

Did a Welshman discover America?

Video transcript – Madog's tale

Take one disillusioned Welsh prince - Madog ab Owain Gwynedd - his equally pessimistic brother, Rhirid, and a bunch of local sailors, and you end up with a foolhardy crew who set out in 1170 from Llandrillo-yn-Rhos and ended up discovering America...

According to legend, Prince Madog landed in Mobile Bay, Alabama and the story is marked by this plaque set into the ancient harbour wall at Llandrillo-yn-Rhos.

Come on though, a Welshman discovering America? Really?

We know Owain Gwynedd was a real king who sired over 20 children. One of his children is believed to be Madog.

The only thing is, there isn't a lot of historical evidence to establish whether or not he really existed.

Maredudd ap Rhys, a 15th century poet, makes one of the earliest references to our intrepid prince.

He alludes to Madog's nautical connections in a traditional form of verse, known as a *cywydd*.

<i>Madog wych, mwyedig wedd, lawn genau Owain Gwynedd, Ni fynnai dir, f'enaid oedd, Na da mawr ond y moroedd.</i>	Splendid Madog, of great frame, True offspring of Owain Gwynedd, He did not want land, he was my friend, Nor great wealth, but the seas.
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Even the English court took an interest in Madog's tale when Elizabeth I's courtiers used the story as propaganda to lay claim to North America.

But the most compelling evidence for Madog's discovery of America comes from 18th century accounts of the Native American Mandan tribe.

Early explorers were struck by how different they were from other tribes both culturally and in appearance.

Yet most astonishingly, the Mandans were apparently able to speak Welsh!

Did Madog and his crew settle in America leaving behind their language and culture, or was the claim of 'Welsh Indians' pure coincidence?

Who knows...? It's a good story though!