

## Chapter 61

### My Welsh Ancestors Going Back to the Middle Ages – Part 1

[originally written on 21 August 2020]

#### **Introduction**

I recently wrote about my 6<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather, John Owen, High Sheriff (1692-1752), who was a Quaker and lived in Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia. John's father, Robert Owen (1657-1697), was born in Wales and immigrated to America in 1690. He left Wales since he was persecuted for practicing his Quaker faith. See:

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

In this narrative, I want to go back farther on John Owen's ancestral lines and see if he has any interesting ancestors. Of course, his ancestors are also my ancestors.

John Owen is part of the World Family Tree on Geni.com, and hopefully I'll be able to go back many generations on one or more of his ancestral lines.

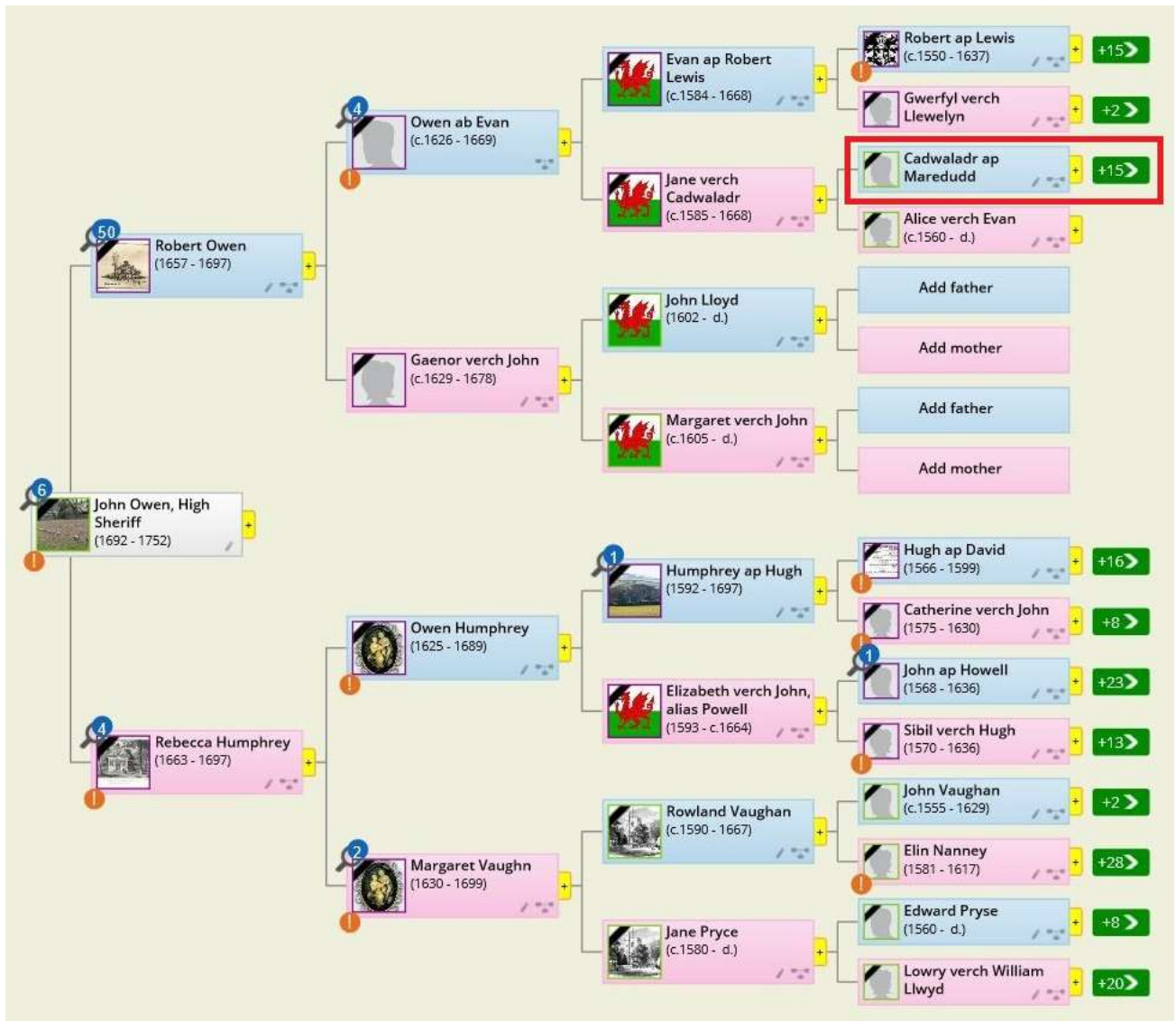
#### **John Owen's Ancestors**

As I mentioned above, John Owen, High Sheriff, was my 6<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather:

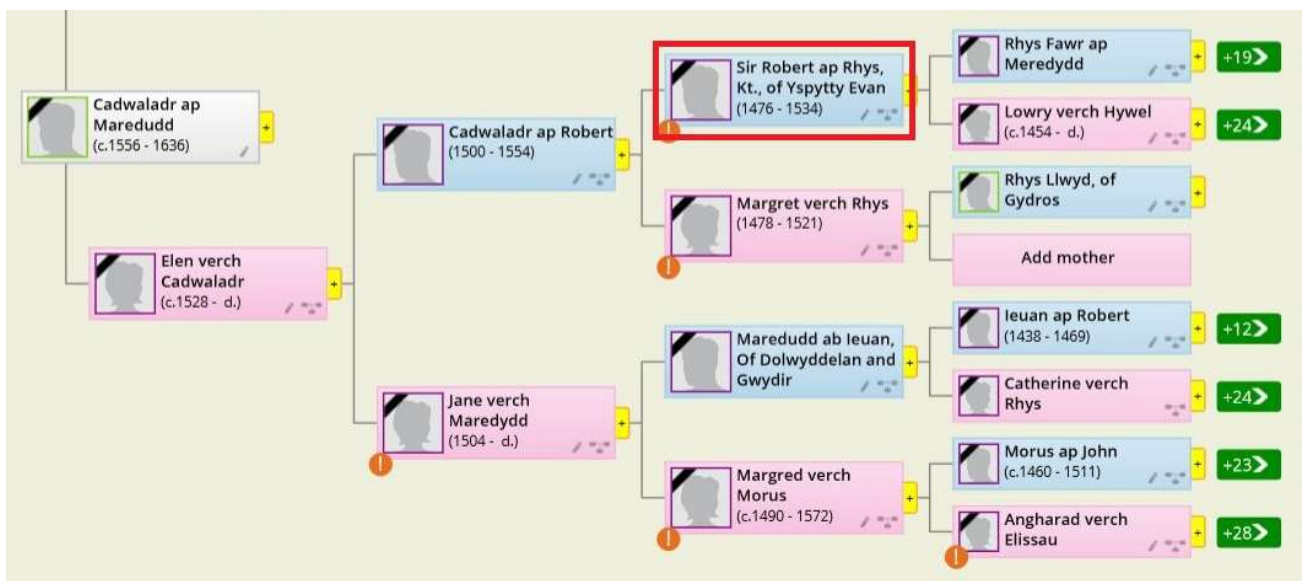


My line back to John Owen goes through my paternal grandmother, Kate Cameron Burks (1873-1954).

Here is John Owen's pedigree on Geni.com:



Let me start by looking at Cadwaladr ap Maredudd (1556-1636), who was one of John Owen's 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandfathers. He appears in the red box in the chart shown above. Here is his pedigree on his mother's side of the family (none of his father's ancestors are known):



One of Cadwaladr's great-grandfathers was Sir Robert ap Rhys, Knight (1476-1534) – see the red box in the chart above. OK, he looks interesting, and it is always nice to find an ancestor who was a Knight.

Recall from Chapter 60 that the words ap (or “ab”) and ferch (or “verch”) are Welsh terms meaning “son of” or “daughter of”, respectively, as in the name Robert ap Rhys – Robert son of Rhys – or the name Cadwaladr ap Maredudd – Cadwaladr son of Maredudd.

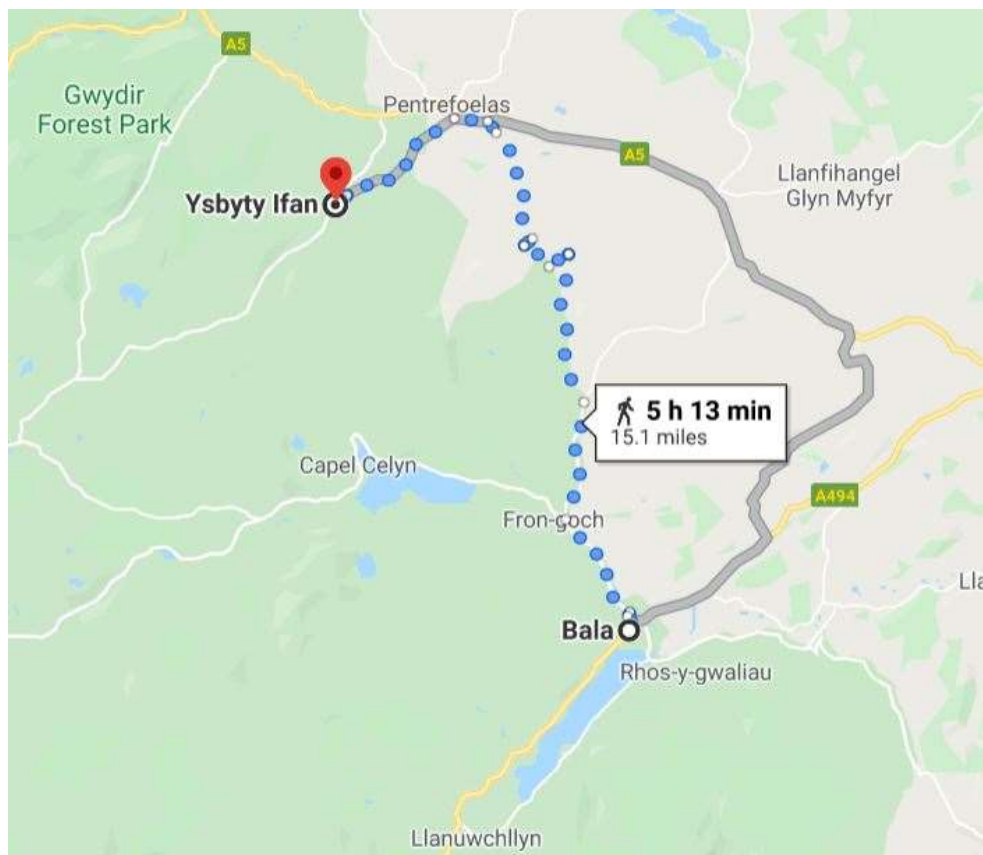
Here is part of Sir Robert's profile on Geni.com:

**Robert ap Rhys, Kt.**

Birth:	1476 Ysptyty, Ifan, Denbighshire, Wales
Death:	1534 (57-59) Denbighshire, Wales
Immediate Family:	Son of Rhys Fawr ap Meredydd and Lowry verch Hywel Husband of Margret verch Rhys Father of Cadwaladr ap Robert; Ellis Price, LL D "Doctor Goch"; Lowry verch Robert; Catherine Liwyd verch Robert; David Pryse and 9 others

<https://www.geni.com/people/Sir-Robert-ap-Rhys-Kt-of-Ysptyty-Evan/6000000002102454004>

Sir Robert was born in Ysptyty Ifan, Denbighshire, Wales – close to Bala, Gwynedd, Wales, where Robert Owen lived (recall that he was my Quaker ancestor who immigrated to America):



I next Googled “Ysptyty Ifan Denbighshire Wales” (no quotes) and that got me to the Wikipedia article about the town – here is an excerpt:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ysbyty>Ifan>

Ysbyty Ifan is a small, historic village and community in the Conwy County Borough of Wales. The population in 2011 was 196 in 76 households (29 household spaces had no usual residents), and over 79% of the population were able to speak Welsh. It has one of the smallest populations of any Welsh community, the smallest being Ganllwyd.

The Wikipedia article included some photos of the area:



Ysbyty Ifan



Bridge over the Conwy



Effigies in the church of Rhys Fawr and Lowri, and their son Robert



Bryn Gwyn

Oh wow! The image with the effigies in the local church includes Rhys Fawr and his son Robert – the son would be Robert ap Rhys (Robert son of Rhys). And that was my ancestor who lived in Ysbyty Ifan!

Clicking on the image of the effigies took me to view a larger image, along with some text:



“From left to right - Lowri (the wife of Rhys Fawr), Rhys Fawr ap Maredydd, and their son Robert ap Rhys. Rhys Fawr was the standard bearer for Henry VII in the Battle of Bosworth and the leader of the North-West contingent against Richard III. The effigy dates from about 1483 and shows Rhys with chain and crucifix. His son Robert is in monastic dress – he was chaplain to Cardinal Wolsey.”

So right away, I've found some interesting ancestors!

The Wikipedia article about Ysbyty Ifan also included “The Ysbyty Ifan Estate is the largest single estate looked after by the National Trust. The area of the estate is over 8,000 hectares and includes moorland, river valleys and hill farms.”

I then Googled the estate, which took me to:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ysbyty-ifan>

Here is a photo from the website – it certainly looks like beautiful Welsh countryside:



Looking around the website got me to:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ysbyty-ifan/features/ysbyty-ifan---our-largest-agricultural-estate->

The text on the page included:

In 1951, the Ysbyty Ifan estate came into our care after being transferred from the Treasury, who received it in lieu of death duties from the estates of the then late Lord Penrhyn. Ysbyty Ifan was transferred along with mountainous Carneddau and Glyderau estate, which boasts the largest continuous stretch of mountainous land in the country, and the impressive building and grounds of Penrhyn Castle.

Penrhyn Castle sounded interesting – my wife Loretta’s paternal grandfather grew up in a house in Pembrokeshire, Wales, named Penrhyn. [Penrhyn is a Welsh word meaning ‘headland’ or ‘peninsula’.]

I then Googled Penrhyn Castle, which took me to the Wikipedia article:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penrhyn\\_Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penrhyn_Castle)

Penrhyn Castle (Welsh: Castell Penrhyn) is a country house in Llandygai, Bangor, Gwynedd, North Wales, in the form of a Norman castle. It was originally a medieval fortified manor house, founded by Ednyfed Fychan. In 1438, Ioan ap Gruffudd was granted a license to crenellate and he founded the stone castle and added a tower house.

Here is a photo of Penrhyn Castle from the Wikipedia article:



Penrhyn Castle

The first name mentioned in the Wikipedia article about Penrhyn Castle was Ednyfed Fychan, who built the original castle, so naturally I wondered if he was one of my Welsh ancestors (hey, why not think big?). His name in the article was a hyperlink, which I followed to:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ednyfed\\_Fychan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ednyfed_Fychan)

Ednyfed Fychan (ca. 1170-1246), full name Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig, was a Welsh warrior who became seneschal [a governor or other administrative or judicial officer] to the Kingdom of Gwynedd in Northern Wales, serving Llywelyn the Great and his son Dafydd ap Llywelyn. He claimed descent from Marchudd ap Cynan, Lord of Rhos, 'protector' of Rhodri Mawr, King of Gwynedd. He was an ancestor of Owen Tudor and thereby of the Tudor dynasty, and all its royal successors down to the present day.

Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig is part of the World Family Tree on Geni.com:



**Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig**

Birth:	circa 1165 Dules, Denbighshire, Wales
Death:	circa July 1246 (72-89) Of Tregarnedd, Wales
Place of Burial:	Llandrillo yn Rhos Church, Llandrillo-yn-Rhos, North Wales
Immediate Family:	Son of <a href="#">Cynwrig ap Iorwerth</a> and <a href="#">Angharad verch Hwfa</a> Husband of <a href="#">Gwenllian verch Rhys</a> and <a href="#">Tangwystl verch Llywarch</a> Father of <a href="#">Gruffudd ab Ednyfed Fychan</a> ; <a href="#">Gwladus verch Ednyfed Fychan</a> ; <a href="#">Gronwy ap Ednyfed Fychan</a> ; <a href="#">Philip ab Ednyfed</a> ; <a href="#">Cynwrig ap Ednyfed Fychan</a> and 7 others

<https://www.geni.com/people/Ednyfed-Fychan-ap-Cynwrig/6000000003649751740>

And when I went to his profile page on Geni.com, I found that I am indeed descended from him:



He was my 21<sup>st</sup>-great grandfather. Amazing!! My ancestral line back to Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig goes through John Owen, who was the son of Robert Owen (and both were featured in Chapter 60). How cool to be descended from Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig!

The Wikipedia article about Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig mentioned Llywelyn the Great and his son Dafydd ap Llywelyn. Since I got lucky with Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig, I wondered if I was also descended from these men (hey, it doesn't cost anything to think big thoughts, right?).

I first looked at Llewelyn Fawr ab Iorwerth, Prince of Gwynedd (1172-1240):



### Llewelyn Fawr ab Iorwerth, Prince of Gwynedd

**Birth:** circa 1172  
Aberffraw Castle, Anglesey, Wales

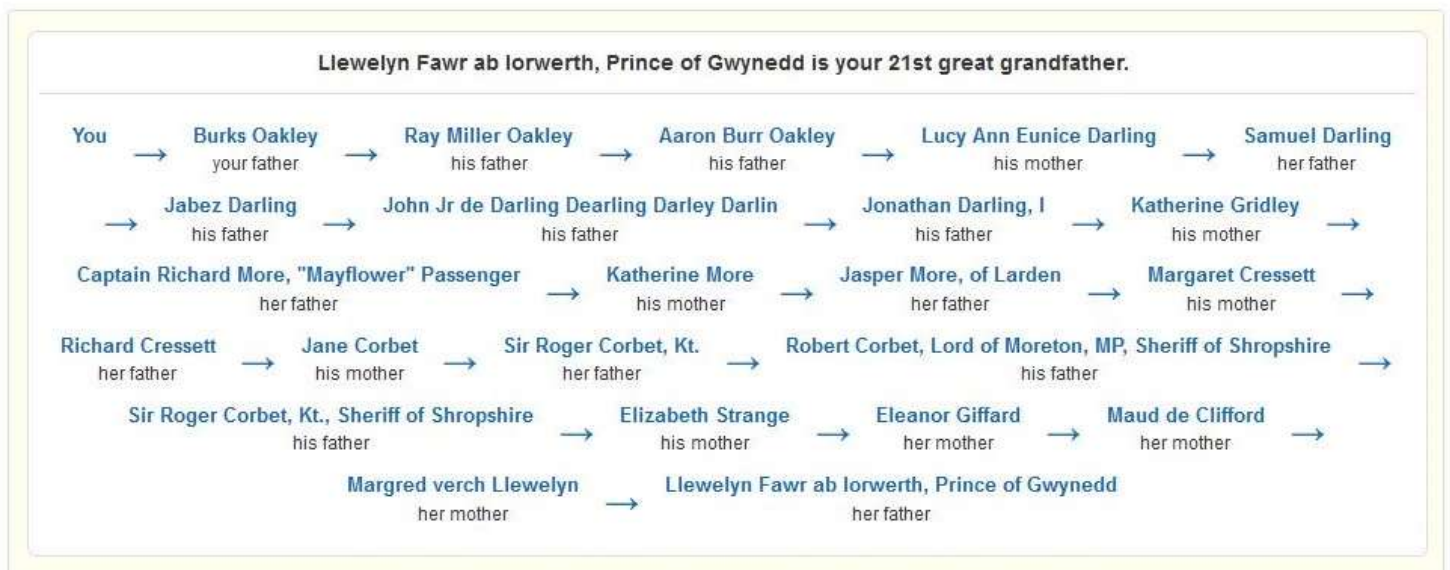
**Death:** April 11, 1240 (63-72)  
Aberconwy, Arllechwedd Isaf, Caernarvonshire, Wales

**Place of Burial:** Aberconwy Abbey, Conwy, Caernarvonshire, Wales, United Kingdom

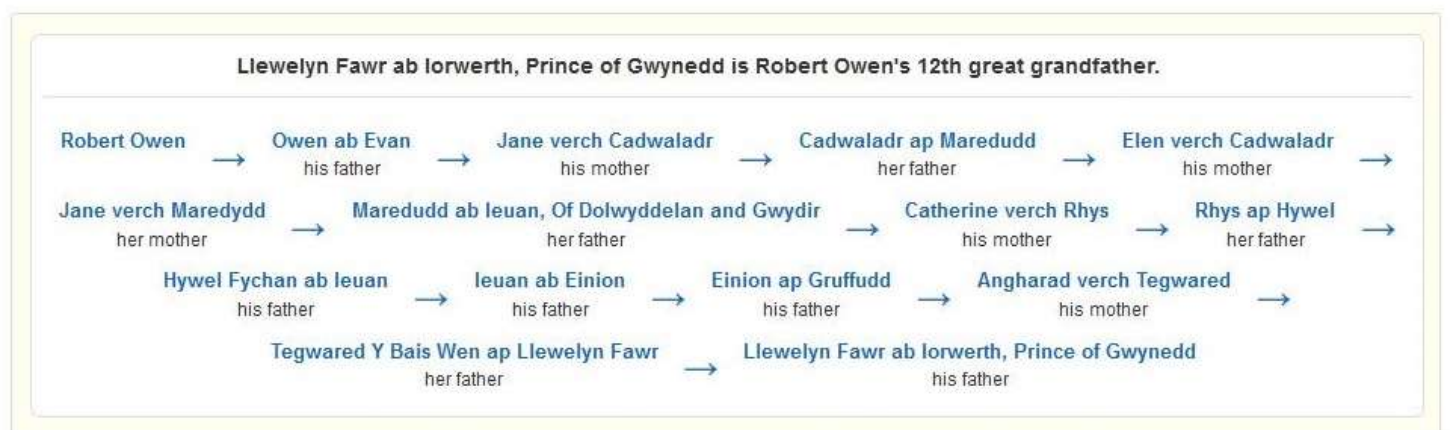
**Immediate Family:** Son of Iorwerth Drwyndwn ab Owain and Margred of Powys  
Husband of Joan - Plantagenet, Lady Snowdon  
Partner of Multiple Unidentified Mistresses; Crysten and Tangwystl verch Llywarch Goch  
Father of Gwenllïan verch Llewelyn; Gwladys Ddu verch Llewelyn; Angharad verch Llewelyn; N.N. verch Llewelyn; Elen ferch Llywelyn and 6 others

<https://www.geni.com/people/Llewelyn-ab-Iorwerth-Prince-of-Gwynedd/600000003807598493>

Indeed, I am descended from him:



Oh my! This line is not what I was expecting. It doesn't go through my Welsh immigrant ancestor Robert Owen – instead, it goes through my **Darling** ancestors. But when I looked at the relationship between Llewelyn and Robert Owen, I found that Llewelyn was Robert's 12<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather:



So I have at least two different lines back to Llewelyn – one through my **Darling** line, one through my **Owen** line.

Here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia article about Llewelyn (with a slightly different spelling):

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llywelyn\\_the\\_Great](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llywelyn_the_Great)

Llywelyn the Great, full name Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (c. 1173 – 11 April 1240), was a King of Gwynedd in north Wales and eventually ruler of all Wales. By a combination of war and diplomacy he dominated Wales for 45 years.

During Llywelyn's childhood, Gwynedd was ruled by two of his uncles, who split the kingdom between them, following the death of Llywelyn's grandfather, Owain Gwynedd, in 1170. Llywelyn had a strong claim to be the legitimate ruler and began a campaign to win power at an early age. He was sole ruler of Gwynedd by 1200 and made a treaty with King John of England that year. Llywelyn's relations with John remained good for the next ten years. He married John's natural daughter Joan in 1205, and when John arrested Gwenwynwyn ap Owain of Powys in 1208, Llywelyn took the opportunity to annex southern Powys. In 1210, relations deteriorated, and John invaded Gwynedd in 1211. Llywelyn was forced to seek terms and to




give up all lands east of the River Conwy, but was able to recover them the following year in alliance with the other Welsh princes. He allied himself with the barons who forced John to sign Magna Carta in 1215. By 1216, he was the dominant power in Wales, holding a council at Aberdyfi that year to apportion lands to the other princes.

During the next fifteen years, Llywelyn was frequently involved in fights with Marcher lords and sometimes with the king, but also made alliances with several major powers in the Marches. The Peace of Middle in 1234 marked the end of Llywelyn's military career, as the agreed truce of two years was extended year by year for the remainder of his reign. He maintained his position in Wales until his death in 1240 and was succeeded by his son Dafydd ap Llywelyn.



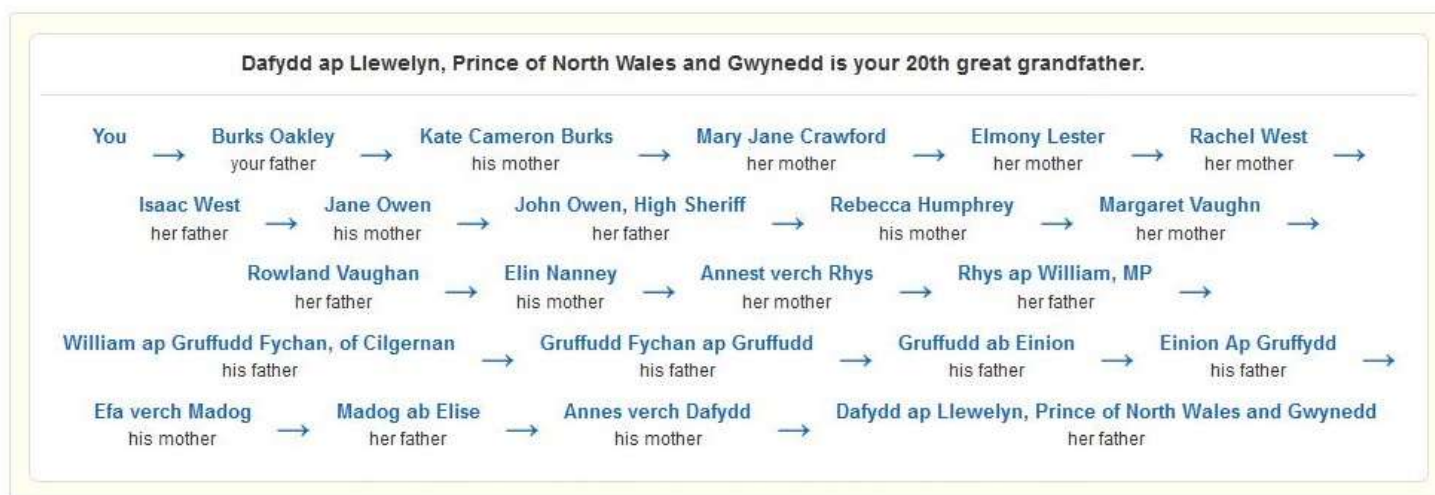
The body of Llywelyn the Great with his sons Gruffydd and Dafydd.

Of course, if I am descended from Llewelyn, I certainly am descended from his son Dafydd ap Llewelyn, Prince of North Wales and Gwynedd (1212-1246). Here is part of Dafydd's profile on Geni.com:

	<b>Dafydd ap Llewelyn, Prince of North Wales and Gwynedd</b>
Birth:	April 1212 Castell Hen Blas, Bagillt, Flintshire, Wales (United Kingdom)
Death:	February 25, 1246 (33) Abergwyngregyn, Gwynedd, Wales (United Kingdom)
Place of Burial:	Aberconwy, Clwyd, Caernarvon, Wales (United Kingdom)
Immediate Family:	Son of <a href="#">Llewelyn Fawr ab Iorwerth, Prince of Gwynedd</a> and <a href="#">Joan - Plantagenet, Lady Snowdon</a> Husband of <a href="#">Isabella de Braose</a> Father of <a href="#">Llewelyn ap Dafydd, Constable of Rhuddlan</a> ; <a href="#">Dafydd ap Dafydd ap Llewelyn</a> and <a href="#">Annes verch Dafydd</a>

<https://www.geni.com/people/Dafydd-ap-Llewelyn-Prince-of-North-Wales-and-Gwynedd/600000000424780349>

Interestingly, my line back to Dafydd goes through John Owen (the son of Robert Owen) and John's mother Rebecca Humphrey:



Dafydd was my 20<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather on this line.

Here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia article about Dafydd:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dafydd\\_ap\\_Llywelyn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dafydd_ap_Llywelyn)

Dafydd ap Llywelyn (c. March 1212 – 25 February 1246) was Prince of Gwynedd from 1240 to 1246. He was the first ruler to claim the title Prince of Wales. [Hot dang! I'm descended from the first Prince of Wales!!]

Though birth years of 1208, 1206, and 1215 have been put forward for Dafydd, it has recently been persuasively argued that he was born shortly after Easter 1212. Born at Castell Hen Blas, Coleshill, Bagillt in Flintshire, he was the only son of Llywelyn the Great by his wife, Joan (daughter of King John). His grandfather was facing trouble in England against his Barons when he was born. In his final years, Llywelyn went to great lengths to have Dafydd accepted as his sole heir. By Welsh law, Dafydd's older half-brother Gruffydd had a claim to be Llywelyn's successor. Llywelyn had Dafydd recognized as his named heir by his uncle King Henry III in 1220, and also had Dafydd's mother Joan declared legitimate by the Pope to strengthen Dafydd's claim.

At this point, I'm overwhelmed by all this. Just a week ago, I had no idea that I had ancestors from Wales, and now I learn that I am descended from Welsh princes and kings. Oh my!

The Wikipedia article about Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig also included "He claimed descent from Marchudd ap Cynan, Lord of Rhos, 'protector' of Rhodri Mawr, King of Gwynedd. He was an ancestor of Owen Tudor and thereby of the Tudor dynasty..."

Do I dare try this one? I've been really lucky so far. Do I want to risk it? Do I have another Welsh king for an ancestor?

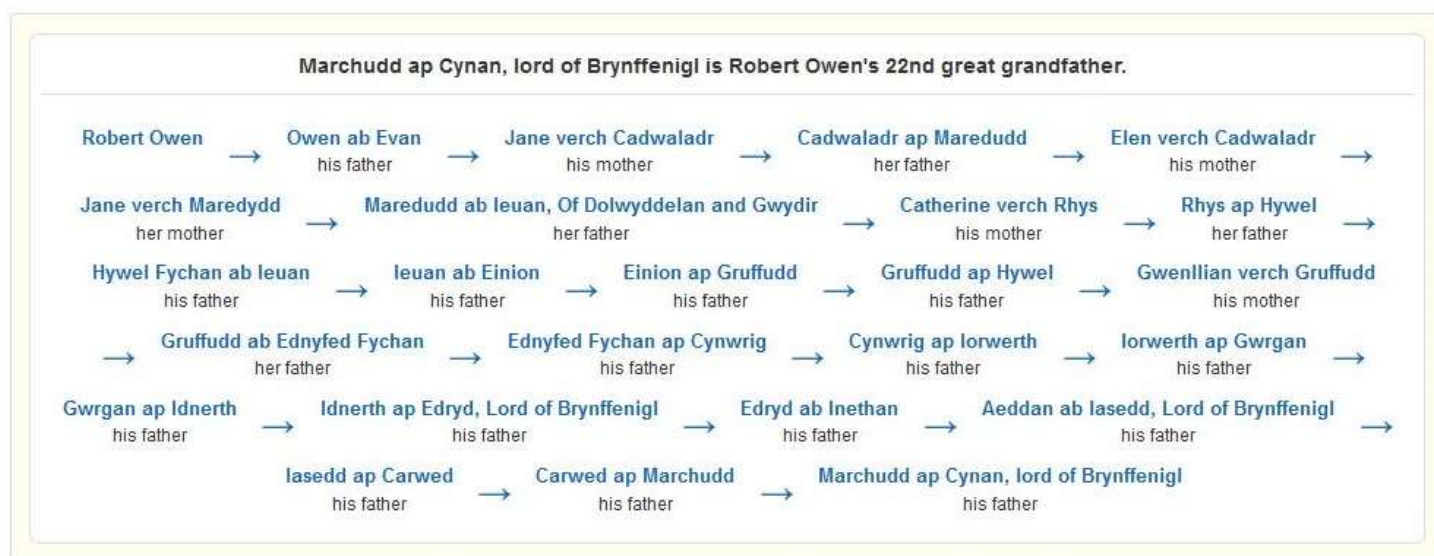
Here is part of the profile for Marchudd ap Cynan (875-?) on Geni.com:

## Marchudd ap Cynan, lord of Brynfffenigl

Gender:	Male
Birth:	circa 875 Uwch Dulas, Denbighshire, Wales (United Kingdom)
Immediate Family:	Son of <a href="#">Cynan ab Elyfw, Lord of Abergele</a> Husband of <a href="#">N.N.</a> Father of <a href="#">Carwed ap Marchudd</a>

<https://www.geni.com/people/Marchudd-ap-Cynan-lord-of-Brynfffenigl/6000000003828110514>

Well, it turns out that I am descended from him, but Geni.com comes up with my “shortest blood line” that doesn’t go through Robert Owen. So I had to see if Robert Owen was descended from Marchudd ap Cynan:



Wow! Marchudd ap Cynan was Robert Owen’s 22<sup>nd</sup>-great grandfather. This is pretty cool, since Marchudd was an ancestor of Owen Tudor, who started the **Tudor** dynasty. Note that Marchudd was born circa 875, and that was a long time ago!

### Summary

In this narrative, I initially followed one of the ancestral lines back from my 6<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather, John Owen (1692-1752). This took me on an excursion around northern Wales in the Middle Ages. I identified a number of people, all of whom ended up being my ancestors:

- Sir Robert ap Rhys, Knight (1476-1534)
- Ednyfed Fychan ap Cynwrig (ca. 1170-1246), seneschal to the Kingdom of Gwynedd
- Llewelyn Fawr ab Iorwerth, Prince of Gwynedd (1172-1240)
- Dafydd ap Llewelyn, Prince of North Wales and Gwynedd (1212-1246)
- Marchudd ap Cynan, Lord of Rhos (875-?)

I note with some pride that Dafydd ap Llywelyn – my 20<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather – was the first ruler to claim the title Prince of Wales.