

History

Enquiry: Why has Alfred been called “Alfred the Great”?

The Kingdom of Brycheiniog

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A new island

In the year 880 there was a Welsh kingdom called Brycheiniog. It was ruled by a powerful king called Elisedd, who decided to do something that had not happened before in England or Wales. He built an island in the middle of a lake. People in Ireland had, for a long time, built this type of island: they were called **crannogs**. This suggests the Welsh kingdom of Brycheiniog had important links with Ireland.



A new island

The fact king Elisedd could order for crannogs to be made suggests that there were powerful kings in Wales at the time that Alfred was king of Wessex. Elisedd's crannog required 13 tonnes of stone to be carried by his workers on rafts to the island's location. The construction of crannog can therefore be seen as **a symbol** of Elisedd's power.



Life on the crannog

Once it was built, the crannog became an important and wealthy part of Brycheiniog. This is particularly impressive because in other parts of Britain there was a lot of violence due to the Vikings. Archaeologists have found evidence which tells us Brycheiniog was very wealthy.



Life on the crannog

For example they have found the burnt remains of a woman's dress. On the dress are pictures of birds and lions, based on similar dresses made thousands of miles away in Asia. They also found **a drinking horn** buried next to the bones of animals like deer and wild boar, which were probably captured on a hunt and then eaten at a feast. Most surprisingly, they found the bones of what may have been Elisedd's pet dogs: greyhounds for hunting and a small lapdog.



The end of Brycheiniog

The Vikings were not the only problem for the kings of Brycheiniog in the ninth century. Instead Elisedd's biggest threat came from other Welsh kings, one of whom was called Rhodri. Rhodri had decided to fight alongside the Vikings against Brycheiniog. Elisedd decided that his best bet was to make **an alliance** with Alfred.



The end of Brycheiniog

For some reason, however, this alliance did not last after Elisedd died and his son took over. In 916, Aethelflaed, Lady of Mercia, ordered her men to attack the crannog. The buildings there were burnt down and the wife of Brycheiniog's king was captured along with 33 of her assistants. Brycheiniog never recovered and after 934, it isn't mentioned again.



Glossary

A crannog: A man-made island where important people lived.

A symbol: Something that represents something else.

A drinking horn: An animal horn turned into a cup.

An alliance: An agreement made between people to protect either other.



Comprehension Questions

1. What is a crannog?
2. Why does the crannog show that Elisedd was powerful?
3. What was found on the crannog?
4. Who was the main threat to Brycheiniog?
5. Who destroyed Brycheiniog?

