

## Chapter 73

### My Ancestral Lines Back to Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons

[originally written 27 November 2020]

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter 72, I wrote about using the World Family Tree on the Geni.com website to learn more about my ancestral lines going back to Hugh de Moreville, Lord of Cumberland. See:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/72-Hugh-de-Moreville.pdf>

It turned out that I have at least forty distinct lines going back to this man. The Geni.com software only displayed the “shortest blood relationship” going from me back to Hugh de Moreville, and I had to create all the other lines manually using “cut and paste” and graphics-editing software. On the shortest line, Hugh de Moreville was my 23<sup>rd</sup>-great grandfather, but on other lines, he was as far back as my 30<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather. In creating several of the charts showing these additional relationships, I found it necessary to find the text “is your 28th great grandfather.”, so that I could append it to “Hugh de Moreville, Lord of Cumberland”, and end up with “Hugh de Moreville, Lord of Cumberland, is your 28th great grandfather.” This meant I had to find someone who was my 28<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather, and I ended up following a line that took me back to Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons, who indeed was my 28<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather:



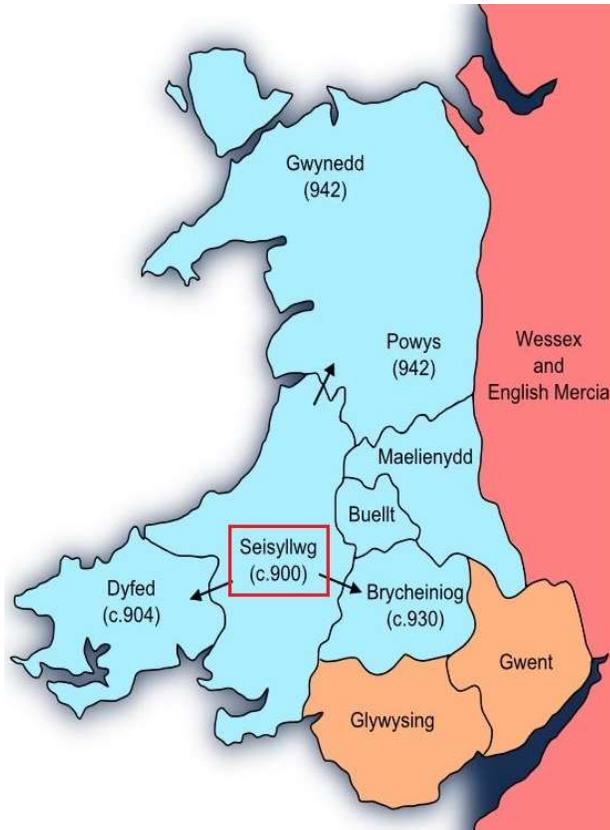
King of the Britons! That is quite a title, and certainly one that I never heard of previously. I made note of Hywel Dda’s name, so that I could learn more about him at some future time. And what an interesting person he turned out to be!

#### ***Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons***

Let me begin by writing that Hywel Dda was from Wales, and at the time, Welsh men were given names that included “son of”. In this case, he would have been Hywel son of Cadell, or Hywel ap Cadell in the Welsh language. But this man actually was called “Hywel the Good”, and the Welsh word for Good is Dda. And that, my friend, is how he ended up being Hywel Dda ap Cadell – Hywell the

Good, son of Cadell. One more thing – Hywel Dda’s father Cadell was a Welsh king – King Cadell of Seisyllwg.

Here is a map of Wales showing the ancient kingdom of Seisyllwg:

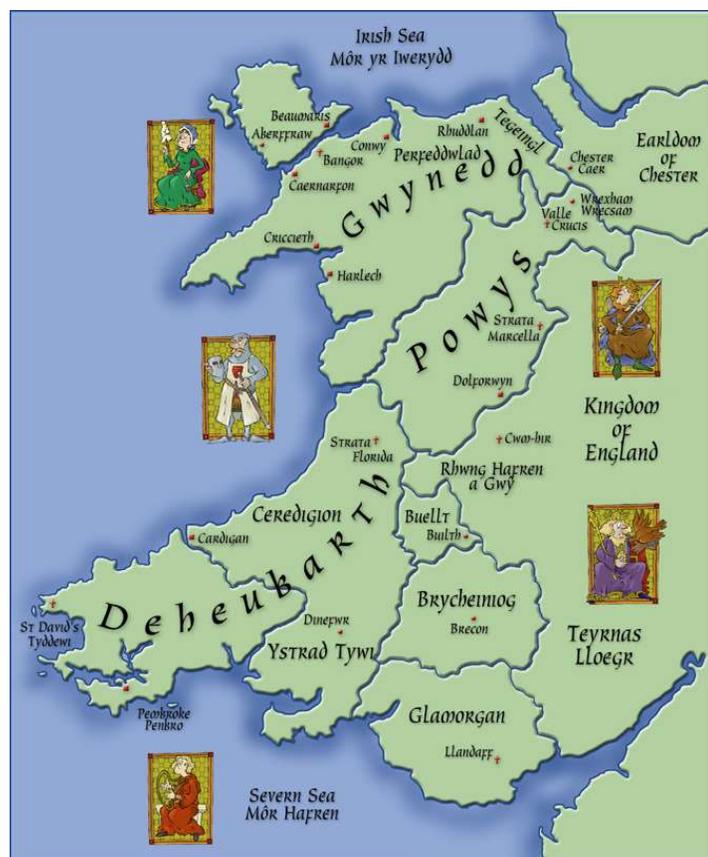


The Wikipedia entry for Seisyllwg includes:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seisyllwg>

In the 10th century, Seisyllwg became the center of power for Hywel Dda, who came to rule most of Wales. In 920, Hywel merged Seisyllwg with the Kingdom of Dyfed to form the new kingdom of Deheubarth.

Here is a map showing the ancient Kingdom of Deheubarth:



## ***King of the Britons***

Before I go any farther, I thought that I should discuss the title “King of the Britons”. Please note that the word is “Britons” and NOT “Britains”. Here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia article:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King\\_of\\_the\\_Britons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_of_the_Britons)

The title King of the Britons was used (often retrospectively) to refer to the most powerful ruler among the Celtic Britons, both before and after the period of Roman Britain up until the Norman conquest of England. The Britons were the Brittonic-speaking peoples of what is now England, Wales, and southern Scotland, whose ethnic identity is today maintained by the Welsh, Cornish and Bretons.

At least twenty kings were referred to as “King of the Britons”, while others were given related titles or descriptions. [The listing on this page] also contains the paramount native Welsh rulers in the Norman and Plantagenet periods – by this time only Wales remained under Brittonic rule in Britain and the term “Britons” was used in Britain to mean the Welsh people (Cymry in modern Welsh). This, and the diminishing power of the Welsh rulers relative to the Kings of England, is reflected in the gradual evolution of the titles by which these rulers were known from “King of the Britons” in the 11th century to “Prince of Wales” in the 13th.

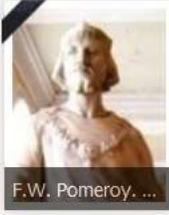
Although the majority of the rulers listed below had their power base in Gwynedd in North Wales, most insular Brittonic areas from the 7th century on are to be found in the list below, from Dumnonia in the West Country, to Strathclyde in southwest Scotland.

The listing includes:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Reign</b>	<b>Regional power base</b>	<b>Recorded title or description</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Hywel Dda	942–950	Deheubarth (from 920), from 942 also Gwynedd and Powys	<i>King of the Britons</i> (in 950)	Annals of Ulster and Annales Cambriae	

### ***All About Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons***

Now let me return to Hywel Dda. Here is an excerpt of his profile on the Geni.com website:

 <p>F.W. Pomeroy, ...</p>	<h2>Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons</h2> <p><b>Birth:</b> circa 880 Dynevor Castle, Llandyfeisant, Carmarthenshire, Wales</p> <p><b>Death:</b> 950 (65-75) Dynevor Castle, Llandilo, Carmarthenshire, Wales</p> <p><b>Place of Burial:</b> Llantwit Major, Vale of Glamorgan, Wales</p> <p><b>Immediate Family:</b> Son of <a href="#">Cadell ap Rhodri Mawr, King of Dyfed and Deheubarth</a> and <a href="#">Rheingar verch Hyfaidd</a> Husband of <a href="#">Elen verch Llywarch</a> Father of <a href="#">Owain ap Hywel Dda</a>; <a href="#">Angharad verch Hywel Dda</a>; <a href="#">Rhodri ap Hywel Dda</a>; <a href="#">Einion Ap Hywel</a>; <a href="#">Rhain ap Hywel</a> and 1 other Brother of <a href="#">Clydog ap Cadell</a> and <a href="#">Meurig ap Cadell</a></p>
--	---

According to this profile, Hywel was born in 880 in Dynevor Castle in Carmarthenshire, Wales, and he died in 950 in the same castle. Allow me to digress and briefly look at Dynevor Castle. Here is part of the Wikipedia article about this castle:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinefwr\\_Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinefwr_Castle)

Dinefwr Castle (sometimes anglicised as Dynevor) is a ruined castle overlooking the River Tywi near the town of Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, Wales. It lies on a ridge on the northern bank of the Tywi River (or Towy River), with a steep drop of one hundred feet to the river. Dinefwr was the chief seat of the Kingdom of Deheubarth.

I next looked online for some photos of Dynevor Castle – and here are a few that I found:

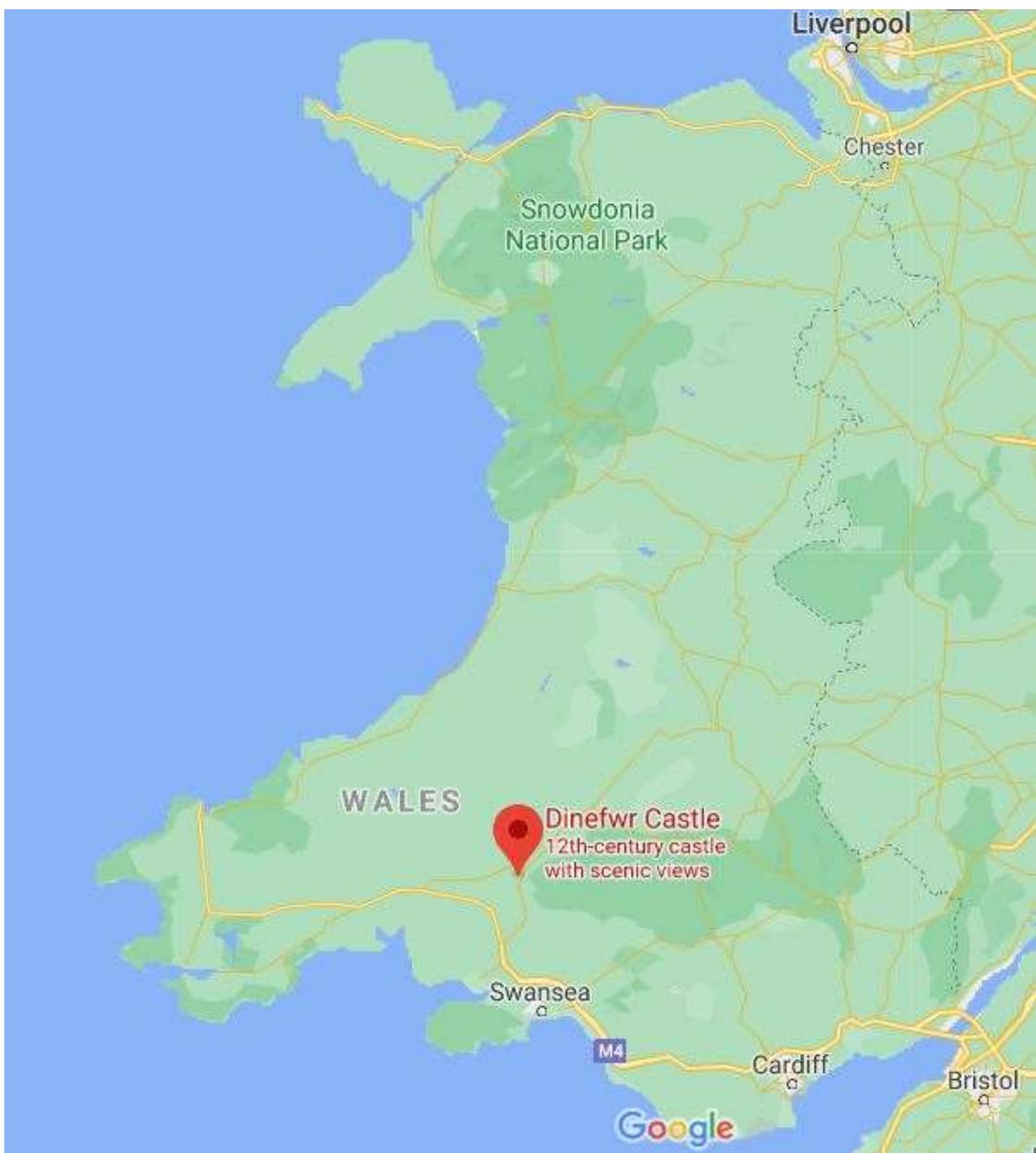


Looking up at Dynevor (Dinefwr) Castle.



Panorama of Dynevor (Dinefwr) Castle.

Here is a Google Map showing the location of Dinefwr Castle in south-central Wales:



Google Map showing the location of Dinefwr Castle.

Zooming in on the Google Map shows the location of the castle and Pembrokeshire (I add this just because my wife's paternal grandfather was from Pembrokeshire, just outside of Fishguard):



Google Map showing the location of Dinefwr Castle relative to Pembrokeshire.

I moved on to learn more about Hywel Dda; here is part of his entry on Wikipedia:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hywel\\_Dda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hywel_Dda)

Hywel Dda, sometimes anglicized as Howel the Good, or Hywel ap Cadell (880-948) was a king of Deheubarth who eventually came to rule most of Wales. He became the sole king of Seisyllwg in 920, and shortly thereafter established Deheubarth and proceeded to gain control over the entire country from Prestatyn to Pembroke. As a descendant of Rhodri Mawr through his father Cadell, Hywel was a member of the Dinefwr branch of the dynasty. He was recorded as King of the Britons in the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Annals of Ulster*.

Hywel is highly esteemed among other medieval Welsh rulers. His name is particularly linked with the codification of traditional Welsh law, which were thenceforth known as the Laws of Hywel Dda. The latter part of his name (Dda, literally “Good”) refers to the fact that his laws were just and good. The historian Dafydd Jenkins sees in them compassion rather than punishment, plenty of common sense, and recognition of the rights of women. Hywel Dda was a well-educated man even by modern standards, having a good knowledge of Welsh, Latin, and English.

The office building and original home of the Senedd (the Welsh parliament) is named Tŷ Hywel (“Hywel House” or “Hywel’s House”) in honor of Hywel Dda. The original Assembly chamber, now known as Siambr Hywel (“Hywel’s Chamber”), is used for educational courses and for children and young people’s debates. The local health board of south-west Wales also bears his name.

Here is a statue of Hywel Dda that is in Cardiff City Hall:



And here is a mid-13<sup>th</sup>-century depiction of Hywel Dda in a Latin copy of the *Laws of Hywel Dda*:



Recall that I only found Hywel Dda because I was looking for someone on Geni.com who was my 28<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather. This relationship is shown in the following chart:



This is the relationship chart that was created by software on Geni.com, and it displays the “shortest blood relationship” going from me back to Hywel Dda. This line goes through my 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandmother, Lucy Ann Eunice Darling.

I naturally wondered if any of my other 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandparents were descended from Hywel Dda. It turned out that three more of them were indeed his descendants. Here is the line through Ezra Marvin Miller:



On this line, Hywel Dda was my 29<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather.

Here is the line through Elmony Lester:

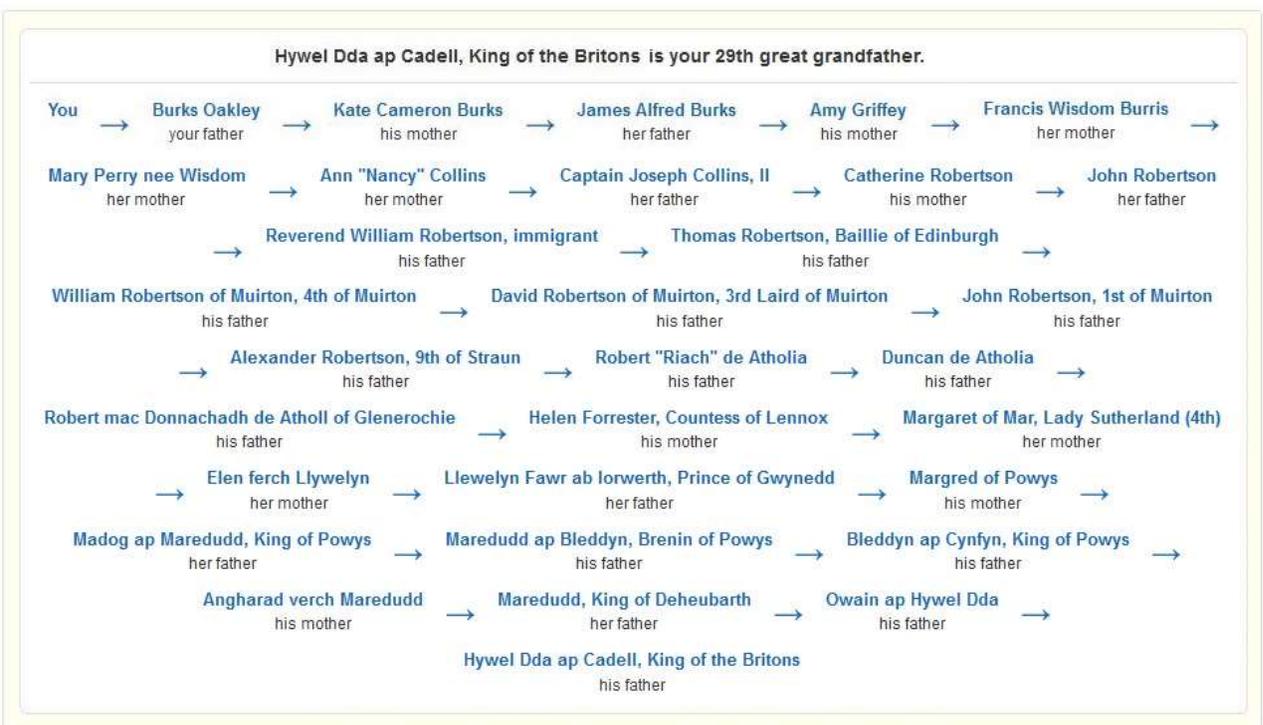


On this line, Hywel Dda was again my 28<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather. This line isn't at all surprising to me, since it goes through Jane Owen, John Owen, and Rebecca Humphrey, and they were Welsh immigrant Quakers that I wrote about previously – see:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/60-MyWelshQuakerAncestors.pdf>

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/61-MyWelshAncestorsPart1.pdf>

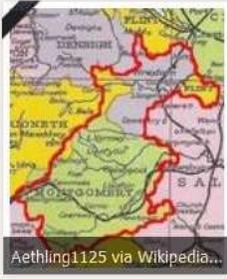
Here is the line through Amy Griffey:



On this line, Hywel Dda was my 29<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather. Note that this last ancestral line goes through Madog ap Maredudd, King of Powys. He also was in the first line I found, which is the “shortest blood relationship”.

***Madog ap Maredudd, King of Powys***

Let me now move forward a number of generations to Madog ap Maredudd, King of Powys. Here is part of his profile on Geni.com:

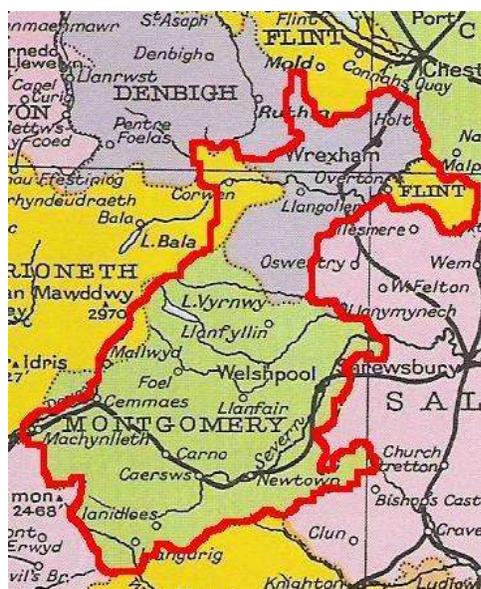


### Madog ap Maredudd, King of Powys

Birth: circa 1095  
 Death: February 09, 1160 (60-69)  
 Place of Burial: St. Tysilio, Meifod, Montgomeryshire, Wales  
 Immediate Family: Son of Maredudd ap Bleddyn, Brenin of Powys and Hunydd ferch Eunydd  
 Husband of Susanna verch Gruffydd  
 Partner of Efa verch Madog and Arienwen verch Moreiddig Warwyn  
 Father of Llewelyn ap Madog; Elisedd ap Madog; Gruffudd Maelor ap Madog, Lord of Bromfield; Owain Fychan ap Madog; Iorwerth ap Madog and 7 others  
 Brother of Cadwgan ap Maredudd; Dyddgu verch Maredudd; Gruffudd ap Maredudd, Lord of Mawddwy; Dafydd ap Maredudd and Efa verch Maredudd  
 Half brother of Hywel ap Maredudd; Angharad ferch Maredudd and Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd, of Mawddwy

Madog ap Maredudd lived in Wales from 1095 until 1160.

Here is a map of the Kingdom of Powys from the time of Madog ap Maredudd:



Powys also appears in the map shown earlier:



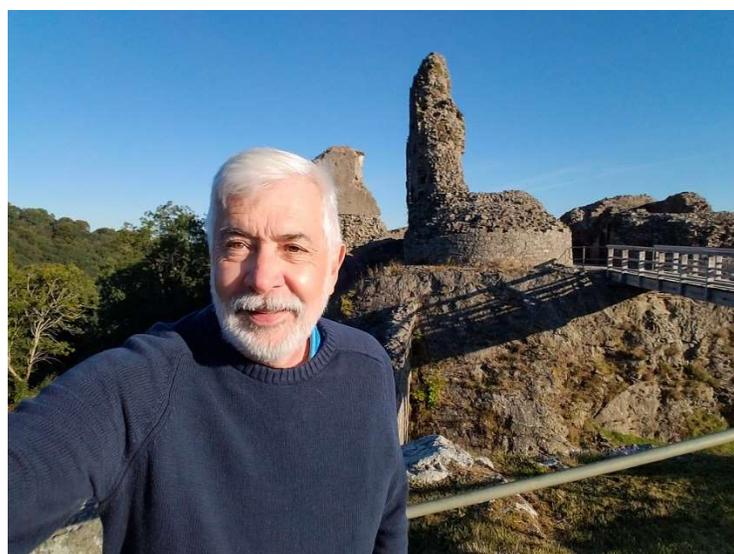
The reference to Powys was nice for me to see, since I was in Powys in September 2019. Really, I was! I was visiting Bishop's Castle, in Shropshire, England, where my Oakley ancestors first took their surname in the early 1200's. Bishop's Castle is right on the Welsh border, and in fact, this town appears in the lower-right of the map in the middle of the previous page. While in Bishop's Castle, I took a quick sightseeing trip to Montgomery, Wales, to see the ruins of Montgomery Castle. Here are some photos that I took that morning:



Sign by the side of the road – Welcome to Wales & Powys.



The ruins of Montgomery Castle.



Selfie by the ruins of Montgomery Castle.



Montgomery Castle in the early morning sun.

I note that this photo looks a lot like a photo of Dynefer Castle taken at sunrise that I found on the web:



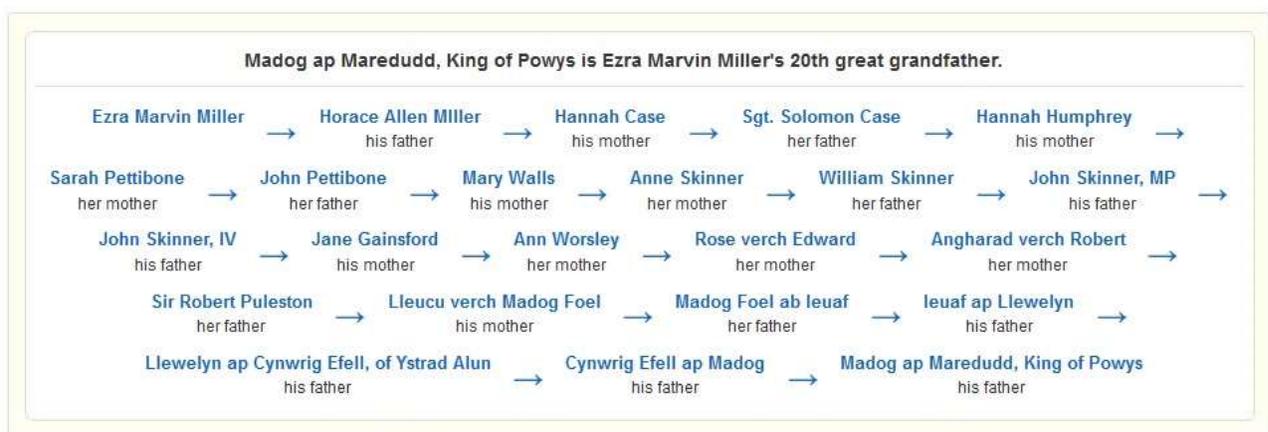
Dinefwr Castle at sunrise.

Madog ap Maredudd is buried in St. Tysilio, Meifod, Montgomeryshire, Wales. Here is a Google Map showing St. Tysilio, Montgomery, and Bishop's Castle:

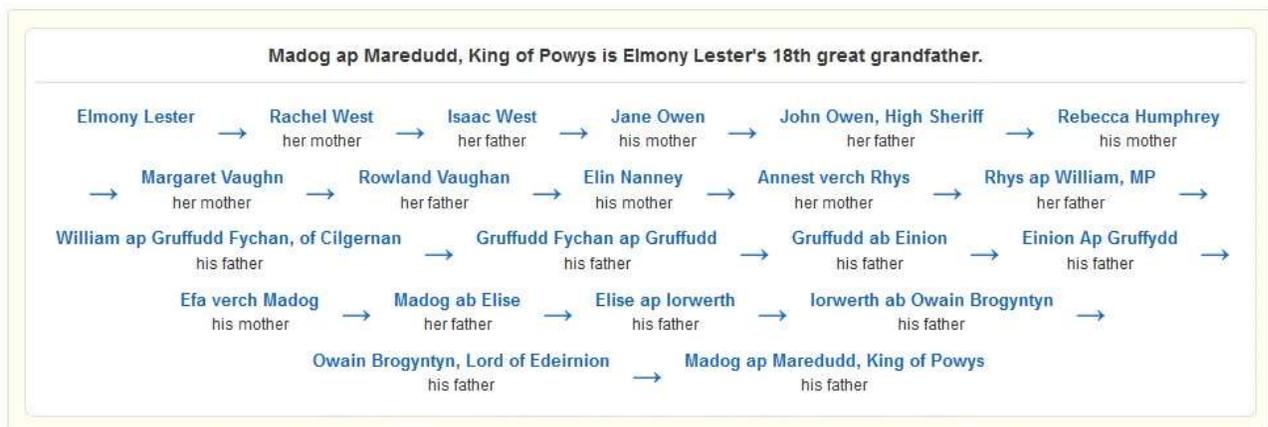


I note that Madog ap Maredudd appeared in the original ancestral line going back from me to Hywel Dda. That was the “shortest blood relationship” going back through Lucy Darling. He also appeared in the ancestral line back to Hywel Dda that went through Amy Griffey.

Somehow, I wasn’t surprised to see that Ezra Marvin Miller also was descended from Madog ap Maredudd:



Interestingly, Elmony Lester is also descended from Madog ap Maredudd:



So once again, I have multiple lines back to an ancestor who lived in Wales in the Middle Ages. And since two of these lines go back through Ray Miller Oakley,

while the other two go back through Ray's wife Kate Cameron Burks, Ray and Kate were distant cousins going back to Madog ap Maredudd, and to Hywel Dda before that:



I should add that Susanna verch Gruffydd was the wife of Madog ap Maredudd. She also was descended from Hywel Dda:



### *Spouses Who Were Related in these Ancestral Lines*

I just mentioned several couples where both spouses were descended from Hywel Dda. In looking through all these ancestral lines I have shown in this chapter, I found a number of couples where this was also the case. I'll start with John Owen and his wife Hannah Maris, who were Elmony Lester's 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandparents:



I learned that both Hannah and her husband John were descended from Hywel Dda:



This isn't at all surprising, given their Welsh heritage – see:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/60-MyWelshQuakerAncestors.pdf>

Similarly, Rebecca Humphrey and her husband Robert Owen were both descended from Hywel Dda:



● Shortest blood relationship

Rebecca Humphrey is Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons' 19th great granddaughter. <

● Shortest blood relationship

Robert Owen is Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons' 20th great grandson. <

They, too, were Welsh immigrants:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/61-MyWelshAncestorsPart1.pdf>

The “shortest blood relationship” from me back to Hywel Dda goes through Elizabeth Bostwick – she was Lucy Darling’s 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandmother. When I looked at Elizabeth, I learned that her husband John Mix also was descended from Hywel Dda:



● Shortest blood relationship

Elizabeth Bostwick is Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons' 20th great granddaughter. <

● Shortest blood relationship

John Mix is Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons' 23rd great grandson. <

Gruffydd ap Hywel, Lord of Nannau, appears on my ancestral line back to Hywel Dda through Elmony Lester. He was my 12<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather on this line. Both he and his wife, Jane verch Humphrey, were descended from Hywel Dda:



● Shortest blood relationship

Gruffydd ap Hywel, Lord of Nannau is Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons' 14th great grandson. <

● Shortest in-law relationship

Jane verch Humphrey is Gruffydd ap Hywel, Lord of Nannau's wife. <

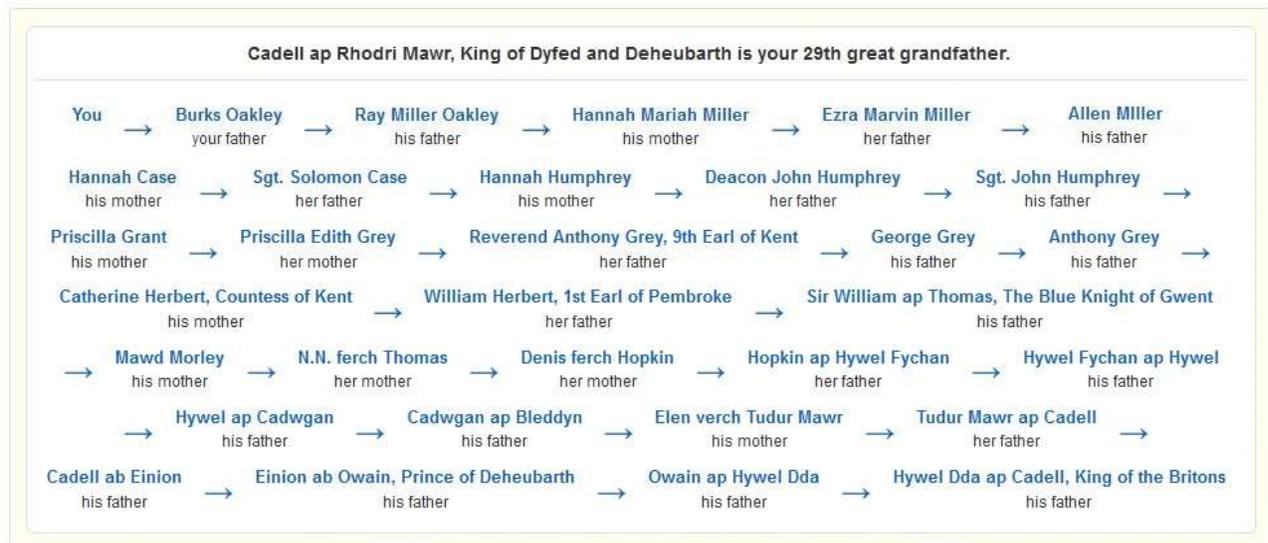
● Shortest blood relationship

Jane verch Humphrey is Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons' 15th great granddaughter. <

I'll come back later in this narrative and show some additional couples where both spouses were descended from Hywel Dda.

## William Herbert, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Pembroke

Let me now discuss one of the more “interesting” people in these ancestral lines. Here again is my line through Ezra Marvin Miller back to Hywel Dda:



This line goes through William Herbert, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Pembroke. My wife’s paternal grandfather came from Pembrokeshire, so naturally I was interested in my ancestor who was the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Pembroke. Here is an excerpt from his Wikipedia article:

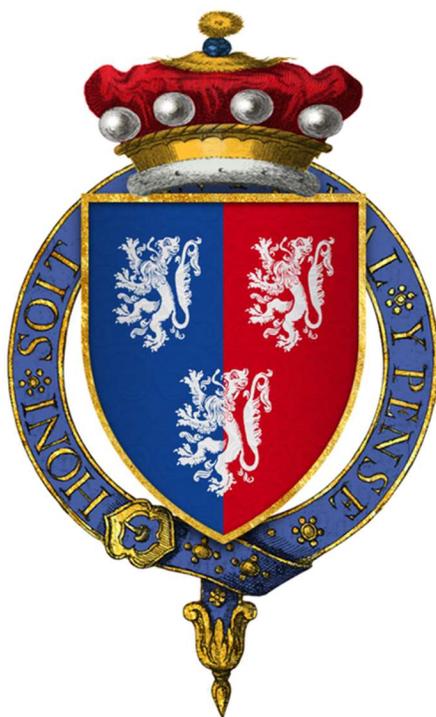
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Herbert,\\_1st\\_Earl\\_of\\_Pembroke\\_\(died\\_1469\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Herbert,_1st_Earl_of_Pembroke_(died_1469))

William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke KG (1423-27 July 1469), known as “Black William”, was a Welsh nobleman, soldier, politician, and courtier. He was the son of William ap Thomas, founder of Raglan Castle, and Gwladys ferch Dafydd Gam, and grandson of Dafydd Gam, an adherent of King Henry V of England.

His father had been an ally of Richard of York, and Herbert supported the Yorkist cause in the Wars of the Roses. In 1461, Herbert was rewarded by King Edward IV with the title Baron Herbert of Raglan (having assumed an English-style surname in place of the Welsh patronymic) and was invested as a **Knight of the Garter**.

Soon after the decisive Yorkist victory at the Battle of Towton in 1461, Herbert replaced Jasper Tudor as Earl of Pembroke, which gave him control of Pembroke Castle - and with it he gained the wardship of young Henry Tudor. However, he fell out with Lord Warwick “the Kingmaker” in 1469, when Warwick turned against the King. Herbert was denounced by Warwick and the Duke of Clarence as one of the king's “evil advisers”. William and his brother Richard were executed by the Lancastrians, now led by Warwick, after the Battle of Edgecote Moor, near Banbury. **[Their executions were by beheading.]**

I guess my wife isn’t the only one in the family with roots in Pembrokeshire, Wales.



Arms of Sir William Herbert, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Herbert, at the time of his installation in the Most Noble Order of the Garter: *Per pale azure and gules, three lions rampant argent.*

### ***What is Being Obscured by the Shortest Blood Lines?***

Let me now shift gears and make an observation about the relationship charts on Geni.com. By now, you have to know that these charts show the “shortest blood relationships”. However, all too often, this path obscures useful information. For example, I showed that my line back to Hywel Dda going through Ezra Marvin Miller includes William Herbert, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Pembroke. But when I looked just at my line back to William Herbert, I found that the “shortest blood relationship” went through Jane Kershaw Wells (the wife of Ezra Marvin Miller):



I don't think I have seen many other ancestral lines in the World Family Tree on Geni.com that go back through Jane Kershaw Wells (if any at all). This means that Ezra Marvin Miller and Jane Kershaw Wells were distant cousins – they both were descended from William Herbert.

● Shortest blood relationship

Ezra Marvin Miller is William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke's 11th great grandson. <

● Shortest blood relationship

Jane Kershaw Wells is William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke's 10th great granddaughter. <

I also tried this for Ray and Kate – and of course, they both are descended from William Herbert:

● Shortest blood relationship

Ray Miller Oakley is William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke's 12th great grandson. <

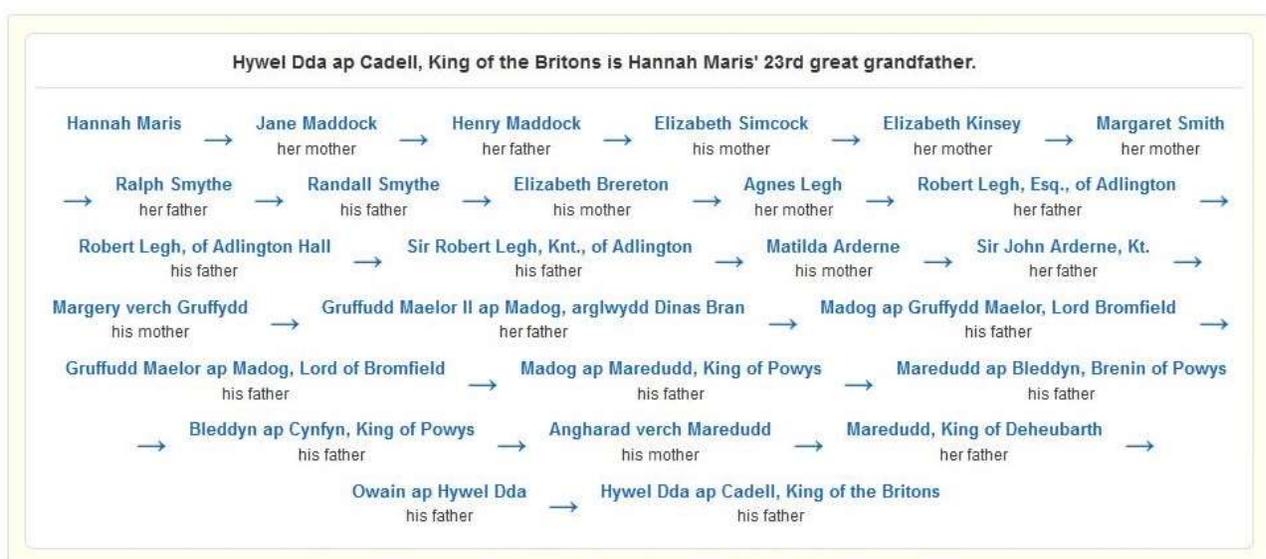
● Shortest blood relationship

Kate Cameron Burks is William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke's 15th great granddaughter. <

Of course, I wouldn't have seen the line through Jane Kershaw Wells if I had stopped with the shortest blood line going from me back to Hywel Dda through William Herbert. Is this a shortcoming of the software? Or am I just trying to use the World Family Tree in a way that it was never designed to be used?

### More Couples Who Were Related to Each Other

I looked at Hannah Maris and her line back to Hywel Dda. Recall that Hannah Maris and her husband John Owen were both descended from Hywel Dda. Here is Hannah's line back to Hywel Dda:

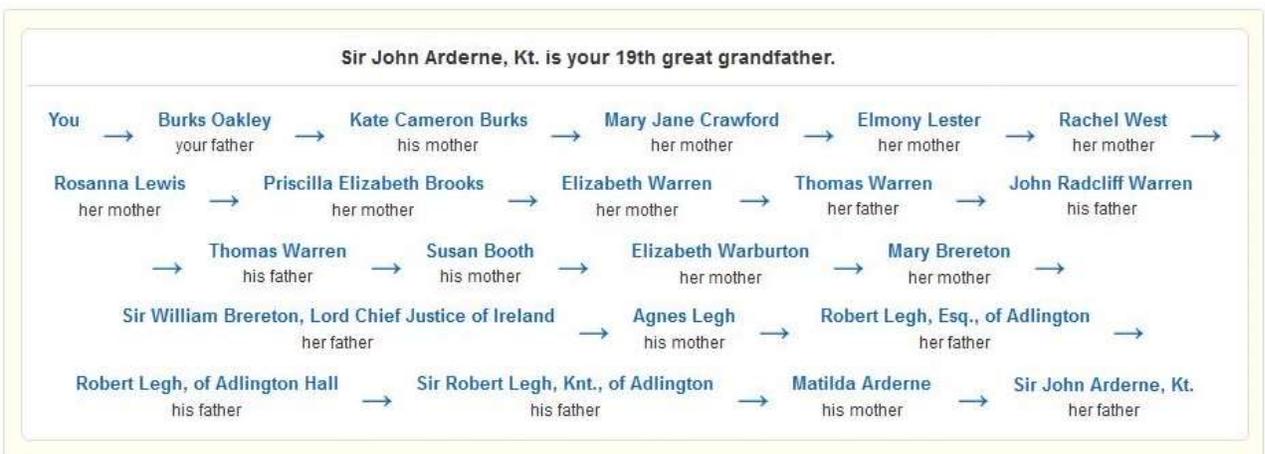


I note that this line goes through Sir John Arderne, Knight. When I looked at Sir John, I still had the reference person as Capt. Richard More (the *Mayflower* passenger). And I learned that Sir John was Capt. Richard More's 9<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather:



My goodness! I'm beginning to think that everyone in my Welsh ancestral lines is related to each other!

Let me stick with Sir John Arderne, Knight. I just mentioned him being in ancestral lines going through Hannah Maris and Capt. Richard More. I found another line from me back to Sir John Arderne, and this one goes through Elmony Lester and Elizabeth Warren:



Note that this line goes through Sir William Brereton, Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. He also held the title Lord Marshal of Ireland. Of course, Sir William and his wife Alice Savage were both descended from Hywel Dda:



I find it amazing that I kept finding more ways in which everyone is related to each other.

One last ancestor and that will be it. Sir William ap Thomas, The Blue Knight of Gwent, was my 15<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather on an ancestral line going through Jane Kershaw Wells.<sup>1</sup> I just had to look at a person who was the "Blue Knight". Sir William was the father of William Herbert, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Pembroke, who I mentioned earlier. Sir William ap Thomas, the Blue Knight of Gwent, was married to Gwladus verch Dafydd Gam, and of course, Gwladus was descended from Hywel Dda:

<sup>1</sup> For more information about Sir William ap Thomas, The Blue Knight of Gwent, see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_ap\\_Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_ap_Thomas)

● Shortest blood relationship	Sir William ap Thomas, The Blue Knight of Gwent is Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons' 11th great grandson.	◀
● Shortest in-law relationship	Gwladus verch Dafydd Gam is Sir William ap Thomas, The Blue Knight of Gwent's 4th wife.	◀
● Shortest blood relationship	Gwladus verch Dafydd Gam is Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons' 12th great granddaughter.	◀

Sir William ap Thomas and his wife Gwladus are buried in Priory Church of St. Mary, Abergavenny, in Monmouthshire, Wales:



Tomb of Sir William ap Thomas (died 1446). The alabaster tomb has fine detailed carvings of apostles and martyrs and the Annunciation depicted on its east panel. He lies alongside his wife Gwladys, known as the 'Star of Abergavenny' for her beauty.

It seems that lots of the spouses in this chapter are related to each other! I'm sure I could find a lot more if I systematically looked for them – but I think I found enough – for sure!

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I focused on my 28<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather, Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons (880-950). Howel the Good was a king of Seisyllwg, then the Kingdom of Deheubarth, and eventually came to rule most of Wales. He is certainly one of my more important ancestors! I have ancestral lines going back to Hywel Dda through four of my 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandparents.

I also discussed Madog ap Maredudd, King of Powys, and how I had visited Powys in September 2019. Madog ap Maredudd was a 4<sup>th</sup>-great grandson of Hywel Dda.

I mentioned some of the more interesting people in the various ancestral lines, and I was amazed to see all of the couples in these lines where both spouses were descended from Hywel Dda.