



SIR JOHN EDWARD LLOYD, 1935

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1861-1947

**J**OHN EDWARD LLOYD was born on 5 May 1861. His father, Edward Lloyd, J.P., was a Liverpool draper, but both parents came originally from north-eastern Montgomeryshire, that is, from the old region of Powys, and the family had retained its strongly Welsh and Nonconformist traditions. To this background Lloyd always remained steadily attached: for a great part of his life he was a lay preacher in the Congregational church; and to the end of his days, even after fifty years' residence in Bangor, that is, in the old province of Gwynedd, it was the Welsh of Powys that he still spoke.

From 1877 to 1881 he was a student at the new University College of Wales in Aberystwyth, and he proceeded thence to Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1881. His first intention was to enter the Congregational ministry, and he had already begun to preach while at Aberystwyth. He gained a First in Honour Classical Moderations in 1883, and then deliberately chose, despite the persuasions of Ward Fowler, not to go on to Greats: he turned instead to the recently established and vigorously growing School of Modern History. He was placed in the First Class in 1885. Even as an undergraduate at Oxford he had begun that characteristically systematic study of Welsh history which persisted throughout his long life. Almost while a freshman he was collecting material for an essay on 'The History of Welsh Literature from 1300 to 1650' with the idea (which, however, was not realized) of competing in the Welsh National Eisteddfod at Cardiff in 1883. In 1884 he won the prize in the Welsh National Eisteddfod at Liverpool for a 'History of Wales for use in Day Schools'.

On leaving Oxford in 1885 he went, not to the Congregational ministry, but to a lectureship in Welsh and History in University College, Aberystwyth. The change of direction was probably not so radical as might appear: the study of Welsh history was his calling in more than a merely professional sense. And the impulse behind it is not in doubt. An Oxford contemporary of his, the late John Arthur Price (1861-1942)—who was Welsh, but not Welsh-speaking, and whose ecclesiastical prepossessions were diametrically opposite to his own—wrote in later years:

It was from Professor Lloyd, while he was under the spell of Welsh

Liverpool, that I learned my first lesson in modern Welsh nationalism, as we took many a walk together in the country roads round Oxford. . . . Lloyd explained to me that Welsh nationalism was not a memory of the ages that were past but a real power in the hearts of modern Welshmen. And from him I learned that Welsh Nonconformists were really interested in the past of Wales and proud of it.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, Lloyd had been touched by that growing stir of Welsh national feeling which had already been expressed by the establishment of the three University Colleges at Aberystwyth (1872), Cardiff (1883), and Bangor (1884), and which in a more general way was typified by the founding in 1886 of the Young Wales Movement known as *Cymru Fydd*. Significantly, Lloyd's first published book (1893), a school history of Wales for Welsh-speaking children—and therefore written in Welsh, but with a parallel translation into English to subserve the practical need of teaching English as their second language—bore on its title-page the words, 'The Young Wales School Series'.<sup>2</sup> So what Lloyd told J. A. Price about Welsh nationalism was notably—and exactly—applicable to himself. It was 'a real power in his *heart*'. But it was not allowed to go to his *head*. What it did for him as a student of Welsh history was to sustain his studies, not to determine his conclusions. 'I can honestly say', he remarked in the preface to his masterpiece, 'that I have not written in support of any special theory or to urge any preconceived opinion upon the reader.'

After seven years at Aberystwyth as Lecturer in Welsh and History he was, in 1892, appointed Lecturer in Welsh History and Registrar at University College, Bangor, established only eight years before. He continued as Registrar until 1919. He was raised to the Professorship of History in 1899, and held it until his retirement in 1930. Throughout that period and later he was very influential in academic circles in Wales, and particularly in the College at Bangor: there he worked in the closest collaboration with the first Principal, Sir Harry Reichel, who held office from 1884 to 1927, and it has been well said that 'in the administration of the College, if Reichel was the captain, Lloyd was the

<sup>1</sup> Cited by E. M. Humphreys in *Gwyr Enwog Gynt* [Eminent Men of Yore], ser. i, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> The first part was published in 1893, the second in 1896, and the concluding part (taking the story to 1282) in 1900. There are indications that the book, though designed as no more than an elementary textbook, was by no means an *obiter scriptum*, but was based on the author's careful preparatory studies for his large *History of Wales*.

pilot, steering with steady hand and clear purpose'.<sup>1</sup> Like a number of other distinguished historians of his day, Lloyd developed and disciplined his historical powers by writing for the *Dictionary of National Biography*: he began to do so in 1893, and between that date and 1900, which was the terminus of the main series, he contributed some 110 articles on eminent Welshmen, ranging in time from the sixth to the nineteenth century. Subsequently he wrote for the second supplement ten more articles on Welshmen who had died during the first decade of the twentieth century.

The turn of the century witnessed a significant stir in Welsh historiography, a stir due ultimately to that nationalist impulse which had moved Lloyd himself. The line of the older histories of Wales, both in Welsh and in English, extending backwards from R. J. Pryse's *Hanes y Brytaniaid a'r Cymry* [History of the Britons and the Welsh] (1872-4) and Jane Williams's *History of Wales derived from Authentic Sources* (1869) to David Powel's archetypal *Historie of Cambria now called Wales* (1584), had concentrated their attention overwhelmingly upon the period down to 1282, and the dramatic death of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd in that year had provided the natural climax of their story. In 1900 and 1901 respectively there appeared two books which broke with this tradition: they were *The Welsh People* by Rhys and Brynmor Jones and *Wales* by Owen Edwards. Edwards's book provided for the first time a continuous history of Wales down to the closing years of the nineteenth century, and it gave more than half its space to the period subsequent to 1282. *The Welsh People* did not indeed attempt a continuous story, but it too gave emphatic attention to the period after Llywelyn by devoting to it well over one-third of the available space. *The Welsh People* was the more learned, *Wales* the more attractive, but they were equally noteworthy in that both alike repudiated the long tradition whereby Welsh history had found its terminus at Llywelyn's grave. Again, in 1898, 1899, 1902, and 1903, the Historical Manuscripts Commission published the first four of the seven parts of Gwengofryn Evans's *Reports on MSS. in the Welsh Language*, while in 1900 and 1903 the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion issued in their 'Record Series' the first two of the four parts of Edward Owen's *Catalogue of MSS. relating to Wales in the British Museum*. These works were not only obviously valuable for the future as keys to great stores of unpublished materials concerning Wales, but they

<sup>1</sup> The remark was made by Sir Emrys Evans, Reichel's successor as Principal, at the time of Lloyd's death.

provided an immediate demonstration that those materials existed, in other words that Wales had a well-recorded history in the centuries after as well as in those before the catastrophe of 1282. The demonstration was reinforced by a third work, whose publication came in 1901: *The Welsh Wars of Edward I*, by J. E. Morris. This book lighted with much fresh detail even the familiar subject of Llywelyn's fall. But not less significant was the fact that its fresh details had been drawn from a storehouse whose treasures had not come within the purview of Gwenogfryn Evans's *Reports* and Edward Owen's *Catalogue*: the Public Record Office. At the turn of the century, therefore, Welsh historiography was awakening to fresh possibilities and broader prospects. Its first big achievement—and still its greatest—under the new dispensation was Lloyd's masterpiece, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, published in two volumes in 1911.<sup>1</sup>

'My purpose', he observed in his preface, 'has been to map out, in this difficult region of study, what is already known and established. . . .' At first sight the book might seem to be in the tradition of the older histories. Like them, it stopped at the death of Llywelyn in 1282. Like them, it gave prominence to 'political' history. Moreover the materials, primary and secondary, that Lloyd used were all in print: the zeal of the unprinted had not eaten him up. Yet Tout rightly judged that, in the field of Welsh history, 'a book on such lines or of such a type has never hitherto been written'.<sup>2</sup>

The study of Welsh history had of course attracted men of real learning before Lloyd's day, but their studies had streamed hither and thither, and had left Welsh history not only less secure in its details but also less intelligible in its development than the neighbouring and more widely known history of England. Lloyd's book remedied both shortcomings. The author systematically mastered the existent but scattered learning, extensively clarifying it by a steady criticism which eliminated legends and corrected errors. He then presented it in such a way that medieval Wales came into view as an intelligible whole, but as a whole which by implication he set in contrast with that more familiar whole which was England. He struck the contrasting note in his two chapters entitled respectively 'The Tribal Divisions of Wales' and 'Early Welsh Institutions'. The former—though the expression 'Tribal Divisions' would now be

<sup>1</sup> A second edition appeared in 1912, and a third in 1939.

<sup>2</sup> *Eng. Hist. Rev.* xxvii (1912), p. 132.

regarded with some reserve—is a masterly example of a topographical survey for historical purposes. The other chapter was in the nature of things bound to be more provisional: not enough preparatory work had then—or has even yet—been done in the difficult field of Welsh law. But taken together the two chapters did clearly supply the clue to all the chapters that followed. The clue was this. In Wales kingship had remained multiple (whereas in England it had become single), and the subdivisions of Wales, the commotes, were the seats of the multiple kingship (whereas the subdivisions of England, the shires, were the outposts of the single kingship). Speaking comparatively, England was a whole in which the parts, the shires, were *integrated*—like cells in a honeycomb: Wales was a whole in which the parts, the commotes, were only *aggregated*—like cards in a pack. Since kingship in Wales was inherent in each commote, he who acquired a commote acquired thereby a status that was royal. And since royalty in Wales was multiple, the commotes in which it inhered could be, and constantly were being, shuffled and re-dealt by changeful circumstance. (That is why the pattern of medieval Welsh history seems so much more involved than that of medieval English history.) Accordingly, one of the characterizing features of the weave of Lloyd's narrative in the lengthy second volume of his *History* was that it attentively traced the vicissitudes of most of the Welsh commotes during the period which it covered. (Had he been writing a history of England for the same period and on a similar scale, he would not have needed to trace the vicissitudes of even one of the English shires.) In short, he was indicating that the medieval Welsh princes—the lords, in other words, of one or more commotes—would be seen but darkly if viewed as nothing more than a species of 'overmighty subject'. Seen face to face, they were not 'subjects'. By Welsh law, they were nothing less than kings. And that was a main clue to the maze of medieval Welsh history.

This motif received a final emphasis by Lloyd's handling of the climax of his book, the career of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd. Llywelyn had traditionally come to be known as 'The Last Prince' *tout court*, and his death in 1282 had been the natural dénouement of the older histories. Now Lloyd's *History* also ended with Llywelyn's death, and the concluding sentence of the book actually referred to him as 'the last Prince'. In substance, however, Lloyd's treatment of Llywelyn showed a notable modification of emphasis. In the older histories, the story of Llywelyn's fall had tended to occupy about twice as

much space as the story of his rise. In Lloyd's *History*, on the other hand, the narrative of Llywelyn's downfall was introduced with the words, 'It will be enough for the present to complete the narrative of the period of independence by briefly tracing the personal fortunes of the last native ruler of Gwynedd to the day of his death'; and the facts were then summarized in as little as one-quarter of the space allotted to the narrative of Llywelyn's rise. This striking adjustment of balance was due to the fact that Lloyd for the first time brought out clearly the historical significance of Llywelyn's rise to power. It was not merely that Llywelyn skilfully turned to his own profit the dissensions of king and barons in England. Nor was it merely that he extorted homage and fealty from other Welsh princes. Both these things had happened before. The unprecedented thing was that Llywelyn in 1258 assumed the title 'Prince of Wales', and then (in the treaties of 1265 and 1267) extorted from the English king the acknowledgement, not only of that title, but also of the obligation of the other Welsh princes to do homage to Llywelyn as Prince of Wales, and to his heirs. In other words, Llywelyn further buttressed his new position by getting the Prince of Wales recognized as being also the hereditary feudal suzerain of all the other Welsh princes. Institutionally, this was a way of reconciling the legal equality of Welsh princes as royal persons with the political need of subordinating them to some single central authority in Wales. Giraldus Cambrensis had already noted that one of the things 'which most especially ruined the Welsh' was that they would not 'subject themselves to the judgment of one king and to a single lordship'. Llywelyn planned to remove this defect: by subordinating the Welsh princes to a Prince of Wales who was also the feudal suzerain of Wales, he intended that Wales should become a Principality in which the commotes would be the *integrated* and not merely the *aggregated* parts of a whole. Lloyd's account, by thus placing the main emphasis upon Llywelyn as the first Prince of Wales rather than upon Llywelyn as 'The Last Prince', heightened not only the dramatic irony but also the historical significance of his life. By bringing out the double point that 'The Last Prince' was the first Prince, and that the first was The Last, he illumined both the career of Llywelyn himself and also the course of medieval Welsh history as a whole.

In achieving his *History*, Lloyd so successfully seized an opportunity that the opportunity can hardly recur: his book did something that cannot in the same sense be done again for Welsh

history. But the title of his book was *A History of Wales*. The term 'history of Wales' could be used, not only in the strict sense, but also in the broader and more purely regional sense of the history of a particular area of Britain before, as well as after, that area had actually become Wales. Almost inevitably it was in the broader sense that Lloyd understood his subject. One of his most persistent aims was to sweep away 'the pile of legends under which the true history of Wales has lain so long'.<sup>1</sup> Many of those legends, including some of the most famous, had reference to precisely that earlier period when 'Wales' existed only in the anticipative and regional sense. Now the evidence for that period is archaeological, and the amount of it that has become available is steadily increasing. Consequently, it is in its earlier part that Lloyd's *History* has faded. But the main bulk of the work—the portion that deals with Welsh history in the stricter sense, and especially the portion contained in the second volume—has required as yet no extensive correction: it can be supplemented, but its workmanship seems likely to ensure for the book as a whole an enduring place in Welsh historiography.

Lloyd was fortunate in the fact that the publication of his masterpiece was followed by nearly forty years of active life. During that period his output of published work, largely in learned periodicals, continued unabated and included one major book, his Ford Lectures on *Owen Glendower*, delivered in Oxford in 1920 but not published until 1931. Lloyd's reputation as a scholar gave him in Wales much prestige and great authority, and both were harnessed to the cause that he had so much at heart, the development of Welsh learning generally and of Welsh historical studies in particular. Within a few weeks of the publication of his *History* in 1911 he read a paper during the Welsh National Eisteddfod at Carmarthen, developing the theme that

historical research, as a serious business with definite aims, must, if it is to be well done, be properly organized. . . . I hold this to be true of Welsh history no less than of other fields of historical study, and I think

<sup>1</sup> These words are taken from the preface to Lloyd's *First Historical Reader*, published in 1893: he went on to say that 'these Historical Readers ought to be truly historical, even at the cost of ignoring many entertaining and ancient traditions. Undoubtedly the rising generation should be versed in the mythology of the fathers, but they should not accept it in place of history.' In 1931 he declared that one of the purposes of his *Owen Glendower* was 'to clear away a good deal of the undergrowth of legend and error which had gathered round the story of the champion of Welsh independence'.



the moment is opportune for calling the attention of all who are seriously interested in the subject to the need of co-operation and co-ordination in the work that still lies before us.

He went on to suggest that Welsh 'publishing and excavating societies' should arrange for 'businesslike comparison of programmes and exchange of ideas', and ventured the prophecy that 'the result would be a harmonious co-operation of effort which in a generation would put Welsh history upon an entirely different footing'. If the particular suggestion ever germinated, it did not survive the war of 1914-19, but the idea remained in Lloyd's mind, and he later seized an opportunity of applying it, though in a very different form.

The Royal Commission appointed in 1916 'to enquire into the organization and work of the University of Wales and of its three constituent colleges' recommended *inter alia* the establishment of a University Press, and the creation of a University Board of Celtic Studies to co-ordinate the growing activity in that field. Both recommendations were accepted, and Lloyd took a leading part in implementing them, particularly in launching the Board of Celtic Studies. He was one of the original members of the Board, and was responsible for preparing the draft constitution presented at its second meeting in February 1919. At the next meeting in March of that year he was appointed Chairman of the Board, and chairman also of its History and Law Committee: he retained both offices until an increasing deafness compelled him to resign them in 1940. When the Board began to issue its *Bulletin* in 1921, he acted both as general editor and as editor of the History and Law Section, and continued to do so until 1937. The very striking record of learned publications on Welsh history, language, and literature already achieved by the Board of Celtic Studies in co-operation with the University Press Board—always, and especially at first, with slender financial resources—owes a very great deal to the inspiration of Lloyd's informed, energetic, and prudent leadership.

There were two other co-operative enterprises in which during his later years he was very actively concerned. One was *The History of Carmarthenshire*, which was completed in two large volumes, published respectively in 1935 and 1939. These volumes were edited and largely planned by Lloyd, who also contributed two sections, one on the topography and the other on the history of the region down to 1282. The other project was the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. This was launched in 1938 by the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, with Lloyd as editor. When the

plan was revived after the intermission of the war, Lloyd handed over the editorship to Professor R. T. Jenkins, but continued to participate most actively in a consultative capacity almost until his death. He did not live to see the publication of the *Dictionary*, but he contributed to it some sixty articles under the letters A-D: among those articles is his last historical work.

Honours came to him numerously and appropriately, both as recognitions of achievement and as opportunities of service. As early as 1913 the Cymmrodorion Medal was awarded to him 'for distinguished services to Wales'. He was D.Litt. *honoris causa* of the Universities of Wales and Manchester. He was a member of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire. He was a member and ultimately the chairman of the Board of Ancient Monuments for Wales. He was twice president of the Cambrian Archaeological Association. He became a Fellow of the British Academy in 1930. He was knighted in 1934, and in the same year was chairman of the Union of Welsh Independents. In 1941 he received the freedom of the city of Bangor.

He died in Bangor after a brief illness on 20 June 1947. He had married in 1893 Miss Clementina Millar, daughter of John Clunes Millar, of Aberdeen: she, with their son and daughter, survived him. A portrait, painted by Raeburn Dobson in 1931, is in the possession of his daughter, Mrs. Garmon Jones; and another, painted in 1937 by Evan Walters, is in the National Museum of Wales, of whose council and court Lloyd was a member. The very characteristic photograph accompanying this memoir was taken by his daughter in 1935.

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Two well-placed observers—Professor R. T. Jenkins and Dr. T. Richards—have recorded their personal impressions in *Y Llenor*, vol. xxvi (1947). A detailed 'List of the Published Writings of the late Sir John Edward Lloyd' was printed in the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, vol. xii. I wish to thank the Librarian of the University College of North Wales for access to the collection of Lloyd's papers preserved in the Library. My special acknowledgements are due to Mrs. Garmon Jones for much information and also for the photograph.