



1.2.4 Owain Glyndŵr c. 1354- c.1416 - Owain Glyndŵr's reign as Prince of Wales

Harlech Castle as a centre of government

Harlech Castle, like many other English ones in North Wales, surrendered to Owain Glyndŵr in the summer of 1404. This was a huge boost for Owain and the rebels as it was one of the strongest castles in the country and provided them with a solid military base. It was also a symbolic victory as this is where, according to the Mabinogion, Bendigeidfran had held his court. Owain set up his government here, with Gruffudd Young as his chancellor. The royal court was impressive, it held feasts where French wine flowed and held tournaments to emphasise Owain's royalty.

Holding a Welsh parliament at Machynlleth

Owain gathered men from all over Wales for his first parliament in Machynlleth in June 1404, following the example of Hywel Dda. He also called men from the four commotes (medieval districts) of Wales to his parliament in Harlech in August 1405. Matters discussed in the meetings were the papacy and an alliance with France. There were possibly representatives from Spain, Scotland and France present at these parliaments.

The Tripartite Indenture

An agreement signed by Owain Glyndŵr, his son-in-law Edmund Mortimer and Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. They would work together to defeat Henry IV before dividing Wales and England equally between them. Owain's share, Wales and parts of England, would be named Cambria and Leorgia, following an old prophecy by the legendary wizard Merlin.

Timeline of Owain Glyndŵr's reign as Prince of Wales

July 1403	Henry Hotspur raises an army to ally with Owain against the King.
November 1403	A French fleet joins Owain and the rebels in Caernarfon.
January 1404	Owain and the rebels besiege Welsh castles held by the crown.
Summer 1404	Harlech Castle is taken by Owain and established as the centre for a new independent government.
June 1404	Parliament held in Machynlleth.
February 1405	Tripartite Indenture signed by Owain, Edmund Mortimer and Henry Percy.
May 1405	Welsh defeats at Grosmont and Pwll Melyn.
August 1405	Parliament is held in Harlech and a French fleet arrives in Milford Haven.
March 1406	Pennal letter is written.
May 1407	First siege at Aberystwyth castle.
November 1408	Aberystwyth Castle surrenders.
February 1409	Harlech Castle surrenders.

The Pennal letter

Owain's advisers met in Pennal to discuss their response to a letter received from the French King, Charles VI. Their response details their plan for a new Wales, appointing their own clergy, regaining agricultural land, forming two universities and transferring their allegiance to the pope in Avignon.

English victory at Pwll Melyn

Following defeat at Grosmont, where around 1,000 Welsh rebels were killed, Owain's men suffered another defeat at Pwll Melyn after they attacked Usk Castle on 5 May 1405. Owain's eldest son, Gruffudd, was captured and taken to the Tower of London and Owain's brother, Tudur, was killed. Welsh casualties numbered 1,500 soldiers, a heavy defeat.

English capture of Harlech Castle, 1409

Prince Henry first besieged Aberystwyth Castle in May 1407. Although initially unsuccessful, he returned in 1408 and also began a siege at Harlech Castle. Edmund Mortimer was killed in the siege at Harlech and many members of Owain's family imprisoned as it surrendered in February 1409.



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