

ER CLOD MYNYW
IN PRAISE OF MENEVIA

Meddyliau ar Esgobaeth Mynyw
(Reflections on the Diocese of Menevia)

RHAGYMADRODD/ PREFACE

Unfortunately, this Essay has been very rushed and so I apologise for its many deficiencies. There was not enough time to properly revise and correct the text and I hope the reader will excuse any repetitions in the text or any unfortunate faux pas. I must confess that in the haste to put this Essay together there are undoubtedly examples of plagiarism and I acknowledge my complete dependence on the work of others and direct you to the books in the Bibliography (and especially those marked with an asterisk). In all departments (church history, theology, canon law, etc.) I am an amateur and, no doubt, there will be some inaccuracies in the text and if there had been more time I would have constructed the Essay differently. It was rather to be hoped that we might have had a year or so to pray about and put together a convincing defence of our beloved and ancient Diocese of Menevia but, in fact, we have been given only three weeks in which to defend a history that stretches back over one and a half thousand years!

I wish to record my grateful thanks to Sandra Davies who has typed up this Essay from an almost illegible handwritten text who, when I was not able to read my own handwriting, somehow managed to interpret my "doctor's handwriting". Thank you, Sandra. Diolch yn fawr iawn am dy garedigrwydd ac amser haelionus yn teipio llawysgrif anodd iawn i ddarllen!

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CYFLWYNIAD/ INTRODUCTION:

On Thursday 12th September 2019, Archbishop George Stack, Apostolic Administrator for the Diocese of Menevia, announced at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Diocesan clergy gathered at St. Mary's Church, Carmarthen, that the Holy See had instructed him, in his capacity as Apostolic Administrator, to explore the possibility of a "union" between the Archdiocese of Cardiff and the Diocese of Menevia, and to consult with the clergy of the Diocese of Menevia with a view to reporting back to the Papal Nuncio/Holy See by the end of December 2019.

Archbishop George suggested therefore that there were three possible outcomes of this consultation:

(i) to continue as before with no union of the Archdiocese and Diocese but to appoint a new Bishop of Menevia in succession to Bishop Tom Burns;

(ii) the creation of a "joint Diocese" with the Archdiocese of Cardiff (citing examples from Ireland);

(iii) to break-up the Diocese of Menevia with the absorption of parts of the Diocese into the new Diocese of Wrexham (1987) and the rest of the Diocese to be incorporated into the Archdiocese of Cardiff, thus abolishing the Diocese of Menevia and returning to the pre-1987 situation. Presumably, the newly extended Diocese of Wrexham would retain the new 1987 title of Wrexham with the loss of the ancient title of Menevia (restored to the Catholic Church in Wales in 1850).

This paper is thus a response to the invitation of Archbishop George to the clergy of the Diocese to respond to these three proposals in order to facilitate further discussion at Deanery Meetings and at the next three meetings of the diocesan clergy planned for 21st October, 12th November and 12th December.

It seems particularly appropriate for us to offer up to God, in fervent prayer, the Prayer for Wales (*Directory & Year Book 2019*, p. 24) that through the prayers of Our Blessed Lady, Our Lady of the Taper, her Divine Son, the Light of the World, may illuminate all our discussions, inspire our vision for Wales, and abundantly bless our endeavours for the re-evangelisation of Wales through a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a "new Pentecost" upon Church and Nation.

Gweddi Dros Gymru

O Hollalluog Dduw a ddanfonodd, o'th anfeidrol ddaioni, dy unig-anedig Fab i ailagor porth y nef, ac i ddysgu inni dy adnabod, dy garu a'th wasanaethau, trugarha wrth dy bobl sy'n byw yng Nghymru. Meithrin ynom y werthfawr ddawn ffydd, ac una ni yn yr un wir eglwys a sylfaenwyd gan dy ddwyfol Fab. Dyro inni'r gras i fod gyda'n gilydd yn dystion cywir i'th wirionedd, ac i fyw'n ffyddlon i'th gariad. Sancteiddia ni trwy sagrafennau dy Fab, a dwg ni i'th addoli mewn ysbryd a gwirionedd, fel y cawn dderbyn dedwyddwch tragwyddol gyda thi yn y byd a ddaw. Trwy'r un Iesu Grist ein Harglwydd.

*Mair, gymorth Cristnogion, gweddia dros Gymru.
Dewi Sant, gweddia dros Gymru.*

*Y Santes Wenfrewi, gweddia dros Gymru.
Holl Seintiau Cymru, gweddiwch dros Gymru.*

Prayer for Wales

O Almighty God, in your infinite goodness, you sent your only-begotten Son into this world to open once more the gates of heaven, and to teach us how to know, love and serve you. Have mercy on your people who dwell in Wales. Nourish in us the precious gift of faith, and unite us in the one true church, founded by your divine Son. Give us the grace to be loyal witnesses together to your truth, and to live faithful to your love. Sanctify us by your Son's sacraments, and bring us to worship you in spirit and in truth, so that we may come to have eternal happiness with you in the world to come. Through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

*Mary, Help of Christians, pray for Wales.
St. David, pray for Wales.*

*St. Winefride, pray for Wales.
All you Saints of Wales, pray for Wales.*

[A] DEWI SANT A'R ARCHESGOBAETH MYNYW/ ST. DAVID AND THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MENEVIA

It is sometimes stated that the Diocese of Menevia came into existence in 1987. Indeed, the "Silver Jubilee" of the Diocese was celebrated in 2012! Nothing could be further from the truth. The Diocese of Menevia has its roots and foundation in the life and evangelistic outreach of St. David in the sixth century. To him, therefore, we turn at this critical moment in the history of our Diocese and implore his prayers as, at the beginning of this 21st century we seek to re-evangelise precisely those same hills and valleys where he has gone before, and we ask especially for his blessing upon the newly instituted Diocese of Menevia School of Evangelisation and Catechetics, and that he (with the other founding Saints of our ancient Diocese – St. Padarn, St. Samson, St. Teilo et al) may powerfully intercede for us at the Throne of Grace, that what he achieved and established in the sixth century may not finally fail and disintegrate one and a half thousand years later in this 21st century.

*Dewi Sant, gweddia drosom!
Holl Seintiau Cymru, gweddiwch drosom!*

*St. David, pray for us!
All the Saints of Wales, pray for us!*

The earliest (extant) Life of St. David is that of Rhygyfarch ap Sulien (1056/7-1099). His Latin *Vita de David*, written about the year 1095, which survives in two manuscript traditions (the Nero-Digby text and the Vespasian text) and also in a medieval Welsh translation (and expansion) of these Latin texts.

[1] Rhygyfarch, Llanbadarn Fawr and the Family of Bishop Sulien

Rhygyfarch was the eldest of the four sons of Bishop Sulien ("the Wise"), who was twice Bishop of Menevia (1073-78) following the murder of his predecessor Bishop Bleiddud and the sacking of Menevia/St. David's by marauding Vikings in 1073; and then again (1080-85), called from retirement at Llanbadarn Fawr, after the murder of Bishop Abraham and the sacking of Menevia/St. David's in 1080.

Evidently, therefore, a man of courage, Bishop Sulien was also a renowned scholar (having studied for thirteen years at monastic schools in Ireland and Scotland (see HOW 459) and the father of scholars at the Celtic monastic community of Llanbadarn Fawr (founded by St. Padarn in approx. 517 – the 1,500th Anniversary of which was celebrated in the Parish of Aberystwyth in 2017), which became the centre of artistic and intellectual life for the church in West Wales and the seat of its own bishop until incorporated into the Diocese of Menevia in the eighth century. (It is probable that a bishop of Llanbadarn Fawr was one of the seven bishops who disputed with St. Augustine of Canterbury at the famous meeting of Celtic and

Saxon bishops at Aust in 603. When later, under the Normans, Llanbadarn was regularised as a parish, it was the largest parish in England and Wales encompassing 200 square miles – the present combined parish of Aberystwyth/Aberaeron covers just over 600 square miles!)

We invoke the prayers of St. Padarn to defend, protect and prosper the Diocese.

St. Padarn, gweddia drosom!

Holl Seintiau Cymru, gweddiwch drosom!

St. Padarn, pray for us!

All the Saints of Wales, pray for us!

Bishop Sulien was the last but one of the independent native Welsh Bishops (the last being Bishop Wilfred 1085-1115) before the appointment of Bernard, the first Norman bishop (1115-48), after the death in battle of Rhys ap Tewdwr, Prince of the Southern Welsh Kingdom of Deheubarth, whose death exposed Menevia to Norman influences and the subjugation of the Church in Wales to the See of Canterbury and the loss of independence enjoyed by the bishops in Wales since the sixth century before Augustine stepped foot on English soil. (Another Welshman, Bishop Iorwerth (1215-29), was elected during the resurgence of the Kingdom of Deheubarth at the beginning of the thirteenth century but he remained subject to the See of Canterbury.)

It was probably also at Llanadarn Fawr, in the ninth century, that Asser (the Welsh biographer of the Saxon King Alfred the Great) received his education, and by the time of Bishop Sulien its library was larger than that of Canterbury or York.

Ieuan, another of Sulien's sons, was a gifted illustrator as can be seen from his illustrated copies of St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*, and his brother Rhygyfarch's *Psalter*. Llanbadarn is almost certainly the place where the *Welsh Chronicles* were first compiled, the most important documents of Norman Wales.

The intellectual life of Llanbadarn was superseded after 1164 when Whitland Abbey established the new foundation of the great Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida to the east of Llanbadarn Fawr.

We may reasonably assume, therefore, that Rhygyfarch's *Vita de David* is written from a Llanbadarn perspective, reflecting the outlook and concerns of his own day (of his family and his Diocese of Menevia) and therefore we may fairly ask to what extent his eleventh century *Life of St. David* is a reliable account of his subject who lived five centuries earlier.

Was St. David a "bishop/archbishop" and ruler of a "diocese" similar to that of Rhygyfarch's Bishop Wilfred (1085-1115) (during whose episcopate Rhygyfarch was compiling his *Vita de David*) – or something quite different?_

[2] Rhygyfarch's Vita de David

In an influential essay, "*Dewi Sant - St. David*" (1981) Professor E.G. Bowen argues that Rhygyfarch's *Vita* when denuded of typical hagiographical themes (especially the miraculous) nevertheless contains a reliable historical outline of the life of St. David, supported by earlier historical evidence which affirms the extent and influence of the Cult of David and the life of David himself.

According to Rhygyfarch, David was born the son of Sant, King of Ceredigion and of Non, a virtuous nun from the region of Dyfed. His future birth was revealed by an angel to both his father, Sant, and to St. Patrick. He was baptised by Ailbe, Bishop of Munster and educated at Vetus Rebus, the Old Grove (later identified, by Gerald of Wales, as Hen Fynyw/Old Menevia – just outside Aberaeron). He then studied under St. Paulinus, before founding twelve monasteries from his community at Hen Fynyw. From there, with his three disciples, Aidan,

Teilo and Ishmael, he established a new monastic community at Vallis Rosina, in Welsh known as Hodnant – “favourable valley” (later identified, by Gerald of Wales, as Menevia/St. David’s). Rhygyfarch gives an extended account of the details of daily monastic life and discipline, and then describes (after other events) the pilgrimage of David, Teilo and Padarn to Jerusalem where the Patriarch of Jerusalem promotes David to the archbishopate. After his return to Menevia, at the Synod of Brefi (Llanddewibrefi) David refutes the heresy of Pelagianism (as a hill miraculously rises under his feet), and he is recognised as Archbishop of the “whole of the British (i.e. Welsh) nation”, and his monastery is dedicated as the metropolitan church of the whole of the country. The decrees of the Synod are confirmed at a second synod, the Synod of Victory. St. David dies at the great age of 147 years and is laid to rest in the grounds of his own monastery.

This, in brief, is the life of St. David, shorn of the other miraculous events with which Rhygyfarch embellished his *Vita*. What are we to make of it?

[3] How reliable is Rhygyfarch’s Life of St. David?

Wooding states that “the evidence for an historical St. David is not insubstantial” (CCN 15), and Professor Bowen argues that “a number of matters stand out which represent echoes (at least) of real historical happenings”. (DSSD 19)

(a) Firstly, Bowen argues, Rhygyfarch makes clear that David’s homeland and early education are associated with mid-Ceredigion and not St. David’s/Pembrokeshire. Bowen accepts the genealogy of St. David which makes him the great-great grandson of the famous Celtic hero, Cunedda, who emigrated from North Britain (Strathclyde) to spearhead Celtic resistance to Irish incursions into north Wales. Indeed, Bowen believes that it is David’s extension of Cunedda’s “mission” that ensured that, in time, Welsh and not Irish became the common language of the southern kingdom of Deheubarth.

(b) It is precisely Rhygyfarch’s account of David’s missionary outreach that Bowen accepts as the second mark of historical authenticity in his *Vita*. Although in Rhygyfarch’s day, St. David’s was the centre of the Cult of David, nevertheless, Rhygyfarch makes clear that David’s initial outreach was from *Vetus Rubus* (later identified as Hen Fynyw/Old Menevia to distinguish it from the new Menevia – which became Tŷddewi/St. David’s). From here Rhygyfarch describes two missionary outreaches, one to the east through Llanddewibrefi (et al) and another to the south-west and the establishment of the new Menevia and churches dedicated to St. David along the way.

(c) Thirdly, although doubt has been expressed about the historicity of the Synod of Brefi and whether Pelagianism was an issue for the Church as late as the sixth century, Professor Bowen makes a strong case for both the Synod and the topic of Pelagianism. He draws attention to the fact that although today the village of Llanddewibrefi seems isolated and remote, in the sixth century it was in the immediate vicinity of the former important Roman fort of Llanio (most likely the *Bremia* of the *Ravenna Cosmography*) on an important Roman road (north to south) which formed part of the western Roman frontier system in Wales. An important lateral road (west to east) also passed over the Brefi river and therefore Brefi/Llanddewibrefi was fully accessible to (and central to) the whole of Wales in Roman and sub-Roman times (although Rhygyfarch was probably not aware of this when he recounted the event).

Pelagianism survived, somewhat modified, in the famous monastic school at Lerins in Gaul, and spread to Britain where St. Germanus of Auxerre was twice invited to Britain (429, 447) to combat the heresy, and as late as 529 the Second Council of Orange met to specifically

address Semi-Pelagianism which even then still prevailed in the church (MCCC Vol.2, p.4). It would hardly be surprising if Semi-Pelagianism lingered longest in the homeland of Pelagius – the British Isles.

(d) Fourthly, Rhygyfarch refers to three individuals for whom there is, otherwise, reliable historical evidence. St. Paulinus (whom Rhygyfarch refers to as one of David's teachers) had a monastic school at Llanddeusant and later moved to Leon in Brittany where his *Life of St. Pol de Leon* was written in 884. Dubricius is referred to in the seventh century *Life of St. Samson*, and Daniel (Deiniol) founded several monasteries in North Wales – including the two Bangors.

Also, as Gerald Morgan points out (PSD 59), “the *Life of St. David* is notable for the numerous mentions of Ireland and the Irish”, reflecting the situation in West Wales in the sixth century but not Menevia in the time of Rhygyfarch. Would Rhygyfarch have been aware of this presence and influence of Irish settlers in the sixth century unless he had access to authentic records/traditions?

(e) Fifthly, Bowen draws attention to the nine chapters (paragraphs) in the *Vita* devoted to the description of day to day life in the monastery and states that “modern writers are of the opinion that this account is a vivid, intimate and authentic description of daily life in a Celtic monastery in the sixth century and can be considered as real history” (DSSD 49). It is “the best and most vivid description of life in an early Celtic Christian monastery that we possess.” (SHD 28)

Jonathan Wooding fully supports this contention (CCN 15f). He argues that several passages reflect a letter of Gildas from the sixth century and that “the parallels – are notable”. John Morris argues that Rhygyfarch's outline of the Rule of Life in David's community comes from “a genuinely early source”. Indeed, says Wooding, there are “few historians” who would not concede that source to be “found scattered in the most ancient writings of our country and especially of his (David's) own monastery” as Rhygyfarch himself states at the end of his *Vita*.

The noted early medieval scholar Dumville states that Rhygyfarch's account “embodies phrases found half a millennium earlier in Gildas' letter. The only convincing explanation appears to be, as Morris saw, that both authors were quoting from David's Rule, now lost, but recoverable in some measure through Rhygyfarch's narrative reporting it.”

Gildas in the sixth century is not punching at straw-men in the air in his criticism of over-excessive asceticism but has in mind, precisely, St. David and his monastic community at Menevia/St. David's.

(f) A further criticism of Rhygyfarch (and of more recent scholarship) is that the churches dedicated to St. David as mapped out by Rhygyfarch and, more extensively, by E.G. Bowen in the twentieth century, do not reflect the extent of the David's own missionary outreach but are later dedications as the “Cult” of St. David expanded and, thus, the medieval diocese of Menevia owes its geographical extent more to the later cult of St. David rather than to St. David's own evangelistic endeavours.

Rice Rees (1804-39), Professor of Welsh at St. David's College, Lampeter (founded in 1823) in his “*An Essay on the Welsh Saints*” (1834) was confident in presenting David as having, more or less, laid out the Diocese that was subsequently ruled by his successors. (CCN 78) In the twentieth century, Professor Bowen famously studied the pattern of church dedications to the Welsh saints believing that they showed the extent of the influence of the Saint and

his cult, even if they were not all established in the lifetime of the saint whose name they bear. The dedication of medieval churches to David across South Wales at least suggests missionary movements emanating from St. David's even if not all from St. David himself.

It may be, as J.W. Evans suggests (CCN 20f.), that the four Welsh Dioceses (essentially in place by 1150: St. Asaph's, St. David's, Llandaff and Bangor) broadly correspond to the principal early Kingdoms in Wales and thus the geographical extent of the Diocese of Menevia roughly corresponds to the boundaries of the Kingdom of Deheubarth, and certainly St. David's/Menevia benefitted from the patronage of the Princes of Deheubarth (apart, that is, from any archiepiscopal authority over the Kingdom – see later section).

Rhys ap Tewdwr, King of Deheubarth, gave the cantref of Peidiog to the Cathedral in 1082, and his descendent, the great Lord Rhys (Rhys ap Gruffudd, 1155-97) was a renowned patron of the Diocese of Menevia, founding Talley Abbey, and celebrated as the protector of Llanddewibrefi in Gwynfardd Brycheiniog's famous poem to St. David.

His sons Rhys, Wyn and Maelgwn endowed Bishop Iorwerth (1215-29) with further estates, and another son, Maredudd ap Rhys became Archdeacon of Ceredigion and was succeeded (as Archdeacon) on his death in 1227 by his own son, Gruffudd ap Maredudd. Thus we see that the medieval Diocese of Menevia is closely identified (geographically and culturally) both with the extended cult of St. David and with the Kingdom of Deheubarth. (Of course, David's missionary outreach preceded the formation of the Kingdom of Deheubarth and we see in David, in the first instance, a bishop/over-bishop of the pre-Roman and post-Roman Celtic Demetae tribe.)

(g) Finally, it is often stated that Rhygyfarch's claim that David was an "archbishop" is anachronistic, and that he simply made up the claim of Menevia to be an archiepiscopate in order to bolster the claims of the Welsh Church to an independence from the See of Canterbury in his own day.

John Reuben Davies (CCN 296f.) argues persuasively "the historical reality of an archiepiscopate of St. David's in the early middle ages was, in fact, a fairly solid grounding in the sources". He refers, in the first instance, to the seven early medieval bishop-houses of Dyfed, cited in the tenth century laws of Hywel Dda, who became king over nearly all of Wales in 972. Thomas Charles-Edwards infers from these bishop-houses that each cantref of Dyfed had its own bishop.

At the beginning of the eighth century, Aldhelm, the Abbot of Malmesbury, in a letter to King Geraint of Dummonia, refers to the "sacerdotes" (the context seems to mean "bishops") of the Demetae tribe (Dyfed). That particular bishops exercised a lordship over others is implied in the Obit of Elfoddw, "archbishop in the Gwynedd region" in the *Welsh Chronicles (Annales Cambriae)* for AD 809.

In the same century, Asser (the Welsh biographer of the Saxon King Alfred the Great, and appointed by him as Bishop of Sherborne) describes his relative Nyfys/Nobis as "archiepiscopus" at St. David's, and it is certain that political developments in the Kingdom of Deheubarth at the time would have meant that the Archbishop's over-lordship would have extended over the whole Kingdom of Deheubarth and not just the seven bishop-houses of Dyfed. The *Welsh Chronicles* state that Nobis was Bishop of Menevia from 840 to his death in 873-4, and succeeded by Llynferth. As Davies points out, the *Welsh Chronicles* appear to provide something approaching a full account of the succession of bishops of Menevia from Nobis onwards.

According to Davies (CCN 298), Nobis was translated from the episcopacy of Llandeilo Fawr to become Archbishop of Menevia. He also argues that Bishop Tramerin of Glasbury/Cynidr (near Hereford) and assistant to Bishop Aethelstan of Hereford, “must be the bishop of the same name” in the list of bishops/archbishops of Menevia provided by Gerald of Wales, and suggests the bishopric of Glasbury was, in some way, suffragan to the “archbishopric” of St. David’s, as was the episcopal community of St. Teilo at Llandeilo Fawr. He concludes, in support of the claims made by Rhygyfarch for his archiepiscopate in Menevia, “we appear to have an archiepiscopal see based at St. David’s that extended its jurisdiction over bishops as far east as the Wye, possibly as late as the eleventh century; moreover an archiepiscopal see that drew on its suffragan bishops for its own archiepiscopal succession.” (CCN 303)

(h) It seems therefore that Rhygyfarch embellished with the miraculous an otherwise authentic historical figure but was very much restricted by the historical veracity of his sources. We see this even in the strange inconsistencies of his text, where he mentions twelve monasteries founded by St. David but names only nine (presumably because his sources are incomplete but he does not alter either number), or when he states that David was “appointed archbishop by the Council of all the bishops” at the Synod of Brefi (para. 53) and then (para. 54) says David was made a bishop! The very inconsistencies point to differing authentic historical sources which Rhygyfarch felt obliged to accept and somehow weave together.

[4] Earlier historical references to St. David

We have thus far only considered the *Vita de David* (and the distribution of David churches) as witness to the existence of St. David. There are also other, earlier, historical references. (DSSD 11f.)

From Ireland, the early tenth century *Catalogues of the Saints* states that Irish monasteries accepted an Order of Service from Saints Dewi (David), Gildas and Docas. And from the same period, the *Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee* refers to David of Menevia under the calendar for March 1st “David Cille Muni”. Even earlier, from the mid-700s, *The Martyrology of Tallaght* refers to St. David’s Feast Day on 1st March.

As already mentioned, David is referred to in the *Life of St. Pol de Leon* (884) where he is nicknamed “Aquaticus” because he lived on just bread, vegetables and water. It is also stated that he was a pupil of St. Illtud at Llanilltud Fawr.

Asser in his biography of Alfred the Great (893) refers to the monastery and “parochia” (sphere of influence) of the Holy Dewi, and that Asser’s own relative is “archiepiscopus” of Menevia.

The most important literary reference is the famous tenth century Welsh prophetic poem “*Armes Prydain Fawr*” (*The Great Prophecy of Britain*) which refers to an agreement between the Welsh, the Danes of Dublin, the Irish, and men of Cornwall, Brittany and Strathclyde to unite against the English oppressor under “the holy banner of David”. Here already, therefore, David is clearly given national status and importance.

These references, says Bowen, are “now eclipsed” by the discovery of an Early Christian inscribed stone at (of all places) Llanddewibrefi, which reads, “Here lies Idnerth, son of Jacob, who was killed while defending the church of Holy David from despoilation”. Bowen states, “experts are unanimous that the style of writing belongs to the early seventh century – it cannot be more than a few decades later than the death of the Saint himself.” (DSSD 13)

The earliest mention of David in a Welsh (not Latin) document is in the *Annales Cambriae* (*Welsh Chronicles*) the oldest surviving copy of which is from the tenth century (but the compilation of which was obviously much earlier), which states that in 458, “David was born in the 30th year after Patrick left Menevia”. As Morgan points out (PSD 20) the date is incorrect but made to fit in with the legend (as described in Rhygyfarch’s *Vita*) that thirty years before David was born an angel announced to Patrick David’s future birth. What Morgan fails to mention is that this means therefore that the legend was not “made up” by Rhygyfarch in the eleventh century for his own purposes, but he is clearly including it from an earlier source.

**[B] ESGOB BERNART (1115-48) A’R ARCHESGOBAETH MYNYW /
BISHOP BERNARD (1115-48) AND THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MENEVIA**

[1] Menevia, Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela

Bernard was the first Norman appointed bishop of Menevia. It is clear that, despite being a foreigner to Wales and expected to view the Church from a Norman perspective (he certainly set up a system of church government – deaneries, archdeaconries, etc. modelled on the Norman/Western European pattern) he soon became convinced of the ancient patrimony of his diocese and of the validity of the claims of Menevia to archiepiscopal status.

No doubt he would have been influenced by reading Rhygyfarch’s *Vita de David* but he would also have had access to those “most ancient writings of our country and especially of his (David’s) own monastery” (i.e. at St. David’s) to which Rhygyfarch refers, and access also to the other diocesan library – (the largest library in Wales and England) – at Llanbadarn Fawr.

We need constantly to remind ourselves that, in the 21st century, we are severely disadvantaged in assessing the historic reliability of medieval historians because we no longer have the historical sources on which they themselves based their histories. As Morgan points out (with regard to the history of Menevia) “We know that all the St. David’s library of medieval manuscripts was destroyed by the reformers.” (PSD 63)

During the episcopacy of Bernard (1115-48), (presumably through a realisation that neither the See of Canterbury nor the Norman King would give a fair hearing to the claims of Menevia) the decision was made to take the extraordinary step of a direct appeal to Rome.

In 1123 Bishop Bernard had visited Pope Callixtus II in Rome and a papal letter of the same date confirmed the privilege and possessions of the Church of St. Andrew and St. David. According to the contemporary historian William of Malmesbury (1080-1147) the Pope, “encouraged English pilgrims to go to St. David’s rather than to Rome because of the length of the journey; those who went twice to St. David’s should have the same privileges (indulgences) as those who went once to Rome”, thus elevating St. David’s to a comparable status with that of Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela! The poet Ieuan ap Rhydderch could write in the fifteenth century of St. David’s Cathedral:

“here is the incense and smoke of a second Santiago”
 (“sens a mwg ail Sain Siam yw”)

It seems also that it was at this time, as a result of Bernard's visit to Rome that St. David officially entered the Universal Calendar of the Church – his feast day the 1st March. (PWP 94)

Presumably encouraged by these developments, during the papacy of Pope Honorius II (1124-30), the “Conventus” of the Church of Saints Andrew and David, at Menevia, and the whole Synod of that Church addressed a letter to the Pope. (EAWD Vol. 1, p.190f.) In this letter they claim that the Diocese of Menevia had its foundation, before that of St. David, in the conversion of British tribes to Christianity in the second century whilst still part of the Roman Empire, and then as one of the twenty-seven bishops of later Roman Britain. Presumably they are here indebted to Bede's “*Ecclesiastical History*” (731 AD) or at least indebted to the same sources as Bede. (The conversion of British tribes in the second century is powerfully argued by D.V. Knight in his “*King Lucius of Britain*”). The letter to Pope Honorius points out that the Welsh Church was never subject to St. Augustine of Canterbury or his successors, and that it is only in the present reign of Henry I that Menevia was made a suffragan of Canterbury. They note that it was from Menevia that Patrick went to Ireland, a reference to the entry in the *Annales Cambriae* under the year 458, and the legend as described by Rhygyfarch. As far as I am aware, although today various places in Britain lay claim to being the birthplace and home of St. Patrick (the Somerset coast, the coast of Strathclyde) – the only historical claim is that of Menevia and would thus make Patrick a native son of our Diocese and the conversion of Ireland the first-fruits of an evangelistic outreach from this part of Wales – an inspiration and encouragement to our newly instituted School of Evangelisation and Catechetics here in the Diocese of Menevia!

Sant Padrig, gweddia dros Fynyw!
St. Patrick, pray for Menevia!

Holl seintiau Cymru ac Iwerddon, gweddiwch dros Fynyw!
All the Saints of Wales and Ireland, pray for Menevia!

[2] Menevia – “the first and greatest province of the Island”

The letter of the “Conventus” of Menevia is followed up by a letter of Bishop Bernard (p. 259) to Pope Innocent II (1130-43), in which he apologises for not already having sought the dignity of a pallium and claims that even at his consecration he argued that he should be consecrated as archbishop of

“the first and greatest province of the island”.

He says that the King (Henry I) forced him to be consecrated at Westminster and he submitted out of fear of the King but that the Pope ought to know that, “the people of this province are different entirely in nation, language, laws, habits, judgement and history”. It is likely that Bernard only dared to write this letter after the death (!) of Henry I (1136). There is no record of a reply until that of Pope Lucius II (1144-45) in 1144 acknowledging the letters (plural) of Bernard and proposing to send legates to England to investigate the claims of Menevia.

In a significant development, Owain, Prince of Gwynedd (“King of Wales”) wrote to offer his support to Bernard – “though in the past they had withdrawn, by proud rashness, the old right of the church of St. David, namely as the archbishopric, now they recognise the same and would not deny it further”. On All Saints Day he, with Anarawd, Prince of Deheubarth

(d. 1143) would come to the door of St. David's "to restore the ancient right of his church" (p.260).

Unfortunately, Pope Lucius II died within the year but the Chapter of St. Andrew and St. David wasted no time in sending a letter (p. 262) to the new Pope, Eugenius III (1145-53) in which they argue that Joseph, Archbishop of Menevia (d. 1064) promoted and consecrated Duvan as Bishop of Bangor; and Bleddud, Archbishop of Menevia promoted and consecrated Melan as Bishop of Llanelwy, and that the pallium having been lost "nevertheless the metropolitan dignity and ministry was not vacated but continuously, at all time, enjoyed until the reign of Henry, King of England". Furthermore, it is claimed, King Stephen designated Bernard to consecrate Gilbert as Bishop of Llanelwy but due to the capture of the King, the Archbishop of Canterbury "presumptuously" intervened and consecrated Gilbert, and thus the Chapter beg the Pope to restore the dignity of their church.

From the English bishops (not surprisingly!) letters went out to Pope Eugenius in support of the See of Canterbury. Everard, Bishop of Norwich, makes the ludicrous claim that from the time of St. Augustine, at the beginning of the sixth century *all* the bishops of Wales were consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury! Davies laconically observes (p. 157) that "his accuracy was challengeable on more than one point".

Other letters were sent from Robert Bishop of Hereford, Nigel Bishop of Ely, Robert Bishop of Bath, and Henry Bishop of Winchester (who himself had endeavoured to raise his own bishopric of Winchester into an archbishopric of the West of England!!) Davies comments, "these letters seem to have been in the nature of a round-robin letter and were probably solicited by Archbishop Theobald from all his suffragans". (p. 198)

In June 1147 both Bernard of Menevia and Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury appeared in person before Pope Eugenius at Meaux to argue their case. Whilst requiring Bernard to reverence the Archbishop as his metropolitan, he fixed the 18th October 1148 for a further hearing "to discover the truth of the matter on the dignity and liberty of the church of St. David's and decide what is just". (p. 261)

In the meantime Bernard and Theobald were due to attend the Council of Rheims in March 1148, and Bernard wrote to Simeon, Archdeacon of Bangor to accompany him to Rheims, "to make manifest the truth of the dispute of the church of St. David which was most fully and undoubtedly known to him. For it would be unbecoming and especially sad if – the greatest glory of the realm of Britain – held in honour for so long a time, should now be brought to nought". (p. 265)

Tragically, when the Council of Rheims met on 21st March 1148 Bernard was dead, and the cause of Menevia lapsed (for a while) by default.

"Bernart, bishop of Mynyw, died in the thirty-third year of his episcopate; a man of extraordinary praise, piety and holiness, after very great exertions, by sea and land, to obtain for the church of Mynyw its ancient liberty." (*Brut y Tywysogion*, 1147-48)

[3] Diwedd/Conclusion

As already noted, Henry Bishop of Winchester, over several years (from approx. 1144-51 at least) had attempted to raise the bishopric of Winchester into an archbishopric. "A chronicler records that Lucius II sent Henry his pallium and proposed to assign to him seven bishoprics, and there is at least a hint that Bernard of Menevia received his pallium from perhaps the same pope, but that he lost it immediately." (EAWD, p. 204) Indeed Henry of

Huntingdon (c.1130-44) records, "in our time, the bishop of St. David's received the pallium from the pope, namely that which was formerly at Kaerlegion, but however he lost it immediately."

Since Pope Lucius (1144-45) sent his reply to Bernard (promising to investigate the claims of Menevia) at the very beginning of his short papacy (letter of 14th May 1144) is it possible that Lucius proposed (or promised) assigning the pallium to both Henry of Winchester and Bernard of Menevia toward the end of his papacy but that his death led to the abandonment of these plans?

It is mysterious, and difficult to explain, how it came to be believed that both Henry of Winchester and Bernard of Menevia had indeed both "received" the pallium. It may be, as Davies suggests (p. 201) that Bernard and Henry may even have cooperated, since Henry (significantly) does not suggest that the Welsh dioceses should be the suffragans of his new archbishopric of Winchester. Was Pope Lucius persuaded that there should be four provinces, of Canterbury, of York, of Winchester and of St. David's? It is interesting to note that the church in Ireland had no archbishop until 1151 when the (four) archbishoprics of Armagh, Cashel, Dublin and Tuam were created. In the same year, David, King of Scotland sought the pallium and metropolitancy for St. Andrews in Scotland denying (as the Welsh sees denied) that York or Canterbury had jurisdiction outside of England. (This was eventually granted to Scotland by Sixtus IV in 1472.)

If Bernard compromised his claim by his (reluctant) consecration at the hands of the Archbishop of Canterbury and his profession of canonical obedience, nevertheless, (according to Davies, p. 207) this did not affect the claims and rights of the Diocese of Menevia to archiepiscopal status. They were to remain dormant until they were taken up again by Giraldus Cambrensis, Gerald of Wales, after the death of his uncle, Bishop David FitzGerald of Menevia (1148-76) who was Bernard's successor in the See of Menevia.

[C] GERALLT CYMRO A'R ARCHESGOBAETH MYNYW/ GERALD OF WALES AND THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MENEVIA

[1] Introduction

Throughout the twelfth century the conflict between the native Welsh princes and the Anglo-Normans (increasingly encroaching from their castle strongholds in the Welsh Marches and also along the south coast of Wales as far as Pembrokeshire) resulted in an often delicate balance of power between the antagonists (victories and defeats on both sides) but by the end of the century Pembrokeshire had fallen completely under the suzerainty of the Norman barons whilst the Marcher Lords continued to press upon the eastern boundaries of the Kingdom of Deheubarth.

With the Anglo-Norman invaders there came also the great European religious orders, supplementing and overwhelming in their influence the localised early Celtic, post-Roman monastic communities and churches, and permanently transforming the religious landscape of Menevia (and Wales).

Within the Diocese of Menevia, Benedictine Priories were established in Brecon (c. 1093), Pembroke/ Monkton (c. 1098), Llandovery (c. 1110), Llangenydd (c. 1111), Kidwelly (c. 1115), Cardigan (c. 1115) and Llanbadarn Fawr (c. 1116 – on the site of the Celtic monastic community founded by St. Padarn in the sixth century).

Also established were Augustinian Priories at Carmarthen (c. 1127 on an earlier sixth century site) and Haverfordwest (c. 1210). Cistercian Abbeys at Neath (1147 – first

established as a Savigniac Abbey in 1130, “the fairest abbey in all of Wales” (so described by John Leland, Henry VIII’s antiquary), Whitland (1144), Margam (1147) – Neath, Whitland and Margam were founded during the lifetime of Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), the founder of the Cistercian Order – Strata Florida (1164 – founded from Whitland) and Cwmhir (1176 – a Welsh foundation from Whitland).

A Cluniac Priory at St. Clears (before 1167), a Tironensian Abbey at St. Dogmaels (c. 1113), and Tironensian Priors on Caldey Island (c. 1120, founded from St. Dogmaels but on an earlier sixth century site associated with St. Dyfrig) and at Pill (c. 1190, founded from St. Dogmaels). A Knights Hospitaller Religious House at Slebech (c. 1160), a Premonstratensian Abbey at Talley (c. 1186 – a Welsh foundation of The Lord Rhys) and (in the following century) Dominican Priors at Haverfordwest (before 1241) and Brecon (c. 1269) and a Franciscan Friary at Carmarthen (before 1282). The ruins of many of these abbeys and priories still exist today and are well worthy of pilgrim visits – perhaps, in the days ahead, to pray for the future of our ancient Diocese.

Sant Benedet, gweddia drosom

St. Benedict, pray for us

Sant Awstin, gweddia drosom

St. Augustine, pray for us

Sant Bernart, gweddia drosom

St. Bernard, pray for us

Sant Dominic, gweddia drosom

St. Dominic, pray for us

Sant Ffransis, gweddia drosom

St. Francis, pray for us

Santes Clare, gweddia drosom

St. Clare, pray for us

[2] The Lord Rhys and the Poets of Menevia

The twelfth century also witnessed the flourishing of Welsh religious poetry from poets usually attached to one of the Welsh royal houses as official court poets to praise the virtues and the strengths of the native Welsh princes.

The twelfth century saw the rise in Menevia of the greatest of the Princes of Deheubarth – The Lord Rhys (Rhys ap Gruffudd, b. 1131, reigned 1155-97), a fierce opponent of, and then ally of, the English King Henry II. Poems survive from two of his court poets.

Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr (flourished 1158-95) – the most prolific of all the court poets in Wales (48 extant poems) – wrote two poems seeking reconciliation (“dadolwch”) with The Lord Rhys (“You without me have no voice; I without you have nothing to say.”) Two poems only survive from the writings of Gwynfardd Brycheiniog (fl. 1170s), one in praise of The Lord Rhys and the other “A Song for David” (“Canu i Ddewi”) which (interestingly) focuses more on Llanddewibrefi than on Menevia (St. David’s) – a poem of 296 lines.

Canu Dewi mawr a moli saint.

A song for great David and praise to the saints.

Ar Iwerddon wlad yn rhad rannawg,

A'r Dehau ef biau a Phebidiawg.

A phobloedd Cymry a gymer ataw

Ac a rydd yn llaw llwyr Deithiawg

Tra êl yn erbyn, i'r parth nodawg,

Padrig a'i luoedd yn lluosawg.

He has a share of the land of Ireland through grace,

And he owns Deheubarth and Pebidiog.

Then he will take to himself the people of Wales

And place them in the care of the completely rightful Lord

While Patrick and his hosts in great multitude
Go to meet him in the appointed place.

*Ym mhlwyf Llan Ddewi, lle a folwyf,
Yd gaffwyf i barch, cyn nys archwyf.
Ac o blaid Dofydd dihenfardd wyf,
Ac i nawdd Dewi y dihangwyf:*

Among the people of Llanddewi, a place I may praise,
May I receive respect, even if I do not ask for it.
And I am a sincere poet supporting the Lord
And may I find safety under David's patronage.

*Dewi mawr Mynyw, syw sywedydd,
A Dewi Brefi ger ei broydd;
A Dewi biau balchlan Gyfelach
Lle mae morach a mawr grefydd.*

Great David of Menevia, a wise teacher,
And David of Brefi that lies beside its lowlands;
And David owns the splendid church of Cyfelach
Where there is joy and great devotion.

*A Henfynyw deg o du glennydd – Aeron,
And fair Henfynyw near the banks of the Aeron.*

*I foli Dewi, da Gymræg – eofn,
O fodd bryd a bron, o brydest chweg,
O brydest dyllest dull ychwaneg
I Frefi a Dewi doeth Gymræg.*

To sing a praise poem for David in good confident Welsh
With satisfaction of the mind and heart, by means of a comely poem,
By means of a poem of an ever increasing pattern
To Brefi and to David in wise Welsh.

*Duw a folaf! Er eirioled – ym,
Can ni allaf i ddim heb Dduw Trined,*

I praise God! As intercession on my behalf
And I cannot accomplish anything without God the Trinity.

*Ac i Fynyw ethwyf eithaf Dyfed,
A theyrnedd ethynt â theyrnged
Ar fab Non haelfron, hawdd ogoned,
Ar Ddewi fab Sant, syndal duded:
Dewi mawr Mynyw, mad y'i gweled,
Pen argynnan bedydd, crefydd a chred.*

And I have been to Menevia in the extremity of Dyfed,
And kings have been with tribute
To the son of the generous-hearted Non, prosperous his fame,
To David, the Son of Sant, his cloak of silken linen:
Great David of Menevia, he has been seen to be holy,
The celebrated leader of the baptised, of faith and of Christendom.

Ac i foli Dewi dothwyfi'r Dehau:
And in order to praise David I have come to Deheubarth:

I Frefi ar Ddewi dda ei fuchedd,
I gymryd Dewi ddigymrodedd.

To Brefi, to David, whose life was virtuous,
To accept Dewi, who has no equal.

Cyfodwn, archwn arch ddiomedd
Drwy eirioled Dewi a Duw a fedd,

Let us rise up and present a request that will not be denied
Through David's intercession, and God who holds authority,

Drwy eirioled Mair, mam rhadlonedd,
Through the intercession of Mary, the mother of graciousness,

Dycheferfyddwn ninnau am drugaredd!
Let us come together to receive mercy!

(CD)

Myrddin Lloyd comments, "Of all the many Welsh poems to the saint, Gwynfardd Brycheiniog's "In Praise of Dewi" is the finest." (GWL 176)

Other poets flourishing in the twelfth century include Gwalchmai ap Meilir (fl. 1132-80), Meilyr Brydydd (fl. 1137-45), Peryf ab Cedifor (fl. 1170) and others. Two of the twelfth century princes were also poets – Owain Cyfeiliog and Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd. (WCD, DTD, GWL)

The Lord Rhys, during his long reign over Deheubarth (1151-89) gave renewed confidence to the embattled kingdom and to the Diocese of Menevia.

Myrddin Lloyd states that Gerald of Wales' "arduous but unsuccessful fight for the establishment of St. David's as a metropolitan see was an expression of the new spirit." (GWL 175)

[3] The Contest for a Welsh Archbishopric

Gerald of Wales was descended from both Norman nobility and from the royal line of Deheubarth. His grandmother Nest was the daughter of Prince Rhys ap Tewdwr, King of Deheubarth and thus Gerald was a second cousin of The Lord Rhys, who was himself descended also from the royal line of Gwynedd through his mother, the Princess Gwenllian.

Gerald's father was William de Barri, and Gerald received his early education from his uncle Bishop David FitzGerald of Menevia (1148-76), Bishop Bernard's immediate successor.

David FitzGerald was consecrated at Canterbury and compelled to take an additional oath which was not disclosed and which was understood to be a promise that during his episcopacy he would not raise the question of Menevia's alleged archiepiscopal status. (EAWD 208)

However, in 1176, the Chapter of the Cathedral (not bound by the Bishop's oath) once again raised the question of the status of St. David's with Cardinal Hugh, the Papal Legate in London, but received the reply that the King "would never allow it, or give Head to Wales

over England by granting Wales an archbishopric.” Within two months Bishop David was dead.

His successor Peter de Leia (1176-98) was also required to take an extra oath that he would not during his episcopacy raise the question of the status of St. David’s.

However, once again, the Canons of the Chapter were not bound by the oath and whilst attending the Lateran Council in 1179, “with great boldness and audacity” protested the metropolitan status of St. David’s before Pope Alexander III but the matter lapsed because Bishop Peter (by his oath) was unable to speak to the issue.

In 1188 Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury entered Wales to preach the First Crusade. The Canons of St. David’s tried to persuade The Lord Rhys not to allow the Archbishop to enter the interior of Wales, and especially the See of St. David’s, which was “the Head of Wales” but Rhys refused their request. As a result, Baldwin celebrated Mass at all four cathedrals (Llandaff, St. David’s, Bangor and St. Asaph’s) asserting his claim to be Metropolitan over the four bishoprics.

The death of Bishop Peter in 1198 led to an unprecedented five-year vacancy as two inter-related causes were contested: (i) the disputed election of Gerald, Archdeacon of Brecon as Bishop of Menevia; (ii) the resumption of the controversy over the metropolitan status of St. David’s.

On 29th June 1199 the Chapter of St. David’s unanimously elected Gerald to be their next bishop – (they had wanted Gerald to be their bishop in 1176 but Henry II refused their nomination) – and wrote to Pope Innocent III requesting that the Pope himself consecrate their new bishop. Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, sought to prevent this and in his letter to the Pope warned of “perpetual division” between Wales and England if this was to happen because “the Welsh, being sprung by unbroken succession from the original stock of the Britons, boast of all Britain as theirs of right.”

Gerald travelled to Rome in January 1200 to present his case to the Pope in person, taking with him letters of support from the Princes of Wales. The Pope was persuaded that the matter needed further investigation and ordered the setting up of a Commission on the status of St. David’s. (EAWD 218)

Gerald returned to Rome in March 1201 with further evidence gathered from the archives of St. David’s Cathedral and, after further delays, a date was fixed for hearing the cause of the status of St. David’s before the Pope on 1st November 1202.

The Archbishop of Canterbury was warned by the Pope not to seek to frustrate the papal mandate “on the question of the status as on the cause of the election” but that the cause could only proceed with the full support (or majority) of the Chapter of St. David. Then an extraordinary thing happened. The Chapter suddenly (inexplicably) withdrew their support for the cause of the status of St. David’s which they had been advocating and supporting for the last one hundred years! The Princes of Deheubarth (Maelgwn and Rhys – sons of the late King, Lord Rhys) and no less a person than Prince Llewelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd, urged the Chapter to stand firm or be regarded as “enemies for ever”, but as Davies observes (EAW 226) the Chapter had been corrupted out of fear of the English King, fearing even for their own lives.

Therefore the Commission set up to hear the case (before the proposed hearing in the presence of Pope Innocent arranged for 1st November 1202) refused to proceed – despite

the strength of Gerald's arguments in favour of the status of Menevia – because he stood alone without the necessary support of the Chapter.

Nevertheless (!), despite efforts to stop him leaving the country, Gerald returned for a third time to Rome in January 1203 delivering letters addressed to the Pope from Llewelyn, Prince of Gwynedd, Gwenwynwyn and Madoc, Princes of Powys, and from Gruffydd, Maelgwn, Rhys and Maredudd, Princes of Deheubarth. These letters pointed to the “peril of souls” the Welsh had undergone since being made subject to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had appointed English bishops “entirely ignorant” of the habits and language of Wales. Before then, “the Church of St. David's was the primate of the rest of the whole of Wales, the Church of Rome alone being its senior in antiquity and metropolitan power.”

In April 1203, Pope Innocent III quashed the election of Gerald as Bishop-elect of Menevia but (at Gerald's further pleading) allowed that another Commission should be set up on the status of St. David's. However, the terms of the Commission were then altered by the Archbishop's representative in Rome. As a precaution before leaving Rome, Gerald ensured that the letters of the Commissions set up to examine the cause and the status of St. David's were entered into the papal register.

In a final audience with Pope Innocent, Gerald indicated that this would be his last visit to Rome. The Pope replied, “What, then, will happen to the dignity of the church of St. David? You will not abandon the cause on the status?” Gerald replied forlornly that the cause was effectively extinguished by the alterations in the terms of the Commission.

On his way back to Wales, Gerald visited King John (in France) whom he had previously befriended when he had accompanied (Prince) John on his tour of Ireland. The King suggested he ought to help Gerald since the creation of a third archbishopric in his kingdom “pertained to the honour and increase of his crown”. The Bishop of Ely, however, pointed out that all the English bishops would be against the King and so he desisted. Later (1207) when displeased by the election of Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury, King John stated publicly that he had followed the worst advice in not supporting Menevia against the church at Canterbury.

Despite the failure of Gerald to secure the archiepiscopal rights to status of Menevia, Prince Llewelyn of Gwynedd declared it was better to have indicated the right of Menevia, against such great adversaries, and against the whole of England, lest through an overlong silence, those rights and status should perish. For as long as Wales should endure, his noble deed would for all time be spread abroad with worthy praises and honours. By his labours the right of the dignity of the church of Menevia would be made more clear and evident for ever. (EAWD 229)

Gwynwynwyn, Prince of Powys summed up Gerald's actions, “Many times has our Wales waged great wars on England, but never one so great and grievous as that fought in our days by the elect of St. David's.”

It is clear therefore that the cause of Menevia – the arguments in favour of its archiepiscopal status as the mother church of Wales – largely failed for political reasons and under political pressures. The case lay dormant for the next two centuries. It could not be expected that the status of the Diocese of Menevia, and the independence of the Welsh Church from the See of Canterbury, could be revisited and resurrected by the Welsh Church whilst the hegemony of the English remained unchallenged. This was to happen two hundred years later under the national revolt and battles for independence under Owain Glyndŵr.

[D] MYNYW YN Y CANOL OESOEDD DIWEDDAR / MENEVIA IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

[1] The Fall of Wales (1282), Cilmeri, Menevia

In the meantime, not only did the cause of Menevia fail but so also the independence of the three Welsh Kingdoms of Gwynedd, Deheubarth and Powys, finally succumbing to Anglo-Norman military might.

By the middle of the century the Kingdoms of Deheubarth and Powys had fallen piece by piece under Norman lordship, the Welsh princes making their homage to their new masters. Suddenly the situation changed. Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Gwynedd fought back. Driving south, he liberated the Kingdoms of Powys and Deheubarth and by 1258 he had united all of Wales under his leadership and taken to himself the title of Prince "of Wales" (the first of the Welsh princes to make such a claim).

For twenty years Wales stood united and independent. Prince Llewelyn attended the Coronation of the new English King, Edward I (1273) but as the prince of an independent Wales, refused to swear fealty to the King.

In 1274 King Edward, having secured himself in England, took the decision to launch an invasion of Wales on an unprecedented scale. (HOW 757)

It had taken the Normans one decisive battle to conquer England in a single day (1066 - the Battle of Hastings). Now, after two hundred years of successful Welsh resistance, Edward determined to bring Welsh independence to an end, and to accomplish the conquest of the Britons begun by the Anglo-Saxons in the fifth century.

He began by exploiting the jealousies toward Llewelyn of the Princes of Deheubarth and of Powys, before surrounding the forces of Llewelyn and forcing him to surrender in 1277 at the Treaty of Conwy.

Five years later, after further revolt in Wales, Edward again invaded Wales to bring about the final and complete subjugation of the country.

Llewelyn, to prevent himself being surrounded, drove south to the highlands of Builth (in Menevia) to create a diversion. On 11th December 1282 near Cilmeri (today on the A183 just west of Builth Wells) for some unknown reason, Llewelyn allowed himself to become separated from his troops and was struck down and killed, not at the head of his army, but by some chancing English soldier who happened upon him and knew not whom he had killed.

Thus on the banks of the Ithon River the last of the British Princes met his end and the indigenous Romano-Catholic Celtic culture of Britain fell under the sovereignty of the invader, 800 years after barbarian hordes first invaded and conquered the Romano-Catholic culture of Gaul, Spain and Italy. The last of the Roman Kings in the West was laid to rest in the hallowed ground of the Cistercian Abbey of Cwmhir in the Diocese of Menevia. Wales was bereft.

The poet Bleddyn Fardd expressed the despair of the nation:

*Gŵr a las drosom, gŵr oedd drosaf,
Gŵr oedd dros Gymru, hy y'i henwaf;
Gwrawl Llewelyn, gwraf o Gymro.*

A man was slain for us, a man of might,
A man for Wales was bold, I name him;
Manly Llewelyn, best of Welshmen.

For Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch, the cosmos had collapsed.

Poni welwch chwi'r sŷr wedi'r syrthiau?
See you not that the stars have fallen?

Och hyd atat Ti, Dduw, na ddaw – môr tros dir!

Ah, God, that the sea would cover the land!

Pa beth sy'n gedir i ohiriaw?

What is left that we should linger?

Thus the soil of Menevia claims the mortal remains of the last Prince of Wales, as also further south the Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida preserves the last resting place of the princes of the Royal House of Deheubarth:

“this blessed plot, this earth, this realm” (!)

Political independence had come to an end but, as J.E. Lloyd observes, by his life-work Prince Llewelyn “had helped to build solidly the enduring fabric of Welsh nationality” (HOW 764), and during the next two centuries the Catholic Church in Wales, facing considerable challenges, remained a faithful daughter of the Church until the breach of the (English) Reformation.

[2] Menevia in the Fourteenth Century (Dafydd ap Gwilym)

As in England and the rest of Europe the fourteenth century was largely a time of stagnation in the life of the Church – no more founding of great religious orders, and a general decline in the life of the Church.

In the Diocese of Menevia, following the Edwardian Conquest, things began well. Bishop Thomas Beke (1280-93) made careful financial provision for the Cathedral and founded two Collegiate churches in the Diocese, at Llanddewibrefi and a second at Llangadog, which he then moved to Abergwili. He also founded two hospitals in the Diocese at Llawhaden (one of the seven bishop-houses) and the other at St. David's.

Bishop Henry Gower (1328-47) formerly the Chancellor of Oxford University, carried out extensive renovations of the Cathedral so that today, “the cathedral bears the impress of his genius more strongly than that of any other of its builders” (WC 73). He also built for himself a palace next door to the cathedral (the splendid ruins of which still exist today) “which has strong claims to be the most beautiful building put up in Wales during the Middle Ages” (WC 73), making Menevia a very desirable bishopric.

Menevia shared the ravages of the Black Death (1349-51) – “y farwolaeth fawr” (the great death) – which is estimated to have wiped out two thirds of the Welsh population, decimating the clergy of the Diocese. In 1349 laymen in Menevia proceeded to ordination to the priesthood in less than a month in order to make up the shortfall, and in that same year in Hereford the bishop ordained 108 priests for Menevia, and in 1350 a further 55.

The census returns for 1377-81 showed that even relatively wealthy religious houses were experiencing a decline in numbers – Whitland (7), Carmarthen (6), Cwmhir (8), Talley (6) – and numbers remained low until the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. The Diocese became impoverished and the larger church estates were rented out, ominously giving laymen the experience and expertise in taking over church land. Even so, St. David's earned less from its estates in 1377 than it did in 1295.

One bright light was the poet Dafydd ap Gwilym (1340-71) – the greatest of all the poets of Wales – a parishioner of Llanbadarn Fawr in the north of the Diocese. However, of his 150 extant poems only four are conventional religious poems – in marked contrast to the poets of the previous century and earlier. Noticeable also is his gentle chiding of the Church and of the lifestyle of the Friars in the Diocese.

One of his most beautiful poems is the evocative “The Woodland Mass” (*Offeren y Llwyn*) which venerates creation – in true Celtic fashion – as part of Christian (not pagan) worship.

*Lle digrif y bŷm heddiw
Dan fentyll y gwyrddgyll gwiw,
Yn gwarando ddechrau dydd
Y ceiliog bronfraith celfydd
Yn canu englyn alathr,*

I was in a happy place today
Under mantles of lovely green hazels,
Listening at dawn of day
To the ingenious cock-thrush
Singing a polished englyn,

*Amdano yr oedd gasmai
O flodau mwyn gangau Mai,
A'i gasul, debygesynt,
O esgyll, gwyrdd fentyll, gwynt.*

He wore around him a vestment
Of the flowers of May's sweet branches
And his chasuble (one would suppose)
Of the winged green mantles of the wind.

*Codi ar fryn ynn yna
Afrlladen o ddeilen dda.
Ac eos fain gain fangaw
A gwr y llwyn gar ei llaw,
Cerwraig nant, i gant a gân
Cloch aberth, clau ei chwiban,
A dyrchafel yr aberth.*

There was raised upon a mound for us
A perfect leaf as consecrated wafer.
And the elegant slender nightingale
From the corner of the nearby thistles,
(The valley's wandering poetess) rang out
The Sanctus bell to the assembly, with a clear whistle,
And lifted up the consecrated Host.

(SPDG)

As Williams points out (WC 200) no poet was to exercise a greater influence on Welsh poets for the next two centuries than Dafydd ap Gwilym – but his poetry revealed the weakening hold of the Church on Welsh literature.

[3] The Archdiocese of Menevia and suffragan sees in England! (Owain Glyndŵr)

The new century began with an astonishing restoration of Welsh independence, as the fortunes of Owain Glyndŵr speeding through the Welsh firmament as a blazing meteor, revived the hopes and dreams of Welsh nationhood only to fall to earth with the collapse of national self-government in Wales until the establishment of the Welsh Assembly Government in 1999. In his ascent, two centuries after the arguments put forward by Gerald of Wales, the rights and status of the Diocese of Menevia as the mother church of Wales were once again revived.

Owain Glyndŵr (c. 1354-1416?) claimed descent from the three royal houses of Wales: Gwynedd, Powys and Deheubarth. A prominent member of the Welsh gentry in north Wales, he had studied law for seven years at the Inns of Court in London and had seen military service in support of the English King in Scotland as well as at sea against the French. It is unclear what caused him at the age of 46 to revolt against the King but it was probably the decision of Parliament not to support him in his land dispute with Lord Grey of Ruthin. On 16th September 1400, supported by prominent clergy and other members of the Welsh gentry, Owain claimed for himself the title of Prince of Wales and launched an attack on Ruthin Castle. Other towns and boroughs were attacked and the revolt spread to south Wales and in 1403 the castles of Llansteffan, Dryslwyn, Newcastle Emlyn and Carreg Cennen fell into his hands, and in 1404 Cardiff Castle was attacked and surrendered to him.

A Welsh Parliament was established in Machynlleth in 1404, supported by the Bishops of St. Asaph's and Bangor. In England also Henry IV was experiencing revolt and in February 1405 Owain made an alliance with Mortimer and the Earl of Northumberland in the "Tri-Partite Indenture" to divide England and Wales between them. Owain's share was to include not only Wales but a significant part of English territory. Owain's troops crossed the English border to within eight miles of Worcester. Not since the Norman Invasion had a foreign army penetrated so deeply into the heart of English territory.

At Pennal, near Machynlleth, in March 1406 Owain allied himself to the French cause to give his support to Pope Benedict XIII at Avignon, provided that the Pope agreed to create an independent ecclesiastical province in Wales, and at its head, "the Church of St. David's shall be restored to its original dignity, which from the time of St. David was a metropolitan church." (OG 43)

In anticipation of his Tri-partite powers in England, Owain claimed also as suffragan sees of the Archdiocese of Menevia not only St. Asaph's, Bangor and Llandaff but also Exeter, Bath, Hereford, Worcester, Coventry and Lichfield. Never in the long history of Menevia had such a vision and prospect of Menevia reached to such proportions!

Pope Benedict was also to provide only such "prelates, dignitaries and beneficed clergy who know our language", and to allow for "two universities – namely one in north Wales and the other in south Wales." (In 1413 Benedict XIII allowed the University of St. Andrews in Scotland to be thus established.)

The year 1406 was to witness the height of Owain's power in Wales. In that year Henry's son, Prince Harry (the future Henry V) led the fight back, learning the art of warfare that he

was later to employ on the soil of France (at the Battle of Agincourt). Over the next four years Owain was gradually beaten back and in 1417 the new King Henry V offered a pardon to all rebels including Owain – who refused to submit. Owain disappeared and nothing further is known about him. With his fall the Diocese of Menevia, her status and promise, receded once again under the other currents of Welsh history and nationhood.

[4] Henry VII (Henry Tudor), Son of Menevia

During the rest of the fifteenth century, the Diocese of Menevia slowly recovered its strength, sharing in the gradual economic recovery of the Principality. Nevertheless, as Williams points out, the three Welsh bishoprics were together worth only as much as the poorest of the English bishoprics, and the total income of all the Welsh abbeys was less than that of just the one abbey at Glastonbury. (WC 271)

The Diocese of Menevia was the best endowed of the three bishoprics retaining the land and extensive estates accrued over nearly a thousand years. There were 46 benefices in the deanery of Pembroke and 30 in the deanery of Sub-Aeron, although nearly half of the benefices were in the hands of absentee incumbents. (WC 291)

On the eve of the (English) Reformation, of the extant 150 Welsh wills nearly all referred to the prayers to be said after death for the deceased and 44 made provision to employ a priest to offer those prayers.

It would seem therefore that in Wales (as in England – as argued by Eamon Duffy in “The Stripping of the Altars”) the populace were happy and content in “Yr Hen Ffydd” (The Old Faith) which had sustained them for a thousand years. The accession of Henry VII to the throne of England promised further blessings to the people of Wales.

Henry VII (Henry Tudor) was born and raised – in the Diocese of Menevia! He was born at Pembroke Castle in 1457 and lived there, and at Raglan Castle, until his exile to Brittany and France in 1471. Descended from Cadwaladr, the seventh century Prince of Gwynedd through his paternal grandfather, Owen Tudor, he was acclaimed by Welsh bards as the “son of prophecy” – that prophecy that Cadwaladr would return and lead the British race to victory over the Saxons. When in 1485 he landed at Milford Haven, Sir Rhys ap Thomas (descendent and heir of the princes of Deheubarth) rode at his side with other co-patriots in his march north through the Diocese (through Haverfordwest, Cardigan, Aberaeron, Llanbadarn Fawr) and then east through central Wales to win the crown for Henry at the Battle of Bosworth. In the accession of Henry VII, this son of Menevia, the Venetian ambassador reported, “the Welsh may be said to have recovered their former independence; the most wise and fortunate Henry VII is a Welshman.” (RRW 237)

In honour of his British ancestry the new King christened his first-born son, Arthur. The reign of the Catholic monarchs King Arthur and Queen Catherine of Aragon is one of the great “what-might-have-beens” of British history.

In Henry’s reign Welshmen were once again appointed to Menevia: Bishops John Morgan (1496-1504) and Edward Vaughan (1509-22).

The accession of the new King Henry VIII in 1509 appeared to herald for Wales the promise of even better times ahead.

[1] The Reformation in Menevia and the Catholic Martyrs

On October 31st 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the west door of Wittenburg Cathedral. Within a few years the spread of Lutheranism threatened the hegemony of the Catholic Church in Europe. In England, Henry VIII was a faithful son of the Church and in 1521 published his defence of the Seven Sacraments of the Church in "Assertio Septem Sacramentum", denouncing the heresies of Luther for which Pope Leo V awarded him the title "Defender of the Faith". (ER 138)

Within twenty years the Catholic Faith in England and Wales had been all but destroyed. Eight hundred religious houses, abbeys and monasteries were closed down, priests and laity arrested and executed and a time of Catholic martyrdom arrived which had never previously been witnessed since the days of the Roman Empire.

In Menevia, the last Catholic bishop, Richard Rawlings (1522-35) – and the last bishop to be buried in the cathedral of St. David's – was replaced by the Protestant zealot William Barlow (1536-47). J.W. Evans (CCN 22f.) observes that Barlow was "clearly and absolutely determined to create a complete break with the medieval past – he slighted the shrine of St. David and destroyed the relics in 1538."

The ancient title of Menevia fell into abeyance but the Anglican Church inherited the boundaries (and patrimony) of the medieval Diocese of Menevia with the preferred title of the Diocese of St. David's (Esgobaeth Tŷddewi) and has retained those boundaries to the present day, thus preserving the Catholic geography of Medieval Wales under a new dispensation.

The new Bishop made plans to establish a Cathedral Church of the Diocese of St. David's in Carmarthen (or Brecon). In the event he only succeeded in moving the Bishop's residence from St. David's to Abergwili, just outside of Carmarthen, where the Anglican Bishop of St. David's still resides today.

By the middle of the seventeenth century the Cathedral lay in semi-ruins and William Thomas, the Anglican Bishop of St. David's (1677-83) sought a licence to demolish the remains of the Bishop's Palace at St. David's and again attempted to transfer his cathedral to Carmarthen – but once again the attempt failed. (CCN 228)

From the first Catholic martyrs under Henry VIII, the persecution of Catholics continued throughout the Tudor and Stuart dynasties to the end of the seventeenth century.

In 1970 Pope St. Paul VI canonised forty martyrs of England and Wales from the Reformation period, among whom we in Wales celebrate the martyrdoms of St. Richard Gwyn (the first of the Welsh martyrs in 1584), St. John Jones (1598), St. John Roberts (1610), St. Phillip Evans (1679), St. John Lloyd (1679) and St. David Lewis (the last of the Welsh martyrs, 1679) – the first Catholic martyrs in Wales since those of St. Julius and St. Aaron in Caerleon in Roman Britain.

As Bishop Daniel Mullins makes clear (FG 272f.), and as the blood of the martyrs of Wales testifies, nevertheless – despite persecution – Catholicism survived in Wales.

Under the Catholic Queen Mary (1553-58) there was an attempt to restore the Catholic Faith in England and Wales. Mullet points out (CBI, 27) that in Wales "the poets celebrated these Tridentine reformers, thereby pointing to a strong potential link between Catholic renewal and Welsh speech and culture". Cardinal Pole appointed Bishop Henry Morgan, a Catholic reformist, to the Diocese of Menevia (1554-59) but he was ejected from Menevia at

the accession of Elizabeth as Queen (1558). Indeed because of Welsh loyalty to the Welsh Tudor dynasty, under Queen Elizabeth Wales gradually succumbed to the Reformation – although Bishop Mullins challenges uncritical assumption of many historians of the Reformation that “by the end of Elizabeth’s reign, Wales had become a Protestant nation”. He points out that among the Cecil papers a letter of 1603 laments that Wales is still steeped “in superstition and popery” and that in the reign of Charles II Wales is still listed among the four strongholds of Catholicism. (See Daniel Mullins’ “Christianity in Wales”).

However in 1603 there were only 808 recusants in Wales (of a population numbering 212,000 church-goers). (CBI, 27) Catholicism seems to have particularly survived where it had the support of local Catholic gentry and especially in East and North-East Wales on the border with England.

Edward Somerset, Earl of Warwick (1553-1628) of Raglan Castle settled Catholic families on his land and established the College of St. Francis at Welsh Newton, which until 1679 was the spearhead of the Jesuit Mission in Wales. (FG 276)

The English Catholic martyr, St. John Kemble (who was born just across the border) is buried in the churchyard at Welsh Newton. (The only church in the world dedicated to St. John Kemble is in the Diocese of Menevia, in Glynneath.)

Other Catholic gentry families included the Morgans of Llantarnam and, in the north, the Mostyn family of Talacre, and the Conway and Pennant families. (CBI, 71)

But in west Wales (north and south) Catholic gentry were lacking and there was a corresponding decline in Catholic observance in these areas.

In the eighteenth century (CBI, 97f.) Welsh Catholicism went into steep decline, and Wales (and Menevia particularly) was transformed by successive Methodist revivals such that “in the course of the eighteenth century Catholicism increasingly lost the battle for Welsh hearts and minds.” (p. 101)

The area between Abergavenny and Monmouth remained the heartland of Welsh Catholicism. The Gunthers of Abergavenny sheltered Catholic priests including the martyr Phillip Evans. The Powell/Herbert family of Perthîr was to provide a base for the Welsh Vicariate Apostolic set up in 1688 and to become the residence for Bishop Prichard until 1750.

The Welsh language remained strong in Monmouthshire and St. David Lewis preached in both Welsh and English, “yet over the course of time, Catholic religious provision did not keep up with the persistent strength of the Welsh language in Monmouthshire – Welsh-speaking Catholics were spiritually starved to death – the church in Monmouthshire failed its people.” (p. 100) A judgement on the Catholic Church in Wales which perhaps, not unfairly, can be applied to the failure of the Church to accommodate the needs of Welsh-speaking Catholics in Wales today.

[2] Menevia and the “catholic” Methodist revivals

The very absence of Catholic witness in Menevia during the eighteenth century allowed something else to happen – and to be understood, nevertheless, from a Catholic perspective – which transformed the religious landscape of Menevia (and of Wales, England and the American Colonies), namely, the Methodist Revival, which sprang from the evangelical revival of the Christian Faith which began in Menevia at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

These revivals are an authentic part of the Catholic history of the Diocese of Menevia according to the Catholic theologian Louis Bouyer in his seminal work, *"The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism"* (1956) written even before the ecumenical initiatives of the Second Vatican Council.

In protestant cultures, where the witness of the Catholic Faith had all but disappeared – and therefore there was no opportunity to respond to, and accept the Catholic Faith – Bouyer argues that the great preachers of Methodism were indeed proclaiming truths of divine revelation which were essentially teachings of the Catholic Church (the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Atonement, Repentance, New Birth, Holiness in Christ, the Second Coming). It is these truths (these Catholic truths) to which their hearers responded even if (of course) the Methodist preachers did not preach the fullness of the Catholic Faith.

These truths, Bouyer argues, have largely been abandoned by liberal Protestantism and can only be safeguarded within the fullness of Catholic teaching from which they were first derived so that, "the Catholic Church (is) necessary for the full flowering of the Principles of the Reformation". (SFP 230) He argues that Protestantism is most successful when it adheres to, and promotes, those Christian truths of divine revelation shared with (and received from) the historic Catholic Faith.

The Methodist preachers challenged the cold rationalist theology and preaching of eighteenth century Anglican Deistic Theology, and appealed instead (as does the Catholic Faith) to the heart and soul of the believer to first "believe that I might understand".

In Menevia, in the eighteenth century, there was clearly a spiritual hunger for the truths of divine revelation which could not be met by the Catholic Church (having virtually disappeared from the landscape in Menevia), and so people flocked to hear about Christ where they could hear Him preached. In Menevia (and Wales) this was all the more powerful from hearing the Gospel preached in their (our) own language.

It is worthy of note that the great evangelical "awakening" of the eighteenth century and of the nineteenth century had its origin not with the Wesleys, but in Menevia!

As Skevington-Wood makes clear in his *"The Inextinguishable Blaze"* (1960), "the dawn" was in Wales and particularly in Menevia. In 1716 Griffith Jones became the Rector of Llanddowror in Carmarthenshire and began a ministry of catechising all his parishioners, and from this began catechising the whole nation of Wales through his Circulating Welsh Church Schools. By 1761 there were 4,000 such schools and it is estimated that he catechised half the population of Wales.

Under his preaching and influence the great Methodist preachers of Menevia (and Wales) discovered their vocation, the greatest of whom were Daniel Rowlands of Llangeitho in Ceredigion and also Howell Harris of Talgarth near Brecon, as well as Howell Davies, "the apostle of Pembrokeshire", not forgetting the greatest of the Welsh hymn writers, William Williams of Pantycelyn, the author of hundreds of "thoroughly catholic hymns", including "Guide me, O Thou Great Redeemer". Indeed the hymns of William Williams, as of Ann Griffiths of Bala, north Wales (whose thought has been compared with that of St. Teresa of Avila), and the hymns of Charles Wesley are notable for their thoroughly catholic content (and for this reason are included in modern Catholic hymn books).

The evangelical revival swept across the English-speaking world but it began in Menevia.

It is difficult not to see Rowlands, Harris and Davies following in the footsteps of David, Teilo and Padarn in re-evangelising the same areas conquered by the Gospel in the sixth century.

Perhaps also in re-evangelising the very same geography of the ancient Diocese of Menevia, they provide a model, a pattern of re-evangelisation, for us to imitate in our own day, an inspiration for the Diocese of Menevia School of Evangelisation and Catechetics, to concentrate on the core of the Catholic Faith, not to preach the church but to preach Jesus (the church following in His wake).

A similar situation pertains for Christians in Menevia today as in the eighteenth century, except that today the Catholic Church is not absent but present throughout the Diocese and (in a culture in which our separated brothers and sisters are increasingly falling under the spell of moral relativism and theological liberalism) we have the opportunity, the privilege, the divine mandate to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ in our own day and to present Christ, who is yesterday, today and forever the same, to the hearts and souls of a spiritually hungry nation. Where else in our day can the yearning heart find the Gospel of Christ which is eternal and unchanging? How tragic, therefore, if, at this very time, we were to retreat from mission by closing churches (as in the Diocese of Wrexham) and dissolving our ancient Diocese.

[3] The Restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy (1850)

As revivalism swept across Menevia and Wales in 1767, a survey of the Diocese of St. David's revealed only 114 Catholic recusants in the whole of the Diocese. (CBI, 163) But by the 1820s and 1830s the Catholic population of the Diocese began to grow through the influx of Irish immigrants especially into Swansea and Pembroke Dock.

From 1688 following the Act of Toleration (although it did not recognise the rights of Catholics) bishops were appointed by Rome to act as Vicars Apostolic in Britain. Wales and Herefordshire were part of the Western District of which the following bishops had oversight: Philip Ellis (1688-1708); Matthew Prichard (1715-50); Lawrence York (1750-63); Charles Walmesley (1763-97); W.G. Sharrock (1797-1809); Peter Collingridge (1809-29); Peter Baines (1829-40).

In 1840 the Western District was split in two and Wales, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire became the Welsh District and Bishop Thomas Brown was appointed the Vicar Apostolic.

Ten years later (1850) the Apostolic Letter "*Universalis Ecclesiae*" restored the Catholic Hierarchy in England and Wales, and erected a Metropolitan See at Westminster with twelve suffragan sees. The Welsh District was established as two episcopal sees, that of Shrewsbury (including the six northern counties of Anglesey, Caernarfon, Denbigh, Flint, Merioneth and Montgomery) and that of "Menevia united with Newport" (the rest of Wales and Herefordshire). Bishop Thomas Brown was appointed as the first Bishop of Newport and Menevia (1850-80) (and also until the following year, Administrator of the Diocese of Shrewsbury) – the first Welsh Diocesan Bishop in Wales since the Reformation.

The decision to re-claim the title of the ancient Diocese of Menevia is the most significant aspect of the Apostolic Letter "*Universalis Ecclesiae*" because whereas for the rest of England and Wales new dioceses with new titles were created, Menevia is the only diocese to have been restored and not newly created. Furthermore, it is the only diocese of England and Wales to take a Latin title, a title which is not only pre-Reformation but pre-Norman and pre-Canterbury. I suggest, in the light of the history of the Diocese of Menevia outlined in this Essay, that this decision to restore the ancient title of Menevia is no accident but full of the greatest significance.

Firstly, the title “Menevia” is a claim to the continuity of the Catholic Church in Wales (and thereby also in England), and that despite the creation of otherwise wholly new dioceses Menevia (on behalf of them all) claims continuity with the medieval church and (in Wales) with the Romano-Celtic Church of the late-Roman and post-Roman eras.

Secondly, in retaining the title “Menevia”, the Catholic Church was also making a claim to be the original mother church of Wales and heir to all the claims and status of the medieval Diocese of Menevia, including the claim that the foundation of the Diocese of Menevia precedes that of Canterbury or any of the other dioceses in Britain according to the boast of Bishop Bernard (1115-48) that Menevia is “the first and greatest province of the Island”.

Thirdly, the title “Menevia” made clear that the establishment of the Catholic Hierarchy in Wales was not the arrival of the Catholic Church in Wales but the revival of the Catholic Church in Wales as “*yr hen ffydd*” (“the old faith”) of the people of Wales. The Catholic Church was claiming to be a Welsh church, not the English Catholic Church in Wales imposed from without.

In the twenty-first century Menevia continues to have this significance which is more than symbolic but which roots the Catholic Church in Wales (and England) in the late-Roman (or perhaps first century?) and post-Roman church which the English dioceses are unable to do having only been founded in the seventh century after two hundred years of Anglo-Saxon paganism, whereas in Wales alone there has been an uninterrupted, continuous Christian history since the days of the Roman Empire. All this long continuity is preserved and safeguarded only in the continual existence of this ancient Diocese of Menevia and not in the newer Welsh dioceses of Cardiff (1916) and Wrexham (1987).

Bishop Brown expected that the Cathedral Church for the Diocese of Newport and Menevia would be built in Newport (which was then the largest town in Wales) but in 1857 work began on building Belmont Abbey to serve as the Cathedral for the Diocese. In 1847 the first part of the present St. David’s Church, Swansea was opened, serving a population of about 3,000 Catholics in the town – almost entirely Irish immigrants. (FG 275) Also in 1847 a church was built at Pembroke Dock and later (1872) the Church of St. David and St. Patrick in Haverfordwest. In 1874 Cardinal Manning consecrated the new Church of Our Lady of the Angels and St. Winifred in Aberystwyth. In 1873 the Benedictines took on responsibility for Swansea (which had been served by Jesuits from Bristol) and the new Church of St. Joseph was opened in 1888 with the intention that at some time in the future it might become a cathedral church.

Also in 1873 Bishop Cuthbert Hedley was appointed as an Auxiliary to Bishop Brown. When Bishop Brown died in 1880, Hedley succeeded him as Bishop of Newport and Menevia in 1881. Bishop Mullins points out that “he was to become a major figure in Catholic life in England as well as Wales. After Newman, he was the most highly-regarded and prolific Catholic writer of his day.” (FG 278) Hedley moved the Bishop’s House to Cardiff and established a college for diocesan seminarians where, amongst other studies, Welsh was taught as an important requirement for diocesan priests serving in Wales. His subsequent support for the claim of Cardiff to be recognised as the capital of Wales was not popular. Cardiff had only lately become the biggest town in Wales but otherwise had no part in the history of Wales from the sixth to the nineteenth centuries.

In 1892 Bishop Herbert Vaughan of Salford (who had learnt Welsh as a young man) became Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. Cardinal Vaughan was not happy with the ecclesiastical provision for Wales stating that “Wales ought to be treated as an independent state rather

than as an appendage of England” and proposed that the medieval territory of Menevia (the counties of Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Brecknock and Radnor) be separated from (what now became) the Diocese of Newport and joined to the six northern counties of Wales to form The Vicariate of Wales (1896) under the Vicar Apostolic, Father Francis Mostyn. Two years later (1898) this became the Diocese of Menevia under (the now Bishop) Mostyn, the first Bishop of Menevia (as a separated, integrated, diocese) since the Reformation. Bishop Mostyn was enthusiastically Welsh and was quick to address “the idea of a Welsh diocese with a Welsh bishop” in the hope that “a bilingual clergy would not only make a special appeal to Welsh Catholics but would break down prejudice and encourage a sympathy in the non-Catholic Welsh and so open the way to conversions.” Strangely, the cathedral and diocesan Curia continued to be based in the north of the diocese in Wrexham, far outside the medieval boundaries of the Diocese of Menevia, but (not inappropriately) Menevia which once claimed Archiepiscopate status over the whole of Wales now incorporated eleven of the thirteen old counties of Wales. In 1898 this extended Diocese of Menevia had a population of approx. 8,500 Catholics served by 29 diocesan priests and 59 priests in religious orders. (FG 283)

In 1916 Pope Benedict XV in his Apostolic Letter “*Cambria Celtica*” established a separate province in Wales which transformed the Diocese of Newport into the Archdiocese of Cardiff with metropolitan jurisdiction over the Diocese of Menevia, the smaller novel Archdiocese (of just three counties: Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire) having jurisdiction over the far larger and ancient Diocese of Menevia. (Previously the Diocese of Menevia and the Diocese of Newport were under the metropolitan jurisdiction of Birmingham since 1911.)

[F] ESGOBAETH MYNYW/ THE DIOCESE OF MENEVIA (1895-2019)

[1] The Extended Diocese of Menevia 1895-1987

The first half of the twentieth century was a great time of optimism and of growth for the Catholic Church in Wales and for the Diocese of Menevia in particular. The Diocese was blessed with visionary and zealous bishops who prayed for, and worked hard for, the restoration of the people of Wales to “yr hen Ffydd” (“the old Faith”). Successive bishops stressed their evangelistic commitment to the conversion of Wales to the Catholic Faith.

This vision began with Bishop Francis Mostyn (Bishop of Menevia 1898-1921; Apostolic Administrator of Menevia 1921-26; Archbishop of Cardiff 1921-39). “From as early as the foundation of the Diocese of Menevia in 1898 and the appointment of Francis Mostyn, an enthusiastic Welsh bishop, Catholics had begun to contemplate seriously the possibility of winning their country back to the Old Faith.” (WC 44)

In the ten years from 1921 to 1931 the number of Catholics in Menevia rose from 9,881 to 17,866 and by 1940 to 20,000. In 1926 Archbishop Mostyn wrote, “What shall I speak of, if not what is nearest to my heart, namely, the restoration of its ancient faith to gallant little Wales.” He stressed, in Wales, the cultural importance of congregational hymn singing, “most of us have heard the magnificent congregational singing that meets our ears as we pass any of the chapels in Wales; why cannot we do the same?” (JWRH 83) After all, Prime Minister Lloyd George told Cardinal Gasquet, “the Welsh people are still catholic at heart”.

In 1924 Archbishop Mostyn established a Welsh branch of the Catholic Truth Society. The re-conversion of Wales to the Catholic Faith was celebrated as just on the horizon. *The*

Tablet in 1924 claimed it had “not the smallest doubt that the ancient affinities of Wales will assert themselves and that Cambria will some day rival Hibernia in her Catholic faith and zeal”. The following year *The Tablet* reported, “In His time and in His season Wales will return to the Faith and to the Catholic Unity which was hers for a thousand years. Wales will be a Holy Land; her windswept Tegid a Sea of Galilee, her headlong Dee a Jordan, her Snowdon a Mount of Transfiguration.” (WC 45)

In Menevia between the 1920s and 1950s, with the visible decline of Welsh nonconformity, the Catholic faith was returning to many areas for the first time since the Reformation. If there was an impediment to this growth it was that the Catholic Church was still perceived as being a foreign institution, but with Archbishops Mostyn and McGrath taking steps to ensure a sufficiency of Welsh-speaking priests, and a number of high-profile conversions (including that of Saunders Lewis, the first President of Plaid Cymru, the National Party of Wales) by the late 1930s there was a belief that the image of the Church as foreign could be overcome. Nevertheless, with the rapid decline of Nonconformity throughout the twentieth century it became clear that large numbers of lapsed Protestants were not turning to the Catholic Church but to secularism, indifference and neo-paganism. (WC 48) Bishop McGrath spoke prophetically in 1932 when he said, “Within the next fifty years Wales must choose between infidelity and the Catholic Church.”

Bishop Francis Vaughan (1926-35) – nephew of Cardinal Vaughan – on his first visit to the Cistercian Community on Caldey Island (“Ynys Bŷr” – regularly visited by St. Dyfrig at the end of the fifth century on his annual Lenten Retreat) asked that their prayers would bring about “the return of our beloved country to its ancient faith”. He was convinced that the re-evangelisation of Wales depended on prayer. “We cannot all be Apostles preaching the Gospel but we can all pray, without ceasing, that Wales once more may take up her ancient place as a beloved daughter of Holy Mother Church.”

During the ten years of his episcopate the number of churches in Menevia rose from 57 to 71, the number of Catholics in the Diocese more than doubled and the number of clergy in the Diocese rose from 26 to 61 – a testimony to his appeal to the Diocese to pray! His “paramount belief in Prayer as the grand means for converting Wales” was noted for special mention in his obituary in 1935.

In 1936, Bishop Michael McGrath (1935-40) re-opened St. Mary’s College in Aberystwyth to train future priests to speak Welsh. (The Passionists also established St. Non’s Retreat House, just outside St. David’s, as a house for Welsh studies.) Bishop McGrath had previously been in charge of the College (1929-34) in Aberystwyth and was an accomplished Welsh scholar (a graduate in Celtic Languages from the University of Ireland, he quickly mastered the Welsh language) and was often consulted by Welsh academics at the University College of Aberystwyth. He invited the Carmelites to take over the running of the College and Saunders Lewis (Welsh scholar, politician and Catholic convert) to teach Welsh. In 1947 the College transferred to Tregyb, Llandeilo but the Carmelites remained in Aberystwyth until 2008 (and established churches in Borth, Penparcau, Aberaeron and Lampeter). In 1954 the College in Tregyb closed and “the dream of a Welsh college that would grow into a seminary for Wales came to an end”. (FG 285)

During the war years under Bishop Daniel Hannon (1941-46) the Apostolate of the Welsh Mission (Cyfeillion Cymru) was set up (in England – by families whose children had been evacuated to Wales and in thanksgiving) to offer prayers, Masses and financial support for the conversion of Wales and by 1946 there were 25 circles in existence. Also in the 1940s Y Cylch Catholig (the Catholic Circle) was established especially for Welsh-speaking Catholics.

Bishop John Petit (1947-72) confessed to being an “English” Bishop of Menevia and referred to himself as a “missionary bishop” challenging the Diocese to become “conversion-minded” and telling the clergy that “Conversion-work is of the very essence of our ministry.” (JWRH 75) He insisted that “if the conversion of Wales was ever to become a fact, the Welshman must be approached as a Welshman and not as some kind of hybrid Englishman, which he is not” – thus recognising that the Welsh are not just a different nation but a different race.

In 1946 the Lamp Society had been set up to help finance bilingual literature and evangelism in Wales; and from this in 1949 the Menevia Travelling Mission was set up. In 1948 Bishop Petit had expressed his wish to have two or more “missionary priests” whose full-time work would be to travel through the diocese evangelising and ministering to the remote areas of the diocese where “the Welsh language was often regarded as a critical necessity in evangelistic effort” and to demonstrate “that Catholicism was not the foreign religion that so many Welshmen believed it to be.” Fr. Patrick Crowley was appointed as the first travelling missionary and within the year had established 14 Mass Centres for about 250 Catholics in the Diocese. Saunders Lewis pointed out that “the lack of Welsh-speaking Catholics was the one impediment to Catholic progress in Wales”. In the first issue of the *Menevia Record* (1953), the editor suggested that the “highest motive” for learning Welsh was the conversion of Wales to the ancient faith.

Of course, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Church of Wales was strengthened by massive immigration into the country. By 1966 a fifth of the population was of non-Welsh origin. In a survey of Aberystwyth in 1955, out of 135 Catholics 22% had been born in Wales, 20% were Italian, 15% Irish, 8% Polish and 4% were from elsewhere on the Continent. Of the 31 converts, 7 were from Nonconformity and 22 were from the Anglican Church. Almost all Welsh converts regarded the (old) Mass as central to their conversion. Saunders Lewis stated that he converted “for one terribly simple reason, that I thought it was in the Catholic Church’s Mass that God is worshipped as He should be worshipped by men”. (WC 39)

In 1955 Bishop Petit embarked on a two-month tour of the United States to raise money for the Diocese and returned with the astonishing sum of \$15,000.

During the twentieth century the “catholic” protestantism of the Diocese continued to flourish in the writings of several of the Welsh poets living in the Diocese.

Gwenallt Jones (1899-1968) was born in Alltwen, Pontardawe, “a powerful and at times prophetic exponent of a catholic evangelicalism and an evangelical Catholicism”. (SG ix) He moved from a Calvinist Methodist background into the Anglican Church “towards a sacramental and catholic perspective” (Rowan Williams, SG vii) but recoiled from the “alien nature” of the Catholic Church in Wales.

He begins his poem in praise of St. David:

“There is no barrier between two worlds in the church
They come to worship with us, our small congregation
The saints our oldest ancestors
The saints who built Wales on the foundation
Of the Crib, the Cross and the Empty Tomb
And they go out as before to travel their old ways
And to evangelising Wales” (trans.)

He addresses Our Lady with ease:

“O Mary, set your star in the midst of heaven’s darkness
And show with your chart, the path back to His will” (trans.)

(MCW)

The “catholic” hymns of the great eighteenth century hymnwriter William Williams:

“They sang above my cradle
Over my boyhood and my youth” (trans.)

In “Ar Gyfeiliorn” (The Lost) he calls upon the Virgin Mary to guide “our stubborn ship to one of God’s harbours.” (SPCP 123)

John Seward asks the question, “Why does the poetic culture of this very protestant country seem so strongly impelled towards things catholic?” and recalls a comment of G.K. Chesterton that “the Welsh are to me a most mysterious people” (*The Uses of Diversity*, 1920) and Seward continues, “most other Englishmen do not recognise the mystery of Wales because they seem hardly aware of the existence of Wales.” Chesterton however had become aware of “the presence in the west of Britain of a culture strangely and stirringly different from that of the English. He felt it was urgent to explore this unknown land: “For, unless I am very much mistaken, Wales is going to play some peculiar, and perhaps dominant part in the development of our extraordinary times.” (CW)

Seward points to the future, “In an almost miraculous way, the poetry of Gwenallt and the other Catholic-minded poets of Wales disposes the minds of its readers to the receiving of Catholic truth. Perhaps the re-evangelisation of these islands will begin in mysterious Wales.” (CW)

Here is the vocation of the Catholic Church in Wales. Here is the vocation of the Catholic Diocese of Menevia.

Waldo Williams (1904-71) grew up in Llandysilio in Pembrokeshire, attending the local Baptist chapel and (twenty years before the ecumenical initiatives of the Second Vatican Council) he praises the forgotten Catholic martyrs of the Reformation:

The centuries of silence gone, now let me weave a celebration
Because the heart of faith is one, the moment glows in which
Souls recognise each other, one with the great tree’s kernel at the root of things
(trans.)

He celebrates St. Tysilio, the seventh century saint of his village and St. Brynach who founded the church, a little further north, in Nevern.

Lord, shepherd of the ages of the earth
Your saints stand in glory
Over and around the places where we dwell
The ancient kinship of earth and heaven” (trans.)

“Brynach, Irishman, look on us
Let our prayers flow together with yours”

(GPW 98/99)

In his long poem “Tŷddewi” (St. David’s) the praises of Mary hover over the Pembrokeshire of St. David.

“The Virgin Mother, Ave Maria
 how clear is the Deo Gloria to God,
 and praise spreading high above the world
 is a cloak of life from Clegyr Foia” (trans.)

(WW 201)

In his poetry, Allchin concludes, there is “a coming together of Catholic and Evangelical conviction which creates something new, which is also the rediscovery of something very old.” (GPW 99)

The “catholic” Methodist revivals of the eighteenth century and the “catholic” protestant poetry of the twentieth century point to a particular vocation for the Diocese of Menevia to open to the people of Wales the richness of the Catholic Faith (“yr hen Ffydd” – the old Faith) in a protestant country “so strongly impelled towards things catholic” (Seward), and to invite conversion to the Catholic Church as “necessary for the full flowering of the principles of the Reformation” (Louis Bouyer). To dissolve the Diocese of Menevia is to withdraw from this vocation and ministry which belongs uniquely to the Diocese of Menevia, the heart of both Catholic and Protestant Wales.

[2] 1987: The Reconstructed Diocese of Menevia and the New Diocese of Wrexham

“By 1982 as many as a quarter of all church and chapel members in Wales were Roman Catholics” and the Church had established itself “as an integral part of the Welsh religious scene” (WC 6, 15). Hostility toward the Catholic Church in Wales had declined and ecumenical contacts were growing following the Second Vatican Council. Bishop Petit was particularly committed to advancing ecumenical encounters especially with the Anglican Church in Wales, which was to lead to the full involvement of the Catholic Church in Cytun in 1990.

Nevertheless, enormous, revolutionary social change took place in Western society from the 1960s onwards with a widespread rejection of traditional Christian values and challenges to all forms of authority. From the 1960s all the major Protestant denominations and also the Catholic Church began to experience a steady decline in membership which has continued through the last fifty years. It was against this background that, as Bishop Mullins states, “the erection of the present Diocese of Menevia in 1987 was an act of faith. At a time when the Christian Faith was in decline in its Ancient European strongholds, the Pope of Rome summoned the people of Menevia to build again on the foundation of St. David and St. Samson and all the saints of Wales.” (TC, xvi)

In other words, Bishop Mullins states explicably that the creation of new boundaries for Menevia in 1987 (creating the new Diocese of Wrexham) was precisely part of the vision of Pope St. John Paul II, to re-evangelise the “ancient European strongholds” those countries “with ancient Christian roots – where entire groups of the baptised have lost a living sense of faith – and live a life far removed from Christ” (MOR 33)

To propose, in 2019, that the ancient Diocese of Menevia, reconstructed in 1987 to facilitate the re-evangelisation of Wales, should now be dissolved or amalgamated is both an admission that, in 1987, Rome made a mistake in thus committing the Catholic Church to the re-evangelisation of Wales, but also that the Catholic Church is very publicly

withdrawing from its mission to re-evangelise Wales which was precisely expressed in the reconstruction of the Church in Wales in 1987. It would appear that in 2019 the Catholic Church is saying that it no longer has a vision for Wales but is in retreat and lock-down. What happened in 1987?

As Bishop Mullins says, in 1987 “Menevia was restored to what was very nearly its medieval territory and the Diocese of Wrexham was formed.” (CW 227) “The evangelisation of Wales so strongly promoted by St. David was again to be the all-embracing need as a secular Wales faced the third Christian Millennium.” (FG 290)

It was proposed that the northern part of the Diocese of Menevia should be separated off and become the Diocese of Wrexham but that what had been the Curial office and the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Menevia (Our Lady of Sorrows, Wrexham) should continue to serve the new Diocese of Wrexham and instal a new Cathedral and Curial Office for the reconstructed Diocese of Menevia established in the City of Swansea.

Undoubtedly, an opportunity was lost in 1987 to recognise the distinctive character and history of the Catholic Church in Wales by the unfortunate decision to give to the new diocese the title of “Wrexham”, which implies no continuity with the medieval and early Celtic Church in north Wales and manifests a certain amount of insensitivity to Welsh sentiments and Welsh history, in that Wrexham is probably in origin an Anglo-Saxon settlement in Wales but certainly a Norman settlement (and castle) and part of the Anglo-Norman conquest of Wales – a rather unfortunate name for a Welsh diocese!

In the middle of the sixth century when Strathclyde, Cumbria and Wales formed a single Celtic homeland (with several kingdoms), Kentigern (Cyndeyrn) travelled from Strathclyde to north Wales and founded a monastery of about 900 monks at Llanelwy on the banks of the River Elwy, which was later named after one of his disciples, St. Asaph (now the title of the Anglican Diocese). What a lost opportunity in 1987 not to call the new diocese of north Wales “the Diocese of Llanelwy”, referred to as “Lanelu” in the letter to Pope Eugenius III in the twelfth century. How much more would Welsh hearts have warmed to, and owned, a title with such deep resonances with the Catholic Celtic history of north Wales.

In 1987 Archbishop Ward of Cardiff and Bishop Hannigan of Menevia petitioned Rome for the creation of a third diocese in Wales. By the decree *Fiducia Freti* of 12th February 1987 the whole of the Welsh Church was restructured. Menevia was restored to its historic medieval boundaries with the addition of a small extension to the east into West Glamorgan. A new Diocese of Wrexham was created. “The evangelisation of Wales so strongly promoted by St. David was again to be the all-embracing need as a secularist Wales faced the third Christian Millennium.” (FG 290) Priests who now found themselves to be geographically situated outside of the diocese of their incardination were given the choice of diocese in Wales in which they now wanted to be incardinated.

What is not clear (to those not involved) from the “Consultation Document on a Proposed Third Diocese in Wales”, and from subsequent events, is the nature of the financial settlement in creating a third diocese. The Diocese of Menevia ceded its Curial Office and Cathedral to the new Diocese of Wrexham. What provision was made to secure the reconstructed Diocese of Menevia on a solid financial foundation?

Bishop Daniel Mullins, the new Bishop of Menevia (1987-2001) shared the vision, and adopted the priorities, of the earlier bishops of Menevia from the time of its restoration in 1898. An accomplished Welsh learner, Mullins oversaw the publication of the Mass in Welsh in 1988 (*Llyfr Offeren y Sul*) under the editorship of Fr. John FitzGerald and Patrick Donovan,

followed by a Book of Welsh Prayers (*Llyfr Gweddïau Catholig*) under the auspices of Y Cylch Catholig in 1997. (In 2006, Y Cylch Catholig published *Emynau Catholig* – Catholic Hymns.) In a major initiative, on the eve of the Third Millennium, Bishop Mullins announced “The Diocesan Plan for Mission” publishing comprehensive and detailed Synod Papers, in July 2000, entitled “*A Pilgrimage to the Heart of the Gospel*” (“*Pererindod i Galon yr Efengyl*”) covering 26 topics under four headings: Teaching of the Church, Community, Sacramental Life and Prayer. The Diocesan Plan for Mission was launched at the Diocesan Synod on 2nd February 2001. In his promulgation of the results of the Synod, Bishop Mullins declared, “Now, at the beginning of the Third Millennium, a time of challenge and profound change, of promise and joyful expectation, of faith and work, the whole Diocese eagerly awaits the results of the Synod’s work and the speedy and effective practical implementation of its recommendations.”

It is clear that in the re-organisation of the Diocese in 1987 and in the Diocesan Plan for Mission (2001), Bishop Mullins does not underestimate the scale of the challenge facing the Diocese but that the Catholic Church in Wales has been re-configured precisely to address those challenges through a whole-hearted commitment to mission.

It is much to be hoped that the recently established Diocese of Menevia School of Evangelisation and Catechetics (DOMSEC) will find encouragement in “re-discovering” this earlier plan for Mission in the Diocese, and that DOMSEC and the whole Diocese will be inspired by the great examples of evangelisation and re-evangelisation in the long history of our Diocese from the missionary endeavours of our sixth century foundation saints (David, Teilo, Samson, Padarn), from the establishment of the great religious orders in our Diocese in the twelfth century, through the witness of our martyr saints and the “catholic” protestant revivals in our Diocese in the eighteenth century, to the inspiring leadership of our bishops in past years and the Diocesan Plan for Mission of 2001. To close down or amalgamate the Diocese of Menevia in 2019 would be a clear public statement that the challenges of our day (never underestimated by previous bishops) have overwhelmed us and defeated us.

[H] ESGOBAETH MYNYW - 2019 - DIOCESE OF MENEVIA

On 11th July 2019 it was announced that the Holy Father had accepted the resignation of Bishop Thomas Matthew Burns as Bishop of Menevia following his 75th birthday at the beginning of June. It was widely anticipated (within the Diocese) that a Diocesan Administrator would be appointed whilst moves continued to appoint a successor to Bishop Burns. The Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Edward Adams, had visited the diocese in February 2018 and it was generally believed that he had gained a favourable impression of the diocese. Earlier this year the Cathedral Chapter and a number of individual priests were approached to comment on the needs of our Diocese and three names (the “terna”) were forwarded by the chapter for consideration to succeed Bishop Burns.

It was a surprise therefore to hear that this process had been interrupted and that Archbishop George Stack of Cardiff had been appointed as Apostolic Administrator for the Diocese, and something of a shock to be informed by His Grace on 12th September that he had been instructed by the Holy See “to carry out all the necessary steps – to verify the hypothesis of a union with – the said Diocese (of Menevia) with the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Cardiff.” Parish Profile documents were also issued to assess the status of, and the viability of, all the parishes in the Diocese. His Grace in his letter of 17th September asked the priests of the Diocese for responses to the Instruction from Rome (and his address to the clergy on 12th September) including reflections on “the history of the Diocese as you

know it and the various proposals for the future pattern of episcopal oversight". He asked that these reflections and also profiles of all the parishes and deaneries should be forwarded to him no later than the 14th October in order to have the opportunity to reflect on them before the next Extraordinary Meeting of Clergy on 21st October.

I think that a general response from the clergy is – Why such haste? The Diocese was founded by St. David in the sixth century, restored in 1850, restructured in 1898 and in 1987 and the request to consider abolishing the Diocese within three months and to respond to the proposal within one month, seems to many of the clergy to be extraordinary and also inexplicable. Why the haste?

Secondly, it is not clear, it has not been explained, who originated this "hypothesis" – where did it come from?

Thirdly, what were the reasons put forward by the originator in favour of his (their) "hypothesis"? Are the reasons Pastoral? Theological? Financial? Ecclesiastical? Or is it concern about numbers? (parishes? parishioners? vocations? priests?) Or is there some other reason/reasons? Several of the priests have commented that it is difficult to respond ("like having your hands tied behind your back") when we do not know the reasons and the argument behind the "hypothesis".

In his address to the clergy on 12th September His Grace drew attention to: (i) the fall in Mass attendance over the last 30 years; (ii) the fall in the number of Diocesan priests; (iii) concern for priestly care indicating that, in his opinion, "isolated individualistic ministry is unsustainable in the future"; (iv) the positive "green shoots" in the Diocese; (v) those areas where the Archdiocese of Cardiff and the Diocese of Menevia can and do already cooperate and work together (i.e. the National Marriage Tribunal). One concern missing from this list is the one which many priests believe (rightly or wrongly) is the underlying reason for the proposition that the Diocese of Menevia should now consider its viability and that reason/concern is the financial viability of the Diocese. It is pondered whether we would be considering the future status of the Diocese if (like the Archdiocese of Cardiff) our Balance Sheet showed reserves of £17,318,278 in the Curial Funds and £6,327,241 in Parochial Funds, a grand total of £23,645,969 (according to the 2019 Directory and Year Book, p. 85). The financial status of the Diocese appears to many to be "the elephant in the room" and undoubtedly the greatest challenge facing the (hoped for) newly appointed Bishop of Menevia when he assumes office.

[1] Finance:

It seems therefore appropriate to address, in the first instance, the financial status of the Diocese. In my opinion the greatest challenge facing the new Bishop will be addressing the financial challenges of the Diocese. On this will depend his ability to address other key issues, especially:

(i) ensuring that the Curial Office is adequately staffed (and paid for). It is clearly unrealistic (for instance) to expect that the Land & Property Officer can manage all the needs of such a large diocesan estate (of 49 churches, plus church halls, presbyteries and schools) on a three-day week.

(ii) to give adequate financial support to the evangelistic and missionary outreach of the Diocese, building on the work of the Diocese of Menevia School of Evangelisation and Catechetics (DOMSEC), continuing in the vision of past missionary-minded Bishops of the

Diocese, and exploring the possibility of funding a Youth Minister and Mission Team (Missioner) for the Diocese.

How then can the financial situation of the Diocese be addressed?

Firstly we need to look at how we have arrived at our present financial crisis. To encourage ourselves it perhaps ought to be pointed out that we have been in financial difficulties before – but it was not suggested closing down the Diocese! In 1949 Bishop Petit set up the Travelling Mission in Menevia but “the cost of such an endeavour was well beyond the means of the Diocese” (WC 27) and required financial help from The Lamp Society. As we have seen, in 1955 Bishop Petit went on a two-month fundraising tour of the United States and returned with over \$15,000.

An important consideration is the financial settlement of 1987. Most of us are not aware of what financial provision was made for the Diocese of Menevia in 1987, and can therefore ask the question: “Was the re-organisation of the Diocese of Menevia in 1987 founded on a firm financial basis?” For, (unlike Wrexham and Cardiff) Menevia had to finance a new Curial Office and new clerical staff (and the new Cathedral). How generous were the Curial Offices in Wrexham and Cardiff in setting up the reconstituted Diocese of Menevia? Menevia could realistically be expected to have been given sufficient financial resources also to meet future needs as well. Did this happen?

It seems, otherwise, difficult to explain how a few years later (15 years?) the Diocese of Menevia was struggling with a debt to the bank of £1.5 million. How did this come about? Was it through mismanagement? Or a flawed financial settlement in 1987? We can only ask the question but others, perhaps, can give an authoritative answer to what is an important question, without which it is not possible to seriously address our present financial predicament and why we are where we are.

Positively, it needs to be stressed how much our financial situation has improved over the last ten years or so. During this time the diocesan debt to the bank has been reduced from £1.5m. to £0.5m. An extraordinary achievement in very difficult financial circumstances. (Of course, parish funds and property more than cover our debt to the bank.) Also to mention the extraordinary diocesan response to the Jubilee Appeal for the Diocese which, in three years, raised over a million pounds! It was made clear that the Appeal was not for the purpose of meeting our debt to the bank but for (i) supporting our sick and retired clergy; (ii) supporting our seminarians; (iii) supporting the pastoral life and mission of the Diocese. It is disheartening (“a punch in the face”) that having worked so hard to bring ourselves back towards financial solvency our efforts are rewarded by the threat of abolishing or amalgamating the Diocese.

What, then, is the way forward? Undoubtedly, this will be the new bishop’s greatest challenge. He will need help.

Firstly, there will need to be a realistic assessment of the 1987 financial settlement of the Diocese and how that can, justly and fairly, now be acknowledged and re-addressed. Presumably only the Papal Nuncio and the Bishops’ Conference are in a position to do this. Would it be possible for the Bishops’ Conference to jointly approach The Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation, on behalf of the Diocese of Menevia, to make the case for the generous funding of the Diocese?

Secondly, it seems only fair that the faithful of the Diocese have an opportunity to respond to the financial difficulties of the Diocese, when it is explained to them that the financial

viability of the Diocese is at stake. It will surely be a priority of the new bishop to make such an appeal to the Diocese.

Thirdly, in addition to a direct appeal to the Diocese, and following the example of Bishop Petit's fundraising tour of the United States in 1955, the new bishop should seriously consider a wider appeal perhaps especially targeting (i) wealthy Catholic donors and organisations and (ii) the many millions who today have an interest in Celtic spirituality, the Celtic Church, the romance of *The Lord of the Rings* etc., because perhaps no other diocese in the world (Ireland included) is so replete with standing stones and holy wells, Celtic and medieval ruins, a sacred landscape and Celtic myths and legends as is the Diocese of Menevia. The new bishop might give serious consideration to employing (for two years?) an experienced fund-raiser who could, perhaps, spearhead both appeals (to the faithful of the Diocese and beyond the boundaries of the Diocese) by utilising some of the £330,000 of the Jubilee Appeal set aside for the pastoral life and mission of the Diocese.

Fourthly, the new bishop will need to give serious consideration to the value of, and the cost to the Diocese of, our three Catholic secondary schools, as distinct from our sixteen primary and junior schools. Difficult questions need to be asked about the extent to which our secondary schools are witnessing to the Catholic Faith and whether the costs of maintaining these three schools are prohibitive, especially if the schools are increasingly required to promote teachings contrary to those of the Catholic Church on marriage, the family, and human sexuality. Rather than pay 15% of building repairs costing £1 million, would it not be a better use of resources to use that money to fund a Youth Minister or Missioner for the Diocese? (As one priest points out, with fewer and fewer Catholic staff and Catholic pupils, these schools are already ceasing to be Catholic.)

[2] Numbers:

Referring now to some of the points raised by His Grace in his talk on 12th September and forwarded as a brief synopsis in his letter of 17th September, the Archbishop draws attention to the fall in numbers attending Mass, and the fall in the number of priests serving in the Diocese.

It is certainly true that we are experiencing a steady decline in those attending Mass. Is this not true of other dioceses also?

To put the figures in perspective, in 1898 the estimated Catholic population of the whole of the (extended) Diocese of Menevia (including north Wales) was 8,500. Please note this is not attendance at Mass but the total Catholic population (WC 287). There were 29 diocesan priests; and today (as the Archbishop points out) we have 28 diocesan priests. In 1926 the Catholic population (not Mass attendees) was 9,880; and in 1951 this figure was 23,600; and in 1961, 33,000. It is clear, therefore, not only from the figures but from our own experience, that numbers are declining and falling back to those challenging times before the rapid growth in the Catholic population of the Diocese from the 1920s to the 1950s, except that those earlier figures refer to the earlier (much larger) Diocese of Menevia (1898-1987), which also included north Wales. In 2017 there were 6,146 attending Mass in the Diocese of Menevia.

We should not be complacent; indeed we should be greatly challenged by the lapsation and secularism taking place in society today but, again, these challenges apply to all the dioceses of England and Wales. (Indeed, it was recently reported that 5 out of every 6 Catholic churches in Holland are marked for closure.)

It is only fair to point out that in 2017 the Diocese of Wrexham had fewer Mass attendees (6,127) than the Diocese of Menevia (6,146). Why is the Diocese of Wrexham not being asked to discuss its future? It must be said that our sister Diocese of Wrexham appears to be experiencing a decline that we are not experiencing in Menevia. Subject to correction, it has no seminarians in training and has not had a priestly ordination since 2009. In contrast, we have been greatly blessed with vocations over the same period with six priestly ordinations and (at present) two seminarians in training. God has been blessing us as a Diocese! We can also draw attention to those vocations which have come from within the Diocese – ten of the fifteen ordinations over the last 25 years (plus our two seminarians now in training) and three priests through the university chaplaincies in the Diocese. Also the average age (so I believe) of our diocesan priests is lower than the average age of the clergy in Cardiff or Wrexham. This is all very healthy!

We must also pay tribute to Bishop Mark Jabalé and Bishop Tom Burns in their commitment to keeping open all the churches in the Diocese (with the exception of the small church at Cymer) over the last 18 years. It is impossible not to see the contrast with the Diocese of Wrexham where a third of the churches are marked for closure. Again, why is the Diocese of Wrexham not being asked to discuss its future?

It is very much to be hoped that the present exercise in assessing the viability of the parishes of the Diocese is to be employed as a means to strengthen those which are less viable rather than to use the Parish Profiles as a means of closing churches. A small church with a small congregation is nevertheless a Catholic presence and a Catholic witness in the local community even if the number of Masses (might) need to be reduced. These smaller congregations are “mission stations” and outposts of the faith, and to start a programme of closures would cut across the vocation to evangelisation and catechetics which it is hoped the new bishop will nourish through DOMSEC and in supporting our less viable churches as mission stations.

Finally, in his talk Archbishop George refers to the care of priests. Many of us have happy memories of Bishop Mark Jabalé and his fatherly care of priests in the Diocese with invitations to Bishop’s House for meals, and wonderful Diocesan retreats in Rome, Valladolid and other places (going abroad every two years). His Grace says that “isolated individualistic ministry is unsustainable”. Many priests however precisely value their independent living and would find it difficult (and stressful) to live with other priests, or to return to the role of assistant priest after many years as parish priest. “Priest care” might mean recognising that for many priests “community life” in a shared presbytery would be the source of, not the alleviation of, stress and discomfort.

[3] The New Bishop:

As already indicated, the greatest challenge facing the new bishop is to address the financial difficulties which, unless successfully addressed, will limit his ability to address other issues.

Firstly, he will need to create a team to support him – that is, in the first instance, to make use of the structures that already exist (i) to give to others – the clergy – a sense of being a valued part of that team; (ii) and to better staff the Curial Office so that it can become (through the appointment of extra staff and full-time staff) a more effective support for the new bishop.

Secondly, to nourish and encourage the sense of fraternity among the clergy which already exists but would benefit from the new bishop’s interest in the lives of his clergy and his fatherly care of them.

Thirdly, the finances of the Diocese, the structures of support for the bishop and a developing sense of fraternity among the clergy should (would be intended) to enable the bishop to address the primary and most important challenge facing the Diocese – which is that of the RE-EVANGELISATION of the Diocese. The re-evangelisation of (i) the Catholic faithful of the Diocese through a programme of catechetics building on and developing the work of DOMSEC. As Pope St. Paul VI points out, “We can only evangelise if we ourselves are evangelised.” (ii) those now outside the Church (or “lapsed” from the Church).

This Essay has shown that we have great and encouraging examples (in the history of our Diocese) of mission and evangelism to the people of our Diocese, beginning with St. David and his companions, through the great religious orders of the twelfth century, the “catholic” Methodist revivals of the eighteenth century and the “conversion-minded” examples of earlier bishops of our Diocese, to the Synod 2000 Plan for Mission of Bishop Mullins.

Fourthly, as part of this re-evangelisation, the new bishop must seek to inculturate the Gospel in the culture and language of Wales. Again, as this Essay shows, this was foremost in the minds of our bishops in the restoration of the Diocese in 1850/1898, and in the episcopacy of Bishop Mullins. It is a scandal that Welsh-speaking Catholics cannot be baptised, married or buried according to the Rites of the Church in their own language, but only in English. It is a scandal that all the other “public bodies” in Wales are required (by law) to have a bilingual policy – and that the schools, the local authorities, the banks, the Anglican Church in Wales, industries and public services are all committed to a bilingual policy – but the Catholic Church (of “inculturation”) does not. At present there is no provision for the regular celebration of Mass in Welsh anywhere in the whole of Wales! This is a scandal and, presumably, the Holy See is unaware of this massive failure in inculturation, and it is not clear how the Catholic Church in Wales has escaped prosecution for its failure to provide for Welsh-speaking Catholics.

The new bishop, therefore, working with Wrexham and Cardiff where appropriate should (i) establish a committee to begin the translation of the Baptism, Marriage and Funeral Services into Welsh.

(ii) invite onto this commission the much undervalued and under-used Welsh-speaking Catholic academics of the Centre for Advanced Celtic Studies, the National Library of Wales, and the University (all based in Aberystwyth) and who have largely been ignored in recent years.

(iii) invite CTS to produce a bi-lingual (tri-lingual) Mass Booklet for the Diocese. These booklets are often present in celebrations of Mass in Rome where you have the Mass printed in parallel columns in several languages (for instance Italian/Spanish/French/German/Polish). For Wales, it might be possible to provide a Mass Booklet with English in the central column and Welsh and Latin on either side.

(iv) encourage, in those parishes where it is appropriate, the use of this “tri-lingual” Mass Booklet and especially in Diocesan (Cathedral) celebrations of Mass. In other words there should be an entirely happy and relaxed acceptance (with no one feeling “threatened”) that, in debt to the rich history of our Diocese, we are a “tri-lingual” Diocese. (Taking into account the intention of the Second Vatican Council and re-affirmed by Pope Benedict XVI that congregations throughout the world should be familiar with the Latin congregational responses (the Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, etc.)

(v) encourage seminarians and also (where possible) diocesan priests to attend Welsh language courses (Welsh degree courses?)

(vi) invite Welsh-speaking priests to strategic appointments across the Diocese, perhaps concentrating on a line across the Diocese from Llanelli/Kidwelly through Carmarthen, Cardigan and Lampeter to Aberystwyth.

I ought to make clear, to confess, that my own understanding of Welsh is somewhat meagre and random, and that I do not make these suggestions as a native speaker or even a fluent Welsh speaker, but from the justice of the case.

These then ought to be the primary focus of the new bishop – the financial difficulties facing the Diocese, the creation of teams to support him, the fatherly care of his clergy, all of which are to be focussed on the re-evangelisation of the Diocese.

What else might one hope for in the appointment of our new bishop?

(i) It is, of course, surely the desire of all the priests of the Diocese that the new bishop is a man of prayer, a man of God, a man of the people, a true friend and father to his brother priests, and also that he is a teacher of the Faith.

(ii) That he has a vision for Menevia and a love of Welsh culture, history and language (and that he does not give the impression of having been “exiled” to the Diocese, preferring to be somewhere else!)

(iii) That he seek ways to lift the increasing burden on his priests of more and more legislation relating to the administration of the parish. To the detriment of the life of the Church, the role of “parish administrator” is becoming, in itself, a full-time post leaving very little time for priestly ministry which is being suffocated under impossible demands.

(iv) To be present at the “big” lay diocesan events, annual conferences, pilgrimages, etc.

Realistically, the new bishop is facing some of the greatest challenges ever encountered by a Bishop of Menevia in the long history of the Diocese. Apart from the internal difficulties and challenges of church life, all bishops are facing the challenge of bearing faithful witness to Christ in a society increasingly intolerant of Catholic teaching especially on marriage, family life and human sexuality. It may be, therefore, that the new bishop is called upon to lead his priests in giving testimony “before kings and governors” for the sake of the Gospel and even into imprisonment.

Dewi Sant, gweddia drosom

St. David, pray for us

Hostias laudis et preces deuotionis, quas tibi in honore beati confessoris tui David atque pontificis, omnipotens Deus, deferimus, placatus intende; et quod nostrum non optinet meritum, tua clementia et illius pro nobis frequens intercessio efficiat per Dominum nostrum, etc. Amen.

Almighty God, being appeased, accept the sacrifices of praise and the prayers of devotion that we offer to you in honour of your blessed confessor and bishop; and what our merit may not obtain, may your mercy and his frequent intercession for us effect, through our Lord, etc. Amen.

(from the “Secret” of the Medieval Mass of St. David. CCN 155)

Gerald of Wales ends his "The Description of Wales" with the story of the old man in Pencader who was asked by King Henry II (during his incursion into Wales in 1163) what he thought of the King's army and what he thought would be the outcome of the war. The old man replied, "My Lord King, this nation may now be harrassed, weakened and decimated by your soldiery, as it has so often been by others in former times, but it will never be totally destroyed by the wrath of man, unless at the same time it is punished by the wrath of God. Whatever else may come to pass, I do not think that on the Day of Direst Judgement any

race other than the Welsh, or any other language, will give answer to the Supreme Judge of All for this small corner of the earth."

It seems appropriate therefore also to end this Essay reflecting on the words of that wise old man of Pencader. It is the earnest prayer and cherished hope of many here in Menevia today, and the purpose and intent of this Essay, that it will be granted also to the Diocese of Menevia alone, on the Last Day of Direct Judgement, to give an account of and to "give answer to the Supreme Judge of All for this small corner of the earth". (GOW)

DIWEDD/ CONCLUSION

In this Essay I have attempted to show that the Diocese of Menevia is no recent construct of 1987 or even 1898, but is rooted deeply in the history of Wales and that, in so many ways, Menevia is at the beating-heart of the history of Wales as a whole. The Diocese of Menevia particularly resonates with, and roots, the memories, the history, the literature and the language of Wales in a way that the Anglicised, industrialised, south-east of Wales (the great conurbations of Cardiff and Newport) are unable to do at the beginning of this 21st century.

The Diocese of Menevia has a different identity from that of the Archdiocese of Cardiff. For the first thousand years of the Catholic Church in Wales, Wrexham and Cardiff had no part in that history whereas Menevia not only precedes the creation of the Diocese of Wrexham and the Archdiocese of Cardiff by over a thousand years but, as Bishop Bernard (1115-48) proudly boasts, Menevia is "the first and greatest province of the Island" and "the greatest glory of the realm of Britain".

"The creation of the present Diocese of Menevia in 1987 was an act of faith – the Pope of Rome summoned the people of Menevia to build again on the foundations of St. David and St. Samson and all the saints of Wales." (Bishop Mullins, TC, xvi) To abolish or amalgamate the Diocese of Menevia (and with such haste!) would be to announce to the world that Rome had made a mistake in 1987 and to admit that the witness of the Catholic Church in Wales is in retreat. The Diocese of Menevia is our claim to be the mother church of Wales and roots the Catholic Church in Wales directly to St. David, the Patron Saint of Wales, affirming that the Catholic Faith is "yr hen Ffydd" (the old Faith) of Wales and not some nineteenth century imposition on Wales.

It would be abandonment of the hope of the 2001 Synod Plan for Mission and a contradiction of the recently established Diocese of Menevia School of Evangelisation and Catechetics.

At a time of resurgence in the life of the Welsh Nation – with the establishment of a Welsh Assembly Government in 1999 – the Catholic Church would be publicly withdrawing from its earlier commitment to the people of Wales and treating the ancient Diocese of Menevia as a backwater of no significance or importance to the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Inevitably, a relegation of the Diocese of Menevia will be interpreted as coming from an English perspective with English priorities, with little understanding, or regard, for the history and culture (and needs) of the people of Wales.

As Archbishop George acknowledges, after recent difficult years, there are signs of "green shoots". It would be a tragedy of historic proportions if after such a long and rich history the Diocese of Menevia should be abolished or amalgamated.

Lord, who in thy perfect wisdom
 times and seasons dost arrange -
 working out thy changeless purpose
 in a world of ceaseless change;
 thou didst form our ancient nation in
 remote, barbaric days,
 to unfold in it thy purpose
 to thy glory and thy praise.

To our shores remote, benighted,
 washed by distant western waves,
 tidings in thy love thou sentest,
 tidings of the Cross that saves.
 Men of courage strove and suffered
 here thy holy Church to plant;
 glorious in the roll of heroes
 shines the name of Dewi Sant.

Lord, we hold in veneration
 all the saints our land has known,
 bishops, priests, confessors, martyrs,
 standing now around thy throne;
 Dewi, Dyfrig, Deiniol, Teilo -
 all the gallant saintly band,
 who of old by prayer and labour
 hallowed all our fatherland.

Still thy ancient purpose standeth
 every change and chance above;
 still thy ancient church remaineth -
 witness to thy changeless love.
 Vision grant us, Lord, and courage
 to fulfil thy work begun;
 in the church and in the nation
 Lord of Lord, thy will be done.

Timothy Rees, C.R. (1874-1939)
Tune: Blaenwern

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APPENDIX**THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF MENEVIA****Archbishops of Menevia**

Daid (d. 589)
 Eliud/Theliau
 Keneu
 Morwal
 Haernueu
 Elwaid
 Gurnueu
 Leudiwit
 Gorwiust
 Gogaun
 Cledauc
 Aman
 Eludged
 Elduuen
 Elaue
 Mailswid
 Sadurnue (d. 831)
 Nouis / Nobis (840-73)
 Sadurnue
 Llynferth (after 874/875)
 Doithwal
 Asser (c. 885)
 Archuail
 Samson
 Kuelm
 Retherth
 Eluin
 Lunuerc (d. 944)
 Nergu
 Sulidir
 Eneuris (d. 946)
 Morgeneu (d. 999)
 Nathan
 Iewan
 Arwistel
 Morgenennith (d. 1025)
 Erwyn (d. 1040)
 Tramerin
 Joseph (d. 1063)
 Bleiddud (d. 1073)
 Sulien (1073-78)
 Abraham (1078-80)
 Sulien (*again*: 1080-85)
 Wilfred (1085-1115)

Bishops of Menevia

Bernard (1115-48)
 David (1148-76)
 Peter (1176-98)
 Vacancy (1198-1203)
 Geoffrey (1203-14)
 Iorwerth (1215-29)
 Vacancy (1229-31)
 Anselm (1231-47)
 Thomas (1248-55)
 Richard (1256-80)
 Thomas (1280-93)
 David (1293-1327)
 Henry (1228-47)
 John (1347-49)
 Reginald (1350-52)
 Thomas (1353-61)
 Adam (1361-88)
 John (1389-97)
 Guy (1397-1407)
 Henry (1407-13)
 John (1414)
 Stephen (1414-17)
 Benedict (1417-33)
 Thomas (1433-42)
 William (1442-46)
 John (1446) – (15 days)
 John (1447-60)
 Robert (1460-82)
 Richard (1482-83)
 Thomas (1483-85)
 Hugh (1485-96)
 John (1496-1504)
 Robert (1505-08)
 Edward (1509-22)
 Richard (1522-36)

 Henry (1554-59) – (under Mary)

 Francis Mostyn (1898-1926)
 Francis Vaughan (1926-35)
 Michael McGrath (1935-40)
 Daniel Hannon (1941-46)
 John Petit (1947-72)
 Langton Fox (1972-81)
 John Ward (1981-83)
 James Hannigan (1983-87)

Daniel Mullins (1987-2001)

Mark Jabalé (2001-08)

Thomas Burns (2008-19)

The new bishop will be the 12th Bishop of Menevia since the restoration of the Diocese in 1898; and the (approx.) 89th Bishop of Menevia since St. David.

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