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## **Early Connection Between Glamorgan and Gloucestershire**

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## EARLY CONNECTION BETWEEN GLAMORGAN AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

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I PROPOSE, by way of preface to the notes I have prepared for our Cardiff programme, to spend the half hour allotted to me in dealing with the earlier history of Glamorgan, showing how closely it is interwoven with that of our own county, Gloucestershire.

The Silures, who dwelt in the country which lies between the Severn and the Towy, were finally conquered by Agricola, A.D. 78.

After this time, if we may judge from the silence of Latin authors, and from the number of Roman villas of which traces have been found, the inhabitants of Gwent enjoyed three centuries of ease and tranquillity. But towards the close of the fourth century, when the Romans were withdrawing their forces from Britain to defend the provinces nearer home from the attacks of the Goths, they entered on troublous times.

Britain was beset on all sides by relentless foes: on the north by the Picts of Caledonia, on the west by the Gaels and Scots of Ireland, and on the south and east by hordes of Saxon freebooters from the Baltic. The lowlands of South Wales, owing to the level character of the country and their proximity to the sea, were especially liable to the attacks of pirates and marauders. Again and again the homes of the inhabitants would be sacked and destroyed, and their women and children carried into captivity, before the Roman soldiers could be summoned to their relief.

It must have been in one of these forays that the Roman villa at *Caer Wyrgan*, near *Llantwit*, was permanently

destroyed and its inhabitants cruelly slain. In 1888, during the excavation of a large hall in this villa, no fewer than forty-one human skeletons were found, of both sexes and all ages, bearing traces of a violent death.<sup>1</sup>

In another foray, probably in 405, when Niall, the Irish chieftain, was seizing the opportunity of Stilicho's departure from Britain to raid the south and west coasts, Patrick, then a youth of sixteen, was torn away from his home by the Severn Sea, and sold into slavery in Ireland. According to Welsh tradition he was a native of Gwent; and in his *Confession* he speaks of his father, Calphurnius, as a Roman citizen and Decurion or municipal councillor of a town called Bannaventa.<sup>2</sup> Professor Bury says "we may be inclined to look for the Bannaventa of Calphurnius in south-western Britain, perhaps in the regions of the lower Severn."<sup>3</sup> I have been led by a paper on Caerwent, by M. L. Dawson, in *Archæologia Cambrensis*, to surmise that this Roman station, which they called Venta Silurum, was the early home of the apostle and patron saint of Ireland.<sup>4</sup>

But if the lowlands of Glamorgan were open to the attacks of pirates, the mountains beyond them were secure; and

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Camb.*, ser. v., vol. v., p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> "I, Patrick . . . had for my father Calpornius a deacon, son of the late Potitus a presbyter, who was of the town (*e vico*) Bonaven Tabernicæ; for he had a farm (*villulam*) in the neighbourhood, where I was taken captive. I was then nearly sixteen year old." (Dr. Todd's *St. Patrick*, 1864, p. 362.)

<sup>3</sup> Bury's *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Arch. Camb.*, ser. vi., vol. iv., p. 243. In the *Life of St. Cadoc* it is stated that whilst living at Llancarvan he was warned in a vision that he must shortly leave it for another sphere of work. He appointed his favourite disciple, Elli, to be the head of the monastery in his place, and immediately afterwards he was transported to Beneventum. The bishop of that place had just died, and St. Cadoc was made bishop in his stead. Beneventum must have been within easy reach of Llancarvan, for Elli was accustomed to go very often from Llancarvan with his disciples to the city of Beneventum to visit the blessed Cadoc. It would be very natural that if the bishopric of Caerwent were vacant, it should be given to St. Cadoc, who had been connected with the place from his childhood.

therefore the Welsh, though attacked in turn by Irish, Saxon and Dane, preserved their independence during the six centuries which followed the withdrawal of the Romans, A.D. 446.

In 601 two historic conferences were held in Gloucestershire, "on the confines of the Hwiccas and West Saxons," between St. Augustine and the bishops of the native British Church. Until a few years ago it was the general opinion that the place of meeting was Aust on the Severn, and this opinion has been ably supported by the arguments of our Editor, the Rev. C. S. Taylor. A later view, enunciated first, I believe, by the Rev. G. H. Moberley, adopted by the historian J. R. Green, and followed recently by the Bishop of Bristol, is in favour of Down Ampney near the forest of Bredon and the Ermin Street.

I have tried to reconcile these apparently adverse opinions by suggesting that the first meeting was held near Lechlade or Down Ampney, where only the bishops of Dyvnaint (Somerset, Devon and Cornwall) were present, and the second at Aust to suit the convenience and safety of the "doctors" of theology who were summoned from Wales.<sup>1</sup> If the Dyvnaint Britons needed further help to combat the arguments of St. Augustine surely they would have obtained it from Caerwent, Caerleon, Llandaff, Llancarvan and Llantwit—the *Bangors* (monastic colleges) of Gwent, and not, as Bede is supposed to mean by "Bancornaburg," Bangor on the Dee, near Deva (Chester).<sup>2</sup>

From the fifth to the eighth century the River Severn was the boundary between England and Wales; Gloucester was a frontier fortress, and the Forest of Dean (the red Gwent), Herefordshire and part of Shropshire remained British territory. But in 779 the Mercians, under Offa, drove the King of Powys from his capital, Pengwyrn (Shrewsbury), and carried the English border westward to the Wye. This border-line is still marked by a huge earthwork, which runs from the north of the Wye to that of the Dee, and which still bears the name of Offa's Dyke.

<sup>1</sup> *S. Gloucester Diocesan Magazine*, vol. 1., p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, *E. H.*, ii. 2; Stevenson's edition, p. 358, note 1.

During the Roman occupation of Britain there were two routes into South Wales from the south of Britain. Gloucester (Glevum), as now, was the starting-point by land; and a great highway, which Hoare calls *Via Julia Maritima*, connected it with St. David's, the capital of Menevia or Western Wales. Where the road crossed the rivers which flow into the Severn Sea fortresses of great strength were erected to guard the fords or bridges and prevent the maritime foe from penetrating with his boats into the upper reaches of the streams.

The port from which naval expeditions set sail was close to the mouth of the Avon (Avona, perhaps a contraction of Aber Afon), possibly Sea Mills. Bristol itself is not of Roman origin, though many proofs of prehistoric settlement, of the Iron Age, have been found by our Secretary for Bristol, Mr. J. E. Pritchard, F.S.A., within the present city, near the confluence of the Avon and the Frome. Avona was connected with Silchester by a great highway, which passed through Bath (Aquæ Solis) and Bitton, and may still be seen on Durdham Down.

Bristol came into existence about the end of the tenth century; and as long ago as the reign of Æthelred the Unready, 979—1016, there was a mintage of silver coins there, showing it to be a place of some importance even then. Whether the first settlers were themselves Danish pirates, or were Saxons who erected a stronghold on a position already naturally secure, we know not; but in the days of the Confessor the Bristol men bought or kidnapped English serfs, mostly boys and girls, and sold them to the Danish settlers at Dublin and Waterford, who in their turn passed them on to the slave-markets of continental Europe. William the Conqueror strove in vain to check this wretched traffic, and if it were suppressed for a while by the reproaches of Bishop Wolstan, it broke out afresh during the civil war of Stephen's unhappy reign.

In the time of Henry II. Ireland was full of Englishmen and

Welshmen, who had been thus kidnapped and sold into slavery in spite of royal prohibition and the menaces of the English church ; and this fact was made a legitimate pretext by the king for the invasion of Ireland under Papal sanction.<sup>1</sup>

But our kind hosts of to-day must not upbraid us for our sins of eight hundred years ago ; for, as Mr. Ballinger tells us in his excellent *Guide*, Cardiff came into notice during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. as the resort of pirates ; and the privateering of the eighteenth century, by which many of our maritime towns were enriched, will hardly bear examination.

In 1063, three years before the coming of the Normans, Harold, son of Earl Godwin, sailed from Bristol with a force he had raised in Wessex, and won for himself and his king the land between the Wye and Usk, and the ancient town of Caerleon on its right bank. Two years later Caradoc ap Griffith, who had succeeded his father as prince of Gwent, recovered this territory, took many Saxons prisoners, and destroyed the hunting-box that Harold was building.<sup>2</sup>

After the Norman conquest of England, in 1066, the great March earldom of Hereford, which comprised all Gloucestershire beyond the Severn, was granted to William FitzOsborn, known as Earl William.

FitzOsborn entered into alliance with Caradoc ap Griffith, and with his aid won with the sword all the north-eastern part of what is now Monmouthshire. FitzOsborn died in 1071, and was succeeded by his son, Earl Roger, who in 1075 rebelled against the Conqueror and forfeited all his vast estates.<sup>3</sup>

In 1081 King William entered Wales with a large army, and marched as far as St. David's, doing homage to the patron saint of Wales, but taking homage from the princes

<sup>1</sup> Green, *Hist. of Eng. People*, i. 176 ; *Trans. B. and G. Arch. Soc.*, xv. 9. Cf. *Gesta Stephani*.

<sup>2</sup> Ang.-Sax. Chr., 1063 and 1065.

<sup>3</sup> Ang.-Sax. Chr., 1075 ; Florence of Wors., 1074.

of the land. Moreover, he freed from bondage many Englishmen who had been languishing in prison or working as slaves.<sup>1</sup>

In the great survey of 1086 (between the entries relating to Gloucester and Winchcombe) the district between the Wye and the Usk, and between Wentwood and the Severn, is treated as English territory.<sup>2</sup>

William Rufus, for several years after his accession in 1087, had no leisure to consolidate his predecessor's conquests in Wales; but in 1093 the whole of Glamorgan and the country west of it was invaded and occupied.

The usually accepted story is briefly as follows: A feud had arisen between Jestyn ap Gergan, the ruler of Glamorgan, and his more powerful neighbour, Rhys ap Tudor, lord of Carmarthen, Cardigan and Pembroke; and Jestyn, fearing the result of an appeal to arms, sent Einion ap Collwyn to Robert Fitz Haymon, imploring his aid. Fitz Haymon, who had received from the king Britric's manors in Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Dorset and other western counties, summoned the knights who owed him military service, and sailed across to Porth Kerry. Here he was joined by Jestyn, and in a battle which ensued, at Bryn y Beddan, Rhys was defeated and slain. The Normans received their promised subsidy at the "golden mile," between Cowbridge and Ewenny, and departed homeward. Now Jestyn had promised to Einion his daughter in marriage and the lordship of Senghennydd as his reward; but when the Norman had departed he broke his word. Hereupon Einion recalled Fitz Haymon, and in a fight which ensued Jestyn was slain, and subsequently his lands were divided amongst the victors. Einion, who was ever afterwards known as the traitor, received his promised guerdon. It requires some courage, as Mr. Freeman says, when one finds a tale so deeply implanted in the local associations of every corner of the district, to show how slight is the historical evidence on which it rests.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ang.-Sax. Chr., 1081; *Norman Conquest*, iv. 680.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Taylor's *Domesday Survey of Gloucestershire*, pp. 211-18.

<sup>3</sup> *Norman Conquest*, v. 110.

We know that to Fitz Haymon was given Britric's lordship of Tewkesbury and much more; that in some way he obtained possession of Cardiff, Cowbridge and Kenfig, and was able to make grants of conquered land in Glamorgan to the great abbey of Gloucester and to the abbey which he founded and endowed at Tewkesbury; but we are certain of very little besides. The chroniclers of both nations tell us that Rhys ap Tewdwr was killed by the French of Brecknock, which certainly suggests that Bernard de Newmarch, and not Fitz Haymon, was the victor.<sup>1</sup>

There is every reason for believing that the war between England and Wales in 1093 was waged by the king's authority, and that it was part of a pre-arranged, systematic conquest of Great Britain by the Normans.<sup>2</sup>

The chroniclers tell us that Rufus, early in the year 1093, was at Alveston, a royal demesne, eight miles from Bristol, on the old highway to Gloucester, and six miles from the "New Passage" over the Severn. He probably came there to superintend the naval and military preparations that were being made at Bristol for the invasion of South Wales. A severe illness, and the dispute about the archbishopric of Canterbury, prevented him from taking the leadership, and he came to Gloucester. This was the memorable occasion on which the crozier was thrust into the unwilling hands of Anselm.<sup>3</sup>

William was at Gloucester again in August, when Malcolm, King of Scotland, came there to visit him, and the English king rudely refused to speak with him.<sup>4</sup> In the meanwhile Rufus had probably joined the army, and, as his father had done in 1071, had reached the western sea at St. David's.

Giraldus Cambensis tells us that William Rufus, who had penetrated far into Wales, on seeing Ireland from the cliffs at

<sup>1</sup> Florence of Wors., 1093.

<sup>2</sup> *Norman Conquest*, v. 820; *Arch. Jour.*, xxviii. 298.

<sup>3</sup> Florence of Wors., 1093.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem.*

St. David's, said, " I will summon hither all the ships of my realm, and with them make a bridge to attack that country."<sup>1</sup>

But whatever may have been the intention of the king with regard to the expedition into South Wales, it is evident that the actual conquest of Glamorgan was effected under the leadership of Fitz Haymon, and that he and the knights who accompanied him reaped the fruits of victory, for we find them and their heirs in possession of large estates, and many of the villages, carved out of the original larger Welsh parishes, are called after the names of the intruders.<sup>2</sup>

But the Welsh inhabitants were neither exterminated nor enslaved. In the uplands many of the former owners retained their estates (very few did so in the lowlands), and some of the victors thought it wise to conciliate the dispossessed by marrying their daughters, and thus establish for their sons some kind of hereditary right to the lands they had won.<sup>3</sup>

As for the peasantry, they only exchanged their lords; and they were, I imagine, none the worse off because their new masters were Norman or English rather than Welsh.

A great deal which has been written about the " Honour of Gloucester " is untrustworthy. The monks of Tewkesbury, in their desire to magnify their founder, Robert Fitz Haymon, seem to have originated the fiction that Rufus granted it to him.

Leland, quoting from a Tewkesbury Abbey MS., tells us that, Britric being dead, Matilda, the queen, received the Honour of Gloucester; that Rufus, in process of time, gave it to Robert Fitz Haymon with all its rights, as Britric held it; and that Henry I., being unwilling to divide " the honour," married Mabel, the first-born of Fitz Haymon, to his own son, Robert, and gave him the " full honour."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Itin. Bish. Baldwin*, Hoare's edition, ii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Barry, Bonvileston, Flemingston, Colwinston, Coston, Gileston, Laleston.

<sup>3</sup> Pagan de Turbervill, who *obtained* Coyty, married the dispossessed Welsh heiress.

<sup>4</sup> Atkyns's *Gloucestershire*, p. 282, and *Trans. B. and G. Arch. Soc.*, xiv. 269.

There is no evidence that Britric had any connection with Gloucester, or that the Honour of Gloucester existed before the reign of Henry I., who constituted it as such, and endowed it with the confiscated estates of King Harold and Hugh de Montgomery, and the manors of Maci de Mauretania in Somerset, Gloucestershire, Wilts, Dorset and Essex, which had lapsed to the Crown through failure of heirs.

All this King Henry did to make his son a fitting spouse for the rich heiress of Robert Fitz Haymon.

It is somewhat strange that so little should be known of Fitz Haymon's antecedents. He held ten fees of the Honour of Evreux in Normandy, and was Seigneur of Thorigny and Creully; but there is no evidence that he was nearly related to the Conqueror.

He married Sybil, a daughter of Roger Montgomery, and it was at her instance that he expended part of Britric's inheritance in endowing the old foundation of Tewkesbury Abbey. He found it subject to Cranbourn, in Dorset, and he reversed their position, and made Cranbourn a cell to Tewkesbury. It is doubtful in what year the foundation-stone of the new abbey church was laid; but the monastery was so far advanced as to be ready for use in 1102, and the monks of Cranbourn took possession.

Robert did not live to see his magnificent church dedicated, for he was severely wounded at Tenchbrai in 1106, and died in March of the following year. His body lies at Tewkesbury in a chapel on the north side of the presbytery.

Tewkesbury received as its share of the conquest of Glamorgan the rectories of Llantwit, Llanblethian, Llantrisant, Penarth and Cardiff; lands at Cardiff, Llantwit, Landough and Lantrisen; a fishery in the Taff, and tithes of the lands of Fitz Haymon's knights. At the Dissolution in the fifteenth century, all the Glamorgan churches of which Tewkesbury held the patronage formed part of the endowment of the new Dean and Chapter of Gloucester, and they have

held them all until a short time ago, when exchanges were made with the Bishop of Llandaff.

To St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, Fitz Haymon gave the church and some of the lands belonging to St. Cadoc's monastic college at Llancarvan, and fifteen hides in Pennon. William de Londres, lord of Ogmores, gave them the priory he had founded at Ewenny, with all the lands and patronage in Glamorgan and Carmarthenshire belonging thereto.

It generally happened that when a church or manor became the property of a great Benedictine monastery like Gloucester it sank into oblivion: it had no history. The monks were excellent landlords, and knew full well how to defend their lands and tenants against the rapacity of other owners. The Welsh seem to have treated the monasteries and churches of Glamorgan with respect, and whilst they lost no opportunity of destroying the castle of an alien lord, and were always more or less in a state of feud amongst themselves, they gave but little annoyance to the secular and religious clergy. Margam, Neath and Ewenny were almost always at their mercy, if they had chosen to destroy them, but we only hear now and then of a raid on a barton (monastic farm) and the theft of a few cattle.

There are two names connected with Llancarvan of whom Gloucester as well as Glamorgan may be proud: Caradoc, the author of the *Brut y Tywysogion*, or *Chronicle of the Princes*—the basis of Welsh history; and Walter de Mapes. The interesting church, which has been described by Sir Stephen Glynn, contains a late twelfth-century chancel-arch of transitional character. This is said to have been built by Walter de Mapes, who gave his name to Walterston hard by.

Walter de Mapes was a favourite travelling companion of Henry II., Ambassador to Rome, Canon of three Cathedral churches, and Archdeacon of Oxford. We lay claim to him as a Gloucestershire man because he was Vicar of Westbury-on-Severn. It was the home he loved best of all, where he wrote several of his well-known works, and where he died. He was a

contemporary of Gerald de Barri (Giraldus Cambensis), and, like his brother archdeacon, he made his mark on the literature of the time, and was a bitter satirist of the corrupt clergy.

Those were the days when the Welsh were consoling themselves for the loss of prestige and freedom by the creation of a glorious but imaginary past. Fifty years earlier Geoffrey of Monmouth, Archdeacon of Llandaff, that daring novelist, had written his fabulous *History of the Britons*, and Wace and Gaimar had translated them into Norman-French.

At this very time Layamon, at Earnley, in Worcestershire, on the banks of the Severn, was expanding Wace's *Brut*, and turning it into some of the purest mediæval English we possess. So complete was the credence given to these myths, that Henry II. made a pilgrimage to Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury; and his little grandson—later on the unhappy victim of King John—was baptised by the name of the Celtic hero. The clergy, bitterly resenting the popularity of such tales of love and war, invented as a counteracting influence the story of the San Graal, the sacred dish which held the Blood of Christ, invisible to all but those who were pure of heart and life. Walter de Mapes, Court poet that he was as well as ecclesiastic and politician, swept the rival legends together, and created in the character of Sir Galahad the type of ideal knighthood *sans peur et sans reproche*.

Robert of Gloucester has told the story of King Henry's wooing on behalf of his son Robert, and it is well known to you all. This first Earl of Gloucester, and second lord of Cardiff, in whose veins were united the blood of the conqueror and the conquered (for his mother was a Welsh princess), built the castle of Bristol as well as the castle of Cardiff; and he founded St. James's Priory, the Norman nave of which still survives the wear and tear of ages, though the chancel, in which he was buried, was destroyed at the Dissolution.

There is one event in the life of this great soldier and statesman which I must not forget to mention, the imprisonment of Duke Robert of Normandy in Cardiff Castle, since it is

closely connected with the fortunes of my own cathedral. The eldest son of the Conqueror having been captured by his brother Henry at Tenchbrai, in 1106, languished in prison till his death. In 1126 he was removed from Devizes and placed in the charge of Earl Robert, who lodged him first at Bristol, and then at Cardiff. I think we may set aside all the stories of ill-treatment which have been handed down to us in so many forms. It is possible that he lost his eyesight in prison, but from natural causes not from fiendish and unnecessary cruelty. He died in 1134, and his body was brought to Gloucester to be laid in an altar tomb in front of the high altar, where a thirteenth-century wooden effigy of him now rests.

Henry I., anxious it may be to atone for the hardships of which he had been the cause, richly endowed St. Peter's Abbey with manors in order that prayers might be said for all time to come for the soul of his rival and his brother.

The present is the outcome of the past. Our forefathers sleep peacefully in the soil for which they contended so long and so valiantly ; but their attributes are the heritage of our race. The administrative gift of the Roman, the intellectual capacity and fervid eloquence of the Celt, the Saxon love of freedom, the hardihood of the seafaring Dane, the military genius of the Norman are all combined in the characteristics of the Briton, who has built up for himself and his descendants the greatest empire that the world has ever seen.

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