

# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD MATTHEW PARIS

**Why do we want to know about Matthew Paris?**

**It is his description, and picture, that shows a Welsh person killing Herbert FitzMatthew in a battle. We don't know where this took place, but it might have been on or near Mynydd Dinas.**

**Why did he write about this?**



Self-portrait of Matthew Paris from the original manuscript of his *Historia Anglorum* (London, British Library, MS Royal 14.C.VII, folio 6r)  
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Matthew Paris was an English Benedictine monk, chronicler, artist in illuminated manuscripts, and cartographer (map-maker), who was based at St Albans Abbey in Hertfordshire.

He was also known as Matthew of Paris. This may have been because he was educated in Paris, as he was English by birth.

He wrote books about history, in the days when all books were written by hand.

He drew and painted pictures to show the events in these books, and some of these still exist today, 700 years later. He wrote some books in Latin, others in Anglo-Norman or French verse.

# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

He lived from about 1200 – 1259 during the reign of the English king Henry III and the Welsh ruler Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, also called Llywelyn the Last in English, or Llywelyn Ein Llyw Olaf in Welsh.

Historians like his writing, partly because he used letters and chats with King Henry III and others. The king knew that Paris was writing a history, and wanted it to be as exact as possible.

In 1257, when he visited St Albans Abbey, Henry talked to him all day and night "and guided my pen," says Paris, "with much goodwill and diligence."

Matthew Paris expressed his own opinion about kings, and sometimes changed his mind.

Here is a picture of King Henry III of England. We don't have a picture of Prince Llywelyn. Why do you think this might be?



By Anonymous - Cotton Vitellius A. XIII, Public Domain,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4930571>



# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

Matthew Paris was a good artist, although maybe not trained. Artists of his time were usually anonymous, so we know more about him than other English illuminators of the period.

He usually put the picture, which was tinted, at the top of the page, like this one of Offa of Mercia in a history book.



Offa of Mercia from Matthew Paris's tract on St. Alban. It is lopsided because it's been photographed straight from the book.  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/14/Matthew\\_Paris\\_Offa\\_horseback.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/14/Matthew_Paris_Offa_horseback.jpg)



Richard Marshal unhorses Baldwin Guines at a skirmish before the Battle of Monmouth in 1233. From the *Historia Major* of Matthew Paris, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library, vol 2, p. 85. MS 16, fol. 88r  
Wikimedia Commons

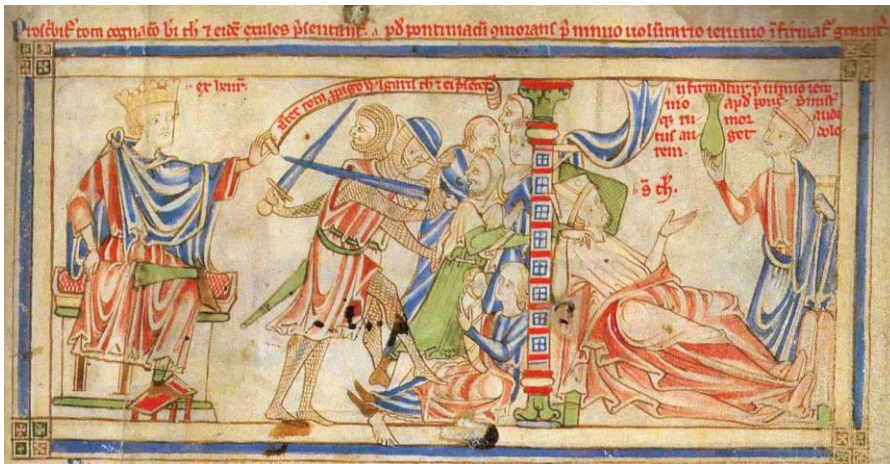
But sometimes he popped them into the margins, like a bit of doodling. His self-portrait on the first page is one of these sketches.

This sketch of people fighting is also on the edge of a page.

# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

Matthew Paris's also drew maps, four of Britain, as people saw it then.

He also drew maps of pilgrim routes to Rome; he did these a bit like a comic strip of the pilgrim's journey – something no one else ever did.



By Matthew Paris - The Becket Leaves (La vie de Saint Thomas de Cantorbéry), C.J.Birkett's Becket Leaves website on Angelfire: webpage, file, Public Domain,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31883931>



The most developed of Matthew Paris's four maps of Britain Abbreviatio chronicorum (Epitome of Chronicles), BL Cotton MS Claudius D VI, fol. 12v British Library  
Public Domain



# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

Even today naturalists think he was quite a good wildlife illustrator, and we can learn from him of wildlife in England at the time.

He described the arrival of the Common Crossbill in 1254, now widespread throughout Britain.



Photograph by Hugh Venables.  
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Elephant of Louis IX of France, a present to Henry III of England.  
Illustration from the *Chronica Majora* II, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge  
Public Domain

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Painting by Matthew Paris 1245  
Matthaei Paris Chronica Maiora II, Parker Library, Corpus Christi College,  
Cambridge. <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/qt808nj0703>  
P376

But the picture that we are interested in is the one of the Norman soldier in battle with the Welsh in Afan Wallia.

What exactly is going on?

Here is a translation to English of Matthew Paris' description of this event:

*"...When the brave English knights on the borders came to oppose them... the Welsh, as was their custom, flew to the crags and inaccessible parts of the mountains, to lie in ambush for their passing enemies. From the summits of rocks they hurled stones and weapons, wounding many of the English; amongst others one of the English nobles, named Herbert Fitz-Matthew, was overwhelmed by a mass of rock, which broke his neck and crushed him to death."*

Look at the difference in the way the two soldiers are dressed. Who would stand a better chance of surviving, do you think?

Text adapted from

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew\\_Paris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Paris) Matthew Paris's English History from the year 1235 to 1273 Translated from the Latin by the Rev J.A Giles D.C.L London Enry G Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden 1853 at <https://archive.org/details/matthewparisseng03pari> More examples of his art work can be seen at: <https://thehistoryofengland.co.uk/resource/drawings-of-matthew-paris/>

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