysis of the Franco-Welsh alliance:

'In retrospect the wonder, surely, is that the alliance achieved as much as it did. In spite of the flattering talk at the French court, Wales could never have been high on France's diplomatic or military agenda [...] at the end of the day there could be no question but that the French were using the Welsh, and that the value of the latter would ultimately be determined by the domestic and international politics of France.' (1995, p.195)

The 1405 campaign reveals a distinct lack of will for serious military commitment in Wales, while the Pennal Letter demonstrates that the alliance was not an equitable relationship. Ultimately, France contributed little, beyond windy rhetoric and unsubstantiated promises, to Glyndŵr's revolt. It is perhaps not enough to blame bad luck for the failures of the Franco-Welsh alliance when Glyndŵr must have known the capriciousness of his French allies.

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