

THE FAMILY OF L'ESTRANGE AND THE CONQUEST OF WALES¹

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Abstract

The L'Estrange family were important Marcher lords of Wales from the twelfth century to the Acts of Union in the sixteenth century. Originating in Brittany, the family made their home on the Welsh borders and were key landowners in Shropshire where they owned a number of castles including Knockin. This lecture looks at the service of several generations of the family to the English Crown in the thirteenth century, leading up to the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282. With its practice of intermarriage with noble Welsh families, the dynasty of L'Estrange exemplifies the hybrid nature of Marcher society in the Middle Ages.

Two points by way of introduction: the first to explain that what follows is taken from my book, *The Rivers Join*.² This was a family history written for the family. It describes how two rivers joined when Ann and I married. Among the earliest tributaries traced are those of my Prichard and Thomas ancestors in Wales at about the time of the Norman Conquest; and on my wife's side the river representing the L'Estranges, rising in Brittany, flowing first through Norfolk and then roaring through the Marches to Wales with destructive force. My second point is to make clear that I will not repeat all the acknowledgements made in the book, except to say that I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the late Winston Guthrie Jones QC, the author of the paper which provided much of the material for this lecture. I am equally indebted to J. Beverley Smith and his life of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.³

Rowland L'Estrange crossed from Brittany during the reign of Henry I. He married Matilda le Brun, whose father Ralph held a considerable estate bordering the Wash. By early in the reign of Henry II, three of Rowland's sons, John I, Hamon, and Guy, were enfeoffed of land in Shropshire on the borders of Wales which included Knockin. The first members of the family involved in the Welsh wars was Guy who held hostages that the king brought back from his disastrous third expedition into Wales. The son of his elder brother John I, John II, succeeded to the property and was probably the first to build a castle at Knockin.

During the reign of Richard I, John had the custody of Pole Castle – now Powis Castle – on behalf of the Crown. On King John's succession in 1199 John L'Estrange became one of the king's most trusted servants. This was the time

- 1 A lecture delivered to the Society by the late Lord Crickhowell (*ob.* 17 March 2018) in London on 16 November 2017.
- 2 Nicholas Crickhowell, *The Rivers Join: The Story of a Family* (Bloomington, Indiana: Trafford Publishing, 2009).
- 3 J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).

when Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (Llywelyn Fawr or Llywelyn the Great), Prince of Gwynedd, was extending his power to cover the whole of Wales except for the Marcher lordships in the south. There is a contemporary document that states that John L'Estrange did much damage to the people of the Welsh prince. In retaliation, Llywelyn destroyed the castle that John had built at Ruyton and imprisoned some of his men. In an ensuing fight John was struck in the face by a lance and bore the mark of his wound for the rest of his life. In 1204 he was one of the men that the king used to send a safe conduct to Llywelyn.

He was soon in favour with those around the young King Henry III, and was one of those present at the council held in Bristol on 11 November 1216 to meet the new king and his guardians. Llywelyn the Great, after his triumphant march through Wales, thought it wise to come to terms with the new king; and John L'Estrange was one of those entrusted with safe conducts for the Welshmen sent by Llywelyn to Worcester to do homage. In 1223 he was probably appointed constable of Montgomery Castle when the king quarrelled with Hubert de Burgh. At any rate, it was in his custody in 1233. John died at the end of 1233 or early in 1234 at the age of about eighty, having for sixty years been the servant successively of Henry II, Richard Coeur-de-Lion, John, and Henry III.

His son, John III, succeeded his father in possession of the L'Estrange fiefs in 1234. His occupation of them lasted until 1269. It was during that time that the power, first of Llywelyn the Great, and then of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, reached its peak. Just as John was taking up his family responsibilities, King Henry found himself in serious conflict with his nobles and for a brief time Richard, Earl of Pembroke, the Earl Marshal, and other nobles entered into an alliance with Llywelyn. Their forces completely destroyed the original stone castle at Abergavenny. In the same year a truce was made and John was one of those who swore on the king's behalf that the truce would be observed. A mandate was issued to John and three other commissioners to conduct Llywelyn's son, Dafydd, to pay homage to the king.

By 1235 John was constable of Montgomery; and in the following year we again find him swearing a truce with Llywelyn on behalf of the king. In the years that followed John is repeatedly found acting on behalf of the king in attempts to deal with infringements of the truce; and on more than one occasion is given responsibility for providing safe conduct to Welsh envoys. In 1240 he was appointed to the custody of the county and castle of Chester, and in practice he held the high office of Justice of Chester. In the same year he was doing building works on behalf of the king at Shrewsbury, and he also hurried off with three others to Cardigan to settle a land dispute. In the following year a patent gives notification that John, to whom the king had committed the castles of Montgomery, Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth, and Chester, had sworn on the Holy Gospels before the king, and bound himself that 'in the event of the King's death he would deliver the said castles to Eleanor, his Queen, to the use of Edward, his son and heir, or of another heir begotten by the said King of the said Queen'.⁴ Edward was at that date an infant under two years of age.

In 1241 John was placed in supreme command of the Marches in the face of

the threatening posture of Dafydd, son of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, who had died on 11 April 1240. Henry III soon showed that he would not allow the son to enjoy the status of his father. The two met at Gloucester six weeks after Llywelyn's death; and although Dafydd was confirmed in possession of the territories which his father had held *de jure*, Henry insisted that the allegiance of the lesser Welsh rulers belonged exclusively to the English Crown. Later that year Henry compelled Dafydd to hand over his elder brother, Gruffudd, who was then imprisoned in London's White Tower, from which he fell to his death on St David's Day, 1244, while attempting to escape. With the possible competition of his brother thus removed, Dafydd attempted to recreate some of his old alliances; and he sought the support of the papacy for his claims. Henry retaliated with a campaign of remarkable ferocity in Gwynedd. The Pope rejected Dafydd's supplication to be a direct vassal of the papacy; and in 1246 Dafydd died.

It was against this background that John L'Estrange had been given the responsibility of safeguarding the Marches against any Welsh attack. He was virtually military governor of the whole of the north March. As part of his preparations John began building what became the castle of Dyserth near Rhuddlan, which became the chief border castle in this region until Edward built the new Rhuddlan in 1277. By his activities he laid a solid foundation for the king's power between the Conwy and the Clwyd. The king conceded lordship over these newly-conquered lands in north Wales to his son, Edward, in 1254.

John also made possible the restitution of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn to his dominions in mid-Wales. Later, John's daughter, Hawyse, married Gruffudd, whose lands lay adjacent to his own castle at Knockin. The responsibilities John held were no sinecure. The records reveal that he was frequently required to raise troops and money, and from time to time to fight. Dyserth Castle was besieged by Dafydd in 1245 and John may well have been inside it. His job was not made easier by the king's conduct of affairs. J. Beverley Smith, in his life of Llywelyn, records that in the same year, 1245, the king's 'delay in launching his offensive cost him dearly. John L'Estrange's appeal for aid became more vociferous, remonstrating with the King that £10,000 would no longer be enough to accomplish what earlier might have been done for £1,000'.⁵ He acted as the advance guard in securing the king's advance across north Wales, while forces from Ireland took Anglesey. The chronicler Matthew Paris wrote that in 1247, after the Treaty of Woodstock, 'Wales has been pulled down to nothing'.⁶

Not long after these events John ceased to hold the onerous office of Justice of Chester; and in 1248 he was relieved of some of his responsibilities for the defence of the Welsh March. He was then about 55 years old. However, he continued from time to time to serve the king. Smith describes how John was sent to Gwynedd in 1256 when it dawned on the king's council that Llywelyn was on the point of invading. The historian comments that 'though we have no means of knowing what the envoy was empowered to negotiate, it would be likely that he was sent to discuss matters of importance which the King had neglected to consider until the

5 Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 53.

6 Cited by John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 140.

eleventh hour'.⁷

The story now moves on to the remarkable children of John who all made a singular contribution to English and Welsh history, and made a mark as well in the Crusader kingdoms. In the middle years of his reign, Henry III was opposed by many of his barons under the leadership of Simon de Montfort. The growing hostility of the barons to the king, and particularly of the Marcher lords who resented the extension of royal authority, is well illustrated by the reaction of Walter de Clifford, lord of Llandovery, who was so incensed when he received a summons from Henry III that he forced the messenger to eat it, seal and all. The government of the country fell into the hands of a baronial council, led by de Montfort, which ruled in the king's name. Disorder in England meant opportunity for the Welsh. Dafydd had been succeeded by his nephews, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and his elder brother, Owain. While it was not the weakness of the English king that then provoked the Welsh rebellion, by the time its initial success was secured the baronial revolt prevented effective counter measures. In the years 1255–56 Llywelyn made himself sole ruler of Gwynedd and during the following two years swept through Wales. Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn was again driven out of most of his possessions, although with the aid of John L'Estrange and the royal forces he was able to retain possession of the castle at Welshpool and some of the adjacent lands.

For the next four years Llywelyn refrained from further campaigns and tried during a series of truces to win the king's recognition of his position and title, despite damaging incursions into Wales by major figures such as Roger Mortimer and John L'Estrange, who carried the war into parts of Powys.

In 1262 Llywelyn advanced again, this time into the lordships of Brecon and Abergavenny, and Peter de Montfort (to be distinguished from Simon), who had been sent to take custody of the lordship of Abergavenny, reported an attack on Llanfihangel Crucornau. This attack posed a threat to the castles of Gwent: Grosmont, Skenfrith, and White. De Montfort's message made clear that this threat was not just posed by an army operating in alien territory, but that 'all the men of the Welsh nation in the lordships of Brecon, Talgarth and Blaenllyfni, Elfael, Ystrad Yw, Tal-y-bont and Crughywel – in a word the Welsh to the confines of Abergavenny – had turned to Llywelyn'.⁸ One wonders whether at this moment my Prichard forebears, descendants of Rhys Goch of Ystrad Yw, were engaged in battle on the Welsh side while Ann's L'Estrange ancestors were fighting for the king. Peter de Montfort feared that the men of Abergavenny would join Llywelyn. It was a major crisis; but the Welsh prince's army was defeated in a crucial battle at the foot of the Bloreng mountain, just to the west of the town.

Although deserted by his brother Dafydd sometime in the summer of 1263, Llywelyn allied himself to Simon de Montfort at about the moment when Simon was pressing hard on Montgomery where John L'Estrange had custody of the royal lordship. John suffered a defeat. After taking a strong force into Welsh territory, his soldiers suffered heavy losses as the Welsh fell upon them when, 'laden with spoil',

7 Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 87.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

they made their return. Simon de Montfort was victorious over the royal forces at Lewes in May 1264; and in June, at Pipton near Glasbury, he recognised Llywelyn as Prince of Wales. For Simon de Montfort it was to be a short-lived triumph, because two months later on 1 August 1265 he was defeated and killed at Evesham.

Llywelyn's successes were to continue for a few more years. In 1267, through the intervention of the Papal Legate, he obtained the recognition that he wanted from Henry III in the Treaty of Montgomery, when Llywelyn was acknowledged as Prince of Wales; but he had been making powerful enemies, some within his own family. He had denied Owain, his elder brother, his rights as the first born, and his younger brothers, Dafydd and Rhodri, also had rights to a share in the patrimony. Even more serious was the enmity of the Marcher lords, such as Gilbert de Clare, with his great castle at Caerffili which Llywelyn attacked in 1271. From 1272 onwards, de Clare, who had successfully secured northern Glamorgan, and two other barons, Bohun and Mortimer, became increasingly formidable foes. In 1274 there was a dramatic addition to the ranks of the prince's enemies when his brother, Dafydd, and his chief vassal, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, fled to England, leaving behind evidence of a plot to kill him in which the L'Estrange family may well have been involved.

In England the royal power passed to Henry's son, the Lord Edward, victorious at Evesham, who ascended the throne in 1272. To a king such as Edward I the chaos in the Marches was intolerable. For him the final provocation was Llywelyn's announcement that he intended to marry Eleanor, the daughter of Simon de Montfort. Llywelyn was prevented from doing so when she was captured by the English as she crossed the channel on her way to Wales. In 1276 Edward declared Llywelyn a rebel and prepared for war.

This, then, was the stage in which the children of John L'Estrange III played their parts. John IV died accidentally in the Severn in the autumn of 1275. During the baronial wars he seems to have espoused the cause of the barons, unlike his younger brother, Hamon, who remained loyal throughout. When those wars began John was bailiff of Montgomery Castle; and a Welsh chronicle tells us that in 1263 he made a night attack but was surprised by the Welsh, who assembled in great force and slew 200 of his men, forcing him to retreat. More significant from the point of view of the family history, he made a brilliant marriage which eventually added greatly to the territorial influence of the family. Another marriage, that of his sister Hawyse to Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, had taken place in 1241; she must have had a remarkable life in the company of a Welshman whose fortunes swung back and forth like a pendulum during these years.

John's younger brother, Hamon, had been an intimate companion of Edward in his youth; he was one of those close friends whom Edward gathered around him to form the nucleus of the party which later led him to victory and thus to the throne, but during the baronial conflicts of the previous reign he had held the castles of Montgomery, Bridgnorth, and Shrewsbury on behalf of the barons and had been one of those in the first outbreak of violence when the baronial wars broke out in 1263. Although Henry III was to live for another ten years, it was in that period of conflict that Edward took the lead as the champion of royal power and began skilfully to win over to the royal cause the very Marcher lords who had triggered

it, Hamon and his brother Roger among them, and they were present with the royal forces at Lewes.

Both escaped capture at that royal defeat. A contemporary chronicle relates how Hamon, following the battle, returned to Wales and ravaged the Welsh Marches with such cruelty that the natives sought refuge in the churches. Edward was soon to escape, and in the following year (1265) he defeated de Montfort at the battle of Evesham. There are good grounds for thinking that Hamon was present at that battle. In the meantime, despite his L'Estrange upbringing and his marriage to Hawys, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn had entered into an alliance with Llywelyn. The switch seems to have been prompted by a struggle over land on the Welsh border and perhaps by the involvement of Hamon and his associates in the confused events that marked the outbreak of the civil war. In the same year as the Battle of Evesham, Llywelyn captured and destroyed the castle at Hawarden on the border between Wales and Cheshire. A royal army was sent against him under the command of Hamon L'Estrange and Maurice FitzGerald. Llywelyn put these two English knights to flight and many of their troops were killed. Two years later peace was concluded on Llywelyn's terms by the Treaty of Montgomery, and Hamon was among those present at the ford on the River Severn below the castle at Montgomery where Llywelyn did homage and swore fealty.

At this point in my book I describe the remarkable involvement of Hamon and Roger in the Crusades. They accompanied Prince Edward when, encouraged by his father, Henry III, he set out on a crusade in the summer of 1270. That is a subject for another lecture. In 1272 Edward returned to find himself king.

At this point we must introduce Roger L'Estrange, for he played a part in the war which Edward waged against Llywelyn in 1277, and a dominant part in the war of 1282 and the events which followed it. Roger, the brother of John, Hamon, and Hawyse, is referred to by contemporaries as 'of Ellesmere', his principal feudal territory. He had fought with the royal forces against de Montfort at Lewes and had made good his escape when the royal army suffered defeat. In 1277 Edward invaded Wales. One of his armies, under Roger L'Estrange and Roger Mortimer, entered southern Powys. Work was started on building a new royal castle at Builth. Another army, based on Carmarthen and Llandovery, penetrated into Cardiganshire. Meanwhile, the main army under the king approached Snowdonia along the coast of north Wales from Chester. The king requisitioned ships from the Cinque Ports which landed troops on Anglesey. The occupation of Anglesey deprived Llywelyn of his corn harvest and in the face of this disaster he had no alternative but to capitulate. The Treaty of Aberconwy confined him to Gwynedd. He retained the by now hollow title of Prince of Wales. His treacherous brother, Dafydd, who had fought on the side of the king, was installed in Denbighshire, and Roger L'Estrange's brother-in-law and sister, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and Hawyse, were restored to southern Powys. In 1278 Roger was appointed to the custody of the castle at Dinas Bran overlooking the Dee at Llangollen.

Five uneasy years followed the war of 1277. The king released Eleanor de Montfort and allowed her marriage with Llywelyn, and indeed Edward was present when the ceremony took place in Worcester Cathedral. The castle of Builth, by then in royal hands, was rebuilt as a massive fortress. Then tension rose again in

Wales; and in 1282 the first blow was struck by Dafydd, the king's former ally. The scene was the same castle of Hawarden where Hamon had received a bloody nose at the hands of Llywelyn seventeen years before. After Dafydd had attacked and captured it, Llywelyn moved south and plundered the land of the king's allies in the vale of Tywi. Edward ordered a massive retaliation. The strategy was the same as that which had proved so successful in 1277. The king requisitioned the ships of the Cinque Ports and assembled them off the north Wales coast. He advanced his northern army from Chester to the river Conwy. The central army, based on Montgomery, was commanded at first by Roger Mortimer, and the southern army, based on Carmarthen, by William de Valence, Earl of Pembroke. Roger L'Estrange was given custody of the new castle at Builth. When Roger Mortimer died in October 1282, Roger L'Estrange was appointed commander of the central army, the custody of Builth Castle passing to John Giffard. Roger's appointment indicates the trust placed in him by the king. Not only was he widely experienced, but he had the further advantage that his brother-in-law, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, was a supporter of the Crown and the most powerful lord in central Wales.

In the spring of 1282 the southern army advanced to lay siege to Castell y Bere where it was joined by a force of about 2,000 men brought from the Marches by Roger L'Estrange. The army met with initial success and in June it took Carreg Cennen. The victory was short lived. While they were returning, laden with booty, to their castle of Dynevor they were overwhelmed by the Welsh and heavily defeated. In the north in September the king took Ruthin and in the following month Denbigh fell. By the autumn the royal forces were on the east bank of the Conwy and Anglesey was occupied by troops landed from the ships from the Cinque Ports. These events drew Llywelyn back to join his brother, Dafydd, in defence of Snowdonia. Edward planned to assault Snowdonia from two directions. He had his army on the Conwy and ordered that a bridge of boats be constructed from Anglesey to the mainland so that his troops on the island under the command of Luke de Tany, a former Constable of Gascony, could launch an attack on the flank. On 6 November, without orders from the king, de Tany with a body of horse and foot crossed the bridge of boats only to be attacked by a strong Welsh force. In the struggle that followed the bridge of boats collapsed and de Tany and many of his knights were drowned.

Llywelyn then took the opportunity to lead an army to mid-Wales. A powerful tradition in Wales is that he was lured there by false promises of support. In a message to the king sent in the first week of December 1282 Roger L'Estrange first reported that the enemy were 'beyond Berwyn and beyond Merugge, which mountains are so boggy and inhospitable that no army can enter them without putting your men in great danger'; but then at the end added 'the night this letter was written news reached me that Llywelyn had descended into the land of the Lord Gruffudd and therefore I am going there'. Smith gives us a detailed account of Roger's role at this critical moment:

He had gathered a mighty force in the vicinity of Builth by the time the prince had arrived there. In two letters written [in Norman French] to Edward, L'Estrange reveals a detailed knowledge of the

whereabouts of Llywelyn's forces and of the prince himself [...] This may be no more than good evidence of the competence of a field commander, but L'Estrange had something of the inner knowledge of the Welsh nation [...] Certainly, there can be no doubt of the key role that he played in the death of the prince [...] Undoubtedly the person mainly responsible for the deployment of the forces which confronted Llywelyn before Builth, one with close links with the soldiers most involved in the action in which the prince was killed, and the person who sent the king the crucial communiqué from the battlefield, Roger L'Estrange may have brought to his task more than the qualities of an astute military commander [...] Llywelyn appears to have led a large army to the lordship of Builth. And, whatever brought them to the area – good intelligence on the part of the king's commanders or something much more intriguing – there to meet him were substantial forces [...] The military might of the whole march from Oswestry to Hereford gathered together at the place where Llywelyn was to fall.⁹

The stage was set for what for the Welsh was to be an historic tragedy.

Having reached the neighbourhood of Builth on 11 December 1282, Llywelyn occupied the high ground of Llanganten just north of the Irfon, which joins the Wye at Builth. Roger L'Estrange, who could rely on the castle of Builth as his base, moved his forces along the south bank of the Irfon until later in the day the two armies were facing each other. According to the chronicler, Walter of Gisborough, between them the river was passable by a bridge, but Smith doubts that it existed. If it did, it was in the hands of the Welsh and the river was in flood; but a local man told L'Estrange of a ford further upstream where his troops could cross. As dusk was falling a detachment, having crossed the ford, fell upon the flank of the Welsh army. Archers placed among the heavy cavalry caused havoc among the Welsh. This is the first example of the use of archers in open fighting. When the cavalry rode down the Welsh on the higher ground, Llywelyn's forces, armed only with spears, broke and fled.

While these events were unfolding, Llywelyn was not with the main body of his troops. It has been suggested that he may have been seeking to make contact with those forces on the royal side who had promised him support. Whatever the reason, one Stephen de Frankton, a tenant of L'Estrange at Ellesmere, came upon the prince with a small group of horsemen and, in a brief skirmish, drove his lance through him. Llywelyn, dying, asked for a priest, but no priest came. Frankton, unaware of the identity of the horseman whom he had slain, rode off. When the prince was recognised, his head was cut off and sent to the king at Rhuddlan, after which it was displayed in the Tower of London. Maud, the wife of John Giffard, who held the castle at Builth, was the grand-daughter of Llywelyn the Great, and her intercession with Archbishop Peckham may have been the cause of Llywelyn's body being taken to Abbey Cwm Hir for burial.

9 Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 556–61.

After the historic skirmish, Roger sent his second message to the king: 'Know, sire, that the good men whom you placed under my command fought with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in the land of Builth on Friday next after the feast of St Nicholas and that Gruffudd is dead, his army broken and the flower of his men killed, as the bearer of this letter will tell you, and believe what he tells you as coming from me.' A letter written by Stephen of St George, a royal clerk who later, in 1283, became Edward's proctor at the Papal Court, is the most nearly contemporary document, other than Roger's letters, relating to Llywelyn's death. The letter states that news of Llywelyn's death reached Rome on 22 January 1283, only about five weeks after it had first reached the king at Rhuddlan, and commented, 'It would be a wonderful thing, and certainly a just one, if, as is commonly reported, a knight estranged by name yet close in loyalty should have exacted the extreme penalty from the rebel and traitor Llywelyn who by the error of his infidelity is estranged indeed.' That play on words suggests that it may have been L'Estrange who struck off the head of the dead Prince, but other evidence indicates that it was not so. Smith produces a version based on a chronicle suggesting that it was in fact Sir Robert Body who was responsible, but he, too, was closely associated with Roger L'Estrange. We cannot be certain whether it was Stephen de Frankton or Robert Body; but it does not much matter. The historic fact is that on that day Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was killed and his death brought to an end the Welsh 'Age of the Princes'. The sense of Welsh loss was profound and long lasting.

Roger L'Estrange played a central role in the subsequent pacification of Wales and the capture of Llywelyn's brother, Dafydd, who was not mourned. In the first war he had conspired and fought against his brother and in the second, after he had received some reward from the king, he had fought with his brother against Edward.

Roger L'Estrange was eventually appointed to the onerous, but important, position of Justice of the Forest south of the Trent, with jurisdiction over the whole of southern England. Before then he still had work to do in Wales. In 1287 and in 1294 Roger was involved in putting down Welsh uprisings. In 1295 he was summoned to Parliament, and thereafter was regularly summoned as a baron. With his nephews, John of Knockin and Fulk of Blackmere, he was one of those who sealed the document sent to the Pope in 1301 which asserted the supremacy of the Crown of England over Scotland. The seals of those three L'Estrange barons survive from the document.

Roger L'Estrange left no legitimate heirs. His nephew John V accompanied Edward in the Scottish wars and became the first Lord Strange of Knockin. He was active, but played a less prominent part in the Welsh wars than did his uncle. It seems clear that, like other Marcher lords, the L'Estranges often played a part somewhat beyond their resources and accumulated substantial debts. Professor Tout has suggested that this may be the reason why the branches of the family in the Marches became extinct or were absorbed into other great baronial families, while the Norfolk branch, with fewer demands on them, prospered down into the

twentieth century.¹⁰ The Black Death may also have played a part. John le Strange of Whitchurch died on 20 August 1349. He left three sons, Fulk, Humphrey, and John the younger, of whom Fulk as eldest was heir. By the time the inquest was held on 30 August, Fulk had already been dead two days. Before the inquisition could be held on Fulk's estate, Humphrey too was dead. John, the third brother, survived but inherited a shattered estate.

The rough river down which we have been travelling with the L'Estranges turns now to Norfolk and from there our branch in the 1500s moves to Ireland where it flowed on the whole more calmly down to modern times. But I finish with a curious twist in the tale. Elizabeth, the sister of John, Hamon, and Eubolo, was married when she was only six years old to Gruffudd ap Madog, the grandfather of Owain Glyndŵr. John V was the guardian of Gruffudd during his minority and became keeper of his son-in-law's lands, which in due course devolved on Owain. We thus find, only four generations after the death of Llywelyn the Last at the hands of Roger L'Estrange, the final great Welsh revolt taking place under the leadership of a man whose grandmother was a L'Estrange.

10 T. F. Tout's suggestion is referenced in Hamon Le Strange, *Le Strange Records: A Chronicle of the Early Le Stranges of Norfolk and the March of Wales, AD 1100–1310* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1916), p. 365.