

*The Henry Loyn Memorial Lecture for 2008*  
 Welsh kings at Anglo-Saxon royal assemblies (928–55)  
*Simon Keynes*

A volume containing the collected papers of Henry Loyn was published in 1992, five years after his retirement in 1987.<sup>1</sup> A memoir of his academic career, written by Nicholas Brooks, was published by the British Academy in 2003.<sup>2</sup> When reminded in this way of a contribution to Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman studies sustained over a period of 50 years, and on learning at the same time of Henry's outstanding service to the academic communities in Cardiff, London, and elsewhere, one can but stand back in awe. I was never taught by Henry, but encountered him at critical moments—first as the external examiner of my PhD thesis, in 1977, and then at conferences or meetings for twenty years thereafter. Henry was renowned not only for the authority and crystal clarity of his published works, but also as the kind of speaker who could always be relied upon to bring a semblance of order and direction to any proceedings—whether introducing a conference, setting out the issues in a way which made one feel that it all mattered, and that we stood together at the cutting edge of intellectual endeavour; or concluding a conference, artfully drawing together the scattered threads and making it appear as if we'd been following a plan, and might even have reached a conclusion. First place at a conference in the 1970s and 1980s was known as the 'Henry Loyn slot', and was normally occupied by Henry Loyn himself; but once, at the British Museum, he was for some reason not able to do it, and I was prevailed upon to do it in his place. Not wishing to disappoint the audience, the organisers of the meeting were so kind as to provide me with a pair of magnificent adhesive eyebrows, so that at least I might look the part. Suffice it to say that Henry's books and articles will stand for many years to come as an example for us all to emulate.<sup>3</sup>

Earlier speakers in this series have taken their respective cues from Henry's own writings;<sup>4</sup> and I wish to do the same, by speaking in his memory about Welsh kings at royal assemblies in Anglo-Saxon England. The subject was first explored almost a hundred years ago, by Sir John Edward Lloyd, towards the end of the first volume of his magisterial *History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (1911).<sup>5</sup> It was a job very well done; and Lloyd's perception of Hywel Dda, in particular, became the orthodoxy. It fed directly into the representation of Hywel

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<sup>1</sup> H. Loyn, *Society and Peoples: Studies in the History of England and Wales, c. 600–1200*, Westfield Publications in Medieval Studies 6 (London, 1992); see also his 'Anglo-Saxon England', in *A Century of British Medieval Studies*, ed. A. Deyermond (Oxford, 2007), 7–26, reviewing the scholarship of the twentieth century.

<sup>2</sup> N. Brooks, 'Henry Royston Loyn, 1922–2000', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows II / Proceedings of the British Academy* 120 (2003), 303–24.

<sup>3</sup> I should like to record my appreciation of the kindness shown by Pat Loyn, and by those in Cardiff hosting the Loyn Lecture, in 2008. I should also like to thank William North, as editor of this journal, for his patience, care and understanding.

<sup>4</sup> N. Brooks, 'English Identity from Bede to the Millennium', *HSJ* 14 (2005 for 2003), 33–51; D. Bates, 'William the Conqueror and his Wider Western European World', *HSJ* 15 (2006 for 2004), 73–87; J. L. Nelson, 'Henry Loyn and the Context of Anglo-Saxon England', *HSJ* 19 (2008 for 2007), 154–70.

<sup>5</sup> Sir J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, (2 vols., London, 1911; 3rd ed., London, 1939), i, 333–53, with J. G. Edwards, 'Sir John Edward Lloyd, 1861–1947', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 41 (1955), 319–27.

constructed in 1928, when the occasion was taken to celebrate the king's millennium;<sup>6</sup> and it lay at the heart of the perception of Hywel, in certain quarters, as Wales's own King Alfred the Great.<sup>7</sup> However, not all historians have continued to subscribe to the notion of Welsh kings fawning at the feet of successive English overlords. In a paper published in the *Welsh History Review*, in 1976, David Kirby expounded what must have been regarded as the more realistic line of argument, suggesting that for the Welsh rulers in the tenth century it was a necessary choice between two evils (taking sides with the Scandinavians against the English, or with the English against the Scandinavians); that Hywel would have had scant affection for the English, and indeed would have been 'seething with suppressed indignation', when on visits to the royal court which were for him 'an indignity and a humiliation'; and that he was essentially 'a successful dynastic opportunist'.<sup>8</sup> In 1981 Henry Loyn reviewed the evidence afresh; and although he did not specifically cite David Kirby's paper, published five years previously, in the same journal, one imagines that he conceived his own as a subtle form of response.<sup>9</sup> Much important work on Wales and its rulers in the tenth century has appeared since then. The ground was broken for one reader by Wendy Davies, in her history of Wales, published in 1982;<sup>10</sup> and many other contributions to the subject were made in the following 25 years.<sup>11</sup> To a historian of Anglo-Saxon England, looking west across Offa's dyke, in 2008, wishing to understand who these rulers were, and to get a better sense of the dynamics between them, it remained a tantalizing subject. The quality of the evidence for the attendance

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<sup>6</sup> The pretext was the millennium of Hywel's journey to Rome (below, 00).

<sup>7</sup> See J. E. Lloyd, 'Hywel Dda: the Historical Setting', *The Hwyl Dda Millenary Volume*, Aberystwyth Studies 10 (1928), 1–4, accompanied by four studies by other scholars of aspects of the laws of Hywel Dda; and [J. E. Lloyd], *Hywel Dda: Penn A Molyant Yr Holl Vrytanyeit 928–1928* (Cardiff, 1928), a bilingual pamphlet with a sub-title ('The head and glory of all the Welsh race') representing the notice of Hywel's death in versions of *Brut y Tywysogion* (950). The Board of Education, Welsh Dept., issued 'Memorandum on the Millenary Celebration of Hywel Dda' (London: HMSO, 1928), encouraging schools to participate in the celebrations on 9 May, and suggesting what they might do. See also F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1971), 341, with reference to a 'new political system'.

<sup>8</sup> D. P. Kirby, 'Hywel Dda - Anglophil?', *Welsh History Review* 8 (1976–7), 1–13.

<sup>9</sup> H. Loyn, 'Wales and England in the Tenth Century: the Context of the Æthelstan Charters', *Welsh History Review* 10 (1981), 283–301, reprinted in his *Society and Peoples*, 173–99. For a more recent treatment of the subject, see K. Halloran, 'Welsh Kings at the English Court, 928–956', *Welsh History Review* 25 (2011), 297–313.

<sup>10</sup> W. Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1982), 112–16, with her *Patterns of Power in Early Wales*, O'Donnell Lectures 1983 (Oxford, 1990), esp. 73–8.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, D. Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge, 1990), 15–16; D. E. Thornton, 'Kings, Chronicles and Genealogies: Reconstructing Mediaeval Celtic Dynasties', *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: the Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century*, ed. K. S. B. Keats-Rohan (Woodbridge, 1997), 23–40; K. L. Maund, 'Dynastic Segmentation and Gwynedd c.950–c.1000', *Studia Celtica* 32 (1998), 155–67; D. E. Thornton, 'Predatory Nomenclature and Dynastic Expansion in Early Medieval Wales', *Medieval Prosopography* 20 (1999), 1–22; K. Maund, *The Welsh Kings: the Medieval Rulers of Wales* (Stroud, 2000), 37–49; D. E. Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies: Studies in the Political History of Early Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Oxford, 2002); D. E. Thornton, entries on tenth-century Welsh rulers, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. G. C. Matthew and B. Harrison (60 vols., Oxford, 2004) [hereafter *ODNB*], listed in *ASE* 37 (2008), 212–13, and cited separately below; and C. Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: the Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014* (Edinburgh, 2007).

of Welsh kings at Anglo-Saxon royal assemblies is impeccable; though it is unclear, even from an ‘English’ point of view, what it might signify.<sup>12</sup>

It is of course presumptuous for a historian of Anglo-Saxon England to address, in Cardiff, any aspect of the history of Wales in the tenth century. I come from a Department, in Cambridge, where we have expertise in Medieval Welsh language and literature, and in Welsh (or Brittonic) history; so I am made well aware of my own limitations, as an Anglo-Saxonist, and in these areas defer respectfully to others.<sup>13</sup> The main source of information survives in the form of the (Latin) *Annales Cambriae*, and related versions of the Welsh vernacular annals;<sup>14</sup> and although it is difficult to construct a coherent narrative from the annals alone, it is this material which establishes the framework in which we can approach a variety of other sources of information, including royal genealogies,<sup>15</sup> the tenth-century prophecy poem *Armes Prydein Vawr*,<sup>16</sup> and later medieval texts such as the so-called *Laws of Hywel Dda*.<sup>17</sup> I venture to speak about the subject, on this occasion, because much also depends on some basic ‘Anglo-Saxon’ evidence. From the late ninth century, we have the original ‘common stock’ of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, compiled c. 890 and perhaps first circulated in 892;<sup>18</sup> and Asser’s *Life of King Alfred*, written in 893, using the *Chronicle*’s annals for 849–87 as a framework, but with additional material of the greatest interest.<sup>19</sup> From the first quarter of the tenth century, we have a ‘Winchester’ continuation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which sets down a contemporary if one-sided view of the stages by which Alfred’s son, Edward the Elder, extended his authority over other peoples, including the Danes, the Mercians, the Welsh, the Scots, the Northumbrians, and the ‘Britons of Strathclyde’.<sup>20</sup> Of less certain authority is the

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<sup>12</sup> In the years which have passed since 2008, understanding of Wales in the late ninth and tenth centuries has been taken taken further by T. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), esp. 479–96 (‘The Britons and Alfred, c. 850–900’), 497–510 (‘From Alfred to Edward the Elder’), 510–19 (‘Æthelstan’s inheritance in Wales’), and 536–52 (‘The decline of West Saxon power over Wales’).

<sup>13</sup> I acknowledge gratefully the advice received from two of my former colleagues, David Dumville and Oliver Padel, and from five of my current colleagues, Fiona Edmonds, Rosalind Love, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Rory Naismith, and Paul Russell.

<sup>14</sup> *Annales Cambriae, A.D. 682–954: Texts A–C in Parallel*, ed. and trans. D. N. Dumville, Basic Texts for Brittonic History 1 (Cambridge: Department of ASNC, 2002), and *Brenhinoedd y Saeson, ‘The Kings of the English’, A.D. 682–954: Texts P, R, S in Parallel*, Basic Texts for Mediaeval British History 1 (Aberdeen: Department of History, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> P. C. Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff, 1966), 9–13 (from BL Harley MS. 3859), with 125–9 (commentary); see also P. Sims-Williams, ‘Historical Need and Literary Narrative: a Caveat from Ninth-Century Wales’, *Welsh History Review* 17 (1994), 1–40.

<sup>16</sup> Sir I. Williams and R. Bromwich, *Armes Prydein: the Prophecy of Britain*, Medieval and Modern Welsh Series 6 (Dublin, 1972); and see further below, 000 and 00–00.

<sup>17</sup> For the Welsh law codes, see further below, 00.

<sup>18</sup> For the *Chronicle*, see S. Keynes, ‘Manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*’, *History of the Book in Britain*, I: c. 400–1100, ed. R. Gameson (Cambridge, 2012), 537–52, with further references, and *English Historical Documents, c. 500–1042*, ed. D. Whitelock (2nd ed., London, 1979), 145–261 (no. 1) [hereafter *EHD*].

<sup>19</sup> *Asser’s Life of King Alfred*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904), with S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser’s ‘Life of King Alfred’ and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983).

<sup>20</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS A*, ed. J. M. Bately, *AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition 3* (Cambridge, 1986), 62–9, with *EHD*, 208–17.

crucial entry for 927, found in the 'D' manuscript of the *Chronicle*, probably derived but perhaps developed from a lost set of northern annals, and the annal for 973 found in the so-called 'Northern Recension' of the *Chronicle*, compiled apparently in York, c. 1000.<sup>21</sup> Other accounts of the events of these years seem to have been incorporated into the material for the tenth century found in a later eleventh-century historical work which itself underlies the set of Latin annals attributed to Florence and John of Worcester,<sup>22</sup> and into William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum*.<sup>23</sup> These are the key sources; and it is within the context which they establish that we approach the less overtly loquacious evidence, including a substantial body of Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas, a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon law-code (*Dunsæte*), and a solitary Anglo-Saxon coin (of which more presently).

*The English and the Welsh in the late ninth and early tenth centuries*

Any discussion of the evidence bearing on relations between the English and the Welsh in the second and third quarters of the tenth century must be taken back into the late ninth and early tenth centuries, not least to acknowledge that on both sides feelings ran deep. It had begun, of course, with the Anglo-Saxon settlements, and with British resistance to the incomers, in the fifth and sixth centuries; though our concern is not so much with whatever were the realities and complexities of that dim and distant period, as with the stories about it which developed in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, on both sides. It was Bede, in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, written c. 730, who gave early expression to Northumbrian or more widely 'English' attitudes to the Welsh; and enough is known of Mercian oppression of the Welsh, during the age of the 'Mercian Supremacy', symbolized by Offa's Dyke, to suggest how Welsh resentment of the English must have become yet more intense in the later eighth and early ninth centuries.<sup>24</sup> The work known as the *Historia Brittonum* was compiled c. 830, representing reinvigorated defiance of the English in the aftermath of the establishment of a new dynasty in Gwynedd, a serious setback for the Mercians in terms of their own supremacy, and growing West Saxon pretensions.<sup>25</sup> Thereafter, we see in the so-called 'common stock' of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* how the presumption among the English, in the later ninth century, was of domination over the Welsh: in 830, Ecgberht, king of the West Saxons, 'led an army among the Welsh, and he reduced them all to humble submission to him'; and in 853, Burgred, king of the Mercians, asked Ecgberht's son Æthelwulf, king of the West Saxons, 'to help him bring the Welsh under subjection to him', so Æthelwulf 'went with his army across

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<sup>21</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS D*, ed. G. P. Cubbin, *AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition* 6 (Cambridge, 1996), 41 and 46; see also *EHD*, 113–15 (on the manuscript), 218 (annal 927) and 227–8 (annal 973).

<sup>22</sup> John of Worcester, *Chronicon*, s.a. 926 and 973, in *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, II: *The Annals from 450 to 1066*, ed. R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk with J. Bray (Oxford, 1995), 386 and 422–4 [hereafter JW, *Chron.*].

<sup>23</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum* [hereafter WM, *GR*] ii. 134.1–3 and ii. 148.2, in *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum / 'The History of the English Kings'*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors with R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (2 vols., Oxford, 1998–1999), i, 212–14 and 238–30.

<sup>24</sup> For Offa's Dyke, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 419–24.

<sup>25</sup> For the *Historia Brittonum*, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 437–52; see also Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 414–19 and 447–52, on the Pillar of Eliseg,

Mercia against the Welsh, and they made them all submissive to him'.<sup>26</sup> These statements were formulated by a chronicler or chroniclers writing from an Alfredian perspective, c. 890; and while they have to be treated for earlier ninth-century purposes with all due circumspection, one should bear in mind that for the late ninth century they can be taken for what they are.

The developments which gave rise to the late ninth-century perception of mid-ninth-century Anglo-Welsh relations were set in motion during the 880s. Alfred the Great (871–99) had been king of the West Saxons since 871; but ten years later, in the early 880s, a new polity was emerging across southern England, reflected in the style 'king of the Anglo-Saxons' accorded to Alfred in his diplomas, and picked up (most significantly) by Asser himself.<sup>27</sup> In his *Life of King Alfred*, written, in Latin, in 893, Asser, a Welshman from St David's, in south-west Wales, used a version of the recently completed *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as the basis for a more artfully constructed representation of Alfred himself.<sup>28</sup> Of course he belonged to the king's inner circle; yet he wrote from a 'Welsh' as opposed to an 'English' point of view, apparently for an audience or readership in Wales, and could not resist having a few swipes, in passing, at those among whom he now spent so much of his time. He provides a compelling account of the circumstances in which certain Welsh rulers had submitted to Alfred in the late ninth century, conveying some sense of the dynamics and of the complications which lay behind political change in Wales.<sup>29</sup> He was committed to all that the king stood for and was concerned to explain to his friends in Wales what advantages were to be gained from their submission to Alfred, 'king of the Anglo-Saxons', and also, as he put it, 'ruler of all the Christians of the island of Britain'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> ASC, MS. A, s.a. 830 and 853 (ed. Bately, 42 and 42–5); *EHD*, 186 and 188–9. For further discussion, see P. Sims-Williams, 'Historical Need and Literary Narrative: a Caveat from Ninth-Century Wales', *Welsh History Review* 17 (1994), 1–40 at 33–4 (observing that nothing is said about how long a submission lasted); Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 475–6 (830) and 486 (853).

<sup>27</sup> For further details, see S. Keynes, 'Alfred the Great and the Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', in *The Brill Companion to Alfred the Great*, ed. N. G. Discenza and P. E. Szarmach (Leiden, 2015), 13–46, with references. Alfred's style reflected the fact that his authority extended northwards across the Thames and into the southern and western parts of the former kingdom of the Mercians. It is clear that Ealdorman Æthelred operated under Alfred, and it may be that Æthelred's reach extended further north; see Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, iv. 4, in *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. A. Campbell (London, 1962), 52.

<sup>28</sup> For Asser's *Life of Alfred*, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 452–66 (Asser and Einhard), and Keynes, 'Alfred the Great and the Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', 35–9.

<sup>29</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 479–96.

<sup>30</sup> Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, chapters 79–81, with Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 262–3; see also Williams and Bromwich, *Armes Prydein*, xxvi–xxx. For a different exposition of Alfredian ideology, placing the emphasis, in effect, on Bede's notion of the 'Englishness' of the English people (*Angelcynn*), see S. Foot, 'The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', *TRHS* 6th ser. 6 (1996), 25–49, with Brooks 'English Identity', 46–8, and N. P. Brooks, 'The English Origin Myth', in his *Anglo-Saxon Myths: State and Church 400–1066* (London, 2000), 79–89. The use of *gens Anglorum*, or *Angelcynn*, for purposes of political ideology has been challenged by G. Molyneux, 'The Old English Bede: English Ideology or Christian Instruction?', *EHR* 24 (2009), 1289–323; 'Why Were Some Tenth-Century English Kings Presented as Rulers of Britain?', *TRHS*, 6th ser., 21 (2011), 59–91, esp. 78–9; and *The Formation of the English Kingdom in the Tenth Century* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 203–6. It is significant, in my view, that the ideology from c. 880 to c. 927 was expressed as 'Anglo-Saxons', developed and used during a period when 'English' might not yet have been regarded as entirely appropriate.

Historians of early medieval Wales write of the emergence of the ‘The Second Dynasty of Gwynedd’, also known as the Merfynion, in the ninth century,<sup>31</sup> and of the way in which some of its members rose to prominence in the first half of the tenth century, with manifestations of ‘dynastic segmentation’ thereafter.<sup>32</sup> Whether Asser would have seen it in this way is another matter; but he was writing at a time when the process was in full flow, and provides information (from his perspective at St David’s) which seems accurate and authoritative. Rhodri Mawr of Gwynedd had died in 878, leaving a quantity of sons after him. According to Asser (chapter 80), it was the sons of Rhodri who, in the 880s, began to exert pressure on the rulers of what Asser calls ‘right-hand’, or southern, Wales, compelling Hyfaidd, ruler of Dyfed, in the south-west, and Elise ap Tewdwr, king of Brycheiniog, in the (mid) south-east, to submit to Alfred’s overlordship. The Mercians were no less oppressive, and themselves brought pressure to bear on other rulers in the south. So, again according to Asser, it was through the ‘might and tyrannical behaviour of Ealdorman Æthelred and the Mercians’ (whom we know to have operated from the Mercian centre of power at Gloucester) that Hywel ap Rhys, king of Glywysing, and Brochfael and Ffyrnfael, sons of Meurig, and kings of Gwent, in south-east Wales, were compelled to submit to Alfred’s overlordship, at much the same time. We learn further that Anarawd ap Rodri and his brothers had themselves entered into an alliance of some kind with the ‘Northumbrians’, i.e., with the Hiberno-Norse rulers then established in and around York; but a few years later (and certainly by 893, when Asser was writing) Anarawd and his brothers decided to abandon that alliance and instead to submit to King Alfred. Asser reveals, in other words, how the rulers first of southern Wales and then of northern Wales had chosen to submit to King Alfred, in order to gain his protection from their external enemies, whether northern Welsh, or Mercian (English), or Hiberno-Norse. He is also at pains to explain that submission brought particular advantages: an increase in worldly power, an increase in wealth, and, for those who wanted it, closer association with Alfred himself. ‘All of them gained support, protection and defence, in those cases where the king was able to defend himself and those under his care.’<sup>33</sup>

The process seems to have continued in the early tenth century.<sup>34</sup> The sons of Rhodri Mawr, who had been active in Alfred’s reign, soon died (‘King Cadell’ in 909, and ‘King Anarawd’ in 916),<sup>35</sup> and power passed to the next generation. Idwal Foel, son of Anarawd, was ruler of Gwynedd, in the north-west, and his cousins Hywel and Clydog, sons of Cadell, were rulers of Deheubarth, in the south-west.<sup>36</sup> It is not so clear how matters had unfolded in the south-east (Glywysing and Gwent) following the submission of Hywel ap Rhys, and the sons of Meurig, to King Alfred in the 880s; and it may be that those representing English political interests at Gloucester had

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<sup>31</sup> Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, 75–120; D. N. Dumville, ‘The “Six” Sons of Rhodri Mawr: a Problem in Asser’s *Life of King Alfred*’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 4 (1982), 5–18.

<sup>32</sup> Lloyd, *History of Wales*, i, 324–6 (Rhodri Mawr) and 326–33 (sons of Rhodri); Dumville, ‘Sons of Rhodri Mawr’; Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 45–6 (segmentation); Thornton, ‘Kings, Chronicles and Genealogies’, 37–40; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 488–96 and 779 (index).

<sup>33</sup> Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, chapter 81. For the king’s ‘Welsh reeve’, who might be relevant in this connection, see Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 291 n. 42.

<sup>34</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 497–510.

<sup>35</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, ed. Dumville, 14–15.

<sup>36</sup> Lloyd, *History of Wales*, i, 330–3; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 504–10.

taken them forward to good effect. One difficulty lies in judging whether or to what extent an overlordship of the kind built up by Alfred over the Welsh, in the 880s and early 890s, might have outlasted his death. Alfred had died in October 899. His son, Edward the Elder, met with opposition from certain quarters, and was not crowned until June 900. Some would argue that there was a revival of Mercian political autonomy; on which basis it may not have been until several years into his reign that circumstances began to change, and that rulers in Wales were prevailed upon to submit to the English king (or indeed would have seen much advantage in so doing). The evidence of charters, law-codes and coins combines, however, with the evidence of the chronicle, and perhaps even with the evidence of the Anglo-Saxon coronation *ordo*, to suggest that Edward inherited the polity, or political entity, which Alfred had built;<sup>37</sup> though that is not to say that its structure and internal dynamics remained exactly as before. A chronicler active at Winchester in the first quarter of the tenth century provides a good contemporary record of the stages by which Edward extended his authority over other peoples within Britain.<sup>38</sup> At the outset of this narrative, Edward is cast in his role as leader of the West Saxons and of the Mercians, reflecting his status (though not explicitly) as Alfred's successor as 'king of the Anglo-Saxons'. The chronicler describes the early stages of Edward's campaign against the Danes who had established themselves in the east midlands; and although his own view is one-sided, it is clear that Edward worked in close co-operation with Æthelred, 'Lord of the Mercians', and with his sister Æthelflæd, 'Lady of the Mercians'.<sup>39</sup> It is interesting to observe what was involved: how Edward prepared the ground with some necessary military action, treaties, and construction of fortresses, followed by an orchestrated campaign which itself led to the submission of the leaders of various Danish armies, based in the boroughs of the east midlands, seeking peace and protection, established with oaths. On Æthelred's death, in 911, Edward assumed control of Oxford and London; and on the death of his sister Æthelflæd, in 918, Edward occupied Tamworth, 'and all the nation in the land of the Mercians which had been subject to Æthelflæd submitted to him', as well they might have done. It was evidently the formal submission of the Mercians to Edward, at Tamworth, in 918, which led directly to the formal submission of the Welsh to Edward, then or soon afterwards, as if the two went together. As the chronicler put it [918]: 'and the kings in Wales—Hywel, Clydog, and Idwal—and all the race of the Welsh, sought to have him as lord.' This is good contemporary evidence, though we have to ask ourselves whether the chronicler would necessarily have been aware of all the complexities of Welsh rulership in the early tenth century, and, in particular, on what basis he could claim that the submission of these three Welsh rulers, in the north and in the south-west, was tantamount to the submission of 'all the race of the Welsh'. It is possible,

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<sup>37</sup> S. Keynes, 'Edward, King of the Anglo-Saxons', *Edward the Elder 899–924*, ed. N. J. Higham and D. H. Hill (London, 2001), 40–66 at 48–55; see also S. Keynes, 'Rulers of the English, c. 450–1066', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge, *et al.*, (2nd ed., Chichester, 2014), 521–38 at 535–6. For the evidence of the ornamental West Mercian coinage, in Edward's name, struck in the 910s (before the death of Æthelflæd), see S. Lyon, 'The Coinage of Edward the Elder', *Edward the Elder*, ed. Higham and Hill, 67–78 at 71, 73 and 77, and R. Naismith, 'Prelude to Reform: Tenth-Century English Coinage in Perspective', in *Early Medieval Monetary History: Studies in Memory of Mark Blackburn*, ed. R. Naismith, *et al.* (Farnham, 2015), 39–83 at 47.

<sup>38</sup> ASC, MS. ABCD, s.a. 908–14, and MS. A, s.a. 915–20; *EHD*, 210–17.

<sup>39</sup> Pauline Stafford, "'The Annals of Æthelflæd": Annals, History and Politics in Early Tenth-Century England', in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed. Julia Barrow and Andrew Wareham (Aldershot, 2008), 101–16.

however, that Edward's overlordship of the [rather shadowy] rulers in south-east Wales (Glywysing and Gwent) was already established and, indeed, was taken for granted;<sup>40</sup> and consequently that the submission of the three others, at Tamworth, represented the completion of the process and the re-establishment of the Alfredian dispensation.<sup>41</sup>

Edward's progress continued; and the contemporary Winchester chronicler reported triumphantly for the year 920: 'And then the king of the Scots and all the people of the Scots, and Ragnald, and the sons of Eadwulf and all who live in Northumbria, both English and Danish, Norsemen and others, and also the king of the Strathclyde Welsh, and all the Strathclyde Welsh, chose him [Edward] as father and lord.' One can understand the chronicler's difficulty in the provision of names, but his statement probably covers all of the major players in the north: the unnamed king of the Scots was presumably Constantine II, who dominated the far north from 900 to 952;<sup>42</sup> Ragnald was ruler of the Scandinavian kingdom of York; the sons of Eadwulf were the rulers of northern Northumbria, based at Bamburgh;<sup>43</sup> and the unnamed king of the 'Strathclyde Welsh' was probably Eugenius (Owain ap Dyfnwal) of Strathclyde.<sup>44</sup> On this evidence, Edward the Elder received the submission, in some sense, of the major powers in the north; but although chosen as their 'father and lord', it is clear that his direct authority beyond the Humber was limited, and that from a southern English point of view there was still some way to go.<sup>45</sup>

The succession to Edward the Elder was as difficult and as protracted as the succession to Alfred the Great, probably for similar reasons. Edward died in July 924, and after various complications it was not until September 925 that his son Æthelstan

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<sup>40</sup> In 914 a 'great naval force' came over from Brittany into the Severn estuary, 'and ravaged in Wales everywhere along the coast where it suited them' (ASC, MS. ABCD, s.a. 914). The vikings captured Cyfeiliog, styled 'bishop of Archenfield', and took him to their ships; whereupon King Edward ransomed him for 40 pounds. For further discussion, see Lloyd, *History of Wales*, i, 332; Maund, *Welsh Kings*, 46–7; Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland*, 210–11; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 506 and 594–6. For further evidence of Anglo-Welsh relations in the same area, though less clearly dated, see below, 00–0 (*Dunsæte*).

<sup>41</sup> The more detailed analysis of the background to the submission of the Welsh to Edward the Elder, in 918, given by Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 498–510, eclipses what is said above. It is worth noting, however (and apropos Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 506–7, 510), that the dynamics change if one takes the view that Edward inherited his father's authority over the Mercians and affirmed his position more directly following the death of Æthelflæd in 918; see Keynes, 'Edward, King of the Anglo-Saxons', 57–62 and above, note 36.

<sup>42</sup> D. Broun, 'Constantine II', in *ODNB* (online); A. Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba 789–1070*, New Edinburgh History of Scotland (10 vols., Edinburgh, 2004–), ii, 126–76.

<sup>43</sup> S. Keynes, 'Bamburgh', *Encyclopedia of ASE*, ed. Lapidge, *et al.*, 56, with references.

<sup>44</sup> A. A. M. Duncan, *Scotland: the Making of a Kingdom* (Edinburgh, 1975), 92–5; A. Macquarrie, 'The Kings of Strathclyde, c. 400–1018', *Medieval Scotland*, ed. A. Grant and K. J. Stringer (Edinburgh, 1993), 1–19 at 14–15 (Ywain), and *Medieval Scotland: Kingship and Nation* (Stroud, 2004), 80–2; C. Phythian-Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians: a Study in British Provincial Origins A.D. 400–1120* (Aldershot, 1996), 111–13; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 516; F. Edmonds, 'The Emergence and Transformation of Medieval Cumbria', *Scottish Historical Review* 93 (2014), 195–216 at 203–4; T. Clarkson, *Strathclyde and the Anglo-Saxons in the Viking Age* (Edinburgh, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> For further discussion, from instructively different points of view, see Broun, 'Constantine II'; Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, 146–7; and Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 516. Nor should it be taken for granted that Edward's authority was acknowledged everywhere south of the Humber; for numismatic evidence, see below, note 109.

was crowned, apparently as ‘king of the Anglo-Saxons’, at Kingston-upon-Thames.<sup>46</sup> Two years later, in 927, Æthelstan was able to take advantage of the death of his brother-in-law Sihtric II [Cáech] Sihtricsson, one of the Hiberno-Norse rulers in York, to drive out Sihtric’s brother, Guthfrith (king in Dublin); and in this way he established direct rule over the Northumbrians, representing the establishment for the first time of a (notionally) unified ‘kingdom of the English’. Compelling evidence of one way in which news of Æthelstan’s achievement was conveyed home to the ‘royal palace’, at this time, is provided by an extraordinary Latin poem, comprising six four-line stanzas, in which the author (named Peter, apparently a priest of continental origin, based at the New Minster, Winchester) used a Carolingian model for his own political purpose.<sup>47</sup> He sings King Æthelstan’s praises as one who rules ‘this Saxon land made whole (*ista perfecta Saxonía*)’, and **who** now assembles an army of the Saxons ‘throughout all Britain’, naming Constantin, king of Scots, as one who hastens to ‘Britain’ [Cumbria], loyal in his service to the king. The probable context for the composition of the poem is suggested by an annal in the ‘D’ manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, describing what was evidently a symbolic submission to Æthelstan performed at Eamont, in Cumbria, on 12 July 927. Following Sihtric’s death, Æthelstan succeeded to the kingdom of the Northumbrians, ‘and he brought under his rule all the kings who were in this island: first Hywel, king of the west Welsh, and Constantin, king of Scots, and Owain, king of the people of Gwent, and Aldred, son of Eadwulf from Bamburgh. And they established peace with pledge and oaths in the place which is called Eamont, on 12 July, and renounced all idolatry and afterwards departed in peace.’<sup>48</sup> It is as if the Welsh and Northumbrian rulers had already assembled at Eamont, by prior arrangement with the king, and that the poet caught the moment when Constantin was approaching from further north. The two Welsh rulers, who were said by the more prosaic chronicler to have submitted to Æthelstan, were both rulers in the southern part of the land: Hywel, ‘king of the west Welsh’, is Hywel ap Cadell, king of Deheubarth, who with his brother Clydog had submitted to Edward in 918, and whose same brother Clydog had died in 920; and Owain, styled king of Gwent, was the son of the Hywel ap Rhys, king of Glywysing, who had submitted to King Alfred in the 880s.<sup>49</sup> Nothing is said here of the ruler or rulers of north Wales, notably Idwal of Gwynedd; but the annal in ‘D’ is of uncertain authority, and we cannot expect it to be representative of ‘all the kings who were in this island’. Some years later, in the early twelfth century, the historian William of Malmesbury felt more sure of his ground. He remarks that Æthelstan compelled Idwal, ‘king of all the

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<sup>46</sup> On the circumstances of Æthelstan’s accession, in 924, and his ‘Mercian’ background, see S. Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of England* (New Haven, CT, 2011), 17–18, with references. For Æthelstan’s royal styles, see S. Keynes, ‘King Alfred and the Mercians’, in *Kings, Currency and Alliances*, ed. M. A. S. Blackburn and D. N. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1998), 1–45 at 38 note 165, with reference to S 394 (*CantStA* 26), S 396 (*Abing* 21) and S 397 (*Bur* 3), and ‘King Athelstan’s Books’, in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), 143–201 at 157–8 (MacDurnan Gospels) and 189–90 (Gandersheim Gospels). For further discussion, see also Foot, *Æthelstan*, 25–7.

<sup>47</sup> The poem, transmitted in two early copies from quite different contexts, was brilliantly salvaged and reconstructed by M. Lapidge, ‘Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of Athelstan’ [1985], in his *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066* (London, 1993), 49–86 at 71–81; see also Foot, *Æthelstan*, 18–20, and Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 512.

<sup>48</sup> ASC, MS. D, s.a. 926 [for 927] (ed. Cubbin, p. 41), with *EHD*, 218.

<sup>49</sup> Lloyd, *History of Wales*, i. 335; Foot, *Æthelstan*, 18–20; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 511–13. For Owain of Strathclyde, see further below, 000.

Welsh', and Constantin, king of Scots, to abdicate, but soon allowed them to return, 'under his lordship'.<sup>50</sup> He refers to 'Eugenius [Owain], king of the Cumbrians', who submitted to Æthelstan at Dacre (near Eamont), apparently with reference to the events of 927.<sup>51</sup> He states also that Æthelstan compelled the rulers of the 'Northern Britons', i.e. the Welsh, to meet him at Hereford, fixing an annual tribute, and setting the boundary with them at the river Wye, and that he then moved south-west, forcing the Cornish to leave Exeter, and setting the boundary with them at the Tamar.<sup>52</sup> William is hardly authoritative on such matters and might have been putting his own construction on information drawn together from various sources; but on the face of it he is suggesting that Æthelstan was recognized already at this early stage of his reign as the overlord of the Welsh, the Scots, and the Cumbrians, and perhaps as one who had regularised the (administrative) position of Cornwall within Wessex.<sup>53</sup>

### *The evidence of the royal diplomas*

The bulk of the evidence for the presence of Welsh and other rulers at the assemblies convened by kings of the English in the second and third quarters of the tenth century is provided by the surviving corpus of Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas.<sup>54</sup> The term 'royal diploma' is applied by modern scholarship to a particular kind of legal instrument, in Latin, which was developed in Anglo-Saxon England from the seventh century onwards, and came to be used increasingly, in the eighth and ninth centuries, for recording grants of land by a king to another party, perhaps a bishop or an abbot, representing a religious house, or a layman, for example an ealdorman or a thegn. The grants were made on the occasion of the royal assemblies convened several times each year, attended by the king, by those of high standing in the kingdom, and by others.<sup>55</sup> A royal diploma was by definition the symbolic product of such an assembly, at which the king, in formal association with his 'councillors', granted a particular estate to a named beneficiary on privileged terms. It was arguably a 'performative' document, in the sense that it would be prepared in advance of and drawn up soon after the beginning of an assembly, ready for use in whatever ceremonial might have been involved, so that the beneficiary could take it away with him when the assembled company dispersed.<sup>56</sup> Before the reign of King Æthelstan, practices varied considerably, for one reason or another; but the political developments which led to the emergence of a 'unified' kingdom of the English, in the late 920s, gave rise to a

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<sup>50</sup> WM, *GR* ii. 131.3 (ed. Mynors, *et al.*, 206).

<sup>51</sup> WM, *GR* ii. 134.2 (ed. Mynors, *et al.*, 214).

<sup>52</sup> WM, *GR* ii. 134.5–7 (ed. Mynors, *et al.*, 214–216).

<sup>53</sup> For discussion, see O. J. Padel, 'Place-Names and the Saxon Conquest of Devon and Cornwall', *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. N. Higham (Woodbridge, 2007), 215–30.

<sup>54</sup> Royal diplomas are cited below in accordance with the conventions explained in S. Keynes, 'Church Councils, Royal Assemblies, and Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas', in *Kingship, Legislation and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Brian W. Schneider (Woodbridge, 2013), 17–182 at 180–2 ('Appendix III: Citations of Anglo-Saxon Charters').

<sup>55</sup> For a recent and wide ranging study of royal assemblies during this period, see L. Roach, *Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871–978: Assemblies and the State in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013).

<sup>56</sup> For further discussion of what remains a controversial issue, see S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'the Unready' 978–1016: a Study in their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980), 33–7, and 'Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas', esp. 68–92, with references.

greater degree of conformity to discernible norms. The operative parts of a typical tenth-century diploma (set within a bed of other elements which though formulaic are also functional) are the superscription, naming the king and according him the dignity of his royal style; the grant itself, naming the beneficiary, with further details; a vernacular boundary-clause for the estate in question; a dating clause, relating to the assembly at which the grant was made; a witness-list, which should be seen not so much as a list of witnesses to the particular act, as an essentially generic and necessarily selective list of those present at the assembly; and an endorsement, summarizing the essential details in English. The diploma would serve thereafter as a title-deed for the specified estate, for safe-keeping by the named beneficiary, and in the longer run for transfer to a new owner should the land be sold, exchanged or for any reason pass into other hands. The challenge in dealing with diplomas issued in the name of any Anglo-Saxon king is first to distinguish the genuine documents from the later forgeries (rarely a simple matter). One might then focus attention on the genuine core, identifying any distinctive groups of diplomas likely to represent the work of a particular agency of production, and observing any patterns of development during the reign as a whole. One might assess their historical significance, whether singly or collectively, as products of an aspect of the business conducted at the assemblies convened during a king's reign. Or one might assess their significance in other contexts, for example as evidence of the learning of those responsible for their production, or as evidence of changing perceptions of royal government. Even the forgeries, once identified, should not be set aside; for some might have been based on genuine material, since lost, and all might in themselves form part of an interesting tale.

An agency charged with responsibility for the production of a royal diploma was creating a record of an act of the king and his 'councillors', which took place on the occasion of a royal assembly. There would be scope, not only in the terminology chosen for the king's style, but also in the attention given to the event in the dating clause, and in the composition of the witness-list, to produce a document which would project a powerful image of kingship in action, for the benefit of contemporaries and of posterity. We are concerned here primarily with the royal styles and the witness-lists. Royal styles are full of interest but have to be approached with all due circumspection. It is not known to what extent (if any) practices were approved or controlled by those in the king's inner circle, and might therefore be regarded as 'official'. Whether formulated by an insider or by one outside the king's circle, a royal style might represent anything on the scale from a realistic statement of acknowledged status, via an attempt at flattery, to a delusion of grandeur. At the same time, different styles might be accorded to a king in different contexts (for example in a diploma, a law-code, or a coin); and if a style implies wide authority, it would not mean necessarily that the king's power was uniform throughout the realm claimed as his own. In general, however, one assumes that of its nature a royal style would represent a king's aspirations, or the way in which he would wish to be seen; and if there might be occasional oddities, one is on playable ground if a pattern emerges from a number of diplomas preserved from different archives, which in the wider diplomatic context would appear to represent a distinctive usage. Witness-lists were probably constructed in accordance with well-established practices and are best approached as 'literary' compositions in their own right.<sup>57</sup> They would probably have been constructed from lists of those attending an assembly, made at an early stage in the proceedings

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<sup>57</sup> Keynes, 'Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas', 71–2 and 164–6.

(perhaps making some use of records from a previous assembly, and with other help when necessary), arranged within each of the major categories (archbishops and bishops, abbots, ealdormen, thegns) in accordance with certain principles. A working schedule produced in this way would be in front of the draftsman when preparing a diploma for use on that occasion. He might have to supply a shorter form of the king's style and suitable forms of words for the individual acts of attestation; no doubt there was also scope for omission, errors of transcription, and modification. The difficulty in any attempt to make use of such material, for historical purposes, is to distinguish the signal from the noise; for we are dealing with a corpus of surviving texts which includes skillful forgeries and inept forgeries, whether made some time before or a long time after the Norman Conquest, and which also includes accurate copies and poorly transmitted or heavily abbreviated copies of authentic texts. Royal styles are best studied as part of the diplomas in which they are found, because so much can depend on seeing them in their diplomatic context, and in relation to other diplomas of the same date, or the same type, or preserved in the same archive; and in combination they tell a story which is reasonably clear and well enough known.<sup>58</sup> Witness-lists are best appreciated in tabular form; for only in this way can one bring together and display the evidence derived from surviving texts, and assess the patterns which emerge. The material is available in a series of tables representing the attestations of all categories of witnesses in royal diplomas, across the whole period from c. 670 to 1066.<sup>59</sup> In these tables, each vertical column represents the evidence of a particular diploma (identified by standard forms of reference); a number in the column against the name specified for each horizontal row indicates the occurrence of the person in question in the witness-list, and his position relative to others in the same group. Each table in the series stands and can be judged on its own. However, it is helpful when dealing with a table for one category of witnesses (royals, archbishops, bishops, abbots, ealdormen, thegns), for the diplomas of a particular king, to look across at the tables for other categories of witnesses, compiled from the same diplomas; for it is always as well to keep an eye on the whole.

For whatever reason, no diplomas of Edward the Elder survive from the latter part of his reign (from 910 to his death in 924); and it is difficult, therefore, to penetrate far beneath the surface of the events recorded in the 'Winchester' annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 918 and 920. However, in 925 the series of diplomas resumes, and the quality of the evidence improves. It is well known that in the period 928–35, and again in the late 940s and early 950s, a number of Welsh kings, coming from different parts of Wales, and each presumably accompanied by a small entourage, appear on several occasions to have travelled across the border in order to be present at the assemblies convened by the king of the English. About a hundred years ago, Sir

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<sup>58</sup> For royal styles in diplomas of the late ninth and tenth centuries, see S. Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', in *Edgar, King of the English 959–75: New Interpretations*, ed. D. Scragg (Woodbridge, 2008), 3–58 at 5–9 and 24–6, with references; see also Brooks, 'English Identity', 44–5 and 46–8; Foot, *Aethelstan*, 212–16; and Molyneaux, 'Tenth-Century English Kings', 59–65 and 90–1, with *Formation of the English Kingdom*, 26, 28, 30, 200 and 206–9.

<sup>59</sup> S. Keynes, *An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters, c. 670–1066*, ASNC Guides, Texts and Studies 1 (Cambridge, 2002), available online from the 'Kemble' website ([www.kemble.asnc.cam.ac.uk](http://www.kemble.asnc.cam.ac.uk)). The compilation of tables of this kind was made possible by modern technology; but the example was set long ago, by L. M. Larson, 'The Political Policies of Cnut as King of England', *AHR* 15 (1910), 720–43 at 725 (earls in the charters of Cnut), and by Lloyd in the following year.

John Lloyd brought this evidence together and reduced it to tabular form.<sup>60</sup> There have, on the one hand, been a few additions to the evidence in more recent years, refining our understanding of it in significant respects but also confirming the basic pattern;<sup>61</sup> on the other hand, two or three of the diplomas used by Lloyd are suspect in their received form and should be handled with care.<sup>62</sup> The table reproduced here as **Fig. 00**, shows the evidence for the attendance of Welsh and Scottish rulers at royal assemblies convened in England across a period of nearly 30 years, in the mid-tenth century; the question is what does it signify. One cannot hope to know under what circumstances a person named in a witness-list had attended on a particular occasion, let alone what if anything he might have contributed to the discussion. Yet the evidence is of good quality, in part because of its form and in part because it is transmitted in diplomas preserved independently of each other, which in their similarities corroborate and in their differences complement each other. The evidence has been examined many times.<sup>63</sup> Attention has been drawn to the ‘primacy’ accorded to Hywel Dda, and to variations in the terminology used for the rulers themselves; and it has been noted that there are gaps in the record between 935 and 946, and after c. 955, whatever this might imply. My purpose is to review the evidence from an English rather than from a Welsh point of view; but the main point of the exercise, as a part of this process, is to emphasise that the evidence comes from two very distinctive groups of diplomas, and that the deeper understanding of each group, on its own terms, contributes significantly to the ways in which the evidence should be approached, handled, and interpreted.

*The diplomas of ‘Æthelstan A’, issued between 928 and 935*

The diplomas of King Æthelstan can be analyzed for present purposes into three groups. The first group comprises a small number of diplomas issued in the opening years of the reign (925–6); the second group (divisible into four sub-groups) comprises a series of about twenty diplomas, representing the work of an agency which seems to have been responsible for the production of all of the king’s diplomas issued between 928 and 935; the third group comprises diplomas produced between 935 and 939, which are significantly different in structure and style from the earlier groups, and which set the pattern for the ‘mainstream’ diplomas of the 940s and 950s.<sup>64</sup> Our concern is solely with the diplomas of the second group, produced

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<sup>60</sup> Lloyd, *History of Wales* i, 353. The sub-king ‘Ast’, on Lloyd’s table (identified by Loyn, ‘Wales and England in the Tenth Century’, 195, as Ealdorman Æthelstan Half-King), is most likely to represent the Latin conjunction *ast* ‘but’; see Keynes, ‘King Athelstan’s Books’, at 157. The evidence of the charters had been assembled by P. W. P. Carlyon-Britton, ‘The Saxon, Norman and Plantagenet Coinage of Wales’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 1905–6 (1907), 1–30 at 11–13.

<sup>61</sup> S (Add.) 418a (Barking), dated 9 Nov. 932; S 1792 (*LonStP* 11), dated 935; and S (Add.) 552a (Barking), dated 950. The two ‘new’ texts from Barking abbey are available on the ‘Kemble’ website ([www.kemble.asnc.cam.ac.uk](http://www.kemble.asnc.cam.ac.uk)).

<sup>62</sup> S 420 (*Chert* 8); S 427 (BCS 705); S 434 (*Malm* 26).

<sup>63</sup> Lloyd, *History of Wales* i, 335–8 and 353. For more recent discussion (since the 1970s), see Kirby, ‘Hywel Dda’; Loyn, ‘Wales and England in the Tenth Century’; Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 73–5; Maund, *Welsh Kings*, 46–50; Downham, *Viking Kings*, 213–14; Halloran, ‘Welsh Kings’; Molyneux, ‘Tenth-Century English Kings’, 65–6; Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 39–40; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 326–7 and 514–19, with table at 515; and Molyneux, *Formation of the English Kingdom*, 57.

<sup>64</sup> This analysis formed the basis of a Toller Lecture on the diplomas of King Æthelstan given at the University of Manchester in 2001 (unpublished). A register of Æthelstan’s diplomas, forming part of A

between 928 and 935, by the agency which has come to be known to modern scholarship as ‘Æthelstan A’.<sup>65</sup> It is important to emphasise that although ‘Æthelstan A’ might reasonably be presumed to have been a priest, operating in the king’s service as both draftsman and scribe, he suffers from the fact that he happens not to be known to us by name; yet he deserves as much as anyone else to be accorded the dignity of his own identity. He was probably of ‘Mercian’ origin, brought up and trained in the first quarter of the tenth century; he was steeped in the *Hisperica Famina*, and in the writings of Aldhelm, and became proficient in the workings of the calendar; he might have served in the Mercian ‘royal’ household of Ealdorman Æthelred and his wife Æthelflæd, sister of Edward the Elder; and if we may imagine that he was in King Æthelstan’s service by the mid-920s, it seems that he rose in the aftermath of the events of 927 to assume primary responsibility for the production of the king’s diplomas. We can but continue to call him ‘Æthelstan A’, with the inverted commas, whilst wondering who he was and what he ate for breakfast.

One should stress that the diplomas produced by ‘Æthelstan A’ were no *ordinary* documents of their kind. They stand apart from and indeed way above anything that had been produced in the eighth, ninth and early tenth centuries, in their size, splendour, structure, and style, and are fully commensurate with the aspirations and the pretensions of a new political order.<sup>66</sup> At one level, ‘Æthelstan A’ might be regarded as a person intoxicated by the exuberance of his own verbosity (as Disraeli said of Gladstone); at another, he is the essence of the novelty and excitement of it all, which he sought to capture in a dazzling display of fancy words and elaborate detail. Any one of these diplomas, taken in its own right, is no more than a title-deed for an estate. Yet when the diplomas are examined as a group and judged as ‘literary’ sources, they assume additional significance. They symbolize a perception, from the centre, of Æthelstan’s newly-established ‘kingdom of the English’, and, by extension, of his kingdom ‘of the whole of Britain’; and they are *about* the projection of that perception to contemporaries and to posterity.<sup>67</sup> One can see this in the grandeur and style of the documents themselves, yet it comes across most clearly in their dating clauses and witness-lists. Most charters were simply dated by year alone, so one has no idea precisely *when*, during the course of that year, the charter was issued; and although it is apparent that each charter emanates from a meeting of the king and his

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*Conspectus of Anglo-Saxon Charters, Part II: 900–75*, is available on the ‘Kemble’ website; it includes a fourth group, comprising diplomas which are spurious in their received form. A map of England in Æthelstan’s reign, produced to accompany the Toller Lecture, is available on the same website.

<sup>65</sup> For details of the surviving examples, see Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table XXVII (on the ‘Kemble’ website). For an early appreciation of the diplomas of ‘Æthelstan A’, see W. H. Stevenson, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Chancery’, Sanders Lectures, University of Cambridge (1898), also available (via a google search) on the ‘Kemble’ website, 33–5. The important study by R. Drögereit, published in 1935, is available (German text, with an English translation), in the same way, on the same website. For further details, see Keynes, *Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 42–4 (with reference to Stevenson and Drögereit); ‘Regenbald the Chancellor (*sic*)’, *ANS* 10 (1988), 185–222 at 186 (defining the corpus); *Facsimiles of Anglo-Saxon Charters*, Anglo-Saxon Charters, Supplementary Series 1 (Oxford, 1991), 9; ‘England, c. 900–1016’, in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, III: c.900–c.1024*, ed. T. Reuter (Cambridge, 1999), 456–84 at 468–71; and ‘Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas’, 53–5 (including a list of those available in modern editions) and 77 (originals).

<sup>66</sup> The richness and interest of their Latin style is demonstrated most effectively by D. Woodman, ‘“Æthelstan A” and the Rhetoric of Rule’, *ASE* 42 (2013), 217–48. In 2014 ‘Æthelstan A’ achieved recognition in his own right on Wikipedia.

<sup>67</sup> Brooks, ‘English Identity’, 44–5 and 49; Foot, *Æthelstan*, 212–16; Molyneaux, ‘Tenth-Century English Kings’, and *Formation of the English Kingdom*, 58–9.

councilors, one is very rarely told where the assembly had been held, and so where the charter might have been issued. Yet when it comes to dating-clauses and witness-lists, ‘Æthelstan A’ comes into his own. He seems to have been concerned, in his dating-clauses, to display his knowledge of the computus in the provision of detail: so, in addition to the year of the Lord’s incarnation, we are given Æthelstan’s regnal year (calculated from his accession in 924 or from his coronation in 925), the indiction, epacts and concurrents (all three read off from an Easter Table), the precise day within the year (according to the Roman calendar), and the age of the moon on that day (presumably worked out from his Easter Table); and, as if this were not enough, we are told precisely *where* the assembly had been held. His witness-lists were also works of art. The memoranda constructed by or on behalf of ‘Æthelstan A’ were remarkable for being so ‘inclusive’, in the sense that they acknowledged the presence of categories of witnesses not acknowledged in such a way before, at the same time creating a picture against which to judge the more *selective* memoranda constructed by those responsible for producing diplomas in the later 930s, and with which to compare the less formal lists characteristic of the ‘alliterative’ diplomas of the 940s and 950s.<sup>68</sup> The practice usually adopted by ‘Æthelstan A’ seems to have been to place the leading witnesses (the king himself, followed by the archbishops, and by the ‘sub-kings’ if there were any) along the lines of the main text, and only to break into columns for the bishops, abbots, ealdormen, and thegns; but the selection of names in each category would have been determined by the amount of space available on whatever sheet of parchment he was using. My sense of the evidence is that if any sub-kings were present, their presence would have been recorded; and so that if a transmitted text has a full witness-list, yet no sub-kings, no sub-kings had been present at the assembly. It is also likely to have been the case, however, that the number of sub-kings included in the text of a charter might have been determined (on an original) by the amount of space available, or (in a cartulary or later copy) by the practices of a copyist.<sup>69</sup> Yet whatever the limitations, it is thanks entirely to the *quality* of the evidence provided by ‘Æthelstan A’ that more is known about royal assemblies during the years from 928 to 935 than for any other period before the Norman Conquest: their place in the larger context of the king’s itinerary, the frequency, timing and duration of the formal assemblies, as the year passed, the variety of chosen locations, the categories of those who attended the assemblies, and (with help from surviving law-codes) the business conducted on such occasions.<sup>70</sup>

The table showing attestations of sub-kings in Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas (Fig. 00) is thus limited, for the reign of King Æthelstan (924–39), to the evidence of the diplomas produced by ‘Æthelstan A’, and is limited further, for that reason, to the

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<sup>68</sup> For the witness-lists in the diplomas of ‘Æthelstan A’, set within the context of the earlier and later diplomas of Æthelstan’s reign, see Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Tables XXXVI (sub-kings), XXXVII (ecclesiastics, comprising diocesan bishops, supplementary bishops, and abbots), XXXVIII (ealdormen, including several with Scandinavian names, who are presumed to be from areas which had been settled by persons of Scandinavian origin) and XXXIX (thegns). For the witness-lists in the diplomas of the later 930s, see further below.

<sup>69</sup> In S 416 (*WinchOM/BCS* 677), which survives in its original form, a line is completed with just two sub-kings (Hywel, Idwal).

<sup>70</sup> For further discussion of such matters, see P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, I: *Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), 434–5 (itinerary); Foot, *Æthelstan*, 71–3 (‘Æthelstan A’), 80 and 82–90 (itinerary), 92–3 (Welsh sub-kings), 98 (Ælle of Lichfield), 132–6 (at assemblies) and 213–15 (style); Woodman, “‘Æthelstan A’ and the Rhetoric of Rule”; and Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 32–43, 54–63, 72–4.

period 928–35.<sup>71</sup> In mid-April (Easter) 928, at least three Welsh ‘sub-kings’ were present at an assembly held at Exeter, in Devon.<sup>72</sup> It may have been at about this time that King Æthelstan (in William of Malmesbury’s terms) drove the Cornish out of Exeter, and fixed the boundary some way further west, at the river Tamar;<sup>73</sup> though of course there were other assemblies at Exeter, for example in November 932, and at least one further west, at Lifton (close to the Tamar).<sup>74</sup> Of the sub-kings present, ‘Howæl’ is an Anglicized form for Hywel (Dda), of Deheubarth,<sup>75</sup> and ‘Iuðwal’ represents Idwal, of Gwynedd.<sup>76</sup> As seen above, both are known to have submitted to Edward the Elder in 918; and since the evidence from 927 or thereabouts is less reliable, the appearance of both at Æthelstan’s assembly in 928 is useful corroboration of their submission. It is interesting, of course, that Hywel is said to have gone to Rome in 928, presumably later in the year.<sup>77</sup> The third *subregulus* at Exeter was ‘Wurgeat’, probably an Anglicized representation of the Welsh name Gwriad (Guriat). He cannot be identified with certainty, or indeed attached to one dynasty or kingdom as opposed to another; but the table shows that he occurs again, in the same form, four years later, albeit in a diploma from the same archive.<sup>78</sup>

In the two surviving diplomas from the Easter assembly in 928, the king was accorded the style *rex Anglorum*, commensurate with the extension of his rule over the Northumbrians; yet while the Welsh sub-kings had been present, it seems that the king’s style was not extended to ‘Britain’ for another year or two, making its first appearance in diplomas of 930. It would appear, none the less, that Welsh *subreguli* were not present at the assemblies convened at Lyminster (Sussex), and at Chippenham (Wiltshire), in April 930, nor were they present at Colchester (Essex) in March 931; from which we learn, usefully, that sub-kings seem not to have been required or expected to be present on every occasion. In June 931, a group of four ‘sub-kings’ were present at an assembly held at Worthy, in Hampshire.<sup>79</sup> Hywel and Idwal, again, were joined on this occasion, in third place, by ‘Morcant’, i.e. Morgan Hen, son of Owain ap Hywel ap Rhys (the king of Gwent said to have submitted to Æthelstan in 927); presumably he had succeeded his father some time after 927, and is here making his first appearance in surviving charters as ruler of Glywysing and

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<sup>71</sup> Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table XXXVI.

<sup>72</sup> S 400 (*WinchOM/BCS* 663), and S 399 (*Glast* 23), both dated 16 April 928. The list in S 399 was abbreviated by a copyist, but it is apparent that sub-kings had been included.

<sup>73</sup> WM, *GR* ii. 134.6–7 (ed. Mynors, *et al.*, 216).

<sup>74</sup> For royal assemblies at Exeter, see Keynes, ‘Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas’, 145–6 (diplomas and law-codes).

<sup>75</sup> D. E. Thornton, ‘Hywel Dda’, in *ODNB*; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 504 and 770 (index).

<sup>76</sup> D. E. Thornton, ‘Idwal Foel’, in *ODNB*; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 504 and 770 (index).

<sup>77</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, ed. Dumville, 16–17. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 267–8. One should add, in this connection, that in 929 Coenwald, bishop of Worcester, visited the monasteries of Germany; see Keynes, ‘King Æthelstan’s Books’, 198–201.

<sup>78</sup> Loyn, ‘Wales and England’, 186 (son of Rhodri Mawr); Downham, *Viking Kings*, 217–18 (son of Rhodri Mawr); Thornton, ‘Hywel Dda’ (uncertain); Halloran, ‘Welsh Kings’, 300–3 (Ceredigion); Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 516 (Powys or Ceredigion).

<sup>79</sup> S 413 (*Abing* 23), dated 20 June 931.

Gwent, which he was still ruling forty years later (until his death in 974).<sup>80</sup> The fourth sub-king present on this occasion was ‘Eugenius’, apparently a Latinate form for Owen/Ywain/Owain. It seems reasonable to assume that the attestation denotes the person represented by two later attestations in the same name, in 935, who seems from his position on those occasions to be distinct from the ‘Welsh’; in which case this would be Owain, ruler of the northern Britons of Strathclyde, known later as the Cumbrians, and so presumably the unnamed king of those people who submitted to Edward in 920, and the ‘Eugenius’ said to have submitted to Æthelstan in 927.<sup>81</sup> The sub-kings were seemingly not present at Wellow, in Hampshire, in mid-July 931,<sup>82</sup> but they were back in Wessex in November, when they attended an assembly at Lifton, on the river Tamar in Devon.<sup>83</sup> The Lifton charter is preserved in its original form,<sup>84</sup> and includes the attestations of Hywel and Idwal; but one should note that with Idwal the scribe reached the right-hand edge of his sheet of parchment, and might have decided that two sub-kings were enough, even if there were two or three more named on his memorandum. They were back again on at least two occasions in 932: Hywel, Idwal, Morgan and Gwriad (‘Wurgeat’) attended an assembly at Milton, in Kent or Dorset, in late August;<sup>85</sup> and Hywel, Idwal and Morgan were at Exeter, in Devon, in early November.<sup>86</sup> Attendance at the meetings in August and November 932, must have represented a demanding schedule for rulers who would have had business of their own to conduct in Wales; but at least Æthelstan allowed the sub-kings to go home for Christmas, for none was present at the assembly held at Amesbury, Wiltshire, on 24 December 932, or for that matter at Wilton and then at Chippenham, in Wiltshire, in January 933.<sup>87</sup>

The contemporary poem mentioned earlier, supplemented by the ‘D’ manuscript of the *Chronicle*, should be enough, as evidence, to establish that Constantin, king of Scots, had submitted to Æthelstan in 927. It should be noted, however, that Constantin makes no appearance among the sub-kings in the extant charters of 928 and 931–3. Of course, it would have been that much harder for Constantin to come all the way south than for the Welsh kings to venture across the border into Wessex; yet, in view of the evidence for the Welsh rulers, there is every reason to believe that Constantin’s ‘absences’ in 928–33 were real. It may be that he would not have been expected; or perhaps it was thought that he might have made an effort. The annal for 934 in the

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<sup>80</sup> D. E. Thornton, ‘Morgan Hen’, in *ODNB*; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 516 and 779 (index).

<sup>81</sup> Above, 00 and 00. Macquarrie, ‘Kings of Strathclyde’, 14–15 (Ywain); Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, 166–8; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 516 and 782 (index); Edmonds, ‘Medieval Cumbria’, 203–4.

<sup>82</sup> S 1604 (*Abing* 24), dated 15 July 931.

<sup>83</sup> S 416 (*WinchOM/BCS* 677), dated 12 November 931.

<sup>84</sup> Images of the single sheet, in the British Library, are available online in the ‘Single Sheet Database’ on the ‘Kemble’ website.

<sup>85</sup> S 417 (*WinchOM/BCS* 689), dated 30 August 932.

<sup>86</sup> S 418a (*Bark* ‘Kemble’ website), dated 9 November 932.

<sup>87</sup> S 418 (*WinchNM* 10) and S 419 (*Shaft* 8), both dated 24 December 932; S 379 (*WinchNM* 8), dated 11 January 933; and S 422 (*Sherb* 7), dated 26 January 933. On the special nature of the business conducted at the meetings in December 932/January 933, see S. Keynes, ‘Royal Government and the Written Word in Late Anglo-Saxon England’, in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), 226–57 at 236, note 42, and 237, note 48; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 307 and 439; Foot, *Æthelstan*, 134–5; and Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 73 and 92–3.

*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records: ‘In this year King Æthelstan went into Scotland with both a land force and a naval force, and ravaged much of it.’<sup>88</sup> The king convened an assembly at Winchester in late May 934, apparently in order to inaugurate the northern campaign. A diploma issued on this occasion, preserved in its original form, names four *subreguli* among those present: Hywel of Deheubarth; Idwal of Gwynedd; a third illegible (probably Morgan of Gwent); and a fourth, ‘Teowdor’, whom we have not encountered before.<sup>89</sup> ‘Teowdor’ is another good spelling, probably representing the scribe’s attempt to represent the name ‘Tewdwr’, probably for Tewdwr ap Griffri ab Elise, of Breicheiniog (in the south-east).<sup>90</sup> The assembled company must have left Winchester at the very end of May; for we find that they had reached Nottingham by 7 June, and that the sub-kings Hywel, Morgan and Idwal were still present.<sup>91</sup> There is no further sign of Tewdwr, perhaps for a good reason, or perhaps because there had been no space for his name on the single sheet. Whatever the case, it would appear that the Welsh sub-kings were accompanying Æthelstan on his expedition northwards to Scotland; and one has to ask whether they had brought some of their own Welsh troops with them, and whether they remained with the king all the way.<sup>92</sup> There is evidence which suggests that Æthelstan visited the shrine of St Cuthbert, at Chester-le-Street, on 1 July, en route for Scotland.<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, the evidence of the diplomas shows that Æthelstan was already back at Buckingham by mid-September; and it is satisfactory (from an English point of view) to see that Constantin is named as the first *subregulus*, as if Æthelstan was bringing him back down south, in tow and on show.<sup>94</sup> There is no sign at Buckingham of the Welsh sub-kings, but we should note that the charter in question is preserved only as copied into the mid-fourteenth-century cartulary of Glastonbury abbey, in which witness-lists were always heavily abbreviated (as in the case of the charter dated 16 April 928). The text reads ‘+ Ego Constantinus subregulus consensi et subscripsi, cum multis aliis’, and ends at that point; so it is by no means unlikely that the Welsh sub-kings were simply omitted by the later copyist, and that they too would have been present at Buckingham. If so, it would follow that Constantin was accorded precedence over the others; perhaps a matter of seniority, or perhaps an indication that a ruler of the Scots (though still called *subregulus*) was reckoned by this Englishman to be of higher status than the rulers of the Welsh.

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<sup>88</sup> ASC, MS. A, s.a. 933, and MS. BCDE, s.a. 934; *EHD*, 219. For the campaign of 934, see Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, 158–68; Foot, *Æthelstan*, 87–8 and 164–9; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 523–4.

<sup>89</sup> S 425 (*CantCC* 106), dated 25 May 934. Images of the single sheet, in the British Library, are available online in the ‘Single Sheet Database’ on the ‘Kemble’ website. The name of the third sub-king has been lost by the disintegration of the parchment along the central horizontal fold. Kemble and *BMFacs*. left a gap; Birch supplied ‘Morcant’ in square brackets, presumably by analogy with the names in earlier and later diplomas. A trace of what may be the descender of a low *r* is visible in the appropriate position.

<sup>90</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 516.

<sup>91</sup> S 407 (*North* 1), dated 7 June 934.

<sup>92</sup> For the possibility that the Welsh sub-kings provided military support, see Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 76.

<sup>93</sup> Keynes, ‘King Athelstan’s Books’, 172–3; see also *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto: a History of Saint Cuthbert and a Record of his Patrimony*, ed. T. Johnson South (Cambridge, 2002), 64 and 108–9.

<sup>94</sup> S 426 (*Glast* 24), dated 13 September 934.

It is greatly to be regretted that one of the last diplomas drawn up for King Æthelstan by ‘Æthelstan A’, in 935, is known to us only in the form of a brief excerpt made in the early seventeenth century from a lost twelfth-century charter-roll of St Paul’s Cathedral, in London.<sup>95</sup> There can be no doubt that the compiler of the charter-roll had access to genuine pre-Conquest material; and it is simply our misfortune that what might have been another magnificent text has been reduced in the process of its transmission to a shadow of its former self. We know nothing of its formulation or substantive content; we have the year (935), and the place of assembly (Cirencester), from the dating-clause, but there is no indication of the month or day to reveal whether it was early in the new year, or some time later; though we do have the names of the leading laymen from the witness-list, including King Æthelstan, and five *subreguli*. Precedence is again accorded to Constantin, king of Scots, followed by ‘Eugenius’, presumably for Owain of Strathclyde. These two are followed by three familiar rulers from Wales: Hywel of Deheubarth, Idwal of Gwynedd, and Morgan of Gwent. Eugenius (assuming him to be the same person) had appeared before, in 931, following the same three Welsh rulers; so it may be significant that in 934 he was ranked above them, perhaps suggesting that Strathclyde was gaining importance, for the English, in emerging political arrangements. At all events, the assembly at Cirencester in 935 must have been an impressive and perhaps even a significant occasion. The question arises whether King Æthelstan’s party, seen at Buckingham in mid-September 934, had remained for some time in the south, before making its way round to the west country for an assembly at Cirencester, and perhaps a parting of the ways. ‘Æthelstan A’ was at pains to explain that the assembly was held there, ‘in the *ciuitas* formerly built by the Romans’. The wording clearly reflects a consciousness, on his part, of Cirencester’s Roman associations; and it may be that the presence of the five *subreguli* in southern England had suggested the choice of a meeting-place which might evoke the glories of the Roman past. King Æthelstan himself would have enjoyed the occasion. The Welsh, however, would have known Cirencester as the place from which the English tax-collectors operated;<sup>96</sup> and one suspects that Constantin, too, might not have appreciated the wider implications. The final ‘Æthelstan A’ diploma is a spurious text from Malmesbury, which is dated ‘937’ but which appears to have been based, in some part, on an authentic charter of the type, issued at Dorchester, in Dorset, on 21 December 935.<sup>97</sup> Taking the witness-list as it stands, there is no sign of Constantin; and it is interesting to see that Eugenius, presumably Owain of Strathclyde, is again listed ahead of the same three Welsh *subreguli*, which might suggest that he represented a polity by now considered to be in a closer relationship with the kingdom of the English than were the component polities of Wales.

#### *Towards the battle of Brunanburh*

Needless to say, realities went deeper than appearances might suggest; and one has to ask whether such displays of political grandeur, in 927–35, however impressive in themselves, prompted some of the realities to rise closer to the surface. We owe all of

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<sup>95</sup> S 1792 (*LondStP* 11). For discussion of this tantalizing text, see: Kirby, ‘Hywel Dda’, 5 note 35; Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 167–8 (enlarging imaginatively on the occasion); Halloran, ‘Welsh Kings’, 304 note 27; Foot, *Æthelstan*, 88–9; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 516 and 524.

<sup>96</sup> Williams and Bromwich, *Armes Prydein*, 6.

<sup>97</sup> S 434 (*Malm* 36).

the granulated information about Welsh and Scottish sub-kings, attending royal assemblies during these years, to a single agency ('Æthelstan A'), whose practices were so distinctive. In the remaining four years of Æthelstan's reign, the sub-kings are nowhere to be seen; and the question arises whether they stopped attending royal assemblies after 935, and if so for what reason, or whether matters were more complicated. The fact is that Æthelstan's later diplomas are more restrained in their language, less ostentatious in their form, and different in their outlook.<sup>98</sup> There is no retreat from the perception of Æthelstan as king of the English, king of the whole of Albion, or king of the whole of Britain; yet the draftsmen of these later diplomas seem not to have been inclined to wax quite so lyrical, at least in the construction of dating-clauses and witness-lists.<sup>99</sup> No longer was it considered desirable, as a matter of course, to indulge in the details of the king's itinerary or the wide embrace of attendance at his assemblies. Indeed, there are changes in the conception, construction and composition of the lists that demand explanation. Gone completely are the sub-kings; yet gone, too, are the supplementary bishops, the abbots, and the ealdormen or earls from 'Scandinavian' parts of the extended kingdom. Something was happening, but one cannot know for certain what it was. It may be that the Welsh 'sub-kings' had ceased to attend royal assemblies (in which case it would be odd that the other groups did the same, simultaneously); or one might suppose that it is simply the quality of the evidence which has changed. Among the archbishops and bishops, there is no longer any sign of the archbishop of York, or of the bishop of Chester-le-Street; there is no sign of the 'Mercian' bishops of Lichfield or Hereford, though Coenwald, bishop of Worcester, is invariably present; and there are clear indications that the bishops of London and Winchester were now assured a more prominent place in the hierarchy, after Canterbury. The recognition extended by 'Æthelstan A' to those styled 'abbot' is interesting in itself, as is the fact that they were not so recognised in the later 930s. No less striking are the changes which can be noticed among the ealdormen and (to a lesser extent) the thegns. An important development presumably taking shape in these years was the formation of a coalition between Olaf II Guthfrithsson (for the 'Irish') and Constantin (for the Scots). Its members probably included Owain of Strathclyde;<sup>100</sup> but the Welsh (of Wales) seem to have kept themselves out of it.<sup>101</sup> The coalition was formed as a challenge to Æthelstan's authority north of the Humber; and one imagines that some or all of the Welsh stayed out because they still had something to gain from 'submission' to English overlordship—precisely the kind of peace and protection, from the north, which Alfred had offered them beforehand.<sup>102</sup> The changes seen in the diplomas issued in the closing years of Æthelstan's reign are likely in some way to reflect the much larger changes taking place in the kingdom;

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<sup>98</sup> Keynes, 'Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas', 55–6. It may be significant that relatively few diplomas were issued in 936; see Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table XXVI (p. 1).

<sup>99</sup> Keynes, 'Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas', 55–6, with *Atlas of Attestations*, Tables XXXVI (sub-kings), XXXVII (bishops), XXXVIII (ealdormen) and XXXIX (thegns); see also Foot, *Æthelstan*, 72, 89–9 and 98–9, and Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 35–6.

<sup>100</sup> Owain ('Eugenius') had attended at least one of Æthelstan's assemblies in the early 930s (above, 00); see further below, 00.

<sup>101</sup> Lloyd, *History of Wales* i. 336; Kirby, 'Hywel Dda – Anglophil?', 8–9; Loyn, 'Wales and England', 183; Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, 168–73; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 525–6, noting, in effect, that Hywel and Idwal might have taken different views.

<sup>102</sup> Above, 00/6, citing Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, chapter 81; see also Molyneux, 'Tenth-Century English Kings', 71–3, and *Formation of the English Kingdom*, 51.

and no doubt personal as well as political and regional factors would have been involved. Whatever the case, King Æthelstan, with his half-brother Edmund alongside him, routed the conspirators at *Brunanburh*, in 937;<sup>103</sup> though in the event they were able to enjoy their success for barely two years.

*The reigns of Edmund (939–46) and Eadred (946–55)*

The death of King Æthelstan on 27 October 939, precipitated a period of political disruption in England which lasted for 20 years, until the re-unification of the kingdom of the English in 959.<sup>104</sup> The complications arose, quite understandably, from the conflict of interests and the conflict of aspirations, that enlivened the dealings in this period between various parties: the Scots, the British of Strathclyde, the Welsh, successive kings of the English, members of the House of Bamburgh, members of the Hiberno-Scandinavian dynasty in Dublin, those of Hiberno-Scandinavian persuasion in York, the Anglo-Danes of York, and an interloper from Norway. The complications are compounded by the difficulties of integrating information derived from chronicles, law-codes, charters, and coins, not to mention archaeology, place-names, and stone sculpture; to which one might add the tendency for interpretations of the evidence to change the more closely each category is examined.<sup>105</sup> The political aspiration entertained on Æthelstan's behalf in the early 930s had been challenged; and in late October 939 it can have been far from clear what lay ahead. Most obviously, Æthelstan's immediate successors faced serious problems in the far north: how to keep the Scots beyond the Forth; how to secure control over the British of Strathclyde and of Cumbria, west of the Pennines; how to secure control over the English of Bamburgh and of Chester-le-Street, east of the Pennines; how to break the deep-rooted link between Hiberno-Scandinavian interests in Dublin and their interests in York; and how to persuade all of those north of the Humber, identified by centres at York, Chester-le-Street, Bamburgh, and elsewhere, that their interests lay in accepting the rule of the king of the English, a long way south of the Humber.

Soon after Æthelstan's death, the Northumbrians chose Olaf Guthfrithsson, from Dublin, as their king; he took power in York, and pushed the boundary with the southern English back down to Watling Street, thus undoing at a stroke the advances which Edward the Elder and his son Æthelstan had made before. Edmund was left in a

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<sup>103</sup> ASC, s.a. 937, taking the form of a poem. For recent discussion, see *The Battle of Brunanburh: a Casebook*, ed. M. Livingston (Exeter, 2011); S. Foot, 'Where English Becomes British: Rethinking Contexts for *Brunanburh*', in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters*, ed. Barrow and Wareham, 127–44 (about 'Britain'); Foot, *Æthelstan*, 169–85 and 212–26.

<sup>104</sup> For general discussion, see S. Keynes, 'England, c. 900–1016', in *New Cambridge Medieval History*, III: c. 900–c. 1024, ed. T. Reuter (Cambridge, 1999), 456–84, at 471–9, with 'Rulers of the English', 536–7, with 526–7 (kings of York); see also A. Trousdale, 'The Charter Evidence for the Reign of King Edmund (939–46)', *Problems and Possibilities of Early Medieval Charters*, ed. J. Jarrett and A. S. McKinley (Turnhout, 2013), 253–74. For illustration of the deeper complications, see P. Sawyer, 'The Last Scandinavian Kings of York', *Northern History* 31 (1995), 39–44, and C. Downham, 'The Chronology of the Last Scandinavian Kings of York, AD 937–954', *Northern History* 40 (2003), 25–51. For a recent account of the period 939–54, see M. Townend, *Viking Age Yorkshire* (Pickering, 2014), 70–84. For the period 955–9, see Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', at 5–9, with references.

<sup>105</sup> For the coinage of York, and of the Five Boroughs, see C. E. Blunt, B. H. I. H. Stewart and C. S. S. Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England from Edward the Elder to Edgar's Reform* (Oxford, 1989), 211–34, with M. Blackburn, *Viking Coinage and Currency in the British Isles* (London, 2011), 45–9, and Naismith, 'Prelude to Reform', esp. 54 (Lincoln coinage in the 920s), 58–61 (hoards, and regional divisions) and 64–6 (single finds, 924–73).

position which represented a significant diminution in the extent of English royal power; but when Olaf died in 941 (succeeded in York by his cousin Olaf Sihtricsson), Edmund himself took advantage of the changed circumstances, and in 942 managed to reassert his authority in the territory of the 'Five Boroughs', south of the Humber. There were also repercussions in Wales. The annal for 942 in the *Annales Cambriae* reports that Idwal, king of Gwynedd, and his son Elisedd, were killed 'by the English'.<sup>106</sup> It is of course the kind of inscrutable statement from which historians are expected to reconstruct their understanding of the past. It may be, for example, that in the later 930s Idwal had broken with other rulers in Wales, siding with Olaf Guthfrithsson and Constantin against Æthelstan in 937; that he took advantage of the disruption in England precipitated by Æthelstan's death, taking sides again with Olaf against Edmund in the early 940s; and that in the process he was killed 'by the English', whether by Edmund, his agents, or others.<sup>107</sup> Whatever the case, Idwal's death in 942 provided his cousin, Hywel Dda, with the opportunity to extend his authority over Gwynedd, and thus to enhance his position among surviving rulers of the Welsh.<sup>108</sup> Henceforth Hywel was dominant in northern Wales, as well as in the south-west, and thus dominant also in the east and south-east; so at this time, from the early 940s, he was indeed the personification of a new (if short-lived) political dispensation in Wales. Perhaps able, therefore, to take advantage of renewed stability in Wales, Edmund took English recovery the two necessary stages further: in 944 he 'reduced all of Northumbria under his rule';<sup>109</sup> and in 945 he ravaged 'all the land of the Cumbrians', and granted it all (*hit let eall*) to Mael Coluim, king of Scots, in return for his support 'both on sea and on land'.<sup>110</sup>

Following Edmund's untimely death, on 26 May 946, his brother Eadred (946–55) took the action required to secure his own position. He reduced the land of the Northumbrians under his rule, and (one imagines in the same connection) also received oaths from the Scots; he was anointed king at Kingston-upon-Thames, in mid-August, perhaps as king of the English, but conceivably as king of the Saxons, Mercians, and Northumbrians.<sup>111</sup> Yet conditions were such that little could be taken

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<sup>106</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, ed. Dumville, 16–17; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 508, 526, 530.

<sup>107</sup> For discussion of Idwal's position, as a ruler in north Wales, and on a main route between Dublin and York, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 525–6 and 530.

<sup>108</sup> Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 35–6; Maund, *Welsh Kings*, 46–50; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 359–60 and 525–6.

<sup>109</sup> ASC, s.a. 944. The chronicler Æthelweard gives credit to Wulfstan, archbishop of York, acting with the 'ealdorman of the Mercians', and for the king's benefit. For further discussion, see S. Keynes, 'Wulfstan I', *Encyclopedia of ASE*, ed. Lapidge, *et al.*, 512–13, and M. Townend, *Viking Age Yorkshire* (Pickering, 2014), 70–84 (for the period 939–54).

<sup>110</sup> ASC, s.a. 945; AC, s.a. 945. See Macquarrie, 'Kings of Strathclyde', 14–15; Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, 183–5; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 530; and Edmonds, 'Medieval Cumbria', 204–5. When King Edmund ravaged 'all the land of the Cumbrians', in 945, it was presumably to bring its leaders to heel; he is said to have given the land to Malcolm, king of Scots, though in 946, and thereafter at least until 958, the 'Britons' of Strathclyde were regarded as a part of the English polity; see further below, 00.

<sup>111</sup> The so-called 'SMN' coronation *ordo*, disseminated on the continent from the late tenth century onwards, would appear to have originated in a mid-tenth-century Anglo-Saxon *ordo*, in which the king would be anointed to the 'sceptres of the Saxons, Mercians and Northumbrians'. For further details of the *ordo*, see J. L. Nelson, 'The Second English *Ordo*', in her *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), 361–74, at 361–5 and 368–9. The style (which is analogous to the style 'rex SM', apparently for 'king of the Saxons and Mercians', seen on a *Cross and Lozenge* penny of King

for granted. In 947 Erik Bloodaxe gained power in York, at Eadred's expense; in 948 the Northumbrians deserted Erik and acknowledged Eadred; in 950 the Northumbrians took back Olaf I Sihtricsson; in 952 they drove him out, and took back Erik; and in 954 they drove out Erik and submitted to Eadred, who thus ruled over the north in the last year of his life (954–5). The frequency with which the Northumbrians took it upon themselves, between 947 and 954, to change their political allegiance, is striking, and suggests that much depended on a calculation of an economic self-interest; so one should be looking here to the coinage, which illuminates the parts that other forms of evidence cannot reach. He died on 23 November 955, and was succeeded by his nephew Eadwig.

*The 'alliterative' diplomas of the 940s and 950s*

Against this background, we move on to consider the second group of royal diplomas which provide evidence for the attendance of Welsh rulers at Anglo-Saxon royal assemblies convened in the central decades of the tenth century. Most of the surviving diplomas issued in the 940s and 950s were drawn up in accordance with the conventions which had prevailed in the closing years of Æthelstan's reign.<sup>112</sup> In diplomas of this 'mainstream' type, the Welsh sub-kings are, as before, nowhere to be seen. The 'mainstream' diplomas for the 940s and early 950s are complemented, however, by a small group of texts known from one aspect of their style as the 'alliterative' diplomas.<sup>113</sup> It is again a *combination* of distinctive features which sets the 'alliterative' diplomas apart from others: not only aspects of formulation (the use of particular literary devices, royal styles, etc.), but also the personal or regional associations of the grants themselves. There is reason to believe that these diplomas, like others, were produced on the occasion of and for use at the assemblies from which they emanated. Interestingly, they share with the diplomas of 'Æthelstan A' a tendency to specify the place where the assembly had taken place, and to provide a regnal year; they also share a liking for 'inclusive' witness-lists, albeit of rather different appearance.<sup>114</sup> In other respects, however, the two groups of diplomas could not be more different. Those of the 'Æthelstan A' type display a steady development in structure and form, from one sub-group to the next, though always with room for a twist and a turn. Were one to imagine them as part of a ceremony of conveyance, with music to accompany the performance, the tone would have been set by uplifting music at the start, giving way to a crescendo of scary music, but culminating with a series of trumpet fanfares. The 'alliterative' diplomas create a rather different impression, in their own delightful way: no less ambitious in style, but freer in form, and suffused

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Alfred in the mid-870s), would have been entirely appropriate in the 940s and 950s; so its currency at this time, and in such a context (without overt reference to pagans and Britons), should not be overlooked. For further discussion, see D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 72–8, and *English Coronation Ordinances in the Ninth and Early Tenth Centuries* (forthcoming).

<sup>112</sup> For a survey of the diplomas produced in these years, see Keynes, 'Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas', 51–61, with references.

<sup>113</sup> For the 'alliterative' diplomas, see Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table XXVIII (further details), with S. Keynes, 'Koenwald', *Encyclopedia of ASE*, ed. Lapidge, *et al.*, 279–80 (Koenwald) and 'Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas', 92 note 257 (further references) and 93–5.

<sup>114</sup> The columnar arrangement of the witness-lists in the diplomas of 'Æthelstan A' is an integral part of their graphic design (and impact); the witness-lists in the 'alliterative' diplomas are linear, rather than columnar, in the sense that they run along the line, in the manner familiar from less formal vernacular documents.

with little tricks and changes of tempo which give them what can amount to a high spirited theatricality. In their case, the performance would have been more improvised, more interactive, especially when they got down to the witnessing; more like jazz.

One of the most interesting aspects of the ‘alliterative’ diplomas lies in consideration of the royal styles accorded in them to the king, in relation to the political circumstances which obtained at the time a diploma containing a particular example of royal style was drawn up. As we have seen, the agency designated ‘Æthelstan A’ was perhaps a person of Mercian origin. The agency responsible for the production of the ‘alliterative’ diplomas would also appear to have been ‘Mercian’, perhaps associated in some way with Coenwald, bishop of Worcester. As the political developments unfolded, from 940 to 955, the draftsman employed styles which reflect his view of the way in which the kingdom had contracted, but then expanded, contracted, and expanded again, using terms which show how he characterized what he considered to be its principal component parts. Operating initially in the wake of the events of 939–40, which had taken the boundary back down to Watling Street, the draftsman set aside the grandiose styles used for Æthelstan (and still employed by other draftsmen for Edmund), and reverted instead to the style ‘king of the Anglo-Saxons’, used previously of Alfred and Edward, and in the earliest of Æthelstan’s diplomas.<sup>115</sup> The revival of this usage, in 940, at a time when Edmund’s rule extended only as far north as Watling Street, continues the story of a royal style which had originated in the 880s, reflecting the polity implicit in the Alfred-Guthrum treaty of c. 880, which was used of Alfred by Asser in 893, and which continued to be used in the first quarter of the tenth century.<sup>116</sup> Following its revival in 940, it was used again in a diploma dated 942.<sup>117</sup> Unfortunately, there are no surviving diplomas of this kind, from 945–6, which might have reflected the extension of Edmund’s power in the closing years of his reign. The effect on this draftsman of the political developments of 942–5 is thus seen for the first time in a diploma of King Eadred, issued on the occasion of the king’s coronation at Kingston-upon-Thames, in mid-August 946 (two and a half months after his accession), soon after the king had asserted his own control of Northumbria (also receiving the submission of the Scots).<sup>118</sup> The new formulation adopted for the king is unprecedented: ‘king of the Anglo-Saxons, Northumbrians, pagans, and Britons’. The point of departure for this quadripartite style, as seen in the diplomas of 940–2, was still the Alfredian kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons, as extended (in this usage) from Watling Street up to the river Humber. The point was, however, that in 946 the formulation was extended further – explicitly, appropriately, and quite pointedly – to include the Northumbrians, pagans, and Britons.<sup>119</sup> One imagines that

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<sup>115</sup> S 472 (*Glast* 29), dated 940, and issued at Colchester, Essex; and S 473 (*Glast* 30), dated 940, and issued at Chippenham, Wilts.

<sup>116</sup> For the origins and early use of the style, see above, 00/5 and 00/7, and below, 00/40; see also Keynes, ‘King Athelstan’s Books’, 158 and 190. For an earlier and independent example of the ‘development’ of the Alfredian style, in this way, see S 1417 (*WinchNM* 9), in which Æthelstan is styled king ‘of the Anglo-Saxons and Danes’, suggesting a date between his accession to Edward’s kingdom and the events of 927.

<sup>117</sup> S 479 (*Bur* 5), dated 942, issued at Winchcombe, Gloucs. S 484 (*Bur* 6) and S 1606 (*Bur* 7) are heavily abbreviated, and contain no indication of the king’s style.

<sup>118</sup> S 520 (BCS 815), from Worcester (Somers Charter 11), on which see Keynes, ‘Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas’, 94 (lost single sheet).

<sup>119</sup> One should compare the chronicler’s account of the submission to Edward the Elder in 920 (above, 000).

the ‘Northumbrians’ (in this usage) would have applied to all Christian people living north of the Humber, in the former kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, including those ruled by the high-reeves or earls of Bamburgh and those ruled from York. The ‘pagans’, in this usage, appears to have been a term which represented residual Hiberno-Scandinavian interests in York.<sup>120</sup> The ‘Britons’, in this usage, were evidently the Britons of Strathclyde and Cumbria, later known collectively as the Cumbrians, who had submitted to Edmund in 945.<sup>121</sup> It may be that the reconstitution of Æthelstan’s unified kingdom ‘of the English’, in 944–5, and its reaffirmation in 946, brought with it a presumption in certain quarters of some form of domination over the Welsh, leading to the presence of their rulers at Kingston. As for the Scots, the annals in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for 945 and 946, are uncompromising in their assertion of English supremacy, though the Scots themselves may not have seen matters in quite the same way. The full quadripartite style was used thereafter in the ‘alliterative’ diplomas of 949–50 (on occasion with ‘other provinces’ instead of ‘Britons’), when it would have been entirely appropriate;<sup>122</sup> but in diplomas of 951, when Eadred was no longer in control of Northumbria, the quadripartite style was replaced by the more ambiguous form ‘king of the English’.<sup>123</sup> Appropriately enough (given yet another change of circumstances), the standard quadripartite form was used again in 955, alongside a more ambitious variation: ‘king of the Anglo-Saxons and ruler of the whole of Britain’.<sup>124</sup>

Clearly, the draftsman of the ‘alliterative’ diplomas was eager to respect prevailing conditions; and one turns to examine his work more closely for an indication of what he might have made of any Welsh or Scottish rulers who may or may not have been present at royal assemblies. As we have seen, the few surviving examples of ‘alliterative’ diplomas from the reign of King Edmund were issued in 940 and 942, at which early stage of his reign he was not in the position he had managed to establish by its close. All one can say is that Welsh rulers are not visible in the transmitted texts of the two diplomas dated 940, nor are any visible in the transmitted texts of the three dated 942; and that while the texts are abbreviated, they are perhaps well enough preserved, as a group, for one to be fairly confident that no such rulers were present at the assemblies represented.<sup>125</sup> A bilingual text from St Albans abbey, which combines Latin and Old English abstracts of the late tenth-century will of Æthelgifu with three further elements apparently derived in some way (and with much alteration) from a mid-tenth-century ‘alliterative’ diploma relating to land at Great Gaddesden in Hertfordshire, presents a greater problem. A name representing Hywel *subregulus* is found among the witnesses, and might be cited, therefore, as evidence that Hywel Dda attended a royal assembly convened by Edmund in the early 940s, at the time when he

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<sup>120</sup> The ‘Norsemen’ who in 939–40 had taken power over the ‘Danes’ of the Five Boroughs are described in *ASC*, s.a. 942, as ‘heathens’; see A. Mawer, ‘The Redemption of the Five Boroughs’, *EHR* 38 (1923), 551–7.

<sup>121</sup> Above, note 44. The assertion of kingship ‘of the Britons’ is of interest in its own right; see above, 00, and below, 00.

<sup>122</sup> S 544 (*Abing* 43), dated 949; S 549 (*Bur* 8), dated 949; S 548 (*Bur* 9), dated 949; S 550 (BCS 882), from Evesham, dated 949; S 552a (Barking), dated 950.

<sup>123</sup> S 556 (BCS 893), from Thorney; S 557 (*Bur* 11).

<sup>124</sup> S 569 (*Bur* 13); S 566 (*Pet* 11); see also above, note 00, for a diploma of Edgar, dated 958, which lends further credence to the Anglo-Saxon kingship of the ‘Britons’.

<sup>125</sup> For these diplomas of 940 and 942, see above, notes 115 and 117.

(Hywel) was securing his position in Gwynedd, in the aftermath of Idwal's death.<sup>126</sup> It should be said, however, that the transmitted text is seriously problematic, and in this form probably represents a document fabricated in the eleventh century from earlier materials.<sup>127</sup> One must conclude that there is no good evidence for the attendance of Welsh rulers at royal assemblies during the reign of King Edmund (939–46); but that while their presence *might* have been noticed, had they been present in 940 and 942 at a time when Edmund was 'king of the Anglo-Saxons', the absence of evidence for the latter years of his reign, when he extended his rule to the north, could also be attributed simply to the non-survival of any diplomas of the type in which the presence of Welsh rulers might have been registered.

The evidence for the reign of King Eadred (946–55) is significantly different. The agency responsible for producing the 'alliterative' diplomas was active throughout these years, and the texts of about ten diplomas of the type have survived, including a few copied directly and carefully from single-sheet originals now lost. The evidence is good, and provides a strong foundation for what proves to represent an interesting development from the diplomas of 'Æthelstan A'. The earliest 'alliterative' diploma in Eadred's name was the one issued in 946, on the occasion of the king's coronation at Kingston-upon-Thames, in Surrey.<sup>128</sup> The surviving text is derived directly from a single sheet, and there is reason to believe that the crosses representing the act of attestation might have been autograph.<sup>129</sup> The draftsman employs the full quadripartite style, applied retrospectively to Edmund and then to Eadred himself. The list of witnesses includes Hywel *regulus*, followed by Morgan and 'Cadm[o]n'; it does not include Mael Coluim, who had succeeded Constantin as king in 943.<sup>130</sup> As we have seen, Hywel was by this stage dominant in Wales, and it is interesting, therefore, that he should be designated *regulus* (as opposed to *subregulus*), and set apart in this way from Morgan (of Gwent) and 'Cadmon' (probably for Welsh Cadfan, unidentified), whose status was left unspecified.<sup>131</sup> The presence of these three men at King Eadred's coronation is especially striking; and one is tempted to suggest that after taking decisive action in the immediate aftermath of Edmund's death, Eadred and those around him made a special point of arranging a grand coronation at Kingston, and invited or summoned the Welsh rulers to attend. In 947–8 Eadred lost control of the north but soon recovered his position. The next surviving 'alliterative' diplomas are a pair issued in 949, in the king's '3rd' year, probably on the same occasion. In both diplomas, the draftsman employs variant forms of the full quadripartite style (using 'English' in one and 'Anglo-Saxons' in the other), indicating (given the explicit reference to the Northumbrians) that they were issued at a time when the king had recovered his former position. In one, the place of assembly is not named and the precise date is not given; Hywel *regulus*, accompanied again by Morgan and

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<sup>126</sup> S 1497 (*StAlb* 7A). For discussion, see *The Will of Æthelgifu*, ed. D. Whitelock (Oxford, 1968), 40–4, and *Charters of St Albans*, ed. J. Crick (Oxford, 2007), 159–61; see also Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 514.

<sup>127</sup> One might add that *subregulus* was not a term otherwise used for the Welsh rulers in the 'alliterative' diplomas (as discussed below), which might be taken to suggest that Hywel's name and style came from another source.

<sup>128</sup> S 520 (BCS 815), from Worcester, with *EHD*, 551–2 (no. 105).

<sup>129</sup> Keynes, 'Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas', 94.

<sup>130</sup> For Mael Coluim, see Woolf, *From Picland to Alba*, 177–92, at 183–4.

<sup>131</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 516–17, suggests that Cadmon/Cadfan might be an otherwise unknown king of Cumbria.

‘Cadmon’ (status unspecified), are listed among the witnesses.<sup>132</sup> The other emanates from an assembly held over the Easter period at Somerton in Somerset; the witness-list is abbreviated at precisely the point where one might have expected to find the Welsh rulers, so it is hard to judge whether or not they had been present.<sup>133</sup> These two are followed in the surviving corpus by another pair, emanating from an assembly (or assemblies) held at an unnamed place (or places) issued later in 949, in the king’s ‘4th’ year; in both, the draftsman employs the full quadripartite style (using ‘English’ instead of ‘Anglo-Saxons’). One survives in the form of an early modern ‘facsimile’ of a lost single-sheet original, which deserves attention in its own right for the simple reason that it brings us as close as we ever get to an original diploma of this type (Fig. 00).<sup>134</sup> We see at once how different was the look of an ‘alliterative’ diploma from that of the ‘mainstream’ diplomas of the mid-tenth century; and in this instance, at the beginning of the third line from the bottom of the sheet, we see ‘Howæl rex’ and ‘Marcant regulus’, for Hywel and Morgan, heading a list of laymen, though followed, curiously, by Abbot Dunstan and Oscetel *circward*, signing off with a special symbol.<sup>135</sup> The other survives as an abbreviated cartulary copy.<sup>136</sup> It was probably issued on the same occasion; and while there is no sign of Welsh rulers in the transmitted text, one can appreciate from the ‘facsimile’ of its pair how easy it might have been for an abbreviating copyist not to notice them in such a layout. In 950, still in his ‘4th’ regnal year, King Eadred convened an assembly on the royal estate at Abingdon. Again, the draftsman of an ‘alliterative’ diploma produced on this occasion for making a grant of land to Barking abbey employed the full quadripartite style, indicating that Eadred was still in control of the north. The witnesses include Hywel, styled *regulus*, and Morgan, whose status was left unspecified.<sup>137</sup> One only wishes, of course, that one knew more about the variety and nature of the business conducted on these apparently auspicious occasions.

The political situation in Wales changed significantly after Hywel’s death in 950.<sup>138</sup> The sons of Hywel were defeated in battle by Iago and Idwal, sons of Idwal, leading to the return of Gwynedd into the control of the sons of its former king. Matters were also made difficult for Eadred in the early 950s, when first Olaf Sihtricsson and then Erik Bloodaxe were accepted in York, at a time when Eadred might have been in failing health. Certainly, it was a period when strikingly few diplomas were issued, perhaps reflecting a reduction in the activities of kingship.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> S 544 (*Abing* 43). Keynes, ‘Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas’, 94.

<sup>133</sup> S 549 (*Burt* 8). Detailed points of contact between the formulation of the two diplomas suggest that S 544 and S 549 were issued on the same occasion as each other.

<sup>134</sup> S 550 (BCS 882). Keynes, ‘Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas’, 94–5.

<sup>135</sup> The prominence accorded in this way to Oscetel *circward* raises the possibility that he might be the Oscytel who succeeded Æthelwold as bishop of Dorchester, c. 950, was later archbishop of York, and was buried at Bedford in 971 (*ASC*); one can but guess what his role might have been in 949. For similar perorations in diplomas of the ‘alliterative’ type, see S 552a (Abbot Eadhelm), with S 556 and S 557 (Abbot Eadhelm and Dunstan). Dunstan is apparently the common denominator.

<sup>136</sup> S 548 (*Bur* 9).

<sup>137</sup> S 552a (*Barking*).

<sup>138</sup> *AC*, s.a. 951 (ed. Dumville, 16–17); Lloyd, *History of Wales* i. 343–4; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 537; see also D. Thornton, ‘The Death of Hywel Dda: a Note’, *Welsh History Review* 20 (2001), 743–9.

<sup>139</sup> For the incidence of surviving diplomas, see *Atlas of Attestations*, Table XXVI (p. 1). It should be noted that the diplomas of the so-called ‘Dunstan B’ type, which are characterized by (among other

Two closely related diplomas of the ‘alliterative’ type survive from 951, by which time Olaf was in York; the style accorded to Eadred reverted to a simpler ‘English’ form (without further extension), and Welsh rulers were seemingly not present.<sup>140</sup> In 954, following their expulsion of Erik Bloodaxe, the Northumbrians submitted again to King Eadred. The transmitted text of an ‘alliterative’ diploma dated 955, in Eadred’s ‘9th’ regnal year, accords Eadred his full quadripartite style, and incorporates a witness-list which begins with the king (styled ‘king of the whole of Britain’, marking a step forward), and an impressive list of bishops, followed by the king’s mother (Eadgifu) and two athelings (his nephews Eadwig and Edgar); unfortunately the rest of the list is abbreviated, from the point where one might have expected to find rulers from Wales, so it is hard to be sure whether or not any had been present.<sup>141</sup> We next encounter a diploma dated 955, in Eadred’s ‘10th’ regnal year, which evidently belongs to the ‘alliterative’ series, but which would appear to have been *composed* in the vernacular (in a most interesting extension or adaptation of the agency’s previous bilingual practices).<sup>142</sup> The king is now styled ‘king of the Anglo-Saxons and emperor of the whole of Britain’, representing further grade inflation, and perhaps also refreshed aspiration. The witness-list comprises much the same names as found in the diploma issued earlier in the same year, up to the athelings, followed by ‘Morcant regulus’, for Morgan Hen, ruler of Gwent, now accorded the primacy, and three newcomers, all of unspecified status: ‘Owen’, for Owain ap Hywel, ruler of Deheubarth;<sup>143</sup> ‘Syferth’, presumably of Scandinavian origin and not necessarily from Wales, was perhaps the king of that name who is mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as having taken his own life in 962,<sup>144</sup> though conceivably a Cambro-Scandinavian still thriving in 973;<sup>145</sup> and ‘Iacob’, for Iago ab Idwal, ruler of Gwynedd.<sup>146</sup> It must have been an important assembly, held as it happened a few weeks or months before Eadred’s death; and it is important too in the present context as evidence that, after all the turmoil of the 940s and early 950s,

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features) a royal style invoking ‘Albion’, are first seen in the early 950s; see S. Keynes, ‘The “Dunstan B” Charters’, *ASE* 23 (1995), 165–93, and ‘Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas’, 95–7.

<sup>140</sup> S 556 (Thorney) and S 557 (*Bur* 11). There is an analogy here not only with the usages for Edmund, in the early 940s (above, 00), but also with the usages for Eadwig in 957–9, when Edgar was king north of the Thames (Keynes, ‘Edgar, *rex admirabilis*’, 8).

<sup>141</sup> S 569 (*Bur* 13); see also S 572 (Ely).

<sup>142</sup> S 566 (*Pet* 11). For the suggestion that this diploma was originally composed in the vernacular (and is not simply a ‘translation’ of a lost Latin original), see David N. Dumville, ‘A Twelfth-Century English Translation of a Tenth-Century Latin Official Document?’, *Anglo-Saxon* 1 (2007), 339–60; see also the further discussion in S. E. Kelly, *Charters of Peterborough Abbey* (Oxford, 2009), 227–33.

<sup>143</sup> D. E. Thornton, ‘Owain ap Hywel’, *ODNB* (online); Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 537.

<sup>144</sup> ASC, MS. A, s.a. 962, recording that he was buried in Wimborne (an honourable burial for a Scandinavian ruler who might have been given refuge after the developments of 954); see also Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland*, 123, 125 and 218–19, with Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 516.

<sup>145</sup> John of Worcester refers to a ‘Sigeferth’ among those who submitted to Edgar in 973; see also Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 59 (Gwynedd?).

<sup>146</sup> D. E. Thornton, ‘Iago ab Idwal Foel’, *ODNB* (online); Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 537.

Eadred ended his reign, in late 955, presiding over an assembly of such a kind, with good representation of the rulers of Wales.<sup>147</sup>

*Aspiration and reality*

I have been at pains to emphasise that the evidence bearing on the attendance of Welsh (and other) rulers at Anglo-Saxon royal assemblies, discussed above, must be understood in terms of two highly distinctive agencies of production. As it happens, both appear to share a ‘Mercian’ perspective, which in itself goes some way towards explaining the respect shown for the Welsh rulers. One was active in the period 928–35, some years before the formation of the alliance against King Æthelstan; the other was active in 940–55, in the years which followed Æthelstan’s death. They were therefore working several years apart, under very different circumstances. It is apparent, in both cases, that while the rulers from Wales attended royal assemblies on several occasions, they were not expected to attend on every occasion. It would also be fair to ask in both cases whether the rulers who came from Wales were representative in any way of their contemporaries, and how representation of the Welsh might compare with the representation of the northern Britons and the Scots. One suspects, however, that the evidence is not good enough for questions of such a kind. The key point is that the two groups of diplomas present us with rather different views of the political structures of their day.

‘Æthelstan A’ served his king in the opening years of the newly ‘unified’ kingdom of the English. He employed grandiose royal styles for Æthelstan, as king of the English, that soon extended to a kingship of Britain; and if the witness-lists are taken in association with the styles, one sees how the diplomas formed part of a construction and projection of what was doubtless felt to be a new polity. Yet his diplomas deserve to be respected first and foremost as literary compositions in their own right.<sup>148</sup> The tone is set by the soaring language of the proem, leading directly to the king’s superscription, with its flourish of the royal style, and maintained through further elements of the dispositive section to the sanction, with further elaboration, matched well thereafter by the impressive detail of the dating-clause and the grandiose display of the witness-list. When present, they were accorded collectively high status among all those listed, placed after the king and the two archbishops, but ahead of the bishops, abbots, ealdormen, and thegns.<sup>149</sup> Their names occur in forms which represent credible attempts by an Englishman to render the way in which the rulers might have been announced or identified by a speaker of Welsh.<sup>150</sup> Each was styled *subregulus*, with explicit subordination to Æthelstan, but without further detail and without distinction between them; the intention was presumably to bring them all, as a group, into an honorific relationship with one who was unquestionably the most powerful ruler yet seen among the English, or by natural extension within Britain.

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<sup>147</sup> For the political configuration of Wales at this time, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 537.

<sup>148</sup> Woodman, “‘Æthelstan A’ and the Rhetoric of Rule’; see also Keynes, ‘England, c. 900–1016’, 470.

<sup>149</sup> They are in fact listed *ahead* of the archbishops in one of the first of the diplomas in the series (S 400, dated 16 Apr. 928); but subsequently they follow the archbishops.

<sup>150</sup> The forms in the two diplomas which survive in their original single-sheet form are as follows (substituting w for wynn). S 416 (BCS 677): Howæl (Hywel); Iuðwal (Idwal). S 425 (*CantCC* 106): Howæl (Hywel); Iuðwal (Idwal); *illegible* [Morcant] (Morgan); Teowdor (Tewdwr). Interestingly, the form for Hywel on his coin (below, 00) is also ‘Howæl’.

From the start, in 928, Hywel Dda was consistently accorded priority over the other Welsh rulers.<sup>151</sup> This might have been a reflection of his seniority among his peers (Hywel became king on his father's death in 909, but Idwal not until 916); though one might prefer to suppose that it was a reflection of his importance, among Welsh rulers, as seen from an English point of view, perhaps because he represented a kingdom (Dyfed) considered to enjoy a 'special relationship' with the line of Alfred, Edward the Elder, and Æthelstan. On at least one occasion, in 931, the Welsh rulers were joined by Eugenius, identified (by modern scholarship) as Owain of Strathclyde; but there is no sign, in the early 930s, of the king of Scots. After the campaign of 934, Constantin returned south with the king. As we have seen, he was accorded precedence over the Welsh at that time, and again when he stayed over (or came back) for an important assembly held at Cirencester in 935. The respect might have been due to him by virtue of his own seniority, even over Hywel, or by virtue of his standing as the 'king of Alba'. Owain of Strathclyde was placed after Constantin at the assembly at Cirencester, as if he were now accorded higher status than the Welsh, a development confirmed by his primacy over the Welsh at the assembly at Dorchester, held later the same year. When the sub-kings came together in this way, with the king, others present might well have felt that the aspirations entertained on Æthelstan's behalf to a kingship 'of the whole of Britain' had been realized. We know nothing of the dynamics or chemistry between the rulers on such occasions; but no doubt there were furtive glances, awkward encounters and staged handshakes, as at modern summits. Something must have been happening, and we have no idea what it was; they found out a couple of years later.

The draftsman responsible for the 'alliterative' diplomas of the 940s and early 950s worked in circumstances of political turmoil and change. It is not clear whether Welsh rulers attended royal assemblies in the reign of Edmund (939–46); one might say probably not in the early 940s, though quite possibly so in the closing year or two of his reign. Eadred's coronation in 946 seems to have marked the celebration of a new political order, represented by the full-blown quadripartite style (with reference to the Anglo-Saxons, Northumbrians, pagans and Britons. Yet we soon see how precarious it remained. Welsh rulers attended assemblies on occasion in Eadred's early years, from his coronation in 946 to a point in 950, at times when his authority extended north of the Humber (946–7, 948–50). It seems that they did not attend assemblies in the early 950s, when English rule did not extend beyond Humber; but it is significant that they came back in 955, after the re-establishment of the composite whole.<sup>152</sup> Like 'Æthelstan A', the draftsman of the 'alliterative' diplomas was concerned to integrate the high-ranking guests into his own projections of the political order; and he chose to place them between the bishops and the ealdormen. The implication could be taken to be that the Welsh, as a group, had been 'demoted' in the eyes of the English; but the difference is between the two agencies, and perhaps one should be more impressed by the fact that the person responsible for the 'alliterative' diplomas (unlike his contemporaries in the 'mainstream' agency) was concerned to

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<sup>151</sup> Lloyd, *History of Wales*, i. 336–7, on Hywel as 'a warm admirer, not only of Alfred, but also of English civilization', seemingly reciprocated by the English; and for a more rational interpretation, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 513, on the 'primacy of Dyfed'.

<sup>152</sup> There is a sense, therefore, in which the attendance of Welsh rulers was linked to southern English control of the north, as if in some way a product of unification. It is likely, at the same time, that south-eastern Wales looked towards Wessex, and Gwynedd towards Mercia (Charles-Edwards, *Wales and Britons*, 513–14, 536).

incorporate them at all. Among the Welsh, primacy was accorded (as before) to Hywel Dda; and after Hywel's death in 950, this primacy passed to Morgan. In three diplomas Hywel is styled *regulus*, standing apart from the others, who are accorded no style; in another diploma, Hywel is styled *rex*, and Morgan is styled *regulus*. Hywel's precedence is clear; and if the terminology fluctuated, the differential was none the less maintained.<sup>153</sup>

One is struck above all by the respect which the draftsman of these diplomas appears to have shown for the structures of political authority north of the Humber. There seems to have been no opportunity for him to register the attestation of a ruler of the Scots (not even in 946), and it may be that for practical reasons and purposes their oaths were considered sufficient. The reference in the royal style to the 'Northumbrians, pagans and Britons' is, however, of singular interest. It appears to signify that the peoples in question retained their separate identities, under the rule of a single king, and that they were not subsumed, in the circumstances which still prevailed, into a larger whole; in which case, the significant boundary remained the river Humber, and those to the north comprised the 'Northumbrians' (the integrated 'Anglo-Danish' people of Northumbria), the 'pagans' (the Hiberno-Scandinavian intruders), and the 'Britons' (of Strathclyde/Cumbria). It is interesting that a distinction was maintained between the 'Northumbrians' and the 'pagans', since the presumption is that the latter lived among the former, yet retained their separate identity, perhaps mainly at their base in York. The 'Britons' are no less interesting. The fact that Eadred, as well as Edmund before him and Edgar afterwards, should have asserted their authority in this way over the northern Britons raises a question of continuity in the line of the 'proper' kings of Strathclyde in the mid-tenth century, in the aftermath of the battle of *Brunanburh*.<sup>154</sup> There is no sign of Owain, or for that matter any sign of his successor Dyfnwal; and perhaps one should infer that the 'Britons', or at least some part of them, were at this time under the direct rule of the southern English king, presumably through agents of his own. If so, the fact that the title was claimed by or applied to the English kings hints at the importance of the region in the rebuilding of the kingdom of the English, not least for securing the north against other parties, notably the Hiberno-Scandinavian rulers of Dublin and of course the Scots.

In short, while the diplomas produced by 'Æthelstan A' are all about the grandeur of Æthelstan's kingship, the 'alliterative' diplomas create a different impression. They acknowledge that the kingdom had been reduced to a lesser state, in the early 940s; and when they track its expansion, in the mid-940s, by the addition of the Northumbrians, the pagans, and the Britons, they acknowledge in so doing that there were various issues and interests at stake, and that when made whole again it was not necessarily any greater than the sum of its component parts. There is serious history behind the formulation. The 'alliterative' diplomas represent a view which is strikingly different from that which suffuses the diplomas of 'Æthelstan A', and (one should emphasise) those of his successors in the diplomatic 'mainstream'; but it is one which may bring us somewhat closer to the realities which faced those intent upon the re-formation of a kingdom of the English.

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<sup>153</sup> For terminology in Welsh sources, see Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 41 and 46–7.

<sup>154</sup> For the kingdom of Strathclyde/Cumbria in the tenth century, see above, note 44.

*The English and the Welsh in the tenth century*

The material discussed above does not provide the basis for anything approximating to a narrative of Anglo-Welsh relations in the tenth century. It does, however, amount to a compelling fact: that in the 930s, 940s and 950s Welsh rulers regularly made their way across the border into the ‘kingdom of the English’ (or the like), in order to attend royal assemblies. When they were included in a witness-list, it was by virtue of their presence on that occasion, and it is a pleasant thought that they played at least some part in the proceedings, whether symbolic or practical. Other traces of interaction between the Welsh and the English in the tenth century may or may not have belonged to the same story, if only we knew more. The examples below are brought together in some kind of order, to serve as a reminder of this evidence.

(1) The manuscript known as the Lichfield Gospels (also known as the Llandeilo Fawr Gospels) can be cited here as a symbol of the movement of books between England and Wales in the ninth and tenth centuries. The gospel-book originated at an unidentified centre probably in the west midlands or in northern England, perhaps in the second quarter of the eighth century. It was in Wales, probably at Llandeilo Fawr (Carmarthenshire), in the ninth century; and it passed directly or indirectly from there to Lichfield, in the heart of Mercia, perhaps in the late ninth century or in the first half or second quarter of the tenth (certainly by c. 970).<sup>155</sup> Records of one kind and another had been added to the gospel-book while it was in Wales; further additions, of similar kinds, show that it was used for similar purposes after its arrival in Mercia.<sup>156</sup> It is interesting that the path seems in this instance to have led from a religious house in south-west Wales (Dyfed) to the episcopal see of the principal diocese in Mercia; in which connection one should bear in mind that Lichfield, in Staffordshire, had been accorded a primacy among Mercian sees by ‘Æthelstan A’, between 928 and 935, and that the more significant presence at royal assemblies in the 940s and 950s was the bishop of Worcester.

(2) Hywel Dda was evidently accorded a place of honor, at royal assemblies, for a period of almost 25 years, from 928 until his death in 950. He is known to have had a son, *Etguin* (the Old Welsh spelling of OE Eadwine), who died in 954.<sup>157</sup> Lloyd suggested that Hywel might have chosen the English name in commemoration of Eadwine, son of Edward the Elder, who was driven from the kingdom in 933, and who drowned at sea.<sup>158</sup> This would have various implications; but since all would depend

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<sup>155</sup> For Llandeilo Fawr, see W. Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm: Studies in the Llandaff Charters* (London, 1978), 152–7. For further details of the manuscript, known by a third name as the ‘Gospels of St Chad’, see H. Gneuss and M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: a Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Toronto, 2014), 210–11 (no. 269).

<sup>156</sup> For further details, see D. Jenkins and M. E. Owen, ‘The Welsh Marginalia in the Lichfield Gospels, Part I’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 5 (1983), 37–66; *The ‘Liber Vitae’ of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester*, ed. S. Keynes (Copenhagen, 1996), 55 (added names of men and women); and G. Charles-Edwards and H. McKee, ‘Lost Voices from Anglo-Saxon Lichfield’, *ASE* 37 (2008), 79–89 (with texts and full discussion).

<sup>157</sup> See T. Jones, *Brut y Tywysogion, or The Chronicle of the Princes: Peniarth MS. 20 Version* (Cardiff, 1952), 7 and 142, with further references.

<sup>158</sup> Lloyd, *History of Wales* i. 336–7. Given the apparent hostility between Æthelstan and his younger half-brother Eadwine, Kirby (‘Hywel Dda – Anglophil?’, 6–7) sees the naming of Hywel’s son as a ‘calculated jibe at, not a compliment to’ the English king. For the borrowing of OE *Eadwine* into Welsh, see, however, D. E. Thornton, ‘Some Welshmen in Domesday Book and Beyond: Aspects of Anglo-Welsh Relations in the Eleventh Century’, *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Higham, 144–64, at 149.

on speculative foundations, the matter is best left aside. The unique surviving example of a silver penny struck in the name of ‘Howæl rex’, by the moneyer Gillys, has far greater force as evidence, out of all proportion to its size and solitude.<sup>159</sup> Although struck in Hywel’s name, it is essentially an Anglo-Saxon coin, probably from the Chester mint; and it is dated by modern numismatic expertise to the mid- or later 940s, when Hywel ruled Gwynedd as well as Deheubarth. There is no clear evidence that coinage was used in Wales during this period, and the coin of Hywel is thus regarded as perhaps an ‘honorific gesture from the English to the Welsh king’.<sup>160</sup> It may be, on the other hand, that coins would prove helpful in connection with interaction between the Welsh and the English regimes, especially at Chester.<sup>161</sup> Whatever the case, the coin goes some way to support a view of Hywel as one who had something to gain from his association with the English. The larger historical significance of the coin is that it symbolizes the importance of Chester, at this time, in respect of political and commercial lines of communication across the Irish Sea, on one of the main routes linking Dublin and York.<sup>162</sup> There were other routes, too. But in view of the intensity of the activity in the 940s, one can appreciate Hywel’s importance to the English for the power he exercised by then in north Wales.

(3) Evidence of a Welsh attitude towards the English in the tenth century is contained in *Armes Prydein*, a medieval prophecy-poem of about 200 lines, preserved in the ‘Book of Taliesin’.<sup>163</sup> When read against the background of the evidence discussed above, especially from the English side of Offa’s Dyke, the poem is little short of electrifying. The poet foretells of a day when various peoples (the Welsh, the men of Dublin, the Irish, the men of Cornwall, the men of Strathclyde) would come together in alliance, and free the Welsh from their English oppressors. There is plainly a deep resentment of the English, traced back to the time of their first arrival at Thanet

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<sup>159</sup> The coin, now in the British Museum, came to light in 1903, at the sale of a private collection; see Carlyon-Britton, ‘Saxon, Norman and Plantagenet Coinage of Wales’, 2–5, and [Lloyd], *Hwyel Dda*, 34–5 (with enlarged illustrations). For further discussion, see D. W. Dykes, *Anglo-Saxon Coins in the National Museum of Wales* (1976), 12–14, questioning the attribution to Hywel Dda; and C. E. Blunt, ‘The Cabinet of the Marquess of Ailesbury and the Penny of Hywel Dda’, *British Numismatic Journal* 52 (1982), 117–22, reaffirming the attribution.

<sup>160</sup> Blunt, *et al.*, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 8–9 [Chester-style, 940s], 138 (‘Horizontal’ type, and Chester moneyer for Eadred and Edgar) and 271; H. Pagan, *Grosvenor Museum, Chester, Part II: Anglo-Saxon Coins and Post-Conquest Coins to 1180*, Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles 64 (Oxford, 2012), 9.

<sup>161</sup> On Chester and the Chester mint in the mid-tenth century, see Pagan, *Chester*, esp. 5–10 (mint) and 16–32 (tenth-century hoards), and Naismith, ‘Prelude to Reform’, 61 and 68. For the large tenth-century coin hoard from Chester, see C. E. Blunt and R. H. M. Dolley, ‘The Chester (1950) Hoard’, *British Numismatic Journal* 27 (1954), 125–60.

<sup>162</sup> For the dynamics between Dublin and York, in the spheres of politics and commerce, see A. P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, (2 vols., Dublin, 1975–9), i, 21–2 (stressing the Clyde-Forth route) and ii, 280 (an alternative). The routes via the environs of Chester, and across the Pennines, would also have been important. See D. Griffiths, ‘Trade and the Late Saxon Port’, in *Excavations at Chester: Saxon Occupation within the Roman Fortress. Sites investigated 1963–1981*, ed. S. W. Ward, *et al.* Chester Archaeological Service Monographs 7 (Chester, 1994), 124–8, and *Vikings of the Irish Sea: Conflict and Assimilation AD 790–1050* (Stroud, 2010), 129–35. For Chester in 973, see further below, 00.

<sup>163</sup> Williams and Bromwich, *Armes Prydein*; D. N. Dumville, ‘Brittany and “Armes Prydein Vawr”’ (1983), reprinted in his *Britons and Anglo-Saxons in the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1993), no. XVI, 145–58; G. R. Isaac, ‘Armes Prydain Fawr and St David’, *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation*, ed. J. Wyn Evans and J. M. Wooding (Woodbridge, 2007), 161–81; Foot, *Æthelstan*, 163, 226; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and Britons*, 519–35; Edmonds, ‘Medieval Cumbria’, 205.

(reflecting the stories told in the *Historia Brittonum*); for their part, the English are said to have wished to deprive the Welsh of all their land. There is mention of the ‘officers of the high king’, with reference to the agents of an unspecified English overlord; and it becomes clear that the main function of these agents was to collect oppressive taxes from the Welsh from a base at Cirencester. The English bring a large army to attack the Welsh, and collect the taxes, but they are driven back from the banks of the river Wye, back through the forest, through the fortress at Cirencester, and all the way to Winchester. There is no mistaking the poet’s deep-rooted political agenda, and there could not be a more explicit or a more powerful expression of Welsh resentment of the English. It seems likely that the poem was composed in the second quarter of the tenth century, though it would have retained its power long thereafter. And while it has been argued that it originated at St David’s, in south-west Wales, in other words in the heart of Hywel’s kingdom, it is also suggested that it might have come from Gwynedd.<sup>164</sup> The difficulty lies in knowing whether the poem represents a hostility towards the English which arose only in certain quarters, among those who resented what Hywel and his fellow-rulers were minded or obliged to do in paying their respects to the English overlord, or whether it reflects a defiance and resentment shared by them all.

(4) The so-called ‘Vatican Recension’ of the *Historia Brittonum* would appear to represent an edited version, originating in Wales, of the ninth-century historical compendium (itself the product of a period when feelings were running high), which had been brought to a place somewhere in England, presumably a religious house, and was copied there in the fifth year of Edmund, ‘king of the English’ (943–4).<sup>165</sup> The rest, unfortunately, must be left to our imagination; but the implication is that there were people in positions of influence who were eager to promote understanding between the Welsh and the English, at a time that could not have been more significant or better chosen.

(5) Another dimension is provided by the remarkable (late tenth-century) account of the journey of St Cathróe, apparently in the 940s, who set out from Scotland to Cumbria, travelling thence further south to Leeds, York, London, and Winchester, before moving onward to Lympe, in Kent, whence he crossed the channel to Boulogne and eventually found his way to Metz.<sup>166</sup> On the journey through Britain, Cathróe encountered not only Constantin, king of Scots, and Dyfnwal (Donald), king of Strathclyde/Cumbria, but also Erik [Bloodaxe] of York, Edmund, king of the English, and Oda, archbishop of Canterbury. The account raises difficulties of various kinds, not least of chronology and identification; but it also offers another view of interactions in the 940s, to set beside those already mentioned.

(6) A different sort of picture, at a more localized level, emerges from a three-page legal text in Old English, proceeding from an agreement established between the

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<sup>164</sup> For recent discussion of the poem’s provenance and date, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and Britons*, 527–35 (927 × 942). See also Jenkins, *Law of Hywel Dda*, 20 (translation, with reference to ‘the bard of the household’ singing ‘The Sovereignty of Britain’) and 227–8 (commentary, with allusion to *Armes Prydein*).

<sup>165</sup> *The ‘Historia Brittonum’, 3: The ‘Vatican’ Recension*, ed. D. N. Dumville (Cambridge, 1985), 4–8 (on the genesis of the recension), with 61 and 83 (references to Edmund); for the context in Edmund’s reign, see also D. N. Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge, 1992), 173–84 (reprinted from the edition, with revision).

<sup>166</sup> For further details, see D. N. Dumville, ‘St Cathróe of Metz and the Hagiography of Exoticism’, *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars*, ed. J. Carey, M. Herbert and P. Ó Riain (Dublin, 2001), 172–88 at 176–9; and Dumville, *Wessex and England*, 180.

‘councilors of the English people’ (*Angelcynnnes witan*), and the ‘councilors of the Welsh people’ (*Wealh ðeode rædboran*), ‘among the *Dunsæte*’.<sup>167</sup> The text is undated; and while some take the view that it originated in the first half of the tenth century,<sup>168</sup> others take the view that it belongs more naturally some time later in the tenth century.<sup>169</sup> The *Dunsæte* comprised identifiably ‘Welsh’ and ‘English’ people who lived in close proximity to each other on either side of a river which ran between them, probably the Wye. The agreement addresses various aspects of life within this mixed community. A body of twelve lawmen (*xii lah men*), made up of six Englishmen and six Welshmen, would decide matters for both parties; and some particular provisions were laid down. There seems, however, to have been more to it than that, for the text ends with an unresolved complication. It is said that formerly the ‘Wentsæte’ (people of Gwent) belonged among the *Dunsæte*; that they belonged more justly (*rihtor*) to the ‘West Saxons’ and should deliver ‘tribute and hostages’ (*gafol 7 gislas*) there; and that the *Dunsæte* would need to receive peace-hostages, if the king would allow it. It was perhaps the kind of matter which might need to be referred to a royal assembly, with Welsh representation.

(7) Evidence of Anglo-Welsh interaction in the tenth century is also provided by a number of entries in the twelfth-century ‘Book of Llandaff’.<sup>170</sup> A small group relate to a certain Wulffrith (Gulfrit), bishop of Llandaff, who, if only to judge from his name, might have been of English origin, and who seems to have been active at Llandaff in the mid-tenth century.<sup>171</sup> Another text purports to record the restoration of land by Morgan Hen [d. 974] to ‘Gucaunus’ (Gwgon), bishop of Llandaff, at the instigation of Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>172</sup> It is followed by a more credible text, remarkable in its own right as evidence (of a kind) that the literary aspirations of the draftsmen of Anglo-Saxon diplomas in the mid-tenth century might have had some impact on the draftsman of a Welsh charter.<sup>173</sup> A notice, dated 982, belonging to a

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<sup>167</sup> F. Noble, *Offa’s Dyke Reviewed*, ed. M. Gelling, British Archaeological Reports, Brit. ser. 114 (Oxford, 1983), 103–9 (facsimile and translation); T. M. Charles-Edwards, ‘The Three Columns of Law: a Comparative Perspective’, in ‘*Tair Colofn Cyfraith*’. *The Three Columns of Law in Medieval Wales: Homicide, Theft and Fire*, ed. T. M. Charles-Edwards and P. Russell, Welsh Legal History Society 5 (Bangor, 2005), 26–59 at 45–7 and 53–9 (translation).

<sup>168</sup> M. Fordham, ‘Peacekeeping and Order on the Anglo-Welsh Frontier in the Early Tenth Century’, *Midland History* 32 (2007), 1–18; Charles-Edwards, ‘Three Columns of Law’, 45–9. For discussion of the ‘early’ date, see G. Molyneux, ‘The *Ordinance Concerning the Dunsæte* and the Anglo-Welsh Frontier in the Late Tenth and Eleventh Centuries’, *ASE* 40 (2012 for 2011), 249–72 at 252–8.

<sup>169</sup> C. P. Lewis, ‘Welsh Territories and Welsh Identities in Late Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Higham, 130–43 at 140–2; and Molyneux, ‘The *Ordinance Concerning the Dunsæte*’, 258–72, arguing forcefully for a later date; For the manuscript context, perhaps suggestive of a connection with an abbot of Bath in the reign of Æthelred the Unready, see Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 232–3, 321, 381–2, 388; see also Charles-Edwards, *Wales and Britons*, 422–3 and 513.

<sup>170</sup> Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS. 17110E. Facsimile: on the website of the NLW. Text: J. G. Evans and J. Rhys, *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav* (Oxford, 1893), reprinted (Aberystwyth, 1979). Discussion: W. Davies, *The Llandaff Charters* (Aberystwyth, 1979); P. P. Sims-Williams, in *JEH* 33 (1982), 124–9; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 245–256, 594–5.

<sup>171</sup> Davies, *Llandaff Charters*, 72, 78, 120–1 (nos. 112–14); Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 594–5.

<sup>172</sup> Evans and Rhys, *Book of Llan Dav*, 240–3; Davies, *Llandaff Charters*, 125 (no. 135).

<sup>173</sup> Evans and Rhys, *Book of Llan Dav*, 243–4; Davies, *Llandaff Charters*, 125 (no. 136); Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 256.

series pertaining to the bishops of Llandaff, registers the death of Bishop Gwgon.<sup>174</sup> The bishop is said to have been consecrated by Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury (959–88), and to have been given his pastoral staff at King Edgar’s court, in the presence of four bishops, two abbots, and three ealdormen. All are named in impeccable form, and all can be identified without difficulty and placed securely as a group in the 960s.<sup>175</sup> There could be little doubt that an authentic record of some kind lies not far behind this notice, and it suggests, helpfully, that the Welsh attended royal assemblies for purposes of their own. A notice dated 983 (a date perhaps adopted erroneously, in relation to the previous entry in the series) registers the election, in Wales, of Bleddri as bishop of Llandaff and his consecration, at the court of King Æthelred, by Ælfric, archbishop of Canterbury (995–1005); it also records Bleddri’s death in 1022.<sup>176</sup> Yet another entry, which does not form part of the original book but was added in the early thirteenth century in a space which had been left blank, is no less interesting. If we are to believe the scribe, he made the entry in order that it might take the place of a charter so old that it had almost perished. According to his account, Hywel Dda and Morgan Hen, said to be subject to ‘Edgar’ (*recte* Eadred), king of the whole of Britain, were in dispute about their boundaries. Edgar summoned them to an assembly; and the dispute was settled in favour of Morgan. Afterwards King Edgar gave the disputed lands to Morgan’s son; whereupon a charter was drawn up at the assembly, in the king’s presence, and was later deposited in the church of Llandaff.<sup>177</sup> A scribe who claims to be recording the text of an original charter said to be disintegrating from old age should not be trusted with a pastoral staff (let alone a barge pole), yet one ought at least to take note of the assumptions he made as he went about his business.

(8) There is no trace of Welsh rulers in surviving authentic diplomas of King Eadwig (955–9) and King Edgar (957/959–75).<sup>178</sup> This might be because the draftsmen of diplomas were no longer minded to include them. It might indicate, alternatively, that the rulers from Wales were no longer in the habit of attending royal assemblies across the border, whether because West Saxon power over Wales was declining or because the dynamics within Britain changed after the Northumbrians made their choice to become part of the kingdom of the English, and when the Hiberno-Norse powers in Dublin refocused their attention within Ireland.<sup>179</sup> It is also possible that the meetings which the Welsh attended had become occasions of a

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<sup>174</sup> Latin text: Evans and Rhys, *Book of Llan Dav*, 246; W. Davies, ‘The Consecration of Bishops of Llandaff in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 26 (1974–6), 53–73 at 71.

<sup>175</sup> Discussion: Davies, ‘Bishops of Llandaff’, 62, 63, 67–8; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 249–50 and 594–5.

<sup>176</sup> Latin text: Evans and Rhys, *Book of Llan Dav*, 252; Davies, ‘Bishops of Llandaff’, 71–2. Discussion: Davies, ‘Bishops of Llandaff’, 67 (sceptical), and *Llandaff Charters*, 78.

<sup>177</sup> Latin text: Evans and Rhys, *Book of Llan Dav*, 247–9. Discussion: Davies, *Llandaff Charters*, 80; D. Huws, ‘The Making of the *Liber Landavensis*’, *National Library of Wales Journal* 25 (1987–8), 133–60, esp. 141–2 and 145; J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaff and the Norman Church in Wales* (Woodbridge, 2003), 66–7.

<sup>178</sup> For the corpus of Edgar’s diplomas, see Keynes, ‘Edgar, *rex admirabilis*’, 12–23, and ‘A Conspectus of the Charters of King Edgar, 957–75’, in *Edgar the Peaceable*, ed. Scragg, 59–80.

<sup>179</sup> For further discussion, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 536–47 (the decline of West Saxon power over Wales) and 552 (‘the English after 950 were changeable in their Welsh alliances and content with short-term advantage’), fastening on the appointment of Ælfhere as ealdorman of the Mercians in 956, and on Ælfhere’s incursion into Gwynedd in 967.

special kind at which diplomas were not issued. In other words, one should not discount the possibility that Welsh rulers continued to attend royal assemblies from time to time, if not necessarily in quite the same way as before. In a passage intended to convey a sense of the grandeur of Edgar's kingship, Ælfric of Cerne, writing in the mid-990s, described how 'all the kings who were in this island, of the Welsh and of the Scots, came to Edgar—on one such day eight kings—and they all submitted to Edgar's rule'.<sup>180</sup> Ælfric's formulation (*hwilon anes dægēs eahta cyningas*) seems quite deliberate in its implication that the kings were in the habit of making their submission in twos and threes, or fives and sixes, but that on one such occasion there were no fewer than *eight*. It is customary to identify the day in question as the occasion at Chester, in 973, following the king's so-called 'delayed' or more likely 'second' coronation at Bath, when 'six' kings came to meet him, 'and all gave him pledges that they would be his allies on sea and on land'.<sup>181</sup> The kings in question are not named in any contemporary source but were increased from six to eight, and then named, in a Latin chronicle which lies behind the twelfth-century chronicles of John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury.<sup>182</sup> The details may of course be no more than the product of the kind of informed guesswork which historians enjoy. Whatever the case, the events of 973 at Bath (so significantly) and at Chester (no less significantly) have dominated subsequent historical tradition, claiming all the attention. It remains possible that the Welsh and other rulers had paid their respects to King Edgar from time to time throughout his reign, thereby tacitly or explicitly acknowledging his supremacy throughout Britain. One should also bear in mind the story of Kenneth, king of Scots, and the cession of Lothian, which is evidence of a kind for periodic visits from Scotland, if not with a string of residences along the way.<sup>183</sup>

(9) The death of King Edgar, in 975, precipitated another period of unrest among the English, not helped by the youthfulness of Edgar's sons Edward the Martyr (975–8) and Æthelred the Unready (978–1016), and exacerbated in 984 by the death of Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester. These years also witnessed the renewal of viking raids, which for the English intensified in the 990s with striking effects.<sup>184</sup> There is no

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<sup>180</sup> Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints*, in M. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun* (Oxford, 2003), 606–7; see also *EHD*, 927 (no. 239g).

<sup>181</sup> ASC, MSS DE (Northern Recension), s.a. 973. The event at Chester was not recorded in ASC, MSS ABC, s.a. 973, or for that matter by Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, iv. 9 (ed. Campbell, 55), or by Byrhtferth (*Vita S. Oswaldi*, iv. 6–7, in *Byrhtferth of Ramsey: The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgbwine*, ed. M. Lapidge (Oxford, 2009), 104–10), which might suggest that it was of significance from a 'local' perspective, but not so much from the more general point of view. For discussion, see Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', at 5 and 48–51, with the further references at 50, note 233; see also Molyneux, 'Tenth-Century English Kings', 66–7, with *Formation of the English Kingdom*, 212–13, and Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 543–5 and 552.

<sup>182</sup> JW, *Chronicon*, s.a. 973 (ed. Darlington and McGurk, 422–4), and WM, *GR* ii. 148.2 (ed. Mynors, *et al.*, 238–40), with II, 132–3; see also S 808 (*CantCC* 129). The Anglo-Norman perception of King Edgar gave rise to the tradition of Edgar's supremacy over the seas around Britain, symbolized in the twelfth century by Worcester's 'Altitonantis' charter, and in the seventeenth century by Charles I's flagship, *The Sovereign of the Seas*. This great vessel, known from contemporary pamphlets and prints, had a figurehead of King Edgar on horseback, trampling over seven kings.

<sup>183</sup> For the 'cession of Lothian' see *EHD*, 284; Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, 211; Keynes, 'Edgar, *rex admirabilis*', 51; Brooks, 'English Identity', 51; and Molyneux, 'Tenth-Century English Kings', 79, with *Formation of the English Kingdom*, 6–8.

<sup>184</sup> S. Keynes, 'The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon', in *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. D. G. Scragg (Oxford, 1991), 81–113 at 85–6; Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland*, 223–30;

trace of Welsh rulers in surviving royal diplomas, and the possible explanations for the reign of their father continue to apply for the reigns of his sons. There are two recorded instances of English hostility towards the Welsh: in 983 Ealdorman Ælfhere ‘and the Saxons’ ravaged Brycheiniog;<sup>185</sup> and in 992 a certain Æthelsige led an incursion, penetrating further west into south Wales.<sup>186</sup> The Welsh also suffered at the hands of the vikings, as in 989, when Maredudd ab Owain (ap Hywel Dda), was obliged to pay tribute or ransom to them.<sup>187</sup> It is interesting otherwise to note that a reference to the blinding of Wulfheah and Ufegeat, at Cookham, in 1006, mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as a part of the domestic upheavals in that year, found its way into the Welsh vernacular annals (Gwlfac and Uryat).<sup>188</sup> It may signify that the Welsh had some reason to take an interest in their downfall, perhaps as part of the background to the appointment of Eadric Streona as ealdorman ‘over the kingdom of the Mercians’ in the following year. Clearly, more could be made of such points of contact, if only we had better information. There is no need for present purposes to look any further forward into the eleventh century. Suffice it to say that on the basis of the evidence discussed above, one begins to understand what complications might lie behind the reference, from the 1060s, to the half-brothers of the late Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, who swore oaths and gave hostages to King Edward and Earl Harold, promising to pay (*gelæstan*) ‘from that land such as had been paid before to any other king’.<sup>189</sup>

(10) I come finally to the evidence of later medieval Welsh law, in Latin and in the vernacular, as first recorded in manuscripts of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>190</sup> It would be difficult not to be moved by Sir John Lloyd’s account of Hywel Dda, and in particular by the extended comparison he makes between Hywel and King Alfred the Great;<sup>191</sup> indeed, it became almost an article of faith that the legislation associated in these law-books with Hywel Dda had originated under English influence in the 940s. More recently, scholars have retreated from the notion that Hywel’s presence at Anglo-Saxon royal assemblies would have given him a taste for the trappings of Anglo-Saxon kingship, and that what he learnt in England might have influenced his actions back home.<sup>192</sup> Yet while it might no longer be imagined (by process of wishful thinking) that the so-called ‘Laws of Hywel Dda’ originated in

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Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, 212–19; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 547–52 (late tenth century) and 552–68 (eleventh century).

<sup>185</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 548–9.

<sup>186</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 551.

<sup>187</sup> D. E. Thornton, ‘Maredudd ab Owain (d. 999): the Most Famous King of the Welsh’, *Welsh History Review* 18 (1997), 567–91, and ‘Maredudd ab Owain’, in *ODNB* (online). For his payment of tribute to the vikings in 989, see also Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 57, and Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 19–20 and 550.

<sup>188</sup> E. Boyle, ‘A Welsh Record of an Anglo-Saxon Political Mutilation’, *ASE* 35 (2006), 245–50.

<sup>189</sup> ASC, MS. D, s.a. 1063, with Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 567.

<sup>190</sup> T. M. Charles-Edwards, *The Welsh Laws* (Cardiff, 1989); Charles-Edwards, *Wales and Britons*, 267–72; and D. Huws, *Peniarth 28: Illustrations from a Welsh Lawbook* (Aberystwyth, 1989), with illustrations from Aberystwyth, NLW, MS. Peniarth 28. Further information is available on the ‘Cyfraith Hywel’ website <[www.cyfraith-hywel.org.uk/en/index.php](http://www.cyfraith-hywel.org.uk/en/index.php)>.

<sup>191</sup> Lloyd, *History of Wales* i, 133–43, with his pamphlet on Hywel Dda, published in 1928, and other publications of that year (above, note 7).

<sup>192</sup> Above, 00, citing Kirby, ‘Hywel Dda – Anglophil?’; although for ‘Hywel’s law’, see, more recently, Walker, *Medieval Wales*, 7–8.

the second quarter of the tenth century, one cannot help thinking of the proverbial baby and the bath water. As set out in the ‘Laws of Court’, in its opening section on the royal family, the person first in the pecking order after the king and queen was the *edlyng* (Modern Welsh *edling*). The Welsh term can be recognised immediately, of course, as a borrowing from OE *ætheling*, meaning ‘prince’ (as applied to a king’s sons in general); though in Welsh the word developed a more particular meaning, as ‘heir-apparent’.<sup>193</sup> One of the chief officials at the Welsh court was known as the *dysteyn* (Modern Welsh *distain*); and in one of the earliest extant versions of the laws, in Latin, preserved in a manuscript thought to have been written in the first half of the thirteenth century, we see him in action, bearing a dish.<sup>194</sup> It is generally assumed that the Welsh term *dysteyn*, used in the laws for the chief official of the royal court, was borrowed from OE *discথেgn* ‘dish-thegn’ (rather than from a Middle English form of the same word), itself the equivalent of Latin *discifer* ‘steward’.<sup>195</sup> Many years ago Professor D. A. Binchy fastened on these borrowings from Old English into Medieval Welsh and appealed for guidance.<sup>196</sup> David Kirby and David Dumville rose to the challenge, showing that OE *ætheling* never had the specific meaning ‘heir apparent’.<sup>197</sup> Feet became cold, and it seems that the *dysteyn* has also suffered by association. All one can say is that Hywel and his colleagues must have sat through many royal assemblies, in the central decades of the tenth century, at which they would have seen the king of the English—be it Æthelstan, Edmund, or Eadred—accompanied by athelings, surrounded by his household officials, and in the presence of many others gathered from afar, promulgating laws, dispensing justice, and issuing royal diplomas to all and sundry. Athelings were much in evidence in the 940s.<sup>198</sup> We also meet *disciferi* and other household officials in the diplomas; and in his will, King Eadred bequeathed 80 mancuses of gold to ‘ælcan gesettan discðegne and gesettan hræglðegn and gesettan biriele’ (to each appointed dish-thegn, each appointed rail-thegn, and each appointed butler), and lesser amounts to his mass-priests and to each of his other priests.<sup>199</sup> Perhaps it is just a wishful thought; but the context could hardly be better, and it is hard to think that the Welsh rulers, and those who came with them, might not have picked up a useful word or two.

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<sup>193</sup> Latin: Emanuel, *Latin Texts of the Welsh Laws*, 110; Fletcher, *Law of Hywel*, 4 (translation). Welsh: *Llyfr Iorwerth*, ed. A. R. Wiliam (Cardiff, 1960), 2–3; Jenkins, *Law of Hywel Dda*, 6–7 (translation) and 222–3 (commentary).

<sup>194</sup> Latin: Emanuel, *Latin Texts of the Welsh Laws*, 113–14, with Lloyd, *Hywel Dda*, 37 (illustration of Peniarth 28, 3v) and Huws, *Peniarth 28*, fig. 6 (for the *dysteyn*); Fletcher, *Law of Hywel*, 9–10 (translation). Welsh: *Llyfr Iorwerth*, ed. Wiliam, 6–7; Jenkins, *Law of Hywel Dda*, 12–14 (translation) and 337 (commentary). For valuable discussion of the place of the *distain* in relation to other officers, see P. Russell, ‘Swydd, Swyddog, Swyddwr: Office, Officer and Official’, *The Welsh King and his Court*, ed. T. M. Charles-Edwards, et al. (Cardiff, 2000), 281–95, esp. 294–5.

<sup>195</sup> For the Old English term, see Keynes, *Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 158–60, with references.

<sup>196</sup> D. A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship* (Oxford, 1970), 22–3 with 50 (*distain*) and 28–30 (*edling*); see also D. A. Binchy, ‘Some Celtic Legal Terms’, *Celtica* 3 (1956), 226–31.

<sup>197</sup> Kirby, ‘Hywel Dda – Anglophil?’, 11 note 61; D. N. Dumville, ‘The Ætheling: a Study in Anglo-Saxon Constitutional History’, *ASE* 8 (1979), 1–33.

<sup>198</sup> Keynes, *Atlas of Attestations*, Table XXXIa (3–5).

<sup>199</sup> S 1515 (*WinchNM* 17), with *EHD*, 554–6 (no. 107).

*From Britain to England in the tenth century*

In his account of the history of the English people in Britain, written seemingly in the 980s for the benefit of his distant cousin Matilda, abbess of Essen, Ealdorman Æthelweard expounded a view of the past based on a version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and beyond that on Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.<sup>200</sup> He moves rapidly from the conquest of Britain by the Romans to their departure. He goes on to describe how, when the Britons were assailed by the Picts, coming from the north, and the Scots, coming from the west, they turned for help to the warlike Saxons, in Germany; how the Saxons were victorious against the Scots, and, seeing 'the fruitfulness of the land and the inactivity of the timid people' (Bede, *HE* i.15), secretly encouraged others to join them; how all were welcomed by the Britons, and promised peace and rewards in return for their services; but how the Britons broke the agreement, whereupon the Saxons took over, and now openly encouraged other peoples – Saxons, Angles and Jutes – to join them from Germany. The Britons were driven back over the boundaries 'into certain narrow promontories', and eventually submitted and made payments of tribute. In a word, as Æthelweard put it himself: 'And so Britain (*Brittannia*) is now called England (*Anglia*), taking the name of the victors.'<sup>201</sup>

The diplomas discussed above, so well known collectively for what they reveal about Welsh rulers at royal assemblies in tenth-century England, form part of this larger story, but perhaps with a twist. For those who looked back to separate identities as West Saxons, Mercians, East Angles, Northumbrians, or whatever, and who by Æthelstan's reign were well aware also of their shared or common identities, whether as 'Anglo-Saxons' or (more widely) as 'English', the second and third quarters of the tenth century led via a heightened awareness of Britain to the gradual emergence of a kingdom of England. *Britannia* is the opening word in Bede's *History*, completed in 731; and Bede's notion of a *gens Anglorum* (OE *Angelcynn*), living within Britain, sat comfortably thereafter in common usage. The presumption was central to Alcuin's admonitory letters of the late eighth century; and it was familiar also to the draftsmen of diplomas in the ninth century, when the need for an inclusive way of expressing 'the long term' encouraged use of the *quamdiu fides* formula ('for as long as the Christian faith shall endure among the English in the island of Britain'), in its various forms.<sup>202</sup> Those who entertained aspirations on behalf of kings and archbishops were never shy of invoking 'Britain' in various contexts and for their various purposes: whether for Edwin, king of the Northumbrians (612–33), or Theodore, archbishop of

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<sup>200</sup> For Æthelweard and his chronicle, see M. Gretsch, 'Historiography and Literary Patronage in Late Anglo-Saxon England: the Evidence of Æthelweard's *Chronicon*', *ASE* 41 (2013), 205–48, esp. 212–38. See also S. Keynes, 'Apocalypse Then: England A.D. 1000', in *Europe Around the Year 1000*, ed. P. Urbanczyk (Warsaw, 2001), 247–70, at 248 (*Anglia*); S. Ashley, 'The Lay Intellectual in Anglo-Saxon England: Ealdorman Æthelweard and the Politics of History', in *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. P. Wormald and J. L. Nelson (Cambridge, 2007), 218–45; and Brooks, 'English Identity', 49–51.

<sup>201</sup> *Chronicon*, i. 4 (ed. Campbell, 9). For this 'appropriation' of Britain by the English, see R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093–1343* (Oxford, 2000), 48–9 and 54–5. For other usages by Æthelweard, see *Chronicon*, *Prol.*, i.1, iii.3, iv.3 (*bis*), iv.5, iv.9 (ed. Campbell, 1, 5, 29, 37, 39, 54, 56).

<sup>202</sup> For the *quamdiu fides* formula, see F. M. Stenton, 'The Supremacy of the Mercian Kings' (1918), reprinted in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. D. M. Stenton (Oxford, 1970), 48–66 at 59 note 3, and Brooks, 'English Identity', esp. 41–2 (Alcuin) and 45–6.

Canterbury (662–90), or Æthelbald, king of the Mercians (716–57), or Offa, king of the Mercians (757–96), or Wulfred, archbishop of Canterbury (802–32), or for Ecgberht, king of the West Saxons (802–39). Even so, there were limits. Æthelbald was styled ‘king of Britain’ in the form of his attestation to one of his diplomas, but a more accurate style had been used for the superscription. Offa was hailed as ‘king and glory of Britain’ in a letter, but he is ‘king of the Mercians’ on his coinage and in his diplomas. Ecgberht was celebrated as ‘ruler of Britain’ (*Bretwalda*) in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, but not in other contexts. The royal style devised for the Alfredian polity established across southern England in the early 880s was king ‘of the Anglo-Saxons’;<sup>203</sup> the new usage was adopted by Asser writing in 893, and he also described Alfred as ‘ruler of all the Christians of the island of Britain’, perhaps in the fond hope that the designation would help his Welsh readers to identify more readily with their common cause (opposing the viking invasions). None the less, Alfred and his son Edward remained king ‘of the West Saxons’ in certain quarters, and there is evidence for the use of another composite style, involving ‘Saxons’ and ‘Mercians’.<sup>204</sup> It was however Alfred’s kingship ‘of the Anglo-Saxons’ which established the political framework for his activities in the 880s and 890s.<sup>206</sup> It provided the same for Alfred’s son Edward the Elder, when he began in the 910s to take matters forward; and it became the legacy of them both to Edward’s son Æthelstan, who, after a complicated succession in 924–5, was described like his father and grandfather as king ‘of the Anglo-Saxons’,<sup>207</sup> or in one case king ‘of the Anglo-Saxons and Danes’.<sup>208</sup> It is only by paying heed to the pattern of diplomatic usage *before* the events at Eamont in 927 that one can fully appreciate the magnitude of the change which followed. The Alfredian kingdom ‘of the Anglo-Saxons’ gave way at once to Æthelstan’s kingdom ‘of the English’, leading soon afterwards, if only by natural extension (and pretension), to his kingdom ‘of the whole of Britain’.

These were heady days indeed. On the face of it, the evidence bearing on the attendance of Welsh kings at tenth-century royal assemblies relates to the period of nearly 30 years which followed the meeting at Eamont in July 927, and belongs in the context, therefore, of what might have been a heightened awareness of the kingship of Britain. It is arguable, however, that the evidence is more revealing. In the years from 928 to 935, ‘Æthelstan A’ projected the grandeur of the new regime in a most spectacular way, glorying in the detail of it all (the itinerary, the precise dates, and the assembled company). Another ‘mainstream’ agency took over from ‘Æthelstan A’ in 935, retaining the grandiose royal styles, yet in other respects adopting practices which seem more restrained.<sup>209</sup> Some may have felt that in 927 Æthelstan had taken matters too far, too fast, with all the posturing about the kingdom of the English and the kingship of the whole of Britain. For their part, the Scots, the Hiberno-Scandinavians of Dublin, and the Britons of Strathclyde/Cumbria combined to challenge Æthelstan’s might; and when the coalition was defeated at *Brunanburh*, in 937, the outcome was celebrated quite understandably as a vindication for Æthelstan’s ‘Britain’. Yet just two years later, in the immediate aftermath of the king’s death, it was all undone. The

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<sup>203</sup> Above, note 27.

<sup>204</sup> Above, note 111.

<sup>206</sup> Above, note 30

<sup>207</sup> Above, notes 37 and 46.

<sup>208</sup> Above, note 116.

<sup>209</sup> Above, 20–1.

draftsmen of the ‘mainstream’ charters, in the 940s, continued to represent Edmund and Eadred as kings ‘of the English’, but there is no longer any crowing about ‘Britain’. They were soon joined by the draftsman of the ‘alliterative’ diplomas, who at once adopted his own view of the English polity, perhaps looking at it from outside the inner circle. When he began his work, in the early 940s, he reverted to the Alfredian kingship ‘of the Anglo-Saxons’, with good reason (given the circumstances which then obtained, with the boundary back at Watling Street). But once Edmund had recovered control of the east midlands, reduced Northumbria under his rule, and ravaged the land of the Cumbrians, the Alfredian style would no longer apply. It is conceivable, if we follow a liturgical as opposed to a diplomatic tradition, that on his coronation at Kingston-upon-Thames, on 16 August 946, Eadred was crowned king ‘of the Saxons, Mercians, and Northumbrians’.<sup>210</sup> We have seen, however, that the draftsman of an ‘alliterative’ diploma issued on the occasion of the coronation chose for reasons of his own to stay with the kingship ‘of the Anglo-Saxons’, extended (for good and proper reasons) to the kingship ‘of the Northumbrians, pagans, and Britons’. In so doing, he was perhaps expressing a feeling on his own part that in the aftermath of recent events it was necessary to acknowledge the Hiberno-Norse faction in York, and the ‘Britons’ of Strathclyde/Cumbria, in addition to the Northumbrians. He seems to have held the view, at the same time, that his witness-lists should be properly representative of those attending the assembly, including Welsh rulers, when they happened to be present alongside others; and, as we have seen, he thus provides us with interesting information on attendance at assemblies in 946, 949–50 and 955. There was, however, nothing overtly grandiose or contrived about his practices. It was a matter of reporting what he saw, in his own inimitable way. Complications arose during the reign of Eadred’s nephew and successor, Eadwig (955–9), leading in 957 to a division of the kingdom between Eadwig, south of the Thames, and his younger brother Edgar, to the north. The complications ran deep, and must here be left aside; it may or may not have been known that the arrangement was unlikely to last for long.<sup>211</sup> Suffice it to say, for present purposes, that in his diplomas Eadwig was styled king ‘of the English’ after the division, rather than (say) king ‘of the West Saxons’, suggesting (in context) that he retained a degree of control overall. Edgar, in contrast, is styled king ‘of the Mercians’; but in one such diploma, dated 958 (and not of the ‘alliterative’ type), Edgar attested as king ‘of the Mercians, Northumbrians and Britons’, providing evidence (from an independent source) that ‘the Britons’ represented an identifiably separate part of the northern share of the kingdom of the English.<sup>212</sup> Eadwig died on 1 October 959, whereupon Edgar became king of a reunited kingdom, and ‘Britain’ was back on the table.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Above, note 111.

<sup>211</sup> On the reign of Eadwig, see Keynes, ‘Edgar, *rex admirabilis*’, 7–9, with references; see also R. Lavelle, ‘Royal Control and the Disposition of Estates in Tenth-Century England: Reflections on the Charters of King Eadwig (955–959)’, *HSJ* 23 (2011), 23–49.

<sup>212</sup> S 677 (*Wells* 31), extant in its original single-sheet form. The style worked on the same principle as the style devised for Æthelstan in S 1417 (above, note 116), and as the quadripartite style devised by the draftsman of the ‘alliterative’ diplomas (without the ‘pagans’); but since in 958 Edgar was king only *north* of the Thames, he was quite properly conceived here as ruler of the ‘Mercians’ (as opposed to ruler of the ‘Anglo-Saxons’).

<sup>213</sup> Keynes, ‘Edgar, *rex admirabilis*’, 24–5. In the law-code known as ‘IV Edgar’, reference is made to Edgar’s kingship over all of the people in his dominion (*anweald*), whether English, Danes or ‘Britons’, a usage which would repay further consideration in this context, and in connection with the styles accorded to Edgar in S 766, from Wilton, and S 779 (BCS 1267–8), from Ely. A different view of

The twenty years which had passed from the death of King Æthelstan, in October 939, to Edgar's accession, in October 959, separate one solid and significant reign from another. Rarely can a sandwich have had such an interesting filling. Although 'Britain' might have been the buzz word among Æthelstan's close associates, and although it was unquestionably important to 'Æthelstan A' and his successors in Æthelstan's reign, it had been shown to be a challenging aspiration. One aspect of the peculiar interest of the 'alliterative' diplomas is that they reveal how a person unknown (the draftsman, perhaps in the service of the bishop of Worcester) responded to the unfolding sequence of events from 939 to 955, laying bare the political realities as he saw them. For this person, it was a story of initial reversion to the Alfredian kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons, followed by the enlargement of that kingdom into an interestingly quadripartite form; and the contrast with 'mainstream' and other diplomas is telling. In effect, the realities which lay beneath the surface had for him been exposed in the campaign which led to *Brunanburh*, and in the aftermath of Æthelstan's death it had been seen how a composite kingdom might fall apart. The lessons to be learnt during the reigns of Edmund and Eadred, so clearly exposed by the draftsman of the 'alliterative' charters, would be joined by further lessons of a different kind, to be learnt during the reign of Eadwig. Yet when Edgar's reign is taken into account, there could be little doubt that a commitment remained to an aspiration which was larger than any kingdom of the English. Ealdorman Æthelweard was one of the first to recognize that 'England' as a political entity was a product of the tenth century, and he was well placed to know. He was also well aware, however, of the larger dimension. After *Brunanburh*, still known popularly (he says) as 'the great war' (*bellum magnum*), the barbarians were ejected, and the Scots and the Picts submitted. 'The fields of Britain were consolidated into one, there was peace everywhere, and abundance of all things, and (since then) no fleet has remained here, having advanced against these shores, except under treaty with the English'.<sup>214</sup> It is striking that Ealdorman Æthelweard rose with such ease over the complications of the 940s and early 950s, compounded by the further complications in Eadwig's reign, and that from his vantage point in Æthelred's reign he should still have looked back to Æthelstan as the king in whose reign the polity which he recognized as his own had originated. His confidence would have been undermined soon after, by another turn of events, when it became an issue again whether Æthelstan's kingdom would endure.<sup>215</sup>

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developments in the tenth century has been advanced by Molyneaux, 'Tenth-Century English Kings', esp. 81–91, and *Formation of the English Kingdom*, esp. 12–14, 48–50, 116, 163–4, 199–201 and 231–3, in effect playing down the roles of Alfred, Edward and Æthelstan, and playing up the role of Edgar. Leaving aside any notion that it was all about the 'Cerdicings', one can appreciate in this way how important is a deeper understanding of the period between 939 and 959.

<sup>214</sup> *Chronicon*, iv. 5 (ed. Campbell, 54, with p. li, n. 3), with E. E. Barker, 'The Cottonian Fragments of Æthelweard's Chronicle', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 24 (1951), 46–62, and L. Whitbread, 'Æthelweard and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', *EHR* 74 (1959), 577–89.

<sup>215</sup> The date of Æthelweard's chronicle is a matter which requires further discussion, in the light of the possibility (raised by Barker and Whitbread) that he might have produced a first version and a later recension. He was aware that viking fleets *had* attacked England since the *Brunanburh* campaign, but he implies that the only fleet(s) to *stay* had done so under the terms of a treaty. If he wrote initially before the death of Arnulf of Flanders in 987 (as generally supposed), it is unclear what 'treaty' he had in mind. His remark would make sense more naturally as an integral part of a work produced in the mid-990s, alluding to the viking army which had arrived in 991, elements of which had stayed in southern England, as mercenaries, after the treaty of 994 (in which Æthelweard had been involved).