

# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

## PRINCES OF AFAN / TYWYSOGION AFAN

Princes of Afan were a royal Welsh house who had ruled over the kingdom of Glamorgan, or Morgannwg in Welsh, before the Normans invaded Britain in 1066.

The Normans killed the Saxon king Harold in the Battle of Hastings, and gradually took over all of England. Then they started on Wales.



The Normans invading England in 1066  
"The Bayeux Tapestry," World History Commons



King Hywel Dda  
National Library of Wales, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

The Welsh Princes lost a lot of land all over Wales to the Norman invaders, but for many years they tried to hold on to as much as they could, and keep the old ways. This included the Laws of Hywel Dda, and different ways of passing on land to their heirs.

# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

But the Normans took the land to the east of their kingdom, up to, and including, Margam. There they established an abbey, with Cistercian monks.



Mick Lobb / Margam Abbey Ruins. Wikimedia Commons

They invaded the Neath Valley, and built a motte and bailey in Neath, and later a stone castle, which still stands today in the middle of the town. They also set up an abbey in Neath, which you can visit, called Neath Abbey.



Photo by Chris Shaw, CC BY-SA 2.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9169749>

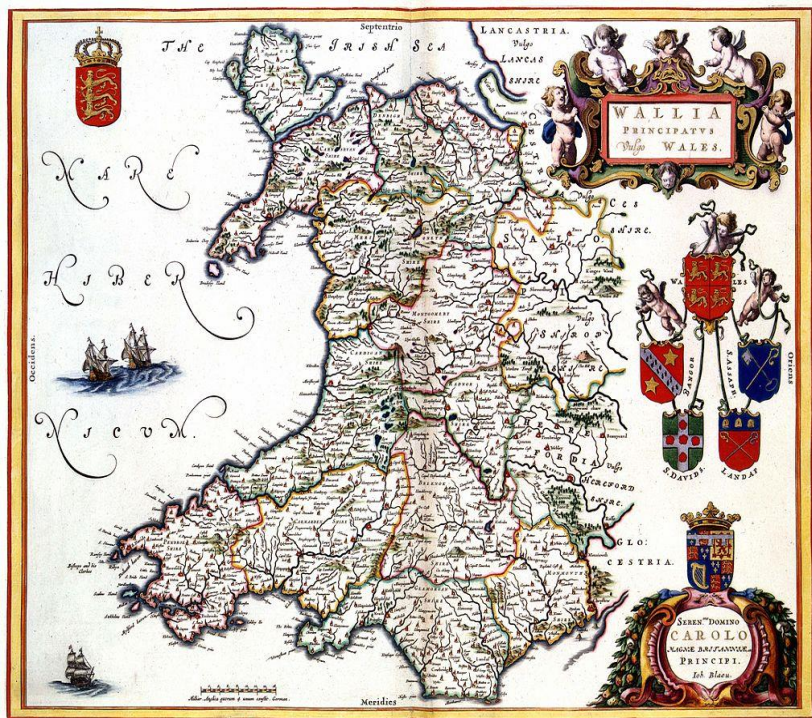


By Ajrhobby - en.wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5092604>



# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

The Normans held Swansea, Neath, Kenfig, Llangynwyd and Newcastle in Bridgend. But for reasons we can only guess at, the Princes of Afan held their land from the sea, up the Afan Valley, as far as Hirwaun, from the Normans, for over 200 years. This area was called Afan Wallia. The land around was called Tir Iarll.



By Joan Blaeu - collections of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, National Library of the Netherlands., Public Domain,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=41671507>

## SO WHO WERE THE LORDS – OR PRINCES – OF AFAN?

They were the descendants of Iestyn ap Gwrgan, or Gwrgant, who was King of Glamorgan before the Normans defeated him and took most of his land.

As there were three Lords, or Princes, of Afan, called Morgan and two called Leision, it can get confusing. Fortunately, they all have nicknames, so we can use those to stop ourselves from mixing them up.

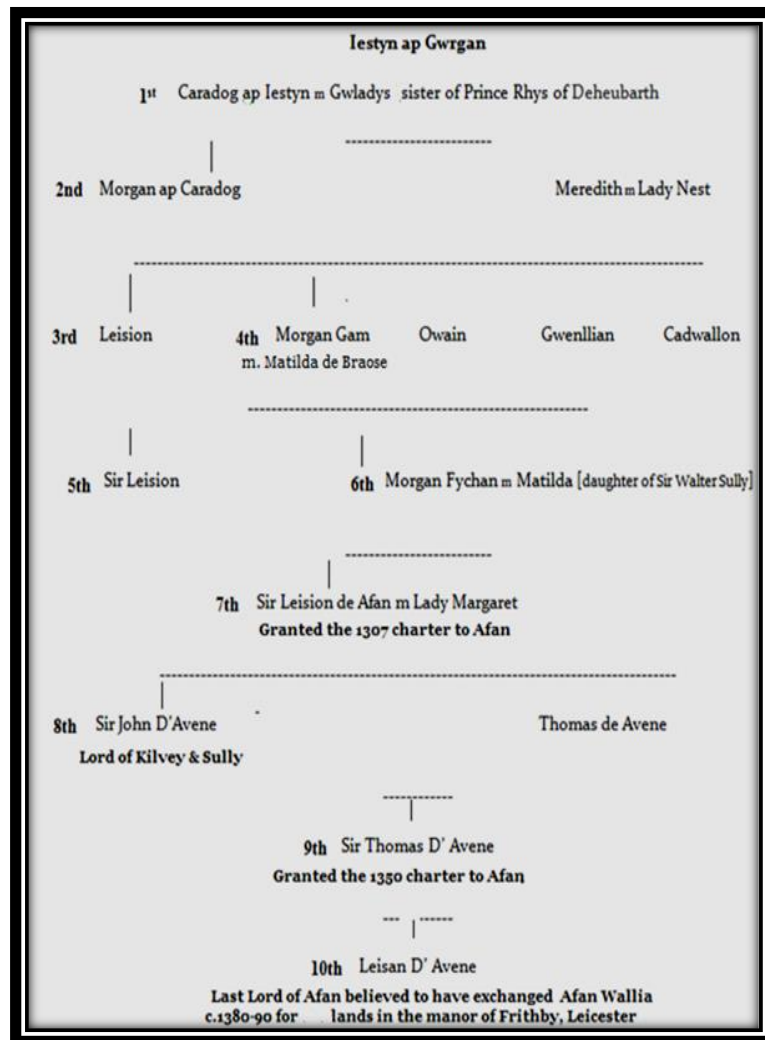
Welsh people used the names of their father or mother, so Morgan ap Caradog is Morgan, son of Caradog.

Morgan Gam suggests that this Morgan had a disability. Morgan Fychan means either that he was small, or that he was the younger Morgan, being Morgan Gam's son.



The Battle for Lincoln 1218 by Matthew Paris [Matthew Paris](#) - [2] from [Matthew Paris](#) (1240–1253), *Chronica Majora*, volume II, folio 51v (55v), [OCLC 9980090](#). Public domain.

# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD



Ancestral Line showing the Ten Princes of Afan Wallia  
by Tim Rees

During the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries Afan Wallia the Princes of Afan raided and resisted the Normans, who kept on trying to take the land from them, and continued to attack the Norman towns.

The land held by the Princes of Afan had two important rivers: the River Afan and the River Nedd. Both of these were very difficult to cross, especially in winter. The River Nedd had dangerous quicksands, and people used a ferry boat to get across to Swansea.



John Lydgate's Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund, England (Bury St Edmunds?), 1461-c. 1475, Yates Thompson 47, f. 97 British Library

This was in Llansawel, which we also know as Briton Ferry. Gerald of Wales nearly lost a horse in the quicksands, and the books and other things the horse was carrying.



# MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

The Princes of Afan and all their people knew how to cross the dangerous land around the rivers, so everyone relied on them to guide them across. Perhaps it was partly this that gave them the power to hold on to their land, and to gain the respect of the Normans. At the same time, they also helped to build Margam Abbey, and when they died, some of the family were buried there.



Photograph: John Lord / Ruins of Margam Abbey. Wikimedia Commons

After many years their sons and daughters also married into Norman families, and gradually built up a peaceful land.



Miniature from the Codex Manesse, Public Domain.

Text adapted from:

[https://www.owain-glyndwr.wales/word\\_web\\_pages/TheLordsOfAfan.htm](https://www.owain-glyndwr.wales/word_web_pages/TheLordsOfAfan.htm)  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Neath\\_Castle#/media/File:NeathCastleRemains.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Neath_Castle#/media/File:NeathCastleRemains.jpg)  
<https://www.visitwales.com/attraction/historic-site/neath-abbey-and-gatehouse-cadw-1600740>  
<https://www.dhi.ac.uk/normans/matthewparis.html>  
<https://worldhistorycommons.org/bayeux-tapestry> [accessed August 21, 2024]  
<https://www.facebook.com/gragabidwal/posts/the-life-and-times-of-morgan-ap-morgan-ap-caradoc-aka-morgan-gam-the-4th-lord-of-905194343226314/>  
<https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-means-of-transportation-during-medieval-times>