

**The Welsh connection: how important was Welsh support in
Henry VII's rise to the throne?**

Dissertation for A329 'The making of Welsh history'

by

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Introduction

‘King Henry the VIIth won the field where was slain King Richard the third’.¹

The quote above was recorded on the 22nd of August 1485 by Henry VII's mother, Margaret Beaufort, in the margins of her prayer book. This date marked one of the most pivotal battles in the Wars of the Roses, the Battle of Bosworth, which brought an end to Yorkist rule under King Richard III and established the Tudor dynasty.² But how did Henry Tudor, a man of no military experience,³ achieve this victory? To answer this question, it is pivotal to understand Henry's upbringing as it was undoubtedly the connections and associations that he gained during his formative years that shaped the military assistance that he would later rely on. From Henry's birth in 1457 to the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, three factors stand out as the most significant. Henry's Welsh Tudor ancestry which amassed support in Wales, the alliances cultivated within the English nobility by his mother, Margaret Beaufort, alongside her connections to the Stanley family, and lastly, the period Henry spent living in French exile. Thus, these can be divided into three locational factors, Wales, England and France. The twentieth century Welsh scholar, T.

¹ Margaret Beaufort's 'Book of Hours' quoted in Nicola Tallis, *Uncrowned Queen: The Fateful Life of Margaret Beaufort, Tudor Matriarch* (London, 2020), p. 167.

² Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 2010), p. 8.

³ Trevor Royle, *The Wars of the Roses: England's First Civil War* (London, 2009), p. 413.

Gwynn Jones,⁴ suggested that ‘Tudor rule would not have happened without Wales’,⁵ but to what extent is Jones’s argument accurate? By conducting a comparative analysis of the support of Wales, England and France, this dissertation seeks to conclude on the importance of Wales in Henry VII’s rise to the throne.

One of the first extensive studies surrounding this topic was conducted in 1915 by H.T. Evans entitled, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses*. Evans suggested that the Welsh ‘exercised a more formidable and decisive influence than is generally believed’,⁶ crediting Henry’s uncle, Jasper Tudor, who Evans suggested had not been significantly researched.⁷ Furthermore, William Garmon Jones’s study, ‘Welsh Nationalism and Henry Tudor’ published in 1918, echoed the same viewpoint as he stated ‘because Henry Tudor was a Welshman, relying on Welsh support...the main interest of the Wars of the Roses...must be sought in Wales’.⁸ Worthy of note here, however, is that Jones labels Henry as a ‘Welshman’, which is potentially problematic as despite being born in Pembroke, Wales, Henry was only a quarter Welsh through his paternal

⁴ Arthur ap Gwynn and Francis Wynn Jones, ‘JONES, THOMAS GWYNN (1871 – 1949), poet, writer, translator and scholar’, Dictionary of Welsh Biography, Available at <https://biography.wales/article/s2-JONE-GWY-1871#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&manifest=https%3A%2F%2Fdamssl.llgc.org.uk%2Fiiif%2F2.0%2F5185080%2Fmanifest.json&xywh=-20%2C162%2C1635%2C1319> Accessed 27 May 2024.

⁵ T. Gwynn Jones quoted in Helen Fulton, ‘Guto’r Glyn and the Wars of the Roses’ in *Gwalch Cywyddau Gwyr: Essays on Guto’r Glyn and Fifteenth-Century Wales*, ed. by D. F. Evans, B. J. Lewis and A. Parry Owen (University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Available at: https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/390316198/Guto_r_Glyn_final.pdf (Accessed 19 May 2024), p. 2.

⁶ H.T. Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses* (Cambridge, 1915), p. 1.

⁷ H.T. Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses*, p. 92.

⁸ William Garmon Jones, ‘Welsh Nationalism and Henry Tudor’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, (1918), p. 2.

line, the Tudors.⁹ As both arguments were published over a century ago, they ultimately require a reassessment.

Much work has been conducted since. In 1972, S.B. Chrimes published his seminal biography, *Henry VII*, in which he declared, Henry ‘owed much, perhaps everything, in his final progress towards Bosworth, to either Welsh support or at least Welsh abstention from opposition’.¹⁰

Despite his emphasis on Welsh support, however, Chrimes criticised the extent of Henry’s Welsh connection, suggesting ‘the Welshness of Henry Tudor can easily be, and often is, exaggerated’.¹¹ Nevertheless, arguments do still arise that liken Henry to his Welsh ancestry. In her study on Wales, Deborah Fisher remarked that Henry Tudor was a ‘Welshman destined for greatness’.¹² Within this dissertation, it is, therefore, crucial to distinguish between these viewpoints and evaluate Henry’s Welsh ancestry. To what extent was this a contributor to Henry’s victory?

To address this question, this dissertation will draw on poetry from a group of Welsh bards named the ‘Beirdd yr Uchelwyr’ or ‘the Poets of the Nobility’.¹³ As a source, these poems are often limited as many have not been translated into English.¹⁴ Those that can be accessed, however, demonstrate an overwhelmingly strong message of support for Henry, and as Helen Fulton suggests, it was this poetic material that was ‘instrumental in putting Henry VII on the

⁹ Ralph A. Griffiths, *King and Country: England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1991), p. 118.

¹⁰ S.B. Chrimes, *Henry VII*, ed. by Daniel Vickers and Vince Walsh (London, first published in 1972, this edition 1999), p. 23.

¹¹ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, p. 23.

¹² Deborah Fisher, *Royal Wales*, (Cardiff, 2010), p. 41.

¹³ Terry Breverton, *Jasper Tudor: Dynasty Maker* (Gloucestershire, 2015), p. 272.

¹⁴ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 272.

throne'.¹⁵ In his recently published PHD thesis surrounding the legitimisation of the Tudor dynasty, David John White also concluded that the Tudor connection was of benefit to Henry, especially at Bosworth, as the poets saw him as the *mab darogan*, the 'son of prophecy', who would 'save the Welsh from Saxon oppression', thus prompting a nationalistic feel that encouraged his Welsh support.¹⁶ The origins of the Welsh 'son of prophecy' lie in two twelfth-century documents, the c.1136 *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gerald of Wales's *The Description of Wales* of c.1194. Alongside various examples of poetry from the Welsh bards, Chapter One will discuss these sources to establish why Henry became so closely attached to these messages, ultimately fuelling a large extent of his Welsh support.

To conclude on the importance of Wales, this dissertation will focus on two Welsh figures, Jasper Tudor and Rhys ap Thomas. Given the extensivity of the Wars of the Roses and the multitude of individuals, it is not feasible within the scope of this research to cover more. It is Jasper Tudor who arises most prominently within the scholarship, subsequently bridging the historiographical gap that Evans noted in 1915.¹⁷ A key historian of this period is Terry Breverton, who has produced two biographies, *Jasper Tudor: Dynasty Maker* and *Henry VII: The Maligned Tudor King*. Breverton advocates for Jasper as 'one of Britain's most selfless and brave nobles', highlighting that 'it would be tempting to say that the eventual Lancastrian victory [Bosworth]...owed to Jasper's loyalty alone'.¹⁸ Breverton also highlights Rhys ap Thomas as the 'most powerful lord in south Wales' who ultimately controlled the 'largest contingent' of forces

¹⁵ Fulton, 'Guto'r Glyn and the Wars of the Roses' p. 2.

¹⁶ David John White, 'The Matter of Britain: How the Tudors Adapted British Historic Tradition to Legitimise their Dynasty' (Canada, 2022), p. 269.

¹⁷ H.T. Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses*, p. 92.

¹⁸ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 11.

at Bosworth.¹⁹ Rhys has been chosen as a case study for this research, most notably, because he was the subject of a Welsh poem by Guto'r Glyn entitled, 'In praise of Sir Rhys ap Tomas of Abermarlais'²⁰, which suggested that Rhys may have killed Richard III, thus concluding Bosworth. This will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Despite the inclination of the arguments discussed insofar, for some historians, the Welsh were of no significance at all and have been completely omitted. For instance, *The Wars of the Roses: England's First Civil War*, written by the military historian, Trevor Royle, excludes the involvement of Jasper and Rhys ap Thomas at Bosworth completely, suggesting that Welsh support was instead 'slow in coming'.²¹ For Royle, it was the English and French assistance that was key, as Henry was 'heavily reliant' on mercenaries provided by the French King Charles VIII and the English forces of his stepfather, Thomas Stanley.²² Dan Jones takes a similar argument in *The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses and the Rise of the Tudors*, advocating only for Stanley as the 'kingmaker' whose role at Bosworth acquired him the 'right to place the hollow crown on Henry Tudor's head'.²³ As this dissertation will discuss, it cannot be denied that support from England and France was beneficial to Henry, but why have historians neglected the Welsh in the process?

The Welsh were certainly not absent from the primary source material. In a letter written in 1485, Henry appealed to them himself, requiring 'the assistance of our loving friends...of this our

¹⁹ Terry Breverton, *Henry VII: The Maligned Tudor King* (Gloucestershire, 2019), p. 110.

²⁰ Lines 35-40, 'In praise of Sir Rhys ap Tomas of Abermarlais', ed. by Dafydd Johnston, Guto'r Glyn.net, Available at: <http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/poem/?poem-selection=014&first-line=%23> Accessed 10 May 2024.

²¹ Royle, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 410.

²² Royle, *The Wars of the Roses*, pp. 408-9.

²³ Dan Jones, *The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses and the Rise of the Tudors* (London, 2015), p. 325.

principality of Wales'.²⁴ The most common source type for this period of study are chronicles. Written to record events, naturally these sources come with limitations, as Michael Bennett remarks, they are often 'meagre, frequently muddled, inconsistent...and subject to partisan disorder'.²⁵ Cross referencing of these materials will thus be required to gauge the most accurate conclusion; and impartiality will remain central by using sources from different locations. This list is not exhaustive, but the sources in discussion will include, Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia*,²⁶ the anonymously authored *Croyland Chronicle*, Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke*,²⁷ and the *Historical Memoirs of Philip de Comines*. Michael Bennett's study entitled *The Battle of Bosworth Field* provides excellent and extensive contextual information and critical source analysis; however, he adopts the same viewpoint as Royle and Jones, mostly ignoring Wales and arguing that it was the Stanleys who were 'fatal for Richard III and proved the salvation of Henry Tudor'.²⁸ This dissertation, therefore, aims to analyse the primary sources from the specific Welsh perspective.

Given the disparity of arguments, there is certainly validity in reassessing this topic and adding to the existing historiography. After all, Henry VII established the Tudor dynasty, one which still gathers, as Ralph A. Griffiths and Roger S. Thomas remark, 'scholarly interest and admiration'.²⁹ Yet within Tudor research, Breverton has noted there is 'little interest' in Henry in comparison to his 'successive Tudor monarchs', Elizabeth I and Henry VIII.³⁰ It is valid to

²⁴ Letter sent from Henry Tudor to John ap Maredudd ab Ieuan ap Maredudd, 7 August (1485), in Ralph A. Griffiths and Roger S. Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (Gloucestershire, 2005), pp. 155-157.

²⁵ Michael Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth* (Gloucestershire, 2008), p. 12.

²⁶ Also named the *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*.

²⁷ Also known as *Hall's Chronicle*.

²⁸ Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 100.

²⁹ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 1.

³⁰ Breverton, *Henry VII*, p. 15.

presume from the secondary scholarship that the Welsh connection of this dynasty may have been lost also.

Therefore, this dissertation will evaluate the significance of the Welsh most prominently, drawing a comparison alongside the support gained from England and France. Chapter One will provide the foundations for this analysis by looking at Henry's ancestry and early life, which was undoubtedly shaped by the Wars of the Roses. How did Henry become a contender to the throne? How important were factors such as his lineage and the events of his formative years in gathering support in the lead up to Bosworth? Chapter Two will then analyse the Battle of Bosworth through extensive cross referencing of contemporary material. How much Welsh support did Henry acquire? How did this compare to that of France and England? Overall, to answer the key question, the dissertation will conclude by considering whether Henry could have succeeded to the English throne without Welsh support.

Chapter One - Henry Tudor's formative years, 1457-1485

When Henry Tudor was born in 1457 at Pembroke Castle in Wales, it was into an environment which had been ‘torn in half by the rival houses of Lancaster and York’.³¹ From 1455, the Wars of the Roses had dominated the social and political landscape, dividing the nobility into those who supported Henry VI, the Lancastrians, and those who had instigated the ‘the heart of the conflict’, the Yorkists.³² Despite these wars being fought in England, as Terry Breverton states, the Welsh ‘played a most prominent part’, creating a ‘aggressively anti-English outburst’.³³ Consequently, Henry’s early life was constantly undermined by political disruptions that shaped his upbringing and eventual rise to the throne.

To fully understand the events of 1485, this dissertation first requires a consideration of Henry’s ancestry, as this had a detrimental impact on the support he would later receive. As has been acknowledged, Henry’s Welsh blood was minimal and this derived from his father, Edmund Tudor. The Tudor family dominated Wales throughout this period, originating from the thirteenth century warrior, Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig, who cultivated his wealth to establish the ‘Tudors of Penymynydd’ in Anglesey.³⁴ As A.D. Carr argues, the Tudors were ‘without a doubt, the most powerful family in thirteenth and fourteenth century Wales’,³⁵ but this dominance was not limited to only Wales. In c.1429, Henry’s grandfather, Owen Tudor, the ‘only one of [Henry’s] four grandparents to be a full-blooded Welshman’,³⁶ married the French

³¹ Jones, *The Hollow Crown*, p. xxxiv.

³² Royle, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 13.

³³ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 24.

³⁴ Breverton, *Henry VII*, pp. 20-21.

³⁵ Carr, quoted in Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 47.

³⁶ Robin Evans, ‘The Battle of Bosworth Field: a Welsh victory?’, *History Review*, (December 2002).

widow of the English King Henry V, Catherine of Valois.³⁷ As the mother to the recently crowned Lancastrian King Henry VI, Owen's marriage to Catherine integrated the Tudors into the English royal household. However, it was not only Henry's paternal line that stemmed from power, as Henry's mother, Margaret Beaufort, was considered the 'richest heiress in England'.³⁸ It is through Margaret that Henry had any semblance to the English throne as the Beaufort family derived from John of Gaunt, the son of the fourteenth century King Edward III. This was a claim surrounded by the 'stigma of illegitimacy' and often refuted,³⁹ however, its existence was crucial when Henry would eventually become a contender for the throne.

Thus, as Deborah Fisher rightly remarks, Henry did have the 'royal blood of England, Wales and France'.⁴⁰ Despite being born in Wales, Henry was only a quarter Welsh, yet many historians have defined Henry for this aspect of his heritage. As Ralph A. Griffiths remarks, 'crucial to an understanding of the nature of Henry's training for kingship, and of his subsequent behaviour as king, [...] is the extent of his Welshness'.⁴¹ This was not a view limited to modern-day scholarship, however, as Richard III would later deem Henry the 'unknown Welshman' in a speech to his troops on the periphery of the Battle of Bosworth.⁴² But why has Henry become so closely attached to his Welsh heritage? It is no doubt because of Henry's relation to the Tudors that his Welsh connection was so heavily harnessed, as within this period, the Tudors became associated with the undercurrent of prophetic literature that had stemmed from the Norman invasion.

³⁷ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 49.

³⁸ Jones, *The Hollow Crown*, p. 160.

³⁹ Tallis, *The Uncrowned Queen*, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁰ Fisher, *Royal Wales*, p. 15.

⁴¹ Griffiths, *King and Country: England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 118.

⁴² Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle*, (c.1540), quoted in Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 147.

From the late eleventh century invasion of Wales,⁴³ the Welsh had been defined by their desire to reclaim their independence, as Robin Evans states, they sought out a ‘redeemer who would lead the Welsh to freedom’.⁴⁴ The origin for these ideas derives notably from two documents. In 1136, Geoffery of Monmouth recorded in his history of Britain, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, which outlined Welsh oppression,

‘Two Dragons, one of which was white, the other red, came forth, and approaching one another, began a terrible Fight...the red denotes the British Nation, which shall be oppressed by the white [the Saxons]’.⁴⁵

The importance of this prophecy to Welsh culture cannot be refuted as it was also documented by Gerald of Wales in *The Description of Wales*, dated c.1194, ‘their countrymen shall return to the island, and, according to the prophecies of Merlin...the Britons shall exult again in their ancient name and privileges’.⁴⁶ Many Welsh figures attempted to restore Welsh independence, such as Llewelyn the Last and Owain Glyndŵr, but were defeated.⁴⁷ No less heightened by the Wars of the Roses, which was viewed as a ‘conflict...between Welsh and English leaders’,⁴⁸ the

⁴³ Robert Bartlett, ‘Gerald of Wales: A voice of the Middle Ages’ (Stroud, 2006[1986]), p. 11.

⁴⁴ Evans, ‘The battle of Bosworth Field: a Welsh victory?’.

⁴⁵ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The British History, Translated into English from the Latin of Jeffrey of Monmouth. With a large Preface concerning the Authority of the History*. ed. and trans. by Aaron Thompson, (London, 1718), p. 206.

⁴⁶ Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales), *The Itinerary through Wales: and the Description of Wales*, ed. and trans. by J. M. Dent (London, 1908). p. 197.

⁴⁷ Breverton, *Henry VII*, p. 20.

⁴⁸ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 269.

fifteenth century was marked by an increased desire for the Welsh redeemer to make an appearance. As documented in the *Croyland Chronicle* ‘throughout Wales, there is a celebrated and famous prophecy, to the effect that, having expelled the English, the remains of the Britons are once more to obtain the sovereignty of England’.⁴⁹ It was a group of Welsh bards, the ‘Beirdd yr Uchelwyr’ or the ‘Poets of the Nobility’ that promoted these ideas most successfully across Wales,⁵⁰ constantly seeking the *mab darogan*, the ‘son of prophecy’.⁵¹ As the Tudors had remarkable notoriety in Wales, bolstered even further by Owen Tudor’s claims that the family derived from the seventh century heroic King of Gwynedd, Cadwaladr,⁵² it was natural for the bards to switch their attentions to the Tudors.

Both Owen and Edmund Tudor fell short of fulfilling the *mab darogan*, however, as Edmund died in 1456 and Owen was executed during the Battle of Mortimer’s Cross in 1461.⁵³ As David John White suggests, these deaths naturally ‘struck a blow against the prophecy for the bards’.⁵⁴ This dejection is evident in an elegy to Owen by the Welsh poet, Robin Ddu, who recorded the ‘severing of the sea-swallow’s head’ but the ‘great eagle, the earl had been left’.⁵⁵ The ‘great eagle’ here is Owen’s son, Jasper Tudor, highlighting that the prophetic legacy was passed throughout the Tudor family. The Welsh poets had good reason to support Jasper, as during this period, he was considered the ‘most powerful personage in the south’.⁵⁶ Jasper also had

⁴⁹ Anon. *Ingulph’s Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland with the continuations of Peter of Blois and anonymous writers*, ed. and trans. by Henry T. Riley, (London, 1908), p. 446.

⁵⁰ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 272.

⁵¹ White, ‘The Matter of Britain’, p. 13.

⁵² White, ‘The Matter of Britain’, p. 30.

⁵³ Royle, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 266.

⁵⁴ White, ‘The Matter of Britain’, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Glanmor Williams, *Renewal and Reformation* (Oxford, 1993), p. 189.

⁵⁶ Griffiths, *King and Country: England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 77.

substantial military credibility, as Breverton concludes, he eventually became the ‘single peer’ to fight in every battle during the Wars of the Roses, spanning from the First Battle of St Albans in 1455 to Stoke Field in 1487.⁵⁷ Ultimately at Bosworth, this military skill would prove beneficial to Henry, but as Jasper obtained the role as Henry’s guardian from birth,⁵⁸ Jasper was also crucial in Henry’s upbringing.

Due to Jasper’s role in the Wars of the Roses, Henry was inevitably dragged into the period’s conflicts. In 1461, Jasper was forced to surrender Pembroke Castle to the Yorkists and from the ages of four to fourteen, Henry lived in the custody of the Herberts at Raglan Castle.⁵⁹ Breverton argues that it was Henry’s experience at Raglan that played a significant role in Henry rise to the throne,⁶⁰ however, it can be argued that the events of 1471 were the most pivotal. The Lancastrians were defeated in quick succession during this year, first at the Battle of Barnet in April,⁶¹ then at Tewkesbury in May, consequently restoring Yorkist rule under Edward IV onto the throne.⁶² The outcome of Tewkesbury was monumental for Henry Tudor as Henry VI’s son, the sole Lancastrian heir, Prince Edward was, as Chronicler Polydore Vergil recounts, ‘crewelly murderyd’.⁶³ Of the Chronicles composed during this period, Vergil’s *Anglica Historia* has been deemed the ‘standard account for subsequent historians’ due to the extensivity of his record, yet

⁵⁷ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 11.

⁵⁸ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 12.

⁵⁹ Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, pp. 231-232.

⁶⁰ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 295.

⁶¹ Battlefields Hub, ‘Battle of Barnet’, Available at: <https://www.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/warsoftheroses/battleview.asp?BattleFieldId=5> Accessed 3 May 2024.

⁶² Battlefields Hub, ‘Battle of Tewkesbury’, Available at: <https://www.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/warsoftheroses/battleview.asp?BattleFieldId=45>. Accessed 7 May 2024.

⁶³ Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil’s English History, Comprising the Reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV., and Richard III*, ed. by Henry Ellis (London, 1844), p. 152.

the source is limited in its reliability as Vergil was not in England until 1502.⁶⁴ Vergil was commissioned by Henry VII himself to compile the record in c.1507-8,⁶⁵ thus it can be deduced that he relied on Henry's own word and eyewitness accounts. Because of this, it is inevitable that Vergil wrote in favour of the Tudor reign and the Lancastrians. In fact, this is implied in the aforementioned quote as Vergil condemns the Yorkist execution of Prince Edward as 'cruel'. The result of this death, as Vergil also recorded, is that Henry was 'the only imp now left of Henry VI's blood'.⁶⁶ Consequently, and despite the supposed illegitimacy of his claim, Henry Tudor became the only remaining Lancastrian claimant to the throne, ultimately making him susceptible to Yorkist threat. Jasper was wise to this, as Vergil records, he 'submyttyd himself and his nephew to his protection' in Brittany⁶⁷ and the Tudors would remain in exile until 1485. During the early 1480s, Henry and Jasper moved from Brittany to France in an act which proved politically advantageous for the French King Louis XI as he became in possession of a valuable threat to the English throne.⁶⁸ In England, tensions amounted in 1483 surrounding the Yorkist King Richard III's usurpation of the throne from his nephew, Edward V, fuelling suspicions that Richard had had Edward, and his brother Richard, murdered in the Tower of London.⁶⁹ These deaths have never been confirmed, but the *Croyland Chronicle* documented 'a rumour was spread that the sons of king Edward before-named had died a violent death, but it was uncertain

⁶⁴ Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 6.

⁶⁵ 'Preface' in *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, p. v-vi.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Jones, *The Hollow Crown*, p. 279. The original is in Polydore Vergil's *Three Books of English History*, (ed. and trans. by Henry Ellis), p. 164, 'thonely ympe now left of king Henry the 6ths bloode'.

⁶⁷ Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, p. 155.

⁶⁸ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 130.

⁶⁹ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 99.

how'.⁷⁰ This chronicle was part of a larger body of work, first written by an individual named Ingulph and subsequently added to by an anonymous author who documented the events of 1459-1485.⁷¹ Another chronicle, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke* by Edward Hall, took this rumour further, implying it was Richard III who had them murdered, as the princes were 'slaine and murdered by the cruel ambicion of their vnnaturall vnkle'.⁷² Whilst this corresponds to some extent with the *Croyland*, Hall was not born until 1498, therefore, he did not witness the events.⁷³ Again, like the *Croyland*, Hall was writing during the Tudor period, in the later reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. It is not implausible, therefore, to suggest a fabrication of these events could have been created with the intention to demean Richard III as the 'mischief kyng'.⁷⁴ What these sources reveal is that there was a sense of dissatisfaction present within the English nobility. This tension was an opportunity for a Lancastrian alternative to take the throne, which would prove most crucial in advocating for English support for Henry Tudor.

Consequently, it was Henry Tudor's mother, Margaret Beaufort, who used her political alliances within the English nobility to garner support. Nicola Tallis argues that Margaret was key in helping to 'lay the foundations for England's most famous dynasty',⁷⁵ whilst also suggesting that it was Margaret who 'brought the son of a nobleman born with no expectations of kingship to the

⁷⁰ Anon. *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland with the continuations of Peter of Blois and anonymous writers*, trans. and ed. by Henry T. Riley, (London, 1908), p. 491.

⁷¹ Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 5.

⁷² Edward Hall, *Hall's chronicle; containing the history of England, during the reign of Henry the Fourth, and the succeeding monarchs, to the end of the reign of Henry the Eighth, in which are particularly described the manners and customs of those periods*, ed. by Henry Ellis (London, 1809), p. 379.

⁷³ Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 147.

⁷⁴ Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle*, p. 422.

⁷⁵ Tallis, *Uncrowned Queen*, p. xxxiv.

throne of England'.⁷⁶ Whilst Tallis's argument is right to some extent, as Henry did become a contender to the throne through Margaret's family claim, she also overstates her role. Arguably, it was not the sole actions of Margaret that assisted Henry to the throne as Margaret aided this event but did not manufacture it. As it has been revealed, Henry became the plausible Lancastrian contender because he was the only surviving relation to Henry VI. In fact, Amy Licence has criticised such overstated views as Tallis's, suggesting that Margaret is often seen as 'overly ambitious, as obsessive and fixated upon her son's position'.⁷⁷ That is not to say Margaret did not assist her son at all. Her key involvement lies in the alliances she forged, as Vergil recorded, in 1472, Margaret 'mariyed Thomas lord Standley'.⁷⁸ Thomas Stanley was a 'wealthy, shrewd and powerful figure', who had once been a Lancastrian but had defected to the Yorkists.⁷⁹ Licence argues that Margaret married Stanley as she had sought a 'powerful protector',⁸⁰ however, Margaret wed Stanley the year after Henry was named heir, suggesting she had a seemingly political agenda.

Most importantly, by marrying a Yorkist, Margaret was granted access to both sides of the political division. In 1483, Margaret used this to ally with the Yorkists who were dissatisfied with Richard III's rule and were seeking a replacement.⁸¹ Most notably, this was the Yorkist King Edward IV's widow, Elizabeth Woodville, who Griffiths and Thomas note Richard had cause to 'alienate' as the mother of the missing Princes in the Tower.⁸² In return for assistance in

⁷⁶ Tallis, *Uncrowned Queen*, p. xxxi.

⁷⁷ Amy Licence, *Red Roses: Blanche of Gaunt to Margaret Beaufort* (Gloucestershire, 2017), p. 305.

⁷⁸ Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, p. 195.

⁷⁹ Licence, *Red Roses*, pp. 296-7.

⁸⁰ Licence, *Red Roses*, p. 297.

⁸¹ Griffiths, *King and Country*, p. 126.

⁸² Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 102.

Henry's invasion from France, Edward Hall recorded of Margaret's promise that Henry 'would sweare to mary y lady Elizabeth as sone as he was kyng'.⁸³ This was an agreement which would prove advantageous to both sides as it would unite the Yorkists and Lancastrians. The Beaufort-Woodville alliance eventually extended to include Richard III's 'most exalted and lavishly rewarded noble ally', the Duke of Buckingham, who had his own plans to rebel.⁸⁴ Conspiring with the Tudors in exile, the plot became known as 'Buckingham's Rebellion', but this collapsed, and Buckingham was executed.⁸⁵ However, what is important about this event is that it confirmed there were members of the nobility willing to support Henry's deposition of the Yorkist King, therefore, pushing forward the Tudor plan to eventually invade.

Throughout this period, the Welsh had maintained their confidences in the Tudors. As consequence of the events of 1471, and undeniably because of Henry's Tudor Welsh connection, as Victoria Flood argues, 'the weight of Welsh expectation shifted almost universally to the young Lancastrian claimant to the throne, Henry Tudor'.⁸⁶ As a contender to the throne, Henry thus demonstrated promise to become the *mab darogan*. Whilst Henry and Jasper remained in exile, the masses of Welsh bards coined material pleading for the Tudor invasion. In *Ceinion Llenyddiaeth Gymreig*, an unknown poet recorded,

'This is the day that will save us...

For the beloved Bull [Jasper] to venture forth...

The Mole [Richard] will fall...

⁸³ Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle*, p. 390.

⁸⁴ Jones, *The Hollow Crown*, p. 306.

⁸⁵ Tallis, *Uncrowned Queen*, pp. 145-6.

⁸⁶ Victoria Flood, 'Henry Tudor and Lancastrian Prophecy in Wales', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 34 (2014), p. 69.

No Saxon will go a second time to the battlefield...

There is a longing for Harry, there is hope for our race...

His name comes down from the mountains as a two-edged sword, and his descent from high blood'.⁸⁷

This poem significantly underlines the Welsh poetic support of Henry, bolstered by his ancestry from Cadwalar, his 'descent from high blood'. This source also reveals that despite Henry's minimal Welsh heritage, the bards did not hesitate to support him. Clearly, it was Henry's relation to the Tudors which cemented this as the poet also makes a reference to Jasper. Given this glorified view, it can be argued that poems were being used as propaganda for the Tudor cause. Griffiths and Thomas certainly make an interesting point, suggesting poetry was used successfully during the period to 'generate enthusiasm, express solidarity or create a sense of mission'.⁸⁸ Thus, it is not implausible to suggest that Welsh poetry was instrumental in eventually gaining support for Henry at Bosworth. Whilst this poem was anonymous, messages of a similar nature were rife across Wales. In an ode to Jasper Tudor, Lewis Glyn Cothi appealed for Jasper's return from exile,

'Jasper, what preparations do you make?

In what seas are your anchors?

When, oh Black Bull, will you turn to land?

How long shall we have to wait?'⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *Ceinion Llenyddiaeth Gymreig*, quoted in Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 270.

⁸⁸ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 157.

⁸⁹ Ode to Jasper Tudor, quoted in Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 271.

Maisie Johnson – The Welsh connection

This poem supports that the Welsh lamented for the Tudor cause, significantly demonstrating that Henry's connection to Jasper was of undeniable importance as the Tudor name had become synonymous with the *mab darogan*. This poem was written immediately prior to the Tudor invasion in 1485,⁹⁰ therefore, suggesting that the Tudor army would have, at least to some degree, Welsh military assistance.

The findings of Chapter One have provided a clear structure of events that shaped Henry's position as a contender to the throne. It has also provided the foundation for Henry's potential support networks at Bosworth. It is clear that by 1485, discontent was amounting in the English nobility, prompting the need for a replacement monarch, whilst the Welsh were also presenting a strong willingness of their intentions to support Henry in the penultimate fight for the throne. As Henry was still in French exile, this would provide the starting point of invasion.

⁹⁰ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 271.

Chapter Two – The Battle of Bosworth, August 1485

To successfully invade England and defeat Richard III, Henry required a substantial military force. As Richard III supposedly remarked, Henry was a ‘Welsh milksop, a man of small courage and of less experience of martial acts and feats of war’.⁹¹ Certainly, Henry had no previous military experience, thus significant assistance was crucial if he was to defeat the Yorkist king.⁹² To Henry’s advantage, he was in French exile, and as Trevor Royle suggests, the newly appointed Charles VIII had an ‘inclination to oppose Richard III’ who was a ‘potential enemy intent on reclaiming English interests in France’.⁹³ Consequently, Henry was provided mercenaries by Charles, no doubt aided by the fact that Jasper’s mother, Catherine of Valois, had been a member of Charles VIII’s family.⁹⁴

The extent of provisions supplied by the French are outlined in *The Historical Memoirs of Philip De Comines*, a document written in c.1490 by French courtier Philippe Commines who had served the French King Louis XI.⁹⁵ Commines stated that Charles ‘paid for the passage of three or four thousand men, gave [Henry]...a considerable sum of money...a large train of artillery’.⁹⁶ These figures can be deemed reliable as Commines worked in French court, meeting with Henry in either March or April prior to Bosworth.⁹⁷ Inferably, Commines had knowledge of the negotiations. Historians mostly agree with Commines’s figures, as Glanmor Williams states,

⁹¹ Edward Hall, *Hall’s Chronicle*, quoted in Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 147.

⁹² Royle, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 413.

⁹³ Royle, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 408.

⁹⁴ Evans, ‘The Battle of Bosworth Field: a Welsh victory?’.

⁹⁵ Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 3.

⁹⁶Philippe de Commines, *The Historical Memoirs of Philip De Comines*, ed. and trans. by J. Davis (London, 1817), p. 313.

⁹⁷ Breverton, *Henry VII*, p. 98.

Henry was supplied with approximately 4000 troops and 40,000 livres.⁹⁸ This is the extent of the source's reliability, however, as Commines later notes that Henry was 'sent him out of Normandy to land in some part of Wales'.⁹⁹ His inability to confirm Henry's precise landing place suggests he did not witness events outside of France. By the time he got to the battlefield, Henry had accumulated approximately 5000-7000 men,¹⁰⁰ therefore, if Commines's record is correct, then Henry's army consisted of mainly French men, suggesting their military forces were crucial. Discrepancies do arise, however, as Vergil recorded, France provided 'two thousand onely of armyd men and a few shippes'.¹⁰¹ Arguably, either Vergil did not know the extent of French forces as he was not an eyewitness, or he aimed to downplay their role. Either way, it cannot be denied that Henry benefitted substantially from French military support.

The rebel army landed in Mill Bay, Wales on the 7th of August 1485 as the *Croyland Chronicle* states, 'without opposition'.¹⁰² Inferably, this is because their choice of landing place was both strategic and deliberate, given Jasper's power there. As assistance from south Wales was, arguably, the most promising, Henry hoped to increase the support he gained from the north. In a surviving letter addressed to John ap Maredudd ab Ieuan ap Maredudd, a 'notable and influential squire' in Caernarfonshire, North Wales,¹⁰³ Henry stated, 'right trusty and well beloved...the assistance of our loving friends and true subjects, and the great confidence that we have to the nobles and commons of this our principality of Wales'.¹⁰⁴ This suggests not only that Henry

⁹⁸ Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, p. 217.

⁹⁹ Philippe de Commines, *The Historical memoirs of Philip de Comines*, p. 313.

¹⁰⁰ Evans, 'The Battle of Bosworth Field: a Welsh victory?'

¹⁰¹ Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, p. 216.

¹⁰² *The Croyland Chronicle*, p. 500.

¹⁰³ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁴ Letter sent from Henry Tudor to John ap Maredudd Ieuan ap Maredudd, 7 August (1485), printed in Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, pp. 155-7.

hoped for an alliance, but by using ‘our’, it demonstrates Henry’s own sense of belonging to Wales. To increase the likelihood of support, Henry called for the ‘oppression of that odious tyrant Richard...usurper of our said right’.¹⁰⁵ This implies that Henry was aware of the messages being disseminated by the Welsh bards, thus he capitalised on this sense of nationalism, whilst simultaneously demeaning Richard. The overall tone of the letter is amicable, except for its conclusion, as Henry commands, ‘we desire and pray you and upon your allegiance straitly charge and command you’.¹⁰⁶ This insistence shows that Henry saw significant value in Welsh support. Presumably, Henry would have written other letters of a similar nature to other nobles, possibly even those in England, but most of these letters have since been lost.¹⁰⁷ Whilst it is unknown whether Maredudd responded to Henry’s calls, Griffiths and Thomas concur that other Welshmen indeed reacted and rallied for the cause.¹⁰⁸ Thus, it cannot be denied that Henry was reliant on the Welsh to support him.

One of the key Welsh figures that was introduced in the beginning of this dissertation was Rhys ap Thomas. By the time Henry reached the battlefield, Rhys had supplied him with around 1800-2000 men, which ‘swelled Henry’s army considerably’.¹⁰⁹ Rebel power in south Wales was clearly undefeatable, as like Jasper, Rhys was dominant as ‘the most powerful lord in south Wales’.¹¹⁰ However, Rhys’s support was unstable. Prior to Henry’s landing in Wales, Richard III had demanded Rhys pledge allegiance to the Yorkist cause.¹¹¹ This necessity to have Rhys on his

¹⁰⁵ Letter sent from Henry Tudor to John ap Maredudd Ieuan ap Maredudd, 7 August (1485), printed in Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, pp. 155-7.

¹⁰⁶ Letter sent from Henry Tudor to John ap Maredudd Ieuan ap Maredudd, 7 August (1485), printed in Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, pp. 155-7.

¹⁰⁷ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁸ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁹ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 166.

¹¹⁰ Breverton, *Henry VII*, p. 110.

¹¹¹ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, pp. 159-60.

side suggests that Richard deemed him a significant threat if he allied with the Tudors, supporting that Rhys's military assistance was seen as beneficial. Despite the fragility of these loyalties, H.T. Evans concluded that Rhys's Tudor alliance had always been concrete, 'there can be no doubt that Rhys intended ultimately to attach himself to Henry'.¹¹² Yet Evans's argument does not consider Henry's own intervention in the cause. As Vergil documented, Henry ultimately had to persuade Rhys to defer his Yorkist allegiance, 'Henry had promysyd to Richerd Thomas the perpetuall lyvetenanship of Wales, so that he wold coome under his obedience'.¹¹³ What this suggests is how valuable Rhys's support was, as Henry was prepared to go to great lengths to acquire it.

For the most part, the Welsh did side with Henry. As Breverton argues, 'men had flocked from every single part of Wales'.¹¹⁴ On their journey across Wales to the English battlefield, the Welsh Chronicler, Elis Gruffydd, recorded men from Gwynedd had joined Henry, including 'Rhys Fawr ap Maredudd'.¹¹⁵ It is not implausible to suggest that this was in large part thanks to the work of the Welsh bards. Prior to Henry's landing in Wales, messengers 'supported by the bards' had travelled across Wales in a pledge to gain support.¹¹⁶ Important to note is that throughout the Wars of the Roses, the Welsh bards had viewed the conflicts as 'one between Welsh and English leaders'.¹¹⁷ Consequently, Henry's Welsh blood, whilst minimal, worked to his advantage as it was this link that significantly bolstered the Welsh to support him in oppression of an English monarch. That is not to say that the entirety of Wales rushed to Henry's

¹¹² Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses*, p. 220.

¹¹³ Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, p. 217.

¹¹⁴ Breverton, *Henry VII*, p. 110.

¹¹⁵ Elis Gruffydd quoted in Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, pp. 165-6.

¹¹⁶ Breverton, *Henry VII*, p. 105.

¹¹⁷ Breverton, *Henry VII*, p. 99.

side because of this connection. When Chrimes stated Henry ‘met with no opposition at all in Wales’,¹¹⁸ it is clear he did not consider the remaining body of Yorkists that remained loyal to Richard. As referenced in Chapter One, the Herbert family were prominent Yorkists alongside the Vaughans.¹¹⁹ What can be deduced so far, however, is that the Welsh may have been more inclined to support an individual who was connected to Wales over an English usurper.

Insofar, this chapter has focused on French and Welsh military support. Attention must now turn to English assistance, which came most notably from the Stanley family. An overwhelming amount of scholarship praises the role of the Stanley brothers on Bosworth battlefield, for example, as Griffiths and Thomas note, their assistance was ‘crucial’.¹²⁰ As discussed in Chapter One, Henry became linked to the Stanley’s through his mother’s marriage to Thomas in 1472. The Stanley’s commanded power across mostly England, but also Wales, as Thomas Stanley controlled Cheshire and Lancashire, whilst his brother, William, controlled Shropshire and Denbighshire,¹²¹ suggesting they would have a large force of men willing to participate.

Most significantly, however, is that the Stanleys were Yorkist, therefore, it can be inferred they would have supported Richard on the battlefield. Yet this matter was complicated as Thomas Stanley was Henry’s stepfather. As Vergil suggested, Henry had also presumed his stepfather’s allegiance as he ‘sent unto Margaret his mother, to the Stanleys...certane of his most faythfull servants’.¹²² It appears the Stanley brothers are often synonymous with each other, therefore, for the purpose of this argument, their forces will be considered collectively. These numbers,

¹¹⁸ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, p. 44.

¹¹⁹ Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, p. 219.

¹²⁰ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 170.

¹²¹ Breverton, *Henry VII*, p. 105.

¹²² Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil’s English History*, p. 217.

however, cannot be wholly confirmed. Edward Hall documented that ‘Sir William Stanley...came to succours with iii. Thousand tall men’.¹²³ As mentioned in Chapter One, Hall did not witness Bosworth, but this figure has been corroborated by other sources, such as Francis Bacon’s *The History of the Reign of King Henry VII*. Bacon suggests that ‘Stanley was sent by his brother, with three thousand men to his rescue’.¹²⁴ Important to note is that Bacon was writing during the Stuart King James I’s reign, nearly one hundred and fifty years after Bosworth, therefore, it can be presumed he mostly copied from existing works. James I was Henry VII’s ancestor, and as David M. Bergeron suggests, Bacon was likely writing to flatter Henry in later scholarship.¹²⁵ Despite the delayed documentation of these sources, however, historians have agreed that the Stanleys provided approximately 3000 men at Bosworth.¹²⁶ Certainly, it is not the over emphasised figure supplied by Commines, who recorded over ‘26,000 men’.¹²⁷ These figures suggest that the Stanley’s had a sizeable army, yet they did not wholly commit to either cause until the last minute.

Thus, the role of the Stanleys is the main contention of this dissertation. Many historians have argued that the actions of the Stanleys on the battlefield were the most decisive for Henry, suggesting that, overall, English military support was the most important. As Griffiths and Thomas argue it was the Stanley intervention that rescued Henry,¹²⁸ whilst Nicola Tallis deduced it was the Stanleys who gained Henry his victory.¹²⁹ When Henry approached the battlefield, he

¹²³ Edward Hall, *Hall’s chronicle*, p. 419.

¹²⁴ Francis Bacon, *Bacon’s History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, ed. by Joseph Rawson Lumby (Cambridge, 1885), p. 124.

¹²⁵ David M. Bergeron, ‘Francis Bacon’s Henry VII: Commentary on King James I’, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 24(1), (1992), pp. 20-1.

¹²⁶ Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, p. 222.

¹²⁷ Philippe de Commines, *The Historical Memoirs of Philip De Comines*, p. 313.

¹²⁸ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p.185.

¹²⁹ Tallis, *Uncrowned Queen*, p. 165.

had acquired approximately 5000-7000 men, excluding the Stanley forces, whilst Richard had over 10,000.¹³⁰ Based on this alone, it is undeniable that Richard had the upper hand. The events have not been accurately documented, but historians have confirmed that when the battle commenced, the Stanleys remained on the sidelines.¹³¹ During the battle, Richard decided to charge into Henry's vanguard to kill Henry personally, but as Vergil documented, this failed and Richard instead 'overthrew Henry's standard, together with William Brandon the standard bearer'.¹³² It was this impromptu attack that placed Richard close to Henry, and it is supposedly at this moment the Stanley's released their forces.¹³³ Despite the plethora of arguments suggesting this was the decisive moment, Trevor Royle suggests that, like Richard, the Stanleys 'acted equally impulsively; if they had that felt the battle was swinging Richard's way there is no doubt that they would have supported him'.¹³⁴ This implies that Henry was already winning to which Breverton suggests the same, 'the outcome may well have been a Lancastrian victory anyway'.¹³⁵ This argument is hard to pinpoint conclusively because of the lack of documentation, but it is not unreasonable to suggest the Stanleys could have switched alliances for the winning team. Prior to Bosworth, Thomas Stanley had previously turned from Lancastrian to Yorkist¹³⁶ and as Nicola Tallis supports, he was indeed 'a man of dubious political allegiance'.¹³⁷

¹³⁰ Evans, 'The battle of Bosworth Field: a Welsh victory?'

¹³¹ Royle, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 412.

¹³² Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, p. 224.

¹³³ Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 99.

¹³⁴ Royle, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 414.

¹³⁵ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 308.

¹³⁶ Licence, *Red Roses*, pp. 296-7.

¹³⁷ Tallis, *Uncrowned Queen*, p. xix.

This dissertation is not discrediting the Stanley involvement at Bosworth. Instead, it has been suggested that their intervention was not to the utmost extent that it has been discussed in historiography. This glorification of their role may have been influenced by ‘The Ballad of Bosworth Field’, a song produced around the time of the battle. It repeatedly praises ‘Sir William, wise and worthy’ and makes no reference to any Welsh or French forces, or surprisingly, Thomas Stanley either.¹³⁸ As Bennett suggests, the ballad was likely created by a member of the ‘Stanley entourage’, but as was typical of this source type, it was likely not written down until later.¹³⁹ William Stanley was executed after rebelling against Henry VII in 1495, thus Griffiths and Thomas suggest the ballad may have been doctored with the ‘intention of highlighting the Stanley contribution to Henry’s victory’,¹⁴⁰ overall supporting that their role may have been overestimated.

As Edward Hall recorded, the Battle of Bosworth concluded when Richard III was ‘slayne and brought to his death as he worthely had deserued’,¹⁴¹ importantly suggesting Hall’s favour of the Tudors. Within the nature of this dissertation, it can be argued that the individual who killed Richard can be deemed the most important as they single handedly ended Yorkist rule, but this has never been confirmed. The French Chronicler, Molinet, writing in c.1490 documented that ‘one of the Welshmen then came after him...and struck him dead with a halberd’.¹⁴² In comparison to other chronicles discussed, Molinet was writing relatively close after the events,

¹³⁸ Anon. ‘The Ballad of Bosworth Field’ in Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, pp. 152-157.

¹³⁹ Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 152.

¹⁴⁰ Griffiths and Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, p. 149.

¹⁴¹ Edward Hall, *Hall’s Chronicle*, p. 419.

¹⁴² Molinet, *The Chronicles of Jean Molinet*, in Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, pp.138-9.

however, it cannot be confirmed that Molinet witnessed this himself. Bennett does suggest, however, that Molinet was a historian with a convincing knowledge of the military aspects of Bosworth.¹⁴³ If Molinet was not a witness, it can be inferred that this information may have been relayed to him by the French forces at Bosworth, or within correspondence to Charles VIII regarding the mercenaries he provided. Breverton suggests the Welshman may have been William Gardyner, a member of Rhys ap Thomas's forces.¹⁴⁴ This would explain why Molinet records they were Welsh but cannot confirm their identity.

If a Welshman did kill Richard, this would suggest their involvement was the most decisive overall as it was at Welsh hands that Henry succeeded to the throne. Significantly, the Welsh poet, Guto'r Glyn corroborates this in his poem, 'In praise of Sir Rhys ap Tomas of Abermarlais'

'King Henry won the day,
Through the strength of our master:
Killing Englishmen, capable hand,
Killing the boar, he shaved his head,
And Sir Rhys like the stars of a shield,
With the spear in their midst on a great steed.'¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Bennett, *The Battle of Bosworth*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Breverton, *Jasper Tudor*, p. 302.

¹⁴⁵ Lines 35-40, 'In praise of Sir Rhys ap Tomas of Abermarlais', ed. by Dafydd Johnston, Guto'r Glyn.net, Available at: <http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/poem/?poem-selection=014&first-line=%23> Accessed 10 May 2024.

Within this poem, Glyn ascribes Richard's murder to Rhys ap Thomas, and this could be who Molinet referenced in his own work. Glyn records, 'killing the boar, he shaved his head',¹⁴⁶ which implies Richard died from a head injury. This can be corroborated as Richard's remains were discovered in 2012,¹⁴⁷ with archaeologists confirming that Richard died from either one or multiple blows to the head.¹⁴⁸ As Glyn heavily praises Rhys throughout the poem, he may have recorded this to grant Rhys more notoriety. However, if Glyn had aimed to gain anything monumental by fabricating this event, presumably he would have granted this killing to the new king instead. As this poem was written in late 1485 or early 1486, Rhys had been knighted by Henry.¹⁴⁹ Did Henry reward Rhys because he killed Richard and solidified his reign? If both Molinet and Glyn's accounts are correct, then this fundamentally supports that the Welsh role was the most important.

Lastly, in discerning the importance of the Welsh, it is important to remember that Henry's Welsh connection was not lost to him. During Bosworth and at his coronation, he used a red dragon alongside the Tudor colours of white and green on his coat of arms.¹⁵⁰ As Fisher suggests, this was significant as it highlighted his Welsh heritage, displaying that 'the Tudors

¹⁴⁶ 'In praise of Sir Rhys ap Tomas of Abermarlais', ed by Dafydd Johnston, Guto'r Glyn.net, Available at: <http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/poem/?poem-selection=014&first-line=%23> Accessed 10 May 2024.

¹⁴⁷ University of Leicester, 'Richard III: Discovery and identification', Available at <https://le.ac.uk/richard-iii> Accessed 11 May 2024.

¹⁴⁸ University of Leicester, 'How Richard III died', Available at: <https://le.ac.uk/richard-iii/identification/osteology/injuries/how-richard-iii-died#:~:text=During%20the%20ensuing%20fighting%20Richard,with%20halberds%20as%20the%20killers>. Accessed 11 May 2024.

¹⁴⁹ 'English notes' for the poem 'In praise of Sir Rhys ap Tomas of Abermarlais', ed. by Dafydd Johnston, Guto'r Glyn.net, Available at: <http://www.gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/poem/?poem-selection=014&first-line=%23> Accessed 23 May 2024.

¹⁵⁰ Licence, *Red Roses*, pp. 317-322.

claimed descent from Cadwaladr',¹⁵¹ but also suggests that he felt pride in his heritage. Upon becoming King, Henry rewarded those he deemed the most loyal to him at Bosworth. Jasper was made the Duke of Bedford and chief justiciar in south Wales, whilst Rhys ap Thomas was knighted and granted extensive power, again in the south.¹⁵² Furthermore, Thomas Stanley was made the earl of Derby.¹⁵³ Possibly Henry's family relations with Jasper and Stanley may have had some influence over these decisions and ultimately, he had promised Rhys he would elevate his power in exchange for his support, but what these grants also suggest is that these were the men Henry valued most significantly in assisting his rise to the throne.

By 1486, the union of the Yorkists and Lancastrians was marked by Henry VII's marriage to Elizabeth of York. As Bacon records, this was a marriage 'so long expected and so much desired'.¹⁵⁴ On the throne, Henry VII remained in value to his Welsh connections, as Licence suggests, he was 'keen to capitalise on his Welsh descent'.¹⁵⁵ Henry's first-born son was named Arthur, providing the new king's link to his descent from Cadwaladr, the 'heir of Arthur'.¹⁵⁶ Overall, in establishing the Tudor dynasty, it cannot be denied that Henry consolidated his reign with his Welsh connection in mind.

¹⁵¹ Fisher, *Royal Wales*, p. 104.

¹⁵² Geraint, H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2007), p. 128.

¹⁵³ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, p. 62.

¹⁵⁴ Bacon, *Bacon's History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁵ Licence, *Red Roses*, pp. 322-3.

¹⁵⁶ White, 'The Matter of Britain', p. 63.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to answer how important Welsh support was at placing Henry Tudor onto the throne in 1485. By remaining impartial to the various avenues of support, it cannot be denied that Wales, England and France were, to varying extents, major contributors to this victory. Overall, however, could Henry have risen to the throne without Welsh support? If the records are correct and Richard was killed by a Welshman then it can be concluded that no, Henry may not have defeated Richard. The Welsh were not important solely for this action, however, as Henry also benefitted greatly from military assistance provided by Rhys ap Thomas, who considerably bolstered the rebel army. As it has been made clear, the Welsh were also prominent advocates for Henry, inspiring men to rise in arms to successfully defeat the English Richard III and restore Welsh rule. Despite Henry's minimal Welsh heritage, his connection to the Tudor family and his relation to Jasper naturally granted him the legacy of the *mab darogan*, further prompting a sense of nationalism which undeniably fuelled his support.

That is not to say that Henry did not benefit from his connections to England and France. By living in France and having the link to the French nobility through his grandmother, Catherine of Valois, Henry was provided with the most extensive part of his army by Charles VIII.

Furthermore, his mother, Margaret Beaufort, successfully used her position within the English nobility to construct notable alliances, highlighting to Henry that his invasion was feasible.

These factors were in no doubt prompted by the conflicts of the Wars of the Roses, which began the chain of events that eventually culminated in the Tudor dynasty on the throne. Without the Lancastrian disaster of 1471, Henry Tudor would never have been considered a contender.

However, it is the Stanley role that remains the largest contention with scholarship, yet as this dissertation has made clear, this may have been overemphasised. Therefore, what this research

has achieved is a correction of the historiography that ignores the role of Wales in creating the Tudor dynasty. Whilst the subject of whether Wales was the most important or the least is one that will always be open to debate, this dissertation has proved that they were no less than significant. Within this period, there are many other figures, events and sources which could not be covered within this dissertation but will add further to this perspective. Ultimately, as the primary material does not deny the Welsh presence, why have historians? Thus, it can be concluded, that the Tudor dynasty was undeniably founded in large part to the assistance of Wales and Henry Tudor's Welsh connection.

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