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Constructing 13th Century Welsh Names

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A Simple Guide to Constructing 13th Century Welsh Names

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The information in this guide is taken from a **tax roll** called *The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll of 1292-3*. The names are those of Welsh people living in north-western Wales, in an area that had experienced relatively little influx of English people at that point. The tax roll was written by people familiar with English and Latin, but not necessarily with Welsh, so names do not necessarily appear in "classic" Welsh spellings. For reference, I have provided the "standard" form of name elements in square brackets.

This guide will show you how to construct a "typical" name of this period. It gives you the common structures and elements, but not an exhaustive list of all the possibilities. If you are interested in a more detailed picture of the names and name patterns present in this document, it is available in my article [Names and Naming Practices in the Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll 1292-3](#).

Given Names

The names are arranged in order of frequency, from most popular to less popular. If more than one spelling was common, the most typical are listed, again in decreasing order of popularity. (If a letter is given in parentheses, then spellings with and without it are both used.)

Men's Names

The following 53 names had at least five examples in the list.

[Madog]	Madoc, Madok	[William]	Wilim, Gwilim
[David]	David, Deykin	[Griffri]	Griffri, Griffry, Gryffri, Gryffry
[Einion]	Eynon	[Ednowain]	Edenowen, Edenewen, Edeneweyn
[Iorwerth]	Iarward, Iarword, Ioreword	[Moriddig]	Moridic, Morydic
[Adam]	Adaf, Ada, Adam	[Cydifor]	Kedivor
[Ieuan]	Ieuan	[Iago]	Yagov, Yago, Iago, Iagov
[Gronw]	Gronou, Groneu	[Iocyn]	Iockin, Iockyn
[Ithel]	Ithel	[John]	Iohannes
[Gwyn]	Win, Wyn, Gwin, Gwyn	[Rhys]	Reys, Reis, Res
[Cynwrig]	Kenuric, Kenneric	[Bleddyn]	Blethin, Blethint
[Cadwgan]	Cadugan	[Cyfnerth]	Kevenard
[Philip]	Phelip	[Maredudd]	Mereduth
[Rhiryd]	Ririd, Ryryd, Rerid, Ryrid	[Thomas]	Thomas
[Gruffydd]	Griffid, Gryffid, Gryffyd	[Ieuf]	Ieuf
[Tegward]	Tegwaret	[Ifor]	Ivor

[Meilyr]	Meiler, Meyler	[Morfran]	Morvran
[Ednyfed]	Edenevet	[Seisyll]	Seysild
[Gwrgenau]	Gurgenu, Gurgeneu	[Deheuynt]	Dehewint
[Llywelyn]	Lewelin, Lewelyn	[Gwasdewi]	Wasdewy
[Gwion]	Wion, Wyon, Gwion, Gwyon	[Llygad]	Leget
[Hywel]	Howel	[Robert]	Robert
[Tuder]	Tuder	[Hwfa]	Hova
[Heilyn]	Heylin, Heilin, Heylyn	[Ynyr]	Ener
[Cynddelw]	Candalo, Candalou	[Trahaearn]	Trahaern
[Madynd]	Madin, Madynd	[Gwogan]	Gogan
[Meurig]	Meuric, Meurik, Meuryk	[Idnerth]	Idnerth, Idenerth
[Llywarch]	Lowarch		

Women's Names

I have been more generous in which women's names to include as "typical", since there were far fewer in the list. These 30 names are all those about which there is no question of interpretation. Again, they are ordered in decreasing popularity with the most typical spelling(s) given.

[Angharad]	Angharat	[Myfanwy]	Mevanou
[Gwenllian]	Wentlian, Wentlyan, Wentliana, Wentlyana	[Erdudfyl]	Eduduwel, Erdiduwol
[Gwladus]	Wladus, Wladusa	[Gwerydd]	Gwerith
[Dyddgu]	Tudgech, Dudgech, Dugech	[Madrún]	Maderun
[Lleucu]	Lewke, Leweke, Leuke	[Margaret]	Margareta, Marured
[Eve]	Eva	[Perweur]	Perweur
[Tangwystl]	Tangwistel	[Alice]	Alicia
[Generys]	Generys, Generis	[Genilles]	Genithles
[Gwerfyl]	Wervel, Wervill, Wervela, Wervilla	[Geneth]	Enith (or this may be a form of <i>Enid</i>)
[Morfudd]	Morud, Morwid, Morwith	[Gwir]	Wir
[Nest]	Nest	[Helen]	Elena
[Hunydd]	Hunith	[Iwerydd]	Ewerich
[Gwen]	Wen, Gwen	[Mabel]	Mabilia
[Gwledyr]	Wledyr, Wledir, Wladur	[Mary]	Mary
[Morfyl]	Morvel	[Millicent]	Milisandia

Name Structures

The most typical overall structure for names is a given name followed by a single byname -- either a patronym (about half the time), a descriptive nickname (about a quarter of the time), an occupation (about one-tenth of the time), or a place-name (only one percent of the time).

Women have an additional type of popular byname -- being identified as the wife of their husband (using Latin *uxor* in this document) -- which is similar in concept to a patronym. Women are also far less likely to have an occupational nickname or one based on a place-name. However for the most part women use the same descriptive nicknames that men do (with the notable absence of *moel* meaning *bald!*).

Actual examples of names of each pattern are provided from the original documents.

Bynames Based On Relationship

For the most common type of byname -- one indicating relationship -- the name is set up as follows:

<given name> <relationship word> <relative's given name>

The typical relationship given is to a father (or husband). The mother's name is used very rarely (less than 1% of the time).

The typical relationship words are as follow:

- **Son** - *ap* or *ab*; a common convention is to use *ap* before consonants and *ab* before vowels, but in this document one scribe used *ap* all the time and the other *ab* all the time. Latin *filius* is also found.

E.g. Eynon ap Madoc
Groneu ab Eynon
Madoc filius Ithel

- **Daughter** - In this document, Latin *filia* is the only word found for this, although Welsh *verch* can be found in documents of a similar period.

E.g. Generys filia Ioreword

- **Wife** - In this document, Latin *uxor* is the only word found for this, although the expected Welsh at this time would be *wreic*.

E.g. Eva uxor Ithel
Wladosa uxor Phelipi

After Latin relationship words, the following name is sometimes given a Latin possessive form -- usually *-i* at the end of the name. However many examples are found where the following name is unchanged.

Bynames Based On A Personal Nickname

The most common nicknames are based on the color of a person's hair or complexion, on size and shape, or on a notable physical defect. The following 22 nicknames each have three or more examples in the document. Again, they are arranged in descending order of popularity with the most typical spellings given.

Important Grammatical Note: For grammatical reasons, the initial sound of the nickname may be different from that of the "normal" form of the word. This is called *mutation*. Men will usually, but not always, use the mutated form of the word. Women will always use the *mutated* form of a nickname, and where I have no examples of this, I have supplied what it would be (marked with an asterisk). If only one form of the name is given, it is what would be used by both men and women.

[Du]	black	Duy
[Coch]	red	Goch
[Moel]	bald	Voyl, Voil
[Bychan]	small, junior	Vachan
[Llwyd]	gray	Loyt
[Chwith]	left-handed, clumsy	With, Whith, Wyth
[Crach]	scabby	Crak Grach (mutated)
[Cam]	crooked, lame	Cam Gam (mutated)
[Cryg]	hoarse, stammering	Crek Grek (mutated)
[Mawr]	big, senior	Maur Vaur (mutated)
[Hen]	old	Hen
[Cethin]	swarthy	Kethin *Gethin (mutated)
[Bongam]	bandy-legged	Bongam *Vongam (mutated)
[Cwtta]	short, stingy	Cutta, Coutta *Gutta (mutated)
[Rhwth]	oreedv. wide	Ruth

[Bach]	small	Bach *Vach (mutated)
[Gwyn]	white, fair	Wyn (men only) Wen (women only)
[Hir]	tall	Hir
[Melyn]	yellow	Velin, Velyn
[Pen]	head, chief	Pen *Ben (mutated)
[Penbras]	fat-head	Penbras *Benbras (mutated)
[Pengrych]	curly-head	Pengrek *Bengrek (mutated)

E.g. Adaf Goch
Ithel Bach
Wentliana Vachan
Angharad Duy

Bynames Based On An Occupation

Many of the occupational nicknames in the document are in Latin. In some cases, both Latin and Welsh versions of the same occupation appear. The following are occupations that appear in some form at least five times in the document. The Latin forms are followed by (L). As usual, the names are arranged in descending order of popularity.

English	Modern Welsh	13th c. forms
Shoemaker		Sutor (L)
Priest, Chaplain	[Offeiriad]	Capellanus (L) Offeriot
Smith	[Gof]	Faber (L) Gof, Of
Carpenter	[Saer]	Carpentarius (L) Saer
Doctor		Medicus (L)
Goldsmith		Aurifaber (L)
Singer		Cantor (L), Corista (L)
Crwth-player	[Crwthor]	Crouthur (masc.) Crouthores (fem.)
Huntsman	[Cynydd]	Kennith, Kenith, Kynith
English-speaker	[Sais]	Seys, Seis
Tailor	[Ysginydd]	Skynith, Skinnith, Skinith
Miller	[Mal] [Melinydd]	Mal Velinith, Melinnith

E.g. Kenuric Faber
Meuric Saer
Wladusa Religiosa

Bynames Based On Location

The typical nickname based on location simply uses the proper name of a place after the given name. In this document, Latin *de* is sometimes placed before the place-name.

E.g. Tudor Glyne
Alan de Ruthin

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