*The Medieval 'Marches' of Normandy and Wales**

In 1215, Magna Carta, clause 56, proclaimed:[1]

> If we have disseised or deprived Welshmen of lands, liberties or other things without lawful judgment of their peers, in England or in Wales, they are to be returned to them at once; and if a dispute arises over this it shall be settled in the March by judgement of their peers; for tenements in England according to the law of England, for tenements in Wales according to the law of Wales, for tenements in the March according to the law of the March. The Welsh are to do the same to us and to ours.

To modern-day historians, the March of Wales consists of the lordships of eastern and southern Wales which were gradually carved out by Norman and English barons from *c.* 1067 on, which after the conquest of Wales by Edward I in 1282–3 remained separate from the Principality of Wales, and which were incorporated into Welsh shires by the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1542. Also included in this March are certain border lordships which were withdrawn from the English counties, that is, where lords succeeded in preventing intrusions by royal officials.[2] But did the 'March' referred to in Magna Carta correspond to this modern historiographical category? This article will argue that in fact, the conquest lordships in southern Wales were not routinely considered to lie in the March of Wales until after the Edwardian conquest. It will contend that this was because during the high medieval period, the Welsh borders were not, overall, considered to be *sui generis*, but similar to at least one other 'march' faced by the Normans and the Angevins: the 'march' of Normandy.

In the words of Professor Sir Rees Davies, Magna Carta 'launched' the law of the March 'on its official career in the most august and authoritative of contexts.'[3] But as he, Kevin Mann and others have pointed out elsewhere, the term 'march' with reference to the Welsh

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1. J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta* (2nd edn., Cambridge, 1992), App. 6, esp. pp. 467–9: 'Si nos disseisivimus vel elongavimus Walenses de terris vel libertatibus vel rebus aliis, sine legali judicio parium suorum (in Anglia vel in Wallia), eis statim reddantur; et si contencio super hoc orta fuerit, tunc inde fiat in Marchia per judicium parium suorum de tenementis Anglie secundum legem Anglie; de tenementis Wallie secundum legem Wallie; de tenementis Marchie secundum legem Marchie. Idem facient Walenses nobis et nostris'.

2. M. Lieberman, *The March of Wales, 1067–1300. A Borderland of Medieval Britain* (Cardiff, 2008), pp. 1–7; id., *The Medieval March of Wales. The Creation and Perception of a Frontier, 1066–1283* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 1–5.

3. R.R. Davies, 'The Law of the March', *Welsh History Review*, v (1970), pp. 1–30, at p. 1.

borders began to be used routinely by the royal chancery and exchequer at least half a century earlier.[4] It is in fact possible to trace the early usage of the phrase *Marchia Wallie* by the English exchequer with some chronological and geographical accuracy, thanks to the Pipe Rolls. These records of the annual returns made by individual sheriffs survive in an almost unbroken series from 1155, and reveal where the twelfth-century phrase *Marchia Wallie* originated and when and where it spread.[5] Significantly, it would appear that a 'March' was at first perceived to exist on the Welsh borders of Shropshire, immediately after 1165. It was in that year that Henry II of England led a large-scale but ill-fated campaign into Wales by way of Shrewsbury, only to be harried by Welsh archers and bogged down by torrential rains on the Berwyn mountains. Henry II seems to have abandoned hope of achieving direct dominion over Wales after this disaster. The fact that royal records increasingly began to speak of the 'March' and 'March of Wales' in referring to the Welsh borders may indicate that those borders were expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future.[6] It is even more significant, however, that the Shropshire borders with Wales lacked true 'Marcher' lordships in the sense of Welsh territories conquered by Norman or English invaders. There were compact border honors here: the Fitzalan lordships of Oswestry and of Clun, the de Bollers lordship of Montgomery and the Corbet lordship of Caus, in particular. But these had mainly originated not as conquests in Wales, but as grants of English estates made by Roger de Montgomery, the earl of Shrewsbury, before 1086.

The phrase *Marchia Wallie* soon spread beyond Shropshire. But it was long before it was used routinely to refer to conquest territories in Wales. The Pipe Rolls occasionally record returns from Wales, but they give no certain indication, before 1204, that the area referred to as *Marchia Wallie* was thought to include the foreign-held lordships in the south of the country, such as Glamorgan, Gower or Pembroke. Moreover Gerald of Wales, in his writings, upholds a distinction between the 'March' and the south of Wales, where he was born.[7] Given that he was

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4. R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest. Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 2000; first published under this title Oxford, 1991; first published as *Conquest, Coexistence and Change. Wales 1063–1415*, Oxford, 1987), p. 272; K. Mann, 'The March of Wales: A Question of Terminology', *Welsh History Review*, xviii (1996), pp. 1–13. Similar phrases already occur in Domesday Book, on folios 183d ('in marcha de Wales'), and 186d ('in Marcha de Walis'). However, these are probably evidence of local usage: cf. M. Lieberman, 'Shropshire and the March of Wales: The Creation of Separate Identities' (Univ. of Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 2004), pp. 10–12; id., *Medieval March of Wales*, 5–9.

5. Lieberman, 'Shropshire and the March of Wales', p. 12; id., *Medieval March of Wales*, pp. 6–7.

6. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 272.

7. For example, *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J.S. Brewer, J.F. Dimock and G.F. Warner (8 vols., 1861–91), i, p. 21 (*De Rebus a Se Gestis*, i, i: Pembroke located in south Wales); ii, p. 148 (*Gemma Ecclesiastica*, i: Monmouth said to be in the March of Wales).

a royal clerk from 1184 to about 1196, he was presumably familiar with the usage of the chancery and exchequer (it is not inconceivable that he played some role in shaping that usage). In any case, as late as the fourteenth century, there was still confusion about whether or not the lordships of south Wales should be included in the March. For instance, at the beginning of the reign of Edward II, the situation of Pembroke in this respect was still somewhat uncertain. The headings *Marchia* and *Marchia Wallie* were added as an afterthought to the inquisitions, made in 1307, of the lands of Joan de Valence, countess of Pembroke.[8] Thereafter, it would appear, it became more conventional to consider the lordships in south Wales as 'Marcher': 'Llandovery in the March of Wales' is the heading of the inquisition *post mortem* of Nicholas d'Audley (d. 1317).[9] But it seems highly probable that in *c.* 1200, *Marchia Wallie* still normally referred not to the conquest territories in Wales, but to the Anglo-Welsh borders. Since Magna Carta explicitly identifies the March as a region with its own law, it may be that all foreign-held territories in Wales, including those in the south of the country, were included on that occasion. But in view of the usage of *Marchia Wallie* by the English chancery and exchequer in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that is far from certain.

That all conquest lordships in Wales were apparently not normally included in *Marchia Wallie* is relevant to the debate on the origins of the Marcher liberties, the quasi-regal privileges claimed by the Marchers within their lordships. The Marcher liberties, which included the right to wage war, broker truces and adjudicate on arson and murder, that is, the pleas of the Crown, were for long believed to derive from a grant made by the kings of England to the barons in charge of defending the Anglo-Welsh border. Then, following an influential article by J.G. Edwards, it was thought that the Marcher lords had usurped from the Welsh kings not just their land but their royal privileges; and that this, rather than a grant by the king of England, was the origin the Marchers' claims to so-called liberties.[10] It was Rees Davies who questioned this view, arguing that for the early Marchers, waging war against each other and against the Welsh was indispensable to their survival, rather than a 'constitutional' privilege.[11] According to Davies, it was only in the

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8. T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], C 134/4 (1), mm. 2 ('Marchia'), 3 ('Marchia Wallie'), 4 ('Marchia Wallie'); cf. *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, vol. v, Edward II* (1908), no. 56.

9. *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, vol. vi, Edward II* (Hereford, 1910), 42 (no. 56); cf. TNA, PRO, C 134/56 (3), m. 7.

10. J.G. Edwards, 'The Normans and the Welsh March', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xlii (1956), pp. 155–77.

11. R.R. Davies, 'Kings, Lords and Liberties in the March of Wales, 1066–1272', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, xxix (1979), pp. 41–61.

thirteenth century that the position of the Marcher lords was challenged by agents of the English crown. Only once the English 'state' had developed to a point where its officials ventured more regularly into the peripheries of the kingdom was the position of the Marchers scrutinised and likened to that of liberty holders elsewhere in the English kingdom.

Professor Davies's argument, which develops that of Helen Cam on the origins of the English franchises,[12] remains unchallenged.[13] But it implies that Marcher liberties were neither the original nor, at least for some time, the dominant element in the medieval concept of the March of Wales. This is borne out by the chronology of the usage, as far as we can tell, and by the fact that of all parts of the Welsh borders, the lordships in the westernmost part of the old English county of Shropshire should have been first singled out as the 'March' after 1165. But if *Marchia Wallie* did not normally refer to all conquest lordships in Wales before *c.* 1300, what *did* it designate? One way of providing an answer to this question is by means of comparisons to other medieval 'marches'. Thus, in the year of Magna Carta, we also find King John referring to his lands 'in the march' in Ireland.[14] Here, in the case of the more recently formed and fluid frontier between the Irish and the English, it seems clear that no 'constitutional' meaning was intended. Gerald of Wales, an eyewitness to the early English conquests in Ireland, had revealed in 1189 how he thought of the Irish frontier: 'those lands that were furthest inland and closest to the enemy, the so-called marches, which in truth could well take the name of "the lands of Mars" from the god of war'.[15] Even in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, similar perceptions of the Irish borderlands predominated. The association of the Irish 'marches' with the 'lands of war', as opposed to the 'lands of peace', clearly shows them to have been viewed above all as military frontiers, at least by the colonial government in Dublin.[16] The

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12. H.M. Cam, 'The Evolution of the Mediaeval English Franchise', *Speculum*, xxxii (1957), pp. 427–42; repr. in her *Law-Makers and Law-Finders* (1962), pp. 22–43.

13. Indeed it has recently helped to revive scholarly interest in the liberties of medieval Britain and Ireland: cf. R. Frame, 'Lordship and Liberties in Ireland and Wales, c. 1170–c. 1360', in H. Pryce and J. Watts, eds., *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages. Essays in Memory of Rees Davies* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 125–38; M. Prestwich, ed., *Liberties and Identities in the Medieval British Isles* (Woodbridge, 2008).

14. *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, ed. H.S. Sweetman et al. (5 vols., 1875–86), i, no. 576.

15. Translation from Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin (Dublin, 1978), pp. 240–1: 'terris penitimis hostique propinquioribus, que marchie dicuntur, seu potius a Marte marcie dici possent'. Compare *Giraldi Opera*, v, p. 391 (*Expugnatio Hibernica*, ii, p. 36), which has the reading 'a Marte martie'.

16. *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, ed. Sweetman, i, no. 2978 (first mention of 'land of peace', 1248); ibid., ii, no. 930 (first mention of 'land of war', 1272); cf. R. Frame, 'Power and Society in the Lordship of Ireland, 1272–1377', *Past & Present*, no. 76 (1977), pp. 3–33, esp. p. 4; id., 'War and Peace in the Medieval Lordship of Ireland', in J. Lydon, ed., *The English in Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1984), pp. 118–41; J. Lydon, 'A Land of War', in A. Cosgrove, ed., *A New History of Ireland,* II. *Medieval Ireland 1169–1534* (Oxford, 1987), p. 240; R.R. Davies, 'Frontier Arrangements in Fragmented Societies: Ireland and Wales', in R. Bartlett and A. MacKay, eds., *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 77–100, at p. 81.

case of Ireland illustrates one important medieval connotation of the term *marchia*. Moreover, it is one that may well reflect the medieval concept of the Welsh March, since most of the men who embarked on the invasions into Ireland in the late 1160s came from the conquest lordships in south Wales.

Yet perhaps it is even more significant that a much longer established frontier, that of Normandy, was also perceived to be a 'march'.[17] In 1172, an inquest into knights' service owed to the duke of Normandy found that Richard Silvain—a ducal official and head of a minor castellan family based in the county of Mortain—was in charge of mustering the service of twenty-nine 'and a half and one-eighth' knights for 40 days 'ad marchiam'; Hugh de Gournay, lord of the eponymous castle on the river Epte, was found to owe the service of all but twelve of his knights 'ad marchiam'.[18] The Norman exchequer roll for 1184 records numerous disbursements on 'the castles of the March'.[19] And in 1203, King John wrote to the constable of Radepont in the Norman Vexin laying down rules concerning the ransoming of prisoners 'in Marchia'.[20] Even without the terminological parallel, there would be good reason to believe that the frontier of Normandy was relevant to the perception of the Welsh March. The Normans played a key role in creating the March of Wales; and numerous links persisted between England and Normandy, particularly between 1066 and 1204, during the most dramatic formative period in the history of the Welsh March.[21] For much of that time, between William the Conqueror's victory at Hastings and John's loss of Normandy, the Welsh and Norman marches were boundaries of the same political entity: the lands under the direct control of the Norman

17. D. Power, *The Norman Frontier in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 13–15. On the debated notion that Normandy itself originated as a Carolingian 'march', or defensive border command, cf. P. Bauduin, *La Première Normandie (x^e–xie siècles): sur les frontières de la haute Normandie: identité et construction d'une principauté* (Caen, 2004), esp. pp. 109–13.

18. *Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. H. Hall (3 vols., 1896), ii, pp. 628, 643; cf. Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 26–30. For the Silvain family, castellans of Saint-Pois, cf. *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall (Oxford, 6 vols., 1969–80), vi, pp. 490–2; Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 33, 275, 389; for de Gournay: D. Gurney, *The Record of the House of Gournay* (4 vols., 1848–58); Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 504–5.

19. The disbursements on these *castri de Marchia* were accounted for by William d'Aubigny, earl of Sussex (and later second earl of Arundel), who was bailiff of Gisors castle in 1183–4. Compare *Magni Rotuli Scaccarii Normanniae sub Regibus Angliae*, ed. T. Stapleton (2 vols., 1840–4), i, cxxxvi–cxxix, pp. 118–21; *Pipe Rolls of the Exchequer of Normandy for the Reign of Henry II. 1180 and 1184*, ed. V. Moss, Pipe Roll Society, new series 53, xii (2004), pp. 83–7.

20. *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri Londinensi Asservati, 1201–16*, ed. T.D. Hardy (1835), 24b. Gerald of Wales referred to the 'march of Normandy' (*Normanniae marchia*) in c. 1218: cf. *Giraldi Opera*, iii, p. 297 (*De Jure et Statu Menevensis Ecclesiae*, dist. v). For the date of this work cf. R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales (1146–1223)* (Oxford, 1982), p. 219.

21. For a recent overview of the making of the March, cf. Lieberman, *The March of Wales*, ch. 2.

and Plantagenet kings of England (England and Normandy were under different rulers in 1087–96, 1100–06 and 1144–54). It seems very possible that the situation existing on the frontier of medieval Normandy helps to explain the way in which the Welsh March was shaped. It may be that the Norman march is essential to understanding the concept of *Marchia Wallie* because the history of Normandy's frontier paralleled, perhaps even predetermined, the making of the March of Wales.

The state of research has now reached a point at which this large and complex issue may be approached. Recently the Norman frontier from the tenth century until the thirteenth has received unprecedented attention by historians in France and Britain. In the year of the 800th anniversary of the loss of Normandy by John of England to Philip Augustus of France, not one but two volumes on the medieval frontier of Normandy appeared: Pierre Bauduin's on the border of eastern Normandy in the tenth and eleventh centuries and Daniel Power's on the Norman frontier in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.[22] Thanks to these volumes, now is a highly opportune time to reflect further on the extent to which the histories of the medieval borders of Normandy and of Wales are intertwined with each other. What is more, a comparison of these two marches will contribute more generally to the study of historical frontiers. This is a field which gathered considerable momentum in the 1990s and which continues to grow.[23] Scholars have learned much about the various ways in which frontiers worked. They have also shown that peripheries have just as much to reveal about the shaping of identities and nations as centres do, because it was at their margins that societies and polities met and often came into clearest focus. Despite the surge of interest in frontiers in recent years, however, as yet little has been written on how the perceptions of different borders influenced each other and changed over time.

At first sight, it may well be supposed that the term 'March' was applied only very loosely to the borders of Wales and of Normandy. In important ways, those two borders were quite different during the High Middle Ages. Thus, in 1066, Wales was a country. Its ancient frontier with England was a political boundary, yet it also separated two societies with their own languages, laws, customs and saints.[24] This sort of

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22. Bauduin, *Normandie*; Power, *Norman Frontier*.

23. See R. Bartlett and A. MacKay, eds., *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford, 1989); D. Power and N. Standen, eds., *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700–1700* (Basingstoke, 1999); W. Pohl, I. Wood and H. Reimitz, eds., *The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians* (Leiden and Boston, 2001); D. Abulafia and N. Berend, eds., *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices* (Aldershot, 2002); F. Curta, ed., *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis. Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005); R. Bartlett, 'Heartland and Border: The Mental and Physical Geography of Medieval Europe', in Pryce and Watts, eds., *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages*, pp. 23–36; Prestwich, ed., *Liberties and Identities in the Medieval British Isles*.

24. For a full discussion of Wales' claim to having been a country in the late eleventh century, see Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 3–20. Compare, of course, ibid., p. 390: 'At no stage in its history could it be more appropriately said of Wales that it was merely a geographical expression than in the fourteenth century'.

frontier must have been novel to the Normans. Normandy, in the late eleventh century, was a principality, a province, rather than a country. Its frontier was political rather than cultural; it was demarcated by the reach of ducal power. As a frontier of language, the Norman border had been eroded by William the Conqueror's day; it did not even remain much of a frontier of dialect.[25] Power argues against the impression, derived from later law codes, that the Norman frontier was a dividing line between significantly different legal systems before 1204.[26] There is some debate about how far *Normannitas*, the Normans' notion of separateness and self-identity, was a fashionable veneer cherished by men who had in fact become assimilated to Frankish culture, rather than a mark of surviving Scandinavian traits.[27] Yet scholars implicitly agree that Normandy, whatever its origins, was never a country, in the sense that England or Wales were. It follows that even Normandy's short border with Brittany, or rather with that duchy's Frankish-assimilated eastern half, was no dividing line between two cultural spheres.[28] In high medieval northern France, there were not the kind of frontier societies that existed in Britain.[29]

Moreover it would be going too far to claim that the Norman frontier was a precursor of the March of Wales. Pierre Bauduin's book is in one sense the latest substantial contribution to the debate on the formation of Normandy, and on the respective extent of Scandinavian and Frankish influence on that process. Bauduin sets out to determine the relationship between eastern Normandy's boundary, as it was determined in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and earlier, Frankish, frontiers. The process he charts is long-drawn-out and complex. But the creation of the Norman frontier in the tenth and eleventh centuries, as presented by Bauduin, could hardly be said to have prefigured the making of the March of Wales. The early history of Normandy is very ill-served by the sources, but began, traditionally, in 911, with a cession of territory to a Viking leader named Rollo by a Carolingian king, Charles the Simple. It was subsequently characterised chiefly by the efforts of the lords of Rouen to extend their sway over other Scandinavian settlers in the archdiocese and to dominate Frankish neighbours. The story of the frontier of Normandy at this period is that of the consolidation of the authority of Rollo's descendants. It fitted into the framework of contemporary Frankish politics, insofar as those politics consisted in the

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25. Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 8–10.
26. Ibid., ch. 4.
27. Compare recently H.M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans. Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity, 1066–c.1220* (Oxford, 2003), p. 36.
28. J. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins. Province and Empire, 1158–1203* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 7–16. See also J. Dunbabin, *France in the Making, 843–1180* (2nd edn., Oxford, 2000), p. 89.
29. Davies, 'Frontier Arrangements in Fragmented Societies', *passim*.

construction of principalities and lesser political units from the rubble of the Carolingian empire.[30] This story bears little resemblance to the piecemeal conquests by which the Marcher lordships of Wales were created from *c.* 1067, mostly on the initiative of individual Norman knights and with very little direction by the kings of England.

On the other hand, it can be argued that from the moment the Normans first arrived on the Welsh borders, a year or so after the battle of Hastings, it would have seemed to them that the similarities between the Welsh marches and their 'home frontier' outweighed the differences. The very first link is also one of the most striking ones. It was provided by William fitz Osbern, the companion of William the Conqueror, and first Norman earl of Wessex, including Hereford. Fitz Osbern was lord of the castle of Ivry, which stands on a rocky outcrop overlooking the valley of the Eure, at a point where that river marked the boundary of the archdiocese of Rouen and of the customs of Normandy.[31] He had inherited, rather than built, that frontier castle.[32] But fitz Osbern did, between 1067 and 1071, build a chain of castles along the Welsh borders, from Chepstow on the Severn estuary to Wigmore in north-western Herefordshire.[33]

Indeed, there are several indications that Wales first presented itself to William I as a military challenge, and one that seemed to him to call for the same kind of measures he, and his ancestors, had tried and tested on the Norman frontier. His creation of earldoms in the border counties must of course be noted first. William became duke of Normandy in 1035, at the age of seven, and spent much of the next decade or so either on the run from or fighting a rebellious and violent aristocracy as well as

30. Bauduin, *Normandie*, pp. 319–22.

31. Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 169–70; cf. Map 1 in J. Le Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (Oxford, 1976); or the map in M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy, 1189–1204. Studies in the History of the Angevin Empire* (2nd edn., Manchester, 1961), which is a reproduction of the map in *Magni Rotuli Scaccarii Normanniae*, ed. Stapleton.

32. There was certainly a castle at Ivry by 1034; Robert of Torigni and Orderic Vitalis even believed it to have been built in the late tenth century: Bauduin, *Normandie*, pp. 194–6; *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni*, ed. E.M.C. van Houts (Oxford, 2 vols., 1992–5), ii, p. 226; *Orderic*, iv, p. 290. Ivry, it seems, was originally under the command of Rodulf, uterine brother of Richard I of Normandy, one of the first Norman magnates to receive the title of count: D.C. Douglas, 'The Ancestors of William Fitz Osbern', *ante*, lix (1944), pp. 62–79 (67–75); see also id., 'The Earliest Norman Counts', *ante*, lxi (1946), pp. 129–56 (131–2). William fitz Osbern became Rodulf's eventual heir by virtue of being his son-in-law's son: Osbern fitz Arfast, father of William fitz Osbern, married Emma, Rodulf's daughter: C.W. Hollister, 'The Greater Domesday Tenants-in-chief', in J.C. Holt, ed., *Domesday Studies* (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 219–48 (231); for a genealogical table cf. Bauduin, *Normandie*, p. 198.

33. William is recorded in Domesday Book as having built the castles of Chepstow, also called Strigoil or Striguil (DB 162), of Clifford (DB 183) and of Wigmore (DB 183); and as having refortified Ewyas Harold (DB 186). It is possible that he built further castles, such as Monmouth, Raglan and Usk. Compare most recently D. Crouch, 'The Transformation of Early Medieval Gwent', in R.A. Griffiths, ed., *The Gwent County History*, II. *The Age of the Marcher Lords, c. 1070–1536* (Cardiff, 2008), pp. 1–45.

external enemies. He was not a man to undervalue life-long friends. It is truly striking that after 1066, he should have delegated not one but two of them to the Welsh frontier: the aforementioned William fitz Osbern and Roger de Montgomery, who was probably created earl of Shrewsbury soon after 1070–1. Nor need long-standing friendship have been William's only reason for his choice. Both William fitz Osbern and Roger de Montgomery had proven themselves capable of dealing with a frontier. William of Poitiers records that fitz Osbern and Roger de Montgomery, when 'hardy young men', rode forth together as scouts against the count of Anjou during the Domfront campaign of 1051/2.[34] Fitz Osbern's interest in the castle of Ivry has just been mentioned. The settlement of Roger de Montgomery's ancestors in the Montgommery hills may have been a defensive measure dating to the mid-tenth century.[35] Roger himself, besides being *vicomte* of the Hiémois, had married Mabel de Bellême, and managed to secure her succession to the lordship of Bellême, on the boundary between Normandy and Francia.[36] Moreover, the man eventually chosen by the Norman duke to be the first earl of Chester was Hugh, the son of the *vicomte* of Avranches on the duchy's frontier towards Brittany. It would seem quite possible that these men were placed in charge of the Welsh borders partly because of their experience in dealing with the frontier of Normandy.

It was a matter of office as well as personality. The title of 'earl' (*comes*) was bestowed on all three men in England. As Christopher Lewis has argued, William fitz Osbern was probably seen as the successor of the last English earl of Wessex; but the most plausible reason why Roger de Montgomery and Hugh d'Avranches were styled earls is that their position on the Welsh frontier was perceived to parallel that of Norman counts.[37] In Normandy, the *comtés* did not extend across the entire area of the duchy in the way earldoms extended over the kingdom of England. The dukes created seven *comtés* in the first half of the eleventh century, Eu, Arques, Ivry, Évreux, Brionne, Exmes and Mortain; all were bestowed on trusted members of the ducal family, and most were intended to protect the province's borders.[38] Moreover Roger and Hugh

34. *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. and trans. R.H.C. Davis and M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1998), p. 26.

35. K. Thompson, 'The Norman Aristocracy Before 1066: The Example of the Montgomerys', *Historical Research*, lx (1987), pp. 251–63, at p. 252.

36. Ibid., pp. 261–2.

37. The argument in this paragraph follows C.P. Lewis, 'The Early Earls of Norman England', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, xiii (1990), pp. 207–23, at p. 219.

38. Lewis, 'Early Earls', p. 210; cf. D. Bates, *Normandy before 1066* (New York, 1982), p. 156; Bauduin, *Normandie*, pp. 192–4, 325. On the complications involved in referring to 'counts' and 'counties' when writing about medieval Normandy cf. Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 213–18. I follow Bauduin and others in designating early eleventh-century Eu, Arques, Ivry, Évreux, Brionne, Exmes and Mortain as *comtés*, while acknowledging that not all of these are described as *comitatus* in the surviving sources. Compare e.g., Bauduin, *Normandie*, pp. 295–8, 325–30.

were styled earls of Shrewsbury and Chester respectively in royal charters from the mid-1070s, just as Norman counts were identified by their chief castle. Conversely, after 1066, the title of earl was not granted to a number of Normans in charge of castles and extensive surrounding territories in the English midlands.[39] Between 1026 and 1053, Robert the Magnificent and his son, the future Conqueror, abolished or allowed to lapse four of the duchy's *comtés* (Exmes, Ivry, Brionne and Arques). Nevertheless, those Norman frontier institutions do appear to have provided a precedent for two at least of the earls whom the Conqueror placed in charge of military commands on the Welsh border.

Moreover, the origins of many of the Norman knights who followed those earls to the Welsh frontier can be traced to the borders of Normandy. Some held most, if not all, of their land on or near them, and had presumably spent a fair share of their lives there before coming to Britain. They were closely associated with the border earls, just as those earls were with William the Conqueror. The case of Shropshire illustrates the point. Here Earl Roger appears to have recreated the Conqueror's strategy for the Welsh frontier on a smaller scale, by assembling a number of disparate English estates adjacent to Wales into compact blocks of land. He may even have chosen to grant them to those of his men who had a frontier background in Normandy. Picot, who received lands in the south-west centred around Clun, was named from Sai, near Argentan, and owed allegiance to Earl Roger's eldest son, Robert de Bellême. A compact holding in north-western Shropshire was granted to a Rainald named from Bailleul, also near Argentan. Admittedly, Corbet, who received a third block of lands, in the strategic Rea-Camlad vale leading from Shrewsbury to Wales, does not seem to have hailed from the Norman frontier. He probably came not from the Pays de Caux, as is often stated, but from Crocy, near Falaise.[40] Moreover, of course, even a random selection of Normans might well have resulted in some links between the two marches. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a considerable number of men holding land in Cheshire and Herefordshire, too, were associated with places on or near the Norman frontier.[41]

Some of the castellans on the Welsh borders were selected by the Conqueror himself. Here again, it is tempting to think that the Norman frontier provided a precedent. The deployment of castellans

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39. Lewis, 'Early Earls', pp. 218–19.
40. Lieberman, 'Shropshire and the March of Wales', ch. 2; id., *Medieval March of Wales*, ch. 2.
41. Notably Avranches, Breteuil, Dol, Écouis, Ferrières, Giberville, Lyre, Macey, Mussegros, Pacy, Radepont, Tosny, Venables and Vernon. Compare C.P. Lewis, 'English and Norman Government and Lordship in the Welsh Borders, 1039–1087' (Univ. of Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1985), Map 47; pp. 195–207 (Cheshire tenants); pp. 276–84 (Herefordshire tenants).

was a long-established way of securing the duchy's borders. One well-known example, attested by William of Jumièges, is the installation of Gilbert Crispin at Tillières in 1013 by Duke Richard II, William the Conqueror's grandfather.[42] In addition, Pierre Bauduin argues for the establishment by the same duke of a *vicomte* at a newly founded castle at Vernon, a step which led to the establishment of a family taking its name from and laying claim to that castle.[43] Richard II also encouraged aristocratic settlers from outside Normandy to establish themselves on the southern Norman border (at Montreuil and Échauffour, Bocquencé and L'Aigle).[44] Indeed, William II of Normandy, the future Conqueror, himself was in the habit of setting pieces on the chessboard of the Norman frontier. During the 1050s, he established his own castellans in the Norman Vexin, at Le-Neufmarché-en-Lyons and at Neaufles, even though in the former case this meant ejecting an entrenched castellan in favour of his own candidate.[45] Moreover, after the death of Guitmund, the custodian of Moulins-la-Marche, he transferred that border castle to one William, the son of Walter of Falaise. This certainly involved arranging William's marriage to Guitmund's daughter, and possibly also meant ignoring the claims of her eight brothers in favour of a man who was 'greatly renowned for his prowess as a knight' (*in militia nimium uiguit*).[46]

Thus, William I of England may well have transferred a well-entrenched practice for dealing with frontiers seamlessly from the Continent to Britain. What is more, it may be that some castellans were picked partly because they were associated with the Norman frontier. Two of the custodians of the castles built by William fitz Osbern were demonstrably Norman frontiersmen: Ralph de Tosny was in charge of Clifford castle; William d'Eu received Chepstow in *c.* 1080.[47] A third, Ralph de Mortimer, lord of Wigmore, derived his family soubriquet from a castle near the Norman border. So did Bernard de Neufmarché, who in 1088 spearheaded the conquest of Brycheiniog from a landed base in Herefordshire granted by either William I or William II of England. Both cases are remarkable. Mortemer stood close to the frontier of Normandy and the county of Amiens. Ralph's father, Roger, was placed in charge of Mortemer castle, probably by William, the future Conqueror. In 1054, he successfully defended it against a French force led by Ralph, the count of Amiens. An irate William, however,

42. Bauduin, *Normandie*, pp. 239, 273, 278.
43. Ibid., pp. 232–5.
44. Ibid., pp. 218–19.
45. Ibid., pp. 273–8.
46. The translation is mine. On the *marchio* William son of Walter, see *Orderic*, iii, pp. 132–4.
47. DB 183; 162; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 468.

relieved him of this border command, since Roger, owing to the fact that he had done homage to Count Ralph, had released his prisoner after sheltering him in Mortemer castle for 3 days.[48] Similarly Bernard de Neufmarché's father Geoffrey was the very man ejected from the castle supplying his toponymic surname, again by William, the future Conqueror.[49] Strikingly, the forfeited frontier castles, rather than any of the other Mortimer or Neufmarché possessions in Normandy and England, furnished the family name of the first Norman lords of Wigmore and of Brecon. Possibly, this was at least in part because an association with a Norman marcher fortification conveyed prestige.

Such an association may even have been considered a badge of the particular military capability which was required of those despatched to the Welsh borders. Twelfth-century authors were certainly to embrace the notion that the lords of marcher castles had an implicit responsibility for defence. Orderic Vitalis propagated an idealised view of Robert of Rhuddlan, one of the first Norman castellans in north Wales, as a protector of England against the Welsh.[50] And he also implies that by the end of Henry I's reign, the marchers of Normandy were thought to be best suited to protecting the duchy's borders, recording how after Henry I's death in 1135 William de Roumare (the lord of Neufmarché), Hugh de Gournay 'and other marchers were despatched to safeguard the duchy's borders'.[51] The de Gournays' designated role in the defence of the Norman 'march' has already been noted. Orderic's 'marchers' are comparable to the mercenaries and settlers who began arriving in Ireland in 1167, many of them, as mentioned, coming from the conquest lordships in south Wales. Gerald of Wales, as is well known, believed these men—particularly those to whom he was related—especially capable of rising to the specific challenges of warfare in Ireland and Wales.[52]

Might the first Norman king of England have been guided by such considerations in making arrangements for the Welsh borders? He certainly did not rely solely on men from the frontier of Normandy. Walter de Lacy, who was one of the keystones in the tenurial edifice built by the Conqueror in the marches of Wales, held and was named after an estate centred on Lassy in the central Calvados region of

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48. *Orderic*, iv, pp. 86–9.
49. Ibid., ii, p. 130.
50. Ibid., iv, p. 138.
51. Ibid., vi, p. 450: 'Guillelmus de Rolmara et Hugo de Gornaco aliique marchisi ad tutandos patriæ fines directi sunt'.
52. For example, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. Scott and Martin, p. 246 (ii, p. 38; a passage close to *Descriptio Kambrie*, ii, p. 8. Compare *Giraldi Opera*, v, pp. 395–7; vi, pp. 220–2).

Normandy.[53] Walter de Lacy arrived on the Welsh borders at the same time as William fitz Osbern and took part in the first raids on Brycheiniog and Gwent.[54] He was granted a significant landed base, much of which lay in Herefordshire athwart some important routes into Wales.[55] The evidence from the reign of William Rufus is mixed as well. Robert fitz Hamo, who embarked on the landed conquest of lowland Morgannwg in south-east Wales in the early 1090s, was the son of William I's steward, but hailed from Creully in Calvados. On the other hand, William Rufus brought the de Ballon brothers from the Norman borders of Maine to Wales, installing Wynebald at Caerleon in Gwent and Hamelin at Abergavenny.[56] It is quite possible that these early connections between the two marches were more than coincidence. It may well be that the first Norman kings of England saw the Anglo-Welsh march as akin to that of Normandy, as presenting similar challenges and calling for similar measures.

   True, any perceived or actual similarity between the two frontiers was almost rendered obsolete by events. The early military impact of the Normans on Wales was so formidable that domination, indeed conquest, of the entire country seemed possible.[57] The Norman *comtés* may have been defensive in origin; but from the border counties of Hereford, Shrewsbury and Chester, a series of cavalry assaults, or *chevauchées*, were launched across the frontier in the 1070s and 1080s. Raids were led to the furthest reaches of Wales by Roger de Montgomery's sons; one of them, Arnulf, secured himself a foothold in the south-west of the country by building Pembroke castle. Others, too, notably Robert of Rhuddlan in north Wales, seized lands by building fortified strongholds from which to control surrounding territories. Such was the momentum carrying land-hungry knights from the Continent via England into

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53. W.E. Wightman, *The Lacy Family in England and Normandy, 1066–1194* (Oxford, 1966), ch. 7; on the 'Marchers' of the Herefordshire border, including the families of Lacy, Braose and Mortimer, cf. further C.P. Lewis, 'The Norman Settlement of Herefordshire under William I', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, vii (1984), pp. 195–213; and most recently B.W. Holden, *Lords of the Central Marches. English Aristocracy and Frontier Society* (Oxford, 2008). Note that Hugh II de Lacy, who was killed in 1186 while engaged in the conquest of the Irish kingdom of Meath, acquired the honor of Le Pin in the Forest of Gouffern in *c.* 1172–3, and with it a landed interest rather closer to the Norman frontier than Lassy; *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France, Illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland, vol. i, 918–1206*, ed. J.H. Round (1899), no. 617 (217).

54. C.P. Lewis, 'Lacy, Walter de (d. 1085)', *ODNB*.

55. Wightman, *Lacy Family*, p. 166.

56. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 35. For the suggestion that Rufus granted Wynebald and his brother Hamelin lands in Britain after campaigning first in Maine and then in Wales, cf. J.H. Round, 'The Family of Ballon and the Conquest of South Wales', *Studies in Peerage and Family History* (1901), pp. 181–215, at p. 190.

57. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 34–6; Lieberman, 'Shropshire and the March of Wales', pp. 130–5; id., *Medieval March of Wales*, pp. 108–12.

Wales that the Welsh frontier, as a political boundary, looked set to
disappear. Yet this outcome was averted, principally on account of two
factors. On the one hand, the resurgence of Welsh opposition in the
1090s saw notable military successes and territorial gains by the Welsh,
particularly in the north. On the other, the abolition of the Breteuil
earldom of Hereford in 1075 and of the Montgomery earldom of
Shrewsbury in 1102, along with the accession of a minor to the earldom
of Chester in 1101, removed the chief driving forces behind the initial
Norman onslaught upon Wales.

   A political frontier between England and Wales thus persisted. It is
possible, however, that after *c.* 1100, the idea that the Welsh frontier was
akin to that of Normandy dwindled in importance—at least for a while.
Since John Le Patourel propounded his vision of a highly unified Anglo-
Norman aristocracy, research on the cross-Channel estates of the twelfth
century has suggested that below the level of magnates, only the elite of
county knights maintained estates both in Normandy and in Britain
over the generations.[58] Certainly the forfeiture of the earldoms of
Hereford and Shrewsbury severed two of the most important ties
between the border of Normandy and that of Wales. Several less
important ones soon disappeared; William d'Eu forfeited his lands in
Gwent in 1096.[59] The Mortimers, as will be seen, remained in place;
but the centre of their Norman honor lay at St-Victor-en-Caux, to the
north of Rouen, at a considerable distance from the Norman frontier.[60]

   Wales and its marches provided a reservoir of lands to satisfy the
demand for royal patronage after disposable estates had grown rare in
England.[61] Henry I of England is well-remembered for restructuring
the Anglo-Norman aristocracy; and he took a particularly active interest
in selecting castellans on the Welsh borders. It seems possible that like
the first two Norman kings of England, he was continuing the long-
standing practice, first established on the frontier of Normandy, of
hand-picking border castellans. In the event, however, he created few
new links between the marches of Normandy and of Wales, since on the
latter he unabashedly advanced his favourites, whether or not they were

   58. Le Patourel, *Norman Empire*, *passim*; D. Crouch, 'Normans and Anglo-Normans: A Divided
Aristocracy?', in D. Bates and A. Curry, eds., *England and Normandy in the Middle Ages* (1994), pp.
51–67, esp. p. 63; for recent case-studies of cross-Channel estates in the twelfth and thirteenth
centuries, including the fairly modest honor held by the Norman knights de Valliquerville, cf. D.
Power, '"Terra regis Anglie et terra Normannorum sibi invicem adversantur": Les héritages Anglo-
Normands entre 1204 et 1244', in P. Bouet and V. Gazeau, eds., *La Normandie et l'Angleterre au
Moyen Âge* (Caen, 2004), pp. 190–209, esp. pp. 206–8. For reasons to think that the Corbet lords
of Caus held a cross-Channel estate see Lieberman, 'Shropshire and the March of Wales', pp. 80–3;
id., *Medieval March of Wales*, pp. 63–5.
   59. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 468; Round, 'Ballon', p. 187.
   60. Powicke, *Loss of Normandy*, p. 353.
   61. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 41.

associated with the Norman frontier. Thus, among those set up by Henry I on the Welsh marches were Alan fitz Flaald, the Breton ancestor of the Fitzalan Marcher lords of Oswestry and Clun (and of the Stewart family), and Baldwin de Bollers, who received the key castle of Montgomery on the Welsh border of Shropshire. Baldwin may be connected to the Boelare family, who were indeed marchers, but Flemish.[62] Neither Miles, the sheriff of Gloucester and earl of Hereford, who received the marriage to the daughter and heiress of Bernard de Neufmarché, nor Pain fitz John, the sheriff of Shropshire and Herefordshire, were men of the Norman frontier.[63] The great cross-Channel estates newly established during Henry I's reign—such as those of Mowbray, Bigod, Trussebut or Stuteville—did little or nothing to harness together the borders of Normandy and of Wales.[64] Stephen of Blois was created count of Mortain, probably by 1113, and acquired extensive lands in England, but none in the Welsh March.[65] The counts of Aumale became lords of Holderness.[66] Moreover Henry I made appointments not just to the borders but to Wales proper; and here, too, he seems not to have favoured Norman marchers. True, Robert de Candos, though he was named after a place just to the north-west of Rouen, was installed as lord of Caerleon, and in 1123 was castellan of Gisors.[67] But on the other hand, more prominent among the appointees to native Wales were the Clares, whose Norman honor was centred on Bienfaite and Orbec in the Calvados (Gilbert fitz Richard de Clare, according to the Welsh chronicles, pestered the English king until in 1110 he was granted permission to attempt the conquest of Ceredigion).[68] It was Henry de Beaumont, the earl of Warwick, a younger son of the lord of Beaumont-le-Roger, who received Gower in c. 1107.[69] Moreover Brian fitz Count, a natural son of Alan, count of Brittany, was chosen over the surviving heirs of Hamelin de Ballon to receive Abergavenny.[70]

62. Lieberman, 'Shropshire and the March of Wales', pp. 91–4; id., *Medieval March of Wales*, pp. 70–2.

63. J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (3rd edn., 1939; repr. in 2 vols., 1948), p. 443.

64. *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray*, ed. D.E. Greenway (1972), lxxi; *Complete Peerage*, ix, pp. 575–89; *Early Yorkshire Charters, vol. ix, The Stuteville Fee*, ed. C.T. Clay (Wakefield, 1952); *Early Yorkshire Charters, vol. x, The Trussebut Fee*, ed. C.T. Clay (Wakefield, 1955).

65. E. King, 'Stephen (c. 1092–1154), King of England', *ODNB*.

66. *Complete Peerage*, i, pp. 350–5.

67. *Orderic*, vi, pp. 342–4.

68. *Brut y Tywysogyon, or, The Chronicle of the Princes. Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1955), p. 70. All references to the Welsh chronicles are to this version. I have checked the alternate versions for significant differences.

69. *Complete Peerage*, xii, part ii, p. 359.

70. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 41.

Yet there is no reason to think that all contact between the borders of Normandy and of Wales broke down. The earls of Chester retained lands and office in Avranches until 1204. Moreover, new and important links continued to be created. The earls of Gloucester, who were lords of Glamorgan from 1121 × 2 to 1183, had a Norman fief centring on Sainte-Scolasse.[71] The Braoses, a family of pivotal importance in the history of the Welsh March, held what was arguably a Norman frontier estate, Briouze near Argentan, from the eleventh century until 1204. Philip de Braose or de Briouze (d. 1134 × 55) seized Radnor in *c.* 1095 and Builth and Elfael before 1100; his son William added Abergavenny and Brecon from *c.* 1165 by right of his wife, the daughter and coheiress of Miles of Gloucester; his son, also William, received Gower from John in 1203, besides, of course, acquiring numerous estates in Ireland.[72] Other, less enduring ties date to after 1189, when John, the future king of England, was both created count of Mortain and became lord of Glamorgan by marrying Isabel of Gloucester; and when William the Marshal acquired the honor of Chepstow and the earldom of Pembroke as well as the Norman honor of Longueville by right of his wife, Isabel of Striguil (later known as de Clare).[73] Such connections may well have helped to keep alive a perception of congruity between the two marches.

Moreover it seems quite probable that the actual resemblances between the frontiers of Normandy and of Wales grew more and more pronounced over the twelfth century. From 1136, the Welsh marches came under severe pressure.[74] Most of the territorial gains made since 1100 were reversed. In particular, the Clare conquests in Ceredigion fell into Welsh hands once more.[75] The situation on the frontier of Normandy, where some castellans sided with Geoffrey, the count of Anjou, was more complex. Yet much of the Norman border was transformed in 1141–5, when he made himself master of Normandy. The duchy's southern frontier lost much of its character as a military borderland. However, the local castellans there remained a force to be reckoned with.[76] The Epte valley, too, remained Normandy's border

71. *Complete Peerage*, v, pp. 683–8 and n.; D. Crouch, 'Robert, First Earl of Gloucester (*b.* before 1100, *d.* 1147)', *ODNB*; *Earldom of Gloucester Charters*, ed. R.B. Patterson (Oxford, 1973), p. 3.

72. Lloyd, *History of Wales*, pp. 402–3; I.J. Sanders, *English Baronies: A Study of Their Origin and Descent, 1086–1327* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 21–2; I.W. Rowlands, 'William de Braose and the Lordship of Brecon', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, xxx (1982–3), pp. 122–33; R.V. Turner, 'Briouze, William (III) de (*d.* 1211)', *ODNB*; Holden, *Lords of the Central Marches, passim*.

73. Sanders, *Baronies*, pp. 110–11; *Complete Peerage*, x, pp. 358–64; Powicke, *Loss of Normandy*, pp. 346–7, 344.

74. D. Crouch, 'The March and the Welsh Kings', in E. King, ed., *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 255–89; Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 388–91.

75. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 45–51.

76. Power, *Norman Frontier*, p. 470.

towards the Capetian dominions in the east. What is more, both the Norman and the Welsh marches bore the marks of decades, indeed centuries, of frontier warfare. The staggering number of around four hundred castles was built in Wales and the borders between 1067 and 1215.[77] This may, to contemporaries, have been the most imposing parallel to the Norman frontier. For by *c.* 1200, the frontier of Normandy was one of the very few areas of Europe with a comparable density of fortifications. The distance from Eu to Mont-St-Michel by way of the Epte valley and the southern Norman border is roughly 400 km, which is close to the distance from Chester to Chepstow to Pembroke; and the maps of the twelfth-century Norman frontier in Power's recent volume show 165 fortresses, 107 of which he classifies as 'major'. Smaller mottes, such as those assigned to the period in Gérard Louise's volumes on the lordship of Bellême, abounded.[78] By 1200, shortly after Richard I built Château Gaillard right next to Les Andelys, it is conceivable that in terms of sheer density of castles, the Norman and the Welsh marches were perceived to be in the same league.

The comparable castle densities also meant that the distribution of aristocratic power at a local and regional level tended to be structured in a similar way. A common feature was the creation of compact castleries, or clusters of castleries, controlled to a greater or lesser degree by a given family. Thus, much of the district of Bray to the north of the Norman Vexin was dominated by the de Gournays.[79] Ivry formed part of a chain of small, relatively compact castleries in the Eure, Iton and Avre valleys, such as L'Aigle, Conches, Dreux, Bréval and Pacy.[80] To either side of this district lay the large honors of Breteuil, Evreux with Montfort, Châteauneuf-Brezolles and the county of Perche.[81] Naturally, this pattern took shape earlier in Normandy than in Wales; by 1100, according to Power.[82] The end result, however, was clearly akin to the patchwork of compact lordships of various sizes that characterised the Welsh March by *c.* 1200.

Furthermore these patterns of aristocratic power were the result, overall, of roughly comparable developments. On both marches, the

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77. A.H.A. Hogg and D.J.C. King, 'Early Castles in Wales and the Marches', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, cxii (1963), pp. 77–124; cf. also id., 'Masonry Castles in Wales and the Marches: A List', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, cxvi (1967), pp. 71–132, and id., 'Castles in Wales and the Marches: Additions and Corrections', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, cxix (1970), pp. 119–24. For maps see also Lieberman, *The March of Wales*.

78. G. Louise, *La Seigneurie de Bellême, x^e-xiie siècles: évolution des pouvoirs territoriaux et construction d'une seigneurie de frontière aux confins de la Normandie et du Maine à la charnière de l'an mil* (Flers, 2 vols., 1990).

79. Power, *Norman Frontier*, p. 357.

80. Ibid., p. 267.

81. Ibid., pp. 246–8, 267, 273, 469.

82. Ibid., p. 208.

density of castles was due to the combined initiative of local aristocracies and of the central authority. As has been seen, the seven counties established by the duke of Normandy during the first third of the eleventh century were all centred on castles, most of them frontier fortresses such as Ivry. Duke Richard II (d. 1026) built Tillières and other castles in the Eure and Avre valleys; his son and successor, Robert I (d. 1035) constructed a fortress near the river Couesnon 'in order to safeguard the Norman frontier' towards Brittany.[83] The lesser Norman aristocracy began erecting castles themselves in greater numbers around 1030; and earlier than that, it would seem, along the province's southern border.[84] Duke William II, the future Conqueror, began fortifying the Norman Vexin in the 1050s, in response to the alliance of the counts of Amiens-Vexin-Valois with Henry I of France.[85] William Rufus' castle at Gisors also lay on the Vexin frontier. Moreover it was designed in 1097 by Roger de Montgomery's eldest son, Robert de Bellême, who also proved his ingenuity as a castle-builder elsewhere in Normandy and in Shropshire.[86] After Henry I, Robert of Torigni observed, the whole march of Normandy bristled with fortifications; strikingly, this author singled out Wales as the one other territory similarly encastellated during Henry I's reign.[87] Most of the Norman border castles which bedevilled the rule of Henry II had already been built when he became duke of Normandy, but his contributions to Norman frontier fortifications included the reconstruction of Pontorson castle, substantial enhancements of Gisors and other castles of the Vexin, and the earthworks known to posterity as the *Fossés Royaux*.[88] When, in 1197–8, King Richard I built Château Gaillard, he was acting in a centuries-old tradition.

By that time, the kings of England had founded far fewer castles in Wales than the dukes had in Normandy, and possibly none at all. The castles at Hereford, Richard's Castle and Ewyas Harold pre-date the arrival of the duke of Normandy in England, and in 1200, the Welsh March remained a land overwhelmingly of baronial, rather than royal

83. *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ii, p. 56; Bauduin, *Normandie*, Map 9 (179); Map 13 (248); J. Yver, 'Les Châteaux forts en Normandie, jusqu'au milieu du xiiᵉ siècle', *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie*, liii (1955–6), pp. 28–115, 604–9. The castle, *Caruscas*, has generally been taken to be Cherrueix. For a rival identification, as Charcey, cf. *Magni Rotuli Scaccarii Normanniae*, ed. Stapleton; Power, *Norman Frontier*, p. 13 and n.53.

84. *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, vii, p. 92; for the earlier castles on the southern border, *Orderic*, ii, p. 26, 356 (L'Aigle); ii, p. 22, 82, 92 (Échauffour). Compare Bates, *Normandy Before 1066*, p. 114, 165, 179.

85. Bauduin, *Normandie*, pp. 273–83. Power, *Norman Frontier*, p. 367.

86. *Orderic*, iv, xxxiv, p. 228; v, pp. 214–6.

87. *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ii, pp. 250–2.

88. Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 396–404, 470; J. Mesqui and P. Toussaint, 'Le Château de Gisors aux xiiᵉ et xiiiᵉ siècles', *Archéologie Médiévale*, xx, pp. 253–317.

castles. Too much should not, however, be made of this contrast, which is clearly linked to the fact that the Welsh frontier featured so much less prominently on the itineraries of the twelfth-century kings of England than did the Norman marches.[89] According to Orderic, Rhuddlan castle was built at the behest of William the Conqueror.[90] Carmarthen was maintained as a royal foothold for much of the twelfth century. During military campaigns, Norman and English castles in Wales were certainly *re*-built by twelfth-century kings of England on several occasions; and by 1200, it was routine for the royal exchequer to bankroll the garrisoning or upkeep of castles of the Welsh marches.[91] Thus by the time John lost Normandy, royal methods of coping with the Welsh border had been well rehearsed on that duchy's frontier. Indeed, in 1212, John decided to divert to Wales the troops, builders and carpenters he had hoped to muster for a planned offensive against Philip Augustus.[92] Only 5 years or so elapsed between his death and the foundation of New Montgomery in the Severn gap on the Welsh borders by the teenage Henry III and his advisers. Edward I's idea that Wales should be hemmed in by royal castles after 1283 could be seen as a permutation of a centuries-old frontier strategy.

Moreover despite the fact that family ties between the frontiers of Normandy and Wales were rare, the two groups of marchers were arguably of the same ilk. On both frontiers, the installation of castellans by kings and dukes often resulted in the creation of a marcher lineage. Indeed a notable common feature of the lords of the Welsh March was a longevity in the male line which was highly distinctive compared to the baronial families of England. Between 1067 and 1300, there were only two major sets of extinctions of marcher families. The first took its toll around the 1180s. That decade saw the demise of the earl of Gloucester, lord of Glamorgan; of the earl of Pembroke; and of the Beaumont earl of Warwick, lord of Gower.[93] The second set of extinctions occurred in the 1230s and 1240s, when seven marcher families, including the Braoses, the Lacys and the Marshals, died out in the male line.[94] But some lived through both of these waves of mortality. The Mortimers, and their neighbours to the north, the Fitzalans of Clun and Oswestry, the Corbets of Caus and the Lestranges of Knockin survived on the Welsh frontier from at least the early twelfth century

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89. Power, *Norman Frontier*, p. 341.
90. *Orderic*, iv, p. 138.
91. For example, Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 51–2.
92. *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Fourteenth Year of the Reign of King John, Michaelmas 1212*, ed. P.M. Barnes (1955), xiii–xvi.
93. Note that in the latter case the dynasty survived, although it lost its hold on Gower. Compare D. Crouch, 'Oddities in the Early History of the Marcher Lordship of Gower, 1107–1166', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, xxxi (1984), pp. 133–41.
94. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p. 271.

until the fourteenth. In 1250–1, Thomas Corbet showed his awareness of the fact when he refused to pay relief for his lands 'because none of his five predecessors had ever paid it'.[95]

Now that Daniel Power has established the genealogies of thirty-three aristocratic families whose most important interests lay on the Norman frontier, it has become clearer than ever before that such dynastic longevity was a feature of both marches. On the Norman frontier, several castellan families of the Eure and Avre valleys survived well beyond 1204: notably the descendants of Ascelin Goel at Ivry (2)[96]; the lords of Châteauneuf-en-Thymerais with Brézolles (9); the Reviers lords of Vernon castle, who were related to the earls of Devon (32); the Tosny lords of Conches (31); the Donjon lords of Muzy (23) and the Mauvoisins of Rosny castle (20). In the Norman Vexin, the Crispins remained lords of Neaufles from the mid-eleventh century until well into the thirteenth (11); this was matched by the lords of Gournay (18) and almost equalled by the lords of Beaussault (7). On the southern Norman frontier, we find three great families of the long twelfth century: the Talvas lords of Bellême (29); the viscounts of Maine, castellans of Beaumont-sur-Sarthe (6) and the lords of Mayenne (21). Moreover the castellans of Montreuil, who were also generally lords of St-Cénéry-le-Gérei, survived in the male line from the mid-eleventh to the mid-thirteenth century (26). Finally, on the Norman-Breton frontier distinctively long-lived families were based at Fougères (15), Gorron with La Tannière (17) and St-James with St-Hilaire (27). This partial roll-call suggests, as Power has noted, that biological accident was more important than politics, including the loss of Normandy by the English kings, in ending Norman frontier dynasties in the male line.[97] The frontiers of Normandy and Wales, already by 1200, and even more so half a century later, were regions where a large proportion of aristocratic families could, and did, pride themselves on exceptionally long agnatic ancestries associated with particular castles.

The mere survival of a frontier dynasty did not guarantee that dynasty's effective control of a given border fortification. This was true both in Normandy and in Wales. To give just one example from the Welsh marches, the Fitzalans lost Oswestry castle to Madog ap Maredudd of Powys in the late 1140s, and only regained it through intercession of Henry II in 1155.[98] As for Normandy, the castles in the

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95. TNA, PRO, E 368/24, m. 12v; on the Corbets see J. Meisel, *Barons of the Welsh Frontier: The Corbet, Pantulf, and Fitz Warin Families, 1066–1272* (1980); M. Lieberman, 'Striving for Liberties in the March of Wales: The Corbets of Caus in the Thirteenth Century', in Prestwich, ed., *Liberties and Identities in the Medieval British Isles*, pp. 141–54.

96. The numbers in brackets in this paragraph refer to the genealogical diagrams in Power, *Norman Frontier*, App. 1, pp. 478–531.

97. Power, *Norman Frontier*, ch. 13.

98. Lieberman, 'Shropshire and the March of Wales', pp. 99–100, 145–7; id., *Medieval March of Wales*, pp. 76–7, 119–20.

Norman Vexin, for instance, were some of the main bones of contention in twelfth-century ducal and royal politics, being bartered, sold, treacherously yielded or conquered, particularly in 1144, 1152–3, 1173 and from 1193 onwards. Frontier lords in Normandy and Wales shared the experience of having to struggle against elements beyond their control to maintain their claims. In these circumstances, it was, on both marches, often the lesser aristocracy that provided the most continuous expression of lordship.[99] This, combined with dynastic longevity, does suggest that the *barones Marchie* of Wales might have had their counterparts on the Norman frontier: a group of lords who 'shaped the frontier, and in turn were shaped by it'.[100]

As time passed, new similarities between the Welsh and Norman borders were established. But this is not the only respect in which the Norman parallel may have helped to forge the concept of the Welsh March. Encastellation and the entrenchment of lordships and long-lived castellan families highlighted increasingly not only what the Welsh borders shared with the Norman frontier but also what they had in common with the conquest territories of southern Wales. It has already been noted that the latter were not normally included within *Marchia Wallie* until after 1300. But with regard to some of the very features which were apparently considered typical of a 'March' by 1200, the difference between the Welsh borders and Wales proper had begun to be blurred long before. As has been seen, Norman castle-building in Wales may have begun as early as the 1070s; and Henry I, in encouraging castle-building or in providing his favourites with lordships, did not discriminate much between the borders and the Welsh kingdoms. By the reign of Henry II, moreover, the dynasties of the Anglo-Welsh borders such as the Mortimers had been established for about as long as the Fitzmartins of Cemais, say, or the Beaumont lords of Gower. The idea that the March and southern Wales were distinct retained its force until after 1300. But it is important to note that the way towards the inclusion of all Welsh conquest lordships within *Marchia Wallie* was already being paved by the late eleventh century. If the Norman and the Welsh marches could be seen to be cast in a similar mould, and this was made possible by their common features, then the conquest lordships in Wales proper were already coming to share some of those same features by 1100.[101]

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99. Compare the 'true *marchiones*' of Dyfed identified by I.W. Rowlands, 'The Making of the March: Aspects of the Norman Settlement in Dyfed', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, iii (1981), pp. 142–57 (p. 145); and Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 275 and 474–5.

100. Quoted from R.R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282–1400* (Oxford, 1978), p. 36. Cf. Power, *Norman Frontier*, p. 199.

101. Lieberman, *Medieval March of Wales*, pp. 259–61.

The differences between the marches of Wales and of Normandy should not be downplayed—they are revealing too. Unlike the Norman border, much of the Anglo-Welsh frontier did of course correspond, if roughly, to the dividing line between lower and higher land.[102] Two marches could apparently be considered similar even though they were of contrasting physical terrain. This would indicate that geographical features could be as irrelevant to the perception of frontiers as they often were to their demarcation.[103] Another important contrast existed in the realm of politics. Time and again, the history of the frontier of Normandy was complicated by conflicting loyalties of marcher lords. Roger de Mortemer, as mentioned earlier, found himself in 1054 having to defend a frontier castle on behalf of one of his lords against an attack made by another from across the border. He was representative of several of the Norman marchers. The twelfth-century lords of the Norman Vexin had so many landed interests and family connections on the French side of the Norman frontier that their very identity as undiluted Normans has been questioned.[104] Such divided loyalties simply did not, so far as we can tell, exist in the Welsh March. The Normans, and other foreigners, settled on Welsh territory as conquerors. The situation was very different from north Britain, where they were granted lands on terms of military service by the king of Scots, and where, as a result, divided loyalties were quite common.[105] In Wales, military tenure was unknown before 1066, and there was no time for Welsh rulers to import it before the raids on their land began; moreover, Wales was splintered politically and the first Norman border earls, for instance, saw even Welsh kings as allies, even subordinates. Some of the foreign lords in Wales thought it prudent to 'put down deeper roots' in Gerald of Wales' phrase, by marrying the daughters of local Welsh rulers.[106] But they were in no doubt that their conquest lordships were held by right of conquest. As far as we know, it would have been inconceivable to them that their occupation of Welsh territories should entail obligations to a Welsh ruler.

Turncoats, therefore, were a feature of the Norman frontier, but not of the Welsh March. True, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,

102. For example, Lieberman, 'Shropshire and the March of Wales', pp. 20–7; id., *Medieval March of Wales*, pp. 23–8. See Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 6–8 on Normandy's lack of physical unity.

103. On this point, see further P. Sahlins, 'Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century', *American Historical Review*, vc (1990), pp. 1423–51.

104. J. Green, 'Lords of the Norman Vexin', in J. Gillingham and J.C. Holt, eds., *War and Government in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 46–61, at p. 60.

105. G.W.S. Barrow, 'Frontier and Settlement: Which Influenced Which? England and Scotland, 1100–1300', in Bartlett and MacKay, eds., *Medieval Frontier Societies*, pp. 3–21, at pp. 12–14.

106. *Giraldi Opera*, vi, p. 91 (*Itinerarium Kambrie*, i, p. 12).

alliances between marcher lords and Welsh rulers were occasionally made, but virtually only at times of crisis in England, such as 1215 (when Shrewsbury was captured by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, the prince of Gwynedd).[107] As a rule, crude military realities prevented the lords of the Welsh March from switching sides, and no Welsh ruler was equal to challenging the king of England on his own ground. Indeed, the lords of Powys themselves found that the best way to maintain their independence from the house of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century was to align themselves more closely with the kings of England.[108] In Normandy, on the other hand, frontier lords regularly benefited from their marginal situation because it provided them with the option of adjusting their political allegiance at moments of crisis. It put them in a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis the dukes on the one hand and neighbouring lords on the other. This often gave lords of the Norman frontier political clout quite disproportionate to their financial and military resources.[109] As a result, and rather paradoxically, the no-man's land between competing principalities provided an environment congenial to the secure entrenchment of castellan families. The very existence of the lordship of Bellême, it has been argued, was due to its frontier position.[110] But when Robert de Bellême based his rebellion against Henry I on an alliance with Welsh rulers of Powys in 1102, he found to his misfortune that this was one frontier practice that could not successfully be transferred from Normandy to Wales.[111]

If the phrase 'March of Wales' was not technical in the strict sense of the word, neither was it deployed arbitrarily. It seems possible to argue that *Marchia Wallie* first came to be used routinely because of perceived similarities between the borders of Normandy and of Wales; and even that similarities to the Norman frontier continued to shape the concept of the Welsh March after 1204. It was contended at the outset that the history of the Norman 'march' did not simply repeat itself wholesale in Wales. But the borders of Normandy may well have provided the precursors of certain concepts and practices which were relayed to the Anglo-Welsh frontier, conveyed as cultural baggage by the Normans arriving in Britain. The securing of frontiers through castle-building was pioneered on the Norman march from the later tenth century. This must be part of the reason why William fitz Osbern engaged in the practice immediately and with such energy on the Welsh border, and perhaps even why castles were already built there by the Normans who

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107. *Brut*, p. 203.
108. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp. 233–6.
109. Compare Power, *Norman Frontier*, p. 200.
110. Louise, *Bellême, passim*, esp. pp. 350–53, 424–6.
111. *Brut*, p. 43; Orderic, vi, pp. 20–2.

arrived during the days of Edward the Confessor.[112] Moreover, experience gathered on the Norman frontier seems to have counted for something. This may partly explain the choice of personnel first despatched to the borders of Wales by William the Conqueror. As Christopher Lewis has argued, the Conqueror's creation of earldoms in the border counties may also have been inspired by the Norman parallel.

Even after William's death in 1087, many direct proprietorial links between the marches proved far more long-lived than that established early on, if briefly, between the castles of Ivry and of Wigmore; and some new ones were created. Some of these connections may have helped keep alive the idea that the borders of Normandy and of Wales were both frontiers, and indeed similar kinds of frontier. But that idea was perhaps bound to gain strength as the twelfth century progressed, and the two marches, for similar reasons, evolved along closely comparable lines. The shaping of frontier aristocracies, along with warfare and encastellation, reinforced the structural, and indeed visual, resemblances. A parallel may have been particularly noticeable between the Welsh borders of Shropshire on the one hand, and the Epte valley on the other. The role of the Norman march in diplomacy has been noted since Lemarignier's *Recherches sur l'hommage en marche*.[113] It was on the river Epte that Charles the Simple conferred land to the Scandinavian leader Rollo in, traditionally, 911; it was here, at the Gisors elm, that the dukes of Normandy were wont to confer with the kings of France.[114] Similarly, after the Montgomery earls forfeited their extensive lands in Shropshire to the crown in 1102, the ford of Rhyd Chwima in the Severn gap, west of Shrewsbury, became the prime meeting-place between the kings of England and Welsh rulers.[115] The English crown acquired Cheshire as well between 1237 and 1241, but in 1267 tradition dictated that a treaty between the prince of Gwynedd and Henry III was concluded at Montgomery.

Thus it seems that Marcher liberties were indeed, at first, irrelevant to the concept of the March of Wales. They only helped determine that concept during the thirteenth century, after the kings of England had lost Normandy. This is consistent with Rees Davies's premiss, that it was only after *c.* 1200, and particularly from *c.* 1240, that Marcher liberties became an issue between the Marchers and the English kings.[116]

112. On the Normans on the Welsh border before 1066, cf. D.F. Renn, 'The First Norman Castles in England (1051–1071)', *Château Gaillard*, i (1964), pp. 125–32; C.P. Lewis, 'The French in England before the Norman Conquest', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, xvii (1994), pp. 123–44.

113. J.F. Lemarignier, *Recherches sur l'hommage en marche et les frontières féodales* (Lille, 1945).

114. Power, *Norman Frontier*, pp. 16–17.

115. Lieberman, 'Shropshire and the March of Wales', ch. 3; id., *Medieval March of Wales*, ch. 3; J. Davies, 'Rhyd Chwima – The Ford at Montgomery – Aque Vadum de Mungumeri', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, xciv (2006), pp. 23–36.

116. Davies, 'Kings, Lords and Liberties', pp. 41–61.

Liberties would, of course, have tended to contrast the March of Wales with that of Normandy, had the two remained borders of the same 'orbit of power'.[117] Certainly it was partly due to the liberties that the medieval category of the March eventually approximated to that of modern-day historians. Common claims to immunity did act to tie together the lords of the Welsh borders and those of the conquered southern coast; perhaps they were already doing so by 1215. But liberties were never the only, nor perhaps ever the most important, distinguishing feature of the area identified as *Marchia Wallie*. Other characteristics played an important role as well, such as the substantial settlement of the southern Welsh littoral by a mainly English peasant and burgess populace, or the development of hybrid seigneurial administrations.[118] By the end of the twelfth century, however, after the heroic formative phase of the March of Wales, the Welsh borders already shared with the south of the country the very things they had in common with the frontier of Normandy: most importantly, all of these districts were patchworks of lordships held by long-established castellan dynasties. A particular distribution of aristocratic power was apparently central to the concept of a 'march' by 1204, in the eyes of those who coined such phrases as *Marchia Wallie* and *barones Marchie*.[119] This perhaps made it inevitable that all conquest lordships in Wales would eventually be included within *Marchia Wallie*. The Norman parallel may well have left a legacy to the Welsh March which endured long after 1204.

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117. Phrase borrowed from R.R. Davies, *The First English Empire. Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093–1343* (Oxford, 2000), ch. 3 (title).

118. Discussed more fully in Lieberman, *Medieval March of Wales*, *passim*; for a case-study cf. id., 'Anglicization in High Medieval Wales: The Case of Glamorgan', *Welsh History Review*, xxiii (2006), pp. 1–26.

119. For an example of the phrase *barones Marchie* which dates to 1204, cf. *Rot. Claus.*, i, 12a.