# Book Reviews

## Pre-1800

Adam Chapman. *Welsh Soldiers in the Later Middle Ages, 1282–1422*. Warfare in History.
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In a great many idealizations of medieval military history, the Welsh—and by association, the longbow—have held a strong place in the historical imagination alongside knights, castles, and the rest of the essential elements, as it were. In his easy-to-read study, *Welsh Soldiers in the Later Middle Ages, 1282–1422*, Adam Chapman has both synthesized a number of research trends of the past decades and broken new ground in several areas by integrating close work in financial and literary sources. Paradoxically, he manages to make an argument for the repeated militarization of Welsh society due to English military needs while redefining, if not debunking, their crucial role in the great battles of the Hundred Years War. Along the way, he also strives to paint a picture of what "Welsh" militancy entailed, including what sectors of Welsh society fought for the English, to what degree they did so willingly, and whether their participation had any effect on the nature of English warfare.

Chapman's stance that Edward I inserted himself more into a civil war than launched a pre-planned war of conquest has a bearing on his later conclusions about Welsh ambivalence to answering the military demands of the new overlords. That they owed military service to their lords, and that such service was due from numerous communities, was a tradition on which the English kings relied. This helps to explain, as Chapman shows, the remarkable integration of the Welsh into Edward's military machinery within as little as four years. From a Plea Roll of 1296, Chapman concludes that the Welsh contribution to Edward's levies was "significant" and "substantial" (25), terms that appear repeatedly as he struggles with a century and a half of documentary vagaries to establish precise Welsh numbers among the English armies. The difficulty that he faces and, by way of his sleuthing, demonstrates to the reader is that few Welshmen can definitively be found in the various musters. The problem worsens across the period as the crown moved from commissions of array, where individual Welsh communities were held responsible for set numbers and fined for failing to

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meet them, to indentures, at which point the "documentation recording the recruitment of soldiers all but vanishes" (177).

With reasonable circumspection, Chapman fields numbers where he can, and thus he shows how much Edward I and Edward II both relied on Welsh levies. Under Edward I, a number of the *uchelwyr* (the leading landowners) used such military connections to advance their political fortunes under the new regime. The connections appeared to grow even tighter as Edward II relied on Welsh contingents to fill out his expeditions in Scotland, and at the end of his reign, several leading Welsh magnates stayed loyal even as Isabella and Mortimer's side triumphed. The troops mustered, though, were infantry for the most part, more usually equipped with a lance or spear than with a bow. The latter were present, Chapman shows, but not in the kinds of numbers that later stories suggest. This reliance on the Welsh as infantry continued into the reign of Edward III, where Chapman, following in the wake of such analyses as Andrew Ayton's *Knights and Warhorses: Military Service and the English Aristocracy under Edward III* (1994) and Clifford Rogers's *War Cruel and Sharp: English Strategy under Edward III, 1327–1360* (2000), leans toward seeing 4,500 Welshmen on the payroll of the 1346 campaign, half of them archers, the other half spearman. On the battlefield of Crécy, however, Chapman notes via Froissart their pillaging and the merciless killing of the elite with their long knives (66–67). He argues that they made their real impact at the siege of Calais, where their numbers are again "indeterminate," but Chapman argues that the echoes of Calais throughout Welsh praise poetry indicate great pride (and participation?) in that endeavor.

The nature of English campaigns in France (that is, *chevauchées*) changed the demands put on the Welsh. The Black Prince drew upon the royal fiefs for his 1355 and 1356 raids, and Welshmen were paid for these campaigns, but their actual role at Poitiers is "impossible to trace" (73). As English forces opted for speed, the demand for Welsh infantry lessened, according to Chapman. Despite his ties to Glamorgan, Edward Despenser's contingent in 1373 had only 49 Welsh among 599 archers (84). Attention shifted to local defense, in fact, once war resumed; Owain Lawgoch represented another option for those Welsh not content with English rule. He threatened an invasion with French help on three occasions, and Chapman shows how the crown turned to castle repair and tried to ensure the loyalty of garrisons in Wales. In contrast with the period that followed, Chapman argues, the Welsh turned away somewhat from military careers as a means of advancement.

All this changed at the turn of the century, first with Henry IV's coup, then with the revolt of Owain Glendŵr. Each of these events contributed to a remilitarization of the Welsh, according to Chapman. In particular, the end of the revolt left many Welsh of the "squirearchy" in need of proving their loyalty to Henry IV and his son. Already in 1411, letters indicate that Henry IV was using military service as grounds for pardons (127). Likewise, Henry V used the Agincourt campaign as a means of confirming the squirearchy's loyalty or controlling former rebels. That said, their numbers at Agincourt, while notable, were not as numerous as was once assumed. Rather more were left behind to secure the kingdom. And just as notable, some exiles fought and died on the French side (141). Nonetheless, the early 1400s saw numbers of the Welsh return to armed service as part of what was expected to advance their careers; Chapman even dangles the possibility of Owen Tudor thus getting his start in this way (145).

In the end, Chapman contends that Welsh participation in English wars did not change the nature of those wars because of Welsh contributions. And insomuch as contemporaries noticed Welsh archers, it was because they were Welsh, not because they were archers.

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