

An Open University Dissertation:

A329: The Making of Welsh History

**The Abduction of Nest of Deheubarth (1109):
A Reappraisal**

**Assessing female personal agency in twelfth and early
thirteenth century Wales**

by Alli Templeton

May 2021

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my tutor, Claire Phillips, for all her help and support throughout this difficult year, and for spurring me on when times were particularly tough.

Thanks also to the medieval historians at the Open University S J Allen and Gideon Brough for their help and advice.

Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter I: Nest in Context	10
Chapter II: The Abduction	18
Chapter III: The Personal Agency of the Noblewomen of Wales.....	25
Conclusion	33
Bibliography	35

Introduction

In the depth of a winter's night in 1109, Nest of Deheubarth, daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr, was the victim of a scandalous night-time abduction by her cousin, Owain ap Cadwgan of Powys. The incident occurred at a turbulent time in the establishment of the Marcher territories and the political consequences were severe. Powys was subjected to an assault by the Anglo-Normans and their Welsh allies, and Owain was driven into exile in Ireland while his father was relieved of his lands for a time by Henry I.¹ Although the abduction of Nest is one of the most famous events in Welsh history, many historians gloss over the episode and little scholarly analysis has focussed on Nest's personal involvement in the scheme and whether or not she was a willing participant. This dissertation will aim to put the lady herself into the spotlight with particular focus on her abduction, and use this as a case study to explore the degree of agency that medieval noblewomen exercised over their personal lives during this highly formative and volatile period in the history of Wales.

The subject of female power and agency is a relatively recent development in the historiography of Britain, having advanced during the women's movement in the 1970s through the work of scholars such as Sheila Rowbotham and Sally Alexander.² In more recent years, historians including Susan Johns and Emma Cavell have successfully challenged the received image of medieval women as mere 'victims of patriarchal power'.³ Johns has

¹ Susan M. Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the High Middle Ages: Nest of Deheubarth*, (Manchester, 2017), pp. 19-20. Historians generally agree that the year of the abduction was 1109. See, for example, David Crouch, 'Nest', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Nest \(b. before 1092, d. c. 1130\), royal mistress | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

² Johanna Alberti, *Gender and the Historian*, (Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), pp. 28- 31. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/open/reader.action?docID=1733995> Accessed: 26th May 2021.

³ Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 6

produced a significant body of scholarship on the subject of female agency in the middle ages, including her book *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth Century Anglo-Norman Realm*.⁴ There is a great deal of work yet to be done in this area and, as Johns has pointed out, there remains a 'lack of published scholarship on women and gender in medieval Wales when compared with medieval English or European women'.⁵ Cavell has been one of the foremost contributors to the Welsh historiography to date, producing several studies on the agency and power of medieval Welsh noblewomen, such as her article *Intelligence and Intrigue in the March of Wales* in which she reveals the role of Marcher wives in the downfall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282.⁶ The focus on women's power has thrown new light on female agency within the political arena, but with these fresh understandings further questions arise as to the extent to which such noblewomen acted on their personal wishes and desires, particularly in under-researched Wales.

There has been comparatively little scholarship on the subject of Nest and her colourful life, and much has been within the context of conquest and political events or portraying her as a key figure in the development of Welsh national identity and as a symbol of resistance to invasion.⁷ There are currently two major works on Nest. The first is John's enlightening monograph *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the High Middle Ages*, which places Nest at the

⁴ Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, aristocracy and power in the twelfth century Anglo-Norman Realm*, (Manchester, 2003).

⁵ Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 7.

⁶ Emma Cavell, 'Intelligence and intrigue in the March of Wales: noblewomen and the fall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, 1274-1282', in *Historical Research*, 88 (239), (2015), pp. 1-19. Available at: [Intelligence and intrigue in the March of Wales: noblewomen and the fall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, 1274–82 | Historical Research | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁷ Susan M. Johns, 'Nest of Deheubarth: Reading female power in the historiography of Wales' in Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds, Susan M. Johns (eds), *Gender and historiography: Studies in the earlier middle ages in honour of Pauline Stafford*, (London, 2012), p. 91. Available at: [View Open Access PDF view of the file GenderHistoriographyNelsonetal.pdf \(humanities-digital-library.org\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021

centre of a study of the interplay of gender, conquest and imperialism in Welsh historiography, and the abduction is covered in detail.⁸ The main thrust of John's argument is that gender was vital to representations of Nest's abduction, the Norman incursions and Welsh resistance to conquest, and that this subsequently affected the development of Welsh identity in the modern period. Kari Maund's biography, *Princess Nest of Wales: Seductress of the English* is a thorough but partly speculative account of Nest's life that reaches beyond the scope of this dissertation, but offers useful insights and information for comparison to primary and other secondary source material.⁹ Those historians who have expressed an opinion on Nest's involvement in her abduction are divided. J. E. Lloyd suggested that 'the heroine did not play an altogether unwilling part in the affair',¹⁰ while Geraint Jenkins presented Nest's willingness as categorical 'fact'.¹¹ Maund disagrees, having asserted that Owain's abduction of Nest was 'opportunistic' and politically motivated.¹² Many historians, however, skim over the incident without comment. For example, David Walker mentioned only that 'in 1109 Owain carried off Nest, the wife of Gerald of Windsor', concentrating instead on the resulting impact on Owain's father, Cadwgan ap Bleddyn.¹³ However, the question of Nest's involvement in the event can tell us much about women's lives in this period of Welsh history. This dissertation will return to the primary and secondary sources available at the time of writing to examine the abduction itself in order to determine whether or not Nest was a willing accomplice. In addition to the secondary

⁸ Johns., *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 19-48.

⁹ Kari Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales: Seductress of the English*, (The History Press, 2007). Available at: [ProQuest Ebook Central - Detail page](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

¹⁰ John Edward Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, Vol 2. (London, Forgotten Books, (2018) [1912]), p. 418.

¹¹ Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales*, (Cambridge, 2007), p. 75.

¹² Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 98.

¹³ David Walker, *Medieval Wales*, (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 37-38.

works discussed above, primary sources such as the works of Gerald of Wales and the *Brut y Tywysogion* will be analysed, together with references to the *Laws of Hywel Dda* and various monastic and secular chronicles.¹⁴ Nest's life will then be used to explore the wider subject of female personal agency among the noblewomen of Wales. In this way, a new dimension of the elite medieval world may be revealed, adding deeper, more rounded insights into the lives of these women during the high medieval period.

Portrayals of Nest have often been criticised as over-romanticised. For example, Johns noted that Lloyd's interests in *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* were in representing her as a romantic popular figure of Welsh national identity.¹⁵ Although the intention of this study is to provide a more pragmatic assessment of Nest's life, historians can often be guilty of overlooking the humanity of the past. Professor Pauline Stafford is an exception, having engaged with aspects of individual personality and emotional behaviour in much of her work, and in a collection of essays in her honour, David Bates's argument concurred that within historical interpretations 'individual uniqueness and

¹⁴ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, ed. & trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London, 2004); Gerald of Wales, *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, ed & trans. by H. E. Butler, (Woodbridge, 2005); Gerald of Wales, *The History of the Conquest of Ireland* (1189), quoted in Julieann Veronica Ulin, "'Can a Wrong Once Done Ever Be Undone?' Ireland's Helen of Troy', in *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 39 (3), (2011), pp. 173-192. Available at: "[Can a Wrong Once Done Ever Be Undone?" Ireland's Helen of Troy - ProQuest \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021; Caradoc of Llancaravan, *Brut y Tywysogion or Chronicle of the Princes*, trans. by John Williams, (London, 1860). Available at: [Brut y tywysogion : or, The chronicle of the princes : Caradoc, of Llancarvan, d. 1147? : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#). Accessed 26th May 2021; Anon., *Brut y Tywysogion, Peniarth MS 20 Version*, trans. by T. Jones, (Cardiff, 1941), quoted in Susan M. Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the High Middle Ages: Nest of Deheubarth*, (Manchester, 2017), pp. 23-24; Anon., *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales: Comprising Laws Supposed to be Enacted by Howel the Good*, trans. by Aneurin Owen, (1841). Available at: [#9 - Ancient laws and institutes of Wales; comprising ... v.1. - Full View | HathiTrust Digital Library | HathiTrust Digital Library](#) Accessed 26th May 2021. **Please note:** The dates in the Williams version of the *Brut y Tywysogion* (online) differ from those presented in most secondary sources. Accordingly, for the purposes of this dissertation the dates from the latter will be cited.

¹⁵ Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p.175.

a degree of agency have always to be reckoned with'.¹⁶ This is one approach that will be taken in this study. The high medieval period in Wales was a time fraught with conflict and emotion, and human nature has changed little over time. In reality, even during the middle ages individuals acted on their feelings and wishes, and people fell in love and made mistakes.

With this in mind, Chapter I will examine the available sources in order to build a picture of the three main protagonists in the abduction: Nest, Gerald of Windsor and Owain ap Cadwgan, within the context of twelfth century Wales. Nest's experiences at home, as a royal mistress and possibly as a ward of the English crown will be considered, factors that will have shaped her character and, it will be argued, would have altered her status.¹⁷ The abduction itself will then come under scrutiny in Chapter II with a fresh analysis of the key text on the event in the *Brut y Tywysogion*. The account provided in the *Brut* has been subjected to scholarly analysis, with questions arising over its reliability owing to variations in style, tone and pace leading to suggestions that the incident was presented primarily as a symbol of Welsh resistance to Norman invasion, a view that will be challenged.¹⁸

¹⁶ Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds, Susan M. Johns, (eds), 'Introduction', in *Gender and historiography: Studies in the earlier middle ages in honour of Pauline Stafford*, (London, 2012), p. 6. Available at: [View Open Access PDF view of the file GenderHistoriographyNelsonetal.pdf \(humanities-digital-library.org\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021; David Bates, 'Anger, Emotion and a Biography of William the Conqueror', in Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds, Susan M. Johns, (eds), *Gender and historiography: Studies in the earlier middle ages in honour of Pauline Stafford*, (London, 2012), p. 21. Available at: [View Open Access PDF view of the file GenderHistoriographyNelsonetal.pdf \(humanities-digital-library.org\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021. For an example of Stafford's approach see the following review: Julie Ann Smith, 'Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's & Power in Eleventh-Century England (review)', in *Parergon*, 15 (2), (1998), p. 280. Available at: [Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England \(review\) \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

¹⁷ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, pp.73-74.

¹⁸ Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 224; Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, pp.96-97.

Having established, as far as possible, what happened, Chapter III will compare Nest's case with the behaviour and actions of other noblewomen from both *Pura Wallia* and *Marchia Wallie*. Examples of marital infidelity and their implications for noblewomen will be discussed before considering Nest's later relationships following her husband's death. A comparison with the responses to widowhood of other noblewomen will reveal that, contrary to Maund's assertions that Welsh widows had little choice but to remarry, Nest's status as a Welsh Marcher wife, mother to a son of the English king and former ward of the crown would have afforded her other options.¹⁹ The conclusion will then draw together all the evidence in the study to assess the extent of control that noblewomen of Wales could exert over their personal lives in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and how they exercised that agency within the confines of a judgemental and patriarchal society.

¹⁹ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p.105

Chapter I: Nest in Context

Historians often portray Nest in somewhat whimsical terms, almost as a figure of light relief amid the political morass that was Wales and the Welsh Marches in the twelfth century. Rees Davies has described her as ‘a lady of easy charm and many lovers’,²⁰ while John Davies pointed out that owing to her ‘numerous affairs’ her seduction by Owain would not have been ‘a novel experience for her’.²¹ Others have at least credited her with some deeper qualities, such as David Crouch who noted that ‘certainly she was a woman of some character and independence’.²² In order to understand the level of control that Nest may have taken over her personal affairs, some understanding of her personality and life would be helpful. Her resourceful character traits would likely have been formed by her experiences as a young girl uniquely caught up in the turbulence of the Anglo-Norman incursions and internal Welsh conflict. We do not know when Nest was born, but as her parents, Rhys ap Tewdwr and Gwladus, daughter of Rhiwallon ap Cynfyn of Powys married c.1081 we must assume it was some time after that. Maund has put her birth between 1081 and 1085, convincingly so considering Nest had borne three children by Gerald of Windsor by 1109 and possibly another by Henry I, and assuming adherence to the Welsh and English Canon laws that both stipulated a minimum age for marriage of twelve years old.²³ Having spent her early years in accordance with Welsh law ‘at her father’s platter’ and most likely within the *Ilysoed* of his kingdom, the death of Rhys ap Tewdwr in battle in 1093 would have

²⁰ R.R. Davies, *Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415*, (Oxford, 2000), p.71. Available at: [Native Wales 1063–1172: Power, Conflict, and Hegemony - Oxford Scholarship \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

²¹ John Davies, *A History of Wales*, (London, 2007), pp. 108-9

²² Crouch, ‘Nest’.

²³ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, pp. 28-29; 94. Maund argues convincingly that Nest’s son by Henry I would have been born before her marriage to Gerald. See p. 79-80; 101.

meant a period of swift and dramatic change for Nest, being thrust into an unfamiliar Anglo-Norman world with an alien culture and language.²⁴ These traumatic changes would doubtless have made a strong impact on a young aristocratic Welsh girl, and necessity and survival instinct would have required her to adjust and learn quickly, adding weight to Crouch's and Jenkins's assessments of her as quick-thinking and resourceful.

An analysis of the effects of Nest's transfer from Welsh to Anglo-Norman hands and possibly into the care of the Crown suggests that her status would have altered and that this would have affected both her expectations and her outlook. At a time when the Welsh Marches were still finding their feet Nest was in an unprecedented position, almost subject to dual nationality. Under Welsh law, she would have held no property rights, but the situation was different in England, where women could inherit land.²⁵ Emma Cavell has highlighted the involvement of women in the 'process of legal transformation [in Wales] ... of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries' resulting from English influence.²⁶ Nest was one of the first Welsh noblewomen to be married to an Anglo-Norman lord at this relatively early stage of Marcher development, possibly even at the instigation of the English king.²⁷ Moreover, her affair with Henry I and the fact that she bore him a son would have brought her closer to the

²⁴ Anon., *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales: Comprising Laws Supposed to be Enacted by Howel the Good*, trans. by Aneurin Owen, (1841). Available at: [#9 - Ancient laws and institutes of Wales; comprising ... v.1. - Full View | HathiTrust Digital Library | HathiTrust Digital Library](#) Accessed 26th May 2021; Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 36; 48.

²⁵ Emma Cavell, *Women in Wales*, (2015). Available at: https://openedx.open.ac.uk/assets/courseware/v1/2d9f18527ea395ff6f0473c5ba6158cb/asset-v1:ou+A329+2020J+type@asset+block/a329_2017j_blk1_aug_women_medieval_wales.pdf Accessed: 26th May 2021.

²⁶ Emma Cavell, 'Widows, Native Law and the Long Shadow of England in Thirteenth-Century Wales', in *The English historical review*, 133 (565), (2018), p. 1387. Available at: [Widows, Native Law and the Long Shadow of England in Thirteenth-Century Wales* | The English Historical Review | Oxford Academic \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

²⁷ Roger Turvey, *The Welsh Princes: The Native Rulers of Wales 1063-1283*, (Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), p. 60. Available at: [ProQuest Ebook Central - Reader](#) Accessed 26th May 2021; Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, pp. 92-93.

Crown and enhanced her status, particularly because Henry was known to look after his mistresses and illegitimate children.²⁸ Therefore, it could be argued that Nest's status as a royal mistress, mother to the son of an English king and a Welsh Marcher wife represents one of the earliest confluences of Welsh and English law, either of which could be drawn upon in her future life to her advantage. Evidence for this early blurring of legal boundaries in the Marches can be found within the twelfth century *Journey Through Wales* written by Nest's grandson, the prolific writer and churchman Gerald of Wales, in which he states that Gerald of Windsor married Nest 'with the object of giving himself and his troops a firmer foothold in the country'.²⁹ This reflects the Anglo-Norman view that Nest must have been in possession of at least some of her father's Welsh lands at the time of the marriage. Nest's experiences in both worlds would, therefore, surely not only have given her a hybrid status, but would also have made her more worldly than other Welsh noblewomen, helping to shape her resourceful character, her expectations and, as will be discussed in Chapter III, would most likely have widened her marital options in later life.

Nest's legendary beauty must also have come into play during these formative years. We are deprived of any contemporary descriptions of her physical attributes, but historians generally agree that she possessed them in abundance.³⁰ What we can be certain of is that there was a sharp awareness of feminine beauty during the high middle ages. Welsh medieval literature, with its roots in the oral tradition, is rich in female characters of

²⁸ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 80.

²⁹ Gerald of Wales, *Journey Through Wales*, p. 149.

³⁰ See for example, Rees Davies's description of her as 'ravishingly beautiful': Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 71. Geraint Jenkins has similarly described her as 'ravishing': Jenkins, *Concise History of Wales*, p. 75. A. J. Roderick also acknowledged that she was 'famed for her physical charms': A. J. Roderick, 'Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282' in *Welsh History Review*, 4 (1), (1968), p. 6. Available at: [Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282 - ProQuest \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

exquisite looks, such as those in the *Mabinogion*, in which influential and beautiful women can directly affect the outcome of stories.³¹ In the First Branch, Pwyll, the prince of Dyfed, falls in love with the enigmatic and elusive Rhiannon on her magical horse, feeling that ‘the face of every maiden and every woman he had ever seen was unattractive compared with her face’.³² In other examples the heroic Culhwch must complete a series of feats of derring-do in order to win the hand of the fair Olwen, whose beauty is richly described in verse, while in the Fourth Branch the adulterous Blodeuedd, conjured from flowers, is ‘the fairest and most beautiful maiden that anyone had ever seen’.³³ These stories, infused with magic, strong imagery and powerful emotions, project an idea of a hypnotic, sometimes almost siren power that feminine beauty could exert over an infatuated man. Love poetry born of the bardic tradition also featured in Welsh culture, in which women are lauded for their fine looks and qualities by lovelorn suitors.³⁴ Johns has argued that Nest has been interpreted in this light as a symbol of a legitimised male response by the Welsh to conquest, whilst acknowledging that Lloyd’s groundbreaking narrative of her abduction that dubbed her the ‘Helen of Wales’ was based on ‘painstaking research’. Johns cites other historians who concur with her view that Lloyd’s purpose was nationalistic and that he used ‘the past as a source of inspiration for the present’. Thus she asserts that Nest’s beauty was a construction in the process of ‘nation building’.³⁵ Whilst this presentation of Nest’s attractiveness as an ‘encoded concept’ is incisive and clearly holds much valid analysis, it must be remembered

³¹ Anon., *The Mabinogion* trans. by Sioned Davies, (Oxford, 2007), p. ix; xxvi

³² Anon., *The Mabinogion*, pp. 10-11

³³ Anon., *The Mabinogion*, p. 192; 58.

³⁴ See, for example, Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd’s poem, *The Choice*, in which he expresses his desire for ‘Yon lovely maid of form divine’: Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd, ‘Translation of The Choice’ in *The Cambro-Briton*, 1 (8) (1820), pp. 312–312. Available at: [Translation of the Choice on JSTOR \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

³⁵ Susan M. Johns, ‘Beauty and the Feast: the cultural constructions of female beauty and social interaction in twelfth-century Wales’, in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 30, (2010), pp. 106-107. Available at: [Beauty and the Feast: the cultural constructions of female beauty and social interaction in twelfth-century Wales on JSTOR \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

that whatever her symbolism within the historiography, during Nest's lifetime she not only drew the admiring eye of the English king, but she secured at least five lovers and husbands who were willing to provide for her and add to her ever increasing brood.³⁶ This alone suggests that, in the harsh reality of the twelfth century, she must have had an enduring appeal in some form, and that she would most likely have been aware of her affect on men and the advantages that might offer. Indeed, her string of relationships may even imply that she enjoyed male attention.

To place Nest within the context of the abduction, a brief consideration of the male figures involved is also apposite. Perhaps the best snapshot of the older, seasoned warrior Gerald of Windsor comes from Gerald of Wales's *Journey*, in which he describes his maternal grandfather's handling of the siege of Pembroke Castle in 1096.³⁷ According to the *Journey*, Gerald of Windsor was 'a stalwart, cunning man' who managed to turn around the desperate situation in which 'those inside were greatly reduced and near the end of their tether' to victory by means of clever deception. Having thrown four pig carcasses over the walls in pretence of the defenders' ample food supplies, he came up with 'an even more ingenious stratagem' of leaving a spurious letter to his lord, Arnulf de Montgomery, to be found by the Welsh, stating that they 'would have no need of reinforcements ... for a good four months'. This led the Welsh to abandon the siege.³⁸ It is, of course, entirely possible that this account of Gerald's heroic genius was embellished with a generous dose of family pride, but the story does offer two important insights. Firstly, we are given a vivid picture of

³⁶ Johns, *Beauty and the Feast*, p. 107.

³⁷David Walker, 'Windsor, Gerald of', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: <https://www-oxforddnb-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-45551?rskey=UXOvVd&result=2> Accessed 26th May 2021.

³⁸ Gerald of Wales, *Journey Through Wales*, pp. 148-149

the brutal, conflict-ridden world of the nascent Marcher territories in which Gerald of Windsor was embroiled, and we can also glean some information about the man himself. As castellan of Pembroke, Gerald was clearly one of Arnulf's most trusted retainers. We can also assume that he had displayed some degree of exemplary skills as a soldier and probably as a military strategist to have risen from relative obscurity as the younger son of a Norman constable of Windsor Castle to hold the top job at Pembroke.³⁹ Furthermore, his switch of allegiance to Henry I after Arnulf's uprising in 1102 enabled him to secure the same role at Pembroke for the king, a career move that suggests Gerald was a pragmatic, adaptable and shrewd man.

Owain ap Cadwgan generally cuts a less impressive figure in the historiography, seeming to fit Rees Davies's description of the Welsh ruling class as 'lustful warriors' and vengeful men of 'violent emotions ... [that] more often than not shaped their actions'.⁴⁰ Owain himself was described by Walker as 'a courageous fighter but completely devoid of political skill, and perhaps even of political ambition'.⁴¹ This seems to match the consensus of most historians.⁴² Aside from the abduction, these traits are apparent from Owain's earliest notable political act of killing his cousins, Griffi and Meurig, who, as sons of a former king of Gwynedd and Powys, he saw as a threat to his father's rule.⁴³ The assertions of his character are supported by the *Brut y Tywysogion*, which notes his turbulent relationship with his father, Cadwgan, and states that he had 'unworthily governed' his Powys lands.⁴⁴ Although

³⁹ Walker, 'Windsor, Gerald of'.

⁴⁰ R.R. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 46

⁴¹ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p. 37.

⁴² Rees Davies described Owain as 'dashing, but utterly irresponsible': R.R. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 71; Roger Turvey described him as the 'maverick prince of Powys': Turvey, *The Welsh Princes*, p.79.

⁴³ Maund, K. (2007), *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 94

⁴⁴ Anon., *Brut*, Williams, p. 93. Available at: [Brut y tywysogion : or, The chronicle of the princes : Caradoc, of Llancarvan, d. 1147? : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/1147) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Owain clearly had a propensity towards rash behaviour, he also appears to have had some moderating qualities. The disposal of Griffi and Meurig indicates that despite the difficult relationship with his father he could be a loyal son. This is further demonstrated by Owain's avenging of Cadwgan's murder by his cousin Madog ap Rhiryd in 1111.⁴⁵ The *Brut* relates that he 'came in haste' to the place where Madog was being held and 'took him with pleasure and blinded him'.⁴⁶ He also appears to have been capable of reasoned thought and perhaps even a silken tongue, as is suggested by his reconciliation with Henry I following the king's campaign against him in 1114. Having been forced to submit, Owain seems to have been treated particularly favourably. The *Brut* quotes Henry as proclaiming 'since thou hast willingly come to me ... I will dignify thee, and exalt thee to be the highest and the chiefest of thy nation', before knighting him and reinstating all his lands.⁴⁷ Although this account may have been exaggerated in favour of the Powys dynasty, it is fair to assume that Owain must have been highly convincing in his submission to the king because as well as treating him favourably, Henry took his new knight and trusted supporter on campaign to Normandy.⁴⁸

The understanding of history can be greatly enhanced by an understanding of the people who made it, and much can be learned by studying individuals' actions and responses to the events of their lives. In exploring the characters of Nest, Gerald and Owain, a picture emerges of a strong, capable and attractive Welsh woman who had learned to survive in

⁴⁵ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 100.

⁴⁶ Anon., *Brut*, Williams, p. 113. Available at: [Brut y tywysogion : or, The chronicle of the princes : Caradoc, of Llancarvan, d. 1147? : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁴⁷ Anon., *Brut*, Williams, pp. 116-118.

⁴⁸ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 94; Huw Pryce, 'Bleddyn ap Cynfyn' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Bleddyn ap Cynfyn \(d. 1075\), king of Gwynedd and of Powys | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

two worlds, her resourceful and experienced older Norman husband and her young, impetuous and perhaps sometimes well-intentioned and loyal, but politically inept Welsh cousin, all living in an era of ambitious rulers, heightened emotions and territorial and political conflict surrounding the emergent Marcher lands. This then, is the heady mix of people and the milieu in which the abduction, which will be examined in Chapter II, took place.

Chapter II: The Abduction

For women in the high middle ages adultery was an offence that could have serious consequences. In England, this perceived threat to the production of legitimate offspring meant that a woman who behaved adulterously could be subject to forfeiture of her inheritance, physical punishment and condemnation by the local community and the Church.⁴⁹ Under Welsh law, a woman's sexuality was seen as her husband's property until he consummated a second union.⁵⁰ Consequently, infidelity was seen as 'the ultimate shame that a woman could bring on herself and her kin, and the ultimate insult that she could impose on her husband'. This in turn might lead to a humiliating public ritual of denial requiring the testimony of fifty women, rejection by her husband and the loss of all rights.⁵¹ Furthermore, the Welsh law texts stipulate that a hefty compensation, *sarhaed*, must be paid to the husband for the wife's infidelity 'because it is productive of family enmity'.⁵² Female adultery, therefore, was regarded as a serious offence, and the risks involved in conducting an illicit affair whilst residing in the marital home were great. Little wonder, then, that Caroline Dunn has argued that many medieval women in England arranged their abductions as a smokescreen for their escapes from unwanted marriages or to 'join their desired lovers'.⁵³ As an astute Welsh woman married to an Anglo-Norman noble, Nest would have been all too aware of the risks on both sides to her honour and security of being

⁴⁹ Caroline Dunn, *Stolen Women in Medieval England: Rape, Abduction and Adultery 1100-1500*, (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 120-121. Available at: [ProQuest Ebook Central - Reader](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁵⁰ Robin Chapman Stacey, 'Divorce, Medieval Welsh Style', in *Speculum*, 77 (4), (2002), p. 1117. Available at: [Divorce, Medieval Welsh Style on JSTOR \(open.ac.uk\)](#)

⁵¹ Morfydd E. Owen, 'Shame and Reparation: Women's Place in the Kin', in Morfydd E. Owen and Daffyd Jenkins (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women*, (Cardiff, 2017), p.58-59.

⁵² Anon, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*, p. 87. Available at: [#9 - Ancient laws and institutes of Wales; comprising ... v.1. - Full View | HathiTrust Digital Library | HathiTrust Digital Library](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁵³ Dunn, *Stolen Women in Medieval England*, pp. 1; 159-160; 195.

caught with another man. But a fresh analysis of the key primary text for the abduction in the *Brut* reveals hints that indicate her willingness to be stolen by Owain, suggesting that in this way that she exercised agency in her personal affairs.

The *Brut*, a thirteenth century monastic chronicle, is one of our foremost primary sources for medieval Wales. There are three independent versions in the vernacular translated from the lost Latin text: *The Red Book of Hergest*, *Peniarth MS 20* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, or *The Kings of the Saxons*.⁵⁴ The *Brut's* account of the abduction has been questioned by scholars in terms of its authenticity. Maund has asserted that the section of years containing the abduction 'shows signs of having been rewritten at some later period' in favour of the Powys dynasty and is 'unusually detailed, including direct speech', almost resembling a prose tale.⁵⁵ However, this analysis is problematic for several reasons. Whilst some signs of bias towards Powys may be discernible, the passage covering the abduction can hardly be seen as complementary to Owain, and it would be hard for any clerical author to justify the theft of a noble wife. Furthermore, the detail provided on the abduction is understandable given the political uproar triggered by the episode, and that in Welsh dynastic rivalry 'violence against women [was] rare', making it worthy of chroniclers' attention.⁵⁶ In fact, the *Brut* is replete with detailed entries of events, even including physical descriptions of notable figures.⁵⁷ Similarly, although uncommon in the *Brut*, direct speech in monastic chronicles is far from unusual, featuring widely in the works of Bede, Nennius and in the

⁵⁴ Johns, *Nest of Deheubarth: Reading female power in the historiography of Wales*, pp. 92-93.

⁵⁵ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 97.

⁵⁶ Johns., *Gender, Nation and Conquest*. p. 42

⁵⁷ For example, see the detailed entries for 1020 on the war between Llywelyn ap Seisyll and Rein the Scot, for 1145 on the death of Rhun, son of Owain including detailed physical description and for 1176 for the cultural festival of the Lord Rhys. Anon., *Brut*, Williams, p. 37; 170; 228. Available at: [Brut y tywysogion : or, The chronicle of the princes : Caradoc, of Llancarvan, d. 1147? : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Book of Llandaff.⁵⁸ The *Brut* would have been written over generations by a succession of authors, therefore it is possible that the section in question may reflect the particular style and interests of the original author or redactor. In terms of reliability, Maund has pointed out that although the Welsh chronicles are retrospective, they ‘may well have been composed ... with access to earlier accounts and perhaps to the memories of those who had viewed the events themselves’.⁵⁹ Johns has also noted that the similarity in accounts between the three versions of the *Brut* suggests that ‘the original tale appears to have been transmitted with little deviation’, which suggests a degree of reliability.⁶⁰ Whilst we should hesitate to take the account at face value, the *Brut* can give us a good idea of what transpired that fateful night, and provide us with a rare glimpse into the private lives of medieval Welsh noblewomen.

The *Brut* tells us that the origins of the abduction lay in the Christmas feast that Owain’s father, Cadwgan, hosted ‘for the chieftains of his country’ and ‘in honour of God’. Nest and Gerald do not appear to have been present as we are told they were at their castle of ‘Little Cenarch’, recently built and fortified by Gerald to house ‘his riches ... his wife, his heirs, and

⁵⁸ For example, see Bede’s account of the friend of King Edwin’s offer of rescue from Raedwald’s court: Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by J. McClure, & R. Collins, (Oxford, 2008), p.92; see also Nennius’s account of the dragons’ fight at Dinas Emrys: Nennius, *The Works of Gildas and Nennius*, trans. by J. A. Giles (London, 1841). pp. 23-24. Available at: [The works of Gildas and Nennius : Gildas, 516?-570? n 85112337 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#). Accessed 25th May 2021; The Book of Llandaff also includes direct speech throughout, for example Caradog’s arrival at Bardsey to find the hermit Elgar: Anon., *The Liber landavensis, Llyfr Teilo, or, The ancient register of the cathedral church of Llandaff; from mss. in the libraries of Hengwrt, and of Jesus college, Oxford*, trans. by William Jenkins Rees (Llandovery, 1840), p.344. Available at: [The Liber landavensis, Llyfr Teilo, or, The ancient register of the cathedral church of Llandaff; from mss. in the libraries of Hengwrt, and of Jesus college, Oxford: : William Jenkins Rees , Society for the Publication of Ancient Welsh Manuscripts : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁵⁹ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 97.

⁶⁰ Johns, S. M., (2012), *Nest of Deheubarth: Reading female power in the historiography of Wales*, p. 94.

all dear to him'.⁶¹ This description of Gerald's intentions for his castle and his family suggests that he was a protective husband and father well aware of potential threats in the Marcher territory, and enhances our image of him as a capable and proactive man. The *Brut* states that after Cadwgan's feast, Owain decided to visit Nest, 'as his kinswoman', when it seems he fell in love with her.⁶² According to the *Peniarth MS 20* version, Owain was 'moved by passion and love for the woman' when, 'at the instigation of the Devil', he took around fourteen men to launch a night time raid on Gerald's castle, where he and his men breached the defences 'unknown to the watchers'.⁶³ Here, it is hard to imagine how a group of fifteen men could gain entry into a well fortified castle unnoticed and unchallenged at such a quiet time of night when little other activity would have been taking place, and the sleek operation would suggest a degree of planning had gone into the raid along with research into the fortress's weak points, perhaps even benefiting from inside information.

When the intruders 'raised a shout', presumably to announce their arrival, we are told that Gerald awoke and was 'afraid ... and knew not what he should do'. In a seemingly grand departure from his quick-thinking, brave and inventive character, we are led to believe that Gerald, the soldier and skilled castle constable, turned to his wife for help. At this point, Nest seemed to be already aware of the attackers' position, and 'led him to the privies' where he escaped alone.⁶⁴ It seems highly questionable that a man of Gerald's strengths and courage who had installed his family in a purpose-built castle for their safety would not stay to defend them. A more plausible scenario might be that he would only have made an

⁶¹ Anon., *Brut*, Williams, p. 83. Available at: [Brut y tywysogion : or, The chronicle of the princes : Caradoc, of Llancarvan, d. 1147? : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁶² Anon., *Brut*, Williams, p. 83.

⁶³ Anon., *Brut y Tywysogion, Peniarth Ms 20*, Quoted in Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 23-24.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 23.

escape had he believed that Nest and his children were to follow his lead whilst he placed himself at the head of his fleeing family. Indeed, here Nest and Gerald appear to have swapped their gendered roles, giving rise to interpretations of the story as representative of Welsh resistance to invasion and humiliation of the Anglo-Normans as Gerald emerges from the privy covered in dirt.⁶⁵ However, it could also be argued that Gerald was cleverly deceived into leaving the castle alone. In terms of promoting Welsh resistance in the historiography, there are ample heroic episodes within the chronicles that do not require the use of such elaborate symbolism as this catalyst for a Cambro-Norman conflict in which the Welsh hardly cover themselves in glory.⁶⁶

With Gerald having uncharacteristically made his lone escape, the *Brut* tells us that Nest called out to the attackers, declaring that Gerald had fled, which could be seen as a signal announcing her husband's departure, leaving the way open for Owain to enter the castle. Once inside, Owain searched for Gerald before seizing Nest and the children and 'having connexion with Nest' before burning the castle and returning home.⁶⁷ Johns has discussed the question of whether or not Nest was raped by Owain, highlighting that *Peniarth* states that Owain 'violated' her but that the *Red Book of Hergest* merely relates that he had intercourse with her, while *Brenhinedd y Saesson* 'simply says that Nest was seized, without any specific language relating to rape or any sexual act'.⁶⁸ It is interesting to note, then, that only one of the three independent versions of the *Brut* accuses Owain of raping Nest.

⁶⁵ Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 26.

⁶⁶ Walker, *Medieval Wales*, pp.37-38. For an example of more overt Welsh victory, see Henry II's defeat by Owain Gwynedd at the Battle of Ewloe: Gideon Brough and Richard Marsden, 'Gwynedd, Owain (r.1137-1170), in *The Encyclopedia of War*, (2011). Available at: <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/doi/10.1002/9781444338232.wbeow269> Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁶⁷ Anon., *Brut*, Williams, p. 85. [Brut y tywysogion : or, The chronicle of the princes : Caradoc, of Llancarvan, d. 1147? : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](https://www.archive.org/details/Brut_y_tywysogion_or_The_chronicle_of_the_princes_Caradoc_of_Llancarvan_d_1147_/page/n6/mode/2-up) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁶⁸ Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 24.

The *Brut* then relates that when Cadwgan, who ‘was not then in the country’ learned of the attack he was ‘sorry and displeased’, because of the alleged violation of Nest but probably more ‘for fear king Henry should be enraged at the insult to his steward’.⁶⁹ Whilst there may well have been a political element to Owain’s raid, the reaction of Cadwgan suggests that he knew nothing of his errant son’s plans and that Owain acted entirely independently and with his own agenda. Furthermore, no amount of reasoning by Cadwgan could persuade Owain ‘to restore to Gerald the steward, his wife and spoil’, indicating that although by then Owain must have been aware of the graveness of his crime and the political fallout that would likely follow for him and his father, he remained unmoved, resolved to keep the lady.⁷⁰ This refusal to part with Nest under any circumstances is interesting given the loyalty and support Owain was capable of showing his father, suggesting there may have been a genuine attachment to Nest behind his reasons for ignoring Cadwgan’s appeals. Indeed, both the abduction and retention of Nest would appear to be consistent with Owain’s character as a hot-headed and emotional young Welshman, and it would be easy to believe he might have acted in such a way out of intense feelings of love and desire, especially with the added benefit of delivering a political blow to an Anglo-Norman lord. The adroit Nest, however, comes across well by successfully intervening to secure the children’s return to Gerald in return for promising Owain that she would stay with him and remain ‘faithful’.⁷¹ Not only would this positive outcome for the children have reflected well on Nest as Gerald’s wife and as a negotiator on his behalf, it would also have kept her all-important honour and reputation intact as she remained with her young Welsh cousin. A final point for

⁶⁹ Anon., *Brut*, Williams, p. 85-87. Available at: [Brut y tywysogion : or, The chronicle of the princes : Caradoc, of Llancarvan, d. 1147? : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁷⁰ Anon., *Brut*, Williams, p. 87.

⁷¹ Anon., *Brut*, Williams, p. 87

consideration is that for Owain, in the legal context of Wales, abduction, though abnormal, was recognised as ‘a way to obtain a wife’.⁷² The Welsh law books list this among the nine accepted categories of sexual union, and according to T.M. Charles-Edwards, one section of these specifies ‘unions to which neither the woman nor her kin consent ... through the abduction of a woman by force’.⁷³ A staged abduction, therefore, could have been perceived as associated with one of the nine categories of sexual union, while the offence on Owain’s part would have absolved Nest from blame.

Although she most likely returned to Gerald and the couple had another child, it is believed that Nest stayed with Owain long enough to have two of his sons, suggesting that the relationship may well have been a close one.⁷⁴ As has been shown in this chapter, medieval women were often involved in their abductions as a means to run off with an illicit lover, and under Welsh law this charade would have protected Nest from the ultimate shame of deviation from the high standards expected of married women.⁷⁵ The *Brut’s* account of the abduction provides tantalising clues as to Nest’s involvement, and unwittingly shows how she may have used her resourcefulness to leave her husband for a passionate young Welshman who was willing to risk everything to be with her. But as will be demonstrated in Chapter III, Nest was far from alone in manipulating the social mores and legal mechanisms to follow her personal desires and wishes.

⁷² Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, pp. 33-34.

⁷³ T. M. Charles-Edwards, ‘Nau Kynywedi Teithiauc’ in Mofydd E. Owen and Dafydd Jenkins (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women*, (Cardiff, 2017), pp. 39-40.

⁷⁴ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 100; Crouch, ‘Nest’; Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 20.

⁷⁵ R.R. Davies, ‘The manners and morals of the Welsh’, in *Welsh History Review*, 12 (2), (Aberystwyth, 1985a), p. 176. Available at: [Welsh History Review Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru. | 85 - Vol. 12, nos. 1-4 | 1984 | Welsh Journals - The National Library of Wales](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Chapter III: The Personal Agency of the Noblewomen of Wales

One of the most telling indicators that Nest may have been willingly abducted by Owain is the silence on the subject that permeates the writings of Gerald of Wales. He is happy to note his 'noble lineage', naming his grandmother as 'Nest, the famous child of Rhys ap Tewdwr', and that she bore Gerald 'a large number of children', but there is no mention of Owain.⁷⁶ He later mentions in passing her sons by Henry I and Stephen, constable of Cardigan, but is careful to stress their respective royal and valiant credentials.⁷⁷ As Robert Bartlett has highlighted, Gerald's writings display 'fiercely misogynistic and antisexual' tendencies, and he appears happy to regale his readers, sometimes almost gleefully, with the marital misdemeanours of other noblewomen.⁷⁸ For example, in a very similar instance of abduction in Ireland, Gerald upbraids Dervorgilla, wife of Prince O'Roric of Meath for having been 'ravished, not against her will', by Diarmuid MacMurrrough, king of Leinster, and so becoming 'the prey of her spoiler by her own contrivance'. Dervorgilla's abduction also led to political conflict, leading Gerald to conclude that 'almost all the greatest evils in the world have arisen from women'.⁷⁹ His notable sidestepping of Nest's sojourn with Owain may, therefore, indicate a reluctance to cast his noble grandmother in the same mould, or perhaps even to deflect attention from her case.

⁷⁶ Gerald of Wales, *Autobiography*, p. 35; Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, p. 149

⁷⁷ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, p. 189.

⁷⁸ Bartlett, Robert, 'Rewriting Saints' Lives: The Case of Gerald of Wales.' in *Speculum*, 58 (3), (1983), pp. 602-603. Available at: [Rewriting Saints' Lives: The Case of Gerald of Wales on JSTOR \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁷⁹ Gerald of Wales, *The History of the Conquest of Ireland* (1189), quoted in Julieann Veronica Ulin, "'Can a Wrong Once Done Ever Be Undone?'" Ireland's Helen of Troy', in *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 39 (3), (2011). Available at: ["Can a Wrong Once Done Ever Be Undone?" Ireland's Helen of Troy - ProQuest \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

One Welsh noblewoman that incurred Gerald's scorn was another Nest (or Agnes), wife of Bernard de Neufmarché (d. 1121-5) and granddaughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, whom he shames for adultery and subsequent betrayal of her family.⁸⁰ We are told that Nest 'broke her marriage vow and fell in love with a certain knight, with whom she committed adultery'. When her son, the 'distinguished knight' Mahel, assaulted and expelled his mother's lover, Nest retaliated out of 'malice' and 'a burning desire for revenge'. She fled to Henry I and had Mahel disinherited by publicly swearing that he was not Bernard's son, but the illegitimate issue of a previous 'secret and illicit' relationship.⁸¹ It appears that in her anger towards Mahel, Nest was openly admitting to having had two extramarital affairs. Gerald leaves us in no doubt as to his opinion that 'this woman, at great loss to her personal modesty and with the sacrifice of all decorum and self-respect' deprived her son of his inheritance with this 'shameful act' that he sees as typical of her 'womanly nature'.⁸² Maund has questioned the veracity of the story and even the existence of Mahel, but whatever the truth behind the episode, Gerald's account of Nest's infidelity underlines the damning judgement that could be heaped on adulterous Welsh women in the high medieval period and shows that despite this, women did not always fulfil the role of dutiful, chaste wife, and that they were conscious of their own sexuality.⁸³ In his overt contempt for Nest de Neufmarché, Dervorgilla and for women in general it could be seen that Gerald indicates an awareness of further instances of female personal agency through infidelity, making his silence on his own grandmother all the more intriguing.

⁸⁰ K. L. Maund., 'Neufmarché, Bernard de', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Neufmarché, Bernard de \(d. 1121x5?\), landowner | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021; Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, pp. 88-89.

⁸¹ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, p. 89

⁸² Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, p. 90

⁸³ Maund, 'Neufmarché, Bernard de'.

Some noblewomen of Wales, however, managed to escape harsh judgement from Welsh society and law, such as Joan, Lady of Wales, the daughter of King John of England and wife of Llywelyn ap Iorweth. Joan's famed affair with Llywelyn's enemy William de Braose, lord of Brycheiniog, ended with his execution in 1230. The affair probably occurred whilst William was being held for ransom following his seizure by Llywelyn's forces in 1228.⁸⁴ Having been married to Llywelyn for around twenty-five years by the time of the affair, Joan would have been well versed in Welsh law and the high behavioural expectations placed on married women. Indeed, as Danna Messer has pointed out, prominent royal figures such as Joan would have been particularly 'exposed to public ridicule and judgement simply because they were more closely observed'.⁸⁵ However, Joan's desire for William clearly transcended any fears of such risks and repercussions on her own part, suggesting that she harboured strong feelings for her lover and was driven to act on them. The *Brut* tells us that in 1230 William was 'hanged by Llywelyn, son of Iorweth, having been caught in the chamber of the prince with the ... wife of the prince.'⁸⁶ Hanging a nobleman publically in this way, even by medieval standards was a shocking act, both politically and in terms of the offence.⁸⁷ However, aside from any political meanings it is a graphic illustration of the gravity with which noble adultery might have been regarded in the culture of medieval Wales, and it could be seen that William publically paid the price for both guilty parties. The contemporary Welsh sources take a surprisingly 'neutral tone' regarding the affair, implying a wish to protect Llywelyn's status.⁸⁸ This may reflect a wider recognition of the need to

⁸⁴ Danna R. Messer, 'Joan (Siwan) (d.1237), princess and diplomat', in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, (2018). Available at: [JOAN \(SIWAN\) \(died 1237\), princess and diplomat | Dictionary of Welsh Biography](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁸⁵ Danna R. Messer, *Joan, Lady of Wales: Power & Politics of King John's Daughter*, (Barnsley, 2020), p. 150.

⁸⁶ *Brut*, Williams, p. 319. Available at: [Brut y tywysogion : or, The chronicle of the princes : Caradoc, of Llancarvan, d. 1147? : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁸⁷ Messer, *Joan, Lady of Wales*, p. 139; 157.

⁸⁸ Messer, *Joan, Lady of Wales*, p. 156.

suppress the scandal in the interests of relations with England and within Llywelyn's Welsh domains. As a result, Joan herself suffered a relatively light sentence, being imprisoned for a year before resuming her role as Llywelyn's consort.⁸⁹ Although the marriage ultimately survived the episode, the trust between the couple must have been shattered. Yet the apparent lack of traditional retributions directed at Joan from Welsh society and law supports Messer's point that the Lady of Wales was also protected, and that she escaped harsher punishments owing to her importance as a diplomat and her ability to mediate with the crown.⁹⁰ However, at the time of the affair, she could not have been certain that her status would guarantee her a safety net. Nevertheless, Joan acted upon her desire for William, even though as a royal princess of Wales she must have realised she was playing with fire.

A further way to assess Nest of Deheubarth's marital behaviour and personal agency is to examine how the noblewomen of Wales responded to widowhood and the often ensuing pressure to take another husband.⁹¹ Maund has argued that after Gerald died, Nest would have had little choice but to remarry, and that this would explain her subsequent relationships with the Fleming sheriff Hait and Stephen, constable of Cardigan Castle.⁹² As a Welsh woman she would have been 'debarred from inheriting land', nor could she receive dower in land after her husband's death.⁹³ Welsh law, however, did not always reflect real life, as is demonstrated in the will of Gruffudd ap Cynan. When he died in 1137 he left his

⁸⁹ Messer, *Joan, Lady of Wales*, pp. 158-159.

⁹⁰ Messer, *Joan, Lady of Wales*, p. 155; 158.

⁹¹ Rhoda L. Friedrichs, 'The Remarriage of Elite Widows in the Later Middle Ages', in *Florilegium*, 23 (1), (2006), p. 81. Available at: [View of The Remarriage of Elite Widows in the Later Middle Ages \(unb.ca\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021; Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 105.

⁹² Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, pp.105-106.

⁹³ Rees Davies, 'The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage in late-medieval Wales' in Morfydd E. Owen & Dafydd Jenkins (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women*, (Cardiff, 2017), p. 116.

wife, Angharad, 'half his goods and two parts of land, and the harbour of Abermenai'.⁹⁴ This would have provided handsomely for her over the following quarter century during which she remained unmarried until her own death in 1162.⁹⁵ It is unclear if any dower arrangements had been put in place for Nest, but whatever had been agreed upon her marriage or stipulated later by Gerald, Nest was an astute Marcher wife and mother to a son of Henry I, and as has been argued in Chapter I, this would most likely have altered her status and legal standing. It would be fair to assume that following the death of Gerald some time before 1130, she may well have reverted to her former position in the care of the crown.⁹⁶ As Henry was still alive at this time, she would not therefore have been obliged to remarry in line with the king's coronation oath concerning widowed noblewomen, which states 'I shall not bestow her in marriage except in accordance with her wishes' and that 'the guardian of the land and children shall be ... the wife' or other suitable relative.⁹⁷ But even without royal protection, as a Marcher wife Nest would have had some legal bargaining power, as is demonstrated by the case of another Welsh noblewoman and royal mistress, Nest of Bloet. As the daughter of Iorweth ab Owain, lord of Caerleon, this Nest also had an affair with an English king, Henry II, and their relationship during the 1170s also produced a son. When her Anglo-Norman husband, Ralph of Bloet, died in 1199 Nest immediately began legal proceedings against her brother and brother-in-law to secure a share of his lands. With the intervention and support of King John she succeeded, winning the substantial manor of Salisbury in Gwent in dower, and thereby negating the need to

⁹⁴ Anon., *The History of Gruffydd ap Cynon*, trans. Arthur Jones ([1910] 2017), p.157.

⁹⁵ John Edward Lloyd, 'Angharad', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, (1959). Available at: [ANGHARAD \(died 1162\). | Dictionary of Welsh Biography](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁹⁶ Maund argued convincingly that Gerald died before 1130. Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p.104.

⁹⁷ Anon., *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, trans. by A. Robertson, (Cambridge 1925), p. 279. Available at: [World Constitutions Illustrated - HeinOnline.org \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

remarry. She remained unattached for another twenty five years until her death c.1224.⁹⁸

Nest of Bloet's case is a good illustration of the ability of Welsh Marcher widows to manipulate their legal status and challenge the system in order to remain independent.

This trend in widows choosing to remain unmarried is mirrored in other Marcher wives on the Anglo-Norman side. One example is Margaret de Bohun, whose husband, Humphrey de Bohun, died when she was in her forties, c.1164. Despite outliving Humphrey for over thirty years Margaret never remarried, directing her formidable energies instead towards the interests of her family and supporting the church.⁹⁹ A similar case is Matilda, Countess of Chester, wife of Ranulf (II), fourth earl of Chester (d.1153). Johns has noted that 'Matilda survived her husband by forty-four years and remained unmarried throughout that period,' likewise preferring to involve herself in support of the church, her family's charters and the duties of her lordship.¹⁰⁰ The noblewomen of Wales were clearly willing and able to resist any pressure to remarry placed on them following the death of their husbands, exercising their personal agency in their right to remain single.

Another option for Welsh widows was to live under the protection of their offspring, should they have reached adulthood.¹⁰¹ Maund asserted that Nest's children would have been too

⁹⁸ David Crouch, 'Bloet, Nest [Nest of Wales, Nest the Welshwoman]', in *Oxford Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Bloet, Nest \[Nest of Wales, Nest the Welshwoman\] \(d. 1224/5\), royal mistress | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

⁹⁹ Emma Cavell, 'Bohun, Margaret de [nee Margaret of Gloucester]', in *Oxford Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, (2012). Available at: [Bohun, Margaret de \[née Margaret of Gloucester\] \(c. 1121–1196/7\), heiress and monastic patron | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

¹⁰⁰ Susan M. Johns, 'Matilda, countess of Chester' in *Oxford Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Matilda, countess of Chester \(d. 1189\), magnate | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

¹⁰¹ Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 105.

young to provide for her when Gerald died,¹⁰² but Lloyd's coverage of the reign of Henry I suggests otherwise, stating that at Pembroke Castle 'Gerald of Windsor was in authority for the greater part of the reign', and that his sons, William and Maurice had taken 'their father's place as defenders of Norman prestige', implying that they were old enough to take on the mantle of their father's responsibility when he died.¹⁰³ Gerald of Wales appears to confirm this, stating that 'The Eldest, William Fitzgerald, held Pembroke and Emlyn'.¹⁰⁴ If this was the case, Nest's sons would have been in a position to support their mother in her widowhood should she have wished to remain unmarried. This option may have been a motive driving Christina, beloved second wife and widow of Owain Gwynedd, when she 'actively supported' her sons, Dafydd and Rhodri, in attacking and killing their older half-brother, Hywel.¹⁰⁵ The decisive battle was fought soon after Owain's death in 1170, and as Lloyd stated, Hywel's enemies were 'Owain's widow, Christina, and her sons', who successfully 'got rid of a formidable competitor for the chief place in Gwynedd'.¹⁰⁶ Such an appropriation of power would have meant that, should she have wished, Christina could have lived under her sons' protection in the manner she had previously enjoyed. The sources make no mention of remarriage, but Christina's actions earned her the scorn of a poet who condemned her 'unchristian behaviour', which demonstrates her determination to forge her own future in widowhood despite any risk of criticism.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Maund, *Princess Nest of Wales*, p. 105.

¹⁰³ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, p. 423.

¹⁰⁴ Gerald of Wales, *Autobiography*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁵ John Edward Lloyd, 'Christina', in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, (1959). Available at: [CHRISTINA. | Dictionary of Welsh Biography](#) Accessed 26th May 2021; Huw Pryce, Owain Gwynedd [Owain ap Gruffudd], in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Owain Gwynedd \[Owain ap Gruffudd\] \(d. 1170\), king of Gwynedd | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, p.549.

¹⁰⁷ Lloyd, 'Christina'.

It would appear then, that in absconding with Owain, Nest of Deheubarth would not have been alone in exercising personal agency to pursue her desires, and she would have had other options open to her following the death of Gerald aside from remarriage. Her status as a Marcher wife would have presented opportunities to obtain a portion of her husband's lands in dower, or she could have lived under the care of her eldest children. Instead, it seems that she chose to enter into two further relationships, having more children with both men. Therefore it could be argued that Nest exercised personal agency at several points in her adult life, thereby accumulating an impressive list of conquests by any standards.

Conclusion

This dissertation has sought to explore the under-researched area of female personal agency in twelfth and early thirteenth century Wales, focussing in particular on the abduction of Nest of Deheubarth in 1109 as a case study. As has been discussed, historians are divided as to whether or not Nest was a willing victim, and the episode has been subject to much analysis in regard to her symbolism in Welsh historiography. However, this study has returned to the sources and examined, as far as possible, the event and the people involved within the context of contemporary Wales and the Marcher territories to remind us of the human side of the event. A character assessment of Nest, Gerald and Owain revealed a potentially explosive mix of personalities that could well lend itself to a medieval love triangle as well as political conflict. It was also argued that Nest's early life straddling the Welsh and Anglo-Norman worlds, together with her relationship with Henry I would have changed her status and broadened her options after the death of Gerald.

A fresh assessment and analysis of the *Brut y Tywysogion*, the key primary source for the abduction revealed new insights into the episode and allowed for the possibility that Nest was, indeed involved in the scheme. It was argued that, as with many cases of abduction during the middle ages, Nest's departure with Owain may have been planned to avoid compromising her honour, that crucial virtue for married women in medieval Welsh culture, and to protect her family. A comparison of Nest's experiences with the marital behaviour of other noblewomen of Wales then illuminated female agency in terms of desire, with cases of adultery documented in primary sources such as the writings of Gerald of Wales and the *Brut*, while an examination of how women responded to widowhood revealed that despite

the pressure to remarry often applied to noble widows, many remained unattached, sometimes for decades, until their own deaths. Moreover, some were even prepared to fight for their rights to independence. These findings challenge Maund's argument that Nest had little choice but to remarry, and indicate that her subsequent child-producing relationships with both sheriff Hait and Stephen, constable of Cardigan Castle were likely to have been entered into through her own choice.

Overall, this study has shown that an investigation into Nest's involvement in her abduction within the context of female personal agency need not be regarded as 'a rose-tinted nostalgic view of the past which is based on myths', rather it is a reminder that medieval people did not only fight political battles and resist invasion, they also loved and acted on their emotions and wishes.¹⁰⁸ From the evidence discussed over the previous chapters, it appears that despite the threat of disgrace, punishment or judgement by family and the wider society, Nest and the medieval noblewomen of Wales knew how to play the system in order to exercise agency in their personal desires and needs, following their own paths through marriage and widowhood.

Word count: 7,693

¹⁰⁸ Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p.225.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Anon., *The Liber Landavensis, Llyfr Teilo, or, The ancient register of the cathedral church of Llandaff; from mss. in the libraries of Hengwrt, and of Jesus college, Oxford*, trans. by William Jenkins Rees (Llandoverly, 1840). Available at: [The Liber landavensis, Llyfr Teilo, or, The ancient register of the cathedral church of Llandaff; from mss. in the libraries of Hengwrt, and of Jesus college, Oxford: : William Jenkins Rees , Society for the Publication of Ancient Welsh Manuscripts : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Anon., *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales: Comprising Laws Supposed to be Enacted by Howel the Good*, trans. by Aneurin Owen, (1841). Available at: [#9 - Ancient laws and institutes of Wales; comprising ... v.1. - Full View | HathiTrust Digital Library | HathiTrust Digital Library](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Anon., *The History of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, trans. by Arthur Jones (Manchester, 1910).

Anon., *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, trans. by A. Robertson, (Cambridge, 1925). Available at: [World Constitutions Illustrated - HeinOnline.org \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Anon., *Brut y Tywysogion, Peniarth MS 20 Version*, trans by T. Jones, (Cardiff, 1941), quoted in Johns, Susan M., *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the high middle ages: Nest of Deheubarth*, (Manchester, 2017).

Anon., *Mabinogion* trans. by Sioned Davies, (Oxford, 2007)

Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed by McClure, J & Collins, R, (Oxford, 2008).

Caradoc of Llancaravan, *Brut y Tywysogion or Chronicle of the Princes*, trans. by John Williams, (London, 1860). Available at: [Brut y tywysogion : or, The chronicle of the princes : Caradoc, of Llancarvan, d. 1147? : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, ed. & trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London, 2004).

Gerald of Wales, *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, ed. & trans. by H. E. Butler. (Woodbridge, 2005).

Gerald of Wales, *The History of the Conquest of Ireland* (1189), quoted in Ulin, Julieann Veronica, "'Can a Wrong Once Done Ever Be Undone?' Ireland's Helen of Troy", in *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 39 (3), (2011), pp. 173-192. Available at: ["Can a Wrong Once Done Ever Be Undone?" Ireland's Helen of Troy - ProQuest \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd, 'Translation of The Choice' in *The Cambro-Briton*, 1 (8), (1820), pp. 312–312. Available at: [Translation of the Choice on JSTOR \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Nennius, *The Works of Gildas and Nennius*, trans by Giles, J. A., (London, 1841). Available at: [The works of Gildas and Nennius : Gildas, 516?-570? n 85112337 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Secondary Sources

Alberti, Johanna, *Gender and the Historian*. (Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/open/reader.action?docID=1733995> Accessed: 26th May 2021.

Bartlett, Robert, 'Rewriting Saints' Lives: The Case of Gerald of Wales' in *Speculum*, 58 (3), (1983), pp. 598–613. [Rewriting Saints' Lives: The Case of Gerald of Wales on JSTOR \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Bates, David, 'Anger, Emotion and a Biography of William the Conqueror' in Nelson, Janet L., Reynolds, Susan. and Johns, Susan M. (eds), *Gender and historiography: Studies in the earlier middle ages in honour of Pauline Stafford*, (London 2012), pp. 21-34. Available at: [View Open Access PDF view of the file GenderHistoriographyNelsonetal.pdf \(humanities-digital-library.org\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Brough, Gideon & Marsden, Richard, 'Gwynedd, Owain (r.1137-1170), in Martel, Gordon (ed), *The Encyclopedia of War* (2011). Available at: <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/doi/10.1002/9781444338232.wbeow269> Accessed 26th May 2021.

Cavell, Emma, 'Bohun, Margaret de [née Margaret of Gloucester], in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2012). Available at: [Search Results for Margaret de Bohun | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Cavell, Emma, 'Intelligence and intrigue in the March of Wales: noblewomen and the fall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, 1274-1282' in *Historical Research*, 88 (239), (2015), pp.1-19. Available at: [Intelligence and intrigue in the March of Wales: noblewomen and the fall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, 1274–82 | Historical Research | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Cavell, Emma, *Women in Wales*, (2015). Available at: https://openedx.open.ac.uk/assets/courseware/v1/2d9f18527ea395ff6f0473c5ba6158cb/asset-v1:ou+A329+2020J+type@asset+block/a329_2017j_blk1_aug_women_medieval_wales.pdf Accessed: 26th May 2021.

Cavell, Emma, 'Widows, Native Law and the Long Shadow of England in Thirteenth-Century Wales', in *The English Historical Review*, 133 (565), (2018), pp. 1387–1419. Available at: [Widows, Native Law and the Long Shadow of England in Thirteenth-Century Wales* | The English Historical Review | Oxford Academic \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Chapman Stacey, Robin, 'Divorce, Medieval Welsh Style' in *Speculum*, 77 (4), (2002), pp.1107-1127. Available at: [Divorce, Medieval Welsh Style on JSTOR \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Charles-Edwards, T.M., 'Nau Kynywedi Teithiauc' in Owen, Morfydd, E. & Jenkins, Dafydd (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women*, (Cardiff, 2017), pp.25-43.

Crouch, David, 'Nest' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Nest \(b. before 1092, d. c. 1130\), royal mistress | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Crouch, David, 'Bloet, Nest [Nest of Wales, Nest the Welshwoman] (d. 1224/5), royal mistress', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Bloet, Nest \[Nest of Wales, Nest the Welshwoman\] \(d. 1224/5\), royal mistress | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th March 2021.

Davies, John, *A History of Wales*. (London, 2007).

Davies, R.R., 'The manners and morals of the Welsh', in *Welsh History Review*, 12 (2), (1984), pp.174-179. Available at: [Welsh History Review Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru. | 85 - Vol. 12, nos. 1-4 | 1984 | Welsh Journals - The National Library of Wales](#) Accessed 10th March 2021.

Davies, R.R., *Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415*, (Oxford, 2011). Available at: [Native Wales 1063–1172: Power, Conflict, and Hegemony - Oxford Scholarship \(open.ac.uk\)](#)

Davies, R.R., 'The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage in late-medieval Wales' in Owen, Morfydd E., & Jenkins, Dafydd (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women*, (Cardiff, 2017), pp.106-130.

Dunn, Caroline, *Stolen Women in Medieval England: Rape, Abduction and Adultery 1100-1500*, (Cambridge, 2012). Available at: [ProQuest Ebook Central - Reader](#)

Friedrichs, Rhoda, L., 'The Remarriage of Elite Widows in the Later Middle Ages', in *Florilegium*, 23 (1), (2006). pp.69-83. Available at: <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/flor/article/view/12530/20155> Accessed 26th May 2021

Jenkins, Geraint H., *A Concise History of Wales*, (Cambridge, 2007).

Johns, Susan M., *Noblewomen, aristocracy and power in the twelfth century Anglo-Norman Realm*. (Manchester, 2003). Available at: [341360.pdf \(oapen.org\)](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Johns, Susan M., 'Matilda, countess of Chester' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Matilda, countess of Chester \(d. 1189\), magnate | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Johns, Susan M., 'Beauty and the Feast: the cultural constructions of female beauty and social interaction in twelfth-century Wales', in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 30,

(2010), pp. 102-115. Available at: [Beauty and the Feast: the cultural constructions of female beauty and social interaction in twelfth-century Wales on JSTOR \(open.ac.uk\)](#)

Johns, Susan M., 'Nest of Deheubarth, Reading female power in the historiography of Wales' in Nelson, Janet, L., Reynolds, Susan and Johns, Susan M. (eds), *Gender and historiography: Studies in the earlier middle ages in honour of Pauline Stafford*, (London, 2012). Available at: [View Open Access PDF view of the file GenderHistoriographyNelsonetal.pdf \(humanities-digital-library.org\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Johns, Susan M., *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the High Middle Ages: Nest of Deheubarth*. (Manchester, 2017).

Lloyd, John Edward, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, Vol 2. (London, Forgotten Books, 2018 [1912]), Forgotten Books.

Lloyd, John Edward, 'Angharad', in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, (1959). Available at: [ANGHARAD \(died 1162\). | Dictionary of Welsh Biography](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Lloyd, John Edward, 'Christina' in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, (1959). Available at: [CHRISTINA. | Dictionary of Welsh Biography](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Maund, K.L., 'Neufmarché, Bernard de', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Neufmarché, Bernard de \(d. 1121x5?\), landowner | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Maund, Kari., *Princess Nest of Wales: Seductress of the English*, (The History Press, 2007). Available at: [ProQuest Ebook Central - Reader](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Maund, Kari., *The Welsh Kings: Warriors, Warlords and Princes*, (Stroud, 2011).

Messer, Danna R., *Joan, Lady of Wales: Power & Politics of King John's Daughter*, (Barnsley, 2020).

Messer, Danna R., 'Joan (Siwan) (d.1237), princess and diplomat', in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, (2018). Available at: [JOAN \(SIWAN\) \(died 1237\), princess and diplomat | Dictionary of Welsh Biography](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Nelson, Janet L., Reynolds, Susan. and Johns, Susan M. (eds), 'Introduction' in *Gender and historiography: Studies in the earlier middle ages in honour of Pauline Stafford*, (London, 2012), pp. 1-8. Available at: [View Open Access PDF view of the file GenderHistoriographyNelsonetal.pdf \(humanities-digital-library.org\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Owen, Morfydd E., 'Shame and Reparation: Women's Place in the Kin', in Owen, Morfydd E. & Jenkins, D., (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women*. (Cardiff, 2017).

Pryce, Huw, 'Owain Gwynedd [Owain ap Gruffudd]', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Owain Gwynedd \[Owain ap Gruffudd\] \(d. 1170\), king of Gwynedd | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Pryce, Huw, 'Bleddyn ap Cynfyn', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Bleddyn ap Cynfyn \(d. 1075\), king of Gwynedd and of Powys | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Roderick, A. J., 'Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282' in *Welsh History Review*, 4 (1), (1968), pp.3-20 Available at: [Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282 - ProQuest \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Smith, Julie Ann, 'Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's & Power in Eleventh-Century England (review)', in *Parergon*, 15 (2), (1998), pp. 279–281. Available at: [Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England \(review\) \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 26th May 2021.

Turvey, Roger. K., *The Welsh Princes : The Native Rulers of Wales 1063-1283*, (Taylor & Francis Group 2002). Available at: [ProQuest Ebook Central - Reader](#)

Walker, David, 'Windsor, Gerald of', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004). Available at: [Windsor, Gerald of \(d. 1116x36\), soldier and dynast | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography \(open.ac.uk\)](#). Accessed 26th May 2021.

Walker, David, *Medieval Wales*, (Cambridge, 1990).