

who held land in Glamorgan,⁴⁸ and this disregard of the family's landholding across the Bristol Channel is probably an accurate of reflection of its position by Giraldus's lifetime. In common with their Marcher kinsmen, to whom they were related through Nest, the de Barris of Dyfed had planted deep roots in south-west Wales, where they represented prime examples of 'the local magnates, the men on the spot'.⁴⁹

Giraldus therefore had a strong interest in the continuation of Marcher power in Wales and did not sympathize with native Welsh political aspirations. He sharply distinguished his Cambro-Norman kinsmen—the 'Geraldines' or 'sons of Nest'—from his Welsh relatives in the dynasty of Deheubarth, and also wrote that Wales belonged to the kingdom of England.⁵⁰ This did not mean, though, that he needed to be ashamed of his Welsh blood: quite the contrary, this arguably gave him greater nobility than did his paternal descent, for whereas his mother was a descendant of a Welsh king his father belonged to a minor branch of the de Barris and possessed only a modest estate, possibly only two knights' fees, in Dyfed.⁵¹ Welsh nobility could be appropriated by the conquerors just as easily as the sanctity of Welsh saints, not least St David himself, whose name was invoked by Giraldus's kinsmen during the invasion of Ireland.⁵² Equally, Giraldus had a somewhat uneasy relationship with the English crown, which, especially after the Anglo-Norman intervention in Ireland, was highly suspicious of the Marchers and did not, in Giraldus's view, properly appreciate their role in subduing both the Welsh and the Irish.⁵³ His identification with Wales was thus essentially a colonialist one: it represented an assertion of control over a half-conquered country, a statement that a land which had once belonged to the Welsh now belonged in part—and in due course, Giraldus hoped, would belong in full—to families like his own.

Let us look next at where Giraldus's career took him and try to assess what this implies about his attitudes to England and Wales. To judge by his autobiographical writings, his life-long ambition was to become bishop of St David's and to elevate that church to an archbishopric. As has often been pointed out, however, the events of his life suggest otherwise.⁵⁴ Another interpretation of his life would be that Giraldus sought to exploit his Welsh connections in order to win favour and promotion from the Angevin regime in England. He made his debut as an ecclesiastical reformer in the diocese of St David's and clearly took his duties as archdeacon of Brecon seriously. However, as we have seen, this depended on cultivating the archbishop of Canterbury; furthermore, Giraldus seems to have deputed much of his work as

⁴⁸ Giraldus, *Opera* 6 p. 66; Davies, Giraldus (as n. 11) p. 86.

⁴⁹ Rowlands (as n. 1) p. 145. See also Flanagan (as n. 10) pp. 145-9.

⁵⁰ Giraldus, *Opera* 1 pp. 58-60; 3 p. 166.

⁵¹ Bartlett, Gerald (as n. 6) p. 20 and n. 43. Cf. T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, Oxford 1993, p. 174, which argues that, in Welsh society, royal status could be transmitted exclusively through females.

⁵² Rowlands (as n. 1) p. 156.

⁵³ Bartlett, Gerald (as n. 6) pp. 21-5.

⁵⁴ See e.g. Richter, Giraldus (as n. 6) p. 127; Bartlett, Gerald (as n. 6) pp. 46-8.