

Giraldus's life can be summarized as follows.¹¹ As the fourth and youngest son he was destined for a clerical career from the beginning, receiving education initially from his uncle, David fitz Gerald, bishop of St David's (1148-76), before proceeding to St Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, and then Paris, where he remained between c. 1165 and c. 1172.¹² After returning from the Parisian schools he obtained a legation from the archbishop of Canterbury in 1174 to collect tithes in the diocese of St David's; shortly afterwards (c. 1175) he was appointed archdeacon of Brecon, having secured the deposition of the previous archdeacon on the grounds of the latter's marriage, which contravened canon law. After a further period in Paris studying theology (1176-9) Giraldus administered the diocese of St David's for about three years on behalf of Bishop Peter de Leia (c. 1179-82).¹³ The next major step in the archdeacon's career was his employment as a royal clerk in the service of Henry II in 1184, a position he retained into the reign of Henry's successor, Richard I (1189-99). His service as a clerk took Giraldus to Ireland in 1185-6 and on a journey with Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury to preach the Third Crusade in Wales in 1188, as well as on missions in England and France. It was at this stage in his career that he wrote the first of his important prose works, two on Ireland (the *Topographia Hibernica* and the *Expugnatio Hibernica*) and two on Wales (the *Itinerarium Cambriae* and the *Descriptio Cambriae*), thereby launching a hugely prolific literary career. After leaving the court c. 1194 Giraldus spent further time in study, first at Hereford and then, from c. 1196, at Lincoln, before his election as bishop of St David's in 1199. The election was disputed, and the matter complicated by Giraldus's reviving the claim, first advanced by the Norman bishop of St David's, Bernard (1115-48), that that church should be recognized as a metropolitan see with authority over a Welsh ecclesiastical province independent of Canterbury. Despite three journeys to Rome to prosecute his case, by 1203 Giraldus had failed to secure either confirmation of his election or the elevation of St David's to the status of an archbishopric. He resigned his archdeaconry in favour of his nephew and spent most of the remaining years of his life at Lincoln, reliving his struggle for St David's in a series of autobiographical works and writing or completing a number of other books, including a *Fürstenspiegel*, *De Principis Instructione*, whose second and third books contained a damning account of his former employer, King Henry II.¹⁴ Giraldus was not unique, of course, as an example of a cleric from Wales who received an education in England (and in his case crucially also France) before returning to hold ecclesiastical office in Wales. Welsh churches were poor and could not provide a thorough grounding in the arts, let alone theology or law, available at

¹¹ The fullest reconstruction of his life remains J. Conway Davies, *Giraldus Cambrensis*, 1146-1946, in: *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 99 (1946-7) pp. 85-108, 256-80.

¹² Bartlett, Gerald (as n. 6) p. 29; Richter, Giraldus (as n. 6) p. 4 assigns Gerald's first period in Paris to c. 1162-74.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 6, 90.

¹⁴ On this last-named work, see Karl Schnith, *Betrachtungen zum Spätwerk des Giraldus Cambrensis 'De Principis Instructione'*, in: *Festiva Lanx*, Munich 1967, pp. 53-66; Bartlett, Gerald (as n. 6) pp. 69-99.