

Noë, King of Powys.

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It is generally supposed that nothing definite is known of the line of princes of Brecknock in the seventh and eighth centuries, except from the scanty notices in the *Liber Landavensis* and in Asser's *Life of Alfred*. This attitude is based on the supposition that the line of Brecknock has been confused with the line of Dyfed in the only manuscript of any historical value which attempts to supply this information—namely Jesus College MS. 3 (once 20).¹

It is the aim of this paper to show that this is not the case, and that the true line of princes can be discovered with a minimum of alteration of the texts as they have come down to us.

Apparently there is no pedigree of the princes of Brecknock in Harl. MS. 3859², but our argument turns on the interpretation of a certain passage in this manuscript—namely Pedigree XV. This follows after two notices of princes of Dyfed, which leads us to suppose that it is probably connected in some way with the line of Dyfed. The notice is as follows :

[G]ripiud. Teudos
caten. Tres sunt
filii nougoy.

¹ Edited in *Y Cymroddor*, viii (1887), pp. 83-90; for which the numbers and pages are quoted.

² Edited in *Y Cymroddor*, ix (1888), pp. 169-183; for which the numbers and pages are quoted.

et sanant elized.
filia illorum. mater erat
regis pouis.

The generally accepted¹ interpretation of these words is that given by Phillimore in his notes (5) and (6) to the pedigree in *Y Cymmrodor*, ix (1888), p. 175. He requires that the position of the word *elized* should be altered, and that *illorum* be changed to *illius*, thus :

Tres sunt filii nougoy
et sanant filia *illius*
mater erat elized regis pouis.

Nougoy is then taken to be the Nougoy (Noë) ab Arthur who appears as a king of Dyfed in the Pedigree No. II of the same work, and in the *Liber Landavensis*; while Elized is supposed to be the Elized king of Powys whose pedigree is given in No. XXVII and on the Valle Crucis Pillar. The difficulty that Cathen is a *grandson* and not a *son* of Nougoy in Pedigree II is not solved, but presumably the intermediate name *Cloten* is regarded as a “doublet” of Cathen, and dismissed as a mistake in the pedigree.

This solution is chronologically satisfactory and also has a certain simplicity in its favour, but it requires two unnecessary alterations of the text, and suggests no solution to certain difficulties that will be mentioned later.

The corresponding pedigrees in Jesus College MS. 3 clearly come from a different though related source. As far as the line of Dyfed is concerned, it agrees with Harl. MS. 3859 in inserting a name between Cathen and Noë, which in this case is corrupted to Eleothen (Pedigree XII). There is also a passage in the Jesus College MS. of the same nature as Pedigree XV in the Harl. MS., but in this case it is inserted in such a way as to leave no doubt

¹ e.g. J. E. Lloyd, *History of Wales*, p. 244.

that it was intended to refer to princes of Brecknock. Unfortunately the editing in *Y Cymroddor* does not indicate the beginning and ending of the lines in the manuscript, but the passage is printed as follows :

[VIII]—Tewdwr. M. Griffri. M. Elisse. M. thewdwr. M. Gruffud. Gruffud. a thewdos. a cathen. Meibyon y vrenhin powys. o sanant *verch* elisse *y* mam. Elisse. *verch* neune hen mab tewdwr. M. rein. M. Cadwgawn. M. Caden. M. Keindrec. Merch. ruallawn. M. Idwallawn. M. Llowarch. M. Rigeneu. M. Rein dremrud. M. brachan.

There is clearly some corruption here, for we know that Elisse was a man's name, whereas here he is called in one place a *daughter*. The correct reading is not clear at first sight, but there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the first two sentences, for they contain no obvious mistake. They say definitely that Gruffydd, Tewdws and Cathen were the sons of the *king of Powys* by Sanan daughter of Elise.

This immediately suggests that the “Harleian” version is wrong only in the *order* of the words and not in the words themselves. *Regis pouis*, not *elized*, are the words that have been “crowded out”, as we might suspect since they come after the verb *erat*. They should come after *nougoj*, and *filia* should be before *elized*,¹ thus :

.... tres sunt filii nougoj regis pouis,
et sanant filia elized illorum mater erat.

This is exactly the meaning of the Jesus College MS. version. Unfortunately, however, the corruption which made Elisse into a woman has also brought *Neuue hen* (*nougoj*, Noë) out of position, for we now see from the corrected “Harleian” version that it should be before *y vrenhin powys*.

The corrected text of this manuscript should therefore be :

¹ But see note 1 on next page (56).

.... Meibyon nenuen y vrenhin powys
o sanant *verch* elisse y mam.
Elisse mab tewdwr.

It will be seen that the mistakes in the two versions were very similar. In one case *regis pouis* got crowded out and put at the end, while in the other *neue hen* got crowded out and similarly put at the end. It looks as if the archetype of the two pedigrees ran somewhat as follows:

.... Tres sunt filii nougoy (sic)
et sanant filia elized
illorum mater erat. regis pouis

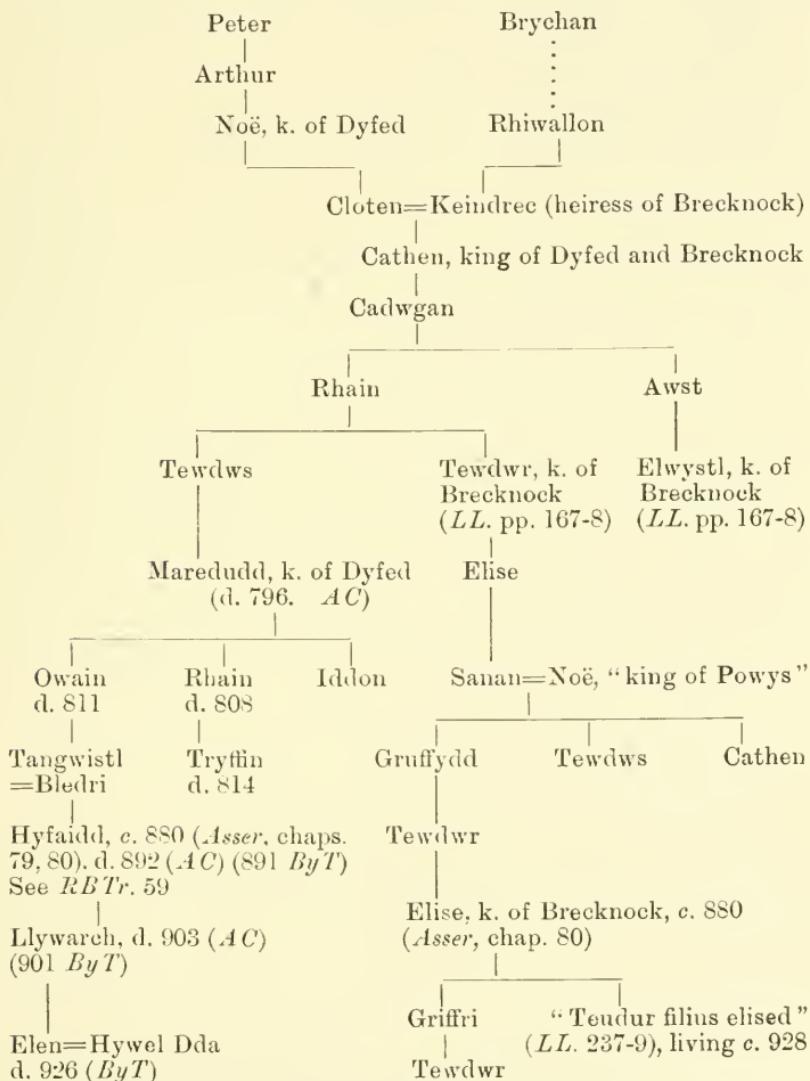
It looks, in fact, as if someone had made a note in the margin to the effect that Nougoy was king of Powys. The arrow was omitted by the scribe of Harl. MS. 3859, and he wrote *regis pouis* at the end of the sentence. But the scribe of Jesus College MS. 3 supposed the arrow to mean that the words should be interchanged, so that *vrenhin powys* appeared in its right place, but *neuuue hen* was placed at the end. Possibly, in the original manuscript, *filia* came after *elized*, and this would be at the root of the mistake which led him to suppose that Elized was the daughter of someone.¹

In the continuation of the Brecknock pedigree in the Jesus College MS. we have three names which correspond exactly to three names in the Dyfed pedigree, and then

¹ The order of words, *Elized filia for daughter of Elized* would have been legitimate, and conventional, if "Elized" had been declinable. The order of these two words in Harl. MS. 3859 may easily be those of the original compiler, for it is quite understandable that he did not notice the ambiguity introduced by not declining the Proper name. A half-hearted attempt to clear up the difficulty is made by Mr. G. P. Jones in *Arch. Camb.* (1926), pp. 367-9.

It is curious to note that Geoffrey of Monmouth mentions "Grifud Mapnogoid" as one of the princes who were present at Arthur's coronation! (Book 9, chapter 12.)

the line continues through a female to Brychan. This is generally taken to be a “confusion with the line of Dyfed”,¹ but there seems to be no reason whatever why it should not be correct. If we take this part of the pedigree as it stands we have the following relationships:



¹ e.g., J. E. Lloyd's *History of Wales*, p. 271 and note 239.

The authorities are :

Harl. MS. 3859—Pedigrees I, II, XIII, XIV, XV.

(JC) *Jesus College MS. 3*—Pedigree VIII.

(AC) *Annales Cambriae* (*Harl. MS. 3859*) for the years 796, 808, 811, 814, 892, 903.

(ByT) *Brut y Tywysogion* for the years 891, 901, 902, 926.

(RBTr) *Triads from the Red Book of Hergest*—No. 59 (*Y Cymmrodor*, iii (1880), p. 61).

Asser's *Life of Alfred*¹—chapters 79, 80.

(LL) *Liber Landavensis*²—pp. 167-8, 237-9.

The pedigree satisfies the requirements of chronology, and also fits in with certain historical data that appear elsewhere. Apparently Cathen ab Cloten inherited both the kingdoms of Dyfed and Brecknock. They remained under one rule until the time of Rhain ab Cadwgan. But the combined kingdoms were unwieldy, and it was during his reign that Seisyll king of Ceredigion conquered the district of Ystrad Tywi, thus dividing the kingdom into two again.³ It was only natural that after the death of Rhain, the two portions of his kingdom should be ruled over independently by his two sons—Tewdws in Dyfed, and Tewdwr in Brycheiniog.⁴ Unfortunately the reference to the latter in the *Liber Landavensis* gives no clue as to his date, and the only check on the chronology of

¹ Edited by W. H. Stevenson, Oxford, 1904.

² Edited by J. Rhys and J. G. Evans. Oxford, 1893.

³ See J. E. Lloyd's *History of Wales*, pp. 262, 274, 281.

It is interesting to note that Seisyll, Rhun (Rhain), and Morgan of Morganwg are mentioned as contemporaries in the life of Padarn (*Lives of the Cambro-British Saints*, ed. by W. J. Rees for the Welsh MSS. Society, pp. 196-7).

⁴ The form Tewdwr for the king of Brecknock is confirmed by the *Liber Landavensis*, pp. 167-8. Tewdws is also invariably given as the name of the king of Dyfed. It is curious, however, that in Jesus College MS. 3, pedigree xii, Tewdws of Dyfed is said to be "o gantref teudos", which was certainly in Brycheiniog. This points to the

the Brecknock line is provided by Asser's *Life of Alfred* where *Helised filius Teudubr* is mentioned in chapter 80 as contemporary with the sons of Rhodri Mawr, that is between about 880 and 900. This date suits our theory perfectly, for Elise ab Tewdwr appears in the same generation as Llywarch, king of Dyfed, who died in about 904.

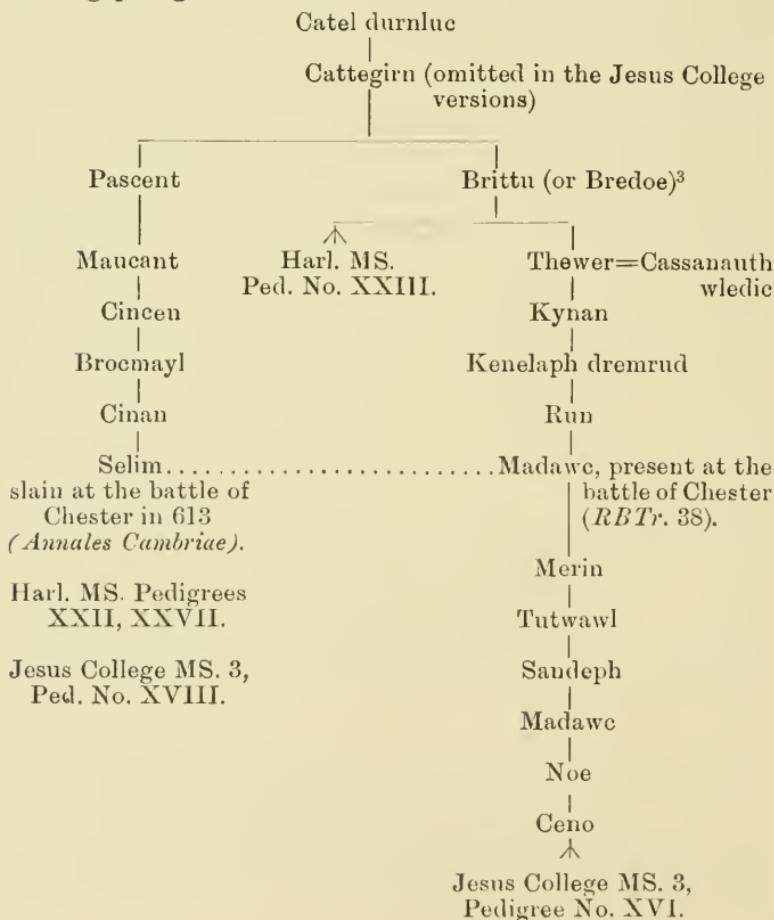
Our solution also explains one or two minor difficulties that have been pointed out in the past; and especially it explains why there is no line of Brecknock princes included among the pedigrees in Harl. MS. 3859. The line was, in fact, the same as the line of Dyfed. Where the lines diverge they are duly entered in Pedigree XV. This pedigree thus appears with numbers XIII and XIV as a group all referring to about the same date, and to two sister kingdoms, genealogically connected. Our solution also confirms the traditional date for Brychan.

It may be remarked at this point that our interpretation of the Jesus College MS. is not new, for it is given in substance by Theophilus Jones in his *History of the County of Brecknock*, 1805 edition, vol. 1, appendix v, p. 6; and also occurs partly in the Golden Grove MSS., book ii, p. 3 (now in the Public Record Office).

Finally we have to discover who was this Noë, king of Powys. No one of this name appears in the usual lists of kings of Powys, but he would appear to have lived towards the end of the eighth century, and therefore would be a contemporary of Cadell, the father of that Cyngen who died at Rome in 854 (*Annales Cambriae*). Possibly he

possibility that Tewdws and Tewdwr were one and the same person, who still attempted to rule over the separated kingdoms. The testimony of the *Liber Landavensis* would then point to Tewdwr as the correct spelling of the name, and the J.C. gloss would have to be regarded as a case of false etymology.

claimed the throne after the failure of the line of Powys.¹ But Powys was a large district, and it is more probable that he reigned over another part of Powys further to the south, and adjoining Brecknock.² This supposition is favoured by a pedigree (No. XVI) in the Jesus College MS., which records an otherwise unknown line of kings, among whom there is a Noë. That the line was connected with Powys is suggested by the fact that it is traced to Cadell Ddyrnllug. Owing to the lack of information, this pedigree cannot be accurately dated, but there is sufficient evidence to date it well enough for our purpose. The following pedigree will make this clear.



A remarkable confirmation, both of the dating and of the placing of this pedigree is the fact that Madawe ab Run is mentioned in Triad 38 in the *Red Book of Hergest*⁴ as being present at the battle of Chester,⁵ and it will be observed that he appears in the same generation as Selim ab Cinan, who was slain at the same battle. If we take about 600 for the date of this generation, and count three generations to a century, we have about 770 for the date of Noë. This is just about the date required in our former pedigree, and enables us to identify the two with some confidence. If we make this identification we must conclude that Ceno ab Noë was probably not the son of Sanan, and so had no title to the kingdom of Brecknock.

This solution of the problem of the pedigree of the princes of Brecknock is so simple, and at the same time hangs together so well, that one cannot help feeling its inherent probability. We have only needed to alter the *position* of a phrase of two words in the Harleian MS. This involves changing the *position* of one word in the Jesus College MS. The rest follows without any difficulty. Besides filling a gap in our knowledge, it explains the apparent omission of a pedigree in the Harleian MS., and supplies a *raison d'être* for a pedigree in the Jesus College MS. Finally, it helps to stiffen the framework of the early Welsh pedigrees, which are indeed the backbone of our knowledge of the history of this period.

¹ Supposing, as is generally done, that the line did fail. See J. E. Lloyd, *History of Wales*, p. 244.

² Perhaps part of the district later known as "Rhwng Gwy a Hafren". Buellt and Gwerthrynyon had a dynasty of their own so that we may tentatively fix on Maelienydd or Elfael.

³ This is the name that occurs in later times as Brydw. See *Arch. Camb.* for 1925, p. 301, and *Y Cymroddor*, vol. xxi (1908), p. 47.

⁴ *Y Cymroddor*, iii (1880), p. 58.

⁵ Wade-Evans suggests 617 as the true date for this battle. See *Arch. Camb.* for 1918, p. 86.