

the Nannau family papers which refers to this arbitration. In it Robert ap Rhys ap Howel Vaughan and Howel ap Rhys ap Howel are bound in a sum of £40 to obey the award of Howel ap Rhys ap Howel Vychan and Griffith ap Sienkyn ap Rhys, arbitrators chosen on the part of Robert and Elin, his wife, and Howel ap Jenkyn ap Iorwerth and Jehn ap Rhys ap Gruffydd ap Aron on the part of Dafydd. They had been chosen to arbitrate "in speciall of for and upon the ryght title and possession of all such mesoz londoz tenementoz toftes medows Woddes and pastures with thur appurtennee in the Shire of Merioneth late in the seosyn and possession of Meirik Vichan."¹ This, incidentally, is the first document in the Nannau collection of which at least a part (in this case the obligation) is written in English. According to Robert Vaughan, Hywel ap Gruffydd Derwas was to be the umpire and "they made an end between them"² which lasted till 1541/2.

N.6. cont. from previous page.

.....ap Howel of Talhenbont - Griffith P.....;
his marriage is not recorded, however.

1. Nannau MS. 16.

2. R. Vaughan, op.cit. P.133.

At that time, according to Robert Vaughan, "there fell a difference" between Rees Wynne, son of the above named Robert ap Rhys, and "old Griffith Nanney", known as Gruffydd Wyn ap Hywel ap Dafydd ap Meurig. This renewed dispute was likewise referred to arbitration - that of Hugh ap David ap Einion of Cwmnancol, get.ⁿ, for Rees Wynne and Griffith ap William ap Rees ap Ieuan ap David of Bolgelly, get., for Gruffydd Wyn. They awarded that if Rees Wynne did not receive the lands called Gwafyehan and three shillings and four pence rent from another tenant^{em} called Y Kaeglas in the parish of Llanfair, together with Hendre Verwydd in Llanbedr, then he was to have a tenement in Nannau called Buarth y Rec, to him and his heirs forever, "the which tenement from that tyme hitherto is held by the heirs of Gwaun-Enion, the posterity of Rees Wynne." Robert Vaughan adds that "a coppice whereof is yet reserved amongst the writings at Nanney."¹.

This settlement is not preserved among the extant

1. R. Vaughan, op.cit. P.133.

Nannau deeds. But there can be no reasonable doubt as to the veracity of Robert Vaughan's account. He is obviously using a document containing the details of the past history of the dispute and the award now given. The past history is, indeed, authenticated by the bond referred to above.

Another interesting document¹ of this period is a bill presented at the Great Sessions held at Caernarvon before William Stanley, knight, King's chamberlain and Prince's Justice in North Wales, on the Monday following the feast of All Saints, 1490, by Dafydd ap Meurig Vychan. It is a petition in which Dafydd prays the Prince's pardon for acquiring twenty acres of arable, fourteen acres of pasture, eight acres of meadow, and three acres of underwood, with their appurtenances, in the township of Llwyngwrl, without first having obtained the Prince's licence. The land had been acquired of David ap Hywel ap Ithel, another free tenant of the Prince. The petition is granted on payment of a fine of ten shillings.

1. Nannau, MS.17.

terms of this will of 1494-5. The will also mentions several "custodes" of the testator's cattle, presumably either professional cowherds or tenants on his estates to whom were entrusted the charge of these animals, upon certain specified conditions. This will shows, moreover, that "gavelkind" was dead - at least as far as the family at Nannau was concerned, although a contributory factor may have been the existence of but one male heir. It does not deal with the subdivision of land, but with the sharing of cash and cattle. The actual estate must have been classed with those goods, movable and immovable, not granted to the daughters, which formed Hywel's portion of the inheritance.

Having bequeathed his soul to God and his body to be buried in Cymer Abbey, Dafydd then turns to more temporal matters - the actual bequests. First comes a series of bequests to "outsiders", who are not members of the family. He bequeathes thirteen shillings and fourpence to the Abbot and convent of Cymer for ten oblations, and the same sum to his "curator", John ap Howel ap Ethel. He gives six shillings and eight pence towards the construction of Llanfachreth Church, ten

shillings towards the buildings of Cymer Ab^bey, and four nobles for the construction of St. Mary's Church in Dolgelley. He leaves ten shillings to the friars of Bangor, ten shillings to the friars at Llanfaes, six shillings and eight pence towards glazing the windows of the chapel of the Knights of St. John at Gwanas, and £10 for the celebration of masses for his soul for the space of two years. He bequeathes six shillings and eightpence towards the repair of the bridge at Edyrn and four marks to a Ieuan ap Rynallt.

Then come the family bequests. He provides first for his daughters, of whom he has six. First he leaves to Angharad¹ all the grain within the bounds of his estates, and five marks for the settlement of his debts. This bequest supports the inference from Tudur Aled's "cywydd" that Meurig and Dafydd died fairly soon after one another, leaving Hywel, Dafydd's son, a minor.² Surely the settlement of his debts would have been put in the hands of his son, had he been of age. He leaves to this daughter, moreover, all the beasts which are in the custody of David Lloyd ap Ieuan ap Llewelyn ap Cadwgan

1. Married John ap Rhys, of Peniarth - Griffith, P.200.

2. E.D. Jones, op.cit. P.10. Supra, P.94...

and Llewelyn Bach, except for those which he gives to his son Hywel and all his other daughters. To another daughter, Elen Lloyd, he bequeathes sixty beasts, now in the charge of Robert ap Maredudd, and five which are in the custody of a certain Elen verch Robert ap David. Another daughter, Catherine, receives forty seven beasts, which are in the custody of the same Robert ap Maredudd, six in the custody of Hywel ap David ap Huw, ten in the charge of Hywel ap Dyo ap Ieuan ap Ethel, and sixteen which are held by Gwenhwyfar verch Jeuan ap Guttyn. He bequeathes forty beasts, now in the custody of Ieuan ap David ap Ieuan Goch, to his daughter Marie. Sixteen beasts, now in the custody of Gruffith ap Euer ap Howel, are granted to another daughter, Elizabeth, together with three in the charge of Guttyn Coch, and four held by Dafydd ap Llewelyn ap Atha. Finally he leaves sixteen beasts, now in the custody of Guttonyn ap Ieuan Bul, to his youngest daughter, Lowre. ~~The rest of his goods, both~~ movable and immovable, he bequeathes to Hywel ap Dafydd, his son.

This is obviously the will of a comparatively wealthy man, and adds point to the assertion that

"David ap Meuric Vychan of Nanney was the representative, in his day, of probably the greatest family in the county of Merioneth."¹ An analysis of the financial bequests reveals a total of £16. 18. --, plus £3. 6. 8. for payment of debts, plus four nobles. The total number of cattle bequeathed in the will cannot be clearly ascertained. We can, however, get some idea of the number of cattle possessed by Dafydd ap Meurig on his death. The actual numbers of cattle given to the five younger daughters was two hundred and twenty three. To this number must be added all the beasts in the custody of Dafydd Lloyd ap Ieuan ap Llewelyn ap Cadwgan and Llewelyn Bach, which were bequeathed to the eldest daughter Angharad, as well as those (if any) granted to the son, Hywel, as his part of the inheritance, as the "*residuum vero omnium bonorum meorum superius non legatorum, tam mobilium quam immobilium.*" The number of cattle bequeathed may very well have amounted, therefore, to three hundred head, if not more. We must add to this total whatever amount of grain could be grown in such a hilly district, the house at Nannau with all its appurtenances, as well

1. W.W.E.W., introd. to Will, op.cit. P.143.

as the complete landed estate. It is no matter for wonder, therefore, that this family was able to purchase the new lands which came on to the market and to emerge eventually among the foremost of the Merionethshire gentry.

Dafydd's son Hywel was, as we have seen,¹ probably a minor on the death of his father in 1494/5. The "cywydd" by Tudur Aled which supports this supposition contains the following lines:

"Iechyd ffriw wychder Ffrainc,
 esgwier t'wysog ieuan,
 hwy na dyn fo henw d'wyneb
 Huw Nannau, oes hwy na neb."²

These lines suggest that Hywel (alias Huw) was at some time an esquire to Prince Henry, later King Henry VIII. It also suggests that he was the first to be called Nannau, although the surname did not come into general use until the time of his son, Gruffydd Wyn,³ and was

1. Supra, P.94..

2. E.D.Jones, op.cit. P.10.

3. Hywel married twice. By his first wife Elin, daughter of Robert Salesbury of Lleweni, he had a son - Gruffydd Wyn; by his second wife, Lowry, daughter of William ap Gruffydd ap Ieuan of Rhiwgoch, he had three sons - Richard Nanney, David Lloyd and Lewis Gwyn -Griffith
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not universally used until his grandson's time.

Hywel is a very shadowy figure. Although he lived at a momentous time in the political life of his country (fl. 1500 - 1540), we do not find him connected with its events in any way. We do find him holding office in his county in 1512/3, as a farmer of the mills of Llanfachreth and Llanegryn¹, in the first extant Merioneth Account of the new reign, and he continued to hold the same office for the rest of his life.² Dafydd ap Meurig's defection (if any) has been forgotten. There is no other record of Hywel's activities in the sphere of politics or administration. There is abundant evidence, however, of his activities in another direction. Between 1500 when Hywel's name first appears in a document³ and 1540, when his name last appears⁴, he was busily engaged in buying more and more land. His lifetime was a crucial period in the family's history, for it saw the culmination of his ancestors' efforts in

1. P.R.O. Min. Acc. SO6/5160/Henry VIII.

2. SO6/5161 - SO6/5223 Henry VIII.

3. Nannau MS. 20; Nannau MS. 914.

4. Nannau MS. 47.

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this sphere and the emergence of the Nanneys as proprietors of a "modern" consolidated estate.^{1.}

The only other matters worthy of note are, first, a document dated the 10th. May 1528 in which Hywel conveys several of his lands and tenements in the townships of Nannau and Brithdir to Lewis Gwyn, one of his younger sons.^{2.} Why he should do this is not clear, as the heir apparent was Gruffydd Wyn. A possible explanation may be that Lewis Gwyn was thus given his share in the inheritance twelve years before his father's death. Six of the seven parcels of land mentioned are in Brithdir, and only one is in Nannau.

Another noteworthy fact is the first appearance of Hywel's son and heir, Gruffydd Wyn, in a document dated the 2nd. March 1536, whereby he buys a tenement in Garthmaelan.^{3.} It would seem to have been the custom

1. Vide Infra, PP. 226-9, Ch. 4.

2. Nannau MS.35. Seven parcels of land were thus transferred - Ruyfelen in Nannau, Dolserre in Brithdir, Tyddyn y Llwyndech (?), another tenement (indecipherable), Llety Rys, Tyddyn Mawr, and Maes y Kambren and Caer Tyddyn, all in Brithdir.

3. Nannau, MS.39.

for the heir apparent, when he came of age, to live during his father's lifetime at Garthmaelan, near Dolgelley. Gruffydd Wyn here buys a tenement in that township, and his grandson Gruffydd Nanney, during his father's lifetime, definitely lived at Garthmaelan and was described in the various deeds, and other documents, as Gruffydd Nanney of Garthmaelan or Maelan.^{1.}

The other important fact to be noticed is the description of Hywel, in a bond dated 16th. September 1538, as a "generos".^{2.} He was never described again as a gentleman, however, nor was his son, Gruffydd Wyn classed as such until 1547.^{3.} The year 1540, the presumed time of Hywel's death, is nevertheless, an important date. By the end of Hywel's life the Nannau surname had appeared,^{4.} Hywel could be described as a "gent", and the family estates had been expanded and consolidated.

1. e.g. Appendix, *Infra*, PP.303,333.

2. Nannau MS. 63.

3. Nannau MS. 59.

4. It should be noticed that the surname "Nanney" does not appear in a document until 1549 - Nannau MS.61.

C H A P T E R I V .

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ESTATE, c.1450 - c.1540.

"You've heard that Benjy has gone courting, sir? Benjy will be married when the spring comes; and in the fall there will be a child, and in the next summer another child. The land doesn't stretch, sir. There won't be enough."

John Steinbeck,

"To A God Unknown."

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The period dealt with in the preceding chapter witnessed the expansion of the original settlement at Nannau into an extensive and consolidated "modern" farm. We have seen¹. that some time between the tenth and twelfth centuries a settlement was made at Nannau, as happened throughout Wales at this time, reflecting a general movement away from "the scratch agriculture and semi-nomadic existence of the dark ages,"². towards a more stable economy. This was the economy of the "gwely". The "gwely" has been defined as "an association of men descended from, or believing themselves to be descended from, a common ancestor in the male line, banded together for mutual protection, the mutual enjoyment of common property, flocks etc., each person within it owing to every other and receiving from every other mutual support."³. We have seen also that the "gwely" had both a personal and a territorial structure, and that eventually the personal elements disappeared, leaving only a territorial shell.⁴.

1. Supra, Ch. 1., P. 17.

2. T. Jones Pierce, "Clenennau Letters and Papers" Part. 1., Introduction P. vii.

3. T. P. Ellis, "Welsh Tribal Law and Custom in the Middle Ages.", Vol. 1. P. 226.

4. Supra. Ch. 3. P. 84 ; T. Jones Pierce, "Some Tendencies in the Agrarian History of Caernarvonshire during the later Middle Ages", Caerns. Hist. Soc. Trans. 1939. P. 30.

This had happened in the township of Nannau by 1420 when the survey of Merioneth was made. From this territorial element was to emerge a consolidated farm, the basis of the estate of a Tudor "gentry" family. A study of the activities of the family at Nannau during this period affords a glimpse of the emergence of these estates out of the tribal "gwely".

There was a natural antipathy between the old tribal system and the new feudalism which was finally clamped on Wales by the English conquerors. This resulted in the decay of the tribal system, for, above all, as one authority has put it, "Arglwyddiaeth yr arglwydd a deiliadaeth y deiliad oedd safonau economaidd y gyfundrefn newydd."¹ The influence of the conquest on the decay of tribalism was immense. The old Welsh Princes had, indeed, built up a quasi-feudal state in the thirteenth century.² The conquest saw the establishment of feudalism in its entirety.

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1. Ben Bowen Thomas, "Braslun o Hanes Economaidd Cymru". P.41.
 2. Vide T. Jones Pierce, "The Age of the Princes" in "The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism", PP.42-59.

This, together with the extensive nature of the possessions of the new lords in England as well as in Wales, the practice of farming taxes and offices, combined with the general growth of commerce and trade to transform the old tribal society.^{1.}

Perhaps the most important factor in this era of change was the establishment of a money economy. The Welsh had become familiar before the Conquest with the use of money, and there had been some progress in the commutation of customary dues and services. Soon after 1284 these tendencies were accelerated by direct administrative action, leading to a sudden demand for increased payments in cash. The strain thus caused must have been great, and was aggravated by the Plague of 1349-50 and the Glyndŵr Rebellion. The result was the depopulation and impoverishment of the countryside, and the dislocation of the machinery of finance. Above all, these factors "hastened on the transition from medieval to modern agrarian conditions."^{2.}

1. B.B. Thomas, 'op.cit. FP.40-45.

2. T.Jones Pierce, "Tendencies in the Agrarian History of Caernarvonshire during the later Middle Ages." P.19.

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This development "assumed almost a revolutionary course during the last century of the middle ages."¹ This is the period when the foundations of the Nannau estate were secured, as were those, for example, of the Maurices of Clenennau. The fortunes of the Nanneys were won in much the same manner.² While there was a general tendency in the later middle ages towards the transformation of the "gwely" into a modern freehold estate, the contributing factors varied in kind and in degree in different districts. In some areas, for example, the main factor was the forfeiture of land to the state, in others the wealth of the garrison families, and elsewhere the power of certain native families endowed before the Conquest with non-tribal lands. Another and more natural factor - that which prevailed at Nannau as at Clenennau - was the enterprise of a humbler tribal family in raising itself above its neighbours to emerge out of the "gwely" as one of the "gentry" of Tudor Wales.

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1. T. Jones Pierce, "Tendencies in the Agrarian History of Caernarvonshire during the Later Middle Ages." P. 19.
 2. T. Jones Pierce, "Clenennau Letters and Papers" Introduction, P. viii.

More than mere enterprise was needed, however. A certain amount of good fortune was necessary, for example. We have also seen how individual members of this family at Nannau had, since the time of Ynyr Vychan, held minor offices in the county administration - they had served in the office of rhaglaw and rhingyll, as woodwards, and as farmers of various other offices. All these offices had their increments.¹ There was, indeed, a magnificent opportunity created by the needs of the new administration for servants and officers. Here was an opportunity (of which the descendants of Ynyr Vychan took full advantage) to establish oneself and one's family^{on} a firm footing and to raise one's social status.

The Nannau pedigree shows, moreover, that "Gavelkind", the curse of Wales, did not "intoe soe little p'tes..... by many discents chopp our inheritance beinge at first lardge."²

1. Vide W.H. Waters, "The Edwardian Settlement of North Wales", P.111, for the perquisites of the offices of rhaglaw, rhingyll and woodward.

2. Sir John Wynn, "History of the Gwydir Family", P.35.

They were indeed favoured by fate. Robert Vaughan states that Meurig Llwyd had four sons, who shared the patrimony.¹ From the eldest of these, Hywel Sele, descended the family at Nannau. He died c. 1402, and his posterity was continued in a single main line in the persons of Meurig Vychan, his son Dafydd, and grandson, Hywel. Hywel Sele's portion of the "gwely" inheritance was thus handed down intact during these three important generations.

If "gavelkind" did not affect this family, it ruined others. Most tribal families in the fourteenth century began the struggle for survival, in a society "red in tooth and claw" as a result of the disintegration of the "gwely", with comparatively small shares in tribal land. The operation of "gavelkind" consequently led in course of time to considerable morcellation. Families, like that at Nannau, who were fortunate and immune from this subdivision, who had slightly greater wealth and influence - presumably as a result of their co-operation with and office holding under the English administration - were able

1. R. Vaughan, "Notes on the House of Nannau", Arch. Camb. 1863, P.131.

to purchase the lands of their less fortunate neighbours and concentrate what had been tribal land into a "modern" consolidated estate.

Alienation was now a common phenomenon in the Welsh countryside. But even at the turn of the fifteenth century transfers of property were still effected - in some places - by peculiarly Welsh legal methods. One document in the Nannau collection¹, dated 1505, illustrates the acquisition of lands by the process known as "tir prid". This was "a form of conditional alienation in which the purchaser was placed theoretically in the position of perpetual mortgagor."² In the words of George Owen of Henllys, "The use was allso among the Clerkes of that age in old tyme upon morgaging of land to make absolute estates by ffeofment without anie condition of redempcion in the deedes, and to have beside a paire of Indentures, mencioning the morgage, or most comonlie an obligation from the morgagee to the morgagor for redempcion of the landes."³

1. Nannau, MS.22.

2. T.Jones Pierce, "Clenennau Letters and Papers", Introduction, P.x.

3. George Owen, "The Description of Pembrokeshire" ed. Henry Owen, Part. 1. PP.181, 182, n.1.

Hywel ap Dafydd ap Meurig, a free tenant in Nannau, acquired for the appreciable sum of £50., from Tudur Vychan ap Gruffydd ap Hoell, another free tenant, all the latter's messuages, lands, tenements, meadows and pastures in Nannau, namely Bwlch y Rhos Wen, Penrhos Ddu and Tyddyn John ap Meredydd to be held as "tir prid" for an initial term of four years and subsequently for quadrennial periods until the property had been redeemed by the alienor and his heirs.^{1.}

The peak of this process of expansion was reached in the fifteenth century, the period when the Maurices were buying lands in South Caernarvonshire, Bartholomew de Bolde and his fellow burgesses were accumulating tribal lands in the Conway Valley, as also were certain native freeholders^{2.}, and when Meurig Vychan, Dafydd and Hywel were extending their patrimony in Nannau and the surrounding townships.

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1. Vide T. Jones Pierce, "Tendencies in the Agrarian History of Caernarvonshire in the Later Middle Ages." P.31, for a further example and discussion of "tir prid"; c.f. Arch. Camb. 1880, P.149.
 2. T. Jones Pierce, "The Gafael in Bangor MS.1939", Cymmr. Trans. 1942, P.160.

We cannot discover from the extant evidence the exact wealth of the family or even the actual bounds of the estate in its varying stages during this period. We have seen, from a study of Dafydd ap Meurig's will¹, that this was a comparatively wealthy family. We estimated the number of cattle to be approximately three hundred head. This is significant, for the fifteenth century saw a vast increase in the number of cattle raised in Wales, consonant with the increased demands of England for meat, skins, leather and wool.² The Nannau family seem to have played their part in coping with this demand. Their wealth was also shown by their generosity and hospitality to the bards.³ The combined chorus of praise for their lavish treatment at Nannau is itself almost sufficient evidence of the family's financial success.

This success was based above all on land. They obviously needed a great deal of land to feed three hundred head of cattle.

1. Supra, Ch.3. PP.104-9.

2. B.B. Thomas, op.cit. PP.61-62.

3. Supra, Ch. 3. P.93.

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We have seen that the system employed was to share out the cattle among several "custodes", presumably, cow-herds or tenants.¹ It was essential that they should take advantage of the new opportunities for buying more and more land. From deeds in the Nannau collection we can see them doing this, extending their estates into several neighbouring townships and consolidating their central demesne by buying lands in Nannau itself.

The first document which concerns this family is a lease of 1436, whereby Meurig Vychan, a free tenant, obtains Tyddyn yn y Fron Goch in the township of Llwyngwrl from Llewelyn ap Evan ap Owain, another free tenant, for four years at an annual rent of twenty shillings.² The first recorded purchase of lands, this time in the township of Garthgynfawr, by Meurig Vychan, was in 1451, when he bought two tenements - Tyddyn yr Euruth and Tyddyn Dewisbren - from his uncle Gruffydd Derwas for forty shillings.³ Both are stated to be free tenants.

For the next hundred years we can see the Nannau family buying lands in the various townships, at a time when the market in land was expanding most rapidly.

1. Supra, Ch. 3., P. 105.

2. Nannau MS.2.

3. Nannau MS.9.

This was the period when most of the future "gentry" families of Wales were busily engaged in the same occupation. Professor Jones Pierce has described in some detail, the rise of a similar type of family - the Maurices of Clenennau - and has traced the rise of Clenennau as shown by various deeds between 1487 and 1545.¹ The period coincides roughly with that of Nannau's rise. Lands must, of course, have been acquired before 1451, and expansion undoubtedly continued to a lesser degree, after 1540. But the period 1451 - 1540 is by far the most important in the growth of the estate, and coincided with equally important periods in the fortunes of the other "gentry" families of Wales. The number of documents relevant to the rise of Clennannau at this period is roughly a hundred;² those in the Nannau collection are far fewer in number. Nevertheless, they provide striking testimony of the diligence and enterprise of Meurig Vychan, Dafydd and Hywel. We can follow, through these deeds, their activities in adding whenever and wherever they could to the core of their estates at Nannau.

1. T. Jones Pierce, "Clenennau Letters and Papers," Introduction, P.xiii.

2. *ibid*, P.xiv.

In 1453 Meurig Vychan paid the not inconsiderable sum of ten marks - £6. 13. 4d. - for five tenements in Talygarreg.¹ In 1455 Meurig bought lands from Vivian Palgone, a burgess of Harlech.² This Palgone sold to Meurig Vychan, a free tenant, all his lands and tenements³ in the township of Penrhyndeudraeth and one tenement in Llanfihangel, for thirteen shillings and fourpence.

And so the story continues. In 1457 Meurig Vychan paid £3. 3. 4d. for a tenement called Gwethallion in Llwyngwril.⁴ In the same year he paid twenty shillings for a tenement in Penrhyndeudraeth⁵ and in 1460 he paid £4. -. -. for various lands and tenements within the township of Nannau itself.⁶ This was the last of Meurig's transactions.

1. Nannau, MS.10.

2. Nannau, MS.11.

3. There are several such deeds relating to the sale of property in general terms in the Nannau MSS., as in the Clonennan deeds - Vide T. Jones Pierce, "Clonennan Letters and Papers," Introduction, P.xv.

4. Nannau, MS.6.

5. Nannau, MS.12.

6. Nannau, MS.13.

Meurig's son, Dafydd, bought two tenements in Migneint for five pounds in 1480¹ and in 1490 he encroached on Crown lands in Llwyngwrl². Those are the only references to Dafydd's activities in this sphere, for he seems to have died soon after his father.³

There is ample evidence of the work of Dafydd's son Hywel in acquiring lands. In 1500 he leased Bryn y llyn and Cwmcedwyn from Gruffydd, Abbot of Cymer, on an eighty years lease, at an annual rent of £1. 6. 8d.⁴ The purchase by "tir prid" in 1505 referred to above⁵ involved by far the largest sum of money of all these transactions. The land concerned must have been extensive for £50. was a sizeable sum to pay at this period for three properties. In 1507 Hywel obtained lands in Nannau as a gift from Evan ap Llewelyn ap Ynyr of Nannau, his kinsman.⁶

1. Nannau, MS. 14.

2. Nannau, MS. 17.

3. Vide Supra, Ch. 3. P. 14.

4. Nannau, MS. 914.

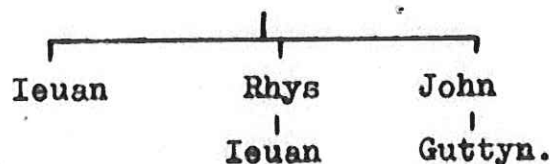
5. Vide Supra, P. 121; Nannau MS. 22.

6. Nannau, MS. 25.

In 1511 he bought a tenement in Llwyngwrl.^{1.}

In 1513 Ieuan ap Rees ap Gruffydd ap David, Ieuan ap Gruffydd ap David, and Guttyn ap John ap Gruffydd ap David, quitclaimed to Hywel all their right and title to the property inherited from Gruffydd ap David in the townships of Garthmaelan and Dyffrydan.^{2.} This obviously refers to the sale of tribal lands by the descendants of a certain Gruffydd ap David. The relationship of the vendors is, it appears, as follows:

David ap Gruffydd



A further quitclaim, dated 10th. August, 1514, granted him the right and title of Hywel ap Ieuan ap Hywel, a free tenant, to two messuages and lands in Nannau.^{3.} Another, dated 28th. December, 1516, obtained for Hywel all the right and title of Iwan ap Howel ap Gwenllïan, a free tenant of Nannau, to his lands and tenements in the said township.^{4.}

1. N.A.W., Peniarth Deeds, 1940. 1667.

2. Nannau, MS. 26.

3. Nannau, MS. 28.

4. Nannau, MS. 30.

The wording of a deed dated at Nannau the 10th. of July 1523 illustrates the nature of these purchases. By this document, Thomas ap Mores ap Gruffydd ap Meuric, a free tenant of the King in the township of Nannau, conveyed to Hywel ap Dafydd ap Meuric Vychan his right and title to all the lands and tenements in Nannau which belonged by descent to Gruffydd ap Meuric ap Meredith, namely, two tenements called Tyddyn y Gors Garneth and Buarth y Rec.¹ Hywel was buying up tribal lands, the patrimony of his less fortunate neighbours, who were themselves free tenants, and who were now forced by some unknown circumstance to sell the whole or part of their inheritance and sink eventually to the level of landless labourers and leasehold tenants.

In 1536 Gruffydd Wyn figured in a transaction whereby Hywel ap Rees ap David ap Iwan Bach, a freetenant, conveyed to him a tenement in Garthmaelan.² There is one other transaction in which Hywel ap Dafydd ap Meurig is concerned, but it bears no date. It has been provisionally included under 1540 - the presumed date of Hywel's death.

1. Nannau, MS. 33.

2. Nannau, MS. 39.

In it Ieuan ap Howel ap Ieuan ap William, a free tenant in the township of Dyffrydan, conveyed to Hywel ap Dafydd ap Meurig, another free tenant, all his messuages and closes, with their appurtenances, in Dyffrydan and Brithdir.^{1.}

An attempt has been made in the chart on P..... to show chronologically the purchases and leases obtained by the Nanneys from 1432 to 1540, and also to show the townships in which these lands lay.

We cannot hope to make any reconstruction of the estate as it stood in 1540, owing to the paucity of the surviving evidence. One can only refer the reader to Professor Jones Pierce's analysis of a similar estate in 1551 - that of the Maurices of Clenennau. It is significant that the important dates in the histories of both families coincide. The period of greatest expansion at Nannau was between 1450 and 1540.

1. Nannau, MS. 45.

At Clenennau it was between 1487 and 1545.¹ The first "major" member of the family at Clenennau to emerge among the foremost of the "gentry" of South Caernarvonshire was William Maurice, and he entered upon his estate in 1575.² At Nannau, Hugh Nanney Hên entered into possession of the family estates in 1574.³ William Maurice first held the office of sheriff in Caernarvonshire in 1581.⁴ Hugh Nanney Hên held the office of sheriff of Merionethshire in 1586.⁵ We know that the first occasion on which a member of the family at Nannau was referred to as a "gent." was in 1538 and that the Nanney surname had appeared by the end of Hywel ap Dafydd ap Meurig's life, (c.1540)⁶.

As for the estate, we must assume that like that at Clenennau, it included scattered fragments of varying size, several larger tenements and the demesne lands centred around the hall at Nannau.

1. T.Jones Pierce, "Clenennau Letters and Papers", Introduction, P.xiii.

2. *ibid.* P.xvii.

3. Nannau, MSS. 111,112.

4. T. Jones Pierce, *op.cit.*, P.xviii.

5. P.R.O. List of Sheriffs, P.261.

6. *Supra*, Ch. 3. PP.109,112.

These lands must have been contiguous with the estates of other squires, and were undoubtedly intermingled with the lands of smaller freeholders. To take but one instance at random, we know that there were lands in Nannau itself which had not yet been acquired by the Nanneys. In 1572, for example, Griffith ap Morris ap Gwillim conveyed to Gruffydd Nanney and Hugh Nanney his heir, all his right, title and interest in lands in the township of Nannau.¹ Further, in 1576, in a deed of exchange dated 6th. May, Rhys Hughes of Maesypany granted Bron Einion in Nannau to Hugh Nanney Hen, in return for Tyddyn y Gors and Tyddyn y Mab Tew in Llwyngwril.²

A feature which is common to the development of both the Nannau and the Clenennau estates is the survival of considerable numbers of smaller freeholders, in the various townships, whose lands had not yet been amalgamated with the larger estates. This reflects a general trend of events at this time. Professor Jones Pierce mentions a slowing down, during the second half of the sixteenth century, in the pace at which the surface pattern of Penyfed and Pennant had been changing

1. Nannau, MS. 106.

2. Nannau, MS. 115.

during the past hundred years, as if a more solid resistance on the part of the smaller freeholders was halting the pressure being exerted by their stronger neighbours.^{1.}

The same phenomenon may be observed elsewhere at this period.^{2.} It may be observed at Nannau, for during the lifetime of Gruffydd Wyn, the son of Hywel ap Dafydd ap Meurig, who flourished from 1536 to 1573, very few purchases of land were made. In 1542, Gruffydd bought Cae Lleucu and Cwm Abergeirw from William ap Reinallt ap Maredudd.^{3.} In 1543 he bought from Tudur Vychan ap Gruffydd all the latter's messuages and lands in Nannau.^{4.} There is no further record of land being bought until 1568, when Gruffydd's son Hugh Nanney bought Tyddyn y Wern in Nannau from Morgan ap Thomas ap Hoell and his son, Robert, free tenants of that township.^{5.} Then in 1569, Hugh Nanney bought land in

1. T. Jones Pierce, "Clenennan Letters and Papers", Introduction, P.xv.

2. T. Jones Pierce, "An Anglesey Crown Rental", B.B.C.S., Vol. X. Pt. 2., PP.156-161.

3. Nannau MS. 930.

4. Nannau MSS. 43, 52.

5. Nannau, MS. 98.

Pennaran^{1.}; he and his father in the same year bought Tyddyn y Gors and Tyddyn y Mab Tew in Llwyngwrl^{2.} and in 1572 Gruffydd and Hugh bought those lands in Nannau referred to above.^{3.} These deeds constitute a remarkably small portion of the Nannau documents of this period (most of which are simply bonds) and illustrate the comparatively few changes which occurred in the territorial structure of Nannau and the surrounding townships. The important changes had taken place during the previous hundred years, between 1440 and 1540. It was then that the land was stretched.

1. Nannau, MS. 100.

2. Nannau, MS. 101. These properties were granted in 1576 as part of an exchange to Rhyd Hughes of Maesypandy - Supra, P. 131 ; Nannau, MS. 115.

3. Supra, P. 131. Nannau MS. 106.

TOWNSHIPS									
DATE	Alwyn gwil.	Garth yr Iwan	Talygarreg	Penrhyn- deudroeth	Nannau	Migneint	Garthmaelau	Boithdir	Dyffrydan
1436	Nann. MS. 2.								
1451		Nann. MS. 9.							
1453			Nann. MS. 10.						
1455				Nann. MS. 11.					
1457	Nann. MS. 6.			Nann. MS. 12.					
1460					Nann. MS. 13.				
1480						Nann. MS. 14.			
1490	Nann. MS. 17.								
1500									Nann. MS. 91.
1505									Nann. MS. 22.
1506									Nann. MS. 2.
1507					Nann. MS. 25.				
1511	Pen. Deeds 1460, 1467.								
1513							Nann. MS. 26.		
1514					Nann. MS. 28.				
1523					Nann. MS. 33.				
1536							Nann. MS. 39.		
? 1540								Nann. MS. 45.	Nann. MS. 45.

= Leases.

* = Encroached

Chart to illustrate Nannau Purchases and

1436-50.

Hywel ap Dafydd
ap Meurig (ob. 1540)

Gruffydd Wyn, later Nanney. (fl. 1536-73).	Richard Nanney, of Cefndeuaddwr.	David Lloyd.	Lewis Gwyn.
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Hugh Nanney Hên. (fl. 1565-1623)	John Nanney.	Margaret.	Elizabeth.	Annes.
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Gruffydd Nanney. (b. 1569 ob. 1609)	Robert Nanney.	Richard Nanney.	Edward Nanney.	Rhys Nanney.	Margaret.	Jane.	Elin.	Gwen.	Mary
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Hugh Nanney the Younger (b. 1588. ob. 1647).	John	William	Anne	Catherine = Robert Vaughan, of Hongert. (antiquary).
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NANNAU

1540-1647

CHAPTER FIVE1540 - 1623 (1)

"They are the strength, and suretie of the land,
In whose true hearts, doth trust and credit stand,
By whose wise heads, the neighbours ruled are,
In whom the prince, reposeth greatest care."

Thomas Churchyard,

"A generall Commendation of Gentilitie", in

"The Worthiness of Wales."

The period to be considered in this and the next two chapters dates from the death of Hywel ap Dafydd ap Meurig in 1540 and the accession to the estate of his son Gruffydd Wyn, later known as Gruffydd Nanney. We have seen¹. that Tudur Aled referred to Hywel ap Dafydd as "Huw Nannau" in one of his "cywyddau". The Nanney surname was not generally used until his son's lifetime, and then not without exception. Gruffydd Wyn first used the surname in 1549;². his brother Richard was described in a bond dated 20 July 1543 as Richard Nanney.³. We have also noted Gruffydd Wyn's first appearance in a deed - in 1536.⁴. The period covered in this and the next two chapters is that of the establishment of the Nanneys as a "gentry" family, culminating in the appointment of Gruffydd Nanney, Gruffydd Wyn's grandson, as Member of Parliament for Merioneth in 1592, and Hugh Nanney Hên's appointment as a Deputy Lieutenant in 1617. The family has "arrived" - "grown" might be a better description, out of the tribal "gwely". The patient work of Meurig Vychan,

1. Supra, Ch. 3, P.109...

2. Nannau MS. 64.

3. Nannau MS. 53.

4. Supra, P.111....; Nannau MS.39.

his son Dafydd, and grandson Hywel, in extending and consolidating the tribal patrimony has borne fruit.

The estates thus accumulated were further extended during the sixteenth century by the acquisition of many of the lands and properties of the suppressed monastery of Cymmer. The next chapter will include an attempt to survey the rather complicated story of the devolution of these monastic lands up to the time when they came into the hands of the Nanneys.^{1.}

Many of the documents of this period in the Nannau archives are merely bonds, containing no details other than the names of the parties. Some of them do help, however, and give some important information. The first recorded mention of any of the family's being referred to as a "gent." occurs in a bond dated 16 September 1538, when Hywel ap Dafydd ap Meurig was so described.^{2.}

1. *Infra*, P.177..

2. Nannau MS. 63.

The main outlines of the story during these years must be sought in other documents. Unfortunately these deal only infrequently with matters other than those arising out of the management of the estate and the exchange and leasing of lands. Consequently only the barest outlines can be given of the family's history. A later chapter will illustrate the extremely litigious nature of the family's representatives from 1592 until the death of Hugh Nanney Hên in 1623.¹

Any attempt to present a complete and rounded picture of the family's activities under the later Tudors - the gentry's period of greatness - would prove abortive, owing to the paucity of the evidence. It is hoped, however, that the selection of documents printed in the Appendices,² together with the material dealt with in this and the next two chapters will provide a glimpse, however imperfect, of the activities of a gentry family in Merionethshire in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The Tudor gentry "held a position determined, not by legal distinctions, but by common estimation."³

1. Vide *Infra*, Ch. 7.

2. Vide *Infra*, P. 136, ff.

3. R.H. Tawney, "The Rise of the Gentry", 1558-1640", *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 1941, PP2 - 4.

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The term "gentry" as understood in Wales "was a highly elastic and comprehensive one"¹. Above all, in Wales the "idea of gentility was still one in which birth and breeding counted more than cash."² Sir John Wynn, "conferring oft with the freeholders of the parishe of llaroost my neighboures, how they held their landes, and from what comon auncestor they weare discended," found that "most of them are discended lineally from Ednyfed Vaughan."³ When he attempted to trace the pedigree of a certain Llywelyn ap David, one of the "gents" who were present when Sir John's great-grandfather (Meredith ap Ieuan) went with Robin Iachwr, the antiquary, to a "chwyrwiva gampe" in Llanrwst, he could not find it: "the reason is that pouertie soone forgett whence it be discended for it is an auncient receaved sayinge, that there is noe povertie but is discended of nobilitie, nor no nobilitie but is discended of beggerie."⁴

1. A.H. Dodd, "Studies in Stuart Wales," P.1.

2. *ibid*, P.3.

3. Sir John Wynn, "History of the Gwydir Family", PP.35-6.

4. *ibid*, P.36.

The members of the Nannau family at this period are given in the pedigree chart at the beginning of the chapter. The heads of the family from 1540 to 1623 were, successively, Gruffydd Wyn, later Nanney, who died in 1573¹, his son Hugh Nanney Hên, who died in 1623,² and whose son Gruffydd Nanney died in 1609,³ and Hugh Nanney the Younger,⁴ who took over the estate on his grandfather's death in 1623. Of these the most interesting and impressive character was Hugh Nanney Hên, head of the family for half a century. His was a most forceful, almost a boisterous personality⁵. His name first occurs in a bond dated 24 May 1566, to which he was a party.⁶ When he died in 1623 elegies were composed by the following poets - Richard

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1. His name last occurs in a lease dated 1 November 1573 - Nannau MS. 914.
 2. Nannau MS. 300; N.L.W. Peniarth 327, Part 111.
 3. Nannau MS. 258.
 4. His twenty first birthday fell on or soon after the 24 October 1609 - Nannau MS. 246.
 5. "Personoliaeth gyda'r rymusaf" - Dr. Thomas Richards, "Bywgraffiadur," P.640.
 6. Nannau MS.95.

Phylip, Huw Machno, Gruffydd Hafren, Richard Cynwal, James Dwnn, Sion Clywedog and Robert Dyfi.¹ The energy with which he prosecuted the family feud with the Owens of Llwyn was immense.² He was one of the stubborn, "stiff-necked" type, who preferred to spend two years in the Fleet prison rather than pay a fine which he thought excessive.³

He seems also to have been something of a loose liver. There are two extant records of sentences passed against him for incontinence. In 1588, at Bewdley, on the 15 June a verdict was given in the court of the Council of the Marches in the case between David Owen, the plaintiff, and Hugh Nanney, Esq., the defendant, represented by his attorney Edward Price and by Rowland ap Elisa, gent..⁴

1. E.D.Jones, "The Family of Nannau of Nannau", *Journal Mer. Hist. Rec. Soc.* 1953, P.11. A note inserted in N.L.W. Peniarth 287, Part 1 (P.306), by W.W.E.Wynne of Peniarth, states that Hugh Nanney Hên was buried at Llanfachreth on the 4 May, 1623 - "From Notes by the late Rev'd Edward Jones, Vicar of Llandegai to a pedigree also by him in the possession of his sister-in-law, Mrs. Jones, relict of the Rev. Mr. Jones, of Llanllyfni. He gives as his authority for the above dates, contemporary Elegies by R. Vaughan, Wm. Philip and John Owen."

2. Vide *Infra*, Ch. 7. PP.137:138.

3. Vide *Infra*, Ch. 7. P.265...

4. N.L.W. Peniarth 410 D.

The case concerned "the severall supposed incontinent living of the deft. with Mary verch Hugh, Katharine verch John and Elen verch Meiricke." Whereas Hugh Nanney "hath confessed that he abouts xiiii yeres last past (c.1574) offended incontinently wth the sayd Katharine verch John and begate one Child upon her bodye" and "ys not as yet ponished", the Council now orders him to pay a forty shillings fine and forty shillings costs. The verdict adds that "forasmuch as there falleth out no sufficient proof against the deft of the supposed offences layed to the charge of the deft wth the said Ellen verch Meiricke and Mary verch Hugh or eyther of them, yt is therefore by the sayd Councell further ordered that the deft be of the supposed offence wth the sayd Ellen and Mary dismissed out of this Court." In 1594 he was ordered by the Bishop of Bangor to do public penance for this sin in the churches of Llanfachreth, Dolgelley, Trawsfynydd, Maentwrog, Beddgelert and Bangor.^{1.}

1. N.L.W. Peniarth 410 D.

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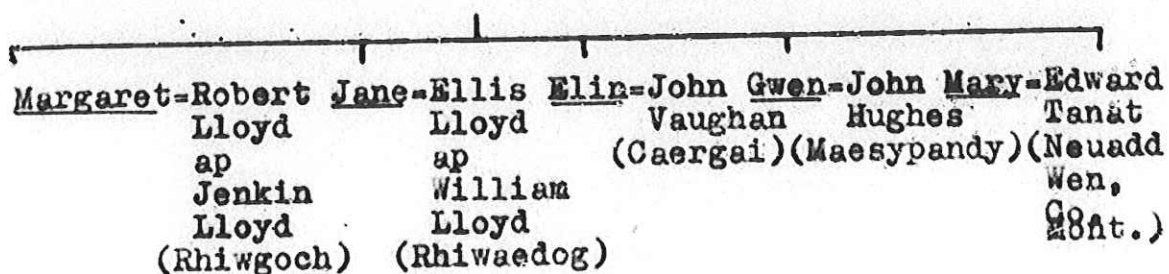
However incontinent he may have been, Hugh Nanney paid a good deal of attention to the question of marriage. He was, one suspects, more concerned with the marriage settlements than the sacraments, as indeed were his fellow squires, who all owed some part of their wealth and position to "matchmaking", the lifebelt of the sinking family, the ladder of the rising one."¹ Hugh Nanney Hên was unfortunate, however, in having five daughters for whom to provide.² He managed to do so, procuring good matches for all five despite his many other expensive commitments. In Tudur Penllyn's words:

"rhoi pum merch ar hap mawr,
bu mawl hyn i bum mlaenawr."³

The five marriages are shown in the following table:

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1. S.T. Bindoff, "Tudor England", P.34.
 2. Griffith, P.200.
 3. E.D. Jones, op.cit. P.12.

Hugh Nanney Hên



Margaret's marriage settlement involved a bond of obligation of £1,000 by Robert ap Ieuan Lloyd (Robert Lloyd) and Robert Vaughan of Glan Llyn Tegid to Hugh Nanney.^{1.}

Hugh Nanney's father, Gruffydd Wyn, was more fortunate in having to provide for only three daughters.^{2.} Gruffydd himself had made a good match by his marriage to Jane, daughter of Humphrey ap Howel ap Jenkin of Ynysymaengwyn.^{3.} Gruffydd's brother - Richard Nanney (founder of the collateral branch of the family at Cefndeuddwr), had married Elizabeth, a daughter of Lewis Owen of Llwyn,^{4.} the Baron Owen, Vice-Chancellor

1. Nannau MS. 132.

2. Griffith, P.200.

3. *ibid*, PP. 200,237.

4. *ibid*, PP. 200,165.

of North Wales, who was murdered by the Red Bandits of Mawddwy in 1555.¹ Hugh Nanney Hên married Annes, a daughter of Rhys Vychan of Corsygedol, the first of many marriages between the two families during the following hundred and fifty years.² His brother John Nanney married Elizabeth, a daughter of David Lloyd of Trawsfynydd³. Of Gruffydd Wyn's three daughters Margaret married William ap Tudur ap Gruffydd ap Edwyfed of Egryn Abbey.⁴ Elizabeth married Robert Lloyd of Trallwyncoch, and Annes married a certain Huw ap Sion Wyn ap William ap Reinallt.⁵

We have referred above to Hugh Nanney Hên's provision for his daughters. Of his sons, Gruffydd

1. "Bywgraffiadur", P.673.

2. Griffith, P.200; E.D.Jones, op.cit. P.14.

3. Griffith, P.200.

4. *ibid*; Nannau MS.79 - William ap Tudur bound in £500 to Gruffydd Wyn to observe the terms of the marriage settlement between himself and Margaret. Parts of present house at Egryn date back to the sixteenth century - T.I.Ellis, - "Crwydro Meirionydd", P.48.

5. Griffith, P.200.

Nanney married Elin, daughter of John Wyn ap Cadwaladr of Rhiwlas, while his brother Edward Nanney married Elizabeth, daughter of Lewis Gwyn of Doleugwyn.¹ Edward Nanney was the ancestor of the Nanneys of Maes y Pandy². The three other brothers - Robert, Rhys and Richard - seem to have remained single. Hugh's grandson, Hugh Nanney the Younger, also married an Annes of Corsygedol, the daughter of Gruffydd Vychan, while his brother William married Elin, a daughter of Edward Edwards of Llwyndu.³ An interesting marriage was that of their sister Catherine to Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt, the famous antiquary.⁴

The activities of this remarkable Merionethshire squire - Hugh Nanney Hen - and his family present in many ways a microcosm of the lives and activities of the Tudor gentry as a whole.

1. Griffith, P.200.

2. *ibid*, P.237.

3. *ibid*, P.200.

4. *ibid*, PP.200 , 201.

They were royal officials - we have seen indeed that this was a family tradition stretching back over the centuries to the time of the English conquest of Wales. Although it is difficult to define the limits of the gentry as a "class", yet we can see its hallmark in the appointment of a person to serve as sheriff. Hugh Nanney Hen was the first member of the Nannau family to hold this office. He was appointed in 1586 and served a one year term.¹ In his capacity as Sheriff of Merioneth, Hugh Nanney, on the 25 January, 1587, appointed John ap Morgan of Bala, gent., as Bailiff of Edeirnion², and Thomas ap Richard of Llandderfel as Bailiff of Penllyn.³ The only other member of the family to hold the office at this time was Hugh Nanney the Younger, who was appointed Sheriff on the 20 September 1637.⁴ As early as 1552, however, Lewis Gwyn, a

1. Nannau MS.151; P.R.O. List of Sheriffs, P.260; Vide Appendix 111, Infra P.337., for a list of undetermined actions handed over to the next Sheriff, Gruffydd Vaughan of Corsygedol, 1587-8, in Nannau MS.158.

2. Nannau MS. 153.

3. Nannau MS. 154.

4. P.R.O. List of Sheriffs, P.260; Vide Nannau MS.334.

younger brother of GruffyddWyn, was one of the three candidates from whom the Sheriff of Merionethshire was chosen, the favour falling on Edward Stanley.^{1.} Meanwhile in the previous year Richard Nanney, another brother, had been appointed escheator.^{2.}

Naturally they also served as Justices of the Peace, those Tudor "maids of all work." The office may indeed be dated from the twelfth century, but it was Henry VII who made nomination to the Commission of the Peace "the recognized first step in a gentleman's public career."^{3.} None of the Nanneys are included in a list of the names of Justices of the Peace for Merionethshire, dated 1574.^{4.} Hugh Nanneys name is included, however, in a list, dated c. 1584, of Merioneth gentry who were qualified to act as Justices of the Peace^{5.}, as well as in a similar list of 1620.^{6.}

1. Cal. Fine Rolls, 6 Edward VI, printed as appendix to Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1553, P.387.

2. ibid, P.375.

3. Bindoff, op.cit. P.58.

4. B.M. Egerton MS.1655/2345.

5. B.M. Lansdowne MS.212/737, f.174 verso.

6. B.M. Harl. MS. 473/1933, f.29.