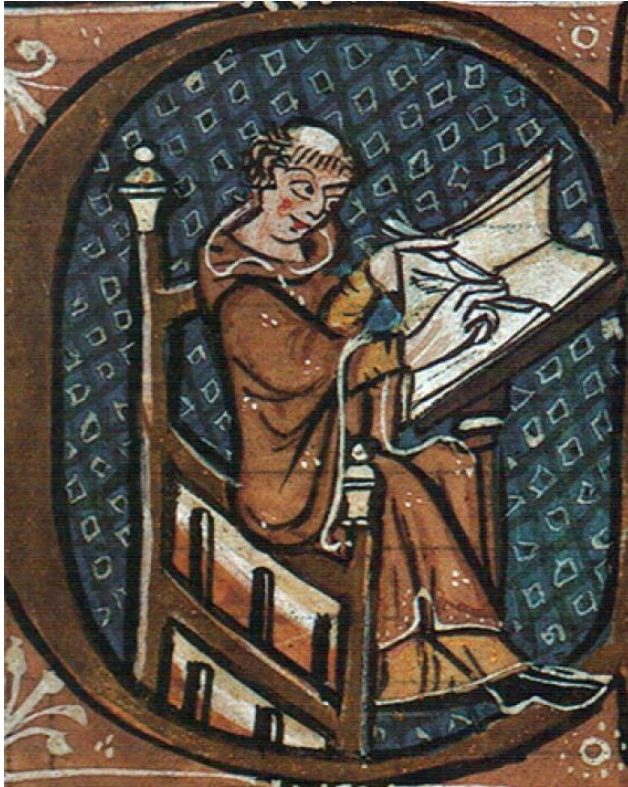


MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

GERALD OF WALES



https://chester.shoutwiki.com/wiki/Gerald_of_Wales

“I am descended from the Princes of Wales and the Barons of the March.... and I hate to see injustice in either nation.”

Gerald of Wales was also called Gerald de Barry, after his Norman father, Gerallt Cymro by Welsh people, Giraldus Cambrensis, by people who, like him, spoke Latin. His father was a Norman and his mother Angharad was the daughter of Princess Nest and her husband, the Norman, Gerald of Windsor. So Gerald was partly-Welsh and partly Norman.

When he was about ten years old, Gerald's family sent him to study at the Benedictine Abbey in Gloucester (today's Gloucester Cathedral is the Abbey church). He learned Latin and logic and rhetoric – which helped him persuade people of his ideas. When he was about 15 he went to Paris to study.

When he came back, he went to work for the King of England, King Henry II. At this time, he started travelling round Wales, and then Ireland, and wrote his most famous books about these travels.

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

His tour of Wales in 1188 was to help Gerald's the Archbishop of Canterbury, Baldwin, recruit men to fight in the Third Crusade, to capture Jerusalem for the Roman Catholic church from the Kurdish sultan who had taken it over..

Gerald's wanted to be bishop of St. David's like his uncle had been, and to make the Welsh church free of the English one of Canterbury. He never did become bishop of St David's. He wrote seventeen books, and his stories of travelling in Wales and Ireland give us a very good picture of life in those countries, with funny stories about local people.

When he arrived in Margam in March 1188, he was guided along the shore towards Swansea by Prince Morgan ap Caradog, one of the Princes of Afan. The weather must have been bad, because he says that "the sea rose up much higher than usual... so that ...beast of all kinds were drowned in many places, and quite a few people were also swept away".



Gerald presenting his book to King Henry II
<https://bestiary.ca/prisources/psdetail1194.htm>

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD



The River Neath today. John Evans / Wikimedia Commons

It was hard, but they got across the River Afan, but the River Neath was worse again

“because of its dangerous quicksands, which suddenly suck down everything placed upon them. One of our packhorses (the only possessed of the writer of these lines) was trotting along the lower road near the sea, and although it as in the middle of a group of others, it alone was nearly plunged into the abyss. Eventually it was pulled out, with great difficulty and after much hard and dangerous work by the horse-boys,

though not without damage to my books and belongings. Although we had Morgan, the Prince of those parts”, as our guide, we only reached the river after suffering many perils, and even more falls.”

After almost being sucked down by the sinking sands, one of the monks with Gerald said “It’s a hard country, this!” Not at all, said the other, “I think it is far too soft.”

After Gerald trying for many years to become Bishop of St David’s, someone else was appointed. Even then Gerald did his best to make sure that the ancient rights of St. Davids were kept. Apart from a pilgrimage to Rome in 1205, he spent the rest of his life writing books. He died in 1223 and was buried at his beloved St. Davids.

The ‘guide’ Gerald describes as Morgan ‘the Prince of those parts’ was Morgan Caradog, Prince of Afan, who was his cousin.

Text adapted from:

A Mirror of Medieval Wales: Gerald of Wales and his Journey of 1188 Cadw

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Giraldus-Cambrensis>