

Conquest of Wales



Introduction

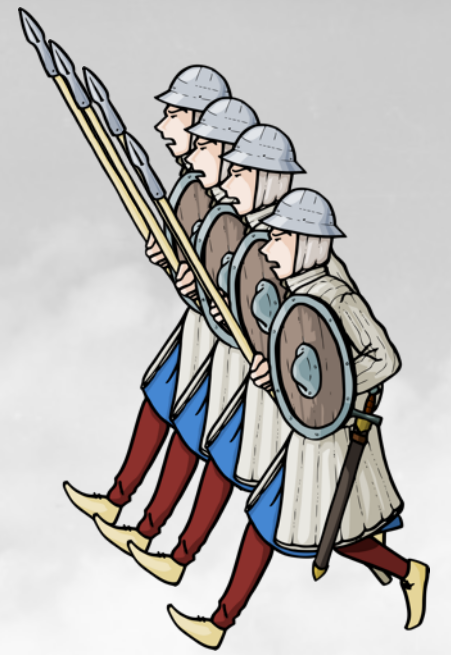
In this book you will:

- Discover the story of how Wales was conquered by King Edward I.
- Explore the collections of National Museum Wales, National Library Wales, Cadw and Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.



Impression of back of Edward I seal showing the king as a knight. © Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales

Timeline of Edwardian Conquest



Llywelyn ap Gruffudd recognised by Henry III as Prince of Wales

1267

1270

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd surrenders

November 1277

Welsh Revolt led by Dafydd ap Gruffudd

March 1282

Statute of Wales became law

March 1284

Revolt in Carmarthenshire

June 1287 -

January 1288

Edward of Caernarfon declared Prince of Wales

February 1301

1300

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd refuses to pay homage to Edward I

1274

English forces invade Wales

January 1277

Edward I leads army into Wales

July 1277

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd killed

December 1282

Welsh revolt ends. Dafydd ap Gruffudd caught and sentenced to death.

June 1283

Wales wide revolt

September 1294 -

Summer 1295

Medieval Warriors

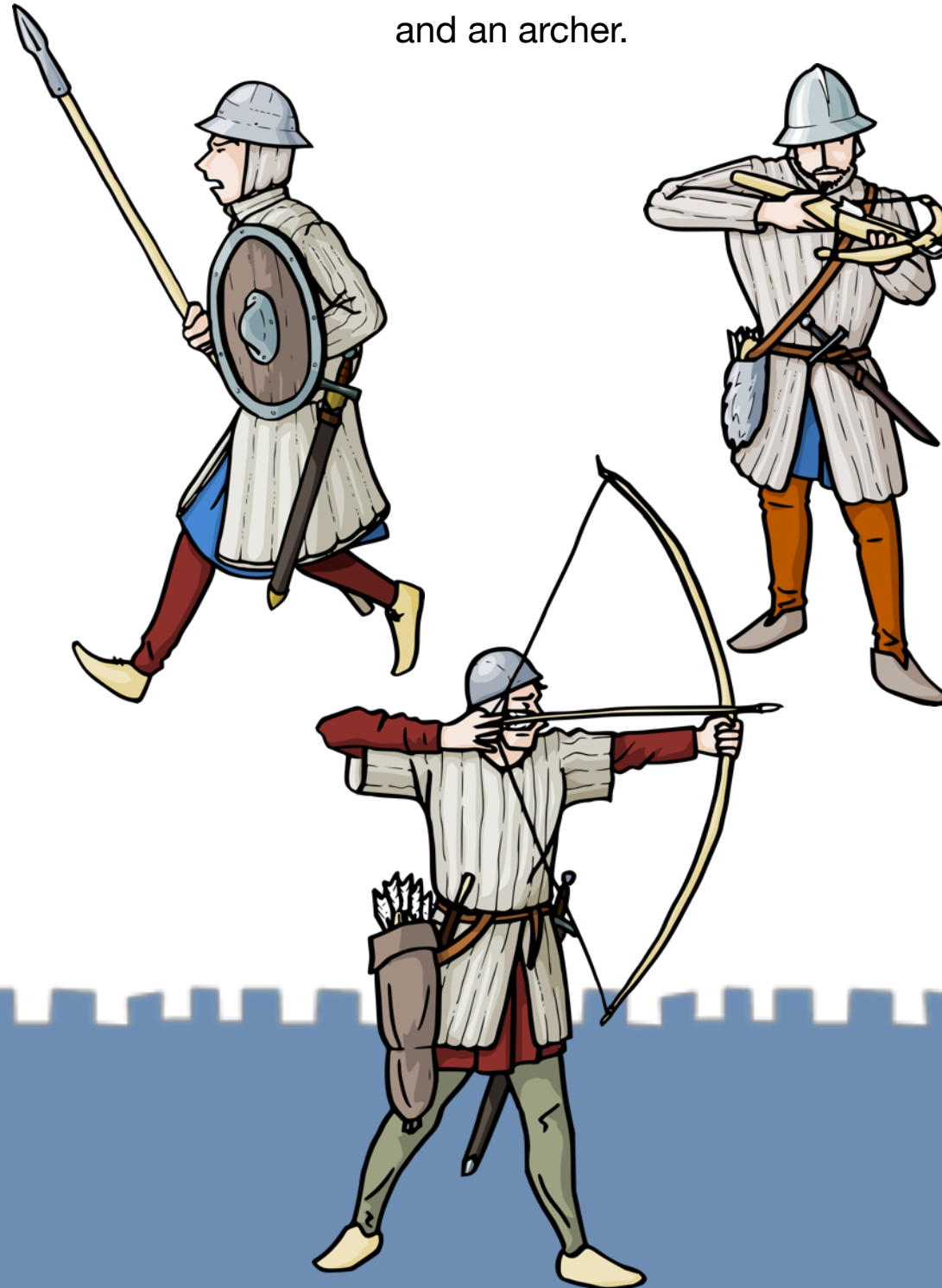
There were three levels of fighting men:

1. Knight



2. Professional soldier

such as a spearman, crossbowman, and an archer.



3. Foot soldier

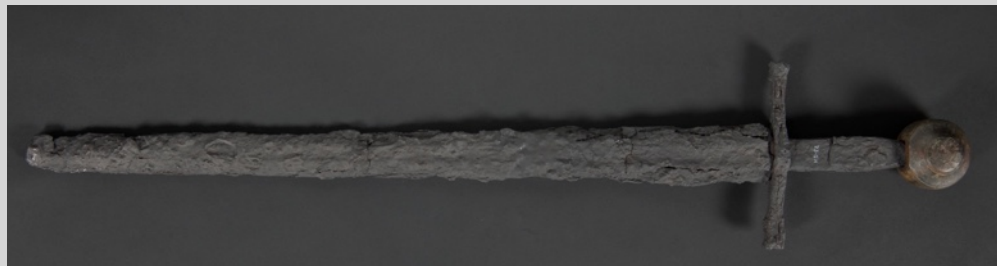
such as a farm worker.



Slow Conquest

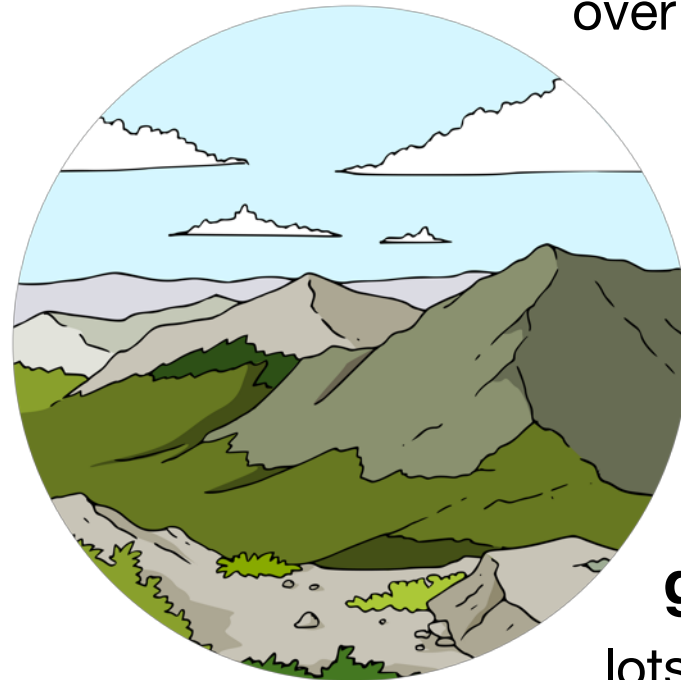
The conquest of Wales was a slow process. The Normans first invaded eastern Wales in the late 11th century.

Over 200 years, English lords slowly took control of the **east** and **south Wales**. These English lords were known as **marcher lords**. During this time many battles occurred between Welsh princes and the marcher lords.



Iron sword dating to 1250 - 1350.

© Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales



There were three main reasons it took over 200 years to conquer Wales:

- Wales had **lots of small kingdoms**. The English could only conquer small parts of Wales at a time.

- The Welsh used a tactic called **guerrilla warfare**. This involved lots of small attacks instead of one big battle. Often they would attack then run away.

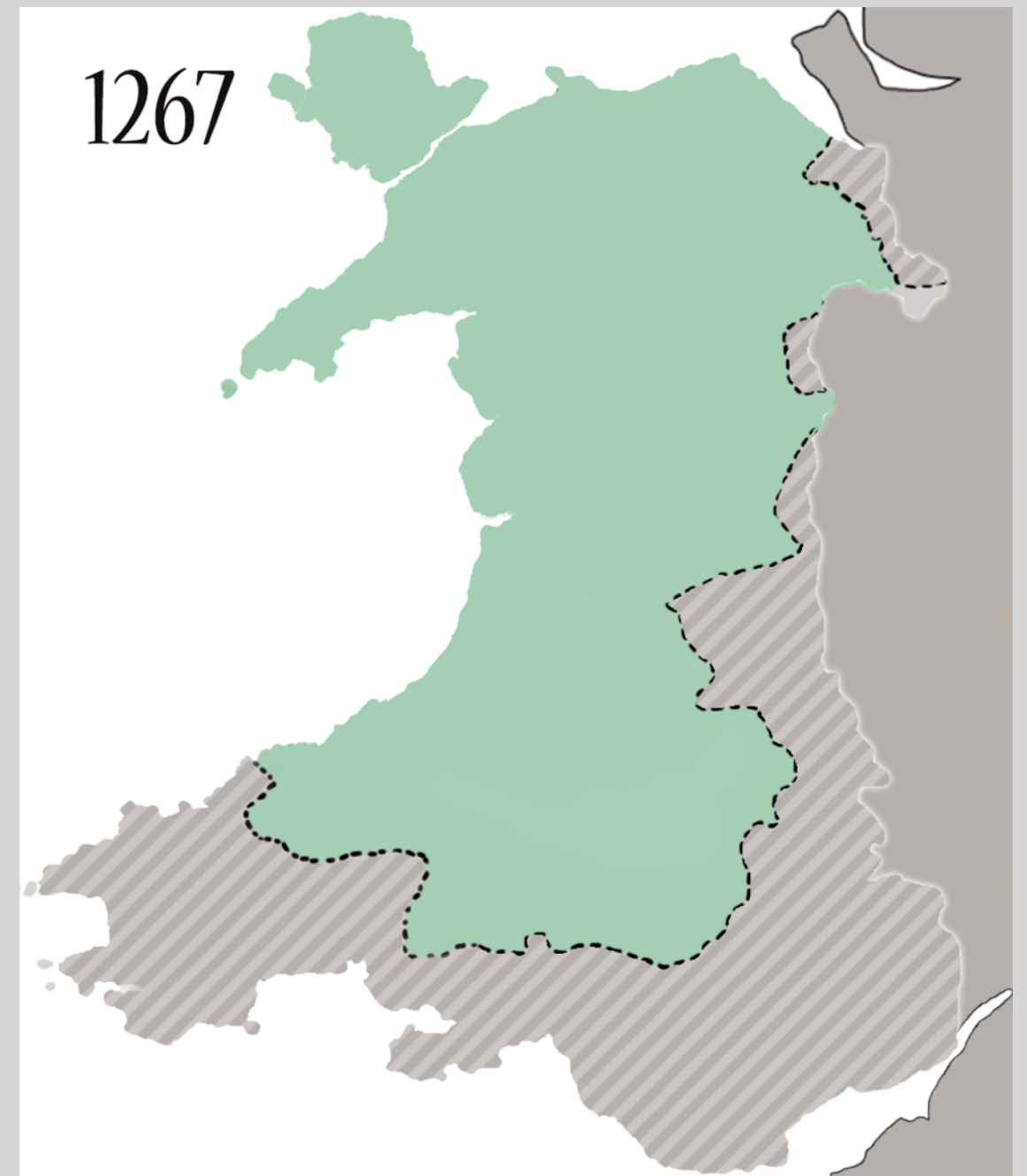


- **Mountainous and forested lands** made it difficult for the English to travel quickly through Wales. The mountains and large forests also gave the Welsh somewhere to hide.

Llywelyn's Kingdom

The **princes of Gwynedd** resisted conquest in north Wales. By the early 13th century **Llywelyn Fawr** claimed himself to be the **Prince of North Wales**. His kingdom stretched down into Powys and Ceredigion.

In **1267** Llywelyn Fawr's grandson **Llywelyn ap Gruffudd** was recognised as the **Prince of Wales** by **Henry III**. Today he is also known as Llywelyn '**Ein Llyw Olaf**' which means '**our last leader**'.



The area in green shows Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's kingdom in 1267. The area in grey shows the land controlled by the English.

Run-up to War

When **Edward I** became king in **1274**, **Llywelyn ap Gruffudd** expected to be recognised by him as the **Prince of Wales**. Edward **refused** to recognise him as Prince of Wales until Llywelyn had paid **homage**. To pay homage Llywelyn would need to show his respect to the king publicly.

Edward had provided sanctuary to Llywelyn's brother **Dafydd ap Gruffudd** and a Welsh lord called **Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn**. They fled from Wales after plotting to assassinate Llywelyn. Edward had also imprisoned Llywelyn's fiancée **Eleanor de Montfort**.

Llywelyn refused to pay homage until these issues were resolved. Edward refused to resolve these issues until Llywelyn had paid homage. Neither side would back down.

The scene was set for war...

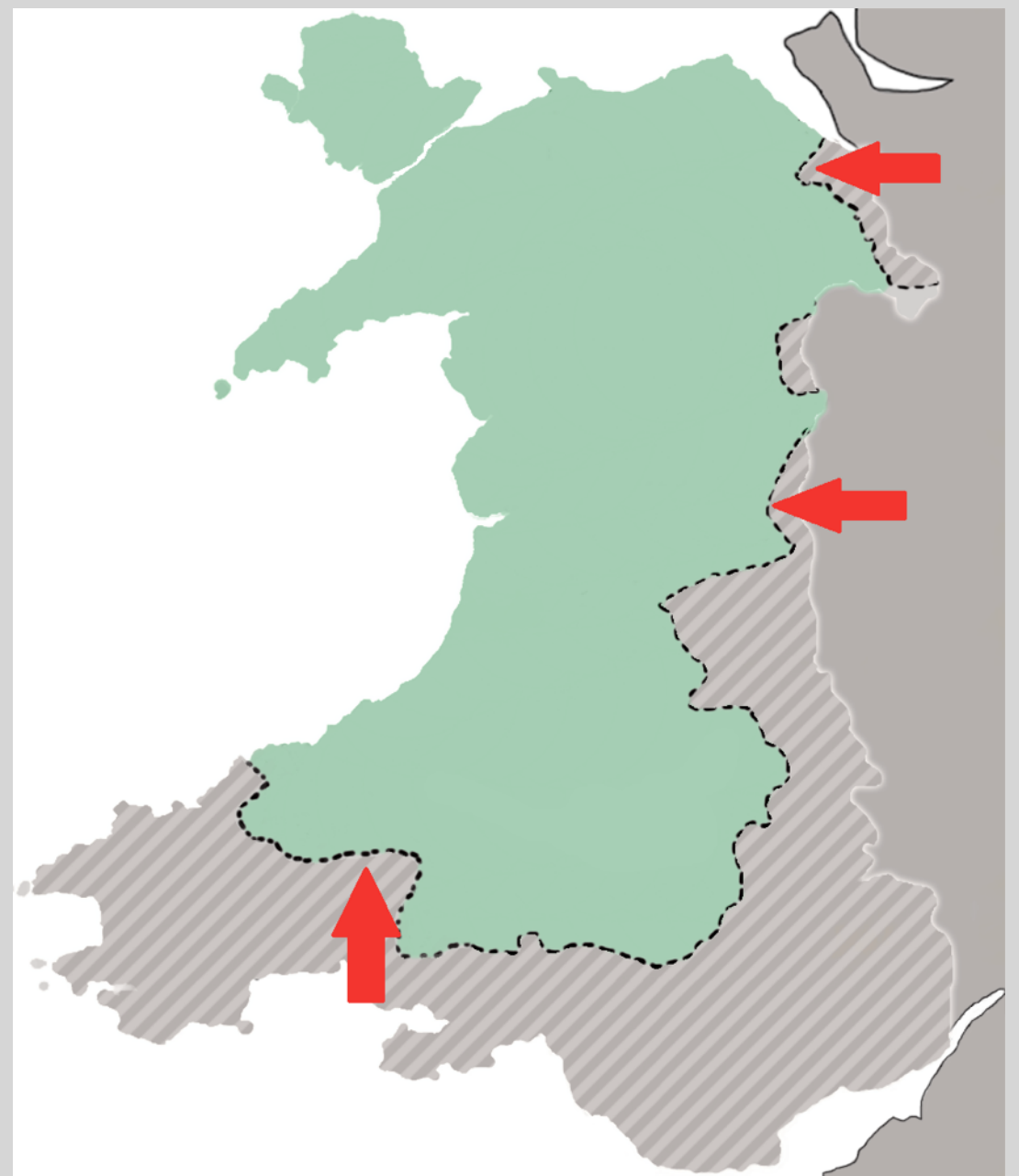


Invasion Begins

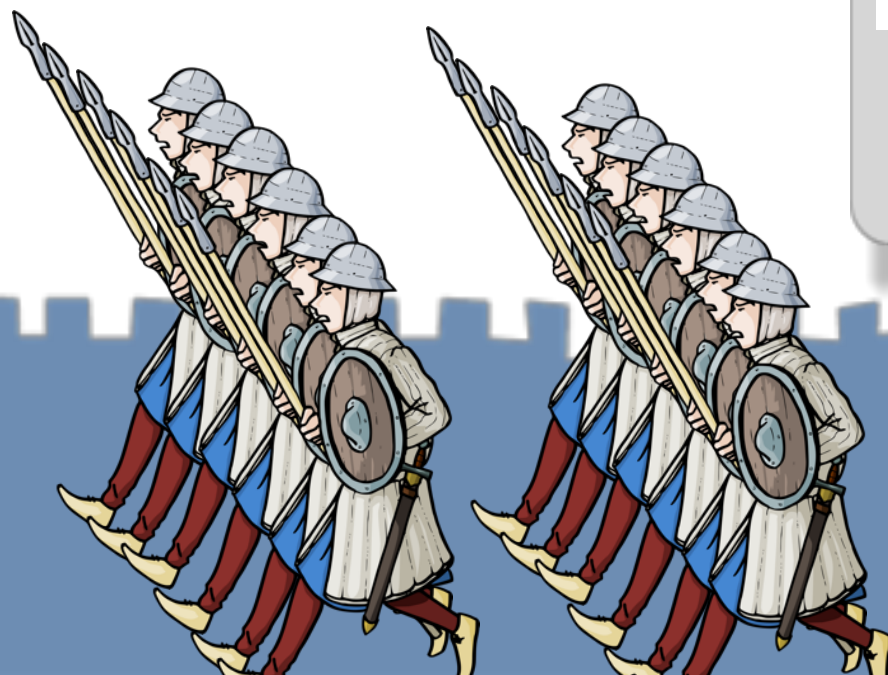
The first attacks began in **January 1277**. In the north the English army had the help of Llywelyn's brother Dafydd.

In the south attacks on Welsh castles in the Tywi valley began. By April Dinefwr Castle had been taken. Then the local Welsh leader switched sides to the English. Before the end of the war many other Welsh leaders would switch sides.

The army attacking mid Wales had the help of **Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn**. In April they attacked and took Dolforwyn Castle.



Edward's plan was to attack Llywelyn from three sides: Chester in the **north-east**, Montgomery in the **mid Wales**, and Carmarthen in the **south**.

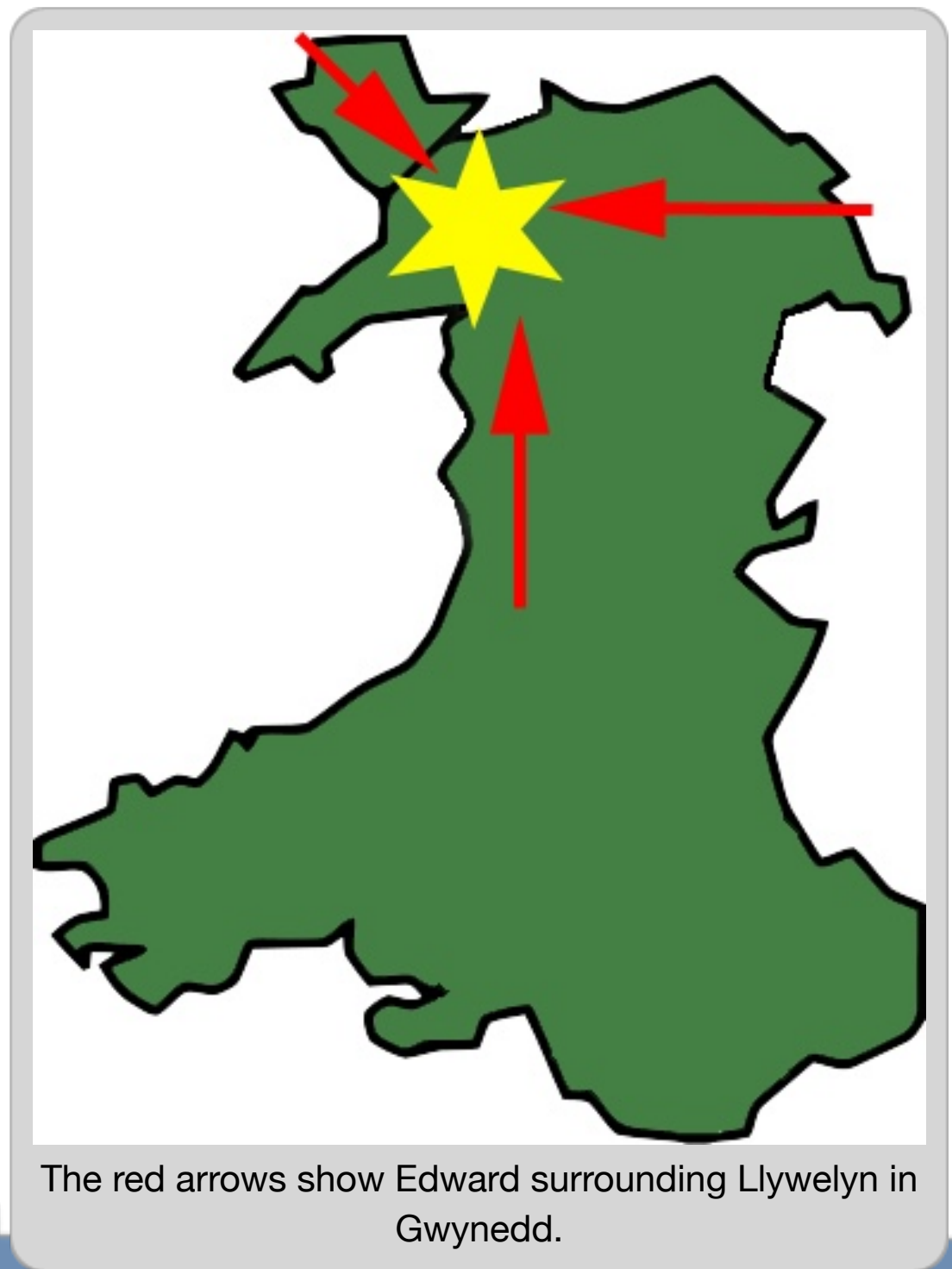


Edward Invades

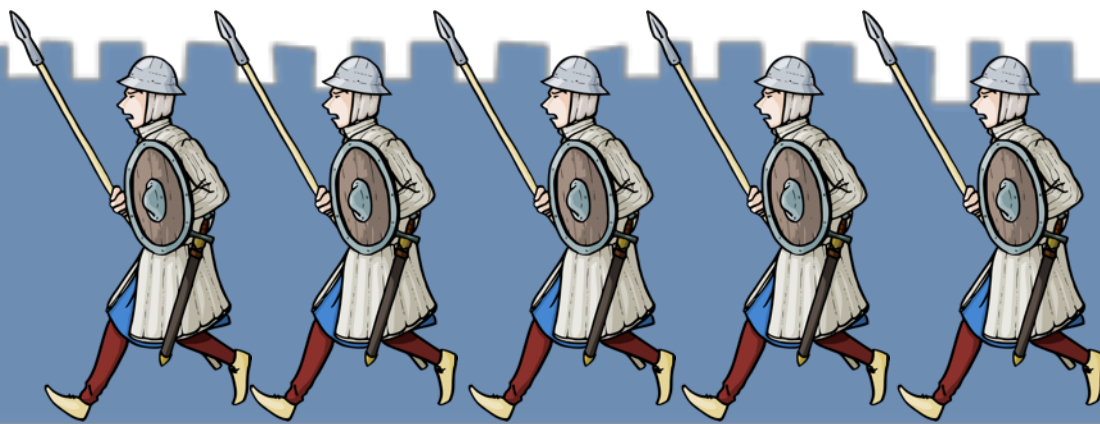
By **July 1277** Edward had a large army ready to attack Gwynedd. The army had **800 knights**, and **15,600 soldiers, 9,000** of which were **Welsh**. As Edward advanced across north Wales he built new castles such as **Flint Castle** and **Rhuddlan**.

Edward sent **2,000 soldiers** to take **Anglesey**. This was successful and Llywelyn was surrounded on three sides: the north west, east and south. On **November 1** **Llywelyn surrendered**.

The **Treaty of Aberconwy** was signed which reduced Llywelyn to **Prince of Gwynedd**. The rest of Wales was now under English control. Over the next five years Welsh leaders would come to resent the English officials established to rule over much of Wales...



The red arrows show Edward surrounding Llywelyn in Gwynedd.



Wales Revolts

In **March 1282** Dafydd ap Gruffudd led attacks on English held castles across north and mid Wales. These attacks were successful and they took control of several castles including Dolforwyn. The prince of northern Powys joined forces with Dafydd. Seeing the success of these attacks Llywelyn ap Gruffudd joined the rebellion.

By **June** the revolt had spread to south Wales. In **July** Edward led an army of **600 knights** and **4,000 soldiers** into Wales. This time Edward's goal was to conquer all of Wales.

By **December 1282** much of Wales was back under English control. Llywelyn decided to take the fight to the English by attacking Builth Castle.



Replica medieval floor tile showing a knight riding into battle carrying a sword and a small shield.
Copied from one found at Neath Abbey.

© Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales



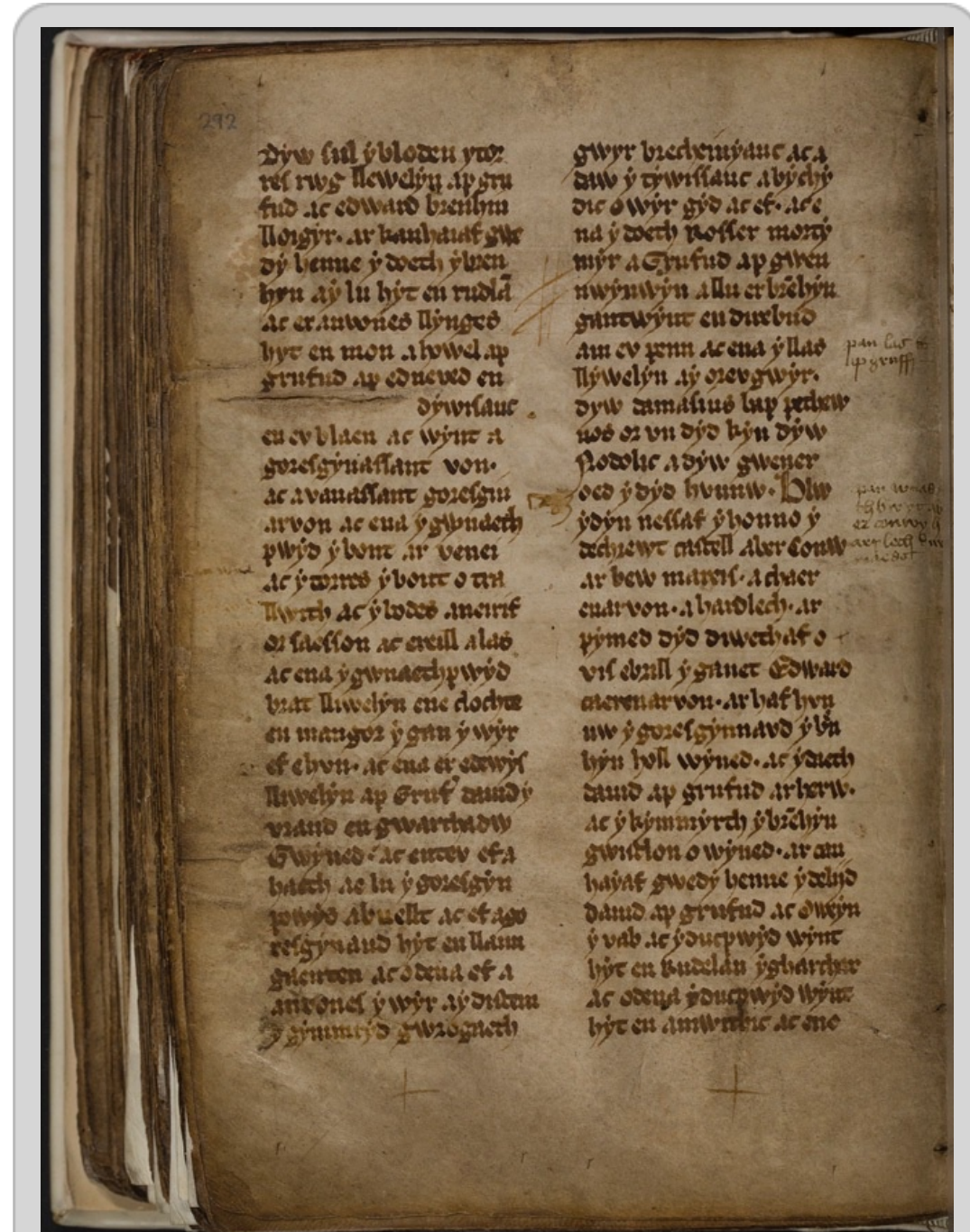
Death of Llywelyn

On **11th December 1282** the **Battle of Orewin Bridge** took place at Cilmeri. Llywelyn was one of the **3,000** Welsh men killed that day.

We do not know exactly how Llywelyn died. One story says that he was killed by a knight called **Stephen de Frankton**. The story goes that Llywelyn was separated from his army. Stephen spotted a Welsh knight on his own and killed him with his lance. It was only after Stephen had killed him that he discovered it was Llywelyn. Another story says Llywelyn was lured into a trap by the English before the battle. They chased him into a wood where they killed him.

Llywelyn's head was cut off and sent to the **Tower of London** to be put on display above the gates.

How do you think the people of Wales felt about the death of Llywelyn?



Brut y Tywysogion: 'Llywelyn and his foremost men were slain on the day of Damascus of the Pope...'

© National Library Wales

Wales Conquered

After Llywelyn's death Edward advanced across north Wales. Dafydd ap Gruffudd went into hiding. On **21st June 1283** Dafydd was caught and sentenced to death. His head was sent to the Tower of London to be displayed next to his brother's.

With the end of the revolt, Wales was now completely conquered for the first time.

The Age of the Princes had ended.



Edward's Celebration

In **July 1284** Edward I held a **victory celebration** at **Nefyn**. This had been one of the most important **Llysoedd (Royal Courts)** of the Princes of Gwynedd. From late September to mid December Edward travelled across Wales. This was to celebrate his victory and show that he had completely conquered all of Wales.

How do you think the Welsh felt about Edward's celebrations?

In **1301** Edward's son **Edward of Caernarvon** was declared the new **Prince of Wales**. This started a new tradition of giving the title to the eldest son of the King.



Edward I silver penny (obverse / heads)

© Amgeuddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales

Statute of Wales

A law called the **Statute of Wales** was issued at **Rhuddlan** in **1284**. The law said how Wales would be ruled under the English Crown. The statute replaced Welsh criminal law with English criminal law.

The Welsh princes were replaced by a royal governor, the **Justice of North Wales**. A Justice of South Wales had been introduced in 1280. A new system of **counties** was introduced across Wales. In English controlled areas of south Wales counties had existed since 1241.

Some Welsh positions of court like the Rhingyll (Sergeant) continued to be Welsh but now served the English Crown.



Llys Rhosyr, Anglesey. ©Amgeuddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales
Some of Llywelyn's halls were dismantled as part of the conquest.
Others were taken over by Edward I.

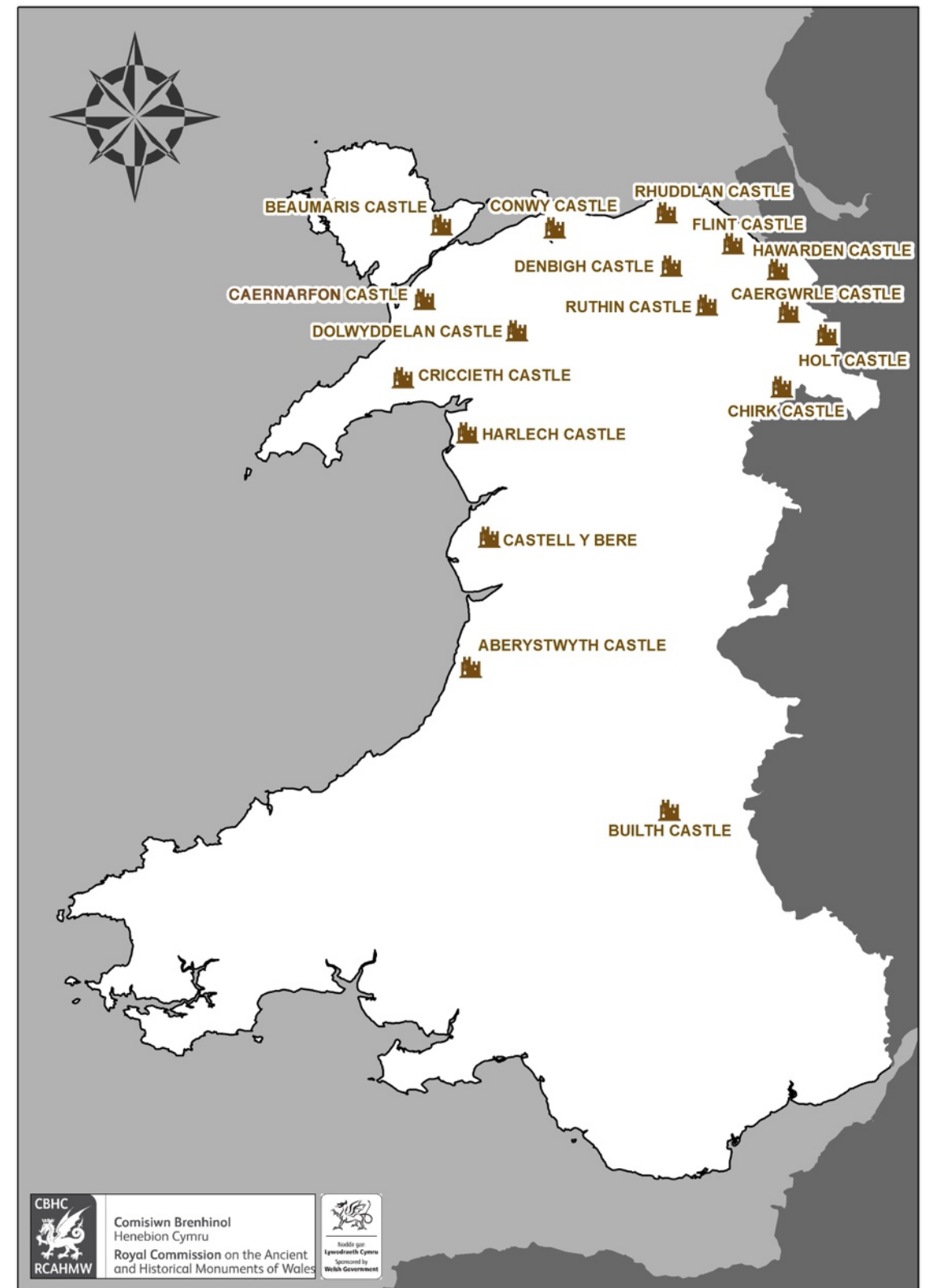


Castles of Edward I

To hold on to the lands that they had conquered the English built or rebuilt castles across Wales. Edward's castles were large buildings that were built for 2 main reasons. The first was for the **military** to house soldiers to fight any revolts. The second reason was to try to **scare Welsh people** into submission.



Beaumaris Castle. © Crown: RCAHMW



Castles that were built by Edward I or had major building work during his conquest of Wales. © Crown: RCAHMW

Boroughs

Boroughs were towns built around castles. **English settlers** lived in the boroughs and were given special **privileges**. Officially, Welsh people were not able to live in most boroughs. Welsh people resented the boroughs which became a symbol of English occupation.

English settlement also occurred in rural areas. In Denbigh, Welsh farmers were forced to live somewhere else. Their land was then given to English settlers from Lancashire and Yorkshire.

How do you think Welsh people felt about being moved from their land?



Illustration of Caernarfon Castle and borough walls.

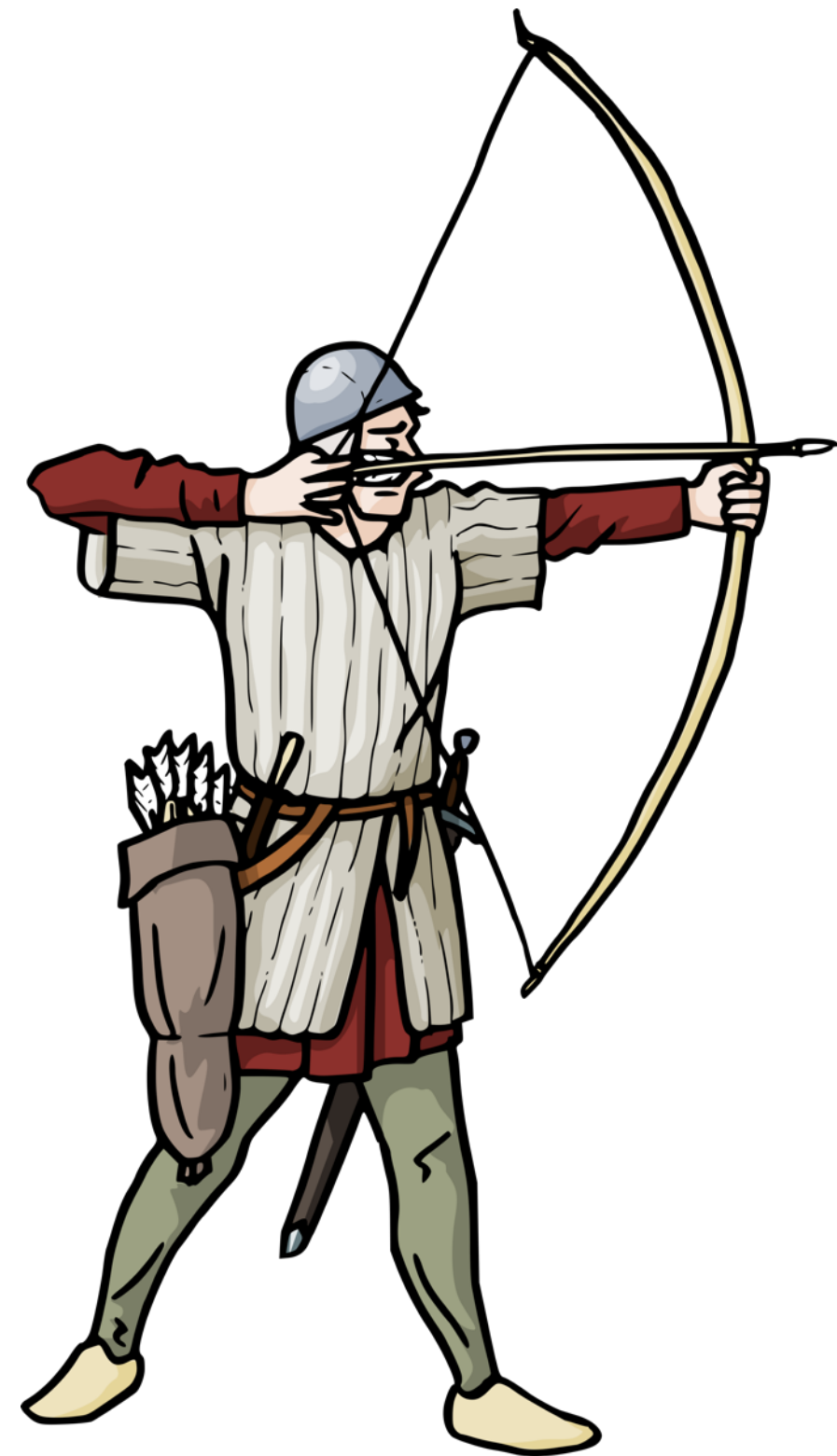
From the collections of the National Monuments Record of Wales: © Crown Copyright: Cadw

More Revolts

In **June 1287** a Welsh lord, **Rhys ap Maredudd**, rebelled. Rhys was a lord from Carmarthenshire and had supported Edward in the wars of 1276-7 and 1282-3. He was disappointed that he had not been better rewarded for his support. Rhys was also fed up with the English **Justice of South Wales** interfering with his rule. The revolt lasted until January 1288. Rhys was defeated by a royal army which included a large number of Welsh men.

The revolt of **1294-5** affected the **whole of Wales**. It was led by 3 Welsh lords: **Madog ap Llywelyn** in the **north**, **Morgan ap Maredudd** in **Glamorgan**, and **Maelgwn ap Rhys** in the **south west**. The revolt lasted from September 1294 until summer of 1295 when the English defeated the Welsh.

Why do you think the Welsh revolted in 1294-5?



Visit Llys Llywelyn at St Fagans

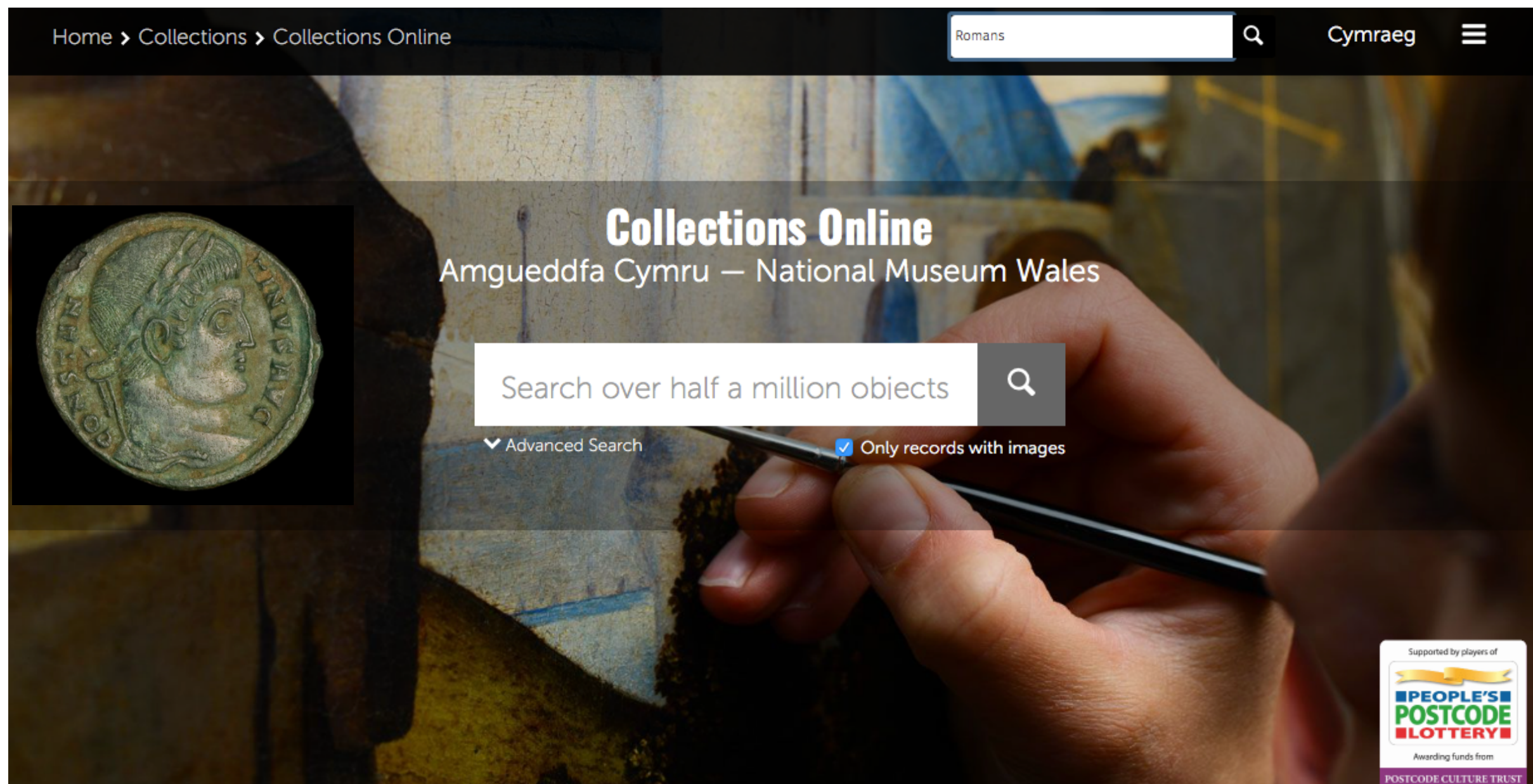


Step back in time to the 13th century and experience a sleepover with a difference.

Take part in a workshop to find out more about life in the Court of Llywelyn Fawr.

<https://museum.wales/stfagans/learning/ks2/>

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