

their return.²⁸ Further north, along the Shropshire border, two families were prominent as agents of royal business in Wales from the reign of Henry II onwards. By 1160 Iorwerth Goch, younger brother of Madog ap Maredudd, the king of Powys who died in that year, held the fief of Sutton in Shropshire from Henry II ‘by the service of being interpreter (*latimarius*) between the English and the Welsh’, a serjeanty inherited by Iorwerth’s sons and grandsons. After the manor was alienated to John Le Strange in the 1260s, however, the service changed to that of conducting the king in Wales in time of war.²⁹ Likewise the Welshman Roger of Powys held Overton Castle in Flintshire and Whittington Castle, Shropshire, from Henry II by the serjeanty of ‘bearing the king’s mandates throughout Wales’, a tenure inherited by Roger’s son, Meurig—who was also required to lead the men of Powys to the royal court—and then by Roger’s grandson, Goronwy; that this service included acting as an interpreter is made explicit in a source of c. 1211.³⁰

Giraldus, it is true, was no interpreter — a role ruled out by his very limited knowledge of Welsh — nor did he owe diplomatic services to the English crown by virtue of serjeanty tenure.³¹ What makes him unique, however, is the extent to which his career depended on crossing borders between Wales and England as well as the degree to which that career is illuminated by his own voluminous writings. Admittedly, as we have seen, he also spent time in France, Ireland and Italy, but these visits all stemmed essentially from either family connections or career interests in Wales or England. It is true, too, that the fact that almost all we know about Giraldus stems from his own words poses serious problems of interpretation, compelling us to read him critically, bearing in mind the rhetorical objectives of his autobiographical writings in particular.³² Nevertheless, the prominence he gives to the tensions arising from his mixed ancestry and connections is revealing and his writings take us closer to the experience of negotiating the boundaries between Wales and England than any other medieval source. For even when allowance is made for a heavy dose of self-justification, there can be no doubt that in its ecclesiastical as well as its political

²⁸ [Abraham Farley (ed.)], *Domesday Book*, 2 vols., London 1783, 1 fo. 179b.

²⁹ R. W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire*, 12 vols., London 1854-60, 2 pp. 108-20; Constance Bullock-Davies, *Professional Interpreters and the Matter of Britain*, Cardiff 1966, pp. 15-17; Hall, *Red Book* (as n. 22) 2 pp. 454, 511.

³⁰ Bullock-Davies (as n. 29) pp. 16-17; Eyton (as n. 29) 3 pp. 105-6; 11 pp. 31-5; Hall, *Red Book* (as n. 22) 2 pp. 453, 454, 511. See also Frederick C. Suppe, *Military Institutions on the Welsh Marches: Shropshire 1066-1300*, Woodbridge 1994, p. 96; Frederick C. Suppe, *Who was Rhys Sais? Some Comments on Anglo-Welsh Relations before 1066*, in: *Haskins Society Journal* 7 (1996) pp. 63-73.

³¹ Cf. n. 84 below. In the journey round Wales in 1188 Alexander, archdeacon of Bangor interpreted the sermons preaching the Third Crusade into Welsh: Giraldus, *Opera* 6, pp. 55, 126.

³² Cf. Bartlett, *Gerald* (as n. 6), p. 1; David Walker, *Gerald of Wales*, in: *Brycheiniog* 24 (1978-9) pp. 62-3. The fullest discussion of Gerald’s autobiographical writings is Georg Misch, *Geschichte der Autobiographie*, 2: 2, Frankfurt a.M. 1962, pp. 1297-1479.