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THE SOURCES OF HISTORY:
STUDIES IN THE USES OF HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

GENERAL EDITOR: G. R. ELTON

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Medieval Wales

by

R. IAN JACK

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Et potest preter hoc haberi alia utilissima cautela que in his circumstantiis potest attendi, ut sciatur cuiusmodi penitentia cui persone sit iniungenda. Alia enim penitentia est iniungenda Walensi, alia Anglico, alia forti, alia debili, alia iuveni, alia seni, et ita de ceteris. Similiter in convictu alia penitentia iniungenda est agricolae, alia mercatori, alia militi, alia histrioni sive meretrici qui in sordido questu versantur, alia oratori, alia sutori, et ita de ceteris. Nunquam igitur penitentiam bene iniunget qui predictas et etiam sequentes varietates personarum non attenderit.

Thomae de Chobham Summa Confessorum, ed. F. Broomfield, *Analecta Mediaevalia Namurcensia* xxv (Louvain 1968), 51–2.

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Contents

General Editor’s Introduction	9
Preface	11
1 Literary Sources	13
2 The Official Records of Wales and Their Preservation	47
3 The Records of the English Government	79
4 Archives of Individuals and Corporations	101
5 Ecclesiastical Records	125
6 The Antiquaries	161
7 Archaeology and Numismatics	185
8 Cartography and Place-Names	213
9 Conclusion	229
Index	235

Abbreviations

<i>Arch. Camb.</i>	<i>Archaeologia Cambrensis</i>
<i>B.B.C.S.</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i>
<i>Brit.Num.J.</i>	<i>British Numismatic Journal</i>
<i>D.D.</i>	Deposited Document (in Cardiff Central Library)
<i>D.K.R.</i>	<i>Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records</i>
<i>D.N.B.</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>D.W.B.</i>	<i>Dictionary of Welsh Biography</i>
<i>H.M.C.</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission
Lloyd, <i>History</i>	J. E. Lloyd, <i>A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Con- quest</i> (3rd ed., London 1939)
<i>N.L.W.</i>	National Library of Wales
<i>N.L.W.J.</i>	<i>National Library of Wales Journal</i>
<i>P.R.O.</i>	Public Record Office
<i>Trans. Hon. Soc. Cymm.</i>	<i>Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion</i>

General Editor's Introduction

By what right do historians claim that their reconstructions of the past are true, or at least on the road to truth? How much of the past can they hope to recover: are there areas that will remain for ever dark, questions that will never receive an answer? These are problems which should and do engage not only the scholar and student but every serious reader of history. In the debates on the nature of history, however, attention commonly concentrates on philosophic doubts about the nature of historical knowledge and explanation, or on the progress that might be made by adopting supposedly new methods of analysis. The disputants hardly ever turn to consider the materials with which historians work and which must always lie at the foundation of their structures. Yet, whatever theories or methods the scholar may embrace, unless he knows his sources and rests upon them he will not deserve the name of historian. The bulk of historical evidence is much larger and more complex than most laymen and some professionals seem to know, and a proper acquaintance with it tends to prove both exhilarating and sobering—exhilarating because it opens the road to unending enquiry, and sobering because it reduces the inspiring theory and the new method to their proper subordinate place in the scheme of things. It is the purpose of this series to bring this fact to notice by showing what we have and how it may be used.

G. R. ELTON

Preface

When Thomas de Chobham, the sub-dean of Salisbury, wrote his manual for confessors in the year of Magna Carta, he emphasised that a careful psychological appraisal of the penitent was an essential part of the priest's function: the confessor should remember that a Welshman was as different from an Englishman as a minstrel or a harlot from a knight. No less a contrast exists between the Welsh reluctance to write general surveys of their history and of its sources and the zealotry of the English. If this book has any theme at all, it is the nature and cause of this contrast.

The central, superficial contrast is between the bulk of the sources for English medieval history, narrative, archival and material, and the small remains for medieval Wales. The difficulty of the Welsh sources, their physical dispersal and the lack of existing finding-aids create massive problems, and in the course of compiling this survey I have been acutely aware of my own ignorance in too many aspects of these sources. Like John Speed, I have been obliged to 'put my sickle into other mens corne'. It is my hope, however, that this initial survey will prompt those qualified in the special fields on which I have trespassed to produce fuller and more authoritative introductions for students. I hope, too, that the questions which I have asked and the projects which I have urged will do more than arouse a nod of approval or a snort of contempt—that they will encourage some activity, whether the translation of ideas into reality or explanations why the ideas should be refuted or the projects discouraged.