

DAFYDD ap LLYWELYN (died 1246), prince

Name: Dafydd ap Llywelyn
Date of death: 1246
Spouse: Isabella de Braose
Parent: Joan
Parent: Llywelyn ap Iorwerth
Gender: Male
Occupation: prince
Area of activity: Military; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Royalty and Society
Author: John Edward Lloyd

The only son of **Llywelyn ap Iorwerth** by his wife **Joan**, natural daughter of king John. As such, he was regarded from his birth, about 1208, as the heir to the strong principality which his father was building up. As early as 1220, the king gave his sanction to the assumption and took the prince and his mother under the protection of the Crown. In 1222, the support of Honorius III was added; four years later the pope instructed the bishops of Bangor, S. Asaph, and S. Davids to see that the oath of fealty to Dafydd, taken by the magnates of Wales at the king's command was being strictly observed. The attainment of majority was marked in 1229 by the rendering of homage to the Crown; provision was made for an annual grant of £40 from the Exchequer, pending the receipt of an equivalent in land. In this year, Dafydd confirmed his father's donation to the priory of Ynys Lannog, better known as Penmon. In 1230, a marriage was afoot between him and Isabella, eldest daughter of **William de Breos**, a powerful baron of the march. The tragedy of that year, when **William** was hanged by **Llywelyn's** men, did not break off the match; it was carried through, and, as part of the bargain, Builth, hitherto a **Breos** lordship, was added to the broad lands under **Llywelyn's** control.

The purpose of this edifice of security is to be found in the fact that Dafydd had a formidable rival. **Gruffydd** was an elder son of **Llywelyn** and, though born out of wedlock, was not for this reason debarred by Welsh law from the succession. He was popular and had the advantage of a mother with Welsh connections. His father was not unwilling to provide for him, but, as **Llywelyn** grew older and Dafydd took the reins, less room was allowed for his activities. On 19 October 1238 all the lesser princes of Wales swore fealty at Strata Florida to the designated heir, who forthwith deprived **Gruffydd** of his extensive holding in southern Powys and reduced him to the cantref of Llŷn. Next year there was a colloquy between the supporters of the two brothers; Dafydd took a treacherous advantage of the occasion to seize **Gruffydd** and his son **Owain**, who were imprisoned in Cricieth castle.

Thus, when **Llywelyn** died on 11 April 1240 there was no obstacle to the succession of Dafydd. He had the powerful support of the late prince's chief counsellor, **Ednyfed Fychan**, of Eionon Fychan, one of **Llywelyn's** regular envoys, and of the bishop of St Asaph. On 15 May, at a great assembly at Gloucester, the king met his nephew, knighted him, received his homage for Gwynedd, and set on his head the 'talaith,' or diadem, which was the token of princely dignity. But this did not entitle him to hold the outlying lands which his father had acquired during his victorious career. Their destination, it was declared, was to be settled by arbitration.

Loth to lose anything he could retain, Dafydd now resorted to delaying tactics, until, in the summer of 1241, Henry could wait no longer and led an expedition into North Wales. His progress was unexpectedly easy; an abnormal drought removed many of the usual obstacles, and the prince was forced to agree, at Gwern Eigron, near S. Asaph, on 29 August, to a peace which required him to resign all claim to the territories in dispute, to surrender his prisoners, **Gruffydd** and **Owain**, and also to give up Ellesmere, Tegeingl, and further, when the peace was confirmed in London in October, the stronghold of Degannwy.

The position now was that while the king had no desire to oppose **Gruffydd** to Dafydd he could do so when he pleased - an excellent guarantee for the good behaviour of his nephew. Peace was thus maintained, until an untoward incident on 1 March 1244 radically altered the situation. **Gruffydd** broke his neck in seeking to escape from the Tower. At once Dafydd was freed from his anxieties and began to reopen the conflict. He won the support of nearly all the Welsh princes (Powys, as usual, standing aloof), and was emboldened to submit his case, with some success, to Innocent IV, pleading that his parents had placed him under the special protection of the Holy See. Henry was slow to take up the challenge, misled, it may be, by the easy victory of 1241. But, as it became evident that the Welsh were making headway, recapturing Mold, for instance, in the spring of 1245, he was stirred into action and appeared at Degannwy with a large force in the late summer of that year. Dafydd and his men offered a vigorous and successful resistance, so that in a couple of months the royal host had to withdraw, with little to show for their pains. The issue was still in doubt when, on 25 February 1246, it was suddenly determined by the death of the prince at his manor of Aber. He was buried with his father and brother in the abbey of Aberconwy, and, as he left no child, the structure set up by **Llywelyn** collapsed and the triumph of the Crown was complete. His widow returned to England; she was allotted Haverford later, out of her mother's portion of the great Marshal inheritance, but did not long enjoy it, for by February 1248 she was dead.

Author

Sir **John Edward Lloyd**, (1861 - 1947)

Sources

J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*(London 1911), 656, 665, 671, 687, 692-706

Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, i, 335. For Isabella's end, see *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 21 April 1246, 15 February 1248

Calendar of Fine Rolls, 21 July 1246

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Dafydd ap Llywelyn](#)

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